

Foreword: Charles R. Swindoll, Th.D.

Let's Revel in Romans

A Devotional Study
New American Standard Version

By John G. Mitchell, D.D.

Glory Press
West Linn, Oregon, USA

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Transcription by the late Miss Edna Rempel
Edited and formatted by Prof. Dick Bohrer
Cover design by Left Coast Graphics

LET'S REVEL IN ROMANS is a revision and expansion of *RIGHT WITH GOD: A DEVOTIONAL STUDY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS*, which was published by Multnomah Press in 1990.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Mitchell, John G., 1892-1990

Right With God : a devotional study of the Epistle to the Romans / John G. Mitchell with Dick Bohrer.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-88070-411-X

1. Bible. N.T. Romans—Commentaries. I. Bohrer, Dick. II.

Title.

BS2665.3.M56 1990

227'.107—dc20

90-49328

CIP

91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 – 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Dedication

Dr. Willard M. Aldrich, Th.D.

Like sons of thunder,
Dr. Willard and Dr. John
taught,
prayed,
and served
beside one another as
associates,
brothers,
companions,
defenders,
enthusiasts,
friends

for more than 50 years.

With Dr. John taking the more public
ministry
and Dr. Willard, as long-time president
of the Multnomah School of the Bible,
the more private,
the two served their Savior
with unrivaled devotion.

**The one could not have served so well
without the other.**

Who is John G. Mitchell?

“I have not walked in the shadow of many giants in my lifetime, but John G. Mitchell was certainly one. My life is richer and my love for Christ is deeper because of his towering presence and godly influence.”

Charles R. Swindoll, President, Dallas Theological Seminary

“I thank God most for his Bible studies. I have used his notes on Romans to preach across the Spanish-speaking world on radio and television. They were invaluable to me in preparing those messages.”

Luis Palau, Evangelist

“Dr. Jack was a remarkable human being, deeply dedicated to Jesus Christ and the Word of God. He set a standard for us that was scriptural and still only rarely equaled. I know he left his mark on me and on many, many Navigators—a mark that can never be erased.”

Lorne Sanny, President, The Navigators

“I would say the authority of the Word of God and the Person of Christ were the two things that stand out in my mind as I recall his impression on me. He gave me a love for the Word. He gave me a love for the Saviour. He gave me a love for people.”

Prof. Howard Hendricks, Dallas Theological Seminary

“He had, certainly, a practical deep submission to the Word of God. His own heart and life were subject to it. It’s like D. L. Moody said of the Word of God, “Do we need to defend it? No. It is like a lion. Loose it and let it go.” That was characteristic of his life. He had a wise simplicity in his approach to the Scripture. He was not simple; you know that. But he approached it from a practical point of view.”

**Willard M. Aldrich, President Emeritus,
Multnomah Bible College**

“Dr. Mitchell’s life was marked by faithfulness to Christ, by integrity with His message. He was a model of a loving heavenly Father to all who have come in contact with him and a man caught up in the wonder of the matchless Name and the love of his Saviour.”

Duane Hallof, student

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Foreword

My first face-to-face connection with Dr. Mitchell came when I was a student at Dallas Theological Seminary in the fall of 1959. He was a visiting Bible lecturer. In fact, he returned for other series of lectures more than once before I graduated four years later.

I was so taken by his “scriptural saturation” (I don’t know of a better way to put it) that I told my wife Cynthia that she must attend the evening meetings in which he spoke to the general public. She and I never missed from then on. We shall forever remember his frequent exhortation to “read ya Bible!”

We had never heard such a Bible teacher as Dr. Mitchell . . . and we had heard many in our lives. His delivery was altogether unique—who will ever forget that Scottish accent?—his grasp of the written Word was incredibly comprehensive, his ability to trace various themes through the Bible was mind-boggling, and his devoted love for the Saviour was contagious.

I shall never forget how he often began his lectures with a gracious but firm reproof, concerned that we at the seminary might be getting an intellectual understanding of God’s Word but failing to have our hearts touched by the truth we were studying. His concern for our spiritual welfare melted me. In the years that followed, it was my privilege to hear Dr. Mitchell on numerous occasions—in churches, at conference centers, at schools and other seminary settings. Each time I loved the Lord more after he spoke than I did before. Being in his presence was nothing short of being near one of the most Christlike men I’d ever known.

I recall one particular occasion when Cynthia was unsettled on a rather complicated subject. She and I had been taught a certain interpretation by one well-known Bible teacher and then a different interpretation by another respected scholar. Our confusion only intensified as we went to the Scriptures on our own

and came to yet another conclusion.

At that time, Dr. Mitchell happened to be speaking nearby, which gave us the opportunity to attend the meeting and talk with him alone afterwards. With keen perception and in a quiet, gracious manner, he patiently listened to our dilemma and then explained the issue as he understood it (quoting numerous passages of Scripture in the process). Ultimately, he helped us both come to terms with an interpretation that squared with Scripture and made sense. We must have been with him for thirty or more minutes, yet he never seemed hurried or irritated. What a man!

In later years, it became my privilege to speak alongside Dr. Mitchell at various gatherings, and at his invitation stand before his students at Multnomah School of the Bible and teach God's Word . . . an honor I never took for granted. There he sat listening to me (of all people) and apparently enjoying the reversal of roles. He never failed to speak encouragingly as he affirmed God's hand on Cynthia's and my lives . . . as he took delight in our growth and as he found pleasure in the ways we were being used.

His quick wit often lifted my spirit. His passion for truth drove me deeper into my study. But it was his humility that impacted me the most in our final years of friendship. Never arrogant, never demanding, never jealous of another's success, and never selfish for the limelight, the man modeled genuine greatness, authentic servanthood.

I have not walked in the shadow of many giants in my lifetime but John G. Mitchell was certainly one. My life is richer and my love for Christ is deeper because of his towering presence and godly influence.

To this day, when my spirit is heavy or my mind gets overwhelmed or my heart begins to grow cold and indifferent, the memory of that faithful, dedicated servant of the Most High draws me back to the path of absolute obedience and the life of simple faith.

I say with great gratitude, he, being dead, still speaks.

Charles R. Swindoll, Th.D.

In Remembrance

His office at Multnomah School of the Bible (now named Multnomah Bible College) where he was a much-loved Bible teacher, the founder, and for many, many years chairman of the Board of Trustees lay in the east wing of Sutcliffe Hall, the administration building.

As you entered, possibly you greeted Miss Hazel Oliver whose office was sandwiched between Dr. Mitchell's and Dr. Willard Aldrich's. Or, in later years, Marian O'Connor, Dr. Mitchell's faithful secretary, welcomed you.

Told that Dr. Mitchell is waiting for you, you turn to your right and enter his room. On his walls you see the pictures of his dear friends, men whose preaching ministries touched his own, decades ago—marvelous men like Arno C. Gaebelien, B. B. Sutcliffe, Lewis Sperry Chafer, W. H. Griffith Thomas, and Harry A. Ironside.

John G. Mitchell sits facing away from you in a large swivel chair behind a strong wooden desk. He's finishing a telephone conversation, and he motions you in with a sweep of his husky arm.

You've come to talk to this veteran preacher-teacher about something that seems to be missing from your life, something that he knows so very much about.

He hangs up the receiver and says in his baritone brogue (he was born in England near the Scottish border), "Come in, my friend. Sit down. Sit down."

You look at the piles of letters around him and say, "Let me come back another day. You look terribly busy."

"Oh, I'm busy," he admits, "but there's always time for us to have a wee little talk together. In fact, I don't know why you don't come more often. I love to have you come."

You enjoy the sound of his rich voice. He's attached to his R's and not only rolls them as they occur to his tongue but supplies them when they don't.

He has just returned from having preached a week each at a Midwest college, a theological seminary and a west coast church. And he's just finished an assignment of cutting thirty-eight broadcast tapes on the book of Genesis for his half-hour daily radio program, aired across a good number of states. So you know he's been busy.

He sees you looking at his piles of letters, and he picks one up and reads it to you. It's from a lady in California who thanks him for his program and asks him three questions.

"You see?" he says at the end. "I have to answer these good letters myself. There's no other way. All these are from people who are listening and writing in questions. They want to grow. They want to know the Lord."

"But don't they go to church? Can't their pastors answer these questions?" you ask.

He shakes his head. He's reluctant to indict his brethren in the ministry. But soon he leans back and reminisces through his seventy-some years as a Bible teacher and pastor.

"The Lord's sheep are hungry for food," he says. "If they don't find it in one place, they'll turn to find it in another. They cannot grow without the Word of God."

"But aren't all pastors shepherds?" you ask.

"A real shepherd will take care of his sheep.

And certainly a shepherd cannot lead his sheep to the pasture unless he knows from experience that there is food there," he says. "In some churches the pastor becomes so occupied with his pastoral duties that he doesn't give the time to study and prayer.

"On the other hand, some men give all of their time to study and then have no heart for the people of God. Some teach the Word of God with intellectual clarity but do not reach the hearts and lives of God's people. Others are warm in their ministry, but they don't have an intellectual grasp of the truth.

"I would say that the neglected gift in the

gospel ministry today is the gift of expository preaching and teaching.”

He turns to the letters in a small pile directly in front of him and riffles through them.

“They tell me, ‘If it were not for your program, I do not know where I would be fed the Word of God.’ Now, that’s tragic. I certainly don’t have outstanding gifts, except that I love the Saviour and I want people to love Him, too. I may not be reaching their heads, but I think I’m reaching some hearts for the Saviour.”

“But not all pastors have an expository gift,” you say.

He leans forward. “You know, if a pastor loves his flock, he’ll feed it. But he cannot feed a flock if he’s not feeding himself. He must be a man of the Book. Whatever our gift may be, we need to saturate our minds with the Word of God so that we’ll be both available and usable in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Why, the truth must live in us.

“Now, when I was a young preacher just starting out in the ministry, I asked Dr. G. Campbell Morgan what was his method of Bible study. And he informed me that he would read a book through forty or fifty times before he even started to study that book. In other words, he saturated his mind with the text.

“Now, it’s true that some pastors have another gift, not expository preaching. They may be evangelists or they may be teachers. But whatever the gift God has given to a man, He has not changed His method of reaching people. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God through the man of God. It says that in I Thessalonians 1:5.”

“Then what’s your definition of expository preaching and teaching?” you ask.

“We preach for a verdict. We teach for edification. A pastor should be able to expound the Word of God, not some theory, not some topic.

“The Bible is not a textbook. It’s God’s personal revelation of Himself to my heart, and it brings me His purpose and His counsel. It’s God’s word to me—personally; but, until I get to the place of recognizing that, I’m not going to heed it.

It will just be another book.

"Now, I'm not speaking of its inspiration here but only of its practical use in my life.

"Expository teaching is expounding the Word of God—exposing it to the mind and heart and life of God's people. It is preaching the truth in the light of the context. It's giving the content of what's in the passage."

"How do you yourself go about preparing an expository message?" you ask.

"When I prepare a message, I read the passage through a great number of times, and I pray about it. I write down what I see, and then I do some more praying. I look at what I've written and may cross it out and start over again, searching for something more out of the passage. Then, when I've gotten all I can, I go to my library and read what someone else has received from the same passage. Often, when I read what someone else has written, I find he's received the same thing I have—only it's mine. I didn't get it from him.

"Now, oftentimes, these men will give you a little nudge. They give you a thought that you will follow through. In other words, you are digging all the time. And, after all these years, I'm still digging.

"Why, a student said to me the other day, 'It must be nice to have preached and taught all these years, Dr. Mitchell, because now you don't have to study any more.'

"I told him, 'Man, I never stop studying.' You never get to end of it. You never get through!"

His eyes flash.

"But what if you have other things to do?" you ask. "You can't study all the time." You're getting close to what you came to talk to him about.

"Listen, my friend, a person has to budget his time and guard his time with the Lord and with His Word. A great many of God's servants are too busy with programs and with running around in the pastorate on a lot of details that someone else could do. Their main object (as Peter could say in Acts 6) should be to give themselves to the ministry of the Word. That's what these men did."

He points to the pictures on his wall.

“A man has to discipline himself to stay at his desk and to stay in the Word of God to get the mind of God. Only then can he teach the Word in the power of the Spirit; and only then will he have a tenderness and compassion for the people of God who need feeding, guidance and direction in their spiritual lives.”

“But can’t he ever go out?” you ask.

“Now, don’t get me wrong. A man must be out among his people. Why, when I was a pastor, I’d be in the hospitals three or four afternoons a week. A man must know the problems and the heartaches of his people if he’s going to minister to them where they are.

“But the danger today is that it is so easy to become lazy mentally. We don’t give ourselves to study. It’s going to cost us something to get to know the Word of God. We receive according to our capacity, and our capacity grows as we lay hold of the truth.

“The truth must live. We can’t feed God’s people if we His servants are not feeding on His Word. The truth must live.”

He moves his hand across the desk and puts it for a moment on yours.

“And, remember, this is true for you, too, you know. You don’t have to be in the pulpit to minister God’s Word to other people.”

You know this man cares about you. You can hear it in his voice.

“God has given you a gift, you know,” he says gently. “He’s given you a gift so you can minister to your own generation.”

“But how do I—?”

“Paul told Timothy to take heed to himself and to the ministry. He was to give himself to reading and to exhortation. Then Paul ends up the passage by saying, ‘Take care of your own soul.’ If you don’t take care of your own soul, how are you going to take care of others? I relate to people what’s in me. I cannot relate what I don’t have.

“Some of the most wonderful truths I ever learned as a young Christian, I learned in old sod shacks way up in northern Canada from old homesteaders who knew the things of God. There

was a sweetness, an aroma about them that stirred in me a tremendous yearning. I saw the reality of life in Christ and my heart responded.

"If the truth is not living in my life, I can talk about it intellectually; but I'm not reaching the heart and the needs of God's people."

He pauses. "Neither can you, you know. We can't imitate the life of the Lord Jesus, but it can be reproduced in our lives by Spirit of God. But He doesn't reveal more truth to our life or to our heart until we walk in the light of the truth we already have.

"All of us believers, not just pastors, need the reality of the presence of Christ by His Spirit in our lives if we're to know the needs of God's people and be of service to them. We need to understand their tests, their heartaches, their disappointments, their sorrows, yes; but we need to know something of the compassion and tenderness of our Saviour. That's the important thing. Only then can we communicate the Word of God. And, of course, we need to pray."

"Pray?" you ask.

"It's no use my reveling in the fact that I am a child of One who is God if I do not seek to please Him and if I do not seek to come into His presence to spend time with Him.

"Oh, we must be men and women of prayer," he says fervently. "I believe that waiting on the Lord in prayer and having fellowship with Him is just as important as the study of the Word.

"The more I go into the Word of God, the more I feel the need of seeking His face to direct me by the Spirit of God in that Word.

"You can't divide Bible study from prayer.

"For example, I would not say I was going to study for four hours in my Bible from eight in the morning to twelve o'clock and after lunch spend two hours in prayer. It doesn't work out that way.

"Oftentimes, when you're studying, you'll spend an hour in the Word of God; and, for some reason, you're not getting anything. What do you do? You get down and talk to the Lord about it. You come back to the Word, and all of a sudden the whole thing opens up like a rose. But your mind's got to be full of the text.

“That’s why I come back to emphasize continual reading of the Word. And, as a person does this, he or she becomes God’s channel of truth to human hearts and minds.

“But we need time. The pastor needs time. His people need to insist that he take time to study and to pray. And they need to insist that he make time for them, too, as well as for his own family. I’m sure that when a pastor is in love with the Saviour, he’ll also be in love with his people and will feed them and shepherd them.

“And that goes for you, too, in your ministry to your neighborhood, you know. Just as you fall in love with the Saviour—oh, what it would mean to Him and what it would mean to you. God grant that our vision of Christ may be enlarged so that we will truly fall in love with Him.”

“Yes,” you whisper. You realize this is the word you came for.

“Every once in a while,” he says, “someone tells me I should have this experience or that experience or some other experience. As wonderful as those experiences may be, I have the Lord Jesus and you can’t add anything to Him. I have everything in Him. And, thank God, the day is coming when through eternity I’ll continually be experiencing what I have in Him.”

He pats your hand. “It’s a wonderful thing to come into the presence of God in eternal glory and be known.” His face lights up in a wistful smile. “He will know me and I will know Him. I shall see God and, oh! He’ll be no stranger.”

He clears his throat.

“I don’t know when God wants to call me Home. But I know He numbers my steps and He bottles my tears and my times are in His hands.”

It’s late.

You need to leave.

You look up at the pictures of those old saints—those great men of God—and you know it’s fitting that he should have these pictures on his wall. A man is known by the company he keeps.

You sense that you may not see him again for a long, long time. “Do you have a word just for

me?" you ask. So much of what you know of Christ and of His Word you've learned from this dear, loving, faithful man.

He puts his hand on yours again.

"Some years ago, a friend of mine was on his way to a mission field in southeast Asia. He had all his belongings on the ship and, just before departure, he called me to ask if I had a word to give him for China.

"Let me give you that same word today—for you and your 'mission field' wherever you go.

"I said to him, 'Sit at the feet of Jesus—and tell the people what you see.'"

You leave his office, your heart warmed and full. You've just sat at the feet of Jesus with one who is himself so very much at home there.

And, now, our Lord has him with Himself. He's finally Home after ninety-seven years. Finally Home, joyously sitting at the feet of his Lord Jesus, whom he loved with all his heart.

And he, who in modesty would so often brush aside our praise, has surely reveled in the supreme tribute he has received from our Lord: "Well done, My good and faithful servant!"

And we echo it—oh, we shout it aloud, "Well done, Dr. Mitchell.

"Well done!"

—Prof. Dick Bohrer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with John's Gospel, I want to thank Mrs. Irene Scruggs for her painstaking reading of proof. She has marvelous eyes and endless patience. She took the time despite an unusually heavy schedule.

I want to thank Karl Baker, former Overseas Missionary Fellowship missionary to Japan, for making sure each Bible reference was correct.

My nominee for "editor of the year" honors goes to Mrs. Bonnie Weiss, an alumna of Multnomah School of the Bible, who with deep perception and great sensitivity to nuance and Dr. Mitchell's intention, combed through the text, clari-

fyng his meaning where needed and underscoring his enthusiasm when it had seemed diminished. She balanced her concern that readers new to Dr. Mitchell would find his colloquialisms distracting with her need to preserve them for those of us who knew him well and find them charming.

—Prof. Dick Bohrer, M.Sc., M.A.

CHAPTER ONE

Martin Luther, the great reformer, called the book of Romans the chief book in the New Testament. Coleridge, the English writer, said, "It is the most profound work in existence." Melancthon, a contemporary of Luther, wrote it twice in longhand just for the joy, the blessing and the thrill of getting into it.

W. R. Newell, one of the outstanding teachers of the book of Romans in the past century, told me one day, "I have taught the book 80 times, and the pastures are still green."

Someone has well said, "To know the book of Romans makes one heresy proof."

It is the great foundational epistle, and all the other epistles are based on this book.

It may be that I'm conscious of this for the simple reason that, when I first went out preaching, I was asked the question, "Mitchell, don't you know there are other books in the Bible to read beside the Book of Romans?" (I had preached Romans all across the Canadian prairies.)

And people have told me, even though I haven't been back in more than 40 years, that they have found people all over the prairies who were established in the Gospel of God's grace; and they got it from a man called Mitchell, who doted on the book of Romans.

So, I'm going to dote a while on the Book of Romans if you don't mind my using the term.

Now it's folly to build a building without a foundation. This wonderful, amazing book of Romans is the foundational book. The epistles that follow Romans are all based on this book. Just what Isaiah, the great prophetic book, is to the

prophets of the Old Testament, the Book of Romans is to the New Testament.

The books of First and Second Corinthians guard the practice of Romans, and Galatians guards its doctrine. We get the revelation of the righteousness of God in Romans where the grace of God makes it possible for unrighteous people to be fitted to come into the presence of a righteous God. The practice of that sort of life is found in Corinthians.

Someone has said that Romans is "Christ, My Righteousness" and Corinthians is "Christ, My Sanctifier." Then, when you come to the book of Galatians, it is "Christ, My Liberator." Galatians guards the doctrine of justification set forth in Romans. These three books make one package.

When you come to Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, you have another package. Ephesians reveals the church, the Body of Christ. Philippians guards the practice of Ephesians—"for to me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). To have the mind of Christ operating in you, to know Christ, to do all things through Christ—this is to be the practice of the church and this is Philippians in four chapters.

Colossians guards the doctrine of Ephesians, especially the headship of Christ over the Body which is the Church. So Ephesians is "Christ, my Life;" Philippians is "Christ, my Joy;" and Colossians is "Christ, my Head."

Now, when you come to the books of Thessalonians, First Thessalonians is the coming of the Lord for His own. Each chapter of the book ends with the coming of the Lord. Second Thessalonians deals with the coming of the Lord to earth with His saints. He is going to come in judgment, as it says in the first chapter. He is going to come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God and who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, these are the Pauline letters to the churches. God gave Paul a two-fold revelation: in Romans, the revelation of the grace of God; and in Ephesians, the revelation of the Church, the body of Christ.

If you want to know something about the sweetness, the loveliness of Christ and the claims of Christ, then you'll go to **Matthew, Mark, Luke and John** where these four men report what they saw and heard. They were not fabricators. Each one wrote with a definite point in view.

Dr. Griffith Thomas has given the following outline:

Matthew wrote of the coming of a promised Saviour;

Mark wrote of the life of a powerful Saviour;

Luke wrote of the grace of a perfect Saviour; and

John wrote of the possession of a personal Saviour.

We need all four Gospels to give us a full picture of our Saviour as a Man in the midst of men.

The book of Acts deals with the ministry of the Spirit of God through the early Church. What the Lord Jesus began as He walked among men is continued by the Spirit of God in the Church as He gathers out "a people for His name."

In the epistles, we see Paul as the apostle who declares the meaning of faith in Christ Jesus; we see Peter, the apostle of hope; and we see John as the apostle of love.

Romans starts with man corrupt and fit for hell; and, in **Thessalonians**, man is translated and glorified. The epistles between Romans and Thessalonians reveal to us how God changes sinners and fits them for His presence.

In the epistles of **Timothy and Titus**, we have instructions to young preachers and young Christians concerning conduct in the house of God.

Philemon is a wonderful story of grace. **Hebrews** declares the superiority of the person and work of

Christ over the Old Testament priesthood and the sacrifices.

James informs us how the godly should walk. Both **1 and 2 Peter** relate the sufferings of the people of God and the opposition they meet. In 1 Peter the opposition is from the world. In 2 Peter it is from false teachers.

The epistles of John speak of the believers' fellowship with God. In the first epistle, we have fellowship with the One who is Light, who is Righteousness, who is Love. Second John tells who are to be excluded from the fellowship, and 3 John tells who are to be included in the fellowship. **Jude** is a book of the last days. In **Revelation**, we see Christ as Judge in the midst of the churches, in the midst of Israel and in the midst of the nations. We also see the final revelation of a new heaven and a new earth.

Having said that, I want to come right back to the book of Romans, the only book in the New Testament (in fact, I would say the only book in the Bible) that gives to us the Gospel of God in a systematic way.

Now I know that in the Book of John the Gospel is declared, but here in Romans it is systematically set forth.

Why was Romans written? Paul has the Jew with his laws and ceremonies in mind and also the Gentile who needs to be told that the Gospel is for him as well. In this book you see both Jewish unbelief and Gentile faith; for chapters 9 and 10 show that what the Jews missed by their works and ceremonies, the Gentiles received by faith.

Paul wanted to assure the Jewish people that this message was God's message for them as well as for the Gentiles. When the Apostle wrote this book, many Jewish people were opposed to him because his message was being believed by the Gentile world. He was writing to prove to them that the message he was giving the Gentiles was

also God's message for Jews and that they must receive it on the ground of faith, just like anyone else.

Likewise, he had the Gentiles in mind when he declared that this message which had so transformed their lives was also for the Jews. He wanted the Gentiles to take heed that, if God had set the Jew to one side because of his unbelief, He could also set the Gentiles to one side because of their unbelief.

That is the line of argument that goes along in the book. You have the Jewish people with all their laws, ceremonies, traditions and ordinances on one side and the Gentile people with their need of enlightenment regarding God's Gospel on the other.

The great theme of Romans is the righteousness of God displayed in the Gospel of His Son. God has made provision whereby every man, Jew or Gentile, can be brought into a place of relationship and acceptance before God. To me, it is a wonderful thing that irrespective of their background or tradition or experience, God has made provision whereby men and women can be fitted to come into His presence.

I was greatly amazed, when I visited the Orient, to see the transformed lives. On one hand, I saw a people in darkness, in despair, in fear, in bondage to paganism. And then I found wonderful men and women who have been absolutely transformed into the sons of God, proving that God has a message and has made provision whereby men of any age and under any circumstance—irrespective of background—can be transformed and fitted for His presence.

I wonder in these days if we haven't been far removed from the Gospel of God. When men and women, irrespective of what they are, can be absolutely transformed and can become the children of One who is God, when they can stand in the pres-

ence of their holy God absolutely righteous and can have a sanctified life through the Lord Jesus Christ, when they can manifest to their generation the character and beauty of the living God and themselves become bearers of the Good News to their generation, one wonders why we're not more diligent to spend our time and our money to support the spreading of that Gospel.

Now Romans is an amazing book! I want to take the time in studying it and preaching it and teaching it to bring to you the jewels and the pearls that are along the way—that we might refresh your heart and strengthen you and establish you in the Word of God. We want you to be especially helped, so that, as the Apostle Paul would say, “By our mutual faith we might be edified by the precious Word of God.”

Let's take just a moment to whet your appetite. In the first 17 verses of the first chapter, we have Paul introducing the truth of the righteousness of God. He is introducing the Gospel of God which was prophesied by the prophets and is now made manifest. He takes up the whole degenerate human race in chapters 1, 2 and 3.

In chapter 1 he specifically has the Gentiles in mind, showing how God gave them up to their sins. In fact, that's the history of the Gentile nations from Genesis 10 right through to the coming of our Lord.

Then in chapter 2 he has a little more difficult job. He has to prove that the moralist and the religionist—both Jew and Gentile—are just as unrighteous before God as those in the first chapter. He specifically takes up the fact that God is going to judge them according to truth.

Then, from chapter 2:17 to chapter 3:9, you have the Jew in his rebellion against God. Paul ends up with a verdict in 3:18-20 where every man's mouth is shut and the whole world is guilty before God.

Now, having shut man's mouth from glorying about his own goodness and self-righteousness, God turns around and opens His heart. Starting at chapter 3, verse 21, and running right down through chapter 5:11, we have the unfolding of God's heart toward men. Here are the great doctrines of justification, redemption and of what God has in the cross (theologically, called "propitiation"). We find in chapter 4, for example, that the Christian life is by faith. It is without works. It is without ceremonies, without law. It is faith in the God of resurrection.

And the question is raised at the beginning of chapter 5: Can we lose our faith?

Paul answers that the love of God will guarantee the faith of every believer. The provision for man's redemption is received on only one ground—the ground of faith. Not only does the Gospel give us forgiveness and redemption and fit us for the presence of God, but it gives us a new life. It brings us into a new relationship with God. It delivers us from death, from sin and from the law. It sanctifies us and will eventually glorify us.

In chapter 5 we are delivered from death. In chapter 6 we are delivered from sin as a master, as a principle of operation. In chapter 7 we are delivered from the law and its curse. The law can't make us righteous, no matter how we strive to keep it. We must turn from the law, which condemns, to a Saviour who redeems and sets us free. Then we come to that amazing eighth chapter, telling all the marvelous things we have in Christ. This is the crowning chapter of the book. Here we are glorified together with Christ.

I'm not surprised that the Apostle Paul says, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18). And then, at the end of chapter 8, the chapter that starts with "no condemnation" and ends with "no separa-

tion,” we have the glorious verse, “He who did not spare His own Son . . . how will He not also with Him freely give us all things” (Romans 8:32).

Chapters 9, 10 and 11 give us what is commonly known as dispensational truth. Here a question is raised: Is God righteous in His dealings with the people of Israel? In chapter 9 we find that God chose Israel for a distinct purpose—not because these people were better than anybody else, but because they could be the avenue through whom the Messiah would come. Their language would be the depository of the Word of God. They would relate to the nations of the earth the wonders of our Sovereign God. But they failed in that. So in chapter 10 we are shown that the Jews rejected both a personal salvation and a universal salvation for Jews and Gentiles.

When you come to chapter 11, another question is raised:

Is God through with Israel? No, He will still fulfill His promise to the nation. He still has a remnant that He is going to bring right through to where His purpose and His counsel will be fulfilled according to the prophetic word.

Then in chapters 12 through 16, we have the practical side of the book, dealing with practical righteousness as well as the question of responsibility. The moment you and I receive the Saviour, we have a responsibility. In chapter 12 we are responsible to God, we are responsible to our position in the Body of Christ and we are responsible with respect to enemies.

When we come to chapter 13, we find our position as Christians with respect to the government under which we live. We are to be in subjection to the powers that be. In the same chapter, starting with verse 11, we have our relationship to society.

In chapter 14, up to the first two or three verses of chapter 15, we have our relationship to weaker

brethren. Some Christians are still babes, and some are in trouble.

In chapter 15 we have an exhortation to God's people about their own relationship to the God of hope, the God of all grace, the God of peace.

And then in chapter 16 we have that great list of dear men and women whom he salutes at Rome. He ends up with a few final words.

Now I have given you a brief run-down of the whole book of Romans because I want to whet your appetite so you will read it. You can't read it too much. You can't study it too much or chew it too much. Sometimes I think about Ezekiel, who, when he got the Word of God, was told to eat it; and, when he swallowed it, it became life to him.

I know some of you have studied Romans before, but it will not hurt you one little bit to go over it again. After all, the book of Romans will make Christians heresy-proof. It is because of their lack of study and knowledge of Romans that so many Christians have been led astray. They have become shipwrecked in respect to their own hearts and lives before God. They have also become "double-minded" and "unstable" in all their ways, to quote the book of James.

I want to say very frankly that many of God's people (even in evangelical circles) are in absolute confusion regarding all the "isms" and the doctrines that are being tossed around today. But they have not been established in the book of Romans. They need the book of Romans. We all need the book of Romans.

You may say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I read the Bible; but I get nothing out of it."

The one thing Satan desires above all else is that we not spend time in the Bible. It is God's revelation to us and to men everywhere. So let us come to know our Bibles. Let us not be ignorant of the marvelous things God has done for us through the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Oh, my friend, as we begin this study, ask the Father to open your mind and heart to show you His beloved Son and to prompt you to truly fall in love with Him.

Paul wrote from the city of Corinth about the year 50 A.D. You remember, he was 18 months in Corinth. And, while he was there, he wrote to these Roman Christians whom he had never seen. He wrote to establish and to encourage them.

A broad general outline of the book would be:

I. DOCTRINAL, chapters 1-8

II. DISPENSATIONAL, chapters 9-11

III. PRACTICAL, chapters 12-16

Let us study, first of all, the doctrinal section of the Book of Romans in 1:1-8:39. We'll begin with Paul's introduction in the first 17 verses of chapter 1.

INTRODUCTION (1:1-17)

Paul, separated unto the Gospel of God (1:1)

1. Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.

This is the only verse in which Paul has anything to say about himself. The moment he mentions the Gospel of God, Paul is forgotten. (You know, it would be a wonderful thing if we who are ministering the Word of God could forget ourselves and exalt the Person of Christ and what He has done for us.)

When I begin to realize the tremendous work that Jesus Christ accomplished in order to bring you and me into a definite relationship with God, I want to say it just staggers my imagination.

Today, we have people who reject Jesus Christ as the Son of God. They reject Him as the Saviour. They say He is just a man, just a prophet, just a good teacher. But is it not an amazing thing that after 1900 years the human race has not produced another person like Him? With all our boasted

knowledge and scientific investigations and all our schools and philosophies and psychology, we have never yet produced a man like Jesus.

My friend, you must come to the one conclusion the Bible comes to: “No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained him” (John 1:18). “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). He is the only begotten of the Father.

As we read and study this book of Romans together, I want you to keep your eye on the Saviour just as this man Paul did. “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.”

Again, I repeat it, once he mentions the Gospel of God, Paul goes off the scene. He wants you to fall in love with God’s beloved Son. And may I say that that is exactly what I, too, would like you to do.

I want every one of us just to fall really in love with our Saviour.

Friend, do you know Him?

Are you established in the Good News concerning His Son? Will you please read and reread the book of Romans?

Now, realizing that the first 17 verses of chapter one are introductory, let’s continue reading it—and forgive me if I repeat the first few words:

**This Gospel is in accord with Old Testament
Scripture (1:1-2)**

1. Paul, a bondservant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,
2. which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures.

Here we have a three-fold statement about Paul himself regarding the relationship, the

character and the dignity of his work. “Paul, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ.” This is his relationship to the Saviour. He recognized he was bought from the markets of sin and set free. Paul, once purchased, is also surrendered to Jesus Christ as his Master. He has no will of his own, no mind of his own, no possessions of his own, no time of his own. Everything he has belongs to Christ. Nothing is kept back.

Now, that doesn't mean that I'm not going to use my will, my mind, my possessions or my time for myself. It means that Christ is the Master and I'm His bonds slave. And may I say, the measure we are thus before God is the measure of our usefulness to God.

I personally believe it is possible for a Christian to take that place voluntarily, to surrender himself to the Son of God as a bonds slave. And then I believe he grows in knowledge as he continually yields various areas of his life over to the Lord.

Paul writes in chapter 12:1, “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice.” That's an act, once for all, a giving of yourself to Him. And, after that, we progress in understanding and progress in experience and progress in knowledge.

There are some people, for example, who question your salvation unless you are wholly abandoned to the will of God. My friend, I disagree with that. Relationship is a matter of acceptance of Christ as Saviour. The matter of growth—the matter of giving areas of our life over to Him—comes according to our knowledge.

I have been a Christian for more than 70 years. I believe that, years ago, as far as I knew, I gave myself to the Lord. I would love to have called myself a bonds slave of Jesus Christ. But I want to say this, that, as we go along in the things of God, we learn more and more from the Scriptures of the desire God has for our lives.

Sometimes I ask God's people, "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is absolute in all authority?"

And they answer, "Why, of course He is."

But if we acknowledge that He is absolute in authority, then we must give Him absolute obedience. This is what Paul means when he says he is a bond-servant. It isn't everyone who is a bond-slave of Jesus Christ.

You say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I serve the Lord."

Yes, we all try to serve the Lord. But I'm going beyond that. I want to know what place He has in your heart and your life, your will and your mind and experience.

But there's a danger sometimes that we become so occupied with the things of Christ, our experience with Christ and our service for Christ that we miss being in blessed fellowship with Him—where He is the center of our life. In fact, I would say, just in so far as you give the Lord Jesus His rightful place in your heart, in your life and in your love, just inasmuch as you can be really a bonds slave of His.

Now, Paul was also called an apostle. In 1 Corinthians 9:1 he tells us, "Am I not an apostle? . . . have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" He defends his apostleship as given by a risen Christ. This is his office. Being a bonds slave is his relationship. He is called to a ministry. He is God's messenger.

You remember, our Lord said in John 17:18, "As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." What for? To be ambassadors. We have that in 2 Corinthians 5:20: "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were

entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

In 1 Corinthians 9:16-17, Paul said, “Woe is me, if I do not preach the gospel! . . . I have a stewardship (a responsibility of the gospel) entrusted to me.” This man was an apostle. He was called to be one of God’s messengers. He was called to a ministry.

And may I say, my Christian friends, whoever you may be, God has called you to a ministry. I didn’t say to be a preacher or even a so-called missionary or evangelist. But every one of us Christians has been called by God to communicate the precious good news of the Gospel to our generation by our lives, by our words. If we don’t, how are people going to hear?

And, by the way, if you are witnessing for the Saviour, be sure your life matches up to what you are saying. People watch a person who is a Christian to see how he is living. They’re not backward in going out of their way to try to make you fail God. I know that. The world sets traps for your feet so it can say, “You’re no better than the rest of us.” But that doesn’t change the situation. If you have really accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, you have a job right where you live to communicate the Word of God to somebody else.

Now, there’s one more thing in the verse. Paul is not only a bondsman and an apostle, but he was separated unto the Gospel of God. This was his duty; this was his position before God. He was separated to no other message—man had no part in it. You see, all the religions in the world want you to do something, to merit something. The Gospel of God is telling people not what you can do for God, but what God has done for you.

Now, it’s true we do things for God because we love Him. But Paul has only one great message: God has done something for man.

“But, Mr. Mitchell,” you say, “you are pretty narrow.”

That’s correct. I don’t object to being called that one little bit. Our Lord could say in Matthew 7:13-14, “The gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life.” What I’m talking about is that He has separated you and me unto the Gospel of God. It’s God’s Gospel. It’s God’s Good News, a message that can’t be improved on, a message that must not be distorted, a message that manifests to men the divine provision for their acceptance of the Living God. It’s high time we believers got this message across to this age.

We have no earthly right to minister or even to live if we digress from the message God has given to us in His Word. We’re separated unto the Gospel of God. Remember, God’s Gospel is God’s provision. It is God’s method. It’s not something that man has created. It’s not something that man has worked out or that he philosophizes about. Man hasn’t a thing to do with it.

My friend, you can have all the degrees that every university can put upon you, and you are not sufficient enough nor do you know enough to add one thing to God’s provision. I hope I have made myself clear.

Now, this Gospel of God is not something new.

This Gospel concerns One Who is both Man and God (1:3-4)

2. Which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy scriptures,
3. Concerning His Son. . . .

You remember, our Lord said to the Jews of His day in John 5:46, “If you believed Moses (had you believed the prophets), you would believe Me; for

he wrote of Me.” When He met the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:25, He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!”

See, friend, God has news for man. The law of God says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” and “The wages of sin is death.” Ephesians says we were dead in trespasses and sin, and we were children of wrath like the rest. But God has good news for man in his sin, in his shame, under the judgment and wrath of God.

So how is He going to get the good news to the people who need it? He’s not going to send an angel. He sends you. He sends me.

“But, Mr. Mitchell,” you say, “I can’t talk.”

My friend, your very life will be a revelation of what God has done for you and through you.

You say, “Well, I’m one of the most retiring people in the world.”

But even you, my friend, if you love the Saviour, can’t live unto yourself and you can’t die unto yourself. Oh, listen. Just you fall in love with the Saviour and in some way, as we study this book of Romans, let it get hold of your heart.

Oh, the marvel of it! The wonder of it—that you and I can stand in the presence of God because of the provision He has made for us through Jesus Christ.

But may I add this further word?

You do not know a truth until you are able to give it to somebody else. You may experience it; you may rejoice in it. But you do not fully know it unless you can give it to somebody else.

I am very well aware of the fact that many of you can say, “Why, Mr. Mitchell, I have known these truths all my life.”

Yes, but in many cases, you are dried up to the truth because of lack of usage. When you don’t dwell in it, it dries up in your soul. That’s a princi-

ple all through the Bible. If we do not use the truth God gives us, we lose it.

I pray that these chapters in this book will be for you times of reveling in the message—the good news from God.

Now, the second verse says this Gospel of God is in accord with Old Testament scripture. In fact, the Old Testament is the documentary defense of the Gospel. Take, for example, this book of Romans in which we have the Gospel of God systematically set forth.

There are approximately 60 references in this epistle to the Old Testament. The prophets were authoritative and authentic. They wrote as they were moved upon by the Holy Spirit because, if God is going to give us a revelation of Himself you can trust, He will make that revelation clear and real and worth our accepting it. And He will protect His revelation down through the centuries so that today you and I may have the revelation of God, His purpose, His counsel, His Person and His Gospel.

John 1:14 says, “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth.” Hebrews 2:16 says that the Lord did not give help to angels; but He gives help to the seed of Abraham, the children of faith. So, I say, in the second verse, this Gospel is not contrary to Old Testament scripture but is in full accord with it.

And then, will you mark verses 3 and 4? The Gospel is not concerning some religious organization. It concerns a person who is both Man and God. It centers around Jesus Christ.

Let us read these two verses.

The Gospel of God is:

3. Concerning His Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,

4. Who was declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mankind was so thrilled, so full of awe when we put men on the moon, a dead planet. We brought them back to earth so they could tell us what was on the moon. They brought back rock because they found nothing alive there.

In contrast, nearly 2000 years ago, heaven sent a Man to the earth, a heavenly Man. He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. He was a real man in the midst of men. Rather strange, is it not, that the first passage in the New Testament has the genealogy of one who is the son of David; and again in the last chapter (Revelation 22:16) He is mentioned again as the Son of David and the bright and morning star. He is a real Man who came among men.

What did that heavenly Man find here? He found the human race dead in trespasses and sin, a race under the bondage of sin, death and hell. He took His place in the human family. And that human family took Him and killed Him. And heaven took Him back. But when He went back to heaven, He went back as our Prince and our Saviour. A real Man is there in heaven, a Man who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, a Man who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Can I change the wording of that verse? "He was marked out from everyone else as God's Son by the resurrection from the dead." The resurrection is the proof of the fact that this Jesus is God's Son. You see, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is taught from the resurrection side.

How do we know that Jesus Christ is real? How do we know that He put away our sins? How do we know He is the Saviour? How do we know

He was the Son of God? We know because God raised Him from the dead. That's a personal proof to you that this Jesus, born in David's line, is God's Son.

I am very, very anxious to get this one amazing fact across because it is the key to the whole book. The Gospel of God concerns His Son Jesus Christ who belonged to man and who belonged to God. He was in two realms. He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. He is a real man who came among men, and He is a real man now in heaven at the right hand of God.

The second thing about Him is that He is from Heaven; He is the Son of God. He always was the Son of God, and He became a man. His resurrection is contrary to human experience. That's true.

That's true. I have had the privilege of conducting funeral services for hundreds and hundreds of people, but not one has been raised from the dead.

When the Lord healed the man by the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day, the Jews were very angry; and they accused Him of breaking the Sabbath.

Our Lord's answer in John 5:17-21 was, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." Then "for this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

But instead of telling them, "You have made a mistake, jumping to that conclusion," He said, "Yes, you are perfectly right. I am making Myself equal with God. For as the Father hath power to raise the dead and make them alive, that's just what I do." What was He claiming? To be God.

God the Son came into the world for a purpose—to make it clear to you that He is the Saviour of men. Your sins, my sins put Him on the cross and in the tomb. But God raised Him

from the dead and gave Him glory so that your faith and your hope might be in God.

Do you see, my friend?

This Gospel of God is not only authenticated by the Old Testament, but it declares that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God with power. He is really God manifested in the flesh, manifested further by resurrection.

The next verses say:

This Gospel is universal (1:5-6)

5. Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake,

6. Among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.

Paul is saying, "I received my apostleship from a risen Christ." You remember, Peter and James and John and the other disciples walked with Him for three-and-a-half years. He called them, and they followed Him. They saw His miracles; they heard His words. But Paul couldn't say that. So he said, "I received my commission from a risen Christ." He met the Lord Jesus after the resurrection on the road to Damascus.

"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

He said, "Who art Thou, Lord?"

"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:4-5).

Notice the words: "I am Jesus"—Jesus of Nazareth, the Man who was crucified, the Man raised from the dead.

My friend, this is the most fundamental thing about our Christian faith. "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless" says 1 Corinthians 15:17; "you are still in your sins." In fact, I would say boldly, justification and sanctification are guaranteed by the resurrection.

This Gospel of God, this good news of how to receive eternal life, is from a risen Christ.

And it is for everybody (v. 5). It is for obedience to the faith among all nations. It is universal in its appeal. It doesn't matter what color you are, what language you speak, what your background is, where you were born or anything about you. This Gospel of God is good news received on only one ground—the ground of faith.

Man has no part in it. All the religions of the world want you to do something to merit faith. But God did the whole business and offers us a salvation free without works on that one ground—it is received for the obedience of faith. When we put our trust in the One whom the Gospel declares, my friend, we pass from death to life. The salvation He purchased is ours the moment we put our trust in Him.

You know, I am just thrilled with this—that you and I can be just as separated unto the Gospel of God, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Apostle Paul or anyone else down through the centuries. Oh, to just so fall in love with Him that we have our minds simply saturated with the truth of it.

You and I not only have our sins forgiven, but we have been joined to a risen, glorified Saviour. This is the guarantee of life, the guarantee of redemption. This is the guarantee of our hope, the guarantee of eternity. Our very position, our standing before God, is guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

You know, just the other day I laid to rest a dear lady 88 years of age. She had left behind some little things that were written in her Bible. And it just thrilled my heart. She had a little poem that spoke of being carried to the other side and finding it “home.” You know, that’s wonderful, isn’t it?

Didn't the Lord Jesus say in John, “I’m going home.” And when Peter said (John 13:36), “Lord,

where are you going?" He said, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now." In other words, "I'm going home. I'm going to My Father's house," home—where we are loved for ourselves and not for what we do. When we get on the other side, we are going to find it Home. Instead of breathing this air today, we are going to breathe celestial air. Oh, it's just a step across the border and the first hand we touch will be our Lord's hand. The first one we see will be our Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who redeemed us.

Friend, do you have a Home to which to go?

This is why the Gospel was given. It is for the obedience of faith. It is for you.

And then in verse 6, Paul says that they (the Roman believers) were called of God even as he was called. He belonged to Christ, and so did they. He had been called by a risen Lord, and so had they. And so have you.

The very fact that we have received Jesus Christ as our Saviour makes it our job to communicate to the world the work He has accomplished for us.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 2:1-2), "When I came to you . . . I determined to know nothing among you, except Jesus Christ (that's His Person), and Him crucified."

And he goes on to say that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. You see, the Gospel is a different message from any other message in the world. It brings life, satisfaction, peace, forgiveness, and hope. Think about that. It brings a person into real relationship with the eternal God. Paul's heart pants that everyone in the whole world will have the privilege of hearing this good news from God, that anybody in any nation—under any circumstance, whatever it may be—will have the right to hear and to receive this message and become a member of the family of God.

I believe the church of Christ has failed in this matter down through the centuries. We

have never received this passion, this great yearning of the Apostle's heart, that our message be truly universal. We send a few out here and a few out there.

We pay a few dimes and a few dollars to send messengers out to the different parts of the world. But, oh, how miserably the church has failed in reaching the world with the Word of God. Do you realize, my friends, that paganism in the earth is increasing at a far greater rate than the Gospel of Christ?

We have been authorized by the Living God to bring the message of His Son as the only Saviour to every man and woman, boy and girl under the shining sun.

More than 2 billion people in the world today, for the most part, have never heard God's message. My, how this ought to come with conviction to your heart and to my heart.

How we need, if we believe the coming of the Lord is near, if we believe this is the Word of God, how we need to rise up with the dignity and the character and the honor that God has bestowed upon us and give His message concerning His Son to the nations.

Then the Apostle goes on to speak of his great desire, found in verses 7 to 17.

First of all, let me take up his prayer of thanksgiving, beginning with verse 7.

PAUL'S GREAT DESIRE (1:7-17) **Paul's Salutation (1:7)**

7. To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We do not know who took the Gospel to Rome. Perhaps saints, scattered abroad after the

stoning of Stephen, went to Rome. And the moment they came, they began to witness. Paul had heard of a number of believers there who loved the Saviour, and he really wanted to see them. So he writes "to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints."

You know, I just kind of love this little statement. God loves to call His people His "beloved."

"You mean, even the weak Christians?"

Yes, even the weak Christians.

"The babes in Christ?"

Yes.

"Old-time Christians?"

Yes. It's not limited.

Everyone who professes the name of the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the beloved of God. You become the definite object of the love and devotion of the living God Himself.

My friend, isn't this wonderful that God can pick up the children of wrath, men and women who have been rebels against His law and order, people who have sinned against Him, and can redeem them and put His arms around them and call them His beloved?

This is grace, absolute grace.

Christian friend, why don't you revel in that today? As you go to work, as you work around the house, take care of the children, drive the car, whatever you do, remember that you are the beloved of God.

My, it's marvelous that God loves to call us His beloved ones. Do you men look upon your wives as your beloved ones? Isn't there something different there? You don't call me your beloved. You ladies wouldn't call me your beloved. And don't you try it either. You would embarrass me to death. You wouldn't think of doing that. There is no bond there. The special one in our lives is marked out as our beloved, and we manifest that love by living for them.

God says, "You are My beloved ones. You are the object, the special ones in my heart."

And He not only calls you His beloved, but we are saints. Having been redeemed from sin, pronounced righteous by God and set apart for His fellowship, we are called saints, holy ones.

Now, some churches make people saints after they are dead; but the Bible doesn't do that. Paul is writing to living people in Rome and calling them saints. He has never seen them. He doesn't know much about them, but he knows they love the Saviour. So he writes this book to establish them in the Gospel, to let them know what God has done for them; and, in so doing, of course, he lets us know, too. He spends more time on this theme in chapters 12 through 16 where we are to walk like saints.

There is a difference between being a saint and being saintly. We are saints by calling.

For example, my name is Mitchell. I was raised in an Irish settlement where there was a lot of fighting going on, and I was one with the rest of the kids. We fought quite a bit. We kind of liked to fight. But my mother would send us out sometimes and say, "Now, remember what you are. I expect you to live and to walk and act like a Mitchell."

Every member of the family of God is a saint. But He wants us to walk saintly.

As a young believer working in the machine shops, I was talking to one of the die makers in our little shop about the testimony I had in Christ. I tried to speak to him the best I knew how, how God can come into our lives and transform us.

And when I got through, he said to me, "Now, listen to me, Jack Mitchell. No use giving that to me. I couldn't do that in this shop. Why, a saint couldn't work in this shop."

"Oh?" I said. "There are some saints in this shop."

"I'd like to see just one."

"Well, there's one talking to you now."

You ought to have seen his face and heard the explosion that followed.

"You, a saint?"

Now, it's true that just a few weeks before that, just a few weeks, at the outside just two or three months, I had been swearing and cussing along with the rest of them in the shop.

A saint in the shop? Yes.

And then he added this, "And are you going to be like that fellow outside, that Barney? Are you going to be like him?"

Barney was a toolsman who tempered the dies. He went to church in the morning with a Bible under his arm, but he had one of the filthiest tongues I have ever heard in my life. He had absolutely no testimony among the men.

"Are you going to be like him?"

And I said, "I trust not. I know one thing—that I have received some good news from God and I know that Jesus Christ is my Saviour and I know He calls me a saint."

We are not saints by what we do. We are saints because He has called us into the relationship. We are the beloved of God; we are His holy ones. Now, He says, "Walk like saints." Every believer is called a saint, let me repeat; but not all

believers are saintly. One is a position before God; the other is a walk before men.

No wonder 1 Peter 1:16 says, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.” You have the same thing in Galatians 5:16—that we should “walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” Now all believers, from one viewpoint, are in the Spirit; but all do not walk by means of the Spirit. That’s why Paul says, “If by the Spirit you live, then by the Spirit walk.” The same principal is here in verse 7.

Then Paul uses a common salutation, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” This is a precious message Paul includes in all his epistles. Peace is the result of grace. Because God has made the provision, we can enjoy peace.

Now, let’s look at the next two or three verses.

Paul’s prayer (1:8-10)

8. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

Is your faith known in your neighborhood? in your suburb? throughout your city? Is it known throughout the world? Is your church known for its faith toward God? for its love for the Lord Jesus and for the saints? Paul thanks God through Jesus Christ because their faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. This was also true in the Thessalonian church.

Paul said, “I don’t need to speak for you. Everybody knows how you walk before God.” My, what a wonderful thing—to have your faith known far and wide.

9. For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you.

Paul not only talks about his thanksgiving for them, but he speaks of his unceasing prayer for them. My, how diligent this man was in his prayer life. And he calls God to be his witness that what he is saying is the truth. In fact, he does this quite often. In Galatians 1:20, he writes: "Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying." In 1 Thessalonians 2:5, he says, "For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness." In 2 Corinthians 1:23, he puts it: "But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth." In Philippians 1:8, he writes, "For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ."

Then in Romans 9:1-2, he writes, "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart." He is calling God to be his witness that what he is saying is the truth, his point here being to impress them that he really is praying for them.

"I have unceasing prayer, unceasing pain for you folk," he says.

I wonder, my Christian friend, could you call God to be a witness that without ceasing you make mention of others always in your prayer? My, what a heart for God's people this man had! He speaks in Ephesians 6:18 of praying "at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints." He was praying continually. He had upon his heart every Christian he knew and even Christians he had never seen. He had just heard of them.

Sometimes in your church you might hear

someone mentioned as in need of prayer—someone in Africa, China, South America, some Indian village—and you pray, maybe once or twice. But this man prayed constantly for God’s people, especially when he saw they were not walking orderly. Now, he didn’t run to the telephone (of course, they had no telephones in that day) to tell people about the failures of others. God keep us from doing that. May we rather get down and pray for them, really pray, as Paul did. Oh, this man! How he loved the people of God!

Do you know why? Because they were the beloved of God. We, too, are the beloved of God. And if God loves us in spite of our failures, then certainly we Christians ought to love each other in spite of our failures. Instead of being hypercritical, may we love. Even though we may disagree on doctrine, we ought to love each other. And if you are going to stand for the faith, brother, do it in love. Do it in love. And God grant that you and I might be much in prayer for other believers.

10. Always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

May I just say here that verses 10 to 13 follow the Book of Acts, chapters 19 and 20, and take us right on through to Romans 15:24-29, showing how this man yearned that God’s people might be built up in the faith. His great desire was to go to Rome.

But, notice, he first of all prays for a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto them. He did not act until he knew God’s will, which at this point he did not know. We may yearn for something, and God may put it upon our hearts; but circumstances hold us back from the fulfillment of that desire.

But if you wait before God and go on day by day, He will open the door in His own time as He did with Paul.

The Apostle waited, praying for God's will; and, when God did finally allow him to go, it was a prosperous journey.

God used him even through the peril (Acts 27). He was shipwrecked en route; and that gave him the opportunity to reveal the wonderful grace of God, not only to the sailors and the soldiers but also to the islanders where he was wrecked.

Paul's longing (1:11-12)

11. For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

12. That is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

Here, again, he is yearning to establish them in the Gospel.

He wants them to know all about the good news from God. But one is only established through the Word of God, not experiences. Paul says it again in chapter 16:25, "Now to Him who is able to establish you, according to my gospel."

Here in chapter 1 he is saying, "When I come to you, I want to impart to you some spiritual gift. I want you to be established, and I want to be comforted by our mutual faith."

It is the revelation of God given to us in His Word that causes us to be established in the faith. But, as we share together what we do know about Christ, what we do know about the Word of God, as we impart to one another what Paul calls "some spiritual gift," we not only edify one another, but we comfort each other.

You know, this is so true today. As we share together the things of Christ, we are comforted with

each other's testimony and are edified as we add to each other's knowledge of Him.

This is one of the greatest needs today among God's people—to share with each other the blessed Saviour whom we love, irrespective of organization and irrespective of what tag we may have.

If you love the Saviour, you share together the things of Christ for fellowship, for comfort and for edification. We comfort one another through our mutual faith—in the home, around the dinner table, in the car, on the street.

Paul's obligation (1:13-14)

13. And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented thus far) in order that I might obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

Not only did he want to comfort the believers and edify them, but he wanted to reach some of the unsaved in Rome. How this man's heart yearned to make Christ known to believers and unbelievers, to comfort and edify the one and to bring the other to the knowledge of Christ.

Now we come to Paul's responsibility, to Paul's obligation.

14. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

He is saying, "I owe the Gospel to everyone, everywhere."

Sadly, the church of Jesus Christ has failed to reach each generation with the Word of God. We can't reach the past generation. We can't reach the future generation; but we are responsible to reach our generation—everyone we can find—with God's message. We owe the Gospel to the campuses of our universities. We owe the Gospel to the men on the streets. We owe the Gospel to our neighbor-

hood. God has put us where we live to reach people with the Word of God by our life as well as by our testimony.

It's a wonderful thing to sit down beside somebody and tell him the Word of God the first time he's ever heard. And it's more wonderful if he receives the Saviour. I love that.

But when you meet people who oppose you over and over and over and over again, the danger is that you want to go after somebody else. No, you live before them.

Remember, Christ died for them, too.

Remember, everyone to whom you witness is a prospective child of God, a prospective saint. God still yearns that men and women receive His Son.

Paul says, "I am obligated. I'm a debtor."

He says in 1 Corinthians 9:16, "Woe is me, if I do not preach the gospel!" Preach to whom? Anybody and everybody where they are. I say again, sadly, how we have failed in this matter.

You know, if we did what we expect our missionaries to do on the mission field, we would evangelize our country in a brief period of time. We expect missionaries to go out representing the Saviour, winning people to Christ, building up the saints of God, keeping everlastingly at it.

How much do you do at home, in your neighborhood, in your family?

Oh, how we have failed!

How the church has failed!

Instead of our country's being drawn closer and closer to God, it has gone in the opposite direction. Instead of our lives being spiritual, they have become secular. Instead of having a passion for God and for men, we have a passion for material things. God has committed to us—to you and to me—a responsibility. Verse 14 says we have an obligation.

You say, “Well, Mr. Mitchell, I don’t have time for other people. I’m a busy man. I’m a busy woman.”

I’m not asking you to preach to everybody. I’m asking you to live Christ, to live like one who belongs to the Saviour, to act and speak with your neighbors as with people you love.

God can put in your heart and in my heart His divine love. You have it in Romans 5:5, “The love of God has been poured out within our hearts.”

Try to love them. The first thing you know, you will be loving them and barriers will be broken down.

Believe me, I’m preaching to myself. I’m not talking only to you.

Paul’s yieldedness (1:15)

15. Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

There is an inference here that Paul is answering his critics who don’t think he is qualified to go to Rome. It’s all right for him to go to out-of-the-way places to preach the Gospel or to colonies like Philippi or Ephesus or Corinth; but to come to the great metropolis of Rome where the sinners are, where Caesar is—and the heart and pulse of the empire—why

Paul says, “That’s where I want to be, right in the very center of the empire. I’m not ashamed of the Gospel. I want to bring it to you. I want fruit among you even as among other Gentiles.” You can just see the passion of this man’s heart.

May God give you and me some of that same passion, that yearning to come to God’s people, to love them and then to pray for them, to build them up in the faith and comfort them, to encourage them and edify them so they can go out to teach and witness to others.

Notice the three “I am’s” in these verses. In verse 14, he says, “I am under obligation;” and that is my stewardship—I am responsible. In verse 15, he says, “I am eager” to discharge my obligation. And then in verse 16, he says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel;” that’s my message.

God doesn’t ask you to do what you can’t do. He doesn’t ask you to give what you don’t have. He just asks you to do your part. Paul is the master of God’s purpose, but he’s not the master of his own circumstances.

He says, “I can’t control my circumstances. I want to come to Rome. The Lord willing, I want a prosperous journey to come to you. I want to come to the great metropolis. I want some fruitage there. Everything that is in me is ready.”

Are you and I ready?

You know, when I think of this, I think of that little story in John chapter 6 where it says 5,000 people were hungry in the wilderness. A lad was there with five loaves and two fishes. That was all the Lord needed. And the startling thing to me was that the boy gave up his lunch. Believe me, that’s a miracle—for a boy to give up his lunch when he is hungry!

The Lord took that lad’s lunch—just what the boy gave Him—and He fed the whole 5,000.

God said to Moses in Exodus 4:2, “What is that in your hand?” He had a dried up old stick, a rod. That was enough for God.

What do you have in your hand? What is your part?

You know, too many of us rationalize our unbelief and our disobedience. We alibi that we’re too busy.

“Oh, Lord, I’ve got so much to do. I have so little time. I’m frantic. I have no time for myself.”

Yes?

“The only time I can go out is on Sunday.”

Yes?

“I have no time for reading. I haven’t even time to read the Bible.”

Oh?

But you can read the newspapers and your magazines. You can do just what you want to do. Are you going to be able to say with Paul, “Thus, for my part, I am eager?”

His obligation is, “I’m a debtor.” His yieldedness is, “I’m ready to do all I can do to discharge my debt.” God doesn’t ask you to do anything that can’t be done by you.

“Well, if I only had so-and-so’s gift—what I wouldn’t do for God.”

Oh?

“Well, if so-and-so was only saved. What a power for God he would be. But I could never reach him!”

Oh?

All God asks of you is that you do your part.

Are you ready to meet your obligation of giving the good news from God to somebody else, someone you know, someone you love, someone with whom you—especially you—are in contact?

Are you and I yielded to God enough so that He can find us usable to reach men everywhere and to be able to say, “For my part, I am ready”?

Remember that God doesn’t look for the great ones to do His work. He’s looking for bondslaves.

He could say to Moses, “What have you got in your hand?” He could say to the disciples, “What have you got to feed these people?”

Someone has well said, “God can take a worm and thresh a mountain”; and He can take us as we are. You know, I’m full of amazement at the kind of people God picks up and uses.

I know many hundreds who are ministering the Word of God in every part of the world. He takes the most unlikely ones and uses them. His servants don’t have to be brilliant orators.

God’s good news is received by faith, not illu-

mined to minds through brilliance.

The Spirit of God indwells you. You have the Son of God in whom the Father has hidden all His treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

All He wants is you. He'll do the rest. He can take a Gideon and thrash Midian. He can take a boy with five loaves and feed a crowd. He can take the rod of Moses and bring water from a rock and split the Red Sea.

What have you got in your hand? Are you going to say with Paul, "Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also"?

Paul's message (1:16)

16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

He says he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Why? Because it is the power of God unto deliverance. Someone has called it the "dynamite of God" unto deliverance for everyone who believes, whether Jew or Gentile, because it reveals the righteousness of God.

I want to say, my friends, there is more power manifested by God in the Gospel, the good news concerning His Son, than there was in the creation of the universe. In Hebrews 11, we read that "the worlds were prepared by the Word of God (the Word of His power)."

In Genesis 1, over and over it reads, "God said. . . God said. . . God said." God speaks from the heavens. Now where is God displaying His power today? In creation? No, though we do see His powers there. The greatest place where God today reveals His power, the great power dynamite of God, is in the simple presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the only message that meets the

need of the human heart. Christ died, He was buried, He was raised again.

I cannot for the life of me understand how church leaders can bring to unsaved people anything but the message of the Gospel of Christ. Let me say very bluntly and very frankly, I am opposed to any insidious ways of trying to reach hearts through psychology, through sad stories, through eloquent language that leaves out the message of the Gospel of Christ. There is only one message that is the power of God to deliverance!

Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." Let me change the wording. "I am proud of the gospel." I am proud of it because it does its job. It takes sinners and rebels and transforms them into saints. It can take the vilest of the vile and cleanse them from sin, forgive every trespass and transform them into the children of God.

That's why Paul wrote in his first epistle to the Corinthians, "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (2:1-5).

This message that reveals the grace of God will also manifest the guilt of man. "I am not ashamed," says Paul of a message that's full of divine power, that can deliver and transform if men will but put their trust in Him.

Notice what he says. This good news from God "is the power of God for salvation." We have it again in 1 Corinthians 1:22 where Paul says, "The Jews ask for signs, and the Greeks search for wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a

stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness; but to those who are the called . . . Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

How can a man stand before God? He can't stand by being a moralist. He can't stand by being a religionist. There is only one way, and the Gospel is the answer. The Man of Sorrows of the New Testament has answered the question of the man of sorrows of the Old Testament: “How can a man be just with God?” We come to the answer in Romans 3 where we find that God is just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? There is no place for it. We conclude that a man is justified by faith without works.

And Job, the Old Testament man of sorrows, had a second question, “If a man die, shall he live again?”

During my many years as a pastor, I have had the privilege and the honor of laying to rest hundreds of God's people; and I have taken hundreds of children in my arms and dedicated them to God. I have married them and buried them. And the cycle goes on. Am I performing just a social service? Never. Man shall live again. The Gospel of God is the only message that guarantees deliverance, that rescues (and that's what the word “salvation” means) us from sin, that rescues us from death and its authority and power and causes us to live forever.

There isn't any such message except the Gospel of God.

Paul was not ashamed of it. Do you know why? He had experienced its saving power and its transforming power. He was so in love with the Saviour that he was ready to go even to Rome with this wonderful message of the Lord Jesus, the message that reveals God's grace and man's guilt.

“I am not ashamed of divine power which can deliver and transform men and women who are

children of wrath into the children of God.” This is the message.

And let me give you some reasons why Paul was not ashamed.

1. The Gospel is the power of God unto deliverance, unto salvation, to everyone that believes.

2. It is a positive message, not one written for philosophers or the high and mighty.

3. It was written for sinners—just for sinners. It is in the Gospel that God portrays His power. What for? It was to rescue you and me—anyone—from the bondage and penalty and guilt of sin, from the fear of death, from the powers of hell and to fit us for His presence.

Paul was not ashamed of this message, but I find some Christians who are. They are afraid of letting people know they are Christians. Maybe, sometimes, it’s a good thing they don’t speak up. Maybe their lives don’t measure up to what they claim.

Christ came to put away your sin and my sin. He died your death and my death. Why? That He might set us free. He who knew no sin became the Sin-bearer that you and I might stand before God without sin.

4. It is the only message on earth that guarantees eternal forgiveness.

5. It is the only message on earth that guarantees eternal life.

6. It is the only eternal gift with no strings attached.

7. It is received on only one ground—the ground of faith.

8. It has only one requirement—our trust. We are saved by faith alone.

This is what the early reformers died for. Many people were martyred for just this one thing. Ecclesiastical leaders said, “You’ve got to do more than just believe on Jesus Christ and be saved, more than just have the blood of Christ cleanse

you from all sin." But this is what Martin Luther stood for. This is what Zwingli stood for. It is salvation by faith alone.

This is not assenting to the facts with your mind and leaving out your will. That's not real New Testament believing.

I've met many people who tell me when I present the Gospel, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, I've believed that all my life."

Well, you may have; that is, you believed the historical facts. But accepting historical facts does not make you a Christian. To believe in the Saviour involves your will.

Could I say something I've said before?

Three things are involved with believing in the Lord Jesus Christ—your mind, your will and your emotions. It takes all three. Some people have what we call "a soulish experience." At some point, somebody preached, maybe told some stories and worked on their emotions. That doesn't make a person a Christian. Salvation involves your mind and will, not just your emotions. Some people have their minds open and may say, "Why, I believe that." With their mind they see the truth, but that doesn't make them a Christian.

With my mind I see the fact that Christ died for me. The Gospel is given to us in words. God speaks to us in words. So He tells us that Jesus Christ died for sinners, died for me. Then He asks me what I will do with the One of whom the facts speak.

I say, "Lord Jesus, of my own volition I accept You as my own personal Saviour. I am putting my trust in You." Now my will is involved; and, when my will is involved, then I accept the definite proposition. With my mind I see the truth; but with my will I accept the truth, and I am brought into a relationship.

Then, often, one's emotions become involved. Some people cry. Some are very happy. No

two of us have the same experience. We don't have the same personalities. Some people cry very easily. Some hardly ever cry. Some people keep their emotions under control. Others don't.

So, if you are saved and you have had a certain experience, don't demand that the other person have the same experience.

What I want to know about people who say they have received the Lord is, have they taken the Lord Jesus Christ as a definite proposition in their lives? Have they repented of their sins and come into a right relationship with the Saviour? Everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus experiences the power that saves. A rest and peace come to his heart.

Now, it is an amazing thing to me how many people spurn the good news. They don't want it. So then there is nothing left except judgment and death. If I spurn the divine provision for my eternal welfare, what is there left but judgment?

And notice that this Gospel is for everybody. It is "to the Jew" in the first 12 chapters of the Book of Acts "and also to the Gentile." And then, starting in chapter 13, the Christians go out to the Gentiles. I believe at the present time that God is pleading with everyone, Jew and Gentile. There is no difference. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Now, this leads me to the 17th verse, the theme and the key verse of the epistle.

The key verse (1:17)

17. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Here the Gospel is not just a revelation of the power of God to salvation, nor is it a revelation primarily of the love of God. It is also a revelation

of the righteousness of God. Now, I'm not denying the fact that the love of God is involved.

You take the first Epistle of John, for example, where you have the revelation of God to us, His children. In the first chapter, verse 5, you have the revelation that God is light. God is holy. In chapter 2, verse 29, and also in chapter 3, verse 7, God is righteous. Everything He does is absolutely righteous. And then in chapter 4, verses 8 and 16, you have the revelation that God is love. He demonstrates that love in sacrifice.

But, you see, the Gospel really is a revelation of the righteousness of God. This is the great theme of Romans; and seven times in this epistle he talks about the righteousness of God—a righteousness that is bestowed on sinners who believe, giving them a righteousness that avails with God.

Now, remember, there is just one righteousness in God's universe and that's His own. Man doesn't have any. Isaiah 64:6 informs us that our righteousnesses are in God's sight like a filthy garment.

You see, friend, for you and me to stand accepted in the presence of God, we must not only have our sin question settled and have eternal life, but we must have His righteousness—a righteousness that equals the righteousness of God.

John Bunyan said, "Our righteousness is at the right hand of God where our good works can't help and our failures can't hurt."

That righteousness is put to the account of every believer. Christ is our righteousness, and the Gospel reveals the righteousness of God.

You see, today, men have so minimized the character of God that sin is no more sin. I'm living in a permissive society. So are you. Things we would have frowned on 25 years ago are just taken for granted today.

You say, well, 25 years ago the same sins were in society, but we kind of kept them under cover. Now, that may be true; but why would we keep

them under cover? Because we had some estimate of the righteousness of God.

But, today, we have lost that concept. The very essence of God's character is His holiness, His absolute righteousness. But having turned our backs on that, having ignored the character of God, we have become permissive and sin is no longer sin. The more we see the character of God, the more we see how awful sin is and, by the way, the more we appreciate His grace.

I am continually amazed at the boldness and the arrogance of even so-called religious leaders who want our government to legalize the filthy sins, the very sins that brought the flood upon the world in Genesis, chapters 7 and 8, and the fire of God upon Sodom and Gomorrah in chapter 19. These are the very sins that caused Israel to go into the Babylonian captivity and that caused God to judge Israel in 70 A.D.

I am going to say very bluntly, the less you and I see the righteousness of God, the more we will look upon sin as being nothing.

I tell you, anybody who preaches permissiveness in the case of morals today doesn't know much about the Saviour or anything at all about the very righteousness of God.

I've had men say to me, when I've presented the good news concerning Jesus Christ to them, "Well, Mitchell, I'll take my chance with God."

Will you? I'll tell you frankly, if that is the case, you are going to end in eternal night, eternal death, absolute separation from God and, as Jude 1:13 says, "the black darkness" that "has been reserved forever."

Listen, in Isaiah 6:5, Isaiah saw the Lord and he cried out, "Woe is me! . . . I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King."

Take this dear man Job. He cried out (Job 42:5-6), "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear:

but now my eye sees Thee. Therefore I retract. I repent in dust and ashes." The King James Version says, "Therefore I abhor myself." He didn't say, "I abhor some of the things I am doing." He said, "I abhor myself." How did he get that way? He saw the Lord. God is righteous.

You take dear old Peter in Luke 5. When the Lord said to him, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch," Peter said, "We fished all night and we caught nothing. And the nets are still dirty. It's the wrong time to fish. But, nevertheless, at your word I will let down the nets."

And, you know, they had a tremendous catch of fish.

I would like to have been there. When I go fishing, which is once in a long, long time, I generally catch what Peter caught that night—nothing. I just have a good time getting out in the fresh air.

But when he saw the miraculous catch of fishes, you know what Peter did? He fell down at the feet of Jesus and said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Was he wicked because he got a catch of fish? Of course not. He saw the Lord in His majesty, in His power. He saw that the One he was following controlled nature, and he worshiped Him.

If you want to get a real picture of yourself, just look at the Lord Jesus. Do you want to know the kind of man God will accept? Just look at Him. He always did the things that pleased the Father.

He was the only one of whom God could say, "This is my Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

Do you think He is pleased with you? With me?

Brother, let's face up to it. We are sinners. And, one day, you and I will have to stand in the presence of a righteous God. The Gospel of God's good news reveals that. But if God is righteous, where is the good news? The good news is that when you

and I receive the Saviour, God not only forgives us of our sins, but He pronounces us righteous. As Paul could say to the Corinthian church, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us . . . righteousness” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

There is only one righteousness—divine righteousness. And that same righteousness is put to our account. That’s why a Christian can come at any time into the presence of God and be acceptable. He stands in all the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

Notice, it is not from faith to works but from faith to faith. Let me get this into your heart. In John 1:17, we’re told, “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.” And it’s grace upon grace, faith to faith. The path is the path of faith. Faith is the starting point, and faith is the course we follow. Faith is confidence in Another as opposed to confidence in ourselves.

“The righteous will live by his faith.” What do I mean? It’s a life of continual trust. If you want a picture of that, look at Hebrews 11 where the believer is justified by faith and maintained by faith. Or if I were to put it this way: The righteous by faith shall live, and only those who are righteous shall live.

You know, it is an amazing thing that this statement is used only four times in the Bible. It is first of all used in the little book by the prophet Habakkuk, chapter 2, verse 4. Then it is used here in Romans 1:17 and the emphasis in Romans is upon the righteousness of God. When you come to the book of Galatians, chapter 3, verse 11, the emphasis is on “the righteous man shall live BY FAITH,” the righteous by faith shall live. When you come to Hebrews, chapter 10, verse 38, “the righteous one shall LIVE by faith” or those who are righteous by faith shall—live.

Romans emphasizes the righteousness of God. Galatians emphasizes faith. And Hebrews emphasizes the question of life.

I'm saved by faith; I continue in faith. I don't put my trust in the Saviour to be saved from sin and from death and from hell so that I can add my own works to that. Oh, no. No. No. There's no place for man's works in salvation. But as a Christian, my life ought to be changed; and I ought to do good works—as Ephesians 2:10 says, He has appointed us “for good works.” That's for His people.

But those who have never received the Saviour need salvation. They need peace of heart and mind. They need eternal life. They need to be able to stand in the presence of a righteous, holy God. It is in Christ that God has vindicated His righteousness (as we shall see in chapter 3).

Now Romans 1:1-17 is the introduction to the epistle. And it would be very, very good for you to read and reread this matter of the Gospel's being a revelation of the righteousness of God—the righteousness which has been bestowed upon sinners who believe. The only ones who believe are sinners. Christ didn't die for good people. He died for the unrighteous. He died for sinners; and sinners, made righteous, shall live by faith. We start with faith and we continue with faith.

Paul now begins to give us the absolute unrighteousness of men—of all men, whether Jew, Gentile, moralist, religionist, you name it. He's going to reveal in chapters 1, 2 and part of 3 that there isn't a man on the face of the earth who has righteousness and is able to stand on his own two feet before God and say, “This is what I am.”

It would be folly for Paul to speak of the righteousness of God when men are occupied with their own righteousness; so he begins by revealing the absolute unrighteousness of man. He proves that all men, Jew and Gentile, are under sin, having no righteousness.

In other words, he asks, "Is the Gospel necessary? Can man do anything to please God?" And then he goes on to prove that he cannot (Romans 8:7-8; Proverbs 14:12).

THE NEED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS (1:18-3:20)

The Gentile world guilty (1:18-3:20)

So, in the rest of chapter 1, from verse 18 to 32, we have the Gentile world guilty before God. And when Paul gets through with the first chapter, all the Jews will say, "Amen! That's a real picture of the Gentile world." It is. It still is.

I've had people say to me, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, don't you think that the world has improved since the Apostle Paul's day?"

Well, I would say we have more education. We have more knowledge. We have more gadgets. Paul never had them. But the human heart of man and his conduct haven't changed one bit.

So the first thing in chapter 1:18 to 32 is the Gentile world is guilty. Allow me to break that chapter down. First of all, man is without excuse (chapter 1:18 to 20).

"Well, Mr. Mitchell," you ask, "what about the heathen who have never heard?"

Well, here are some of your answers:

Man is without excuse (1:18)

18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Gentile man is without excuse. And, if you ask the question about the heathen, well, that's what Paul is talking about.

You notice in the 18th verse that the Gospel is not only a revelation of the righteousness of God as seen in verse 17, but it is also a revelation of the wrath of God; and His wrath is just as real as His love. If a generation rejects His love, His grace, His mercy, then there is nothing else for a righteous God to do but to judge and manifest His wrath.

Here you have the divine repulsion against sin, and God is bound to judge in righteousness. How else could He judge? That's why in Acts 17:31 He has set apart a day "in which he will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." He is going to judge the world in righteousness.

He is saving sinners today on the ground of His love and on the ground of His grace which is provided in righteousness.

But I read here, first, that the wrath of God is revealed against man's ungodliness.

Now an ungodly man is one who leaves God out. He has no regard at all for God.

"Well, Mr. Mitchell, there are none like that today."

My friend, you would be surprised that in your own city there are men and women who have absolutely no regard for God. They are ungodly. They might be moral. They might be wonderful people, but they leave God out of their lives. They go to bed at night, get up in the morning, go to work, come back from work, do a few things they want to do, and go back to bed with no thought, no room, no time for God. They live in a little world all their own, and God is outside of it. That's the ungodly.

"Then they are atheists," you say.

No, I'm not saying they are atheists. They just have no regard for God. They go their own way. They live their own lives. The great majority of people live just that way. Sadly, some Christians do, too.

Second, the wrath of God is revealed against the unrighteousness of men. Now this deals with their acts one to another, their actions against somebody else, or even their actions against you. It deals with wickedness of conduct. Ungodliness means God is out of their lives. Unrighteousness is their conduct.

And then the third thing about them is they hold down the truth in unrighteousness.

What do I mean? They suppress the truth. They stifle the truth. Why? Because they want to sin. It is willful opposition to revealed truth. In his wickedness man would suppress the truth.

You know, I talk to people today; and I have been told to shut up. They are a little more blunt than that, too, by the way, with a few strong words thrown in. They would rather not hear the truth.

There are men, intellectual men in the teaching profession, who try to keep from our young people the revelation of God in His Word, the revelation of the Son of God as the Saviour. They ridicule it.

I remember hearing of a professor who said in a freshman class, "If I find those who believe, who are so-called fundamentalists, who believe in God and Jesus Christ, I try to destroy their faith in Christ. If I can't get them the first year, then the second year I make them a butt of ridicule that anybody today with any brains would believe in Jesus Christ or the Word of God."

I'm quoting him.

He said, "When they get to be seniors, I get a big bang out of it because some of these have become infidels."

I don't know how much he was exaggerating, but he was holding down the truth in unrighteous-

ness. And do you think for one moment he is going to escape the wrath of God or the judgment of God?

My friend, God is going to judge men in righteousness. And He has revealed Himself to man. For the 19th verse says, "Because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them."

Man doesn't have a particle of excuse. What man out of Christ can stand before a holy, righteous God and have any excuse?

Now, God has revealed Himself to man and in man. Heathen man, civilized man has in himself the capacity to worship and trust the Living God; and, when he does, God gives him more truth. But man has refused it and cast it out. Every man, everywhere, knows what he "ought" to do. God has given him a conscience. Man wants to live in his own little world, his own little circle; and he is the center of that circle. He wants to do what he wants to do.

May I tell you, my friend, there is only one salvation, one way of deliverance, and that is God's way. God's way is through Jesus Christ, His beloved Son.

All men need righteousness because they have all gone out of the way. They are unprofitable, they are unrighteous, and none do any good. And I read here in these verses that man has no excuse.

You see, there is only one righteousness in the universe; and that is God's. And not until we see that we have no righteousness of our own, not until then will we accept the divine provision—the good news from God that He has put away sin and provided righteousness for everyone who will receive Jesus Christ as personal Saviour.

I don't care what part of the world you go to. Men know this. God revealed Himself to them even before Christ came.

God has revealed Himself (1:19-20)

19. Because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

20. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Creation was man's first Bible. Even if he knew nothing of the writing of books, he could find God through creation. Take the 19th Psalm with its first three verses, for example: "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of his hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard."

That is, men—heathen men, all men—down through the centuries, whether they had a Bible or not, whether they ever heard of Christ or not, are responsible to worship their Creator, the One who made them and the universe.

You take Acts chapter 14. You remember the Apostle Paul and Barnabas went down to a place called Lystra and healed a man. People thought they were Jupiter and Mercury. The priests of the town were going to offer sacrifices to them and worship them.

They said, "The gods have come down to us in the form of men."

And you remember Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes and ran around, saying, "We are also men of the same nature as you, and . . . (God) did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:15-17). They were telling the Lystrans, "You should worship (Creator) God who

sends us seedtime and harvest and crops in creation.”

What did Paul talk about in Athens? Creation.

“The God who made the world and all things in it” has given to all men “life and breath and all things.” What for? That they “should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist; as even some of your own poets have said, For we also are His offspring” (Acts 17:24-28).

Paul said to them, “Don’t you for one moment think that the Godhead is like unto stone or wood carved by man’s device. God does not like the images you make. You should worship the God who made you. See, there is no excuse.” And there is no excuse for man’s ungodliness down through the centuries.

And there is no excuse for yours. You have to deal with the Living God—the One who framed the ages and made the world and holds all things by the Word of His power.

But man is without excuse. God is going to come in flaming fire, dealing retribution to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Why, even in the early centuries before Christ and after Christ, men like Plato and Aristotle and Cicero all wrote about a supreme Creator. They read this in creation. They saw His power and His Godhead, but what did they themselves do? They worshiped the gods; they ignored the One who made them. He was made known through creation.

Man did not sin through lack of knowledge, but in spite of that knowledge. Man had the light, but he rejected it; and, by spurning Him, man lost sin-consciousness. That means sin was not sin to him any more.

That’s the history of man, by the way, not only in the first century but also in the twenty-first.

**THE SINFULNESS OF THE GENTILE WORLD
(1:21-32)**

Their degeneration (1:21-23)

How do you account for what goes on today in the world? Take the last two world wars we've had. You talk about cruelty, sadism, especially in nations that were supposedly the elite, scholastic nations of the world. They were just as cruel, just as sadistic as the wild tribes of South America or Africa. No, the more we see ourselves as sinners the more we will want Christ to be our Lord.

I sat down with some tribal people in northern Thailand after they heard the story of Jesus, and I said, "Have you ever heard that before?"

They said, "No."

"What do you think of it?"

"Oh, it is wonderful if it is true."

Now these women worshiped evil spirits. Why didn't they worship the God who created them?

Paul here is talking to the pagan world when he writes verse 20. And then he turns in verses 21 to 32 and takes up the terrible sinfulness of the Gentiles. And, listen, we do not see here the teaching of evolution but rather of degeneration. He does not show us the progress of the knowledge of God but the progress of evil.

21. For even though they knew God, they did not honor him as God. . . .

They first of all knew God. Man is not evolving to the place where he is going to know God. No. Man first of all knew God. Then he didn't glorify Him as God. In fact, afterwards, we had men who were polytheistic, who worshiped all the gods that men have created. Man first of all knew God. He knew he was responsible to God. But in the fourth

chapter of Genesis, when Cain went out from the presence of God, he tried to make this world a fit place to live without God; and that has been going on ever since.

In the place where I live and the place where you live, there are thousands of people without God in their lives. They don't want Him. It's not that they are ignorant. It is because they know they must stand in the presence of a righteous God. And because of that, they would rather not hear. They would rather not be stirred up. They would rather not be convicted of their sins. So they have no time for the Lord Jesus. They will not accept the good news concerning God's Son.

You remember the Lord said in Mark 7:21, "Out of the heart of men proceed the evil thoughts and fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries."

He gives you 13 of the ugly brood that come out of the heart of man. When you come to the book of Galatians, chapter 5, verses 19 to 21, what do we read? "The deeds of the flesh are evident which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality. . . ." And he gives you 17 of the ugly brood, 17 of the sins that come out of the human heart—your heart, my heart and the heart of everyone born into the world.

My friend, whether you like it or not, we were born in sin. We were children of wrath like the rest, unrighteous and unholy. And either we were filled with our own self-righteousness or filled with outbroken sin. Now let's look at the degeneration. It's a sad picture.

21. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22. Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23. And exchanged the glory of the uncorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and fourfooted beasts and crawling creatures.

24. Therefore God gave them over . . .

You will notice even in their sinfulness they go down instead of up. There is a negative side. They did not glorify Him as God. They became unthankful. They became puffed up. They were godless and thankless. Having stopped the worship of God, they lost the knowledge of God. We have these all around us today. Men still misuse the knowledge they have and become puffed up. Man becomes independent of God and, as a result, becomes vain in his reasonings.

And then you have the positive side. In verses 22 and 23, professing himself to be wise, man became a fool.

The proof? He changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image; and, even in his worship, you have degeneration.

First of all, he worshiped God as a man, then as a bird, and as a quadruped, then as a creeping thing; and God gave him up.

What is God like? An animal?

No.

A bird?

No.

Creeping things?

No.

He is the Lord Jesus, the sinless One, the righteous One. You see, man became a fool, turned his back on the revelation of God, refused to have God in his knowledge and entered declension and degeneration, not only in his thinking, but in his actions. You take some of the gods of the Orient, India, South America, Africa. They are hideous and sensual. They reveal the heart of man. They are the product of hearts that are sinful.

You see, the only true image of the invisible God is Jesus Christ. You have it in Colossians 1:15. He is "the image of the invisible God."

If you want to know God, you must find Him in Jesus Christ.

Do you want to know God? Do you really, really want to know Him? Do you mean business?

God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, His Son. Rule out that revelation, my friend, and you have no revelation of the Person of God. I am saying that very frankly. Rule out your Bible, rule out Jesus Christ and you have absolutely no revelation of God.

Thank God, there is a revelation and this revelation is in His Son Jesus Christ.

But knowing God, they became fools in preferring themselves and the work of their hands to a God who loved them and wants to manifest His mercy to them. They made gods who can neither hear nor see nor act nor do anything—chunks of stone and wood.

And, my friend, when men make idols, they condemn themselves when they worship them. For, when I take a piece of wood and make it into something, I am greater than the thing I made. The creator is greater than the thing made. The very fact that someone made us, the human race, makes us responsible to worship Him. And if I worship anything else, I condemn myself. I have made what I worship greater than I.

But then, a sad thing took place.

Their judgment (1:24-32)

24. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them.

I'm not going to go into all the ramifications of this portion of the chapter from verses 24 to 32 except to point out that, when God gave them up,

He deliberately turned them over to be dominated, to be controlled by their own lusts.

Here we have a positive act of God. He gave them over as slaves to the very thing they wanted. Sad, isn't it? Having refused the person of God, having spurned His righteousness, His love and His grace and His mercy, they became slaves to that which they craved. They made what they served greater than they.

God gave them over to uncleanness. Why? Because they changed the glory of God into an image. The fruitage of their idolatry was immorality. Their bodies were defiled, and their minds were diseased. They were given up to it.

God gave them up to vile affections (1:25-27)

25. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie; and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26. For this reason God gave them over to vile degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

27. And in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire towards one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

They changed the truth of God into a lie. They refused His revelation. They persisted in their sin. The fruitage of their unbelief in the Word of God was vile passions, passions of disgrace. And in verses 26 and 27, you have moral perversion.

Why are men morally perverse? Because they changed the truth of God into a lie. They worshiped and served themselves, the creature, more than the Creator. God gave them up to vile passions. You just can't play fast and loose with God.

In fact, I have been amazed of late at the arrogance of men in writing and on radio and television and even in churches who take the Word of God and change it to suit their own philosophies. They make it mean something else.

How bad is the human heart? When you and I think of sin, we think of the outbroken sins of society—drunkenness, revelry, sexual perversion, immorality, moral corruption. Name it; you have it. But some things are even more vile than that in the presence of God.

When men take the Word of God and pull it to pieces and change it, they traffic in souls. They delight to take people who love the Saviour and try to destroy their faith. In God's sight, that is far worse. They break down the simplicity of faith in the Saviour; they dethrone the Saviour. They throw the Word of God out as being untenable and the fruitage is right here.

Having "exchanged the truth of God for a lie," having "worshiped and served the creature—or man—rather than the Creator," they were given up by God "to degrading passions." Men are given up to the very things they want to do because of their refusal to have God in their lives.

Now go down to verse 28 for the third thing to which God gave them over.

**God gave them up to a reprobate mind
(1:28-32)**

28. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.

He mentions 23 things. And they are all around us today.

29. Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,

30. slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boasters, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

31. Without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

32. And, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Now, here is an amazing thing. It says, "They did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer." They preferred to be ignorant of God and the things of God and the Son of God and the salvation in Christ. As a result, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do despicable things.

And do you know, we have come to a place in our history as so-called civilized nations when men no longer call these "sins." They tell us we ought to have pity on these people because they are diseased. They go out and do all kinds of immoral acts, perversions and murders. What are we to say? We're supposed to excuse them because "they are sick in their mind. They have had a temporary case of insanity."

My friends, all sin is insanity because God has made Himself known to man. In this first chapter of Romans, we have the history of man right down to this century. And don't you tell me that man today lives any better sort of a life than he did three, four, five thousand years ago. The human heart hasn't changed. Once a man rules God out of his life, there is nothing left but lawlessness.

Now, I am well aware of the fact that my generation reaped the fruitage of the character of our

forefathers who loved God. Our life was changed through the Gospel of Christ. Our characters were changed. We had the Word of God. We loved the Saviour. Even though a great many of our people did not accept the Gospel, their lives were affected by the character and testimony of Christians.

The reason the wrath of God is not revealed today on many countries in the world is because God's people are still there. The blessing of God keeps these nations, these continents from some of the vileness we see in other lands.

Take this picture in Romans 1:18 to the end of the chapter. God took His restraints off men and let them have their uncleanness, their vile affection, their reprobate mind. Why? Because they changed the glory of God into an image, because they changed the truth of God into a lie, because they refused to have God in their knowledge.

Yet in spite of it, God is still loving people. He still loves men and women. Why do you think He is holding back the forces of wrath and of judgment from the world?

God doesn't love men's sin. He doesn't love their corruption. He doesn't love their self-righteous-ness. He doesn't love their folly. He loves them! And He "is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness; but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

But the day is coming when the wrath of God is going to be revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of man.

CHAPTER TWO

A wee summary.

As we went through Chapter One, we saw the universality of sin. Paul had wanted to talk about the righteousness of God, but he realized the folly of spending time talking about that when men think they have a righteousness of their own.

So when you read Chapter One, you find the universality of sin, especially in the Gentile world. But God gave the Gentiles up. They had spurned the God of creation. They had changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image. He had given them over unto uncleanness; and, because they changed the truth of God into a lie, He gave them up to vile affections. Then, because they refused to have God in their knowledge, He gave them over to a reprobate mind to do the inconvenient things. This is Chapter One.

THE MORALIST AND RELIGIONIST GUILTY (2:1-16)

But in Paul's day, there were those who could say, "We don't belong to Chapter One. We haven't sinned like that." And there are a great many people in our age who are quite ready to condemn others and justify themselves.

God will judge according to truth (2:1-5)

So, when we come to the first 16 verses of the second chapter, we have Paul addressing this group who think they are more moral than the

man on the street and certainly not as bad as the people in Romans 1. We have him proving that the moral person and the religious person are just as guilty as the amoral and the irreligious.

Now he is not going to be dealing in this second chapter with salvation, but with how God will judge men. I would like to emphasize that fact. Some verses in this portion of Scripture look as if salvation is by works. That's not true. The very fact that men have sinned means that they have to be judged. God is righteous. Never forget that.

"But, Mr. Mitchell, God is love," people tell me.

Yes, but He cannot manifest His love at the expense of His righteousness. We are dealing with a righteous God. Hence, if you and I have sinned, then sin pays wages and death is the wages.

So Paul gives to us four grounds on which men are going to be judged by God. The first one occurs in the first five verses. You will notice that God is going to judge men according to truth. He is going to be dealing not with empty profession, but with reality. Remember that. In 2 Thessalonians 2, we read two of the reasons why God is going to judge them: because they believed not the truth and because they loved not the truth.

Let us read the first three verses of this chapter:

1. Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

2. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

3. And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

Why is the one who judges not excused? Because he does the same things and thinks that God is going to let him get by. You see, I think that

although Paul primarily has the Gentiles, the moralists and religionists in mind, he also has the Jew in mind. Like the moralist, the Jew judges others; and yet, right down in his heart, he wants to commit the same sin the other fellow is doing.

Let me give you one or two illustrations of what I mean. The Pharisees in John 8 came to the Lord, dragging a woman with them.

They threw her down before Him and said, "Rabbi, according to Moses's law, this woman ought to be stoned. We caught her in the act of adultery; and, according to Moses's law, she should die. What do you think?"

And Jesus did a wonderful thing. He ignored them. But when they persisted, He said, "All right, I appoint you men as the executioners of this woman if you are without sin."

Now I think the implication he meant is if they are without the same sin that they accused the woman of. And I read in the Bible that, from the oldest to the youngest, they sneaked out of the crowd one by one until the woman stood alone. The Lord lifted up his head and said, "Where are your accusers?"

And she said, "There are none, Lord."

And He said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more. If there is no one to accuse you, then no one can judge you."

Now the Lord was not condoning her sin just because He said to her, "You go and sin no more."

She had said, "There are none, LORD." She was a transformed woman, standing in the presence of God.

Why did her persecutors run out? Because of what this verse says. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, for, when you judge somebody else, you judge yourself because you do the same things." And if you don't do them, then I'm sure you would like to do them.

You see, God is going to rule by the heart.

Or you take that passage over in 2 Samuel 12 when Nathan told David about the rich man who took his neighbor's little ewe lamb.

And Nathan said, "You are the man, David. You are the man. God has given you everything, and you took Bathsheba from her husband." How quick we are to judge and accuse people when we ourselves are doing the very same thing. God is going to judge men according to truth. No man can escape the judgment of God unless he comes God's way.

And when you come to verses 4 and 5, not only is God bound to judge according to truth, but the tragedy is that man despises the forbearance of God.

4. Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

5. But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Let me stop here a minute. Acts 17:30 says God commands all men everywhere to repent. You see, from Abraham to Christ, God allowed the Gentile world to go on. How patient He was, and how patient He is yet with those who despise Him even though there is nothing left but judgment.

You know, it just seems that sinners get away with their sin. They sin with impunity, with arrogance. They despise the righteous God. And, because God is good and loving and merciful, "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9), they think they can do anything they want to.

But still, my friend, they have to meet God. Those who despise His goodness are storing for themselves judgment and wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment

of God. Remember, God is bound to judge righteously. And the very goodness of God should lead them to repentance. You see, man has exchanged the goodness of God for His wrath.

“Oh, Mr. Mitchell,” you say, “no, I haven’t.”

My friend, you have if you have spurned His goodness. Just because God doesn’t judge you right away doesn’t mean you aren’t going to face judgment.

There is only one way to get free from judgment and that is to receive the Saviour; for I read in John 5:24, “He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment.” In Romans 8:1, Paul says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

But even then there can be judgment. Some of you are saved but have never turned from your sin. How much longer do you think God is going to be good, longsuffering and tender? It’s true that God loves you, but He certainly hates the sin and the vileness and the corruption in your life. Your very selfishness, your very jealousy and envy and self-will are going to come under the judgment of God if you don’t confess and forsake them. God is longsuffering. He has allowed you to live all these years on the earth without judgment.

What for? Because He is longsuffering. Don’t you know that the very goodness of God should lead you to repentance, to turn around from your sins and repent? This is what you have in these first five verses of Romans 2. Only here he is dealing with unbelievers. God must judge all men according to truth, and He must be righteous in His judgments.

“But, Mr. Mitchell,” you may say, “my God is love.”

How do you know He is love? His righteousness must be vindicated.

This is why Jesus died on the cross. He vindicated the righteous character of God. He opened the way whereby sinners like you and me can be transformed into the children of God.

**God will judge according to men's deeds
(2:6-10)**

Now we come to the second ground whereby God is going to judge men. He will do it according to their deeds. This is in verses 6 to 10, and it is a very, very solemn thing.

6. Who WILL RENDER TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:

7. To those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.

Now after these two verses, we have 8, 9 and 10 where you have the other side of the coin.

8. But to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

9. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,

10. But glory, honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Now, this involves the character and aim of the doer. God is not going to judge men according to their profession. He is going to deal in righteousness and in reality. And, believe me, it is a solemn reality because God knows their thoughts and motives.

Now, notice that in verses 7 and 10 Paul speaks of every man "who by perseverance in doing good" seeks for "glory and honor and immortality, eternal life" and "glory, honor, and peace, to every man who does good, to the Jew first, and also to

the Greek.” God in His righteousness is judging men according to reality. A heart that is trusting God reveals itself by persevering in well doing. But those who trust the law seek glory for themselves and incorruptibility. But how can they have that unless they are in touch with God?

In other words, what they are in themselves is revealed by their actions. God doesn't cultivate people with an empty profession. If their actions do not measure up to what they say, God is going to judge them according to their deeds. He is going to judge in truth. He is going to judge in reality.

Now in verses 8 and 9, you have those who are opposed to God, who are contentious and do not obey truth but obey unrighteousness. I read “wrath and indignation . . . tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil,” whether Jew or Gentile. Now this is the heart of the man who has no trust in God. As a result, his life is a life of evil; he yields himself to sin. And the result is going to be anguish and tribulation and wrath.

Listen, this is not salvation, but divine judgment in view of works. And the attitude of men's hearts to God is revealed by their works. He is not dealing with being saved by works, but rather with divine judgment in view of works. In other words, God is going to judge righteously. Those who are arrogant, self-righteous and self-willed are going to do what they want to do, whatever it may be. They are going to stand before God who is righteous. He is going to judge them righteously.

And the man and the woman who are doing the best they can to live a life pleasing to God will be judged according to their works. He is going to judge on the reality of their life before Him. He is going to shut the mouths of men from glorying in their own self-righteousness and goodness. He is going to judge the very thoughts and idle words they have spoken. They may fool you and me, my

friend, and that wouldn't be very hard to do; but they are not going to fool God.

"But, Mr. Mitchell," these people say, "we haven't sinned much."

I tell them it's not a question as to the amount of sin but the fact that they *have* sinned. It means that there is unrighteousness in them. Would they be willing for God to blaze abroad the thoughts of their heart—the thoughts that never find expression in words or in actions?

They say, "You mean to tell me, Mr. Mitchell, that God knows my thoughts?"

Psalm 139:1-2 says that He knows my thoughts from afar.

I tell them, "Friend, God knows the very innermost secrets of your life, things that you think you are the only one who knows. Not another living soul knows what goes on in your heart, what you think—not even your wife or your children. But God knows. Would you be willing to stand before a righteous God and let Him tear the veil off and let everybody see?"

Oh, no, you keep it covered. Although you may not have said bad things or done bad things, you know right down in your heart the things you would have liked to have done. The reason you didn't do them is because of what the effect might have been on yourself or upon somebody else or upon your reputation.

You are not fooling God, my friend. You're not fooling God. You can fool preachers and people, but you can't fool God. God must judge according to truth, according to your character, according to the very depth of your being. Everything that is unrighteous is going to be judged. The wages of sin is death. The soul of sinners shall die. God will judge by what man's heart is. We are dealing with divine judgment in view of works.

Now the third ground of judgment follows.

God will judge without partiality (2:11-15)

11. For there is no partiality with God.

12. For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law;

13. For not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

Now we come to a tremendous passage of Scripture, and I'm sorry to say it's a passage that has been greatly misunderstood. God is going to judge men in absolute impartiality. There are going to be no favorites.

By the way, do you know that whenever this little statement is used—"without respect of persons"—it is always used in the Bible with regard to judgment. It is a question of divine approval whether one is a Jew or a Gentile. You remember in Acts 10, when he went down to the house of Cornelius, Peter said, "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality."

Paul is really going after the Jew now in this connection. Watch what he says. The doers of the law, not the hearers of the law, are justified before God. Verse 13 merely states the conditions of legal righteousness, whether they are fulfilled or not. The law is to be obeyed, not just heard.

In fact, here you have God repudiating lip-service. You remember the Jews were God's people. They said, "We have the law; the Gentiles have no law. They are way out in their sins; but to us Jews God says just 'the doers of the Law will be justified.'"

You say, "Well, there you are, Mr. Mitchell. Salvation is by works." No, let me tell you this very briefly. No man has ever lived, except the Lord Jesus, who ever kept the law. For 1500 years between Moses and Christ, the Jews had the law. I know that they added to the law with their tradi-

tions, but be that as it may. No Jew ever fully kept the law.

You take the best men in the Old Testament and, somewhere along the line, they failed God.

The law was not given to save man. It was given to prove man is sinful. In fact, I would say to you, my friend, and I don't care who you are, I say it dogmatically, it is impossible for you or for me to keep the law of God from the moment we are born until the moment when we die. It is impossible. Why? We are born in sin.

You say, "But, Mr. Mitchell, God has forgiven me my past; and from now on I'm going to keep the law."

No, you can't. I'll guarantee that even Christians do not keep the law. And, if you want to know what the spirit of the law is (not just the exact Ten Commandments), you go to Matthew 5 (let me paraphrase) where our Lord tells us that Moses said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Then He added, "But I say unto you, if you look upon a woman to lust, you have already committed adultery in your heart."

He said, "The Book says, 'Thou shalt not kill;' but I say unto you, He that hates his brother without a cause is in the same category."

The Jews were great sticklers for keeping the law, washing their hands a certain way and all that. But their hearts were far from God. As the Lord Himself said through the prophet, "With their mouth they praise me, but their hearts are far from me."

No, friend, to say the doers of the law shall be justified is true if you can find a man who keeps the law. But the Book also says that if you break the law in one point, you are guilty of all.

"CURSED IS EVERY ONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM" (Galatians 3:10). You see, we are all sinners. "For all have

sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). That which the law demanded, we could never do. And, again, I repeat it. The reason for the law was to show that men are exceedingly sinful. When we get to Romans 7, we will go more fully into that part.

Now, what about the Gentiles?

14. For when the Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,

15. In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.

The question is raised then, “If the Jew could not be saved by keeping the law because he was just a hearer and not a doer, what about the Gentiles?”

Well, my friend, the Gentiles have no excuse either. We had that in chapter one. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse” (1:20).

The moral law has been revealed to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles are responsible to do the right and not the wrong. Notice, what it says. “He that sins without law shall perish without law.”

Even though they had no revealed law, yet all Gentiles are accountable for their sins because everyone knows right from wrong. And if the Jew claims that the law will save him, then the Gentile can claim that his law of conscience will save him.

But both Jew and Gentile are absolutely guilty, the Jew for disobeying the revealed law and the Gentile the law of conscience; and both must stand before God who is righteous. He is going to

judge men according to truth with respect to works and without respect to persons.

Which brings me, of course, to the last ground.

God will judge the secrets of men (2:16)

The conscience God put in man centuries ago has become so distorted today that what used to be called sin in our society is no longer called sin. Our young people have no conscience concerning sin.

“As long as you want it, do it.” they say. “And as long as it’s love . . .” It’s not love. It’s lust. And do you think they’re going to dodge the judgment of God? Not a bit of it. This is a question of divine disapproval.

If you want to follow that through, I would suggest you take Luke 10 and Mark 10 where you have the lawyer and the rich young ruler. These two men asked Jesus the same question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He never questioned the lawyer about his stand before God, but he did ask him about his neighbor. And he responded, “Who is my neighbor?”

With the rich young ruler, the issue was not his responsibility before his neighbor, but to God. In fact, I would say that only those who are enjoying divine life in Christ can live the life that will please God.

16. On the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

The Jew had the law of Moses. The Gentile had the law written on his conscience and his heart. Both must stand before God who “will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel.”

Elijah said the heavens are going to be closed at “my word” (1 Kings 17:1). What happened? Elijah took God’s Word and believed it, and it became his

word. And now Paul says very boldly that the secrets of men are going to be judged according to “my gospel.”

Allow me to read a couple of verses from 1 Corinthians 4:3-5: “But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. I am conscious of nothing against myself; yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.”

May I quote something else? “The gospel is standard. The Judge is just. The day is certain, and the judgment is sure.” We have it in Genesis 18:25. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” Of course, He will always do the right thing. “The Judge is just. The day is certain.” We had it in Acts 17:31: God has “fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed.”

And the judgment is sure. As Hebrews 9:27 says, “It is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment.” The very secrets of men, the very motives of the human heart are going to be judged by Jesus Christ. I’m certainly happy that I have a Saviour who has put away every one of my sins.

And if I am to stand before a righteous God with my heart laid bare, then not only my actions, not only my words, but my very motives, the very secrets of my life are going to be an open book to Him. How do you think I’ll stand? How do you think you will stand?

“Why, Mr. Mitchell, nobody will be able to stand,” you say.

That's right. No man will be able to stand before God because He is going to judge according to truth, without respect of persons, according to our works. He will judge the very secrets, the very motives of our heart.

**THE JEW: AS GUILTY AS THE GENTILE
(2:17-29)**

The Jew's knowledge accuses him (2:17-20)

Now Paul comes right out and goes after the Jew. He is going to prove that the Jew is equally guilty with the Gentile sinner of chapter 1. And the first thing he takes up is the fact of what the Jew knows—that is, his knowledge—in verses 17 to 20. Notice how the apostle writes:

17. But if you bear the name 'Jew,' and rely upon the Law, and boast in God,

18. And know His will, and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law,

19. And are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

20. A corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth.

Now this is what the Jew knew; and, if Paul can prove the Jew to be as guilty as the Gentile, then the Jew is in a worse condition than the Gentile because of his added knowledge and responsibility.

Notice, he rests in the law and makes his boast of God. Here you see the blindness of the Jew. He never did see the reason for the law.

The law is an executioner. The soul that sinneth shall die. It's like a man with his neck on the block; and, as the executioner has his ax out

ready to chop his head off, he glories in his executioner.

You say that's a foolish thing.

Of course it is, but that was what the Jew was doing. He made his boast in the law, and he rested in the law. Because he had the law from God, he thought that that covered a multitude of sins. Instead of that, the law was the revealer of sin; and he was blind, blinded by his own self-righteousness, blinded by his own egotism, blinded by his condition in the fact that he thought he was a favorite of God.

He made his boast that Jehovah was his God.

He claimed to know the will of God, and he approved of things that were different. That is, he knew right from wrong according to the law.

He claimed to be a leader of the blind, of those who were in darkness. He claimed to have the knowledge of God's law. He made all these very vast claims: His God was the only God. He had the law of God. He had the Word of God. The Jews were God's people. They were Abraham's children. They were the people of the covenant.

Oh, how they boasted about their God and about their relationship to Him.

But notice their condemnation now in verses 21 to 29. The very doctrine they believed or professed to testify to was denied in their very deeds. The Jew failed in that exact thing he knew best. I want you to mark it. He refused to walk in the light of what he taught.

The Jew's practice accuses him (2:21-29)

21. You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal?

22. You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

The Jew refused to walk in that which he himself taught. “Thou that teachest a man that he should not steal, do you steal?” The Jew thought nothing, for example, of going down to the heathen temple and stealing the gold and the silver and the precious stones, whatever was of any value in the heathen temple.

“This is for the glory of God,” he would say. “We are putting down idolatry.”

“You that preach a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?” The answer, of course, is very obvious.

“You that abhorrest idols, do you commit sacrilege?” If a Gentile came into the temple courtyard in Jerusalem, the Jews would cry out, “Sacrilege,” and get ready to kill that Gentile. But they thought nothing of going to the Gentile temple and defaming it and smashing things up. As I mentioned, they would plunder the heathen temples and steal everything they could lay their hands on.

23. You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?

24. For “THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,” just as it is written.

Now let me just stop here. The Jews tarnished the very name of God. Their lives made the Gentiles curse God. For example, in Ezekiel 36:17-20, where the prophet says in effect, “When you were in Israel, you were in idolatry and moral corruption. Now you are in captivity among the nations of the earth; and, even now, the very name of Jehovah is blasphemed because of you Jews.”

You know, I couldn't help thinking that the name of our Saviour is often blasphemed because Christians are not walking correctly before God.

I've had people say, “Mr. Mitchell, if that is Christianity, I don't want it.”

My friend, that which you are looking at is not Christianity.

Dwight L. Moody had an answer when someone would point to a man who was drunk, lying in the gutter, and say, "Mr. Moody, there goes one of your converts."

"Yes," said Mr. Moody, "he might have been my convert. But, if he had been converted to Jesus Christ, he wouldn't be in the gutter."

Oh, I say sadly, how often the very actions and lives of the saints have been used by Satan to hinder people from coming to Christ.

The other day, a friend of mine said to a young man who was a professing Christian in the army, "Did you tell anybody about the fact that you love the Saviour?"

And he said, "No."

He said, "Well, I'm glad you didn't because your actions are a dishonor to the Saviour. And don't talk about your Saviour until your actions are a little more like your Saviour."

Oh, may you and I so walk before God that our Saviour will not be dethroned or dishonored because of what we say and because of what we do. I know we are all frail, and we all have certain characteristics and weaknesses; but let's look to the Lord for them. If you know you have a weakness, look to the Lord that He may give you victory over it and that you may enjoy deliverance from that frailty and become a testimony for God.

Oh, I just pray that you and I may so walk before God that we will shed abroad something of the sweetness of the aroma of Christ. Our lives will be a benediction to people. Perhaps, instead of people saying things against the Saviour, they might say, "You've got something we haven't got. I'd like to have what you have. I'd like to have that peace, that loveliness of character, that sweetness of disposition that you have instead of what I have."

God grant that those of us who profess the name of "Christian" might in a very, very unusual way give forth the Word of Life.

Now, in verses 25 to 29, you have the inconsistency of empty profession. He is talking especially about the Jew. Look at what he says:

25. For indeed circumcision is of value, if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

26. If therefore the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?

27. And will not he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law?

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

29. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

What in the world is Paul talking about?

The Jews boasted about being the circumcised. The Gentiles, of course, were the uncircumcised. Circumcision was a sign of a covenant. God made a covenant with Abraham and his seed, and it became a national sign.

For example, in Exodus 31, the Sabbath Day was a national sign. The Sabbath Day is not an individual sign; it is a national sign—the sign of a covenant between God and the people of Israel. It was a sign of the Mosaic covenant.

Circumcision was a sign of the faith covenant made to Abraham and to his seed. The sign of circumcision didn't make a real Jew. Circumcision was of the heart.

For example, Ishmael was circumcised just as Isaac was; they were both sons of Abraham.

But God said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called" (Genesis 17:19 and Hebrews 11:18). His descendants were called the "children of faith," the "children of Abraham." Our Lord said, in effect, in John 8:39, "I know you are Abraham's seed (national); but, if you were Abraham's children (children of faith), you would believe Me as Abraham did."

Notice, please, outward ordinances only benefit if your heart is right with God. There are certain privileges connected with being circumcised. For Jews, it was an outward manifestation that they belonged to God. But that would do no good if they didn't live for Him.

Now let me bring it down to the present time. Outward ordinances are empty if your heart is not right with God. And no rite of any kind, no ordinance is going to shield any sinner from God. It's got to be reality.

There are some people today who say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I have joined the church. I've been baptized."

That may be true. I'm not opposed to that.

But baptism is an outward sign to the world that you belong to God. So your life should be godly. Paul here is saying, "You Jews who have the rite of circumcision, if you are not walking before God, you are in a worse plight than the Gentile who seeks to please God but who has never been circumcised. It's no use glorying in the label if you don't have the content."

For example, if I can use a very crude illustration, suppose I have a little ticket in my pocket and on the ticket is a label that says, "1 quart of milk." Now which would you rather have? A little ticket with a label that says, "1 quart of milk" or a bottle of milk without the label?

"Why," you say, "that's a ridiculous question. Of course, I would rather have the bottle of milk without the label."

That's what you have here.

The Gentiles had no label, but they have reality; whereas the Jews who had the label have no reality.

Paul is saying, "It's no use your boasting about a label if you don't have the real thing. Don't you boast about your being a Christian if you haven't had any relationship with the Saviour."

Now, I'm well aware that there are Christians, genuine Christians, who love the Saviour and have been baptized and have joined the church but who have certain frailties and weaknesses. I recognize that. But when a man boasts of his knowledge of God and that he is a Christian and when he lives like a man that is unsaved with no desire to change, then I question whether he really is trusting the Saviour.

You say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, you can't judge a man's heart."

That's right. I can't see your heart. God sees your heart. Men see your works. That's why, when we get to chapter 4, we find the truth—God sees my faith, but men see my works. You can't see my faith except as it is transmitted in works. And Paul is saying it's no use your boasting about being a Jew, being circumcised, being superior to the Gentiles if your life is not real before God. God would rather accept the Gentile without the rite of circumcision, without any ordinances at all if his heart is right with God.

The question I ask you is, "Is your heart right with God?"

I say, I'm not opposed to ordinances or ceremonies. What I'm after is the reality of your own heart life before God. You and I can discuss and argue concerning ceremonies, but that is neither here nor there if your heart is not right with God. The important thing is does your life show something of the transformation that comes to one in whom Christ dwells?

Which leads me, of course, to the third chapter. Paul continues to probe the Jew who had his knowledge in verses 17 and 20, his condemnation in verses 21 to 29, and now his advantages in chapter 3:1-8. And we are going to see that privilege increases responsibility. It does not free one of responsibility.

The more I know of Christ, the more responsible I am to walk before God, honoring Christ in what I say and do. This ought to be true of you. It ought to be true of all of us who love the Saviour.

CHAPTER THREE

God has revealed to us the Gospel of God, the Gospel concerning His Son, who was a real Man, God manifest in the flesh. He was the Son of God raised with power. When I think of what we have here in the Book of Romans, my heart goes out that every Christian might be established in the wonderful truth of the grace of God as it is given to us in this amazing book, this most foundational book of all of the epistles.

I say very frankly, my friend, if you are not established in the Book of Romans, then you are not established in the Gospel that God has for us.

Paul has just said, in chapter two, verses 25 to 29, that empty profession isn't worth a thing. Outward ordinances are empty if your heart is not right with God. So he raises a question:

THE JEW'S ADVANTAGE ACCUSES HIM (3:1-8)

1. Then what advantage has the Jew? or what is the benefit of circumcision?

2. Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

If a Gentile can be acceptable with God without being circumcised, what's the use of being circumcised? For the Gentile, there is no spiritual benefit. That mark separates the Jew. It's a mark that shows his privilege—he belongs to God.

And if this rite is of no value at all, what's the benefit of being a Jew?

Paul says, "The benefit is 'great in every respect.'" Privilege always increases your responsibility; it never frees you from it. And this very ad-

vantage is what accuses the Jew.

Why didn't Paul say here that God was through with the Jew? The Christian churches have now been established. What's the use of being a Jew?

He answers his own question by saying that God has given three things to the Jews and that we have to acknowledge them.

First, unto the Jews were committed the oracles (the revelation) of God. Where did we get our Bible? From the Jews, who were the depository for the Word of God. God spoke through their prophets, through their leaders, through their sages, through their apostles.

The second thing they had was that through them the Messiah came. When He was talking to the Samaritan woman, our Lord said, "Salvation is from the Jews."

The third thing is that God chose the Israelites, not because they were many or because they were good. He chose them in sovereign grace to be His witnesses to the nations even though they failed in their job and have been scattered among the nations for more than 1900 years. That choosing has never been abrogated. You have that in the 43rd chapter of Isaiah. Israel is to be restored to fellowship and relationship with God. She is again going to be His testimony to the Gentiles of the wonderful grace of God.

And so we have here, and I repeat it again that circumcision only profits when one is exercised in heart. What profit is there in circumcision? Everything, if you are right before God.

Now, if you go on from verse 3 down through verse 8, you find some other questions raised.

3. What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?

4. May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "THAT THOU MIGHTEST BE JUSTIFIED IN THY WORDS, AND MIGHTEST

PREVAIL WHEN THOU ART JUDGED."

Well, what if some did not believe? Will God not keep His Word and bless Israel so that all will share in the blessing? Isn't God faithful to His Word? Yes, even if some did not believe.

Now, mark the subtlety of this thing. Is it not true that whatever God has promised, He will do? If God is going to keep His Word and bless Israel, then we are all going to share in His blessing. Now keep that in mind. That's a good argument. God will keep His Word in spite of the unbelief of those who profess His Name.

And if I were following that through, I would point out that God's faithfulness does not free man from God's judgment. I would use Ezekiel and Zechariah and prove to you that God, when He comes, is going to purge out of Israel all the unbelieving Jews. They are not going to come in under the promises of God. They must have faith, personal and individual faith, before they can have the blessing. That's true among the Jews; it's true among the Gentiles today.

Now the second question is raised.

5. But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.)

6. May it never be! For otherwise how will God judge the world?

Well, Paul, if Jewish unfaithfulness, if Jewish unrighteousness makes the righteousness of God stand out with more glory—if it exalts and exhibits His righteousness—what are you finding fault for? You ought to be thankful that his very unrighteousness is going to bring more glory to God. Why judge the Jew if God is going to be glorified by his unrighteousness? Is God unrighteous who takes vengeance?

Now, again, mark the subtlety of this situation. Paul has a tough time trying to get the Jew to realize he needs a Saviour. The Jew runs from one hole to the next. Paul pulls him out of one, and he dives into another. Now notice the thing.

Let me repeat the question. What if some did not believe? Will God keep His Word and bless Israel?

The answer is, "May it never be!" If God did that, He would have no basis of judgment. If He lets the Jew with his privileges go because God was glorified through his unfaithfulness, He must let the Gentile who has no privileges at all go, too. In fact, I would say this. If anyone is going to be set free, it will have to be the Gentile because the Jew has had more responsibility and is just as big a failure.

If you take two fellows out to sea and tie a block of cement to one and throw them both overboard, which one will go to the bottom quicker? Of course, the one with the cement block.

Well, that's the Jew with his privileges. He was just as bad as the Gentile so he was under greater judgment than the Gentile. And, if God lets the Jew go, He has to let the Gentile go.

But Paul's not through yet.

7. But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner?

8. And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.

If through my lie God is glorified, that doesn't free me from being a liar. I'm still a liar and under judgment. Now, it's true in the final analysis that everything is going to redound to the glory of God. But that does not free you or me from the fact that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and that we are to come under the judgment of God unless we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

Now, remember what Paul is doing. He is not talking about the Gospel. He's not giving us good news. Indeed, it's far from good news. What he is telling us here is that the law with all its ceremonies has only one point and that is to prove that man by himself cannot fit himself for the presence of God.

The Scriptures have concluded all under sin. God has concluded all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all. God has so much in store for man in the future, and He is going to keep His Word. He is faithful. Every jot and every tittle is going to be fulfilled whether you like it or not. Whatever man does, God is going to do His job.

So, listen. If God is glorified through my failures, that doesn't give me ground to glory in my sin. And as Paul says (let me use my own words), "If I lie and God is glorified through my lying, I am still a liar; and I must stand before God for lying. If the truth of God has more abounded through my lie to His glory, I am still a sinner. I am still a liar, and I am going to come under the judgment of God. And now rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil that good may come. Whose damnation is just."

GOD'S INDICTMENT OF THE HUMAN RACE (3:9-20)

Paul is not about to talk of the wonderful righteousness and grace of God when man is occupied with himself, with his own so-called goodness, with his boasted religious experiences instead of Christ. So he must shut the mouth of man from glorying in his own self-righteousness before he can reveal to us the very righteous character of God, which he does starting in verse 21.

But now, between verses 9 and 20, he takes up the great indictment of the human race and what

he does is this: He takes the Jew's own Scripture and shuts his mouth.

9. What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.

Paul begins by making the flat statement that no one is better than anybody else. People are always saying that today.

"I'm not as bad as he is."

"I'm not so bad after all."

God has declared everybody under sin.

Man's character (3:10-12)

Now, having said that, Paul takes the Old Testament Scriptures and proves that all men in their character and conduct are absolutely unrighteous. In verses 10 to 12, he takes up the question of the character of man. He is not talking about any individual. He is talking about everyone in the human race. As God sees men, this is their character.

10. As it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

11. THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

12. ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

Now, that's not a very nice picture, is it? But Paul is simply reminding the Jews of what David wrote in Psalm 53:1-3. He wrote, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice; there is no one who does good. God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if

there is anyone who understands, who seeks after God. Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one." This is how God looks at man. Now, it may not be the way you look at man.

You might say to me, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, I'm just as good as anybody on earth." Well, I'll take your word for it. But what are you going to tell God? It's how God sees us that's the important thing.

I remember one time I was preaching in Tacoma on this portion of Scripture that there is no one who seeks for God, when a great big fellow stood up and waved his fist at me right in the meeting. He said, "I want you to know, sir, that I sought God. That's why I was saved—because I sought God."

Now it happened that I had been in Tacoma the year before, and I had had the privilege and joy of leading this great big brother to Christ. But in the meantime he had been told that he had been saved because he sought God.

So I said to this man, "I didn't know that God was lost and that He had to be sought, dear brother. We were the lost ones, and God came seeking us."

And I gave him Luke 19:10, which says, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Man is incurably bad, my friend. Just look in your own heart. Don't line yourself up with somebody else and say, "I'm not as bad as he or she is." That isn't the question. The question is how do you stand before God. How does God see you?

Now, it's true that you and I may do good things in our lives. We may do good works as far as man counts them good. If we go by the standards of men, we would argue with this point. But this is not the standard. It's God who is declaring this

thing. This is the way God sees people who are out of Christ.

Man's conduct (3:13-17)

Now, if that is our character as God sees us, let's read what our conduct is as God sees us.

13. "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS;"

14. "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS;"

15. "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

16. DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,

17. AND THE PATH OF PEACE HAVE THEY NOT KNOWN."

This is the history of man from the beginning. Even in my brief space on earth, we have had a number of wars. In fact, there is always some war going on.

Look at the actions of men. Their actions and conduct correspond to their character. If my character is unrighteous, then, of course, my actions will be unrighteous. Listen to Paul, "Their throat is an open grave"—like a grave with a body in corruption. "With their tongues they keep deceiving."

Did you ever deceive anybody?

"The poison of asps is under their lips." We do more damage with our tongues than we can do with anything else. No wonder the Apostle James says that the tongue is set on fire by hell (James 3:6).

My, the nasty things we can say with our tongues. Aren't we all guilty? And sometimes things come out of our mouths we never intended to say. But when your ear hears your tongue say it, your very pride will forbid you taking it back or apologizing. Oh, the characters that have been murdered by people. And, if you would accuse

them of murdering somebody's character, they would look so righteous, so self-righteous. Why, they wouldn't do a thing like that.

No, but it comes out just the same.

I want to tell you, my friend, you can't read your newspaper without seeing it. You can't read your magazines and you can't walk among people without realizing it. Deceit, asps, the poison of asps, villainy—where does it all come from?

From within. As the Lord Jesus said in Mark 7, from within the heart of man proceed all these things.

Look at our text. "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."

Before I came to know the Saviour, I wasn't taught to curse. I just cursed. In fact, that was part of the language. You work in shops or ship-yards or railroad yards, wherever it may be, wherever your plant may be, wherever men are, women are, mouths are there full of cursing and bitterness.

Even among Christians I have seen that bitterness as they speak with a bitter tongue. Oh, the damage they do, the friendships that are broken, the fellowships that are smashed. It's because of a bitter heart. No wonder the writer to the Hebrews (12:15) wrote to the church and said, "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled."

Before we were saved, our mouths were full of bitterness and cursing.

But isn't it wonderful? When one accepts the Saviour, the cursing goes out; and He puts a new song in our mouths, even praises to the Lord. Instead of cursing people, we bless them. What made the transformation? We've come into a relationship with the Saviour.

And then we come to verse 15, "Their feet are swift to shed blood." That's the history of the

human race. Wars and bloodshedding are very, very common.

I remember when I was a youngster fighting with my fists with the boys around in the neighborhood. We used to fight just about every other day. If we didn't find somebody to fight and if we had no reason to fight, we would hit someone on the shoulder and get him to fight. And, believe me, brother, when you would hit him on the nose and when the blood came out, there was an exultation there.

Where did it come from? From a rotten heart, a heart that was sinful, unrighteous, unredeemed. That's the history of man.

His feet are swift to shed blood.

Destruction and misery are in his path.

Even today, with all our knowledge, we see destruction and misery. More than half of the world's population doesn't know where the next meal is coming from. And yet we in our land take our excess produce out and dump it in the ocean to keep prices up.

"Destruction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace have they not known."

It's a terrible picture!

The cause (3:18)

Now, what's the cause of it all? What's the reason for this character and this conduct?

18. "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

They rip God out of the picture. They leave God out of their life and let sin and corruption come in. There is no way out of it. Rule God out of a nation and what do you find?

Corruption. Sinfulness. Brutality. Bloodshed.

You name it.

I want to say to you, the more we leave God out

of our nation and out of our cities and schools—and out of our own individual lives—the more there will be of moral corruption, lawlessness, bloodshed, bitterness and cursing.

Why?

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

The verdict (3:19-20)

19. Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God.

You see, it has taken Paul nearly three chapters to shut all mouths—“that every mouth may be closed.” Jew, Gentile, moralist, religionist must all stand before God with their mouth shut. Their only plea is “guilty.”

Then, to keep these moralists and religionists and especially the Jews from running to some cover, Paul immediately closes everything up by saying in verse 20:

20. Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

The law was never given to save anyone. The law was given to reveal what sin is. The law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; and, after we come to Christ, we're no longer under the schoolmaster. The law gives a distinctive character to sin. The law works wrath. As James says, the law is a looking glass. And, as Mr. Moody used to say, you don't use the looking glass to wash your face. The looking glass reveals how dirty your face is. The law is given to reveal sin.

There was a misunderstanding in the minds of the Jews (just as there are misunderstandings today in the minds of a great many religious folk

who call themselves Christians) that by keeping the law they're going to be justified in the sight of God. We found in chapter 2 that the Jew cannot be saved by his law; neither can the Gentile be saved by walking according to his conscience. Neither law nor conscience was given to save anyone. And if God saves the Jew by the law, he must save the Gentile by his conscience. But then, God would have no ground for judgment as found in chapter 3.

Now, I want you to mark that "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight." And that closes the door, doesn't it? There is not a thing anyone can do to fit himself for the presence of God. God must be righteous. How is anyone going to stand before Him? There's not an excuse any of us can make. We are all incurably bad and totally helpless.

When God gets us to that position where we are totally helpless and we recognize our position, then He will step into the picture and do something for us. After shutting man's mouth from glorying in himself, now God must open His heart and make provision whereby men and women can be saved. And this is what we have in this book of Romans.

"But, Mr. Mitchell, I know that God is righteous; but God is also love. The God that I worship is love."

Yes, my friend, but God cannot manifest His love at the expense of His righteousness. Let me get this thing very, very clear in your mind. I grant you that in I John 4:16 we have the statement that God is love. But where did God manifest His love? How do you know that God is love? Well, read verse 10 in that same fourth chapter: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." He sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. And that verse also says that He "sent His Son to be the propitiation

for our sins,” the sacrifice for our sins.

Let me get this very clear in your mind. God, of necessity, must be righteous. He must be holy or He wouldn't be God. And, when you tell me you are trusting God who is love and that you are really putting your trust in a God who is love, then you must accept what that love has done for you in the Person of His Son.

The people who say, “My God is a God of love,” have never realized that God is essentially righteous and holy.

Friend, we are not dealing with a weakling, jellyfish sort of a god. We are dealing with God who is absolute in holiness, absolute in righteousness. He is Sovereign God, and I'm a creature and I was born in sin. All of us are not only natural sinners, but we are cultivated sinners. This is the history of man—your history, my history, the history of everyone.

And, now, having proved that man is unrighteous, that his mouth is shut and that he is guilty before God, Paul shows how God has opened up His own heart. God has brought the man who was far off and alienated from Him and dead in trespasses and sin, nigh unto Himself through the work of His own Son; and the righteousness of God is received by faith.

Now, remember, He doesn't open up His heart and reveal what He is and what He has done for man until man comes to the end of trusting in himself. When a man realizes he is a sinner who needs a Saviour, you will find God ready in a moment's notice to save anybody who will come to Him. I don't care how bad he is. I don't care how unrighteous he is. God has good news and the good news is that God Himself has come into this world to take away our sin.

GOD'S WAY OF JUSTIFYING SINNERS (3:21-5:11)

Oh, I just love this. If there is any doctrine in the Bible I love to talk about and revel in, it is this one of the divine righteousness put to the account of a sinner who accepts the Saviour so that that sinner, having accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, stands before God in all the merits of Christ. He stands and has the joy of staying, rooted and grounded in the very presence of God.

As Paul could say in Ephesians 3:12, "In whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him." Isn't it wonderful that you and I can come with confidence, with boldness, having our access into the presence of God because we stand there just as Jesus Christ His Son stands?

Now, let's look at these verses in Romans 3:21-31. I would like to suggest that you stop for a moment and read the passage through. It's the basic passage, the foundation upon which the rest of Romans is built.

Many Christians love to read Romans 8; but, my friend, you won't appreciate chapter 8 so much unless you have Romans 3.

I remember a friend of mine who loved to study Romans. This happened when Mr. W. R. Newell was living in Florida. Newell wrote on the Book of Romans some years ago, and he was one of the outstanding Bible teachers of Romans and Hebrews of this past generation.

My friend was living in Calgary, Alberta. And in his study of Romans he found he couldn't get into his mind and into his heart the truth of Romans 6. So, what did he do? He took a couple of weeks off work, took the train and went all the way down to Florida to meet Mr. Newell and ask him about his exposition of Romans 6.

Mr. Newell, after hearing him for a while, said, "My friend, what you need is not Romans chapter

6. What you need is Romans chapter 3:21 to 31.”

That's why I want to stress this amazing passage which has to do with God's opening His heart and revealing to man His righteousness. I can't over-emphasize the fact that there is only one righteousness in the universe and that is God's. And, if you and I are going to stand before God, we must stand in a righteousness that is comparable to God's righteousness.

Otherwise we can't stand. And the marvel of it is that God is offering His own righteousness to everyone who will trust His Son.

**GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RECEIVED BY
FAITH (3:21-31)**

**This righteousness is apart from the law
(3:21-22)**

21. But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22. Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction.

I want you to come and look at all we get out of the first word in Romans 3:21—"But." If you follow that through your New Testament—especially in Pauline revelation—it's a very common thing for Paul to reveal the utter helplessness and sinfulness of man. And, when he brings you to that point, he begins to unveil, to reveal to us the righteousness of God.

For example, in Ephesians 2:1-3, he says that we were dead in trespasses and sins. He says that we were controlled by the prince of the power of the air, that we lived in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the mind. We were by nature children of wrath like the rest. He pushes us way down, with our mouths shut, incapable of producing anything that will please God.

Then he begins to reveal this amazing fact in verse 4: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions.” Before he reveals the greatness of God’s love and the richness of His mercy, Paul brings man down to where he actually is—in God’s sight.

We have this structure here again in Romans 3:21: “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God.” He now begins to display the righteousness of God and, from chapter 3, verse 21 to chapter 5, verse 11, he explains God’s way of justifying sinners.

The real tragedy in our churches today is that so little is known of God’s real Gospel. Proverbs 14:12 says there is a way “which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” The human heart is primarily legalistic. We’re always going about trying in some devious way to get glory to ourselves by doing or being something extraordinary. There is absolutely no place in the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the glory of man or for the works of the flesh—however moral or religious those works may be.

Now, having declared that man is absolutely void of righteousness, Paul shows us where the righteousness of God is manifested.

You remember, you have it in 2 Corinthians 5:21: He who knew no sin was made sin for us “that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” In Philippians 3:9: I’m going to be “found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law,” but the righteousness of God which is by faith. There is only one righteousness in the universe and that is God’s.

And, before we get through, I want you to see this fact of the impossibility of any man or woman, however moral, however religious, however won-

derful, however good they may think they are, the impossibility of their standing in the presence of God who is righteous unless they have a righteousness that is equal to His.

Paul describes himself in the first verse of Romans as “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.” And what is the “gospel of God,” the good news from God? He begins now to unfold it—that God’s righteousness is to be put to the account of the one who puts his trust in the Lord Jesus.

So you have in this 21st verse, “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God” (without works of any kind) is revealed, is evident, is manifested, “being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God.” Titus 3:5 says, “Not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness.” Isaiah 64:6 informs us that “all our righteous deeds are (in the sight of God) like a filthy garment.”

In Romans 4:5, Paul writes of him who does not work, “but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.” In Galatians 3:21, we have the same truth brought before us. One could multiply the number of passages.

Paul in Philippians 3:6 could say concerning the righteousness which is in the law that he was “blameless,” but he was lost. Then he says, having caught a glimpse of God’s righteousness in Christ, everything else fades out of the picture; and he wants to “be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own”—that is, what I thought was wonderful—but to be found in Him, having His righteousness (Philippians 3:9).

Do you realize the utter folly and the utter futility of religion? Every religion informs us what we should do. The Gospel of God’s grace tells us what God has done. And He wants us to come with our sin, our shame, our unrighteousness,

just as we are; and by our simple trust in Him, by our putting our trust in the Saviour Jesus Christ, we are pronounced—rather, He pronounces us — righteous.

You know, I love the testimony of John Bunyan—that cursing tinker, you remember—the man who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. And that dear old John Bunyan with his conscience slashed went across the fields in the south part of England. He had been cursing and swearing and spitting at everybody, and the Lord convicted him of his condition. And then he realized in the midst of it that only in Christ could he be found acceptable; only in Christ did he have righteousness.

And he shouted, "Praise the Lord! My righteousness is at the right hand of God where my good works can't help it and my bad works can't hurt it."

Christ is our righteousness! Allow me to give you a few verses concerning this. In Romans 10:3-4, Paul writes about Jews who, "not knowing about God's righteousness," tried to establish their own. But "they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law (not the beginning) for righteousness to everyone who believes." In 1 Corinthians 1:30, he writes, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us . . . righteousness."

Then, in Romans 5:1, Paul writes, "Therefore having been justified (declared righteous) by faith, we have peace with God." And this righteousness is to the one who believes. Again, it's not the one who is good or religious that God pronounces righteous; but it is the one who will simply put his or her trust in the Lord Jesus. It's not an experience. It's not coming to what God does in me.

Get this clear in your mind.

It is not what God does in me. It is coming and knowing what God has done for me. If we do

not have God's righteousness, then, my friend, we haven't anything. Everything else fails.

And where is this righteousness of God manifested? Where is it revealed? In only one place—in Jesus Christ. It has been unveiled before us in Jesus Christ. You remember in 2 Timothy 1:10 we read that “life and immortality” have been brought “to light through the gospel.” And in this good news from God, He pronounces righteous the one who puts his trust in Him. And this righteousness of God is witnessed by the law and the prophets.

Let me remind you, for example, of Jeremiah 23:6 where, when our Lord returns to the kingdom, He is going to be called Jehovah Tsidkenu, “The Lord our Righteousness.” The whole nation is going to come to the realization that Jesus Christ is its righteousness. Isaiah 53:11 says, “By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many.” The Righteous One shall declare righteous the many. What many? The many who believe. And this righteousness of God, of course, is only received on one ground and that's on the ground of faith—“unto all and upon all them that believe.” When? The moment we accept the Saviour.

The righteousness of God was mine the moment I accepted Christ as Saviour. And from the moment I became a Christian and came into right relationship with Jesus Christ by simple faith, from that very moment to this present moment and through eternity, I'm going to stand before God in all the righteousness of Christ.

Now you say to me, “Mr. Mitchell, aren't you going too far?”

No, I am just telling you that, if this is not true, then nobody can stand before God. This is true of any sinner who accepts Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Now, let's chew some more on these verses I've given you. In 1 Corinthians 1:30, I read: “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who (in the

wisdom of God) became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” In 2 Corinthians 5:21, I read that Jesus Christ was made to be sin for us—Him who knew no sin—“that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

In Philippians 3:9, Paul says, I am going to “be found in Him (in Jesus Christ), not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the (very) righteousness (of God) which comes from God on the basis of faith.”

My friend, how clearly can God put it? Jesus Christ became what I was—sin—that I might become what He is—righteousness. There never has been a person in the Old or the New Testament that ever stood before God righteous—justified—apart from Christ. The next question is raised in verse 23. But who needs this righteousness?

All men need this righteousness (3:23)

23. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

What is God’s measurement? Or, if I might change the word to make you see what we are talking about, what is His righteousness? We have all sinned and fallen short of the righteousness of God. You can’t come into the presence of the blazing glory and omnipotent righteousness of God. Nobody can, except we come His way—in Jesus Christ. We all need this righteousness.

This is God’s yardstick.

As I said earlier when we were dealing with the character and the conduct of man, there is none righteous. This is what God sees.

“But, Mr. Mitchell, I’m as good as everybody else,” someone says. “I’m as good as that preacher. I’m as good as those religious folk down the street.”

Well, you may be and you may not be; that's not the question. Certainly you are not going to come before God and say, "I'm as good as my neighbor," are you? The moment you catch a glimpse of the eternal glory of God, my friend, you will be glad to get out of His presence. I say this reverently.

All of us need this righteousness. If you don't believe that, let me give you some of God's conclusions concerning you and me. I'm talking now about the merits of Christ.

"All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." "The Scripture hath shut up all men under sin." That's Galatians 3:22. "God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all" (Romans 11:32).

All have become destitute of righteousness. There is not one who has attained the glory of God. There is not one who could measure up to the righteousness and the holiness of God.

My friend, the gospel is a display of the righteousness and glory of God. Remember 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving." Why? "That they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." No, all of us need this righteousness.

Which leads me now to another wonderful truth:

This righteousness is given freely (3:24)

24. Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

This righteousness of God is given freely. Don't you like that? If God would have put a cost on it, nobody could have been saved. And if He had, I am sure I couldn't have paid the cost, nor you.

If God had said to us, "You climb on your knees to the top of the highest mountain on your continent; and, when you get up there, I'm going to give

you eternal life,” believe me, we would all be heading for that mountain. What for? To become the recipients of eternal life.

Well, you know, I’m so glad He didn’t do that. A lot of folks would fall by the wayside. No, this righteousness is given freely. And this word “freely” means, if I can use another word, to be without a cause.

The same word is used in John 15:25 where the Lord Jesus said, As it “is written in their Law, they hated me without a cause.” There was no reason why they should hate Him. It was just envy and jealousy.

It’s the same word—“being justified freely,” without a cause. There is no cause in me why He should do it. It’s because He is the One who has done it. The cause is in Him. It costs me nothing to be saved. I cost Him everything—and, my, what a cost.

I remember here, during a gospel campaign years ago, dealing with the leaders of the counseling program.

We were working out a series of lessons for personal workers, and I raised the question in our little committee meeting, “Shall we put something in this about justification to teach redemption and forgiveness so that, when we deal with these dear souls who are hungry for the Lord, we will not only bring them to the saving knowledge of Christ but we will tell them what they have in Christ—that they’re forgiven every trespass, that they’re redeemed, that they’re children of God and that they have life eternal.”

In other words, I wanted to know what they were going to do about justification.

And one other gentleman on the committee (he and I didn’t agree on doctrine—I knew that and that’s why I raised the question) said this to me, “Why, Dr. Mitchell, of course. Of course, we all believe in that.”

And I said, "And what do you believe justification is?"

And he said, "Don't you know?"

And I said, "Yes. Do you know?"

"Oh, yes," he said, "justification means that we stand before God just-as-if-we-had-never-sinned."

And that's the common definition of justification which is not true. It's only a part of the truth. It is true in a sense, but that's just plain innocence. Justification is a pronouncement from God that the sinner who puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ is righteous. It's a positive thing! God says, "I put to your account My righteousness."

When you speak of God, you're speaking of One who is holy and righteous in His character. And the holy, righteous God not only sees us with our sin, but He sees us absolutely righteous in His Son. Oh, I hope we can get hold of this fact.

You take that simple verse, "Therefore, being justified by faith," we have what? "We have peace with God."

Look, friend. Listen. You couldn't have peace with God if you weren't righteous.

We have just seen in the first three chapters the blackness and condemnation, but I want you to see some of the glory. I want to say to you, my Christian friend, if it ever gets hold of your heart, you will never again be the same.

Paul said, "When I saw Him in His righteousness and when I saw that His righteousness would be put to my account, I counted all things as loss—the things that were gain to me, the things that I counted wonderful—I count them but the refuse of the streets. Why? That I might be found in Him, having His righteousness" (my wording of Philippians 3:8-9).

It's a complete reversal of value. We spend much of our time criticizing and sitting in judgment of other people, but we wouldn't if we could see the thing that God demands—an absolute righteous-

ness that will stand in the blazing glory of the presence of God.

How in the world are you going to get a righteousness that equals His righteousness? There is only one real righteousness, and that is God's. But now the righteousness of God is revealed from heaven without the law, and it's being witnessed to by the law and the prophets—even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ.

It's unto all and, thank God, it's upon all them that believe. There is no difference.

Now, remember this little statement, "For there is no distinction," is not part of verse 22. It is tied to the next verse. "There is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." That is true, but the little statement refers to this question of righteousness.

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile. There is no difference between any man, whatever his color, whatever his background, whatever his country or tongue.

There is no difference as far as God is concerned. All men need righteousness. Anyone who comes and puts his trust in the Saviour is pronounced righteous.

I spoke with a man who has been religious most of his life, and he wanted to know if he was saved.

I took my Bible and gave him some scripture; and he said that he's been hearing that, but he wanted to know that he was saved.

After talking about it, I said, "Listen, Mr., do you know what you're doing? You're questioning the character of God. I just read you a verse, and you don't believe it."

"I do believe it," he said.

And I said, "Who said it?"

And he said, "God."

And I said, "There's no ifs, ands or buts in there. If God says it, believe it."

And it was as if someone had taken the blindness and moved it out of his eyes. I could just see the thing move right across. Brightness came.

And he said, "Dr. Mitchell, I'm saved."

"Is that because you feel it?" I said.

"God says it," he said. "And if God says that I am righteous in His sight, who am I to question God?"

It's high time that we Christians got down to bed-rock on this thing. When Jesus Christ died, we died. When He was buried, we were buried. The Saviour who died for me on the cross satisfied God.

Listen, I want you to get this statement. God must act either in grace or He must act in judgment. Now which would you rather have—God acting toward you in grace or God acting toward you in judgment?

Now God has acted toward the human race in grace. As 1 John 4:10 says, "In this is love, not that we loved God (we didn't love Him), but that He loved us" and sent His only begotten Son into the world to be a sacrifice, to put away our sins, to make it possible for Him to pronounce us righteous and to free His hands to take sinners—ungodly, unrighteous men and women—and to make us the sons of the living God in all the righteousness of Christ.

My friend, what a Saviour!

Oh, what a Saviour!

No wonder the hymn writer says, "I need no other argument; I need no other plea. It is enough that Jesus died and that He died for me." He died for you and me and rose again, guaranteeing this very salvation we have in Christ.

I wish you'd read and reread this passage until it gets hold of your very being. It was the first great truth that got hold of my heart.

May I give a little testimony?

When I was saved, I came into contact with a little bald-headed barber in Calgary, Alberta. (I don't

know why a barber should be bald-headed.) And this dear brother never had gone to school in his life. He had been saved out of a life of alcoholism and had moved from New York to Calgary, Alberta, to get away from his old habits and friends. And the Lord wonderfully transformed him. And all he knew and all I heard for the first six months I was with him was Romans 3:21-31.

And I said to him one day, "Heddy, don't you know any other scripture besides this?"

He said, "I know a few. I've learned to read a few. But I'm not gonna give you up until you know Romans 3!"

"Well," I said, "I know it backwards and forwards."

And he said, "Yes, you know the scripture, but you don't know the truth."

And after I'd been sitting with that barber for a year, I went out preaching. And what do you think I preached on.

I was fooled, if I might use this term. The man fooled me into the ministry, but the sovereign God was behind the whole thing.

A week of meetings had been announced, and I wasn't going to be the speaker. I thought the other fellow who announced the meeting was going to be the speaker. But he took the train and beat it and left me with the meeting in my hands. I had to keep one jump ahead of the people so I began to read the book of Romans; and I taught the book of Romans every night.

Once in the afternoon, I got to Romans 3. I spent all day and night reading Cruden's Concordance on justification and righteousness and, when I stood up to speak on Sunday afternoon to the group that was present, I declared to them that I have a righteousness that is the righteousness of God.

There was another preacher in the audience, and he got up and went out. And he said all over

town that this young fellow Mitchell was declaring that he was God. But I didn't say that.

I can still see the man that was in charge of that work, sitting in the front seat with his mouth open. He was horrified.

I looked at him and said, "Did I say something wrong? When I said that I have a righteousness—the righteousness of God—am I wrong?" And out of my mouth came scripture after scripture on justification and righteousness.

I said, "Please don't judge till you read them all." And I closed the meeting and walked out.

I didn't stay in there because I was scared stiff. I didn't know what I had done. I was in my innocence. You see, I wasn't a preacher. I wasn't raised in the churches. I didn't know anything about it except what I was reading in the book of Romans.

The next Sunday afternoon in the middle of the testimony meeting, this same dear old man got up. He had been a lay preacher and a circuit rider for the Methodist Church for years.

He got up and said, "Last Sunday afternoon, when our young brother spoke about justification and righteousness, I thought that something was gone wrong with his head. He was making some drastic statements.

"But," he said, "it's true!"

I didn't even get a chance to preach that afternoon. He opened his mouth and spoke a whole hour on the righteousness of God which believers in Jesus Christ have.

My friend, justification is not just an experience. Some people say that justification is having your sins forgiven. It isn't. Justification is God pronouncing righteous the man who believes in Christ. And, seeing that there is only one righteousness, then the believer has the righteousness of God, the very righteousness of God, put to his account.

Now, going on in verse 24, we are “justified (declared righteous) as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

Now, underlying all of justification is the great doctrine of redemption. The word “to redeem” means to purchase for the purpose of setting free. You remember 1 Timothy 2:6 says that our Lord was a “ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time.” In Matthew 20:28, Jesus said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Romans 7:14 declares that we were “sold into bondage to sin.”

You and I were slaves in a slave market. We were slaves of sin. Sin was our master and, when Jesus Christ came, He came to be a ransom; and He paid the price to deliver us from the markets of sin. Whether you like it or not, my friend, we were sold under sin. We get that in Romans 6.

We not only were delivered from the penalty of sin and from the guilt of sin, but we were delivered from sin as a master. We have been emancipated from sin as a master. We have been set free.

Now you remember in 1 Peter 1:18 through 21 Peter writes, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold . . . but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was fore-known before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you (and me) who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”

And in the book of Revelation, chapter 1, verse 5, I read, “To Him who loves us (and that’s a continual thing—He loves us), and released us (the King James Version says He has washed us) from our sins by His blood.” The word there is the same word used here. He loosed us from our sins in His own blood.

In Revelation 5:9, you have the heavenly hosts singing and praising God; and what do you think is the theme of their song in heaven? “For Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

My friend, listen. I cannot say this often enough. We are not saved by what Christ is doing **in** us. We are saved on the ground of what Christ did **for** us at the cross. His life was a ransom. He bought us from the slave markets. It was a real cost. It cost everything to redeem you and me. We're redeemed freely without any charge. It's by His grace; it's through the redemption.

“But, Mr. Mitchell, what if I lose my redemption?”

My friend, you can't do that. In Hebrews 9:12, I read, “Through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” He didn't obtain our eternal redemption for a year or ten years. He bought you and me for Himself forever. And, if He bought us with His own blood, isn't He going to take care of us?

Aren't we His purchased possession?

Didn't He buy us?

That's why Paul says in Romans 5:9, “Much more then, having now been justified (declared righteous) by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”

Isn't that an amazing thing? You and I who are trusting the Saviour, we ought to be filled with continual joy and thanksgiving to God.

You know, I can't help but add this to it. He has delivered us from three tremendous things. He loosed us from sin and the grave. Remember that verse in Titus 2:14, where He declared, “Who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from (out of) every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”

He also ransomed us from the curse of the law. You have this in Galatians 3:13, which says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree.”

Aren't you glad that He ransomed you from the curse of the law? And Galatians 4:4 says, “But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.” For what purpose? That He might “redeem (loose) those who were under the Law”—not only from its curse but from the law itself.

He also redeemed us from this present evil world. You find this in Galatians 1:4, where we read, “Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver (loose) us out of this present evil age.” He ransomed us not only from sin and from the grave and from hell and from bondage, but He loosed us from this present evil world.

God has made the provision in Jesus Christ whereby we can be delivered from sin, ransomed from the power of the grave and ransomed from the power and guilt and penalty of sin. He is the One who can fit us for the presence of God.

This is redemption. It means that God has set men free from sin, from the law and its curse, from this present evil world—all three—through the precious blood of Christ, who gave Himself a ransom for you and for me. This is the basis of our righteousness.

We have been dealing with verse 24 where we have been declared righteous freely without a cause. It cost God everything; it cost us nothing. Let me say it all again.

It is on the ground of grace (that's the source of it), and it is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. He purchased us for the purpose of setting us free.

“Justification” means that God pronounces righteous the sinner who puts his trust in the Lord

Jesus. "Redemption" means that we have been set free by the payment of a price; and that price, of course, was the precious work of Christ at the cross.

**This righteousness is displayed at Calvary
(3:25-26)**

25a. Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

You see, we are dealing now with what God sees at the cross. In fact, both verses 25 and 26 tell us where the righteousness of God was displayed—at the cross of Calvary. God set forth His Son as a sacrifice which satisfies Him.

You remember that Isaiah 53:11 says, "As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied." Propitiation is a divine satisfaction. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He vindicated, satisfied, the holy, righteous character of God. This is what the cross means to God. And, may I say, this is the most important part of the work of Christ.

It is not what man sees. It's what God sees. When you and I think of the cross, we think of Christ's being a Saviour, giving His life a ransom, dying on the cross for us sinners. We think about what we receive from it.

Did you ever stop to think that God has more involved in the work of Christ at the cross than you and I do? When Christ died on the cross, He did not die to secure the righteousness of man; but he died to reveal and to vindicate the righteousness of God. The issue is not how to fit man for the presence of God. There has been a tremendous misunderstanding of the very character of God.

The question is how can you bring a holy, righteous, sovereign, eternal God down to man whereby man can be fitted to come into relationship and

fellowship with Him.

In other words, there is something that must be done before a man can be fitted for the presence of God. And we find this wonderful truth in this doctrine of propitiation.

How can God remain righteous and yet declare ungodly sinners righteous?

Now here we have it. At the cross, Jesus Christ met all the demands of God's character and justice; and God is perfectly satisfied with what He did. He is perfectly satisfied with the work of His Son at Calvary, so He is also satisfied with those who put their trust in the Son.

Christ satisfied the very righteous character of God. He made it possible for God to show mercy to sinful man. It is not that man is satisfied with the work of Christ. But God is satisfied. That's what God has at the cross. The barrier is gone; access is ours. There is a throne of grace to which we can come, and Christ need never die again. God set Him forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.

25b. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.

Man has a misconception of the character of God. In Genesis 2, God said to Adam and Eve, "I make only one request of you, one law. Do not touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That's all. You can have all the rest; just do not touch that tree."

But man did touch it. He took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and ate it. Now God had said, "In the day that you eat thereof you will surely die." But, you see, man didn't die.

"But Mr. Mitchell, he died spiritually," you say.

That's true, but I believe that when God said, "In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die," He

meant the whole man—spirit, soul and body.

I want to tell you that even before man sinned, God already had planned a Redeemer. From the time Adam sinned, right through until Jesus died on the cross, God looked at man in the light of the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. You have it in this verse: “To demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.”

How do you think the Old Testament saints were saved? They looked forward to the One who should come. They had been taught by God to put their trust in the One who should come. It's true. God covered their sins and put them away at the cross. God saved men and women in the Old Testament on the ground that His Son would come to put away those sins.

What I'm trying to get to your heart is the most important thing, my friend. When Christ Jesus died on the cross, He did it because of His Father. He did it to vindicate the righteousness of God as you have it in verse 26.

26. For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Remember in the 85th Psalm, verse 10, we read, “Lovingkindness and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” How could God in His righteousness manifest mercy to sinners who have no righteousness? Jesus Christ came and put away our sin. He vindicated the righteous character of God and made it free for God to come down to man. Oh, no wonder we sing such songs as

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost but now am found,
was blind but now I see.”

“I need no other argument.
I need no other plea.
It is enough that Jesus died
and that He died for me.”

“On Christ the solid rock I stand,
all other ground is sinking sand.”

And, if God is perfectly satisfied with the work of His Son, are you? The writer of Hebrews could say in chapter 4, verse 16, “Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in (every) time of need.”

My friend, God’s heart is opened up to us. All the misunderstanding from Adam down has been cleared. That’s why Paul could say to the philosophical Athenians in Acts 17:30 and 31, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.” God let the nations go their own way to do what they wanted to do. But now, something has happened. Jesus Christ has died and satisfied the holy character of God. God today is willing to save all who come to Him.

God is satisfied. Are you satisfied?

In Exodus 34:7, do you remember what God says? He says He will forgive their “iniquity, transgression and sin.” As someone has said, “God forgave men on credit.” He knew that His Son would come.

And the marvelous thing I’m telling you today is that the heart of God is open to us now. God spared not His own Son. Or as 1 John 4:10 says, “In this is love, not that we loved God.” Don’t you love it? “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son to be the propi-

tiation for our sins.”

In 1 John 4:9, “God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.” This is repeated in the 10th verse with this change, He “sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

In other words, He transforms the judgment throne into a mercy throne—from a judgment seat to a mercy seat.

Why doesn't God today judge the world? Why doesn't God blot man out for his rebellion? for his corruption? for his lawlessness? for his sin? for his vileness? Why doesn't God do something?

My friend, aren't you thankful that “the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some men count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Without the death of Christ, justification, salvation and redemption would have been impossible. But, because He died, we live. His righteousness is put to our account.

Someone is going to say, “Why, Mr. Mitchell, how can I receive this righteousness?” And so we come to verse 27.

**This righteousness is received by faith
(3:27-31)**

27. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

28. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

All human boasting is gone. God is satisfied with the work of His Son, and I manifest my satisfaction by putting my trust in Him. As I say, all boasting is gone. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a re-

sult of works, that no one should boast.”

And as Peter could say in Acts chapter 4, verse 12, “There is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”

Jesus said in John 10:9, “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved.”

In John 14:6, He could say, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me.”

First Corinthians 1:29 and 30 and 31 say “that no man should boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, ‘let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.’” It’s absolutely apart from works. It is apart from the law entirely.

29. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also—

30. If indeed God is one—and He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

Why, of course, there’s only one way of salvation. If all men are sinners and there is only one God, how many ways of salvation will He have? Just one way. And the writer rules out the law and circumcision and the works of man as having any part in it at all. So it is received on only one ground, on the ground of faith. And the law is upheld.

31. Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

We don’t cancel out the law. We were slain. We died. In Christ all the demands of the law were met for us. The only way the law can be met is by death. There is no mercy in law. We acknowledge the demands of the law. But I tell you, my friend,

it is my Saviour and your Saviour only who met all the demands of the law. We are set free so that the law doesn't have a word to say. We are saved apart from works and everything else by putting our trust in the One who died for you and for me.

And God is satisfied.

CHAPTER FOUR

A wee summary

Chapter 3 says in essence, “How can a righteous God pronounce guilty sinners righteous?”

The righteousness of God was displayed at the cross. When our Saviour died, He vindicated the righteousness of God; that is, He satisfied the divine character of God for you and for me. Man could not provide one thing. God provided the remedy. It is received in only one way and that’s through faith, not works. He justifies those who believe. He doesn’t justify anybody else. Hence, all human boasting is excluded. All men are guilty. There is only one way of salvation.

How can a person be justified but by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul rules out the law and circumcision as having any part. Does faith make void the law? No, says Paul, we establish the law by the execution of the penalty. All its demands were met when the Lord Jesus died for you and for me.

The question is raised at the end of chapter 3, “Do we have the right kind of faith?”

Paul concludes that the only way one can be fitted for the presence of God is on the ground of grace through faith.

In chapter 3, he declared righteous not the saints who believe but the sinners who believe. We do not change from being ungodly to godly and then believe. God takes men and women wherever they are, in whatever condition they are, however low they may be, however much they have sinned. The moment they put their trust in God’s Son, Jesus Christ, as their Saviour, that moment God pronounces them righteous.

Now then, in chapter 4, Paul presses justification home and uses three examples. In the first five verses, he takes up Abraham, the father of those who believe. The emphasis here is on faith without works. Then in verses 6 to 8, he takes up David and the emphasis is not on faith, but on the fact of being without works. In verses 9 to 13, he takes up the fact that it is without ceremonies or ordinances. Then he ends the chapter by referring back to Abraham as an example of faith.

Now, in the first 16 verses, the Apostle proves to us that from Adam right down to the cross nobody has ever stood justified before God except by faith—never on the ground of works, never on the ground of ceremonies.

In the first five verses, we have Abraham given to us, this one who was the father of all believers. What kind of faith did he have?

THE SAMPLE FAITH (4:1-25)

The righteousness of God is by faith alone (4:1-5)

1. What then shall we say that Abraham, our father according to the flesh, has found?

2. For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God.

In Galatians 3:7, we read that “it is those who are of faith that are sons of Abraham.” Our Lord said in Luke 19:9 concerning Zaccheus, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.” In John 8:39, the Jewish leaders said, “Abraham is our father.” And the Lord answered, “If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham.”

We have Abraham as an illustration of how one is justified. He found that all that the flesh stood for could not stand before the presence of

God. If it were by works, he would be able to glory in what he had done.

Can you imagine what heaven would be like if men got there by their good works? Why, they would be boasting all through eternity about what they had done. They wouldn't glorify God at all. It's not me-plus-Jesus. It's not Jesus-plus-me. He did the whole thing. He satisfied God. We are the recipients of His wonderful grace. Justification before God can never be on the ground of works.

Abraham had "something to boast about; but not before God."

3. For what does the Scripture say? "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Now, quite often someone says to me, "But, Mr. Mitchell, there must be a conflict here. In the Book of Romans, Abraham is justified by faith without works. In the Book of James, chapter 2, Abraham is justified by his works. Now which one is right?" Some of the old timers, the old worthies who wrote many years ago, used to call the Book of James, "An Epistle of Straw."

No, in Romans we have the root of the matter; in James we have the fruit. In Romans we stand before God, hence we need faith. In James, we stand before men, hence we need works. In Genesis 15:6, we see the ungodly Abraham saved. In James 2, we see the godly Abraham tested. In one, you have faith alone; and, in the other, you have the works of faith.

For example, Romans is dealing with Genesis 15:5-6 where God said to Abraham, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."

But James 2:24 says, "You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone" when he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar.

And, by the way, lest someone misunderstand me, let me say this, that even in the Book of James the writer is not talking about works of the law or works of the flesh. He is talking about the works of faith. I can't see your faith. God sees your faith and whether it is real or not. All I can go by is your works—and by that I don't mean that you are going to go out and perform miracles. The life of faith is a life of walking in fellowship with God.

If I do not see any manifestation of a godly life in you and someone asks me if you are a Christian, I say, "I don't know. He may be. He says he is, but I don't know because I do not see the works of faith evidenced in his life." But when I see one who is walking before God, seeking to please Him, and you ask me if that fellow is saved, I say, "Why, certainly. I see his faith manifested by his works."

In the Book of Romans we have what God sees. In the Book of James we have what man sees. James says, for example in 2:24, "You see." "You see"—not God, but "you." You see how Abraham was justified by works when he offered up Isaac. And what did Abraham have in the flesh? Nothing at all.

I repeat it again. No works of man can stand before God. Abraham was justified by faith, and he had nothing in which to glory before God.

"For what does the Scripture say? 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.'"

You see, the key to this passage is that he stood before God. Here you have works and grace contrasted. Abraham did one thing. He believed God. When was he justified? When he believed God. It was not when he worked, but when he believed God.

4. Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor but as what is due.

5. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.

Now he is going to narrow it down a wee bit. When was Abraham justified?

Before he was circumcised.

What kind of a man was Abraham when God called him?

Joshua told the people of Israel in Joshua 24:2 and 14 (as they entered the land of Canaan) that their forefathers were idolators in Ur of the Chaldees. In Isaiah 51:2 and Acts 7:3-4, we read that the God of glory appeared unto Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, and said, "Depart;" and "he departed."

In the first few chapters of Abraham's life, nothing is said about justification until Abraham believed God when He told him his seed would be as the stars of the heavens for multitude.

Paul narrows it down in Galatians 3:16 where we read, He said, "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'AND TO SEEDS,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'AND TO YOUR SEED,' that is, Christ." And when his faith was coupled with the heavenly seed, with Christ, he was counted righteous.

You say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I've always believed in God. I believe in the Creator. I'm not a pagan. I'm not a heathen. I'm not an atheist. I really believe there is a God. Did God not create all things? I believe in God."

My friend, you cannot stand before God acceptably on that ground. You are not justified before God until you believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. If you go down to Acts 10, you read of Cornelius, the Roman officer of the army. He was a good man. He was told, "Your prayers and alms

have ascended as a memorial before God;" but he wasn't a Christian.

The Apostle Paul in Philippians 3 was a real Jew. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. As touching the law, he was a Pharisee. He was not a liberal. He was conservative in theology. And concerning zeal for God, he was persecuting the church. Touching the righteousness which was in the law, he was blameless.

And yet he was not saved.

A person can be a moralist and a religionist and not be saved, not be fitted for God's presence. There must be relationship to God's precious Son. It was Jesus Christ who satisfied the character of God for you and for me. It was Jesus Christ who removed the barrier between God and you, God and me. He removed the barrier of sin. That's why He died. And His resurrection was the guarantee that He not only put away your sin, but He absolutely satisfied the character of God.

God comes to us and brings us the good news that Christ died for us and made the provision whereby you and I by faith in Jesus Christ can stand in the presence of God in all the righteousness and beauty of Christ.

You see, you have here in verses 4 and 5 the principle of works and the principle of grace.

One is an obligation, a debt; the other is of grace and the kindness of unmerited favor. You have the working method versus the believing method.

No, my friend, there must be a definite pay for a definite work; or you have to accept the grace of God to the undeserving. And we find that here in verses 4 and 5:

"To the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as favor but as what is due."

You work for a man, and he pays you your wages. It's not a gift; it's a debt.

"But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reck-

oned as righteousness.” Not his works, but his faith. It was the faith of the ungodly Abraham that was counted for righteousness.

God’s very righteousness reaches right down to men in whatever state they are as they accept the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

It’s not changing an ungodly man into a godly man who will believe. It’s the ungodly man who believes and becomes a godly man.

People say, “If I were only better.”

No, God doesn’t say, “When you get better and believe, I’ll take you.”

You’ve got to be saved first; then you become better. Let’s put it straight. It’s by faith A-L-O-N-E, not faith plus anything else. It is just faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Forgive me for repeating all this, but I so desperately want to impress these precious things upon your heart so you can impress them upon the hearts of others.

The righteousness of God is without works (4:6-8)

As we come to verses 6 to 8, Paul uses David to illustrate the blessedness of righteousness by faith. Now, when he used Abraham, he was stressing the question of faith; with David he stresses that it is without works.

6. Just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works:

7. “BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.

8. BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.”

Please mark this passage. Paul is dealing with the blessedness, the joy that a person has in the forgiveness that is perfect, that is divine, that is

eternal. David, filled with joy in the 32nd Psalm, verse 2, writes, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity."

For God not to charge you with your sin is to impute righteousness. May I change it around? When you and I put our faith in the Saviour, He counts us righteous; and He will never under any consideration charge us with our sin. God is revealing His character as the Righteous One in not imputing sin to those who believe and put their trust in His Son.

Now here is an amazing thing. The enemies of the Word of God make a joke of David and Bathsheba. They hate the God of David. They prefer the sin of David with Bathsheba to a righteous God who demands judgment.

And David, under the judgment of God, comes before Him in repentance and confession. God forgives his sin, and David is filled with the joy and the blessedness of a forgiveness that's real, that's eternal, that's divine.

Now that didn't free David from judgment. The child died. Amnon was killed. Absalom was killed. Adonijah was killed. The sin of David went through his family. He had nothing to present to God but sin. He stood before Him in his shame. As he could say in that 32nd Psalm, verse 4, "The hand of God was heavy upon me. I was just filled with tears and the drought of summer" (my version). He went through hell for a whole year until Nathan came and opened his heart. And when David saw the sinfulness, the blackness, the awfulness of his own heart, he bowed in repentance and shame before God in confession.

Immediately, he confessed and God forgave him and cleansed him; and David described the blessedness of the grace of God who can pick up men and women like him and like you and me and cleanse us and forgive us and impute righteousness without works.

What work could David bring? What work can you bring? I'm afraid too many of us are like David in that we can condemn the sin we see in others and not condemn ourselves. Yet the marvel of it, the wonder of it that the moment a sinner comes into the presence of God, confesses his sinfulness, repents, and in simple faith puts his trust in Jesus Christ without works of any kind, God imputes righteousness. Oh, the blessedness!

“Oh, but Mr. Mitchell,” you say, “that’s works.”

Oh? Is it? Confessing to God that you are a sinner is a work? Repenting of your sinfulness is a work? Never! It is the process of placing faith, the process of being justified.

My friend, I'm dealing with a foundational thing. God in infinite, wonderful grace through His blessed Son takes the ungodly, the sinner, the outcast or whatever God finds him to be and pronounces him righteous without works when he puts his trust in His Son. “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

My, what a joy! What a wonderful thing that you and I can come into the presence of a righteous, holy God. And, as we stand in His presence, we have that conscious realization, that blessedness, that joy of knowing that the righteous God will never again impute sin to the one who puts his trust in His Son. Now that's the good news from God.

I want you to get the thrill of this and the joy of it and the peace that comes. I have met people who are afraid to come into the presence of God. Well, what are you afraid of?

“Oh, but Mr. Mitchell, I've been such a sinner. I've failed so much.”

Listen, my friend, nobody will ever see your sins or your failures when you get to heaven. That's why I like the 11th chapter of Hebrews. Did you ever notice all those Old Testament worthies? Not

a word is said about their failures. Did Abraham fail God? Yes, but you don't find it in Hebrews 11. Did David fail God? Yes, but you don't find it in Hebrews 11.

Did Moses fail God? He certainly did. But you don't find it in Hebrews 11.

When I come to John 17:8, just before our Lord went to the cross, He said to His Father, "The words which thou gavest Me; I have given to them; and they received them."

There is not a word about the fact that they were going to run away, that they were going to deny Him. No. When He stands before His Father and prays for His disciples, not a thing is said about failure or weaknesses.

Oh, what a salvation is this that you and I can come into the very presence of God in Christ Jesus and know that we stand before Him in all His righteousness and that every sin is forgiven, put away and forgotten.

Now you and I may remember them down here.

You say, "Won't I remember them in heaven?"

I don't think so. You'll be so occupied with our blessed Saviour in the glory of it all that what happened down here will be long past.

Now, in the first five verses we have the positive side of the Gospel. God takes sinners who without works just put their trust in Jesus Christ by simple faith, and He covers them with the righteousness of Christ.

And then in verses 6 to 8, we have the other side of the coin. Their sins and their iniquities will He remember no more. How blessed is the man whom the Lord will not charge with sin. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, has cleansed us from all sin. We can truly sing, "Hallelujah! What a Saviour!"

JUSTIFICATION IS WITHOUT CEREMONIES (4:9-16)

Now we come to the third thing in the passage, and this runs from verse 9 right down through verse 12. Justification is without works and now without ceremonies.

I recognize that the Apostle Paul has the Jewish people in mind. But when we bring it down to the present day, we have "churchianity" in mind. We have a great many folk who are professing Christians, who make a great deal of ordinances and ceremonies.

Theoretically, we see there is no value to it from the question of salvation. But we stress it so much that we take to ourselves some value that is not there. For, when we push an ordinance beyond what is written, we defeat the very thing for which it was written. And not only so, if we trust an ordinance, it means that we are not trusting the Son of God. Let's read:

9. Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also?

For we say, "FAITH WAS RECKONED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

10. How then was it reckoned? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;

11. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised; that righteousness might be reckoned to them,

12. And the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham, which he had while uncircumcised.

Let me stop here very briefly. When was Abraham justified? He was justified 14 years before he was circumcised.

You see what Paul is after? The Jew has divided

the human race into two groups, saying, "We are of the circumcision. Everybody else is of the uncircumcision. We are God's people, and the rest are outside of God's covenant. We are the people. We are of the circumcision."

Circumcision was a sign to Abraham of his union and relationship to God, that he was one with God, that God was his God. He was separated unto his God. Jehovah was his God. The Living God was his God. He had been called out by the God of glory, out of idolatry in Ur of the Chaldees. Now he could say, "In my being I have a sign, given to me by God, that I belong to Him. He is my God." And it is a sign to the outside world of his separation from the world unto God. It's a sign. That's all it is—an outward sign to the world and to Abraham that he was justified by faith in God.

The blessings which came upon the Jewish race were not through the faith of a circumcised man but through the faith of an uncircumcised man.

Or, if I might change the wording, the blessing which came upon the Jewish race was through the faith of one who was declared righteous while he was a Gentile. Indeed, if you want to follow it through, if the Jews are going to be saved at all, they have to come the Gentile way—that is, by faith.

Now, you remember, in Acts 15 there were some Jews who were Christians; and they wanted the Gentiles to come to Christ through Judaism. They wanted the Gentiles to be circumcised, to keep the law.

And, you remember, both Peter and James withstood that. And Paul withstood it. In fact, Peter said in verse 11—it was nice the way he put it—"But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

How's that?

By faith.

And here in Romans, Paul insists that no ordinance will ever take the place of Christ's work for us.

I'm going to repeat that. No ordinance or ceremony will ever take the place of Christ's work for you or for me.

It's an amazing thing. Here in professing Christendom how much merit we put in ordinance and ceremony, whether it be baptism or the Lord's Table or whatever it may be.

But we are not saved by baptism or by observing the Lord's Table.

One dear woman said to me one time, "Why, Brother Mitchell, I've been baptized seven times, and I would be baptized the eighth time if I had to."

Well, bless your dear heart. I don't care what you've done. It means nothing as far as that is concerned. I'm not opposed to baptism or to the Lord's Table.

What I'm saying is this, that the moment you add the least thing to salvation, however precious that thing is to you, you add to the work of Christ; and that moment you ruin God's good news.

I remember in Galatians 1:8-9, the curse, the anathema of God is upon anyone who brings to you any other message than this. And I repeat it. Nothing you can do in the way of religious observances of any kind can add or take away from the work of Christ.

Abraham was justified 14 years before he went through any circumcision, any rites of any kind. Abraham wasn't justified after he had this circumcision ceremony. No, he was justified 14 years before that.

"Well, Mr. Mitchell, do you mean to tell me that he would have been a saved man if he hadn't been circumcised?"

Of course. Of course. Circumcision was only a

sign to the world that Abraham was a man separated unto God.

Now, I'm asked this question quite often; and I know I'm talking to people who will disagree with me. That's your right; that's your prerogative. I wouldn't expect you to agree with me anyhow. But, brother, if you're going to come and argue with me, bring your Bible.

No soul was ever saved by faith in Christ plus any work or any ceremony.

"But, Mr. Mitchell," you say, "baptism is not a work."

Well, what is it? It's something you do, and what you do physically is works. Now baptism is a sign to the world of your separation unto God. It's a sign of your testimony that you are trusting in what Jesus Christ did in His death and burial and resurrection. To those who believe, it is a sign that you have received the Spirit of God.

Now, I'm not going into the question of water baptism—what it teaches or even the mode.

I'm after only one thing, and that is that baptism does not add one iota to your salvation in Christ. Christ is a perfect, complete, eternal Saviour; and His death on the cross is 100 percent. You can't add to it; and, if you try to add to the work of Christ, you spoil the Gospel. It is no longer good news.

God in just one swoop (as we have in chapters 1, 2 and 3) took men and put them all on the same plane. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All need the same Saviour and can be saved on only one ground—on the ground of grace through faith. It couldn't be any other way. If there is one God and all are sinners, then they've got to be saved by one way and that is by faith. It has to be either by works or by faith.

And, if it's by works, there can be no reason why Christ died. If it is by faith, then God does the whole business. You have to accept it by faith and revel in Him.

Then, because of your relationship to God, you ought to live like a Christian, like a child of God. This does not lead to license.

Listen, my friend, and I say it very bluntly because I have been accused of this—that, when you teach the grace of God, you teach man to go out and do anything he wants to. When a person makes that statement, he reveals to me his shallow thinking and his ignorance of the grace of God.

The more one sees the grace of God, the marvellous privilege that God has made for men, the more we want to please Him and the more we want to be obedient to His Word and submissive to His will.

And, whether you believe it or not, my friend, this is what the Book says; and I'm going to go by the Book. This is divine revelation. Justification is without works and by faith and without ceremonies. And Paul is insisting on this, you know. No ordinance of any kind will ever take the place of the work of Christ.

Now, you have God's promise in verses 13 to 16—God's promise to Abraham that he would be the heir of the world on one ground, the ground of faith.

Let's read those four verses.

13. For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that

he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

14. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;

15. For the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

16. For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

This dear man Abraham was called out from Ur of the Chaldees, from the house of idolatry.

He went out not knowing where he went; and, step by step, there came to his heart the revelation of God. And, one day, when God said (Genesis 15:5 and 22:17), "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars . . . so shall your descendants be," he believed God; and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Galatians 3:16 says that that seed was Christ. When his faith was coupled with Christ, he was justified.

But God went beyond that and declared him the inheritor of the whole world. God had made Adam and had given him dominion over all the works of His hands. Sin came in, and Adam lost the whole business. God found a man whom He called His friend, a man who walked with Him in all his tests and trials, in all his accomplishments and failures. And Abraham believed God.

He believed God in spite of everything.

And God said, "I've found my man. I've found the one through whom My Son shall come. I've found the one to whom I'm going to give the whole world. He is the heir of the world through faith."

Go now beyond this question of justification for a moment. The Jews said, "Abraham is our Father. We are God's people. We are going to rule the world. We are going to be the leading nation of the world." They could go back to the Old Testament to prove that.

Did Zechariah not say, "The time is coming when ten men from every nation from under heaven will lay hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew and say, 'We are going to go with you.'" Does it not say in Isaiah that men shall call Jews the priests of God, the ministers of God? Does it not say that the Word of God shall go forth from Jerusalem and all the nations of the earth shall be under His dominion?

Paul says, "Yes, but don't forget that this promise that Abraham would be the heir of the world, this in which you Jews are boasting, is not received through the law or through works or through ceremonies. It is received by faith."

Then, in the 14th verse of this fourth chapter, he makes this amazing statement, "For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise nullified." If it is by works, if it's by the law, the Jews have broken that law. They do not qualify. The Gentiles are outside the pale of the law, hence they cannot qualify. And if the Jews and the Gentiles cannot qualify, then God can't keep His Word. Hence, it must be by faith to the end that the promise might be made sure to the seed.

Now will you please notice that God's promise that Abraham would be the heir of the world was not on the ground of the law because he didn't have the law. It was not on the ground of works. It was not on the ground of ceremonies, but on the ground of one thing—faith. And this is ever the divine mode of blessing.

Friend, listen. Nothing pleases the Lord more than for people to believe Him. It just rejoices the

heart of God when you dare to believe what God says is true, whether you feel it or you don't feel it.

For example, do you have eternal life?

You say, "Yes."

Do you feel it?

You say, "No."

Are you justified?

"Yes."

Do you feel it?

"No."

Justification is just God's declaring the man who believes in His Son to be righteous. This is what God sees. I have eternal life because God says it and because I have put my trust in the One who has perfectly satisfied God.

"Do you mean, Mr. Mitchell, I will never die?"

That's right. I may leave my body behind, but the man who lives in this body is eternal. That's because we have put our trust in the Saviour. And Abraham became the heir of the world through faith. Adam lost it through sin, but God promised it to His friend Abraham on one ground—faith. And there are no barriers between.

Now, notice what it says in verses 14-16 (let me paraphrase): "If they which are of the law be heirs, then there is no need for faith and the promise is no good because the law worketh wrath—for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is by faith that it might be by grace to the end that the promise may be sure for all the seed."

If it's by the law, if it's by the works of the law, then there is no need for a promise.

Nobody can receive the promise if it is on the ground of the law.

The law just shuts everybody up.

Let me repeat the argument in verses 14 and 15 and 16. Verse 15 says the law brings about wrath. The law never saved anybody. It doesn't justify anybody. It doesn't help anybody. All the law could do is to curse. And, where there is no

law, there is no transgression. If there is no law to break, of course you can't transgress what is not there.

What is he saying? The Jew was the only one who had the law of Moses, but he broke that law. Hence, he was disqualified from being the heir of the world. The Gentiles didn't have the law; and, hence, they were automatically disqualified. They knew nothing about the law. So, if the inheritance is by law, then the promise of it is no good because nobody can keep the law. The Jews didn't keep it; the Gentiles didn't have it. Hence, there would be no heirs.

So, in verse 16, "For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace; in order that the promise may be certain."

Aren't you glad for that? He makes the thing sure to all—Jew and Gentile—who are of the faith of Abraham who is the father of us all.

In other words, Abraham is put up here as the sample faith. He dared to believe God in spite of everything else. He didn't add one iota of works to it.

So it is with us.

You see, you have three things in the chapter: 1) We are declared righteous by faith. It is without works, and it is without ceremonies. We have every sin forgiven. For God not to impute sin is to impute righteousness. He is not going to impute sin to us at any time.

And then, 2) we become the heir of the world through faith. That's why Romans 8:17 says, "And if children, heirs also, heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with Christ." So we have justification. We are forgiven; and 3) we have an inheritance, guaranteed not on the ground of works but on the ground of grace through faith. Or, as one has so well said,

Under the law with its terrible lash,
Learning, alas, how true;

But the more I tried,
The sooner I died,
While the law cried, "You, you, you."

Hopelessly still as the battle raged,
"O wretched man," I cried.
And deliverance I sought
By some penance bought,
While my soul cried, "I, I, I."

Then came a day when my struggling ceased
And trembling in every limb,
At the foot of the tree
Where One died for me,
I sobbed out, "Him, Him, Him."

So, let me repeat. Verse 16 says, "For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain, certain, certain to all the descendants."

We have this confidence because God has done it. Listen, friend, if this were by works—your works, religious works, moral works—you would never be sure that you had done enough. You would never have peace. You would never have assurance. No, to make the thing sure, God puts it entirely on the ground of His grace.

Let me digress just a moment. There is one word in verse 15 I must touch on since we have been discussing the question of works and the question of the law. I read: "For the Law brings about wrath."

You see, someone is going to ask the question, "Then why in the world, Mr. Mitchell, did God give the Jew the law of Moses? What is its purpose?"

You remember in John 1:17 that "the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." The law is the opposite of faith. We had that in Galatians 3:12: "The Law is not of faith." The law is the opposite of faith, and

God brought Israel out of Egypt on the ground of grace.

You take Exodus from chapter 1 right on down to the beginning of chapter 19. God brought Israel to Himself entirely on the ground of His grace. Then in chapters 19 and 20, He gave the law. Why? Because their confidence was in the flesh. They did not appreciate the mercy and grace and love of God. Indeed, they told God, “All that the Lord our God has said we will do.” You have them boasting what they would do for God.

But, notice, in Exodus 19 and 20 that, when the law was given, you have darkness and terror. In fact, they were so scared, they told Moses to go before God. Hebrews 12:21 says that even Moses was scared.

Brother, I’ll tell you there is no joy in the law. Haven’t you heard it thunder? It’s a terror. There is no mercy in law—not even in the law of Moses. So, why did God give the law? Galatians tells me in chapter 3:19 that the law was an “added” thing until Christ should come. From Abraham to Moses they were under the grace, under the promise of God. And then God gave them the law, and from Moses to Christ the law was an added thing. And why was it given?

Let me give you a few reasons.

First, the law was given to make sin exceedingly sinful. That is, the law was given to give a distinctive character to sin. You take this 15th verse of Romans 4—the law brings about wrath. Where no law is, there is no transgression. Transgression means missing the mark. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not under the law. They were standing on the promise of God. There was no law given.

Now that doesn’t mean they didn’t sin.

Though they were frail and failed God, they knew God. They had peace with God. But the law brings about sin.

You take Romans 7:7-11. Let me condense it. "I would not have come to know sin," says Paul, "if the law had not said, 'Thou shalt not covet;' and that which I thought was going to give me life, behold it brought death." In Romans 5:12, you have the same thing.

James says the law was like a looking glass, but you don't wash your face with the glass. The glass shows you just where all the dirt is and what you look like. The law does exactly the same thing.

And, second, the law is the strength of sin. In 1 Corinthians 15:56-57, the law is not the strength of righteousness or of goodness. The law is the strength of sin. "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Do you remember Romans 6:14, "Sin shall not be master over you"?

Why?

Because you are not under the law but under grace. You put men under the law, my friend, and you put them under the dominion of sin. You can't separate the law and sin. The law was given to show us what sin really is. It was never given to save. It never forgives. It has no mercy.

And, then the third thing, the law was given to bring us to Christ. You have this in Galatians 3:24. The law is effective only as it drives the sinner to the Saviour. The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. And having come to Christ, says the Apostle Paul, we are no longer under the schoolmaster.

Now, to sum up, that's why the law was given—to make sin exceedingly sinful. It is the strength of sin. It was given to bring us to Christ. The only way the law is effective is to drive us to Christ.

What does the law do then? First, the law demands perfection. You remember James 2:10 says that he who breaks the law in one point is guilty of all. Not much chance, is there? A man can live 68, 90 years of age and not break the law; and then, one day, he just breaks the law once. Too bad. He is under the sentence of death, and there are no extenuating circumstances. The law demands perfection.

“Why, Mr. Mitchell,” you say, “there is no man who is perfect except Jesus Christ.”

That’s right. And the law demands perfection. Listen to Galatians 3:10: “Cursed is every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.” We are going to use that verse again in a little while. They were obligated to do the whole law, not just part of it. The law doesn’t say that, if you do the best you can, you will have some mercy. The law doesn’t have any mercy to give you.

The second thing the law does in this verse, Romans 4:15, is that “the law brings about wrath.” It doesn’t work salvation. It doesn’t work peace. It doesn’t work justification. It doesn’t give you forgiveness. The law works wrath.

Third, the law is a ministration of death. You have this in 2 Corinthians 3:7 to 18 and in Romans 7:5, 12 and 13. The law says you must die. And Paul says, “That which I thought was going to give me life, behold it brought death.”

And the fourth thing that the law can do is curse. We have already mentioned that in Galatians 3:10 to 13. It curses whom? Those who continue not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

And, you know, man doesn’t believe that. He just goes on trying to keep the law to gain favor with God. He doesn’t believe the law curses. The law is the ministration of death. The law works wrath. The law is the strength of sin. It makes sin

exceedingly sinful.

Well, can't it do anything?

No. I'll give you four things about this, too.

The law cannot save you. You remember in Romans 3:20, Paul says, "By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin." The law cannot save. You find that in Galatians 3:11.

Second, the law is not of faith. We had that in Galatians 3:12. You have it also in Romans 11:6. One could multiply these passages. I am just picking them out to let you see the truth.

And then, third, the law cannot give life. Paul could say in Galatians 3:21, "For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law."

And then, last, the law cannot perfect God's people. That is, it cannot fit men for the presence of God. In Hebrews 7:19, we read the fact that "the Law made nothing perfect, and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." The law made nothing perfect.

Oh, listen, friend. When you and I accept the Saviour, we are saved apart from the law entirely—we are absolutely outside of its jurisdiction. The law has no authority to save, help or forgive you.

And the moment you and I, as sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, put ourselves under the law of Moses, then, my friend, you have to face the fact: "Cursed is every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." All it can do is to curse.

No, thank God, we are delivered from the law and its curse, as Galatians 3:13 says: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree."

When Jesus Christ died in your place and my place, when God's Son bore your sin and my sin,

and I say this reverently, all the holy law of God could do was to curse Him because it is written, “Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree.”

Thank God, we are delivered from its curse. And we are also delivered from its authority. That’s what you have in Romans 8:3 and Galatians 4:4-5 when God sent His Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” Do you remember that?

In the fulness of time, God sent forth His son, born of a woman, born under the law so that He might free us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us—that He might deliver us from the law and all that pertains to it—that we might receive the adoption of sons.

I’m talking about Galatians 3 and 4 and Titus 3:5—“He saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”

I repeat it, the law has no mercy. It never did have any mercy for transgressors.

Friend, did you ever break the law of God?

“Why,” you say, “everyone has.”

Then they are under the curse.

“Oh, but Mr. Mitchell, I’m going to do better from now on.”

You are too late, brother. You have already broken it. The law says you must die. If you break the law in one point, you are guilty of all and you must die. That is the administration of death. Either you die or somebody else dies for you.

Oh, listen. The good news from God to you is that God the Son came, bore your sins and died your death so that you and I might be set free.

That’s why I like Romans 10:3-4. You remember—the Jews, “not knowing about God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law.” He is the end of the law, not the beginning of the law. He is

“the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

May I make a strong statement? The law of God was never given as a means of life to the unsaved, nor was it given as a rule of life to the saved. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. And, as Galatians 3:24 says, “The Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ;” and, having come to Christ, we are no longer under the schoolmaster.

My friend, to go back to the law, either for salvation or even as a rule of life, denies the sufficiency of the work of Christ. To put anybody under the law, Christian or non-Christian, is to put him under a curse. And as Galatians 5:4 says, “You who are seeking to be justified by the law; you have fallen from grace.”

Either Christ is sufficient to save us and keep us or He is not a Saviour at all.

I'm putting it right on the line.

It's about time we Christians, especially we Christians, got down to the place where we can see that, when the Lord Jesus Christ came, He absolutely and perfectly completed the work of redemption. And the resurrection is the guarantee of it.

And for one who professes Christ as Saviour to go back under the law, even as a rule of life, is to deny the sufficiency of the work of Christ.

You put yourself under the curse, and you fall from grace.

Indeed, I might say this, that the death of Jesus Christ has forever severed the relationship between the believer and the law.

If I were to take up this question in the Book of Galatians, which I am not, I would point out that the death of Jesus Christ has severed our relationship to sin and to the world and to our religion, to self, to the curse of the law, to the law itself and to the flesh and its lusts.

If we turn from the Levitical priesthood of the

Old Testament to Christ, then we must turn from the covenant of law to the covenant of grace.

I would remind you of Hebrews 7:11-12 where we read what the purpose of the priesthood was.

“If perfection was through the Levitical priesthood, (for on the basis of it the people received the Law,) what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek” or for the law’s being changed? Or the priesthood’s being changed.

Where there is a necessity, there is also a change of covenant.

And, if I change from Levi and Moses to Christ, then I change from law to grace.

He speaks of this in the 12th verse: “For when the priesthood is changed” from the Aaronic priesthood to Christ’s priesthood—if I change the priesthood—then “of necessity there takes place a change of law also.”

For I read farther on in verse 19, “The Law made nothing perfect, and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.”

Therefore (Romans 4:16), “it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants” (Jew or Gentile, apart from the law and ceremonies of works and all the rest of it).

Christ is our perfect—blessed be His name—our perfect Saviour.

Now then, we come to verses 17 to 25 and I ask the question again, “What is justifying faith?”

IT IS FAITH IN THE GOD OF RESURRECTION (4:17-25)

How do we know when we have the right kind of faith? You remember it says in Hebrews 11:6, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him.”

Now Abraham is given to us again as a sample.

He is the father of those who believe. And if you want his history, you have to go from Genesis 12 right on down to chapter 25:8 when he was taken away at 175 years of age.

Abraham was not the only one who had faith at that time. You remember in chapter 14 you have Melchizedek, who was the priest of El Elyon, the Most High God. But Abraham's faith is given to us as the sample faith.

Look again at Luke 19:5-9 where Jesus said of Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham."

And what did Abraham do? Abraham believed in the God who made alive, who quickened the dead. He believed in the God of resurrection. Now, that's really what it says.

17. (As it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

18. In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."

19. And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;

20. Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,

21. And being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.

22. Therefore also IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

23. Now not for his sake only was it written, that "IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM,"

24. But for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,

25. He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

Now, the great thing about Abraham was that he believed in God that quickeneth the dead.

He believed in the God of resurrection. He considered not his own body now dead. That is, he was conscious of a physical impossibility; yet he rose above it in faith and believed he was going to have a boy. He looked away from his own physical infirmity and stood upon the Word of God.

“Whatever the circumstances, whatever anybody else says, I am going to believe in God.” He didn’t waver one little bit. He dared to believe God because God had spoken.

Now here, when God said, “You are going to be the father of a boy,” he had hope. But when we come to chapter 16 in Genesis, you have where Sarah, who was barren, believed that Abraham could still have a boy; and so she gave him Hagar, her handmaid, through whom Ishmael was born.

God said, “This is not the boy. This is not the heir.” And then I read in Genesis chapter 17, the first verse, “Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old . . .” From a physical viewpoint, there was no hope at all of Sarah’s having a baby or of Abraham’s having one either.

But God said, “I’m going to make your seed like the stars of heaven.” God says, “I’m going to give you a boy. You are going to have an heir.”

And Abraham believed God in spite of his body. He believed beyond the physical in a God who could keep His word.

Oh, friend, do you?

Or are you still trusting what you can do?

Way back in your old heart, are you saying, “Oh, if I could only live a little better, if I only could go through certain circumstances, ceremonies, join some church, be a better man, be a better woman, maybe the Lord will—”

No, friend. No, friend.

There must be faith in the God of resurrection. When Abraham had come to the end of himself, he had no hope. Sarah came to the end of herself. She had no hope. Abraham still believed God. He was not going to waver.

Circumstances said, "You will never have a boy."

All they knew about the physical said, "You can't have a boy."

God said, "I'm going to give you a boy"; and Abraham believed God. This is the sample faith. We must have this same kind of faith.

"But, Mr. Mitchell, I don't have the faith Abraham had," you say.

I didn't ask you if you had the same amount of faith. You have to have the same kind of faith.

Let me quote from I Peter 1:3 and 21 where Peter says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. . . . Who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

Abraham just believed that God would do what He said He would do.

The disciples and even the Lord Himself never spoke of the cross without resurrection. The cross was a tragedy apart from resurrection. The blessing of justification is secured by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He was delivered up because of my offences, yours and mine. He bore your sins and my sins. He bore the penalty.

How do I know He put my sins away?

God raised Him from the dead. That's why, when you come to the Book of Acts, you have nearly 30 times when the apostles proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Friend, if there is no resurrection, there is no salvation. But if He be raised from the dead, then His work at the cross absolutely, perfectly satisfied God.

And I'm going to say what I've said so often: The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is God's personal proof to you that Christ Jesus has put away your sins. He has satisfied God. God is now free to take anybody who puts his trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and not only forgive his sins, but also cover him with the righteousness of Christ.

Now, let me give you a little Bible study.

We are justified by God. This is chapter 3. This is the source of our justification.

We are justified by grace in Romans 3:24, "Being justified as a gift by His grace." That's the principle of it.

We are justified by faith, as you have in Romans 5:1, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God." This is the method of receiving justification.

We are justified by His blood, the ground of justification. Romans 5:9 says, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."

Resurrection is the proof of it as you have in Romans 4:25. "He was raised because of our justification." Now, let me repeat it quickly. We are justified by God. That's the source of it.

We are justified by grace. That's the principle of it.

We are justified by faith. That's the method of it.

We are justified by blood. That's the ground of it.

And resurrection is the proof of it.

As 1 Corinthians 15:17 says, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless." We haven't anything. We just haven't anything.

Now, that raises another question.

In chapter 3:21-31, we found that justification is by faith and in chapter 4 we have been dealing

with what sample faith is.

We are justified by faith without works, without ceremonies, without the law.

We are justified by faith in the God of resurrection. The very foundation of our Christian faith is based upon not only the death of Jesus Christ but the resurrection. "If Christ has not been raised . . . you are still in your sins. . . . We are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:17, 19).

But now there is another question raised.

"All right, Mr. Mitchell, I believe in the God of resurrection. I believe that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. And I believe this One, who bore my sins, put them away. God raised Him from the dead as the guarantee that He is satisfied with that work. But suppose I lost my faith? Is it possible for me to lose faith?"

Lose your faith?

Why don't we change the question?

Is it possible for a real Christian, one who has really trusted the Saviour, to lose his faith?

Now the answer to that question is given to us in Romans 5:1-11.

I wish you would read that through, and in our next chapter we will be taking up this guarantee—the guarantee of faith.

Faith in the God of resurrection cannot be destroyed.

CHAPTER FIVE

A wee foretaste.

I would like to give you a little bird's-eye picture of what's ahead in chapters 5 through 8.

In chapter 5, the death of Jesus Christ severs the relationship between the believer and Adam's race; and it severs the believer from the bondage of death. In chapter 6, the death of Christ severs the believer from the dominion of sin as a master, as the principle of operation in his life. In chapter 7, the death of Christ severs the believer from any relationship to the law; and then in chapter 8, we learn what it means to the believer to be in Christ Jesus. That chapter starts with "no condemnation" and ends with "no separation."

THE GUARANTEE OF FAITH (5:1-11)

The question is now raised, "What if we lose our faith?" This question is answered in chapter five. In the first five verses of chapter 5, Paul gives us the fact that the tests and trials of life do not destroy faith. And then from verse 6 to verse 11, he tells us faith is never destroyed because it is guaranteed by the love of God. Faith can never be destroyed because tests only purify it. Now, let's read verse 1:

Faith is never destroyed by tests (5:1-5)

1. Therefore having been justified by faith (being declared righteous by faith), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse 1, our faith is a past, settled thing. God has declared us righteous. In verse 2, we have a present experience.

2a. Through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand.

And then we have our future at the end of the verse:

2b. And we exult in hope of the glory of God.

It is then that we shall see the culmination of the purpose of God in redeeming men and women by simple faith in His Son.

Haven't you noticed as you've gone through your Bible that every message from God to man always starts on the ground of peace or "fear not." When Gabriel comes, when the angels come, when God comes in the Old Testament and comforts the hearts of men, the very first thing mentioned is peace.

Now, because of Christ, there's no longer any enmity between God and us. There's no longer a barrier between us. There's no longer sin between us. God sees us in His Son, absolutely righteous.

All that which was between God and you and me has been put away by the work of our precious Saviour at the cross of Calvary. We have peace with God. God is perfectly satisfied with what His Son has done. And can I put it this way? God is at perfect rest concerning His people. Hence we can have peace. God looks at Christ, not at our failures. He sees us as righteous in His Son. And this gives us peace.

Now, in the second verse, we have obtained our introduction by faith. Or, if you take the words "by faith" out (and in some versions it is omitted), you have "through whom also we have obtained our introduction into this grace."

Or, if I may give you the revised text, “by whom also we have had our access into this grace.”

It is not something we are brought into; it is something we are already in. It is not something for the future; it is a simple fact for now. “We have access into this grace in which we stand.” Having been justified, having been declared righteous, we have our access; we are already in this grace. It’s “in which we stand,” not wherein we move around and stride about and get out of. This is the grace in which we stand.

The book of Hebrews is sometimes called “The Gospel of Access.” In Christ we have a new and living way whereby we come into the very presence of God at any time, under any circumstance.

Why? Because God is not looking at my failures; He’s looking at His Son when He sees you and me.

I remember a friend of mine, a preacher of the Gospel, who just loved to preach. He was a very good preacher, and he became a very fine teacher. And when he would preach on the coming of the Lord, he would get so blessed it was as if he had one foot in heaven already.

But he wasn’t sure that he would be saved tomorrow. You’ve met those folk, haven’t you? They’re saved today, and they hope the Lord will come before tomorrow comes so they won’t fail God lest they be lost.

And, one day, I said to him, “You know, I just love to hear you preach on the coming of the Lord.”

He said to me, “Brother Jack, I just love to preach it to you, too.”

I said, “I don’t know why you should love to preach it because you’re so inconsistent. You are rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, but you’re scared stiff you won’t be saved tomorrow. He might come tomorrow when you’re not saved. Why do

you rejoice today when you don't know if you'll be there tomorrow?"

He looked at me kind of funny, and he said, "Now I am in a predicament. What shall I preach? I'm going to give up one or the other."

I said, "Why don't you get straightened out on what Christ has done for you on the cross? And I suggest that you get into the book of Romans and get straightened out a little wee bit."

We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Look at these three things, will you. We have peace with God; we have our access into this grace in which we stand; and we look forward to the future—we exult in hope of the glory of God. What a folly to rejoice in the glory of God if you're not sure you're going to be there.

So in verse 1, we have "having been justified." We have been declared righteous on the ground of faith. We have peace with God as our present possession. We have access into His presence because our standing in His wonderful grace is a settled thing from God's viewpoint. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God when we shall be glorified with the Saviour.

That marvelous day is coming when God is going to reveal to all created intelligences in the whole universe who His children are. He's going to be glorified in them and they in Him. That's what Paul means in Romans 8:18 when he says, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

In 2 Corinthians 4:17, he says, "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." Colossians 3:4 says, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." And one could go on.

Even John speaks of this in 1 John 3:2-3 when he says that, when we see Him, "we shall be like

Him” and everyone who has this hope set on Him purifies himself “just as He is pure.” Or take Romans 8:29, when Paul says that God has determined that we shall be “conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.”

What I’m talking about here is, in this second verse, our present experiences are settled. We stand before God in all the righteousness of Christ, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It’s a wonderful thing. Did you ever get a taste of the glory? Why you have missed something if you have not. There isn’t a thing on the face of the earth that could buy it. The world doesn’t know a thing about it. It’s a little touch of the glory, of coming into the presence of God where you get a taste of the glory of Him who is our Saviour and everything fades out of the picture—time and everything else. Nothing down here is worth looking at.

That’s what Paul meant in Philippians 3:8 when he saw Him in His righteousness; and he said, “I count all things—all things—to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” I am willing to suffer the loss of all things just to know Him, just to see Him, to be found in Him, in His righteousness.

Let’s get our hearts occupied with this wonderful God and with His wonderful Saviour, who has made such a marvelous provision, who has declared us righteous, who grants us peace, who stands us in this grace forever, who gives us access into His presence and into His grace. Let us really rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Are you rejoicing in hope of the glory of God?

“Oh, but Mr. Mitchell,” you say, “I’m going through some real troubles.”

Are you? Well, listen to what Paul says.

3. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

4. And perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

5. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Now, here is a wonderful thing. In verse 2, we exult in hope of the glory of God. That's future. Today, we glory in our tribulations.

Pardon me, I think I should read verse 3 the way most people would like it to read. "And not only this, but we growl in our tribulations, knowing that tribulations disturb me; and, when I am so disturbed, I am not worth living with."

Is that what the Book says? Of course not. But this is the way some people think it reads. No. We not only rejoice in hope of the glory of God, but we rejoice—we glory—in tribulations also.

Now what is Paul talking about here? In verses 3 to 5, faith is never destroyed by tests. In fact, if you go to 1 Peter 1:6-8, you will find that faith is indestructible. He is speaking of the manifold temptations that have come upon the earth to try you, "that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him."

Faith is purified by tests. It is never destroyed by tests.

And may I say in this connection, God always limits the tests. He will not test you beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13). Now everyone of us has temptations and trials.

You think, "Well, I've got so many tests and trials that nobody goes through what I go through."

Oh? Listen, my friend. You can always find somebody who is in a hotter, tighter place than you are.

I saw such a man, one time, years ago. He had been eight or ten years on his back, and he suffered excruciating pain. In fact, the doctor told me he should have been dead six or eight times, according to medical science. And that fellow—I've seen him when he had sores from the top of his head to the sole of his feet, inside and outside—and he never complained.

In fact, one day, I took a missionary to see him. And the missionary, of course, went in there with the purpose of cheering him up.

But, when we came out of that sickroom, he said to me, "Mr. Mitchell, that room is a service station. I thought, when I went in there, that I would go to cheer him up and help him. Instead of that, he helped me. Why, that fellow is living so close to God without a growl and without a complaint that he is just full of the love of the Saviour."

And we feel so sorry for ourselves, so self-sympathetic. You know that most of us do.

Off and on, I used to go to see my friend. I forgot about all my trials and tests and my little aches and pains, whatever they were. Here was a man just glorying in his infirmities. In fact, he was living continually in anticipation of the coming of the Lord so that this old body of his would be redeemed and freed from all disease and pain and suffering.

And I remember his saying to me, "You know, Dr. Mitchell, I'm going to beat you to glory. Think of it! I'm going to get there ahead of you so that, when you come, I'll be there to greet you. And I'll not have this old body that I have today."

Brother, I tell you, I came out of that place fully ashamed of myself. I had been so self-occupied. I

was ashamed of myself. Here was a man living in the presence of God, radiating the sweetness and the love and the aroma of Christ in spite of his suffering.

Paul says, "We glory in tribulations." And you ought to read the 12th chapter of 2 Corinthians and see what Paul endured. Remember, he could say in 2 Corinthians 4:17 that these light afflictions are just for a moment. They are working for us. That's why I say faith is never destroyed by tests. Faith is purified by tests. Faith is indestructible.

By the way, God did not promise that He would deliver us from the tests, but that He would bring us through the tests.

He is always with us in the tests, as Hebrews 13:5 says: "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." Anyone will be encouraged with that. Read the third chapter of Daniel about the three Hebrew children who were in the fiery furnace. God was with them in that furnace.

Yes, but someone says to me, "Mr. Mitchell, I've had more tests and trials since I became a Christian than I ever had before."

Why, sure. You ought to expect that. Before you were a Christian, you didn't have any enemies. Now that you've taken Christ as your Saviour, you have the world, the flesh and the devil opposed to you. You can expect tests. That's how faith grows. That's how faith becomes strong, but it's never destroyed.

And other people tell me, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, God doesn't test me like He does Mrs. So-and-So. She always seems to have problems and tests and trials, and I don't have that."

Well, listen. I wouldn't glory in that too much if I were you. It may be the Lord can't trust you with tests and trials. It isn't everybody who can go through tests and afflictions and sorrows without

breaking down. God knows whom He can test, whom He can try.

What I'm getting to your heart is that faith is never destroyed by tests. Faith is indestructible.

You know, many years ago, I worked in the machine shops. Sometimes we had to make bearings for some of the farmers' machinery, and we would take old babbitt (some of you may appreciate this). We would take old babbitt and put it in a pot and then put the pot in the forge. And we would melt that babbitt down and begin to skim it. Now, we wanted to make a good bearing. We didn't want any refuse in it or whatever you have.

So, as the metal came to a boil, on the top of the metal would be all the stuff you couldn't use—stuff that would hinder a good bearing. So we kept skimming it off until we saw the blues and the greens and the yellows on top of the metal. There was no more scum there. Then you poured out the metal, and you had a good bearing.

Now, faith is put in the crucible, not to be destroyed but to skim off the stuff that you don't want, stuff that is a hindrance to your walk with God or to your service or to your growth in the grace of God. We are down here in school, and our faith must be tested and tried and purified. Read the Old Testament. Read the whole Bible.

Take the apostles of Jesus Christ. See how they suffered. Take the Lord's saying to Peter in Luke 22:31-32, "Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

And Peter's faith didn't fail in the test. Peter failed miserably, that's true. You read that chapter, and you remember poor old Peter. He was so self-confident. He had to get rid of that. He slept in the garden when he should have prayed. And, you remember, he manifested the flesh when he

chopped the fellow's ear off. Then he followed afar off. And then he sat down with the enemies of Christ. He denied the Lord with oaths and curses.

Peter failed miserably, that's true. But his faith did not fail. Do you know why? Because Jesus said, "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail." The same man who couldn't stand on his two feet before a girl and who denied His Lord with oaths and curses, we find a few weeks afterward preaching to the whole nation of Israel and accusing them of the death of Jesus Christ.

When Peter went through the testing, do you know what he lost? His self-confidence and his cowardice. When God puts you and me through the crucible, He has something there He wants to get rid of.

Paul says, "I know what God is doing. He is taking the rough edges off me."

Just like when Solomon built the temple—they quarried the stone, and the stone was chipped and shaped and ground and polished down in the quarry. There was no noise of hammer or saws in the temple. And when the stone was ready to fit into the place it had in the temple, it was taken out and put there without any noise.

You and I are down here in the quarry, down here on earth. And the Lord is quarrying us out. He has saved us, He has redeemed us, He has justified us, He has covered us with His righteousness, He has given us eternal life, He has made us the children of God. We are bound for glory, but we have to go on living down here in this scene. What for? Because He wants our faith to be purified. How is it purified? Through tests and trials.

Paul says, "We also exult, we glory in our tribulations." Why? Because "tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope: and hope does not disappoint; because the love of God has been

poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

Each time we have a test, something is added to our faith, not subtracted. Tribulation works patience.

You say, “I asked the Lord for patience, Mr. Mitchell, and all I got was trouble.”

Yes, that’s true. I remember asking the Lord for that once.

A friend said, “What are you praying for today?”

I said, “I am praying for patience.”

He said, “Don’t pray for that. God will send you tribulation.”

I said, “Man, I have enough tribulation as it is.”

He said, “Well, when you talk to the Lord, don’t ask for patience. Ask Him for grace to go through the tribulation. Glory in the tribulation because tribulation works perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint.”

Oh, the wonderful thing!

From tribulation to perseverance to proven character to hope. And now, indeed, the abiding love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us. Faith is not mentioned again in Romans until you come to chapter 9, verse 30. Not only our faith but our hope (as we see here) is also strengthened through tests.

Now we let us look more deeply into verse 5.

5. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Here you have the eternal, abiding, wonderful love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us. This is the first time in the book of Romans that the Holy Spirit’s name is mentioned.

Indeed, it is not mentioned again until chapter 8. But we find in this verse that the Spirit of God is the agent of God's love to us. The Spirit of God assures us of God's divine love for His people.

Remember, it is the love of an eternal God, a love that never fades, a love that is always sure, a love that is eternal. Just like you have in Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

God's love guarantees our faith (5:6-11)

And this leads us to the next passage—verses 6 to 11. God's love guarantees the faith of His people. God gave you that faith as a gift in the first place. You have that in Ephesians 2:8 and 9. It is His eternal, wonderful, unchanging love that we're talking about here. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.

And I tell you, if I might just say this, the more the Spirit of God controls your life and my life, the more is manifested the love of God to people. It is divine love.

And it's an amazing thing, this. You can love people you've hated.

I've heard people say, "I love So-and-So, but I don't like him."

Well, that's not a good statement. If we Christians can't manifest genuine love, then there is something wrong with us. There is something wrong with what we believe.

If you and I really are indwelt by the Spirit of God, which was given unto us as this verse says, then we can go to that Christian we have something against and swallow our pride and try to make things straight. This is love; and the first thing you know, you will be surprised how lovely that person is.

It's amazing how a little manifestation of love to the other fellow, divine love manifested in you and

me, will change him. The one you thought you didn't like turns out to be a wonderful person.

Now, starting with verse 6 and running through verse 11, we have the fact that this love of God, which has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, guarantees our faith.

Let's look at it for a few moments.

6. For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

7. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

8. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

10. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

11. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Now mark, please. Verse 5 is the door to verses 6 through 11. The love of God—not our love for Him but His love for us—has been shed abroad in our hearts, and it is the guarantee of our faith. If your faith and my faith were guaranteed by our love for Him, brother, I don't know whether I would have much peace or not.

Would you?

Let's be realistic about it. If my faith is to be guaranteed by my love for the Saviour and I grow cold or indifferent or my fellowship is broken and I lose that first fervency of love for the Saviour, does that mean I lose my faith, too? Oh, no.

Listen. His love guarantees your faith. When did God start to love you and me?

Verse 6: While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for whom? For the ungodly.

Verse 8: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Verse 10: "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son."

Notice the condition you and I were in when the Lord loved us and manifested that love by dying for us. In verse 6 we were ungodly. We were without strength. We were absolutely helpless. We were in spiritual and moral bankruptcy; yet He loved us enough to die for us. Oh, I could stay here for a long while.

In verse 8, when we were yet sinners and still active in our sins, He demonstrated His love to us and gave us heaven's best.

I'll tell you, my friend, the death of the sinless Son of God gives full proof of God's eternal blessed love for you and for me. You see, man must have a motive for his love. But God doesn't. His motive was in Himself.

In verse 10, we are enemies. "For if, while we were enemies"—we were alienated from God by wicked works. We were enemies, yet He loved us enough to reconcile us to Himself.

When? When we were still active sinners.

Sometimes people say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, if I were only a better man, I could accept the Saviour."

No, God didn't die for better men. God didn't die for good people. God didn't die for religious people either. God died for sinners. You and I have to take our place as sinners needing a Saviour. It's when we see our lost condition that we come to the Saviour and receive the divine provision for our need.

How does God see us? Without strength, ungodly, active sinners, active enemies of God. But He still loves us.

How do I know? "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever

believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Oh, what a love!

Look at 1 John 4:10 and allow me to give you that verse again. “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His (only begotten) Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” He loved you. He loved me when we were helpless, ungodly sinners. We were opposed to God. We were enemies of God, and He still loved us.

A friend of mine one time was holding some camp meetings near Detroit, Michigan, and he had a good streamer put across the street. It said: “Hell is peopled with religious folk.” And the preacher took him to task about that. But, my friend, it’s true. Nobody gets to heaven because he is good in himself or religious. There must be a personal relationship with the Saviour. He loved you and me enough to die for us when we were helpless, hopeless and ungodly.

My friend, may I go on to say this blessed love of God, this divine love which provided a Saviour, guarantees your faith.

Look at verse 7. “For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God . . .” Men may die for some good cause, but God commends His love to sinners, to the ungodly, to His enemies by sending His Son to die for us.

Verse 9: “Much more then, having now been justified (declared righteous) by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.” If God declared me righteous, when I was ungodly, when I put my trust in Him, what will He not do for me now that I am righteous in His Son?

Much more!

Much more! We are the objects, friend, of divine love. Like the Apostle John said of our Lord in John 13:1, “Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

And allow me to quote again from Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." The amazing thing to me is that that verse is found in the prophet Jeremiah. Remember, God said to him, "Don't you pray for this people, for I won't listen to you." But He still loved those people. He still loved them though they must go into captivity and come under the judgment of God.

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved."

The question is raised, "Will I have a place of safety in the wrath of God?"

Yes, "much more, much more." Look at verse 10. If God loved me enough to reconcile me to Himself when I was His enemy, what will He not do now that I am His child? "Much more, having been reconciled, I shall be saved by His life."

What I am trying to get to your heart, friend—and forgive me if I emphasize this point by repeating it—is that if God loved us enough to die for us when we were ungodly and helpless and enemies, loved us enough to save us, to give us faith to believe in His Son, to draw us to Himself and to bring us nigh by the blood of His Son, what will He not do for us now that we are His children?

What will He not do for us now that we are righteous in His Son?

What will He not do for us now, having forgiven us every trespass?

Oh, how wonderful it is to know that we have a place of certainty, a place of assurance. We are the objects of the divine love of God.

Oh, the marvel of it all, that ungodly, helpless, hopeless enemies could be so transformed that we become special objects of the affection and devotion of the living God. Who wouldn't put his trust in such a Saviour? Who wouldn't?

Now He doesn't stop there. Verse 10: "Much more . . . we shall be saved by His life." What life? Not His life on earth, surely. No, His life now. His

present life. Not only does He love us and guarantee that our faith will continue, but His present life in heaven guarantees it.

Take Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 26, “But now once at the consummation (at the end of the age) He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

Or Hebrews 7, verse 25, which says, “Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

Or take John 14:19 where the Lord Jesus said, “Because I live, you shall live also.”

Or take 1 John 2:1 which says, “My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins (talking about Christians), if anyone sins—he is lost now? No!)—we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

Oh, listen, we have One pleading our cause.

You know, way back in the Old Testament, Job cried out, “Oh, that I had somebody who could put his hand on God and put his hand on me and bring us together.” This is what God has done. He has made the provision for Jesus Christ to be our Mediator and then to be our Advocate.

He has put His hand on God, and He has put His hand on us. He has brought us together into union with Himself, and He advocates our case. We are down here in frailty and weakness and sometimes in failure, and He never gets tired of praying for us.

He guarantees our faith. He guarantees our life in Himself. He guarantees our forgiveness because He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

His work on the cross guarantees justification, forgiveness, relationship.

His work on the throne guarantees our faith, guarantees that we will stand before God in all the perfection and all the beauty of Christ.

Oh, what a Saviour we have! What a God we have!

So we find in Romans 5:11: “And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation”—we now experience it. He not only made reconciliation for His enemies, but—having now become His children—we revel in the reconciliation.

What do we mean by reconciliation? God has made peace for sinners. We were alienated, enemies in our minds by wicked works; and God at the cross made peace for us. He removed the barrier. And now, by simple faith, we take Christ as our Saviour; and we enjoy our reconciliation in Him.

Please notice three grounds of rejoicing.

In verse 2, we “exult in hope of the glory of God.”

In verse 3, we “exult in our tribulations.”

And in verse 11, we exult in God because we are reconciled. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God because we stand in His grace; and we rejoice now in the fact that, being reconciled, we are full of joy.

Oh, what a wonderful thing.

In chapter 3, our mouths are shut. We stood before God guilty.

Now in chapter 5, every believer's mouth is open. We rejoice in the glory of God. We glory in tribulation, and we rejoice because we now have received the reconciliation.

Friend, we need to be filled with joy and rejoicing because we have an all-sufficient, wonderful Saviour.

Oh, isn't it wonderful to become the objects of divine love of such a God who loves us with an everlasting, perfect love?

**GOD'S WAY OF SANCTIFYING SAINTS
(5:12-8:39)**

Now we come to the second main division of the book of Romans.

The first division was God's way of declaring righteous the ungodly who believe in Jesus Christ.

Now we have the second: God's way of sanctifying saints. Having taught the great doctrine of justification, Paul now prepares to leave this great truth and enter into the sphere of sanctification.

We are going to find, as we finish chapter 5, verses 12 to 21, that this means more than forgiveness. It means more than being declared righteous. It means the impartation of a new life.

If I may be allowed to repeat once again—in chapter 5, we are delivered from death; we are delivered from Adam's race which is under the sentence of death.

And the ground of that deliverance is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In chapter 6, we are delivered from sin as a master, as a principal of operation in our lives. And this is also on the ground of the death of our Saviour.

In chapter 7, we are delivered from the law as a rule of life and from its bondage. And this is always on the ground of the death and resurrection of Christ.

When we come to chapter 8, that marvelous chapter, we are in Christ Jesus.

And what safer place can we be than there?

DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH (5:12-21)

Now, let's go back to chapter 5. Paul is discussing the question of what we were in Adam and what we are now in Christ. He is talking about two Adams and two races of people. In this passage we have what we were in Adam and what we are now in Christ. We are either seen in Adam or we are seen in Christ. The first thing I want you to mark

is that death reigns from verses 12 to 14, and the whole human family has been affected.

Death reigns (5:12-14)

12. Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

13. For until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

14. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's offense, who is a type of Him who was to come.

When Adam sinned, death came in and affected the whole race. Sin was here. You can't get away from the fact of sin. What caused the flood? Sin. What caused the Tower of Babel and the dispersion upon the earth? Sin. What caused God to confound their language? Sin. This is sin before the law was given.

But sin was here and death was here; and, wherever you find death, you find sin. Sin is a deadly thing. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death;" and, wherever you turn, we see these two things—sin and death. You can't get away from their fruitage. I don't care what part of the world you go to, you have the same thing—sin and death.

Tell me. Why does a baby die? It may live to be two or three or four months of age. It may only live a week. It may only live a day.

And, I'll tell you, having been a pastor for a great many years, one of the hardest things I ever had to go through was when God took a precious baby. Here is a young couple. They've been wanting a baby and they have a baby and the baby dies. Why does it die? Because it was born into the human race where death reigns.

My friend, you can't get away from it. Death reigns. And the only way you will ever get rid or freed or emancipated from death is to be in Jesus Christ.

"Oh, Mr. Mitchell," you say, "but Christians die."

No, Christians don't die. Christians have eternal life, resurrection life. They may put our bodies in the grave. The bodies may go back to dust, but the believer still lives. He goes right into the presence of the Lord. The Apostle Paul taught that in Philipians as well as in Corinthians. "To be absent from the body (is) to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). We have hope.

Sometimes, when I talk to men about their relationship to Jesus Christ, they will tell me, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, you have your philosophy and I have mine."

I ask the question, "All right, you have a different philosophy from mine. What hope do you have? After death, what hope do you have?"

All the philosophies of men end in death with no hope.

No hope.

When Jesus Christ bore our sin, He was raised again from the dead to give hope. He brought into being a new race of people over whom death does not reign.

All over the world, you find death reigns. Whether rich or poor, bond or free, religious or irreligious, death reigns.

Is it possible that God in His wonderful love and grace has made provision whereby we can be delivered from death? That's exactly right.

Jesus said in John 8:51, "If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death." He said in John 14:19, "Because I live, you shall live also." He said in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die." We are just as sure we have eternal life

as we are that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.

You say, "Mr. Mitchell, I don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

All right, what hope do you have?

You don't have any hope. You see, sin reigns today; and death reigns. Is there any way we can get deliverance from this terrible enemy of death? Yes!

The Lord Jesus said to the people of His day, and He says it to you and me in John 5:24, "He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." He has passed from death into life.

In Romans 8:2 we read, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." And whether you want to believe it or not, these verses are true. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."

Some say to me, "Mr. Mitchell, I don't believe the Bible. I don't believe in Adam. I don't believe those stories in the first 11 chapters of the Bible." And I could include some preachers among them.

When I accept the Bible, I accept the first 11 chapters. Tell me, how did death come into the human race? Do you think God created man to die?

You say, "You just follow certain laws."

Yes, but what laws? The first 11 chapters of Genesis show that man offended the holiness of God when he sinned, and death came in as the punishment for sin. You cannot separate sin and death, and the rest of Scripture bears this out. "The soul who sins will die" (Ezekiel 18:4). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

David wrote in the 51st Psalm, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (verse 5). What's the result? Death.

How can Christians be sanctified and live a life pleasing to God? The very first thing is that God must take us out of Adam's race where death reigns.

So, from verses 15 to 19 here in Romans 5, Paul gives us contrasts; and we are going to talk about the fact that Christ's one act at the cross brought justification of life.

Now, remember, Adam's one sin brought ruin to the human race; and, friend, you cannot deny that.

My father and mother died. And, if the Lord tarries, I will die, too. Why? Because I was brought into the human race by my parents who were sinners. And, likewise, their parents and right back to Adam. And, whether you like it or not, death reigns today whether a man lives three score years and ten or, whether by reason of strength or by God's grace, he lives to be a hundred.

Now we have to face this issue. I have sinned. The penalty of sin is death. How can I get rid of both of them? I want to get rid of sin. That was settled in chapters 3, 4 and 5. What about death?

Death pays wages. God executes the penalty. How am I going to get free?

From verses 15 to 19, we have the fact that Christ's one act on the cross brought justification of life. And, when God justifies a man, He communicates a new life—a life that is not contaminated, a life over which death doesn't even cast a shadow. It's His life. That's what He means in John chapter 1.

Allow me to quote those verses again to you, verses 10 to 13, where John writes, "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. (The world did not know its Creator.) Verse 11, "He came to his own, and those who were His own did not receive Him."

The Jews rejected their Messiah. Now what shall God do? The Gentiles rejected their Creator,

and the Jews rejected their Messiah. What shall God do? He decides to bring in a new race of people, a new race of people over whom death has no power at all.

So I read verses 12 and 13 in John 1: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but (who were born) of God.”

And sinners, when they accept God's precious Son as their Saviour, are born from above; they are born into a new family.

They are born into a new race where death doesn't cast a shadow; for, when Jesus Christ saves a man, He not only forgives his sin, He not only covers him with His own righteousness, but He also imparts to him a new life—a new life and a new nature.

This is what the Apostle Peter means in 2 Peter 1:4 when he says, “He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature.”

We belong to a new race, a new family. Death reigns in the old family of Adam because of sin. But we have been translated out of Adam's race into a new race, and death doesn't even cast a shadow.

You say, “So what? Why should I be affected by what Adam did?”

Well, whether you believe it or not, my friend, you have to answer the question, “Why do men die?”

You see, it is a very natural thing; but death is the fruitage of something. When God made man, He didn't make man to die. He made man for the purpose of living eternally so that man might enjoy the fellowship of God and so that God would have

someone with whom He could have fellowship. Then sin came into the picture.

The one act of Adam brought ruin to all those who were in Adam's race, the human family. Death reigns, and there is no question that this is so. Death reigned even when there was no law.

You see, the law gives a distinctive character to sin. I had not known sin until the law said, "Thou shalt not covet" (Romans 7:7). And even when there was no law, people were still sinners and they died.

The moment God justifies a sinner, He communicates to that person a new life, a life to which sin is not attached, a life that is linked to a new head—not Adam, but a new Head—a life that cannot be contaminated by sin, a life that is wholly satisfying to God. That's why, in Ephesians 4, the new man is created in righteousness and through holiness

Now, this is the first step in the deliverance from sin. We want to get this into our hearts and into our minds. Many die who have never sinned Adam's sin, but nevertheless death reigns. And since God is righteous, death includes them all—"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Now, notice the contrast as we go along.

Christ's act at the cross brought justification of life (5:16-19)

15. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

Now, let's look, first of all, at this word "many." The Greek word means "all," all in Adam are dead because of Adam's sin. All in Christ receive the gift of grace by Jesus Christ. Now let's read on:

16. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.

17. For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

18. So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

19. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

God's grace is abounding (5:20-21)

20. And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

21. That, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Take a piece of paper. Divide it in two. On the left-hand side write, "In Adam," and on the other side write, "In Christ."

There are seven things in this passage which concern those in Adam; and then you have seven things concerning those who are in **Christ**.

Now, it might be well for me to say this first. There are those who teach universal salvation on the ground of these passages. They say that eventually everybody is going to be saved. For example, it says here in verse 19, "For as through the one man's disobedience the many (all) were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many (all) will be made righteous." So they say that in Adam death reigned over the whole human

race with no exceptions at all. Whereas in Christ all shall be made righteous.

But they fail to realize what the Apostle is writing. We all are under death because we are in Adam. But to be righteous, we have to be—in Christ.

He is not teaching universal salvation. He is making a contrast between two races of people. You are either in Adam or you are in Christ.

And there are seven things you should know concerning your position in Adam and seven things regarding your position in Christ.

1. Verse 15: By the transgression of the one, many (all) are dead in Adam. In Christ, the gift of grace has abounded to many.

2. Verse 16: Judgment was by one man to condemnation. But the free gift justifies in Christ those who have many offences against them.

3. Verse 17: Death reigned in Adam's race. Those in Christ shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus.

4. Verse 18: By one offence, judgment came to all. In Christ, the righteousness of one has brought justification to all.

5. Verse 19: By one man's disobedience, all were made sinners. But by the obedience of Christ, all were made righteous in Him.

6. Verse 20: Where sin abounds, grace did much more abound. In Adam, sin abounds. In Christ, grace abounds all the more.

7. Verse 21: Sin reigns unto death. In Christ, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

Now, those first seven things in Adam are true of everybody in Adam whether you are good, bad, indifferent, moral, immoral, whatever you are. You are born in Adam, and these seven things are true of you. You are under the sentence of death. You are under condemnation. Death reigns over you. You are under judgment. You are a sinner.

Sin abounds, and sin reigns unto death for all who are in Adam.

Now, if we are in Christ, the gift of grace has abounded toward us. The gift unto justification over many offences is ours. And we shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus. We are justified. By the righteousness of one, all are justified in Christ. By His obedience, we are made righteous.

Grace abounds. Grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life. This is true of all in Christ, whether we are a strong or a weak or a carnal or a stumbling Christian. This is true of all who are in Christ.

Now, you say, "Mr. Mitchell, I have seen some people who were not Christians. Outwardly they seem to live a much better life than some folk who claim to be Christians."

Now that may be true. But we are not talking about that. We are talking about our position. You are either in Adam or you are in Christ. And if you are not in Christ, then you are under the bondage of death, facing eternal judgment and the wrath of God.

But God is perfectly satisfied with the work of His Son. So that, when you accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, He not only forgives your every sin and imparts unto you His own righteousness, putting it to your account, but He imparts to you new life. You belong to a new race of people. Everyone in this new race stands before God righteous, without sin, having eternal life. Death reigned over Adam's race. We reign in life by One Christ Jesus. Death will not even cast a shadow on those who are in Christ.

Now, I've tried to make this passage simple. It's true. You might find some of these dear people who do not believe in the Saviour but yet live a good, moral and possibly a better life than many Christians you know. But it is not a question of walk here.

The main issue is, are you in Adam or are you in Christ? You needn't stay in Adam under sin, under the bondage of death, afar off, under the wrath of God. You can be in Christ.

Listen, where sin abounds, grace did much more abound. I don't care how much a man has been under the bondage, the tremendous bondage of sin in its terrible power; he can still be delivered.

Someone said to me just the other day, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, you know I think Mr. So-and-So has sinned away the day of grace."

Now, please don't say that. I believe the grace of God can reach anybody. "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."

"Well," you say, "isn't there a verse in the Bible saying, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever'?"

That's correct. You find that, by the way, in the book of Genesis, in chapter 6, verse 3, before the flood. And if you are going to quote that verse, then quote the whole verse. "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh: nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

God is saying, "I'll go right along with the fellow until he is 120 years of age. At least, I'll go that far with him. I would even go farther."

The Bible says, "Where sin increased, grace abounded more and more." Notice again the "much mores." We had some in the first 11 verses of chapter 5: "Much more, having now been justified." "Much more . . . we shall be saved by His life." "Much more . . . the grace of God." "Where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more."

Verse 17: "Much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

In other words, my friend, when you and I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, irrespective of our background, of our life and whether it was much in sin or not, the grace of God reached right down where we were.

And where were we? We were dead in trespasses and sin. And right where we were, He picked us up and redeemed us and justified us and imparted to us new life. That's why in 2 Corinthians 5:17 I read, "If any man is in Christ (this head of a new race), he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

Now, isn't that wonderful?

CHAPTER SIX

The sixth chapter of Romans is absolutely full of foundational truth concerning not the question of repentance or forgiveness or justification, not the question of S-I-N-S, but the question of being delivered from sin as a master.

DELIVERANCE FROM SIN (6:1-23)

Now, Paul raised this question in chapter 5:20 by saying, “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

“Then, Paul,” we say, “if grace super-abounds—whatever sin is—let us sin that grace may abound.”

So he raises the question and answers it early on in chapter 6.

We are delivered from sin as a place (6:1-11)

1. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?

2. May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Sin is a tyrant. You can’t afford, Christian friend, to play with sin.

You say, “Well, really, Mr. Mitchell, I wouldn’t lie. I wouldn’t steal. I wouldn’t get drunk. I wouldn’t do this or that.”

I’m not talking about sins. I’m talking about sin as a whole, sin that dominates your life, sin that forces you to obey its whims.

Now, it is an amazing thing—the confusion in a great many Christians' minds concerning this question of victory or deliverance from sin as a master. Some go to a spiritual life conference or a victorious life conference or they go somewhere and get sanctified. Some say you have to get the baptism of the Spirit. Others have various doctrines. But all, basically, are trying to do one thing. They want to get free from sin as a master.

“How can I glorify God in my life when I am so frail and weak?” they ask.

That's because we have a body that is not yet redeemed. You see, our salvation is not yet complete in our experience. It is true we have been forgiven and justified; and, as far as God is concerned, He sees us glorified in His Son. There are certain facts that are true.

You don't experience facts though. You experience life. Facts are to be believed. The life is to be lived. And we find that Christians, having come into contact with the Saviour, loving the Lord Jesus and wanting to please Him, find that sometimes the more they try to please the Lord, the more they fail. And I know I'm talking to a lot of folk who know this through experience.

It just seems the more we try to live a holy life, the more we do things we don't want to do. So we try to formulate a way whereby we can be delivered from the power of sin in our life. As I say, and I repeat it, we have bodies that are not yet redeemed. My body, your body has desires. Your body has lusts whether you want to acknowledge it or not. Christians do sin.

So how can I get delivered? I'm yearning for a life that is pleasing to God. I want to be like the Saviour, when He said, “I always do the things that are pleasing to Him” (John 8:29). And it just seems the more I try, the worse it gets. So we try in the energy of the flesh. We keep our chin up. We try by will power.

We say, "I'm not going to do that thing again. It's dishonoring to the Lord. It's sin, and I'm not going to do it again."

And you confess your sin to the Lord and turn right around and do it all over again. That's because you are trying by the energy of the flesh, and there is no deliverance that way. There is only one way of deliverance, and that is God's way. He wants you to trust Him for the deliverance.

"You mean, Mr. Mitchell, God will give me the deliverance?"

That's right. We are going to see that. And there is ground for it, but it's going to take faith on your part and my part.

See, my experience says, "I'll do it."

God says, "No, I'll do it."

Man says, "No, I want to try first."

God says, "Trust Me."

Now, I'm talking about a very difficult thing. I know this. It is so easy for us to jump into the picture and want to live a holy life for God ourselves; but we find that, every time we try to do it in the energy of the flesh, we fail. God wants us to let Him do it.

It's a question of our yielding ourselves to Him. This is not an act once for all where a person has an experience and he gets sanctified and the roots of sin are taken out.

I was discussing this very thing with one dear friend of mine.

He said, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, I haven't sinned in ten years."

I said, "I'm sorry, but I can't agree with you. I don't believe you. Before you were justified, you did such-and-such thing and it was sin. After you were justified, you did it again and it was still sin. Now you are sanctified, and you do it again."

Is it only a mistake? Oh, no. Let's be realistic about this. Sin is sin. Anything that is contrary to the divine character is sin. But we pray, we fast, we do things that we feel will help us get rid of our sin nature; and we find that self is still there. So we fail God. And that's because God must do it all.

"I know He saved me from the guilt of sin and the penalty of sin," you say, "but what about the power of sin?"

This is a case that calls for a daily walk with God, a daily walk that is pleasing to Him where it is none of self but all of Him.

Some people try to conquer sin by crucifying self. Now, let me tell you this. The Lord Jesus did not crucify Himself. You are talking about an impossibility. Others crucified Him. The Bible does not teach self-crucifixion.

"Well, doesn't it say some place, Mr. Mitchell, that we are to take up our cross and follow Him?"

Yes, but what is the cross? Christ must come before self, that's true; but that's not self-crucifixion. In fact, the Bible says in Galatians 2:20, "We were crucified with Christ." That's past. If I talk about crucifying self, then I must be on the wrong side of the cross. We are on the resurrection side. Colossians 3:1 says, "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above."

There are those who teach that we die daily to sin. Now there's no such Scripture about that. In 1 Corinthians 15:31-32 (let me paraphrase), Paul says, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what's the advantage of it if the dead rise not? Behold I die daily."

Paul was living in daily expectation of martyrdom. That's why he could say, "What is the advantage of being a martyr if there is no resurrection? I die daily." Or he says in Romans 8:36, "We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

You see, we already are dead to sin. Our history as sinners came to an end at the cross. This is not something you feel or experience. This is a fact. A fact. Facts, I repeat, are to be believed. But before I can experience this life in Christ, this being freed from sin as a master, I must acknowledge by faith that what God says is true: that, when Christ died, you and I died. We are new men, new women in Christ.

Now, chapter six contains four basic instructions.

First, we are to know the facts. Let's not be ignorant of the facts of what God says is true.

Second, we are to acknowledge, to consider the facts to be true.

And, third, we are to yield our bodies to Him so that He can work through us.

Which, of course, brings us to the fourth instruction. We are to walk pleasing to the Lord. That's what He wants.

As we go more deeply into this sixth chapter, I hope you will read it and re-read it and re-read it. I know there has been a great deal of confusion about this question of being delivered from the power of sin in our daily walk and manner of life. But God has a way, and God's way is the best way. Don't you agree?

Then let us know the facts, reckon them to be true, believe them to be true and act upon them by yielding our members to Him.

Now, let's read the next verse:

3. Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

Now, I'm going to say this again. We are not dealing with your experience or my experience. We're dealing with a fact. God has declared that, when Christ died, you and I were joined to Him.

We were baptized into His death. When He was buried, we were buried.

And, when He came forth in resurrection, we too came forth, identified with the risen and glorified Christ. God has declared that when a sinner accepts the Saviour, he is not only forgiven his sin and delivered from the control of Adam's race where death reigns (hence he has eternal life), but he is joined to the Saviour in resurrection. We are joined to the Man at God's right hand.

But you say, "Well, really, Mr. Mitchell, what about me now? I am still on the earth in my frailty."

The more we know the Word of God, the more we love the Saviour, the more we want to please Him, the more we want to live lives that are glorifying to Him. But we do things we know we shouldn't do, and sometimes we do them before we even think about it. We cry for deliverance, and we struggle and think that by praying we'll be delivered.

Some of us think that, if we fast, we're going to be delivered; but God wants to do the delivering Himself. He wants to deliver us from sin as a place.

Before we were Christians, we lived in sin. We live in Christ now. We are no longer living in sin. "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"

Now, He amplifies that. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

This is the second fact He wants you to know. It's the end of you and me as far as our history as sinners. I want to go back to Romans chapter 1, verse 7, which says, "Beloved of God . . . called saints," holy ones.

If I were teaching Ephesians, I would point out that we are no longer children of wrath but children of God.

I would ask you, "Are you in Christ?"

You would say, "Yes."

"Are you a child of God?"

"Yes."

"Are you in the church, the body of Christ?"

"Yes."

Then you will know this fact from Colossians 3:1-3, "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." Why? Because you have died, "and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Now, if you take the first verse, "If then you have been raised up with Christ," I have to ask a question. What kind of people are raised?

"Why," you say, "dead people."

So verse 3 tells you when you died. "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

In Galatians 2:20, Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." The tense of these verbs is the past tense. We died. We are not dying, but we died. It is a finished transaction. If a man is dying, he is never dead. When a person is dead, he has quit dying. As long as a person is dying, there's still hope. But if death comes in, that's the end.

Now then, are you dying to sin or have you died to sin? The Book says you died to sin. You've quit dying then. And, if we have died, then Colossians 3:1 says we have risen with Him.

Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ." I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."

Let us read 2 Corinthians 5:13-17: "If we are beside ourselves, it is for God: if we are of sound mind, it is for you." Why? "For the love of Christ controls us (or the love of Christ overmasters us)." Why?

"Having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer." Why? Let me put it in my words: "If any man is in Christ, he is risen, glorified with Christ; he is a new creation (he is a new creature); old things are passed away, behold all things have become new."

You see, friend, we were identified with Jesus Christ, not only in his death and burial, but also in His resurrection.

Now, I have met men, even teachers, who glory in the fact that they died with Christ and then they come full stop. We not only died with Christ, but we were raised with Christ. Not only are we dead to sin as a fact, but we have a new life to live for God.

You have the two aspects. That's why I quoted Colossians 3, "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." Your past life as a sinner came to an end. You are no longer seen as a sinner by God. You are seen as one of His children, as one of the saints.

That's why, when you come to the end of Romans, you are exhorted to be saintly in your life. I am a saint by calling, but I should be saintly in my life. All Christians are saints, but they do not all walk in a manner that is suitable for saints. All believers, for example, are in the Spirit. All do not walk in the Spirit or by means of the Spirit.

Now, we are dealing here in chapter 6 with a positional truth. When we come to chapter 12 and on to chapter 16, we have the experiential side of the picture. But it's no use talking about our experience until we get the facts concerning what God says we are.

So Paul says here,

4. Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

5. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection,

6. Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him.

Now, let me get in this question, "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" Death has taken place.

Listen, friend, wherever you live there are graveyards. As long as a Christian is alive, even if he is dying, he is not buried. I repeat. As long as there is life, you have hope. But when death comes in, what do you do? You take the body, and you put it in a casket and bury it.

Dead people don't break the law. They don't sin. They are dead. God says that, when you and I accepted the Saviour, we were joined to Jesus Christ and that, when He died, He not only died for your sins but He died for you. He not only died for our acts, but He died for the "acters," not only for the guilt but for the guilty.

I ask you the question, "Did Christ die for you or just for your sins?"

"Well," you say, "He died for me."

Then that's the end of you. You and I were the ones who should have been crucified. You and I were the ones who had transgressed against the law of God and broken the law. You and I were the sinners. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). "The person who sins will die" (Ezekiel 18:20).

Forgive me. I must say it again. Either we die or somebody else dies. Christ died in your stead and in my stead. We were identified with Him—we were joined with Him when Christ died. God saw you and me in His Son, hanging on the cross and buried in the grave. And when He rose from the dead, we were joined to a Risen Christ.

That's why we love this wonderful truth of our union with the Risen Son of God, joined to the eternal God. But death must come in. And I recognize the fact that I died in Him.

Now I must raise this question in verses 3 to 5 of this chapter. Is Paul talking about a rite or a ceremony? Is he talking about water baptism?

No, of course not. No rite of any man can put me into Christ and join me to Christ in His death and burial and resurrection. It is an act of God for everyone who receives His precious Son as Saviour.

Now, if you want to witness to this fact by water baptism, why that's between you and the Lord. If you want to show forth in this way your identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, then you are still to walk in newness of life.

Sometimes I smile and tell people I am about to baptize, "Remember, if I thought for one moment that you are not going to live glorifying to the Lord in your life, I would put you under the water and keep you there."

If I am going to make a public witness by some rite or ceremony that I am joined to the Risen

Christ, then my life ought to be a pattern of that, showing forth the fact that I am a new man, a new woman in Christ.

I'm not going to discuss the question of water baptism, but I mention it because I know there are those who say this passage is teaching immersion. Paul is not even thinking about water baptism in this connection. He's talking about something God does. It is true of every believer in Christ.

Do you mean to tell me that Galatians 3:27, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ," is water baptism? That would mean that only those who were baptized by immersion have put on Christ.

Oh, no. It is an act of God. The moment a sinner receives the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, he puts on Christ. He becomes a member of the body of Christ. He is baptized into the body of Christ by the Spirit. He is joined to the eternal Son of God.

But Paul here is stressing the fact that, when Christ died, you died. It is an act of God. It joins us to the Son of God in His work at the cross, in His burial and in His resurrection.

Now, I think I have said enough about that, but I want this thing to be very, very clear in your minds—that we should walk in newness of life.

For me to say that I've been joined to Christ, identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection means that I, too, ought to go forth to walk in newness of life so that His name may be magnified and glorified in my life. And the more I witness to this fact, the more there should be the demonstration of the living Saviour in and through me—and in and through you. Since you really believe that you belong to the Saviour, then you ought to manifest something of this new life in Christ.

But let me again get into your heart. We are dealing here with the fact; and the fact is that, when Christ died, that was the end of your history

as a sinner. You are no longer seen by God in sin or living in sin. He sees you in Christ. May the Lord make it clear to you today.

Now, starting in verse 6, Paul continues this question of identification. Remember, he wants you to know the facts. He wants you to reckon the facts to be true. And he wants you to yield your body to God. That's what we find as we go down the chapter.

In the first 11 verses, remember, we are delivered from sin as a place in which to live.

6. Knowing this, that our old self (all that you and I were in Adam) was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin;

7. For he who has died is freed from sin.

Now, notice, the body of sin has not been "done away with" in the meaning of "annihilated." This is the same word used in Hebrews 2:14-15. Our Lord became a Man for what purpose? "That through death He might 'render powerless' him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives."

Now Satan was destroyed in the sense that he was rendered powerless; and I can read Romans 6:6 with that in mind: "Knowing this, that our old self (all that we were in Adam) was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be 'rendered powerless,' that we should no longer be slaves to sin." Sin is no longer our master. We have a new Master, Christ Jesus.

Now the man outside of Christ is still under the authority and power of sin. Sin is his master. He may deny this. He may say he is better than you, and that may be true outwardly. Sometimes, we Christians are amazed at the good that sinners

will do; but sin is still their master. That's where they live—in sin.

Your Master is the risen Christ. Death has come between you and the old master, sin, that henceforth we should not serve sin. He that has died is freed, liberated, from his old master, sin.

Now, I know all Christians—at least as a rule—know that the death of Christ has severed their relationship to sin. They have been forgiven their transgressions, and they will never again see their sins. They believe that Christ “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,” as Hebrews 9:26 says; and as I John 3:5 and 8 say: “He appeared in order to take away sins; and . . . that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

The devil is still a personality. He still lives, but his power over the Christian has been cut away. Sin has lost its authority—its power—over the believer. Death has taken us out from under its reign, and we are now on resurrection ground. We are joined to the Risen Christ. He that has died is freed from sin.

8. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.

If I acknowledge the fact that, when Christ died, I died, then I believe I am going to live with Him, being joined to the risen Saviour.

It's a funny thing about us Christians. I ask the average Christian, “Do you believe you live with Christ.”

“Oh, yes.”

“Do you believe you are going to spend eternity with Christ?”

“Oh, yes.”

“Do you believe Christ has put away your sins?”

“Oh, yes.”

“Do you believe that you died to sin once?”

“Oh, wait a minute. My experience doesn't say that.”

I didn't ask what your experience says. I'm talking about a fact. I repeat it, my friend, when you come to chapters 12 to 16 of Romans, Paul deals then entirely in the field of experience.

For example, Romans 12:1-2 (my version) says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God (and this is what we are dealing with, the mercies of God), that you present your body as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not entangled again with these other things, but be ye transformed.”

Now I want it very clearly understood concerning this matter of sin. He that has died is freed from sin. He that is dead will live with Him.

9. Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.

10. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all.

You say, “Well, Mr. Mitchell, I know that Christ died unto sin.”

And so did you. It's a fact. He's not talking about your failures. He's talking about the fact of sin's being a master; and it is a tyrant. Don't you forget that. Sin is a tyrant.

Now, I know it's hard for a believer to absorb these verses because as soon as I talk this way you immediately look at yourself. You see your failures and your frailties instead of daring to believe what God says.

“Well,” you say, “Mr. Mitchell, I believe these things.”

But are they down deep in your heart and in your life? I guarantee this—that God will send you some tests along the way to see if you really believe it.

You say you believe what it says here? He that has died is freed from sin?

“Well, Mr. Mitchell, I sin.”

But he that has died is freed from sin as his master. This is a fact. I wish I could get it across to you. He that is dead is freed from sin.

“But I’m not,” you say.

If we be dead with Christ, we believe we shall live with Him.

“I believe that, but it’s that seventh verse. I’m not freed from sin.”

Well, take verse 10:

10. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

“That’s true about Jesus,” you say, “but not about me.”

My friend, Paul is telling you the experience of our Saviour. He is through with sin forever.

Let me attack this from a different angle. Is Christ Jesus, the Living Son of God, through with sin?

“Oh, my, yes! Oh, yes!”

Absolutely through with sin?

“Oh, yes!”

When did that take place?

“At the cross.”

Where is He now?

“On the throne.”

Will He ever go back to the cross?

“No.”

Will He ever be made sin again?

“No.”

He is through, eternally, with sin, S-I-N?

“Yes.”

So are you!

God says you also in Christ are through with sin forever. Sin is no longer your master. Remember, sin pays wages—Romans 3:23. “The

wages of sin is death”—but you died. The wages were paid. You are joined to Jesus Christ and “the life you now live in the flesh,” says Paul, “you live by the faith of the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you. I do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness comes by works, then Christ died in vain.” I’m paraphrasing, by the way, Galatians 2:20-21.

Oh, I wish in some way I could make it clear to you. I’m asking you not to look at your feelings or your experience, but to dare to believe that what God says is true.

Now, listen. Am I going to believe God or am I going to believe my experience?

You would tell me, “Why, Mr. Mitchell, you should believe God.”

But what about you?

Now, look. “He who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again.”

Is He through with it? Death hath no more dominion over Him?

You say, “That’s right about the Saviour. Death hath no more dominion over Jesus Christ.”

For in that He died, He died unto sin once?

You say, “That’s right.”

In that He liveth, He liveth unto God?

“That’s right.”

But what about you?

Look at verse 11:

11. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Here now is the reckoning of faith. We go back. We are to know the facts. What are the facts? When Christ died, we died. That was the

end of our history as sinners. I am no longer a child of wrath.

I'm a child of God. I'm no longer in sin; I'm in Christ. Death has severed my relationship to sin as a master. Just as Christ died unto sin once, we died unto sin once. In that He liveth, He liveth unto God. And we live unto God.

Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more. Death has no more dominion over Him. Neither does it have dominion over you or me. Death has lost its authority. Sin is no longer a master. It has been rendered powerless by our Saviour. If sin comes into a believer's life, it comes in as a test.

I'm talking about God's way of holiness, God's way of sanctification. God says your history as a sinner came to an end. You are a new man. You are a new woman in Christ.

We are delivered from sin as a principle (6:12-15)

12. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts.

13. And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

14. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

15. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

As I've said, we have a new master; we are no longer under the tyrant, sin. Our new master is Christ. You remember Simeon in Luke, chapter 2:29-30, when he took the baby Jesus in his arms to bless Him, he said, "Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

What he really said was, and I'll give you the literal translation of that verse, "Now, Master, release your bondslave, according to your Word." He recognized God as his Master.

I'm asking you, my Christian friend, who is your master? Sin? or the Lord Jesus Christ, your risen Lord?

Chapter 5 says we were freed from Adam's race through the death of Christ.

Chapter 6 says the only way to get rid of sin as a master is through death. We died with Christ. Again I say, if you are "dying daily to sin," it means you are not satisfied with your new Master. You are still struggling with the old master and so there is no victory; there is no deliverance.

Take what God says as fact. We have died to sin once in the person of Christ. We no longer live in sin as a principle of operation.

Before we were Christians, sin used our bodies with all our gifts, our tongue, our mind, our hands, our eyes, our feet. It used all of us. What for? For the performance of sinful acts.

Now, says the writer of Romans, you are joined to a new Man; and sin no longer has any authority over you. You yield your members unto God. Just as before you were saved, when you yielded your members to sin, even so now yield your members to God.

You know, it's so easy for people to become slaves. It's true today. It's true through the centuries. Here are people tied down under the bondage of sin. They think they can give sin up.

Oh, how often men say to me, "Why, Mitchell, I can give it up or leave it alone. I can take it or leave it."

Well, I know what they'll do. They'll take it. Do you know why? They are slaves. Sin is a tyrant. It may be alcohol. It may be drugs. It may be immorality. It may be anything, but they can become slaves to it.

And they try medical sources. They try this philosophy and that psychology. They try everything, and they are still not delivered.

And then they come to the place where they receive Jesus Christ as Saviour. And often, when they trust Him, they are freed immediately from the slavery of that sin.

But you tell me, “Mr. Mitchell, I know some Christians—men who really accepted the Lord—and they’ve still had trouble after they were saved. They are still slaves to certain sins.”

That’s right. They try and try and try to get delivered, and they can’t. They pray, they fast and still they get no deliverance.

In desperation, they turn to the Lord and say, “Lord, I can’t do this thing. You’ve got to do it.” And immediately they’re delivered.

Now let me illustrate what I mean.

Some years ago, I was invited to speak in a certain town. And, after the morning meeting, one man said to me, “I want you to come home and have dinner with me.” So I got into his buggy.

He followed a trail right on down through the forest, and we came to an open place where he had built a house and was farming and ranching. And this man had six daughters. At that time, I wasn’t married.

He said to me, “Now, Mr. Mitchell, you get out of the buggy and go into the house, and Mom and the girls will take care of you.”

Well, I didn’t want to go into a house with six girls, so I decided to wait for him. As he got out of the buggy, he stooped down.

He didn’t see me standing there. And, just as he was going to take the tracers off the buggy, he took a big plug of tobacco out of his pocket. He bit a chunk of it off and, just as he did, apparently I moved; and he saw me. He turned around and apologized to me for the tobacco.

“Well,” I said, “it’s okay with me if you want it. I don’t want it. Thank God, I’ve been delivered from it. You go ahead. It’s up to you.”

So he took the tracers off and put the horses away. And on the way back, he said, “You know, when I was a boy, we lived in Virginia and we raised tobacco; and on the way to school every day we kids used to take a leaf of the tobacco plant and chew it. I’ve done this all my life.”

And I said, “Well, do you know the Saviour?”

“Oh, yes,” he said. “I’ve been saved and I’ve been sanctified, but I can’t get rid of it.”

“Well,” I said, “I think you better trust the Lord for that. You’ve been struggling to get rid of it, and you can’t.”

A few years after this, I met a friend of mine who used to preach up in that area.

And I said, “By the way, do you ever see So-and-So?”

“Oh, yes,” he said, “he was addicted to chewing tobacco.” Then he laughed and said, “Do you know how he was delivered?”

I said, “No.”

“Well,” he said, “after you left, he was so embarrassed because you caught him doing it, that he decided to take some water and go out into the timber. He stayed two or three days fasting and praying that he would get delivered. But the moment he got back home, he just made for the tobacco can.

“And then, one day, in desperation he got on his knees and said, ‘Lord, I’m going to heaven trusting the blood of Jesus Christ, tobacco or no tobacco.’

“And, you know, when he got up from his knees, he became violently sick; and, from that day until I don’t know how long he lived, he wasn’t able to even stand the smell of it.

“And, when his old Dad came up from the south, puffing on his old pipe, he said, ‘Dad, would you

mind going into the barn? I can't stand the smell of it."

Now, I told you that for a reason. This man had tried everything, by praying, by fasting—and, by the way, I'm not opposed to praying and fasting—but he was trusting what he was doing for deliverance instead of trusting the Lord.

So, we read here, "Present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

Yield yourselves unto God. Let God do the delivering. Let God have the victory. You can't win the victory. God wins the victory. You and I enjoy the deliverance.

Now, I don't know what it is in your life, Christian friend; but I'm sure I'm talking to some Christians who have tried and have prayed and have agonized about being delivered from certain things in their lives that are hindering their spiritual growth, hindering their ministry, hindering the work of God in them.

Now it may or may not be outbroken sin; it may or may not be some filthy habit. God wants you for Himself. Sin is no longer your master.

And, just as before you were saved, when you yielded your body, your members, your mind, your tongue to sin and sin reigned in you as your master whether you believed it or not, now you've got a new master, Jesus Christ; and you yield your members unto Him.

For example, perhaps before you were saved, maybe your tongue was full of filthy talk, cursing and bitterness. Now yield your tongue to the Lord. Let Him put a new song in your mouth so that, instead of cursing and bitterness, there will be blessing.

See the contrast between yielding your members to what is sinful and what will be for the glory of God? You've been delivered from sin as a place

to live, and you've been delivered from sin's authority and from sin as a principle of operation.

God wants you and me to realize we are no longer under the tyrant of sin. We belong to the risen Saviour. We belong to the One who wrought salvation for you and me, the One who loves us with an everlasting love, the One who loves us even when we fail Him, the One who is always waiting for us to come and have fellowship with Him.

This is God's way of sanctification where the Lord—not selfishness, not some great desire you may have for yourself—becomes the center of your love, the center of your life.

Now, I want to warn you, too, that sometimes people say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I'm not bound by any sin."

No? But self is there. It sticks out all over you. Self. Your religious self. Your moral self. Oh, you wouldn't go into the sins of society. Oh, no, sir. You've been delivered from that. But your life is sapped of spiritual power. You have no joy. You have no blessing, and you aren't very useful to the Lord.

What's the matter?

You haven't yielded yourself.

You haven't recognized the fact that Jesus Christ is now your Master. You have a new Master, a new life with new hopes and new aspirations. You and I sit in our chairs and criticize the world and how far the world has gone in its sin.

You say, "My, the world is getting terrible—lawlessness, moral corruption, legalized sinfulness—legalizing the things that cause the wrath of God to come down upon men."

We sit and talk all about it, but the world can't help itself. That's the way it is under the tyrant of sin.

But, Christian friend, you are not under that tyrant any more. Neither am I. And how can I prove that?

Paul says that God wants you to yield yourself and your members unto Him so that your tongue—instead of being filled with things that destroy the character of people, saying nasty things about people or being jealous and envious of people—will speak in love and peace. Your life may be a benediction.

I'm not asking you to preach. I'm just asking you to live for Him. You have a new Master, Christ Jesus.

We are delivered from sin as a practice (6:16-23)

Now we come to the last part of chapter 6, verses 16 to 23. We've been delivered from sin as a place in which to live, and we've been delivered from sin as a principle of operation. Now we are delivered from sin as a practice in our lives.

In verse 16, we have a brand new experience. We are going to be living for God instead of sin and self.

16. Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

Some Christians take verse 16 entirely out of context and conclude they can lose their salvation because it says here that, if I yield myself to sin by obeying my members, if I obey the lusts of the flesh, then I become a slave of those lusts and am no longer a child of God.

But Paul doesn't even have that in mind.

He's saying, "Don't you know that, if you yield yourselves to sin, you are its bondsman and the

end is death? Don't you know that if you yield yourselves to obedience the end is righteousness?"

You have two different things.

Either your life is characterized by sin as your master or it is characterized by a great desire to please God even though you may fail.

Again, we are getting right down to motives of the heart in the life of a Christian. If you are a real Christian, if you really have taken Christ as your Saviour, even though you may be a failure and have weaknesses and so on, you will have a great yearning in your heart to do the things that are pleasing to God. (When we get to chapter 7, we will see more of this.)

The person who is not regenerated is controlled, dominated by sin. He may be a moralist, and he may be self-righteous; but he is not the servant of God. He's serving himself or serving the devil instead.

Now, in verses 17 and 18, Paul begins to encourage God's people. Listen to what he says. And I'm going to put into it what I believe is the thought of the Apostle Paul.

17. But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,

18. And having been freed from sin (as a master, as a dominating force in your life), you became slaves of righteousness.

See, Paul is bringing assurance into the hearts of Christians. His great desire for us is that we not yield our members unto unrighteousness and sin. Sin no longer should dominate the life and the heart of a believer in Christ. This is what he said in verses 12 and 13.

Now go on to verse 19:

19. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh (because ye are living in bodies that are not yet redeemed). For just as you presented your members (that is, your body with all its members) as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now (having been delivered from sin as a master and having a new Saviour, a Lord who is righteous) present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

In other words, we have a new experience. We're no longer going to be dominated by sin. We're going to live for God instead of sin.

Now, if I've accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour and you have too, then we have been delivered, as Colossians 1:13 says, out of the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. Having been translated from the place where sin and death reign, we are now in a new kingdom where righteousness and love reign.

You see what Paul is after? He wants us to see our position in Christ so that it will affect our lives and our daily living. This is practical sanctification. All I need so that I may stand before God is what Jesus Christ did for me at the cross. Our Lord put away our sins. He defeated death and the grave. He made it possible for God to pronounce us righteous. He made it possible for God to love us with an everlasting love and to give us life eternal.

But I'm still in a body not yet delivered, not yet redeemed. Now, how shall I live for God when my body has certain desires and certain lusts that are dishonoring to Him? What shall I do?

Paul asks a very technical thing.

Before we were Christians, we just naturally yielded our members to sin, lying, cheating or whatever it was. In fact, we had no righteousness. No unsaved man can produce righteousness.

This is what he is saying in verse 20:

20. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness (you had no righteousness).

21. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.

We are now ashamed of some of the things we used to do.

You know, here comes a man who has been living a certain kind of life before he knew the Saviour. He comes and accepts Jesus Christ as his own personal Saviour; and he is forgiven every transgression, every sin. He has a new life. He has a new standing before God, a new relationship as a child of God. And some of the things that he used to do, he is ashamed to do them today.

There are some things that I did before I was a Christian, and I wouldn't think of doing them today. I would be ashamed of them.

Now, what has made the transformation?

Paul here is telling these Roman Christians. And I'm also trying to tell you that the very fact we are now ashamed of some of the things we did before we knew Christ is one of the proofs that we have a new master—not sin, but the Risen Lord of glory.

I just trust I have made this clear to you. I'm going slowly, but I want you to get this.

Now verse 22:

22. But now having been freed from sin (having been emancipated from sin as a master) and enslaved to God (you have a new master—and what is the result?), you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

Don't be afraid of that word. "Sanctification" is a good word. It means "saintliness" which comes from the same root word. The joy of it is the guarantee that we have everlasting life.

Now Paul doesn't mean that everlasting life is the fruit of living a holy life. So he guards that in verse 23 when he says, "The wages of sin is death."

Then why does he mention eternal life in verse 22? To show the contrast. Before we were saved, we were free from righteousness. We had none. But now, having been made free from sin as a master and having a new Master, the Living Son of God, what is the fruit of it?

A life lived down here glorifying to God.

And what is the end?

Enjoyment, the assurance, the certainty of everlasting life—not because of our walk, but because of our union to this Risen Son of God whom we now recognize as our Master.

Then Paul goes on in the last verse:

23. For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Can I change it? Sin pays wages.

The prophet said, "The person who sins will die." Sin pays wages, and you can't quit the job. You can't go on strike. The wages must be paid. Either you pay the wages or somebody else does. The wages of sin is death.

We find in Romans 3:23 that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Death reigns today over the human race, and the only way one can be delivered from sin as a master or from its wages is to trust the One who died for us, the One who took our place, the One who died our death. For, you remember, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Isn't this good news? God has made provision whereby any and all men and women may be saved, wherever they are, whoever they are, whatever they are. I don't care who you are; I don't care what your past is. Sin pays wages; God executes the penalty. But the good news is Jesus Christ, His blessed Son, who came, bore our sins, took our wages and now offers to us—as a free gift—eternal life.

And eternal life can only be received from God as a gift.

The Lord Jesus could say, "He that believeth on me has everlasting life." The gift of God is eternal life. In Him is life. To have the Son of God is to have life. Not to have the Son of God is not to have life.

I don't care how good or religious you are. Unless you have a relationship to the Saviour, you are lost. God has made the provision whereby you can be delivered from the wages of sin, and that is by accepting God's provision for you in Jesus Christ. You come to Christ, receive Him as your Saviour and yield your members unto God so that Christ will be glorified in your life.

This is practical sanctification where the Lord, the Righteous One, lives out His life through you and produces righteousness in you.

As Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."

Do you know this little poem? In just a few words, it gets to the heart of the matter contained in this marvelous chapter of Romans:

"Oh! the bitter shame and sorrow,
That a time could ever be,
When I let the Saviour's pity
Plead in vain, and proudly answered—

‘All of Self and none of Thee.’

“Yet He found me. I beheld Him
Bleeding on the cursed tree;
Heard Him pray, ‘Forgive them, Father,’
And my wistful heart said faintly—
‘Some of Self and some of Thee.’

“Day by day His tender mercy,
Healing, helping, full and free,
Sweet and strong, and oh! so patient,
Brought me lower while I whispered,
‘Less of Self and more of Thee.’

“Higher than the highest heavens,
Deeper than the deepest sea;
Lord, Thy love at last has conquered:
Grant me now my soul’s petition—
‘None of Self and all of Thee.’”

CHAPTER SEVEN

We have here the cry of the human heart—**longing to please God, longing to live a holy life.** But the more he tries to keep the law, the more he breaks it. The more he reads the Word of God and sees what the law was made for and what it demands, the more he must cry out, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?”

The law never saved anybody. It was never given to save. It was never given as a means of life for sinners, nor was it given as the rule of life for the believer in Christ.

You say, “Well, Mr. Mitchell, can one use the law today lawfully?”

Yes, in 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 9, Paul says, “The law was made for the lawless.” One can use the law to prove to men that they need a Saviour. That’s the purpose of the law. As Paul could say in Galatians 3:24, “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ;” and, having come to Christ, we are no longer under the schoolmaster.

The danger with us is that we know we are saved by grace, saved through the precious blood of Christ. But we think that to be good we must keep the law. The more we try, the more we realize we can’t be good by keeping the law. So we have in this seventh chapter two wonderful things: We are delivered from the law through the death of Christ, and we were delivered so that we can bring forth fruit unto God.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE LAW (7:1-25)

The principle of deliverance from the law (7:1-6)

1. Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?

2. For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.

3. So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.

Now here is the principle of deliverance from the law. Paul turns from the thought of being a slave in chapter 6 to being one who delights now in a new master and in a new relationship that will bring forth fruit unto God. The principle of a holy life is not obedience to the law but union with the risen Lord. May I repeat that statement?

The principle of a holy life is not obedience to the law but union with the risen Lord. In fact, Christ in glory is the rule for the believer's life.

Now Paul is not discussing here the question of marriage and divorce and remarriage. He is using the illustration of marriage to show that when the husband dies, the wife also dies. But the woman is left, so she is free to marry somebody else. In other words, no one can be the wife of a dead man. When the husband dies, the law of marriage is broken by that death.

Take any kind of law. The only way man knows of keeping down sin is by making laws. And, when you have a law, you must also have a corresponding penalty. There is no mercy in law. There may be mercy in a judge, but there is no mercy in law. The law says that, if you sin, you shall die. This is the law of Moses. "The wages of sin is death." "The person who sins shall die." The only thing that can deliver you from law is death.

For example, outside your city and my city we have graveyards. You never have any policemen there, patrolling the graveyards. Death has severed the relationship between the people who are buried there and the law under which they lived.

And, my friend, the man who has accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour has not only been freed from death, having been the recipient of eternal life, he has not only been freed from sin as a master and as a tyrant, but he has also been delivered from the law.

I repeat it, the law, as 1 Timothy 1:9 says, was made for the lawless. The law has teeth in it. If you sin, you die. The only way you will ever get freed from it is by death. That's what he is dealing with in these first six verses. The principle of deliverance is by death.

As long as you live under the law, you have to obey the law. You break the law in one point, and you are guilty of all. As Galatians 3:10 says, "Cursed is every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them."

The law says, "If you break me, you die."

Remember, the law demands two things. The law demands that you do not break it, and the law demands righteousness. You have no capacity to measure up to either one. You neither have righteousness nor are you innocent. You have broken the law.

You say, "But, Mr. Mitchell, I'm doing the best I can."

But you have already broken the law. You must die.

"But I'm doing the best I can!"

It makes no difference. The law has no extenuating circumstances. Have you broken it? Did you ever break it?

"Yes," you say.

You must die. Either you die or somebody else

dies for you. And the fact is that Jesus Christ took your place and died your death. What for? That you might bring forth fruit unto God. You see, what God wants is fruit. Just as a man is married to a woman and has children and dies, so the woman remarries and has fruit unto a second husband. Under the law, we produce death. We produce sin. That's all we could do under the law.

There is no mercy in law, not even in the law of God. There is nothing wrong with the law, but there is something drastically wrong with us because we can't keep it. If we can't keep it, we must die and there is no mercy. The only way you will get out from under the law is by death. For once death comes in, your relationship to the law is severed.

How are you joined to the risen Christ? The law was from Moses to Christ. You are not joined to the Jesus who walked the earth. You are joined to the Lord Jesus who came forth in resurrection.

The law has had nothing to say since the cross. Isn't that a wonderful thing? You and I can bring forth fruit unto God, recognizing that we are no longer under the law which is a taskmaster, which has no mercy and which insists that we die.

And so, Paul goes on to say,

4. Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ (death has severed the relationship), that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.

Now, I know some of you are saying, "But, Mr. Mitchell, we *must* keep the law."

Listen to what the word of God says:

"Therefore, my brethren."

Are you a child of God? He's talking to you.

"You also were made to die to the Law (you are not alive to the law, but dead to the law) through

the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.”

Now, listen again.

5. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

6. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

Death severs the relationship.

Some people even fight this.

I remember a story Dwight L. Moody told. In a meeting, he asked, “Do you know anyone who is perfect?”

A man put up his hand.

“My wife’s first husband.”

But death must sever that relationship. Here we are, joined to a risen Christ; and we are trying to keep the memory of that old husband, the law, alive.

Allow me to quote to you from Galatians chapter 2, verse 19, where Paul says, “For through the Law I died to the Law.”

For what purpose?

In order “that I might live to God.”

I say this reverently. You cannot live to God, Christian friend, if you are going to live under the law. Two verses, Romans 10:3 and 4, talk about the Jews’ going about to establish their own righteousness. They have not subjected themselves to the righteousness of God. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

I ask you the question: Have you taken Jesus Christ as your Saviour?

You say, “Yes.”

Have you been covered with all the righteousness of Christ?

“Yes.”

You have been justified by faith?

“Yes.”

Then, my friend, the Book says Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. He is not the beginning of the law, but the end of the law. Law has no more to say to a Christian. All the law can do is to kill, to curse, to condemn.

But Christ took my place; and now in Christ Jesus, this risen glorified Saviour, I have been set free from the law.

Now, someone is going to say this, “Well, Mr. Mitchell, we are saved by the grace of God. We are saved through what He accomplished for us at the cross. But we must keep the law as a rule of life.”

Friend, you are putting yourself back under the law. And, if you put yourself back under the law as a rule of life, then you must come back under its curse. “Cursed is everyone who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

Now here is strong language, isn't it? But in these first six verses, this is what we have.

The law doesn't die, but we die to it in Christ; and now we are joined to the risen Christ, and we are dead to the law by the body of Christ. We are joined in heart and love to the risen Saviour with all His rights, with all His inheritance, with all His righteousness, with all His life.

What for?

To bear fruit unto God in living, loving, willing obedience to Him. Our former life, the passions of our sins which were energized by the law, brought forth fruit unto death. It was not unto God.

Listen. Let me read that fifth verse, “For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.”

I know you have struggled and struggled and

struggled for deliverance. You want peace of heart—not only peace of conscience through the work of Christ on the cross, but you also want peace of heart.

You have struggled and worked and struggled and worked to be pleasing to God by keeping the law, and you are not happy. You have no enjoyment or peace, and do you know why?

You have become legalistic. You are trying to merit favor with God. You are not saying salvation is just Christ's death for me. You are saying it is Christ plus my keeping the law.

I'll say, very frankly, if one is saved by trusting the Saviour plus keeping the law of God, then none of us will be saved because it is impossible for any one of us to keep the law. If you break the law in one point, you are guilty of all.

You see, the trouble is that people have never seen the purpose of the law.

Why in the world did God give it to us anyway?

What is the intent of the law?

What is its purpose?

Oh, I just hunger for God's people to live unto Him.

Galatians 2:19 says, "I through the law am dead to the law." Death has come in. I have severed my relationship to the law. What for? that I might live unto God.

You see, if I'm living under the law, then my heart is occupied with keeping the law and I live unto myself. I produce or bring forth fruit unto sin; for the law is the strength of sin. The law is not the strength of righteousness. God wants me to bear fruit for Him. I am His workmanship, created in this living, glorified Christ unto good works. I am dead to the law for the purpose that I might live unto God.

And the very next verse in Galatians 2, which most people know, is "I have been crucified with Christ; . . . I no longer live, but Christ liveth in

me.”

By the way, the 20th verse of Galatians 2 is the answer to the question raised in verse 19. Allow me to give it to you. The basis of the question is, “I through the law am dead to the law in order that I might live unto God.” Now, here’s the question: All right, Paul, when did you die to the law?

“I was crucified with Christ.” In my identification with Christ in His death, death having come in, my relationship to the law has been severed once for all. The law was an added thing because of the transgression. The law was imposed upon the people of Israel to open their eyes to the awfulness of sin, so that they would put their trust in God and live for Him.

I say very, very frankly, none of us can really live unto God unless we realize that we have a new life in Christ, that we’ve been joined to the risen Saviour and that the law has no more jurisdiction over a Christian.

Did you hear me?

The law has no more jurisdiction over a Christian.

Just as sin is no longer our master, we are no longer under the jurisdiction of the law. We belong to a risen, glorified Saviour. Hallelujah!

Friend, rejoice in your new life in Christ. It’s wonderful to live for God instead of living for self. Death has severed our relationship to the law so that we are free to enter into a new relationship. Take a piece of paper and put a cross in the middle of it. On the left-hand side, write “Sin—death—law.” And then on the other side, since you have been joined to Christ, write “forgiveness—justification—freedom from death—freedom from the law—freedom from sin as a master.” The law has had nothing to say since the cross; it was there that Christ met the demands of the law.

What the law did (7:7-13)

7. What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET."

8. But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.

9. And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died;

10. And this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me;

11. For sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me.

12. So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

13. Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

I wrote down, some time ago, 11 things that the law can do and cannot do.

Now, remember, the law made sin "utterly sinful." The law is not sinful; but, through the law, sin wrought in Paul all manner of lusts. The law is all right. It's I who am wrong. Without the law, sin was dead; it was dormant. But the old master, sin, woke me up when the law came. This, of course, manifests the fact that death puts an end to all the hopes of the flesh. Now I would like to give you what the law can and cannot do. Or, putting it another way, why was the law given? I want, first, to give you eight things about the law.

1. *The law makes sin exceedingly sinful.* You have this in verses 7 and 8: "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law. . . . But sin, taking opportunity

through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind.”

The law makes sin exceedingly sinful. You have it again in verse 13 and also in chapter 5:20: “And the Law came in that the transgression might increase.” The law gives a distinctive character to sin.

2. *The law brings about wrath* (Romans 4:15). It never works righteousness.

3. *The law is the ministry of death* (2 Corinthians 3:7-9). All the law can do is to kill you.

4. *The law is the power of sin* (1 Corinthians 15:56). It is not the strength of righteousness. The law demands righteousness but gives you no power to produce it. It is the power of sin.

5. *The law brings a curse*. Galatians 3:10 says, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them.”

All the law can do is to curse. This is something the legalist will never admit. This is what most Christians will never admit. All the law of God can do is to curse. And when Jesus Christ took your place and mine and bore your sin and mine, all the law of God could do with Him was curse.

But Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. How? He was made a curse for us.

6. *The law was “added because of transgressions”* (Galatians 3:19). It was imposed on people.

The Jews said, “All that the Lord our God hath said, we will do.”

They didn’t know themselves, nor did they know the law of God. So the Lord gave the law to prove what they were.

7. *“Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”* You have that in Romans 3:20 and 7:7. “I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, You shall not covet.” “By the law is the knowledge of sin.”

8. *It is a "tutor to lead us to Christ"* (Galatians 3:24-25). And, having come to Christ, "we are no longer under a tutor."

Now, all these eight things show what the law is really like in that it makes sin exceedingly sinful. It is a ministration of death. It works wrath. It is the strength of sin. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." It brings out what's in me.

You see, the law stirs up what is in me and brings it up. "I would not have known coveting was sin until the law said, You shall not covet."

For example, my mother, every Saturday night when we were youngsters, used to bring home a bag of butterscotch candy; and she would give one to each of us children. There were four of us, three boys and a girl. Mother would put the bag in a glass-covered case up where we could not reach it, and then she would make a law.

She said, "Now, if I catch any of you children touching this candy, you're going to be whipped."

We knew we would be whipped. She made a law, and with the law was a corresponding punishment. And every time we looked at the bag of candy, of course we wanted the candy. But the law said, "Thou shalt not do it."

Sometimes she would put things in the living room (we called it the "front room"), and she would shut the door. And then she made a law and she would say, "Now, you children, don't you go into the front room today."

Well, we weren't even thinking about going into the front room. We were in the kitchen most of the time. But when mother said, "Don't you go in there today," what do you think we did? The first chance we got, we went in there. Why? She had made a law.

"Don't you go in there or you know what!"

That stirred up something in me and my brothers. What in the world has she got in there? It stirred up sin in us, disobedience in us.

Or supposing you've got some fruit trees in your backyard and you don't want the children passing by to pick them. They can't see the fruit. But if you make a law and put it on a sign on your front lawn and say, "Boys, you keep away from the fruit," the moment they see that law, what do they want? Why, of course, they want the fruit.

Now, you've made a little simple law—"Boys, don't steal the fruit. Keep off the fruit tree." But what does it do? It stirs up in our hearts a desire for fruit. Now the desire for fruit was dormant, but seeing the law put up on the front lawn brought this lust for fruit to life.

Now let me come back to what we have here.

Man says, "I'm pretty good. I'll do everything God says to do."

But the law says, "You shall not do this, and you shall not do that;" and it stirs up that which was dormant.

So that's what you have in these first eight things. Now let me give you three more.

9. *The law is not of faith* (Galatians 3:12); it is contrary to faith. In the Old Testament, people were never saved by keeping the law.

We have this in Romans 4:6-8 where "David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.'" The law is not of faith. You have to turn from works and just accept by faith what Christ has done. You can't have both faith and works. They just don't mix.

10. *The law cannot justify.* That is, the law cannot save.

In Romans 3:20, Paul says, "By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."

This is an amazing thing.

People say, "But I'm trying to keep the law."

God says, "You can't stand justified before Me by keeping the law because by the law is the knowledge of sin."

The law doesn't give you righteousness. The law demands it. And you haven't any at all. Your righteousness is in God's sight as filthy rags.

Now one more thing.

11. *The law cannot give life.* In Galatians 3:21, Paul says, "If a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law." When Christ died, He delivered us from the law; and now God is free to give eternal life to as many as will put their trust in Him.

Now, won't you fall in love with the Saviour? He is the Saviour not only from sin and from death, but also from the law. We now live unto God instead of unto sin or under the law. We are new people, new creatures in Christ, living unto God. Remember, God wants you to love the Saviour with all your heart.

THE LAW CANNOT DELIVER FROM SIN (7:14-25)

Now, Paul is not concerned with pardon. He is not concerned with the question of being saved. That's already settled. But he is dealing with the fact of deliverance from indwelling sin.

In chapter 6, man was trying to do it one way or another by keeping sin down.

But here in chapter 7, he tries to do it by keeping the law. And the more he tries, the more he fails.

I want to make this thing very clear—and that is why I repeat and repeat each point I want to make.

The death of Christ has severed the relationship between you and the law. The law is not sinful, but the law works in me all manner of lust; and

I'm the fellow that's wrong, not the law. Without the law, sin was dead. Sin was dormant. The old master sin woke up when the law came.

In verses 12 and 13, Paul vindicates the law. It is just. It is holy. It is good. It is spiritual. It came from God, but it cannot deliver.

Now, there's nothing wrong with the law. I don't throw the law out as being no good. But I cannot meet the law's demands. Neither can you. Neither can anybody else. It was not given to save. It was not given to help you be good, but it demands that you be good. The law prescribes a holy walk, but it gives no power to do it.

As Christians, we are joined to the risen Christ. We have a new life, new motives. We have new prospects. We have new hopes. Everything is in place.

But here is the exercise of the quickened soul: Desiring to be holy, he can't be. He wants to please God; but the more he tries to please Him, the more he fails. The old nature is unable to overcome sin in the flesh. He says, "I am carnal; I'm sold under sin. Nothing is wrong with the law; the trouble is me."

Now let's read these verses:

14. For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

15. For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

16. But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good (that is, I wanted to keep the law but I couldn't do it).

17. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.

Now, let me come down to it. I am carnal, sold under sin. Go back to 1 Corinthians 2:14 where we have the natural man, the unsaved man, the

unregenerate man who does not understand the Spirit of God. Then in verse 15 we have the spiritual man who discerns all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

In the following chapter, 1 Corinthians 3, the first four verses, we have the carnal man. He is the Christian who should grow but is not growing. He lives like the unsaved sometimes.

He is the Christian living in the flesh. He loves the law; he wants to be holy; he wants to please God; but he finds that the more he tries, the less he can do it. He is the undelivered believer who lives with indwelling sin. He is the Christian who has not experienced deliverance from the power of sin in his life. He can say:

18. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me (I want to do the right thing), but the doing of the good is not.

19. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.

20. But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

21. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.

22. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man (in my heart, I want to please God; I really want to please God):

23. But I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

He is saying, "In my flesh there dwells no good thing. My body is full of lusts and desires. Oh, how I want to please God, but the more I seek to please Him the more I fail. Am I really saved?"

Yes, yes. Thank God, you are not saved by what you do or don't do. You are saved by trusting the Saviour. The more you read the Word of God, the more you want to please God.

But the danger is, if you try to please God in the energy of the flesh, you will fail to realize that in your flesh dwells no good thing. God has no confidence in the flesh—neither yours nor mine.

Paul found that out. Can I repeat that? God has no confidence in anybody's flesh, yours or mine. Paul, speaking here from personal experience, I believe, wants to please God in the flesh; but he finds he can't make the flesh behave. There are certain desires there.

But we can get deliverance; he speaks of it here:

24. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

It's a cry for help, a cry for a deliverer. How can I be free of this thing? Help must come from the outside.

Do you know what he is saying here in this "who will set me free from the body of this death?"

It is said that if a criminal, a prisoner in a Roman jail, didn't behave himself, his guards would take the body of a prisoner who had died and tie it to the back of the prisoner who didn't behave himself. And wherever he went, he carried that body of decaying flesh. The stench of this corrupt body was ever with him. Wherever he went, he carried it with him.

And he cried out, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

It's the cry of Paul.

He says, "Here I am living in a body that is full of desire. When I want to do the right thing, I do the bad thing. When I want to leave a thing alone, I can't do it."

It's like the man who says, "I can take it or leave it." Well, you and I know what he will do. He will take it. And sometimes we begin to wonder if there is any deliverance from indwelling sin for us. Is there any way we can keep our body from doing

the things it does?

Now let's be realistic about it. Don't try to live like an ascetic and then tell me, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I'm holy and I don't sin."

I don't believe you. I don't believe you. If you don't sin in action, you are thinking thoughts and words and deeds. All of us do to a more or less degree. Of course, we can see the badness in the other fellow; but he sees the badness in us. We criticize each other, and we are both bad. Oh, how quick we are to judge the weakness and failure and frailty in some other Christian. And the world is very quick, of course, to judge that sin in us.

So there is a yearning in my heart, and I try to make my body behave itself. I'm trying to keep the lust down, and I try the law of God. The law says, "Don't you do such-and-such." But I go ahead and do it. The law says, "You must die." It is a body of death.

You say, "Who will deliver me?"

I say the deliverance must come from the outside. So the last verse says:

25. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

See, he learned something. He learned that sin was dwelling in his body, and he was powerless against it. Is that your experience, my friend?

Notice something else. The sinful self was not the real self. The real self wanted God. The new man panted after God. The old man panted after sin.

Deliverance is found in one place—in Jesus Christ. The channel, the course of our deliverance, is found only in Him. So now the law of the risen Christ Himself is the rule of the believer. That's why chapter 8 is full of the Spirit of God.

Did you notice chapter 7 doesn't mention the

Holy Spirit? Here is a man who is trying to be holy and good without the power of the Holy Spirit. He is trying by his own strength to conquer frailty and weakness and failure in his life. He wants to please God and finds he can't do it. He is trying by himself.

As the old saying goes, he is trying to lift himself up by his own bootstraps.

But he learns something. He learns that sin is in his members. He learns that he is powerless against it. He learns that he has a new life patterned after God even though sin is in his members.

And he learns that there is only One who can deliver him and that is Jesus Christ, the risen Son of God. Sometimes the Lord has to get us right down into failure and to the bottom of things before we really trust Him.

Many have often said, "We trust God for our eternal souls—but, oh, how difficult it is to trust Him the next 24 hours with our daily walk in life."

My friend, may I say, if you're a discouraged Christian and you've tried to live for God and you've failed, there is a place of deliverance. When we come to the next chapter, you will find it is full of the Spirit of God. In chapter 7, it was "I," "me" and "mine," "what I can do," "what I hope to do," "what I am trying to do." And the answer to that is failure. In chapter 8, it is no longer I—but Christ.

Under the law with its terrible lash,
Learning at last how true;
The more I tried,
The sooner I died
While the law cried, "You, You, You."

Hopelessly stilled did the battle rage;
"O wretched man," my cry.
And deliverance I thought
By some penance bought

While my soul cried, "I, I, I."

Then came a day when my struggling ceased;
And, trembling in every limb,
At the foot of the tree
Where One died for me

I sobbed out, "Him, Him, Him."

Oh, when we just stop our deadly doing and trust the Lord, what wonderful things happen.

Friend, again, are you struggling? Are you discouraged? You're trying to live for God, and your life has been full of weakness and failure? Just turn the whole business over to the Saviour.

You cry, "Who will deliver me?" Then comes the answer: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Say with Paul in chapter 8, "We overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."

Now may the Lord make it wonderfully real to you.

Isn't it wonderful to have a Saviour who not only saves us from the penalty and guilt of sin, but a Saviour who can deliver you and me daily from the power of sin and from the curse of a broken law?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Now we come to the crowning chapter of the Book of Romans, a chapter where the Spirit of God is so evident and so available for God's people.

A wee summary.

We've seen in our past lessons that our relation to the old life has been annulled by the death of Christ. In chapter 6, our relation to sin as a master was broken.

In chapter 7, the death of Christ severed our relation to the law. Christ did a perfect work at the cross. When He died, we were identified with Him so that now a risen Christ in glory, not the law, is the rule of our life.

In chapter 7, you remember, the personal "I" was very prominent; the Spirit wasn't even mentioned. Chapter 8 is just the opposite. The Spirit of God is prominent, and the "I" is left out.

In chapter 6, we had sanctification because of our union with Christ. In chapter 8, we have sanctification because of the indwelling Spirit. Instead of experiencing the weakness and defeat of chapter 7, we now have life and power and victory by the indwelling Spirit.

You know, it is one thing to possess the Spirit of God—to have Him indwelling you and me as believers—but it is an entirely different thing for us to use the vast resources God has given us. In fact, I would say a great many Christians are ignorant of what they have. Hence, they're in bondage; they're full of fear; they don't experience the peace of God that passes understanding.

So it's a wonderful thing when we come to this eighth chapter of Romans and discover the marvel of what God has for us. We are in Christ Jesus. We have a new life experience in the power of the Spirit.

As we follow through, we are going to find the wonderful joy of what we have through the cross (chapters 3-5), what we have through union with Him (chapters 5-7) and now what we have through the Spirit's indwelling us.

You will notice that the chapter starts with "no condemnation" and ends with "no separation." I tell you, there is life and liberty and assurance as we read this blessed chapter.

Let me first give you a telescopic view of Romans 8.

We are in a **new position**. We are in Christ.

We have a **new deliverance**, having been emancipated once for all forever from the law of sin and death.

We have a **new place to live**—in the Spirit.

We have a **new relationship**. We are the sons of God.

We have a **new hope**. We are going to be transformed and made just like Him.

We have a **new provision**. We have two Advocates, one in heaven and one on earth.

And then we have the very **blueprint of God's purpose and plan for His people**.

The chapter ends, as I said, with "no separation." No power on earth or hell or even heaven can destroy this wonderful union and relationship we have with our wonderful God.

It's an amazing chapter, and I trust you will read it over and over and over again. In fact, it would not hurt you or me to sit down and just memorize this wonderful eighth chapter of Romans.

Now, let's read about the first thing Paul is presenting—we have a new position in Christ:

1. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who to are in Christ Jesus.

The King James version adds “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” It repeats these words in verse 4. In the Greek text, if I might be a little technical here, these words occur only in the fourth verse. Freedom is not limited to the few who “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” It is for any and every believer in Christ Jesus—strong ones, weak ones, spiritual ones, carnal ones. It’s for every real child of God. There is no condemnation, and the ground of this is two-fold.

The first ground is that there is no condemnation because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross. For example, in John 5:24, Jesus said, “He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” Now we have that in Romans 3:21 through chapter 4, verse 25. The question of judgment is past. Righteousness has become our portion. We have been redeemed, forgiven and pardoned.

As we had in Romans 3:24, “Being justified (declared righteous) as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,” we have it also in Ephesians 1:7 where we have “the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.” It is repeated again in Colossians 1:14 and in Hebrews 9:12 which says that He “obtained (He purchased) eternal redemption” for us.

Every one of our sins is put away and cleansed by what Jesus Christ did at the cross. The Apostle John wrote that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin. And, when John the Baptist introduced Jesus Christ to the people of Israel and to the world, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” Hebrews 9:26 declares that He appeared “once at the consummation (at the end of

the age) . . . to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

He was made sin for us, He “who knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” And one could multiply the Scriptures. The very evidence of our sin has been destroyed, and we stand before God in all the beauty and preciousness of Christ.

I'm going to be very bold and say this: Just as it is impossible for the Lord Jesus Christ ever again to come into judgment with respect to sin—Christ risen from the dead is through with the sin question once for all forever—so it is impossible for the believer to come under the judgment of God. The sin question is settled. We have been united to Christ. We are in Him, and He is in us. What is true of Him is true of us in this regard. You have it in Hebrews 10:12, “But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.” This is why His death on the cross is called the “finished work.” He finished the job, a perfect job; and you and I are in Christ forever.

Now, the second ground is that our union in Christ makes us free.

In chapter 6, He has delivered us from the power of sin. In chapter 8, He declares that He has delivered us from the judgment of sin. I like that verse in 1 John 4:17 where John writes that we “have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.”

You know, I can't help but tell you this. The first time I saw that verse, 1 John 4:17, it struck me so forcibly. I had been a Christian only a few weeks, possibly two or three months. I was living in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and I used to go down and study the Word with a dear man who was a barber, a wonderful Christian barber—a bald-headed barber, by the way. His name was Spencer. And at 6 o'clock at night, he would pull the shade down on his shop and only those in the shop could be

taken care of.

Well, I was up in my room reading the Bible; and I came across this verse, we “have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He (Jesus Christ) is, so also are we in this world.”

I jumped up and ran down to the barber shop three or four blocks away and knocked on the door. It was past 6 o'clock. He peeked behind the shade, saw who it was, opened the door and let me in. He was standing by a fellow, and he was about to shave him.

And I said, “Listen to this,” and I quoted this verse.

He kept on stropping his razor—enough to say, “Well, what of it?”

And I said, “Man, don't you see it?”

And he said, “Oh, yes, I've known that for a long time.”

“Do you mean to tell me that you've known this for a long time and you didn't tell me?”

He kind of laughed and said, “Son, there are so many things in the Word of God that you've never seen; but as you grow in the grace of God, you'll come to see them.”

He pricked my bubble, to be frank with you. I sneaked out of the shop and went back to my room.

I don't think he was wise in dealing with me like that because I was a babe in Christ and didn't know very much. Instead of encouraging me, he discouraged me. Please don't discourage young believers. If they come to you full of joy because of some truth you've known for 40 years more or less, you just nod your head and say, “That's wonderful! Isn't that wonderful? My, that's wonderful.”

Why? Because “as He is, so also are we in this world.”

So we have, in this first verse of Romans 8, a new position in Christ where there cannot be any

condemnation. There wouldn't be any peace or joy if there was condemnation.

"Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Mitchell, that you are going to go into the presence of God without any fear of condemnation?"

That's correct.

"Do you mean that you will not come into judgment with respect to sin?"

That's correct. Jesus Christ bore all my sin. As we have in chapter 6, "The wages of sin is death." Christ paid those wages; we go free.

I wish in some way I could put this so simply that this truth would just grip your heart because of what Christ did at the cross and because of your union with Him. God never sees you in any other place than in Christ. Didn't the Lord say in John 14:20 that in that day, when the Spirit of God indwells you, you will know "that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you"? We are in Christ; and, being in Christ, it is impossible that we would ever come under condemnation.

Now, having said this, we come to verses 2 to 4; and here we have the second thing Paul is presenting—we have a new deliverance. We are no longer under the power of sin and the bondage of death, but we are under a new principle of operation.

Notice that there are two laws in these verses:

2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free (has emancipated you) from the law of sin and of death.

3. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

4. In order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Oh, what a wonderful, wonderful thing—no condemnation, never to come into judgment and to be eternally free from the law of sin and from the law of death. Don't you revel in this wonderful fact?

Christ did such a perfect work for you and for me that we come into His presence with no condemnation. No one is going to be able to produce any evidence in the presence of God that you and I were ever sinners. No wonder we sing that song, "Hallelujah! What a Saviour!"

What a wonderful thing to be saved, to know that you are saved and that you can come into the presence of God at any time and have fellowship with Him.

Now, why don't you do that today? Read Romans chapter 8, come into the presence of the Lord and discuss the matter with Him.

Discuss the chapter with Him. Pour out your heart to Him. He just loves to have you come into His presence and to have you talk to Him face to face. This is why He made you the way you are. He gave you the power to communicate with Him. Why don't you do it? Enjoy the Lord. Don't endure some "religion." Enjoy the Lord Himself. Enjoy your salvation in Christ Jesus. The Lord wonderfully, richly, marvelously bless you as you do this.

And I tell you again, my friend, it is a wonderful thing to realize that we have been delivered. The one law—the law of the Spirit of life—has delivered us from the other law—the law of sin and death. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has emancipated us from the law of sin (which you find in chapter 6) and the law of death (which you find in chapter 7:13 where he says the Mosaic law makes sin utterly sinful). The law is the power of sin as you have in 1 Corinthians 15:56. The law is the ministry of death as you have in 2 Corinthians 3:7.

But we are free now to serve God. We are free now to live for Him, free now to live a new life for

Him which we didn't have under the law. The law demanded, but "the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh." Again, I repeat it: The law is holy, just and good.

Paul said, "I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET" . . . and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me." (Romans 7:7,10). All the law can do is to slay, to kill, to condemn, to curse. It can't do anything else.

You see, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and the law of death. The Mosaic law never supplied anyone with power to perform what it demanded. It did not produce holiness in a life. It demanded holiness. So how can one be emancipated?

God, "sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin," condemned sin in the flesh. What for? "That the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us"—not by you or through you but "in you"—"who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." What the law could not do, God's Son, Jesus Christ, did.

God sent His Son into this world where sin reigned, where death reigned. What for? In order to deliver you and me from the law of sin and death. I want you to mark that. Why did He come? Because man was totally hopeless, totally helpless, void of righteousness.

And the law says you must die. But He appeared once in the end of the age to put away sin (Hebrews 9:26). The sinless One was made sin for you and me.

He became a man that "through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

I like to quote 2 Corinthians 5:21 like the old lady who had been delivered out of a life of bondage to alcoholism. This dear woman didn't know much about schools; but, believe me, she knew the Lord.

And I remember her testimony: "Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for me who knew no righteousness that I, who knew no righteousness, might be made the righteousness of God in Him." This is what you have in Romans 8:3.

He made provision not only to put away our sin but to destroy the power of sin so you and I could go free—in order that (verse 4) the very righteous requirement of the Law "might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Our Lord released us from the bondage, penalty and guilt of sin. He judged sin in its stronghold. He bought us and set us free. Sin has no more right to the Christian. It comes as a trespasser.

And what is the result? The very righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us.

Friend, God did something the Law could not do. He made possible a holy life for those who walk in the Spirit. What the law demanded and couldn't empower, the Spirit of God does in the believer. All that the law demanded is met in Christ for the believer. The believer in chapter 7 tried in his own power to please God and couldn't do it.

Then we come to chapter 8; and, in the power of the blessed Spirit of God who indwells us, each one of us can live the life that is pleasing to God.

Now, the third thing we have is a new place:

5. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

6. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

7. Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so;

8. And those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9. However you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

In these verses, we have a contrast between living after the flesh and living after the Spirit.

I believe we have two classes of people here. In chapter 7 we had two natures, the new nature that longs for God and the old nature that yearns for the lusts of the flesh. Here we have the mind of the flesh and the mind of the Spirit.

The mind of the flesh speaks of death, enmity, a life dominated by the flesh, the things the unregenerate nature prefers instead of God's will. In 1 Corinthians 2:14, the natural man, the man of the flesh, "does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."

In contrast to this, you have the mind of the Spirit, a life dominated by the Spirit and full of life and peace (verse 6).

Now the unsaved, according to the Book of Jude, are sensual, not having the Spirit. The flesh is a life of doom, and death is the fruitage of the flesh. You can't separate these two. But the Spirit means life and peace.

And then Paul goes on to say in verses 7 and 8 that the mind of the flesh is in enmity against God. It is hostile; it is not subject to the law of God and is not even able to be. So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God. It is a moral impossibility for the flesh to please God. He has no confidence in anybody's flesh, neither yours nor mine.

You remember the first three verses of Ephesians 2—may I restate the wording?—“You having been made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins: wherein you walked in times past in the lust of the flesh, in the lust of the mind. You were controlled by the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. We all had our manner of life in the lust of the flesh and the lust of the mind. We were by nature children of wrath like the rest.”

What can we do? We are incapable of submitting ourselves to God. Hence nothing but sovereign mercy can redeem us. That’s why Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3, “That which is born of the flesh is (can be nothing else than) flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” You can’t, my friend, so maneuver, so fix up the flesh that it is pleasing to God.

Now look at verse 9. “You are not in the flesh.” Now I’m not saying that. The Book says it. “You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

By the way, will you notice the verse? You have the “Holy Spirit;” you have the “Spirit of God;” you have the “Spirit of Christ,” and they are synonymous.

There are some who tell us that a person can be saved and not have the Holy Spirit. This is false doctrine. You cannot be saved and not have the Spirit of God. This verse says, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” The Spirit of God dwells in you. The Spirit of Christ dwells in you. The Holy Spirit dwells in you. These are used synonymously. The whole Godhead is not only for His people but in His people.

Again, I come back to John 14:20 when our Lord speaks of this marvelous, wonderful, glorious union between the Father and the Son and the be-

liever. Some people who have accepted the Saviour have agonized and done all kinds of things in order to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. They have been told to wait, to tarry until they receive the Him.

My friend, the moment you accept the Saviour, your body becomes the sanctuary of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Christ dwells in you. As Paul could say, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Take all those passages in the New Testament about Christ living in His people, God being in His people, the Spirit of God being in His people. The Lord Jesus is at the right hand of His Father. That's where His resurrected body is, and He is in us in the power and blessed presence of the Holy Spirit. And if we do not have the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit, we do not belong to Him. Now I didn't say that. That's what the Book says. "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

"And if Christ be in you," the 10th verse says, if Christ is in you (may I restate the wording?), "the body is under the sentence of death because of sin." That's the present experience of Christians.

We are in bodies that are under the sentence of death. If our Lord Jesus tarries, your body and my body will die. We will leave these bodies. Death requires the separation. When we leave this body, we say the body is dead. Because of what? Because the body is not yet redeemed.

The body still has its lusts and desires, and sin is in it. That's why, when we talk about chapter 6, sin is no longer the master in the believer. Sin should no longer control your body; but the Spirit of God, which indwells you, should.

This is the appeal of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6. This is the appeal to you. If you have in you some things that are displeasing to the Lord, breaking your fellowship, affecting your testimony, then, my

friend, come to the Lord and confess your sins. The Spirit of God who indwells you will enable you to live the kind of Christian life that will glorify God. He is not going to force Himself. The Spirit of God indwells you. The question is, will you yield yourself to the blessed Spirit of God who does indwell you?

You are in the Spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. If any man have not the Spirit of God, he does not belong to Him (verse 9). This is the believer's position. "If by the Spirit you live," let me paraphrase Galatians 5:25, "then by the Spirit walk." This is our responsibility—to walk in the Spirit.

In our present experience, the body is under the sentence of death because of sin. But the Spirit is life because of righteousness. This is righteousness imputed, righteousness that indwells. And, as I yield myself to the Spirit of God, then the righteousness of God is manifested in my life.

This leads, of course, to verse 11 where we have the hope that God has given to us. And, wherever Christ is, there must be life.

There must be eternal life.

Jesus said in John 14:19, "Because I live, you shall live also."

In Him is life. Wherever Christ is, there is life, eternal life, resurrection life, satisfying life, indwelling life by the Spirit of God. That's where we live.

"But, Mr. Mitchell, I fail God."

That doesn't alter the fact. This is where you live. You live in the Spirit. Now the exhortation is to walk in the Spirit as you have it in Galatians 5:16 and 25, "If by the Spirit you live, then by the Spirit walk."

Now we come down to verses 10 and 11:

10. And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the Spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Will you please notice this.

11. But if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

Now, let me say again, the body is under the sentence of death because of sin.

But Paul is bringing us another contrast. The Spirit is life because of righteousness—His righteousness—for, where Christ is, there must be life. “I am the resurrection and the life.” “I am the way, the truth and the life.” “Because I live, you shall live also.” We are in the sphere where the Spirit dominates. That’s where we live; so, hence, we have life.

Now the body is not yet redeemed. I needn’t propound that. The body is dead because of sin. We all know that. We know that the body dies. We know that the body sins; the body lusts. The body does things we don’t want to do. We try to live for God; and, behold, the body does something else. This is true. But, as we are going to see in verses 12 and 13, we owe the flesh nothing. All it gives us is trouble.

Now verse 11 says, “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,” and we just had that in verse 9, then “He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.” Here is the hope that God has given to us. The body is yet to be made alive.

Now, remember, in verse 10 the body is under the sentence of death because of sin. But there is a time coming when our bodies are going to be

transformed, and they are going to be freed from death.

And you and I, we Christians, have already in us the Spirit that is going to quicken, to transform our bodies. We already have in us not only the power of resurrection but the power that is going to change our bodies. Verse 10 says we are under the sentence of death because of sin. But we have in us the Spirit of God, the Spirit of resurrection. We have the hope that one of these days our bodies are going to be made alive. In other words, our bodies are going to be freed from the sentence of death. And this will be in God's own time.

Allow me again to quote those wonderful passages. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, Paul tells the church that we do not sorrow "as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede (go ahead of) those who have fallen asleep."

Now, listen. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." That's those who are dead—Christians who have died. Their bodies have been buried and gone back to dust. The power of God is going to raise them from the dead and glorify them. But it doesn't stop there.

He goes on to say that we who remain, we who are on this earth and are still under the sentence of death, are going to be freed from that sentence of death; and the body is going to be emancipated and made immortal and be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. So the dead saints are raised and glorified and the living saints are changed and glorified and caught up together to

meet the Lord in the air and to be forever “with the Lord.”

Allow me to quote again from 1 Corinthians 15:51: “Behold, I tell you a mystery.” He has just been speaking before this about different kinds of bodies. There are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial. Now, when you come to verse 51, we read, “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”

This mortal, we who are alive, this mortal shall put on immortality.

This corruptible, those who are in the graves, shall put on incorruption. We are all going to be changed. In fact, in Romans 8:29, we read we are going to be just like God's Son; 1 John 3:2 says we are going to be just like the Lord Jesus. Oh, what a transformation!

“Do you mean to tell me, sir, that you already have in you the power that can change your body from mortal to immortal?”

That's right. Read verse 11 again. “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.”

Now I must say this. If we already have in us the power of resurrection, the power of transformation, cannot that same Spirit who indwells us control us now?

Can He not give us daily deliverance from the lusts of the flesh, the pride of life, the weakness of the body?

This is life in the Spirit. And you and I are the ones who must yield ourselves. It is up to us to yield ourselves to the Spirit of God who indwells us so that He will control these very bodies which are under the sentence of death.

Now let me go down to the next two verses, two verses that have been a trouble to a lot of Christians.

12. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—

13. For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die (you are about to die); but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

We owe the flesh absolutely nothing. The way of the flesh is the way of death. The body is under the sentence of death because of sin. The body has lusts and sin in it, but we owe the flesh nothing. Remember that.

God has saved us. God has justified us. He pronounced us righteous. He has freed us from the law of sin and death. He has freed us from Adam's race which is under death. He has freed us from the tyrant of sin as a master. He has freed us from the law with its bondage. My, what we owe to God!

Yet God does not take up what we owe Him but rather the fact that we owe the flesh absolutely nothing. All the flesh does for you is give you trouble. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (verse 8). God has no confidence in anybody's flesh. And I am repeating this. He has no confidence in your flesh, my flesh or anybody else's flesh.

The flesh is incurably bad, but God came and justified us and forgave us and put us in Christ. He indwells us by His Spirit. He has given us His Spirit already in resurrection and glorification. He has given us the power that is going to transform us. Now, why don't we yield ourselves to the Spirit of God so that He can control our bodies? He can give us the deliverance.

He gets the victory. We enjoy the deliverance. Hence we owe the flesh nothing. All the flesh can do is to produce death. It is incurably bad; and,

until God changes it, it will never be changed. You can fix it up. You can color it up. You can paint it and do anything you want to with it, but it is still f-l-e-s-h. The man out of Christ, the man of the flesh who is dominated by the flesh, has nothing to show but sin and rebellion against God. But the believer has in Him the Spirit of God that is going to change these bodies. We have in us the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead.

Paul prayed in Ephesians 1 that we might know “what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand.” And in Philippians 3:10 and 11, he says, “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

What do you mean, Paul?

“I want to experience my identification with Christ, not only in His death, not only in His sufferings but also in His resurrection life and power.”

And I say, very bluntly, you and I have no excuse. I don't know what the sin is in your life, Christian friend; but there is deliverance for you by the Spirit of God who indwells you. The trouble with us folk is that we try to get deliverance on our own terms. We struggle, we set our wills, we set our chin that we are going to get the victory. And, instead, we are defeated and defeated and defeated. He wants us to trust the Spirit of God.

Our body is under the sentence of death, but we have in us the very Spirit that raised Christ from the dead, the very Spirit that is going to take this body and transform it from a body under the sentence of death to an eternal, incorruptible, glorified body. And, if you and I already have this power,

there is nothing left but to yield ourselves to the Spirit of God and let Him do it.

Let Him do it.

My, how we have struggled and strained and prayed and fasted. What for? To get deliverance. And we didn't get deliverance until, in our absolute helplessness, we threw ourselves on God for deliverance; and He got the victory and gave us the deliverance.

Allow me to quote from Colossians 3:1-4: "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." That's what we have been having in Romans 8. "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you will be revealed with Him in glory."

We are joined to the eternal Son of God. We have the hope of a body that is going to be changed, a body that is going to be fashioned like His glorious body.

Wouldn't you like that to happen now? Wouldn't you like to have your body transformed and changed now?

You say, "Yes, I would."

All right, if you believe that, take the second half of Romans 8:13. Hold your body under the sentence of death. "If by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Mortify the deeds of the body. The body wants to do things that do not glorify God.

If you want to do things that dishonor Him and that hinder the work of the gospel in others' lives, throw yourself upon God. Let God the Spirit who lives in you live out His life in and through you.

This is what He wants.

I say, my friend, a holy life without a controlled body is a contradiction. We owe the flesh nothing.

Now God doesn't say, "You owe Me something." It is so obvious we owe everything to God—justification, sanctification, glorification. We owe the whole business to God. He doesn't remind us of that. All He wants is for you and me to exalt His Son in your life and my life. We owe the flesh nothing. We owe everything to God. Then let's live for God today.

Now, it's remarkable to take the context and see how the Spirit of God brings us into the position of the new relationship we have as members of the family of God.

14. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

The old race had nothing to give us. It proved to be incurably bad. So what is God going to do? He is going to bring in something entirely new. You remember in John's Gospel, chapter 1, verses 10 and 11, we read: "The world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him."

See, the old race had proved itself incurably bad. God must bring in a new race of people. Then you have John 1: 12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Is there any need for a new race? Why, of course. We just found in Romans 8, verses 7 and 8, that "the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

You see, sin has ruined everything. It caused Satan to fall. You remember, his root sin was pride. Five times in Isaiah 14:13-14 Satan said to God, "I will." "I will ascend. . . . I will raise my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will sit on the mount of assembly. . . . I will ascend. . . . I will make myself like the Most High."

In Genesis 3, you see in Adam and Eve the same thing, pride.

Satan said to Eve, "Why, God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." And this has followed right on down through the history of man. The world killed God's prophets, despised His Word, crucified His Son. What can He do?

My friend, listen. God is bringing into being a new race of people. He is not dealing with nations as such. He is dealing with individuals. In fact, I would say to you, when God begins to deal with the nations, I don't want to be on the earth. Revelation 5-19 records the judgments of God upon the world, upon the nations. In fact, as Isaiah 26:9 declares, "For when the earth experiences Thy judgments, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness." They will not learn it any other way. They despised His grace. They spurned His love. What else can God do?

So I read here in verse 14, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Now I think maybe a word of warning here will be in order. There are some people who make a distinction between being a child of God and being a son of God. They teach that, when you believe the Lord Jesus Christ is your Saviour, receive Him into your own heart and life and put your trust in Him as your Saviour and Lord, you become a child of God. And then as you are led by the Spirit, you become a son of God. That's contrary to Scripture.

When John is writing about the family of God, he always calls us children. He is not dealing with our standing so much. He is dealing with the question of life and relationship and fellowship. In John's Gospel, he tells us how to receive life. In the Epistle of John, he tells us how to enjoy that life. He always addresses us as children.

Now I recognize that in the King James Version the word is "sons." But the word really is *teckna*, which means "children," because John is dealing with relationship, fellowship and life.

Now the Apostle Paul, who was the apostle of faith, talks about our position and our standing before God. We not only stand before Him as His sons in Ephesians 1:5, but He also determined that we should be adopted into His family as sons in Galatians 4:5. This is what you have here. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." In other words, the moment we accept the Saviour, my friend, the Spirit of God is involved in this.

How did you receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour? You say you heard the Word of God? That's right. But remember the Spirit of God was the One who made it real to you. He was the One who opened your eyes to your need of a Saviour. It was by the Spirit of God through the Word of God that you became a child of God. And, not only so, but you became a new creature in Christ. That's 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Or you take Galatians 6:15 where being a Jew or a Gentile profits nothing, but a new creation does. Or you take 2 Peter 1:4 where Peter says that according to these many wonderful promises which God has given to us we have become "partakers of the divine nature."

In other words, the moment you and I accepted the Saviour, we were led into the family of God, forgiven our sins and declared righteous.

Not only has He put us into a new family, having a new Head, but He has delivered us from the master sin in chapter 6 and delivered us from the bondage of the law in chapter 7.

So now where are we? We are in a new race of people. We are born by the Spirit of God into this new family where everyone has eternal life and where death does not even cast a shadow.

As you walk today, as you go to work, as you work in the office, as you are with your family, think of the dignity of it all. We are children of One who is God. "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." We stand before God adopted into His family, not only as children but as sons. What a wonderful thing, I say. We are members of an entirely new race.

In Galatians 3:26, we have, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." We are partakers of the divine nature, adopted, placed in the family of God as His sons. Hence we can say, in Romans 8:15, "For you have not received a spirit of slavery (which we had under the law) leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which we cry out, 'Abba, Father!'"

You know, this is an amazing word, "Abba, Father." Did you ever think of it? We need no longer be in fear of being slaves to sin, slaves to the flesh; we are able to say in the presence of God, "Abba, Father." If you would go to the Near East today, whether it be Israel or the Arab world, you will notice that the children call their father, "Abba," "Daddy." Here is a sweet relationship. Oh, the wonder of it. He is "Abba." He is my father.

And, by the way, the very moment I say I'm His son, I'm His child, then I must be subject to His discipline. As Hebrews 12:6 says, "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." Is it not a wonderful thing today that God can take men and women like you and me and transform us into the chil-

dren of God and put us into a race of people, into a family where death never comes? Everyone in the family has eternal life.

We talk too glibly about being the children of God. That's why I love to put it, "We are the children of One who is God." May you live today like that. I'm the child of One who is God. That being so, how shall I conduct my life?

Don't you think it would be a wonderful thing if today you could just lift up your heart to the eternal God and say, "Abba, Father," and if you could then pour out your heart to Him just like a child would pour out its heart to its mother or daddy? "You have loved me with an everlasting love. You are sufficient for my need. You have a tremendous interest in me. I am the object of Your love."

Why don't you come today and spend some time in the presence of your Father?

Oh, the wonderful intimacy of relationship between the Father and His people. And I find in verse 16 that the Spirit of God Himself bears witness to this relationship. Listen to it.

16. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Here is a mutual thing. The Spirit of God and the believer have been joined together in mutual love, in mutual life. You remember, Romans 5:5 says, "The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." In 1 John 3:1, we have, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." And we manifest our sonship by our obedience to His Word.

He left us, you and me, down here to reveal God to men even though they reject our testimony. The Apostle Paul could say to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 that we are

unto God “a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?”

And he goes on to say our adequacy is of God.

In Romans 8:17, not only are we brought into the family of God, but because of this relationship we have an inheritance we share with Him.

For I read:

17a. And if children, heirs also, heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with Christ . . .

Let me just stop here for a moment. I am reminded of 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 4, where it says that we have an inheritance which is “imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” You see, God guards the inheritance and keeps us for it. We are joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

You know, I question if our minds are able to comprehend the wealth of this truth. You remember in Hebrews 1:2 God speaks to us “in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things.” Jesus Christ is the heir of all things on earth and in heaven. The whole universe belongs to Him.

You take Colossians 1:16, “For in Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible.” It makes no difference. All things were created by Him and for Him and without Him nothing was made, and by Him all things are held together.

And I am a joint heir with Jesus Christ!

Oh, Christian friend, how rich we are! The riches of God, the riches of glory, as well as the riches of grace are for His people. I tell you, when you say, “I’m a child of God,” I wonder if you realize for a

moment what that means. It means you have come into a position far beyond angelic beings. You've come into a relationship that no other created intelligence has that I know of. We are the children of God. He made us in His image. He has redeemed us. He has bought us back to Himself, given to us life eternal and then said, "You are my children. You are my sons. You are my heirs. You are my joint heirs with the Son of God." Oh, the wonder of this!

Too many of us Christians, with all the wealth we have in Christ, are just living like paupers. Oh, that we might live in the good of this marvelous relationship. We are the sons of God here on earth.

We may not be recognized by the world, but one of these days we shall be recognized by all created intelligences in heaven and earth. God is going to put you and me on display. He is going to say to the myriads of angels—angelic beings, principalities and powers—as well as the nations on earth, "These are my sons; these are my children."

Ah, I tell you, He is not ashamed to call us brethren. God is not ashamed to be called our God. So here in verse 17, we have an inheritance in Christ:

17b. If indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

Now, I remember a preacher one time telling me that you are not a joint heir with Christ unless you suffer with Him.

I want you to mark this. Inheritance is not based on suffering. Inheritance is based on relationship. It's true in the human family. It's true in God's family. We are joint heirs with Christ because we are His children. We are joint heirs with Christ because of relationship.

It is suffering and glory that go together. Go to 2 Timothy 2:12, “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.” Relationship and inheritance go together. Suffering and glory go together.

Now there is a certain sense in which all the people of God are going to be glorified together with Christ. For example, Colossians 3:4 says, “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.” That’s true of all believers. You have it in John 17:22, 24, “The glory which Thou hast given me I have given to them. . . . Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am (that’s eternal glory), in order that they may behold My glory (His moral glory),” the glory which He had with the Father before the foundation of the world.

Whenever he speaks of the sufferings of God’s people, Paul always brings in the glory. He wants to encourage us to remember that—even though we suffer for the Saviour—God takes thought of everything.

Oh, I’m so glad He sees everything, aren’t you? He’s the only one who understands us, and He is the one who is sufficient for us.

You see, Paul was looking at the sufferings he was going through in the light of eternal glory. If you and I were to look at our circumstances in light of the present, we would get discouraged. But Paul could see the glory in contrast to what he was going through.

For example, take 2 Corinthians 11 and 12 where he speaks of the sufferings he went through: “Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.” Five times he was beaten within an inch of his life. He had been jailed. He had been stoned; and he tells about all the persecution he went through, running from one city to the other. His life was, as he said in 1 Corinthians 15:31, lived in daily anticipation of suffering and martyrdom. What made him do that?

Because his eyes were on the glory. That's why he could say,

18. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

You see, the end of verse 17 opens the door for our hope which we have in verses 18 down through 25. We have no hope in the flesh. It's incurably bad. Therefore, we live in the Spirit and walk by the Spirit so that His character and His love and His compassion will be revealed through us. Now this may bring us suffering and opposition of one sort or another. In the first century it meant martyrdom. It meant death.

Oh, listen, friend. Inheritance is determined by our relationship to the Lord because we are the children of God; and, being His children, we have an inheritance "imperishable and undefiled and (one that) will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you"—for us. And God is reserving—us—for the inheritance. And so, in view of this, in view of the glory, we can say, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

I tell you, my friend, it's a wonderful thing to be a Christian, to be a child of God. We have a guarantee not only of an inheritance but of the glory we shall be having in Christ Jesus. My, who would turn down such a Saviour? Who would be indifferent to such a Lord?

And I just plead with you, child of God, to live that way today—to live as the child of one who is God.

Verse 18 also marks the beginning of a new division in chapter 8. I call it, "Our New Hope."

We had a new relationship; now we have a new hope. As His sons, we are to be revealed in His glory. In chapter 7, we were groaning in bondage.

Now, in chapter 8, we are delivered from the bondage; but we are still in an unredeemed body.

That's why, when you come to 2 Corinthians 5:1-2, you have that wonderful, wonderful promise: "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven." You have that here in Romans 8, verses 18 to 25—the new hope—because whatever you go through today is not to be compared with the glory God has in store for you.

The Apostle wrote that our light afflictions are just for a moment (2 Corinthians 4:17).

May I change the wording just a wee bit?

"Put your afflictions to work"—these light afflictions that are working to produce for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond anything we could ever dream of." Why? Because we do not look at the things that are seen but at the things that are not seen. We don't judge life in the light of the present 24 hours. We judge it in the light of eternity.

As I have said before so often, when God gets through with us, we are going to be just like His Son. You know, I'm not surprised that the Thessalonian Church went through so much persecution. Those people were waiting for the Son from heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:10). And in 2 Thessalonians 1:10, the Lord is going to come to be admired with all His saints. Just think of it! We are living in evil days, but Galatians 1:4 says Christ has delivered us "out of this present evil age." And 2 Timothy 3:1 says, "In the last days difficult times will come," evil days, dark days, days of opposition to the Gospel. But our Lord, I am reminded, suffered. He went to the cross, as Hebrews 2:9-10 says, to bring "many sons to glory."

The people of the world, one of these days, are going to be greatly astonished when they see the manifestation of the people of God. You see, the world has spurned the real Christians. They look down on us; we are kind of odd. They may call you "deacon." They may call you names.

In times past, I've had preachers say to me, "Well, Mitchell, are you still preaching the old Gospel?"

I say, "Yes."

"Man, don't you realize that we've gone beyond that?"

"No," I say, "I haven't realized that."

"Why, don't you know that we're in an enlightened age? We're living in an age of post-Christianity."

"No," I say. "No. Man is just the same. He's incurably bad and needs a Saviour."

All the philosophies of men can't redeem anybody from sin, death and the grave. Thank God for a message where the Gospel concerns a Person, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself to redeem us out of all iniquity, to purify unto Himself a people for His possession who are going to be glorified with all the glory of God.

I say, my friend, what a prospect!

God is going to say, "These are my heirs; this is my family." No wonder the angels of Hebrews chapter 1 are going to be servants to minister to you and me who are in Christ Jesus.

Don't hang your head down, my friend, because you are a Christian. Put your head up. You are a child of One who is God. And the very sufferings of this present time are not even worth talking about when you think of the glory that shall be revealed in you and me in that day.

Now let's talk more about our new hope.

Did you ever stop to think that this hope not only deals with the believer, but it also deals with all creation? In fact, in verses 19 to 22, we see

where there is hope for creation. Let's read these verses:

19. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

20. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope

21. That the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

22. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

Now, here you have the hope of creation. The creation and the creature are eagerly waiting for the unveiling of the sons of God.

You see, all creation is waiting for the day when you and I who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be manifested before that creation. There is nothing of that now. But just you wait. Just you wait! We have not yet seen what God intends creation to be. But He has a plan, He has a purpose, and He has a hope for creation.

Remember that the creature went down with man. When man sinned, he not only dragged the human family into bondage, but he also dragged the creature with him. Look at verses 20-22. The whole creation today is groaning and suffering "the pains of childbirth together until now." It's waiting to enjoy the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Did you ever stop to think of this?

Someone has said that the whole creation is in the minor key.

You know, some years ago, when they began to deal with microphones, I'm informed, they put a steel rod with a microphone at the end of it down as far into the earth as it would go. All they heard was groaning.

To me, this old earth and all creation is groaning, groaning because of man's sin. It's after sin

came into the universe, first of all through Lucifer—through Satan, the devil—then through Adam and Eve to the family on earth, that we find groaning in the minor key, trouble and sorrow. Not only are men and women experiencing the fruitage of sin, but the very earth upon which we walk is suffering from it.

You remember Genesis 3:17, when God said, “Cursed is the ground because of you.” What did it give forth? Weeds, weeds, and more weeds. We use all kinds of insecticides to keep down bugs, to keep down disease and what have you. The curse of sin is not only on man, the human race, but it is on the very earth on which we walk.

My friend, you can't account for it in any other way. God said—and I don't care what men say—God said, “Cursed is the ground because of you.”

You know, many years ago up in the prairies of Western Canada, you could go to some of those expanses where a plow had never been put and you would find hardly any weeds. But let a man homestead, put his plow in, turn over the sod and put in an early crop, and by fall he had many weeds. The curse just follows man.

You get on a plane and you fly over our forests, and everywhere you see the curse of man. Everything he touches, he ruins. Thank God, a day is coming when the very ground is going to be delivered from the curse. And a day is coming when the animal creation is going to be freed from the curse.

And not only they, but we, too.

23. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

24a. For in hope we have been saved. . . .

In verses 23-25, we believers have hope. The animal creation has hope. The ground has

hope. We are waiting for the completion of redemption. We enjoy the liberty of grace now, but all heaven is waiting and all earth is waiting. What for? For our complete redemption. Oh, how much hinges upon God's purpose in the Church.

Did you ever think of it? How much of God's purpose is dependent upon the Church? All heaven waits. All earth waits. The creature waits. The whole universe waits. What for? For the manifestation of the children of God. They are waiting for the full redemption of the believer. I tell you, my friends, it is an amazing thing. It's true.

We are not known now as the children of God, as the sons of God. But I tell you, we will be when we get our glorified bodies. Someone has called that "an immortal prospect" for our bodies. Can you think of it?

Listen, Christian friend. Did you ever stop to think of the tremendous place you have as a Christian in relation to God? In relation to the universe? In relation to the animal creation? In relation to the earth? We don't know God's plan or what He had in mind for the earth when He made it. We don't know the prospect He had for the animal creation when He made it. Man came and ruined the whole picture. So when the body of the child of God is redeemed, that is the hour for which all creation waits. And, I tell you, it's going to be a wonderful, wonderful day when you and I stand before the throne of God and are recognized by all created intelligences in heaven, earth and hell.

"These are the sons of God," they'll say. "These are the heirs of God."

We are just waiting today. What for? For that day to take place when the dead in Christ shall be raised and when we together with them shall be reunited and caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

What a prospect! What a hope!

Now, the earth has hope, the creature has hope, the believer has hope. But the unbeliever has no hope. Just think about this for a moment. The only place in God's universe where there is no hope is among unbelievers here on earth. In fact, I would say, the only place where there is any question mark about who Jesus is is in the human family; for, you remember, the angels knew who Jesus was.

They said to the shepherds (Luke 2:11), "Today in the city of David there has been born for you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." In fact, the angel Gabriel told Mary that He would reign from the throne of His father David, and of His kingdom there would be no end. And there is no question in the minds of the demons of the underworld who Jesus is because, when our Lord walked the earth, the demons said, "We know who You are—Jesus, the Son of God." Or as one said, "Jesus, the Son of El-Elyon, the Most High God."

Where is the place of unbelief? In the human family. You know, this just about breaks a person's heart when you think of it. The only place in God's universe where there is any question mark as to who Jesus of Nazareth is is in the human family. So, who has hope?

Well, first of all, the earth on which we walk has hope. It says here in verses 22-23, "The whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now . . . waiting." Waiting, for what? Verse 19, "For the revealing of the sons of God" when the creation is going to be set free.

Remember Isaiah 11 and 59 both speak of the fact that the earth is going to be delivered from its bondage. There will be no more thorns and briars. The desert will blossom like a rose. You take Amos chapter 9—the last chapter, verses 11-13—when the sower shall overtake the reaper and the ground will give forth its increase. The ground will be delivered from the curse. And, if you want to

follow it through, you will find it also in Isaiah 35, in Ezekiel 34, in Psalm 67:6, in Revelation 21 and 22 where you have the new heavens and the new earth, in 2 Peter and in Isaiah 51:6. I am quoting these Scriptures to you because this is where you find hope for the earth upon which you and I walk.

The desert is going to blossom like a rose.

The curse is going to be removed, and the earth is going to give forth its increase. We have never seen the earth give forth its full increase. Today in our country by our scientific research, we have been able to put things into the ground to get large crops. We haven't begun yet to see what God will do when the curse is removed from the earth.

And then the creature has hope.

"Do you mean the animal creation has hope?" you ask.

Of course it does. In Isaiah 11:6-9 and Isaiah 65:25, the lion shall lie down with the lamb; the bear shall lie down with the kid; and a baby, a child, shall play with a viper. There shall be nothing to hurt or to mar in all the holy mount of God. The Book of Joel (and Joel, you remember, is the book of the Day of the Lord), chapter 2, tells you what God is going to do in the millennial kingdom. In that period of time, the animal creation, as well as the earth is going to be removed from the curse. It is going to give forth its increase. So we find that the earth has hope and the creature has hope.

And the believer in Christ has hope.

I tell you, this is what Paul says here in verse 23: "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved."

The believer has hope. You remember, Ephesians 4:30 says that we are sealed by the Spirit of God for the day of redemption. And that is the day when our bodies will be redeemed from the curse and bondage of sin.

In Romans 13:11, I read, "It is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed."

"Why, I thought we were already saved," you say.

Yes, we were saved when we believed in Christ. The Lord saved us and we are being saved and we are yet to be saved. The time is still coming when our very bodies will be delivered from this question of sin and death. And in 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 5, Peter says, "We are protected by the power of God through faith" unto a salvation (yet) to be revealed in the last time.

You find the same thing in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass."

Or you take Philippians 3:20-21, where Paul writes "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

In Romans 8:29, God has determined that we should be "conformed to the image of His Son."

And you have the same thing, of course, in 1 John 3:2-3 that says when we see Him, "we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, allow me to quote again just the last two verses of that, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to

meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

In 1 Corinthians 15:51 through 53, we have, “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

You see, our inheritance is eternal, our redemption is eternal, our life is eternal, and our family is eternal. Everything that God gives to us, my friend, is eternal. Why, we belong to an eternal family if we have taken Jesus Christ as our Saviour. We had that over here in Romans 8:14-17. We are now the children of God, and we partake of that which our Father has. I say it is a wonderful thing. It is a wonderful thing!

Now, notice in verse 24:

24. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees?

25. But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

You see, when we receive that which we hope for, we no longer have hope. And, when we receive our new bodies, we no longer have hope.

Listen, friend, if I were to ask you, are you saved by hope, I think many of you would say, “No, we are saved by grace.” Some of you will say, “We are saved by faith.”

Well, that’s true; but we are also saved by hope. We are saved by grace as we have it in Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.” The base of our salvation is His grace.

And we are saved by faith. That is how we receive our salvation. Take Romans 5:1, for example:

“Therefore having been justified (or declared righteous) by faith, we have peace with God.” But we are also saved by hope, and this is the completion of our salvation. This takes in the body.

So, let me repeat it. We are saved by grace; that’s the foundation of it. We are saved by faith; that’s how we receive it. And we are saved by hope; that’s the completion of it. As Philippians 1:6 says, “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” So, you see, we are saved by hope.

You know, I feel like quoting chapter 11 of the Book of Romans.

Do you remember that 33rd verse?

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable his ways!” And then Paul goes on, “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him, that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.”

We are saved by grace! Saved by faith! Saved by hope! God starts salvation, continues it and completes it. We’ve been saved from the penalty and guilt of sin. We’re being daily saved from the power of sin. And we are yet to be saved from the presence of sin.

Oh, do you know of anybody who has a hope like that? Just Christians. Just Christians. The philosophies of men give you no hope. How wonderful, how wonderful that God has given us a message, a gospel which brings us real deep-down hope.

As Peter could say in 1 Peter 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

I tell you, it's a wonderful thing when you think of the future glory of the saints. Indeed, it's wonderful that all creation is waiting for the time of our manifestation. The whole of creation is wrapped up in our hope.

"But, Mr. Mitchell, what if I fail? Will I lose my hope?"

Oh, no. The Spirit of God steps into the picture and helps our infirmities. He doesn't remove our infirmities, mind you. He helps our infirmities. He takes hold of us. We don't even know how to pray, but He does; and He stirs up the desire and wakens us and encourages us to come before the throne of grace.

Now, the sixth thing we have is a new provision or new knowledge in verses 26 to 30.

26. And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;

27. And he who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

28. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

We don't even know how to pray as we ought. You know, that always staggers me. How many Christians today know how to pray? And I speak to myself as well as to you. We all know something about praying. We've all heard sermons and Bible readings and exhortations on prayer, but how many of us pray? Sometime, if you have the opportunity, get that little book by E. M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer*. It will stir your heart to pray. The Spirit of God will stir you up. We don't even know how to pray as we ought.

“But, Mr. Mitchell,” you say, “when I get down to pray, I fall asleep.”

Well, I can appreciate that. Sometimes, I do the same thing. We get tired, and we start to pray when we're tired out. And the only comfort I have is that the Lord understands me; He knows my frailty. He is touched with the feeling of my infirmities. He knows all about it.

Dear old Peter was a good sleeper. Remember? He slept on the Mount of Transfiguration in the Lord's glory, and he slept in jail when he was going to have his head chopped off the next day. Peter was a good sleeper.

Now, I'm not rationalizing my sleeping when I say that. But, you know, the Lord understands. He knows about the frailty of our bodies. But please don't hold back because of that. Get down and pray; and, if you can't pray, let the Spirit of God pray through you. Read your Bible and let the Lord talk to you, and you will soon be praying.

The Spirit of God pleads; He intercedes for us. You remember Ephesians 6:18, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.” And in Jude 20 we are told to pray in the Holy Spirit. You see, the Spirit of God is in us taking care of God's interests down here. And Jesus Christ, our Advocate in heaven, is pleading our cause before the Father and taking care of our interests up there. He never gets tired of praying for us.

God has a tremendous interest in every believer, even the weakest believer. Do you think He will leave us alone and let the world take its venom out on us? Oh, no! Do you think God is going to trust us to ourselves to keep ourselves? He couldn't do it. What does He do?

The Spirit of God comes to indwell us and to take care of His interests. We don't know how to pray, but the Spirit of God makes intercession for

you and me with groanings that can't be uttered.

But mark something else in verse 27. The Lord Jesus also is praying for us. He is making intercession for us according to the will of God. See, I have a great interest in heaven; and my Saviour is taking care of my interests up there. He is taking care of your interests up there. I tell you, God is leaving nothing to chance. He is leaving nothing, my friend, to you and me to work out. Hebrews 9:24 says He now appears "in the presence of God for us."

In 1 John 2:1-2, we read, "My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."

Now notice Romans 8:27. "And he who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is." The Lord Jesus Christ doesn't search our hearts to find fault with us, but He searches our hearts to know the mind of the Spirit. Are you and I willing to have Him come down and search our hearts? You remember, the 139th Psalm, verse 2, says He knows our thoughts from afar; and, if I run to the farthest end of the earth, I'll find Him there waiting for me. He searches the hearts. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that He uses the Word of God to search our hearts, and Revelation 2:23 confirms that He does indeed search our hearts.

And I'll tell you one thing. He is praying for you, and He is praying for me. Did you ever notice, in John 17:9, He says, "I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me (out of the world)"? In other words, "They were Yours, and You gave them to Me." And He says in John 17:20, "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word." You find it in Hebrews 7:25, "Hence, also,

He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

I say, what a wonderful thing! The Spirit of God in you and me is praying for us, representing God to us, taking care of God's interests in us; and He seals us unto the day of redemption. He'll never leave us.

Did you hear what I said? The Spirit of God will never leave you. And Jesus said in John 14:16 that the Spirit, too, is going to abide with you forever. And then to have Him pleading our cause up there—oh, I tell you, we have a wonderful Saviour! Oh, the wonderful, wonderful provision God has made for us. He never leaves us for a minute, and He guarantees that we shall stand in the Father's presence just like Himself.

Look at this chapter—Romans 8. We are in Christ Jesus. We have a new deliverance. We have been delivered from the law of sin and death.

We are living in a new place—in the Holy Spirit and we have a new future.

Our bodies are going to be redeemed in verses 10 and 11. We have a new relationship as the children of God, the sons of God, the heirs of God, having an inheritance in Him. And then we have a new hope. He guarantees our very body is going to be redeemed because the salvation we have is a complete salvation—spirit, soul, and body. And I repeat what I said before that God will never be satisfied with you and me until we stand in His presence, conformed to the image of His Son.

Now, it's no use my reveling in the fact that I am a child of one who is God if I do not seek to please Him here on earth and if I do not seek to come into His presence to spend time with Him and read the Word of God and know what His purpose is for the Church and for you and me individually.

Oh, listen, Christian friend. You are in God's hand. You are in His family. You are His child, His

heir. And don't revel in that without realizing that in His family you come under the discipline of God as Hebrews 12 says. And, sometimes, the discipline is hard; but it always produces something. We are tested and tried, of course, not to be destroyed but to be purified so we will be to the praise of the glory of His grace.

I can say (my translation) and you ought to say with the Psalmist (139), "Whom do we have in heaven but Thee? Who is there on earth beside Thee? Though I take the wings of the morning and go to the farthest ends of the earth, You are still there waiting for me." No wonder David said, "This is too wonderful for me." It is beyond all human comprehension.

My friend, listen. This salvation we have starts in God, is continued by God and is going to be completed by God.

We have the Spirit of God in us, the interceding Saviour on the throne, and God Himself for us. Then all things must work together for good to those who love the Lord, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Oh, listen, Christian friend, why don't you revel in these things in Christ? Enjoy the One who gave so much for you and me.

Now let's go down to verse 28 which contains the second thing in this new division. It's a good thing to know that "God causes all things to work together for good," and there are a lot of things in the New Testament we should know. For example, Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:12, "I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." John says in 1 John 5:20, we "know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ."

What a verse Romans 8:28 is!

But, you know, if I may be allowed to say this, oftentimes I think Christians quote that verse a lit-

tle too glibly. We have the attitude, "Oh, well, Romans 8:28 is still in the Book." Well, of course it is. But let's remember that it is a tremendous thing. "God has caused all things to work together for good!" We've seen our sonship, our future glory, His care for us. And now we know that the very million details that come into our life—the heartaches, the sorrows, the joys—work together for our good because we love God.

You remember that Ephesians 2:10 says, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." We are His craftsmanship.

"Do you mean to tell me, Sir, that every little detail of my life—He knows all about it?"

Of course He does. Doesn't Job 14:16 say that He numbers our steps?

Afterward, he says that He bottles our tears. He counts the hairs of our head. He knows all about you and about me. There is not a detail of our lives that He doesn't know about. And every part of our experience is working together for God's glory—and for ours. I want you to think about that.

You know, I like hot biscuits. Don't you? I remember years ago in Texas they would give us hot biscuits with honey for breakfast.

Now, I wouldn't want to take a spoonful of flour and put it in my mouth. And I certainly wouldn't want to take a spoonful of salt or some yeast or some baking soda—whatever you use to make your biscuits. I wouldn't want to put any one of them individually in my mouth, and you wouldn't want to either. But you put them together and cook them a wee bit and you get good, hot, luscious biscuits.

Now, friend, don't take one little detail of your life and begin to get discouraged. The Lord knows how much is good for you.

Listen, if you grant to me that the Lord never leaves you nor forsakes you and you grant to me that He loves you right through to the end with an everlasting love, then grant that He knows every detail and that He is right there with you. He knows how much you can stand, and He is working it all out for your good and for His glory.

You know, I like that little word of Anne Ross Cousin's when she wrote,

I'll bless the hand that guided,
I'll bless the heart that planned,
When throned where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land.

Or another song:

He holds the key of all unknown,
And I am glad;
If other hands should hold the key or
If you entrusted it to me,
I might be sad.

Isn't that true? I may not understand everything that comes into my life, and you may not. I know one thing— that everything that comes into our life, God works out for our good and for His glory.

Now I'm not excusing any frailty or disobedience or failure on your part or mine. What I'm saying is that God in His wonderful grace and love takes the very things that are discouraging to us and uses them for His own glory and for our good. You see, He has us on His heart; and, when we murmur against circumstances, the chances are we are murmuring against God.

In fact, I have heard Christians blame God for certain things. Don't blame God. God can take the most outlandish things, the finest detail or the greatest sorrow and suffering, and make that work

together for your good and for His glory. You see, we are His workmanship.

Now, I repeat it. I do not say we will always understand why we go through certain things. I know one thing. He never stops loving you. He can use every detail of your life for your good and for His glory.

Now, for whom is this? The verse (8:28) goes on, "To those who are called according to His purpose." And who are the ones who are called according to His purpose? Why, of course, those who love God, those who are trusting the Saviour. This is a fact. It is not an experience only. Ephesians 1:11 says, He "works all things after the counsel of His will." And in 1 Corinthians 1:27-29, He takes the weak things and the base things of life to confound the things that are mighty, that no flesh should boast in His presence.

You know, our hindsight is often pretty good. We look back over our life. We see certain experiences, and I think down the years we are going to thank the Lord for them. We didn't enjoy what we went through very much. But we'll see that it was through those things that He brought eternal glory to Himself and blessed His people.

Now, many of us often read into verses 29 and 30 what was not the intention of the Spirit of God. For I read:

29. For whom he foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.

30. And whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom he called, these He also justified; and whom he justified, these He also glorified.

31. What then shall we say to these things?

Here we have God's blueprint.

You know, when you are going to build a house, you don't just go out and build a house. You call

an architect. You buy plans or you draw plans yourself. Certainly a person is not going to build a house without some idea of what he is going to build.

Now God has an eternal purpose that He is working out. We who are Christians and who love the Lord are a distinct part of that purpose; and we see here the blueprint of just what God is going to do with us, with the Church of Christ, with those who love Him. You will notice He does not reveal His purpose until He has a people redeemed and justified and united to Himself, a people who love Him, a people who are in His family and who have been guaranteed a new body, a people who are in the care of the Spirit of God. And, having this people, He now begins to open His heart and reveal His sovereign purpose to us.

You know, I think a lot of people are really disturbed about this question of the sovereignty of God; and it is very easy to become an extremist one way or the other.

Someone says, "Dr. Mitchell, are you a Calvinist? Or are you an Arminian?"

I say, I'm Pauline. I believe what the Bible says. It's so easy for one to become lopsided. One can become an ultra-Calvinist or one can go to the place where he is at the other extreme where people believe they are saved by works and that they can be saved today and lost tomorrow. Now, remember, God has a purpose. God is not doing things frivolously.

Oh, listen, my Christian friend, we have a God who is sovereign; and these words of sovereignty like "foreknowledge," "predestination," "choice" or "election" always have something attached to them.

For example, Ephesians 1:4 says, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless." It does not say we were chosen to go to heaven or that He chose some

to be saved and some not to be saved. You don't find that in Scripture. What He does say is we are chosen to be holy and without blame.

So I say all these Scriptures must be taken in their context, and we must notice what is attached to these words.

Now I believe in the sovereignty of God, but I also believe that man has a tremendous responsibility. What is he going to do with God's Son whom He sent into the human race? God holds man responsible. God has revealed Himself. Man doesn't have any excuse.

Even the pagan, the man who has never heard of Jesus Christ, has no excuse because there is no place where the voice of creation is not heard. I don't care where you are in the world. If people have never heard of the Saviour, have never seen a Bible, they are still responsible to worship the God who created them.

And, today, in so-called Christian countries that have the Word of God, that have a church on nearly every corner where the Word of God is proclaimed, people do know the name of the Lord Jesus. They are responsible then to do something about God's Son.

But what I'm trying to get to your heart is this, that God is not doing things by happenstance. He doesn't do things on the spur of the moment. Way back, God purposed that certain things would take place.

Let me read here, for example, two portions of the Book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 14—I'm reading from verse 24 and verse 27—"The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, 'Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand. . . . For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?'"

God is sovereign. He does what He wants to do, and none can change His purpose or hinder Him in the completion of that purpose.

Let me read from Isaiah 46:9-10: “Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.’”

Verse 11, “Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.”

That’s the kind of God we have, a God who is righteous and yet who is love. When He purposes a thing, He carries it through. He never starts to do something He doesn’t finish.

Now you don’t have to look very far to see where men start things and don’t finish them. I think we are all guilty of that, more or less. We start a project and somebody else has to finish it for us.

God never starts a work He doesn’t finish. For example, the moment you accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour, you find that God has already started a work in you to bring you to Himself and that He will not be through with you until you are conformed to the image of His Son. You are going to stand before God holy and without blame.

But, on the other hand, it may be that He elected you to a place of suffering. This is what Peter talks about in his first epistle.

We are “chosen according to the foreknowledge of God.” What for? To be saved? No. For suffering. The whole epistle deals with suffering. In the first epistle, the suffering is from the outside world. In the second epistle of Peter, the suffering is from false teachers. And God has planned from way back that His people will know something of suffering because this is part of His purpose in forming you and me to be like His Son.

So you have here in Romans 8:29-30 the extent of His purpose. Remember, these are facts, not necessarily experience. Allow me to take these two verses together. Here you have the length of God's purpose. Ephesians 1:4 says that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless. In chapter 2, verse 7 of the same epistle, Paul writes, "That in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Here you have an eternal picture of the purpose of God for you and me. He chose us in Christ to be holy and without blame.

When? Before the foundation of the world.

Why? That in the ages to come, He is going to display, He is going to put on exhibition, if you please, you and me to show forth the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Then Paul goes on to say that we are His workmanship. We are His craftsmanship. And don't you think that when God starts a job He is going to finish it? Now there might be some things through which you and I may have to go.

When Solomon built the temple, there was no sound of hammers or saws. All the noise was out in the quarry. Here we are on the face of the earth, and God has quarried us out. We have to be shaped and ground and polished; and, when God gets through with us, we are going to be right in the place He has for us in eternity.

And I want to tell you, my friend, God doesn't say very much about eternity for His people. But what He has intimated is beyond all human comprehension. In fact, I question very much if any of us today—if we were ushered into the presence of God the way we are, apart from what we are in Christ—I question if we could stand it for one second. So God begins to prepare us. He begins to loosen our feet from this old world.

That's why, having been a pastor for a great many years, I have oftentimes rejoiced in the privilege of being with some of God's dear saints when they are leaving this world.

They tell me, "Dear Brother Mitchell, please don't pray for me to stay here. I just want to go Home."

You see, God's purpose for them on earth is finished; and God has taken out of their hearts any desire for things down here. They've got a little glimpse of the glory, and they can hardly wait to get Home.

You say, "Brother Mitchell, I've never had that feeling."

No, you are not ready for it yet. But I'll tell you one thing. When God has you ready for what He wants to do with you, don't worry. You will be eager to get there.

I don't know when God wants to call me Home, but I know He numbers my steps and He bottles my tears and my times are in His hands. He is on the job day and night. He never leaves us. He never forsakes us. He has made us the object of His love and affection. He is working out His divine plan and purpose.

Now some people God takes Home early. Some go through a great deal of suffering. God can't trust everybody with suffering or sorrow or tests or trials. Some Christians break under it so God doesn't give it to them. Some of these dear saints, some of the sweetest saints, are suffering saints.

Sometimes, you know, I wonder if God can't trust me with it. I know so little about suffering. Oh, I've had some things in life. Yes, but when I think of what some of God's people go through and their cheerfulness, their fortitude, their peace of heart and mind, I tell you it's an amazing thing.

You see, God is the One who is working it out. God is working out a purpose and none can say to Him, "What doest Thou?" God has a purpose in

your life and my life. That is what I'm trying to get to your heart. So we can say in Romans 8:28, "God causes all things to work together for good." Everything! The blessings and the trials and the tests and the sorrows and the joys, all the details that come into your life, everything works together for good.

You know, the Lord must love detail. Did you hear what I said?

The Lord must love these little wee things we call insignificant. They are not insignificant to Him. The very hairs of our head are numbered. I wouldn't start to try to count yours or mine. I'll tell you one thing. He knows every detail of our lives.

By the way, I'm very glad for that. I'm very glad for that. You and I may not know very much, but I know one thing. We are in the hands of the omnipotent, sovereign God. And there is no power in heaven, earth or hell that can change His purpose for you or for me.

What He wants you and me to do is to appreciate that and to walk with Him.

Allow me to go back to that verse in Ephesians 2:10: "We are his workmanship (his craftsmanship), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." This is God's desire. This is God's purpose. And sometimes He has to hedge us in to get us to do the thing He wants us to do.

My, how stubborn we are. How we want our own way. How willful we can get, and we just go along wanting what we want. And so the Lord, in His wonderful love for us—that blessed, unchanging love—puts things into our lives. He hedges us in. Sometimes the things He hedges us in with are not very nice. But He does it because He loves you, because He is working out a purpose.

And don't forget, Romans 8:29 says He predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son. Just think of it! Just think of it! My friend, go look

in the looking glass. Thank God for His grace and say, “All right, that’s the way I look now; but just wait until God gets through with me.”

The eternal Sovereign God has purposed that I’m going to be just like Jesus Christ, His wonderful Son.

Doesn’t that thrill your heart?

Friend, today you have disappointments. You have failures, weaknesses, tests. You wish you were living someplace else. You wish you had a different job. You wish you lived in a different neighborhood. You wish this and you wish that.

Ah, listen. The Lord has put you right where you are because He is working out something in your life and in somebody else’s life and because He uses all of us one way or another. In His own good time—and, by the way, He is always on time—He works things out after the counsel of His own will.

I like these verses here in Romans 8. “Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He (the Lord Jesus) might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

God already sees you and me as glorified.

When I look at God’s people, I say, “Well, that hasn’t taken place yet!” That’s true in our experience. It has not taken place yet. But I’m just as sure as God is on the throne, just as sure as God is sovereign, the Lord of lords and King of kings, the El Shaddai, the Almighty God, the One who holds on His girdle the keys of death and of hell, that He is going to work it all out. And when He gets through with you and me, we are going to be just like His Son, Jesus Christ. Isn’t that a wonderful prospect?

Now you live in the joy of that instead of growling over your tests and trials. Say, “Praise

the Lord, He is using this to make me just like the Lord Jesus.”

Now, predestination always looks ahead to what we shall be like. For example, in Ephesians 1:5, “He predestined us to adoption as sons.” We are not only in the family of God as children but as sons. God determines that what He has planned will be worked out in every one of His children. And what is His purpose which He has determined? That we shall be just like His Son.

Now we have spoken of this before, but I would like to refresh your memory with some Scriptures. In 1 John 3, the second verse, we have, “Beloved, now are we children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”

In Philippians 3:20-21, the Apostle Paul says, “Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state (this body of our humiliation) into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”

And you have it in Romans 8:29—He determined that we should be “conformed to the image of his Son.” This is the purpose of God.

The Psalmist caught a glimpse of it in the 17th Psalm, the last verse, verse 15, when he said, “I will be satisfied with thy likeness when I awake.” And Job caught a little glimpse of it, when he said in Job 19:25, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is flayed, yet without my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes shall see and not another (not a stranger).” I like that verse, you know. When we stand in the presence of God, we are not going to be strangers.

Did you ever go into a city or to some part of the country where you didn't know anybody, and you walked among the thousands of people on the street? You went up to your room in the hotel, and you were alone. It's an awful feeling. Or you've gone to some foreign country where you can't communicate with anyone. It's a terrible feeling when you are not known.

But it's a wonderful thing to come into the presence of God in eternal glory and be known. He will know me and I will know Him. I shall see God by my side, Job says; and, when I see Him, behold He is not a stranger. God has determined that we shall be conformed to the image of His Son.

Do you know He is already on that job? He is doing that work now. This work of transformation has already started. He not only took us out of the kingdom of darkness and put us into the kingdom of His Son, but 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (as a present thing) into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

Think of it. Revel in it. Even the tests and trials and disappointments and sorrows of life are part of God's program in changing you and me, in forming us, in fitting us so that when He gets through with us, this workmanship of His, we are going to stand in His presence like the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Now, I say that reverently; but I am sure of 1 Corinthians 2:9, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." Don't stop there. "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God."

Oh, that our hunger for God may be increased, our eyes may be opened, our hearts may be

opened to see, to receive, to revel in and to rejoice in a God who is faithful and who will do exactly what He says.

He has determined that we shall be conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the first-born among many brethren, the first one in this new company of people, the first one in this group called the Church. He didn't call us to go to heaven. He called us to be like His Son. He didn't predestine us to go to heaven. He predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son. And it's going to be a permanent likeness.

No wonder the Lord Jesus, who looked and spoke in the light of eternity, could say to the women after the resurrection, "Go to My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God'" (John 20:17).

By the way, please allow me to say this. Don't ever call Him "Brother Jesus." You know, I have met people who call Him "Brother Jesus;" and they take it from these two portions of Scripture, John 20 and Hebrews 2:11, where it says, "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." But, when you mention His name, please don't say "Brother Jesus." You call Him "Lord Jesus." Do you hear me? He may in grace call us His brethren, but we don't presume to call Him that. After all, He is God!

I rejoice, I revel in this relationship with the Saviour. We have been joined to the eternal Son of God. We are members of an eternal family where everyone is going to stand before God absolutely perfect and complete and just like the Son of God. This is God's determination. This is God's purpose and program for everyone who receives His Son. Think of it! We are cleared of every charge, declared righteous, given the blessed hope and, God says, glorified.

This is His purpose for His people. And, as far as God is concerned, it is a finished transaction. We manifest our faith in what He has done and what

He is doing and what He is going to do by our obedience and by our love for Him.

Friend, you know no man, no created intelligence could have worked out such a thing as this. I look over the thousands of God's people and think of what God has done and what He is doing, and then I remember that the whole universe is waiting for the day when every Christian is going to stand in the presence of God conformed to the image of His Son. The very creation is waiting for that day. The creatures are waiting for that day.

Why do they wait? Let me repeat it just once more. They wait because, when the children of God are manifested before all created intelligences, that will be the time when the earth will be delivered from its curse. That will be the time when the animal creation will be delivered from its bondage. That will be the time when righteousness will reign and our Saviour will be glorified in and through His people.

I tell you again, my friends, no man could have conceived of such a thing. And is it not a wonderful thing for you and me to depend upon the faithfulness of God and to declare that what God has purposed is going to take place? As he has purposed, says Isaiah 14:24, so shall it stand. "Just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand."

God saw you when you were in your mother's womb. He knows your thoughts afar off. He never leaves you. He never forsakes you. He makes you the object of His love and affection and says, "Listen, Mitchell (or whatever your name is), when I get through with you, you will be just like my precious Son, the Lord Jesus Christ."

No wonder we have in chapter 8, verse 14, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Read Ephesians 1:5 with this. He determined that we should be His sons, adopted into His family as His sons, and not only as His

sons, but as heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. This One owns the whole universe—this is His inheritance—and you and I are going to share it with Him.

But the marvelous thing, my friend, is not only the inheritance. The marvelous thing is not only that we are going to be just like the Lord Jesus Christ.

But to me the marvelous thing is that God is going to have a people right on through eternity with whom He can have unbroken, wonderful fellowship—so that through you and through me and through the Church through eternity, He is going to fulfill His purposes for all creation, for the whole universe.

My, what a privilege that you and I should become the children of God!

Now, certain questions are raised as we sum it all up in verses 31 to 39:

31. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

32. He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

From verse 31 to the end of the chapter through verse 39, we have four questions and answers. We can go no farther. This transcends everything in human language. These four questions and answers come after all Paul has revealed to us. He takes man in chapters 1, 2 and 3 and proves him absolutely unrighteous with none doing good.

Then he reveals to us the wonderful provision of God who takes sinners who receive His Son, forgives their sins and pronounces them righteous, who brings them right to Himself, who frees them from the bondage of death, from the mastery of sin, from the bondage of the law, who puts them in

His Son Christ Jesus, who indwells them by His Spirit, who calls them to be His sons and heirs and gives them the hope of a new body transformed like the body of His Son. Then He provides two Advocates, one in heaven and one on earth—the Lord in heaven, taking care of our interests there and the Spirit of God in us, taking care of His interests here.

You see, God leaves nothing to chance. He does not trust the flesh to do anything.

Then we have God's blueprint. And the blueprint reveals to us not only that we are redeemed and pronounced righteous, having eternal life and the Spirit of God, but also His purpose that we shall be conformed to the image of His Son. He glorifies us, as John 17:22 says, "The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them." So far as God is concerned, we are already glorified.

Now these are the facts. They are true, and the eternal Sovereign God declares that they are true. We can look forward with real expectancy to our experiencing what He has purposed.

I tell you, it's a wonderful thing to be a Christian. It's a wonderful thing to belong to the Saviour.

Now, we are not only bound for heaven—that's a mere item—but we are going to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and to be numbered among those with whom God is going to have eternal, unbroken fellowship through the countless ages of eternity. And we are going to display the grace of God and the wisdom of God to the whole universe.

Now, what are you going to say to these things? What can you say except "Amen, so let it be!"

What more can He do?

God is for us in all that He is. The Spirit of God helpeth our infirmities. He carries out a perfect salvation, from condemnation to glorification.

Who does it? God does it. The opposition doesn't even count.

Who can be against us? Well, who can? God is for us and who will oppose or destroy the purpose of God?

Can hell?

Why, Jesus in Matthew 16:18 said, "The gates of Hades shall not overpower it." Or you take Revelation 1:18. Our Lord holds the keys, the authority of death and of hell. Where is the opposition? It doesn't even count. Romans 8:31: "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?" Having given to us His Son, what else can He give us? He can't withhold anything from us. He gives us—everything.

Let's look further at verses 32 and 33: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect?"

You know, I don't think the human mind can really get hold of this.

You remember in 2 Peter 2:4 we read that "God did not spare angels when they sinned." Now I can understand that. And God spared not the old world. I can understand that because the thoughts and the imaginations of the heart of man are evil continually. "And He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah" (2 Peter 2:6). I can understand that because of their gross immorality. I can understand all those things. But how do you account for God's not sparing His own Son?

I tell you, my friend, He didn't send an angel. He didn't send an archangel. He didn't send some good man. He sent His only begotten Son, who took my place. "He spared not His own Son." In other words, the judgment of God that should have fallen on you and me fell on Him. And, when God the Son took your place and my place on the

cross of Calvary, all the law of God could do was to curse Him.

I am not surprised in Matthew and Mark that the Lord Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Did you ever think of it? God spared not His own Son. I'll even go further. God gave up His Son at frightful cost. What for? To redeem you and me.

To redeem you and me!

No wonder Paul could say in 1 Corinthians 3, the end of the chapter, "All things belong to you." Why? "Because you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God."

Now that's the first question—what shall we say to these things? This is the purpose and program of God, my friend. What can you say but "Amen!"

And when God spared not His Son, He went to the nth degree; He could go no farther. He gave heaven's best.

Oh, listen, Christian friend, why don't we Christians fall in love with God's Son? Why don't we love Him more? We take so much for granted. We talk so glibly about Romans 8:28. We talk so glibly about being Christians and about going to heaven. What about your daily experience in magnifying Christ among men?

Will you please, today, sometime today, meditate on this? God loved you so much that He spared not His only begotten Son. All the judgment, all the wrath of God that should have fallen on you and me fell upon Him; and no human mind can begin to explain or to express what the Son of God went through when He went to the cross. No wonder in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:42) He cried out, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me." No wonder He said (John 12:27), "Now my soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour."

Did you ever think of it?

And when Peter chopped the fellow's ear off, Jesus said (John 18:11), "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

Oh, listen, Christian friends. Stop sometime today and take a few minutes. Just meditate on the price God paid to redeem you and to redeem me.

You see, the problem with us is we see things in the light of the next 24 hours. We see things only in the light of human history. The Lord Jesus spoke in light of eternity. As Revelation 13:8 says, He was "the Lamb slain" from the foundation of the world. God spared not His Son. Why? That you and I might be delivered from sin and bondage, covered with the righteousness of Christ and fitted for the eternal presence of God. This is what Paul means in Philippians 3:8, when he says, "I count all things to be loss," everything to be loss—the good things and the bad things—everything loss. What for? Just to know Him and to be found in Him.

Let me tell you, I wish I could put into words just what I feel about it. I'm talking to you now. I just don't find the words to express this amazing truth.

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

When you have the Lord Jesus Christ, you have everything.

Every once in a while, someone tells me that I should have this experience or that experience or some other experience. Now, as wonderful as those experiences may be, may I tell you, my friend, I have Jesus Christ; and you can't add anything to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have everything in Him. And, thank God, the day is coming when through eternity I'll continually be experiencing what I have in Him.

These are eternal things. And what shall we say to these things? What can you say but "Amen! If God be for us, who can be against us?"

There is not a created intelligence in the whole universe who can thwart the purpose of God in His Son and in His people. And "whom He justified, these He also glorified." There is not a created intelligence in the universe who is going to prevent any believer, the weakest as well as the strongest, from being glorified with all the glory of the eternal God. My, what a salvation is this! What a Saviour is this!

Friend, I cannot understand those that turn their back on such a Saviour and who reject such a love as His. God spared not His own Son in order to redeem you and me from sin and death and hell. If that were all, that would be wonderful. But He has made it possible that we shall be like His Son and be fitted to enjoy eternal, unbroken fellowship with God through eternity.

Oh, my friend, what shall we say to these things? If God spared not His Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

We come to the second question:

33. Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies.

When God has pronounced us righteous, what are you going to say? Who can charge anything to any of God's people when God says they are righteous?

My friend, to charge us is to impeach the Judge; and He has cleared us of every charge. The evidence of all our sins has been destroyed. He has pronounced us righteous, and whoever brings a charge against us has to reckon with God. I say again, the opposition counts for nothing.

You say, "Mr. Mitchell, this is beyond me."

I confess to you, it is beyond me. Oh, that it would get hold of your heart and life and your mind. Who can lay any thing to the charge? Who would dare stand before God and charge His people with anything when God has destroyed all the evidence of our sins? He has put them all away. He has cleared us of every charge. He has pronounced us righteous. And, if you charge the believer, then you must reckon with God.

I ask you again, are you going to impeach the Judge? And I tell you again, this salvation we have is an amazing thing. If God be for us, who can be against us? We are in the majority. If God has justified us, who can charge us with anything?

There is only one answer to this, which leads us to the third question:

34a. Who is the one who condemns?

Who can? No angel can. No man can. No demon can. Satan can't. Nobody—nobody in the universe can come before God and condemn us when God has pronounced us righteous. This, too, is an amazing thing, isn't it? I say this is an amazing thing!

But the thing that breaks my heart—in fact, there are two things that break my heart. First of all, Christians seem to have so little realization of this wonderful, wonderful truth. Christians seem to have so little knowledge of the wonderful salvation we have in Christ, of the wonderful Saviour we have and of all that God has done for us. I repeat, all that God is, all that God has—is for His people.

Who will condemn us? Who can lay any charge against us? I say, this is what burdens my heart—so many of God's people know so little about their relationship with the Saviour, about this union with the living God and what it means.

And the other thing that breaks my heart is that there are so many wonderful, wonderful people who have spurned the Saviour. Possibly I better put it this way—they are just totally indifferent to Him, coldly indifferent. It isn't that they oppose the Gospel. They are just indifferent to it.

Like one man said, "Dr. Mitchell, I don't need Jesus Christ. I have all that I need. I don't need Jesus Christ."

But, listen, they've got to stand before God; and He is either their Saviour or their Judge. Each one must decide what he is going to do with God's precious Son. He "did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all."

Oh, why won't these accept God's precious Son? He has said, "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest. . . . The one who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out" (Matthew 11:28; John 6:37). But as many as receive Him, to them He gives the right to become the children of God (John 1:12). Oh, why won't they bow their head and receive Him as their own Saviour?

Christian friend, why don't you fall in love with your Saviour? Oh, what that would mean to Him and what it would mean to you! God grant that our vision of Christ may be enlarged and that our love for Him shall grow in intensity so that we will fall, really fall in love with Him.

Grant it today, Lord.

Now, let us more fully develop the third question here in verse 34:

34. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

There are four tremendous things in this verse. I would like to be brief (whether or not I am is something else).

Who is the one who condemns? Nobody can. Satan can't. Man cannot. Angels cannot. Why? Because Paul says here it is Christ who died and who is risen again, who is at the right hand of God and who also intercedes for us. I say we have four remarkable things in this verse.

First of all, Christ died. That means that the sin question was settled, and we have been pronounced righteous before God. That is Romans chapters 3 and 4.

The second thing, He "was raised" from the dead and this brings us to chapters 5 through 8. Christ is risen; He is no longer in the tomb. We have been identified with the Risen Christ. We are not joined to the Christ who walked the earth. It was when He took our place on the cross and bore our sins and died our death that we were joined to the One who came forth in resurrection. We became new creatures. We received a new life. We are joined to the Risen Christ where death doesn't even have any place at all.

When Christ rose from the dead, He had already defeated Satan and put away sin and defeated death and the grave. And, when you and I took the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we were not only declared righteous (having our sin question settled), but we were identified with this risen, glorious Saviour. You find this in Romans chapters 5, 6 and 7. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, our relation to the old Adam has been severed. Our relation to sin as a master was severed. Our relation to the law and its bondage was severed. When you come to chapter 8, we are in only one place—in Christ Jesus.

What a marvelous thing!

And then we have the third thing: "Who is at the right hand of God." And that's representation. In Hebrews 9:24, I read, He now appears "in the presence of God for us." Do you need any help in the court of God? Our Lord and Saviour is there.

The One to whom you have been joined is there. He represents us.

Can you find any fault with the Lord Jesus? No. Can angels find any fault with Him? No. Can Satan find any fault with Him? No. Men? No. Where are we? In Jesus Christ. He is our representative.

And, if anyone were to charge us or condemn us before God, all the Father needs to say is, "Do you find any fault with my Son?"

No.

"These are in My Son."

What a wonderful thing it is to be in Christ, saved, righteous, fitted, glorified in Him. Now these are facts. It may not be your present experience, but it is a fact. We are dealing with God's facts, facts that hold up for even the weakest child of God.

And the fourth thing we have in this verse is One "who also intercedes for us." He is not only representing us, but He is our High Priest who is interceding for us in our frailty. You see, we are still down here in weakness. That's why, in Hebrews 2:17, He was "made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God."

I suggest for your study the whole 17th chapter of John's Gospel where our Lord is praying for His own. I suggest 1 John, chapter 2, the first two verses, where we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And then I would take Hebrews 7:25, "Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

He is our Intercessor. He is our Advocate. He is our Mediator. He is the One who is praying for us.

You know, again I come back to Job who was crying for somebody to plead his cause, somebody who could put his hand on God and put his hand on him, someone who could represent him before

the eternal God. You may be one of God's weakest children; but, if you mean business and you have taken Him as your own personal Saviour, my friend, you have in the presence of God One who not only prays for you because of your weakness and advocates your case when you fail, but you have One who pleads your cause, One who represents you.

Ah, I tell you, God has left nothing to chance, has He?

You know, this gets beyond me. Look at this verse. We have justification, identification, representation and intercession here. What more can God do for you and me?

Well, He is not through yet.

In verses 35 to 39, we pick up the fourth great question. The first question was "What then shall we say to these things?" —that is, say to God's purpose and program for His people from verse 28 to verse 30.

You ought to say "Amen" to that.

The second question was "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" When God has pronounced us righteous, nobody can.

The third—"Who is the one who condemns?" Who can condemn us when Christ has justified us and joined us to Himself? Who can condemn us when He represents us and intercedes for us?

Nobody.

Which leads me to the last little question:

35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36. Just as it is written, "FOR THY SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."

37. But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

38. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Notice, nothing is left out. In verses 35 and 36, he is talking about our experiences.

Shall tribulation separate us?

No.

Or distress?

No.

Or persecution?

No.

Or famine?

No.

Or nakedness?

No.

Or peril or sword?

No.

“For thy sake we are killed all the day long.”

We are facing martyrdom, says Paul. “In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” No circumstance on earth can separate us from the love of Christ, the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. My, nothing in God’s universe can separate us from Him. Nothing affects His love for us or toward us.

Now, sometimes, it may be that you and I are under a cloud. That may be true. But the sun still shines above the clouds. And nothing, nothing, nothing in this whole wide universe can separate us from the One who loves us with an everlasting love.

Don’t you remember that verse? John 13:1, “Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end”—clean through to the end. And even though some circumstances seem to indicate that God has forgotten us, He hasn’t. It’s

not true. There is nothing in God's universe that can separate us from Him.

In fact, Paul says, "We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered" and we are those who "overwhelmingly conquer." Sheep for slaughter and yet conquerors? Yes, He cannot be conquered. The Son of God cannot be conquered. And where are we? In the Son of God. He has guaranteed victory.

I love that verse in Philipians 4:13. Do you know what it is? "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." And Philipians 1:6, "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." And Jude 24, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy."

"I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. . . . Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass." I'm quoting 2 Timothy 1:12 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.

Oh, do you see the impossibility of separation? the unutterable conviction? Think of every conceivable adversary in the universe, and not one of them can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Listen to it:

"I am convinced that neither death . . ." Aren't you glad? Death doesn't separate you from Him. Death may separate you from your loved ones—from them, but not from Him. You go right into the presence of the Lord.

I am persuaded that nothing in life, "nor angels (who excel in strength), nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing . . .” Nothing in all God’s universe can separate us.

I’m telling you, He loves us in death. He loves us in life with all its successes, with all its failures, with all its tests, with all its sorrows, with all its circumstances. He loves you in life, and He loves you in death. He loves you in spite of all the opposition or dangers or demons or powers in heaven and hell.

Things present, things future, things known, things unknown, things above, things beneath—you name it, my friend—there is not a thing, not a created intelligence in the universe that can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God gave us His Son, and He gave Him to us in love. Now nothing, nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Listen, can I do something? Will you allow me to run ahead to chapter 12 for a moment? After what I’ve said in these last three or four chapters on the wonderful, wonderful program of God for His people, let me “urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God (by all these things), to present your bodies (give your body as a present to God) a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world (don’t be fashioned according to this world), but be transformed (transfigured) by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Don’t you think after all I have said in these first eight chapters of Romans there is only one logical thing for you and me to do? God in His purpose has determined that we are going to be glorified together with His Son; and there is no experience on earth, there is no created intelligence in heaven, earth or hell that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

There is only one logical thing for you and me to do and that is to turn our lives over to Him and to turn our bodies over to Him that He might be glorified in and through us here on earth.

Is that asking too much? God gave heaven's best. He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all. And with Him He has given us everything. Can't we give ourselves now over to Him so that He might be all in all in our lives, in all that we are and all that we do?

Won't you bow your head, Christian friend, with me today and give yourself over to God and tell Him, "Father, in all my weakness, I am going to give myself over to You."

You say that means dedication. That's exactly what it means.

You dedicate yourself, and He will consecrate you and set you apart that you might be to the glory of His Son.

Father, we pray today that You will take these amazing lessons in the Book of Romans and make them to be a living reality in the heart and life of everyone who has been reading this.

Oh, that those of us who are Christians might give our bodies and all that we have and are to Thee, the Living God, and to our wonderful Saviour.

And, Father, should there be an unsaved one who has read this far, may he or she come into this wonderful, wonderful place of accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and being numbered among those who shall stand in Your presence, conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grant this . . . for His Name's sake.

Amen.

CHAPTER NINE

A wee summary.

We have just finished the first eight chapters which deal with the wonderful, wonderful grace of God.

We've seen in chapters 1, 2 and 3 how God can take men who are unrighteous and who are away from Him and bring them to Himself through the blood of Christ. They have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. They have been redeemed. They have been forgiven every trespass. They are covered with all the righteousness of the Son of God. They have been joined to Him, identified with Him not only in His death and burial but in His resurrection.

Through that death, He has severed the relationship of the believer both to sin as a master and to the law with its bondage; and He has put us in Christ who made us members of His family and who represents us before God.

We end up in chapter 8 where no one can condemn, no one can bring any charge against God's people and nothing in this wide universe can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What a tremendous transformation!

That's why, when we come to chapter 12, He beseeches you and me by the mercies of God to present our body as a living and holy sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service.

**GOD IS RIGHTEOUS IN HIS DEALINGS WITH
ISRAEL**

(9:1-11:36)

Now, in between chapters 8 and 12, we have these three chapters, 9 10 and 11; and the question is raised, "Is God righteous in His dealings with the people of Israel?"

You remember at the end of chapter 2, after Paul has said that a Gentile who is uncircumcised can be justified in the sight of God, yet a Jew who has been circumcised may be lost, he asks (3:1), "What advantage has the Jew?"

He answers, saying, because God gave the Jewish people the Word of God, the revelation concerning Himself; and God called the nation to be a place of privilege to witness to the Gentile nations of the oneness of God and to be the family through whom Messiah should come. That's the three-fold reason telling why God chose Israel. God did not choose them, as we read in Deuteronomy 4:37, because they were many. In fact, they were the fewest of people. He chose them because He loved them. This nation has a tremendous place in the purpose and program of God for the earth.

GOD IS RIGHTEOUS IN ELECTING GRACE (9:1-33)

Was God righteous in choosing Israel to be His witness to the nations? Was God righteous in giving His truth to Israel, making it the depository of the Word of God? Why, of course. There is nothing wrong with that. God had a right to do that if He wanted to. He had a right to say through what people His Son should come into the human race. That doesn't mean He was despising all the other families. He chose the Jews to be His witnesses, and they failed the job.

Please don't raise the question of personal salvation here. He is talking about choosing a people for a place of privilege. He is talking about nations, not individuals.

So let me repeat, in chapter 9 you have God

righteous in choosing Israel to be the nation that would be the depository of the Word of God, the one through whom Messiah should come and through whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

In chapter 10, you have God righteous in disciplining Israel. He pushed the race to one side and began dealing with personal salvation. When you come to chapter 11, you have God righteous in restoring the nation Israel to its place of privilege in the fulfillment of prophecy.

Paul is not talking about the church. He is dealing entirely with the nation Israel in chapter 9. In chapter 10, he opens the door for the individual Jew to accept the Saviour.

In chapter 11, God will restore the nation again to the place of privilege. As the 46th Psalm says, the Jews are going to be God's witnesses, exalting Him among the nations.

I have been saying these things because I want you to know that all the promises of God for Israel will be fulfilled. But there are those who believe that God is through with the nation Israel and that all the blessings that He promised in the Old Testament to Israel are going to be given to the church.

May I say very bluntly, the church is not Israel and Israel is not the church. They are two entirely different companies of people.

If you want to know God's purpose for the church, you have to go to Ephesians and Philippians and Colossians. The argument in Romans 9-11 is dealing with what God is doing with the nation Israel. For nearly 2000 years, the Jews have been a scattered people. They have been the butt of abuse and scorn and ridicule and persecution and martyrdom. In December 1947, they again became a nation; but they are still the object of persecution and trouble.

Why has God permitted this if they are God's

people? And why has the Gospel gone out to the Gentiles? Why did God push the Jewish people to one side and scatter them and then pick up the Gentiles and form a new thing called "the church"? The much misunderstood answer is in these three chapters. And, while I speak to that point, may I suggest this, too?

One of the tragedies through the centuries has been that the church of Christ has taken the promises of God to the nation Israel and tried to apply them to itself. God has not given the church any worldly ambition or any earthly inheritance. Our Lord said in John 16:33, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

The promises of God to the church are entirely different from the promises of God to the nation of Israel. Unless we see that, we are going to be caught in the vortex of taking the promises of God to the nation of Israel and trying to work them through the church with the result we are neither fish nor fowl. We have ruined the heavenly promises for us and destroyed the earthly promises for Israel.

When God deals with the nation Israel, He deals with the nations of the earth. Today, He is not dealing with the nations. Today, He is dealing with individuals. He is gathering out a people for His name, made up of Jews and Gentiles.

It doesn't make any difference who you are, what your color is, what your tongue is. God is dealing today with individuals, not nations.

And, when God begins to deal with the nations, He is going to deal in righteousness. He is going to deal in judgment. In fact, I would say, if I may quote from Isaiah 26:9, the nations of the earth will never know righteousness except through the judgment of God. "When the earth experiences thy judgments, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness."

And, remember, God is always righteous in everything He does. So you have His past dealings with Israel in Romans 9 in electing them to a place of privilege.

Paul is not writing as one who hates Israel but as one who loves His people. He writes with a heavy heart.

It is easy for us to stand to one side and see what the Apostle experienced and to have none of it in our own hearts. And yet, I must say this, if you glory in the truth of the first eight chapters of Romans, if you revel in the purpose of God in chapter 8, if it doesn't produce in your heart and my heart a real burden for those who are on the outside of the truth of God, then we have missed out entirely. The truth of chapter 8 has never gripped our heart.

The more we see of the glories we have in Christ and of our position in Him, the more there should be a greater yearning in our souls for men and women who are outside of Christ. If the one is real in our hearts, the other will be the evidence of it. If there is no evidence of love for souls, then we have got to question the reality of our faith. Reality always expresses itself in behalf of somebody else. Now the first three verses show:

Paul's great desire (9:1-3)

1. I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.

He calls on God to be his witness for the burdens of his heart.

You detect a note of heaviness, a note of sadness and sorrow as he writes. The Jews were accusing him of setting aside all God's gracious promises to Israel, and they were very bitter about it. One can't read, for example, Acts 21 and on without realizing their hatred for Paul. In fact, in his missionary

journeys, practically 90 percent of the opposition and the persecution came from Jews. They knew that their ministry, their calling, was to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles; but they didn't do it. They gloried in their separation and believed everyone who was not a Jew was a Gentile under the curse of God.

You have that in Jonah who epitomizes the attitude of the nation. And so they are accusing Paul of setting aside God's gracious promises to Israel.

"Is God setting aside the Jew to take up the Gentiles?" they ask. "If so, what about His covenants? What is the use of being a Jew if the Gentiles can be saved without us?"

Paul's argument is a matter of God's sovereignty—His election of Israel in times past when the Gentiles were set aside. Now God has set Israel aside so He can reach the Gentiles. The Jews had said of Jesus, "We will not have this Man to reign over us."

And, when Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" they said, "We have no king but Caesar." They repudiated the Messiah, the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now God has flung the door wide open to the Gentiles; and, for both Jew and Gentile, His appeal asks each to come one by one.

Do you know, I have met Christians—and I'm sorry to say this—who claim that we must not pray for the unsaved, that nowhere in the New Testament are we urged by the Spirit of God to pray for the unsaved.

Now, that's not true. In 1 Timothy 2:1-4 we are exhorted to pray for all men, all in authority, for God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. And you remember the great burden of Christ's heart in Matthew 23:37, when He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under

her wings, and you were unwilling.”

The Jews were religious. They were moral. They searched the Scriptures; but they were not saved. And their unbelief greatly distressed the Apostle Paul. He must prove his love for Israel.

Therefore, he stands before God with his heart laid bare. “I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.”

When a person calls God to be his witness, he better be speaking the truth. Don't you think so? You have that in the first chapter when he was writing to these Christians in Rome whom he had never seen. He said words to the effect that “God is my witness that I want to come to you, but I have been prevented thus far. I want to come and have fruit among you. I want to come to edify you. I want to come to build you up in the faith. And God is my witness. That's the great yearning of my heart.”

My friend, how much of a burden do you have for the unsaved people around you? How much of a burden do I have?

You know, we pray for our missionaries; we pray for our pastor; we pray for church members; we pray for the Christians we know; we pray for those who are sick; but how much time do we spend in the presence of God pleading for lost men and women? How much compassion, how much tenderness, how much of the grace of God has really, really gotten hold of your heart and mine? What do you know or I know of what Paul is talking about here?

He says, “I have continual sorrow. I have unceasing pain in my heart. I could verily wish myself to be accursed from Christ for my brethren's sake that they might be saved.”

Oh, friend, I trust that the Lord will give us something of the compassion and tenderness of Christ and a heart that yearns for the salvation of

men and women.

Will you please notice Paul's agony of soul in verses 2 and 3?

2. That I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

3. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

He just said in chapter 8 that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Yet, he says here, I have come to the place where I would be willing to be separated from Him if by so doing, my brethren, my kinsmen might be saved.

Can you say that? Can I say that? Do the souls of others mean enough to us that we are willing to suffer? Do we have continual sorrow, unceasing pain?

Isn't it strange that in the experience of one man there could be these two extremes? In chapter 8, he is full of ecstasy and wonder and glory and praise as he sees the matchless grace of God through Christ for him. Now we find him full of continual sorrow and unceasing pain.

I met a man in Dallas, Texas, some years ago by the name of Dr. Truitt. He was pastor of the First Baptist Church of that city. In fact, I think he had one of the largest Southern Baptist churches in the world. His Sunday School then ran between 4 and 5 thousand. But he was never known to smile.

Why? people wondered. Wasn't he happy in the Lord?

Yes, he was. But in his first years in Dallas, he had gone out with the chief of police on a hunting expedition somewhere in Texas.

As he climbed through a fence, his gun caught and went off. He shot and killed not himself, but his friend. From that day until Dr. Truitt went to

be with the Lord, he had one great passion. "The Lord has preserved me for one thing," he would say, "to reach people for Christ."

He had continual sorrow, not only because he had shot his friend but because of the multitude of men and women outside of Christ. It affected his whole life. Here in the Apostle Paul, you have the same thing. "I have great sorrow; I have unceasing grief."

May I say, here we have a revelation of the compassion of Christ revealed in a man. Here we have the heart of God manifest in Paul.

You know, the Lord Jesus, because of His love for you and me, became an accursed thing. As Galatians 3:13 says, "Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree." Jesus became an accursed thing just because He loves you and me. Paul was willing to go to any length for his brethren, his kinsmen after the flesh.

Were you ever in the presence of a heart-broken mother, agonizing on her knees in the presence of God, pleading for the salvation of her daughter who has gone astray? My friend, I'm telling you, it will pull the heart out of you. This is what I'm talking about. Here in Paul is a heart experiencing the very thing that caused the Lord Jesus to go to the cross.

You know, sometimes we sing a chorus (I rarely ever sing it; in fact, I don't sing it), "Give me Calvary love." I often wonder what we know about Calvary love. Here is a sample of it right here.

Paul is willing to become an accursed thing. He is in continual sorrow, in unceasing pain, broken-hearted before God, suffering in the very depth of his soul that his brethren might be saved.

You know, you find passages like this in the Old Testament. Do you remember in Exodus 32:9-13, when Moses pleaded with God on behalf of the Jews who were worshiping the molten calf? God said, "Let me alone, that My anger may burn

against them, and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.”

And Moses said in effect, “You can’t do that. Remember Your Name and remember Your Word. If You blot Israel out, You can’t keep Your promises to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And what will the Egyptians say as to the kind of God that Israel has? that He took them out in the wilderness to kill them?”

Then, as you go to the end of the chapter (verse 32), Moses pleads, “But now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin—.”

There is a little dash there as if Moses were going to make a promise to God. But then he changed it and said, “If not, please blot me out from Thy book which Thou hast written!” He made himself one with the people.

Psalm 106, verse 23, says that if Moses, His chosen one, hadn’t stood in the breach, God would have blotted the nation out that day.

Take Isaiah 59, verses 15 and 16, the last appeal of God for Israel through Isaiah. What did he say essentially? “Justice is fallen in the streets, the righteous man is a prey, and God was astonished.” If I remember correctly, this is the only place in the whole Bible where God was ever astonished.

What do you think He was astonished about? That there was no prophet?

No.

That there was no leader?

No.

No teacher?

No.

What made Him astonished?

He was astonished that there was no man to intercede. There was no man to plead for His people before God.

Do you remember that, 100 years afterward, Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, stood before God. He was a broken-hearted man, and he was plead-

ing for Israel.

But God said, “Jeremiah, I’m not going to listen to you.”

Three times, God said to him, “Don’t you pray for this people. I won’t listen to you.”

Did that stop Jeremiah?

No, sir.

In Jeremiah 5:1, God said, “If you can find one righteous man in the city, I will save the city for the one man.” That shows you how far down in corruption and idolatry and rejection of God the Jews had gone. Did that deter Jeremiah?

Oh, listen to him. Let me put it in my words: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. Is there no balm in Gilead? Doesn’t anybody care about my people? I’m in mourning. Is there no doctor? Is there no physician to heal the hurt of the daughter of my people? Oh, that my head were waters, that my eyes were a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.”

Their crime? “They are not valiant for the truth and they proceed from evil to evil and they do not know Me, says the Lord” (Jeremiah 8:20-9:5).

Isaiah in chapter 28:18 said (let me paraphrase), “They made a league with death, with hell you are in agreement; and when the overflowing scourge shall pass over, it shall not come nigh thee because we have made lies our refuge and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.”

It was for this kind of people that Jeremiah was broken-hearted.

“Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears” (Jeremiah 9:1).

You take the prophet Ezekiel, chapter 22, verse 30, the end of that chapter. The priests have become corrupt. The princes are trafficking in souls. The people are in corruption. And God says, “I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the

land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.”

I want to say this very, very solemnly. If God were looking for men today who will get down before Him in intercession and travail for lost men and women, I wonder how many He would find.

Would he find you?

“I looked for a man to intercede and found none.” And God was astonished that there was no intercessor.

Paul says, “I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites” (Romans 9:2, 3, 4a).

I wonder, my Christian friend, have you ever touched the heart of God?

Has the compassion of the Son of God ever gripped your soul?

Did you ever come into the presence of God and pray, not for yourself, not for things, not even for experiences, but come into the presence of God and mean business and plead with God for lost men and women for whom Christ died?

You remember the prophet said, “As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons” (Isaiah 66:8). I know he is talking about Israel there. But if truth be welded in our own hearts, when the believer in Christ travails for the lost, then we will see God move. It is impossible for a believer to come into the presence of God and plead with Him for lost men and women without having the privilege of seeing lost souls saved.

Witnessing and intercession are partners; they are coupled together. The more we plead with men for God, the more you are going to plead with God for men. And vice versa. That’s the heart of Paul.

He informs his Jewish brethren that he has no bitterness in his heart although they have perse-

cuted him, although they have stoned him. He has been in prison because of them; nevertheless, he still loves them. And what he writes is because of his love for them. Oh, that God might put upon your heart and my heart a real burden, a compassion, a tenderness of yearning over lost men and women that they might be saved.

This thing doesn't come on you spasmodically. It doesn't come on overnight or for a few minutes. This is a thing that grows on your heart. I'm sure that the Apostle Paul spent many, many hours on his knees before God praying for Israel.

Now we are coming to a very important passage, and it may be a little difficult because Paul is dealing with the sovereignty of God; and he is going to prove the fact that, whatever God does, He is righteous in doing it.

We are seeing today in the world a revival of what is known as covenant theology. Basically, it is that the church of God started with Abraham, that God is through with Israel as a nation and that these wonderful promises to the nation of Israel are now given to the church, making us the spiritual Israel. And they come to this passage to support their position.

But may I suggest that Paul is not dealing with the church here.

He is talking about those in the nation of Israel. For example, in the gospel through John, chapter 8, reading from about verse 37 to 44, our Lord is dealing with the leaders of Israel. And they said, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." They were challenging him concerning his deity.

He had said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." He called Himself the light of the world. Not to follow Him meant to walk in darkness. He has just declared that he whom the Son sets free is free indeed.

They have said to Him, "We know who your fa-

ther is. We know who your mother is. We know the whole business. We were not born of fornication. God is—our—father.” They were sniping at His birth, that no one knew who His father was, and His claim that God was His Father.

His answer was, “If God were your father, you would love Me. . . . You are of your father, the devil.” They were also boasting of their natural descent. That’s what Paul is taking up here. Being in the natural descent of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob doesn’t make you a child of promise.

But the promises of God are going to be accomplished, and the purpose of God is going to be accomplished in those who are the spiritual seed of Abraham in Israel.

God has never promised the church that we shall govern the world, whether you like it or not.

God said to Moses that the nation Israel would be the head of the nations—not the tail—and that through Israel the nations of the earth are going to know God. The Gentile nations are going to come into blessing through Israel. The time is going to come when ten men out of every nation under heaven will lay hold of the skirt of a Jew and say to him, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you” (Zechariah 8:23).

Or take Isaiah, chapter 2:3-4, that says that out of Zion (Jerusalem) shall go forth the law; and the nations shall be taught the word of God. And He, the Saviour, shall arbitrate between the nations to learn war no more.

“And Paul,” the Jews charge, “you are coming along and saying that the Gentiles can be blessed now? The Gentiles can become children of God now by simple faith and not by natural descent? They can be saved and become the children of God? You are denying all the Old Testament. You are defiling the prophets. You are an apostate.”

You see their ground for this?

So Paul answers that. He declares that God

chose Israel for a purpose.

May I say here, he is not dealing with the sovereignty of God as to whether He has chosen some to be saved and some to go to hell. You do not find that in your Bible. Don't read what isn't there. He is dealing here entirely with the question of privilege. God in sovereignty chose Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants for a place of privilege. Read verses 4 and 5 to see Israel's place of blessing.

Israel's place of blessing (9:4-5)

4. Who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,

5. Whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

This was their privilege.

They had the covenants.

They had the prophecies.

They had the Word of God. Through them Christ would come, and they were privileged to be God's witnesses to the nations of the earth.

Jonah was one of God's men, and he ran away from the presence of God. He ran away from the responsibility like Israel did. He was told to go to Ninevah and preach to the people a message of judgment that would bring them to their knees in repentance.

And Jonah said, "I won't do it."

That's exactly what Israel should have done—preach to the nations a message of judgment. But it, too, didn't do it. But it was chosen for this purpose. See Deuteronomy 7:6-8, "I didn't choose you because you were many. You were the fewest of people. I chose you because I love you. I have given to you a place of privilege, a place of bless-

ing.”

Paul now deals with:

The question of privilege (9:6-13)

6. But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

7. Neither are they all children (Abraham had eight sons altogether) because they are Abraham's descendants, but "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."

8. That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

What was Abraham when God called him? An idolater. Isaiah 51:1-2 says, "Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; when he was one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him."

Acts 7:2-3 says, "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Depart from your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.'"

Why did God choose Abraham? He had the right to do that. Abraham was righteous. There was no other righteous person on the face of the earth. The whole earth was given over to sin and debauchery. God had scattered the people across the face of the earth (Genesis 10 and 11) for their rebellion. And God in sovereign grace and mercy chose Abraham.

God would have been righteous, perfectly righteous, if He had left Abraham in his sin and idolatry. Didn't He have the right in His sovereign grace to pick him up and say, "I am going to bless you"?

Was God unrighteous in doing that? Of course not.

And the Jews said “Amen” to that.

Was God righteous in choosing Isaac instead of Ishmael?

The Jews said “Amen” to that, of course.

God was not unrighteous in letting Ishmael go. He blessed Ishmael. But in sovereign mercy, He picked up Isaac. That is what you have here.

9. For this is a word of promise: “AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON.”

10. And not only this, but there was Rebecca also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac;

11. For though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God’s purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls,

12. It was said to her, “THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.”

You find that story in Genesis 25. But please mark something.

Before the children were born, it wasn’t a question of whether they were good or whether they were bad. It was not a question of being religious or irreligious. God in His infinite grace and mercy said, “The older will serve the younger.”

Does that mean that God was unrighteous concerning Esau?

No. God wanted a people who would become His messengers. He wanted a people to whom He could give His Word, the revelation of Himself. He wanted a people through whom Messiah would come. He wanted a people. He had the right to choose.

He didn’t choose Ishmael, nor did He choose Esau.

You could have said, “Well, He didn’t choose Ishmael because Sarah wasn’t his mother. Abraham was his father, but Hagar was his mother. So God couldn’t take him because he was a child of

the flesh.” But what about Jacob and Esau who both had the same father, the same mother and the same grandfather? God was not unrighteous in choosing Jacob instead of Esau.

13. Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.”

Esau was a secular man. Hebrews 12:16 calls him “godless.” That doesn’t mean he was a cursing man. Anything outside of the temple was called “godless.” He had no time for God. He didn’t care about the sacrifices. He didn’t care about worship. In fact, he didn’t care about being the priest in the family. He sold his birthright for a mere mess of pottage. In other words, Esau had no heart for God.

Even though he was tricky and everything else, Jacob wanted the birthright. He had a heart for the things of God. And God told Rebecca that the older will serve the younger.

There was nothing wrong with that. And approximately 1500 years later in narrating the history of the Edomites and the history of Israel, God said in Malachi 1:2-3, “I have loved you,” says the LORD. But you say, “How hast Thou loved us?”

“Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation, and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.”

Someone said to Mr. Spurgeon one day, “Do you think God was righteous in hating Esau?”

He said, “My problem isn’t that. My problem is how in the world God could love Jacob.”

The history of Esau confirms God’s choice.

In Esau and his descendants, we have absolutely no trace of a desire for God. We never read of them praying. We never read of their having a prophet or having promises. Esau was a man of the world. Esau was a man of the flesh. Esau had

absolutely no desire for God and no thought of God. He didn't want God. He despised the things of God.

He said to Jacob in Genesis 25:30, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished."

Jacob said, "I'll give it to you on one condition. Sell me your birthright. Give me your birthright. You are the senior, the older of us two. Give me your birthright."

"Of what good is a birthright to me if I die? Give me the pottage."

He despised his birthright. Why? The birthright not only had to do with inheritance, it had to do with relationship to God. It involved the family priesthood and, say what you will about Jacob—a mama's boy until he was about 70 years of age, hanging around the tent with nothing in his life that would appeal to anybody—but right down in his heart he had gotten hold of something.

No doubt he had seen it in Isaac and Abraham, for he knew both of them.

Abraham had something that Jacob yearned for, something beyond the flesh. He yearned for spiritual things.

Esau bartered spiritual advantage for fleshly gratification.

Jacob was willing to do anything to get that spiritual advantage of being the priest in the family and being the one to whom the promises of God would be given.

God did not say before they were born, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated." Before they were born, he said, "The elder shall serve the younger." And God was perfectly righteous in choosing Jacob instead of Esau to be the one through whom His Son should come.

And the Jews said "Amen" to that.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN BESTOWING MERCY

(9:14-33)**Is God righteous? (9:14-18)**

14. What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

Let me just stop right here. God is never, never unrighteous. You and I may not understand all that He says. But He is never unrighteous. Otherwise, He wouldn't be God. Jacob was just as bad as Esau. It was their heart attitude toward God that was different.

Is God righteous in choosing Isaac instead of Ishmael? Yes.

Is God righteous in choosing Jacob instead of Esau?

Yes.

Then isn't God righteous in putting the Jew to one side and picking up the Gentile? That's what Paul is after.

God has put Israel to one side because of her unbelief, because of her disobedience; and God is pushing her to one side for the purpose of bringing in the Gentiles that they might come into relationship with Him.

15. For he says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."

16. So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

Now, this question, "Is there unrighteousness with God?" is answered in verses 15 to 19. And here Paul uses the example of Israel and the Egyptians. To the people of Israel, God manifests His mercy; and to the people of Egypt, His wrath. Now, to know something of His dealings with Egypt, you have to read Exodus, chapters 5 through 12; and

to understand His dealings with Israel, you have to read Exodus, chapters 30 through 33, where you have this question of God's wanting to blot out Israel because of its idolatry and corruption.

Now Paul begins moving away from the question of natural descent as regards Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He wants to prove that it is by the mercy of God in His sovereign power that Israel has come down through the centuries under the blessing of God. He had had infinite mercy on the people. If they had gotten their just desserts, they would have been obliterated. They had forfeited every right to God's blessing.

Forgive me for repeating much of this, but I do it to emphasize to your hearts the plan and purpose of God for His chosen people.

Israel had come out of Egypt under the power of God. The people had crossed the Red Sea and come into the wilderness. God fed them, watered them, clothed them and took care of them so that their shoes didn't wear out, their clothes didn't wear out and their feet didn't swell. He protected them from the terrors of the night by the pillar of fire. He protected them from the heat of the day by the cloud.

He revealed Himself unto them as Jehovah Raffa, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." A whole race, possibly three million people, were shut up entirely to God. They had no drug stores, no doctors, nothing but God. And He is doing a new thing. He wants to dwell in the midst of His people. He wants to teach them how to live so they can glorify Him. He calls Moses up into the mountain and keeps him there 40 days and 40 nights.

While Moses was up there, the people became tired of having no leader. They said to Aaron, "Make us gods. As for this fellow Moses, we do not know what has become of him."

So, you remember, Aaron asked for all the gold and silver they had brought out of Egypt and he

threw it in the fire. According to his own words, out walked a golden calf.

And Aaron said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!"

"And the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play" (Exodus 32:4, 6).

These people were as corrupt as the Egyptians. I'm sure that the Israelites were in idolatry when they were living in Goshen. Otherwise how would they know how to make a molten calf and go about worshiping it?

And God said to Moses, "Get thee down, for thy people have corrupted themselves."

Then He made this amazing statement, "Let me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them (they are not fit to live); and I will make of you a great nation" (Exodus 32:10).

And, as Psalm 106:23 says, "Had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him, to turn away His wrath from destroying them," they would have been utterly destroyed.

God would have been righteous if he had just blotted out the entire race. But Moses interceded. He stood in the breach three times in the book of Exodus and pleaded for Israel.

And God said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy. . . . So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy" (Romans 9:15-16). There was no will, there was no work in Israel except corruption; but God in sovereign grace displayed his mercy and delivered the people.

May I be a little personal? Are you saved? Is it because you willed it? Is it because you worked it? No, it is because God showed mercy on you. Ephesians 2:4-5 says, "God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions...."

When did He start to love us?

When we were dead in sins.
 When did He manifest His love?
 When we were dead in sins.
 When did He manifest His mercy?
 When we were dead in sins.

Titus 3:5 tells us, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy." God was righteous in manifesting mercy to Israel. The very righteousness of God demands judgment upon sin; but His mercy endures forever and is available for every heart.

Now then, the next question. Was God righteous in His dealings with Pharaoh?

17. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."

18. So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

"There you are now, Mr. Mitchell," you say. "Don't you see that God has already purposed to judge some people and to damn others?"

It doesn't say that. You can't interpret these verses without reading your history. You must go back to Exodus 5 through 12. Is God unrighteous if He does not show mercy to somebody who is arrogant and who defies Him? That's what we have here. Look at Pharaoh.

It says here that God hardened his heart. What do I mean by that? He made his heart heavy. He made his heart strong.

You see, in Exodus 5, Moses came to Pharaoh at the instigation of God, Who had told him, "You go and stand before Pharaoh, and I'm going to be with you. And you tell Pharaoh, 'Let My people go that they may serve Me in the wilderness. I want them to go three days journey and serve Me

there.”

Pharaoh was the head of a great empire, possibly at that time the greatest empire in the world. He was being worshiped as God, as the representative of the gods.

“I know not Jehovah,” he said. “Why should I obey his voice? Shall I, the mighty Pharaoh, the favorite of the gods, bow down and obey the god of slaves? If your God Jehovah is what you think He is, why are you slaves? Are not the gods of Egypt greater than your Jehovah? Our gods have made me a god. So shall I, the Pharaoh, the mighty Pharaoh, worshiped by my people, bow down to the God of slaves? I should say not!”

“All right, Pharaoh,” God responds, “I’m going to prove to you that I am the only living God.”

And what do we have? The judgments of God fall upon Egypt.

After each plague, God strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, hardened it, if you please. He made it strong in his opposition to God. Why? Until every god in Egypt had been broken down. God proved that He was sovereign. In Exodus 12:12, God says, “Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the LORD.”

Dear old Nebuchadnezzar had to learn in Daniel 4:35 that God rules in the heavens and none can say to Him, “What hast Thou done?” Pharaoh had to learn the same thing.

Was God unrighteous in showing mercy to Israel? It is not of him who wills. It is not of him who works. It is of God who shows mercy.

Was God righteous in revealing His power and His might and His sovereignty to Pharaoh? Perfectly righteous. I repeat the statement that when a heart is arrogant and rebellious against God, He permits that heart to go its own way; and that way eventually leads to utter destruction.

If God had not manifested sovereign mercy and love and grace, no one would have been saved.

God would be righteous in damning the whole human race because of our sin and rebellion. And, if in God's wonderful way He has brought you into a relationship with His blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as your Saviour and Lord, then you ought to get down and thank God for His mercy.

As Paul could say in 1 Corinthians 1:29, "that no man should boast before God," no one will be able glorify himself in His presence. We have become children of promise. We have become the sons of God only because of divine grace and divine mercy and divine love.

Oh, how we ought to thank God! How we ought to worship Him! How we ought to sing "How Great Thou Art!" How we ought to sing "A Mighty Saviour Is Our God!"

I find it interesting that, when Israel went through the wilderness and came to Jericho, they met a woman by the name of Rahab.

She and all the people of her city already knew; they had already heard of the power and majesty of Jehovah, the God of Israel. His power was known throughout the earth because of what had happened to Israel in Egypt. So you find that Israel became the object of His mercy. Not because the people deserved it. They didn't deserve anything. But God had the right. He was sovereign. He was righteous in showing them mercy.

On the other hand, God was still righteous in not showing mercy to the Egyptians when they defied Him in their arrogance.

Today, I see all around me the arrogance of the human heart. It has no time nor room nor thought for God.

"We don't need to give ourselves over to God," people say. "We are sufficient unto ourselves. We don't need a Saviour."

But I tell you, my friend, that "the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to

perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

There is a time coming when the day of grace will end and men will perish. I can't guarantee when that day may come. It may be today.

It may be tomorrow.

I don't know.

All I know is that God wants men everywhere to repent, to turn around from the way they are going and to take His way, which is the way of life and the way of salvation and the way of redemption. God is longsuffering. He has mercy for all.

But if a person deliberately of his own volition turns against God, opposes God, refuses to believe in God, spurns His message of salvation, then God just takes His hands off and the man is left to himself on a path that leads to destruction.

You can't blame God for this. And this raises the question in verse 19, as an objection now comes into the chapter regarding God's sovereignty.

Man's objection to God's sovereignty (9:19-21)

19. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

20. On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

This "Why did you make me like this?" is not the cry of a heart that wants the truth. This is not the cry of a heart that is yearning for God. This is an arrogant heart. This is a heart that puts itself in judgment upon God. This is the attitude some have when they say, "Well, God has chosen some to be saved, and He has elected some to be damned. What can I do about it?"

That is not what you have in the Bible. Turn to Romans 2 and 3 for a minute. You remember that God has made all men of one lump. Chapter

3, verse 23, says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All are of the same lump, Jew or Gentile. And He has mercy upon all.

But now look at chapter 2, verses 3-5, “And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

God is righteous in manifesting mercy to this group who ought to be judged.

Is He unrighteous because He lets another go on in unrighteousness?

Let me repeat that. Is God unrighteous because He finds some people to whom He wants to manifest mercy—like Israel—and in infinite mercy He saves them from judgment? According to their just desserts, they ought to be obliterated. But in His mercy, He says, “I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

So He manifests mercy. He is righteous in doing that. But is He unrighteous because He doesn't show mercy—or at least doesn't manifest mercy—to the Egyptians, who spurn Him, who reject Him, who don't want Him, who defy Him?

This is the heart of the man in verses 19 and 20. This is the cry of the man who sits in judgment upon God. This is an arrogant heart. This is an unbelieving heart. This is a sinful heart. He is putting the blame on God for his own sin. He is putting the blame on God for his own unrighteousness, for his own arrogance.

I am reminded of 1 Corinthians 2:14, “But a natural man does not accept the things of the

Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”

Man's heart is alienated from God by his wicked works. And when a man says in his arrogance “Why have You made me thus?” he sits in judgment upon God. This is the revelation of a heart that does not want God, of a heart that is not thinking of God.

“Well,” you say, “if I'm elected to be saved, I'll be saved. And, if I'm not elected to be saved, then I'm going to be lost. And I can't do anything about it.”

Friend, I say it again. He is not talking about that.

He just declared He has a right to show mercy where He wants to show mercy. Neither Israel nor Egypt had any right to His mercy. Both nations were in idolatry and corruption. And God in pure sovereign mercy, because of His promises to their fathers, manifested mercy to the people He chose, but not because they were better or more choice than the Egyptians.

Then what about the Egyptians? Well, if God didn't show mercy, He is still righteous. They were arrogant. They didn't want to obey God. They didn't want God. They repudiated God. So God was not unrighteous by not manifesting mercy.

Listen, friend, election is God's business. It's your business and my business to accept the provision that He has made. God has given you and me the capacity to do something about the provision He has made for our salvation. If you are going to bring it into the field of salvation, here it is.

Once more, it is true that election is God's business. Isaiah 14:24 says, “As I have intended so it has happened; and just as I have planned so it will stand.”

Take the 46th chapter of Isaiah, verses 9 and 10, and you have the same thing. In Daniel, chapter 4, verses 25 and 35, “the Most High is ruler

over the realm of mankind” and He raises up kings and puts down kings. He moves according to His will and no man can say to him, “What hast Thou done?”

21. Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?

Hasn't God the right to do what He pleases?

Will He not always do the right thing?

Now it's true that some have more privileges than others. But the more privilege you have, the greater is your responsibility. No man can say to God, “You didn't give me a chance.”

God offers His mercy to all. The question is, “Do you want God?” The question is, “Do you want to know God?” The question is, “If you knew that what God had promised was what He was offering you, would you accept it?”

For more than 1900 years, He has been offering His mercy and His grace to men. He is offering that to mankind today. God is “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” Now God may take one man and make him a vessel of honor. He may take another man and make him a vessel of dishonor. Each one has a different place of usefulness in the house. But His mercy is for all.

Is God unrighteous by giving one man a gift to do something and not giving the other man the same gift? No, of course not. God is absolutely righteous in everything He does, and His mercy is for all.

Now we are getting to the next point.

The purpose of God's sovereignty (9:22-29)

22. What if God, although willing to demonstrate his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience

vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

23. And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

24. Even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

God is calling men today, whether Jew or Gentile, who will accept His mercy.

If a man accepts the mercy of God, God is certainly righteous in bestowing that mercy. And if a man rejects His mercy, then God is righteous in not giving him mercy and in casting him out into utter darkness.

Indeed, I would say this, that having spurned the mercy of God, unregenerate man will be glad to get out of the presence of God. He will prefer hell to heaven with its holiness. Now you think that through.

People say to me, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, God won't send anybody to hell."

I say where can man go, once he's spurned God? He certainly would not be comfortable in the presence of God or in the presence of the holy angels. He doesn't even like the people of God here on earth, so how is he going to stand us in heaven when we are just like God's Son? You see, it just doesn't add up.

Look at 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8. The Lord is going to come "in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction."

Look at 2 Thessalonians 2:12, "That they all may be judged who did not believe the truth." This doesn't say a word so much about their actions, except this amazing fact that they have rejected the provision God has made for men to be delivered from sin and from death and from the powers of darkness.

So the judgment of God is going to fall upon men because they do not know God. They didn't want to know Him; and they did not believe the Gospel. They didn't want to believe it, and they didn't love the truth. They spurned the truth. When God manifests His power, His might and His sovereignty in their judgment, He manifests the same in mercy to those of us who have received the Saviour.

I'm going to say it very bluntly that there is not one of us who is worthy of being saved in ourselves. There is no reason at all why God should save any one of us. The reason is in Himself: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

God is gathering out from among men those who will accept His mercy, those who appreciate His longsuffering, those who accept the Saviour and come under blessing. So the purpose of His sovereignty is to make His power known to those who are lost and to make His mercy known to those who will accept it.

"Can we find fault with God if He shows mercy to the Gentiles?" Paul asks. "If He does so apart from Israel?"

You know, this was one of the hardest things for the early church to accept. There were Jewish Christians there in Acts 15 who wanted the Gentiles to be saved but wanted them to come to Christ through Judaism. No, the sinner himself must come immediately to the Saviour and accept His mercy. If he really wants the mercy of God, it is there for him.

Now, from verse 25 to the end of the chapter, it is very, very simple. You have the manifestation of God's sovereignty, and Paul uses Old Testament scriptures.

25. As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"

26. "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD."

Of course, Hosea is talking about Gentiles coming in. Israel had forfeited every right to be the people of God. And now the Gentiles, by accepting the Saviour, are called the people of God.

27. And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE AS THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED;

28. FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD UPON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY."

29. And just as Isaiah foretold, "EXCEPT THE LORD OF SABAOOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME AS SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH."

And here you have the testimony of Isaiah. Israel never did stand before God on the ground of merit, but always on the ground of mercy. And, even though the nation is like the sand of the seashore and is living in disobedience and unbelief, yet a remnant shall be saved.

How? Always on the ground of grace, on the ground of mercy.

And, you know, when I read verse 29, "Except the Lord had left to us a posterity, we would have become as Sodom and would have resembled Gomorrah," I can't help but think of Revelation 11:8 where you have the two witnesses lying dead in the streets of the great city, Jerusalem; and that city is called, "Sodom."

Think of it. It's called, "Sodom!" And to be sure that you knew what he was talking about, he said, "Where also their Lord was crucified."

Israel as a nation in the last days will be so corrupt it's going to be just like Sodom. And even though the nation is corrupt and God is going to purge out two-thirds of its people including every rebel, God still has a remnant. God still has a remnant! But if God hadn't manifested His mercy, there wouldn't be one left.

And note, as we finish, that God will always answer to faith, as we see in verses 30 to 33, for Paul now passes from the sovereignty of God to the responsibility of man. He has been dealing with God's sovereignty in choosing Israel instead of Egypt, in choosing Gentiles instead of Jews.

God will always answer to faith (9:30-33)

Now Paul begins to make it personal.

30. What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

31. But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

32. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over THE STUMBLING STONE,

33. Just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

We pass from the sovereignty of God to the responsibility of man.

Can I put it very simply? What the Jew rejected by his works, the Gentile received by faith. The Gentiles didn't follow after righteousness. They were afar off. They were under the curse. They went their own way. As Romans 1 says, they were given up to sin, given up to uncleanness, given up to vile affections, given up to a reprobate mind. But God followed them with the gospel of His righteousness. And

that's what Paul has been preaching. And they received the righteousness which is by faith.

Now the Jews rejected this. What they tried to get by their own works, they missed. They boasted of the law of righteousness but didn't follow it. Hence, having more light than the Gentiles, the Jews were in a worse plight. And they stumbled at the "Rock of Offence." Why? Because they were looking for a glorified, reigning Messiah, not for a suffering, crucified Lord. They were looking for one who would free them materially and nationally from their enemies. They were not looking for one who had come to save them from their sins.

For, you remember, the very first promise in the New Testament is in Matthew 1:21, "You shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." It was not "save His people from their enemies." He will deliver them from their enemies when He returns the next time. He came first as a Saviour from sin, and they stumbled at that stumbling block and rock of offence.

Again, what the Jews missed by their works, the Gentiles received by faith. "If righteousness comes through the Law (Galatians 2:21), then Christ died needlessly." But we in this century, we who attend churches and call ourselves Christians, need to be sure that we have received the righteousness that comes by faith, not by our works.

From Genesis to Revelation, no one is ever saved and fitted for the presence of God on any other ground but the ground of grace, received by faith. When the poor man on the street who is a sinner, who has no righteousness of his own, accepts the Saviour by simple faith, God puts His own righteousness to his account.

So I repeat it, what the religious man misses by his works, the sinner receives by faith in Christ.

Father, may we who are Christians, we who have accepted the Saviour, realize that Thou hast not only

chosen us unto salvation but to be a channel of expression, to be a testimony to our neighbors and our friends of Thy grace. Oh, that they too may know about the Saviour who redeems and saves with an everlasting and perfect salvation.

Forgive us for our indifference to others. Forgive us for being indifferent to Thee, dear Father; and may our hearts be stirred first of all with thanksgiving and worship because You have had mercy on us.

And then bring others to the same Saviour, the same Lord, that they too may experience the mercy of God, the love of God and the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER TEN

God today is not dealing with nations. I want to emphasize this to you. God today is dealing with individuals—you, me.

The question is, what is your relationship, what is my relationship to the living God? He has already made very, very clear that there is a way open whereby any man or any woman, whoever he or she is, whatever he or she may be, can come to know Him. This is what you have in Chapter 10.

Although the nation of Israel as such is under governmental discipline, having been scattered among the nations of the earth, God is dealing with Jews and Gentiles as individuals.

Now in the first 11 verses of Chapter 10, Paul gives to us the difference between righteousness by works and righteousness by faith; and I want to go a little easy on this for the simple reason that I want you to see what the Apostle Paul is after.

And I may make some strong statements about this. I do so because I believe the Word of God declares them. The tragedy is that too many of God's people today have never seen the completeness of Christ's work on the cross nor have they seen the value, the importance of the resurrection.

First, let us look at the difference between righteousness by works and righteousness by faith (10:1-11):

1. Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.

We had the same thing in the first two or three verses of chapter nine where Paul said he called God to be his witness that he had great sorrow and continual grief in his heart. He could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren's sake, the Israelites, that they might be saved.

Again, I say, mark the tremendous yearning of this man for his people Israel, for the Jews, not only as a nation but as individuals.

He yearns that they might be saved. And, as I said in chapter nine when we were discussing it, this man had unceasing pain in his heart. He was really burdened before God that these people might be saved.

Now in verses 2 and 3, you notice the ignorance of Israel concerning God's righteousness—and the same thing can be said today of Christendom. In fact, I would say that even among many professing Christians today there is an appalling ignorance of the righteousness of God. Our very lives manifest that. Our theology manifests it.

Man is so occupied with man, so occupied with self-image, with love of self and with the importance of self-esteem, that he is blind to the righteousness of God.

2. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

3. For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

Notice, they had a zeal for God; but zeal and sincerity are no ground for safety. Having zeal doesn't imply that a person's heart is right with God.

Take these Jews. You can't read the history of Israel, especially between the fourth and the first century B.C. and not find that the Jews suffered. They were torn to pieces because they refused to

deny the law of God. They had a tremendous zeal for God, but they didn't know God personally.

The Jews claimed that they were following God's law. Did God not give them the law? Did they not say to God, "All that the LORD has spoken, we will do"? I'm quoting Exodus 19:8.

Yes, they believed that the law was given by God to them. In fact, they believed they were the only ones who had the revelation of God through the law. Gentiles have no law. The law was given to Israel.

What for?

To make them good?

Oh, no. The law of God was given to prove they were no good that they might turn to Him in simple faith and accept His mercy.

We have that same problem today. A great many people are depending upon their goodness, their morality. They pay their debts. They're good parents. They don't do anything really bad. They don't get drunk. They don't do this or that. They go to church every Sunday morning.

"Why, Mr. Mitchell, what more do you expect?"

I don't expect anything. I say only this. If you are depending on that, then the evidence is that you are ignorant of the righteousness of God.

From the time a Jew entered his world until he died, his whole life—socially and materially and religiously—was interlocked with the religious life of his people. Yet he was wrong.

The Apostle Paul could say in Philippians, chapter 3, that all these things that were gain to me—born a real Jew; of the tribe of Benjamin; a Pharisee; a fundamentalist with plenty of zeal in persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which was in the law, blameless—did nothing to save him. He was blameless but lost. But once he caught a glimpse of God's righteousness, the rest just faded out of the picture.

And that was the Jew's trouble. He knew the character of God. He knew that God is holy, but he was ignorant of the fact that nothing short of God's righteousness would stand. Legal righteousness can never stand in God's presence.

The third verse brings this out. Being ignorant of God's righteousness, this righteousness that comes by faith, he tried to establish his own righteousness; and, by trying to establish his own righteousness, he didn't submit himself to the righteousness of God.

When a man or woman seeks to establish his own righteousness, he is manifesting ignorance of God's righteousness.

"But, Mr. Mitchell," a man says to me, "I am doing the best I can. I am trying to keep the golden rule. I am trying to keep the Ten Commandments. I am attending church. I was baptized. I joined the church. I pay my tithes. I've done all these things."

Yes, but that is the manifestation of your ignorance of God's righteousness. If you are trusting those things for your salvation by establishing your own righteousness, that doesn't mean you've got the righteousness of God.

So we have this question of the Jew in verses 2 and 3. He had no spiritual discernment—like a lot of folks today. For him it was a system of "do." D-O. It was a system of works that barred him from the righteousness of God. The Jews never saw two things: They never saw their own frailty, weakness, sinfulness; and they never saw the righteousness of God.

The rich young ruler was a very admirable person, but he was ignorant of two things. He was ignorant of the character of God; and he was ignorant of his own frailty, weakness and sinfulness. The lawyer in Luke 10:25 said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

You see, we squirm, we turn around and do anything, anything but face up to the reality of the

fact that God of necessity must be righteous and I must be a sinner who has no righteousness. So how can we come together? How can I come into the presence of God and be accepted? Verse 4 is the answer.

4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

This is God's method. Christ is the end of the law, not the beginning of the law. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. The law has had nothing to say since the cross.

When our Lord was raised from the dead, He started something entirely new; and the law doesn't belong to this new creation. The law was an added thing, imposed upon the people of Israel to show them how bad they were and how they needed a Saviour.

No Jew—and no Gentile—will ever be able to stand before God, the righteous God, unless he is covered with the righteousness of Christ.

Now don't jump to the conclusion, as so many theologians have, that Jesus Christ kept the whole law for us. He didn't. You can't find that in the Scriptures. They say because Christ kept every demand of the law, because He kept the whole law, that that is put to our account.

That is not true. Christ kept the whole law that He might be a perfect, satisfactory sacrifice for you. You are not joined to Christ because He kept the law. You were joined to Him because He bore your sins and died for your sin on the cross.

Let me make this thing very clear.

Christianity starts on the resurrection side of the cross. The law is through, either as a means of life or as a rule of life. The bill is canceled. It is out. Christ is the end of the law, outside of its jurisdiction entirely. The law came to the cross, and

the law was satisfied at the cross in what Christ did for us there.

I wish in some way this amazing truth of the righteousness of God by faith would get hold of your heart. If I were to ask you to witness to me, you would probably say, "Well, thank God, I was saved by faith in Christ."

Why don't you say, "Thank God, I was declared righteous by God when I accepted Christ."

It might stagger your imagination if you said that, and yet faith and righteousness are coupled together over and over and over again.

God has pronounced us righteous, righteous with a righteousness that equals God's righteousness. As Paul could say in Philippians 3:8-9, "I count all things to be loss." What for? That I might be found in Jesus Christ, "not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of (through) faith."

Now starting at verse 5 and running down to verse 11, we have works and faith contrasted. Christianity is not a life of do's and don'ts. It's a life of walking with Him.

There are many things we push to one side because we love Him and want to attract people to Him. We are now under the law of love because of our union with the God of love.

5. For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.

6. But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down),

7. Or, 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."

8. But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching.

The law's demand of righteousness would be evident by perfection if one would never, never, never break the law in one point. But the moment he breaks the law—just once—then the judgment of God falls upon that man. You see the utter frailty and hopelessness and helplessness of man. If anybody is going to be saved, God has got to do it. And He's got to do the whole thing—the whole thing. You have this in Leviticus 18:5 coupled with Galatians 3:11-12.

You see, what we need is not more strength to keep the law. What we need is a power from the outside. And God has made His salvation apart from man. And that salvation is in His Son. As it says in verse 4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

Now then, in verses 6 to 8, we have "the righteousness based on faith" (not great works) and this depends upon divine testimony.

This is a quotation from Deuteronomy 30:11-14: "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it."

The Spirit of God applies these words to Christ. Our Lord did come. He did die. He was raised again from the dead, and the work is all done. The whole work of redemption is completed. God doesn't need to do another thing.

When I think of the tremendous truths that are in this book, I just pray that every Christian might become saturated with the truth revealed to us by His Spirit here.

It is a precious thing to know that the moment a person accepts the Saviour he stands before God, our righteous God, in all the beauty, in all the merit, in all the righteousness of Christ.

Isn't this a wonderful thing?

No man can stand in the presence of God without Christ. That's very clear. Righteousness by the law is dependent upon doing. The righteousness of God is received by faith, and it shuts out all doing.

As I have so often said, "Oh, that men would stop their deadly doing and trust the Lord Jesus."

Now, in verses 9 to 11, we have righteousness realized.

9. That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved;

10. For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness; and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

11. For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

Now, notice. The great thing here is not the nature of your faith. It is the object of your faith.

People say today, "As long as you believe and are honest in what you believe, you will be all right." Well, the Muslim believes, the Shintoist believes, the Animist believes, the Buddhist believes. Believes what? They believe their doctrines, they believe in their gods, they are honest; and sometimes they may put you and me to shame with their devotion to their gods. That doesn't mean they are saved and fit for the presence of God. No, the object of faith is the important thing.

How often men have said to me, "Mr. Mitchell, I don't see any difference between you and me. I have faith and you have faith."

But I say, "There is a great deal of difference between you and me. The difference is in the object of our faith."

Is Jesus Christ the Son of God? He is the One of whom the Spirit of God spoke on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter said (let me paraphrase it), "This Jesus whom you took by wicked hands and crucified has God raised up and exalted to be both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:23-24, 36).

If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, His work on the cross does not avail. If He was never raised from the dead, then our faith goes down the drain. It doesn't do any of us any good.

We must confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is our Lord. He must be the object of our faith. We recognize His position. He is Lord. This One, whom men put on a cross, God put on the throne. Men crucified Him as an accursed thing. God exalted Him to be Lord. Men cast Him out; heaven took Him in. The world repudiated Him, but heaven rejoiced in exalting Him as Prince and Saviour.

We are to confess this Jesus as Lord. How? With our mouth. It is a confession, I say, of a Person. You have it in 1 Corinthians 12:3, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." It is our belief in a Person and our confession of His work.

If you will "believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Notice, nothing is said here about the work at the cross. There is no need to. Paul has already spent eight chapters on that. He is writing about the confirmation, the guarantee that the work that Christ did on the cross absolutely satisfied the righteous character of God.

We've had this in chapter 3, and I only want to remind you that God is just and the Justifier of

those who believe in Jesus. And when you confess with your mouth He is Lord and you believe in your heart—the very depths of your being—that God raised Him from the dead, you are saved.

Now, I'm not saved by confessing. But, because I am saved, I confess.

Someone has well said, “We testify of the One in whom we have put our trust. We testify to God, and we testify to men.”

If you were to give me a gift or if you were going to give somebody else a gift, you would expect the recipient of that gift at least to say, “Thank you.” There would be a response to it. And, if we receive eternal salvation from God as a gift, the least we can do is thank God for it. And, by so doing, we confess that Jesus Christ is our Saviour, our Lord.

When the risen, glorified Saviour is the object of our faith, then we receive His salvation and His life. We are covered with His righteousness, His beauty and His merit. In fact, as Romans 8:1 says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” My, what a place to be! Just to be in Christ!

Of course, you can't work your way into that. There is only one way, God's way. And that's the way of faith. And so we have here, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.”

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the guarantee from God to you that this Jesus who was crucified is His Son and that the work He did on the cross absolutely satisfied God.

What a wonderful thing that Jesus Christ is the object of your faith and that He gives to you a salvation that is complete, that is personal.

And here you have in verse 11, “Whosoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.” God will see to it. I think of that verse in 1 John 2:28, “Little children, abide in Him, so that when He ap-

pears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.”

Now, starting in at verse 12 and running through verse 18, Paul writes that righteousness by faith is for all. That is, it is open for all, irrespective of whether you are a Gentile or a Jew. In the first 11 verses, he dealt with personal salvation. Now he is going to deal with a salvation for anybody.

Do you remember Romans 1:5 talks about the “obedience of faith among all the Gentiles”? This is not for any particular group. It is for the individual. The great thing here in these verses is that righteousness by faith is for anybody who wants it. It’s for all.

It’s not limited to any group. It’s not limited to any nation or one country. It’s open for everybody who lives on the face of the earth; it doesn’t matter who they are. This righteousness through faith is open to everyone.

12. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him.

His character declares this. If God is righteous, He is not going to show any favoritism. God is righteous, and He offers this righteousness to anyone and everyone who will receive it. “For there is no distinction (no difference) between Jew and Gentile.”

You remember in Romans 3:23, there was no difference in sin. “All have sinned (Jew and Gentile), and fall short of the glory of God.”

Now he is saying in verse 12 that there is no difference in salvation. All are lost and need a Saviour, and the same Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him.

You remember Romans 3:29-30, “Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also?”

Yes, of Gentiles also—if indeed God is one—and He will justify the circumcised (the Jew) by faith and the uncircumcised (the Gentile) through faith.” You see, there is no difference whether you are rich or poor, whether you are wise or ignorant, whether you are brown or black or white or red or yellow or whatever your color may be. Whatever country you belong in, whatever tongue you may have, wherever you go in the world, this salvation is for all.

And I say, the very righteous character of God declares this.

Not only His character declares this, but His promises declare it.

13. For “WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”

There’s a “whoever” in John 3:16 that puts you in, too, doesn’t it? This 13th verse is Joel 2:32 all over again. It is repeated in Acts 2:21 and Revelation 22:17 (“Let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost”). This salvation from God is for anybody, anywhere and for anyone who will believe God’s good news concerning His Son. The Jews wanted to keep salvation for themselves; and, because they did that, they became occupied with themselves and they missed God’s salvation. Now Paul is saying it is for all.

God’s character declares it in verse 12. His promises declare it in verse 13. And now in verses 14 to 18, His servants declare it.

14. How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

15. And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!”

16. However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?"

17. So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

18. But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have: "THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD."

The servants of God, the called of God, are sent with good news.

Now, remember, the law is not good news. The law says if you sin, you die. There is no recourse. But God has raised up men and women to go and tell their friends and their family, their neighbors, and everybody around some good news. God wants to communicate to men the good news concerning His Son. How is He going to do it? Through those who know the Word of God. Second Corinthians 5:20 says, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

The last words of our Saviour in Matthew 28 were, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations." Our Lord could say in Acts 1:8, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

What a change, I say. In the Old Testament when the Jews were called, their nation was set apart from others so they could reveal to the world the wonders of our God. They failed in that, and so what is God doing now?

He has turned to the Gentiles, to the saved men and women, and said, "You take My good news. Tell your friends. Go into all the world. Wherever there is a man or a woman who doesn't know the

Saviour, you go and bring the Word of God to that person.”

I say this with a great deal of sadness that after 2000 years of having the gospel of the grace of God, we still have not touched the whole world.

Is God’s purpose going to be defeated? No. Even right now, God’s good news is being beamed out to practically every part of the globe. God has seen fit to use this means of mass communication by radio, by television, shortwave, whatever it may be. There is hardly a place in the world today where you cannot hear the precious Gospel of God as revealed in Christ.

The coming of the Lord is very, very near; and, my Christian friend, I would plead with you as I plead with my own heart. May the Lord deliver us from any coldness or indifference concerning the salvation of men and women.

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ.” If you have the Word of God, in some way then by your life, by your testimony, bring the good news to those around you that they may know Him whom to know is life eternal.

I would plead with you to be much in prayer that God will send forth laborers into His harvest field.

I believe Paul in verse 18 in his reference to the “voice” has the voice of creation in mind. Everyone has, through creation, heard of the Living God. There is no excuse for unbelief in the Living God.

No one will be able to stand before God and say, “I have never heard of the Living God.” For “the heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice (the voice of creation) is not heard” (Psalm 19:1-3). They may not have heard about the Saviour, but they have heard about the Living God.

Oh, how we Christians have failed to get behind God's messengers who have gone to the farthest ends of the earth, sacrificing themselves and leaving their family and friends, to reach precious souls with the Word of Life.

Usually it takes missionary candidates two years to gather their support. This is to our shame.

And how often do we pray for them when they are there on the mission field? I just plead with you friends to spend some time remembering the servants of God in different parts of the world, especially in those places where there is so much trouble.

My, what a wonderful, wonderful thing that God should call you and me to pass on the good news to our generation.

It is a universal salvation. It is for everybody. And this is right. If God is righteous, it has to be that way. His very character demands it. His promises declare it. His servants declare it.

So when we come down to verses 19 through 21, you find there is no excuse for the people of Israel. They should have known that God was not only the God of the Jews, but He is also the God of the Gentiles. They believed there was only one God, but they didn't want the Gentiles to come under His blessing. Human nature is a strange thing. You want things for yourself but not for anybody else. This was their attitude. Is it yours?

So Israel was cast away under the discipline of God. For more than 1900 years, Jews have been in bondage, scattered over the face of the earth.

19. But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? At the first Moses says, "I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU."

20. And Isaiah is very bold and says, "I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO SOUGHT ME NOT, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME."

21. But as for Israel He says, "ALL DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE."

There is absolutely no excuse for Israel because the Jews were not ignorant. Neither are you, my friend.

If the Gentiles in their heathendom discovered the wonderful truth of righteousness by faith, there is no excuse for Israel which had the Word of God. And if there are people coming to know the Saviour in Africa, Southeast Asia, South America and those different parts of the earth we call the Third World, then there is no excuse for those of us who have heard the name of the Lord Jesus all of our lifetime.

Whether we were raised in a Christian family or not, we knew about the Saviour. We knew about the Bible. We knew something.

But the very fact that men and women in pagan countries have come to know the Saviour is a rebuke to those in our land who in their arrogance have turned away from Jesus Christ as their Saviour. They are in the same position as Israel.

"Did not Israel know?" Of course they knew.

"But Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people."

The very fact that Gentiles were coming under the blessing of God should have stirred Israel to jealousy to seek their God and be obedient to Him.

And Isaiah is saying the same thing—that God had already declared that He would save Gentiles. Hence, there is no excuse for Israel because they knew it. But why should they get mad at Paul who was going out among the Gentiles and preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ? Why should they be envious of Paul? Why seek to persecute him when their own Scriptures declared that God would speak to them through other nations?

The Gentiles, who did not seek God, accepted Him. Israel, which had the Word of God, was indifferent to him and full of unbelief.

What did God say? "But as for Israel He says, All the day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." In Exodus 19:5, God told His people, "You shall be My own possession among all the peoples." Oh, the blessings, the mercy, the love He poured upon them; but they never turned to Him. They became colder and colder.

Take the Book of Joshua when the people entered the land after the captivity. What happened? God gave them victories; and, when we come to the beginning of the Book of Judges, they are fighting their enemies. But they are coldly indifferent to God. In the last half of the book, they are fighting among themselves and idolatry comes in.

And you find them all down through their history full of unbelief—unbelief. In fact, they were so indifferent to God, they didn't care whether God wanted them or whether God had anything for them. They didn't care anything about God.

That's why God said with a broken heart to Jeremiah, "Oh, if I could only find one just man in the city, I would save the city for the one man's sake."

How God yearned over Israel. My, how He loved them. How He mourned over them.

Why?

What broke His heart?

They rejected a free salvation (Romans 10:1 to 11), and they rejected a universal salvation in the last half of the chapter.

Now another question is raised, "Has God cast away His people?"

CHAPTER ELEVEN

When we come to this 11th chapter, we find in the fulfillment of prophecy God's future dealings with the nation Israel. Its rejection is neither total nor final. The bringing in of the Gentiles, which He has been doing for more than 1900 years, will not alter the promises of God to Israel.

So we find that the Lord has in a wonderful way manifested His grace and His love and His patience to Israel. And, when we come to this 11th chapter, we find that God is going to fulfill every word, every promise, every covenant He made with this people.

GOD'S FUTURE DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL IN THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY (11:1-36)

God has not cast away His people (11:1-10)

Now, in the first ten verses, we have this fact that God has not cast away his people whom He foreknew.

1. I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

2a. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.

You see, the Jew is liable to say, "What's the use? God has cast us off and we are done for."

Paul says, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. I'm a Jew. I'm an Israelite. I'm of the tribe of Benjamin. I'm of the seed of Abraham. God hasn't cast me off."

He has not cast away His people whom He fore-knew.”

And I'm sure that just as Paul was speaking to them, thousands and thousands of other Jews who have accepted the Saviour can say the same thing. Paul was living proof that God had not cast His people off. Remember, He did not choose them because they were many. He chose them because He loved them.

2b. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

3. "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED THY PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN THINE ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE."

4. But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT FOR MYSELF SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."

5. In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.

Has God cast away His people whom He fore-knew? God forbid. He has always had a people in this nation, even when it was away from Him in apostasy and idolatry and corruption. He always had those, a remnant of the nation, who trusted Him.

Take this man Elijah in 1 Kings 17-19 especially. The whole nation had followed Ahab, the wicked king. All the people worshiped Baal.

Ahab said, "If you find any prophet of Jehovah, you kill him. You get rid of him." He tried to stamp out the worship of Jehovah.

Elijah saw the overwhelming flood of unbelief. He said, "Lord, you might as well get rid of me since I'm the last one." You remember, he "wished in himself to die."

But God said, "Listen, I've got 7,000 who have never bowed the knee to Baal."

Elijah didn't know who they were. Certainly Obadiah, who was the governor of Ahab's house, "feared the Lord greatly." But nobody knew about it. That's just like today. We have a great many Christians—and I'm not going to question that they are not Christians (that's between them and the Lord)—who give no public indication that they are the Lord's. My heart doesn't run after Obadiah. My heart runs after Elijah.

I have talked to many Christians who have come to the place in their discouragement where they think they are the only ones who love the Saviour. I have met preachers who felt they were the only ones who had the truth. I want to tell you, my friend, that God will always have a remnant of those who love Him.

When one sees the way things are going, I tell you it makes the heart sad. It ought to drive us to our knees in intercession on behalf of our own country as we see even in so-called Christendom cold indifference to the person of Christ.

You know, it's bad enough to be indifferent; but it's terrible when one is satisfied in his indifference.

Are you one of God's remnant today? Are you, as one who loves the Saviour, standing for Him in the midst of a world of corruption and in the midst of a Christendom that has run after the social gospel? God always has His people. He always has a remnant that loves Him.

6. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

Nobody has ever been saved by his works—nobody, not from Adam down to the present time. Nobody has ever been fitted for the presence of God on the ground of any works, either moral or religious or any other kind. One is saved only on

the ground of the matchless grace of God. Not grace plus something. Grace by faith A-L-O-N-E.

After speaking of this question of grace and works, Paul says:

7. What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

8. Just as it is written, "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY."

9. And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM.

10. LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."

God is gathering out individuals, Jews and Gentiles, and calling them to Himself, knitting them together in His Son Jesus Christ and making of them what is known as "the Church."

You find this in Acts 15:14-16. "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up."

What for? That the rest of the Gentiles might be brought to Christ. This is going to be the job of the remnant in the tribulation and in the millennium. God is going to reveal Himself through Israel in that day.

Israel did not obtain (11:7) what it sought for. Why not?

Because it was seeking it by works. As a result, eyes were darkened and all its national hope as pictured in David came to nothing. They became so much the enemy of their own good that David's

curse on the enemies of Jehovah's servant (Psalm 69:22) fell on them themselves.

Now, what is God's purpose for Israel in the future? Is God through with Israel? We see them scattered all over the face of the earth. Only a small remnant has gone back to Israel. Is God through with them?

God's purpose for Israel in the future (11:11-32)

11. I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

12. Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

13. But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

14. If somehow I might move to jealousy my fellowcountrymen and save some of them.

15. For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

You can see what the Lord is doing. If He can stir the Jews up to jealousy, then they might turn to Him. Follow the Book of Acts as the Apostle Paul goes from city to city, starting in chapter 13 when he and Barnabas went out. You will notice that, when they went to the synagogues, certain ones were saved. The Gentiles heard the Word of God, and a great multitude of them believed.

Then the Jews became very envious. But, instead of their being stirred up to jealousy to turn to the Lord, they turned against Him.

But Paul here says, "This is what we are doing. If a few Jews can reach so many Gentiles with the Word of God, what will happen when the Gentiles do the preaching? What will happen when entire Gentile nations are saved?" It would mean the salvation of the world.

And this is what God is going to do with the Jewish nation. For more than 1900 years the Gentiles have had the gospel and have preached it to the world. But, today, hundreds of millions of people in the world know nothing of the Saviour. If Old Testament Israel failed in its job of making known to the nations the wonders of God, I can say very frankly that the Church of Jesus Christ in 1900 years hasn't done its job either.

There will not be a reaching of the nations of the earth until Israel is gathered in, purged and sent out as God's messengers. Isaiah 66:8 declares, "A nation shall be born in a day." This is going to mean the salvation of the world, and then we are going to get into the millennium.

Now let's go down to the next statement in verses 16 to 24.

Paul brings up again this question of national privilege. He is not dealing with the question of salvation but with divine privilege. He is not dealing with the Church at all. He is dealing with the nation Israel and with Gentiles.

16. And if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too.

17. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,

18. Do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.

God gives the nation hope here. He is not through with the Jews.

It is true they are going back to the land of Israel today, but most of them are going back in unbelief. Their great theme is not going back to meet the Messiah. They are going back to the land because of Zionism. They are going back to the land of their forefathers. They may not realize it but

God is beginning to gather the Jews together so that eventually He can keep His promises and His covenant with them.

So we have found that God is not through with Israel. He is going to bring it back to life. "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the Gentiles, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"

Now, notice three things; and I want them to be very clear in your mind. The olive tree has to do with the question of testimony on the earth, national testimony. You find this in Jeremiah 11:16 where you have the nation as an olive tree having the national privilege of testifying to the nations of the earth.

The vine has to do with fruitbearing. In Isaiah 5, in Jeremiah 2:21 and 24:6, God speaks of Israel as planted in a vineyard to produce fruit unto God; and, when He went to get the fruit, instead of getting good fruit He found sour grapes. As a result, He scattered the Jews.

Now the fig tree mentioned in the Gospels speaks of the remnant of Israelites who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah and who rebuilt the temple and city wall; and this carries right on through until 70 A.D. when they were scattered. This was the remnant that returned from captivity so that Messiah might be born.

Then, you remember, our Lord toward the end of His journey among men went from Bethany and crossed the valley of Kidron. He found a fig tree with a lot of leaves but no fruit, and He cursed the fig tree. As He came by on His return, the disciples said, "See, it is all withered."

Now Matthew 24:32 says, "When you see the fig tree putting forth her leaves, you know that summer is nigh, even at the door." Luke 21:30 adds a little statement, "When you see the fig tree and the olive tree putting forth their leaves, you know that

summer is nigh." Luke is speaking of the Lord's second return, His second coming to the earth.

You see, friend, our Lord is going to return to the earth for a purpose. He is going to gather Israel, "the remnant," the fig tree.

So the olive tree represents the place of privilege and testimony, the vineyard has to do with fruitbearing and the fig tree has to do with the remnant of Israel. All three pertain to the nation Israel.

Now let's go back to Romans 11. I want to look more closely at verses 17 to 22 and examine Israel's privilege.

17. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,

18. Do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.

19. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."

20. Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, and you stand only by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;

21. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.

22. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

Please, please do not read into that personal salvation. He is talking about the olive tree, the place of witnessing to the nations of the earth. And because they didn't do their job, the Jews were cut off through unbelief. And we Gentiles were grafted in, contrary to nature. You have it in Galatians 3:7, "Those who are of faith are the children of Abraham." In other words, we were grafted in to salvation by faith.

Now you don't graft a wild branch into a good tree. You generally do the opposite. And if God cut them off because of their failure and disobedience, then God is going to cut the Gentile off.

When the Church is gone from the scene and our testimony is through, God is going to turn around, pick up the people of Israel and restore them to the place of privilege. Isaiah 43:10, you remember, speaks of the fact that they are going to be witnesses for God to the nations of the earth. Every Jew in that day is going to be a witness for God.

You remember in Isaiah that the Gentiles will call the Jews "priests unto God." Nations will recognize that the Israelites are God's people, God's witnesses concerning Himself. And what we have not been able to do in 1900 years, the nation Israel is going to do when this godly remnant is brought into a wonderful relationship with Him.

Now this brings us right down to verse 23.

23. And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again.

24. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

I believe the time is very near when the Gentiles are going to be broken off. I think this because passages like 2 Timothy 3:1-5 speak of the professing Church in the last days. Allow me to quote these five verses to you: "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a

form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.”

This is not a picture of the world. If you want a picture of the worldling, you go to Romans 1 or Galatians 5. This is a picture of the professing Church. The world has always been this way. But here is the Church of Christ—that is, the professing Church of Christ. It is the Laodicean Church of Revelation 3. God is going to spew them out because they are boastful. They don't need a Saviour. They don't need the Spirit of God. They don't need the Word of God. They say, “We are rich, we are increased with goods, we have need of nothing.”

And God says, “You are poor and blind and naked.”

God is going to spew the professing Church out of His mouth. The real Church, the real believer, is going to be translated to be with his Lord.

Now let's read verse 25:

**He will bring them back to Himself again
(11:25-32)**

25. For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in

What is the mystery? That blindness in part is happened to Israel. For 1900 years the Jewish people, who had the Word of God, have been scattered among the nations under the discipline of God.

They are blind. They will be blind as a people until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in.

Here in my city, I remember meeting a dear man; and I just loved this dear old man, this dear old Jew. And I can just see him now as I talked to him about the Saviour.

He said, "Mr. Mitchell, I know what you are going to say to me. I know what you are going to say—but my children. They have turned from Judaism. They have turned from the Law."

And he wept. "My heart is broken."

I said, "But you know that the Bible said this."

"I know what you are going to say to me," he said. And the tears just ran down his cheek and off his beard.

Here was a dear man, heart broken because his children were not following the way of the law of Moses. You see, he could think of nothing else. He was spiritually blind.

We Gentiles are to recognize this mystery so that we will not be wise in our own conceits. We are not to be ignorant of the fact that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in.

Now what is the fulness of the Gentiles?

Friend, this I believe has to do with the question of the Church of Jesus Christ. Allow me to contrast two passages of Scripture.

Remember, in the Gospel through Luke it speaks in chapter 21:24 that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are filled full. Now there is a difference between "the times of the Gentiles" and "the fulness of the Gentiles."

We have been living in a time when God is gathering out a people for His name, called "the Church." This is "the fulness of the Gentiles," and it will end at the translation of the saints.

But the “times of the Gentiles” starts from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, when he took the people of Israel into captivity; and it runs right through until the Lord begins to deal with Israel in the tribulation period and then sets up His kingdom. Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be filled full.

And, when you see what is happening in Israel today, you can lift up your head, my friend, if you are a Christian, because your redemption draws near. But the Church, the “fulness of the Gentiles,” starts with the resurrection of Christ and lasts until the translation of the Church.

“Blindness in part” has happened to Israel until the “fulness of the Gentiles” has come in. And when I see that God today is gathering Israel together and I see the move of God upon Israel, oh, if ever there were a time when we Christians needed to lift up our heads for our redemption draws near, it is now.

26. And thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”

27. “AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”

Even though Israel has been unfaithful to God, God will still be faithful to His covenant, to His promise.

“Does that mean that every Jew in the world is going to be saved, Mr. Mitchell?” you ask.

No. You see in the time of tribulation, after the Church has been taken away, God will begin to deal with the nation Israel.

First, He will purge out her rebels, her unbelievers. “And it will come about in all the land,” declares the LORD, “that two parts in it will be cut off and perish; but the third will be left in it. And I

will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'" (Zechariah 13:8-9).

The greater percentage of Jews going back to Israel today do not have a heart burning to see the Saviour. Just as there was a remnant in the time of Elijah, so Paul says that at this same time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

You read in Isaiah 66 that a nation—and whoever heard of such a thing—will be born in a day. How are they going to be born in a day? When they see the Lord Jesus Christ come, they are going to say, "This is our Lord. We have waited for Him."

You see, the Apostle Paul was saved by a personal appearance of the Saviour on the road to Damascus, Acts 9. As Saul, he was full of murder and hatred for the Christians, for the "people of The Way." He called them anything and everything and threw them in jail. He was ready to kill these blasphemers who claimed that Jesus was God. Then God met him, and he was saved by a personal appearance of the Lord Jesus. That's why in 1 Corinthians 15:8 he could say he was "one untimely born."

Paul, what do you mean by that?

Well, the nation of Israel is going to be saved in one day by the personal appearance of Jesus Christ. They shall see Him whom they pierced and shall say, "What are these wounds?"

And He shall say, "I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zechariah 13:6). And there will be national repentance.

Paul is a living illustration of how the nation is going to be saved. "I was born ahead of the time." He knew what the Bible said—that the nation Israel was going to be saved by the personal appearance of Christ. "Out of Zion shall come forth the

Deliverer," not from heaven but from Zion.

He came the first time to the earth to Israel, to fulfill the promises made to the fathers. "I am sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He is going to come the second time to the earth for the salvation of Israel, to deliver them from their enemies and to judge the nations of the earth (Deuteronomy 30).

And we believers wait for the translation of the Church. We are not going to meet Him on earth. We are going to meet Him in the heavens. We are going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and be forever with the Lord.

But Israel, when the Lord comes the second time, will be surrounded by its enemies. All the nations of the earth will be against it. And the only way of deliverance is up. And that's when God begins to pour out His wrath upon the nations of the earth. He is going to judge them, and He is going to reign on the earth. He is going to turn ungodliness away from Jacob, saying, "This is My covenant with them, when I shall take away their sins" (Romans 11:27). He is going to make a new covenant with the people of Israel.

"But, Mr. Mitchell," you say, "the new covenant is what God made with the Church."

I'm well aware of the fact that there is a certain sense in which the new covenant takes us in. But when you take Hebrews 8, God is going to make a new covenant with the house of Israel when He takes away its sins. You take Jeremiah 31 and 32. You take Ezekiel 37 and you have the same thing—God is going to take away the heart of stone in His people. He is going to give them a heart of flesh.

Let's read Hebrews 8:8-10: "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah; not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took

them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days, says the Lord.”

And then Paul quotes from Jeremiah 31:33-34: “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

This is written to Israel, not to us as members of the Church, as individual Christians. It’s true that when you and I accepted the Saviour, we were forgiven every sin, cleansed from every transgression.

We passed from death to life. We will never again come into judgment as sinners. We are covered with the righteousness of Christ. We have become the children of God, the recipients of eternal life and fitted for eternal glory. Now that’s the Church.

But don’t you be jealous of what God is going to do with Israel. Remember, it is going to be on the ground of grace. Two-thirds of Israel will be cut off. He is going to bring one-third through the fire. This is what we have in the tribulation period, according to Jeremiah 30. This is “the time of Jacob’s distress” (30:7). That’s when God is going to purge Israel. And then, when He comes, He is going to make a new covenant with the house of Israel.

After the Church has been taken away, He is going to purge out of Israel her rebels; and He is going to bring Israel to Himself. He is going to make them a wonderful, wonderful people; and

they are going to know the Lord after He takes away their sins and brings them into a new covenant with Himself. And their sins and their iniquities will be remembered no more.

28. From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.

When God made His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He made an everlasting covenant. When He made His covenant with David, it was an everlasting covenant; and, when He made those covenants, He knew all about Israel. Don't you forget that. He knew exactly what they would do.

In fact, if you read Deuteronomy 28, 29 and the beginning of 30 where Moses declared the blessings and the curses, you will notice he is very positive as he writes that they are going to come under the judgment of God. But, nevertheless, even down through the centuries, they are still beloved for the fathers' sakes.

But, because of their enmity, God opened the door to the Gentiles. That doesn't mean that He doesn't love the Jew. That doesn't mean He's not going to complete His promises to the Jew. Every covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David He is going to fulfill.

You talk about the grace of God. You talk about the mercy of God. They don't deserve mercy any more than you do. But God has manifested His grace to you and to me. He forgave us our sins and blotted them out, never to see them again. Cannot God do the same thing for Israel?

My friend, thank God. He opened the door to the Gentiles so that you and I could be saved. But the time is going to come after the Church is gone when He is going to judge the nations of the earth, He is going to purge the rebels out of Israel, and

He is going to make a new covenant. But He still loves them.

And then Paul makes this amazing statement:

29. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Ecclesiastes 3:14 says, "I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him."

When God starts a thing, He finishes it. Now He may not do it on the split second, but He will do it in His own good time.

When God called Israel to be His people, He knew exactly what they would do; yet He still chose them. His word to them is as eternal as the new heavens and the new earth which He is going to make. God never repents in manifesting His grace to man. He still saves and He still keeps. Even Israel's rebellion and idolatry will not turn God from fulfilling His purpose and His plan.

30. For just as you once were disobedient to God but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience,

31. So these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

32. For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.

If the mercy of God was free to the Gentiles, the mercy of God is going to be free for Israel. And, my, what will not God do for Israel when these people come in!

It says here that all are in disobedience. You know, if you and I were to write verse 32, we would write it this way, "God has shut up all in disobedience that He might judge all." No, thank God, it doesn't say that.

God has shut up all in disobedience that He might have mercy upon all.

He doesn't make any difference between Jew and Gentile. You and I make a difference between sinners. We say that fellow over there is a vile sinner. Only the grace of God can reach him.

"Me?" we say, "I'm a good man. I'm a moral person. I'm a religious person."

Yes, my friend, you need the mercy of God just as much as the other fellow in outbroken sin. You see, this fellow in outbroken sin revealed what he was. And if we could pull your heart out and look at what you were before you were a Christian and if we could see the thoughts and the desires of your heart . . .

"Oh, brother," you would say, "don't pull that out."

What about the many things you would have liked to have done?

"Don't pull that out. Oh, no."

You see, when God looks in our hearts, he finds we are all under sin, all in unbelief. He could have left Adam in his sin. He could have left Abraham in idolatry. He could have left Israel in its unbelief, and He could have left you in your sin. God didn't have to save anybody, did He?

It's so wonderful when we come to the rest of it. Look at verses 33 to 36. I don't know of any Scripture so marvelous as this.

The great doxology (11:33-36)

33. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

Here you have the great doxology of Romans 11. This is an amazing revelation to a man whose heart was bursting with rapturous praise as he thought of the grace of God, grace that has taken

Gentiles given over to sin and has fitted them for eternal glory. The same grace will regather the Jews and cleanse them and purge them and forgive all their iniquities and bring them into a place where the promises of God will be fulfilled in them in the millennial reign of our Saviour.

As Paul came to this, he couldn't help but burst out in this wonderful, wonderful rapture of praise. This is comparable to 2 Corinthians 5:13, 14 where, thinking of the grace of God, he said, "For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us."

Oh, to be controlled by that wonderful, divine love of the Saviour so that you and I can become channels displaying that very same love to our generation.

"O the depth of the riches." Did you ever think of it, the divine wealth? The inexhaustible riches of Christ? I am reminded of Ephesians 3:8 where Paul speaks of the "unfathomable riches of Christ." You can't exhaust them, and you can't get to the end of searching them. Oh, the divine wealth of His grace and His mercy and His love!

In Ephesians 1, 2 and 3, Paul speaks of "the riches of His grace," "the unfathomable riches of Christ," and "the riches of His glory." I tell you, we have a God who is rich in mercy, rich in love, rich in grace toward any open heart that will come to Him. My friend, He excludes nobody.

Then think of the depth of His wisdom.

Do you know He has no confidant, no counsel. The depth of His wisdom is beyond, way beyond, the faculty of man to plumb. You remember in 1 Corinthians 1 the very foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men. Take the book of Job, chapter 11, verse 7, "Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?" Oh, the impossibility of it. In 1 Corinthians 1:24, it is "Christ the power of God and the

wisdom of God.” In fact, in Colossians 2:3, we read that God has hidden in Christ all His treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. Hence, I must say this: All we know of God is just what He has revealed to us.

My friend, you can study all the philosophies of the world. Can they bring you into a relationship with God? What do we know about God? Just what He has revealed. What do we know about His working? What do we know about His ways? What do we know about His wisdom and His love? Just what He has revealed.

To me, the astounding thing is that men today question the working of God. They question His wisdom. They question His love. They sit in judgment on God.

Oh, the arrogance of the human heart. Man can't begin to even plumb the depths of the wisdom of God, of the riches of God. We calmly sit back and we tell God just what we think of Him. We judge Him. We claim to have more love than He has, more grace than He has.

No, my friend, let me tell you this. There is only one way you will ever know God and the grace of God, the love of God, the compassion of God. You find it in the Word of God in the way He has revealed it.

And may I remind you that He is “the only wise God.” You find this in Romans 16:27. Oh, the depth of His riches, the depth of His wisdom!

But it goes on. Paul celebrates not only the depth of the riches of His wisdom, but also of His knowledge, for God is omniscient. He knows everything. Our Saviour manifested this. You remember in John 2, the last two verses, many believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He performed; but He did not yield Himself to them or reveal Himself to them because He knew what was in men. He even knew their thoughts. And His ways are past finding out.

Isaiah 55:9 says, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

He does not show us His ways until we yield ourselves entirely to Him. In fact, His ways are beyond the reach of human intellect, human philosophy. I’m talking about the eternal, omniscient God. I’m talking about the One who is rich in wisdom and knowledge, whose judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out.

34. FOR WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?

My friend, when God created the universe, made this world, made man, made the animal creation, He didn’t call anybody in to consult with—not even the angels, not even the archangel Michael, not even His messenger Gabriel. He didn’t invite anybody in. Who counseled with God?

Read the 40th chapter of Isaiah, an amazing chapter on the compassion of God, who takes the lambs into His bosom. It gives a tremendous picture of the character of God. Let’s read just one or two verses:

“With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge, and informed Him of the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust. . . . All the nations are as nothing before Him. They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless” (Isaiah 40:14-17).

Read that whole chapter of Isaiah and then come back to these verses.

Who has known the mind of the Lord? Do you remember Matthew 11:25? “I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst

hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes”—to those who have come in simple trust. As 1 Corinthians 2:10 says, “For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.”

The mighty Nebuchadnezzar learned that the Most High ruleth over the affairs of men and none can say to Him, “What hast Thou done?” (Daniel 4:34-35).

What do we know about our redemption? What do we know about the resurrection? What do we know about the rapture, about the new heavens or the new earth or the resurrected and glorified body? We don't know, my friend. What do we know about what is going to happen after death? You don't know unless you come to the Word of God where He has revealed it to us. It's a wonderful thing to know the Word of God.

35. OR WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?

36. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Just one more thing before we leave this wonderful, wonderful portion of Scripture. What can we give such a God? Have we ever given Him anything? He has given us everything in His Son. He did not hold back His blessed Son to save us. What He wants is our worship. What He wants is our trust. What He wants is our obedience, for everything we have is from Him.

I want to tell you, my friend, He is going to have all the glory, too. Time would fail me to go into Corinthians and Romans and Ephesians where over and over again the Apostle Paul writes, “To Him be the glory.”

No flesh will glory in His presence. Not a bit. Won't you go over these verses again? I have just barely scratched the surface.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways. But you and I can know them by walking in His fellowship and enjoying Him.

That's what spiritual life is—the enjoyment of divine life.

CHAPTER TWELVE

From chapter 1 right down through chapter 11, we have had—for the most part—what God has done for us. Now, starting in at chapter 12, as Christians and as the children of God, we have a discussion of the practical righteousness God wants manifested in His people. In other words, we have here what we are to do to glorify God on earth.

Paul begins by appealing to our wills. God has given to us by the Spirit of God the capacity to glorify the Saviour among men. Think of it. He wants you and me to be channels to express to the world something of His love, of His grace, of His compassion, of His tenderness to men. God still loves men and women. Remember that.

And how is He going to display Himself except through you and me?

PRACTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS MANIFESTED IN HIS PEOPLE (12:1-16:27)

Relationship to God (12:1-2)

1. I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Now here you have the beseechings of grace. It's not the law, demanding you do something; but this is the entreaty of grace. It's a plea for personal dedication to God. You know, I think sometimes that we who have been on the way for many, many years have lost that fervency, that freshness, that sweetness of love for the Saviour.

How about you, my friend?

Now, I'm not questioning your standing before God. All I ask is, how much do you love Him? How much do you really love Him? My, when I think of how good God has been to you and to me, there is only one thing we can do and that is to obey this verse. Let it get hold of you.

“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God”—not by anything else, just by the mercies and compassion of God—“to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice.” That's all He asks.

Before we were saved, we yielded our members, our bodies unto sin. We yielded to the lusts of the flesh and the mind. Now he says, yield those very things to God.

Why? To be saved?

No.

To get something?

No.

Just because we love Him. It's a voluntary thing. Notice, Paul says, “a living sacrifice,” not a dead sacrifice.

Somebody says, “I'll die for Christ.” He didn't ask you to do that. No, my friend, the challenge is to live for Him in the midst of a world that has no place for Him and in the midst of people—friends, neighbors, and relatives—who scorn you because you love the Saviour.

You remember that Paul said in Romans 1:1 that he was a bond-servant of Jesus Christ.

A bond-servant was one with no possessions of his own, no will of his own, no time of his own. He was given over to—he was possessed entirely by—his master.

And you remember the Lord said of the Levites, “These are mine.” They were not numbered among the tribes because “they are mine.”

You say, “Well, Mr. Mitchell, it's going to cost me something.”

Yes, it costs to be a sacrifice. It's a living, holy sacrifice.

You know, whenever I think of this verse, I think of a man by the name of John Alexander Clark, a missionary who was knighted by the Belgian government. He spent his lifetime in the Congo. He told of treating a poor woman who had fallen into a fire and very severely burned her arm. He put some medicine on her arm and bandaged it and took care of her. And then, for quite a number of weeks, he would go daily to her hut and massage her arm until it became usable.

Months later, he was sitting in front of his hut one day when the woman came down from the village with a very, very large basket full of corn on top of her head. She came right to him and put the big basket down and said to him, "This is your corn."

He said, "Oh, no, it isn't. It isn't my corn. I didn't buy it—but I will buy it from you."

"Oh, no," she said. "I can't sell this corn. It's your corn."

"No," he said. "It is not my corn."

"No," she said, "you don't understand. This corn is your corn. This arm is your arm. You're the one who saved this arm. It's your arm. This arm prepared the ground. This arm put the seed in and cultivated the soil. It gathered in the harvest. This arm is your arm. This corn is your corn."

I have never forgotten that, and it's been about 60 years.

I never forgot it because the Lord Jesus gave Himself for us.

Can we not give ourselves to Him so we become His arm? He redeemed us from the fire. He bought us with His own precious blood. He sacrificed to save you and me. The least we can do is to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God as our spiritual service of worship.

Have you done that, my friend?

If not, why not?

For out of this spiritual worship comes our service. I say, is the Lord asking too much of us that we should just give ourselves, holy, acceptable unto Him, a living sacrifice? It's the only logical thing we can do.

2. And do not be conformed to this world (fashioned according to this age), but be transformed (transfigured) by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Paul first makes a negative statement: "Do not fashion yourselves according to this age." Don't run your life according to the world that is in opposition to Christ. This age is a selfish age. It pleases self instead of God. It is dominated by Satan, not by Christ.

Don't forget that.

To conform to this world and system is to manifest unfaithfulness to the One who redeemed us from this present evil age.

Then he makes a positive statement. We are to be "transformed by the renewing" of our mind. The renewing is on the inside.

Transformation is on the outside. When we have our mind renewed by continual occupation with Christ, then we are able to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Indeed, it is the positive setting of your mind on Christ that prompts, that enables the transformation.

I believe that knowing the perfect will of God for your life is the outcome of the dedication in verse 1. And I believe that, when I give myself as a present to Him, turn my body and all I am over to Him, then I begin to prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God.

Now I beseech you by the grace of God, put yourself, put all you are and have in the hands of

your wonderful Saviour; and then, through you, the Spirit of God will reveal something of the loveliness and beauty of Christ Jesus your Lord.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE BODY (12:3-18)

Membership in the Body (12:3-5)

3. For through the grace given unto me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Now, first of all, he takes up the responsibility you and I, as members of the body of Christ, have to the Church which is His body. Remember, your gifts have been given to you under the sovereignty of God. The Spirit of God, I say, is not only sovereign in the bestowal of gifts (1 Corinthians 12), but He is sovereign in the place you have in the body of Christ. And He is sovereign in putting you in the place where you can exercise your gifts as you serve the Church which is His body.

You remember in Ephesians 4:16 and Colossians 2:19, we are put in the body for two reasons. First of all, for the edification of the body, as Paul said in Romans 1:11-12, "For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established . . . each of us by the other's faith" as we share together in the things of Christ.

I believe we ought to share with each other what we know about the Saviour. As we do so, we encourage each other. We may impart to somebody else truth that he has never seen; and, in like manner, he may impart to us something we have never seen.

You see, friend, there is so much more to know. We haven't even scratched the surface. There is so very much in the Word of God that we don't know. That's true of me. Isn't it true of you?

In fact, I want to say that some of the most wonderful truths I ever learned as a young Christian, I learned not in seminary, not in school. I learned them in some old sod shacks way up in northern Canada, sitting down on an earthen floor with a homesteader telling me what he or she knew of the Saviour.

It's true that I didn't know much in those days; but, believe me, I met people who were not men of the schools. They were not scholars by any means; and some I don't think even went through grade school. But don't tell me they didn't know the things of God.

There was a sweetness, an aroma about them in the things of Christ that caused me to have a tremendous yearning. This is what I want. This is real, not something to tickle my intellectual capacity but something to reach the need of my heart. It was the reality of life in Christ that I saw.

What I'm trying to get to you is this. God has given to each one of us gifts, according to the measure of faith. It is God who in His sovereignty has put us in the body of Christ as it pleased Him. And He has gifted us by the Spirit of God as it has pleased Him. It's not what we want. It's what God wants. The Lord knows all about you. He knows all about me. And He knows the best place for you and for me to serve Him. He has put us in the body as it has pleased Him. He has put us there to function so that He will be glorified.

4. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,

5. So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

In other words, my friend, you can't get along without me and I can't get along without you. If I may go to 1 Corinthians 12 for a moment, my eye cannot say to my ear, "I have no need of you." And

the ear can't say to the nose or mouth, "I have no need of you." Each one has a different function. What God wants us to do is to walk in fellowship with Christ Jesus, our Head. And as we do, then we will be able to use our gift and to edify the other members of the Body.

The second thing we are to do is to increase the Body, and that's soul winning. It is ministering the Word, communicating the Word to our generation. And you, my friend, might claim to be the weakest member in the body of Christ.

All right, I'll take your word for that. You are the weakest member of the body of Christ, but you have a place to function. You might be only a joint, but even so you must function. And, you see, the Church of Christ on earth can't get along without you or without me. No one can take your place.

You say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I don't know what He wants me to do."

Now that may be true. But all I'm asking you to do is to walk in fellowship with Christ in the light of His Word. He will soon tell you what to do. It will be put upon your heart what to do. God will open up doors for you. Or it may be that God's ministry for you might be in your bedroom or in a hospital room or a nursing home room with the door shut where you may have a ministry of intercessory prayer. That, I would say, is one of the most needed ministries in the world today.

Oh, for God's people to take some time to wait upon Him, to intercede on behalf of the Gospel of Christ and to think of our missionaries, of His servants all over the world.

Sometimes they feel forgotten. Nobody prayed. Oh, it would be terrible if a man or woman were to go to the mission field and have nobody behind him in prayer.

Why don't you take some of them upon your heart and pray for them? Take your place in the body of Christ as one who intercedes. Oh, the need

for God's intercessors, God's remembrancers, to remind God of these things.

Of course, God knows all about them. He doesn't need to be reminded, but it is in the purpose of God that you and I share with Him. We are, as 1 Corinthians 3:9 says, "We are God's fellow-workers."

To do what job?

To reach our generation.

Think of it, my friend. You, whoever you may be, have a particular place in the Church, the Body of Christ. And, as you yield yourself to the Lord, He works through you. Now, nobody might see what you do. Nobody might even know what you do.

But He knows, He hears, He will reward. You'll see.

Our ministry in the Body (12:6-8)

Everyone of us must minister in the body of Christ. Everyone of us. When you don't minister, then the body suffers. And I'm pleading with you, especially these days, because I believe the coming of the Lord is near. We must buy up every opportunity of reaching our generation for Christ.

Will you pray that every testimony for Christ will be given in the power of the Spirit of God to our generation? How glad I am we are workers together with Him in this blessed ministry. Each of us has a ministry. Our service really is measured by how much of a heart we have for Christ.

6. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

7. If service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;

8. Or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

You will notice there are seven gifts mentioned here. The Spirit of God outfits the believer to serve the Lord Christ. One man has the gift of evangelism; another man has the gift of teaching. We all have different gifts. Some are public gifts; many others are personal. Notice the first:

If our gift is prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith. The gift of prophecy is for edification and comfort. This is more in the sense of giving forth the Word of Life. And we give it according to the proportion of faith.

Now prophecy doesn't necessarily mean prophesying future events. A prophet is one who represents God to the people. A priest is one who represents the people to God. Every Christian is a priest. We find in 1 Peter 2:5 and 9 that we are a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood. That is, we can pray for each other.

A prophet is one who speaks for God to others. When I speak from the Word of God, I am prophesying. Now everyone doesn't have this gift. But those who have it are to use it to give forth the Word.

Now the second gift mentioned here is service, ministry. This is pouring out our lives for others. You have this, for example, in Ephesians 4:12. You have it in 2 Corinthians 10.

Certain men in the gospel ministry are not evangelists or teachers, but they are good pastors. They minister to the needs of God's people. As long as you are a member of the body of Christ, you can minister. You can minister to the preacher. You can minister to others. You can reveal to them things whereby they can be encouraged in the Lord. Anyone can have a ministry.

“Or he who teaches, in his teaching.”

God has given certain men gifts of teaching so that they can make the Word of God clear. Ezra, a scribe in the Old Testament, made the Word of

God clear as he spoke to the people. Likewise, a teacher is one who instructs God's people in the Word of God. Now that's a gift.

I have friends who have a tremendous capacity for knowledge. But when it comes to imparting that knowledge, they have a very difficult time.

You can ask them a question, and they can answer you. But you put them down before a group of people, and they just can't communicate it for some reason or other. They don't have the gift of teaching.

Now you may not be able to qualify like G. Campbell Morgan or someone else who has a tremendous gift of teaching. Nevertheless, you can impart the truth of God to others, whether in Sunday School, young peoples' meetings or whatever. If you have the gift of teaching, use it.

"He who exhorts, in his exhortation."

Now a man who exhorts God's people encourages them to be obedient to the Word of God. He encourages them in the vital concerns in their own lives.

A friend of mine, a well-known man, when asked what his gift was, said, "I'm not a teacher, I'm not an evangelist, I'm not a pastor. I'm an exhorter."

He had the gift of encouraging God's people to do something for God. He exhorted them to perform the ministry to which God had called them. A person may not be a teacher of doctrine, but he can stand up and give a devotional to exhort the people of God, to encourage them to walk with God in the midst of a world that is lawless and sinful.

That's the work of an exhorter. Now, if you love to exhort, don't try to be a teacher or an evangelist or pastor. Stick to your job of exhortation. We need the teacher. We need the pastor. We need the evangelist. We need the exhorter. And then notice this next one—

"He who gives, with liberality."

You remember, one day, when our Lord was standing by the treasury in the temple, the Pharisees came along and blew their trumpets and made a lot of noise so everybody could see what they put into the treasury box. And along came a little widow who slipped in her two mites and kept on going.

Nobody saw it except the Lord. But He spoke wonderfully about the little widow, her joy of giving and her sacrifice. He never said a word about the old Pharisees and the amount of money they put in. When you give, give with simplicity.

And, by the way, lest somebody should say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, you know that I don't have the gift of giving . . ."

Now, don't you try to rationalize your stinginess. That's a poor word to use, isn't it? You know what I mean, don't you? Don't hold back. But if you do give, give it with simplicity. Give it with a heart that is wholehearted for God. Give it because you love Him.

And, remember, God will never be in your debt. So if you are going to give, give with simplicity.

"He who leads, with diligence." If you are a member of a board of your local church, when you serve, do it with diligence. Do it with a heart before God.

Remember, this is a God-given responsibility. Did you hear what I said? It's a God-given responsibility, and you rule with diligence as if it were your own business.

It's an amazing thing, but I've seen men who were very diligent in their business in the world. But when it came to the Lord's business, they were sloppy. They were indifferent. No, you be just as diligent in the work of the Lord and leadership as you are in your own business. It is God's business, and we should do it with diligence. Don't you miss your meetings, and don't slack up on your responsibilities. Lead with diligence.

And then the last one.

“He who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

Galatians 6:1 comes to my mind in connection with this. “If a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted.”

Now here is a ministry. It may be with the sick. It may be with failing, stumbling believers. It may be with discouraged Christians. It may be with disheartened Christians. What they need is not a club. What they need is some mercy. God has been wonderful in His mercy to you and to me. Should we not show the same thing to God’s people?

“Brother Mitchell, if you only knew what they’ve done!”

I don’t care what they have done. What they need is not a club, not a kick. What they need is some mercy. Oh, that God would put into your heart and my heart a spirit of mercy for God’s people. Now don’t go into a hospital room as if your last day had come. When people are sick, they need to be cheered up; they need encouragement.

You find some Christians who are downhearted because of the roughness of the path. They are having a hard time. Everything is going wrong. They’re discouraged and down in the dumps. And what they need is someone who will come along and understand them, care for them, love them, show them mercy.

And if you find Christians who have been taken over by some sin, please don’t judge them. Don’t knock them on the head. Don’t go around and tell everyone about them. You manifest mercy and encourage them in the Lord. Put your arm around them and encourage them in the Saviour. Remind them that the Lord is full of mercy and grace. Remind them that they have a throne of grace to

which they can come and there obtain all the mercy and all the grace they need. Show mercy.

We have been discussing these seven gifts, the outfitting of the Church of God by the Spirit:

* for prophesying—that's for edification and comfort;

* for service, pouring out your life for others;

* for teaching the Word of God, appealing to minds and hearts what God has declared;

* for exhorting, appealing to peoples' will; and then

* for giving heartily and

* for leading diligently. Remember, you are representing God in the midst of His people. And then

* for showing mercy. Oh, how we need Christians who have that spirit of mercy and who can exercise it with cheerfulness.

Don't you think we need these seven blessed ministries today?

These are the gifts and every Christian has a gift. You may not be a teacher, you may not be a prophet, you may not be a minister, you may not be able to exhort, you may not have much to give, you are not a member of a board, but you can show mercy.

Oh, God give us Christians who can show mercy to God's people in their need and their troubles, in their frailties, in their sins, in their sorrows. Don't you think it would be a wonderful thing to come with a cheerful spirit manifesting mercy? And be that kind of person in your own family, too.

Oh, for that understanding spirit that can take the dear people of God in all their frailty and love them so much that they turn to the Saviour in repentance or they are encouraged to go on for Him.

You and I have a tremendous place in this. Why not begin to exercise the gift you have, and the Lord bless you for His name's sake.

Our relationship to each member (12:9-18)

9. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

“Let love be real” is what he is talking about. “Let love be without hypocrisy.” It must not be something you put on like a coat.

Read 1 Corinthians 13—“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love,” it’s nothing else but an empty tin can. Though I give my body to be burned, give all my goods to feed the poor . . . Though I prophesy and everything else and have no love, I am nothing. Love is patient and is kind.

And here in Romans you have, “Let love be without hypocrisy.” Don’t put on. Let’s be genuine in our love.

“Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.” In other words, this is to be our attitude to evil men and to evil things. Abhor that which is evil. Run away. Don’t put yourself in the way of temptation.

We think sometimes, “Why, I’ll never do that.” But we do. And we do it again and again. Why? Because we put ourselves in the way of temptation. Are we not all guilty here?

You say that God delivered you from some of your weaknesses, sins in your lifetime, habits, corrupt sinful things you did before you were saved. And after you were saved, the Lord put in your heart a desire to please Him. You think that that desire is so strong now evil things won’t tempt you.

Listen and don’t you forget it. Don’t you forget it! Don’t you put yourself in the way of temptation because—just as sure, just as sure as your name is what it is—you will do it.

A man says to me, “Well, Mitchell, I can take it or leave it.”

I know what he is going to do. He is going to take it.

“Abhor” means to hate, to run away from that which is evil. The Word of God says, “Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

My friend, don't you forget that you are pretty weak. All of us are, as Paul found out. You remember Romans 7:18: “I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.” Remember that you are just as weak now as before you were saved. Just as you trusted the Lord then, you must trust Him now for everything every day. The Lord is the deliverer, not your strong will.

10. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.

Sometimes, I think kindness is a forgotten art. It doesn't cost you anything to be kind. A kind word, a kind act—oh, friend, how this world needs it. There are so many dear, dear Christian people who would welcome kindness from somebody. There are so many lonely people in the world. They have lost their family.

Maybe a dear woman has lost her husband, and her children are living in some other part of the world. She is alone. Oh, how she needs some little kindnesses—a kind word, a kind act. You think about that, will you? And be kind.

You say, “But, Mr. Mitchell, I have no gift.”

You can be kind. You can be full of mercy toward people. We don't need a gift to be kind!

“Give preference to one another in honor.”

This is not a very common thing, is it? There is no self-exaltation here in preferring one another. What if the other fellow wants your job? Let him have the job. Don't be envious.

Don't be jealous. Oh, how it must rejoice the heart of God when self is put to one side and the other brother is given the place of honor.

May God grant to us, you and me, a generous spirit when we meet with God's people—not to be always looking for a place of honor for ourselves but to let the other fellow have it.

11. Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

What does this mean?

Be diligent. Don't lie down on the job.

You say, "I don't like my job."

All the more reason to be diligent, to do your job for the Lord and to be the best fellow on that job. Remember, you are serving the Lord Christ.

You say, "I don't get what's coming to me."

Listen, can't you trust the Lord who loves you? Can't you trust Him to pay you for what you are doing? Not that the Lord wants to pay you in material things. But I'm telling you one thing, my friend: He will never be in your debt. If you are serving and doing the job as unto the Lord, you can trust God to take care of you. And not only that, but it becomes no longer a chore, no longer a burden. It becomes a real joy. Why? You are doing it for God.

So don't be lazy in business. Believe me, a lazy man or woman is no credit to the Lord.

Did you hear me? No lazy man or woman is a credit, an honor to the Lord. Never mind what people say about it.

You serve the Lord Christ. You'll do a better job, too, by the way.

Whatever the task is, you do it as unto the Lord. Believe me, the Lord will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

"Fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

What a wonderful thing—burning up in spirit, fervent in spirit, a heart that's warm for God.

Is your heart warm toward Him?

You know, I remember a man by the name of Harvey Farmer. The dear, dear man from North Africa was telling us one time that he went to a college to see a young fellow. And when he got to the room of the dormitory, he said to this boy's roommate, "When will he be in?"

"I expect him to be in any minute."

He walked over to the desk and said, "Is this his Bible?"

And he said, "Yes."

And he opened it to the fly leaf and do you know what was written on the fly leaf of the boy's Bible? I'll quote: "Wanted: Wicks to burn out. Oil supplied."

That's what God wants. He wants us to be fervent in spirit, burning up for God. Or let me put it just a little simpler. Is your heart full of fervent love in warmth, in desire, for the things of God? Are you fervent in your spirit? Isn't this what John means in Revelation 2 when he writes about "first love," that fervency, that freshness of love for the Saviour?

We have another triplet in verse 12.

12. Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.

Why rejoice in hope? Because the Lord is going to come pretty soon. We must live in daily expectation of seeing the Saviour. As 1 Timothy 1:1 says, "He is our hope."

Are you living in the expectation of His coming? Are you rejoicing in hope of the glory of God? As dear Paul could say in Romans 8:18, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." Isn't it wonderful that you and I can live today in expectation of seeing Him whom, having not seen, we love? So we are filled with joy.

But you say, "I'm in sorrow right now. I'm in tribulation right now. I'm having a tough time right now."

But lift up your head. Your redemption draws near. The Lord is at hand. Think of the early martyrs. They went into the amphitheater singing the glories of Jesus even though they were going to be torn to pieces by wild beasts. They knew they had a hope, and they went singing.

They went singing. Why?

Because they were rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. They were going to say, "Good night, earth! Good morning, glory!" Oh, to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Won't you do that today?

"Persevering in tribulation."

You know, it's very hard sometimes to be patient in tribulation. Some people become so self-sympathetic.

"My, nobody goes through what I go through. I tell you," they say, "no one has the tests I have."

Did you ever hear that? Well, don't worry about that, friend. Don't get occupied with yourself. You'll get discouraged. Glory in your tribulation, says Paul, because tribulation works. It's doing something for you. "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

A friend of mine was very sick in the hospital and, when I saw him, he said, "You know a verse came to me today. I'm just thrilled I'm not going to be here very long."

I said, "What makes you say that?"

He said, "I was reading in Peter. It talks about the God of peace and that, after you have suffered awhile, He will perfect you and strengthen you and so on. You see, Mr. Mitchell, I'm only going to suffer for a while. There's an end to this thing, and God is going to work out something for my perfection and for His glory."

That's the way to look at it, isn't it? Persevering in tribulation.

And in the same verse, we are to be “devoted to prayer.” What do we mean by that? Being ready at any time to pray.

“Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Mitchell, that on the job, driving the car, at home, be always ready to pray?”

Well, why not? Our Lord said in Luke 18, the first verse, you remember, that men ought always to pray and not to lose heart. Now, that doesn't mean you have to be on your knees all the time or praying all the time in the sense of words. But your heart should be so in touch with the Lord that whatever comes into your life you can talk to Him about it.

If you meet some child of God going through some testing or having problems, you can pray with him. You can do that as you do your job. Or as 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray without ceasing (pray always—always).” That means to be always ready at any time to lift up your heart to the Lord in prayer for whatever may come. In other words, we are workers together with God. The least thing in your life is of great interest to Him, and it's wonderful to just sit down and talk to the Lord about it or to go on about your business and commune with Him about it.

13. Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

Certainly, if Christians can't meet other Christians in their need, who will? Both 1 John 3:16-18 and 2 Corinthians 9 take up this matter. Be generous. God will never let you down. You do it for His glory, for His name's sake to bring blessing, to ease someone else's burdens. Let's be generous.

And then, practice hospitality. I like what Hebrews 13:2 says about entertaining angels unawares. Do it without complaint as you have it in 1 Peter 4:9. Be given to hospitality, but don't do it with a grudging spirit.

Don't say, "Well, I wish they would go on home. I wish they would go some place else. Don't they know I'm busy?"

No, be given to hospitality. Oh, how often, how often, whether you know it or not, you will uplift someone by that little act of kindness of yours, that hospitable spirit of yours, that stopping the thing you are doing just to encourage some dear soul that has come to you or to your home in need.

And, my, the joy it gives you when you meet their need or at least you try to meet their need. Be given to hospitality.

And do invite the saints home. Often the only ones who get invited home are the pastor or the visitors. And, more often, even they are not invited home. Hospitality is a responsibility, not a gift. These are very, very practical things.

14. Bless those who persecute you: bless, and curse not.

Bless them. Follow the example of our Lord in 1 Peter 2:23, who "while being reviled, He did not revile in return . . . but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."

You know, it is a wonderful thing not to retaliate. Somebody—maybe a relative—calls you all kinds of names, and you know they are not very just in what they are doing. What they are saying is wrong. The great yearning and the most natural thing is to retaliate. Now instead of retaliating, just you bless them. Just take it quietly.

I know what the natural reaction is. You take a little boy. Let somebody touch him and, immediately, without any thought, he will turn on that

person and strike back. I know that. That's so natural.

But Christianity is the supernatural life. Anybody can retaliate. It takes a strong man not to retaliate. "Bless those who persecute you," and, of course, the rest of the verse, "Bless and curse not." You can disarm people by manifesting a sweet, sweet spirit.

And then verse 15 is a rather remarkable verse.

15. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

"Do you mean, Mr. Mitchell, I have to go around crying?"

Paul means this. You are to enter into the joys and the tests and sorrows of fellow Christians. If you are at a wedding, no matter how you feel, you rejoice with the bride and groom. May their joy be filled full because you are part of their celebration.

And if you are with those who are going through testing, sorrow and heartache, enter sympathetically with them. Manifest mercy and kindness and understanding and love. This is not being a hypocrite, my friend. This is thinking about the other fellow, rejoicing with him and not robbing him of his joy by being a pickle. No. Remember, we had this in verse 8: "He who shows mercy, (let him do it) with cheerfulness."

16. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

In other words, live in harmony with all men. I know it's very easy to want to be with somebody who is so-called great or who has a reputation. Forget about that. Seek out people who are lowly, humble in mind and who live a genuine life. That's

what he is after. You fellowship with lowly men and don't be conceited.

17. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

Don't return evil for evil. Rather, of course, return good. I would suggest 1 Peter 3:9, "Not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing."

Now the Apostle Peter has been writing about the relation of husbands and wives. Don't rail upon each other because that builds up a wall between you, he says. But if one starts to rail on the other, let the other just turn around and bless. Don't render evil for evil.

Don't render railing for railing but, instead, blessing.

Now I have preached on this subject several times—you'll forgive a wee little personal note, won't you—and I've always thought I was in control of these things. But the Lord brought this home to me one night when I'd come home storming about something or someone and I took it out on Mary Mitchell, the way men do sometimes. You know.

It's not that we don't love our wife, it's just—well, you know men.

I crabbed about something she'd spent a lot of time on—something new she'd made for dinner—and she just smiled and said, "The Lord bless you, honey."

Talk about putting a man in his place! We still laugh about it.

Then Paul says, "Respect what is right in the sight of all men." Be honest in all your dealings with the outside world and with Christians, too. Don't take advantage of another Christian. Don't force him to take a lower price for his goods or ser-

vices. Let us be honest in what we do, honest in what we say. Remember we are children of One who is God, and He wants us to be honest in the sight of all men. And don't you for one moment pay back evil for evil or demand a bargain.

18. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Be at peace with all men as far as it is possible. I suggest Hebrews 12:14, and our Lord Himself speaks of it in Mark 9:50.

I needn't go any further in this. These are very practical exhortations about our relationship, our responsibility, our service, our ministry the one to the other. Read them over and over again. Remember, it's as we walk in fellowship with God that our lives show forth His praise. May that be true today.

Now starting in at verse 19 and running through to the end of the chapter, Paul gives us our relationship, our responsibility toward those who don't love us or like us, who are opposed to the ministry which you and I may do and opposed to our Christian faith. This is very common.

They call us all kinds of names. If you try to live as a Christian and please God, you are bound to receive opposition of some kind. Now don't run away from it. That's the last thing you should do. Remember in Ephesians 6:10-18, there is no armor for the back.

Let's face up to it. The closer you walk to the Lord and the more you seek to please Him, the greater will be the opposition you can expect. We are living in a world that has no place for the Saviour. So what is my relationship to be?

Relationship to our enemies (12:19-21)

19. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room

for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY, SAYS THE LORD."

20. "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD."

21. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

You know, it is very, very hard not to seek revenge. It is very difficult to leave everything to the Lord. You feel like saying, "Lord, hurry up." No, again may I refer you to 1 Peter 2:21-23. Our Lord Jesus Christ left us an example, that we should follow in His steps, "who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."

You see, you and I cannot judge righteously. We do not know all the facts involved. We do not know all the circumstances. But you can leave everything to the Lord; for it says here in Romans 12:19, "It is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." And believe me, my friend, you can trust God to repay.

Somebody has said that God is the only one who can pay back personally and accurately. You and I can't. And if you have any enemies, you be kind to them. Your very kindness may open their eyes to their need of a Saviour.

Or, if I may add, it may increase their doom. I am reminded of 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 where Paul says, "We are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?"

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:18, "The word (the preaching) of the cross is . . . foolishness." To whom? To them that perish. And when you and I

give forth our testimony, oftentimes we are hindered; we are opposed and sometimes cursed.

So what!

So what?

Bless them. Be cheerful. In some way just manifest something of the grace and the mercy and patience of the Lord.

And I want to tell you, my friend, it really works. I have seen fellows be so ashamed of the things they've said. They wouldn't have been ashamed if one had cursed them back or reviled them back. That would have meant increasing the hate or the fight.

Just bless them. Overcome evil with good.

It really works.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Now we come to the fourth relationship in Romans.

Relationship to civil authorities (13:1-7)

1. Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

2. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

When Paul wrote this passage, Nero was on the throne of Rome as Caesar. He was a terrible man who became emperor only because his mother Agrippina got rid of every man who was in Nero's way. There was no question she was a really wicked woman.

But, you know, after he came to the throne, Nero turned around and condemned his mother to death.

When the executioners came to kill her, she said, "Strike. Level your raids against the womb which gave birth to such a monster."

Here you have extremely wicked, corrupt, vicious people in authority. And yet Paul writes to the Christians who were living under that authority to "be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God."

We are to be subject to civil authority. Why? Because rulers are ordained of God. They receive authority from Him. How they rule is not the question before us nor is their character. Paul doesn't

bring up the question of Nero with all his wickedness and his temper and his murder and his corruption. He brings up one fact—that the powers, the civil leaders, are ordained of God; and, therefore, they receive their authority from Him.

Allow me to give you an illustration. From Isaiah 44:28 to chapter 45:6, you have where God raised up a man by the name of Cyrus to be head of the Media-Persian empire. He calls him “My shepherd.”

Now Cyrus was an idolator. He was corrupt. Yet God called him His shepherd. Why? Because God gave him the authority so that the Jewish remnant could go back to Israel. You remember, Zerubbabel and Ezra went back and built the temple; and, afterward, Nehemiah came and built the walls of the city.

Now I'm not going to go into that except for one thing. It's not that Cyrus was a saved man, but he was a minister of God in the sense that he was given the authority to liberate the remnant of Israel from Babylon. In that sense he was a servant of God. His authority came from God. God established human government.

Go back to Genesis 9. After the flood, God gave man the authority, the power, to govern the world. I repeat it. How men govern is not in question.

When you and I have manifest contempt for the government, that's lawlessness. We are resisting the authority that was given to men.

We're living in a day when people thumb their noses at the government because they don't like what's going on. But I have to recognize my place is one of subjection to the government. The power, the authority, is ordained of God.

3. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same;

4. For it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.

It's a terrible thing today that we have public sympathy for criminals. In fact, we have more sympathy for the criminal awaiting judgment than we have for the ones he killed or injured. Men excuse the criminal "because he's got a disease." So sin is no longer sin. Corruption is no longer corruption. Murder is no longer murder. Stealing is no longer stealing. It's just a disease.

My friend, God has authorized government to keep down evildoers; and, when you sympathize with those who are guilty of crime, you rebel against God. This is a sad picture today when sin is no longer sin.

And if Satan can get us to minimize sin, then he can minimize the work of Christ on the cross. When sin is no longer sin, no longer lawlessness, when it's just a disease, I tell you we have come to the place where nothing short of the wrath of God is going to fall on our generation. Anything that is against the righteous character of God is sin and will come under the judgment of God.

5. Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

If I might change the wording, "You must be subject to the government not only because of what it can do to you when you break laws, but also for your own conscience's sake." We are to be subject to constituted authority. Whatever the law says, there is no question as to our duty.

"But, Mr. Mitchell, what about my conscience? What if the government demands something that is contrary to my conscience?"

Well, may I say this? Governments are for the

earth, for the keeping down of evildoers. Remember this. This is a basic thing. But governments don't control the realm of the spiritual.

For example, you take the Book of Daniel. Azariah, Mishael and Hananiah refused to bow the knee to Nebuchadnezzar's golden image. Theirs was a question of conscience before God. The issue here is not government. The issue is God. They refused to bow the knee to an image the king had made. He was trying to control and direct their worship. That's a different proposition.

So here, for example, if I am told I may no longer preach the gospel of Christ, if I am told I may no longer worship the Lord Jesus Christ or stand for the Word of God, I would rather go to jail. It is a question now not of government, but a question of relationship. And if it is contrary to my conscience before God and the issue is concerning my relationship to God, there is no question where I will stand. I will stand for God whatever the cost may be to me.

But I want to get to your heart that, as a Christian, I'm under the government. As long as the government doesn't interfere with my walk before God and my obedience to His Word, I will obey the government because it is ordained of God. I may not agree with some of the methods of government; but, as I said, I am not dealing with government alone. I am dealing with the authority the government has that comes from God. And, because it's from God, I must be in subjection to my government.

Now we get down to the pocketbook.

6. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.

7. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

In other words, pay your taxes.

“But, Mr. Mitchell, I don’t like my tax bill,” you say.

Brother, neither do I. But I pay my taxes. I’m a Christian. I’m subject to the authority that’s over me. I pay my taxes for conscience sake. I pay my taxes to support the government. The leaders are ministers of God to keep down evildoers, and they must be supported.

We have a responsibility here as Christians. In Matthew 17 in the matter of the tribute money, the Lord Jesus, the Creator of all things, the Lord from heaven, didn’t dodge His taxes.

Remember that. He recognized the Romans had their place of authority even though the Jews squirmed a great deal because of the way Rome treated them. Nevertheless the Son of God said to Peter, “You go and catch a fish. In its mouth you’ll find some money. Pay the taxes for me and pay your taxes, too, from that same money.” Why? “Lest we give them offense” (Matthew 17:27). Lest we should cause any trouble.

Again, I repeat it.

If the time ever comes in our country where we have to choose between our relationship to God and our relationship to our government, if the issue comes up that it is either Christ or Caesar, then only one decision can be made and that is for the Saviour.

Whatever it costs, whether it means a firing line or jail, we must stand by the Saviour.

Relationship to society (13:8-14)

8. Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

Now we are not talking about this word “love,” which is used so commonly today with no depth to it. In fact, what people sometimes call

love today is nothing but lust.

Paul writes this in view of the return of the Lord, who manifested His love for His Father by obedience. He manifested His love for you and me by sacrifice, by dying for us. Likewise, we also as Christians manifest our love for our Heavenly Father by obedience, by being obedient to His Word. We manifest our love for each other by sacrifice, by “dying,” as it were, for the saints and for our neighbors. Love is a perpetual debt, and we are to owe no man anything but love.

“But, Mr. Mitchell,” you ask, “why did Paul bring the law in here?”

He is dealing with our relationship to man. In our relationship with God, it is a question of faith, of putting our trust in Him. God sees our faith; man experiences our love—not our faith, but our love.

Paul uses the law to show us our relationship to each other in practical living.

9. For this, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

10. Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.

In the Ten Commandments, the first four laws govern our responsibility to God. Paul doesn't use them here. He is talking about our relationship to each other. The law is righteous, and the law demands righteousness. Now love alone can keep the law. Love is the active principle of Christianity. When we love God and man, we fulfill the purpose of the law. The one who loves has wrought righteousness.

You see, friend, if I'm going to use the law as a means of life, then I'll never have life. The law was

never given as a means of life to the unsaved, and the law was never given as a rule of life to the saved. The law has had nothing to say since the cross. But as Christians, indwelt by the Spirit of God, we will keep that part of the law that relates to society. That's why I say here, no man is ever saved by keeping the law. We are saved by grace through faith in the Saviour. The Saviour is the object of our faith as we had in the first eight chapters of Romans.

But concerning my relationship to society, my neighbors and other people on earth, I have a responsibility; and love is the only way I can express that. When you love people, my friend, you will do things you never dreamed of doing. Love alone can keep the law.

But I want to make this very, very clear—don't expect the government to manifest love. God doesn't expect the government to manifest love. God doesn't expect the government to rule by love.

The government is to rule by righteousness. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

Righteousness is the act-of-principle for reigning, but love is the act-of-principle for living with one another.

Why should I love my neighbor as myself?

11. And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

The incentive for us to love our neighbor is because each day brings our salvation nearer. And, if Paul could say that to the early Church, believe me, my friend, how much closer the coming of the Lord is to us now. This is the incentive—the Lord Jesus may come today.

Do you remember Philippians 4:5 where it speaks of the fact that the Lord is near? The mar-

ginal note reads that "the Lord is at hand." What manner of men are we to be? Oh, listen, I can't guarantee that the Lord will not come today.

Now you might say to me, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, the Church down through the centuries believed that and He hasn't come."

That's true. Why that's even the genius of it. He may come today. And I'm to live today just as Paul lived his day in expectation of seeing Him whom having not seen we love. And here he says, because our "salvation is nearer to us than when we believed," then we ought to love our neighbor as ourselves. We ought to manifest that love which would be for the benefit of our neighbor for the glorifying of God.

Oh, when I think about it, my generation and your generation are so full of indifference and coldness to this appeal of the Saviour that I wonder what will break them down. We are not fighting so much outbroken opposition to the gospel. We don't meet so much vileness against the gospel today. We just meet cold indifference. And it's not only bad to be indifferent, it's terrible to be satisfied with your indifference.

And, may I say very kindly, this is also true of many Christians. I'm not questioning their salvation, but one begins to wonder how much love they have for the Saviour.

Our nearly empty Sunday night and Wednesday night prayer meeting services give an indication of this. And now many churches have dropped these services entirely!

Oh, to be delivered from this cold, cold indifference to the warmth of the love of our Saviour. It is possible that you and I can be right in our doctrine and be cold in our heart and indifferent to the appeal of our Saviour that we should live before men as "the children of God . . . in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world" (Philippians

2:15). We ought to buy up every opportunity to love our neighbors and live a life that will glorify God in the world.

Oh, listen, my friend, why don't you read the times? It's high time to awake out of sleep. Am I talking to you? Are you a sleepy Christian? An indifferent Christian? A luke-warm Christian? Are you so satisfied with the things of this world that in some way, somehow, you have missed Christ's appeal that you manifest the character, the heart, the compassion and tenderness of the Saviour to men and women for whom He died?

How am I going to reach my generation? How are you going to reach your generation if we don't manifest that precious divine love of the Saviour?

And please don't tell me, "Mr. Mitchell, I just can't stand my neighbors."

Listen, the Lord loved you when you were His enemy.

And that same divine love that caused Him to leave the glory and die for you when you were His enemy is the same love that is indwelling your heart by the Spirit of God.

"The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us," Paul wrote in Romans 5:5.

As you and I walk before God in the light of His Word and in the Spirit of God, then we begin to manifest the character and the heart and the love and the compassion and the tenderness of our Saviour.

If you knew, my Christian friend, that the Lord Jesus was coming for you tonight, wouldn't you change your plans for today?

I remember someone once said to Mr. Wesley, "Sir, what would you do if you knew the Lord was coming today?"

He said, "I would be doing just what I am doing. I am living today, every day in the anticipation of the coming of our Saviour."

Or as G. Campbell Morgan used to say, "I am living and serving as if the Lord was coming today, and I am working my head off as if the Lord was going to tarry a hundred years."

12. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

13a. Let us behave properly as in the day. . . .

The hour for the coming of the Lord Jesus is at hand, that of which He spoke in John 14:3, "And if I go . . . I will come again, and receive you to Myself." Now, in view of this, my hope being stimulated, my watchfulness being aroused, what shall I do?

Notice, three times in verses 12-13, Paul says, "Let us"—"Let us cast off . . . Let us put on . . . Let us walk."

Now let me ask you. What are the works of darkness? The next verse tells us:

13b. Not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.

As someone has said, "Let's get rid of our night clothes, the clothes of darkness." Cast off the works of darkness. Throw off your night clothes, the deeds of the old man—rioting and drunkenness. That means intemperance. That means public passions.

Rioting and drunkenness are the outbroken sins of society. I needn't go into them. Rioting and drunkenness don't belong to the children of God. Rioting and drunkenness are the manifestation of the sins of the night. This is the world outside of Christ.

The second couple—chambering and wantonness, sexual promiscuity and sensuality—are the secret sins of society—impurity and corruption.

You and I are living in a day of situation ethics.

“If two people agree that they want to do certain things, what’s wrong with that? They both love each other. Let them do what they want to do,” the world says.

It’s moral corruption, and with that moral corruption comes the fruitage of that corruption—disease. I question even if medical science could give us an accurate account of how many people suffer from sexual diseases in our country. One reads that a tremendous percentage of young people are already diseased. This is chambering and wantonness. Let it not once be named among us as the children of God.

I know you may say, “Oh, Mr. Mitchell, you won’t find me drunk. No, sir!”

But what about those secret sins, the sins that brought God’s wrath on the world at the flood, the sins that brought down the wrath of God on Babylon, Sodom, Gomorrah and Greece. I am sorry to say the cup of iniquity is filling full in our country and throughout the world.

Oh, listen, Christian friend. I am appealing to you today. You and I haven’t very much more time left on earth to magnify the Saviour.

Please listen to me. We can’t afford to live one day out of fellowship with God.

I tell you that we are surrounded with this wave of situation ethics, of moral corruption, this freedom of expression that is lapping over, not only in our schools but into our churches and into our society.

As Christians, as children of God, let us walk honestly before God, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness.

You say, “Why, Mr. Mitchell, I am not guilty of rioting. I am not guilty of drunkenness. I am not guilty of immorality.”

All right, but look at the next two. What about the last couple? These are sins of our heart, sins of

our emotions. Notice the company that “strife and jealousy—envy” keep.

I want to tell you how sad my heart was the day I heard of a split in a church in a certain city, a church with a wonderful testimony for God out of which there sprang three or four new congregations. The breakup had arisen out of fighting and strife among the members. It was a case of envy, of jealousy.

Oh, listen. Someone has said that envy and jealousy are the sins of Christian workers. God forbid!

How easy it is to become jealous and envious of someone, even of some other Christian, some other Christian whom God is using. And because your own heart is out of fellowship with God, you say things you shouldn't say about him or her. There is envy and jealousy; and the first thing you know, you divide God's people. Shame on us Christians!

No, sir, we wouldn't be found guilty of rioting and drunkenness, nor would we be guilty of chambering and wantonness, impurities and moral corruption. But what about these inner things, these passions—strife and envying and jealousy? Song of Songs 8:6 says, “Jealousy is as severe as Sheol; its flashes are flashes of fire.”

O, God, deliver us from such a thing.

And one finds it in the most unexpected quarters.

May I say to you who are preachers, Christian workers, Sunday School teachers, officers in the church, whoever you may be, God deliver you and me from envy and jealousy of some other Christian whom God is using. I may not agree with all he does, but God is using him. To his own Master he stands or falls. May we keep our hands off and glorify what God is doing.

Did you ever notice in your Bible, that often, when the Spirit of God through His servants gives us a list of the sins of society, He will bring in envy

and strife and jealousy? These sins are common among God's people, and they do nothing but separate the saints.

Rather wouldn't it be a wonderful thing for God's people to be knitted together around the Person of Christ so we would see each other in Christ Jesus, not in our weakness, in our frailty or even in our failures?

The time is at hand. The day is far spent. The Lord is even at the door. He may come today. What an incentive to live for God. What an incentive to throw off rioting and drunkenness. What an incentive to throw off the sins of the flesh, immorality and uncleanness. What an incentive to throw off all strife and bickering and fighting and jealousy.

And then what are we to do? Let us turn to 1 Thessalonians 5:8 for an answer: "But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation." In Romans, Paul says:

14. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

This is the place of victory. This is the place of deliverance.

"Put on."

In other words, recognize your identification with the Risen Lord and appropriate Him for your daily needs. We look forward to His return, but now we experience Him in a delivered life. It means to live Christ.

For example, you take Philippians 1:20-21, that "Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ."

We are to live like citizens of another world. Paul's determination was (Philippians 3:10, 8) "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. . . . I

count all things but loss . . . that I may gain Christ”—that I might know Christ.

Make no provision for the flesh, for its desires and for its lusts. All you need is found in Christ.

Take everything. Take your weaknesses, take your circumstances, take your frailties, take the whole business to Him. He is all you need.

And what are His terms?

“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

That means to be in Him. That means to put Him on like a garment, to arm ourselves with His power for our lives day by day.

That's for you.

That's for me.

Oh, listen, my Christian friend, why don't you appropriate Christ today?

You say, “I want to live a victorious life, Mr. Mitchell.”

Well, listen. You let Him live His life out through you, and then you enjoy the deliverance. This will manifest love toward society. Oh, how we need this. I need this just as much as you need it. And God grant today that you and I may walk before Him and live in the light of His presence, radiating something of the sweetness and the aroma of Christ. Oh, that people may see Christ living in you and me. Let us manifest a loving spirit toward others by our speech, what we do, where we go—so Christ shall be glorified.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Chapters 14 and 15 ought to be in big letters on every church bulletin board. Oh, the confusion among Christians, the lack of love and compassion and understanding we show. How we need this passage!

Few of us know how to deal with Christians who may not be doing the things they ought to do or who are doing the things they shouldn't do or going to places they shouldn't go. What is our attitude to be toward them? Likewise, how should we act toward weak brethren, to those who are babes in Christ?

Some of us have been saved for 20, 30, 40 years. We are well taught in the Word of God, and we know our doctrine. But there are others who have been Christians for 10, 20, 30 years; and they haven't grown at all in the knowledge of God. Are we to judge these people in the light of our own conscience and by how much more we know than they do? Or is there another way?

In chapter 12, we examined our relationship and responsibility to God, to the body of Christ and to our enemies.

In chapter 13, we dealt with our responsibility to the state, to our neighbors and to society.

In chapter 14, we're dealing with our responsibility to other Christians. Paul deals with the matter of receiving weak believers, some of whom have certain scruples.

In chapter 15, the first few verses, Paul will talk about those who claim to be strong and who ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. If I'm a child of God, then I ought to walk as a child of God, not only in my love for the Saviour and my obedience

to His Word but also in my relationship to my friends whether they are strong or weak.

RELATIONSHIP TO WEAKER BRETHREN (14:1-15:7)

Receiving weaker brethren (14:1-4)

1. Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.
2. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.
3. Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.

I am sorry to say there are certain groups who will not accept anyone into their fellowship unless he believes just a certain way.

Now I recognize the possibility of heresy and the need to guard believers against it. But if someone really stands for the person and work of Christ and loves the Saviour, there is no reason why we cannot have fellowship with him.

I know that sometimes it is hard for us not to judge, not to criticize, when we see things we believe are dishonoring to the Lord, especially when the person we're judging and criticizing doesn't see why he should do this or shouldn't do that.

We're to walk in love the one toward the other, and it's going to cost us something to do so. Now let's be very realistic about this. It's not an easy thing to stop doing something you like to do and you feel free to do. You stop it, not because it's bad but because it's a stumbling block or it hinders another Christian who believes he can't do that sort of thing.

“Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.”

What in the world does Paul mean by that? Don't dispute with your weaker brother over things that are only doubtful. How often we've heard, “If that fellow was a real Christian, he wouldn't do that.”

Well, how do you know he is not a Christian? He may be thinking the same thing about you.

You see him not doing certain things, so you say, “Oh, he is a legalist. That fellow never was saved. He is just bound up in religion.”

And he looks at you and you have some freedom and he says, “I don't believe that fellow is a Christian. If he were a Christian, he wouldn't do that sort of thing.”

So you see, we begin to judge each other in the light of our own knowledge, conscience and experience. The result is we don't manifest patience toward one another. We try to decide the other man's doubts for him and so require him to walk in the light of our conscience.

And, my friend, he must not be forced to do so. Why don't you let him grow normally by the Word of God? He has faith. I know he's weak, but you should receive him into your fellowship. See, the trouble is that we cross our t's and dot our i's and we split hairs; and, if a person doesn't believe exactly word for word what we believe, we won't have fellowship with him. And this causes pride and division among God's people.

I remember one time when I had a men's Bible class here in my city. We would have from 70 to 80 men week by week.

One day, a dear man and his wife and family came to our Sunday School for the first time and he came to the men's class. During the course of the teaching hour, he asked some questions; and it was very obvious from the questions he asked one after the other that he disagreed with what had been said.

And, when I tried to lead the man along to see the truth as it is in Christ, I didn't get a chance to do so. Two or three of the men in the class spoke out and jumped on this fellow like a ton of bricks. You know, he just shut up and he never came back. I don't blame him. I just don't blame him.

So I told those men the next Lord's Day, "Why, listen, it has taken the Lord 10, 20 years to get you fellows where you are today. All you know now about the Saviour and about your position in Christ was not learned in 24 hours. Some of you folk, when you first came to our Sunday School, believed just like this fellow did. And just quietly the Word of God had its affect on your heart and your life, and you have grown in the grace and knowledge of God. And now you want this fellow to get there in 10 minutes? It doesn't work out that way."

With these weak believers, we either edify them and build them up in Christ or we judge them and destroy them in their fellowship with the Saviour. If you discourage them, if you send them out of your fellowship, where do they go? Sometimes they don't know where to go, so you drive them out to some other place where they shouldn't go. Or maybe they get discouraged and go back into the world. We are to blame because we didn't manifest that love, that understanding, that compassion, that desire to build them up in the truth of God.

I know what you might say, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, we tried that but they were obstinate. They were stiff-necked. They were stubborn."

Now, I know there are troublemakers. There is plenty of Scripture for that. If anyone comes along and makes division and troubles God's people, have nothing to do with him. That's what the Book says. But I'm not talking about those people.

I'm talking about a great many people who are just babes in Christ and have never been fed, have never been instructed. They may get into your hair, and they may say things and do things which you can't stand. The danger is to criticize them and judge them and remove them out of your fellowship when the very thing they need is your fellowship. And, when you keep them in your fellowship, you have an opportunity to bring them into the unity of faith.

Remember in Ephesians 4, Paul did not say first of all "be diligent to preserve the unity of the faith." He said, first of all, "be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit" because there is one Lord and one faith. Afterward, God gave to the Church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. What for? For the perfecting of God's people till we all come to the unity of the faith. There must be growth, there must be understanding, there must be patience; but there must be love the one for the other in the unity of the Spirit. I am so desirous that God's people enjoy each other in Christ.

Let me give a personal testimony.

When I became a Christian, I had no doctrine to undo. The Lord just saved me and dropped me right into the grace of God—into the wonderful position that I have in Christ as given to us in the Book of Romans. In fact, somebody asked me one time if that was the only Book I had in my Bible because I reveled so much in the marvelous truth of it. But I had nothing to undo. I had no doctrines to get rid of.

But there are other people who have been raised from the time they were children in certain doc-

trines. And, my friend, you can't expect them to get rid of that in 10 minutes.

So, if you meet a man who loves the Saviour, who claims to believe in the Lord and he is weak in the faith or he doesn't agree with you (and that's to be expected), then what shall you do? Bring him into your fellowship to encourage and edify and build him up.

4. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

I am appealing to you Christians who have been taught all your life.

I am appealing to you preachers and Sunday School teachers to manifest grace, tenderness and compassion for God's people. Remember that a great many of them have never been instructed in the precious Word of God. They have longed and longed for scriptural food from the Word of God. They have gone from church to church and haven't gotten it.

Friend, if you are in a church where they preach the Word of God, you thank the Lord for it; but do not sit in judgment upon those who have never had the opportunity.

You see, I'm pleading here for young believers and weak believers, possibly for fallen believers. What they need is not a club. What they need is some encouragement in the Lord, some edification.

What they need is someone who can pray with them and weep with them, if necessary.

The ground for receiving weaker brethren (14:5-12)

5. One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.

6. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

The first ground for receiving the weaker brethren is that we have the same Lord, the same standing. We are going to glory together. We'll spend eternity together. This puts our receiving others on the unchanging absolute of our relationship to the Saviour. Apart from the Word, we have no grounds really for judging other Christians. Why? Because it says here that one man regards the day as unto the Lord. Another man doesn't. Here is one man who eats certain things and gives thanks. The other one doesn't.

Now, remember, we are speaking of practice—of eating and observing days and external things like that. We are not speaking of false doctrine. We do need to guard our assembly from those who would bring in false doctrine.

7. For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself;

8. For if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

9. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

There is no other law to be considered. Jesus Christ is the Lord for all believers, whether strong or weak, whether mature or babes.

You know, when we begin to judge another Christian, it's not as a rule an act of love as much as an act of pride. Is that not true? And, especially, if we know quite a bit of truth, the danger is to criticize and to judge the weaker brethren or those who don't agree with us.

But Paul here says in verse 5, "Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind." Why? Because we walk before God and in the Word of God as we see it, and others walk in the Word of God as they see it. We all want to please God, and we want to live for the Lord even though our practice may be different from that of others. Right down in our very heart, we all have the same yearning. There is no room for judgment because we have the same Lord and we each can't live unto ourself.

And then the second ground of receiving the weaker brother is because the Lord is the Judge. He is not only the Lord over all believers, but He is the Judge of all believers. And, remember, He is going to judge righteously.

10. But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.

11. For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD."

12. So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

In the final analysis, friend, we have to stand before God. And it might be well for me, right here, to say one or two things about Christ's being the Judge. You see, our sins as Christians have already been judged at the cross. We are being judged today on the character of our daily walk, and the result is chastisement or blessing. When we have been received up into Glory, we are going to be judged with respect to rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The unsaved are going to be judged at the Great White Throne judgment. These are the unsaved that you have in Revelation 20. Fallen angels and the nations will face judgment at the coming of the Saviour to reign on the earth. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a guarantee of salvation to everyone who will put his trust in Him. Yet the resurrection of Christ from the dead is a guarantee of judgment to everyone who rejects Him. "Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men," Paul urges in 2 Corinthians 5:11.

He discusses rewards in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. The wood, hay and stubble shall be burned up, and the believer shall suffer loss; yet "he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire." The things we think are so wonderful may be nothing but wood, hay and stubble.

Do you minister, do you work, do you sacrifice because of your love for the Saviour, your love for God's people? Or do you do it for a reputation or to keep a reputation or to earn the money? May the Lord deliver us from that.

What stands the test of the fire—the gold, the silver, the precious stones—brings glory to God.

Now it may be you are having some trouble with another Christian. Examine your own heart in the light of God's Word. If your heart is clear before God and the other man accuses you of certain things, don't retaliate. You and I can well afford to wait until the Judgment Seat of Christ. He will be the Judge, and He will judge righteously.

Do you know of anybody else who can judge righteously? No. He is the only One. We do not know all the circumstances. We do not know all that is involved in the other person's life. So let's be very slow to judge, to criticize, to damn another Christian. "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God" (verse 10). Then everything will

be out in the open—not only our works and our actions, but our very attitudes.

So wouldn't it be a good thing for you and me just to walk with God and let Him judge the brother instead of you and me?

Let's not judge other Christians. Let's encourage them, edify them and build them up in the Lord Jesus.

The edification of all believers (14:13-23)

The Apostle now begins to talk about the fact that we are to seek the edification of all Christians, and here he takes up the use of liberty. He takes up our walk before God and our love for each other.

In verses 13 to 16, we are to avoid being stumbling blocks to other Christians.

13. Therefore let us not judge one another any more, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

14. I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

15. For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

16. Therefore, do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil.

Now notice, we either nurture young Christians in their growth or we judge them and cause them to stumble. You can do something and say, "I'm free to do it. I'm not bound. I can do it. I have a free conscience in it." Yes, but your brother may have a conscience in that matter, too.

There are certain things that I gave up after I became a Christian. I gave some of these habits up, not because I felt they were wrong nor because

someone told me they were wrong. I gave them up because I found they were hindering young Christians from going on with the Lord. And they were hindering sinners from coming to the Saviour.

We must each ask ourselves, “Am I willing to give up things for the glory of Christ and for the edification of His people?” The Lord Jesus loved these weak Christians, these failing brothers, these legalistic friends if you want to call them that. The Lord loved them enough to die for them. Can’t you and I give up some things that we like to do that are a stumbling block to our brothers? Can’t we love them enough to give that up for their sake? Again I say, friend, you can have love for God; but I can’t see that except as it is displayed in your love for your brother.

Now notice this, if the Lord has received the brother and if He is able to make him to stand, what are you going to do? To his own master he stands or falls. How would you like to have someone judge a servant of yours? You wouldn’t like it. God never put you on the jury. He never made you a judge. Don’t forget Romans 14:1, “Accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.”

Receive him as a member of the body of Christ. Please don’t judge anyone in the light of your conscience. The more light you have, the greater is your responsibility before God. And the greater is your responsibility before believers, weak believers.

And shall I say, when one has a critical, censorious spirit, it certainly does not attract the unsaved to Christ. There is a tragedy just right here. Oftentimes, Christians will run down another Christian in the presence of unbelievers, failing to realize that, by so doing, they are putting a stumbling block, a barrier, between the unbelievers and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please, please do not criticize another Christian,

whatever he has done, in the presence of the unsaved. This is a family matter. Don't give him ammunition to reject the Lord Jesus Christ because you told him about the failures and weaknesses and frailties of other Christians. I'm dealing with a very, very serious thing here.

It also breaks my heart to see the coldness and the critical attitude of some Christians toward some of God's servants. Now it may be that we do not agree with these men in their ministry of the Word of God, but they love the Saviour and are seeking to win men to Christ. We should still love them, not condemn them. And, if we believe they are not going according to the Word of God, then we should get on our knees and pray for them.

If you claim to be strong in the faith, then, my friend, be charitable, compassionate, tender, and understanding toward weak believers. And encourage them to get into the Word of God.

When people come to argue with me about Mr. So-and-so and Mrs. So-and-so, I say, "Well, pardon me, but I am not talking about them. I am talking about the Saviour. Do you find any flaw in the Saviour? Do you have any fault to find with Christ?"

If there is no Christian walking in an orderly manner or if there are hypocrites in the church, that doesn't excuse any unsaved person from accepting the Saviour. It is with Christ that we have to do. But we must manifest love one toward the other, especially to weak believers. And there are a great many weak believers.

Paul has been talking about our reaction one to the other. Now he goes on to make known the fact that the kingdom of God is not made up of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

17. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19. So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Notice where it is. It's in the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is dealing with our walk. When a person enjoys peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, there comes that holy joy.

That's why I love to see new-born Christians in their fervency of love for the Saviour. They are full of joy. It just runs out all over them. And, even though they may say things that you don't agree with, you can't get away from their exuberance of joy. The Lord has brought them peace. They are enjoying forgiveness, deliverance, life in Christ—and they are reveling in it. They know nothing about doctrine. They don't even know how to walk. But, brother, they've got life in Christ.

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. It is not these things materialistic. But it is righteousness and peace and joy. Where? In the Holy Spirit.

You know? This is wonderful when you think of it!

Then he goes on to say in verse 18, "For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God, and approved by men." When we are living in the Spirit of God so that righteousness and peace and joy are evident, this life is pleasing to God and free from the judgment of men.

Does your walk, does my walk please God? Does the way we live really please God? It's not a question of what men think or what men do. Do MY actions, do MY words, do MY attitudes, do MY motives glorify God?

Paul said, "I am very ambitious of one thing."

What is that?

"To be pleasing to Him."

When your life pleases God, then you also have the approval of men. Even the world respects the reality of life in Christians. People may not agree with your doctrine. They may not agree with your being in Christ. They may be indifferent in their relationship to the Saviour. But when they see the reality of life in a believer, my friend, they cannot deny it.

You know, this is an amazing thing. You can talk to people about the Saviour. You can talk doctrine to them. You can even give them the gospel. And they may rise up in opposition or they may be coldly indifferent to it. But the moment they see something of reality of life in Christ, they take notice of it.

How often people say to me, "My people were not Christians. I wish I had what Christians have. In all of the problems of life through which they go, their sorrows, their afflictions, their disappointments, they have a spirit. They have a peace. We don't understand it. I wish we had it."

Well, there is only one place to find it and that's in Christ. So that when you and I walk in fellowship with God to please Him, then our life is acceptable to God and we are approved of men.

Now I am very well aware of the fact that there will be division among God's people when it comes to the question of the Person and Work of Christ. I'll go with you on that. I'm a stickler for doctrine. But at the same time I must demonstrate my love for Christ and my appreciation and my attitudes and understanding and compassion for God's people even though they may not agree with me.

I get letters every once in a while from people who don't agree with what I've been saying on the radio. Well, I can understand that. No man knows all the truth. We have all the truth in the Word of God. And, after studying it for 65 years, I have barely scratched the surface of what's in the Holy Book.

You don't know all the truth either, my friend. So, this being the case, would it not be well for us to see each other in Christ and, because of our love for the Saviour, to not destroy the work of God? Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and things whereby we may edify and build one another up.

20. Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.

21. It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.

22. The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

23. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

We have in this grand passage the walk of faith. Liberty misused is a sin against Christ. Christ must be the center of your walk.

"All things indeed are clean." Now I'm not going to take up such questions as "Is it good to eat meat?" or "Is it good to drink wine?" Paul is still dealing with the issue he mentioned at the beginning of the chapter—don't let eating and drinking cause your brother to stumble.

Paul said in Corinthians, "If I eat meat, and by eating meat I offend my weaker brother, I shall not eat meat while the world stands." In other words, let us not do anything that will cause our brother to stumble. So live, so act, so move that your life

will be for the glory of God and for the blessing and edification and building up of your brother in Christ, especially these who are weak brothers.

Now he goes on to the end of the chapter and says, "The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God." What does he mean by this?

Don't air your freedom before others. Don't go ahead and say, "Well, I'm free. I can eat. I can drink. I have perfect liberty to do that. And if the other fellow is afraid to do it, then he is a legalist. He's got no sense. He's a babe."

That's not the attitude of one who loves the Saviour. I'm not going to eat or drink anything that will cause my brother to stumble. That's what Paul says. And if you've got faith to eat or to drink, keep it to yourself.

If you've got faith to do certain things, don't make a show of your faith. Don't glory in front of weaker Christians about what you can do or what you can't do. You are sinning against Christ when you do it, brother.

"Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves."

But on the other hand, if a fellow believes that to do certain things is sin, to him it is sin. That's what he is saying in verse 23: "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith." So you have one who can eat and drink in faith, and it's not sin. The other man eats and drinks in doubt, and then he sins. Whatever is not of faith is sin.

May I close this passage, chapter 14, with this statement? The one thing that God delights in is faith. He just loves to have men and women trust Him, not only for their eternal salvation, but trust Him every day, every 24 hours.

It's an amazing thing about us Christians. We trust God with our eternal souls and rejoice in a salvation that is eternal and perfect and complete.

But for the next 24 hours, we become full of doubts and worry. We can't trust God for the next 24 hours. But each hour is to be received with thanksgiving. "And whatever is not from faith is sin."

Christian friend, do not use your liberty to cause a brother to stumble. In so doing, you sin against Christ. And if you have faith to do certain things, have it to yourself. Don't make a show of your faith—what you can do and what you can't do—before others. On the other hand, brother, sister, remember that that which is of faith pleases God.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Liberty and license are two different things. **L**With license, you do what you want to do without regard for what happens to anybody else. Liberty is the freedom not to do something that will be a stumbling block to others.

Real liberty has tremendous respect for the rights of others. No man lives to himself. No man dies to himself. As long as you are on this earth, my friend, you must live with other people and, especially, with other Christians. If you claim to be strong, you have a tremendous responsibility to those who are weak.

THE PRINCIPLE OF LIBERTY (15:1-7)

1. Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.
2. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.

I am reminded of that passage in Galatians 6:1 where Paul writes, “Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual (you that are strong), restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted.” This can also be translated, “If a man is out of joint.”

If we are strong, we are to put the brother back into joint again. We're to receive him. As we had it in Romans 14:1, we should bear the infirmities of the weak, not judge him, not criticize him. We should sacrifice for his sake that he might be built

up in the faith, that he may be strong, that he may be able to walk on his own two feet.

A great many Christians need a lot of help. So many are on spiritual crutches. So many are in spiritual hospitals. Some churches are nothing but convalescent wards.

Oh, what an atmosphere of fellowship and joy and blessing there would be among God's people if we were all trying to please the other fellow. I don't mean to dance up to the other fellow and pat him on the back with an enthusiasm that's not real. But let's edify him, attract him to Christ, especially if he has failed God. Let's encourage him in the Lord.

3. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED THEE FELL UPON ME."

This hits us pretty hard, doesn't it? What is the example? "Christ did not please himself."

Do you know of any place in our Lord's life among men when He pleased Himself? There is only one verse where He said, "Father, I want something for myself." And that's John 17:24, where He said, "Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with Me where I am; in order that they may behold My glory."

Oh, friend, Christ pleased not Himself and the reproaches that should have fallen on other people fell on Him; and the reproaches that men had against God fell upon Him. He is the example of one who pleased not Himself.

May I give you a few Scriptures just to kind of make it very precious to you? Psalm 40:7-8 says, "In the scroll of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy Law is within my heart." In John 4:34, He could say to His disciples, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me." That was His desire.

In John 5:30, John 8:29, Matthew 26:42 and Hebrews 10:5-10 He said again and again that he came not to do His own will, but His Father's will.

His whole life was one of ministering. He "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). He took upon Himself "the form of a bond-servant" (Philippians 2:7). In John 13, He took a towel and girded Himself. What a sight for angels who had worshiped Him. What a sight for them to see the Son of God on His knees, girded with a towel, washing the dirty feet of His disciples.

Oh, friend, the Lord Jesus left us an example that we should follow in His steps. To think that He should leave the glory just because He loved you. And where were you? Active in your sins.

Where were you?

Dead in trespasses and sins.

Where was the other brother?

In the same position.

And if God the Son loved him and loved you and died for both of you, don't you think that you ought to love each other? Sacrifice for each other? There is only one answer to that, isn't there?

Now for the encouragement.

4. For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

He is inferring here that the whole Old Testament gives to us a revelation and an example. Of what? Of patience and comfort.

"But, Mr. Mitchell," you say, "I can't stand that other brother. I can't stand the things he does. I can't stand him. He is weak. He is stumbling. He's a disgrace to the Lord."

Yes, that's because you need patience. That's because you need the love of Christ to be welling up in your heart for him.

And, remember, Christ pleased not Himself. The whole Old Testament is a revelation of the fact, written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope—not only personal hope but hope for the other believer that he might become strong in Christ.

5. Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement . . .

Why didn't Paul say, "The God of glory?"

Why didn't he say, "The God of all grace?"

Why didn't he say, "The God of peace?"

No, what strong believers need is patience with the weak believer.

5. Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus;

6. That with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7. Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

Tell me, how did Christ receive you?

In grace, in tenderness, in compassion, in love. Isn't that right?

Then how should I receive my brother who doesn't agree with me? Or my brother who is weak, possibly a little worldly, frail, who doesn't know very much of the truth of God?

How shall I receive him?

In Christ.

Have fellowship with him so that together with one mouth you may glorify God and accept one another as Christ accepted you.

Remember, he is the object of the grace of God just as much as you are. He is the object of the affection of Christ just as much as you are. Then,

my friend, fellowship with him and together glorify God.

Now, having dealt with the need for unity and fellowship between strong and weak, between mature and immature Christians, Paul begins to plead for more unity between converted Jews and Gentiles. For, as Christ has accepted both Jew and Gentile, so we should accept each other—not on sectarian grounds or the grounds of culture or background—but because we are in Christ.

You remember in his epistle, John speaks of fathers, young men and babies; but they are all in the same family.

Paul is thinking of the family as he writes to the Christian church of his day.

EXHORTATIONS (15:8-33)

Now, starting in at verse 8, he gives exhortations to the people of God. The first one occurs in verses 8 to 13 where he says that the Gentiles are to be blessed through Christ and that His ministry is to bring everybody, Jews and Gentiles, into one body called the Church.

The Gentiles are blessed through Christ (15:8-12)

8. For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers,

9. And for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO THEE AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO THY NAME."

One purpose of Christ's coming was so that He could be the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God. Now, it's very obvious, when our Lord came and walked among men, that He came to "confirm the promises given to the fathers."

Why? “That the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”

One is reminded of Matthew 15:22-28 where the Syro-Phoenician woman said to the Lord Jesus, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.”

A Gentile, she came on the wrong ground. She came to Him as if she were a Jew, claiming the mercies of David. But Gentiles have nothing in the mercies of David. He rightly said, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs.” In other words, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

It was only when she began to plead, “Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their master’s table” that she got on the right ground and her daughter was healed.

You see, the Lord came to confirm the promises made to Israel. In Matthew 10:5-6, when He sent out His disciples two by two, He said to them, “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” This was their limited ministry.

In Acts 3:26, in the second message of Peter, he said to Jerusalem, “For you first, God raised up His servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.” To whom? To the Jew first. Christ “came to confirm the promises given to the Fathers” (verse 8).

You take John 12 when certain Gentiles came and said, “We wish to see Jesus.” Do you know what He said?

“The hour has come.”

What hour?

The hour for crucifixion.

Unless a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it can’t bring forth fruit.

You see, there was no place for the Gentile until Christ died on the cross. He came “to confirm the

promises given to the Fathers.” He came to confirm the truth of God who had made certain promises to Israel about the coming of the Messiah and what they could expect.

And if I were teaching the Book of Matthew, which is the “Book of the Messiah,” I would point out how the Lord proved His legal right to the throne and His moral right to the throne and His prophetic right to the throne in chapters 8, 9 and 10.

That’s why, when He sent out the disciples two by two, He said, “Don’t go to the Gentiles or to the Samaritans. Go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” These were His prophetic acts. He completed His prophetic right to the throne. They should have known what He would do. Isaiah spoke of it.

But why this verse 9, “For the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy”?

Both Jew and Gentile are included in the purpose of God.

Now mark why Paul is writing this. He’s urging the fellowship of Jew and Gentile in the Saviour. This is what God expects.

10. And again he says, “REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE” (that is, with the Jews).

11. And again, “PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES, AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM.”

12. And again Isaiah says, “THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE.”

In other words, Paul is urging these Jewish Christians to accept the Gentile Christians as being one with themselves.

Now it is very hard for us today to realize the tremendous difference between the Jew and the Gentile, especially in the first century. In Galatians

2, Paul rebuked Peter because Peter left the Gentiles and moved over to the Jewish side.

Paul withstood Peter on this because there was a possibility that two kinds of churches, a Jewish church and a Gentile church, would result.

And here in Romans 15, he is informing us that our Lord came to confirm the promises given to the Fathers, not only for the Jew to be saved, but that the Gentiles also would come to know God. Then both Jews and Gentiles together could be joined in their praises and in their worship of God. This is what you have in verses 8 through 12.

Paul's great desire for them (15:13)

13. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is an amazing verse. Our hope is based, first on all, on the resurrection of the Son of God; and then it is based on the faithfulness of God. The resurrection of Christ and the faithfulness of God guarantee our hope.

If our Saviour is not raised from the dead, then we have no hope. This is what 1 Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Our Saviour is a risen, glorified, exalted Saviour, exalted to the right hand of authority. That, my friend, gives me hope.

Furthermore, the faithfulness of God guarantees that hope. What God has said, He will surely perform.

For example, God has declared that every Christian is going to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said also in John 14:3, "Where I am, there you may be also." So wherever Jesus Christ is, the faithfulness of God guarantees that we will be there. God will surely keep His Word to every one of His people. So I like this 13th verse, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

You see, friend, He is the God of hope, not only for the Jew but for the Gentile. And having the same Saviour, having the same salvation, having the same destination, having the same hope in Christ Jesus, then every believer ought to rejoice in having fellowship together in Christ Jesus that we might glorify God for His mercy. And this certainly cancels all credibility for separate churches for saved Jews and saved Gentiles.

When a person really loves and trusts the Saviour, my friend, there is a bond there that is eternal and complete. We ought to rejoice whether Jew or Gentile, whoever we are, in the God of our salvation. Why? He is the God of hope, and He is the God of patience for all of us together.

Now let's have one more look at verse 13. "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

My, what a verse! That He might "fill you with all joy." Hope brings joy. A hopeless person has no joy, no joy, nothing to look forward to, living exactly in the present.

Do you remember our Lord once told us to be full of joy? In John 15:11, He said to His disciples in the upper room, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full"—full, full, full. Is your joy full? When a Christian's joy is not full, you can count on one thing. His fellowship with the Lord Jesus is broken. He has lost that deep joy that is not affected by circumstances.

“My joy I give unto you.” The Lord said that in light of the cross. In a few hours He was going to be scourged, and then He was going to be crucified. He was going through those two terrible things just because He loved you and me.

And yet He, for the joy, if I may quote Hebrews 12:2, “set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” You see, this is the joy that you have in the midst of affliction or in the midst of sorrow or disappointment or pain. You can have a real and a settled joy. And the hope of the believer—even in the midst of all circumstances—that Christ may come today, fills us with joy.

What is the purpose of it all? “That you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Friend, I do not need to know your circumstances. I know One who is with you in your circumstances, One who knows all about your circumstances, One who never leaves you in your circumstances. And He is the God of hope who can fill you with all joy, with all peace in believing. He is the One who has caused you to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, I’d like to take a little side trip and notice the titles we have here.

For example, in Romans 15:5, He is called “the God who gives perseverance.” Why? Because of our need for endurance. He is patient with each one of us. Hence in a practical way, we ought to be patient with one another.

Now the second thing in verse 5, He is also “the God of encouragement.” You see, again we need encouragement so we can comfort others. Paul suffered a great deal so that he might be able to comfort all of us down through the centuries who have gone through certain afflictions and sorrows.

It may be that you are going through a great deal of sorrow now.

It may be that the Lord is permitting this so that at some future time, if He tarries, He may make you a channel of comfort and blessing to some dear heart that nobody can touch but you.

You see, the Lord never leaves us. He knows exactly how much we can stand. And, I tell you, it's a great thing, when you've gone through the same experience someone is going through, to sit down and understand and comfort and encourage him and strengthen him and lead him to a place where the Lord will be glorified. Now come down to verse 13.

He is also “the God of hope.” In the God of hope, we have abounding joy, abounding peace and abounding hope because Christ Jesus is our hope. And our hope is guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ and by the faithfulness of God.

In verse 33, He is “the God of peace.” It's rather remarkable that our Saviour is called “the God of peace” more than anything else in the New Testament. In Romans 15:33, He is the God of peace who will “be with you all.” In Romans 16:20, He is the God of peace who “will soon crush Satan under your feet.” In Hebrews 13:20-21, He is the God of peace, “who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep,” who will equip His people in every good work. He is again the God of peace who “shall be with you” in Philippians 4:9. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, the God of peace will “sanctify you entirely.” In 1 Corinthians 14:33, the God of peace is opposed to all confusion, anything that will split up and confuse the people of God.

What I'm after, my friends, is one thing—the foundation of the fellowship of God's people is anchored in the person of God Himself.

This is what we have here in chapter 15. He is the God of patience because we need endurance. He is the God of all comfort because we need encouragement. He is the God of hope when all around seems to be failing because He fills me

with joy and peace and because He will perfect that which He has started.

He's the God of peace, guaranteeing the perfecting of God's purpose in His people, guaranteeing the completion of our salvation and guaranteeing that He will defeat Satan under our feet shortly.

He is called "the God of all grace" in 1 Peter 5:10: "And after you have suffered for a little, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To him be dominion forever and ever."

And finally, He is the everlasting God, the eternal God in Romans 16:26.

You see, what I'm talking about here is the fact that the person of God must be the center of our fellowship. If anything else is the center of fellowship, then we are going to have confusion, not fellowship. Period. But when hearts are gathered around the person of Christ who is the God of all patience and the God of all hope and the God of all comfort and the God of all peace and the God of all grace, the Eternal God, oh, friend, this knits us together in the Person of Christ. He is there for us every day, every hour of the day, every minute of the day.

My, what a God! What a Saviour we have!

Christian friend, why don't you get occupied with Him? If you look at men, they are failures. If you look at leaders, they disappoint you. You look at Him, and He will never disappoint you.

Take courage. He will work all things out after the counsel of His own will and perfect in you and me that which pleases Him.

EXHORTATION AND TESTIMONY (15:14-33)

His persuasion of them (15:14)

14. And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another.

What an assembly of Christians you have when you have these three marvelous things—goodness, spiritual perception and openness to admonish one another. You notice in verse 13, they had all joy, they had all peace, and they were abounding in hope. But now he is persuaded of them that they are also full of goodness. This is the proof of their faith.

Now remember that Paul had not met these Roman Christians. He had just heard of them. In the first chapter, he longed to see them that he might impart to them some spiritual gift to the end they would be edified and built up and established. He thanked God for their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for all the saints, but he had never met them.

Now he says, “I am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness.” You know, it’s a wonderful thing when the love of Christ is evident in a Christian by his being good. Barnabas was called “a good man.” He was full of the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom. He was able to bring joy and edification to God’s people. And when the Bible says that a man is a good man, believe me, my friend, he’s good.

And Paul was persuaded that these Roman Christians were full of goodness which, I say, was proof of their faith. And it’s folly for you and me to talk about our faith in the Lord Jesus if it is not transforming our lives.

And, furthermore, they were filled with knowledge. It doesn’t mean they were filled with worldly knowledge, but rather they were able to understand and perceive spiritual realities. It’s a wonderful thing, you know, to find Christians who are full of spiritual perception. They are able to dis-

cern that which is right, that which is in accord with the Word of God, that which is in accord with the character of God as well as the love of God and the grace of God.

And then they were able to admonish one another. That is, they were able to guide each other and build each other up. They were able in love to correct fellow believers and to exhort one another for edification.

You know, admonishing one another doesn't mean that you know more than the other fellow and you kind of crow about things or you sit in judgment on God's people in their frailty. No, this is one who is not only able to perceive things spiritually but has the grace and the tenderness and the understanding to encourage God's people to go on with God. Sometimes you have to say things that are hard to say, and yet it is for the glory of God and for the benefit of His people.

As dear old Solomon could say in Proverbs 27:6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend," a friend who will love you enough to even wound you sometimes because you need it.

Now Paul begins to speak of his experience.

His experience (15:15-21)

15. But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,

16. To be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

17. Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.

Now the Apostle was preaching everywhere in the power of God that he might bring the Gentiles who at one time were in idolatry, afar off, dead in

sins, without Christ, without hope and without God, into new life in Christ. He longed that through his ministry of the gospel these Gentiles might be so transformed and so set apart by the Spirit of God that they would be an offering, offered up to God with thanksgiving.

You know, it's a wonderful thing to have the opportunity as Paul did to go to the Gentiles. Who else would go?

You may say Peter. No, Peter didn't go to the Gentiles. He was an apostle to the Jews. All Peter knew was Jewish culture. But when God wanted a man who could reach the Gentile world, He picked a man who was well acquainted with both the Jewish and Gentile cultures.

For, you remember, the Apostle Paul came from the city of Tarsus where you have the academies of the Stoics and the Epicurean philosophers.

Paul was well versed in the philosophies of the Greeks and the Romans as well as the Jewish people. And the result was he was usable.

18. For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

19. In the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20. And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation;

21. But as it is written, "THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND."

My, what an evangelist this man was! He was full of the compassion and the tenderness of Christ.

Do you remember in Acts 20, when speaking to the Ephesian elders on the shore of Myletus, Paul

said in effect, "I have not kept anything back. I have given everything that I knew of the Word of God to you folk. I didn't come with a part message. I came with the full message of the gospel of Christ. In fact, I have strived to preach the gospel not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation."

You know, this gets hold of my heart. How often do we hear only a part of the gospel. We don't hear the full truth that God has given to us. What a need we have for men in this country and throughout the world, men whose very lives are saturated with the Word of God, whose very affections and devotion are centered in the person of Christ and whose dependence is not on the things of man but in the power of the Spirit of God.

This is Paul.

No wonder, when you come to Philippians 1, he could say—now, may I use my own words here?—"I don't care whether I live or whether I die. It makes no difference to me as long as Christ is magnified in my body. I count everything but loss—the good things of life—yes, I count everything but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things."

What for? "That men might know the gospel of the grace of God."

Oh, that in some way God would raise up, in these last days, men and women with hearts full of tenderness and compassion for lost souls and whose very passion will be the Person of Christ. We need men and women who will not be satisfied until they reach people everywhere with the gospel of Christ.

I can begin to feel something of the passion of this man Paul who could say, "I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already

named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation."

You know, it is something to go into a place where they have never heard the gospel of Christ. You go in and make known the wonderful, wonderful grace of God; and then you see precious souls saved, taken out of sin, maybe out of idolatry. They have no doctrines to undo, and you can just come with the precious Word of God. Then these dear people accept the Saviour and fall in love with Him. They take up the Word of God, and He just opens it wide to them.

My, what a wonderful experience it is to sit down and talk to somebody who has never really heard the gospel of Christ! It's wonderful to see the Spirit of God take the Word and make it live in that person's heart. And then you have the joy of building that person up in Christ Jesus. You know, there is nothing comparable.

Now to make disciples means that you not only bring people to the saving knowledge of Christ but you follow through and you build them up. You build them up in Christ Jesus. I say it's a wonderful thing.

You know, I can appreciate that in my early ministry I had the joy of preaching the Word of God on the Canadian prairies where nobody else had been with the gospel. They hadn't had a gospel message for some 20, 30 years.

Believe me, my friends, I loved to stand up before people in a school house and bring to them the precious Word of God. And, after preaching for an hour, to have them say to you, "What are you stopping for? Give us the rest of it."

And I preached until 11, 12 o'clock at night, three or four hours, to hungry people who for the first time were really hearing the wonderful grace of God. What a joy to see them accept the Saviour and to see the transformation of their lives and to build them up in the holy faith.

I can just sense the yearning of Paul's heart.

Oh, what an evangelist this man was, what a missionary, what a heart for God, and what a heart for men and women—for God's people.

Oh, that God would give us big hearts, not little tiny things, but big hearts that will take God's people and establish them in the truth.

Oh, to get a hold of some of these dear, dear people for whom Christ died; for God still loves them, and He wants that love to be manifested through you and me so that we can reach these people with the Word of Life that they too might be saved.

His desire (15:22-33)

Paul's great desire, of course, was that he might go to Rome and encourage these dear Christians in the Saviour, these people he had never seen. He had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He had heard of their love for the people of God, and how he yearned to see them face to face and to have some fruitage among them.

From verse 22 to the end of the chapter you have the great yearning and desire of the Apostle Paul for the building up of God's people. He had no desire to build upon another man's foundation. He was the special apostle to the Gentiles; and he would like to take these Gentile believers and offer them up before God as an acceptable sacrifice, set apart by the Spirit of God.

This ought to be the yearning of every pastor and every Christian worker—to be able to present men and women to Christ with great joy, great blessing, an acceptable sacrifice.

I wonder sometimes if that was in the heart of the Apostle John. You remember in 1 John 2:28 where he said, "And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have con-

fidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.”

Now I am well aware of the fact that that could be true of the whole body of Christ; but possibly John is saying “when I present you whom I have led to the Saviour to the Lord Jesus, I want to do it without being ashamed.”

We have the same thought here in the Apostle Paul when he speaks of these Roman Christians. How he longed to see them that he might impart to them some spiritual gift.

22. For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you;

23. But now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you

24. Whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for awhile—

In other words, Paul is saying, “I am planning to go west to Spain, and on my way I want to stop by Rome and see you folk so that you and I both may be encouraged and edified by our mutual faith.”

25. But now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

26. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

27. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.

28. Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.

29. And I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ.

You know, he came to them all right, but he didn't get a prosperous journey because when he

went to Jerusalem with the offering to the Jewish Christians, he was taken prisoner in the temple courtyard. And the Jews would have pulled Paul to pieces—they would have killed him—if the Romans hadn't stepped into the picture and delivered him. He was taken prisoner. Then he went down to Caesarea and was there for more than two years. From there, he went to Rome and was shipwrecked.

I don't know whether he ever went to Spain or not. Tradition says he did, but I don't know according to the Word of God.

Now, when you come to verse 29, I like the confidence of this man Paul. He said, "And I know (am sure) when I come to you, I will come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ."

You know, that has been one of my own great desires when I go out on Bible conference ministry or go to some different places to have meetings. I want to go in all the fulness and blessing of the gospel of Christ.

This gets hold of my heart. Would indeed that every evangelist, every Bible teacher, every pastor every time he gets up and opens the Word of God would be filled unto all the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ so that, as his own heart is full of His blessing, he will relate that blessing to God's people.

You know when a person gets blessed in his own ministry of the Word of God, he can be very sure that others are going to be blessed. You know that sometimes, when I am talking over the radio, I get so blessed when I think of the truths I am trying to impart. I get so blessed that I am sure the listeners get blessed, too.

I want you to mark Paul's need for prayer.

30. Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

31. That I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;

32. So that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.

Paul had just said in verses 18 to 20 that he had gone out preaching to the Gentiles and the mighty power of God was manifested in signs and wonders by the Spirit of God. He said that from Jerusalem to Illyricum the gospel had been proclaimed to everybody. A great many people had come to know the Saviour.

And yet, by the end of the chapter, an amazing thing takes place. Paul turns to these Christians he has never seen and asks them to pray for him. Oh, the humility of this man!

Listen to this prayer because, after he uses an amazing word, he makes three requests. "I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive . . ." Now that word "strive" means to agonize in prayer.

Do you remember Epaphras in Colossians 4:12? He was "always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers." He was always agonizing in prayer that God's people might stand complete in the Word of God. Here is a place where the believer can come into the presence of God and plead with Him for others. I'm not talking about saying prayers. I'm talking about getting right down in earnest.

Friend, since when did you get down before God and mean business—I mean really mean business?

I've had the privilege and honor—and it's a sacred thing—to be in the presence of people who have meant business before God when they were on their knees. They forgot about you and everybody else as they laid hold of the Throne of Grace in behalf of somebody else. There is something about it. It's beyond the ken of men, that re-

deemed men and women can besiege the Throne of Grace and come right into the presence of God in the inner chamber. They come right into the holiest place of all and plead with God for the requests on their heart.

This is what Paul is asking—"that you agonize, that you strive, that you mean business together with me in your prayers to God for me."

Now, what does he want?

First of all, "that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea," that I might be delivered from them that hate the gospel. He knows what he is going to go into. "Pray that I may be delivered from them that do not believe, from the unsaved Jews in Jerusalem."

Now, somebody is going to ask me, "Why didn't God answer that prayer, Mr. Mitchell?"

Just a minute. If the Apostle Paul had not been made a prisoner, the chances are we might not have had such books as Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. There's a purpose behind all this. How would the people in Caesar's household have known about the Saviour if Paul hadn't been a prisoner there?

See, God answers prayer His own way. He wasn't blind. He wasn't deaf to the cry of Paul and these Roman Christians that Paul might be delivered from the unbelievers in Judaea.

Then, the second thing in verse 31, "And that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints." You see, even though he was going to take an offering back to Jerusalem, he did not know how the Jews would receive it. He didn't want them to take offense.

He is saying, "Do pray that they will accept my offering in the same spirit in which it is given. For these dear people in Macedonia and Achaia gave out of the abundance of their poverty. It was a real sacrifice for them to give, but they gave because there were others in need."

How perceptive and how far-reaching were Paul's concerns for the churches.

And the third thing he prayed for was that "I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company." You have this in chapter one.

You know, the first year I went out preaching the gospel, I was with a certain missionary. One day, when he wasn't feeling too well, I said, "Why don't we pray for you, Brother So-and-so?"

He said, "Pray for me? I don't need your prayers!"

It came as a shock to me that a man would spurn the prayers of God's people. Is he so far above God's people that he doesn't need their prayers?

Not the Apostle Paul. Here are Christian Gentiles who have come to know the Saviour, and he is pleading with them that they strive together in prayer before God with him and for him. And, by the way, I would ask you the same thing. Wouldn't you sometime get down when you are praying and remember the Multnomah Bible College?

"Do you mean to tell me, sir, you folks need my prayers?"

We sure do. We would rather have your prayers than anything else. I'd rather have your prayers that the teaching of the Word of God would go forth in clarity, in power, in tenderness and compassion to these young people so that through them people will be saved and so that through them the people of God will be established and built up in Christ.

Paul prayed that he might be delivered from his enemies, that his gift to the Jewish Christians might be acceptable and then lastly that he might come to them with joy by the will of God. "I want to come with joy."

And, you know, I believe he did. Because in Ephesians 3:1, he calls himself “the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles.”

I like the dignity of that. He didn’t say, “Paul, a prisoner of the Romans.”

Oh, no.

He said, “Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus.”

These Romans could not touch him. God’s purpose must be accomplished.

So he asked them to pray that he would be delivered from the unsaved in Judaea.

“And I want you to pray that my gift, the gift to these dear saints, will be accepted by the saints in Jerusalem and that I may come to you with joy by the will of God.”

And, though he was shipwrecked and despite all the other things that happened to him after he left Miletus, I believe he really was full of joy when he walked up the Appian highway into Rome. Joy filled his heart even though he was in chains.

33. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Again, Paul comes right back to the “God of peace.” This man had such a passion for the Saviour and such a love for God’s people. He would sacrifice anything, anything and everything, that they might be established in the Word of God and that their joy might be filled full. And that’s my desire for you. I don’t know who you are, but I know there are thousands of you who have listened in to the broadcast and/or who are now reading this book. And, I tell you, my friend, God can absolutely and perfectly satisfy your heart. Remember, He’s the God of all comfort. He’s the God of all peace.

He’s the God of all grace; and He’s sufficient for your every personal and individual need.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

I hope you are not getting tired of our study in the Book of Romans. It is a tremendous, tremendous book. How wide its scope is. How deep its truth. How high it soars in its praise of Almighty God.

I would just hope that you would read and re-read the Book of Romans over and over again.

SALUTATIONS (16:1-27)

God's notables (16:1-16)

Now in chapter 16, the Apostle Paul is through exhorting the Christians at Rome; and he has a few words of salutation.

1. I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

2. That you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.

3. Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus:

4. Who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Paul names a great number of people. I call them "the notables of God." This is God's hall of fame. Wherever the Word of God has gone for the last nearly 2000 years, people have read about these unknown men and women.

My, how precious of Paul to remember them!

May I say just a word to you who think you are unknown. It is true, you may not be known by very many on earth. You have been serving the Lord faithfully, some of you for 20, 30, 40, 60 years; and you think, "Well, I'm not very well known. Possibly I'm one of the least saints the Lord has on earth."

But, my friend, you are well known to God. I like what Paul writes here about these people. He calls them "servants of the church . . . the helpers of many . . . fellow-workers in Christ Jesus." They are "beloved in the Lord." They are "chosen." They are "fellow prisoners." They are "approved in Christ."

In fact, one is reminded of David's notable men way back there in 2 Samuel 23. There were 37 of them, all mentioned by name.

How glad I am that the frailest, the weakest, the simplest child of God is well known by the Saviour. And if the Apostle Paul is manifesting such a heart of love to them, my, how much more the Lord Jesus must love every one whom He has received, every one that He has bought for Himself. Isn't it wonderful to know that you belong to Him?

And so what, whether the world knows you or not? That's neither here nor there, just as long as you know the Lord and He knows you.

You notice also in this list of notables a number of women are mentioned—Phebe, Priscilla, Mary, Julia. You have the mother of Rufus and Paul and the sister of Nereus. I think there are 10 or 11 women in this Hall of Fame. Now let's look at one or two of them for just a moment.

Take this woman Phoebe in the first two verses. She's called "a servant of the church." She was possibly a deaconess of the Church at Cenchrea.

And Paul said, "Now you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of

you; for she herself has also been a helper of many." She has been a helper not only to the church in Cenchrea, but she has been a real helper "of myself as well."

In fact, there are those who believe that Paul gave her this epistle to take to Rome. He had had fellowship with her, and he wants them to have fellowship with her. I'm glad for this.

Possibly very few knew who this woman was; but, believe me, she has a real place in the 16th chapter of Romans, among the notables, among God's known people whom He loves.

And then you have Priscilla and Aquila. You remember, you met them in the Book of Acts. You find them there with the Apostle Paul at the end of chapter 18. They were tentmakers and, wherever they went, they radiated the presence of Christ; and they communicated the wonderful gospel of the grace of God. They even risked their lives for the Apostle Paul. They were willing to die that he might be free to preach the gospel of Christ to the churches and the people in Europe.

It's an amazing thing, as you go down through these names, who they are. In fact, there are five kinsmen of Paul mentioned here. He even mentions his mother among the notables. How thoughtful of him to do a thing like that.

And then in verse 5 and in verses 14-16, he mentions the churches, "the church that is in their house" and "all the churches of Christ greet you."

5. Also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epae-netus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.

6. Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.

7. Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

8. Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.

9. Greet Urbanus, our fellow-worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

10. Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.

11. Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.

12. Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord.

13. Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.

14. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren with them.

15. Greet Philologus, and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

16. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

Note that Paul knew who all these people were, where they were, what they were, what they had done and what a tremendous interest they had in the people of God. I just wonder if we today couldn't reflect the great yearning this man Paul had for the people of God—these people who had helped him, who were humble ones, who were not great leaders but who had labored much in the gospel.

They were approved in Christ, and possibly some of them had gone through great testings and afflictions for the gospel's sake.

Wouldn't you like to be approved in Christ?

Then Paul talks about Rufus, his chosen. He stood out in Paul's mind as one who had proved his position.

And then, as I say, you have those who suffered for the gospel's sake—Andronicus and Junia, his fellow prisoners. Here are two men who are Paul's relatives, and they became Christians before he did.

Now they are fellow prisoners with him. You know, they may have been among the group in

Acts 9 when Paul went about trying to put all the Christians in prison. It may be that he turned on these relatives of his. And now they are fellow prisoners.

My, what a transformation in Paul, transformed from a persecutor to a humble servant of the Lord. And he is not backward in recognizing that these men know the Saviour he knows.

And then you will notice 11 times in this passage the phrases "in the Lord" and "in Christ." This shows the oneness of the believers.

Being in Christ, they were knitted together. They were in union with Him, and they were in union with each other.

Did you ever think of it? Here are masters and slaves. Here are rich and poor. Here are Jews and Gentiles, and yet they are all one in Christ. You have variety, but you have unity. They were unknown to the world, I say again, but known to God. They were not leaders nor great outstanding speakers; but they were helpers, they were beloved, they were approved of God. And, you know, they are all in glory now.

I tell you, one of these days, you and I who love the Saviour are going to meet all these men and women of whom we read here.

I couldn't help but spend a moment on this because it is so wonderful when you think of the marvelous, marvelous grace of God in picking up these different people and approving them and calling them His beloved. They were called the "off-scouring of the world." They were unknown and unwanted by the world; yet they are well known in glory, well known in Christ.

Am I talking to you, my Christian friend? Sometimes you become discouraged because you are not doing very much for the Lord.

May I again remind you that God never rewards greatness. He rewards faithfulness in the task He has given you to do.

You say, “But, Mr. Mitchell, I don’t know what He wants me to do.”

It may be just to live for Christ and magnify Him right where you are under the circumstances in which He has put you.

The best place for us to serve and please the Lord is right where we are.

I’ve had Christians say, “My, if I were only in some other city or if I were only in some other church or if only I were in some other country—my, what a person I would be for the Lord.”

Oh, no. Oh, no. God has put you right where you are. He knows every detail of your life. He knows your strength, and He knows your frailty and your weakness; and He put you in the best place where you can serve Him.

I’m so glad that the Apostle Paul took the time out to write these names in this passage.

Exhortations (16:17-21)

Now let’s go right on down to the end of the chapter. Paul first gives us a warning.

17. Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

18. For such men are slaves not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

Yes, God puts us in the best place where we can serve Him; but sometimes situations change, and what was once a fertile harvest field for you comes under the control of someone else. Sometimes, false teachers emerge.

Paul here calls for separation from those who would bring in false teaching and who would cause divisions among God’s people. We cannot tolerate error. You must be a stickler for doctrine

as I am. And, sometimes, you have to leave a situation rather than compromise your testimony. But leave in love. As Paul would say in 2 Corinthians 5:14, "The love of Christ controls us," so that whatever he did, he did it because of his love for the Saviour. The Spirit of God in him manifested the very character of Christ through to others.

We see so much division today, sometimes on something that doesn't matter a thing. It's amazing how quickly someone can come along and break up the unanimity of spirit and the purpose and the fellowship the saints have in Christ.

We are not asked to separate from those who love the Saviour, but we are called to put out those who bring in false doctrine.

Don't you leave the church you've paid for. Put the newcomers out. And, if you have no authority to put them out, pray them out!

And then he goes on to say the lives of false teachers usually measure up to their doctrine for they do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ. They serve themselves. They're out for themselves. And "by their smooth and flattering speech, they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting." They come for the purpose of deception.

They come for the purpose of breaking up the unanimity of spirit among God's people.

And, as someone has said, "False teaching and vile living often go together."

Mark them; watch them.

Peter speaks of these in 2 Peter 2:1 when he says, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them."

And God is going to bring upon them swift destruction just as surely as angels fell and came under the judgment of God, just as surely as the

old world fell and came under His judgment, and just as surely as Sodom and Gomorrah fell and came under His judgment.

Likewise these false teachers shall also come under the sure judgment of God.

The Apostle John speaks of it in 1 John 4:1-6, especially verse 3: "And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist."

19. For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil.

Our safeguard is our simplicity in Christ. I need not know all the ramifications of all the false doctrines. One thing I ask is what place do they give to the person of Christ?

Our safeguard against false teachers who come in and split the assembly and divide God's people is our simplicity in Christ.

As someone has well said, "We shoot mad dogs. We quarantine infectious diseases; but we tolerate evil teachers, false teachers in the body of Christ."

Make Christ, His shed blood, His atoning work at the cross for us, His burial, His resurrection and exaltation the very center of your life and your fellowship and your worship.

Oh, that we might determine "to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ (that's His person), and Him crucified . . . that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:2,5).

What I'm concerned about is that we rejoice in the fact that whether we are known or not known by men, we are known of God who has knitted us all together in one bond in Christ Jesus. Oh, that we might enjoy the fellowship and the communion of God's people. And you will when Christ Jesus is your center of attraction.

And then we have a promise:

20. And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

You remember, way back in Genesis 3:15 when Adam and Eve sinned, we had the promise given that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. Now Paul encourages these Roman Christians, who were suffering for their testimony's sake. He gives them this promise that "the God of peace will soon crush Satan" under their feet.

In other words, the one who hates God's people, the one who causes persecution against God's people is going to come under the judgment of God and under the feet of God's people.

The enemy of their souls is going to be defeated and be crushed under their feet. This was to encourage them because of the days in which they were living.

Paul's fellow workers (16:21-24)

21. Timothy my fellow-worker greets you; and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

22. I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.

23. Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother.

24. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Paul usually had friends and fellow workers around him, and these now take the opportunity to send their greetings to the believers in Rome. Timothy, of course, was Paul's close companion and helper during many of his missionary journeys. Paul usually dictated his letters, and Tertius served as secretary for this letter to Rome.

God's ability to establish us (16:25-27)

25. Now to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,

26. But now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;

27. To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

Only God can establish us. No religious system can ever establish any of God's people. God must do this.

Remember in the first chapter, Paul said (verse 11), "I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established." But he also recognizes this must be done by God Himself. And notice in verse 25, it's going to be done, says Paul, according to "my gospel."

In the very first verse of the epistle to the Romans, you have Paul "a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God." In Romans 1:16, you have "I am not ashamed of the gospel," and in verse 16 of chapter 2, God is going to judge the secrets of men through Jesus Christ "according to my gospel."

"Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Mitchell, that Paul has a message all his own?"

No, I would say this, that God's message has so taken hold of the Apostle Paul that it has become his own gospel. I am reminded of the Prophet Elijah, who said to King Ahab in 1 Kings 17:1, "There shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." Now do you mean to tell me that Elijah's word was going to close the heavens?

No. He believed what God had said to Moses

that, if the people of Israel ever left God and followed idols and became idolators, He would shut up the heavens to them. He would withhold the rain from them. Hence, they would have no crops.

Elijah had taken the Word of God, the promise of God, and made it his own.

This is what Paul is doing. He is taking the gospel of Christ which, of course, is "the good news from God concerning His Son." He is so wrapped up in it, it has become so much the part and parcel of his life, that he could say, "According to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus."

You know, it would be a wonderful thing if you and I could take the Word of God and make it our own.

I am reminded of 1 Thessalonians 1:5, where the Apostle Paul writes, "Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."

In 2 Corinthians 4:3, he could say, "If our gospel (our good news from God) is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing."

What I'm trying to get to your heart is, are you so in love with the Saviour, so trusting Him, is He so much the center of your affections that His Word becomes your word? Has His gospel become your gospel so that as you minister the Word to others, as you bear testimony for the Lord, it becomes a vital, living reality in your heart?

You see, unless truth lives in you, it is not yours. Unless you are able to impart it to somebody else, it is not yours. But, when the truth gets hold of your heart and you speak with that authority, you speak with that certainty, with that assurance that this is the truth of God, it has become your word. This is what Paul is saying.

Now, what is this “secret”—“according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past”? This is also found in Ephesians.

God gave Paul two revelations—the revelation of His grace which you find in Romans and the revelation of the Church, the body of Christ—a mystery hidden in God from past generations—which you find in Ephesians chapter 3.

Now in Romans, the Gentiles are brought in by the gospel. But what is their status?

You say, “Well, Mr. Mitchell, the Gentile Christian is on the same ground as the Jew.”

This is what caused some of the problems in the early Church. It was no mystery in the Old Testament that the Gentiles would be blessed. Isaiah and Hosea wrote that God would bless and eventually save the Gentiles. Zechariah 8:23 tells about the ten men of every nation under heaven who lay hold of the skirt of a Jew and say, “God is with you.”

It was no mystery in the Old Testament that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would be born of a virgin. The Old Testament tells how He is to be born, where He is to be born—in Bethlehem of Judea—how He is going to live, how He is going to suffer and die and be raised again from the dead. That was no secret. And the Old Testament is very clear on the fact that Gentiles are going to be blessed.

So what is the mystery? The mystery, spoken of by Paul in Romans and established in Ephesians, is that Gentile Christians will be fellow heirs with the Jews. They will be members of the same body, with the same life and the same standing. They will be one in Christ, a company of people seated in the heavenlies in Christ, citizens of heaven.

It’s God’s desire to take all His children and bring them into His glory so that He may reveal

Himself to them in all His love, in all His grace, and in all His compassion.

This was not made known to angelic beings. This has been made known to simple believers, Jews and Gentiles, whether known or not known in the earth.

The moment you accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour you become a member of the Church, the Body of Christ. And it's to this Church that God has revealed the wonders of His love and of His grace. He has revealed that the Church is going to share with Him in His glory.

Did you ever stop to think of it? To Israel He revealed His righteousness; He revealed His holiness. Israel and the nations are going to see the King in His glory. See Isaiah 33:17 and Revelation 1:7.

What about us in the Church? We are going to share with Him in His glory.

Let me give you some Scriptures just to encourage your heart. We have this in Romans 8:18, where Paul says, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." In John 17:22, Jesus said, "The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them."

In 2 Corinthians 4:17, Paul says, "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory." In Colossians 3:4, Paul says, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

What I'm also trying to get to your heart is that there is a company of people called "The Church" to whom Christ is going to reveal His purposes. He is going to share with them in His glory. This is not for angelic beings. This is not for the nations. This is not even for Israel. This is for you and me who love Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Then you have the purpose of it all in chapter 16, verses 25-27. Let us read it once again.

25. Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,

26. But now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all nations, leading to obedience of faith;

27. To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

The book of Romans starts with Paul wanting fruitage among the Gentiles. He speaks of the fact, especially in chapter one, verse 5: “We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name’s sake.”

God has chosen to give us this tremendous responsibility of making known to the nations, the millions who have never heard, the precious Word of God.

And I tell you, my friend, the time left to us to reach people with the Word of God is very brief. When I read my Bible in connection with the condition of the professing Church in the world, when I read my Bible with respect to Israel and to the nations of the earth, I tell you, my friend, we have very little time left for you and me to give to the world the wonderful story of Christ’s redemption.

God has taken you and me out of sin, and He has put us in Christ. He has taken us out of the kingdom of darkness, put us into His own kingdom and left us here on earth with this tremendous responsibility of bearing testimony to others that they might know Him, Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal.

May I plead with your heart, my Christian friend, to give everything over to Him.

Let Him, the only wise God, the One who has all ability and all authority and all power, use you in these final days for the praise of the glory of His grace and for the salvation of precious souls.

The Lord indeed bless you for His name's sake.

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Prof. Dick Bohrer, the editor,
and the Mitchell family of your response to this
volume,
kindly address your letter to
Glory Press
P.O. Box 624
West Linn, Oregon, U.S.A. 97068
E-mail: dickbohrer@comcast.net

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