

The purpose of God according to election

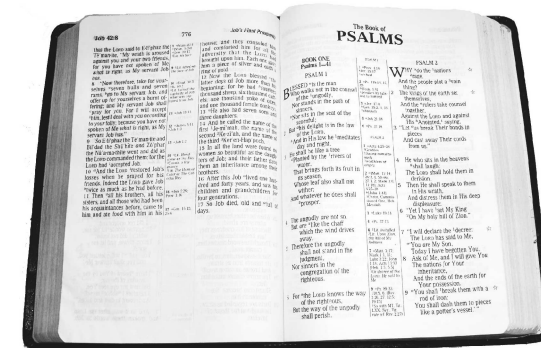
God had made many promises to Israel, but they had rejected him and were rejected by him. Does this mean that God has failed to keep his promises? Not at all! He always keeps his word and all of his promises to Israel will be honoured, but we must understand that earthly Israel and the true Israel are not the same. The Jews boasted of their descent from Abraham (eg. John 8:33,38), but not all of Abraham's descendants ('seed') are *'the children of the promise'* (6–8; cp. Genesis 17:7). Isaac was the son of promise not Ishmael (7). It may be objected that Ishmael was rejected because of his own wickedness and that Isaac, born fourteen years later was chosen to replace him. Paul shows that such an argument is fallacious and uses Jacob and Esau to illustrate his point. Rebecca was childless and her twin sons were graciously given in answer to prayer (Genesis 25:21). God chose Jacob and rejected Esau before they were born, before they were capable of doing good or evil, *that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him who calls* (10–11).

Those whom God has graciously chosen are the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). **Election is absolutely unconditional and is according to God's sovereign purpose and not on account of any works foreseen in us.** He *has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began* (2 Timothy 1:9). Christian, does it not humble you to know that God loved you before he made the world and that he loved you so much that he gave his Son to die for your salvation?

Note — The interpretation of verse 13 has been a subject of much debate between Christians. Does 'hated' mean 'loved less' as some claim? The context of the Scripture quoted (Malachi chapter 1) does not support this. God did not show a 'lesser love' to the descendants of Esau (the Edomites). See commentaries on Romans by R. Haldane, W. Hendriksen and G. Wilson for a more detailed consideration of this verse

PILGRIM BIBLE NOTES

God's holy Word simply explained and applied



November 2015

Bible readings from Romans chapters 2 to 9

I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart

We have been encouraged as we have read in Romans 8 of our great privileges as Christians. In this new section of his letter, the apostle directs our attention to his own people, the Jews. Questions are raised that need to be answered. If the gospel is *for the Jew first* (1:16; cp. Acts 1:8), why have most of them rejected the good news? They had the great advantage of having the written word of God, the Old Testament Scriptures entrusted to them (*the oracles of God*, 3:1–2). The Lord Jesus Christ, the *eternally blessed God*, is promised in those very Scriptures and he came to earth as a Jew (3–5). Has Jewish unbelief proved the gospel to be a failure? Have God's purposes been thwarted? Paul answers these questions in the next three chapters of his letter.

The Jews had bitterly opposed Paul's ministry (eg. Acts 17:5–9, 13; 18:5–6; 21:26–36; 2 Corinthians 11:24) and he denounces them for their hardness of heart and hypocrisy in this letter (2:5, 17–24). Some may have wondered whether the apostle had washed his hands of the Jews but such a consideration could not be further from the truth. Paul writes, *'I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh'* (2–3). These are profoundly moving words! They are the words of a man who is carrying a heavy burden. He earnestly desires the salvation of his fellow-Jews. He writes later, *'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved'* (10:1). Grief and deep desire drove him to prayer. Do you pour out your heart to the Lord in intercession for those who are lost?

Do you have a heartfelt concern for those who are unsaved? Let these words of Robert Haldane challenge us: **'He who has no sorrow for the perishing state of sinners, and especially of his kindred, is not a Christian. No man can be a Christian who is unconcerned for the salvation of others.'** (COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, published by The Banner of Truth Trust, page 444).

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Who shall separate us from the love of Christ

The closing verses of Romans chapter 8 are wonderful because they assure us that nothing whatever can separate us from the love of Christ. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* (35). The word translated ‘*tribulation*’ indicates being beaten down and buffeted, going through severe trial and affliction. The Bible does not promise that when we become Christians we will no longer suffer. We must rather expect to suffer. We live in a world which is hostile to the gospel message. Suffering is not to be taken as divine disapproval but rather as a token of God’s blessing (Matthew 5:11–12).

The Christians at Rome and others who were to read Paul’s letter in the early church were soon to pass through the fires of persecution and suffering. They would no doubt recall these wonderful words about the love of God. None of the suffering that would hit them could separate them from the love of God. He would not cease to love them when Nero unleashed his cruel atrocities upon them. They were precious to God and so is every Christian!

The apostle Paul does not indicate that we will pull through suffering and just about survive! He speaks of conquest in suffering and asks, ‘*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*’ Nothing whatever can separate us from his love, not even death (35–39)! The love of Christ triumphs over all evil and will never fail us. Do you feel deserted by God? Are you passing through a deep valley? Oh, remember that the Lord is with you, he is for you, and he loves you! He sees your fears and trials and he will bring you through. Remember that God loves you and that he tenderly watches over you at all times. In every dark circumstance, in all of our suffering, nothing *shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. We can joyfully assert, ‘*In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us*’ (37). **Let us be encouraged and pour out our hearts to God in humble, grateful, joyful praise!**

God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ

We saw from yesterday’s reading that we will all be judged by God and that his judgment *is according to truth* (2–5). We are now given more information about the judgment of God:

- God will judge us according to our works. Salvation is by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), but faith without works is a false faith, it is dead (James 2:14–26). He *will render to each one according to his deeds* (6). The righteous are given *eternal life ... glory, honour and immortality*; but *those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness will suffer indignation and wrath* (6–8).
- God is completely impartial in his judgment. The Jews have enjoyed a great advantage over the Gentiles by having *the oracles of God*, the Old Testament scriptures, which contain his holy law (3:1–2). Privilege brings greater responsibility. God will punish all sinners, the Jew first and also the Gentile (‘*the Greek*’). God’s rewards are for the righteous, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile (9–12). The religious heritage of the Jew will not give him any advantage over the Gentile on the day of judgment.
- God’s judgment is based on his holy law (12–15). Verses 13 to 15 explain and reinforce the reasoning behind verse 12. Sinners *will be judged by the law ... in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ* (12, 16). The heathen are ignorant of God’s law but they do have a conscience which gives some sense of right and wrong. Both Jew and Gentile are guilty of breaking God’s law and will be judged accordingly. God the Father has committed all judgment to the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:22–30; Acts 17:31). Many people are guilty of sordid sins that will never be discovered while they are on earth. They carry their secrets to the grave, but their sins are all known to God. He knows all our sins, whether we consider them great or small. **We may be able to deceive men but we are not able to deceive God!**

He is a Jew who is one inwardly

The Jews were confident that their possession of God's law and their circumcision brought them salvation. Such confidence was misplaced. Two very important principles are found in our reading today:

- We must practise what we preach. The Jews boasted in their knowledge of the law of God. They were confident that they were able to guide those who were spiritually blind and that they were a light to those who were in darkness (17–21). They did not live according to the law however, and they dishonoured God. His name was *blasphemed among the Gentiles* because of their hypocrisy (21–24; cp. Matthew 23:14, 23–24). We may believe that the Bible is true, but if we do not obey its teaching, we dishonour the Lord.
- We must not rely on religious ritual for salvation. Circumcision was given to Abraham as a sign for God's covenant people. Many a Jew was relying on this as a passport to heaven but such confidence was misplaced. The Jew who breaks the law is condemned by the law just as much as the uncircumcised Gentile (25–27). We may rely on our church-going, baptism or family connections to get us to heaven but this is a great mistake. If we are trusting in anything or anyone to save us apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, we deceive ourselves. **True religion comes from a work of God in the heart through the Holy Spirit.** *He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit ... whose praise is not from men but from God* (28–29; cp. Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 36:26).

There is a play on words in verse 29. The word 'Jew' is derived from the name 'Judah'. Most of the Jews who were taken into Babylonian captivity were from the tribe of Judah (see 2 Chronicles chapter 36). They were called 'Yeh-hoo-daw-he' ('Jehudahite'). The word 'Judah' means 'praise.' The true 'Jew' does not seek praise from men but from God. His behaviour glorifies God and does not give unbelievers any excuse to blaspheme God's holy name (24).

He who did not spare his own Son

We are repeating our reading in this great passage of Scripture for the next two days to ponder some of the other wonderful truths found in these verses. Two further questions convey precious truths:

- *He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*'(32). God's love for us is so great that he *did not spare his own Son*. This means that God did not hold back from punishing his Son for our sins, that he showed no mercy to the Lord Jesus as he hung on the cross at Calvary. In the Bible, 'not sparing' is associated with judgment for sin (cp. 11:21; 2 Peter 2:4–6). The Lord Jesus Christ knew the horror of being forsaken by God the Father as he was punished for our sins at Calvary. He cried out, *'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'* (Mark 15:34). If God loves us so much, he will gladly supply our needs because he loves us (Philippians 4:19). We will not leave the throne of grace empty-handed if we come to him with childlike faith. **Let us now come to him with our worship, adoration, praise and thanksgiving. Let us make our requests known to God. We do not come to him in vain!**
- *Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies* (33). God's holy law pronounces us guilty (3:19) but all charges against the Christian are cancelled because God's law has been satisfied and no longer condemns us. Satan accuses us and seeks to destroy our Christian assurance, but his accusations are dismissed because God has justified us.

It is important to see that the promises in these verses are for God's elect, for those who have been predestined. God is for his elect (31), Christ died for them (32), God justifies them (33), Christ prays for them and loves them (34–35). Who will condemn us when Christ died in our place and now prays for us at the right hand of God? The Holy Spirit makes intercession for us (26) and so does Christ. Those prayers are never wrong but are in perfect harmony with the will of God the Father. **Christian, take heart!**

What then shall we say to these things?

Paul poses a number of questions in these verses and then answers them to show the glorious blessings of the gospel. When he asks, ‘*What then shall we say to these things?*’ (31), he means all the things mentioned in his letter – man’s desperate plight in his sin, God’s answer in the gospel, and the suffering endured by the believer.

What then shall we say to these things?

- Is there anyone who can prevent us from being glorified, who can block our path to heaven? The apostle gives his answer in verse 31 and we shall turn to this shortly.
- The next question that may arise is whether God’s love and goodness will ever diminish. It is answered in verse 32.
- There is the problem of future condemnation. *Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect?* This is answered in verses 33 and 34.
- The last problem that we may have is whether any kind of suffering or any being can separate us from the love of God, and that question is rousing answered in verses 35 to 39.

God is against man in his sin (1:18), but God is on the side of his elect people. *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (31; cp. Psalm 27:1). The ‘*if*’ here is not an expression of doubt, but of certainty – *Since* (or because) *God is for us*. With the almighty, sovereign God on our side, we have no need to fear those who oppose the gospel, whether wicked men, or Satan and the dark powers of evil.

What then shall we say to these things? Have you been battling with discouragement? Are you anxious and troubled in your heart? Is it not true that ‘*these things*’ include our battles and suffering? *All things work together for good;* the *things* that God has done and is doing for us, the *things* that are unpleasant, the attacks of Satan, the struggles with our own sinfulness. Oh, child of God, remember that God is for you. Cast all your cares on him because he cares for you. *In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us* (37). Hallelujah!

What advantage then has the Jew?

Paul now poses questions that he knows will be in the minds of his readers as a result of what he has written. If spiritual circumcision (a changed heart) is all important (2:29), *What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?* (1). The answer is that they enjoyed a great advantage because *to them were committed the oracles of God* (2). God had given Israel the Old Testament scriptures and no other nation had enjoyed that privilege. Through his word they were in a position to know the mind of God. This raises a further question, *If some did not believe*, has that unbelief shown that God has failed in his faithfulness to Israel? (3). Paul replies, ‘*Certainly not!*’ Every man may be a liar, but God is true (4)! *If we are faithless, he remains faithful*, God cannot lie (2 Timothy 2:13; Titus 1:2).

The next question concerns the justice of God. If our unrighteousness demonstrates that God is righteous and faithful, is it fair for God to inflict wrath when our sin magnifies his goodness (5)? Paul again rebuffs such a notion pointing out that such an idea would then exclude God’s righteous judgment of the world (6). The apostle recognises that men argue so much because they will not submit to the truth and he is ready for the next question. ‘*If my falsehood magnifies God’s truth and thus causes God to be glorified, why should I be judged as a sinner? Surely, if our sin brings glory to God, why not do evil?*’ (7–8). Paul replies that such an attitude denies true Bible teaching and that any who teach such things deserve to be punished.

There is a warning in this chapter for all of us who attend churches where God’s word is faithfully preached. Like the Jew, we have a great advantage over those who are ignorant of God’s word. If we have no concern to obey God’s word, however, we do not really love the Lord (John 14:15); we must also question whether we are truly saved. **Let us be sure that we not only profess to believe the Bible but that we also obey its teaching.**

Guilty before God

The Jews had the advantage of possessing the special revelation of God through the Old Testament (*'the oracles of God'*, 2). They were however, the same as the Gentiles (*'Greeks'*) in that they also were sinners. *They are all under sin* (9,23). Paul fully accepted the Old Testament Scriptures as the word of God and quoted from the Psalms and Isaiah to prove the guilt of everyone (10–18). Man's depravity is universal! Notice the words *'none'* (10–11). Man in his natural state is ignorant of spiritual things (11; cp. 1 Corinthians 2:14). Sin is vile and its terrible fruit is described in verses 10 to 18. We also sin when we fail to do what God commands (sins of omission). It is sin not to seek after God our Creator (11). Our goodness is not good in God's sight (12) because *all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags* (Isaiah 64:6).

The speech of sinners is deceitful, poisonous and *full of cursing and bitterness* (13–14). The tongue is *a world of iniquity* (James 3:6) which we must learn to control if we belong to the Lord (Ephesians 4:31; 5:4). *Let your speech always be with grace* (Colossians 4:6). Sin also produces murderous attitudes and brings misery and destruction (15–16). Man in his sin cannot know peace nor does he fear God (17–18). When we speak to many who are not Christians, it is soon apparent from their attitude to sin, righteousness and coming judgment that *there is no fear of God before their eyes*. **Many vainly believe that because God is love there will be no judgment and so nothing to fear. They fail to understand the nature of the love and justice of God.** We must tell them that the Bible teaches that God is angry with them and that they will perish if they do not repent.

God's holy law cannot save us, but it reveals our sin. The law silences and condemns us all. It speaks *that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God* (19–20). Let us praise God for giving his Son to die so that in him our guilt is cleared through justification.

Foreknew ... predestined ... called ... justified ... glorified

The doctrine of predestination brings great comfort if rightly understood. On what basis did God choose us before he made the world (Ephesians 1:4)? Some Christians interpret *'foreknew'* to mean that God chose those whom he knew would have faith to choose him, making election (God's choice) ultimately dependent upon us. Such teaching fails to accept that faith is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8) and that we can only come to the Son when the Father draws us to him (John 6:44). The foreknowledge of God means more than him knowing about us. It means *'to know and to love with intimate personal awareness.'* (cp. Genesis 4:1; 18:19; Hosea 13:5; Amos 3:2; Matthew 7:23; John 10:14). The Lord did not set his love upon us for any good found in us, but on the basis of his free and sovereign grace *according to the good pleasure of his will* (Ephesians 1:5; cp. Deuteronomy 7:6–8). The apostles Paul and Peter poured out their hearts in praise to God when they thought of the doctrine of election (Ephesians 1:3–6; 1 Peter 1:2–3).

God has chosen us to be holy (Ephesians 1:4). Those who lead careless lives and yet profess to be saved should not take their salvation for granted. We are urged, *'Be diligent to make your calling and election sure'* (2 Peter 1:10). We have been *predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son* (29). **Can the beauty of the Lord Jesus be seen in your life?**

There are five links in the chain of salvation that cannot be broken. Notice that they are all the work of God. — *He foreknew ... he predestined ... he called ... he justified ... he glorified.* We cannot lose our salvation. Everyone whom God has predestined, he calls, everyone who is called is justified, and everyone who is justified will be glorified. **God does not choose us and then lose us; what God begins, he completes!** *He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ* (Philippians 1:6). *He is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy* (Jude 24).

All things work together for good to those who love God

Christians of all ages have found great comfort in verse 28. The Holy Spirit *makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God* (27) and every adverse circumstance, every perplexing situation, every disappointment and all fiery trial is in the will of God. We can have the same confidence as the apostle Paul: *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.* We may not be able to understand God's present dealings with us but our suffering is not meaningless. God is making *all things work together for good* to those who love him.

Jacob experienced many trials. He lost his wife Rachel in childbirth, and then his favourite son, Joseph went missing, presumed killed by some wild animal. He was not to know that Joseph had been sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. Jacob was to say years later, when he heard bad news, *'All these things are against me'* (Genesis 42:36). He was to discover that *'all these things'* were working for his good. Joseph must have been at a complete loss to fathom what God was doing with him when he was sold into slavery by his brothers or when he was the victim of injustice and cast into prison. The Lord was working in every detail however (Genesis 45:5–8). He was able to say to his brothers, *'As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good'* (Genesis 50:20). Our glorious, sovereign God is able to overturn all the plans of those who oppose us (cp. Nehemiah 4:15). No one is able to frustrate his sovereign purpose (cp. Isaiah 14:24,27).

Christian, are you passing through a dark valley of suffering? Are you cast down or perplexed? Oh, trust in our all-wise, never failing, loving heavenly Father. He is working all these things together for good and he will never leave you nor forsake you!

*God shall alone the refuge be
And comfort of my mind
Too wise to be mistaken, he,
Too good to be unkind.*

(Samuel Medley)

But now the righteousness of God ... is revealed

The first section of Romans paints a very dark picture of man in his sin (1:18–3:20). We now come to God's answer which tells us what he has done to save us. Man is unrighteous, *but now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed* (21). That righteousness is revealed in the gospel (1:17). Sin has left every man and woman:

- a. Guilty and under God's condemnation (19).
- b. Under the wrath of God (5–6).
- c. Enslaved, being under the power of sin (9).

Three words are used to show how God has provided to meet our desperate need:

- **'Justified' (24).** Justification deals with the problem of guilt and condemnation. To be justified is to be pronounced righteous by God resulting in the removal of condemnation (8:1). The source of our justification is the free grace of God. The ground of justification is the perfect obedience and death of Christ which satisfies God's holy law (5:5–9, 17–19). Sinners are justified through putting their trust in the Lord Jesus (26; 4:5; Galatians 2:16).
- **'Propitiation' (25)** deals with the problem of God's wrath. Propitiation is the turning away of wrath by an offering. The blood of Christ satisfies the demands of God's justice and thus his wrath is turned away from us. God the Father provided the propitiation in giving his only begotten Son (1 John 4:9–10).
- **'Redemption' (24)** is release from slavery or some other form of evil by payment of a price. The Christian has been freed from the bondage and tyranny of sin *through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*. Salvation is free, but it was purchased at tremendous cost, even the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18–19).

God may have appeared to be unjust in passing over the sins that were previously committed (by the Old Testament saints) but their sins are pardoned through the death of Christ and divine justice is satisfied (25–26). **Have you put your trust in the Lord Jesus to save you from your sins?**

Where is boasting then? It is excluded

The Jew boasted of his possession of the law (2:17–18) but such boasting is out of order. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded* (27). The apostle then asks another question and answers it. *By what law* (on what basis) is boasting excluded? Is it excluded on the basis of works? *No, but by the law* (on the basis) *of faith*. We fall short of God's holy requirements set down in his law (23). Our works cannot save us. Justification comes through faith alone and not by the works of the law (27–28).

God is not only the God of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles, and he accepts both by faith (29–30). If we cannot be justified by keeping the law (which we cannot keep), does it mean that we no longer need the law (31)? *Certainly not!* The gospel is not the enemy of the law. The law establishes that everyone is guilty but it cannot justify us. The gospel reveals how guilty sinners may be brought into a right relationship with God whom they have offended and points us to Christ. He alone can save us and make us righteous and thus we establish the law through the gospel. Let us rejoice in our great Saviour who died and rose again to meet the requirements of God's law and to meet with our deepest spiritual needs.

We may think that we would never be guilty of boasting, but let us beware of deluding ourselves. We must not boast in our knowledge of the Bible and its teaching, nor in what we do for the Lord. Such boasting is foolish. Let us beware of pride and make it our aim only to glory in the Lord and in the cross of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:31; Galatians 6:14).

*Not what my hands have done
Can save my guilty soul;
Not what my toiling flesh hath borne
Can make my spirit whole.*

*Thy work alone, O Christ,
Can ease this weight of sin;
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God,
Can give me peace within.*

(Horatius Bonar)

Sufferings ... glory which shall be revealed in us

As children of God, we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and though we may suffer now, a wonderful future and glory await us (17). Adam's sin blighted all creation bringing the curse of God on nature (20–21; cp. Genesis 3:17–18). The Christian does not escape suffering. — *We suffer with him* (17; cp. 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 2:20–21; 4:12–14). We are helped in times of suffering if we keep in mind our wonderful future. Paul wrote, *'For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us'* (18). Our groaning is not that of a dying man. The groans of creation are like those of a woman groaning with birth-pangs, and we also groan, but with expectation and not in despair (23–24). We are not alone in our weakness, for the Holy Spirit helps us and shares in our groaning. He prays for us, making *intercession for the saints according to the will of God* (26–27).

Suffering will give way to glory when Christ returns. The glory which shall be revealed in us is beyond anything that we can possibly imagine! Creation will also be delivered from its bondage (21). There will be a new earth (Isaiah 11:6–9; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1–5). Our salvation will then be complete with the redemption of our body which will be raised and transformed (23; cp. Philippians 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2). God has prepared wonderful things for those who love him (Matthew 25:34; 1 Corinthians 2:9). Suffering is but for a time, but glory is for ever! **Are you eagerly waiting for Christ's return? If you are, you will persevere in suffering (25).**

Paraphrases of Scripture are not always accurate, but J. B. Phillips captures something of our glorious future in his rendering of verses 18 and 19 – 'In my opinion whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has planned for us. The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own.' **Let us ponder the blessings of our great salvation and praise God with all of our heart!**

Children of God

When we are saved, God brings us into his family and this is a priceless privilege. We are described as ‘*sons of God*’ (14) and ‘*children of God*’ (16). We have already seen the importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and these verses speak of:

- The leading of the Holy Spirit. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God* (14). This verse does not refer to general guidance, but guidance concerning our behaviour. We put to death the sinful deeds of the body through the help and power of the Holy Spirit. He is ‘*the Spirit of holiness*’ (1:4) who leads us in the path of obedience to the will of God. He is also ‘*the Spirit of truth*’ who guides us into all truth (John 16:13). Those who embrace error do not have the Spirit of God. He never leads us into error. He leads us to love God and our fellow-believers.
- The liberty of the Holy Spirit. *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption* (15). The translators have used a small ‘s’ for ‘spirit of bondage’ indicating that they do not believe that this refers to the Holy Spirit. John Murray takes it to mean that you ‘did not receive the Holy Spirit as a spirit of bondage but as the Spirit of adoption’ (COMMENTARY ON ROMANS). We are no longer slaves to sin or Satan, but we are children of God. We enjoy liberty from the slavery to sin and fear of condemnation. By the Holy Spirit, we call God, ‘*Abba, Father*’ (15). ‘*Abba*’ is a very intimate term originally used by young children to address their father. God is our heavenly Father who will never fail us, who will always love us and care for us (cp. Matthew 6:25–34).
- The witness of the Holy Spirit. *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God* (16). As we put to death sin in our lives, and obey the Lord, the Holy Spirit gives us a consciousness that we are God’s children. **What privileges are ours! – Life for the ‘children of God’ is wonderful now but the best is yet to come as we shall see tomorrow.**

His faith is accounted for righteousness

The message of the gospel makes a person think. Paul poses question after question in Romans and then provides the answers. Some of his Jewish readers might have thought that he was saying that faith cancels God’s law (3:31). He anticipates this question by referring to Abraham who is revered by every Jew (cp. John 8:39–40,53). Paul had written earlier that the Law and the Prophets witness to the truth of justification by faith (3:21). Abraham is the ideal person to illustrate Paul’s argument:

- Abraham was not justified by works, but by faith (2–3). The law had not been given when Abraham *believed God*, but God imputed righteousness to him (i.e. put righteousness to his account) without works (3–6). The debt of sinful man can never be cancelled out by the works of the law because we have all broken God’s law (3:20,23). We must trust in the holy Son of God who died and rose again to pay the debt (23–25). *Such faith is accounted for righteousness* (5).
- Abraham was not justified by circumcision (9–11). His faith was accounted to him for righteousness before he was circumcised (10; cp. Genesis 15:6; 17:24). Our sin has been imputed to the Lord Jesus Christ; it was put to his account; he was punished for it (Isaiah 53:6). His righteousness has been imputed to us (23–25; cp. 2 Corinthians 5:21). Those who know this imputation are blessed indeed (7–8)!

We may be kind and helpful to others, we may have been baptized, we may be religious and say our prayers but we still have the problem of sin in our lives. We are all sinners by nature and good works and religious ritual cannot earn us salvation. **Are you walking ‘in the steps of the faith’ which so characterised the life of Abraham** (12)? Have you cast yourself upon God trusting in Christ alone to save you? Do not remain in your sin but seek the blessing of God’s forgiveness.

He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief

We saw from yesterday's reading that Abraham was not justified by works (2–8) nor by circumcision (9–11). The apostle now demonstrates that Abraham was not justified through the law (13–16). The Lord promised Abraham that he would have innumerable descendants and that he would be the father of many nations (17; cp. Genesis 15:5–6; 17:5). At that time the patriarch was childless and his wife past child-bearing age. Abraham believed the promise of God and was justified 430 years before the law was given. The promise was given without law-keeping as a condition for fulfilment (13; cp. Galatians 3:16–18).

Abraham's faith is a challenge to us all. He may have been very old, and frail in body, but he was not weak in faith! *He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief.* He was *fully convinced* that what God *had promised he was also able to perform.* God accounted this faith to Abraham for righteousness (19–21; see also verses 3 and 5). He wants us to trust him wholeheartedly for our salvation and for our every need. Such a faith delights him and brings glory to him. **If Satan is attacking you with doubts and fears, remember, God will never let you down, for 'what he had promised he is also able to perform.'**

We are justified through believing in God who delivered the Lord Jesus Christ up to death at Calvary to save us from sin and who raised him from the dead (24). *He was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of our justification* (25). Robert Haldane writes, 'The justification ... of his people, which includes not only the pardon of their sins, but also their title to the eternal inheritance, was begun in his death, and perfected by his resurrection. He wrought their justification by his death, but its efficacy depended on his resurrection. By his death, he paid their debt; in his resurrection he received their acquittance. He arose to assure them of their right to eternal life, by fully discovering and establishing it in his own person, for all who are members of his body.' (COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, published by Banner of Truth Trust, page 184).

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit

Paul states that unbelievers ('*those who are in the flesh*') cannot please God but he reminds his Christian readers, '*But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit*' (8–9). The work of the Holy Spirit is vital in salvation. It is he, *the Spirit of life*, who brings us to new life in Christ (2; John 3:8; 6:63; Titus 3:5), and it is he who enables us to live the Christian life. Notice that he is called *the Spirit of God* and *the Spirit of Christ* (9; this is another verse which proves that Christ is God). Those who teach that you can be a Christian and not have the Holy Spirit are in serious error for they deny the word of God. *If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his* (9).

Christ lives in us and so does the Holy Spirit (9–11)! We cannot live for Christ without the Holy Spirit. We live under his influence, not according to sinful flesh (1,4,5). We have no obligation to live according to the flesh. We are debtors to grace and not to the flesh. We must not lead sinful lives, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, we must put to death the sinful deeds of the body (13). The Christian is not a helpless victim of the power of sin. We are able to deal with sin and we must mortify (put to death) sin throughout our lives because of the remains of sin within us.

How do we put to death the sinful deeds of the body? We must shun everything that may lead us into temptation and sin. We must not feed sinful desires by watching films or television programmes that involve the use of foul or blasphemous language, that portray sexual immorality or marital infidelity as acceptable. We must not feed our minds on covetous fantasies. Kill sinful thoughts as soon as they begin to arise and think on good, wholesome things (Philippians 4:8). Soak your mind in the word of God and obey it (Psalm 119:9–11).

*Dear Lord, and shall thy Spirit rest
In such a wretched heart as mine?
Unworthy dwelling! Glorious Guest!
Favour astonishing, divine!*

(Anne Steele)

To be spiritually minded is life and peace

There are two classes of people in the world – unbelievers *who live according to the flesh* and Christians *who live according to the Spirit* (4–5). The unbeliever has his mind set on the things of the world which appeal to his sinful human nature (cp. 1 John 2:15–17). The person with a carnal (fleshly) mind seeks to gratify his sinful desires and is in a state of spiritual death (5–6). The carnal (‘fleshly’) mind is a rebel and an enemy of God (7). Those who are in the flesh live according to its dictates, and they *cannot please God* (8). The hostility of most people to God is not always apparent. They may even be religious or friendly to those who love Christ, but when faced with the challenge to repent of their sin and to follow Christ as their Lord, they may become very angry or dismissive.

Life is different for the Christian. He sets his mind on *the things of the Spirit* (5). What does this mean?

- It means to love God’s holy Word, which has been given by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).
- It means to meditate on good and wholesome things (Philippians 4:8).
- It is to *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness* (Matthew 6:33).
- It produces a desire to please God (cp. 2 Corinthians 5:9).

Some immature Christians spend much time seeking blessings and sensational experiences. Real life in the Spirit is to be *spiritually minded* and thus to enjoy sweet fellowship with God as we walk with him. *To be spiritually minded is life and peace* (6). We may struggle with the remains of sin, but what peace we have within despite the conflict! We have our struggles and a deep sense of our own unworthiness (7:24), but we are undergirded by the surpassing peace of God (see Philippians 4:6–7; Isaiah 26:3). There is a desperate need for *spiritually minded* Christians when so many are very materialistic and worldly minded. **Can you honestly say that you are ‘spiritually minded’?**

We ... rejoice in hope of the glory of God

Each Person of the Trinity is involved in our salvation – God the Father (1,5,8,10), the Son (1,2,6,8–11), and the Holy Spirit (5). This chapter describes some of the privileges and blessings that belong to those who have been *justified by faith*. Let us consider some of them:

- *We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ* (1). As sinners, we were the enemies of God, but now we are reconciled to him (10). The hostility has ceased. We are no longer condemned for our past; our sins will be remembered no more (cp. Hebrews 8:12).
- *We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand* (2). We stand in this grace (justification) and have access to God the Father (Ephesians 2:18; 3:12) and to his throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). We are accepted and welcomed into the presence of the King of kings. This blessing is for the present. We have fellowship with God now!
- *We ... rejoice in hope of the glory of God* (2). The word ‘hope’ means ‘confident expectation’ of something yet to come. We now have access to God the Father, but one day we will be in his very presence in heaven and we will see our wonderful Saviour face to face. The Greek verb translated ‘rejoice’ means ‘to boast’ and is not the word used to indicate ‘gladness’ as in Romans 12:12 and many other New Testament verses. It is important to understand that this boasting does not come from a sense of pride, but of humble, heartfelt gratitude to the Lord. Before the Lord saved us from our sins, we were far from God and without hope, but all that has changed. Do you *rejoice* (boast) *in hope of the glory of God*? Do you talk to others about all that the Lord has done for you and of your hope in Christ? This is the message that men and women need to hear.

Always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear

(1 Peter 3:15)

We also glory in tribulations

We continue with the theme of boasting in today's notes and yesterday's reading is repeated. The word 'glory' in verse 3 is from the same Greek verb translated 'rejoice' (2). The apostle contrasts two situations in which there is rejoicing or boasting. 'We ... rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, we also glory ('rejoice' or 'boast') in tribulations' (2–3). Christians experience suffering as well as blessings! The Lord Jesus teaches us that we will have tribulation in this world (John 16:33). Tribulation covers all kinds of suffering – affliction, persecution, perplexity, loss, disappointment, bodily weakness and illness (cp. 2 Corinthians 12:7–10). The very thought of the glory that awaits us helps us to rejoice in tribulations (8:18; cp. Matthew 5:10–12).

We can also glory in tribulations because God uses suffering for our good (3). Suffering leads to greater dependence upon the Lord and drives us to prayer. Suffering produces perseverance (endurance) which strengthens us and produces Christian character (4). This in turn produces hope which *does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (5). **Our future is secure in Christ; we are pilgrims to heaven. Let us be encouraged and bring our praises to God!**

Stuart Olyott writes, 'What an amazing thing Christian experience is! The buffetings of this world stir up our hope of, and our longings for, heaven. The more the world turns its back on us, the more sure we are that God loves us. Will he who loves us fail to bring us home? Would his Spirit stir up within us a hope that will never be realised?' (THE GOSPEL AS IT REALLY IS — PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS SIMPLY EXPLAINED, pages 42–43).

*When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
For I will be with thee thy troubles to bless;
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.*

(K' in Rippon's Selection, 1787)

Now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus

Romans 8 is one of the most wonderful chapters in the Bible. Haldane writes, 'This chapter presents a glorious display of the power of divine grace, and of the provision which God has made for the consolation of his people' (COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, published by Banner of Truth Trust, page 310)

We have already seen that all men are condemned in Adam and under a sentence of death (5:12,16,18; 6:23), but things are different for the Christian. *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus* (1). The law is *weak through the flesh*, being powerless to deal with our sinful nature (3). It is impossible for man to reach the standards of God's holy law, but what the law has failed to do, *God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh* (3). Through Christ's sacrifice, our debt is cancelled. 'In Christ' we are free from condemnation, from the dread sentence of the law.

The Christian is aware of the remains of sin ('*the law of sin*' in his members, i.e. his body – see yesterday's notes). He also has *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus* which is greater than *the law of sin and death* (2). Notice how many times the Holy Spirit is mentioned in Romans 8. Without him, we would be very weak and we would not be able to lead a godly life. The Lord Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh to deal with sin. He took on human nature when he came to earth, but he never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). By his perfect obedience to God the Father, he met the righteous requirement of the law which is fulfilled in us, not by us (3–4). He bore the penalty of our sin and we are united to him in his death and resurrection. **Is it any wonder that we should delight to walk according to the Spirit (4) and thus to please the Father who so loves us?**

*No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine!
Alive in him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine.*

(Charles Wesley)

O wretched man that I am!

Some godly men (eg Dr. Lloyd-Jones) believe that verses 14 to 25 describe Paul's experience prior to his conversion, but I agree with the vast majority of commentators (eg. F.F. Bruce, Calvin, Haldane, Hendriksen, Hodge, Luther, Murray) who believe that these verses refer to Paul's experience as a Christian (notice the change to the present tense in verses 14 to 25). Moreover, the unsaved man does not *delight in the law of God* (22).

There is a teaching which suggests that through the Holy Spirit, we are able to attain a state of Christian perfection in this life, the remains of sin being removed from our lives. We are told that we can know rest from the struggle with inward sin, our only warfare then being against the world and the devil. Don't be deceived by such teaching! It is not true to Scripture nor experience and it takes a shallow view of the nature of sin.

We have already seen that sin no longer reigns over the Christian but it remains in him. We are not under its bondage; we are not its willing slaves. **This remaining sin brings anguish to the life of every believer. Before he was saved, the Christian was at peace with sin, but now he is at war with it (23).** He has holy desires which are in conflict with remaining sin (15–25). This conflict will remain with every child of God until he goes to be with the Lord in heaven. When we do sin, we cry out, '*O wretched man that I am!*' (24). That groaning will be with us as long as we are in our mortal body (8:23).

The members of the body – mind, eyes, ears, lips, hands, feet are the instruments of sin (23; cp. 3:13–18). Redemption will be finally complete when Jesus returns and our bodies are raised up, when we shall see him and be like him (1 John 3:2). **If we can sin without a sense of grief and shame, we must ask ourselves whether we are truly saved.**

Christ died for the ungodly

We should never forget what we were without Christ. We were *without strength* and we were *ungodly* (6). *Without strength* describes our helplessness as sinners. We were separated from God and unable to come to him. We were helpless to deal with our guilt, with the power of sin and its result, death (*sin reigned in death*, 17,21). If we fail to see that left to our own devices, we are totally incapable of saving ourselves or of pleasing God, we do not understand the grace of God. He reached down to save polluted, helpless, hell-deserving sinners by sending his beloved Son into the world to die on the cross. Christian, doesn't the thought of the amazing grace and love of God fill your heart with grateful and joyful praise?

We sometimes hear people ask, 'If God is a God of love, why ... ? How should we answer such a question? We should point out that we are all sinners (many people will agree). We must then show from the Bible how our sin alienates us from God who is holy and that it will lead us to eternal separation from him in hell if we do not repent of it. The love of God is seen in the measures he took to save us from our sins. God has demonstrated his love in giving his Son to die for sinners (8). On rare occasions a man may lay down his life for a good man, but *Christ died for the ungodly* (6). He died for the bad! He shed his blood for our forgiveness and justification! Now that we are *justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him* (9–10).

What amazing love that God should give his Son to die for such wretched sinners as ourselves! Let us spend time thinking about his wonderful love. The Christian can and should rejoice that he is reconciled to God and no longer under divine wrath (11). Are you rejoicing in him?

*How helpless and hopeless we sinners had been
If he never had loved us till cleansed from our sin!*

*Unto him who hath loved us and washed us from sin,
Unto him be the glory for ever! Amen.* (Arthur T. Pierson)

Through one man sin entered the world

The passage of Scripture that we have just read is one of the most important in the Bible if we are to understand the gospel:

- It sets before us the doctrine of original sin, showing how sin came into the world and why we are all born with a sinful nature.
- It points to the fact that the first three chapters of the book of Genesis are history and that the events described in those chapters actually happened.
- It shows the importance of what is known as ‘covenant theology.’ God always deals with man through a covenant (a binding agreement). Man has a covenant representative. Adam was the first representative, the Lord Jesus Christ is our representative in the new covenant (14; cp. Hebrews 9:15). In these verses, Paul makes a comparison between the saving work of Christ and the condemning work of Adam. Many people thoughtlessly accept the theory of evolution and deny that Adam was a real person in history. We cannot believe in evolution and also in the Bible! If there were no such a person as Adam, Paul’s argument that we are ruined because of Adam’s sin has no validity. Death came into the world because of Adam’s sin, but evolutionists believe that death has been with us from the beginning of life on earth. They also ignore the scientific data that casts doubt upon the theory of evolution.

As representative head of the human race, Adam brought ruin to mankind when he sinned. *Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin.* Sin came into the world through his disobedience. His sin is imputed to all men and everyone born into the world is sinful (12–13,19). That sin brought death, judgment and condemnation into the world (16–18). *Death reigned from Adam to Moses* before the giving of the law (14,20). ‘The law did not put sin into the heart, but it was an instrument to display the depravity already existing in the heart.’ (Haldane). **Adam brought ruin, but the Lord Jesus brings salvation through his death and he gives us greater blessings than Adam lost. Hallelujah!**

Is the law sin?

The statement that the law arouses sinful passions (5) leads to the next question. If the law rouses such passions, ‘*Is the law sin?*’ (7). Again there is an emphatic answer, ‘*Certainly not!*’ Paul illustrates his answer from his own experience before he became a Christian (notice the past tenses of the verbs). He had been a zealous Pharisee and by outward appearances may have appeared to be keeping the law. The law had revealed to him, however, that he had broken the tenth commandment, ‘*You shall not covet*’ (Exodus 20:17). Apart from the law he would not have known that this was sin (7). Covetousness is different from other sins as it is an inward attitude and not an outward action. It often leads to other sins:

- Theft – Adam and Eve coveted the forbidden fruit and took it (Genesis 3:6); Achan also coveted and stole (Joshua 7:21).
- Adultery – David coveted another man’s wife and committed adultery (2 Samuel 11:2–4; cp. Matthew 5:27–28).
- Murder – David (see above; 2 Samuel 12:9); Ahab coveted Naboth’s vineyard and murdered him to get it (1 Kings 21:19).

The commandment was given to bring life (10; cp. 10:5; Leviticus 18:5; Luke 10:28; Galatians 3:12), but sin took the advantage and produced in Paul *all manner of evil desire* (8). Sin makes forbidden fruit appear to be desirable. Sin makes use of the law for its own evil purposes, but God turns the tables on sin. The law shows up sin in all its ugliness and makes us realise our own helplessness. We then see sin as *exceedingly sinful* (13). Such a revelation of sin killed the Pharisee in Paul; he realised that he was a sinner despite his outward religious show (11). The law is not sin, but is holy. The commandment that so convicted the apostle when he was Saul of Tarsus *is holy and just and good* (12).

Do you love the law of God and delight in it (22; cp. Psalm 1:2; 119:97, 140)?

Fruit to God

Paul has already shown that believers are no longer under the reign of sin because they *are not under law, but under grace* (6:14). He now explains how the Christian has been freed from the claims of the law by showing that when we are dead, we are no longer subject to the law (1; – In civil law, a criminal cannot be brought to trial if he dies before the court sits). The ‘*law*’ spoken of in Romans 7 is the law of Moses given at Sinai and established as a covenant (Exodus 19:1–9; 20:1–20; John 1:17; Galatians 4:24). This covenant has been superseded by the new covenant (Hebrews 8:6–13).

The marriage relationship is used to illustrate the point. A woman is legally bound to her husband as long as he lives, but she is free to remarry if he dies (2–3). Every believer has *become dead to the law through the body of Christ* (4) to whom we are now united in his death and resurrection (6:3–4, 8). We are now married to Christ who fulfilled the demands of God’s holy law through his death on the cross. We are married to Christ *that we should bear fruit to God* (4). This blessed fruit is *fruit to holiness* (6:22; cp. John 15:8; Galatians 5:22–23) and is contrasted with *fruit to death* (5; cp. Galatians 5:19–21).

When we were in the flesh (that is, when we were unregenerate, ‘*in Adam*’ we could not please God (8:8). How are *the passions of sins aroused by the law* (5)? ‘The more the light of the law shines upon and in our depraved hearts, the more the enmity of our minds is roused to opposition, and the more it is made manifest that the mind of the flesh is not subject to the law of God, neither can be.’ (John Murray, PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT, page 185). The law exposes our sinful passions but this does not make the law sinful; it is holy (5,7,12).

Freedom from the law is not freedom to sin, but freedom to serve Christ *in the newness of the Spirit* (6). **In the new covenant, God’s law is written in our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Hebrews 8:7–13). We should be bearing ‘fruit to God.’ How are you doing?**

By one man’s disobedience ... by one man’s obedience

We repeat yesterday’s reading because it has so much to teach us. Adam was a type of the Lord Jesus (14) who became man to save sinners. *For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous* (19). Let us think about the disobedience of Adam and the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are three significant gardens in the Bible:

- The garden of Eden. Adam was created sinless and God gave him everything necessary for lasting happiness in the garden of Eden. He enjoyed unspoiled fellowship with God but he rebelled against his Lord, bringing ruin to himself and this wonderful world.
- The garden of Gethsemane where the Lord Jesus prayed in great anguish as he faced his cup of suffering. He said, ‘*Father, if it is your will, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done*’ (Luke 22:42). In the garden of Eden, Adam rebelled against God to satisfy his own will. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus submitted himself to the will of God the Father. His sinless, obedient life provided the only acceptable sacrifice for disobedient sinners.
- There is also another important garden. *Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So they laid Jesus there* (John 19:41–42). The garden at Calvary was witness to *one man’s righteous act* (18). That righteous act was the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus who died to break the power of sin and death (18–21). How we should love him and adore him! The garden at Calvary was also the scene of the triumph of the Lord Jesus over death, where he rose from the grave.

We would be without hope, in our sins, with death reigning, but for *abundance of grace* (17). *Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more* (20). **The reign of sin has been replaced in the life of the believer by the reign of grace, and that grace brings eternal life (21).**

Sin shall not have dominion over you

Stuart Olyott writes, ‘Two things are clear to everyone who has understood Romans chapters 1 to 5. The first is this: that we are not saved by keeping the law of God, or, indeed, by anything that we do. The second is that the grace of God is at its best where sin is at its worst’ (THE GOSPEL AS IT REALLY IS published by Evangelical Press). The grace of God is magnified in forgiveness and in the imputation of Christ’s righteousness (his perfect obedience is put to our account). Grace abounds much more than sin (5:20).

Paul now anticipates a question, ‘*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*’ (1). In other words, ‘If the grace of God is magnified in his forgiveness of sinners, why not go on committing sin so that God’s grace can abound in free forgiveness? The apostle’s answer to this question is emphatic: ‘*Certainly not!*’ (2).

Believer’s baptism symbolises our position – *buried with him* (Christ) *through baptism into death and raised with him to walk in newness of life* (3–4). Christ’s death secured our pardon and it also sealed our death to sin. How can we continue to lead a sinful life now that we are dead to sin? We died to sin in the death of Christ. *We were baptized into his death ... buried with him ... united together in the likeness of his death* (3–5); *our old man* (nature) *was crucified with him ... has died with Christ* (6–8).

We also share Christ’s resurrection life being raised to lead a new life of obedience to God. Sin does remain in us (we will not be perfect until we reach heaven), but we must not allow sin to reign in us! (6,12,14). **We do not need to be defeated by sin and we are to reckon ourselves to be dead to all its enticements (11).** We once used our minds and bodies (our ‘members’) in the service of sin, but now we must use them to please God (13). *Do not let sin reign in your mortal body ... for sin shall not have dominion over you*’ (12,14).

Set free from sin, and having become slaves of God

Another question is now raised: ‘*Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?*’ The answer is, ‘*Certainly not!*’ (15). We cannot be saved by observing the law. We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8–10). Believers are not free from the law, however, as a rule of duty. *We are under law towards Christ* (1 Corinthians 9:21). We love the law of God (Psalm 119:97) and seek to obey his commands. **The Lord Jesus perfectly kept the law for us but that does not give us a licence to sin. We have been saved to lead holy lives (cp. 1 Peter 1:15).**

There are two masters who make entirely different demands and give different rewards to those who serve them:

- The first master is described as *sin* (16–18,20,22–23), *uncleanness* and *lawlessness* (19). Sin is a terrible and tyrannical master who gives terrible wages – *death* (23).
- The second master is described as *righteousness* (18–20) and *God* who gives *eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord* (22–23). We praise and thank God that in Christ, we are no longer *slaves of sin* nor *slaves of uncleanness* (17,19), but we are now *slaves of righteousness* (18–19). Those who serve righteousness are also the servants (or ‘slaves’) of God. *But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life* (22).

Those who follow Christ enjoy freedom. Slavery to righteousness leads to wonderful liberty producing fruit to holiness and leading to eternal life. Our new Master is our heavenly Father who always loves us and cares for us. **The more we love God, the more we will hate sin!**

*How blessed is life if lived for thee,
My loving Saviour and my Lord;
No pleasures that the world can give
Such perfect gladness can afford.*