

“GOD FORBID”

**A brief Exposition of the first eight chapters of Paul’s epistle
to the saints at Rome, embracing particularly 5:20 and 6:1.**

**“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded,
grace did much more abound...What shall we say then? Shall we continue in
sin that grace May abound? - GOD FORBID.” (Romans 5:20; and 6:1.)**

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FOREWORD

Of the 16 chapters of the epistle to the Romans, the Holy Spirit by Paul devotes 10 to doctrine, 6 to the practical life of the believer befitting the doctrine; of the 6 chapters of Galatians, 4 are doctrinal, 2 practical; of Ephesians 3 are doctrinal, 3 exhortatory; of Colossians, 2 doctrinal, 2 admonitory; and so on with the epistles to the Corinthians, Philippians, Thessalonians, and to Timothy and Titus. In all this, the Holy Spirit in authorizing these scriptures preserves a proper balance between the principles of the doctrine and the outworking of those principles in the life and walk of the believer. To hold to works without doctrine as the ground of good works Arminianism. To hold to principles of doctrine separate from good works which are the fruit of the doctrine, is Antinomianism. But to be able the grace of God, to faithfully maintain the doctrine and to maintain in love a life and walk consistent with the doctrine, is the true standard for every child of God. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.” Titus 2:11-14. What evidence have we that we have been purged from our sin and that we are Christ’s peculiar people, unless we are zealous of good works! In the absence of any desire or zeal for those good works “which God hath ordained that we should walk in them”, where is our basis for a good hope through His grace?

The articles written by Brother Berry from time to time in the “Old Faith Contender”, and now being put forth in this booklet, are most timely and much needed by all of us; and I have encouraged our brother to publish these in a convenient form for circulation among our brethren and among the churches of our faith and order, and may this booklet go forth with the blessing of God upon it, that to the praise of the glory of His grace may redound all edification and instruction resulting therefrom. These articles formerly published separately, are now offered together for convenient reading; they seek to maintain a proper proportion between doctrine and practice, a balance much needed in the preaching of the gospel in this day. For this reason, I recommend them for the careful and prayerful consideration of all who love the Word of God, especially of all who are called of God to the work of the ministry.

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GOD FORBID

“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound... What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? – GOD FORBID.” Romans 5:20; 6:1.



In the first eight chapters of Romans the apostle Paul carefully explains (1)man’s lost and depraved state, (2)the consequent reign of sin, (3)the purpose of the law, (4)man’s just condemnation under that law, (5)redemption and justification by faith, (6)salvation by grace, and (7)the consequent reign of grace.

Man’s Fall and depraved State

He shows how that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (3:23); that both Jew and Gentile “are under sin” and “there is none righteous” (3:9,10). He shows how the whole human race, from the fall of Adam to the giving of the law, lay corrupted in sin “being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, etc...who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do them, but have pleasure in them that do them.” (1:29-32).

The Consequent Reign of Sin

Sinners in this dead state are not only unrighteous, but full of unrighteousness; they are “filled” with fornication, wickedness, etc. They are not only full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, etc., “but have pleasure in them that do them.” This was the corrupted and debased condition of humanity not only before the flood, but afterwards, up to this present day, and will continue to “wax worse” unto the end. The presence and reigning power of sin in the world has been well demonstrated from the first fall. The fruits of sin have been grown and produced in every tree of the Adamic root, except the one Man, Christ Jesus. Through the power of the law the sting of it has “reigned unto death,” both natural and spiritual. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... Death reigned... By one man’s offence death reigned... Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation... By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Rom. 5:12, 14, 17, 18-21). “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (See Rom. 3:10-18, 23).

The Purpose of the Law

While man was guilty of sin and all these fruits of reigning sin, and he knew the judgment of God, there was as yet no law against them. Therefore they were not held guilty or charged with them; as Paul states, “For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed [charged] where there is no law.” (5:13). We may use the simple illustration of a Stop-sign. Cars may be ruining through a certain

intersection without regard to traffic from the other direction. This condition may exist for some time until several wrecks occur, but no one can be charged before the court of the land as guilty, because no law had been violated (although conscience says to stop). Finally a Stop-sign is placed at that intersection, which indicates there has been a law written against the running of that intersection without coming to a stop, with penalty attached for all violaters. Now the same characters who have been running the intersection uncharged, are found guilty by the law, brought before the court of justice, condemned and punished accordingly.

“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound.” Putting up the Stop-sign did not prevent drivers from ruining the intersection, neither did it make them run it; but it manifested and held them as violaters when they did run it. Likewise, the giving of the law did not take away sin (that was not its purpose), neither did it cause men to sin; but its purpose was to manifest sin (for by the law is the knowledge of sin) and hold sinners guilty and justly condemned before God. “That sin might appear exceeding sinful.” (Romans 7:13). “Because the law worketh wrath; for where no law is there is no transgression.” Romans 4:15.

Man’s Just Condemnation under the Law

“But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?” “But be sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.” “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” (Rom. 3:5-6; 2:2; 1:18).

“Wherefore then the law? – It was added because of transgressions.” (Gal. 3:19). “For sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 Jn. 3:4. “What shall we say then? – Is the law sin? – GOD FORBID. Nay, I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead... For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? – GOD FORBID. But sin that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” Rom. 7:7-8, 11-13.

That is, it was not God’s purpose that sin should remain, as it were, under cover, with the creature unaccountable for it; that it should not only be revealed, but made to appear in all its inherent depths, its blackness and enormity, and how infinitely opposed it is to His holiness and Divine nature. What is God’s purpose in showing the wicked power of sin? Why to also show the need for the righteous power of grace over it. The creature had no real knowledge either of the “mystery of iniquity” or the “mystery of godliness.” The serpent said, “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” “The Lord said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil.” (Gen. 3:5, 22). The law is an eye-opener, makes one to know his state: “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Rom. 3:20).

In the revealing of God’s eternal design to conform a people to the image of Christ, we see His wonderful but unfathomable purposes in the fall of Adam; and in this fall or disobedience, sin, death and destruction passed upon the whole human race. What was the purpose of this? God said of Pharaoh, “For this purpose have I raised thee up – that I might shew my power in thee, and that my

Name might be declared throughout all the earth.” Ex. 9:16; Rom. 9:17. Pharaoh laid heavy burdens on the Israelites grievous to be borne; but God showed His mighty arm of power and grace in their deliverance. By the entrance of sin through the transgression of the law an unbearable weight of condemnation and bondage rested on Adam and his posterity; but God, for Christ’s sake, His own name’s sake – brought in a more abundant life, even immortality through the grace of the gospel of His Son.

However, we confuse God’s order to say that Adam had to sin, or that it was good that he sinned in order that God might show His grace. In Romans 11:11, Paul says, “I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall?” Was that the purpose of God, merely that the Jews should fall? “GOD FORBID: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles.” So in the fall of Adam; it was not in the decree of God merely that Adam should stumble in order to fall, but that through that fall salvation should come to man, to the praise of the glory of His grace. No God-fearing child of God will say he is thankful he is a sinner, but he is thankful, since he is a sinner, that Christ died for such.

Could He not have shown His power and declared His name another way? Certainly He could; but He is a sovereign and did not choose to do so. We cannot agree with the sentiment that “God could not manifest His power without the devil.” That is limiting almighty God, with whom all things are possible. But for some wise purpose, best known and understood by Him alone, “sin abounded, but thanks be to God, grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death – even so might grace reign through RIGHTEOUSNESS unto eternal life BY JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.”

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

But now, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? – GOD FORBID.” Because God has purposed that because of sin, salvation should be necessary, and grace might appear and reign; because the truth of God by the effectual working of His grace has more abounded through my lie unto His glory; because He has taken up such a polluted wretch to manifest His holiness in; because He has taken my feet out of the mire and clay to set them on a Rock; because He took me as a sinner to reveal His Son and show His mercy and grace in me – shall I therefore continue in sin that this grace may thus abound? – GOD FORBID”!

“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” “You hath he quickened who WERE dead in trespasses and sin.” The child of grace who has been delivered out of a state of death and condemnation is now quickened into divine life, and killed to his former life of sin and death under the law. Therefore HOW can he live again or longer IN that to which he is made dead?

“Know ye not that so many of us were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life... “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Rom. 6:4, 6.

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. – Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Rom. 6:3-11.

REIGNING GRACE

Body of Sin Destroyed

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

When Christ suffered and died under the curse of the law it was for His Bride, the Church: “Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ [by His sacrificial death] that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” We learn from these and similar scriptures that at the birth of the new man there takes place the death of the old man. There has been much said and written on the new birth; man has been divided into many parts, and the subject more confused. But let us now not try to search out the perplexities in the manifestations of nature and grace; let us be content to consider what Paul here says takes place with a sinner when the “old man is crucified.”

Primitive Baptists have always preached and believed in the necessity of a new birth, that one must be born of the Spirit from above, that he must be a partaker of the divine nature, that he must receive of the righteousness of Christ and of God Himself, that when this takes place he is killed to the love of sin and made alive to righteousness; he is turned about and made to repent with a godly sorrow not to be repented of or turned back from; he is mortified, crucified and killed to his former life of lust in the flesh and “ungodly conversation,” etc. This truth has not only been held by grace Baptists in all ages, but it has been an essential and identifying part of their faith. This being the case, and it being also Bible truth, may God grant us grace that we may return to it, both in preaching and practice.

Effects of the Change

Paul here states that the old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed. What body of sin does he mean? He has been explaining the curse of sin and the condemning power of the law, how the law passes sentence upon the guilty sinful creatures. Now since Christ interceded as the sin-Bearer, He is held guilty for the sin and guilt of His Bride, and crucified. What takes place through this death? A crucifixion of any other person would result only in endless death; but by virtue of who this Man is – His descent, His Godhead, His office and His power, by His vicarious offering He actually benefits someone else by His own death. “He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” This seems strange indeed that such a thing could be – that one could be healed by the stripes of another. This is the mystery of godliness; and we need not expect to understand it fully in this life. But since by the mercy of God it is so, let us view the glorious results.

The result of Christ’s death is stated by Paul, “that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin;” and “that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” (Rom. 7:4).

It may be observed by some that this is all to be considered only in a doctrinal or legal sense. Certainly it is doctrinal; but what is meant by that? Shall we say Christ died and put away the “body of sin” only in a doctrinal sense? that His atoning sacrifice was merely a legal transaction? that His office-work as

Prophet, Priest and King was merely as a law-fulfiller, and the sinner is not thereby actually benefitted and changed as a result of all this work? Shall we “make void” the results of the sacrificial work of Christ by saying these scriptures do not teach that the poor sinner is affected, but only that his salvation is secured and laid up for him; that it does not begin now by Christ being formed in him and he changed from nature to grace to “walk in newness of life”? – GOD FORBID!

By emphasizing Christ’s obedience to the law, and neglecting His other equally important office-work the thought has become traditionally rooted that since Christ has fulfilled the law for us, that is the end of the matter and we are thereby saved. The fact is, that if all that Christ did was to meet the just demands of the law, His people would never be saved. By His fulfilling the righteous precepts of the law for them, Christ released the lawful captive; but the releasing from prison and the penalty for a crime has never justified a criminal. Something else must be done. Therefore Christ not only met the demands of a broken law and paid the penalty for sin, but He imputed to them His own righteousness, which exceeded that of the law (Matt. 5:20), and thereby justifying them before God. But still more must be done before the sinner reaches heaven or knows anything of this work done FOR him. As a consequence of this work of redeeming and justifying done for him, another work must be done IN him, and that work is the imparting of the nature of God by His Holy Spirit.

The salvation of a sinner is a great and wonderful work, God has not done it half-way. He not only chose His elect before time, He redeems them in time; He not only removes the charges of sin from them legally, He also imputes or puts to their account a justifying righteousness; He not only imputes His righteousness, but also imparts to them the nature of that righteousness and true holiness in the new birth. It is vain to talk about the imputation of the righteousness of Christ FOR sinners, without the impartation of His holy nature IN the life of sinners. Without this work of impartation they could not worship God acceptably in this life nor dwell with Him in the life to come. The salvation and glorification of the sinner is the principle matter; all doctrinal truth relative to that salvation is secondary and incidental to it.

Paul did not show the work of sin, the law, and grace, merely from a doctrinal standpoint, apart from the effects in the sinner; but rather does he show first the cause doctrinally, then the effects experimentally, – the actual results for and in the poor sinner. To know Christ died for sinners would do me no good if it does not actually find its effect in me a sinner. Paul gives an illustration of this in Romans 8:29: “Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate – to be CONFORMED to the image of his Son.” Where the word “predestinate” is the purpose, design or blueprint. But a blueprint is not the building; it is only the plan or design of the building. Now this building process begins down here while we are in sin – “in the field.” – For He will have no hammering, cutting, crucifying, or changing going on in the New Jerusalem. The subjects of that city must be crucified and suffer with Him “without the camp,” that they may reign with Him in glory. When He begins to fit us in the field the first operation is to cut us down; and no person who has felt this cutting will say it does not affect the old man, but rather will he cry out in his wretchedness because of the killing process going on. This is the old man being crucified. Strange as it may seem, the new man groans and feels the workings of this death, so much so that he may say with Paul, We had the “sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust he will yet deliver.” 2 Cor. 1:9-10. “For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” (2 Cor. 4:11). Thus he shows that the work begins and is first manifested in “our mortal flesh.” “We have this treasure in earthen vessels.” (2 Cor. 4:7).

They which are in Christ Jesus

“That the body of sin might be destroyed.” In the mind and purpose of God and in a legal sense, this “body of sin” was destroyed when Christ offered Himself on the cross; “who was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Rom. 8:1-2. There are two very important truths to consider here, namely, (1) That “there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” What does the “therefore” mean? He explains in these eight chapters, and particularly from the sixth to the eighth, namely what the law could not do through the weakness of our sinful flesh, God did by the sacrificial death of His Son. And for whom did He do it? – why, for “them that are in Christ Jesus.” How are you in Christ Jesus? merely in a doctrinal or legal sense? You must be “in Him” vitally, both in a legal and experimental sense. You must not only be chosen “in Christ” but also “made alive” in Him. You must be predestinated and also called. Now, here is the point, – are you “in Christ Jesus”? You say, “That is my hope.” Very well then, since you do not even know that, but live by hope that you are in Him, is it not a fearful thing to conclude that since there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ you may therefore “continue in sin”? For how do you know but that you may yet be condemned out of Him? for if you are not in Him, neither is His Spirit in you. But we must consider further, (2) That those who are in Him “walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” Do you not now see the matter, that the walk of those “in Christ” has been changed from the flesh to the spirit? The heart has been changed from stone to flesh (feeling), the old man has been put off and the new man put on, there has been a transforming from the things of this world to the things of Christ; there has been a translation from the “kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son”; there has been a going down in death with Him under condemnation and a being “raised in newness of life.” And what is this life? It is the life in Christ Jesus, that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” – that is the “eternal life” which we have now, – “Christ in you the hope of glory.” We do not now fulfill the law to be justified, but we fulfill it practically and experimentally in the spirit because we are justified and made new creatures in Christ. Jesus.

Serving in Newness of Spirit

Do we get out of condemnation by our not walking after the flesh? certainly not – that is salvation by works, a turning things backwards. We escape condemnation if we are “in Christ” who died for us. Then the consequent and essential result of this death is “that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.” He who is dead in trespasses and sins cannot please God because he is in the flesh and minds the things of the flesh. If one is seen always minding the things of the flesh (regardless of what he professes) it is very evident that he is still in the flesh. “But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”

Can we not live after the flesh and still have Christ in us the hope of glory? – GOD FORBID! The word of God says here not only that we cannot live after the flesh, but he that does so “is none of His.” This is an awful truth and an hard saying to the carnal mind. Paul follows his statement with proof: “But if Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.”

What does he mean here? – our outward body of flesh and bones? – certainly not, but the “body of sin;” it is dead, crucified, killed, mortified, put down, kept under, etc. It is the carnal mind, the lust of the flesh, which in Paul’s words, serves the “law of sin and death.”

Is there Holiness or Perfection in the Flesh?

But, one may say, I am free from that law. Yes, if you are “in Christ” you are not only free of the condemning power of God’s law, but also free from the power of sin. But let us not confuse what Christ has wrought for His people and the work of the Spirit in them with the nature that is still left in the flesh. While it is true that the spotless Bride or Church is no longer under condemnation, and is freed from the law so far as her standing in Christ before God is concerned; – yet sin was “condemned in the flesh” and there remains this “thorn in the flesh,” which is the “motions of sins” in the flesh and “sin that dwelleth in me” or the “body of sin” or our “old man;” which must now be “crucified” that being dead wherein we were held (law of sin) “that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” (Rom. 7:6).

An old writer wrote: “The man from whom the old life has gone out, and into whom the new life has come, is still the same individual. The same being that was once “under law” is now “under grace.” His features and limbs are still the same; his intellect, imagination, capacities, and responsibilities are still the same [in nature]. But yet “old things have passed away; all things become new.” The old man is slain, the new man lives. It is not merely the old life retouched and made more comely; defects struck out, roughnesses smoothed down, graces stuck on here and there. It is not a broken column repaired, a soiled picture cleaned, a defaced inscription filled up, an unswept temple whitewashed. It is more than all this; else God would not call it a new creation, nor would the Lord have affirmed with such awful explicitness, as He does, in His conference with Nicodemus, the divine law of exclusion and entrance into the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3). Yet how few in our day believe ‘that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit’ (Jn. 3:6) ...A Christian is one who has been ‘crucified with Christ;’ who has been buried with Him, risen with Him, ascended with Him, and is seated ‘in heavenly places’ with Him (Rom. 6:3-8; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:5-6, Col. 3:3). As such he ‘reckons himself dead unto sin, but alive unto God.’ ”

Where Paul says, “In my flesh dwells no good thing, he does not mean his body of flesh and bones, but rather his old carnal nature; for he also says “We have this treasure [Christ the hope of glory] in an earthen vessel,” and we bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in my mortal flesh. Again, “Know ye not that your body is the temple [dwelling place] of the Holy Spirit in you.” (I Cor. 7:19). So from these and other like scriptures we know that there is something very good and spiritual in the body of a saint. John says, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.” for His seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 Jn. 3:9). The same apostle says, “If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). So we conclude that he speaks of two men and two natures. He and Paul are speaking of the same thing, the old man and the new man. There is no holiness or perfection in the old or carnal man, the “body of sin” which is destroyed. But while this fleshly nature is not yet changed the child of God is greatly benefitted in the new birth, which brings in the “stronger man,” the life of Christ, who binds the old man, mortifies and keeps him under, etc.

The important and glorious truth to remember is, that where sin abounded grace does now the much more abound over sin.

“That henceforth we should not serve sin.”

We have discussed what was “the old man” crucified and “the body of sin” destroyed. Now in an experimental sense, let us inquire into how is this “body of sin” destroyed, and for what purpose. The answer to these questions Paul gives in the balance of this sixth chapter of Romans. Following his statement that the “old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed,” Paul states the reason, namely: “that we should not serve sin.” Does not this last clause really sum up God’s purpose in sending His Son to “destroy the works of the devil” and the “body of sin” – that henceforth His elect should not serve sin, but should be to Him a holy and a peculiar people? That is, that they should no longer be slaves in bondage to sin, but rather set free to serve Him in “true holiness.” Paul is teaching this truth in the Roman letter very particularly. He says that since Christ has died because of sin, once, He now lives to God, that you who are quickened by the Spirit and made alive in Christ, should for this reason and in the same manner, also “reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” And – “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield your members as instruments [or weapons] of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness.”

When is it we are not to “serve sin”? – in the next world hereafter, or “henceforth”? Henceforth means, from now on. This work begins when the work of grace begins: “He that has begun a good work in you will perform it...” Where God begins the crucifying of the old man, and the quickening of the new, He begins the destruction of the body of sin in our members, which were “servants of unrighteousness unto uncleanness.” He changes the service of those members from sin to holiness, from unrighteousness to righteousness, from evil to good, from hate to love, from lust to holy desires; in short, from all the works of the flesh to the fruits of the Spirit.

An Effectual, Efficient and Holy Work

This is also an effectual and efficient work performed by the Spirit of God in new-born sons and daughters of God. It may not be manifested at once, because they are not yet perfected, but the work of grace has begun, and just as sure as He has begun this work there must be consequent results in the carrying on. For God works in you “mightily” – not in a weak, half-hearted manner. God’s work is an effectual work: “by the effectual working of his power;” and like Himself, it is a holy work on and in a people called unto holiness, and “partakers of His holiness.” Eph. 3:7; Heb. 12:10; Luke 1:25.

If a person professing religion does not manifest any results or effects of a holy work in him by godly sorrow over sin, repentance, and mortifying of the flesh – but rather a continuance in its lusts, and “fulfilling the desires of the mind,” in all manner of ungodliness and worldly conversation and practice – it is plainly evident that God has not changed his course nor begun this work in him. Such have never been crucified with Christ, killed to the love of sin, etc., and so have not “reckoned themselves dead indeed [really] to sin, but alive unto God.”

Characters under Consideration

When Paul says “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in the lusts thereof,” to whom is he talking? – why, you say, to those who are “dead to sin but alive unto God.” Then does this injunction mean anything to them? It certainly does – to those particular characters who

have the fear of God in their hearts; who have been taught of God to know “the exceeding sinfulness of sin,” and the corruption of their fallen nature, and have been made to feel the just condemnation for their sinful state; also to know the just requirements of God’s holy law, and that to be at peace with Him they must be made “holy even as he is holy.” Their old stony unfeeling heart has been cut out and they have been given a heart to feel their weakness and a tender conscience to “fear God” (the beginning of wisdom). They fear to do anything that will displease their Father or is contrary to the “law of life in Christ Jesus” which contains in the spirit all the true righteousness of the law of God, in which they delight after the inward man. (See Rom. 7:22; Psa. 1:2; 119:35.) They are ever found seeking to “know what His good and acceptable and perfect will is,” rather than disregarding it. The holy and tender conscience of the new man “created after righteousness and true holiness” in them, will not allow them to let “sin reign” or bear rule as formerly, in their “mortal body” in obeying the lusts thereof, unprotected or without godly sorrow. They did love sin, but they hate it; they did serve it, but now they serve God in “the spirit and have no confidence in the flesh;” they did revel in sin and rolled it under their tongue as a sweet morsel, but now it is bitter to their taste, and contrary to the new life in them.

Works of the Flesh and Fruits of the Spirit

Paul lists the works of the flesh as: “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.” Where these are always manifest sin reigns there; sin has full sway and abounds in that person; there being no opposition to it, no tender conscience (but a seared one), no godly sorrow which “works repentance” for the deeds of the flesh. Such works are rampant among religious professors of the world; and do we see any such also being performed by those calling themselves Primitive Baptists? If so, is there any godly repentance and turning from them? or is there a continuance therein, allowing it not only to reign, but do they rather justify and excuse it? Do they profess to be “dead indeed to sin”? (If they are Primitive Baptists they have and must profess this, else they have no right to the name.) If they have ever known the way of righteousness but are now again indulging in these things, have they not become as the dog which returned to its vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire? (2 Pet. 2:22). Paul says they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, godliness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.” Gal. 5:19-25.

Freed to Serve as Sons

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? – GOD FORBID.” (Rom. 6:14-15).

After exhorting the saints not to yield their members to unrighteousness, he expounds why they should not, with these words, that they are no longer servants under the law. He takes this from the custom of slavery in the East. The slave serves his master in bonds; he is branded by a mark which distinguishes him as a slave; he has no freedom outside of the close observation of his master’s overseers, and in some instances he may be chained or otherwise bound. If he is disobedient or incurs the disfavor of his master he is punished by wearing the yoke, which consists of a cord tied around the wrist and looped

around the neck. To relieve the neck the arm must be held up; but the arm thus soon is tired, and so it is let down only to hang on the neck again. Thus the poor wretch is in constant misery. This is an apt figure of our bondage to sin, under the severe rule and requirements of the law. But occasionally it may please the master or owner of slaves to adopt one into his family as a son. When this is done the slave is freed from his life of servitude in bonds and receives the privileges of a son. However he may continue his work or labor for his father, but it is now performed freely as a son, and not as a slave. He has a new interest in life and in his father's service. He does not take advantage of his sonship to shirk his "reasonable service," or indulge his lusts because he is free.

When we were dead in trespasses we were the servants of sin, and its stain branded us as slaves; we found the law a hard task-master, and its burdens heavy; our life was a constant servitude and we found the wages of sin to be only death. We were under the dominion of the law of sin, which found its strength or killing power in the just and holy law of God. (Rom. 7:11-12). After we are born of God and receive the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father: we are adopted into the family of His dear Son, and freed from our life of bondage under the condemnation of the law; we are given the liberty of sons. Instead of being under the frowns and disfavor of God through His broken law we now enjoy His smiles. Our subjection to Him, however, remains the same – His law has not changed, but we are no longer under its curse, because we are freed from sin (6:7), and the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit, enabling us to come near as sons and daughters, and to approach Him as our "Father." The requirements of the law we formerly labored under we now find to be a pleasure, because the fulfilling of that law is in the one word, "love" (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:10), which we now possess in the new man! and the very righteousness of that law is now "fulfilled in us, [not by us], who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8:4.

As the freed bond-slave worked gladly as a son, so also the regenerated sons of grace now delight in serving their God "in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter." Rom. 7:6; 1 Cor. 7:22. Instead of taking advantage of their new liberty to use it as a "cloak of maliciousness," or changing the mercy and grace of their heavenly Master to indulge in the lust of the flesh, they have no desire now to use those members to ungodly living, which were once servants to ungodliness. In other words, as Paul here replies to those who would thus pervert the grace of our God and be so ungrateful of their sonship: "What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? – GOD FORBID! Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." That is obvious, that whatever we serve we are servants to that or to whom we serve. Paul, at one stroke, and in one breath here, proves it is impossible to serve sin and also be a servant of righteousness; that grace is not and cannot be the "minister of sin." 2 Cor. 5:17 which it would be if it freed the subjects of the law dead in sin and removed them from the condemning power only to go on fulfilling the desires of the flesh "under grace" – to which horrible and repulsive conclusion Paul shouts – "GOD FORBID!"

Thankful they are the Servants of Righteousness

"But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you." Rom. 6:17. Paul does not mean to convey the thought that he was thankful for sin, or glad that saints were sinners; for such a thought was repulsive to him, as he repeatedly says: "God forbid." We object to Arminians using only part of a text, such as, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," and "Work out your own salvation, etc." But are we not sometimes as guilty of the same thing with other texts, such as this one? The meaning of Paul's expression here is the

same as in similar passages such as, “For yet were sometimes [once] darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” Eph. 5:8. “And you hath he quickened who were dead...wherein in time past ye walked, etc...we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh. Wherefore remember, that ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh...without Christ:... but now in Christ Jesus ye who some times were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Eph. 2. “Which in times past were not a people, but now the people of God;” 1 Pet. 2:1; “old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” 2 Cor. 6:17, and many other such scriptures. As a matter of fact, Paul is here only continuing his contrasting of evil and good, of bondage and deliverance, etc.. And now he says, God is to be thanked, that notwithstanding the fact that they were or had been the servants of sin, they have now been delivered from that bondage and freed from condemnation; that while they have now received a new and clean heart from which they have obeyed and received the imprint of the law of the spirit of life in Christ. It may also be read thus: “Thanks be to God that, being bondmen of sin, ye have now become obedient from the heart.”

In other words, Paul is thanking God that wretches who were slaves to sin have now been freed (v. 18) and become servants of righteousness; and truly this is something to be thankful for! This is further proved in verse 21: “What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.” Would Paul thank God for that which he was ashamed? – GOD FORBID! Nay, rather, what satisfaction, what enjoyment, what good did you derive from your former conversation when you walked in the lusts of the flesh, but now being quickened by the Spirit you are now ashamed? No where in God’s holy writ is sin ever said to be a good thing, but rather condemned as a very bad thing; yea, it was sin that crucified His darling Son! Although according to the divine prescience of God “where sin abounded” He made grace to abound over it, does not therefore make sin in any wise more agreeable to His holy nature, but on the contrary, should and does make it more “exceeding sinful” – hateful, abhorrent in His sight and hence in the sight of all His true-born children. Where Paul says, “By the grace of God I am what I am” he is exalting the grace of God in saving him from sin and condemnation. Instead of a condemned sinner, by the grace of God I am a saved sinner. To say that we are sinners by the grace of God is not only a twisting of Paul’s words, but is a blasphemous and damnable reflection on the grace of God which leads to repentance for sin, and teaches “us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” (Tit. 2:12).

The sentiment that God is as much pleased and glorified with sin as with holiness is contrary to the teaching of His word, to the work of His Son and the consequent experience of grace in every child begotten of His Holy Spirit; it is a damnable perversion of the holy doctrine of God our Savior and a “changing of the grace of God into lasciviousness;” and such teaching should have no place among the people of God or those professing to believe in salvation by grace. It is a sad wresting of the faith to put sin in the place of grace and the work of God’s Holy Spirit; this is not merely a “changing of the grace of our God” but it blasphemes the Holy Spirit. It is a shame that it should be necessary to meet and expose such an awful teaching in our midst, and to contend for a truth that is admitted even by the wicked, not to mention everyone who is taught the fear of God by His grace. Therefore it behooves our people to be stirred to a holy fear and a righteous indignation against such God-dishonoring, faith-destroying heresy.

Will any Old Baptist take the position that God’s people are not to be a separated people? that they are at liberty to mix and revel with the world and spot their garments with all its pollutions and filth? that because they are saved by grace and cannot finally fall away, and because the righteousness of Christ is

imputed to them their garments cannot be spotted by the flesh (Jude 23)? We ask again, Will any take the position that the grace of God does not teach its subjects to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world”? (Tit. 2:11-15). Again, let us reaffirm, that it is not a matter of the works by the creature, but rather a manifesting of what we are by what we do. To argue that we cannot do good or keep ourselves unspotted in our own strength, no believer in grace will contend, neither that he can do anything great or small acceptable to God; but the Lord and His apostles teach that by the living faith and grace of God in them they will desire and strive to have a good report, as humble followers of the despised Lamb of God; that they will not openly, deliberately and brazenly bring reproach on that holy name by disorderly conduct and wanton indulgences of evil practices with those “who sport themselves in the daytime,” as well as at night, and reproach us because we don’t run to the “same excess of riot with them”. (1 Pet. 4:4).

In our constant opposition to Arminianism and the works system we have developed a negative kind of religion; expressed by some as “cant-help-it.” We say by the works of the flesh we can’t help it, – which is right in the sense of true religion; but while contending for this we have had too little to say about what we CAN do by the GRACE OF GOD, which works in us “both the will and to do.” Jesus said, “Without me ye can do nothing.” Paul says, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Phil. 4:13). In other words, we have had far more to say about what we can’t do without the grace of God than what we can do BY the grace of God. Which is more exalting and magnifying of the grace of God, – to infer by our walk and talk that it does very little or nothing for us, or rather now to delight more in the fact that the grace of God does much for a poor sinner? Should we not think and talk more in terms of what the power of grace does in the life of a child of God, how it takes his feet out of the mire and the clay and sits his feet on the firm Rock, and puts a new song and a new taste in his mouth, enables him to leap over a wall, to endure temptation and withstand the fiery darts of the wicked one, and finally “be more than conquerors” “laying hold on eternal life.” This is not what flesh does, but what the grace and strength of God does in and for a sinner, saved by grace. Boasting in the flesh has been excluded, but now we have so much more to rejoice and glory in by the grace of God. Instead of talking so much about the weakness of the creature let us preach more of the power of God working in that weak creature; that where sin did abound grace does the MUCH MORE abound. It is necessary that we know creature weakness. But that in itself is not the best part; to experience the super-aboundings of grace over sin is the better part.

What the Law Requires

While we are on the subject of the law let us consider its effect on sinner and saint. Sinai thunders to the sinner: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart.” Deut. 5:6. When the Israelites of old began to serve other gods, Joshua gathered them together and said to them, “Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods... And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God;” “For their heart was not right with him.” Thus we see the sinner could not serve God in spirit and truth on tables of stone, neither with hearts of stone. No one

with a hard, carnal nature can love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself; yet that is the service required by God's holy law! Therefore the wretched, depraved sinner, being incapable of thus serving God, is condemned by this law.

But now, to this same sinner the promise is made that the day comes when God will not write His law merely on tables of stone, but will put them in a soft heart in which they can be imprinted. That is, He will by the spiritual birth, give them a heart and a divine nature which will enable them to "serve Him in spirit and in truth;" and be His people indeed. This is not a different law in the essence of it, from that written on tables of stone, which condemned its breakers, – but it is now written in a different place, namely, in the new heart and imprinted in the mind, which is the "mind of Christ" in His people. Jesus makes all this clear in His reply to the lawyer, when he asked which is the great commandment in the law. Jesus replied: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy heart, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Mat. 22:36-40.

The Love of God

Paul also confirms this in Romans 13:5-10: "And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." And this is the "love shed abroad" in the new heart by the Holy Spirit, whereby we cry Abba, Father, and serve Him now in true holiness after the "power of an endless life." John and other writers also have much to say about this love and its manifestations: "Love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (see 1 Jn.). Thus we begin to see that the law in the real spirit of it, instead of being destroyed, is rather established and magnified by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and hence through His people. This has ever been taught by grace Baptists, but in late years it has too often been overlooked in speaking of the new covenant and our not being under the law but under grace, etc.

An old writer says, "But while it is clear that the law is not changed, and cannot be changed, either in itself or in its claims, it is as clear that our relations to the law and the law's relations to us, are altered, upon our believing on Him who is "the end (or fulfilling) of the law." Our old relationship to law (so long as it continued) made justification by the law a necessity. The doing was indispensable to the living, so long as the law's claims over us personally were in force. We strove to obey, in order that we might live; for this is the law's arrangement, the legal order of things; and so long as this order remained there was no hope. It was impossible for us to "obey and live"; and as the law could not say to us, "live and obey," it could do nothing for us. Only that which could reverse this order in our case, which could give life in order to obedience, would be of any service to us. This the gospel steps in to do. Not first obedience and then life, but life and then obedience... So long then, as the old relationship continued between us and the law; or, in the apostle's words, so long as we were "under the law," there was nothing but condemnation and an evil conscience, and the fearful looking for of judgment. But with the change of relationship there came pardon and liberty and gladness. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13); and so we are no longer under law, but under grace. The law is the same law, but it has lost its hold of us, its power over us. It cannot cease to challenge perfect obedience from every being under heaven, but to us its threat and terror are gone...

Our new relationship to the law is that of Christ himself to it. It is that of men who have met all its claims, exhausted its penalties, satisfied its demands, magnified it, and made it honorable... The law looks on us as it looks on Him; we look on law as He looks on it. And does not He say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psa. 40:8). Some speak as if the servant were greater than the Master, and the disciple above his Lord; as if the Lord Jesus honored the law, and his people were to set it aside;...as if he kept it, not that we might keep it, but that we might not keep it, but something else instead, they know not what."

To sum up briefly, the sinner is taken from under the curse of the law and put on a level with the law; so that the prophets and the law itself are witness to the righteousness we now have in Christ Jesus, and is fulfilled in them "who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit;" thus excluding all forms of Arminian legalism as well as all lawlessness. The Lord says: "Be ye holy as I am holy." That is not a mere suggestion – it is the Divine requirement, and God gives His people His holiness and His own divine nature by which they now serve Him as a "holy nation."

In this brief writing we have not endeavored to take up the various related truths taught in the Roman letter; but it has been our purpose to dwell particularly upon the work of grace in its abounding over sin. There are so many good things and truths to be considered in the work of grace and the purpose of God in predestinating a people to be "conformed to the image of His Son." What we have written is in love and fear of God we trust, and with a sincere desire that it may be used of the Lord to the edification of some of His people, and to the stirring up of their pure minds, working in them a carefulness, indignation, godly fear, zeal and vehement desire to a clearing of themselves (2 Cor. 7:11) of all evil practice and corrupt teaching, with a consequent exalting of the true grace of God.

We are living in the days spoken of by Jesus, when "the love of many shall wax cold;" (Matt. 24:12) and by Paul, "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." (1 Tim. 4:1). There is no question that there has been a great falling away and departure from apostolic faith, both in doctrine, practice and godly zeal. God has in a great measure withdrawn the unction and blessing of His Holy Spirit and left us to ourselves. A spirit of worldliness and cold indifference has gripped us, causing a general slackness and unfaithfulness in the doctrine and order of God's house. The ministry itself is subject to the same condition, not having a burden or vision from the Lord. The general membership and hearers not being firmly rooted and grounded in the faith, accept most anything from the pulpit, without question whether it is according to wholesome doctrine. The ministry has been busy either fighting Arminians or fearing lest they be called Arminian. The preaching of the pure gospel in demonstration of the spirit and power has become a rare thing. The membership has encouraged and supported the situation by following and worshipping men instead of God. This has given room for many erroneous and hurtful things to creep in.

These evils are seen and admitted by many, but because they have become so deeply rooted, few will stand against them in the churches. And so it has gone from bad to worse, until today in some respects we have departed so far from the true order and faith, many are confused as to what is gospel truth. There must be a return in faithfulness to God and to His word. We have denied the faith and gone after fables. We must seek again the old paths and a "Thus saith the Lord." We must not only know "what the good and acceptable and perfect will of the Lord is," but have grace and courage to do it! "God's people are taught in the heart, and have the word of God as the "man of their counsel." It is to that counsel we must return to and contend for in love and faithfulness.

We must forget self and seek the honor of God and the welfare of Zion. We must do the right thing because it is right; and not to please men, even good men, or stand in the fear of man whose breath is in his nostrils, and who fades as the flower of the grass. We must put the kingdom of God before everything else in our lives, – even before our own selfish desires and ambitions. We must be stirred to a realization that the things that pertain to God and godliness are sacred and eternal vital principles that cannot for a moment be compromised or trifled with without serious consequences.

May God’s people be burdened to “pray for all saints” and for His true sent ministers, that they may open their mouth to speak boldly such things as they ought to speak; (Eph 6:20) and may our merciful heavenly Father undertake for us all, and give us grace to serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear. May this grace of God teach us “that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.” (Titus 2:12-15)

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