

DELIVERANCE:

WHAT IS IT?

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1. THE NEED OF DELIVERANCE.

EVERY one who, with his spiritual eyes opened, observes the condition of things among the people of God in the present day, will be conscious that in spite of great and wide-spread blessing through the gospel, in spite of much Scripture light and knowledge, and a revival of truths which for ages had been lost sight of, in spite, too, of a very extensive and awakening preaching of the Lord's coming,—yet, in general, the state of Christians by no means answers to what such things would seem to imply. Feebleness is every-where apparent. I do not speak of the concurrent growth of ritualism and infidelity, which is evident, but is the product, in different ways, of the denial of the divine Word; nor do I speak even of the worldliness which is as undeniably evident among so-called evangelical denominations. I confine myself now to the narrower sphere of those who professedly have peace with God in the knowledge that they are justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and, standing in grace, rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Among such, at least, it is not too much to expect devotedness, and that, as they grow continually in the knowledge of the truth, they should be in proportion sanctified by it.

Before peace is known, a true walk with God is impracticable, however sincerely it may be desired and sought for. The moral character of practical Christianity is found in this: "That they which live should henceforth no more live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." (2 Cor. v. 15.) But is it possible for one to whom his ultimate salvation is yet unas-

sure to be thus regardless of what must be to him of the greatest moment to have secured? Can he live thus devoted to another who has such abundant reason for anxiety about himself? and if there is "no fear in love," as the apostle assures us, and love is the principle of all right obedience, and that by which faith works, how is it possible to be divested of fear—"fear" which "hath torment"—if there be a real possibility of at last being cast away as utterly reprobate?

It is this that is the misery of all half-gospels. Men are left toiling in worse than Egyptian bondage, to work out for themselves a deliverance which no human power could ever accomplish; Christ's work, and God's love in Him, in their sweet and sanctifying reality, unknown. No doubt in this condition there may be much ignorant zeal for holiness, while they take up to accomplish it a law which is "the strength of sin," and refuse the grace of which it is affirmed, in contrast, "sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace."

But we are to trace out the subtler workings of this principle in those who have already "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." In such, there surely should be found fruit unto holiness. The instincts of every quickened soul are after it. Why is it, then, that such as profess (and we may say, truly profess) to be at peace with God are found so often, in practice, little beyond those who profess nothing of the kind?—nay, not infrequently, as it would seem, doing their best to confirm the disparaging thoughts of those who identify the precious gospel of God's grace with what they entitle "antinomianism"? Why is it, further, that those who really, with the knowledge of peace, desire earnestly to know what it is to walk with God, manifest and confess such constant and utter want of power for it? and why do so many who have begun well and happily fall back often under the power of things they had forsaken, and go on in a course of conduct at variance with their Christian profession, if even they do not give it up?

We do not at all suppose that one answer will be suffi-

cient to account for all such cases; but we do believe that one of the most frequent causes is to be found in this, that such souls, though they may have known peace, have not known deliverance—a deliverance such as the eighth of Romans, in the commencement of it, sets forth; a thing which must be apprehended, not merely doctrinally, but experimentally, before the Christian life in its true character can be known and manifested.

The state of need which calls for deliverance is described in the seventh chapter, and it is important to get fully hold of this before we look at what meets it in the eighth. It is on this account that souls have to go through it experimentally, as they have, because deliverance can be reached no other way; although bad teaching may unduly protract this experience, and even add to it features that are not contemplated in the inspired picture.

Thus it should be seen that the whole question here is of *servng* and of *fruit*.—"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth *fruit* unto God" (vii. 4.); and again, "But now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held, that we should *serve* in newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter." (ver. 6, marg.) So the state is of one "carnal, sold under [in slavery to] sin," doing, under this tyranny of sin "that dwelleth in him," in compulsion to a "law of sin and death," the thing he hates; and the deliverance enjoyed finally corresponds to this: it is that "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death."

It is therefore no question of justification or of peace; that has all been gone through in previous chapters. That, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, is a conclusion fully arrived at in chapter v. 1, and the inability of the law to *justify* had been fully insisted on previously to that. Throughout our present section there is no repetition of this; it is a different and a further question. While justification is "not of works, lest any man should boast,"

and "to him that worketh not, . . . his faith is counted for righteousness," here, on the other hand, it is "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

It is plain, then, that ability to walk is a matter which needs to be learnt by a man already justified; and that it is such an one, already delivered from wrath and condemnation, who needs yet *another* deliverance from a law of sin and death—a present power of evil in him, without which he is still left helpless, doing the evil he would not, and not accomplishing the good he delights in.

This in itself is important to realize, and at first a thing very difficult to realize. In the vivid apprehension of sins forgiven, of the terror of the wrath of God gone forever, of the wondrous love which has visited us and turned the shadow of death into morning, it is easy to conclude that the warfare with sin is well-nigh over, when, in truth, it has not fairly yet begun. Who could sin for whom the cross of Christ has blotted out the past, the grace of God furnishes the present, and whose future prospect is the glory of God? But experience soon sorrowfully disappoints this expectation, and we learn to cry out despairingly for a new deliverance—"Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

What the apostle has elsewhere (vi. 6) called the "body of sin," he here calls the "body of death," and the oppressive power of this body of sin and death is what produces a "*law* of sin and death in his members." It is the resistance of the still-existing old nature he is experiencing, or what is termed the "flesh," for into mere flesh, as if destitute of the spiritual principle God had communicated to him, was the natural man sunk down, and, as our Lord says, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh;" from one to another this fallen nature is transmitted.

In the flesh sin dwells (I am only quoting from the chapters before us) and good does *not* dwell. Its mind (viii. 7. Gr.) is "enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" so that it is not possible to change its evil into good. It remains, and remains still the same, even in the child of God in whom

the Spirit of God dwells ; for of such it is written, that “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other.” (Gal. v. 17.)

So in the seventh of Romans, the man who is experiencing the power of evil in him, though converted, is conscious also of something within him opposite, in tendency, to sin and flesh. Nay, he identifies himself rather with that opposite tendency—“Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” (Ver 20.) Twice over he asserts this, although unable to deny either that the flesh too is himself. (Ver. 18.)

But all through he maintains that his will is on the side of God and good ; he delights in the law of God after the inward man ; with his mind he himself serves it ; but he sees another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin in his members. He is not indifferent to the state in which he finds himself, as is evident by his anguished cry, “Oh, wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me ?” The state thus described is sufficiently distinguished from that which the apostle speaks of in the sixth chapter. In answer to the question there, “What then ? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace ?” he replies, “God forbid ! know ye not that to whomsoever ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness ?” Here, the case is that of a free man (or one taking that ground) yielding himself voluntarily up to sin ; in the seventh chapter, on the other hand, of a man compelled to serve *involuntarily*. These states are wholly different. If the man’s free choice is to serve sin—well, he will get its wages ; but the other, though “carnal,” is not choosing to serve it, though he does. The will is right, but the power is wanting.

A terrible thing it is for the soul professing to have peace with God then, and yet unexercised about the evil in him or the evil he may be in. Let such ponder the solemn warning of the apostle—“To whomsoever ye *yield* yourselves servants to obey, *his servants ye are to whom*

ye obey;" and let us also remember that sin in God's sight is not measured by the mere natural conscience, which may be dulled and seared to any extent, or by the customs of society, even professedly Christian, but by the precepts of the Word alone. It is God's account of things that is alone trustworthy; and it is amply so, however little our dullness may apprehend the evil of what He calls such, or the manners of our neighbors indorse His estimate.

But yielding one's self to sin is not the question of the seventh of Romans. The soul is not unexercised, but consenting to and delighting in the good it cannot accomplish. For such, however impossible it may seem in their eyes, deliverance is possible, and the way is pointed out in the chapter before us. How is it possible, indeed, that He who gave His Son to redeem us from wrath and condemnation should leave us helpless to the dominion of sin? How should the grace which avails to bring a man to heaven *not* avail to keep him by the way from what to him is misery and to God dishonor? Let any one take heed who imagines that God can acquiesce in the triumph of evil over His good. It cannot be. It would be but to repeat the cry of old, "We are delivered to do these abominations." Scripture, at least, is in no wise responsible for such a thought; and this we shall go on to consider, at the same time that we inquire into the meaning of such a state as we are speaking of exhibiting itself in a converted and justified man.

2. THE MEANING OF THE NEED.

A "*law of sin in the members*" is not what is proper to the Christian, as we have seen. If on the one hand the apostle's language is, that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," on the other hand he says, "These things write I unto you that ye sin not, and *if* any one sin"—he supposes this possible, but not normal. Again—"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [or better, practice] sin; for His

seed remaineth in him, and he *cannot* sin [or, be sinning], because he is born of God." (1 Jno. iii. 9.) The force of these words is, not that a believer cannot commit a sin, (a thing contradicted by Scripture and experience alike,) but he cannot *practice* it, or be sinning, as he once was; and over and over again this is asserted: "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that practiceth sin is of the devil." (Ver. 6-8.)

This language has been strained so as to make it contradictory of the supposition that the experience of the seventh of Romans is that of a child of God at all, and to lead people into the manifest error that a mere child of nature may "with the mind serve the law of God," as "delighting in it." But this is in the teeth of the apostle's own assurance that "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can be*; so, then, they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God." (Rom. viii. 7, 8.) Here, the mind *is* subject to the law of God, as the mind of the flesh, or of one in the flesh, cannot be. Thus the man passing through this experience, with a right will, and perfect powerlessness to accomplish it, is clearly converted and a child of God. And that deliverance described in the beginning of the eighth chapter, by which freedom from the law of sin is attained, and the righteousness of the law (of God) is fulfilled in him who walketh not after the flesh but after the Spirit, is looked at as already the happy portion of those whom the apostle John in his epistle is addressing as believers.

And their portion it is—a thing which thus lies at the beginning of a true Christian course; for how can one unable to do the things he would—carnal, and the slave of sin—be qualified to walk with God or to glorify Him? And yet, alas! with many a true child, for a long course of years the truth is not known which sets free for this. For the truth it is that sets free (Jno. viii. 32.), and the truth alone; but that, also, truth apprehended by a soul

conscious of its need—conscious of bondage, and longing for deliverance. It is only when the cry is wrung from the soul, “Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” that the answer is supplied, “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” It is an experience of evil from which we are delivered; and for that we must, in one way or another, *pass through the experience*.

But this is not yet the explanation of the need; for why should not the knowledge of peace with God and the practical deliverance from the power of sin go together? In the epistle to the Romans it is evident they are treated as separate questions, of which the one receives its answer after the other. The ordinary experience of believers confirms this, if it does not add, often, “*long after.*” I am persuaded that, in fact, the want of deliverance is the great want of by far the larger part of those even at peace with God. Their lives, if they would own it to themselves, are made up of empty purposes and broken resolutions, if they have not got into the more perilous condition, rather, of half-contentment with the evil, from which there seems no escape. Why, then, the need of such an experience at all as this in such as I am speaking of?

Now, in the practical attainment of peace with God, we may find (if we have attained it,) what may help us greatly in the inquiry. Here too, what a length, oftentimes, of so-called “conflict” before that which is already made for us and so fully proclaimed to us and to which we are made so heartily welcome is attained! What means this struggle? Its character is evident enough—at least to those who have passed through it. It is the struggle to maintain, or to produce,—by God’s help, too, no doubt,—some righteousness of our own, for peace or for justification. Instead of bowing before God’s righteousness, according to which “our righteousnesses”—“*all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,*” we seek to rescue something from this absolute condemnation, and be received at least as not wholly and in the full sense “lost.” We try (and are often *taught*) to find firm footing for faith in the assurance of our *saintship*, and not of

our *sinnerness*; as if as *sinner*s we were not entitled to the fullest possible confidence in Him whose special title is, The Saviour of sinners.

And thus we miss what we are anxiously striving after. The "God, I thank Thee I am not as other men,"—the self-satisfied assurance of the Pharisee,—is what God can never own or accredit. Peace through our own evidences—peace through our own work or effort or self-complacency—cannot be identified with "peace with God *through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Now, in the matter of holiness and fruit-bearing a similar lesson has to be learnt. The holiness which God does indeed seek from His people is confounded with a *self-consciousness* which is the destruction of holiness. To one of whom God testified, "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty," He had to say, "Thine heart was *lifted up* because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness." (Ezek. xxviii. 12, 17.) Into no such dangerous path as that does the Lord lead the feet of His own. He cannot trust us to such perilous self-contemplation. He has made Christ to be our sanctification as much as our righteousness (1 Cor. i. 30.), and the way of it is, occupation with Christ, and with Christ alone. Only as "we all with open face" are "beholding the glory of *the Lord*" do we become "changed from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." (2 Cor. iii. 18, *margin.*)

How we are enabled for this we shall have to consider more at large directly. The fact itself is what I would press here. Justification is no more on the principle of faith than sanctification is: holiness is no more acquired by self-cultivation than righteousness is. It is faith that purifies the heart; it is faith that worketh by love; it is faith that does all this, because it is *Christ* does it, and faith it is that lays hold of Christ for whatever purpose. Self is never its object, but Christ only. The soul taken up with the beauty of Christ is the soul that at one and the same time is learning effectually to be holy and what is its own nothingness and unlikeness to Him.

The need of the experience of self in the seventh of

Romans is the need of learning practically to abide in Christ at all times, to accept Him for practical life as well as for position. And here we may have to find, what is a thing strange enough in the discovery, that a pious and right-willing self may stand in the way of this, and need to be set aside, that Christ may have the place that He must needs have with all His own. "I live, yet *not I*, but Christ liveth in me," says the apostle. (Gal. ii. 20.) That is another thing from saying "Christ is my life," to say "*Christ lives in me.*" It is a practical substitution (for faith) of Christ for the saint on earth, as real as His substitution for the sinner on the cross. In death, He was the sinner's substitute; in life, He is the saint's. This may be still an enigma to the reader. I trust it will be cleared up as we proceed.

"We are the circumcision," says the apostle, again, "who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have *no confidence in the flesh.*" (Phil. iii. 3.) This does not seem so sweeping. Of course, we think, the *flesh* is not to be trusted in; but if we are born again, there is more than flesh in us, surely. Does the new nature go for nothing? is all as much corruption in the child of God as in the child of the devil? There are good desires in me, I am sure: is there not to be good fruit? does not God enjoin it? ought not I to be producing it?~

Surely God does enjoin it: surely we are to produce it. But the fruit is for the Master's eye and taste, not ours; our light is to shine for others, not ourselves; and that new nature, which we have as children of God, *its* principle is faith, its knowledge, "Christ is all." (Col. iii. 11.) Faith, love, hope,—our whole Christian character,—are tendrils which attach God's vine-branches elsewhere, and which if they clasp about themselves, the whole trails in the dust, a ruin.

"No confidence in the flesh" means thus "no self-confidence" at all; and the despairing cry, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" is just the break-up of this self-confidence when in a Christian—the absolute necessity for a Christian walk. The bearing of

the law upon all this is now to be considered before we can rightly understand the deliverance itself.

3. DELIVERANCE NEEDFUL FROM THE LAW.

IN the doctrinal statement at the beginning of the seventh chapter is declared the need and the fact of our deliverance from the law. Even in the sixth it is already said "sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace." In the beginning of the seventh it is more strongly stated—"Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ . . . that ye should bring forth fruit unto God;" and again—"But now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of the spirit, not in the oldness of the letter." (Ver. 4, 6.)

Strange as this may sound,—strange as, the apostle admits, this doctrine must sound, where the law so spoken of is the law of God, "holy and just and good,"—it is yet in full consistency with the language of Scripture elsewhere.—"The strength of sin is the law." "Wherefore, then, serveth the law? It was added *for the sake of transgressions*" (Gal. iii. 19—*Gr.*), —*i. e.*, not to avoid, but to *have* them. In the chapter before us, the apostle shows us this worked out in experience.—"For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came,"—what then?—"sin revived, and I died; and the commandment which was unto life"—"ordained" is not in the original, and is too strong; "was proposed," one may rather say,—"I found to be unto death." Let us now inquire into this so dark a problem for many even to the present day.

The "due time" for Christ to die was "when we were yet without strength," as well as "ungodly." (Rom. v. 6.) Man's need, before it could be met, had to be exposed. That was his need—"ungodly," and impotent for good; and "yet" (after long years of trial) he was only that.

The law was one of God's appointed means to bring

out this. Evidently probationary in character, the result of the trial, long and patient as it was, was to establish the sentence, "There is none righteous, no, not one;" "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." And this was its foreseen and designed effect: "We know that whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

For this end, of course, nothing must be wanting *in the law itself* to make it a fair and a full trial. In effect, nothing *was* wanting. While God's necessary claim for righteousness was exhibited by the law itself, this was accompanied with every incitement to obedience that could be given, and every possible discouragement to disobedience. Delivered from cruel bondage, in a way which manifested the power and goodness of their Deliverer, the awful judgments accompanying it, though upon their enemies, were warnings, on the other side, not to trifle with His goodness. The visible ensigns of Deity were before their eyes, the audible utterances of Jehovah in their ears. Did they obey, earth should be practically paradise renewed; while disobedience would mar all their happiness for time as well as for eternity. Heart and conscience, eye and ear,—the whole of man, and in all his circumstances and relationships, was addressed in the fullest way. Nor was the encouraging voice of mercy wanting: still, in the ears of even the wicked man it proclaimed that did he turn from his wickedness, and do that which was lawful and right, he should "save his soul alive."

All failed, and failed utterly; failed, as being "weak through the flesh," the corrupt nature of man, which could neither be won by its goodness nor controlled by its holiness; while that holiness could not relax its requirement, nor forego the penalty attached to disobedience. Good as the law was, the "motions of sins" were "*by* the law." "Sin," says the apostle, "taking occasion *by* the commandment, deceived me, and *by* it slew me." And this was the foreknown and designed effect: "Sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is

good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."

To expose sin, then, to detect it in its innermost working, to manifest its utter sinfulness, provoked and aroused by the very presence of good,—this was the aim and object of the law.

How it aroused it the apostle likewise shows.—“I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, ‘Thou shalt not covet [or lust];’ but sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence [or lust].” There the very point is touched which reveals man’s departure from God. To “lust” is to manifest a heart not in subjection to God. The “corruption which is in the world” is “*through* lust.” (2 Pet. i. 4.) Had we not dropped away from the sense of God’s wisdom and His love—did we believe in absolute *goodness* on a despotic throne, the Lord of heaven and earth our Father,—whatever the circumstances, how could one’s heart crave more? how should it do other than rest absolutely?

The law, then, must, of necessity, forbid “lust,” as the very characteristic feature of man’s condition, as the expression of unbelief and enmity which is the “mind of the flesh.” It must *forbid*,—but what then? Lust is *there*, and no prohibition will get it out—no law will better it. The flesh remains even in the child of God, and, as ever, opposed to God. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other.” (Gal. v. 17.)

But more. The law is not merely powerless to change the flesh; its prohibitions but irritate and arouse the enmity against God which is its “mind,” and which surely rebels against them. The *motions* of sin are thus by it, although the sin which is now roused into activity was there before. The law detects it only, and brings it out as “transgression” of the divine command—sin by the commandment becomes exceeding sinful. But thus also it is the strength of sin, and not of holiness. Its very perfection for the purpose for which God gave it necessitates this.

The law thus reveals me as evil to the very heart's core. It makes me learn this experimentally, by putting me under responsibility *not* to be the thing I am. *It occupies me with myself and with the evil*—very profitably, surely, until I have learned the extent of it. I am taught practically to “know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” In the face of a right will, I cannot accomplish my desire. I may argue that it is not I that do the evil, it is “sin that dwelleth in me,” still that is not deliverance. It only makes me cry the more, “Oh, wretched man!”

Self-occupation is the necessary effect of being in conscience under law. The law says, “You,” “you,” “you,” and we respond with “I,” “I,” “I.” Some thirty-five times in this experience of the seventh of Romans are “I” and “me” repeated. The only good in it is in the full discovery of the evil, and in the self-despair in which it ends.

Self-occupation is never holiness. God never means me to be able, with the Pharisee, to thank Him for the goodness that I find in myself. Self-conscious humility is spoiled by the consciousness. If I will be at it, He leaves me to find in this irreparable flesh, which cannot be mended, what I may break my heart over, but never alter. It is a quicksand which spoils all my building—a morass impracticable to cultivation; and God uses this, in His sovereignty over evil, to wean me from self-confidence and self-complacency, and cast me over helplessly upon Himself. But then, surely it will begin to be apparent that for real fruit Godward I must “be delivered from the law.” This is the plain teaching of the epistle to the Romans; and the experience detailed by the apostle, and familiar to so many souls as there described, is abundant confirmation of it.

But what then? Have I title to give up this striving? Will not that rather be to lapse into indifference than the way to overcome the innate evil? Must I acquiesce in my powerlessness? and how shall that be to me the way of power? Questions such as these we may ask in vain at the hands of human reason. God has however provided

the answer; and here we shall find the apostle's language fully to apply, that the "gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

4. THE MEANS OF DELIVERANCE.

WE must now take up the verses which speak of the deliverance itself. But in the first place, there are two points of criticism to be insisted on, that we may not have to discuss them where to do so would divert us from the subject before us.

The first is, that we are at liberty entirely to disregard the division of the chapters, which, every where a mere human work, is here most injurious to the proper understanding of the question of deliverance. Indeed, if we end where our present seventh chapter ends, deliverance there is none; for, although the cry, "Oh, wretched man that I am!" has been followed by "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," yet the only explanation that seems to follow is, that with the mind he is serving God's law, and with the flesh sin's law,—just the old difficulty, and no deliverance, nor way of deliverance, after all. For that, we must go on into the eighth chapter.

The second is, that we must omit altogether the last clause of the first verse of that chapter. All critics are now agreed, whatever their individual creed may be, that "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" is an unwarrantable interpolation from the fourth verse, where the words are in perfect place and keeping. As they stand (and still more certainly in the Greek), they make "no condemnation" conditional upon a certain walk. But this would effectually set aside the apostle's argument, as we may surely even already see. It would be poor consolation to one groaning over his powerlessness to do the thing he would, to be told that his freedom from condemnation nevertheless depended upon his doing this! and it would be the emphatic denial of the doctrine already so emphatically laid down for us in the previous chapters—that we are "justified by faith, without the deeds of the law."

But the consideration of the passage at length will clear up any remaining difficulty.

The cry, then, uttered in the anguish of the discovery of his condition, the man himself directly answers with a burst of praise. Finding he cannot deliver himself, and God Himself giving him no help in the direction in which he has been looking for it, his cry is almost a wail of despair.—“Oh, wretched man that I am! *who shall deliver me from this body of death?*” “Death,” he calls it; for death, to man, is hopeless; but death, also, because separation from the God toward whom his heart is surely that. And how can God be with him while sin has power over him and he none? It is not a question of justification; people in this condition may make it such, but not the apostle here. For him, that point is already settled, nor is he going to unsettle it again. But God may be for us when He is not able to be with us, and this may well make one in that condition cry out of a “body of death.” The mind of the flesh is *death*.

But it is not exactly to God that he cries. Unbelief, alas! is working; but also real despair of self—the point to which God has all through, unconsciously, as far as he is concerned, been guiding him. He, a man justified and born again, has had to come to this, that still power is not in him. A new nature is not power. The will is right, and the walk most wrong. Ah, never was there such a heart-break as to find, when we “*delight in the law of God after the inward man,*” spite of all, a “law of sin in the members, warring against the law of the mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin which is in our members.”

But this point being reached, deliverance is at hand.—“I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The first word of the delivered man is praise, and brings in a name which we have never heard throughout the experience preceding. The eye turned in upon self has been turned away from Christ. The destruction of all hope of self-satisfaction has left it free to return to its allegiance. Deliverance has come through Him who is now more than ever “Lord.” But how has it come? and in what form?

Has there been a sudden infusion of power from on high, nerving the paralyzed soul to accomplish the thing impossible hitherto? No; that is contradicted by the words which follow. It is not that: it is a word which has come home to the soul—a new revelation which reveals the folly and hopelessness of the past struggle, while it brings it to an end forever. “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin: now, then, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the Spirit’s law, of life in Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death.”

There is the explanation of the deliverance. I have but slightly transposed some words, to give, as I believe, more vividly their meaning. First, the speaker describes the condition in which he still is, when the deliverance comes. Then he gives the delivering word which has come to him, that withal there is no condemnation to those in Christ. Then he shows that this law of the Spirit, of life in Christ, has in fact set him free from sin’s law.

Let us look at each part of this in detail, that we may, by God’s infinite grace, get full assurance of understanding about it all; for it is the “truth” by which we are set free, although the Spirit of God alone can make the truth effectual for this.

First, the words with which the seventh chapter closes, —“So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin,”—are not a description of the state which follows deliverance, but of the state to which deliverance applies and in which it finds the speaker. This is shown by both clauses of the sentence; equally by the fact that he is yet serving the law of *God*, and by the fact that he is yet serving the law of *sin*.

For serving the law of God is not being “delivered from” it, or “dead to” it, and we must be that, as the apostle has told us, in order to bring forth fruit to God. And again, to serve the law of sin shows that sin is still to us a *law*, and we are not delivered. No doubt this is emphasized, that it is “I *myself*” who am upon the side of God and good, but that only shows fully the condition

to be one of bondage in which, spite of "himself," he is serving the law of sin.

The old question may come up again, "Is the law sin," that you confound them so together? but the apostle has already put the question and replied to it. It is *not* sin, but "holy, just, and good." But although it is not sin, it is the "strength of" it (1 Cor. xv. 56.), and we have been considering how it is, and that it must necessarily be so. The truth of deliverance cannot be understood unless we are fully convinced of and grounded in this fundamental fact.

The delivering word comes right upon this—"Now, then, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Do not let us assume that we know this, hastily, because we know justification, although justification it is, but in a peculiar power and with a special application, which make it in some sort a new thing for the soul. We must look at it in this way, and at its application to the case in hand.

"*In Christ Jesus*"—what is that? It is evidently a definition of all Christians; and it defines them as a people identified with One who as a man has entered into the presence of God for men, their Representative. The full acknowledgment of that wonderful fact, too little apprehended by those who have title to all the blessedness it would let in upon their souls, that Christ is as really a *man* in the glory of God as when on earth He hungered and thirsted and wept and bled and died, is absolutely needed in order to apprehend this place of ours in Him. If He had not taken true manhood up to God, we could not be "in Him," as our Representative, nor be in God's sight "as He is," if He were *only* the divine Son, forever in the Father's bosom. It is *Man* who has suffered for man, died for him, has been quickened out of death, raised up, and is ascended. It is as man that He has earned for us the glory into which we enter, preparing for us a place in the Father's house by presenting to God that precious and efficacious blood with which He has passed through the heavens.

"In Christ" is in this way the language of complete

identification. Representing us upon the cross, His resurrection was the divine declaration of the acceptance of the Representative in His place and work. Henceforth the eye of God sees us ever in Him alone. We are reckoned, and are to reckon ourselves, as with Him dead, buried, quickened, risen, and in Him seated in the heavenly places before God. God's delight in us is His unchangeable delight in Him; therefore the Lord says to us, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

How could there be a doubt about the believer's perfect security if this were realized? It would be impossible. Can He change? or will God say to Him, I cannot any longer accept You as standing for this people? Or, once again, *if* standing for them, is *He* on probation yet? is *His* work completely done, or still to do?

It is done, blessed be God: He sits in the glory of God. His heart is at rest, and ours may be. Had He not entitled our hearts to rest, His own heart would not allow Him to be seated there.

And "now, then, there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus." How would it be possible, for those whose acceptance is in the Beloved? Only we must remember that the question before us is not of wrath—of condemnation in that sense, but of a body of death, from which the speaker groans to be delivered. Personally accepted, and delivered from the fear of wrath to come, he is still for practical holiness, a man in the flesh. He is a person with a mixed character of good and evil, who has to master or eradicate the evil and develop the good. And that is the only view that naturally we could take of it. The practical experiment, however, is the reverse of encouraging, as we have seen. The body of death is perfectly impracticable to this kind of self-culture. In self-despair as to producing the good state he longs for, his eye is turned upon his blessed Representative in heaven; and *there*, it flashes upon him, is his remedy. *In the matter of holiness he must as frankly accept Christ as what he is—his true self—as for righteousness he had to accept Him before.* To him, serving the law of God with his mind, but with his flesh practically the law of sin, the

delivering word is, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "In Christ"—can God's own eye find fault with Him? "in Christ" is there any flesh—any body of death, any thing to mend or improve or alter? *and in Christ he is.* There his chains drop off. Much more, but still that. He is delivered: he is free!

Let us understand well. *This is not walk yet;* it is the principle—the key, and, when applied by the Spirit of God, the power for it. We are to "walk as Christ walked;" we are to walk "in Christ;" and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" sets us "free from the law of sin and death." Thus the responsibility of a right walk is still and ever ours. It is not that Christ's walk is substituted for ours, or Christ's holiness imputed to us, or any thing of that kind. It is not yet the question of how to walk, but of what I *am*; but a question which, when settled in God's way, stops necessarily the effort to **BE** what no effort of mine can make me, and what, thank God, His infinite grace has already made me.

"As Christ is, so are we in this world," and this for "boldness in the day of judgment." (1 John iv. 17.) Could effort of ours make us "as Christ is"? It would be clearly impossible; and yet nothing but this would reach up to the standard God has given us. Nothing short of this would be perfection, and nothing short of perfection could we rightly rest in. So far, the so-called "perfectionist" is right enough. He is wrong in this, that he seeks his perfection in the flesh—in himself as a man in the world; and so he misses it; while to persuade himself that he has *not* missed it, he has to lower the standard of perfection, to accommodate it to the actual fact of his imperfection. So true is it, that "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." The deception would not be possible if Christ were the measure and test of what is perfect. Dare any one assert himself to be (other than as *in Christ*,) *what Christ is*? Dare he assert even that for one day of his life on earth he has walked *as Christ walked*? Then away with the folly of perfection in the flesh; for Christ is God's standard for the Christian, and He will not lower it.

But if imperfection God cannot accept, and perfection I cannot bring Him, what then? Then I must accept a perfection of God's providing, and find in Christ a self that needs no mending and cannot be improved, where no body of death disturbs or oppresses, and occupation with which is not legalism, nor Pharisaism. "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus." God's eye can find no blemish, nor defect; but His favor, better than life, rests like the fruitful sunshine upon the soul that, drinking it in, reflects it back to Him, a wealth of satisfaction and joy in Him.

I have to walk now as what I am. I have not to walk to be what I am not. I am to "walk in Christ;" and to "abide in Him," that I may walk in Him. How else can I walk in Him than as being consciously "in Him"? But to be there is to be delivered, for no body of sin or death is there—"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

I am privileged to turn away from what I find in myself as a man down here, then, because in the death of the cross, the death wherein I died with Him, "sin in the flesh" has been fully dealt with. The condemnation of it by God, which I have been looking at as necessarily to be expressed in His dissociation from me—a loss of fellowship and separation—has already found its full expression, where for sin, but for me, the Son of God died. For faith, not for experience, I too am dead, and that "to sin," because "He died unto sin once." I reckon myself (not feel or find myself) to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Jesus Christ. (Chap. vi. 11.)

As far as what I am, then, is concerned, all effort, all necessity for effort, is at an end. I have no self to take up and make something of religiously. In the "man in Christ," as such, flesh and sin do not even exist. But more. In a true sense, "I" do not exist.—"I am cru-

cified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 21.); or better, "I live, no longer I." This "I, no longer I" is the mystery and the power of practical Christianity.

"I live"—because, of course, the person—the individual remains still the same. It is no Platonic mysticism, no pantheistic absorption into the ocean of being. The joy that fills my heart, the brightness poured over my life, are *mine*—fully and entirely mine. Nay, I live henceforth a life true and eternal, worthy to be called such. I have for the first time, as the apostle terms it, "what is *really* life."*

But "I live, *no longer I*," because the blessed fact of Christ's death for me upon the cross, of Christ's life for me in heaven, I have by faith laid hold of. I have come into the infinite blessedness of God's thoughts and actings concerning me. Him whom God has accepted for me and as me I have learnt to accept in the same way for and as myself. As the life which He has given me is His own very life, and has in Him its source and spring, a "life hid with Christ in God," so "in me Christ lives" down here. I have by faith realized identification with Him, as His—part of Himself.

His peace, His joy, are mine; His life and Spirit are mine; His pursuits, objects, interests, are mine; the love of His Father is mine; His present rejection and future glory are mine also; and all this in the power of a love wherewith He has, at His own personal cost, set me completely free from all that alone *I* but now had title to, or which had title to me.

What a deliverance is this! I am drawn out of the whole scene to which I belonged, and in which my interests, my rights, my cares, my sorrows and temptations inhered; and being drawn out and to Himself, the hold of all this loosened and cast off forever, I am sent into it for one blessed purpose, as His, TO REPRESENT HIM IN IT.— "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, so have I sent them into the world." (John xvii. 18.) And so, as the

*So 1 Timothy vi. 19 should be read, and not as in the common version, "eternal life."

works He did were "in the Father's name" (John x. 25.), the works we do are to be in *His* name: "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Col. iii. 17.)

But we must look at this still further, and at its practical results.

5. POWER.

I HAVE now rest for my heart. I am no more at the impracticable work of trying to be what I am not; I *am* all I desire to be. Only, sense and experience do not present to me my true self at all. My life is in Christ Jesus. I am in Him; and this only faith recognizes, which recognizes also the cross of Christ as that wherein my old self was judged and set aside for God. My "old man was crucified with Christ;" the "new man" is the man in Christ alone.

Here the perpetual sunshine settles down upon my soul. God is for me—with me—and must ever be. No cloud is there of His putting; no hiding ever of the Father's face. I may turn away—true, I may forget, but I have only to turn to Him again, to find undimmed His glorious face shining upon me in His own Beloved, and in His presence I am welcome and at home.

And observe, these two things I find in the One who, having filled the lowest place on earth, fills the highest place in heaven. In Him I find what I am for God, and am brought to God; in Him, also, I find the "image of God" and the "glory of God." He is Man for God blessed Lord, I know; and He is also just as fully and manifestly God for man. In His own wondrous person do these glories meet. He who is God with God is Man with man. And therefore, also, is He Man with God and God with man.

Think of the fast embrace with which I find myself held, right to the heart of God Himself, when I discern my place in Him who is alike Son of Man and Son of God, alike *first*-begotten and *only* begotten.

Grace, and only grace, has set me in this place; des-

potic, absolutely sovereign grace, willing to manifest itself as such—to show its exceeding riches unto the ages to come. What could effort of mine have done in the matter? what can failure of mine *undo*? yet, blessed be God, this is His power for me that I may *not* fail: “Sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.” A soul happy in Christ, how little can temptation avail with it! how little can it be shaken! A soul with its joy o’ershadowed, how accessible to the influences, of a thousand kinds, which are not of God! Therefore the apostle will say, and say again, to his beloved Philippians, “Rejoice in the Lord.”

This, then, is the first element of power for me. Happiness in this sense, *if real*, is, in effect, holiness; joy in Christ is devotedness; occupation with Christ is what is, of course, implied in joy; and the brightness thus diffused within my heart diffuses itself naturally—necessarily—in my life also. “We all, with open [unveiled] face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.” (2 Cor. iii. 18, *marg.*) “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give out the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (Chap. iv. 6, *Gr.*)

Occupied with this glorious object, we are transformed by it; we receive the light and give it out. Hence, another characteristic of a life of power is that it is a life of *dependence*,—only as we *receive*, and what we receive, we give out. And this surely, also, “abiding in Christ” implies. “The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye,” says the Lord, “except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing.” (John xv. 5.) The connection between branch and stock must be maintained, or the sap cannot circulate; so only as we abide in Him does He, as fertilizing sap, abide in

us; or, as the Lord again put it at the feast of tabernacles, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John vii. 37, 38.)

This flowing forth—this reflection—this fruitfulness, in fine,—is not the result of effort. We must abide in Him, and He will certainly abide in us; we must be in the sun to reflect it; we must come and drink at the inexhaustible stream, that the living waters may flow forth. The flowing forth is a necessity, if the vessel be in connection with a reservoir of supply more capacious than itself, but a necessity, mark, *after the vessel is itself full*. Alas! the effort to live and to walk aright is so commonly a failure, because it is the effort to pump out of a vessel that has but little in it—an effort which (if successful) *only exhausts the vessel itself*, while God's way is, that only the overflow should pour out, and *the vessel be always full*. But thus the overflow is itself no scanty measure, but (when once the vessel is full) the whole power of the spring itself, as the Lord says, "*rivers of living water.*"

For this, then, there must be dependence—a dependence of which we are made, and intended to be, continually conscious; for thus, as Christ is alone continually power to us, the constant ministration of it is the constant witness of an omnipotent love, which carries us and all our burdens. And thus we have not to measure our strength for the evil day, for our strength it is not. He has guaranteed that "as thy days, so shall thy strength be." (Deut. xxxiii. 25.) This is the promise to Asher—the happy one, and happy indeed is he who realizes it. Thus, as the apostle says, what indeed we want to know in ourselves is weakness, for "when I am weak, then am I strong." "*His strength is perfected in weakness.*" And then it is not merely that I receive sufficiency, but it is "*His grace*" that is "sufficient for me." As with Israel in the wilderness, every day is a new realization of a love which is as fresh and true one day as another, and as full of power in the greatest as in the smallest emergencies.

Thus it is beautiful to see how in this eighth chapter of

Romans, instead of, as before, an unavailing struggle of self with self, "the law of the *Spirit*" it is that sets me "free from the law of sin and death." And so, from this point, throughout the chapter, what is set against the flesh, or the "sin that dwelleth in" it, is now every where not the good, pious, right-willing "I," but the "Spirit," the blessed Spirit of God, who has come to take up His abode within me. The power that worketh in us is divine power, therefore not myself, although with me and in me—power upon which I can confidently lean, and without self-sufficiency or self-complacency.

And He who has come to take of the things of Christ and show them to my soul comes not to fill me with my own brightness, or gladden me with my own beauty, or set up another object before me outside of the Christ in whom I live. All that would be mere distraction—all "gain to me" in this sense merely loss. So much less would He be to me than the "all" He must be.

It is true that the Spirit of God may have, alas! to take also of things that have been in my walk and ways, to show me where I have *not* walked as what I am—*not* walked as Christ walked. But even so, not to occupy me with myself, but to show me the fruit of having forgotten to "reckon myself dead unto sin, and alive unto God in Jesus Christ." Having learned and owned what has come of my eye being off Christ, my *resource* is His grace, who brings the basin and the towel to cleanse me from the defilement I have contracted. "If I wash thee not," He says, "thou hast no part with me." For that, even, I must be His debtor, and for that again, in company with Him.

And that is the secret of a walk of faith ever; for He, and He alone, is faith's object; it knows no other. Ought I to have faith in myself? ought I to have an object there? The cross of Christ, then, is the death of self, His grave its burial, that, burying my dead out of my sight, I may be free to be occupied with Him who is not dead, but living, and in whom I live.

This is deliverance. But if it be, how many of us, Christian reader, know it? Alas! unbroken will, persist-

ent self-indulgence, worldliness, attest, on every side, how little it is known. Every where the terrible lack of power is manifest. Over how many children of God sin *has* dominion! And the only reason why many are unconscious of it is because "sin" is measured by a mere worldly standard, and *not* by Scripture. What title have we to measure the true Christian life by less than the words of the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet *not* I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Beloved reader, they are the words of the same apostle, "Whatsoever is *not of faith* is SIN."

Poor indeed are all our words; but God give His *own* Word, at least, power.



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