

DIFFICULT PASSAGES IN ROMANS.

VII. THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST.

As we pass from the fifth to the sixth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, we become conscious of a total change of matter and phrase and tone. It is not like the change from darkness to light in chapter iii. 21, or the converse change in chapter i. 18. For already in chapter v. 1, 2 the readers stand in the favour of God and exult in God: and in the chapter before us they are not under law but under grace, looking forward to the end, eternal life. But in chapter vi. we read no more for the present about justification through faith and reconciliation to God. Other thoughts and phrases, also peculiar to St. Paul, take their place. And there opens before us a new aspect, from another point of view, of the life entered at justification.

A way of transition to this new point of view is found in chapter v. 20, 21. In the contrast between Adam and Christ, the Law seems to have been forgotten. We now read that it *came in alongside* (*παρεισῆλθεν*) as though hiding between greater events. St. Paul refers evidently to the Law of Moses; but, by omitting the article, he looks at it in its abstract quality as a prescribed rule of conduct. It came in *in order that the trespass might be multiplied*: *i.e.* in order that the one disobedience of Adam might be followed by the many transgressions of those to whom the Law was given. This was an inevitable result of the gift of a divine law to men who had inherited Adam's moral fall; and therefore, like all inevitable and foreseen results, may be spoken of as the aim of the Law. But this was not its ultimate aim. As matter of fact, the multiplication of the trespass was followed by superabundant results produced by the undeserved favour of God: *where sin multiplied, grace abounded beyond measure*. The aim of this

superabundance of grace, and therefore the ultimate aim of the coming in of law, was that the undeserved favour of God might exercise beneficent rule and dispense royal and life-giving bounty: *in order that grace may reign, for life eternal.* In other words, the multiplication of sin by means of the Law was a means to a further and blessed end.

This teaching suggests an objection which St. Paul uses as a stepping-stone to another view of the way of life. For the first time, in the exposition of the Gospel begun in chapter iii. 21, we have now a serious moral question: *are we to continue in sin?* If multiplied trespass be a means of blessing, are we to go on sinning in order that still more abundant blessing may follow?

This question St. Paul meets by stating another doctrine, also peculiar to him, quite different from the two great doctrines stated in chapter iii. 21-26. Plainly stated, it is that in the death of Christ we died to sin, and therefore can no longer live in it, and that from His grave, with our risen Lord, we have gone forth into a new life like His own life of devotion to God. In other words, the cross of Christ now stands between us and sin; and the life we are now living is a partnership in His resurrection life.

Notice here the first reference to Baptism, the rite of introduction into the corporate life of the Church of Christ. Reconciliation to God is a personal matter. But the reconciled need for preservation and growth, the help provided by Christ in the community instituted by Him. *Baptized for Christ, . . . for His death: i.e.* the new relation to Christ which Baptism has in view has special reference to His death. This implies, as does the whole argument following, that even as compared with His holy life the death of Christ holds a unique place in man's salvation. This place has been already marked out in chapter iii. 25, 26: and these verses are the only sufficient explanation of the importance here given to the death of

Christ. Since Baptism has special reference to His death, and symbolises our death to sin resulting from His death on the cross, it is the funeral rite of our old life of sin, which is now buried in His grave. In this sense, St. Paul and the Roman Christians *were buried with Him by Baptism for death.*

To Christ, death and burial were not the end of life; but only a transition to a higher life. And St. Paul argues that, if believers are buried with Christ, it is in order that they may share His resurrection life: *in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead . . . so also we may walk in newness of life.* Notice here the word *walk* in a moral sense, as in Genesis v. 22, "Enoch walked with God." It is a conspicuous feature of the Epistles of Paul and John; and in John viii. 12, xii. 35, is attributed to Christ. The future tense in verse 5, *we shall be united in growth with Him by the likeness of His resurrection,* is best understood, like a similar form in chapter iv. 24, as a sort of logical future. Christ is already dead; and we have been united with Him in His death in the sense that thereby we have escaped from sin: and from this we infer that henceforth we shall be sharers of the life, and ultimately of the glory, of our risen Lord.

Verse 6 explains in what sense we are "dead to sin" by union with the Crucified. The word *συνεσταυρώθη, crucified-along-with,* is used in Matthew xxvii. 44, Mark xv. 32, John xix. 32 to describe the fate of the robbers executed beside Christ. Here and in Galatians ii. 20 it evidently describes an inward experience, making men in some sense sharers of Christ's crucifixion; in what sense, is explained in the rest of the verse. The references to death immediately following in verses 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and in verses 2, 3, 4, show that this is the writer's chief thought when using the word *crucified.* On the other hand we have no reference here to the pain of crucifixion. Believers are dead

and buried with Christ, and therefore dead to sin: for the death of Christ was, as we read in verse 10, a death to sin. In other words, St. Paul looks upon himself and his readers as, not merely nailed to the cross and dying, but as already, in some real sense, actually dead.

The word *καταργηθῆ*, a favourite with St. Paul, denotes to reduce to ineffectiveness, to deprive of results, to make useless. It may be rendered, here and in chapters iii. 3, 31, iv. 14, *made of no effect*. *The body of sin* can be no other than the human body looked upon as an organ of sin. This exposition is required by the conspicuous prominence given in verses 12, 13, 19 to the body and its various "members" as "weapons" or "slaves" of sin or of righteousness. To surrender ourselves to sin, is to surrender our bodies to be a throne from which sin will rule us. The believer has been united to Christ in order to reduce to powerlessness the hostile power exerted over us by sin through the medium of our own bodies.

The ultimate aim of this destruction of the power of the body is *in order that we may be no longer slaves to sin*. This explains in what sense believers are to be "dead to sin": they are no longer to be in bondage to it. And we notice that death sets every bondman free from the bondage under which he lay while living. We are dead to sin in the sense of being set completely free from bondage to it. That this death to sin is described here as a partnership with Christ in His death, implies that our deliverance from the bondage of sin is a result of His death on the cross.

The words *no longer slaves to sin* (*μηκέτι δουλεύειν τῇ ἀμαρτίᾳ*) imply, as does the whole contrast in verses 17-22, that all men are or have been slaves of sin. And this is in harmony with the picture of the heathen given in chapter i., where we read that because they turned away from God, He gave them up to shameful sins.

The word *justified* in verse 7 is used, not in St. Paul's

technical sense, as in chapters iii. 24, 26, 28, 30, iv. 2, 5, 25, nor as in chapter ii. 13, nor as in chapter iii. 4, but in a more general sense. *He who has died* has paid the due penalty, and is therefore legally free, and in this sense *justified*, from any further punishment of his *sin*. So is every criminal who has borne the full punishment of his crime. This form of speech is another indication of St. Paul's legal mode of thought. He looks at everything from the point of view of law.

Then follows a further exposition of this deliverance from sin and of the new life which is its positive counterpart, and especially of the relation to Christ of this deliverance and this new life. St. Paul argues that if we have shared His death we shall also share His life. The future tense as in verse 5. Notice the word *believe* to denote a logical inference. But this inference is full conviction, which is the root idea of the word. Moreover this conviction rests on the promise of God in Christ, and is therefore an element of saving faith. The special ground of this assurance that we shall share the life of Christ is that by death He once and for ever escaped from the dominion of death: *of Him, death is no longer lord*. Moreover, He who *died to sin once for all now liveth for God*. From this, St. Paul infers that if we share the death of Christ, we shall also share His life of devotion to God. He bids his readers to contemplate Christ, dead to sin and living for God, and then to *reckon* themselves also to be like Him, *dead to sin and living for God in Christ*. This important verse demands our best attention.

The first word of verse 11, *οὕτως*, which we may render literally *in this way*, or (R.V.) *even so*, makes Christ, dead to sin and living for God, a pattern of the experience which St. Paul bids us to reckon to be our own. This parallel will shed important light on the phrase *dead to sin*, both as used of Christ and of us. That Christ *died to sin*, implies

that in some sense by death He escaped from it: and this implies that before He died He stood in some hurtful relation to it. And this we can understand. "On our behalf" God "made Him to be sin" (2 Cor. v. 21). When hanging on the cross, He "became on our behalf a curse" (Gal. iii. 13). This relation to sin did not in the least degree defile Him who to save us from sin placed Himself under the curse of our sin: but it brought to Him anguish and shame. All this ceased in the moment He died. In this sense *He died to sin*.

Very different was our relation to sin. We were held fast by it in degrading bondage. But death sets every captive free from the bondage in which he lived. And St. Paul bids his readers reckon that they also are *dead to sin*. This can only mean that they are set free from all bondage to sin, as the Christian slave is liberated by the hand of death. And the phrase is so explained in verses 18 and 22: "having been made free from sin."

This freedom from sin is only the negative side of the experience St. Paul is here describing. He bids his readers reckon themselves to be on the one hand dead to sin, on the other hand *living for God*:  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$  . . .  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ : the two sides of the new life thus placed in conspicuous juxtaposition. Of each side, Christ is the pattern. For He who (verse 10) once died to sin now *liveth for God*. And the word  $\omicron\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma$  in verse 11 covers both elements, as does the phrase "in Christ Jesus." In each verse, in reference to Christ and to us, the Greek dative,  $\zeta\eta\ \tau\hat{\omega}\ \Theta\epsilon\omega$ , is the dative of advantage. The whole phrase denotes a life of which God is the one aim, and in which all the powers of life are put forth to work out the purposes of God. The present tense in verse 10, *He liveth for God*, describes the glorified life, divine and human, which the ascended Son now lives at the right hand of God. In verse 11, this life of Christ in heaven is made the pattern of our life on earth. In other

words, God claims, not only that we refrain from sin and obey His commands, but that He shall be to us the one aim of life, that all our purposes and activity be subordinate to the one purpose of serving Him and building up His Kingdom.

Notice that this positive side of the Christian life involves the foregoing negative side. For all sin is antagonistic to God. Consequently unreserved devotion to God implies a turning from all sin. But sin occupies so large a place in human life, and raises so tremendous a barrier between man and God, a barrier broken down only by the death of Christ, that St. Paul makes deliverance from sin a definite element in his description of the new life in Christ.

That the two datives, τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ and τῷ Θεῷ, in verse 10 and again in verse 11, convey different ideas and require in English different renderings, is no difficulty. The Greek dative denotes in itself merely a close relation, in this case a relation to sin and to God. What the precise relation is, must be determined by the context. The words τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ἀπέθανεν denote *died in relation to sin*: and, since death is separation, we infer that these words assert a separation from sin. This sense is conveniently reproduced by the English rendering *died to sin* and *dead to sin*. But the word *live* suggests activity. The dative case asserts that this activity has relation to God; and suggests, according to a common use of this case in Greek, that of this activity God is the aim. This meaning is admirably reproduced by the rendering *for God*. But no one English rendering will reproduce the sense of the Greek in each clause. The Revisers' rendering *unto God*, here and in 2 Corinthians v. 13 (cp. 15), Galatians ii. 19 is clumsy and meaningless. Uniformity is dearly purchased at such a price.

The concluding phrase *in Christ Jesus*, like the word οὕτως at the beginning of verse 11, dominates both sides of the ideal life here set before us. We are *dead to sin*, not in

ourselves, but *in Christ*, *i.e.* by inward spiritual contact with the Crucified, and only so far and so long as this contact continues. And *in Christ* we are *living for God*: *i.e.* our devotion to God is an outflow, by inward spiritual contact, of the devotion to God of the glorified Son. We live for God on earth because for us He thus lives in heaven. Away from Him we at once fall into selfish and worldly aims.

The phrase *in Christ* is all-important in the writings of St. Paul and St. John. We have already met it in chapter iii. 24, "redemption in Christ Jesus." It occurs at the end of this chapter, in chapter viii. 1, 39, and elsewhere frequently. The phrase "abide in Him" is found in 1 John ii. 6, 24, 28, etc. In John vi. 56, xv. 4, 5, 7, the same phrase is attributed to Christ. Notice also 1 John iv. 16: "he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God in him." This conspicuous mode of speech represents Christ and God as the home and refuge and the living and life-giving environment of the servants of Christ.

St. Paul bids his readers *reckon* themselves to be, like Christ and in Christ, dead to sin and living for God. This reckoning is faith. For, like the faith of Abraham expounded in chapter iv. 18-21, it is a firm conviction resting on the word and power of God. The word *reckon* is a favourite with St. Paul; and reveals a mind accustomed to mental calculation. It denotes the mental process of faith. This exhortation implies that God will make good in us this reckoning of faith. Otherwise our reckoning will be false. For it contradicts our past experience. Hitherto we have submitted to the yoke of bondage, or vainly striven against it. St. Paul bids us to believe that the yoke is broken. His words would be awful deception unless he knew that in the moment of our faith and in proportion to our faith God breaks in us the bondage of sin. And thousands have proved, by happy experience, the reality of this experience.



The present imperative λογίζεσθε denotes a continuous reckoning always going on. It thus differs from the aorist imperative in verses 13 and 19, "present yourselves to God," which represents the consecration as made once for all. The difference is merely in the mode of viewing similar mental acts. But it is worthy of attention.

We have now before us two more fundamental doctrines, distinct from, and supplementing, those of *justification through faith* and *through the death of Christ* in chapter iii. 21-26. These are (1) that God claims from the justified abandonment of all sin and unreserved devotion to Himself like the devotion of Christ; and (2) that what God claims from us He is prepared to work us on the condition of faith and in proportion to our faith. The former of these, we may speak of as St. Paul's doctrine of *sanctification*, using this word as in verses 19 and 22. The latter we may describe as *sanctification through faith*. These great doctrines need to be carefully correlated with other moral teaching of the New Testament and to be guarded from misuse. But thus correlated and guarded, they are an all-important element of the Gospel of Christ.

Verses 12, 13 are a practical application of the reckoning bidden in verse 11. The word βασιλεύετω keeps up a form of speech already used in chapter v. 14, 17 twice, 21 to describe the dominion of death and sin. The locality or throne of this reign of sin is *in your mortal body*: its tendency or aim is *in order to obey the desires of the body*. It involves that we *present the members* of our bodies (τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν), *as instruments (or weapons) of unrighteousness, to sin*. In contrast to this earlier consecration to sin, St. Paul bids us now *present ourselves to God, and our members, as instruments of righteousness, to God*. Similar language is found again in verse 19.

This phraseology does not imply that the body is essentially bad: and, that God claims that it be presented to

Him, implies that it is good. It implies only that sin, always an element of disintegration and revolt, uses the lower element of man's nature, the part condemned to the grave, as a platform from which to dominate the whole man. The prominence given to the body as a factor in the spiritual life is a conspicuous feature of the teaching of St. Paul as compared with modern religious thought.

The exhortation in verse 11 to present ourselves and the members of our bodies to God is strengthened by the encouraging assurance *sin shall not be your lord*. And this assurance is supported by the statement *ye are not under law but under grace*. But this statement is not further expounded. It is simply used as a starting point for an objection similar to that in verse 1 introducing the new aspect of the Christian life now before us. It is a momentary and preliminary reference to a topic which will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Verses 1-14 have given an answer to an immoral perversion of the Gospel. The answer is, We must not continue in sin, because God designs us to be dead to sin through the death of Christ and living for God by inward contact with our risen Lord. Verses 15-23 give another answer to a similar perversion supplementing the answer just given. This second answer is a comparison of the only two courses open to us, a comparison based on the readers' own experience. St. Paul assumes that all men are and must be *slaves*, *δούλοι*, that the only alternative open to them is a choice of masters. His readers know by experience the service of sin. The apostle reminds them, in verse 21, that its service was shameful, and asks what *fruit*, *i.e.* good result, they had from it; and asserts in verse 23 that *the wages of sin is death*. On the other hand, they who have been *made free from sin and have been made slaves to God have fruit of their service in the direction of sanctification; and the end, eternal life*. This eternal life, like the life of

devotion to God which St. Paul in verse 11 bids his readers appropriate by faith, is *in Christ Jesus*, whom he now speaks of as *our Lord*.

That the servants of God are in verses 18 and 22, and the members of their bodies in verse 19, spoken of as *slaves*, is in harmony with the title "slave of Jesus Christ" claimed by the apostle at the beginning of this epistle, and expounded and justified in my first paper.

St. Paul has now described negatively and positively the new life which God designs for the justified, has taught how it may be obtained, viz. by the reckoning of faith, and has given a strong reason for claiming it, viz. the comparative profit of the old life and the new. In so doing, he has referred once to the Law and has said that we are "not under law but under grace." This passing remark and the whole subject of the believer's relation to the Law need further exposition. This is given in the next chapter of the epistle. The apostle will there show in what sense we are no longer under law but dead to it; that, although deliverance from the Law is good yet the Law is not bad, but reveals to us the infinite evil of sin and the awful condition of those who have not experienced the salvation offered by Christ. This important teaching will be the matter of my next paper.

JOSEPH AGAR BEET.