



PROLOGUE TO ROMANS

WILLIAM TYNDALE
1494 - 1536

A PROLOGUE TO THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Contents

Principal Words	3
Chapter 1	13
Chapter 2	14
Chapter 3	14
Chapter 4	15
Chapter 5	17
Chapter 6	18
Chapter 7	19
Chapter 8	21
Chapters 9-11.....	22
Chapter 12.....	23
Chapter 13.....	23
Chapter 14.....	24
Chapter 15.....	24
Chapter 16.....	25
Conclusion.....	26

William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, ed. Henry Walter, vol. 1, *The Works of William Tyndale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1848), 484-510.

Approximately two-thirds of the material in this text consists of Tyndale's translation of Martin Luther, "Vorrede auff die Epistel S. Paul: an die Romer" in *D. Martin Luther: Die gantze Heilige Schrift Deudsch 1545 aufs new zurericht*, ed. Hans Volz and Heinz Blanke, vol. 2 (Munich: Roger & Bernhard, 1972), 2254-2268. English translations of Luther's "Preface to the Epistle to the Romans" are available on the internet.

© Copyright 2023 Chapel Library: annotations. Original text is in the public domain. Printed in the USA. Scripture quotations are from author's translation or paraphrase. Chapel Library does not necessarily agree with all the doctrinal positions of the authors it publishes. Permission is expressly granted to reproduce this material by any means, provided

- 1) you do not charge beyond a nominal sum for cost of duplication, and
- 2) this copyright notice and all the text on this page are included.

Chapel Library sends Christ-centered materials from prior centuries worldwide without charge, relying entirely upon God's faithfulness. We therefore do not solicit donations, but we gratefully receive support from those who freely desire to give.

Worldwide, please download material without charge from our website, or contact the international distributor as listed there for your country.

In **North America**, for additional copies of this booklet or other Christ-centered materials from prior centuries, please contact

CHAPEL LIBRARY

2603 West Wright Street
Pensacola, Florida 32505 USA

Phone: (850) 438-6666 • Fax: (850) 438-0227
chapel@mountzion.org • www.ChapelLibrary.org

Please see also *Life of Martin Luther* by Diana Kleyn and Joel Beeke; and Free Grace Broadcaster 261, *Conscience*—all available from Chapel Library. The *FGB* is a quarterly digest of six to ten messages from prior centuries, all on one theme, with a different theme each issue. Request a subscription

- worldwide, eBook sent via email:
www.ChapelLibrary.org/subscriptions/
- in North America, printed copy sent via mail: write Chapel Library
- in a country with an international distributor, printed copy sent via mail;
write to them directly:
www.ChapelLibrary.org/about/distributors/

A PROLOGUE TO THE BOOK OF ROMANS

FORASMUCH as this epistle is the principal and most excellent part¹ of the new Testament and most pure *evangelion*, that is to say, glad tidings, and that we call gospel, and also is a light and a way unto the whole Scripture, I think it meet² that every Christian man not only know it, by rote³ and without the book, but also exercise himself therein evermore continually, as with the daily bread of the soul. No man verily can read it too oft or study it too well; for the more it is studied, the easier it is. The more it is chewed, the pleasanter it is; and the more groundly⁴ it is searched, the preciouser things are found in it, so great treasure of spiritual things lieth hid therein. I will therefore bestow my labor and diligence, through this little preface or prologue, to prepare a way in thereunto, so far forth as God shall give me grace, that it may be the better understood of every man: for it hath been hitherto evil darkened with glosses⁵ and wonderful dreams of sophisters,⁶ that no man could spy out the intent and meaning of it; which nevertheless of itself is a bright light, and sufficient to give light unto all the Scripture.

Principal Words

First, we must mark diligently the manner of speaking of the apostle, and above all things know what Paul meaneth by these words, *the law, sin, grace, faith, righteousness, flesh, spirit*, and such like; or else, read thou it ever so oft, thou shalt but lose thy labor.

Law

This word *law* may not be understood here after the common manner, and (to use Paul's term) "after the manner of men" (Rom 6:19), or after man's ways; as that thou wouldest say the law here, in this place,

¹ Luther: "Right corner-stone."

² **meet** – fitting; proper.

³ **rote** – memory.

⁴ **groundly** – thoroughly.

⁵ **glosses** – comments; explanatory remarks.

⁶ **sophisters** – subtle disputants.

were nothing but learning, which teacheth what ought to be done, and what ought not to be done, as it goeth with man's law, where the law is fulfilled with outward works only, though the heart be never so far off. But God judgeth after the ground⁷ of the heart, yea, and the thoughts and the secret movings of the mind: therefore His law requireth the ground of the heart, and love from the bottom⁸ thereof, and is not content with the outward work only, but rebuketh those works most of all, which spring not of love, from the ground and low bottom of the heart, though they appear outward never so honest and good; as Christ, in the gospel rebuketh the Pharisees above all other that were open sinners and calleth them hypocrites, that is to say, *simulars*,⁹ and painted sepulchers: which Pharisees yet lived no men so pure, as pertaining to the outward deeds and works of the law. Yea, and Paul confesseth of himself that, as touching the law, he was such a one as no man could complain on; and, notwithstanding, was yet a murderer of the Christians, persecuted them, and tormented them so sore that he compelled them to blaspheme Christ, and was altogether merciless, as many are which now feign¹⁰ outward good works (Phi 3).

For this cause the 115th Psalm¹¹ calleth all men liars, because that no man keepeth the law from the ground of the heart, neither can keep it, though he appear outwardly full of good works. For all men are naturally inclined unto evil and hate the law. We find in ourselves unlust¹² and tediousness to do good, but lust¹³ and delectation¹⁴ to do evil. Now where no free lust is to do good, there the bottom of the heart fulfilleth not the law; and there no doubt is also sin, and wrath is deserved before God, though there be never so great outward show and appearance of honest living.

For this cause concludeth St. Paul in the second chapter that the Jews all are sinners and transgressors of the law, though they make men believe, through hypocrisy of outward works, how that they fulfil the law; and saith that he only which doth the law is righteous before God, meaning thereby that no man with outward works fulfilleth the law. "Thou," saith he to the Jew, "teachest a man should not break wedlock, and yet breakest wedlock thyself...Wherein thou judgest another man,

⁷ **ground** – depths; reality.

⁸ **bottom** – deepest part.

⁹ *simulars* – those who pretend to be what they are not.

¹⁰ **feign** – pretend.

¹¹ The 115th of the Latin Vulgate is the 116th of the Hebrew and of our Authorized Version.

¹² **unlust** – a lack of desire.

¹³ **lust** – desire.

¹⁴ **delectation** – great pleasure; delight.

therein condemnest thou thyself; for thou thyself doest even the very same things which thou judgest” (Rom 2:1, 22). As though he would say, Thou livest outwardly in the works of the law, and judgest them that live not so. Thou teachest other men, and seest a mote in another man’s eye, but art not ware¹⁵ of the beam that is in thine own eye. For though thou keep the law outwardly with works, for fear of rebuke, shame, and punishment, either for love of reward, advantage, and vain-glory; yet doest thou all without lust and love toward the law, and hadst lever¹⁶ a great deal otherwise do, if thou didst not fear the law. Yea, inwardly, in thine heart, thou wouldest that there were no law, no, nor yet God, the author and avenger of the law, if it were possible—so painful it is unto thee to have thine appetites refrained, and to be kept down.

Wherefore then it is a plain conclusion, that thou, from the ground and bottom of thine heart, art an enemy to the law. What prevaieth it now, that thou teachest another man not to steal, when thou thine own self art a thief in thine heart, and outwardly wouldest fain¹⁷ steal if thou durst?¹⁸ Though that the outward deeds abide not alway behind with such hypocrites and *dissimulars*,¹⁹ but break forth, even as an evil scab cannot always be kept in with violence of medicine. “Thou teachest another man, but teachest not thyself; yea, thou wottest not what thou teachest, for thou understandest not the law aright” (Rom 2:21), how that it cannot be fulfilled and satisfied, but with an unfeigned love and affection; much less can it be fulfilled with outward deeds and works only. Moreover, the law increaseth sin, as he saith (chapter 5), because man is an enemy to the law, forasmuch as it requireth so many things clean contrary to his nature, whereof he is not able to fulfil one point or tittle as the law requireth it; and therefore are we more provoked and have greater lust to break it.

For which cause sake he saith that “the law is spiritual” (7:14); as though he would say, If the law were fleshly, and but man’s doctrine, it might be fulfilled, satisfied, and stilled with outward deeds. But now is the law ghostly,²⁰ and no man fulfilleth it, except that all that he doth spring of love from the bottom of the heart. Such a new heart and lusty courage unto the law-ward canst thou never come by of thine own strength and enforcement, but by the operation and working of the Spir-

¹⁵ **ware** – aware.

¹⁶ **lever** – rather; comparative form of the Anglo-Saxon *leof* or *lef*- (more beloved, more acceptable, more wished for).

¹⁷ **fain** – willingly, gladly.

¹⁸ **durst** – dared.

¹⁹ *dissimulars* – people who conceal what they are.

²⁰ **ghostly** – spiritual.

it. For the Spirit of God only maketh a man spiritual and like unto the law, so that now henceforth he doth nothing of fear, or for lucre, or vantage's sake, or of vain-glory, but of a free heart and of inward lust.²¹ The law is spiritual, and will be both loved and fulfilled of a spiritual heart; and therefore of necessity requireth it the Spirit, that maketh a man's heart free, and giveth him lust and courage unto the law-ward. Where such a spirit is not, there remaineth sin, grudging, and hatred against the law; which law nevertheless is good, righteous, and holy.

Acquaint thyself therefore with the manner of speaking of the apostle, and let this now stick fast in thine heart, that it is not both one, to *do the deeds and works* of the law, and to *fulfil* the law. The work of the law is whatsoever a man doth or can do of his own freewill, of his own proper strength and enforcing. Notwithstanding, though there be never so great working, yet as long as there remaineth in the heart unlust, tediousness, grudging, grief, pain, loathsomeness, and compulsion toward the law, so long are all the works unprofitable, lost, yea, and damnable in the sight of God. This meaneth Paul, where he saith, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God" (3:20). Hereby perceivest thou that those sophisters are but deceivers, who teach that a man may and must prepare himself to grace, and to the favor of God, with good works, before he have the Spirit and true faith of Christ. How can they prepare themselves unto the favor of God, and to that which is good, when they themselves can do no good, nor can once think a good thought, or consent to do good, the devil possessing their hearts, minds, and thoughts, captive at his pleasure? Can those works please God, thinkest thou, which are done with grief, pain, and tediousness, with an evil will, with a contrary and grudging mind? O holy Prosperus,²² how mightily with the scripture of Paul didst thou confound this heresy twelve hundred years ago, or thereupon!²³

²¹ **lust** – delight or inclination. Tyndale uses *lust* frequently in the sense of the regenerate person's desire to fulfil God's righteousness.

²² Prosperus, or Tiro Prosper of Ries in Aquitain, lived in the earlier half of the fifth century, and distinguished himself by his defense of the doctrines of Augustine, and by his argumentative replies to their Pelagian opponents. Cave, Script. Eccles. under date of 444. The main tenor of his writings was to the effect designated by Tyndale; and a single passage translated from them by Milner may serve as a specimen of his view of the question respecting man's ability to do good: "The mind, which originally had light from the supreme light, involves the will in darkness, and leaving the light chooses to grow black in earthly darkness, nor can it voluntarily lift up its captive eyes on high; because, by the robbery of the tyrant, it hath even lost the knowledge of the greatness of the wound under which it lies prostrate." Milner's *History of the Church of Christ*, Cent. V., ch. 13.

²³ **thereupon** – thereabouts.

To fulfil the law is to do the works thereof and whatsoever the law commands with love, lust, and inward affection and delectation, and to live godly and well, freely, willingly, and without compulsion of the law, even as though there were no law at all. Such lust, and free liberty to love the law, cometh only by the working of the Spirit in the heart, as he saith in the fifth chapter.

Now is the Spirit none otherwise given, than by faith only, in that we believe the promises of God without wavering, how that God is true, and will fulfil all His good promises towards us for Christ's blood's sake, as it is plain (chapter 1): "I am not ashamed," saith Paul, "of Christ's glad tidings, for it is the power of God unto salvation to as many as believe" (Rom 1:16); for at once and together, even as we believe the glad tidings preached to us, the Holy Ghost entereth into our hearts and looseth the bonds of the devil, which before possessed our hearts in captivity and held them, that we could have no lust to the will of God in the law; and as the Spirit cometh by faith only, even so faith cometh by hearing the word, or glad tidings, of God, when Christ is preached, how that He is God's Son and man also, dead and risen again for our sakes, as He saith in chapter 3, 4, [and] 10. All our justifying then cometh of faith, and faith and the Spirit come of God, and not of us. When we say, faith bringeth the Spirit, it is not to be understood that faith deserveth the Spirit, or that the Spirit is not present in us before faith: for the Spirit is ever in us, and faith is the gift and working of the Spirit: but through preaching the Spirit beginneth to work in us. And as by preaching the law He worketh the fear of God, so by preaching the glad tidings He worketh faith. And now when we believe and are come under the covenant of God, then are we sure of the Spirit by the promise of God, and then the Spirit accompanieth faith inseparably, and we begin to feel His working. And so faith certifieth us of the Spirit and also bringeth the Spirit with her, unto the working of all other gifts of grace, and to the working out of the rest of our salvation, until we have altogether overcome sin, death, hell, and Satan, and are come unto the everlasting life of glory. And for this cause we say, Faith bringeth the Spirit.

Hereof cometh it, that faith only justifieth, maketh righteous, and fulfilleth the law; for it bringeth the Spirit through Christ's deservings. The Spirit bringeth lust,²⁴ looseth the heart, maketh him free, setteth him at liberty, and giveth him strength to work the deeds of the law with love, even as the law requireth; then at the last out of the same faith, so working in the heart, spring all good works by their own accord. That

²⁴ **lust** – delight or inclination to God's righteousness.

meaneth he in the third chapter: for after he hath cast away the works of the law, so that he soundeth as though he would break and disannul the law through faith, he answereth to that might be laid against him, saying, "We destroy not the law through faith, but maintain, further, or establish the law through faith" (Rom 3:31); that is to say, we fulfil the law through faith.

Sin

Sin in the Scripture is not called that outward work only committed by the body, but all the whole business, and whatsoever accompanieth, moveth, or stirreth unto the outward deed; and that whence the works spring, as unbelief, proneness, and readiness unto the deed in the ground of the heart, with all the powers, affections, and appetites, wherewith we can but sin; so that we say that a man then sinneth when he is carried away headlong into sin altogether, as much as he is, of that poisonous inclination and corrupt nature, wherein he was conceived and born. For there is none outward sin committed except a man be carried away altogether, with life, soul, heart, body, lust, and mind thereunto. The Scripture looketh singularly unto the heart and unto the root and original fountain of all sin, which is unbelief in the bottom of the heart. For as faith only justifieth and bringeth the Spirit and lust unto the outward good works; even so unbelief only damneth and keepeth out the Spirit, provoketh the flesh, and stirreth up lust unto the evil outward works, as it happened to Adam and Eve in Paradise (Gen 3).

For this cause Christ calleth sin unbelief; and that notably in John 16. "The spirit," saith He, "shall rebuke the world of sin, because they believe not in me" (Joh 16:8-9). And, "I am the light of the world" (Joh 8:12). And therefore he biddeth them, "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light...for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not where he goeth" (Joh 12:35, 36). Now as Christ is the light, so is the ignorance of Christ that darkness whereof He speaketh, in which he that walketh knoweth not whither he goeth; that is, he knoweth not how to work a good work in the sight of God, or what a good work is. And therefore Christ saith, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world, but there cometh night, when no man can work" (Joh 9:4, 5), which night is but ignorance of Christ, in which no man can see to do any work to please God. And Paul exhorteth that they "walk not as other heathens, who are strangers from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them" (Eph 4:17-18). And again, in the same chapter: "Put off the old man, which is corrupt through the lusts of error" (Eph 4:22), that is to say, ignorance. And, "Let us cast away the

deeds of darkness” (Rom 13:12), that is to say, of ignorance and unbelief. And, “Fashion not yourselves unto your old lusts of ignorance” (1Pe 1:14). And “He that loveth his brother dwelleth in light...and he that hateth his brother walketh in darkness, and wotteth not whither he goeth, for darkness hath blinded his eyes” (1Jo 2:11). By light he meaneth the knowledge of Christ, and by darkness the ignorance of Christ. For it is impossible that he who knoweth Christ truly should hate his brother.

Furthermore, to perceive this more clearly, thou shalt understand that it is not possible to sin any sin at all, except a man break the first commandment before. Now the first commandment is divided into two verses: “Thy Lord God is one God; and thou shalt love thy Lord God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, with all thy power, and with all thy might” (Deu 6:4-5). And the whole cause why I sin against any inferior precept is that this love is not in mine heart; for were this love written in mine heart, and were it full and perfect in my soul, it would keep mine heart from consenting unto any sin. And the whole and only cause why this love is not written in our hearts is that we believe not the first part, that “our Lord God is one God.” For wist I²⁵ what these words, “one Lord and one God,” mean; that is to say, if I understood that He made all and ruleth all, and that whatsoever is done to me, whether it be good or bad, is yet His will, and that He only is the Lord that ruleth and doeth it; and wist thereto what this word, “mine,” meaneth; that is to say, if mine heart believed and felt the infinite benefits and kindness of God toward me, and understood and earnestly believed the manifold covenants of mercy wherewith God hath bound Himself to be mine wholly and altogether, with all His power, love, mercy, and might; then should I love Him with all mine heart, soul, power, and might, and of that love ever keep His commandments. So see ye now, that as faith is the mother of all goodness and of all good works, so is unbelief the ground and root of all evil and all evil works.

Finally, if any man that hath forsaken sin, and is converted to put his trust in Christ and to keep the law of God, do fall at any time, the cause is that the flesh through negligence hath choked the spirit and oppressed her and taken from her the food of her strength; which food is her meditation in God, and in His wonderful deeds, and in the manifold covenants of His mercy.

Wherefore then, before all good works, as good fruits, there must needs be faith in the heart whence they spring. And before all bad deeds,

²⁵ wist I – if I knew.

as bad fruits, there must needs be unbelief in the heart, as in the root, fountain, pith, and strength of all sin: which unbelief and ignorance is called the head of the serpent, of the old dragon, which the woman's seed, Christ, must tread under foot as promised unto Adam.

Grace

Grace and gift have this difference. Grace properly is God's favor, benevolence, or kind mind, which of His own self, without deserving of us, He beareth to us, whereby He was moved and inclined to give Christ unto us, with all His other gifts of grace. Gift is the Holy Ghost, and His working, which He poureth into the hearts of them on whom He hath mercy, and whom He favoreth. Though the gifts of the Spirit increase in us daily, and have not yet their full perfection, yea, and though there remain in us yet evil lusts and sin, which fight against the Spirit, as he saith here in chapter 7, Galatians 5, and, and as it was spoken before, in Genesis 3, of the debate between the woman's seed and the seed of the serpent; yet nevertheless God's favor is so great and so strong over us for Christ's sake, that we are counted for full whole, and perfect before God. For God's favor toward us divideth not herself, increasing a little and a little, as do the gifts; but receiveth us whole, and altogether, in full love for Christ's sake, our Intercessor and Mediator, and because the gifts of the Spirit, and the battle between the Spirit and evil lusts, are begun in us already.

Of this now understandest thou the seventh chapter, where Paul accuseth himself as a sinner, and yet in the eighth chapter saith, "There is no damnation to them that are in Christ" (Rom 8:1), and that because of the Spirit, and because the gifts of the Spirit are begun in us. Sinners we are, because the flesh is not full killed and mortified: nevertheless, inas-much as we believe in Christ, and have the earnest and beginning of the Spirit, and would fain be perfect, God is so loving and favorable unto us, that He will not look on such sin, neither will count it as sin; but will deal with us according to our belief in Christ, and according to His promises which He hath sworn to us, until the sin be full slain and mortified by death.

Faith

Faith is not man's opinion and dream, as some imagine and feign, when they hear the story of the gospel; but when they see that there follow no good works, nor amendment of living, though they hear, yea, and can babble many things of faith, then they fall from the right way, and say, "Faith only justifieth not; a man must have good works also, if he

will be righteous and safe.” The cause is, when they hear the gospel or glad tidings, they feign of their own strength certain imaginations and thoughts in their hearts, saying, “I have heard the gospel, I remember the story. Lo! I believe.” And that they count right faith, which, nevertheless, as it is but man’s imagination and feigning, even so it profiteth not, neither follow there any good works or amendment of living.

But right faith is a thing wrought by the Holy Ghost in us, which changeth us, turneth us into a new nature, and begetteth us anew in God, and maketh us the sons of God, as thou readest in the first of John; and killeth the old Adam, and maketh us altogether new in the heart, mind, will, lust, and in all our affections and powers of the soul; the Holy Ghost ever accompanying her, and ruling the heart. Faith is a lively thing, mighty in working, valiant, and strong, ever doing, ever fruitful; so that it is impossible that he who is endued therewith should not work always good works without ceasing. He asketh not whether good works are to be done or not, but hath done them already, ere mention be made of them; and is always doing, for such is his nature; for quick faith in his heart and lively moving of the Spirit drive him and stir him thereunto. Whosoever doth not good works is an unbelieving person, and faithless, and looketh round about him, groping after faith and good works, and wotteth²⁶ not what faith or good works mean, though he babble never so many things of faith and good works.

Faith is, then, a lively and a steadfast trust in the favor of God, wherewith we commit ourselves altogether unto God; and that trust is so surely grounded and sticketh so fast in our hearts that a man would not once doubt of it, though he should die a thousand times therefor. And such trust, wrought by the Holy Ghost through faith, maketh a man glad, lusty, cheerful, and true-hearted unto God and unto all creatures: whereof, willingly and without compulsion, he is glad and ready to do good to every man, to do service to every man, to suffer all things, that God may be loved and praised, which hath given him such grace; so that it is impossible to separate good works from faith, even as it is impossible to separate heat and burning from fire. Therefore, take heed to thyself, and beware of thine own fantasies and imaginations, which to judge of faith and good works will seem wise, when indeed they are stark blind and of all things most foolish. Pray God, that He will vouchsafe to work faith in thine heart, or else shalt thou remain evermore faithless—feign thou, imagine thou, enforce thou, wrestle with thyself, and do what thou wilt or canst.

²⁶ **wotteth** – knows.

Righteousness

Righteousness is even such faith, and is called God's righteousness, or righteousness that is of value before God. For it is God's gift, and it altereth a man, and changeth him into a new spiritual nature, and maketh him free and liberal to pay every man his duty. For through faith a man is purged of his sins, and obtaineth lust unto the law of God; whereby he giveth God His honor, and payeth Him that he oweth Him; and unto men he doth service willingly, wherewithsoever he can, and payeth every man his duty. Such righteousness can nature, free-will, and our own strength never bring to pass. For as no man can give himself faith, so can he not take away unbelief. How then can he take away any sin at all? Wherefore all is false hypocrisy and sin, whatsoever is done without faith or in unbelief, as it is evident in the fourteenth chapter unto the Romans, though it appear never so glorious or beautiful outwards.

Flesh and spirit

Flesh and spirit mayest thou not here understand as though flesh were only that which pertaineth unto unchastity, and the spirit that which inwardly pertaineth unto the heart: but Paul calleth flesh here, as Christ doth, all that is born of flesh (Joh 3:6); that is, to wit, the whole man, with life, soul, body, wit, will, reason, and whatsoever he is or doth within and without; because that these all, and all that is in man, study after the world and the flesh. Call flesh therefore whatsoever we think or speak of God, of faith, of good works, and of spiritual matters, as long as we are without the Spirit of God. Call flesh also all works which are done without grace, and without the working of the Spirit, howsoever good, holy, and spiritual, they seem to be: as thou mayest prove by the fifth chapter unto the Galatians, where Paul numbereth worshipping of idols, witchcraft, envy, and hate, among the deeds of the flesh; and by the eighth unto the Romans, where he saith that the law by the reason of the flesh is weak; which is not understood of unchastity only, but of all sins, and most especially of unbelief, which is a vice most spiritual, and ground²⁷ of all sins.

And as thou callest him flesh which is not renewed with the Spirit, and born again in Christ, and all his deeds, even the very motions of his heart and mind, his learning, doctrine, and contemplation of high things, his preaching, teaching, and study in the Scriptures, building of

²⁷ **ground** – foundation; root.

churches, founding of abbeys, giving of alms, mass, matins,²⁸ and whatsoever he doth, though it seem spiritual and after the laws of God; so, contrariwise, call him spiritual who is renewed in Christ, and all his deeds which spring of faith, seem they never so gross,²⁹ as the washing of the disciples' feet done by Christ, and Peter's fishing after the resurrection; yea, and whatsoever is done within the laws of God, though it be wrought by the body, as the very wiping of shoes and such like, howsoever gross they appear outwardly. Without such understanding of these words thou canst never understand this epistle of Paul, neither any other place in the Holy Scripture. Take heed, therefore; for whosoever understandeth these words otherwise, the same understandeth not Paul, whatsoever he be.

Now will we prepare ourselves unto the epistle.

Chapter 1

Forasmuch as it becometh the preacher of Christ's glad tidings, first, through opening of the law, to rebuke all things, and to prove all things sin that proceed not of the Spirit and of faith in Christ; and to prove all men sinners and children of wrath by inheritance; and how that to sin is their nature, and that by nature they can none otherwise do than to sin; and therewith to abate the pride of man, and to bring him unto the knowledge of himself and to misery and wretchedness, that he might desire help; even so doth St. Paul.

And he beginneth, in the first chapter, to rebuke unbelief and gross sins, which all men see, as idolatry, and as the gross sins of the heathen were, and as the sins now are of all them who live in ignorance, without faith, and without the favor of God; and saith, "The wrath of the God of heaven appeareth through the gospel upon all men, for their ungodliness and unholy living" (Rom 1:18). For though it be known, and daily understood by the creatures, that there is but one God, yet is nature of herself, without the Spirit and grace, so corrupt and so poisoned, that men neither can thank Him, neither worship Him, neither give Him His due honor; but they blind themselves, and fall without ceasing into worse case, even until they come unto worshipping of images, and working of shameful sins, which are abominable and against nature, and

²⁸ **matins** – morning prayers.

²⁹ **gross** – common; seemingly inferior.

moreover they suffer³⁰ the same unrebuked in others, having delectation and pleasure therein.

Chapter 2

In the second chapter, the apostle proceedeth further and rebuketh all those holy people also, which, without lust and love to the law, live well outwardly in the face of the world, and condemn others gladly; as the nature of all hypocrites is, to think themselves pure in respect of open sinners; and yet they hate the law inwardly, and are full of covetousness, and envy, and of all uncleanness (Mat 23). These are they which despise the goodness of God, and according to the hardness of their hearts heap together for themselves the wrath of God. Furthermore, St. Paul, as a true expounder of the law, suffereth³¹ no man to be without sin, but declareth that all they are under sin, who of freewill and of nature will live well, and suffereth them not to be better than the open sinners, yea, he calleth them hardhearted and such as cannot repent.

Chapter 3

In the third chapter, he mingleth both together, both the Jews and the Gentiles; and saith that the one is as the other, both sinners, and no difference between them, save in this only, that the Jews had the word of God committed unto them. And though many of them believed not thereon, yet is God's truth and promise thereby neither hurt nor diminished; and he taketh in his way, and allegeth the saying of Psalm 51, that God might abide true in His words, and overcome when He is judged. After that he returneth to his purpose again, and proveth by the scripture that all men, without difference or exception, are sinners; and that by the works of the law no man is justified; but that the law was given to utter and to declare sin only. Then he beginneth and showeth the right way unto righteousness, by what means men must be made righteous and safe; and saith they are all sinners and without praise before God, and must, without their own deserving, be made righteous through faith in Christ, Who hath deserved such righteousness for us, and is become unto us God's mercy-seat,³² for the remission of sins that are past:

³⁰ **suffer** – allow.

³¹ **suffereth** – allows.

³² **mercy-seat** – “Propitiation” in the Authorized Version of Romans 3:25 is translated from the Greek *hilasterion*, which is used in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) for the

thereby proving that Christ's righteousness, which cometh upon us through faith, helpeth us only. Which righteousness, saith he, is now declared through the gospel, and was "testified of before by the law and the prophets" (Rom 3:21). Furthermore, saith he, the law is holpen³³ and furthered through faith; though that the works thereof, with all their boast, are brought to naught, and are proved not to justify.

Chapter 4

In the fourth chapter, after that now by the three first chapters sins are opened and the way of faith unto righteousness laid, he beginneth to answer unto certain objections and cavillations. And first, he putteth forth those blind reasons, which commonly they that will be justified by their own works are wont³⁴ to make, when they hear that faith only, without works, justifieth; saying, "Shall men do no good works? Yea, and if faith only justifieth, what need a man to study for to do good works?" He putteth forth therefore Abraham for an example, saying, What did Abraham with his works? Was all in vain? Came his works to no profit? And so he concludeth that Abraham, without and before all works, was justified and made righteous; insomuch that, before the work of circumcision, he was praised of the scripture and called righteous by his faith only (Gen 15): so that he did not the work of circumcision for to be helped thereby unto righteousness, which yet God commanded him to do, and was a good work of obedience. So in like wise,³⁵ no doubt, none other works help anything at all unto a man's justifying: but as Abraham's circumcision was an outward sign, whereby he declared his righteousness which he had by faith, and his obedience and readiness unto the will of God, even so are all other good works outward signs and outward fruits of faith and of the Spirit, which justify not a man, but show that a man is justified already before God, inwardly in the heart, through faith, and through the Spirit purchased by Christ's blood.

Herewith St. Paul now establisheth his doctrine of faith, rehearsed afore in chapter 3, and bringeth also the testimony of David (Psa 32), which calleth a man blessed, not of works, but in that his sin is not reckoned, and in that faith is imputed for righteousness, although he abide not afterward without good works, when he is once justified. For we are

mercy-seat, lid of the Ark of the Covenant, where the blood of the sacrificial animal was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement.

³³ **holpen** – helped.

³⁴ **wont** – accustomed.

³⁵ **wise** – manner.

justified and receive the Spirit for to do good works; neither were it otherwise possible to do good works, except we first had the Spirit.

For how is it possible to do anything well in the sight of God, while we are yet in captivity and bondage under the devil, and the devil possesseth us altogether, and holdeth our hearts, so that we cannot once consent unto the will of God? No man therefore can prevent³⁶ the Spirit in doing good. The Spirit must first come, and wake him out of his sleep with the thunder of the law, and fear³⁷ him, and show him his miserable estate and wretchedness; and make him abhor and hate himself, and to desire help; and then comfort him again with the pleasant rain of the gospel, that is to say, with the sweet promises of God in Christ, and stir up faith in him to believe the promises. Then, when he believeth the promises, as God was merciful to promise, so is He true to fulfil them, and will give him the Spirit and strength, both to love the will of God, and to work thereafter. So we see that God only, Who, according to the Scripture, worketh all in all things, worketh a man's justifying, salvation, and health; yea, and poureth faith and belief, lust to love God's will, and strength to fulfil the same, into us, even as water is poured into a vessel; and that of His good will and purpose, and not of our deservings and merits. God's mercy in promising, and truth in fulfilling His promises, saveth us, and not we ourselves; and therefore is all laud, praise, and glory to be given unto God for His mercy and truth, and not unto us for our merits and deservings. After that, He stretcheth His example out against all other good works of the law, and concludeth that the Jews cannot be Abraham's heirs, because of blood and kindred only, and much less by the works of the law, but must inherit Abraham's faith, if they will be the right heirs of Abraham; forasmuch as Abraham before the law, both of Moses and also of the circumcision, was through faith made righteous, and called the father of all them that believe, and not of them that work. Moreover, the law causeth wrath, inasmuch as no man can fulfil it with love and lust; and as long as such grudging, hate, and indignation against the law remaineth in the heart, and is not taken away by the Spirit that cometh by faith, so long, no doubt, the works of the law declare evidently that the wrath of God is upon us, and not favor: wherefore faith only receiveth the grace promised unto Abraham. And these examples were not written for Abraham's sake only, saith he, but for ours also; to whom, if we believe, faith shall be reckoned likewise for righteousness; as he saith in the end of the chapter.

³⁶ **prevent** – take action before.

³⁷ **fear** – affright; terrify.

Chapter 5

In the fifth chapter the apostle commendeth the fruits, or works of faith; as are peace, rejoicing in the conscience, inward love to God and man; moreover boldness, trust, confidence, and a strong and lusty mind, and steadfast hope in tribulation and suffering. For all such follow where the right faith is, for the abundant grace's sake, and gifts of the Spirit, which God hath given us in Christ; in that He gave to Him to die for us, while yet His enemies.

Now have we then that faith only, before all works, justifieth, and that it followeth not yet therefore, that a man should do no good works, but that the right shapen works abide not behind, but accompany faith, even as brightness doth the sun; and they are called by Paul the fruits of the Spirit. Where the Spirit is, there it is always summer, and there are always good fruits, that is to say, good works. This is Paul's order: That good works spring of the Spirit; the Spirit cometh by faith; and faith cometh by hearing the Word of God, when the glad tidings and promises, which God hath made unto us in Christ are preached truly and received in the ground of the heart, without wavering or doubting, after that the law hath passed upon us and hath condemned our consciences. Where the Word of God is preached purely and received in the heart, there is faith and the Spirit of God; and there are also good works of necessity, whensoever occasion is given. Where God's Word is not purely preached, but men's dreams, traditions, imaginations, inventions, ceremonies, and superstition, there is no faith, and consequently no spirit that cometh from God. And where God's Spirit is not, there can be no good works, even as where an apple tree is not, there can grow no apples; but there is unbelief, the devil's spirit, and evil works. Of this, God's Spirit and His fruits, have our holy hypocrites not once known, neither yet tasted how sweet they are; though they feign many good works of their own imagination, to be justified withal, in which is not one crumb of true faith, of spiritual love, or of inward joy, peace, and quietness of conscience; forasmuch as they have not the word of God for them, that such works please God, but they are even the rotten fruits of a rotten tree.

After that, he breaketh forth and runneth at large, and showeth whence both sin and righteousness, death and life, come. And he compareth Adam and Christ together; thus-wise reasoning and disputing, that Christ must needs come as a second Adam, to make us heirs of His righteousness, through a new spiritual birth, without our deservings; even as the first Adam made us heirs of sin, through the bodily genera-

tion, without our deserving. Whereby it is evidently known, and proved to the uttermost, that no man can bring himself out of sin unto righteousness, no more than he could have withstood that he was born bodily. And that is proved herewith, forasmuch as the very law of God, which of right should have holpen if anything could have holpen, not only came and brought no help with her, but also increased sin; because that the evil and poisoned nature is offended and utterly displeased with the law; and the more she is forbid by the law, the more is she provoked, and set afire, to fulfil and satisfy her lusts. By the law then we see clearly that we must needs have Christ to justify us with His grace, and to help nature.

Chapter 6

In the sixth he setteth forth the chief and principal work of faith; the battle of the Spirit against the flesh, how the Spirit laboreth and enforceth to kill the remnant of sin and lust, which remain in the flesh after our justifying. And this chapter teacheth us that we are not so free from sin through faith, that we should henceforth go up and down, idle, careless, and sure of ourselves, as though there were now no more sin in us. Yet there is sin remaining in us, but it is not reckoned, because of faith and of the Spirit, which fight against it. Wherefore we have enough to do all our lives long, to tame our bodies, and to compel the members to obey the Spirit and not the appetites; that thereby we might be like unto Christ's death and resurrection, and might fulfil our baptism, which signifieth the mortifying of sins, and the new life of grace. For this battle ceaseth not in us until the last breath, and until that sin be utterly slain by the death of the body.

This thing (I mean, to tame the body and so forth) we are able to do, saith he, seeing we are under grace, and not under the law. What it is, not to be under the law, he himself expoundeth. For not to be under the law is not so to be understood, that every man may do what he lusteth: but not to be under the law is to have a free heart renewed with the Spirit, so that thou hast lust inwardly, of thine own accord, to do that which the law commandeth, without compulsion, yea, though there were no law. For grace, that is to say, God's favor, bringeth us the Spirit, and maketh us love the law: so is there now no more sin, neither is the law now any more against us, but at one and agreed with us, and we with it. But to be under the law is to deal with the works of the law, and to work without the Spirit and grace: for so long, no doubt, sin reigneth in us through the law; that is to say, the law declareth that we are under sin,

and that sin hath power and dominion over us, seeing we cannot fulfil the law, namely, within in the heart, forasmuch as no man of nature favoureth the law, consenteth thereunto, and delighteth therein; which thing is exceeding great sin, that we cannot consent to the law; which law is nothing else save³⁸ the will of God.

This is the right freedom and liberty from sin and from the law; whereof he writeth unto the end of this chapter, that it is a freedom to do good only with lust, and to live well without compulsion of the law. Wherefore this freedom is a spiritual freedom; which destroyeth not the law, but ministereth that which the law requireth, and wherewith the law is fulfilled; that is to understand, lust, and love, wherewith the law is stilled, and accuseth us no more, compelleth us no more, neither hath ought to crave of us anymore. Even as though thou wert in debt to another man, and wert not able to pay, two manner of ways mightest thou be loosed; one way, if he would require nothing of thee, and break thine obligation; another way, if some other good man would pay for thee, and give thee as much as thou mightest satisfy thine obligation withal. On this wise hath Christ made thee free from the law; and therefore is this no wild fleshly liberty, that should do naught, but that doth all things, and is free from the craving and debt of the law.

Chapter 7

In the seventh chapter, he confirmeth the same with a similitude of the state of matrimony. As when the husband dieth, the wife is at her liberty, and the one loosed and departed from the other; not that the woman should not have the power to marry unto another man, but rather now first of all is she free, and hath power to marry unto another man, which she could not do before, till she was loosed from her first husband: even so are our consciences bound and in danger to the law³⁹ under old Adam, as long as he liveth in us; for the law declareth that our hearts are bound, and that we cannot disconsent from him; but when he is mortified and killed by the Spirit, then is the conscience free and at liberty; not so that the conscience shall now do naught, but now first of all cleaveth unto another, that is, to wit, Christ, and bringeth forth the fruits of life. So now to be under the law is not to be able to fulfil the law; but to be debtor to it, and not able to pay that which the law requireth.

³⁸ **save** – except; but.

³⁹ **in danger to the law** – responsible or answerable to the law.

And to be loose from the law is to fulfil it, and to pay that which the law demandeth, so that it can now henceforth ask thee naught.

Consequently, Paul declareth more largely the nature of sin, and of the law; how that through the law sin reviveth, moveth herself, and gathereth strength. For the old man and corrupt nature, the more he is forbidden and kept under of the law, is the more offended and displeased therewith; forasmuch as he cannot pay that which is required of the law. For sin is his nature, and of himself he cannot but sin. Therefore is the law death to him, torment, and martyrdom. Not that the law is evil; but because that the evil nature cannot suffer that which is good and cannot abide that the law should require of him any good thing; like as a sick man cannot suffer that a man should desire of him to run, to leap, and to do other deeds of a whole man.

For which cause St. Paul concludeth that where the law is understood and perceived in the best wise, there it doth no more but utter sin, and bring us unto the knowledge of ourselves; and thereby kill us, and make us bound unto eternal damnation, and debtors to the everlasting wrath of God; even as he well feeleth and understandeth whose conscience is truly touched of the law. In such danger were we, ere the law came, that we knew not what sin meant, neither yet knew we the wrath of God upon sinners, till the law had uttered it. So seest thou that a man must have some other thing, yea, and a greater and a more mighty thing than the law, to make him righteous and safe. They that understand not the law on this wise are blind, and go to work presumptuously, supposing to satisfy the law with works. For they know not that the law requireth a free, a willing, a lusty, and a loving heart. Therefore, they see not Moses right in the face; the veil hangeth between and hideth his face, so that they cannot behold the glory of his countenance, how that the law is spiritual, and requireth the heart. I may of mine own strength refrain, that I do mine enemy no hurt; but to love him with all mine heart, and to put away wrath clean out of my mind, can I not of my own strength. I may refuse money of mine own strength; but to put away love unto riches out of mine heart, can I not do of mine own strength. To abstain from adultery, as concerning the outward deed, I can do of mine own strength; but not to desire in mine heart is as impossible unto me as is to choose whether I will hunger or thirst: and yet so the law requireth. Wherefore of a man's own strength is the law never fulfilled; we must have thereunto God's favor, and His Spirit, purchased by Christ's blood.

Nevertheless, when I say a man may do many things outwardly clean against his heart, we must understand that man is but driven of diverse

appetites; and the greatest appetite overcometh the less, and carrieth the man away violently with her. As when I desire vengeance, and fear also the inconvenience that is like to follow, if fear be greater, I abstain. If the appetite that desireth vengeance be greater, I cannot but prosecute the deed: as we see by experience in many murderers and thieves, who though they are brought into never so great peril of death, yet, after they have escaped, do even the same again; and common women⁴⁰ prosecute their lusts, because fear and shame are away, when others, which have the same appetites in their hearts, abstain at the least outwardly, or work secretly, being overcome of fear and of shame; and so likewise is it of all other appetites.

Furthermore, the apostle declareth how the Spirit and the flesh fight together in one man; and he maketh an example of himself, that we might learn to know how to work aright, I mean, to kill sin in ourselves. He calleth both the Spirit, and also the flesh, a law; because that like as the nature of God's law is to drive, to compel, and to crave, even so the flesh driveth, compelleth, craveth, and rageth against the Spirit, and will have her lusts satisfied. On the other side, the Spirit driveth, crieth, and fighteth against the flesh, and will have his lust satisfied. And this strife dureth⁴¹ in us as long as we live, in some more, and in some less, as the Spirit or the flesh is stronger; and the very man his own self is both the Spirit and the flesh, who fighteth with his own self, until sin be utterly slain, and he altogether spiritual.

Chapter 8

In the eighth chapter, he comforteth such fighters, that they despair not because of such flesh, neither think that they are less in favor with God. And he sheweth how that the sin remaining in us hurteth not; for there is no danger to them that are in Christ, which walk not after the flesh, but fight against it. And he expoundeth more largely what is the nature of the flesh and of the Spirit; and how the Spirit cometh by Christ, which Spirit maketh us spiritual, tameth, subdueth, and mortifieth the flesh; and certifieth us that we are nevertheless the sons of God and also beloved, though that sin rage never so much in us, so long as we follow the Spirit, and fight against sin, to kill and mortify it. And because nothing is so good to the mortifying of the flesh as the cross and tribulation, he comforteth us in our passions and afflictions by the assis-

⁴⁰ **common women** – prostitutes.

⁴¹ **dureth** – lasts; continues.

tance of the Spirit, which maketh intercession to God for us mightily with groanings that pass man's utterance, so that man's speech cannot comprehend them; and the creatures mourn also with us of great desire that they have that we were loosed from sin and corruption of the flesh. So we see that these three chapters, the 6th, 7th, and 8th, do nothing so much as to drive us unto the right work of faith, which is to kill the old man and mortify the flesh.

Chapters 9-11

In the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters he treateth of God's predestination; whence it springeth altogether; whether we shall believe or not believe; be loosed from sin, or not be loosed. By which predestination our justifying and salvation are clean taken out of our hands and put in the hands of God only, which thing is most necessary of all. For we are so weak and so uncertain, that if it stood in us, there would of a truth be no man saved; the devil, no doubt, would deceive us. But now is God sure, that His predestination cannot deceive Him, neither can any man withstand or let⁴² Him; and therefore have we hope and trust against sin.

But here must a mark be set to those unquiet, busy, and high-climbing spirits, how far they shall go; which first of all bring hither their high reasons and pregnant wits, and begin first from an high to search the bottomless secrets of God's predestination, whether they be predestinate or not. These must needs either cast themselves down headlong into desperation, or else commit themselves to free chance, careless. But follow thou the order of this epistle, and noose⁴³ thyself with Christ, and learn to understand what the law and the gospel mean, and the office of both the two; that thou mayest in the one know thyself, and how that thou hast of thyself no strength but to sin, and in the other the grace of Christ; and then see thou fight against sin and the flesh, as the seven first chapters teach thee. After that, when thou art come to the eighth chapter, and art under the cross and suffering of tribulation, the necessity of predestination will wax sweet, and thou shalt well feel how precious a thing it is. For except thou have born the cross of adversity and temptation, and hast felt thyself brought unto the very brim of desperation, yea, and unto hell-gates, thou canst never meddle with the sentence of predestination without thine own harm, and without secret

⁴² **let** – hinder.

⁴³ **noose** – find shelter, lie close, or nestle as a child with a nurse.

wrath and grudging inwardly against God; for otherwise it shall not be possible for thee to think that God is righteous and just. Therefore, must Adam be well mortified, and the fleshly wit brought utterly to nought, ere that thou mayest away with⁴⁴ this thing, and drink so strong wine. Take heed therefore unto thyself, that thou drink not wine while thou art yet but a suckling. For every learning hath its time, measure, and age; and in Christ is there a certain childhood in which a man must be content with milk for a season until he wax strong and grow up unto a perfect man in Christ and be able to eat of more strong meat.

Chapter 12

In the twelfth chapter, he giveth exhortations. For this manner observeth Paul in all his epistles: first he teacheth Christ and the faith, then exhorteth he to good works, and unto continual mortifying of the flesh. So here teacheth he good works in deed, and the true serving of God, and maketh all men priests, to offer up, not money and beasts, as the manner was in the time of the law, but their own bodies, with killing and mortifying the lusts of the flesh. After that, he describeth the outward conversation of Christian men, how they ought to behave themselves in spiritual things, how to teach, preach, and rule in the congregation of Christ, to serve one another, to suffer all things patiently, and to commit the wreak⁴⁵ and vengeance to God—in conclusion, how a Christian man ought to behave himself unto all men, to friend, foe, or whatsoever he be. These are the right works of a Christian man, which spring out of faith. For faith keepeth not holiday, neither suffereth any man to be idle, wheresoever she dwelleth.

Chapter 13

In the thirteenth chapter he teacheth to honor the worldly and temporal sword. For though that man's law and ordinance make not a man good before God, neither justify him in the heart, yet are they ordained for the furtherance of the commonwealth, to maintain peace, to punish the evil, and to defend the good. Therefore, ought the good to honor the temporal sword, and to have it in reverence, though as concerning themselves they need it not, but would abstain from evil of their own accord; yea, and do good without man's law, but by the law of the Spirit,

⁴⁴ **away with** – tolerate; handle.

⁴⁵ **wreak** – revenge.

which governeth the heart, and guideth it unto all that is the will of God. Finally, he comprehendeth and knitteth up all in love. Love of her own nature bestoweth all that she hath, and even her own self, on that which is loved. Thou needest not to bid a kind mother to be loving unto her only son; much less doth spiritual love, which hath eyes given her of God, need man's law to teach her to do her duty. And as in the beginning the apostle put forth Christ as the cause and author of our righteousness and salvation, even so he setteth Him forth here as an example to counterfeit,⁴⁶ that as He hath done to us, even so should we do one to another.

Chapter 14

In the fourteenth chapter he teacheth to deal soberly with the consciences of the weak in the faith, which yet understand not the liberty of Christ perfectly enough; and to favor them of Christian love; and not to use the liberty of the faith unto hinderance, but unto the furtherance and edifying of the weak. For where such consideration is not, there followeth debate and despising of the gospel. It is better then to forbear the weak awhile, until they wax strong, than that the learning of the gospel should come altogether under foot.⁴⁷ And such work is a singular work of love; yea, and where love is perfect, there must needs be such a respect unto the weak—a thing that Christ commanded and charged to be had above all things.

Chapter 15

In the fifteenth chapter he setteth forth Christ again, to be followed, that we also by His example should bear with others that are yet weak, as them that are frail, open sinners, unlearned, unexpert, and of loathsome manners; and not cast them away forthwith, but suffer them till they wax better, and exhort them in the meantime. For so dealt Christ in the gospel and now dealeth with us, daily suffering our imperfectness, weakness, conversation, and manners not yet fashioned after the doctrine of the gospel, but which smell of the flesh, yea, and sometimes break forth into outward deeds. After that, to conclude withal, he wisheth them increase of faith, peace, and joy of conscience; praiseth them, and committeth them to God, and magnifieth his office and administration in the

⁴⁶ counterfeit – copy; imitate.

⁴⁷ come...under foot – come to be despised.

gospel; and soberly, and with great discretion, desireth succor and aid of them for the poor saints of Jerusalem; and it is all pure love that he speaketh or dealeth withal.⁴⁸

So find we in this epistle plenteously, unto the uttermost, whatsoever a Christian man or woman ought to know; that is to wit,⁴⁹ what the law, the gospel, sin, grace, faith, righteousness, Christ, God, good works, love, hope, and the cross are; and even wherein the pith of all that pertaineth to the Christian faith standeth; and how a Christian man ought to behave himself unto every man, be he perfect or a sinner, good or bad, strong or weak, friend or foe; and in conclusion, how to behave ourselves both toward God and toward ourselves also. And all things are profoundly grounded in the scriptures, and declared with examples of himself, of the fathers, and of the prophets, that a man can here desire no more. Wherefore it appeareth evidently that Paul's mind was to comprehend briefly in this epistle all the whole learning of Christ's gospel and to prepare an introduction unto all the Old Testament. For without doubt, whosoever hath this epistle perfectly in his heart, the same hath the light and the effect of the Old Testament with him. Wherefore let every man, without exception, exercise himself therein diligently and record⁵⁰ it night and day continually, until e be fully acquainted therewith.

Chapter 16

The last chapter is a chapter of recommendation, wherein he yet minglenth a good monition,⁵¹ that we should beware of the traditions and doctrine of men, which beguile the simple with sophistry and learning that is not after the gospel, and draw them from Christ, and noosel them in weak and feeble, and (as Paul calleth them in the epistle to the Galatians) in beggarly ceremonies, for the intent that they would live in fat pastures, and be in authority and be taken as Christ, yea, and above Christ, and sit in the temple of God, that is to wit, in the consciences of men, where God only, His Word and His Christ, ought to sit. Compare therefore all manner doctrine of men unto the Scripture and see whether they agree or not. And commit thyself whole and altogether unto Christ; and so shall He with His Holy Spirit and with all His fulness dwell in thy soul. Amen.

⁴⁸ **withal** – with.

⁴⁹ **to wit** – possibly “to know.”

⁵⁰ **record** – older uses of *record* include memorize, recite, remember, and meditate on.

⁵¹ **monition** – warning.

Conclusion

The sum and whole cause of the writing of this epistle is to prove that a man is justified by faith only; which proposition whoso denieth, to him is not only this epistle and all that Paul writeth, but also the whole Scripture, so locked up, that he shall never understand it to his soul's health. And, to bring a man to the understanding and feeling that faith only justifieth, Paul proves that the whole nature of man is so poisoned and so corrupt, yea, and so dead, concerning godly living or godly thinking, that it is impossible for her⁵² to keep the law in the sight of God; that is to say, to love it, and of love and willingness to do it as naturally as a man eats or drinks, until he be quickened again and healed through faith. And by justifying, understand no other thing than to be reconciled to God, and to be restored unto His favor, and to have thy sins forgiven thee. As, when I say, God justifieth us, understand thereby, that God for Christ's sake, merits, and deservings only, receiveth us unto His mercy, favor, and grace, and forgiveth us our sins. And when I say, Christ justifieth us, understand thereby, that Christ only hath redeemed us, bought, and delivered us out of the wrath of God and damnation, and hath with His works only purchased us the mercy, the favor, and grace of God, and the forgiveness of our sins. And when I say that faith justifieth, understand thereby that faith and trust in the truth of God and in the mercy promised us for Christ's sake, and for His deserving and works only, doth quiet the conscience and certify her that our sins be forgiven, and we in the favor of God.

Furthermore, set before thine eyes Christ's works and thine own works. Christ's works only justify thee, and make satisfaction for thy sin, and not thine own works; that is to say, quiet thy conscience, and make thee sure that thy sins are forgiven thee, and not thine own works. For the promise of mercy is made thee for Christ's work's sake, and not for thine own work's sake.

Wherefore, seeing God hath not promised that thine own works shall save thee, therefore faith in thine own works can never quiet thy conscience, nor certify thee before God, when God cometh to judge and to take a reckoning, that thy sins are forgiven thee. Beyond all this, mine own works can never satisfy the law, or pay that I owe it: for I owe the law to love it with all mine heart, soul, power, and might; which to pay I am never able, while I am compassed with flesh. No, I cannot once begin

⁵² her – man's nature considered abstractly.

to love the law, except I be first sure by faith that God loveth me and forgiveth me.

Finally, that we say, Faith only justifieth, ought to offend no man. For if this be true, that Christ only redeemed us, Christ only bare our sins, made satisfaction for them, and purchased us the favor of God, then must it needs be true that the trust only in Christ's deserving and in the promises of God the Father, made to us for Christ's sake, doth alone quiet the conscience, and certify it that the sins are forgiven. And when they say, A man must repent, forsake sin, and have a purpose to sin no more, as nigh as he can, and love the law of God; therefore faith alone justifieth not, I answer, That and all like arguments are naught, and like to this—I must repent and be sorry; the gospel must be preached me, and I must believe it, or else I cannot be partaker of mercy, which Christ hath deserved for me. Therefore, Christ only justifieth me not; or Christ only hath not made satisfaction for my sins. As this is a naughty⁵³ argument, so is the other.

Now go to, reader, and according to the order of Paul's writing, even so do thou. First, behold thyself diligently in the law of God, and see there thy just damnation. Secondly, turn thine eyes to Christ, and see there the exceeding mercy of thy most kind and loving Father. Thirdly, remember that Christ made not this atonement that thou shouldest anger God again; neither died He for thy sins, that thou shouldest live still in them; neither cleansed He thee, that thou shouldest return, as a swine, unto thine old puddle again; but that thou shouldest be a new creature, and live a new life after the will of God, and not of the flesh. And be diligent, lest through thine own negligence and unthankfulness thou lose this favor and mercy again. Farewell.



⁵³ **naughty** – bad; inferior.