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**BIBLE STUDY.****LETTER TO THE ROMANS. — NO. 13.**

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Last night we closed our study with a consideration of the sixteenth verse of the eighth chapter of Romans: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

This evening we will commence with the seventeenth verse. It will be impossible to consider each verse in the chapter separately, for our time is too limited, so that some of them will have to be passed with but a small amount of study.

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." There is one thought about this glory that I wish to make plain to you. I stated last night that if we were joint-heirs with Christ, we must have whatever Christ has. When he enters upon his kingdom, receiving that promise which God made to Abraham and to his seed, we shall enter upon it with him. We are joint-heirs with Christ; therefore whatever Christ enjoys now, we have too, if we are in him. Whatever glory he has now, is for us also. All the love that he enjoys in the presence of his Father, we enjoy likewise; for he says, "That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." So it is that God has bestowed this wonderful love upon us; that we should be called the sons of God.

Think of it,—God has one only begotten Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; he is the well beloved; but O, the wideness of his love, that he is able to take us into it,—to adopt us into his family, and make us sharers of the same title that his only begotten Son shares. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Just as the world did not recognize him as the divine Son of

God, the heir of heaven; so it will not recognize us as the sons of God, and the heirs of heaven. "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." We are the children of God *now*, just as much his sons now as we ever will be. The glory of the Sonship is not manifested in us, but when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him, for he "shall change this vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

Then shall the children of God shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Brethren, since I have learned that God gives both grace and glory, I delight more and more in thinking of the glory that shall be revealed in us. For I understand that God gives them both by the same power and that that throne to which we come and make our petitions, as to a throne of grace, is likewise a throne of glory. Says Jeremiah, when making petition for his people: "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not *disgrace* the *throne of thy glory*; remember, break not thy covenant with us." And so, since it is both a throne of grace and a throne of glory, the grace that is bestowed is equal to the measure of the glory that there is in that throne. That glory is by and by going to be revealed in us, so that this poor, vile body will shine like the sun. This assurance,—that the glory to be revealed in us by and by, is our assurance that the measure of that grace may be revealed in us now; and that is why the Lord has revealed to us now just as much of the glory that is to come, as we can understand. Here is where we often fail to get the benefit of things that God has set before us about this glory that is to come. We forget that they are given for our present help, that we can have and share all the strength that there is in them now.

Just as much as the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed; just that much are the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the grace that is given us at this present time to endure them. The grace is equal to the glory.

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Now we have received the firstfruits of the Spirit. That does not mean that we are now to receive only a little of the Spirit, but that we get the Spirit as the firstfruits, or the advance money,—the earnest—of our inheritance. Paul proves this in Eph. 1:13, 14: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of His glory." Then having the Spirit of God, and being the sons of God,

is entering upon the riches of our inheritance *now*. We begin to share the riches of that inheritance now, and if we continue to be the sons of God, we continue in our inheritance right along through eternity, the only difference being that when the Son of God comes, we shall have the full inheritance and glory of it.

By looking at these promises this way, we can see how it is that heaven begins right here on earth. If we really take hold of these things by faith, we can carry the Spirit of God with us, and we shall know the peace and joy of heaven.

"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered."

Brethren, there is a whole world of encouragement in these verses. I have thought so much sometimes when I have been at our meetings, and have heard one after another arise and bear testimony, and close with the words, "pray for me," that Christ Himself prayed for us, and that the Holy Spirit itself is making intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered. Brethren, while we can ask for others to pray for us, cannot we take hold by faith and appropriate the prayers that are being continually offered for us in heaven above? Even if the brethren do not pray for us, we have the joy and comfort of knowing that Christ and the Spirit are praying for us.

For myself, I can understand these things and draw encouragement out of them just this way: I go to God, and lay my soul open before him, and ask him to give me,—what shall I ask for?—sometimes the words are gone, and I can think of nothing, only an inexpressible desire for something more than I have; but the Holy Spirit knows what I need, and knows the mind of God. It knows just what God has to give me, and so it makes intercession for me, and God gives exceeding abundantly above all I can ask or think. The Spirit of God takes those thoughts that we cannot put into words, and can scarcely think, and it transmutes them into words and petitions before the throne of God, and he that searcheth the hearts of men knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.

I am persuaded that a great many of us make a great mistake in this matter of searching the hearts. We hear brethren saying that they "are going to search their hearts, and put away all the evil things that they can find to be in them." Says Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jer. 17:9, 10. We are here on earth, and in a sinful condition. We admit that we are not in that spiritual condition that we ought to be; and so we will search our hearts, and put away all the wickedness that we can find in them. We cannot do it, for the heart will deceive us every time. Yet God can search the heart, and he does; and if we will take the result of his searching, great will be our joy. For it is the Comforter that brings these sins to our hearts, that the Lord hath searched out; and this very act of bringing our sins before our eyes, is a part of the comfort of God. Yes; by the very work of making known our sins to us, God gives us comfort.

Some people say that the Lord makes known their sins to them as they can bear them. When the Lord made known my sins to me, I could not bear them. I thought that the very life was being crushed out of me, and I knew I could not bear them. There was where the comfort came in,—I could not bear them, so I was willing to let the Saviour bear them for me. So the Lord searches the hearts of men, and the only thing that we have to do is to accept the pardon that he has for us, when he has searched them out, and held them up before our eyes.

Now we come to the most blessed, and the most glorious part of this most glorious chapter. One word forms the keynote of the eighth chapter of Romans,—

"Glory."

"And to know that all things *work* together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

The twenty-eighth verse is quoted wrong very often, and applied wrong, very much more often, just by the changing of tense. People read it, "We know that all things *will* work together for good to them that love God." But that is not what Paul says. He says that all things work together for good, at the present time, for those who love God. But says one, I don't know that they do. Well, just take hold of this Scripture, and believe it, and then you will know it. The only way that we can know is by believing the word of God. We shall then find that all things do work together for good to them that love God. This is the joy of the Christian,—that there cannot anything bad happen to him.

Some say, there is a special class to whom this is so. Yes, that is true, there is a special class, and that special class is composed of them that love God. We know whether we love God or not, therefore we know whether we can appropriate this promise or not. Is there not reason enough to love God? Some say, I want to love God more, I know that I do not love him enough. How absurd this is,—just as if the love of God was a duty that we could drive ourselves to perform. Love cannot be forced; the very act of forcing a person to love another, would show that there was not any love at all. How do we love any object for which we do have affection? Simply because it is lovable in our eyes, and the more we know of that thing we love, the more we love it. Then the more we know of God, the more we shall love him. As we come to his word, from which we must get our knowledge of him, we see the wideness of the mercy of God, and we cannot help loving him. Why cannot we help loving him? Because he first loved us. Then if we would love God more, study his love more as it is revealed in his word.

Now how about this class,—"To them who are called according to his purpose.?" Here we have the matter of "calling," and that causes some to be discouraged sometimes. A brother will say, "Perhaps I am not called, I am not at all sure that I am; and therefore it don't work good for me." That matter of "calling" can be settled very

easily. Who has God called? "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And *whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17.

Now the call is to every man and woman and child on earth. Those that hear it are to take it up and pass it along. The kindness of God is wide enough to take in every individual; "for God so loved the *world* that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Those two texts are sufficient to scatter to the four winds all the theological trash that has been written to prove that God has some set few that he has called, and no others. Let no soul stay away, because he thinks he is not called. The call is to all. All do not come,—all do not take the advice of Peter, and make their calling and election sure; but that is not the fault of God's provision.

Now we are "called" and "elected." Sometimes we get wonderfully afraid of that word, "elected." Is there any need to be afraid of that term? No; for every individual can be a candidate, and every candidate can be elected. Here is something that everybody can have, and the fact that one is elected, does not debar everyone else from being elected.

In 2 Tim. 1:9 we read, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Mark you, his own purpose is a purpose of grace, and the free gift by grace comes upon all unto justification of life. Now note what the election is:—

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

"He hath blessed us in all spiritual blessings!" In what?—In Christ; therefore just the moment you give up self and take Christ instead, you have everything that Christ has to give. Why have all these blessings been lodged in Christ? Because he is able to bless you, "in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts 3:26. So since we have given to us by God himself all the blessings that can be given to deliver us from sin, and to turn us from our iniquities, we can have joy and peace in him. Peter says, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." Everything that is necessary for life and godliness is given unto us. In whom?—In Christ. Therefore the soul that stands in Christ may stand and does stand as firm and secure as the Rock of Ages.

Now it is "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted." In whom?—"In the beloved." Not in ourselves, but in the beloved; and every one is called to the fellowship of Christ, if he will accept it. Brethren, is it unreasonable that

God does not accept those who will not accept him?—No. Then is it unreasonable and unjust that God accepts us when we accept his call?—Certainly not. Then we are elected in him, according to the good pleasure of his will, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. . . . Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him; in whom we also have obtained an inheritance." Mark it, when we are in Christ, we have obtained an inheritance,—we have the firstfruits of it,—we begin to share it now.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Just a few words on "foreknowledge." Sometimes the position is taken that God did not know what man was coming to when he made him, and if he did know, then he ought not to have made him at all, or he ought to have stopped him from going in the way he has gone. God does know, and he foreknows, and he knows the end from the beginning. "Known unto God from the beginning are all his works." God has not changed a hair's breadth from the plan which he knew before the world began. And there is no power in all the universe that could make him change.

"Did God know that Adam was going to sin, and does he know whether we will be saved or not?" Yes, he knows all about it,—who will be saved and who will be lost. "Then how can it be that we are free?" I do not know, and it does not make any difference. I know from his word that I am perfectly free to have salvation, and to have it when I want it. I know at the same time that God knows whether I will take it or not. I cannot understand how these two things can be; but God knows, and he is not unjust, so it is all right. There is not an angel in heaven who knows how it can be, but they know that it is so.

Notice the absurdity of the statement, that God can know if he wants to, but that he does not want to know some things; and therefore does not exercise his power to know. Some say that if he did know, he would be responsible for our being saved or lost, so he does not exercise his power to know, and therefore releases himself from that responsibility. That is bringing a fearful charge against God. It really throws all the responsibility of man's ruin upon God, and charges him with trying to shirk it. If he chooses not to know certain things, how is it possible for him to know what he wants to know, and what he does not want to know?

The very statement that he wills not to know certain things proves that he must know them in order to know that he does not want to know them, and this is an utter absurdity. That he wills not to know the things that he does know, is a self-evident absurdity. Such an idea as that must necessarily be based on the supposition that God knows that he does know by studying. But God does not have to count, and calculate, and figure to arrive at conclusions. He is God, and knowledge is in him, and begins and ends in him.

God is the High and Holy One "that inhabiteth eternity." He dwells in eternity. What is eternity?—It is something that has neither beginning nor ending. It may be represented

by a circle, at every point of which God dwells at the same time. He is self-existent. That is, the millions of ages that have been in the past, and the millions that are to be in the future, are all "just now" with God. Past, present, and future are all present with God. He lives in an ETERNAL NOW. We cannot understand how that can be; but that does not matter; he says it is so, and we believe him.

That he is the eternal God, constitutes the strength of the fact that he is our refuge. It is the eternal God who has had charge of our ways in the past, and we have confidence in his leading. If he had not known the past and the future, how could I have known whether he was leading me right or not? Job says, "He knoweth the way that I take."

He leads us in the way that we should go, and looked over the ages, and he saw just who would have the inheritance, and he is preparing it for him. What would you think of a man, to put the thing on a very low plane, who got a lot of stones together, and commenced to build a house. You ask him what kind of house he is going to build. "Why," he says, "I don't know, I am going to put these stones and timbers together, and then see what kind of house will come of it." Such talk as that would be foolishness. Before a man starts in to build a house, he knows just how it is coming out, he knows exactly how it will look when it is finished. When God laid his plans in ages past, don't you think that he knew what kind of earth he was going to have? He knew what kind of earth it was going to be and he had a purpose in making it. He created it to be inhabited.

Not only did he know what kind of place it was going to be, but he knew what kind of men were going to dwell in it; he knew every man who would dwell in it, and he had every one of them named. Those men whom God saw that he would have to inhabit the earth, when he laid his plans for it in ages past, were to be good and holy men; and that same earth, when this little experiment of sin is worked out, will be inhabited by just exactly the persons that God saw would inhabit it, and they will have the names that he gave them in ages past.

In Rev. 2:17 we read, "And I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Now it is not to be supposed that over in the kingdom of God we will not know each other's names, to be able to pronounce them. In the Bible every name signified something. Jacob was the "supplanter;" Israel the "prince of God;" Abraham, the "father of many nations;" Sarai, a "contentious woman;" and Sarah, a "princess." The name signified the character of the individual.

Now while all the redeemed are to have the perfect character of God, yet that character is so perfect and so broad, that there is room for each to have a distinct character. Why is it that no one will be able to understand the name of any one else? Because no two persons will have had the same experience in developing character. No two persons have been led in the same way, and have had the same experience or trials. "The heart knoweth its own business and the stranger meddleth not therewith."

In Ex. 33:17 the Lord said to Moses, "Thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name." Moses was wonderfully near to the Lord at that time. He walked with

God, and endured continually "as seeing him who is invisible." Day by day his character was moulded by the Almighty, and had it not been for one sin he would have been translated without seeing death. He was meek above all men, and God knew him by that name which was written in the book.

Man fell, but every man who lived directly after the fall, could have accepted the proffered salvation if he had wished, and could have been one of those persons who would people the earth,—one of those persons whom God saw when he laid the plans for the earth and for its inhabitants. If that had been so, the earth would have been filled, and the work closed up long ago. Would that have been unjust to us, for in that case we would have been unborn and therefore left out? No, it would have been no more unjust than it will be unjust to close the work in a few years from now, and leave out possible nations yet unborn.

Now God foreknew us in Christ, and in him in the beginning we were predestinated to just such a place in the earth in its state of purity as God wants us to have. I am so thankful that we may have Christ if we will, and if we will believe him and trust in him, we know that we are predestinated to a place in his kingdom. God hath "predestinated us according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Cannot you see that all things work together for good to them that love God?

How do I know that I am a child of God? He loved me, and he bought me, and I gave myself to him, and therefore I am his. Now I am in Christ, and it matters not what happens to me. There is not a bad thing that can come upon me, for everything that does come, God will work it for my good; and not only will he do it, but he does do it. He does it that he may develop my character, and fit me for what he is preparing for me.

Now, Satan concocts some wicked scheme against me,—influences some man or government to do something against me, that is calculated to destroy me. Well, that is all right; for God takes those very wicked schemes, and out of them he brings good for me. Satan works those wicked schemes to accomplish my ruin; but God takes his schemes, and by them carries me along to the desired haven. Therefore the Christian has no business to be complaining.

There is no one who would think of complaining when he was having a good time. But the Christian is having a good time all the time, for all things work together for good to him. These bad things good, that are concocted against us? Yes, for although they are bad when they start, and are designed to ruin us, yet by the time they get to us, God transforms them into good. When we look at things in this way, we can praise God no matter what happens.

There was Joseph, his brethren sent him down to Egypt. They did it with no other intention than to destroy him. They first tried to kill him, and then when they sold him for a slave, they thought that he would not live long down there as a slave, and that they would get rid of him that way. And yet we are told by the psalmist, that, "God sent a man to Egypt." Those brethren of his were working out the evil of their hearts, and at the same time God sent him down according to his will. We cannot understand how this can be, but we know that it was so.



Caiaphas, that wicked old high priest asked if it were not better that one man die, than that the whole nation perish. There was the sentiment of the worldly-wise, scheming politician. Yet at the same time, in those very words, God was speaking a prophecy. There is not a wicked person, not even the devil himself, but God just takes him and his wickedness as it comes, and makes it work out his own eternal purpose. There is a world of comfort in the thought that *that* is the kind of God that we serve.

So it is that those whom he predestinated he called, and whom he called he justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Christ says, "and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one." Jno. 17:22. Yes, the Lord does give grace and glory, and we have the glory now, only it is in the form of grace. "He will beautify the meek with salvation." He has given unto us the riches of his glory and his grace. By and by he will show us the exceeding riches of his grace with the glory that is to be revealed.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

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