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BIBLE STUDY.**LETTER TO THE ROMANS. — NO. 8.**

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One motive only should actuate the minds of those who study the word of God, and that is that they may by this study be drawn nearer to God. God is no respecter of persons. He will give his Holy Spirit *to any* and *to all who ask for it*. He is just as willing to make the truths of the Bible plain to one as to another. Peace and light may come into your hearts from what is spoken from the desk; but if you do not know the word for yourselves, that peace and light will not stay with you. The Holy Spirit spoke the words of the Bible; and it is only by the aid of the Holy Spirit that it can be understood. Any man who will submit himself to the Holy Spirit, may understand the Bible for himself.

There is but one true help to the Bible—the Spirit of God. If you get your ideas about Christ and his work from the writings of other men, you get it second hand at best. Draw your light straight from the Bible. Learn the Bible from the Bible itself. When our minds are illuminated by the Holy Spirit, although the word will appear simple, at the same time there will be heights and depths to it that will fill us with amazement. All eternity will be spent in studying the plan of salvation and the longer we study, the more we will find to study.

Last evening our study brought us to the close of the fifth verse of the fifth chapter. We will commence this evening at the sixth.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Mark the words "*without strength*." There was a fixed time in the history of the world when Christ was offered on the cross of Calvary. But that was not the only time when Christ availed for the ungodly. Who are the ungodly? They are those who are "without strength." The human family has been without strength from the fall, and they are without strength to-day. When men find themselves without strength, Christ is to be

lifted up, and he says that he will draw all men unto him. So we can look to Jesus as a crucified and risen Saviour to-day, just as much as could the disciples.

We sometimes think that we look back to Christ, and that the patriarchs and prophets looked forward to Him. Is it so? We look *up* to Christ and so did they. We look to Christ a loving Redeemer *by our side*, and so did they. Said Moses to the children of Israel: "It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? . . . But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." The Word, which was Christ the Redeemer, was nigh unto them; and he is nigh unto us.

They all drank of that spiritual Rock that went with them, and that Rock was Christ. The Israelites did not need to look forward to Christ. He was nigh unto them. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He is and ever has been a present Saviour to all who made him so. He was a present Saviour to Abel. "By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." "By faith" in what?—In the Son of God, for there was no one else for him to have faith in. So it was that Enoch walked with Christ by faith. He did not look away beyond to some future time for the help of the Redeemer. Christ was to him a present Saviour, and they walked along together.

So in every age of the world, when men have felt themselves to be without strength, then Christ has been a Saviour to them. Notice how plain are the words: "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Abel was without strength, and Christ died for him. Enoch was without strength, and Christ died for him. Abraham and Sarah were without strength, and Christ died for them. His death was a reality to all of these. How remarkably powerful was Christ to Abraham! That Christ, the Messiah not yet come and who was to come through Abraham, that very Messiah was so very powerful that faith in him brought forth the son to Abraham and Sarah, in order that he might come through that son. At every period of the earth's history, Christ has been a present Saviour to those who were "without strength."

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." The word in the original signifying "righteous," is a different word from the one, which is rendered "good." The word righteous here means a man who is strictly honest and upright, but having nothing peculiarly lovable about him. Scarcely for such an one will anyone die. But for a "good" man, one who is kind and benevolent, who would give all he had to feed the poor and clothe the naked, for a man of this class some would even dare to die. This is the highest pitch to which human love attains. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13. But note the love of God. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We too often measure God and his love by ourselves and our love. The Lord through David said: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." The unregenerate heart treats as it is treated, and judges God by itself, but God's love is altogether different from human love; he loves his enemies.

How wonderful and how matchless is the love of God, and to how great an extent was that love shown by the death of His dear Son! What had the world done to merit goodness at the hand of God? It had joined hands with the enemies of God; nothing but punishment was deserved. Some say they cannot accept Christ because they are not worthy. People who have been professed Christians for years will deprive themselves of the riches of God's grace because they say, "I am not worthy." That is true. They are not worthy. None of us are worthy. But God commended His love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Why did he die?—*To make us worthy*; to make us complete in him. The trouble with those who say that they are not worthy, is that they do not feel half unworthy enough. If they felt "without strength," then the power of Christ could avail them. The whole secret of justification by faith, and life and peace in Christ, lies in believing the Bible. It is one thing to say we believe the Bible, and another thing to take every word in it as spoken by the mouth of God to us individually.

In 1 Tim. 1:15 Paul says: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." That is exactly what he came for—to save sinners. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Oh, that men would realize that they are *without strength!* When they reach that point, then they can have the strength of Christ. That is the strength that is worth something; it is worth everything.

It is a great thing to believe that Christ died for the ungodly. Sometimes we feel almost discouraged, the heavens seem like brass over our heads, and everything we do or say seems to come back in our faces as if it were worth nothing. We think our prayers do not ascend higher than our heads. What will you do at such a time? You must thank God. "Thank him for what? I have no blessing; I don't feel that I am his child at all; what will I thank him for?"—Thank him that Christ died for the ungodly. If it does not mean much to you the first time you repeat the words, repeat them again. Then light will soon come in. You feel that you are one of the ungodly; then the promise is yours that Christ has died for you. You are there before him on your knees because you are a sinner, so you can have the benefit of his death. What is the benefit of that death? "Much more then, being now *justified by his blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through him." "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Many act and talk as if Christ was dead and irrecoverably dead. Yes, he died; but he rose again, and lives forever more. Christ is not in Joseph's new tomb. We have a risen Saviour. What does the death of Christ do for us?—Reconciles us to God. It is the death of Christ that brings us to God. He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Now mark! It is the *death* of Christ that brings us to God; what is it that keeps us there?—It is the *life* of Christ. We are saved by his life. Now hold these words in your minds—"Being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

Why was the life of Christ given? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Then Christ gave his life that we might have life. Where is that life? What is that

life? and where can we get it? In John 1:4 we read: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." He alone has life, and he gives that life to as many as will accept it. John 17:2. Then Christ has the life, and he is the only one who has it, and he is willing to give it to us. Now what is that life? Verse 3: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Has a person who *knows* Christ eternal life? That is what the word of God says.

Again he says in John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we know that we have this life? This is an important question. "We *know* that we have *passed* from *death* unto *life*, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

Says one, "We know that we will get eternal life by and by." Yes, that is true, but it is better than that; we get it *now*. This is not a mere theory, it is the word of God. Let me illustrate: Here are two men—brothers—to all appearances they are alike. But one is a Christian and the other is not. Now the one that is a Christian, although there is nothing in his external appearance to indicate it, has a life that the other has not. He has passed from *death*—the state in which the other one is—to life. He has something that the other has not got, and that something is *eternal life*. The words, "No *murderer* hath eternal life abiding in him," would mean nothing if nobody else had eternal life abiding in him.

1 John 5:10: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; *because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*" God cannot lie, and so when we say that the words of God are not so, we make liars of ourselves. Now, according to this scripture, we make God a liar, if we believe not the record that God gave of his Son. What, then, must we believe in order to clear ourselves of that charge,—of not believing this record and thus making God a liar? The next verse explains it: "*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*"

Some people are afraid that this idea of justification by faith, and eternal life, will get men away from the commandments. But nobody but the one who is justified by faith—who has Christ's life—does keep the commandments; for God says that we are justified by faith, and if we say we are not, then we make God a liar,—we bear false witness against him, and we break the commandment. In the verse just quoted we are told what we are to believe in order to be cleared from the charge of making God a liar. We are to believe that God has given to us eternal life in Christ. As long as we have the Son of God we have eternal life. By our faith in the word of God we bring Christ into our hearts. Is he a dead Christ? No; he lives and cannot be separated from his life. Then when we get Christ into our hearts, we get life there. He brings that life into our hearts when he comes. How thankful we ought to be to God for this.

When Jesus went to Bethany, he said to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life." We have already read about passing from death unto life; how is that done? Only by a resurrection. In Christ we have a resurrection to a new life. Note the following:

Paul prays that he may know him, and the "*power of His resurrection.*" What is the power of that resurrection? In Eph. 2:4, 5, 6, and 7 we read, "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us [made us alive] together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)."

Notice, he *hath* done this, and he "hath raised us up and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We were dead, we are quickened, and we are raised up to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. We must have, and we can have the life of Christ to-day, for when he comes, he will change our vile bodies by the same power by which he *has* changed our hearts. The heart must be changed now. It cannot be changed except by the life of Christ coming in and abiding in it. But when Christ is in the heart, we can live the life of Christ, and then when he comes, the glory will be revealed. He was Christ when he was here upon earth, although he did not have a retinue of angels and glory visible about him. He was Christ when he was the man of sorrows. Then when he ascended, the glory was revealed. So with us. Christ must dwell in our hearts now, and when he comes and changes these bodies, then the glory will be revealed.

Christ gave His life for us. John 10:10, 11. He gave all there was of him. What was that? His life. He gave it for our sins. Gal. 1:3, 4. We shall be saved by his life. It is the life of Christ working in us that delivers us from the sins of this present evil world. This is a business transaction. He gave his life for our sins. Then to whom did he give his life? To those who had the sins to give in return for it. Have you any sins? If you have, you can exchange them for the life of Christ.

In Heb. 5:2 we learn that the work of the high priest was to be one of compassion. That is why the men who bore the name of priests when the Savior was here upon earth, were not really priests. They had no compassion. They were wicked, grasping men. One passed by on the other side of the man that had fallen by the wayside, whom the robbers had plundered. Christ had compassion: "Therefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

What is done by the compassion of Christ? Strength is given to us. What benefit is the compassion of Christ to us? He knows the strength we need. He knows what we need, when we need it, and how we need it. So the work of Christ as priest, is for one thing,—to deliver us from sin. What is the power of Christ's priesthood? He is made priest "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an *endless life.*" That is the power by which Christ delivers you and me from sin this day, and this hour, and every moment that we believe in him.

Christ was immortal before he came to earth. He was God. What is the essential attribute of divinity? Life. If Christ was immortal, and therefore had life, how could he die? I don't know. That is a mystery, but I am so glad that one did die for us who had life that could not be touched by anything, and that was successful in resisting the attacks of the enemy. Then so powerful was he that he could lay his life down and take it up again. Why was it that no one could take life away from Christ? Because he was

sinless, and if there ever had been another man on earth who lived without sin, he too could never die. But there never was but the one who trod this earth, who was perfectly sinless, and that was Jesus Christ of Nazareth. No one could take life from Christ. The wicked had no power to kill him. He laid his life down. If he had not chosen to do that, no one ever could have taken it from him.

God raised Him up, "having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." It was not possible that death should hold Christ. He had power in his life that defied death. He laid life down, and took death upon himself, that he might show his power over death. He defied death, he entered right into the realms of death—the grave—to show that he had power over it. Christ laid down his life; and when the time came for him to do so, he took it up again. Why was it that death could not hold him?—Because he was sinless. Sin had spent all its force on him, and had not marred him in the least. It had not made a single blot upon his character. His was a sinless life, and therefore the grave could have no power over him. It is that same life which we have when we believe on the Son of God. There is victory in that thought. We can have it by believing on the Son of God. Give your sins to the Lord, and take that sinless life in their place. He has given that life for them, and why not accept the price that has been paid? You do not want the sins, and the life will be so precious to you. It will fill your hearts with joy and gladness. We are reconciled by his blood, now let us be saved by his life.

The life of Christ is divine power. In the time of temptation the victory is won beforehand. When Christ is abiding in us, we are justified by faith, and we have his life abiding in us. But in that life he gained the victory over all sin, so the victory is ours before the temptation comes. When Satan comes with his temptation, he has no power, for we have the life of Christ, and that in us wards him off every time. O the glory of the thought, that there is life in Christ, and that we may have it.

The just shall live by faith, because Christ lives in them. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Yes, we are crucified with Christ; but is Christ dead?—No, he has risen again; then we have risen with him. But we are in the flesh. That is true; but in the flesh there may be the divine life that was in Christ when he was in the flesh.

We cannot understand these things. They are the mystery of the gospel. The mystery of Christ manifested in the flesh. Everything that is done for man by Heaven, is a mystery. Once there was a poor woman, who was afflicted with an issue of blood. In a dense crowd she touched the hem of the Master's garment. Said Christ, "I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." Now that woman had a real disease, and when she touched the hem of his garment, she was really healed of it. What healed her? There was a real power which came out from Jesus and went into her and healed her.

These miracles were written for us. Why were they written? "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." The same life and power which went out from Christ and healed the body of

that woman, went out to heal her soul: Jesus is ready and willing to do the same today. These things were put upon record that we might know that the same Divine power and life that went into the bodies of men to heal them goes into the soul of those who believe. We can take that same life into our souls to withstand the temptations of the enemy.

There is only one life that can resist sin, and that is a sinless life, and the only sinless life is the life of the Son of God. How many of us have been striving to get ourselves sinless. It has been a losing game. But we can have the life of Christ, and that is a sinless life. Thanks be unto God for this unspeakable gift.

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