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BIBLE STUDY.**LETTER TO THE ROMANS. — NO. 1.**

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This book is one of the most wonderful in the Bible. In the sixteen possible lessons before us, we shall be able only to touch, in the briefest manner, upon the general outline of the book. We shall expect to find things we cannot understand, even as we cannot understand how the infinite God upholds the universe by the word of his power. We believe that which we cannot understand, because God says so. Approaching the study of the Bible thus, we place ourselves where God can unfold and explain to us the mysteries of his word.

Chap. 1:1-15. These fifteen verses are introductory, the first seven comprising the salutation, the remaining eight being personal explanations. Yet in these verses are some of the richest passages in the Bible; as in verse twelve, wherein Paul states that he expected not only to minister to the church on his visit, but to be ministered to by it. Both were to be comforted by their "mutual faith." This does not contemplate a condition of the church in which the minister must spend his energy in combating error, and settling differences between brethren.

Verses 16 and 17. Here we have the *text* of the epistle. The entire book is but an expansion of these verses.

In the remaining verses of the chapter, we have a statement of God's justice in punishing wicked men, and of the consequences of a separation from God. We are liable to get an idea something like this; namely, that we have the third angel's message, consisting of a system of truth comprising such subjects as the law, the Sabbath, nature of man, advent, etc., and that to this we have superadded a little gospel, the idea of justification by faith. There is but one doctrine we have to preach, that is the gospel of Christ. Mark 16:15, 16. This commission is to us. Those that believe

the gospel will be saved. Is there nothing besides the gospel to teach?—"It is the power of God unto salvation." What do we want besides salvation? What more can we ask for?

The gospel brings righteousness. The righteousness of God is what God does; it is his way. To be in harmony with him is to make his way our way. The gospel reveals this way to us (Rom. 1:17), and not only this, but it is the power of God to work out his way in us. The Bible is a statement of God's way, and this is summed up in the ten commandments, which are a declaration of his righteousness. Isa. 51:6, 7. In Matt. 6:33, Christ declares this righteousness to be the one thing needful. Why?—Righteousness is life, and the man who has God's righteousness has everything in this world, and in the world to come.

Verse 17. Here we have righteousness by faith. "The just shall live by faith." Nothing else? By faith and works? "Add not thou unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." To be just is to be righteous, and a righteous man will do righteous acts. That is the fruit of righteousness. But how does he do these works?—By faith. John 6:28, 29. "This is the work of God, that ye believe." Possibly we have had a narrow idea of what faith is.

"The just shall live by faith." Here is the whole thing. Nothing can be added to the preaching of the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ. What about these doctrines, as the Sabbath, immortality, etc.?—Since the "kingdom of God and his righteousness" is the one thing needful, and since there is nothing unimportant in the Bible, all of these doctrines are simply divisions, lines depending upon that one thing—all summed up in the doctrine of righteousness by faith. We can preach nothing else; for everything outside of this is sin.

Verse 18. Wrath is revealed against those who "hold (or restrain) the truth in unrighteousness." Connect this verse with chap. 10:3. God is a living God. His throne is a living throne. There is the water of life, and the tree of life—everything is life. Therefore his righteousness is active, is life. Some men, ignorant of this righteousness, refuse to submit themselves to it, and resist it. God will punish men. Why?—Because they identify themselves with unrighteousness. They are permeated by it, and when that is gone—for sin must be destroyed—it takes them with it. It means simply that God is no respecter of persons.

Verses 19 and 20. Is God unjust?—No; for ever since the creation his works have testified of him. Many do not know that the world could not create itself, but it "*may* be known."

Verses 21-32. How does it come that men do not know?—They know so much. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." The most unreasonable thing in the universe is human reason. It is utter foolishness with God. 1 Cor. 1:19-31.

Paul says those who do the things described in the latter part of the chapter under consideration, *know* that they are worthy of death, and you cannot find a people who do not know it. The heathenism Paul was speaking of, as represented at Athens and elsewhere, was not ignorance of things of this world. It embraced men whose work in the arts and sciences is studied to-day. A man may know without God, just as the beast

may know; and where is the difference, save in degree? There is no wisdom apart from God. This is what Paul means when he says, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy . . . after the rudiments of this world, and not after Christ." So also in 1 Cor. 1:18 and Col. 2:3.

We hear a good deal of "natural morality;" and "scientific morality,"—morality common to all men. This is what Paul is describing. It is heathenism. The popular idea of heathenism is an incorrect one. The heathen is the man who doesn't know God. He may be a religious man, but God is not the source of his wisdom. In Mark 7:22, 23, Christ describes the source of "natural morality." The hearts of all are alike; we are made of one blood to dwell upon the earth. The heathen are the people who do the things spoken of in Paul's first chapter, wherever they live. Men who in the United States or in England follow the leadings of the natural heart (Gal. 5:19-21) are no better than those who do the same things in China.

Compare 2 Tim. 3:1-7 with the latter part of Rom. 1. They are almost identical. It means that men in the last days shall be open heathen—giving themselves up to the works of the flesh. This helps to explain many references in the Old Testament in which God speaks of judging the heathen. It means that all who will be destroyed will be heathen. Who are the heathen? Rom. 2:1. "Thou that judgest doest the same things." Did we ever do anything we would be ashamed to speak of? Wherein were we different from the heathen? Here is broad enough ground for the gospel. It is a shame to speak of those things that have been done by us all in secret, but "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

[Verified by and from the original.]

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