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BIBLE STUDY.**LETTER TO THE ROMANS. — NO. 12.**

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We must not forget that the only object that we should have in this study of the Bible is that we may be drawn nearer to God, and that we may learn that the Word of God means just what it says, and that what it says, is the voice of God speaking to us individually. Take the Word and build upon it.

There is one thought that was mentioned last night that I wish to impress upon your minds. Our union with Christ and with his righteousness, may be and should be just as close and complete as our union has been with sin. The figure of marriage shows that to be so. We were held in union with sin,—married to the old man,—to the body of sin. That was an unlawful connection, consequently the body of sin was a body of death to us, because we could not be separated from that body except by death. That body and ourselves were identified,—we were married; therefore we were one, and the body of sin was the controlling influence in that union; it dominated everything.

Now Christ comes to us, and when we yield ourselves to him he looses the bonds that have bound us to the body of sin. Then we enter into the same intimate relation with our Lord Jesus Christ that we previously sustained with the body of sin. We become united to Christ,—married to him,—and then we are one. And as in the other case, where the body of sin was the controlling influence, so in this second marriage, Christ is the controlling influence.

Notice how perfectly that figure of marriage is carried out. We are represented as the woman. The husband is the head of the family; and so Christ is our head, and we yield ourselves to him. We are one with him. What a precious thought it is, that we are one flesh with Christ! In this we see the mystery of the incarnation appearing again. If we can believe that Christ was in the flesh, God incarnate in Christ, we can believe this,—Christ dwelling in us, and working through us,—through our flesh, just the same as

when he took flesh upon himself and controlled it. It is a mystery that we cannot understand; but we acknowledge it, and that gives us freedom.

We sang tonight, "My sin is nailed to his cross." He says that our old man was crucified with him. That is true; but it is not raised with him. Christ came to minister, and not to be ministered unto, but he came to minister to us and not to be the minister of sin. Therefore when we and the body of sin together are crucified with Christ, and are buried together, we are raised up to walk in newness of life, but the body of sin remains buried, so we are free from it. Now what follows?

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

In these verses we have that which, if we will hold it in our minds, and believe that Jesus is able to save us by faith, will be to us a sure rock upon which we can build. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." In these words lies a practical thought, and from it arises a question which troubles many. They say, "I believe all that in theory, I am fully in harmony with that, and I know that Christ can cleanse from sin. I believe that if I confess my sins, he is faithful and just to forgive me and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. But the question in my mind is, have I confessed all my sins? That is what gives me trouble; if I was only sure that I had confessed all my sins, then I could claim that promise, and believe that there was no condemnation for me."

Now this is something that troubles very many,—How are we going to know that we are not under condemnation? We cannot charge God with having left the matter so indeterminate that it is impossible for us to know whether we are condemned or not, therefore it must be that we can find out. We may put it this way: "I have confessed all the sins that I know of, everything that the Lord has shown me; and when the Lord shows me something else, I will confess that." Of course confess everything the Lord shows you: but, brethren, don't stop half way. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Then when you have confessed a sin, believe that God forgives it, and take his peace into your hearts, and if he shows you other sins, confess them, believe that they are forgiven, and have his peace still. But there are scores of honest souls who deprive themselves of a blessing, and finally go into darkness, because when they have confessed their sins, they do not take the forgiveness, and thank God for the freedom that must follow.

Now the idea conveyed in that expression, that we have confessed all the sins we know of, but still we dare not acknowledge freedom from condemnation, for fear that there are other sins that we do not know about, and therefore have not confessed, is

really bringing a serious charge against God. It is making the Lord out to be the forgiver of the man who has the best memory. But was it your memory alone that enabled you to remember those sins that you did confess? Who quickened and spurred up your memory? It was the Spirit of God that showed those sins to you. Now are we going to charge God with doing a partial work? He sent his Holy Spirit to show you those sins. Shall we say then that he kept back a part of them, that he did not reveal to us? He showed us just what he wanted us to confess, and when we have confessed them, we have met the mind of the Spirit of God, and we are free.

Suppose that I have injured one of you, I may have been pursuing a systematic course of evil toward you,—accusing you falsely, trying to injure you in your business, trying to provoke and irritate you in every way possible, doing everything I could against you, day by day, and week by week, and month by month. By and by my eyes are opened, and I see the meanness of that course. I feel all broken down because I have lent myself to such a mean way of acting, and I come to you, and acknowledge what I have been doing. You can see in a moment that I am all broken down over it, and that I really feel that I have done wrong.

Some of us here have had occasion to forgive people who came to us in just that way. Now has it been our custom when they come in that contrite way, to stand coolly back, and let them tell the whole story from beginning to end, and rack their minds to try to remember everything that they have done in detail, so that they may confess it? Then when they think they have told it all, and ask for your forgiveness, do you stand back still, and remind them that there was another little thing which they have missed, and tell them that you would like them to confess that too? Then when they have told you everything that they can think of, and that you can remind them of, do you say, "Well, I guess you have confessed it all, so I will forgive you"? There is not a person in this house that would do that.

When I settled that question for myself, I thought, I have no business to make myself out any better than God. When anyone comes to me or to you, all broken down, and confesses his wrong, we forgive him freely; and before he has told half what he might tell, we tell him that it is all right, that he is forgiven, and to say no more about it.

That is just what God does. He has given us the parable of the Prodigal son, as an illustration of how he forgives. His father saw him a great way off, and ran to meet him. I am so thankful that God does not require me, before I can be forgiven, to go back and take up every sin that I have ever committed, and confess it. If he did, he would have to lengthen my probation longer than I believe he possibly can, for me to repeat the smallest part of them. Well may David say, "For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me." Ps. 40:12. Yes, our sins are "innumerable," but "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;" a broken and contrite heart he will not despise. We take hold of the sacrifice of Christ, take it into our very selves, and thus we make a covenant with God by sacrifice.

The Lord forgives freely, and we can know it. God shows us the representative sins of our lives. Sins that stand out prominent,—they stand for our whole sinful nature, and we know that our whole life is of that same sinful character. We come and confess the sins. Shall we charge God with saying, "I have shown you those sins and you have confessed them; but there are some other sins, and I will not show you them, but you must find them out for yourself, and until you do I will not forgive you." God does not deal with us in that way. He is infinite in love and compassion. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

Now another point: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." People say, "I have taken Christ, and now I look back and trace my life history through the day, or the week, and I cannot see anything but imperfection in what I have done, and then the feeling of condemnation comes over me, and I can't stand free. How can I say, there is no condemnation for me, when I see these failures?" This is a subtle deception of Satan, to deprive us of acceptance and peace with God. Do we expect to be justified by those deeds? If we do, we make a grand mistake in the beginning. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." To Jesus we must look for our justification, and to him alone.

Says one, "I am afraid that I will fall." You need not be afraid. Paul says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12. What have I committed unto him? My life, and he is able to keep it.

When we get over into the kingdom of God, we will not look to the best deeds that we have done, and thank God that we are justified because we have done so well. But our song of joy will be, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." And so we know that when we yield ourselves to him, and die to him constantly, that he does those things for us that we cannot do for ourselves. Let us look to him continually! But when we take our eyes from him, and go into sin, he is not responsible for that.

Just as long as we keep looking at him, there is no condemnation. Try it, and you will know that it is a fact, for it is a fact that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Why? "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ hath made me free from the law of sin and death." In our sins the law is death to us; and not only is it death to that man who makes no profession of righteousness, but it is death to that man who acknowledges the claims of the law, that it is good, and yet says, "But how to perform that which is good I find not."

All will allow that a Christian must do what is good, *some of the time* at least. But this experience in Rom. 7:21, "When I would do good, evil is present with me," shows that the man having that experience does not do good at all. Yet he wants to do good. This is service in the oldness of the letter. The man is serving the law, but is a slave. There is no freedom in the service; it is bondservice. But now having tried with all his might to do

what he wants to do, and having failed, he finds that in Christ is the perfection of the law, in him there is life.

So the law as it is in the person of Christ is the law of the Spirit of Life. So he takes the life of Christ and gets the perfection of the law as it is in Christ, and serves him in spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. Thus he is delivered from bondservice to the law to freedom in it. There is a wonderful amount of rich truth in that,—“The law of the Spirit of Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.” Is there any discouragement in that? does it cast disparagement on the law? Not in the least. What could not the law do? It could not justify me because I was weak. It did not have any good material to work on. It was not the fault of the law, it was the fault of the material. The flesh was weak, and the law could not justify it. But God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to condemn sin in the flesh, that he might justify us.

Some have taken the position that this verse teaches that the law could not condemn sin unless Christ died. Brethren, that is a fearful charge to bring against God and Christ. That would be making Christ, not our Saviour, but our condemner. Christ himself says, in John 3:17, “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” The law always condemned sin. He that believeth not is condemned already. Christ is the justifier. Since the law condemns man, it is evident that it cannot justify him, for it is impossible for it to condemn and justify at the same time. But what the law could not do, Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh to do. How did he do it?—By keeping the law when he was in the flesh.

There are certain things which I used to do, which I always liked to excuse myself for. I knew that they were wrong consequently I made resolutions that I would not do them. But I did them just the same. Again and again I did them, until finally I made up my mind that they were inherited traits—that I was born with them, and therefore I could not help doing them. But thinking that way did not free me from condemnation; I felt condemned just the same. For Christ has left us no excuse; he has condemned sin in the flesh; by his life he has shown that sin in the flesh is condemned and he has destroyed it, for in him the body of sin is destroyed, and we are new creatures in Christ. By his exceeding great and precious promises we are made partakers of the divine nature. He has taken away this sinful nature,—taken it upon himself that we might be delivered from it.

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

But the carnal mind can acknowledge that the law is good. “I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not; but what I hate, that I do. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.” We have fancied, and have tried to comfort ourselves with the thought that we were subject to the law, because we loved it,

and regarded it as a beautiful thing, and tried with all our might, or as some put it, "in our weak way" to keep it. But the carnal mind is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be. And what is the evidence of the carnal mind? The inability to do that which is good, and which we know we ought to do. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Gal. 5:17.

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

There is a beautiful thought contained in these verses. First, we have the fact presented that we may have the Spirit of God. How do we get it? By asking. Go back to the eleventh chapter of Luke. Christ says, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? . . . If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Make a personal application of that text. When you kneel down to pray for the Spirit of God, which is all powerful and will cleanse from all sin, quote that to the Lord.

If your children came to you, asking for some of the necessities of life, you would study every way to know how you could give them the things that they desired. You are poor, and weak, and miserable, but God is infinite; therefore he is infinitely more willing to give you the thing that you need so much than you can be to give good things to your children. The Holy Spirit is his to give, and he is willing and anxious that we should have it.

Again Christ said, "He that believeth on me, . . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And this he spake of the Spirit, that he would give. Said Christ again said to the woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Why?—"For if the Spirit that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Here is the hope of the resurrection again. What remains to be done when the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in you? Only to quicken, that is, to make alive, our mortal bodies.

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear! O remember that.

He gives us his Spirit now; and shall we be afraid? Isaiah says, "I will trust and not be afraid." No; we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; for perfect love casteth out fear. Think of Abraham, and what was written of him for our benefit. We need not consider the frailties of our bodies, but be strong in faith, giving glory to God, knowing that what he has promised, he is able to perform. Yes, we will "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself."

"Abba, Father," that means, Father, Father. First of all realize that he is in heaven, and that he is God; he is infinite in power, and so great that he can take up the isles as a very little thing; to him the nations are as a drop in the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Great and awful being that he is, we can come to him, and call him "our Father." He has the tenderness of a parent, backed by the power of infinite divinity.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." In Eph. 1:13 we are told that spirit is the "earnest of our inheritance. Some do not seem to be able to understand this witness of the Spirit. They say if they only had it they would rejoice. What is the witness of the Spirit? "Why," says one, "it is a sort of feeling, and when I have it I will know that God has accepted me." But brethren, it rests on something more substantial than a feeling. I am glad that God has not left the witness of his Spirit to be dependent on my feeling.

Sometimes I feel so tired and exhausted that I have hardly any power to feel any way. And that is the very time when I want to know more than at any other time that I am a child of God. Sometimes disease takes hold of us and saps all our strength, and we have no power of mind or body. We are just alive, conscious, but with no emotion. That is the time we want the witness of the Spirit. Can we have it then? Yes, "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." How does it witness? "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 1 John 5:9, 10.

Now what does a witness do? Bears testimony, does he not? I am brought up as a witness in a court. How do I bear witness in that case?—By telling what I know. That is all,—I give my word, and perhaps I back it by my oath. Then if the Spirit witnesses, it must say something, must it not?—Yes; then how do we recognize the witness of the Spirit? How does the Spirit speak? Mark this point:—

God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets since the world began. The Holy Spirit spake by the prophet Jeremiah. David, the sweet psalmist, says, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." It spoke by the apostle Paul. Whose word is this? [Holding up the Bible.] It is the word of God. What speaks in this word? The *Spirit of God*. Then what is the witness of the Spirit? *It is the word of God*.

Well, but how about this witness in myself? Remember the words of Paul in Rom. 10:6-8. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend unto heaven? (that is, to bring Christ from above:) or, who shall descend into the deep? (That is to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The *word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart:*

that is, the word of faith which we preach." What word? The word of Christ, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, and believe with thy heart, that God raised Christ from the dead, "*ye shall be saved.*"

The Word of God is the voice of the Spirit of God. Then we have the witness in ourselves, when we have his word in our hearts by faith. We eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, by feeding upon his word, and so we have the witness, within ourselves.

This witness has been sworn to. God has put his testimony on record, and he swore to that testimony. When God has put himself on record, what can you bring to corroborate that word? When God has spoken, will you bring up the testimony of a man to sustain it? No,—It is the word of God,—that is our sheet anchor. It is our only hope, and it is the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. It enters in within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.

Our Christian life, from the very beginning, must be based on the word of God. That is why I want you to take the word of God and believe it. When you go to your homes,—to your closets,—recognize the voice of God speaking to you; for his Spirit witnesses with our spirit, that we are the children of God. I thank God for the witness of His word.

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Brethren, it means something to be a child of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." BEHOLD IT. We are called the sons of God! It is too wonderful for the human mind to fully grasp. Poor, unworthy, miserable creatures, worthy of nothing, yet God has had such an infinite love for us, that he has made us worthy to be his sons; and he gives us everything that he gives to Christ.

In John 17:3 the Saviour prays to the Father, "That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and *hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*" Brethren, the Father loves us, just as much as he loves his only begotten Son. How do we know? The assurance of that is given not only in this text, but in the fact that he let his only begotten Son die to save us from death. We share with Christ all the love that the Father has for him.

"We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." That means that since we are joint heirs with Christ, that Christ cannot enter into his inheritance without us. For if you and I are joint heirs to an estate, we must have it together. You cannot enter on your inheritance before I enter and enjoy it with you. Then whatever Christ is sharing now at the right hand of Father is for us. He is at the right hand of God in the heavenly places, and so we are quickened with him, and raised up and made to sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.

By and by when Christ takes his own throne, we will take that too. In the first letter to the Corinthians it is written, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Cor. 2:9. This has to do with the inheritance, but don't put it all off for the future. Go back a couple of verses,—"*We speak of the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of*

glory." They might have known it, for read what follows in verse 10: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

It is something that God reveals to us *now*. We must not put it all off to the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, to the pearly gates, and the walls of Jasper. And the only reason why we have not seen these things in the past is because the natural man cannot see them. It is a precious thought, and I want you to grasp it,—that everything that Christ has we have now. Like David of old we can say, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Ps. 16:6.

Let us take God at his word, that we may know the meaning of that prayer in Eph. 1:17, 18: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." If we lack wisdom, let us ask of him who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given unto us.

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