

## STUDIES IN ROMANS

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### IV. THE UNIVERSAL NECESSITY OF SALVATION (Concluded)

(As shown in Case of Jews)  
Romans 2:17 to 4:25

Another point in chapter 2 is that under the law, being a Jew outwardly could not save a man. The real Jew is one inwardly, and his circumcision is of the heart. He must be regenerated, and the publication of the grace plan ran side by side with that law plan, even in the Old Testament.

#### I. GOD HAD BUT ONE PLAN OF SALVATION FROM THE BEGINNING

1. That leads to some questions:

(1) What advantage has the Jew? -- If, being naturally a Jew, and circumcised according to the Jewish law, and keeping externally the ritual law, did not save him, as chapter 3 opens -- what advantage then hath the Jew? The answer to that is that to the Jews were committed the oracles of GOD, and they had a better chance of getting acquainted with the true plan of salvation.

(2) Then what if some of these Jews were without faith? -- That does not destroy the advantage; they had the privilege and some availed themselves of it.

(3) Does that not make the grace of GOD of none effect? -- In other words, if GOD is glorified by the condemnation of unbelievers, how then shall the man be held responsible? His answer is, "**God forbid,**" for if that were true, how could GOD judge the world? That supposition destroys the character of GOD in His judgment capacity. If GOD were the author of sin and constrained men by an extraneous power to sin, He could not be a judge. All who hold the Calvinistic interpretation of grace must give fair weight to that statement. Whenever GOD does judge a man, His judgment will be absolutely fair.

A party of preachers were discussing election and predestination. I asked the question, "Do you believe in election and predestination?" The answer was, "Yes." "Are you ever hindered by what you believe about election in preaching a universal Gospel? If you have any embarrassment there, it shows that you have in some way a wrong view of the doctrine of election and predestination." A young preacher of my county went to the wall on that thing. It made him practically quit preaching, because he said that he had no Gospel except for the sheep. I showed him how, in emphasizing one truth according to his construction of that truth, he was emphatically denying another truth of GOD.

(4) That brings up another question: If the loss of the sinner accrues to the glory of GOD, why should he be judged as a sinner? -- A supposition is made. Under that view, would it not be well to say, "**Let us do evil, that good may come**"? There were some slanderous reports that such was Paul's teaching. He utterly disavows such teaching or that any fair construction of what he preached tended that way.

2. We come now to his conclusion of the necessity of the Gospel plan of salvation -- He bases it upon the fact that under the law of nature, providence and conscience, under the law of Sinai, under any form of law, the whole world is guilty.

**There is none righteous, no, not one;  
There is none that understandeth,  
There is none that seeketh after God;  
They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable.**

So apart from the Gospel plan of salvation there is universal condemnation.

3. We come to his next conclusion, 3:13-18, that man's depravity is total -- "Total" refers to all the parts, and not to degrees. He enumerates the parts to show the totality. that does not mean that every man is as wicked in degree as he can be, but that every part is so depraved that without the Gospel plan of salvation he cannot be saved:

**Their throat is an open sepulchre;  
With their tongues they have used deceit:  
The poison of asps is under their lips:  
Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:  
Their feet are swift to shed blood;  
Destruction and misery are in their ways;  
And the way of peace have they not known:  
There is no fear of GOD before their eyes.**

4. With mankind universally guilty, and every member totally depraved, we get another conclusion -- that whatever things the law says, it says to those under the law -- No matter whether the law of conscience, the law of nature, or the moral law of Moses, those under the law must be judged by the law. That being so, he sums up his conclusion thus: "**By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.**"

## **II. THE GOSPEL PLAN OF SALVATION**

That brings us to consider the Gospel plan of salvation which extends from verse 21 of this chapter to the end of chapter 8, and covers four points -- justification, regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. For the present we will discuss that part called justification.

1. It is of faith, not of merit -- He commences by stating that while there is no righteousness by the law, there is a righteousness apart from the law; and this way of salvation apart from the law is witnessed by the law itself and by the prophets. He further says that this righteousness is

presented to both Jew and Gentile without any distinction, and that this always has been the way from the beginning of the world to the present time. If GOD has seemed to discriminate in favor of the Jews, He looked toward the Gentiles through the Jews, and if He now seems partial to the Gentiles against the Jews, He is looking toward the restoration of the Jews. This righteousness is presented to all men on the same condition, faith, and this righteousness presented by faith is of grace. Man does not merit it, either Jew or Gentile -- it is free.

It is the hardest thing in the world to convince a sinner that salvation comes from no merit of his, and that faith is simply the hand that receives. Throughout all the length of the great chain of salvation it is presented without discrimination as to merit or race, color, sex, or previous condition of servitude.

2. We come now to the ground of it -- That ground is redemption through CHRIST. To redeem means to buy back, as we have already seen. It implies that one was sold and lost. It must be a buying back, and it would not be of grace if we did the buying back. It is a redemption through JESUS CHRIST. He is the REDEEMER -- the one who buys back. The meritorious ground consists in His expiation reaching us through His mediation. He stands between the sinner and GOD and touches both. The first part of His mediation is the payment of the purchase price. He could not, in paying the purchase price, stand for GOD unless GOD set Him forth as a propitiation. He could not touch man unless He Himself, in one sense, was a man, and voluntarily took the position. The effectiveness of the propitiation depends upon the faith of the one to receive JESUS. That covers all past sins. When we accept JESUS we are acquitted forever, never again coming into condemnation. I said that that "covers past sins." We must understand this. But CHRIST's death avails meritoriously once for all for all the sins of a man, past, present and future.

In the methods of grace there is a difference in application between sins before justification and sins after justification. The ground is one, before and after. But the HOLY SPIRIT applies differently. When we accept JESUS by faith as He is offered in the Gospel, we at once and forever enter into justification, redemption of soul and adoption into GOD's family, and are regenerated. We are no longer aliens and enemies, but children and friends of GOD. GOD's grace, therefore, deals with us as children. Our sins, therefore, are the sins of children. We reach forgiveness of them through the intercessions of our HIGH PRIEST and the pleadings of our ADVOCATE (see Hebrews 9:15-26; 7:25; I John 2:1). We may be conscious of complete peace when justified (Romans 5:1), but our consciences condemn us for sins after justification, and peace comes for these offenses through confession, through faith, through intercession, through the application of the same cleansing blood by the HOLY SPIRIT.

### 3. "From Faith to Faith"

So in us regeneration is once for all, but this good work commenced in us is continued through sanctification with its continual application of the merits of CHRIST's death. Therefore, our theme says, "**From faith to faith.**" Not only justified by faith, but living by faith after justification through every step of sanctification. We do not introduce any new meritorious ground. That is sufficient for all, but it is applied differently. Justification takes place in Heaven. It is GOD that justifies. The ground of the justification is the expiation of CHRIST. The means by which we receive the justification is the HOLY SPIRIT's part in regeneration which is called

"cleansing." Regeneration consists of two elements, at least -- cleansing and renewing. But the very moment that one believes in CHRIST, the HOLY SPIRIT applies the blood of CHRIST to his heart and he is cleansed from the defilement of sin. At the same time the HOLY SPIRIT does another thing. He renews the mind. He changes that carnal mind which is enmity toward GOD. Few preachers ever explain thoroughly that passage in Ezekiel: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean... I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." There is the cleansing and the renewing. JESUS says, "**Born of water and of the Spirit.**" There are no articles in the Greek. It is one birth. In Titus we find the same idea: He saved us "**by the washing of regeneration,**" the first idea, and the "**renewing of the Holy Ghost,**" the second idea.

4. This method of justification enables GOD to remain just in justifying a guilty man -- If we could not find a plan by which GOD's justice would remain, then we could find no plan of justification. How do we understand that to be done upon this principle of substitution? J.M. Pendleton, in his discussion of this subject based upon a passage in the letter to Philemon, explains it. Paul says, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." Now Philemon can be just in the remission of the debt of Onesimus, because he has provided for the payment of that debt through Paul; so CHRIST promised to come and pay our debt and the payment is reckoned to the man that accepts CHRIST, thus showing how remission of sins in the case of Old Testament saints precedes the actual payment, or expiation, by CHRIST. GOD charged Abraham's debts to CHRIST, and CHRIST promised to pay them when He should come into the world. Abraham was acquitted right then. So far as GOD was concerned, the debt was not expiated until CHRIST actually came and died. In our case, expiation precedes the faith in it. He expiated my sins on the cross before I was born. There came a time when the plan of salvation by that expiation was presented to me, and I received it, and then remission took place.

5. This plan of salvation by faith not only justifies GOD, but absolutely excludes any boasting upon the part of the man -- If the man had paid the debt himself, he could claim to be the cause of this justification. But since he did not contribute one iota to the payment of the debt, there is no possible ground for him to boast. This plan brings out GOD's impartial relation both to Jew and Gentile, since both are admitted upon equal terms.

This brings us to an objection that has been raised. If GOD acquits the man without his having paid the penalty of the law, does not that make the law void? His answer is an emphatic denial. It not only does not make the law void, but it establishes the law. How? The law is honored in that the Substitute obeys it and dies in suffering its penalties. Further, by the fact that this plan takes this man saved by grace and gives him, through regeneration, a mind to obey the law, through it may be done imperfectly, and then through sanctification enables him to obey the law perfectly. It fulfils all of its penal sanctions through the One who redeems and through the HOLY SPIRIT's work in the one that is redeemed. When I get to Heaven I will be a perfect keeper of the law in mind and in act. We can easily see the distinction between a mere pardon of human courts, which may be really contrary to law, and a pardon which magnifies and makes the law honorable. So we see that GOD can be just and the justifier of the ungodly.

### **III. FINAL PROOF THAT GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE SAME**

In his argument to prove that GOD's plan of salvation has always been the same, Paul illustrates it by striking Old Testament cases that would appeal to the Jewish mind.

1. One of these is Abraham's conversion which is recorded in Genesis 15 -- Up to that time Abraham was not a saved man, though he was a called man and had some general belief in GOD. At that time he was justified, and he was justified by faith, and righteousness was imputed to him; it was not his own. That was before he was circumcised, and it deprived him of all merit, and made him the Father of all who should come after him in the spiritual line. He proves this by the promise to Abraham and his seed, and shows that that seed refers, not to his carnal descendants, but to the spiritual descendant, JESUS CHRIST. Then he goes on to show that as Isaac, through whom the descent flowed, was born, not in a natural manner, but after a supernatural manner, so we are born after a supernatural manner. He then takes up the further idea that that was the only way in the world to make the promises sure to all the seed.

2. The other illustration is the witness of David -- David was their favorite king. His songs constituted their ritual in the temple of worship. He testifies precisely the same thing: "**Blessed is he whose... sin is covered;**" that is, through propitiation. Blessed is the man to whom GOD imputeth no transgression. He takes these two witnesses, Abraham and David, and establishes his case. He shows that the results of justification are present peace, joy and glory; "**Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.**"

Take the thief on the cross. He had no time to get down and reform his life. He was a dying sinner, and some plan of salvation was needed which would be as quick as lightning in its operation. Suppose a man is on a plank in the deep and about to be washed away into the watery depths. He cannot go back and correct the evils that he has done and justify himself by restitution. If salvation is to be sure to him, it must work in a minute. That is a great characteristic of it.

## **QUESTIONS FOR STIMULATION AND REVIEW**

1. What judgment is referred to in Romans 2:6, and what the proof?
2. What advantage had the Jew?
3. Did all Jews avail themselves of this advantage?
4. Does that not make the grace of GOD of none effect? Why?
5. Does the doctrine of election hinder the preaching of a universal Gospel? Why?
6. If the loss of the sinner accrues to the glory of GOD, why should he be judged as a sinner?
7. What is Paul's conclusion as to the necessity of the Gospel plan of salvation? Upon what does he base it?
8. What is Paul's conclusion as to man's depravity? What is the meaning of total depravity? How is it set forth in this passage?
9. What then is his summary of the whole matter?
10. What is the theme of Romans 3:21 to 8:39? What four phases of the subject are thus treated?
11. Is there a righteousness by the law? What is the relation of the law to righteousness? To whom is this righteousness offered?
12. How do you explain GOD's partiality toward the Jews first and then toward the Gentiles?
13. What are the terms of this righteousness? What its source?
14. What is redemption? What does it imply?

15. What is the meritorious ground of our justification? Upon what does the effectiveness of it depend?
16. What is the difference in the application to sins before justification and to sins after justification?
17. How does this method of justification by faith enable GOD to remain just and at the same time justify a guilty man?
18. How does this plan of salvation exclude boasting?
19. What objection is raised to this method of justification? What the answer to it?
20. What is the distinction between a mere pardon of human courts and this method of pardon?
21. How does Paul prove that the plan of salvation has always been the same?

## **LET US RETHINK THE CHAPTER**

### **I. GOD HAD BUT ONE PLAN OF SALVATION FROM THE BEGINNING**

1. That leads to some questions:
  - (1) What advantage had the Jew?
  - (2) What if some Jews disbelieved?
  - (3) Is not the grace of GOD thus made of none effect?
  - (4) Why should the sinner be judged as one?
2. The necessity of the Gospel plan
3. Man's depravity is total
4. The law speaks to those under the law

### **II. THE GOSPEL PLAN OF SALVATION**

1. It is of faith, not merit
2. We consider the ground of it
3. "From faith to faith"
4. Enables GOD to remain just in justifying the guilty
5. Excludes boasting

### **III. FINAL PROOF THAT GOD'S PLAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE SAME**

1. Illustrated in Abraham
2. Re-enforced by David

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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