

RIGHT IN ROMANS

Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans

by

C. Norman Bartlett

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CHAPTER SEVEN

PART FOUR – RESTORATION OF THE JEWS (9:1-11:36)

A. GOD'S REJECTION OF ISRAEL (9:1-29)

Paul, as he reaches the great heights of truth in the field of Christian privileges in Christ, has his thoughts turned to the condition of his own people, and their state of unbelief. Their plight fills his heart with sorrow and presents a very real problem to him; and so for three chapters he deals with this very urgent question. We find in the opening part of chapter 9 one of the greatest pieces of genuine pathos and sorrow to be found in Scripture.

1. Paul's grief for the Jews (vv. 1-5)

a) Depth of grief (vv. 1-3)

In reading the verses we are brought into the presence of a mighty spirit writhing in pain. Note the solemnity of the statement, **"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost."**

He calls upon his conscience, upon the Saviour, and upon the Spirit to bear witness to the truth of what he says. Paul weighed his words. He was absolutely sincere. He did not give utterance to what he did not feel in his soul. Can we, like Paul, call God to witness the genuineness of our spoken or written word?

Note the intensity of sorrow. **"That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh . . ."** We see there a wonderful outflashing of Paul's profound passion for souls.

The apostle was no less fervent in heart than he was brilliant in mind. His spirit was a furnace of emotions. He had a most earnest love for souls, and this was no small element in his power. We need a greater passion for souls. Many work weakly for the Lord because they feel feebly for the lost.

b) Cause of grief (vv. 4, 5)

“ . . . Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises . . . ” Paul had a natural affection for his own people. He was gravely concerned over their future as he beheld their impending doom. This penalty looms the more darkly against the bright background of the privileges that the Israelites enjoyed.

“The saddest words are these, ‘It might have been.’” Something of that feeling filled the heart of the apostle. The Israelites were the recipients of God’s special favor. To them belonged the covenant, to them was committed the law. Before their eyes gleamed the promise. From them, on the human side, came the Messiah; and now in unbelief they turn their backs on all this. They refuse to reap the harvest and gather the fruit. They will not enter the Promised Land. The priceless privileges the Jews forfeit by their unbelief, makes their unbelief all the more perplexing.

“ . . . Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.” Not only have the Jews been united to God by so many ties, but the very purpose for which they have been selected has been fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus. Through physical descent on the one side Christ has come of the Jews. Of course, His spiritual descent is different; as we know. He was the eternal Son of God. We can say that Jesus Christ is the fairest flower on the stock of humanity. Many go no further in their estimate of Christ. They gladly admit that He was the best and noblest man that ever lived, the moral and religious genius of the human race, the one perfect example; but they refuse to go beyond that, and confess Him as the second Person in the Godhead. In Him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells, as we read in Colossians; and this Christ, the eternally begotten Son of God, the Israelites reject to their own eternal loss; and this fills the heart of the apostle with indescribable anguish of soul.

2. Rejection of Jews no reflection on God (vv. 6-13)

a) God’s Word has not failed (v. 6a)

“Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.” The phrase **“word of God”** in this case does not mean the entire Old Testament, but the promise of God with reference to His chosen people.

It is not that God has rejected them; they have rejected God in rejecting the Redeemer. That is no disgrace to God, as we can readily see. It is as if a man had put several thousand dollars in the bank for his son’s college education. When the boy becomes of age, he decides he does not want to go to college. That does not change the fact that his father has provided for him to go to college. He cannot say that his father has not kept his word.

So, Paul would say, the Israelites cannot charge God with unfaithfulness, because God has fulfilled His promise. They refuse to avail themselves of that which has been provided for them in Jesus Christ.

b) Promise to spiritual, not physical seed (vv. 6b-8)

“That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” We are reminded of our Lord’s words to Nicodemus, **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”** (John 3:6). Neither because they are Abraham’s seed are they all children (Rom. 4:11, 12; Matthew 3:9; John 8:39). In all those passages the same thought is emphasized, that the Jews who rejected Jesus Christ were not the spiritual descendants of Abraham.

To many of the Israelites in the past, God’s ministry of mercy had led to presumption of spirit, rather than to devotion in service. They failed to recognize their stewardship. They claimed for themselves, as the physical descendants of Abraham, promises that belonged only to those who were Abraham’s spiritual seed. Incidentally, we might mention that there are people in all the nations who allow pride of birth, of wealth, and so forth, to shut them off from the grace of God.

c) This fact is borne out in the case of Jacob and Esau (vv.9-13)

Neither Jacob nor Esau were of particularly admirable character. Jacob’s conduct was nothing short of contemptible. Paul refers to Jacob and Esau to show that while both of them were the physical descendants of Abraham, only one of them was in the line of spiritual descent, that is to say, the inheritance of the promise.

In verse 13 the reference is not to the individual, but to the nations descended from them. We know that the Edomites were among the greatest enemies of the Jewish people. They were a wild, barbaric race. Esau despised, while Jacob valued the birthright and the promise. Jacob got by fraud what Esau lost by scorn. Men are always forfeiting the heritages that they despise.

3. Election to grace no reflection on God (vv. 14-18)

a) No injustice with God (v. 14)

We have noticed again and again in this Epistle how Paul makes just such a statement when some problem arises. He says in effect, “I cannot solve this perplexing problem, but I am sure God is absolutely holy, righteous, just.” Paul stakes everything on that statement.

There is something that we may well learn from such an asseveration. We might make it a rallying point for philosophy and theological thinking. If, when we reach the place in Christian theology where we can go no farther, we can say, God is perfectly holy and just, then we can leave it with God.

In the question of election, we can take this along with other passages in the New Testament and thereby be assured that it is God’s desire that all shall be saved (John 3:16). The human will, however, can reject and spurn the proffered grace of God.

b) God’s sovereignty in mercy and in power (vv. 15-18)

What God is governs what God does. We have a God who is as good as He is great, who is as rich in grace as He is strong in might. His mercy and His power are both rooted in holy love and perfect wisdom.

“Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”

Paul never says or implies that God has created man for the purpose of damnation. He created man that men might love and serve Him, but man went astray, turned his back on God’s goodness, and fell into sin. What Paul is saying is this: **“God reserves the right to deal with man on his own conditions, and not on man’s. It is God who sets the terms. God does not stoop to man’s tastes; man must bend to God’s will.”**

4. Rebellion at election no reflection on election (vv. 19-24)

Man rebels at the doctrine of election. Too often he does not grasp the meaning.

a) Such rebellion may be natural (v. 19)

“Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?”

The apostle referring to what he has just brought out in the preceding verse (17, 18) conceives of someone asking, “If God is behind all, where then does human responsibility come in? If God has mercy on His chosen objects, and if, on the other hand, He hardens the hearts of others, how can we say that man has any responsibility left? How can we reconcile absolute divine sovereignty and freedom of will?” Not a few thinkers who have plumbed the depths of philosophical and theological thought have reached the conclusion that to reconcile these two doctrines is beyond the power of the human mind. That which is conformable to divine reason may not always be explainable by human reason.

b) But it is presumptuous in man (vv. 20, 21)

“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? . . .” What Paul is saying here is this, that man has no right to dispute the justice of God’s dealings. To do so is impious and blasphemous; it shows the utmost irreverence for man to question God’s dealings. We must remember that Paul is dealing here with humanity that is fallen into sin; he does not refer to man in his original creation.

Man, in other words, has no claim upon God, because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Men have no right to say, “Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that.” Men are God’s property. God is absolutely Sovereign. We are not to question His dealings. Man has no rights before God; he cannot make demands upon Deity. However, this is not to say that God acts capriciously. Nor does it mean that God is not governed by right. What God is governs what God does, as we have stressed repeatedly. We have revealed to us in Jesus Christ a God of holy love. In all His dealings with men God is governed by infinite holiness, love, and wisdom.

c) Election a reflection of God’s glory (vv. 22-24)

“ . . . and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory . . . ” Here we have the stress laid on the mercy of God. God bore with man’s sin. He was patient and longsuffering. He withheld the full outpouring of penalty. Not only that, but He provided Jesus Christ as Saviour. **“That he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory”** does not say God prepared vessels for dishonor.

“ . . . Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” Sinners, then, have no rights before God, no claims of their own. All is of grace, and God has made provision for all. But God cannot do violence to His own nature in order to save men. Only through the sacrifice of His Son is such salvation possible.

5. Reflections of election in prophecy (vv. 25-29)

a) Hosea (vv. 25, 26)

Hosea is prophesying that God will call to Him a people from among the Gentiles, those who shall believe on His name.

b) Isaiah (vv. 27-29)

“Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: or he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth, And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrhah.”

B. ISRAEL’S REJECTION OF GOD (9:30-10:21)

We might say that this whole section develops one outstanding point, namely, that God’s rejection of Israel is due to Israel’s rejection of God.

That is the essential truth running through this part of the letter to the Romans. The reference is to the nation as a whole and not to individuals. As a people, the Jews turned their backs upon the Gospel of redemption: God’s offer of grace was spurned. Of course, we know there were not a few among them who, especially upon the day of Pentecost, did accept Christ as their personal Saviour.

1. Reason for rejection broadly stated (vv. 30-33)

In these verses Paul gives us a summary answer, and then in chapter 10 he goes into particulars and elaborates.

a) The question stated (vv. 30, 31)

Paul says to them in effect, *“The fact is that the Gentiles have attained to righteousness, although they did not seek it; and the Jews failed of righteousness although they did pursue it earnestly.”* Why should this be?

b) The answer given (vv. 32, 33)

“Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.”

Israel had sought righteousness not by faith, but by works. What faith gained for the Gentiles, lack of faith lost for the Jews. What must be received as a gift cannot be obtained as a right. The essential thing was a real union by faith with God, and that could not be achieved through self-righteousness. Faith is the essential requirement.

Perhaps we might illustrate it in this way: Faith is the lighting of the lamp; and works, as practiced among the Pharisees and Jews at large, and other groups, in the hope of securing salvation, is like trying to light a lamp by polishing it on the outside—that is not the way to get the lamp lighted. The wick has to be brought into contact with the flame; and so salvation was to come only through faith in God.

“For they stumble at that stumblingstone . . .” The cross is the unlimited source of salvation freely offered; and yet we do not need to be reminded how that same cross through the centuries has been a stumbling block to a great many people. In pride they bury fountains of grace under mountains of scorn.

2. Israel failed to see Christ as the end of the law (vv. 1-4)

We note that each of these three chapters begins with a warm, personal testimony of Paul’s pity for Israel.

“For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.”

There are those who try to find God while spurning the revelation of God, and ignoring the Holy Spirit. They are engaged in a futile quest (cf. John 14:6).

3. Israel failed to see the free character of salvation (vv.5-11)

a) Description of righteousness of faith (vv. 5-8)

The teaching of these verses is that man, if he had really kept all of God’s laws, would have had salvation; but no one has kept the law, and no one can keep all the law.

The reference is to the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ in verses 6 and 7. Paul is referring to a passage in Deuteronomy 30:12. In the Old Testament reference Paul brings out the fact Moses is looking forward to the time of the New Covenant, when Israel would have available means of forgiveness and redemption. God was addressing Israel, not on the grounds of the law, but on the basis of faith. He was looking forward to the New Testament fulfillment of that for which the Old Testament story was a preparation.

What Paul means is that the incarnation and the resurrection of Jesus Christ were the acts of God. They were divine miracles, beyond human power; and men could never attain for themselves that which God alone could do in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

However, that which is not obtainable by human effort has been made available by divine grace. The source of the New York City water supply is away up in the Catskill Mountains; and the building of the aqueduct, the means whereby the water could come down to New York City, was an enormous feat of engineering, an extremely costly piece of work.

Suppose all the people in New York City had to walk to that reservoir to get water. It would be simply impossible; but by means of that aqueduct this water is ready to be used, and all they need to do is to turn on the faucet. What man could never procure for himself has been put at his disposal through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The redemptive love of God was from all eternity, but the cross was the dam that made the mighty reservoir of that love available for all the needs of mankind.

b) Salvation through the righteousness of faith (vv. 9-11)

“ . . . That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved . . . ” Salvation has been prepared, but possession is another thing. Here is a bridge built across a river. The bridge is there. But of what use is a bridge to one who is afraid to trust it? Salvation is free, but we must possess it by a direct act of will, by believing in our hearts. We must commit ourselves to Christ by faith.

4. Israel failed to see the universality of the Gospel (vv. 12-21)

a) Universality of the Gospel proved from the nature and promises of God (vv. 12, 13)

“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.” There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all. It is as much the nature of God to love as it is for fire to burn, or for light to shine. The sun in the sky is rich in warmth and life to all that call upon it, to the flowers, to the rooms that are open to it; and so it is with the love of God, but it is a matter of receptivity to God. God’s promises spring out of God’s nature.

b) Universality of Gospel shown (vv. 14, 15)

Advertisers today use every method to force their products upon the attention of the public. Everything is done to make people believe in the product; and yet do we show anything like that enterprise in making known the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Why exploit people for gold and not for God? People of every race, nation, and class need Christ as the one and only Saviour.

c) Universality of Gospel scorned (vv. 16-21)

The Israelites held the Gospel in scorn. The rejection which characterized the Jews throughout their history culminated in their rejection of the Messiah. They valued the material blessings of God, and their privileges, but did not value the spiritual implications of all that God had done for them.

C. RESTORATION OF ISRAEL (11:1-36)

1. Rejection of Israel not complete (vv. 1-10)

a) Exemption of true Israel (vv. 1, 2a)

“I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.” Paul, though a Jew, has been converted to Jesus Christ, which is proof that not all Israel is rejected. Because Israel was God’s chosen people, not all individuals can be cast off.

The promise, as was brought out in an earlier chapter, is not to the physical, but to the spiritual seed of Abraham. Some think this refers to the entire nation, but it is more probable that Paul is thinking of the spiritual seed of Abraham. Paul brings out later that he has reason to believe that in the future Christ will appear in such a way that vast numbers of living Jews will be willing to accept Him.

b) Instance of remnant in time of Elijah (vv. 2b-4)

There is a rather close similarity between the experience of Elijah and that of Paul at the time of writing this letter. In the case of Elijah it seemed as if the whole nation was carried away into idolatry, although seven thousand remained true. To Paul it might well have appeared as if the whole nation had rejected the promise; but Paul knew by experience in his work that not a few had accepted Christ and entered into the promise. Some people who live in the city see nothing but smoke. Some read the newspapers and see nothing but the smoke of sin; but if we read the Bible, we see promises behind the blackest cloud of sin, and we know that God rules, and that eventually His righteousness will prevail.

c) Mercy for the elect, justice for the hardened (vv. 5-10)

In verses 5 to 7a the thought is of God’s mercy for the elect. The fact that there is a remnant who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, at the time Paul is writing, is proof that God has not cast off His people; but Paul makes it clear that this is of grace, not works. No man has the right to demand salvation of God. It is of God’s mercy alone that man is saved. It is only through meeting God’s conditions that salvation is possible. To find life in God, salvation through Jesus Christ, we must appropriate what God has provided. This is true of redeemed Israel, as it is of redeemed Gentiles.

In verses 8 to 10 we learn that the Jews have not failed because they have been hardened, but that they have been hardened because they failed. Privileges not accepted as obligations are likely to become a source of injury rather than of benefit.

2. Rejection of Israel not final (vv. 11-24)

a) Rejection anticipated (vv. 11-16)

Paul says, in effect, that the rejection of the Jews has made for the salvation of the Gentiles.

When the Jew refused the message of the Gospel, the apostle turned to the Gentiles, and many of the Gentiles accepted the Saviour, and so the rejection of the Jews did result in the benefit of the Gentiles.

If this is so, then, the fulfilling of the Gospel, in the sense of the Jews accepting it in the future, will result in the greater blessing of the Gentiles. Paul is looking forward to the time of the return of Jesus Christ and the setting up of His throne in Jerusalem, when there will be a wide-spread acceptance of Him by the chosen people. Then, by their acceptance, will come greater blessing to Gentiles.

He is convinced that in God's own time and way there will be a widespread turning of the Jews to Christ as their Messiah and Saviour. Their continuance as a people down through the centuries, remaining a distinct people, does point to their being preserved by the Lord for a divine destiny. The Jews returning to Palestine, we feel, is the setting of the stage; but we cannot be blind to the fact that many are returning in irreligion. By "**the firstfruits**" Paul means the patriarchs, the founders of the nation, and they were holy in the sense of being consecrated to God—so the whole nation is set apart to God. Paul turns from this to an address to the Gentiles.

b) Admonition to believing Gentiles (vv. 17-22)

Critics have sometimes said Paul did not know much of agriculture because it is inconceivable to speak of a wild olive being put into a good olive tree; but in the East when an olive tree becomes old it is not uncommon for a wild olive to be grafted into the old tree, and so the wild olive gives new life to the old tree.

The old olive tree is Israel. The wild olive is the Gentiles. Paul says the wild olive branches have no right to glory over the old tree because it is through the old tree that they get their strength. Today we, as true Christians, deplore the anti-Semitism in the world. There is a vital connection between Christianity and Judaism. Christianity is the flowering of the law.

"Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." If Gentiles depart from Him they will be cast off, just as unbelieving Jews were cut off. Paul warns Gentiles against boastfulness (17, 18), pride (19-21), and presumption (22).

In other words, do not presume upon the fact of being Gentiles—do not think that because of that, we shall have special favor from God. Only by accepting Christ as Saviour can either Jews or Gentiles find acceptance with God.

c) Restoration for believing Israel (vv. 23, 24)

We cannot but see in these words a setting forth of a confident hope, on the part of the apostle, that in the future, by the providence of God, by some special revealing of Himself, there will be a wide-spread turning back by the Jews to God and the acceptance of Christ as Messiah and Saviour. Neither Gentiles nor Jews have any claim upon God by virtue of anything in self, but only by grace as it is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Salvation for all (vv. 25-32)

a) Full restoration for Israel (vv. 25-27)

(1) When the fullness of time for the Gentiles is come (vv. 25, 26a)

When Paul uses that phrase, “**For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant,**” he indicates he is going to bring out truth of great importance. He would not have his readers ignorant of “**this mystery.**”

Just what is meant by “**mystery**” in the New Testament? It really means that which has been concealed, but is now revealed. The mystery of the Gospel had been hidden in the mind of God until its unveiling in the life and death of Jesus Christ; and Paul here has reference to a particular phase of Gospel truth, namely, the final restoration of Israel as a people. He brings out further in this chapter that there will be a wide-spread turning of Israel to the Redeemer.

The Gentiles are rebuked here in this passage. Paul is referring to Gentiles who drew the conclusion that Israel had been rejected henceforth forever, and that they (the Gentiles) had been put in their place; and so these Gentiles had become full of pride.

There are those today who, not informed on scriptural teaching, hold to that error, and they tend to become proud and overbearing toward the chosen people of God. We do rejoice in the fact that the Gospel has been brought to the Gentiles. We are living in the age of grace, but let us not presume upon our privileges. Blessings from God should make for lowliness of heart, rather than for loftiness of pride.

What is meant by “**the fullness of the Gentiles**”?

The phrase does not mean when a predetermined number of converts have been won among the Gentiles, but it means that when the Gentiles as a people grafted with the Jews have come to the fullness of their strength, then there will come the power which is to provoke Israel, God’s chosen people, to jealousy.

According to the teaching of Scripture, the time is coming when the Jews will be so moved by the blessing that has come to the Gentiles, that they will be moved to seek that same blessing for themselves.

(2) Prophesied in Isaiah (vv. 26b, 27)

Paul is thinking here of Israel as a Christian nation, that is, as a people after they have turned to an acceptance of Christ. The prophet quoted foretells the conversion of the Jews. This is in the future, and we cannot go into detail, or know exactly how this is going to be brought about. We should rejoice in it. We ought to be happy in this prospect that is in view for God's chosen people. We must bear in mind that the reference here is not to a political, but to a religious restoration of the Jews, who as a people shall be brought back again to their God who has manifested Himself in Christ. Here is a real motive for evangelization of the Jews.

There is a tendency among liberal groups not to evangelize the Jew, but to pare down the Gospel, reducing it to a mere ethical system; but we will never win the Jews, or any people, to the Gospel by stripping the Gospel of its essential features. The conversion of the Jews will not be achieved by a perversion of Christ, by reducing Him to the level of a good and great man, by removing the crown of deity from His head.

b) Israel's dual status (v. 28)

“As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.” Because the Jews have refused Christ, they are passively the enemies of God, just as any who refuse Christ are the enemies of God. Because of the Jews' refusing Christ, the apostle turned to the Gentiles, and so the Gospel was brought to them. However, on account of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with whom God made an eternal covenant, God will not desert His chosen people.

c) God's election to mercy irrevocable (vv. 29-31)

God will not go back on His Word. His promise is indestructible. In verses 30, 31, Paul is putting the argument in this way: You Gentiles were once disobedient and living in sin, as described in the opening chapters of Romans, but now, in the mercy of God, you have been brought to Christ.

If the Gentile world which, for centuries had been lost in sin, has had the Gospel given and many have accepted it, is it impossible that the people of Israel, in God's good time, will be brought to the Gospel? This has not been fulfilled yet. There have been thousands of Jews who have accepted Christ, and become devoted followers of the Saviour. All this is but a foretoken of what lies beyond the veil.

d) Ultimate purpose of mercy to all, Jew and Gentile (v. 32)

“For God hath concluded [shut up] them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.” That does not mean, of course, that God ordains sin when He says, **“God hath concluded them all in unbelief,”** but rather that He will overrule that sin. In spite of sin, God made His grace known. God's purpose is that all shall be saved, but the fulfillment of that purpose is contingent upon man's accepting what God provides.

4. Doxology (vv. 33-36)

a) God's providence unfathomable (v. 33)

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” Paul bursts forth into a rhapsody in praise of God. God's judgments are unfathomable. It transcends the power of the human mind to grasp the mind of Deity. Take the subject of astronomy. We have not begun to explore the universe yet. The new 200-inch telescope on Mount Palomar promises to expand the visible universe a thousandfold. Even then we shall probably not reach the outer confines of creation. So we try to build ever more powerful telescopes that we may see farther into space and may have unveiled before our view certain sublimities of this universe which we cannot see now. In God love and grace are absolutely without limit. With divine help we ought to have our hearts and minds made more powerful telescopes so that we may be enabled to comprehend more and more of the illimitable worlds of truth and grace that abound in the triune God.

“The riches . . . of wisdom.” The knowledge and the love of God are absolutely inexhaustible. We need to be mastered by that mystery, and to feel our own smallness. Humility is not futility. Truth is as powerful in our hands as we are powerless in its grasp. When we are simply overpowered by a sense of greatness of God's truth, when we are awed by a sense of the mystery of God—the wonders of His redeeming grace—then it is we can be mighty for God. A realization of greatness is dependent upon a visualization of smallness. We must feel we are small before we can be great. We must know that we can do nothing before we can do anything. **“Without me ye can do nothing.” “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”** We achieve mastery with truth to the degree we feel it transcends mastery. We must be possessed by the truth, we must be gripped by the grace of God to be used for Him. **“O the depth of riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.”**

b) God's providence self-determined (vv. 34, 35)

God is governed by His own holy nature. Our God is one of perfect, holy love; and God will not, and, we say it reverently, cannot do that which violates His own nature as a holy and loving God. We have a God who is as merciful as He is powerful. We ought to rejoice in that. We cannot coerce God to grant our mistaken prayers. God loves us too much to do, even in answer to prayer, that which is not for our own highest spiritual good.

c) God's providence all-inclusive (v. 36)

“For of him, and through him, and unto him, and to him, are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.” (See Colossians 1:16.) In this reference to Jesus Christ, we see Him as the image of God, as God's only begotten Son through whom God has created the universe and sustains it.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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