

Romans - Commentaries by Frederick George Patterson

Collected Writings, Experience of Romans 7, The (7:14-24)

Q. "R.P." What is the difference between the bitter experience of Romans 7:14-24; and the conflict of flesh and the Spirit as in Galatians 5? How am I to know in which state I am? Do not both come to the same wretched experience in the end, if in the conflict the flesh gets the upper hand?

A. First; there is no proper Christian conflict in scripture but that of Ephesians 6:12; this is fighting God's battles against Satan's power. Romans 7 is not conflict but experience; not the experience of a person at the time of his feeling its bitterness, but that of a delivered man, who narrates what he felt when learning his powerlessness against the sinful nature he had discovered, and the sad evil of the flesh in which dwelt no good thing. As a man who had floundered in a morass, and found every plunge putting him deeper, drops his hands and cries out for a deliverer, who comes and pulls him out and sets him free. The delivered one turns round to thank his deliverer and tell him, now at peace, what he felt when there. He had much to think of when there, now he relates it on solid ground. So it is experience before deliverance, told by a delivered man. Galatians 5 states the fact of the two antagonistic principles — flesh and Spirit — in their contrariety one to the other. Not necessarily conflict. Because walking in the Spirit we are above the influences of flesh, and do not fulfill its lusts.

In Romans 7 the soul looks back to the struggle before deliverance. In Galatians 5 it is the two principles which remain in the delivered man.

When you are referring your acceptance with God to your own state in anywise, you are still under law. By which I mean your responsibility as a child of Adam; not necessarily the law of Sinai: and your experience is then that of Romans 7. You have not yet bowed to the injunction, "Reckon yourself dead"; and you are consequently not free from the power of the evil nature which harasses you. You reply, how can I reckon myself dead, when I feel I am alive? I reply, you never will "feel" yourself dead! but you must "reckon" it so, and accept God's word as more true than your experience and thoughts. Then you will be able to say, "Yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me."

Souls go through this painful process (Rom. 7) in order to discover the hopeless evil of the flesh — "That in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." It is bitter to discover right desires and strivings after God and good, and after all to be led captive to an evil "I," so that you hate what you do, and the evil nature is your master, and you do what you hate. These experiences do not set you free, but bring you to the discovery of how evil the flesh is, and that even the possession of a new nature gives you no power! Then you are forced. to say, "Who will deliver?" "Who," brings in another, and your eye is turned off yourself to Him and you are free! In Christ, God has condemned sin in the flesh when He was a sacrifice for it (Rom. 8:3).

The "flesh" in the delivered one is unchanged; he learns growingly the total depravity of his nature. But there is a new "I"; Christ is his life (Col. 3:4), and the Spirit of God dwells in his body (1 Cor. 6:19); and there is power in Christ to subdue the evil, by engaging his heart with Christ. The very evil he finds in himself becomes an occasion of communion with Him who has borne its judgment, that He may be delivered from its workings. He does not seek to subdue it himself — that were to labor into sorrow and failure, and recognize himself again. He keeps His eye on Christ, and lives by another, and the evil which would spring up if his eye were averted is subdued, and the power of Christ rests upon his weakness, and he can glory in it because of the power of Christ. He never receives intrinsic strength, that would be to take away the joy of living by Christ, and thus an unbroken engagement is needed for victory, and the subjugation of self He walks in the Spirit and does not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Collected Writings, What Is the Meaning of Romans 6:17? (6:17)

"R. P." What. is the meaning of, "But ye have obeyed from the heart the form of teaching into which you were instructed (Rom. 6:17, N. T.) etc.

A. The disciples in Rome had given proof in their practical ways of the Apostle's doctrine in this chapter by walking in the truth, that the old man had been crucified with Christ. They were counting themselves as dead with Him, and alive unto God through Christ. Thus sin as not having dominion over them, and as set free from its slavery they had become slaves to righteousness (he speaks after the manner of men.) The heart was thus free to yield itself unto God in practical obedience, the conscience being at rest before Him.

I do not believe the thought you express is in the passage.

Their practice corresponded with the true spiritual meaning of their baptism, which was "unto death." Baptism is never put as obedience in Scripture. It is always the act of the baptizer, never that of the baptized. It is never the sign of what a man is already, or of an inward state.

Words of Truth: Volume N1, Romans 5:7 (5:7)

The subjects treated in this part of the Romans are entirely distinct. The apostle here takes up the condition of man before God. You get his responsibility; first the guilt, and then the state, and after that comes another question—being delivered out of the state, not merely out of

the guilt. Both are in every Christian, but one is not the other.

Suppose any one of us owed a thousand pounds, if someone comes forward and pays it all, well he is cleared, but then he is ruined, he has not got a thing; he cannot set up for anything. We see God for us, carrying the person on until he joys in God; God is for us all through as sinners. Until I get that, I have that same grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am rejoicing in hope all the past, present, and future. In the grace of God for us we are able to rejoice in tribulation; and then he continues, "And not only so, but we also joy in God." Persons who were sinners are reconciled to God.

Then comes another question, that is, not what we have done, but our state. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." That is not what I have done; that is Adam's guilt. If men had not the law, they were lawless and wicked; if they had the law, they had broken it. He gives the law its place, but He goes farther back-up to the first Adam—and puts all in the same place; not guilty, but lost. Guilty refers to the day of judgment, but lost is what I am now. I look back to the first man, and see where we all are; and then I look up and find a new man, and see that I have died in Christ; and this brings me to my state. The moment I see that one man's obedience has made me righteous, how can I live on, if I am dead, in the very thing I have through death been brought out of? I cannot live on in it.

Well, what is the law to do here? By it I have knowledge of sin, not sins—quite another thing. I am in such a state that, even if I have the will to do good, I cannot do it, for I have in me another will which I cannot succeed in mastering. He learns first that "In me—that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing;" the tree is bad, not the fruit merely—that is what he has been treating of all along; he cannot get any better, so he is cast upon this, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is a much more difficult thing to believe, and much more difficult to see deliverance from.

You do not find forgiveness in the eighth chapter; it has nothing to do with forgiveness; it is, you are free. Now there are two ways of using the word "free." I say, "That horse is free from vice;" that means he has not any. But we also say of a slave in the West Indies, "That man is free." Now it is in the last sense that the word is used here. We were captives, now we are free. He kills the flesh and gives you a new life; or, rather, He gives you a new life and kills the flesh.

I am both guilty and lost. After a man finds forgiveness when he does not know himself, and then afterward, when he finds sin in himself, he begins to think, Oh, I must have deceived myself, whereas he is really just finding it his state; before he only knew his guilt. If, to begin with, you get, by a full, free Gospel the forgiveness of your sins, then you will just have to learn yourself after it. You may go through it before you find forgiveness; but you must go through it sometime; and what is more, if you do not learn yourself what you are, you will make other people learn it! If I have got a rogue in my house, and I trust him, he will pilfer me with pleasure; but if I do not trust him, I just lock up all my things. It may be very uncomfortable, but still I am safe.

As to the Holy Ghost, you may lose the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but not the gift. As we read this morning, He abides forever. The Holy Ghost "distributes gifts to every man severally as He will." A man may not have the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but he must have the gift, for he has the Holy Ghost. As to gifts, the Holy Ghost gave tongues to one, healing to another, and so on.

What I find in the 4th of Ephesians is Christ caring for the Church, and there you have no miraculous gifts, but those which are continued "till he comes," for He must cherish His Church. So I find them in Ephesians, continuing till He comes, whilst in Corinthians I find, as of tongues, &c., "they shall cease;" it does not say when, but so it is.

Words of Truth: Volume 4, God's Love to a Sinner (5:1-11)

The truth in this chapter goes even farther than the eighth; and carries us into fuller blessing; because, as men say, it is more objective. That is, it is less about what is wrought in us, in order that we may enter into the enjoyment of redemption. This is what chapter 8 so beautifully describes. But God Himself, and what He is in Himself, is before us throughout these verses as the object of our souls!

For instance (in chapter 8.), we have "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." That is, the Spirit of God is looking for the effect, upon our hearts of the work of redemption. Here (c. 5.), "We have peace with God!" so that the blessing is looked at in reference to God Himself. It is in virtue of what God is, that there has been this redemption wrought. The work is not presented here as making me free by the Spirit of Christ in my soul; but it is the total putting away of sin out of God's sight; and "being justified by faith," that I may joy in Him! And this after all is the secret of all our blessing. These verses (1-11) give us truly the privileged place of the Christian, but we shall find that throughout they speak of Him who has wrought the work instead of the effect of the work of redemption on our hearts.

I can quite understand that souls would turn more to the eighth chapter. I am not finding fault with their doing. so; for in the seventh and eighth chapters we have the process which must go on in the soul, that it may know the privileged place of the Christian. But it is a higher thing to have God before us as the object of our souls! and until we are brought to this by grace, the heart does not get to God Himself. This is what will constitute our eternal blessedness in heaven. It will not be our joy that will occupy us there. We shall have no need to think of self, where everything will be perfect. We shall have nothing left to desire, our object will be God Himself! There is not this objective: truth in the eighth chapter. There we find what meets our need. All right and blessed in itself, but after all not the highest thing.

In the eighth chapter we have the "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," the "Spirit of adoption," and "God for us;" and as has often been said, the chapter beginning with "no condemnation," and ending with "no separation." Most blessed truth, but still occupying the heart with what it has received, more than with what God is. How we like to be occupied with self. It, is natural to us all. If for instance, a person suffers bodily pain, he will talk to you about it, not that he likes the pain, but he talks to you about it, because it is about himself; and so with pleasure, because it is what he has been enjoying. We see this occupation with self in souls just delivered. It is their joy and their deliverance that occupies their minds, and I am not finding fault with it. If I were now taking up the process that must go on in your souls before you can have

God as the object of your heart, I should turn to the seventh and eighth of Romans to bring this out. We must all pass through this process, and the deeper the better. There is no settled peace with God until the sinner has been thus exercised; and has learned not only what He has done, but, as the seventh chapter brings out, what He is.

In the verses of our chapter we have read, it is “sins” that are taken up, after the eleventh verse the apostle takes up “sin;” that is, not what a man has done, but what he is in himself. In the beginning of the epistle the apostle speaks of sins, first in the Gentiles, and then in the Jews; and in the third chapter we have “redemption” by blood from these sins. But the soul has to learn more than this. The soul must come to the end of flesh before God. Not in conflict, for that always remains; but before you can have settled peace with God, you must be delivered from this state of a man “in the flesh” responsible to God. When one has come to the end of it, as to all hope in it, and as to all expectation of getting any good out of it, the soul gets “deliverance” by Another. Then being “in Christ,” I find there is “no condemnation.” I am no longer “in the flesh” before God; I am “in Christ.” It is getting rid of flesh, not by passing over sin and making light of it; but by dying to that condition in Christ, and rising out of it into another in Him.

Now this judgment of what sin is in the soul is called—experience. I do not speak of conviction, or of having committed sins, as experience. That is repentance, and that is the first work when divine light enters the conscience; but Rom. 7 is the experience, through the Spirit working within, not of what a man has done, but of what he is.

And he gets delivered by reckoning himself dead, because Christ has died, so that he can say, being in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation.

But in convincing a man of sins, God takes up his conscience as a matter of fact. He lets His light into the soul, and shows it what has been going on there; like the vision of God which the prophet saw when God commanded him to dig into the wall of the Temple and to go in, and there he saw all the abominations and idols of Israel portrayed upon the wall round about.

When God is convincing a soul of what it has done, He says, “I’ll set before thee the thing which thou hast done. Now look at your life as it has been, but let Me be there, while you look back, and let Me cast My light upon everything that you have done.” How vivid, then, does the memory become! What a number of things long forgotten rise up before the mind! Now that is all guilt, and this conviction of guilt is where God begins with the soul. Just as the Lord did with the woman of Samaria, telling her all things that ever she did, so that she could say to others she had found the Messiah, for He had told her all things that ever she did.

This is the first witness that He is the Christ, because He can enter the heart, and show us as, a wonderful recollection, all that we have done. Now is there any honesty, dear friends, in trying to keep up a good character, and all the time to have a guilty conscience? I suppose you all have a good character before men, and you may even be outward worshippers of God, but if God should come in when you are carrying on your worship, you would fly and hide yourselves from Him as Adam did in the trees of the garden. Well! that shows that you have a bad conscience, and what honesty, I say, is there in having a very good character and a very bad conscience. Why, you would not have any one know what passes in your hearts. Suppose the world was to have everything told about everyone, how would the world get on? I don’t say any good would come out of such a disclosure, but it just shows what the world is, what you are.

This is, what the presence of Christ brought out. The truth came by Him, grace too, but He was the truth and revealed everything. Now the law was not the truth about anything. The law does not say what things are, but what they ought to be, and that is necessarily condemnation. But the law is only a rule. It is not the truth itself, but only commandments about what a man ought to be. But when Christ came, He was the truth Himself. He is, we know, the truth still, but I am speaking now of His manifestation on earth. It is not merely a commandment, but I know a Person, who is the thing itself. Take the Beatitudes; (Matt. 5) He says, for instance, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Well, but He was poor in spirit. “Blessed are the meek;” and He was meek and lowly in heart, and so with all of them. He was what He taught, so that in Christ I have the thing, as well as have heard about it. Everything is brought completely out: what God is, and what man is, and besides being the truth, grace came by Him. He reveals the sin as in the woman of Samaria, but talks to her of the gift of God, as if she were as pure as an angel! All the sin is brought out by this blessed One; but I see God above it all in goodness. Oh! what a comfort this is to the heart. I learn it in the Holy One, who walked up and down in this world. I know Him. He tells me what He is, and if He tells me what I am as a sinner, He is God and is greater and better than it all! I have not to ask where is He? as He said to the blind man in John 9, “Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.” I am He who has found out all that is in your heart, not as a Judge, but as a Saviour? The Person who convicts of sin is the Saviour.

This we see all through the word, in the souls of those the Lord dealt with. Bringing out before the conscience of the sinner what God is, and then saying, “I that speak unto thee am he.” He who is the Judge of quick and dead is He that says, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.” There I am, a poor sinner in His presence, and He speaks to me of the gift of God. Is it that He does not know me? or that He is deceived as to my character? No, indeed. He has told me all things that ever I did, but in showing me what I am, He has shown me what God is in grace.

But blessed as it is to have God dealing about sin in this manner, this is not all; there must be a work to put sin away before God, and to clear the conscience; and so in the last verse of the preceding chapter we have Christ delivered for our offenses; and raised again for our justification. It is what God has wrought in Christ. He delivered Him for our offenses, and has raised Him from the dead, so that, “having been justified by faith, we have peace with God.”

Thus the conscience is cleared, and in God’s sight, too, we are perfectly clear. We want both. It is not enough that there should be this perfect putting away of sins in God’s sight, you must have the answer to it in your conscience, too, or you cannot walk with God. God won’t have sin, and until a soul has peace with God about its sins, it cannot walk with Him. Of course, if you are careless about the thing altogether, you are not walking with God; but I am supposing you are troubled about sins. Well, you must get your conscience clear. I grant, you may walk, forgetting Him and go on with your sins, that we are very apt to do, but you cannot walk with God in your sins, that is impossible. Now what the Spirit of God shows us in this chapter is, that God has put us into a position above the sin, having delivered Christ for our offenses.

We must be fit for heaven, not fit to get back to Paradise, that is over forever and ever. We must be fit now to be in the presence of God where He is fully revealed. How can this be? Why, God has delivered His own Son for the offenses, so that they are all atoned for. It is an

accomplished fact, He gave Himself for this according to the counsel of God. Man had nothing to do with that. Of course, it was man's wickedness that crucified Him, but I do not speak of that now. It was according to the counsels of God entirely outside man's doings. It was an act between the blessed Lord and God about sin; and the whole thing is settled. I have nothing to do but to believe what God has done, and I have peace with God. Not that a soul who has peace with God will be free from conflict with sin, and from exercise of heart; but as regards its relationship with God, it can say—He has delivered His Son for my offenses! It is the revelation of what God has done, and done too, long before I became anxious about the matter, so that I have peace with God. Christ has done the work which has put the sin away. I have peace before God about my sins, and I have peace in my conscience too. Now if you are Christians and have not this answer in your conscience, you are not where Christ's work has put you. You may be learning what you are in yourselves, all very needful in its place, but till you have peace with God, you have not got that which Christ has made by the blood of His cross. The thing is perfect in itself. There is the peace, whether you have it or no. Your conscience entering into it is another matter.

It is this which Peter means, when he says, "Who by Him do believe in God." When I enter into what God has done in delivering Christ for my offenses, and raising Him when He had borne them, then I believe in God. I have peace with Him.

See how entirely it is outside yourselves. I have God before me as an object, by believing what He has done in delivering Christ for my sins. I have peace with Him about my sins.

But this is not all. The apostle goes on to say, "By whom, also, we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." It is not only that I am delivered from my place of guilt and condemnation, but what place have I now? Here we come to resurrection. I have access by a risen, Christ into the place of grace and divine favor before God. I have a present place before God. The Judge has brought me there. He has raised Christ for my justification, so that it is not only that I am delivered from my old place in Adam, but I am brought into a new place in Christ. I am standing in the favor of God. For a poor, vile, corrupt thing like me, if He has given His Son. The sins are gone, but the love remains, and in this grace and favor of God I stand.

But there is more than this. You may say, but what can you want more? Well, for my present position in this world I do not want more than to stand in this favor of God in a risen Christ, but then I am not always going to remain here. I have another prospect. I am going to God, and I rejoice in hope of being in His glory. This is my prospect for the future. I am going into the glory of God. Do you say, how can I expect that? Well, dear friends, if I look at myself a poor worm, I could not say so; but I don't look at myself, I look at Christ, and then I can say, I shall have it, for He who died for my sins, is in the glory of God, and He is my life, so I can say I shall be with Him there, as the apostle says, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Thus, God is before us as our object. It is not my happiness, but His glory, and what He is for me; and He is far more glorious in redemption than He was in creation. He had not to give His Son to create a world, but He had to redeem one. Christ has gone into that glory of God as a man, and as the firstborn among many brethren, whom God is bringing to glory, entering there as our forerunner. That is what my hope is.

Then, also, we glory in tribulations. These are the exercises by the way. And we glory in them, because "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts;" so that we can say, come what may, how can He but love me, having given His own Son to die for me, when I was a sinner and an enemy.

Mark here, again, how objectively the apostle speaks of the love of God. It is not as in chapter 8, the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children: of God, crying, Abba, Father, in our hearts; but this love is shown in the way it acted toward us while we were sinners and without strength; and to be proved to be without strength is a harder matter by far than to be convinced that one is a sinner. Well, the love came out, then, in Christ dying for us. Much more, then, says the apostle, having been reconciled by His blood, we shall be saved by His life. If His love was such, when He was at His weakest, (for He was crucified, we read, through weakness;) how much more can we count upon that love in everything, now that He liveth by the power of God for us. Thus in all the exercises of heart I pass through, I say, I am sure, come what may, all is love. And how do I prove it? I answer, when there was no good in me at all, He gave His Son to die for me, and if, when an enemy He died for me, now that He has made me His friend, He is not going to cast me off: I can expect everything, when I reason from what God is, and what He will be to me. To know this is the peace and strength of the Christian.

Thus I look back and see Him delivering His own beloved on for my sins, and I say, That is what He has done for me. I look at the present place into which He has brought me, and I say that is what He is to me, and I rejoice in the hope of His glory, as that which I shall have. We have three things in these blessed verses—sins gone, present grace, and future glory; then I glory in tribulations, because they

give instruction in the path, and the key to all the exercises I pass through, is His love to me when ungodly and without strength, for then it was He gave His Son for me— and that was the very best thing there was in heaven to give.

The Spirit of God reasons throughout from God to us. Then there is a step further, for in learning God, I can joy in God Himself, the highest thing of all. He becomes the delight of my heart as an object. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation."

The place of the Christian is a settled place, in which he can joy in God. If he looks up, there is not a cloud. There were plenty, but Christ has put them all away! When we were poor wretched sinners, He loved us, and gave His Son for our offenses, and now at peace with Him through His own work we can joy in Him, and judge from what He was to us as sinners as to what He will be to us as saints. The Christian is one who is beloved in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and who, having believed in what God has wrought, knows that sin is put away.

And now, dear friends, let me ask you, Have you peace with God? The Lord Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." There it is, but have you entered into it? The Lord Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Have you the rest which He gives? No, you say. Well, then, you are not yet in the place into which God puts His people. What has the work of Christ done for you? Has it redeemed you? Then you are redeemed. Has it reconciled you? Then you are reconciled—you have peace!

May you not be satisfied in anything short of this-being able to say, I am reconciled to God, so that you may be able to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

Collected Writings, Romans 4:25 (4:25)

Q. "E. Le P." What authority is there for translating Romans 4:25, "Was delivered in consequence of our offenses, and raised again in consequence of our justification"?

A. None whatever. Some have tried to render the διὰ, 'in consequence of,' others, 'because of,' but equally erroneously. This is because of the desire to connect the justification of the believer with the resurrection of Christ, instead of the time when faith operated in his soul. Scripture never separates those things. The first verse of chap. 5 would thus be wrenched off from its true connection: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God." etc.

I add the words of another:

As regards δικαίωσις, διὰ is translated 'for,' as giving the sense, but in English. The point is not there but in δικαίωσις. Διὰ, with an accusative is just 'on account of,' but δικαίωσις is not the thing done, but the doing of it, and it is this on which it turns. If it had been 'on account of our having been justified,' it would have been διὰ τὸ δικαιωθῆναι ἡμᾶς, and this is not the ease till faith comes in... The Greek rule is, that words derived from the perfect passive are the thing done, doing it, and the doer; κρίμα, the judgment; κρίσις, the judging; κριτής, the judge; though all are not always there. We have δικαίωμα: I am not aware of δικαίωσις.

Words of Truth: Volume 4, Offering Up of the Gentiles, The (15:16)

"Because of the grace given to me by God, for me to be the minister of Jesus Christ to the nations, carrying on, as a sacrificial service, the message of good tidings of God in order that the offering up of the nations might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15:16; lit. translation.)

The full meaning of this verse can only be seen, I believe, in connection with verses 8 and 9. "Now, I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy."

The mission of Jesus Christ was primarily to the Jews, with a consequent blessing, through them, to the Gentiles. But He was cut short in His work, for the Jews rejected Him "We will not have this man to reign over us." Therefore as yet, the Gentiles, as nations, do not put their trust in Him (v. 12). He does not reign over them.

For the blessing of the nations must flow through the Jews. "God shall bless us (Jews), and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him."

Paul, therefore, is chosen to carry on this work, as he says—"The grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles," carrying on the message of good tidings. He had not only a distinct call and revelation from the ascended Christ to make known the mystery (Eph. but he was chosen, as a Jew, to carry on the mission of Christ to the Gentiles as such. This explains the use of passages from the prophets, belonging critically to a future day, as in verses 9, 10, 11, 12 of this chapter. The Gentiles are not to be losers through the unbelief of the Jew. Although that manifested blessing which was to come to them through the Jew is still in abeyance, there is nevertheless a presentation of Christ to the Gentile, as such, corresponding to the presentation of Christ to the Jew. And to this work the Apostle Paul was called by the Lord Jesus by special revelation from heaven, "To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light.... that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified." (Acts 26:18.)

There is beautiful fitness as regards the instrument chosen to carry on this Word of life. That the blessing may still flow in God's order. A Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, receives the commission as minister of Jesus Christ. He does not go up to Jerusalem to receive his credentials from thence; there is no owning of the nation, nor of that apostate city as a center of blessing for the earth; but, in the person of Paul, the prescribed order is maintained.

Thus in the mercy of God they partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree, and not one Gentile who, in the purpose of God, would have been blessed, is allowed to suffer through the unbelief of the Jew. Moreover, although those quotations from Old Testament Scriptures in verses 9, 10, 11, 12 regarding the Gentiles, will have their true fulfillment when the Jew has his proper place in the earth, yet are they here used by the apostle in connection with their present blessing.

Now, as in the humiliation of Christ, the Jews received Him not, and are for the time cast away; so during his rejection the Gentiles, in like manner, own Him not, continue not in the goodness of God, and must, in the crisis of their unbelief and self-will, also receive the judgment of God "Thou also shall be cut off." Thus, both Jew and Gentile corporately reject the "Messiah," the "seed of the woman," and bring out this great truth, that blessing for man on earth must flow from Him who is risen from the dead, the beginning of the creation of God. Paul, the pattern Jew, with a mission direct from the risen Christ, cannot inaugurate blessing for the Gentile on earth.

But, as in every previous dispensation, there has always been a path known to faith, and a secret order of blessing underneath that which through the unfaithfulness of man has failed; so now, during the casting away of the Jew, and the growing apostasy of the Gentile, the Lord is gathering out from the Jew "a remnant according to the election of grace;" and from among the nations "a people for His name," Who together form the Church—the body of Christ—neither Jew nor Gentile, but the one new man in Christ Jesus.

This is the present joy of His heart, the compensation for having, as regards Israel, apparently labored in vain. (Isa. 49) Thus, in the unfailing resources of our God, He has treasured up in the purposes of His heart that mystery, now revealed, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith (Rom. 16:25,26), which, without interfering with the exact fulfillment of His promises, and in the exact order of blessing prescribed from the first, brings out now a pre-fulfillment of it, evident to faith; and by which, in the coming day of manifestation of the sons of God, He will make known the exceeding riches of His grace, even in His kindness toward us by Christ Jesus.

There is another thought—verse 16— “That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” This appears to be the character of the meat offering, and especially of the wave loaf baken with leaven, as in Lev. 23:16,17. It is called “a new meat offering,” but two wave loaves constitute it. It follows upon the waving of the first-fruits—Christ risen and accepted. Fifty days afterward the loaves were offered— “they are the first-fruits unto the Lord.” In view of His mission to the Gentiles, as filling up what remained of the work committed to Christ, this would appear to be an allusion to the presentation of the Gentile to God— “For through Him we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

There is a wonderful symmetry or harmony in all God’s actings. Although man may seem to interfere with His purposes, His counsels they shall stand. He will work, and who shall let it? His prerogative is to bring His own good out of man’s evil; and every effort to set aside His authority in the earth not only ends in the overthrow of His enemies, but affords scope for a still further unfolding of His grace and manifestation of Himself. “O the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” “To Him be glory forever. Amen.”

clickbible.org