

Deliverance

William Kelly

Deliverance

The beginning of Romans 8 is the full answer to the cry of wretchedness in Romans 7: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There are three great parts in the deliverance: first, the setting free of the soul at the commencement of its career; then, practical freedom in its course; and, finally, ultimate deliverance for the body in resurrection at the coming of our Lord. What concerns souls pre-eminently, in the first instance, is that spiritual freedom, without which there can be no practical power, any more than in the service of the Lord, or in worship. Hence it is this first part of the deliverance that it will be my main business to dwell on at present. Not that the application to practice is not of the highest moment; but we should remember that practical freedom and power depend on this primary deliverance. Again, final deliverance must not be supposed to be forgotten; but that is a question of the Lord's intervention by-and-by, when there can be no possibility of a flaw. Now there may be failure, first, in appreciating the soul's deliverance, as in verse 2; and, secondly, in turning practical liberty to the Lord's account in walk. But when the Lord comes to quicken these mortal bodies — and they are called mortal in contradistinction from the soul — no failure will be possible. It was not necessary to call the soul immortal, because immortality is essentially bound up with its nature.

Let us, then, turn to a little consideration of the first grand truth, the setting free of the soul. And this remark may be made at the threshold, that the deliverance in question is quite distinct from quickening. Romans 7 is the strongest possible proof of this; for we have, from verse 7 onward, exactly the experience of a man quickened, but not delivered. We see there a soul going through much painful exercise inwardly ending in the cry, "O wretched man," etc. It is not a careless or unawakened person, but neither is it one delivered. There are two errors to be avoided here, over-rating and under-estimating the condition of the case in Romans 7. These two mistakes carry away far the largest part of Christendom, and perhaps of real Christians. There are those who consider that the soul in this distress is unconverted; and one reason why they do so is, because in the progress of its exercises it says, "I am carnal." But such an inference is unwarranted, and arises from confounding carnal with natural, which is ignorance of scripture. For it speaks of three classes, and not two only; there are natural, carnal, and spiritual men. Now Romans 7 describes the intermediate class; the person there is neither natural nor spiritual. This is where the great mistake is made, and by none more than by the theologians. They confound a carnal with a natural man, supposing that "carnal" means one dead in trespasses and sins. But in 1 Corinthians 2, 3 this distinction is plainly drawn.

In chapter 2 the apostle, speaking of the natural man, declares that he "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." In chapter 3 he takes up the other term, and distinctly tells the Corinthian believers that they were carnal; not, of course, natural, but "carnal." They were believers, but in a wrong and low condition. They ought to have been, but were not, "spiritual."

Thus every believer is not by any means a spiritual person. For this reason the apostle, in addressing the Galatians, says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." He did not mean by this that every believer is a spiritual man, but, on the contrary, distinguishes certain believers more fitted than others for the delicate work of restoring a man who has slipped aside. And who are they? The men who know best the hateful evil of flesh, as well as, what is of far deeper moment, the grace of God. These can therefore feel for souls ensnared and drawn away from the Lord. A carnal man knows God and himself so partially, that he is unfit for such work. He would err, either on the side of easy-going amiability, which would slip over sin, or in overwhelming harshness. The spiritual man, by grace, holds the balance even. He would condemn the wrong, but also

meet the soul in restorative grace.

This distinction appears everywhere. Among believers, who does not know some spiritual, with not a few carnal? As believers, they are no longer natural, but they are not therefore necessarily spiritual. Not that they have not the Spirit, but that they do not walk or judge in the Spirit. The possession of the Spirit does not necessarily make a man spiritual. The Corinthian saints clearly had the Spirit, but there was unjudged activity of the flesh in many. There is a shade of difference between the word (and the sense, I also think) in Romans 7, compared with 1 Corinthians 3: 8, which calls little for notice now. It is only one letter, and; the Auth. Version (though not always) translates both as "carnal." Do not suppose that we are going into critical points now; but it surely is of interest and importance to apprehend the difference between being born of the Spirit, and having the Holy Ghost dwelling in me. A man may be born of the Spirit, and yet may require to have the Holy Ghost given to him. Now the word in Romans 7 does not decide that the Spirit dwells there, the word in 1 Corinthians does admit of it. However this may be, we may now turn to the fundamental Christian truth of present deliverance.

In Romans 7 a struggle is described, and fully argued out; but this conflict supposes life. While a man is dead in trespasses and sins, there is no such conflict. Mark the language of this soul. He has a hatred of evil, and yet falls into it; he loves what is good, and yet fails in doing it. It is a state, not of natural wickedness, but of spiritual powerlessness. At Corinth the fleshly activity of the intellect overruled the mind of the Spirit in too many saints. Here it was a dead weight of evil within, that always dragged him down when he wanted to do the will of God. He is like a person in a quagmire, not drowned, but sunk deeply, and struggling; yet as soon as he gets one leg out, the other is more deeply in. And so his state is most miserable. This increases, though with growing discernment of himself, until he rests in Christ. It is not a man who has not seen Christ, but one who, looking to Him, thought it was enough for all need, and never expected as a believer to find evil continually within him. He wakes up at length to the humbling fact that there is this constant inward evil ever seeking to break out, and that having the blood of Jesus for his forgiveness does not fully deal with the case. It is a question, not of pardon only, but of deliverance. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" He has life, and the law has probed him as born of God, and killed him in conscience. It is far from true that he is dead in trespasses and sins; but an awakened conscience has given the law killing power, and he is slain in the conviction of sin, which he had not been; if an unconverted man. The unconverted soul knows nothing of this inward exercise and trouble. Here I am obliged to part from my Arminian friends, who generally regard this latter part of Romans 7 as a description of the natural man. "I am carnal," says the apostle, not natural. They are wrong.

The truth is, that the effect of sin is far deeper than even Christians suppose. Life and forgiveness are not all that is wanted. Both are given in the gospel: but besides there is present deliverance. And this deliverance comes after there has been practical proof, not merely that we are sinners, but that we are without strength, which is a deeper thing. Here the soul is brought to the pass: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" He looks out of himself, there was the turning-point. He had looked to the Lord to find life and forgiveness; but when he had Christ he thought. "Surely I shall be able to go on now, happily glorifying the Lord." He discovers his weakness, he struggles and strives, but finds it out more and more. At last he looks about himself, and not his past sins only, to Christ risen after the flesh was fully judged in the cross; and this is the consequence, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."* (Ver. 1.)

* The vulgarly received text adds a clause to the Greek which is rejected by the Sinaitic, Vatican, Rescript of Paris, and other MSS, the Coptic and Aethiopic versions, and some of the best Greek and Latin commentators. It is easy to account for the supplement from verse 4, where it is appropriate and certain; but here it confounds practice with standing. Even so the A.V. is a mistranslation. as one may show presently.

The first part here stated of this deliverance is, that grace puts us in a new place or standing, in which there can be nothing against us. At once we see the contrast with Adam. It was not merely that the first man fell, and that his children were sinners, but the very nature and place involving them in condemnation. In contrast, then, with fallen Adam stamping the fall on all his family, there is another or "second Man" and "last Adam." What is His position? Risen and in glory, after having died not for sins only but to sin, and both for us, that grace might through Him reign through righteousness to eternal life. The apostle does not pursue all the consequences here, but particularly presses this, that Christ is dead and risen. He is not merely an expiatory sacrifice, but a dead and risen Saviour. And thus He is applied to the condition of the man who believes in Him. Nothing so frees from claim as death. Have there been debts? Death cancels them. Claims? Death comes in, and dissolves their force. Do I deny, then, the responsibility of the Christian? The very reverse. But his responsibility is not that of a man naturally, which comes to an end in death (not his own, but Christ's, and the believer's with Him); and where man ends, the Christian begins. The Christian, therefore, is baptized to Christ's death. It is thus a dead and risen Christ that characterises Christianity. A living Christ was what the Jew wanted. They would have liked a mighty Messiah born in the world to lead them on to victory and supremacy. And this is very much what many Christians think and crave after. But it is not Christianity, which is founded on the death of Christ and closes the old man; and He is risen, which brings in the new creation for faith.

Therefore it is that the Christian now is not merely forgiven, but identified with Christ who died; and the consequence is that he is dead to sin. Such is the argument of the apostle in Romans 6. The Christian is likewise dead to the law. I know there are those who tell you that the law is dead,* but they are quite wrong. The law, far from dead, is a living and killing power; and you must therefore pronounce death, not upon the law, but upon yourself. (See Gal. 2) God gives the believer in Christ to take the place of being dead, both to sin and to law: but is this all? Surely not; it is only negative. No, he is in Christ Jesus, the One risen from the dead. The Christ that the believer possesses is One who, after His death not only for our sins but for sin itself, passed into resurrection life, and that, too, as a life-giving Spirit. Who receives this life? The Christian. As a believer in Christ, and submitting to God's righteousness, he has received new life and the Spirit, and consequently his position is in Christ Jesus. Therefore he partakes of all that Christ is, as risen. All His blessedness — not speaking of Him as a divine person, the eternal Son of God, but as Man risen from the dead — now attaches to every believer in Him. And for this reason it is that the apostle says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." You might as well talk of condemning Christ as of condemning the Christian. Since Adam's fall, the curse rested on him and on all his seed. So now, since His death and resurrection, the favour of God rests just as thoroughly on Christ and all who are His. For in point of fact they are in Christ as men naturally are said to be in Adam. No doubt it is a mystical way of speaking, but it is a true thing. The expression is a figure, but the fact is certain. Are the effects of connection with Christ less real than of connection with Adam?

* The sole apparent authority for it is Beza's daring conjecture of ?p??a??t??, followed by the A.V. but corrected in the margin of Romans 7: 6.

What a blighting thing is the unbelief that despises and distorts, or destroys, the force of such deep realities! Do you say they are not facts? Are the only facts things that you can see and feel? Are you a positivist? Is there nothing real but sin and misery? Is God nothing? or are you as unbelieving, or worse, than a Jew or a heathen? Is not Christ as real as Adam? I admit the reality of sin. Alas, we know it too well! We know it even as natural men, and we felt it even when we were carnal — if indeed we are spiritual now. Let us search and see how far our souls have passed out of human thoughts, for this is carnality in a Christian. The Corinthians were in that state; they allowed the thoughts of men to sway them. We are called, on the contrary, to enter into the revealed truth of God. We are said to "have the mind of Christ." The Corinthians, as all Christians, had the title to this, but did not make it good; they

had the ground, capacity, and even power; but they did not use what they had, through value for the world's wisdom — surely an important distinction, and a common danger.

Here, then, is the first clearing of the Christian position. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." It is not merely no condemnation for this or that — for particular acts or things — but no condemnation whatever; it is absolute. Were there no faults or blemishes? Too many and grave; but for what did Christ die? And Christ is risen, and there is no condemnation. Are you still afraid to rest in Him? Better not be distrustful of Him or the word of God; far better to believe it, and be afraid of ourselves. This is both wiser and humbler. I know there are many who read the word of God, and hesitate to accept the clear and absolute language of scripture. But we ought, in this respect at least, to be calm and confident. Remember that I am not now resting on an isolated bit of scripture, though a single text is stabler than heaven and earth; I refer to what is the very back-bone and substance of this epistle. I am not pressing you with a mere fragment of scripture, torn out of its mace and context. I leave that to others; and there are plenty who preach thus on scraps. Beyond controversy, the apostle is showing that believers have an entirely new position in the dead and risen Christ. They are as truly partakers of the acceptance in which He stands risen from the dead, as men naturally inherit the condemnation of the first man. No condemnation can any longer touch His person who secures the Christian. We are in Christ.

The apostle gives two conclusive reasons for this. "For," says he, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

Before saying more, perhaps one ought to explain why the last clause of the first verse is quite ignored. Here it is not scripture. The same clause is scripture in the fourth verse, but not in the first. It is as perfect and divine in the one case, as it is wrong and human in the other. But the monastic scribes who copied for us the writings of the apostle seemed to have thought the first verse as it stood meagre, and rather dangerous too, and so did their best to improve and guard it by additions. Was not this rationalistic, Rationalism does not mean conscience judging what is wrong, but man presuming to judge where he should believe and learn of God. Any attempt to mend the scriptures is about as bold and bad rationalism as can be. You may find it in a monk just as much as in a monkey-loving professor. No doubt the monks included many a rationalist of the middle ages; I leave you to judge who are such now. In the first verse there cannot be a question that the words referred to are a mere human accretion. Ask any one entitled to speak: Mill, Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, Tischendorf or Tregelles, will tell you that the clause is an interpolation. They rejected it, not because all, or any of them, liked the truth resulting from the true text, but because they were honest men, and competent scholars, who stuck to the best witnesses. In the Catholic Greek Testaments of Munich, 1847, and of Dublin, 1860, you will find the same thing; the clause is omitted, and quite correctly, spite of the Vulgate. So also Bishop Wordsworth and Dean Alford, in their editions of the Greek New Testament, omit it.

Do not mind what people say about "peculiar views." For that is just what I eschew, at least as much as they. I want to help souls more fully into the truth, which surely ought not to be "peculiar." I call human views, old tradition or modern speculation, peculiar, if not wicked too. But I do not call it peculiar, and I hope you do not, to adhere uncompromisingly to the words of the Holy Spirit, and to seek the genuine, simple, and sure sense of God's word. The true form of the verse, then, is, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The apostle so speaks without the smallest qualification. If you add, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," and if you translate it more correctly as not "who" but "if," "when," or "because they walk not," etc., you bring in another idea — walking in the Spirit, not standing. It would amount then to this: that there is no condemnation to them since they walk in holiness. But this were to mix up the walk with the position, the effect of which is that you can never be sure of your position. All is plunged in uncertainty. Place in Christ and walk in the Spirit are two distinct things. I do not know what a man's position is by looking at his walk, for he may

often shift and move. The walk is surely of the utmost importance. But the first verse of the chapter speaks only of position, and if you bring in walk there, the position is unsettled, and the truth is spoiled.

When you speak of walk, you bring in Christian responsibility (which I entirely admit); but if the apostle is teaching "no condemnation," how can our conduct, our desert, our possible faults be introduced? Do not faults deserve to be censured? Whose walk is such as to claim "no condemnation?" If the walk is mixed up in the question, it is impossible for one ever to know it. The word is thus made void, the apostolic comfort is also nullified, and people get into a religion of doubt, in consequence of this confusion. They find themselves on a quicksand instead of a rock, and miscall it Christianity, whereas it is so far a mere consecration of naturalism. The object of the verse is to show the firm ground on which God has placed His children.

Surely there is a walk that suits those that are in that position, and scripture furnishes abundant instruction as to it. But the first need is to know that I am placed by the grace of God where no condemnation can reach us. This gives solid peace, and becomes the means of power to the believer. Do we want to know the ground of it? The answer follows: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Mark the precision of the language. It is "the law of the Spirit of life," meaning that fixed principle. Let others boast about the law of Moses; the apostle says, this is the law for me, a Christian. Has Moses delivered you? He could only condemn: "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." But here is the proper starting-point of the Christian — the soul set free. It is a place of deliverance that nobody ever had till Christ died and rose again. And it is a remarkable fact that our Lord acted on this truth on the very day He rose from the dead. He never did so, before, coming into the midst of His disciples, He breathed on them the breath of His own resurrection-life. His own people were plunged into the deepest distress by His death on the tree; but He imparted to them life more abundantly than before His death. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." While He was here, He was no doubt the life of the believer; but risen from the dead, He gave life more abundantly.

It is familiarly known that some apply His inbreathing as if it meant inspiring the disciples to write the scriptures, as others take it to be power to work miracles, and so forth. The truth however is that it means neither one nor other, nor anything but what is said here: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Therefore it was that He said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted," etc. They were to go forth, as in Christ, in the power of the Spirit. They were to take Christ's place in this world; dead to law and sin, and alive from, yet among, the dead. The world outside is the place of death, not of life. The believer owns this, but thanks God that there are some living among the dead. And whence comes this life? From Christ risen — the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. It was not a life breathed into any before He rose from the grave. If it had been before the cross, it would never suit a sinner to receive it, any more than God to give it; nor could it be a guarantee of deliverance. But when the Lord Jesus went down into the fight, the rule of that war was, that those who tarried with the stuff should share just as much in the spoils as He that went down to battle. Such was the law of David; and it is the way of a greater than David. He alone fought the fight; but we reap the full fruits of His victory. Grace has set me in this position, so that sin and death are no longer a law to me.

Sin is not a law, because I am no longer sold under and in bondage to sin; I am inexcusable if I do sin. There is no such necessity if I come under grace. If I fail in prayer and vigilance, I am sure to sin; but I ought never to be unwatchful, and so never to sin. No Christian should deny this. A Christian may sin, and a Christian does, if he is not walking in dependence on God. He is only kept so long as his life is practically one of faith. "The life that I now live in the flesh," says the apostle, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." Where one walks in the Spirit, the believer does not sin.

Sin, then, is not a law to the Christian, but what about death? Must not we all die? This is exactly what

unbelief says — that we must all die. "Surely," some untaught soul cries, "you have not the face to say that we are not all to die." Men are so appointed, but not Christians. We shall not all sleep, but all be changed: I believe because God says it. "We shall not all sleep." The moment Christ comes in bodily presence, not a Christian falls asleep; on the contrary, those asleep arise. We are changed without dying. I say therefore that death is not a law to the Christian. He is not doomed to die like a man naturally. It is quite true that death is the common portion of humanity, as such, but not of God's children. "It is appointed unto men once to die. But, as said before, a Christian is not a mere man. He is already delivered, taken out of the lot of sin and death in which all mankind are naturally. We enter in Christ a supernatural state. Do you shrink from the supernatural? If you believe in Christ, the Son of God, you must accept its fulness, for surely He is so. And on all who are His He imprints His own incomparable blessedness, as He is their life and righteousness. I quite admit that we may die, just as we may sin. But I deny that either the one or the other is a necessity for the Christian. When life in the Spirit was given, there was power against sin; and when Christ comes, death shall disappear for all that are His. It is the effect of life in Christ, the life-giving Spirit. When my soul sees Him, my soul gets life; when in my body I see Him, my body will be immortalised and transformed. Such is the Christian's portion, and he should enter by faith into the blessedness of Christ's triumph now. Consequently we are entitled to have peace, joy, power, and conscious victory now, and this righteously by the cross.

But along with it must be kept up the exercise of self-judgment; for if we are in Christ for no condemnation, Christ is in us for the continual detection of the flesh already condemned by God, that the walk should be truly in the Spirit. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, and the Spirit is life because of righteousness." As surely as Christ is ascended and the Holy Spirit now given, the two sides for the Christian are inseparable for privilege and responsibility. Even as our Lord said, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you;" and what God has joined, let not man put asunder.

This deliverance has a great deal to do with a man's being spiritual. One may doubt that a person can be truly spiritual, in the scriptural sense of the word, before he is delivered. Not that a delivered man will necessarily always walk as such, because we are liable to be off our guard, and turn aside. What may not a Christian be dragged into when he forgets the Lord? But certainly the consciousness of deliverance by Christ's death and resurrection is a weapon of great power. Like Goliath's sword in David's hand, none is like it. Nevertheless, one needs dependence, as much after being delivered as before.

Could God condemn the life that is in Christ? But this is the life the Christian has. Do you suppose Christ's grace shown in that act was limited to those who lived then? "Because I live, ye shall live also." Was this true of the disciples alone? It was a sample of what He has done for and gives to every Christian. I speak not of walk, but of what is at the bottom of it, when I say it is life in Christ. In Adam I have the natural life, which is alas! depraved, proud or vain, wilful and selfish. And where do I get the life that hates these and all evils alike? From faith in Christ. It is no credit to the receiver. It is all and solely of the grace that was in our Lord Jesus. The risen Saviour has a family instinct with the same life that was and is in Himself. And the life is that of One risen from the dead after all judgment was undergone. This last is the point the apostle adverts to next. "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." (Ver. 3.) God has already executed sentence of condemnation, not on us (else we should be lost for ever), but on Christ.

The cross of Christ was not merely blood-shedding as the final answer to the various sacrifices; the explanation, after long waiting, of why it was that God attached such importance to the offering of a bullock, a lamb, or a goat. Surely it was not with slain beasts that God was occupied. He was giving sensible signs of the One sacrifice — presentiments of His Son that was coming. He was setting plainly and distinctly before the eyes of a dull people that One who was to shed His blood for the sins of men.

But more than this: that One was to bear the judgment. There are two things appointed of God to men because of sin – death and judgment. Christ bore judgment as well as death; and the consequence is that the believer now receives a double blessing. Not merely has he life, in contrast with death, and pardon through that blood shed for the remission of the sins of many, but also deliverance in Him risen, and no condemnation, through the condemnation having fallen wholly on Christ. This the law could not do. It could condemn the sinner, and nothing else, because it was a good law. If it had been bad, it might have let off bad men. The law was therefore powerless to deliver; it condemned, and could only condemn, the guilty. Had this been all, we were hopelessly lost. But sinners were the very people that God intended to save by grace. In Christ He would save sinners, but condemn sin. The law could not deal with sin apart from the sinner. It dealt with a sinful man for his sins, and the end could only be death for him. But it could not execute judgment on the nature, any more than extricate the man himself. Whereas "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [that is, as a sin-offering] condemned sin in the flesh." The Son was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in sinful flesh; else He must have suffered for Himself, and could be no unblemished victim for others. It was not in the likeness of flesh, but really in flesh, He came.

How guarded is scripture! How much better than any formula, even the so-called Athanasian! What a meagre effort at symbol is the vulgarly styled Apostles' Creed! No wonder Whiston and other Arians could admire and use it. But the word of God is divine light to deal with man's heart and conscience.

Look, then, at the truth of Christ as presented here. God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin. He was the Holy One, and yet became a man - as truly man as He was God. He, ever Son of God, came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was born of a sinful mother, so that none could have known, except by the revelation of God, that there was not the same state of humanity in Him as in her. It was a revelation, distinct and positive, that He was the Son of God incarnate, not the son of a human father. He was the Son of God and the Son of man as born of Mary, but certainly not Joseph's son, save legally. The Gospels, though some with more particularity, affirm distinctly, making it blasphemy to deny it, that He was Son of God in the supreme sense.

That Blessed One came "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin." Mark this last, for it means as a sin-offering. "For sin" is its technical expression in both Old and New Testaments. It was to deal with "sin," not merely sins, that Christ was sent; to meet and remove that dead weight which, in Romans 7, the believer discovered; to have the root, as well as fruit, wholly disposed of. The burden of all fell on Christ. Sin in the flesh God condemned in His cross. It is not pardon that is wanted for an evil nature, but condemnation. Pardon for sins one does want, but condemnation, unqualified judgment, of the nature that produced them. And in order that you or I should be saved, that condemnation must fall, not on us, but on the Saviour. This is exactly what God has done. The condemnation of sin in the flesh, and by an offering for sin, fell on the only One who had no sin in Him. If there had been sin in Him (I say not done by Him), then condemnation must have fallen on Him for Himself. Such a falsification of His person was the peculiar and fatal error of Irvingism. In that system, in order to make the Lord Jesus sympathise with us as much as possible, He was made to have fallen humanity. It was taught that He had taken into union with the divine nature, not merely human nature, which is true, but fallen and peccable, which is a ruinous lie. If it had been so, Christ could not have suffered for us, but for Himself. But being the Holy One of God, the only One in whom was no sin, He could suffer, not only for sins, but for sin. Consequently, in executing judgment on Him crucified, God condemned sin in the flesh.

And what was the moral end of it, as here shown us by the apostle? "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who* walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Ver. 4.) Here comes in the walk of the Christian in its proper order and only true place. When the Christian's standing by grace in Christ is a settled fact, when consciously delivered with a new life by the Spirit, when he knows his nature judged in the cross, then his walk according to the Spirit follows. And do you not know how,

when you are not happy and free, everything goes wrong? You are tried with this and that, vexed with circumstances and with other people, and, most of all, if you told all out, with yourself. Such is the condition of the soul in Romans 7.

* The reader of the Greek Testament will observe that the true text of verse 4 differs from the spurious clause of verse 1. It is not the anarthrous pe??pat??s??, which would import a condition ("if walking"), but t?? p., which means the fact or character — "those that walk." The dominion of sin is broken.

But now see here the efficacious excellence of what God has wrought and gives in Christ. Not only are sins forgiven, but the evil of flesh is already dealt with in His death. So that one has not to wait for one's own death for deliverance. To faith the believer died with Christ, is alive in Him to God, and is therefore entitled to be no longer a self-tormentor because of the total ruin and corruption within. The old man is as surely condemned in the cross, as the sins of the believer are washed away by the blood of Christ. He submits to the humbling certainty that the nature is hopelessly evil but accepts the blessed truth that it has been already condemned by God in Christ's death. No part of scripture, no rite of Judaism, ever taught that man's nature gets better; Christianity sets forth, even in baptism, that it is judged and set aside for ever in Christ. It is only the fond fancy of a Brahminist, or of others hardly less dark in principle — this notion of improving the flesh. It is the religion of human nature all over the world. But any effort to deliver myself, as it begins, so can end, only in a religious imagination. It is by righteousness and in Christ, not by power, that victory comes over self. To trust oneself is not to be delivered, but only deluded. Whereas, in the sense of total weakness, and ruin, and evil, to rest on Christ dead and risen, is to find myself in Christ, and "no condemnation" my portion.

But we do well to mark the ground of "no condemnation." First, God has given me a perfectly new life, the life of Christ risen from the dead; and this He cannot surely condemn. The life of Christ is the Christian's life, to which no condemnation can attach. But what about my old and evil nature? God has already dealt with it, having executed sentence of death on it in the cross of Christ. Thus God gives the believer a new life, which cannot be condemned, having condemned the old man, out and out, in Christ's death. Therefore now no condemnation falls on those that are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8: 1-4 is the truth for the soul to seize, a spring of confidence for going on with God; Romans 7: 7-23 looks back at a wholesome, but painful, discipline, a transition state, during which the soul, desiring what is good, because converted, learnt its utter powerlessness, because it was under law, and did not yet submit to the sentence of death. Now it bows experimentally, and sees itself by faith delivered according to the import of Christ's death in His resurrection. Thenceforth all is clear as to present as well as past, as to what you are, no less than as to what you have done; and this, not at all because of what you were or are, but on account of Christ, whose death settled all questions for you, and in whom you now live — alive from the dead to God.

Hence the righteousness of the law, instead of being a claim against you, and so condemning you, is now fulfilled in you, which is more intimate than by you. Knowing God thus, you cannot but love Him; and, loving Him, you love your neighbour also, and even your enemy. By the grace of God you are able to rise above the evil to which you once succumbed. If the believer loves God and his neighbour, is not the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him? I do not admit such a thing as a Christian, in whom the righteousness of the law is not fulfilled. The grace of God has wrought this immense change. The vain or proud man, who made himself his centre, but now a believer, and in Christ, has his heart drawn out in true love to God and in love to his neighbour. And no wonder, when one is by grace so blessed! There is nothing that tends to practical holiness so much as being, not pardoned only, but made perfectly happy by and in divine love. One does not become holy first, and then happy, but if he is made happy, practical holiness follows. I speak now of what is wrought by God and His grace in the believer. But Christ is all — not only He dying for us, but we living in Him risen.

Thus, as we see, this subject has its practical side. Grace has wrought in Christ for us "that the

righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." It is carefully added afterwards, that, though one be delivered, he may not always walk in the Spirit. He may yield to the flesh, and prove its bitter consequences. Who knows sorrow so humbling as that of the unfaithful Christian? His is not the same wretchedness as that of Romans 7 but of a still deeper kind. What anguish, after such mercy and grace, after knowing such a God, to have forgotten and dishonoured Him, grieved the Holy Spirit of God, and brought shame on the name of such a Saviour! How exceeding sinful does sin then appear in one's eyes, and what self-reproach for having yielded to it! Chapter 7 describes the exercises of one quickened, but not delivered; in chapter viii. ho is delivered, and consequently knows far deeper affections, normally in good, but it may be as to evil, if he sin.

There is thus and thenceforward the constant necessity of discerning between flesh and Spirit. The flesh is the old stock, but there is a new graft inserted. The old stock was nothing but a crab-tree, which, no matter how cultivated, would only bring forth crabs. Its nature is not changed, but a good tree is grafted into it. Still, if the old stock is allowed to bear at all, its fruit is, and must be, bad. The point, then, is not to tolerate the least sprout of the old stock. Cultivate the new graft, and let it bear freely, but do not spare a single bud of the crab. This is just what we have to do with the old man — the flesh. Walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. They are contrary to each other, that ye may not do the things ye would, says Galatians 5.

* It is ??a, not ?p??, and the sense "in order that," etc., just the contrary of the A.V., which confounds the case with Romans 7 and might act as an Antinomian excuse for sins.

And this principle is practically carried out by applying the blessed truth, that I am entitled to reckon myself dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ. It is a part of what grace teaches, and enables me to hold fast, being, we have seen, involved in the declaration of baptism. Otherwise what means it? Is it merely the application of the blood of Christ that makes a Christian? Did not Christ come by water and blood? We are baptized in water, not in blood. We needed not only His death for us, but ours with Him. Faith in His blood gives remission of sins; while His death writes God's sentence on the flesh, treating it as a thing done with to faith. But Christ is risen, and we are in Him accepted according to His acceptance. Is this what men present or believe? Is Christianity short of it? Is not Christendom as a whole? and even most of the real Christians in it? Can one wonder that where deliverance is ignored, everything else is lowered, and even more or less falsified — experience and hope, walk and worship?