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BIBLE STUDY.**LETTER TO THE ROMANS. — NO. 14.**

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In order to finish the eighth chapter this evening, it will be necessary for us to spend but a short time on each verse. Yet I believe it will be best to briefly review the verses considered at our last study.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Rom. 8:28-30.

You will notice that the verbs in these texts are all in the past tense. The blessings and promises contained here are true continually of those who are called of God, and of *all* who are called of God. Who are called? "For the promise is unto you, and to your children and to *all that are afar off*, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." He calls, "Whosoever will." "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Now what is the purpose of God in calling all the world,—whosoever will come, to him? "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him." Eph. 1:10. Speaking on the same subject in 2 Tim. 1:9, the apostle Paul says: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given in Christ Jesus before the world began." We are then to be gathered together *in Christ* according to the purpose and grace of God. Seeing this, what is our duty? "Therefore the rather, brethren, give

diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." 2 Pet. 1:10.

Now how can we make our calling and election sure? Every one is called; but the purpose of God is in Christ; "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." Rom. 11:36. We are all called, and we can all make our calling and election sure, by accepting Christ, and abiding in him; then we are called according to the purpose of God, because we are in Christ. Give up everything of self, and everything that is connected with self; then you can have Christ, and you are called according to the purpose of God.

If we say, "Here I am, Lord, take me," then we are in Christ; but that saying, "here I am, take me," must be in deed and in truth. It is not simply the words, but we must know what it means. Then we are in him and therefore we are predestinated to be conformed according to the image of his Son.

"All things work together for good to them that love God." When?—*Now*. How is that?—"For whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son." BEHOLD, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. When we tell the Lord, day by day, "Here is my heart, Lord; I have made no change in the gift; I want thee to have it," he will bind us with cords of divine love to the horns of the altar. We are then predestinated with Christ. What he has, we have. He has given us eternal life, and hath said himself, "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." John 10:28.

God had a purpose. Can it be changed? No, the thing is fixed. Those that are called, are justified, in Christ, therefore, we have justification. But those that are justified, are also glorified. Can we believe that? If we can, we have got hold of a wonderful amount of strength. We have the glory of Christ? Yes, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." John 17:22.

Mark, it is past tense. The glory that God has given to Christ is ours to-day. It is true that that glory doth not yet appear, and the world knoweth us not, because it knew not Christ. But it is ours, and it will appear, and even now it appears in the form of grace. Inwardly we have it, for says Paul, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Eph. 3:10. For the same reason Jeremiah says, "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory." Jer. 14:21.

"The Lord will give grace and glory, no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Peter says that, believing, we may "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Peter 1:8.

The glory is all ours, we have it now. By and by when we have accepted this grace according to the riches of his glory, and worked out in us his purpose, then we will step out of grace into glory on the same level.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Take this verse and read it, and commit it to memory; and then remember to say, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." Rev. 12:11.

And remember that Christ gave the example of defeating Satan by the word of the testimony; every time the temptation came he said, "It is written." So when the clouds of darkness come, and the thick darkness gathers around, just say, "If God be for us, who can be against us!" And God is for us, as is shown in that he gave Christ to die for us, and raised him again for our justification.

There is peace in the thought that God works out all things after the counsel of his own will, and that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Then it does not matter what comes against us, for in that it comes against us, it comes against the purpose of God, and that is as sure and firm as the existence of the Almighty can make it.

Now who is against us? Satan is against us. That does not make any difference if he is. Satan has tried his power with Christ, and it has proved itself to be nothing. "All power in heaven and earth is given to me," says Christ. Then if all power has been given to Christ in heaven and in earth, and it has been given, where is there any left for Satan? There is none. In a contest with Christ, Satan has no power; so if we have Christ for us, nothing can be against us.

Some of us have been talking about the power of Satan in the past; but he has none, there is none left for him. Technically speaking, Satan is against us. Who is he?—"The prince of the power of the air." He brings pestilence, he brings disease, he puts things in our way, and arrays them against us. But the very things which he arrays against us to work our ruin, God takes and makes them for us. They are all good. We often sing:—

Let good or ill befall,
It must be good for me,
Secure of having thee in all,
Of having all in thee.

But we very often sing things that we do not believe at all. Now I would not have anyone sing these things any less, but I would have you believe them more. It is often the case that if you took the words from the music, and put them into plain prose, there would not be anyone in a whole congregation who would believe or dare to say them. Let us believe them not because they are in the hymn, but because they are Bible truth.

We are like the people who are represented by the prophet Ezekiel: "Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against [about] thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, everyone to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord." That is it, —they say, Come, let us go to meeting, and hear the sermon. "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." Eze. 33:30-32.

I say that a great many of these truths are just a song to many people. They hear them and are interested in them, and then pass on, but they do not believe or do them. But the Lord has given them for us to both believe and to do, and they will be our strength. So everything works for good to them that love God. We cannot always see how, or tell how; but God has said it, and we know it is so. There are many things that we cannot tell why we believe, and to our very senses they do not appear to be so; but the very fact that God has promised that if we do believe them they will be so, makes them so, when we take hold and believe them. We can never know this till we do believe; but when we do believe, then we will know. So if God be for us, who can be against us?

Think of that lone prophet of God, Elisha. He was down in Samaria, the mountains were all around him. A whole host of armed men had come to take him. He stood alone with his servant, and that servant was afraid. He did not think in that moment, nor did he say, that the King of Israel ought to send a troop of horse, or some infantry to defend him. The young man came to him, and said, "Alas, my master! How shall we do?" Elisha prayed, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes." and the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw and behold the mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire round about.

The whole mountain and plain was filled with chariots and horses, and any one of them was stronger than the whole host of the enemy. It is as true in our case as in that of Elisha, that "they that be for us are more than they that be against us," and the only thing for us to do is to get our eyes open so that we may see that this is so. What opens our eyes?—The word; it is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path, and if we believe it, we will know that they that are for us are more than they that are against us.

He who is with us is the living God of Israel, who has power to turn darkness into light, and weakness into strength; and every evil thing that comes against us, he turns into a blessing to help us on our way.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Why will he with Christ also give us all things?—Because all things are in him. Note Eph. 1:23. "Which is his body, the fullness of *him that filleth all in all.*"

He that hath put on Christ is "strengthened with all might!" Why? because God has placed Christ "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." Therefore everything is in Christ. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He has all power given him in heaven and in earth. Don't you see that this being the case, it is a foregone conclusion, that when God gave Christ for us, and freely delivered Him up for us all, that in him he does give us all things.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Eph. 1:3. "Grace and peace be

multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to knowledge and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 2 Pet. 1:2-4.

Christ has all power, and he *hath* given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Notice that the past tense is used. This has been done for us. Then why don't we have them? For just one reason,—because we don't take them. We have been mourning for so long, and saying that we want these things; well, we can have them, they have been given to us, and there is no reason why we should not appropriate them to ourselves.

Suppose I come to you and say that I am very hungry, and that I would like something to eat. All right, you say, just sit down here to the table and we will get something for you. Soon you place the best of what you have on the table, and tell me that there it is, and now, eat. But I say, "O, I am so hungry, and I do want food so much." All right, take it, and eat. "But I am so hungry, and I do want something to eat, I have not had anything for days." Well, take it. "Yes, but I do want food so bad." You would say that I was out of my mind if I acted that way, and did not eat of the food that was so freely placed before me.

Said one to me the other night, "If that is the way that the Lord does with these blessings that pertain to life and godliness, we are certainly foolish that we do not take them; but I do not think that the illustration is a fair one, because we cannot see these things that the Lord has to offer, and we can see the food." Neither do I think that is a fair illustration, because it does not half fill the bill.

Did not you often think you saw something that you did not see? Does not your sight often deceive you? Sometimes you think you saw a thing that you did not see, and then again you saw things that when you came to look at them closely were not as they really appeared to be. But the word of God never deceives. Therefore I am more sure of the things promised in the word of God than if I could see them. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all." Rom. 4:16.

"The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor. 4:18. We must revise our logic a little in this matter. We think that anything that we can see is all right and sure. Therefore we get hold of a house or a piece of land or some other property, and think that we have something, because there is in our possession something that we can see. But the truth of the matter is that the only things that we can depend on are the things that we cannot see. We can see the earth, and we can see the heavens, but they are going to pass away. "But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." 1 Peter 1:25.

With the psalmist we can say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Ps. 46:1-3. Can we say that? Brethren, that time is coming. The earth will reel to and fro like a drunken man, and be removed like a cottage, and the mountains will skip away, and pass over into the ocean. That is going to happen, and there will be some people at that time who will feel perfectly calm and trustful; but they will not be composed of men and women who have never learned to say that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose. The man that doubts God now will doubt him then. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he with him freely give us all things? That promise includes *all*. "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 3:21-23. This is not in the future. All things are yours, at the present time. Everything is ours, and therefore we can say with the psalmist, "The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage."

Yes, we have everything; we are children of the King, of the Most High. What difference does it make if people do not own us? God owns us, and he knows us; and therefore, if men heap on us reproach and persecution, the only thing we can do is to pity them, and labor for them, for they do not know the riches of the inheritance.

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Well, there is one that will do it surely. We have his name, Satan. Here is a testimony concerning him. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before God day and night." Rev. 11:10. Yes, Satan is the accuser of the brethren; he has done it day and night, and he is doing it still,—laying everything he can to the charge of God's elect. But he is cast down, and now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ. Christ has all power; how good that is.

But says one poor discouraged, desponding soul, "I believe all that, and I have confessed my sins, and I believe that God is faithful and just to forgive them and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness; but these sins keep coming up before me all the time!" Are you sure that it is Satan that brings them up? That is an important point, for if you are sure of that, and they do come up, you ought to be one of the happiest creatures alive.

Why does Satan bring these things up? Because he is the accuser of the brethren, and he is a false accuser, he is a liar and the father of it, and therefore if Satan brings these sins up and accuses you, then you know that they are forgiven, because he would never have brought them up if they had not been forgiven. He could not tell the truth if he tried, and unless they had been forgiven he never would bring them up, never in the

world, because he would be afraid that you would confess them, and they would be forgiven.

Well, another query: "I don't know; perhaps it is not Satan; it must be God." No; "It is God that justifieth." If God justifies, he cannot condemn. Who has any right to condemn but God?—No one,—God is judge alone. Then there is no other soul that has any right to condemn, except God. He shows us our sins, and we confess them, and give ourselves to him, and he justifies us, and in him is neither variableness nor shadow of turning; therefore, when he justifies, who is there in the universe that can condemn? Who will do it?—Satan; but what have we to do with him? If we would only give more credence to God's truth, and less to Satan's lies, it would be better for us.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Who is going to condemn us, then, since God justifies, and Christ died and rose again as a pledge of that justification. Christ died and rose again, and is even *now* at the right hand of God to make intercession for us. Don't you see there is not a possible loophole left for discouragement for the Christian?

There is a time when God brings sins up before us, but it is when they have not been confessed. That is the only time. But it is the Comforter that convicts of sin; so he comforts us in every place, and in the very act of calling to our remembrance the wrongs that we have done. Then when God brings sins to my notice that I have not confessed, I will thank him for the comfort, and when Satan brings them up again, I will praise God again, for if they were not forgiven, Satan would never bring them up, but if they have been confessed, they have been forgiven.

In Christ are mercy and truth met together. The same hand that holds the law, holds the pardon also. Brethren, remember this, that when the law was spoken from Sinai in thunder tones, it was in the hand of a mediator, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Then the same hand which holds the justice, and that which convicts of sin, holds also the pardon. Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." That idea of "much more" which is so prominent in chapter five, is found again in these verses.

We often hear the expression, "If I can only get inside the gates of heaven, I will be satisfied." I am so thankful that we don't have to just get in, as if we wished to apologize for our presence after we were there. Why not?—Because he has promised that "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

"We have enemies to contend with," says one. Don't talk about them, or your trials and temptations, but talk of the power of Christ. All power has been given to him. So when we wrestle, we will remember that it is not an even-handed battle, but we fight a fight of faith, and the power is given unto us whereby we can be more than conquerors

through him that loved us and gave Himself for us. Where sin abounded, there did grace much more abound.

Who are conquerors? They are those who have gained the victory. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." It is not flesh and blood that we are fighting against, therefore flesh and blood are of no account in the defense. Then how do we meet the foe? "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."

There comes in that life question again. "Lay hold on eternal life." The only power that can resist evil is the power of an endless life, and he that hath the Son hath that life. We are to fight the good fight of faith. What is faith? Trusting in another. If I fight a fight with my fists, I do the fighting. If I fight the fight of faith, someone else is fighting for me, and I am getting the benefit. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well how is this? Christ has fought, has he not? Yes, he has fought hand to hand with Satan here on earth. He conquered Satan and all his host, and he has put down all might and dominion, for he was put above all "principality and power and might." Mark, those are the very things that we wrestle with. How great was the victory of Christ over them? "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made show of them openly, triumphing over them in himself." Col. 2:15. So Christ met these very enemies that we have to wrestle with, and he triumphed over them and spoiled them. He has gained the victory over them. What is the result? What always must be the result when a battle has been fought, and one side has conquered the other completely,—peace. Satan would not give in, so the Saviour conquered a peace.

"He is our peace." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14:27. As he has given us his peace, and peace follows victory, so the victory has been gained already. And if we have Christ, that victory is ours already. We simply lay hold of the eternal life of Christ, and that is done by laying hold of his word, which is spirit and life. Thus we bring Christ into our hearts, and so we have Christ, and the victory that he has won for us.

The great trouble with us is that sometimes we are afraid that Christ will gain the victory. Why? We have some darling sin that we do not want to give up, we are willing we think that all the rest should go but that, and so we are afraid that Christ will gain the victory, and that that sin will have to be given up. Just think of it! We call Christ in to help defeat our enemy, and when he comes, he finds us on the side of the enemy. But if we will give up all these things, Christ will give us something that is infinitely better. When we make up our minds from the word of God that all that God has to give us is in Christ, that he is the fullness of him that filleth all in all, we will realize that the meager things of this earth are not worth having, compared to what is going to be given us.

In 1 John 4:2-4 we have reference to the wicked spirits with which we have to fight, and this assurance is given to the children of God: "Ye are of God, little children, and

have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." So with Elisha we know that they that are for us are more than they that are against us. "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." R. V. 1 John 5:5.

Do we believe that Christ has conquered everything, and that when we have him, we have everything, and that there is no power of darkness that can do us any hurt?

When this has been done, we are crucified with him. Our own lives have been given up to Christ, but we still live. Then it must be some other life that we live, and that life is the life of Christ. That is the life in which we glory. Christ is our life, and he has the victory, and therefore we have it. "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Eph 6:11.

What is it to put on the whole armour?—To stand in Christ complete, that is what we mean.

He is the truth, the Lord our righteousness. Shod with peace, he is our peace. It is Christ all through. Then take the sword in your hand, and it is the word of God, and Christ is the eternal word.

"And ye are complete in him." Having put on the whole armour which is Christ, we are complete in him. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ!" He is the armour, and the armour is he. Thus it is that in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us and gave his life for us. There is nothing that can take the armour away from us. "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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