

# The Epistle to the Romans

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*Transcript*

The scope of John Carter's three talks is conveyed in his opening comment in Study 1:

"We are going to try and get some idea of the significance of this Letter, what Paul is talking about to us in it. We cannot go into it in detail, obviously. We propose trying to get a general outline and applying more particular study to some of the key passages as far as time will permit."

## Study 2

God has said: "My ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"<sup>1</sup>. And perhaps in no subject within the whole range of Bible teaching is that more evident than when we come to try and understand God's work in Christ Jesus. That he died for our sins according to the Scriptures we can accept as a fact, it is so declared. But that is at the forefront of the preaching of the gospel is also true, for Paul amongst the first things that he preached in Corinth was "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that he was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures"<sup>2</sup>. Which means that Paul taught the Divine work in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and presented it with an Old Testament background, showing that what God had revealed beforehand had been fulfilled in the work of Christ.

But now we have to think of a man who was just regarded as a peasant, a man who grew up in a village in Palestine, a man who startled the nation by his preaching, the authority with which he spoke, and the grace with which he spoke. We have to think of one who challenged the authorities in a number of ways. Who himself found it necessary to repulse the crowd because they were pursuing him for wrong ends. And who steadfastly pursued a course, which culminated in the authorities determining that he must die. And since the Romans had the power of death, and since it was a custom just then and there, that crucifixion was practiced, so Christ met his death by crucifixion. And that in very brief is the outline of the outward facts.

And yet Paul says that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them"<sup>3</sup>. What was it that was done in this work of God in Christ, culminating in his death, followed by his resurrection that provided the basis upon which we are reconciled to God, that provides the basis upon which God forgives us our sins? And it is when we come to seek the explanation of it, to try to get to the inwardness of the Divine ways in that connection, that we must sometimes go, we feel with rather faltering steps, perhaps a little more surely, and a little more surely as we establish ourselves as we go along the way.

But there are one or two presuppositions with which men have approached it, which have hindered them from seeing the truth of the matter. If you think of Jesus as God the Son who left an eternal glory and was in some way incarnate, and so was revealed as the man Christ Jesus, with whom there was some

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 55:9

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19

cooperation, or in an older view antagonism between himself and the Father in this work, then of course you beset the subject with needless difficulties. So too if you believe that man has an immortal soul, then your problem is to provide the conditions whereby that soul can enjoy life endlessly and blissfully whereby can somehow be provided with an escape from what would otherwise be endless torment. And I think we ought to not balk at these issues. It is fashionable today for people who generously think of their fellows and be (kind), and think that God ought to be just as kind as we feel about the matter, without any regard to Divine principles and think that somehow, in some way at last far off, at last when the Divine purpose reaches its climax,

“... not one life shall be destroy’d,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete;<sup>4</sup>”

And so they think of somehow these souls which must live endlessly some way getting to that which is good. And they leave out the moral difficulties that there may be those who finally and everlastingly are unwilling to respond to God. You’ve got immortal souls, you must have moral souls, you must have moral issues. And you raise all sorts of problems which are needless to there. But we say to both those complications, and there is another word that perhaps might be said, and that is that the New Testament almost always, we might use the word invariably, explains the work of Christ against the Old Testament foreshadowings of it. And those foreshadowings centred very largely in a sacrificial arrangement which began after transgression in Eden, continued through the Patriarchal Ages and was given to Israel in their more systematic form in their ordinances and services in connection with the Tabernacle. And the very ritual, which was basic to the Old Testament revelations given through Israel, forms as it were the alphabet, the language in which is expressed in the New Testament pages the explanation of Christ’s work. Because there was the terminology which described the prefiguring, and it was quite natural that they should speak of that.

And so we get the recurrence of the phrase “the blood of Christ”, and we are so used to it that we don’t think of the blood of Christ. But perhaps we don’t think also that the phrase was a kind of shorthand, a phrase which gave in a shorthand way, in a very abbreviated way, a whole set of ideas. That we mustn’t restrict our attention to the blood is shown by the fact that other phrases are used concerning the death of Jesus. The offering of his body once for all, the laying down of his life, and so on. All of which shows that we mustn’t concentrate our attention too much upon the one phrase, the blood of Christ. But when we do read of the blood of Christ we must think of the set of ideas that it represents. Now that is an abiding factor which is always with us as Bible readers, which we must always bear in mind. And if we start using these phrases in a kind of mechanical way, and start pushing them about, like say drafts men are pushed about upon a drafts board, and it isn’t too crude an illustration as to how some of these phrases have been handled, then of course you can raise all sorts of problems.

I think if we begin by remembering that the work of God in Christ was a revelation of his righteousness, and that is what Paul’s theme is, you remember. Then we are remembering that the work of Christ was to express certain moral truths, certain important and vital moral truths, upon the basis of which God accepts us. In other words, the explanation must be essentially of what was done morally in connection with, in this work of Christ Jesus. Now that has been a rather long preamble, but I think those aspects must be kept in mind.

Now open your Bibles at the chapter we have read and let us look at it a little closely, Romans chapter 3. “Now the righteousness of God without the Law”<sup>5</sup>, and since the righteousness with the Law, or through the Law, was a righteousness which man sought to gain by his own works. The righteousness of God without the Law manifested means that God has revealed a way of righteousness for men in which

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<sup>4</sup> In Memoriam (Section LIV) by Alfred Tennyson

<sup>5</sup> Romans 3:21

his own righteousness becomes their's. "Now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested", and singularly enough although the Jew rested in the Law, since the Law witnessed to this coming way of righteousness in Christ, by the very fact it witnessed to another, proved that it didn't, wasn't intended to give that righteousness and that life which is pleasing to God. We shall come to that in a moment or two. But he explains

"even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that have faith", or if you want "by belief of Jesus Christ",

"upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"<sup>6</sup>.

What does it mean to come short of the glory of God? Well, man was made in the image of God, and in Christ, the sinless one, we have the image of the glory of God. Men have come short of the Divine life that it was intended that they should live. And all are stamped with signal failure, with an incapacity to rise to it because of certain basic faults which belong to them as a result of the outworking of sin in human life. We shall see in a moment or two that point made by Paul. All have sinned, all have come short of the glory of God, therefore all stand in need without exception of this way of God.

Now what has He done, what has God done? Well, we are justified. Now that means we are pronounced righteous. It doesn't mean we are made righteous. In only one case could the word be used in the literal sense as expressive of fact, and that is the case of the Lord Jesus, of whom it was prophetically testified in Isaiah 50 that God would justify him. It is a chapter which speaks of his suffering. It speaks also of his discipleship to God. The fourth verse:

"<sup>4</sup> The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to *him that is weary*: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. <sup>5</sup> The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. <sup>6</sup> I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. <sup>7</sup> For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. <sup>8</sup> *He is near that justifieth me*; ...."<sup>7</sup>

And God justified him, and it was a statement of fact when God pronounced him righteous. And there is a little touch in Peter's Epistle which you will remember, which describes Jesus as Peter had seen him on that night he never forgot, when Peter was before the authorities. And it must be by revelation that Peter can say this. For he says, counselling them that when they are reviled that they should not revile again. And that they should remember him whom before Pontius Pilate, being judged, committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. By contrast, here was Pilate, Herod, the Pharisees, all judging unrighteously. And there stood this sorry spectacle as men saw him, very sorry indeed, his vision more marred than any man, through the suffering of Gethsemane, difficult to comprehend, but must have left its mark upon him. The physical scourgings, the pressing of the crown of thorns upon his head, the indignities that had been poured upon him, described by Isaiah in that passage. And yet he was committing himself to him that judges righteously. And the righteous judge justified him, because he raised him from the dead and gave him life, because he had done nothing worthy of death. And that brings us to the very real connection that exists between sin and death in human relationships. And yet Jesus died. Why? Well, we'll see.

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 3:22-23

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 50:4-8

But we are “justified freely by his grace”<sup>8</sup>. And grace is an attitude of God’s mind. The word grace has been used in theological circles of something that was given to men, a kind of infusion from God. But the Biblical use of it describes it as an attitude of God. And when I say an attitude, I mean an active attitude. Just as he is righteous, so he is gracious. But since his graciousness has been revealed particularly in those things by which redemption has been wrought in Jesus Christ, the grace of God has a particular association with those circumstances. We are redeemed by his grace. That means, by those various activities of God in connection with Christ, in which he died for our sins that we might be justified in him who was raised from the dead.

So we are justified, or pronounced righteous. That is only another way of saying our sins are forgiven for his sake. Because when Paul, in the next chapter, comes to describe or interprets what he means by justifying, this is what he says, verse 2:

“For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God. <sup>3</sup> For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him”, counted unto him, “for righteousness. <sup>4</sup> Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. <sup>5</sup> But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. <sup>6</sup> Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, <sup>7</sup> *Saying*, Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. <sup>8</sup> Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”<sup>9</sup>

And in that statement from David, Paul is describing the position of the man who is justified.

So, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”<sup>10</sup> Redemption was historically illustrated when Egypt had to give up the children of Israel. God came down, he said, to redeem his people. Now redemption is connected with ransom, and here we must learn not to carry figures beyond their Biblical intention. If you think of ransom in connection with brigandage as was current in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century in many parts of the Roman world, you can understand why the teachers of Christianity at that time lay hold of the figure associated with brigandage and explain Christ as the ransom. But when somebody is held to ransom, held captive on payment of a ransom, there is a transfer of something from one person, the ransomer, to the one who holds the one to be ransomed, upon the basis of which the ransomed is set free. So of course they speculated concerning what the ransom price was, who paid it, and to whom it was paid. And it led to the development very seriously of the idea that God paid the ransom to the Devil, and that God hoodwinked the Devil really, because of the sinlessness of Jesus the Devil could not hold Jesus. So he got paid and lost his ransom too but men were free. Now we can smile at it, but men debated those ideas very seriously, very earnestly and we might say very wrongly.

But in the redemption from Egypt there was something done. And that something was a ritual expression of the fact that God only redeems when certain principles are recognised. For the Passover lamb was slain and its blood sprinkled on doorpost and lintel. And by that act of faith everyone in the houses of the Israelites came within the protective care and favour of God, when the destroying angel passed through Egypt. And so, while no price was paid, because the prophet says that they were redeemed without money, no price was paid, there were certain principles annunciated, upon the basis of which redemption was accomplished. It is all part of this figure.

And yet, again and again to press home a point, the idea that we are bought is used. Not to be carried to the idea of to whom was the purchase price paid, but to emphasise the aspect that it has been at a cost

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<sup>8</sup> Romans 3:24

<sup>9</sup> Romans 4:2-8

<sup>10</sup> Romans 3:24

that we are bought. We are bought, redeemed with his precious blood, something that was single and alone in the whole of the race's experience. That here was one, a sinless man, who laid down his life, and hence the uniqueness of Jesus, hence the preciousness of it. And Paul says, "ye are bought", "ye are not your own"<sup>11</sup>. But the emphasis is upon the fact that something has been done in order that we might be free. And keeping it within the limits intended by the Apostle it is a very vigorous expression whereby he brings home to us the very, very great cost to someone. I say to someone, but we have to look at God's part and Christ's part in it. It is at a great cost that we have secured this freedom which is in Christ Jesus, this deliverance, this forgiveness of sins, this hope of everlasting life. This, and this is behind it all, this relationship to God which persists in eternity. When we have used all the other language that we have, concerning this work, we must remember that we are dealing with something that expresses a personal relationship to God. There is the establishment of a personal relationship with God in this work in Christ Jesus, received by us in faith, which can persist in eternity, whereby we are there in everlasting fellowship with the great Creator. And behind all of the terms that we may use to describe it, let us try and keep that fact in mind. For really that is the primary one, it is because of that fellowship, that friendship, that harmony established in this way, that God gives us everlasting life, and so everlasting association with himself. It is a tremendous thing to think about, but there it is, of very, very freely, the gospel.

And so Paul says,

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."<sup>12</sup>

Now he comes to why:

"Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith"<sup>13</sup>

And now we must put a comma in there, like the Revisers do. It isn't through faith in his blood. Through faith and in his blood are both subsidiary, and both qualify what Paul has said about Jesus being set forth to be a propitiation. It is "through faith" on our part. It is "in his blood" on his part. And when we say "in his blood", we must remember it is this symbol language, this shorthand language of which we spoke.

"To declare God's righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;"<sup>14</sup>

And then Paul shows what he is really wanting us to get hold of by repeating the essential points.

"To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."<sup>15</sup>

So what Paul is bringing out is the very nerve of this arrangement, is that in some way Jesus has declared the righteousness of God. And there surely the phrase must be descriptive of this character of God as righteous. But when he says that he might be the bestower of righteousness, or the justifier of him that believeth, then he is using righteousness in the sense of that outworking righteousness which becomes available for us.

And so we look again at this verse and we look at the words.

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:20,21

<sup>12</sup> Romans 3:24

<sup>13</sup> Romans 3:25

<sup>14</sup> Romans 3:25

<sup>15</sup> Romans 3:26

“Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation”<sup>16</sup>.

Now I am not going to spend time on the discussions that have taken place concerning this word. They come back pretty much finally to the one thing. But the word is used by Paul in Hebrews to describe the Mercy Seat. And the word is so used in the LXX too. And in short I think that is the idea that the Apostle has in mind. And if you say, Why should he express this as the Mercy Seat that belongs to Old Testament symbolism? How would they understand it? I have to say, Why did he say “in his blood”, which again goes back to that Old Testament symbolism? In fact, Paul must have done much more explaining of the Old Testament in his preaching than we sometimes think. How ever otherwise could he teach them that Christ rose the third day according to the Scriptures unless he had explained some Old Testament passages which prefigured, which foretold, as the case may be, that Christ would rise the third day.

And so “Whom God hath set forth *to be* a Mercy Seat”. And what was the Mercy Seat? Well, the Mercy Seat was the cover lid of the Ark. The Tabernacle succeeded by the Temple was a structure three times as long as it was broad. It was divided in two portions, one part, the first part, the Holy Place, twice as long as it was broad. And the innermost place, the Holy of Holies a cube, a square. A veil in between, to which Paul refers when he says “the veil, that is to say his flesh”<sup>17</sup>. Inside the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant, with a lid of pure gold, with cherubic figures with outstretched wings of one piece with it. It was used on the Day of Atonement. On that day the High Priest went into the Holiest of All. And the instruction in Leviticus 16 is most explicit, that when the High Priest was functioning, no other Priest had to be in the Place performing any of the services in connection with the Holy Place. In other words a different system was being prefigured than that which was in operation through the Law’s appointments and ordinances and services.

And it wasn’t as the head of the priestly system, with the robes for glory and for beauty, but clad in white linen, divested of the robes which represented him as the head of the Aaronic system. Now prefiguring a man who would be clad in the perfect white linen of righteousness, with a white linen bonnet and white garments. He pulled aside the curtain to go inside the Most Holy Place, but not without blood, which was sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat. Now the Mercy Seat was God’s throne in the midst of Israel. There he manifested himself. And concerning it God said, “There will I commune with thee, there will I meet with thee”<sup>18</sup>. It was the place of meeting, the place of communion between God and man. And we have an expression in the Letter to the Hebrews, which seems to gather up some of the content of it. We are bidden to come boldly to the Throne of Grace. And while there’s grace, upon the basis of the blood sprinkling, it is still a Throne, God’s Throne, where the Sovereign Rights and Majesty of God are upheld. And it is important that we remember that.

And so we have in the Mercy Seat, that which represented the meeting place of God and man, established through one entering into God’s Presence, clad in righteousness, with the token of life given, shed blood. Now we are on the way with that picture, to seeing something of the principles.

But now Paul goes on to express it in moral terms, “To declare his righteousness”. Now just a word about the next phrases in this 25<sup>th</sup> verse. If you read the Revised Version you will see that what is meant is that God in the past ages has in a kind of way held his hand although man has continued sinning.

And Paul is saying, now He has done this because he had in view this redemptive work in Christ. But that does not alter the fact as far as I can see it, that if it had to do with the remission of sins done aforetime, it is still operative concerning all other sins and the principle stands. And while in strict accuracy you must follow the Revised Version, it comes to the same practical result that it was to

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<sup>16</sup> Romans 3:25

<sup>17</sup> Hebrews 10:20

<sup>18</sup> Exodus 25:22

declare His righteousness, whereby God passes by sins. And he repeats it, “to declare His righteousness, that he might be righteous and also the bestower of righteousness”. Not that there is a conflict between the mercy and righteousness of God, because God is a unity. There is no conflict between any of the elements of his character if we can put it like that, but there is the functioning together of his justice, his righteousness and his mercy and his grace, whereby men and women are accounted righteous through Jesus declaring his righteousness.

Now, how did he declare his righteousness? Let us go back to John’s ministry. The Gospels don’t tell us this aspect of the message of John, which is revealed through the prophet Isaiah. But there it is: “the voice crying in the wilderness said, What shall I cry?” And the message given was: “all flesh is grass, and the glory of man as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower thereof fadeth away. Surely the people is grass.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, part of the message of John was to proclaim that man was mortal. Now why is man mortal? Why are we dying? And the answer is, by the righteous decree of God imposed upon sin. Why was this decree necessary in the righteousness of God? Because sin ultimately is lawlessness as John defines it, the Revised Version translates it correctly. Sin is lawlessness. That is, sin is firstly an attitude of mind in which we refuse God’s Law, expressed in action which is contrary to God’s Law.

Sin is lawlessness. A man can be a rebel in heart without doing a rebellious act, and he is still a rebel. He’s lawless. He doesn’t recognise God’s law. And so the first pair set it aside. But God who is supreme cannot allow that which challenges his supremacy, which man did when he set up his own will against the will of God. And the necessity in the supremacy of God that that which conflicts with it should ultimately be removed. But still man was made and the purpose was that the earth be peopled and so death comes, not as a death imposed at once, but as we saw when looking in those earlier chapters, there are laws of life. There were changes, how, precisely what we need not consider. But certainly after sin Adam was aware of a sense of shame, he was conscious of nakedness. He was conscious of an unfitness to meet God as he had met him before when God walked in the garden in the cool of the day. There had been a defilement of his conscience. And since all our thinking is related to our mind which reside ultimately in our brain tissue, and again we do not know how it happens, but there it is, it stands related to his physical relationship and well being. And so by Divine decree “by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin”<sup>20</sup> – we will stop short there because we are coming back to that passage in a minute or two.

Here was something now where the whole race had inherited death. It passed through to all men, and all are dying. Why are they dying? They are dying by the righteous decree of God. And now John proclaims the mortality of man. He proclaims the unworthiness of man, the waywardness, the willfulness of man. And you have the picture there of multitudes gathered there on the banks of the Jordan and as the result of John’s preaching, now one, and now another steps out, wades down into the water where John is. And the record says, they went to John to be baptised of him, confessing their sins.

Then one day a young man, at the plenitude of his power, with a calmness and yet with a gravity, with a kindliness but with courage all expressed in his face. With an apparent understanding of John’s message, steps out. And because part of the Law’s object was to teach the sinfulness of men, there was a very adequate vocabulary describing sin in the Hebrew language.

For instance, three words are used which occur again and again in the Psalms and Prophets which the High Priest expressed, sins and iniquities and transgressions on the Day of Atonement. And so there was no lack of words whereby they could describe their sinfulness. And Jesus goes to John and we are not told what he said, but he had no sins to confess. He must have said something. May it not have been something like this: “I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day”. And John held

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<sup>19</sup> Isaiah 40:6-7

<sup>20</sup> Romans 5:12

back, can you wonder? “I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?” It is the answer of Jesus that leads us on. He says: “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness”<sup>21</sup>. And not forgetting the “us”, which indicates that more than Jesus was involved, we fix our attention upon Jesus here. And he required that he should submit, sinless though he had just declared himself to be. But he must submit to a rite which was a symbol of death. A rite which John had to minister by Divine authority, Jesus himself being witness to that fact, against the background of the message of man’s mortality. And in that symbolic rite Jesus witnessed in act, to something that we might express perhaps a little like this: That God has involved us all in death in his righteous ways because sin is so contrary and abhorrent to him. And it so necessary that God showed in his righteousness thus deal with sin. And we acknowledge the righteousness of his ways by voluntarily submitting to this act which is a symbol of death, which is something that is due to us as sinners. And although Jesus himself had no personal transgressions, it is here where the importance of the doctrine so often proclaimed, that he came in the flesh comes out. It was because he was a wearer of this nature, rightly related to a dispensation of death, because God has dealt with the whole race in involving it in this. But Jesus as a member of the race could declare God’s righteousness. And in that upholding of God’s moral law, in that upholding and exhibition of the moral righteousness of God, we are led along the way to what was really implemented when Jesus died upon the cross

“There”, says Paul, and we must let pass from our eyes the Scribes and the Pharisees, Herod and Pilate, and the crowd. And we must look at it as Jesus was doing it, in the consciousness of fulfilling a Divinely appointed work. And he went there and laid down his life to declare the righteousness of God. Now it wasn’t done in a corner. It had to be done in such a way that men would know of it. And therefore we get the public associations of it, whereby firstly the whole of the nation of Israel was aware of it. And then through that, it became a matter of public testimony and thus there was a publicity attached to it, which perhaps is indicated by the words: “whom God hath set forth”<sup>22</sup>. There it is in a way that men can’t shut their eyes to it. It is there as a perpetual continual challenge in human life. And we are asked to look at the Divine explanation of it, in which God’s righteousness was upheld, and being so upheld, God says: “If you will identify yourself with this man in the way that he has appointed, then for his sake I will forgive you your sins”. Just how God does that, will turn in the next phrase.

Jesus didn’t come to preach the gospel, but he came that there might be a gospel to preach. And while it must be that the work that Jesus did had to be explained afterwards, it nevertheless remains true that the Lord saw clearly what was involved in his own work. How could it be otherwise? But he must of necessity express it in ways that had some meaning to those who heard him, although the deeper significance of it perhaps wasn’t perceived. He told of a Publican and a Pharisee who went to pray. One was obsessed with the “I do this”, and the other smote his breast and said “God be merciful to me a sinner”. The margin of the Revised says, “be propitiated”, exercise the mercy that belongs to the Mercy Seat towards me. That is a very rough paraphrase. And Jesus says, “he went away justified more than the other”<sup>23</sup>. Don’t you get a hint in that phrasing there, of something much deeper than perhaps we would gather from our reading of the Authorised Version. And then when he said, “the Son of Man came not to be served, but to be a servant and to give his life a ransom for many”<sup>24</sup>. The very language that he is using links him up with the Servant of Isaiah, and the word “many” goes back to the 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Isaiah, “by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities”<sup>25</sup>. And the very word ransom goes back to the Old Testament usages of it, where in the Law, offerings were to be made in a variety of ways as a ransom for his soul.

And Jesus speaks of men and women denying self and taking up the cross and following him. But the very essence of the cross was a denial of self, not denying oneself of something. Self denial from a

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<sup>21</sup> Matthew 3:14-15

<sup>22</sup> Romans 3:25

<sup>23</sup> Luke 18:10-14

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 20:28

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 53:11



Biblical point of view is not the abstentions in Lent practiced by Church people. It is something more radical. It is the recognition that something of self, the ego, is something that works contrary to God. It is a denial, a repudiation of that. But Jesus had just told them that they were going up to Jerusalem where he would be rejected and slain. He doesn't say how, but immediately his words go on, requiring men to take up the cross daily and follow him, denying self. But look at his phrases and you see that there is involved that he would be crucified because he calls upon them to follow him. And in crucifixion there would be that complete repudiation of the self, inhering in human nature. In other words it was a radical repudiation of the flesh, with its waywardness. And so the teaching of Jesus comes you see into line, is in line, doesn't come to, is in line, with the teaching of Paul. But he couldn't express it in the same way because of the circumstances, of course.

And so again coming back to that paradox that we quoted from Corinthians, "God hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin". And the order that Paul wrote it is, "him that knew no sin, God made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him"<sup>26</sup>.

And clearly it doesn't mean that him who knew no sin became a sinner. The very emphasis in the order of the words, the very words themselves exclude it. But him that knew no sin was somehow the embodiment of sin's effects, that them being so repudiated, so met, so discharged, whatever term you use is to how you are just approaching it, at any given moment. So Jesus was there, taking all the effects of sin in the declaration that he was making in his act, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. He begins by saying he was made of our nature. For Sin is used as a synonym in Scripture for that. And surely Paul's language involves all that belongs to becoming of human nature, "Sin", with all it stands for in this economy of life with its relationship to God.

And so Jesus indicated that men must follow him. And that means having faith. And that brings us back to this basic idea that God has done this and there is nothing that we do in connection with this except receive it, and have faith in it. And faith is accepting what God has done. Faith is believing what God says, and accepting what he has done. And the vital place of faith was illustrated in "Abraham who believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness"<sup>27</sup>. Now we can't follow in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of this Letter to the Romans how Paul reasons out all that was involved in that statement. But I do want you to notice what he says at the end because of its importance to us. He says that this was imputed to him for righteousness "Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but for us also."<sup>28</sup> It was written for us. Here is the value of these writings. It was written as part of the oracles given to Israel. It was written about Abraham, but it was preserved by God as an illustration of his ways and his purposes, and the method he is employing in this work among men. And the Divine record is "and Abraham believed God". Will you each in turn put yourself, put your name there, and whatever your name is, just mentally do it now. Believe God, and it, your belief, was counted to you by God for righteousness. It describes God's reaction to a man's faith. But it was written for us. If we can bring it home to each one of us for ourselves in that way, we can see in a way that lifts us beyond all discussions and disputations about the value of these writings, it brings us to a point where we see them as God's word for us, written for us, wherein is demonstrated these principles which stand for us. And so we believe God and then these issues ensue.

## Chapter 5:

"1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God"

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<sup>26</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21

<sup>27</sup> Romans 4:3

<sup>28</sup> Romans 4:23-24

You remember how I was trying a little while ago to emphasise the fact that whatever words we use about these things, ultimately they come to this personal relationship between ourselves and God. Now Paul brings us there in these verses. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”. By whom also we are introduced, the Lord has introduced us to God, as though he said to each one in turn, “My Father, this is one who has believed these promises that you have made. He has rendered obedience by faith and I have introduced him into your family. This grace, where God in the exercise of his mercy is bringing men sons unto glory, and he has made the captain, the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. We have access by faith, we are introduced by “faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”. So Paul expresses these personal relationships and consequences that follow.

But now we said that Christ had done these things. He died, he declared the righteousness of God. We spoke of our identification with him, our endorsement as it were of the principles he upheld. But there is still just another question remaining. How can God, being righteous, accept us on those conditions even? And Paul answers that there is a sense in which God is dealing with the race.

And he illustrates it by pointing out that there are two heads in this arrangement, that Adam sinned. Now I want you to look at verse 12 of this chapter.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

I think we ought to reject the marginal reading “in whom all sinned”. Paul is pointing out the terrible fact that all have sinned. Well, he had shown that. Why had all sinned? Because all inherit an entail from the first man. He sinned and death came by that. But because he sinned, all others have sinned, except the one God raised up who was His Son. All others have sinned, and therefore death has passed through to all men, rightly. And you see how comprehensively the Apostle states the matter. And he says “Wherefore as” this happened, and so you are expecting, a “so” this other. But Paul turns aside. Paul is always just effervescing with his thought, and parentheses just tumble out of him sometimes, well here they do.

And he has to establish that all have sinned as a result of Adam sinning, and all share in death because they are descendants of Adam. And this is how he does it.

13 “(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.”<sup>29</sup>”

Now the Edenic Law was penal. If you do this, you shall die. We speak of the Commandments of Christ, but they are not penal in the sense that the transgression of them arraigns us immediately before God for judgement and punishment. But the Law of Moses did impose death for certain things, it was penal. And therefore death could come under the Law of Moses. But there was no law from Adam to Moses which was penal, and yet men died. Why did they die? And Paul is saying this happened to prove his point that death has come through to all, as extensions of Adam, as descendants of Adam. They are propagations of his being as he was after he had transgressed and the sentence had been passed and they all share in the evil that has come in the wake of sin. And that is the object of those two verses, to show that since this death is universal, and there’s been no penal law bringing it so often, that we must look for something other to explain that death comes with individual men.

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<sup>29</sup> Romans 5:13-14

In other words, Paul looks on death, not as the biologist might say, well death is there, the plants grow and die. Death isn't natural in the creature that God has made after his own image, because he made this man for some other and higher purpose than the grass of the field, or the trees or the animals. Made in the image of God there was the potentiality of an everlasting association with the Father. And death comes in, in his experience and his life, as something that is, and if I may use the word without being misunderstood, unnatural. It is something that is imposed, and imposed because of sin, and all share it.

Now it isn't until the 18<sup>th</sup> verse that Paul restates the case, that as this happened, so. And this is how he restates the case in the 18<sup>th</sup> verse:

“Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so”

And the whole of these verses are a comparison or a contrast as required between Adam and Christ. One sin involved us all in this ruin, but the gift of grace in Christ Jesus cover many offenses. There's the contrast. But we all share the effects of one man's work in inheriting the evil that has come. We can all share in the effects of the other man's work. But in the one case we share it by generation. In the other case we can only share it by regeneration. And I want you to notice how Paul breaks his comparison to get home the facts. The 17<sup>th</sup> verse:

“For if by one man's offence death reigned by one;”

Now what's the strict antithesis of that? So by one man's righteousness life reigned by one. And there would be involved the universality of effects in both cases. But that is not true, for our relationship to Adam is a physical one, we can't help ourselves, we are extensions of his being. But our relationship to Christ Jesus, which is a regenerative work, is as indeed was as in the fall but in reverse, first by believing God, he doubted. By believing God, in accepting his promises and by obeying where Adam and Eve disobeyed. But it is a regenerative work that begins by our receiving the grace of God, and has no roots as we said in ourselves

Now notice how Paul puts it then in the 17<sup>th</sup> verse:

“Wherefore as “by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness”.

And instead of stating it in the abstract principle, he states it in the concrete relationship of practical things, that it is those who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. And that is contingent upon men's actions, women's actions in receiving of this. Turn from it and they don't share. Ignore it, neglect it, despise it and they can have no place whatever in it. But those who receive the “abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall” themselves “reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”<sup>30</sup>”

So we can go on.

“Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation;”

And all share in this death-stricken condition, prone to evil as we are.

“even so by the righteousness of one”<sup>31</sup>”

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<sup>30</sup> Romans 5:17

<sup>31</sup> Romans 5:18

And so we have, since death has come by sin, in the very perfect obedience of Jesus, that which required his resurrection, because if death is the wage of sin, since Jesus had done no sin, then in itself and viewed exactly by itself exclusively as a separated thing, then death was not due to him. He was a member of the race for a particular purpose to accomplish of course, and we must not separate him from that, but that being said, upon the very principles by which death had come, through sin, so through the perfect obedience Jesus was raised from death and given life. And Paul establishes the nexus between him by showing that it is by our receiving of his grace and as it were, merging ourselves into him. Just as we are part of the extension of the first man, so we must merge ourselves into this new man, Christ Jesus, to share.

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were constituted sinners,”

in being born into a set of circumstances, a constitution, a bundle of life is an expression I like. They were such as became sinners, inevitably under the circumstances.

“So by the obedience of one, shall many be constituted righteous,<sup>32</sup>”

for they receive the gift of righteousness and are esteemed as righteous in God’s sight.

“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.”

God wanted to bring home to men the sinfulness of sin. But the grace of God covered it all.

“But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:<sup>33</sup>”

For the grace of God in Christ Jesus is sufficient for the covering, not only of the multitude of sinners, but the multitude of offences of all those sinners.

And then Paul very finely reaches the conclusion of this section.

“That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>34</sup>”

There are two domains as it were. The head of the first is Adam. The head of the second is Christ. The first transgressed and brought all his posterity into this rack and ruin. The other being there, as Paul says, by man came death, by man, necessarily it must be, otherwise there couldn’t be a resurrection. By man came also the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam we all die, even so in Christ shall we all be made alive. So we stand related to one domain or the other, with two ruling principles, two regnant powers as it were in this graphic figure of the Apostle, where Sin is represented as a monarch presiding over all its subjects. Sin has reigned. And what’s the fate of the subjects of Sin? Sin has reigned unto death.

But here’s another now regnant principle, another ruling principle that God has established, grace reigns. But it doesn’t reign any way, upon any principle, but grace which is the expression of God’s goodness and kindness, reigns through righteousness. God’s righteousness working itself out in the overcoming of sin. God’s righteousness expressed triumphantly. And the vindication of it in the death of Jesus when he declared his righteousness. Grace reigning in that men who are delivered from the thralldom of sin become adherents of righteousness to service. So grace reigns through righteousness.

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<sup>32</sup> Romans 5:19

<sup>33</sup> Romans 5:20

<sup>34</sup> Romans 5:21

Don't forget those operative, qualifying words, that grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

And so Paul shows us in this section of his letter how righteousness, God's righteousness working, manifested in Christ Jesus, was declared in him, and so can become our righteousness, as a regnant power, but as ours in that we stand acquitted and clean before God in Christ Jesus. Very wonderful, and very awe inspiring, very thrilling to try and follow it. But we feel as we deal with it, as Moses was bidden to take off his shoes, for you are on holy ground. So we should (...).