

EPHESIANS

via

ROMANS

Charles H. Welch

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Showing the 'permanent' and the 'passing' in the Epistle to the Romans, and the connection between the doctrinal 'basis' of Romans and the dispensational 'superstructure' of Ephesians.

by

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The Testimony of the Lord's Prisoner
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CHAPTER 1

RIGHT DIVISION AND ALL SCRIPTURE

(The reader must imagine two men engaged in conversation. One, whom we shall call B, is offering the other, A, some literature. A is apparently refusing to accept it and we come within range of his voice just in time to hear his reason for this refusal).

A.- Thank you, No. I would rather not take the pamphlets, not because I doubt your honesty, but because I am not sure that the teaching they represent is fundamentally sound.

B.- It is refreshing to meet with a refusal that makes some approach both to charity, in that you do not impute dishonest motives, and to clarity, in that you will have no complicity with any teaching that denies the fundamentals of the faith. May I ask what you consider to be fundamentals?

A.- I consider the inspiration of *all* Scripture to be fundamental, and I understand that you so divide the Scriptures that only four or five small epistles are left for the Church today.

B.- It is encouraging to find agreement where we might have expected strife. I, too, believe with all my heart that *all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Shall we turn to the passage concerned and observe its context?

They turn to 2 Timothy 3:16.

B.- (*Continuing*): By the 'context' I do not mean only the verses immediately adjacent, but the context of the whole epistle. The same epistle that teaches the inspiration of *all* Scripture, also enjoins the principle of interpretation expressed in the words '*rightly dividing* the Word of truth' (2 Tim. 2:15). You will see, therefore, that Paul at least could stress the 'dividing' of the Word, without departing from the foundation of our faith.

A.- Yes, I admit that the fact that the two passages come together in the same epistle shows that 'right division' need not be in opposition to the doctrine of the inspiration and profitableness of *all* Scripture; but what I have been given to understand is that you cut out practically the whole Bible before you are satisfied that you have divided the Word aright. It is to this that I object.

B.- I suppose I may take it that you are a Protestant, and a believer in the gospel of the grace of God?

A.- Praise God, I am.

B.- As a believer in the gospel of grace, you have been delivered from the necessity of endeavouring to keep the law of Moses as a means of attaining righteousness. You have never felt the slightest inclination to submit to the rite of circumcision, or to observe the Feast of the Passover, or to keep the Day of Atonement. And I presume you have no qualms of conscience in working on the seventh day of the week and keeping the first day as a day of rest?

A.- All this is very true, and indeed is implied in the gospel by which I have been saved.

B.- Yet would it not be possible for someone who did not understand the grace of God, to charge you with denying the law of Moses? Could he not say that you evidently do not believe *all* Scripture to be inspired, but have limited yourself to the New Testament only.

A.- If such a charge were to be made against me I should consider that it sprang from ignorance. Because I do not now attempt to keep the law, it does not follow that I do not believe it to be inspired and true; I simply do not believe that the law was given *to me*.

B.- That is an answer which I believe to be very much to the point; and if we could only substitute the earlier revelation of truth found in the Gospels and the Acts for the law of Moses, we should have a parallel argument that would exactly suit our case. Let me put it this way. The Church which is the Body of Christ, called into being after Israel had been set aside at Acts 28, is associated with a calling that goes back before the foundation of the world, a 'mystery', 'hid in God' until it was revealed to Paul as the prisoner of Jesus Christ. As a member of this Church I can legitimately say with regard to the Gospel of the Kingdom and the calling associated with Abraham :

Because I do not now attempt to follow the teaching that belongs to the dispensation of the kingdom of Israel, it does not follow that I do not believe the Gospels and the Acts to be inspired and true. I simply do not believe that their teaching was given *to me*.

A.- When you put the matter like that, I can appreciate the strength of your argument, but I am by no means sure that the cases are parallel. The coming of Christ and His offering of Himself upon the Cross for our redemption stand between me and the law of Moses; but you, by cutting off the Gospels, the Acts and the early Epistles of Paul, cut away the very Cross of Christ and so overthrow the foundations of our faith.

B.- I think we are getting to grips at last. Am I correct in assuming that you have been assured by some brethren of repute and standing that we have no place in our teaching for the Epistle to the Romans?

A.- Well, as you ask the question, I must answer in the affirmative. I have read in the writings of more than one teacher that *The Berean Expositor* has no room for the teaching of the Epistle to the Romans, and because I value this epistle more than any other book in the New Testament, I felt, out of sheer loyalty to Christ Who fills the epistle with grace and glory, that I should have no dealings either with you or your literature.

B.- I suppose the following extract from an article on the Epistle to the Romans would give a fair presentation of your own attitude. (*Reads*):

'Perhaps no one book in the whole of the Scriptures may be considered to have a claim upon all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, more than the Epistle to the Romans. Where all exhibit the hall-mark of inspiration, comparisons are odious, but inasmuch as a building needs foundations as well as top-stones, so we may speak of the Epistle to the Romans as essentially fundamental in character'.

A.- That represents exactly my own position and contention.

B.- May I read a little more from the same writer?

'Paul had been charged with introducing innovations, preaching a self-evolved message, of altering laws and customs, and therefore before he defines his gospel he turns aside to declare that it was entirely in harmony with the Old Testament Scriptures, and indeed was the fulfilment of its promises. In 1:17 he picks out one verse from an Old Testament prophet and makes it live for all time: "The just shall live by faith". In chapter 3:10-18 he shows that his doctrine of universal sin is founded upon the Old Testament Scriptures, and in chapter 3:21 declares that the gospel presentation of a righteousness of God without the law is witnessed by the law and the prophets ... He who tampers with Moses destroys John 3:16 (*see* 3:14). He who ridicules Jonah denies the resurrection (Matt. 12:40). He who disbelieves the Flood doubts the Second Advent (Matt. 24:37-39). Moreover, as a final witness against Modernism, it was the risen Christ Who declared that all things must be fulfilled that had been written of Him "in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms" (Luke 24:44). The many who believe the gospel of God as preached by Paul can have neither part nor lot with any who deny the inspiration of the Old Testament, narrow and old-fashioned though such an attitude may appear'.

A.- These are exactly my own views, and the last sentence expresses my own reason for refusing your literature.

B.- You think, then, that the writer of these extracts was sound in the faith?

A.- Yes, and I wish you would send a copy of these articles to the Editor of *The Berean Expositor*. It might do him good.

B.- I am sure he would read them with interest, *particularly as he wrote them himself*.

A.- What? Do you mean to say that the extracts just read were written by the Editor of *The Berean Expositor*?

B.- Yes, see for yourself. I have been reading from *The Berean Expositor* Vol. 16, pages 33 and 69. After nearly twelve years, this same epistle is still under consideration, and at the time of writing, the current issue of the magazine contains article No. 66 on Romans 9:4,5.

A.- I can hardly believe my eyes. How then can you account for the condemning criticisms that have been made of this magazine in connection with the Epistle to the Romans?

B.- I think I could account for a great deal of it, but I prefer to leave it with the Lord and to 'that day'. I am more concerned for you, and for the truth, that no prejudice or misunderstanding should prevent you and others like you from realizing the truth as it is set forth, in all its clearness and glory, in the epistles of Paul.

A.- But surely there is some foundation for this critical attack?

B.- Yes, false charges are sometimes truth misunderstood. For example, the cry that was raised against the Apostle in the Temple was truth distorted :

'This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place' (Acts 21:28).

A.- I am afraid I have done you an injustice, but there is still something about your attitude to the Epistle to the Romans that I very much wish you would make clear. Perhaps we could meet again and go more carefully into the matter.

B.- We will; and as a parting word I should like to quote from a still earlier volume of *The Berean Expositor* (Vol. 5, page 9) :

'A believer needs to be fairly well grounded in the doctrinal portions of Romans before approaching the Mystery'.

CHAPTER 2

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'DOCTRINAL' AND 'DISPENSATIONAL' TRUTH EXPLAINED.

A.- The sentence that you quoted as we parted last time has been in my mind since our last talk. I gather that you see a difference between 'the doctrinal portions of Romans' and 'the Mystery'. Perhaps it is just here that my problem is to be found. Why does the writer quoted stress 'the *doctrinal* portions of Romans'? Is not doctrine simply teaching, and is not every chapter and every verse full of teaching that is of extreme value whether in the gospel, the practical outworking of the truth, or in God's dealings with His people Israel?

B.- In every branch of investigation the question of names is important. Every advance in Science must be accompanied by the application of names, and if new things or new laws are discovered new names have to be invented. The history of human investigation is largely a history of names. Such words as 'electricity', 'radium', 'wireless', 'television', 'photograph', 'gramophone' will illustrate my meaning. Many, if not all, of these names are used in a restricted sense, which has been agreed upon for the sake of clarity.

When we turn our attention to Theology, we are confronted with the same recurring need for names. There is, for example, no such word as 'Trinity' in the Scriptures, but the necessity for the name must be admitted whether we endorse all that it is intended to cover or not. Such expressions as the 'Deity of Christ', 'Eternal Sonship', 'Perfectionism', 'Antinomianism', 'Pre-Millennial' and the like are all necessary labels for belief, whether the beliefs themselves be true or false. And so there arose in the minds of some students of the Word the desire to be able to differentiate easily two aspects of revealed truth, and the labels they adopted were 'Doctrinal Truth' and 'Dispensational Truth'. You must remember, however, that those who selected these terms would agree with you that in one sense all truth is doctrinal and in another sense all truth is dispensational. They must, therefore, have had some special reason for coining these terms.

A.- I think that, if you could make clear to me what you really mean when you speak of ‘doctrinal truth’ and ‘dispensational truth’, I should be better able to follow your argument concerning the Epistle to the Romans.

B.- Let me use an illustration. Mankind can be regarded from two different points of view :

- (1) As creatures who eat, drink and sleep.
- (2) As a collection of nations, each nation having creature characteristics in common, but also national differences.

Now suppose I were to say: ‘Englishmen eat, drink and sleep; Frenchmen eat, drink and sleep: therefore Englishmen are Frenchmen’. You would probably reply: ‘No, you are failing to observe the difference between what is common to all men as creatures, and what is common only to some men as nationals. While Englishmen and Frenchmen have basic things in common they have also characteristic differences. For example, the English belong to a monarchy, their monetary system is based upon the pound sterling, and they drive their cars on the left. The Frenchman is a member of a republic, his monetary system is based on the franc, and he drives his car on the right’.

Now if we substitute ‘Doctrinal Truth’ for that which belongs to a man as a creature, and ‘Dispensational Truth’ for that which belongs to him as a national, let us see where our argument takes us. It means that I cannot say because all men are sinners and need redemption, and all who are saved are saved by the blood of Christ and believe the same Book, that therefore all men belong to one calling, and there is no difference between them. To argue in this way would be equivalent to assuming, because all men are creatures and have the same creature needs, that all Englishmen are Frenchmen. We must observe the differences as well as the characteristics that they have in common.

Some of the redeemed are to inherit the earth, some are to walk the streets of the New Jerusalem, some are to be seated with Christ far above all principality and power. Some will form a Kingdom of Priests on the earth, some will constitute the Bride of the Lamb, some will form the Body of Christ. Some are called under the terms of the covenant made with Abraham, some go back for the inception of their calling to a time before the foundation of the world. These differences cannot be ignored, and in order to avoid confusion, the basic and fundamental teaching of Scripture concerning Sin and Redemption we have called ‘Doctrinal Truth’, and the teaching concerning the different callings and spheres of blessing that subdivide the redeemed into different groups we have called ‘Dispensational Truth’.

Now whatever changes may take place in the form of government either in England or in France, and whatever changes there may be in their coinage or driving customs, their basic needs will remain unchanged. ‘Doctrinal Truth’ represents that which is permanent, while ‘Dispensational Truth’ represents that which is true at one time but not necessarily true for all time. Your own attitude to the inspiration of all Scripture and to your own personal obligation to keep the law of Moses is a case in point. The inspiration of all Scripture is a doctrinal truth; it is true for all time, and can never be set aside. On the other hand the dominion of the law over a man is a part of dispensational truth. It is not true for all time; it was set aside at the cross.

A.- I understand, then, that you find in the Epistle to the Romans two sets of teaching: first, that which is true for all men and for all time, and which you have called ‘Doctrinal Truth’, and secondly, that which was once true, but is not true today, which you place under the heading of ‘Dispensational Truth’. If you can make this difference clear to me, I feel we shall have made progress. I find it difficult to believe that a thing can be true at one time and not at another.

B.- I quite appreciate the difficulty and I shall be glad to do what I can to help. Suppose we turn to the Epistle to the Romans itself and see whether we do or do not agree with regard to the principle concerned. Will you choose a subject which you believe to be true for all dispensations, and then we will consider, if possible, some related teaching which was true when first uttered but has ceased to be a truth which we must observe today?

A.- Well, I suppose no one worthy of the name of Christian would hesitate to affirm that Romans 1:16 is true for all time.

B.- Let us consider the passage, then, step by step.

'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ'.

That is most certainly true for all time and for all believers.

'For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth'.

That again is still as blessedly true as it was when the sentence was first written.

'To the Jew first, and also to the Greek'.

Is that still true?

A.- Yes, I believe the Church has a great debt to pay to Israel, for through that nation we received the Scriptures, and even, so far as the flesh was concerned, the Saviour Himself.

B.- All that is quite true and admitted, but does not the Apostle mean something more than that? He uses the same expression in Romans 2:

'But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God' (Rom. 2:8-11).

A.- I see your point. The Apostle, by using the same expression with regard both to blessing and wrath, must have intended some special distinction between the Jew and the Gentile.

B.- Peter says much the same thing in Acts 3:

'Ye are the children of the prophets . . . unto you *first* God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities' (Acts 3:25,26).

Paul and Barnabas were evidently of the same mind, for in Acts 13, when the Jews refused their testimony, they said:

'It was necessary that the word of God should *first* have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles' (Acts 13:46).

You will observe, moreover, that the apostles took this pre-eminence of Israel literally.

'They came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: *and Paul, as his manner was*, went in unto them' (Acts 17:1,2).

Do you feel under the same obligation? Have you made it a rule always to visit the Jewish synagogue first, before preaching the gospel in a new centre?

A.- I am afraid I have not considered the reference to 'the Jew first' so literally.

B.- Yet you will find that even when the Apostle reached Rome, and even though he had told the Roman Christians how he longed to see them, he sends for the chief of the Jews and bears his testimony to them *first* of all (Acts 28:17-31). The position of the Jew in Romans 1:16, in Acts 3:25,26, and in Acts 13:46, is in harmony with their position as enunciated by the Lord Himself and repeated by the Apostle in Romans 15.

'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. 15:24).

'Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. 10:5,6).

'Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy' (Rom. 15:8,9).

We must, therefore, divide Romans 1:16 into two sections:

Doctrinal Truth (Permanent)**Dispensational Truth (Passing).**

Not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth

To the Jew first, and also to the Greek

I suppose you would maintain that you were a member of the Church which is the Body of Christ?

A.- Yes, I should.

B.- And you appreciate the blessedness of this membership in that there is perfect equality among all the members?

A.- Yes, most certainly.

B.- Yet I take it that up till now you would also have maintained that 'Romans belongs to the Church of the One Body' without discriminating between the doctrinal portion which is equally true of the Ephesian position, and the dispensational section which cannot be reconciled with the perfect equality of membership in the One Body.

A.- I partly suspect that you are right, and that I have not appreciated these distinctions very fully. But will you make your meaning quite clear? Where, in the Epistle to the Romans, do we find this inequality? Do we not read twice over that there is 'no difference'?

B.- We do, but I think you will agree that these two references come under the heading of doctrinal truth, true before Romans was written, and still true now that the dispensation has changed. The two references deal with 'sin' and 'salvation'.

'We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin . . . *There is no difference*: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:9,22,23).

'For *there is no difference* between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him' (Rom. 10:12).

Yet, in chapter 11, writing to believing Gentiles, the Apostle reminds them that they were 'wild olives', grafted in contrary to nature, among the natural branches. There can obviously be no comparison between such a position, and the equal membership of the One Body. While the sphere of sin and redemption remains the same after Acts 28 as it was before - doctrinal truths are permanent - the dispensational position, set forth before Acts 28 under the figure of the olive tree, and after Acts 28 under the figure of the body, was changed when Israel were set aside and Paul entered into his prison ministry.

A.- I think I can see now how it is that some have condemned you for setting aside the Epistle to the Romans. They have evidently never read your statements carefully for themselves, and have not weighed over the difference between doctrinal and dispensational truth. By jumping to conclusions they have done themselves harm and possibly hindered others from seeing the truth. Had you not been able to explain the position to me, I should probably still have been numbered among those who think they are doing God's service by warning other believers against your teaching. I wish now to learn more, and not to be swayed by prejudice or ignorance.

B.- We must bring our discussion to a halt once more, for the time being. May I leave with you another extract from the writings of the Editor of *The Berean Expositor*, this time from a pamphlet now out of print entitled: '*Roman Stones for the Ephesian Temple*'?

'When the revelation of the Mystery was made known to Paul certain *differences* were introduced and noted. These were:

- (1) In connection with the relationship between saved Jews and Gentiles.
- (2) In connection with the constitution of the church that gave public expression to this new relationship.

- (3) In connection with the new phase of the age purpose that was related to a period called "*before* the foundation of the world".
- (4) In connection with the new sphere of blessing which was "far above all in the heavenlies"

The term "*Dispensational Truth*" therefore was necessitated by the re-discovery of the teaching of the prison epistles in order that the unique blessings and privileges therein revealed may be kept distinct. Now why should we use the words "*Dispensational Truth*"? We evidently desire to "register a difference". We see that truth is many sided, Scriptural truth being one section. Now Scriptural truth itself needs differentiation or "rightly dividing".

There is *prophetic* truth, a term usually applied to that teaching of Scripture which deals with the restoration of Israel, the millennial kingdom, the rise and destruction of Antichrist, and the Second Coming of the Lord. There is *practical* truth, which deals with the believer's walk before God and man, and his manner of life in home, business and church. There is *doctrinal* truth, which includes such basic teaching as that which relates to sin and death, redemption, forgiveness, justification, the nature and attributes of God, the teaching of reward and punishment, &c. The very tabulation of these various divisions of "truth" justify the distinctive names given above.

The third chapter of Romans provides a Scriptural illustration of the difference that exists between doctrinal and dispensational truth. In the first verse the Apostle raises the question of Israel's dispensational privileges, saying:

"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" (Rom. 3:1).

Observe the terms used. There is no question here of sin or death, redemption or atonement; it is "what advantage", "what profit", "Jew", "circumcision". The answer to the Apostle's question is "much every way". One important advantage which the Apostle brings forward is :

"Chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2).

This was a distinct mark of favour:

"He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (Psa. 147:19,20).

The state of the surrounding nations is expressed by Paul in Acts 17:30 as "the times of ... ignorance". In Romans 9 the Apostle piles up the dispensational advantages of Israel. To them pertained the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, the promises, the fathers, and even the Messiah as concerning the flesh. The Gentiles had none of these:

"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? MUCH EVERY WAY" (Rom. 3:1,2).

"What then? are we better than they? NO, IN NO WISE: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" (Rom. 3:9).

Here we have dispensational and doctrinal truth clearly distinguished. Dispensationally the Jew had great advantages over the Gentile; doctrinally he had none. If it be a question of "advantage" the circumcision had it, but if it be a question of sin, both Jew and Gentile stand upon a common platform of guilt needing a "common salvation" received by "common faith", without respect of persons.

Now it is just here that misunderstanding has arisen to hide the truth and prevent its enjoyment. Some have carried over such items as spiritual gifts into the dispensation of the Mystery, and thereby introduced confusion; others have cut themselves off from the great treasury of legitimate doctrine, and have therefore failed to grasp the fulness of some of the teaching of Ephesians.

What we need to remember is that at the setting aside of Israel a new *dispensation* was brought in, erected upon the *doctrinal* foundation laid by the Apostle to the Gentiles. This note was sounded in Vol. 1, pp. 12 and 14, of *The Berean Expositor* published in 1909 which contains the following :

"The Epistle to the Romans, whilst containing *doctrine* as true today as when first written, contains also *dispensational* teaching which has passed away with the Pentecostal period".

"It must be remembered that *dispensational privileges* must be distinguished from *personal standing*. With regard to the former - they may be lost, with regard to the latter - they are indefectible".

In Vol. 2/3, page 13, we have the following question and answer given under *Answers to Correspondents*:

2 Cor. 5:17.- What more do you want than being "in Christ" as in the text?

This was an objection to the teaching that Ephesians gave a higher dispensational calling. Our answer was :

"At first sight it would appear that this verse reaches the zenith, but it is not so. 2 Corinthians and Galatians are to be read together, and the result is this:

Doctrinal position..... 2 Corinthians 'In Christ'.

Dispensational position..... Galatians..... 'With Abraham'.

When we turn to Ephesians we shall find that the dispensational and doctrinal positions are the same, viz.:

Doctrinal position..... Ephesians 1..... 'In Christ'.

Dispensational position..... Ephesians 2..... 'With Christ'".

It will be seen that there is therefore an advance in the dispensational teaching of Ephesians over that of 2 Corinthians. Quoting once more from an earlier Volume (5, page 9) :

"A believer needs to be fairly well grounded in the doctrinal portions of Romans before approaching the Mystery"‘.

CHAPTER 3

SOME DOCTRINES THAT ARE UNCHANGED WITH THE CHANGE OF DISPENSATION

A.- Let me see whether I have grasped aright the distinction you have suggested between 'doctrinal' and 'dispensational' truth. You believe, I understand, that the Church of the One Body, as made known in Ephesians, is a new thing, subject to the dispensation of the Mystery, but not associated with the covenant made with Abraham, and independent of Israel or Israel's hope. Nevertheless, while the dispensation changed at Acts 28, and a new sphere of blessing was introduced, man's fundamental needs remain the same, whether he be called in this day of grace and Israel's blindness, or during the Acts period while Israel were still 'first'. Have I grasped your meaning?

B.- Yes, you have stated the case very clearly. Shall we go on now to a further consideration of the Epistle to the Romans in relation to the 'prison epistles' (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and 2 Timothy)? While realizing that there are essential things that differ here - which we must leave untouched for the time being - let us seek to discover some of the things that are shared in common. What would you consider to be one of the foremost doctrines that characterize the teaching of the Epistle to the Romans?

A.- I should say the doctrine of justification by faith without works.

B.- If you have ever endeavoured to express in a few words the teaching of Romans on this mighty theme, I think you will appreciate the fulness of Paul's own synopsis in Philippians 3 :

'If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more ... Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless ... And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith' (Phil. 3:4-9).

A.- Yes, there is no doubt that the glorious doctrine of Romans is fundamental to Philippians. The passage in Philippians is practically the same as Romans 3:21-26 :

'But now the righteousness of God without the law ... even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ'.

I think I can anticipate your next comparison. I should imagine it will be Ephesians 2:8,9.

B.- Very true. Here is the passage :

'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast' (Eph. 2:8,9).

A.- This is practically identical with Romans 3:27 :

'Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith'.

B.- We are, then, in perfect agreement that, so far as the doctrinal teaching of these epistles is concerned, they are united on the subject of justification by faith.

Let us take now another theme, this time one that demands a certain amount of care in handling. I want, if I can, to show how Romans 6 illuminates a passage in Ephesians and practically compels us to translate the latter correctly. Will you listen to the following passages, and tell me whether the suggested alteration is possible? In Romans 6 we read :

'God forbid. How shall we, that are dead TO sin, live any longer therein?' (Rom. 6:2).

Is it possible to translate the passage 'dead *in* sin'?

A.- No, that would be impossible. It would stultify the very object the Apostle has in view.

B.- Further on in the same chapter we read :

'For in that He died, He died UNTO sin once' (Rom. 6:10).

I hardly like to press the alternative here, where the subject is Christ Himself, but I am sure you will agree that no one could tolerate the translation: 'He died *in* sin once'.

A.- Most emphatically not. If this were true, the whole scheme of redemption would collapse.

B.- Let me give one more example from the same chapter. In verse 11 we read :

'Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed UNTO sin'.

Can we translate this: 'Dead indeed *in* sin'?

A.- Certainly not. But why do you ask? Is there any similar passage that *is* so translated?

B.- There is. But first, how are we to be certain that the passages just mentioned are similar?

A.- Well, although I have no knowledge of Greek, I can identify similar words and letters, so if you will point out the wording, that will be quite sufficient.

B.- Here is the Greek original, transliterated for comparison :

Apethanomen te hamartia.

Apethanen te hamartia.

Nekrous men te hamartia.

You will notice that the words *te hamartia* ('to sin') are identical in each case. If the word were plural instead of singular we should have: *tais hamartiais*, as in 1 Peter 2:24 : 'Dead *to* sins'. *Apethanomen* means 'to die', and *nekrous* 'a corpse' or 'dead'.

Now let us come to Ephesians 2:1, which reads :

Kai humas ontas nekrous tois paraptomasin kai tais hamartiais.

‘And you being dead to trespasses and to sins’.

Here we have the same phrase again as that which is correctly translated in the Authorised Version of Romans 6:2,10 and 11 and 1 Peter 2:24. If such a rendering as ‘in sin’ is impossible in Romans 6 and 1 Peter 2, why should we foist it upon the Apostle’s teaching here? Moreover, Ephesians 2:1 includes the word *ontas*, the present participle ‘being’, indicating the *present state* of the Ephesians. If, therefore, we were to accept the Authorised Version rendering, we should have to conclude that the Ephesians, even though saved and members of the Body of Christ, were still dead *in sins*, which is obviously impossible. What the Apostle is teaching in Ephesians 2 is that the saved, quickened, raised and seated believer is ‘dead to sins’ and ‘alive unto God’.

A.- But is not Ephesians 2:1 a proof-text for the deadness of human nature under sin?

B.- It may have been used for this purpose, but obviously we are not justified in distorting the truth of one passage merely to support the truth of another. Our prime intention, however, is to show how useful this close association between the doctrinal portions of the epistles can be. The church of the Ephesians, although dispensationally new, is nevertheless built upon the foundation once and for ever laid in Romans. Those who are addressed as being dead to trespasses and sins in Ephesians 2 find the doctrinal basis for their position in Romans 6:11 :

‘Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord’.

Another Ephesian doctrine that finds its roots in Romans is the Apostle’s teaching concerning the ‘new man’ of Ephesians 4.

A.- Why do you say ‘of Ephesians 4’? The ‘new man’ is first mentioned in Ephesians 2.

B.- In Ephesians 2:11-19 the Apostle is dealing with the constitution of the Church which is the Body of Christ, and the fact that those who are made so ‘nigh’ in that Church as to be the very members of Christ’s Body, were once ‘far off’, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise. The ‘new man’ of Ephesians 2:15 is made (or better ‘created’) of ‘the twain’; ‘the both’ or ‘the twain’ of verses 14,15,16 and 18 referring to the Jew and the Gentile, who, in this newly-created ‘new man’, lose their national distinctions and become an entirely new company.

A.- What is the ‘middle wall’ that is spoken of in verse 14? Does this refer to some barrier between the sinner and the Lord?

B.- No. The Apostle is referring to a well-known part of Herod’s Temple. Between the Court of the Gentiles and the rest of the Holy Place was a wall, and at intervals, marble slabs were let into this wall, with notices inscribed to the effect that foreigners were forbidden to pass the barrier, on pain of death. You will observe that the Apostle stresses this aspect in Ephesians 2. He begins by showing the Gentile that he was once an ‘alien’ and a ‘stranger’, and closes by saying that he is no longer a ‘stranger’ and a ‘foreigner’ (verse 19). He further indicates that the change has come about by the breaking down of the exclusiveness of the early period, which made a division between Jew and Gentile even in the Church itself.

Associated with this ‘new man’ of Ephesians 2 is the ‘new man’ of Ephesians 4, and it is this doctrinal and practical aspect that finds its foundation in Romans. The dispensational aspect has changed, from the inequality of the ‘olive tree’ position (Romans 11) to the perfect equality of the newly-created ‘new man’. But the doctrinal aspect remains the same, and is carried over from Romans, as we shall now see. As Colossians speaks of this ‘new man’ also, we will combine the references. Perhaps you would read the passages concerned.

A.- (*Turns to Ephesians 4 and Colossians 2 and 3 and reads*):

‘That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man’ (Eph. 4:22-24).

‘And having spoiled (put off) principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it’ (i.e. the cross, see previous verse) (Col. 2:15).

‘Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds’ (Col. 3:9).

May I anticipate your parallel reference in Romans? In Romans 6:6 we read :

‘Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin’.

B.- That is splendid: and is one more example of the fact that, while the dispensation of the Mystery brings in new things, things unheard of and unrevealed before, the new calling rests nevertheless upon the doctrinal basis of the Epistle to the Romans. The exhortations to ‘walk in newness of life’ (Rom. 6:4), to ‘serve in newness of spirit’ (Rom. 7:6), and to ‘put ... on’ the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:14), are further passages in Romans parallel with those cited from Ephesians and Colossians.

In the passage you read from Colossians 2 there occurs another very distinctive phrase, found only in the ‘prison epistles’ and Romans.

A.- Do you refer to the ‘principalities and powers’?

B.- Yes. You may have noticed that where Israel is prominent in Scripture there is continual reference to *angels*; but in Ephesians and Colossians, where Israel is set aside, and a new sphere of blessing has been revealed, it is ‘*principalities and powers*’. Before the believer can really enter into the truth that points to a position ‘far above all principality, and power’ (Eph. 1:21), he needs the doctrinal assurance found in Romans 8 :

‘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’ (Rom. 8:38,39).

With this assurance, the believer can contemplate without fear the position assigned to him by grace, to be ‘seated together in heavenly places’ (Eph. 2:6), ‘far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world (age), but also in that which is to come’ (Eph. 1:21).

A.- I notice that ‘angels’ are mentioned in Romans 8:38, but omitted, as you have pointed out, in Ephesians 1. I begin to appreciate your earlier remark, that when we ‘rightly divide’ the Scriptures we need each individual word, and can give it its true meaning. I noticed as we were reading Colossians 2, that the passage emphasizes another doctrine that is to be found in Romans 6 to 8. May I read the verses?

B.- By all means. Your appreciation of the truth is very cheering to one who has met with so many rebuffs in similar circumstances.

A.- (*Reads*) :

‘Wherefore IF YE DIED with Christ ... ‘ (Col. 2:20 Author’s translation).

‘BURIED with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are RISEN with Him’ (Col. 2:12).

‘Therefore IF YE BE RISEN with Christ ... ‘ (Col 3:1 Author’s translation).

B.- You will find also that the spiritual application of circumcision in Colossians 2:11 is anticipated in Romans 2:26-29.

Turning now to an entirely different theme, let us look at the subject of reconciliation. If we consult the original, we shall find that before Acts 28 the Apostle uses the word *katallasso*, whereas in Ephesians and Colossians he uses the intensive form *apokatallasso*. The former, we shall discover, is the basis of the latter. Romans 5 does not settle the differences that existed between the circumcision and the uncircumcision, Moses and Abraham, but goes back to the *racial estrangement* brought about by Adam. Romans 11, on the other hand, deals with the *national estrangement* that took place at Babel (Genesis 11; Romans 1:18-32).

In Romans 11:11-18 we read of a reconciliation which hinged upon the setting aside of Israel :

‘Through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles’ (Rom. 11:11).

‘If ... the diminishing of them (be) the riches of the Gentiles’ (Rom. 11:12).

‘If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world’ (Rom. 11:15).

Ephesians 2:16 deals with the complete reconciliation that was brought about between ‘the both’, ‘in one body, by the cross’ - a reconciliation limited indeed to this one company, but finding its basis and justification in the cross of Christ and the ‘reconciliation’ of the Epistle to the Romans. While the Church regarded as a company is seen to be reconciled in Ephesians 2, there still remains the question of its perfect alignment with the purpose of the ages and its sphere of blessing in the heavenlies. So in Colossians 1 we read :

‘And, having made peace through (by) the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven’ (Col. 1:20).

This reconciliation is further described in Ephesians and Colossians :

‘That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one (Gk. ‘head up’) all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him ... And gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all’ (Eph. 1:10,22,23).

‘And He is the Head of the body, the church ... For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, Which is the Head of all principality and power’ (Col. 1:18; 2:9,10).

As Israel begin to pass off the scene, the reconciliation of the world takes place, and after Acts 28, with Israel gone, the full reconciliation of the Church of the Mystery is revealed.

A.- We have spent some time now on *doctrinal* themes. May I suggest that we should devote, if possible, some time in the future to a consideration of the *practical* teaching of Romans and Ephesians, so that we may have a clear understanding of what is involved in the question of our walk?

B.- By all means. Practice is the fruit of doctrine, and it is important that we should be concerned not only with our ‘calling’ but also with the walk that is worthy of it.

CHAPTER 4

A FEW GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON THE QUESTION OF PRACTICE

A.- We decided at our last meeting to devote some time to a consideration of the practical working out of the doctrines of Romans and Ephesians. I have made a few comparisons during the interval which I thought you might be interested to see.

B.- I shall be most interested. Before you proceed, however, may I add one word by way of preface? Practice is the fruit of doctrine. Whatever our calling may be, it is incumbent upon us to seek to walk worthy of it. Practice, however, like fruit, is influenced not only by the root (i.e. the doctrine itself) but by the soil and climate (i.e. the characteristics of the dispensation to which it belongs). We shall have to be careful, therefore, to distinguish between the fruit itself, as it develops from the doctrine, and any peculiarity that may be attached to it by reason of dispensational conditions. You will remember the reference we made earlier to Romans 1:16, where one peculiarity was not carried over into the present dispensation. As a rule, therefore, we must beware of attempting to follow those practices which are *dispensational* in origin.

A.- Yes, I think I appreciate the difference; and the first parallel that I had noted may have something of this distinction about it. In Ephesians 5:2 we are exhorted to ‘walk in love’. This practice, I believe, is timeless and uninfluenced by any change of dispensation. The parallel in Romans, however, has, I think, some elements attached to it that were peculiarly applicable to the time when Romans was written.

‘But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably (according to love)’ (Rom. 14:15).

I see now that the Apostle had in mind here the scruples of the Jew in connection with food which had been offered to idols - a matter which presents no practical difficulty to us today. It would obviously be quite wrong to take this out of its context and attempt to apply it to a member of the One Body. To do this would be to confuse the

temporary dispensational attachments and the abiding doctrinal principle. The principle that decided whether a believer would eat or not, or whether he would observe the day or refrain, remains the same :

‘For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself . . . For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living’ (Rom. 14:7-9).

Not only has our brother a claim upon us by reason of our union with the risen Christ, but in verse 10 there is another motive introduced :

‘For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ’ (Rom. 14:10).

Here I have rather a difficulty, for I take it that no member of the Body of Christ will stand before this judgment seat.

B.- The difficulty is, I think, one of words rather than of realities. It may be true that no member of the Body of Christ will ever stand before that judgment seat, just as it is most certainly true that no believer in Christ will stand before the throne of Matthew 25 or Revelation 20; but that does not prove that there will be no scrutiny of the believer’s service simply because he is blessed on higher ground. Colossians 3 makes it clear that a principle similar to that of Romans 14 is at work also in the dispensation of the Mystery.

‘And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons’ (Col. 3:23-25).

A.- Yes. The concluding clause ‘There is no respect of persons’ seems almost to have been written to guard against one company putting forward a claim to exemption from this searching scrutiny.

B.- What other parallels had you noted?

A.- I have been thinking a good deal of the references to ‘armour’ in Romans and Ephesians. Romans 13:12 speaks of the ‘armour of light’, while Ephesians 6:11 speaks of the ‘whole armour of God’. Romans sums up the ‘armour of light’ by the balancing clause ‘Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ’, while Ephesians specifies each part of the armour separately. The particular point, however, which I wanted to raise was that Ephesians 6:12 speaks of ‘wrestling *not* against flesh and blood’, whereas in Romans 13 ‘the flesh’ seems very prominent. Let me read the passage :

‘The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly (decently), as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof’ (Rom. 13:12-14).

B.- In Ephesians 6 the conflict is against ‘spiritual wickednesses’, ‘principalities and powers’, ‘rulers of the darkness of this world’, and not against ‘flesh and blood’. In Romans 13 it is the believer’s conflict with ‘the flesh’ as opposed to ‘the spirit’; and the rioting, drunkenness, etc., that are specified are examples of what the Apostle means. The exhortation of Romans 13 can be brought over without alteration into the present dispensation, but the conflict of Ephesians 6 is peculiar to the Church whose blessings are ‘in the heavenlies’. The underlying principle may be the same, but the dispensational features in Ephesians 6 are peculiar to the dispensation of the Mystery.

A.- I quite see your point. There are many items of practice found in Romans that may be transferred without reserve to the present dispensation, while there are other items that belonged essentially to the dispensation that then obtained and which have since lapsed.

We began, I remember, with widely divergent views as to the true interpretation of the Epistle to the Romans, and I must thank you for helping me to distinguish things that differ. Before we end our discussions, it would be a great help if you could sketch out quite briefly the relation between the various epistles, and their position with reference to the dispensational boundary. I believe you teach that this boundary must be drawn at Acts 28. While I no longer believe that the Church that we have in mind began at Pentecost, I have rather inclined to the view that all Paul’s epistles must be considered as a whole, and that the revelation of the Mystery of Ephesians 3 is a

development, an evolution if you will, of the teaching made known in his earlier epistles. What we have already seen regarding the dispensational differences between Ephesians and Romans has somewhat shaken this belief, but I should like, if possible, to get a clearer view of the true position of the Church of the One Body.

B.- I will gladly do all I can to help; and, as the subject will demand our best attention, let us agree to meet once more with minds fresh and hearts attuned by grace, ready to receive with meekness all that has been written on this subject for our learning.

CHAPTER 5

THE TWO SETS OF PAUL'S EPISTLES IN RELATION TO ACTS 28.

A.- As this is our last opportunity, at least for a time, of continuing our studies together, I am anxious to hear what you consider to be the relationship of the Pauline epistles to one another and to the Acts of the Apostles, and particularly to the last chapter.

B.- Before we can do this satisfactorily, it will be necessary to make sure that we are agreed as to what epistles were written by Paul, for, at different times, the authorship of several epistles has been called in question by the Higher Critics.

A.- There is only one epistle about which I have any doubt, and that is the Epistle to the Hebrews. I should like to know what are your grounds for believing it to be the writing of the Apostle Paul.

B.- I have many grounds for so believing, but since some would require a close study of the original and a knowledge of the niceties of grammar, we have not the time to investigate them now. I believe, however, that I can give you sufficient for our present purpose.

Two things are agreed upon both by the Modernist and the Fundamentalist; first, that 1 Corinthians is a genuine epistle of Paul, and secondly that, whatever views one may have as to the nature or extent of inspiration, such Divine superintendence does not obliterate the individuality of a writer's style.

If you will turn to 1 Corinthians 15:27 you will see how Paul handles the quotation from Psalm 8. I will then read from Hebrews 2:8, and I believe you will agree that the similarity of style is in favour of the Pauline authorship of Hebrews.

A.- (*Reads*):

'For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, *it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him*' (1 Cor. 15:27).

B.- (*Reads*):

'Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet. *For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him*' (Heb. 2:8).

There is more here than appears on the surface, but I think the similarity of style is most marked, is it not?

A.- Yes, and this of itself presents one argument in favour of its Pauline authorship. Have you any further evidence that is easily presented?

B.- Well, we have Peter's testimony to the fact that Paul had written at least one epistle to 'the dispersion' (2 Pet. 3:15), which, while it does not prove that Hebrews is that epistle, removes all possible objection to the idea that Paul wrote such an epistle. We have, however, in Hebrews itself what amounts to Paul's signature.

A.- Paul's signature! That can hardly be, for its presence would be the end of controversy. You must mean something other than your words seem to imply.

B.- Yes, perhaps 'signature' was hardly the right word. Suppose I alter it and say his 'sign manual', that is some thing written by the Apostle that was agreed upon as an indication of his undoubted authorship.

A.- If you can show me that, the argument is at an end.

B.- As you will see by referring to 2 Thessalonians 2:2, early in the history of the church a spurious epistle was circulated purporting to have come from Paul. To safeguard the church from any further deception on that score, the Apostle undertook to write with his own hand, as a token in every epistle, a certain salutation, knowing that God could prevent any other writer of the time from adopting the same form of words.

'The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: *so I write*. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen' (2 Thess. 3:17,18).

There are two points here, one which we must believe the early church was fully competent to judge, that is, the actual handwriting of the Apostle, and the other, which we can examine for ourselves, namely, the particular salutation to which he drew attention. Suppose you read the salutations at the end of the epistles from where we are reading to Hebrews itself. That should be enough evidence for our purpose at the moment.

A.- (*Reads*) :

'Grace be with thee. Amen' (1 Tim. 6:21).

'Grace be with you. Amen' (2 Tim 4:22)

'Grace be with you all. Amen' (Tit. 3:15).

'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen' (Philemon 25).

'Grace be with you all. Amen' (Heb. 13:25).

B.- You can examine the remainder at your leisure and also the forms of salutation adopted by the other Apostles, and you will find that it is as Paul declared.

A.- Before we leave this important item, I feel it would be wise to anticipate a possible objection. The book of the Revelation ends with the self-same form of words, and, at first sight, this appears to modify your argument.

B.- We must certainly consider the bearing of this fact. First of all, however, let us be clear as to the Apostle's intention when he wrote 2 Thessalonians 3:17,18. Did he say that no other writer would ever use these words in any circumstances?

A.- No, he said nothing about other writers, all he undertook was to use that formula himself. It is we who have discovered, long afterwards, that no other writer did in fact use this formula when writing an epistle to the church, although this may have been implied in the Apostle's promise.

B.- There is almost unanimous testimony that John wrote the Apocalypse about A.D. 96, or over twenty years after the Apostle Paul's death, and by that time there could be no fear of an epistle being sent as from Paul with any likelihood of deceiving the church, and there was certainly no reason why the canon of the New Testament should not conclude with the grace of the Lord, simply because thirty or more years previously Paul had promised to use this form of salutation in his own handwriting.

A.- Yes, I am sure no reasonable person could really use the close of the Revelation as an objection.

B.- Well, then, I think we can now pass on to our real study, with the conviction that Hebrews may be included as one of Paul's fourteen epistles.

A.- How do you consider these epistles should be arranged, for nearly every commentator I have consulted gives a different date for their writing, and often a different order also.

B.- For our present purpose neither the dates, nor the order in which these epistles were written, is of vital importance. There are three historical facts, all found within the pages of holy writ, which I propose to use to place these epistles in their proper relationship.

- (1) THE PRESENCE AND PRE-EMINENCE OF ISRAEL, 'THE JEW FIRST'.
- (2) THE PRESENCE AND ABUNDANCE OF MIRACULOUS GIFTS.
- (3) THE LIBERTY AND MISSIONARY ACTIVITY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

These three facts are characteristic of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the seven epistles written during that period, namely, Romans, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Hebrews. At the end of the Acts, Israel and its hope are set aside, miracles cease to be the normal experience of the church, and Paul's liberty comes to an end by his imprisonment.

We gather from the later epistles that Paul was set at liberty after two years of imprisonment at Rome, and, after spending a short while visiting the churches, he was again apprehended and imprisoned as an 'evil doer', for such the Christian had become since the outbreak of Neronian persecution. During the brief interval of freedom he wrote the two epistles of this series that make no reference to his imprisonment, namely, 1 Timothy and Titus.

It may be as well to explain further that we are in the habit of speaking of the 'Four Prison Epistles', not because we ignore or deny the epistle to Philemon, but because we see in these four the basic truths of the present dispensation. We also, for the sake of brevity, use the expression, 'Acts 28', which has been criticised by those who have only a superficial knowledge of our teaching, but any one who has followed our presentation of dispensational truth knows that by 'Acts 28', we intend the full term 'Acts 28:23-28' as the dispensational boundary.

A.- I quite understand, and you need have no fear of such a misunderstanding on my part. You have not, however, enumerated the second set of seven epistles.

B.- Yes. I wandered from my theme for a moment. The second set of seven epistles is as follows: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy.

We must now return to the first set of epistles and see how they are related to one another. First you will observe that there are three single epistles, Romans, Hebrews and Galatians, and that there are two sets of double epistles, 1&2 Thessalonians, and 1&2 Corinthians. Upon further study you will discover that the three single epistles are united by the fact that, in the development of their teaching, they each give prominence to an obscure text from one of the minor prophets: 'The just shall live by his faith' (Hab. 2:4). Each epistle lays stress on a different part of the quotation. Thus in Romans it is 'the just' which is emphasised; in Galatians it is 'by faith'; while in Hebrews 'shall live' is stressed.

A.- That is a splendid example of the preacher's custom of dividing his text into 'firstly, secondly and thirdly'.

B.- We have the two pairs of epistles left which we would expect to correspond. Let us examine them.

A.- I can see at least one point of similarity, if I may be permitted to anticipate.

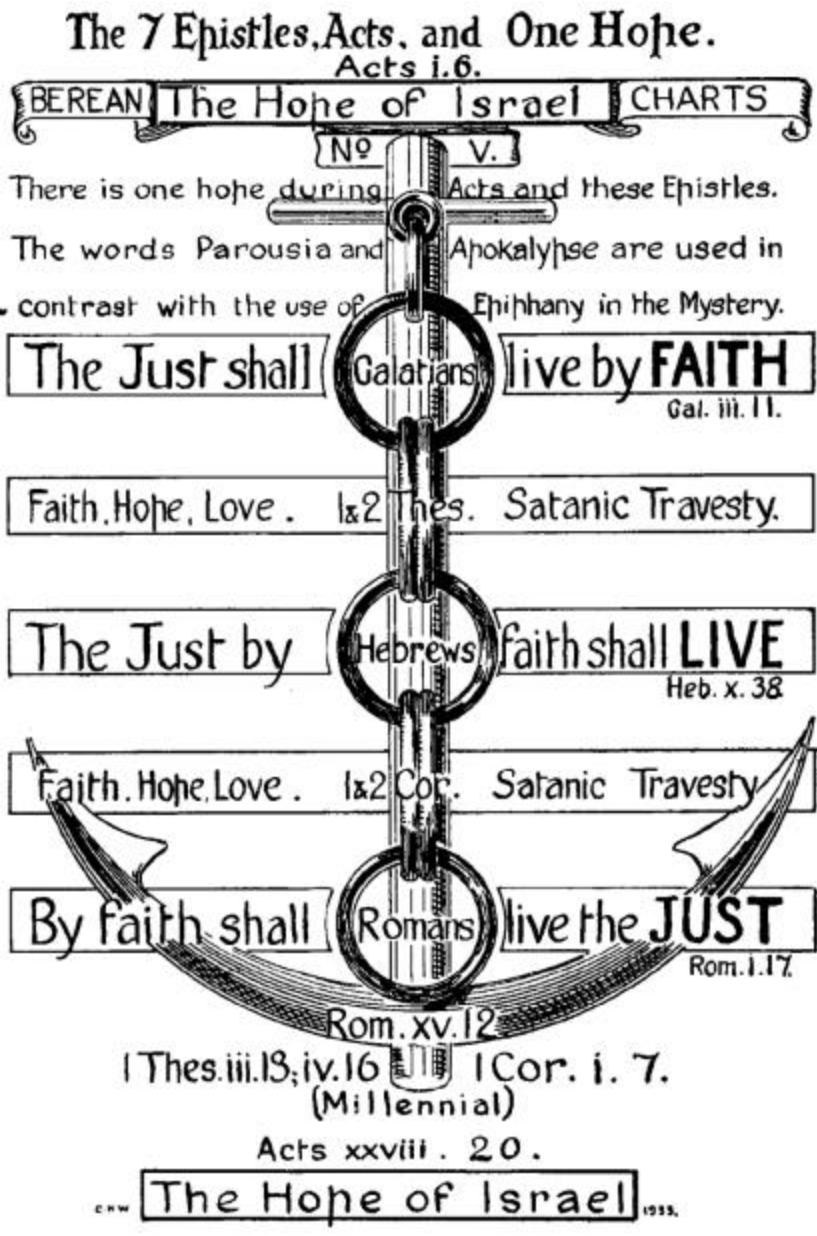
B.- By all means, that is the real idea behind this conversation - to stimulate the *Berean* spirit.

A.- I already know that 1Thessalonians is written around the words 'faith, hope and love', and it has just occurred to me that at the very heart of 1 Corinthians we have 'these three' (1 Cor. 13:13), but I am at a loss to see what 2 Thessalonians and 2 Corinthians have in common.

B.- You are right in what you say regarding the first epistles; now let us look at the second a little more closely. In the first place they are both 'second' epistles and were both written to correct some misunderstanding that had arisen over the first epistles. That is one point of resemblance. The second is that both epistles give prominence to Satanic travesty (2 Thess. 2, and 2 Cor. 4:4; 11:3,4,13,15).

For our present purpose it is not of great importance which of his epistles the Apostle wrote first, although I personally am persuaded that it was Galatians, but, if we waive that point for the moment, the following diagram may be helpful in visualizing what I have already indicated, but only partly proved, namely, that the hope of Israel, in view at the beginning and end of Acts, is also the hope of these epistles, binding them one to another and placing them in the Acts period.

B.- (Continues): As to the oneness of the hope, this is obviously true of the Acts itself. In 1:6 and in 28:20 there is but one hope, viz., 'The hope of Israel'. Upon examination this is found to be the case with regard to the church of the period. Romans, being the last epistle of the series, and the most dogmatic, will determine the question once for all. Romans 15:12,13 ('trust' is the same word as 'hope') reveals that the hope before the church was connected with Christ as the 'Root of Jesse', who should 'reign over the Gentiles', the reference being to Isaiah 11 and the great day of Israel's restoration. Every reference to the hope of the church found in 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians and Galatians is in perfect harmony with this crowning passage.



We therefore place the symbol of hope - the anchor, with its pendant epistles as links in a chain, in such a way that it shall coincide with the whole of the Acts of the Apostles, including its opening and closing references to 'the hope of Israel'.

'The one hope' of the mystery finds no exposition in these early epistles of Paul. It was essential that 'the mystery' itself should be revealed before its hope could be expressed.

A.- As our time is fast running out, and as I now see quite clearly the general disposition of these earlier epistles, I should be glad of some guidance towards the understanding of the later epistles. Of course I fully appreciate the fact that in our present enquiry we can only deal with the subject in outline.

B.- The structure of the seven epistles written after Acts 28 is as follows :

A	EPHESIANS 'Seated together'.	Dispensation (3:2 and 9 R.V.) Mystery (3:3). The church which is His body (1:22,23) The fulness (1:23; 4:10). Christ the Head (1:22). Principalities and powers (1:21).
B	PHILIPPIANS 'The Prize'.	a Bishops and Deacons (1:1). b Try the things that differ (1:10 margin). Strive (1:27). Press toward the mark (3:14). Prize (3:14). Depart (1:23). Offered (2:17).
C	PHILEMON 'Above a Servant'.	The truth of the mystery in practice.
A	COLOSSIANS 'Complete in Him'.	Dispensation (1:25). Mystery (1:26). The Church which is His body (1:24). Fulness (1:19). Christ the Head (2:19). Principalities and powers (1:16; 2:10).
B	1 & 2 TIMOTHY AND TITUS	a Bishops and Deacons (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1). b Rightly dividing the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). Crown (2 Tim. 4:8). Depart (2 Tim. 4:6). Offered (2 Tim. 4:6).

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2 Tim. 4:7).

I think, with this outline as your guide, you will begin to realize the distinctive nature of the dispensation of the mystery, and at some future time we may be able to study these magnificent epistles together.

There is one other theme that awaits our consideration and that is the claim that Acts 28:28 is the dispensational boundary which divides the earlier ministry of Paul from the later. This later ministry is associated with the church of the one body which came into being at that time. In the thirteenth chapter of the Acts we find the end of the dispensation foreshadowed.

THE MIRACLE OF JUDGEMENT (Acts 13:6-12).

Here a Jew, who sought to turn a Gentile from the faith, is stricken with blindness. The Gentile believes, and he bears the same name as that of the Apostle. What took place at Paphos but foreshadowed the blindness that was later to fall upon all Israel.

THE PROPHETIC WARNING (Acts 13:40,41).

This warning, to beware lest that come upon you which was spoken by the prophets, looked forward to the fulfilment in Acts 28 of the prophecy of Isaiah 6.

When we turn to Acts 28 itself we find evidence that the dispensation of the kingdom is still in operation, first in the undiminished exercise of miraculous powers (Mark 16:17,18; Acts 28:1-10), and secondly in the fact that the Jew is still 'first' (Acts 28:17,20).

The all-day conference with the leaders of the Jews ended in their rejection at the quotation of Isaiah 6:9,10. Since that day Israel has been, and still remains, 'Lo-ammi'-'Not My people', and the dispensation of the Mystery has taken the place of that of the Kingdom.

All this I know is very challenging, and I do not ask you to accept it without the most rigorous enquiry. As I have just said, there may be granted to us a further opportunity of study, when we might examine together the distinctive characteristics of the Mystery. For the moment we must be satisfied with what we have attained, and I do not think I can do better than conclude our talk by giving you the structure, in outline, of Acts 28:23-31.

Acts 28:23-31.

- A **a** 28:23-. Chief of Jews come to Paul's lodging.
- b** 28:-23-. Paul expounds the kingdom of God.
- c** 28:-23. Concerning 'Jesus', out of Moses and Prophets.
- B 28:24-27. ISRAEL. They heard not.

Isaiah 6:9,10.

The dispensational boundary.

- B 28:28. GENTILES. They will hear.
- A **a** 28:30. All come to Paul's hired house.
- b** 28:31-. Paul preaches the kingdom of God.
- c** 28:-31. Concerning 'The Lord Jesus Christ'.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION.

During the last twenty-eight years it has many times been the happy experience of the writer that, if a believer can but be persuaded to give serious attention to the claims of Acts 28:28 as the dispensational boundary, he can be left without anxiety to the study of the Word, the entrance of which giveth light. Provided the claims of that last chapter of the Acts be duly weighed and verified, such an enquirer will sooner or later arrive at the conclusion that

while *a* church began at Pentecost, *the* church, in which there is neither Greek nor Jew, and where Christ is all and in all, came into being only after Acts 28 when Paul had become 'the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles'. Further study reveals that the dispensation of the mystery is unique in its inception, its sphere, its blessings, its constitution and its hope.

May the Lord bless all, who, like 'A' begin the reading of this booklet with a prejudice, born of loyalty to the fundamentals of the faith, but are sufficiently imbued with the *Berean* spirit to 'prove all things' and have the courage, when once convinced, to 'hold fast that which is good'.
