

ASSURANCE IN THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

(Frank Worgan, Corby)

It is true that all the letters in the N.T. were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is also true that they vary a great deal both in their tones and in what they teach. You need only think of the difference between Paul's letters to the troubled, problem-ridden Church in Corinth, and the intimate, gentle tone of his letter to Philemon concerning the converted runaway slave Onesimus.

All of the letters are important and have something important to teach us, but I suggest that, if there is one letter which is more powerful than the rest it must be Paul's letter to the Romans, not merely because it is the longest letter in the New Testament, with 16 chapters comprising 433 vv. - (1st Corinthians also has 16 chapters but is 17 verses shorter) - but because the theme which runs through it is the problem of sin and the manner in which the grace of God has dealt with it.

- > In Chapter 1, after his opening personal greetings, Paul declares that the Gentile world has fallen into sin and has even denied the evidence of God's very existence, thus bringing it under His judgment and condemnation.
- > In Chapter 2, he points out the unpalatable fact, that the Jewish world is no better than the Gentile, because, although it possessed the law of God, it did not keep the law.
- > In Chapter 3, he therefore concludes that '*there is therefore no difference*' between Jew and Gentiles, "**all are under sin**", because, "**all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.**"
- > In Chapter 4, he continues to expand this theme, pointing out that it is impossible for Man to free himself from the guilt of sin. He cannot *work* his way out, and he cannot *merit* forgiveness. Forgiveness has to come through faith in the Grace of God.
- > Chapter 5 then opens with the well-known statement: "**Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**", and,
- > In Chapter 6, he describes the change that occurs when we become Christians: "**You were the servants of sin, but you obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine that was delivered to you, and, being made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness**".
- > Chapter 7 describes the experience of a man who is held in the power of sin and, in verse 24 he finally exclaims, "**O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord**".

We then come to what I believe is one of the most important statements in this letter – perhaps the most important in *any* of the letters - because it expresses the joy that we experience as Christians, and the assurance and confidence that we have in the knowledge that our sins are forgiven because we have entered into a right relationship with God through what Jesus has done for us.

Chapter 8:1-2

"There is therefore now no condemnation, for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, for the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ has made me free from the law of sin and death."

The grand message these verses contain is the message that, as a child of God, your future is secure and you possess the Assurance of Salvation.

Important Words

There are certain words in this statement, which need to be examined and emphasised: words that should be weighed: words to savour, in fact.

“There is THEREFORE... NOW... NO CONDEMNATION... FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS...”

These then are the words:

- THEREFORE
- NOW!
- NO CONDEMNATION.
- FOR THOSE IN CHRIST JESUS.

1st Notice the ‘Therefore’

Whenever in the scriptures you come across the word “*therefore*”, there is always a “*Wherefore*”. There is always a reason. Whilst “*Therefore*” announces a conclusion, “*Wherefore*” announces a consequence. It tells you *why* that conclusion has been reached.

Remember that in chapter 7, Paul has been discussing the problem we all face, that is, the problem of sin and its effects, and he makes that well-known statement in v.21: **“When I want to do good, evil is present in me.”** Almost the entire 7th chapter is painful to read because it reveals the terrible hold that sin has on every one of us. Paul even expresses what was his personal experience when he recognized himself to be a sinner, and he reveals the depth of his agony when, in v.24, he cries; **“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me...?”**

To expose the consequences of sin in our lives he uses a very graphic, horrifying illustration. It is an illustration that relates to a gruesome ancient practice with which his Roman readers were no doubt familiar. At one period in history, the corpse of a murderer’s victim was tied to the guilty individual so that he had to drag the dead body around with him as both a constant reminder of, and witnessed to, his crime.

In other words, the criminal was compelled to carry his guilt wherever he went because he could never escape from the rotting, foul-smelling corpse to which he was tied! Obviously, this was an exhausting and draining punishment! In fact, the word ‘*wretched*’ is the Greek word ‘*talaiporos*’, which describes someone who is exhausted through hard labour, so that what we have here is a *cry of anguish*; a *wail of agony*. Literally translated the text exclaims, “*Wretched man, I!*”

The Divinely-provided Solution

But then, in verse 25, Paul reveals the solution. The agony turns to joy. **“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** And this is where the word ‘*Therefore*’ comes in!

Let me say that I think it is a great pity that the translators started a new chapter at that point, because the statement should have continued without interruption – without a break. Leave out the heading “Chapter 8” and read the letter as Paul wrote it. **“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”**

2nd Notice that word ‘Condemnation’

“No condemnation.” The two words mean “*no penal servitude*”. No sentence to be served.

If you look at vv 33-34 of the same 8th chapter – and you really should! – you will see that Paul *simply cannot let go* of this glorious fact: **“Who shall lay anything to charge of God’s elect? He is talking about you and me! We are God’s elect!**

But now listen carefully, because he then asks a rhetorical question – and you know that a rhetorical question is a question, which needs no answer, because the answer is obvious! **‘Shall God – who justifies?’** Then: **‘Who shall condemn? Christ – Who died? – Who rose again and is now at the right hand of God making intercession for us?’**

Do you understand what Paul is saying? This question – which is really a statement – says: When *GOD* justifies us, who can lay any charge against us? And if He does not accuse us who will dare to accuse us? Certainly *not* the Lord Jesus, *Who died for us; Who also rose from the dead, and Who is even NOW at the right hand of God as our Intercessor!*

3rd Ah! That word ‘Now’!

This is emphatic! Positive! Notice the use of the present tense! Paul is not talking of something that will happen sometime in the future! Or, *‘in the sweet by and by!’* as the old hymn says! He is talking about something, which is *the present experience and possession* of every child of God – every Christian. He is speaking about the fact that there is, *at this very moment - Right NOW* - no sentence to be served by us, because, through the sacrifice and mediation of the Lord Jesus, we know that our sins are forgiven and we are justified before God and *by* God.

In a word: No-one can lay *any charge* against us, because God Himself justifies us. And no one can *condemn* us, because Jesus has died for us. And the Result? Look at v.37 of the same chapter: **“In all these things we are more than conquerors -** (‘over, over comers’, is what the text says), **- through the One who loves us”.** And, therefore: **“I am convinced that neither life nor death nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come... Shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

4th And who possesses this Assurance?

Paul writes: **“Those who are in Christ Jesus”.** How do we get into Christ Jesus? Well, listen again to Paul when he writes to the Christians in Galatia, recorded in Gal: 3: 26-27: **“We are all the children of God by faith, in Christ Jesus, for as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”.**

This often quoted – and misunderstood – statement declares that it is those who have come to be *‘in Christ Jesus’*, *according to the principle of faith, who are the children of God*, and they are the ones who receive the blessings. It does not teach that people become children of God *‘by having faith in Christ Jesus’*. It *locates* Sonship with God. It declares that this relationship is enjoyed by those whose faith has led them to *‘put on Christ’* – which means much more than claiming to believe in Him. And how do we put on Christ? **“For as many – (no more and no fewer) - as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”.**

Let us rejoice in the knowledge that God has **“blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”** Eph.1:3. And: **“In Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”** Col.1:14.

But remember, also, how Romans 8:1 continues. Here is the one essential and logical conclusion: **“who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”**

So long as we walk ‘in Him’, our salvation is guaranteed and our assurance is secure.