



# Doctrine & Remarks

## *An Outline of the Theology of Romans*

by Charles Hodge (1823-1886)



The following selection was originally published in *The Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* by Charles Hodge, 1835. After a lengthy section of commenting on the text, Hodge would generally sum up the section he was dealing with by formulating the doctrinal content into a brief outline. This document represents these sections throughout Hodge's commentary (although, it currently only contains the outlines of chapters 3 & 4; additional chapters are forthcoming). The electronic edition of this article was scanned and edited by Shane Rosenthal for *Reformation Ink*. It is in the public domain and may be freely copied and distributed.

### *Romans 3:1-8*

#### DOCTRINE

1. The advantages of membership in the external Church, and of a participation of its ordinances, are very numerous and great, vs. 1, 2.
2. The great advantage of the Christian over the heathen world, and of the members of a visible ecclesiastical body over others not so situated, is the greater amount of divine truth presented to their understandings and hearts, v. 2.
3. All the writings which the Jews, at the time of Christ and his apostles, regarded as inspired, are really the word of God, v. 2.
4. No promise or covenant of God can ever be rightfully urged in favour of exemption from the punishment of sin, or of impunity to those who live in it. God is faithful to his promises, but he never promises to pardon the impenitently guilty, vs. 3, 4.
5. God will make the wrath of men to praise him. Their unrighteousness will commend his righteousness, without, on that account, making its condemnation less certain or less severe, vs. 5, 6.
6. Any doctrine inconsistent with the first principles of morals must be false, no matter how plausible the metaphysical argument in its favour. And that mode of reasoning is correct, which refutes such doctrines by showing their inconsistency with moral truth, v. 8.

**REMARKS.**

1. We should feel the peculiar responsibilities -which rest upon us as the inhabitants of a Christian country, as members of the Christian Church, and possessors of the word of God; as such, we enjoy advantages for which we shall have to render a strict account, vs. 1, 2.
2. It is a mark of genuine piety, to be disposed always to justify God, and to condemn ourselves. On the other hand, a disposition to self-justification and the extenuation of our sins, however secret, is an indication of the want of a proper sense of our own unworthiness and of the divine excellence, vs. 4, 5.
3. Beware of any refuge from the fear of future punishment, founded upon the hope that God will clear the guilty, or that he will not judge the world and take vengeance for our sins, vs. 6, 7.
4. There is no better evidence against the truth of any doctrine, than that its tendency is immoral. And there is no greater proof that a man is wicked, that his condemnation is just, than that he does evil that good may come. There is commonly, in such cases, not only the evil of the act committed, but that of hypocrisy and duplicity also, v. 8.
5. Speculative and moral truths, which are believed on their own evidence as soon as they are presented to the mind, should be regarded as authoritative, and as fixed points in all reasonings. When men deny such first principles, or attempt to push beyond them to a deeper foundation of truth, there is no end to the obscurity, uncertainty, and absurdity of their speculations. What God forces us, from the very constitution of our nature, to believe, as, for example, the existence of the external world, our own personal identity, the difference between good and evil, etc., it is at once a violation of his will and of the dictates of reason to deny or to question. Paul assumed, as an ultimate fact, that it is wrong to do evil that good may come, v. 8.

***Romans 3:9-20*****DOCTRINE**

1. However men may differ among themselves as to individual character, as to outward circumstances, religious or social, when they appear at the bar of God, all appear on the same level. All are sinners, and being sinners, are exposed to condemnation, v. 9.
2. The general declarations of the Scriptures, descriptive of the character of men before the advent of Christ, are applicable to men in all ages of the world, because they describe human nature. They declare what fallen man is. As we recognise the descriptions of the human heart given by profane writers a thousand years ago, as suited to its present character, so the inspired description suits us as well as those for whom it was originally intended, vs. 10-18.
3. Piety and morality cannot be separated. If men do not understand, if they have no fear of God before their eyes, they become altogether unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, vs. 10-12.
4. The office of the law is neither to justify nor to sanctify. It convinces and condemns. All efforts to secure the favour of God, therefore, by legal obedience must be vain, v. 20.

**REMARKS**

1. As God regards the moral character in men, and as we are all sinners, no one has any reason to exalt himself over another. With our hands upon our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, we must all appear as guilty before God, v. 9.
2. The Scriptures are the message of God to all to whom they come. They speak general truths, which are intended to apply to all to whom they are applicable. What they say of sinners, as such, they say of all sinners; what they promise to believers, they promise to all believers. They should, therefore, ever be read with a spirit of self-application, vs. 10-18.

3. To be prepared for the reception of the gospel, we must be convinced of sin, humbled under a sense of its turpitude, silenced under a conviction of its condemning power, and prostrated at the footstool of mercy, under a feeling that we cannot satisfy the demands of the law, that if ever saved, it must be by other merit and other power than our own, v. 20.

## ***Romans 3:21-31***

### **DOCTRINE**

1. The evangelical doctrine of justification by faith is the doctrine of the Old, no less than of the New Testament, v. 21.
2. Justification is pronouncing one to be just, and treating him accordingly, on the ground that the demands of the law have been satisfied concerning him, vs. 24-26.
3. The ground of justification is not our own merit, nor faith, nor evangelical obedience; not the work of Christ in us, but his work for us, i.e., his obedience unto death, v. 25.
4. An act may be perfectly gratuitous as regards its object, and at the same time proceed on the ground of a complete satisfaction to the demands of the law. Thus justification is gratuitous, not because those demands are unsatisfied, but because it is granted to those who have no personal ground of recommendation, vs. 24, 26.
5. God is the ultimate end of all his own acts. To declare his glory is the highest and best end which he can propose for himself or his creatures, v. 25.
6. The atonement does not consist in a display to others of the divine justice. This is one of its designs and results; but it is such a display only by being a satisfaction to the justice of God. It is not a symbol or illustration, but a satisfaction, v. 26.
7. All true doctrine tends to humble men, and to exalt God; and all true religion is characterized by humility and reverence, v. 27.
8. God is a universal Father, and all men are brethren, vs. 29, 30.
9. The law of God is immutable. Its precepts are always binding, and its penalty must be inflicted either on the sinner or his substitute. When, however, it is said that the penalty of the law is inflicted on the Redeemer, as the sinner's substitute, or, in the language of Scripture, that "he was made a curse for us," it cannot be imagined that he suffered the same kind of evils (as remorse, &etc.) which the sinner would have suffered. The law threatens no specific kind of evil as its penalty. The term death, in Scripture, designates any or all of the evils inflicted in punishment of sin. And the penalty, or curse of the law, (in the language of the Bible,) is any evil judicially inflicted in satisfaction of the demands of justice. To say, therefore, that Christ suffered to satisfy the law, to declare the righteousness of God, or that he might be just in justifying him that believes in Jesus, and to say that he bore the penalty of the law, are equivalent expressions, v. 3 1.

### **REMARKS**

1. As the cardinal doctrine of the Bible is justification by faith, so the turning point in the soul's history, the saving act, is the reception of Jesus Christ as the propitiation for our sins, v. 25.
2. All modes of preaching must be erroneous, which do not lead sinners to feel that the great thing to be done, and done first, is to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and to turn unto God through him. And all religious experience must be defective, which does not embrace distinctly a sense of the justice of our condemnation, and a conviction of the sufficiency of the work of Christ, and an exclusive reliance upon it as such, v. 25.
3. As God purposes his own glory as the end of all that he does, so ought we to have that glory as the constant and commanding object of pursuit, v. 25.

4. The doctrine of atonement produces in us its proper effect, when it leads us to see and feel that God is just; that he is infinitely gracious; that we are deprived of all ground of boasting; that the way of salvation, which is open for us, is open for all men; and that the motives to all duty, instead of being weakened, are enforced and multiplied, vs. 25-31.

5. In the gospel all is harmonious: justice and mercy, as it regards God; freedom from the law, and the strongest obligation to obedience, as it regards men, vs. 25, 31.

## ***Romans 4:1-17***

### **DOCTRINE**

1. If the greatest and best men of the old dispensation had to renounce entirely dependence upon their works, and to accept of the favour of God as a gratuity, justification by works must, for all men, be impossible, vs. 2, 3.

2. No man can glory, that is, complacently rejoice in his own goodness in the sight of God. And this every man of an enlightened conscience feels. The doctrine of justification by works, therefore, is inconsistent with the inward testimony of conscience, and can never give true peace of mind, v. 2.

3. The two methods of justification cannot be united. They are as inconsistent as wages and a free gift. If of works, it is not of grace; and if of grace, it is not of works, vs. 4, 5.

4. As God justifies the ungodly, it cannot be on the ground of their own merit, but must be by the imputation of a righteousness which does not personally belong to them, and which they received by faith, vs. 5, 6, 11.

5. The blessings of the gospel, and the method of justification which it proposes, are suited to all men; and are not to be confined by sectarian limits, or bound down to ceremonial observances, vs. 9-11.

6. The sacraments and ceremonies of the Church, although in the highest degree useful when viewed in their proper light, become ruinous when perverted into grounds of confidence. What answers well as a sign, is a miserable substitute for the thing signified. Circumcision will not serve for righteousness, nor baptism for regeneration, v. 10.

7. As Abraham is the father of all believers, all believers are brethren. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, among them as Christians, vs. 11, 12.

8. The seed of Abraham, or true believers, with Jesus Christ their head, are the heirs of the world. To them it will ultimately belong; even the uttermost parts, of the earth shall be their possession, v. 13.

9. To speak of justification by obedience to a law which we have broken, is a solecism. That which condemns cannot justify, v. 15.

10. Nothing is sure for sinners that is not gratuitous. A promise suspended on obedience, they could never render sure. One entirely gratuitous needs only to be accepted to become ours, v. 16.

11. It is the entire freeness of the gospel, and its requiring faith as the condition of acceptance, which renders it suited to all ages and nations, v. 16.

12. The proper object of faith is the divine promise; or God considered as able and determined to accomplish his word, v. 17.

### **REMARKS**

1. The renunciation of a legal self-righteous spirit is the first requisition of the gospel. This must be done, or the gospel cannot be accepted. "He who works," i.e. who trusts in his works, refuses to be

saved by grace, vs. 1-5.

2. The more intimately we are acquainted with our own hearts and with the character of God, the more ready shall we be to renounce our own righteousness, and to trust in his mercy, vs. 2, 3.

3. Those only are truly happy and secure, who, under a sense of illdesert and helplessness, cast themselves upon the grace and promise of God, vs. 7, 8.

4. Nothing is more natural, and nothing has occurred more extensively in the Christian Church, than the perversion of the means of grace into grounds of dependence. Thus it was with circumcision, and thus it is with baptism and the Lord's supper; thus too with prayer, fasting, &etc. This is the rock on which millions have been shipwrecked, vs. 9-12.

5. There is no hope for those who, forsaking the grace of God, take refuge in a law which worketh wrath, v. 15.

6. All things are ours if we are Christ's; heirs of the life that now is and of that which is to come, v. 13.

7. As the God in whom believers trust is he to whom all things are known, and all things are subject, they should be strong in faith, giving glory to God, v. 17.

## ***Romans 4:18-25***

### **DOCTRINE**

1. Peace with God is the result of that system of religion which alone, by providing at once for the satisfaction of divine justice and the sanctification of the human heart, is suited to the character of God, and the nature of man. All history shows that no system other than the gospel has ever produced this peace, v. 1.

2. All the peculiar blessings of redemption are inseparably connected with and grow out of each other. Those who are justified have peace with God, access to his presence, joy under the most adverse circumstances, assurance of, God's love, and certainty of final salvation; see the whole section, and compare chap. viii. 30.

3. The Holy Ghost has intimate access to the human soul, controlling its exercises, exciting its emotions, and leading it into the knowledge of the truth, v. 5.

4. The assurance of hope is founded on the consciousness of pious affections, and the witness of the Holy Spirit; and is a grace to which believers may and ought to attain, verses 4, 5.

5. The perseverance of the saints is to be attributed not to the strength of their love to God, nor to anything else in themselves, but solely to the free and infinite love of God in Christ Jesus. The praise is therefore no more due to them, than condemnation to a helpless infant for its mother's sleepless care. "Can a woman forget her sucking child," etc., verses 6-10.

6. Redemption is not by truth or moral influence, but by blood, verses 9, 10.

7. The primary object of the death of Christ was to render God propitious, to satisfy his justice, and not to influence human conduct, or display the divine character, for the sake of the moral effect of that exhibition. Again, its infinitely diversified results, all of which were designed, some of the most important, no doubt, are the sanctification of men, the display of the divine perfections, the prevention of sin, the happiness of the universe, etc. But the object of a sacrifice, as such, is to propitiate, verses 9, 10

8. All we have or hope for, we owe to Jesus Christ—peace, communion with God, joy, hope, eternal life; see the whole section, and the whole Bible.

### **REMARKS**

1. If we are the genuine children of God, we have peace of conscience, a sense of God's favour, and freedom of access to his throne. We endure afflictions with patience. Instead of making us distrustful of our heavenly Father, they afford us new proofs of his love, and strengthen our hope of his mercy. And we shall have, also, more or less of the assurance of God's love, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, verses 1-5.
2. None of these fruits of reconciliation with God can be obtained until the spirit of self-righteousness and self-dependence is removed. They are secured through faith, and by Christ Jesus, and not by our own works or merit, v. 1, etc.
3. The hope of the hypocrite is like a spider's web; the hope of the believer is an anchor to his soul, sure and steadfast, v. 5.
4. Assurance of the love of God never produces self-complacency pride; but always humility, self-abasement, wonder, gratitude, and praise. The believer sees that the mysterious fountain of this love is in divine mind; it is not in himself, who is ungodly and a sinner, vs. 8-10.
5. As the love of God in the gift of his Son, and the love of Christ dying for us, are the peculiar characteristics of the gospel, no one can be a true Christian on whom these truths do not exert a governing influence verses 9, 10; compare 2 Cor. v. 14.
6. True religion is joyful, verses 2, 11.

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