

he looked toward Rome, dictated to his amanuensis these words that speak alike of confidence in reviewing the past and courage in looking out upon the future.

Considering the text in the light of its historical setting, three questions present themselves for our consideration:

I. What was the Gospel in which Paul expressed such confidence?

II. What was the ground of his so great confidence in this Gospel?

III. What was the work which he regarded the Gospel as so well fitted to accomplish?

I. First then, what was the Gospel in which Paul expressed this confidence?

The epistle which follows is the answer to that question, and the theme of that epistle is given in the words that follow our text, 'For God's righteousness is in it unveiled by faith on to faith, as it is written the just man shall live by faith.' Now, what is this righteousness of God that is unveiled in the Gospel? It is not the attribute of God, that ineffable holiness of the Most High that is His essentially—rather it is God's justifying righteousness, the righteousness that He bestows, by which the sinner is acquitted of sin, accepted as holy, and received as a son by the just and righteous God. This view we are warranted to take from Paul's use of the word 'righteousness' throughout this epistle. In seven other passages the term is used, and each of them supports this interpretation: one only need be quoted as it clearly explains the others. In the third chapter, the apostle, speaking of this righteousness of God, describes it as that which secures that 'God may be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.' It is that which solves the problem of the ages, how man guilty and condemned can yet be received into fellowship and restored to communion with the eternally righteous God: how God, while honoring His law, which is His very nature and which man has broken

and set at naught, can bring men into relations of peace with Himself and look upon them as righteous. And it is worthy of note that it is the righteousness of God that the Gospel first reveals, not the love of God with which some would have us believe the Gospel is wholly occupied. Paul knew well that though love existed eternally, yet before it could have free exercise, law must be honored and the eternal demands of God's righteousness respected. He who sacrifices God's righteousness for God's love sacrifices the foundation upon which God's love must rest.

But the Gospel reveals God's justifying righteousness made man's by faith. First we see the glorious provision which the law and the love of God have united to provide for man, then we see this provision made ours by simple acceptance, for this is the apostle's view of faith. 'Faith is trust,' said the masters of Reformation theology, and though the Council of Trent laughed at the 'heretics' trust' yet the heretics had a good authority for their doctrine of faith in the apostle. Faith is the humble acceptance into the empty hand of God's rich gift; and thus it is that God's provision becomes ours. Paul knew nothing of merit on the sinner's part, he knew only his utter helplessness and the full provision which God was ready to bestow on every trusting heart. This then was the Gospel in which Paul gloried, this it was of which he cried as he looked towards Rome 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel.' These were the glad things which he so delighted to proclaim that he counted life valuable only as it afforded him opportunity for making known to men the glorious secret of God herein unveiled. It was no mere philosophy, no mode of life or scheme of morals, it was the glorious truth that God having given His Son to death, had satisfied forever all claims against the sinner, and that this Christ received as a free gift by