

own present living. The subject around which the chief interest gathers in the Epistle to the Thessalonians has passed away almost entirely when we come to those addressed to the churches in Colossæ and Ephesus. New matters of consideration have forced themselves upon the writer's mind in the later letters, because the assaults upon the truth, or the questionings of the Christian brethren, have become new. No less manifestly is this the case as we compare the Epistle to the Galatians either with those which precede or those which follow it. When Paul wrote to the Romans, a struggle was going forward as between the Judaistic and Pauline views on a question which was vital to the Christian system. We see the earnestness, and even violence of the struggle, in the Galatian letter, which was written only a few months earlier. The feeling of the Apostle is calmer as he addresses himself to the Roman believers, but the controversy is so far the same as to affect both his plan and his phraseology. He discusses the same great question of salvation by faith. Whether the Church at Rome was mainly Jewish or mainly Gentile, this question was the vital one of the hour, and, as he proposes to himself to send a letter to its members which might be a kind of representative of his personal presence, he naturally thinks of it as the one needing to be considered for the interests of both parties alike. He writes, therefore, upon this subject, and upon this subject only, so far as the doctrinal and principal part of the Epistle extends.

To my view, Paul writes as closely, as connectedly, and as exclusively along the line of this subject as any intelligent author could within the limitations of the epistolary style. He establishes his doctrine by arguments, both of a more general and more specific character; he sets forth the consequences flowing from it in the way of blessing, as it is thus established; he defends it against objections, and brings out the glorious consummation which it involves; and, finally, he presses upon his readers the comprehensive exhortation to which it leads—that they should consecrate themselves, both in body and mind, to God. If this view is correct, and the writer has a single aim, and a single end before his mind, it readily follows that he may sometimes incidentally, and for the accomplishment of his main purpose, introduce statements connected with certain doctrines of the Christian system without expressing himself fully or with minuteness of detail respecting them. They are brought into the discourse not for their own sake, but to elucidate or to help forward the views on the main theme which he is defending. If we lose sight of this fact, we are liable to fall into error as to his meaning, and to interpret him by the mere words of a particular sentence, instead of making the thought of the context determine and limit the force of the individual statement. How often such error has resulted is manifest from the history of theological discussion and controversy. The Apostle