

those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Aspiration.] We adore the gracious conduct of thy providence, O Lord, interposing to moderate the sufferings of this holy and heavenly man, and thereby giving him an opportunity of performing various and extensive services in the promoting of thy cause and kingdom, of which he must other-

Jews acted in such a manner, under the most awakening means, as if they had studied artful ways of making themselves insensible; and were determined not to receive the message of God, and the salvation which it set before them. It is to be feared, that the same spirit prevails among the Jews unto this day. Paul was now resolved to address the Gentiles, as he had opportunity; in doing which he hoped for more success.—He dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, doing all he could to promote the cause of his divine Master; for he received all that came unto him for instruction in the way of life; “preaching the kingdom of God,” as established in the person of his Son, and “teaching those things which relate to the Lord Jesus Christ, with all freedom and

wise have been incapable. The wrath of man shall praise thee; and the remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain. The labours and the sufferings of thy servants are all appointed by thee, according to thine own infinite wisdom, and neither earth nor hell shall be able to disconcert the plans, which thou hast laid. Thy counsel shall stand, and thou wilt do all thy pleasure. We thank thee for this most interesting narrative relating to the affairs of thy church in the days of the apostles. Bless the perusal of it to our souls, and may primitive Christianity be happily revived in our day. Amen.

confidence, no man forbidding him.” During this period, he wrote many of those excellent epistles which come next under our consideration; as, that to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, to the Philippians, and to Philemon, with perhaps some others. It seems highly probable, that, at the end of the two years here mentioned, he was released from his confinement. About the year of Christ sixty-five, he returned to Rome; where, after some time, he was thrown into prison, as many other Christians were, on a vile pretence of being concerned in setting fire to the city. Nero put him to death soon after the second epistle to Timothy was written. It is said, he was beheaded not far from Rome; not being crucified, as some others were; probably because he was free of that city.

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE ROMANS.

CHAP. I.

1—6 Paul, by way of introduction, asserts his commission.
7 He salutes the brethren at Rome. 8—10 He offers up his prayers and thanksgivings for them. 11—15 Expresses his desire to see them, and to preach to them. 16, 17 He then opens his main design, concerning justification by Christ; 18—32 and sets forth the abominations of the Gentiles, to shew that they could not be saved by any works of their own, since the law of nature was so awfully violated by them.

PAUL, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)
3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;
4 And declared to be the Son of God with power,

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ROMANS.] The apostle Paul wrote this excellent epistle while he was at Corinth, as appears from his sending it by Phœbe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea, a port belonging to Corinth, chap. xvi. 1. The epistle contains salutations from Gaius, an inhabitant of Corinth, and from Erastus, the chamberlain of that city, chap. xvi. 23. It is supposed to have been written about the year fifty-seven, or fifty-eight. The general design of the apostle in this letter is, to fix on the minds of those to whom he wrote, a deep sense of the excellency of the gospel; and to engage them to act in a manner agreeable to their profession of it. He first shows, that the world stood in great need of such a dispensation, on account of the deep depravity of both Jews and Gentiles; and the impossibility of any man's being justified and saved by his own obedience. He then states the method of justification and salvation revealed in the gospel, through the redemption which is by Jesus Christ. He proves, illustrates, and exemplifies this very clearly; and shows, that the evangelical doctrine is connected with sanctification and obedience. He speaks of the believer's experience, and inward conflicts; and then, at large, sets forth his character, his hopes, his privileges, and his security. Hence he is led to treat of the sovereign mercy and love of God, which he illustrates, by the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles. He then applies the whole, by a rich variety of practical exhortations, precepts, and instructions, enforced by evangelical motives.—In a word, this part of scripture is of unspeakable value; and is, perhaps, the most methodical and systematical of any of the epistles of this great apostle.

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CHAP. I. Ver. 1—4. *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, &c.*] The Christian brethren at Rome are here addressed by Paul, once a persecutor of the church, but who now regarded it as his honour and happiness to be a servant of Jesus Christ, absolutely under his command, and at his disposal; being called by his grace, and invested with the character of an apostle in the church; separated and appointed to the gospel of God, to preach it to the world, and to spend his life in promoting it. That gospel, he tells them, is no new invention; but what was promised, and, in some measure, declared and exhibited, “by his prophets in the holy scriptures.” This gospel is chiefly concerning Jesus Christ the Son of God; he is the sum and substance of it. He was “born of the seed and family of David, according to the flesh;” that is, with respect to his human descent: but he was determinately marked out and declared to be the Son of God, by that divine power which raised him from the dead, “according to the Spirit of holiness.”—The Spirit of holiness intends, not the divine nature of Christ, but the Holy Spirit himself. Reference seems to be had to the pouring out of the Divine Spirit on the witnesses of Christ's resurrection: for the apostle is speaking of the proof of Christ's being the Son of God, which was given by his being raised from the dead. The gift of the Holy Spirit, in so extraordinary a manner, to the witnesses of his resurrection, was a divine attestation to what they declared concerning it; thus he was determined to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection; which event was fully demonstrated by the Spirit of holiness, in the miraculous gifts which he bestowed, and the astonishing effects which followed. Christ