

The Doctrines of Grace Do Not Lead to Sin

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately argues that the doctrines of grace, far from encouraging sin, empower believers to overcome sin through God's transformative mercy and love.

Scripture: Romans 6:14-15, Ephesians 2:8, John 3:16, Titus 2:11-12

Topics: "Grace", "Sin and Holiness", "Salvation"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon addresses the common objection that the doctrines of grace lead to sin and moral laxity. He explains that grace is the very essence of the gospel, bringing true salvation that frees believers from the power and love of sin. Drawing on Scripture and historical examples, Spurgeon demonstrates that grace promotes holiness and godly living rather than licentiousness. This sermon challenges misconceptions and encourages believers to embrace the transforming power of God's mercy.

Transcript

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.”—Romans 6:14, 15.

Last Sabbath morning I tried to show that the substance and essence of the true gospel is the doctrine of God's grace—that, in fact, if you take away the grace of God from the gospel you have extracted from it its very life-blood, and there is nothing left worth preaching, worth believing, or worth contending for. Grace is the soul of the gospel: without it the gospel is dead. Grace is the music of the gospel: without it the gospel is silent as to all comfort. I endeavoured also to set forth the doctrine of grace in brief terms, teaching that God deals with sinful men upon the footing of pure mercy: finding them guilty and condemned, he gives free pardons, altogether irrespective of past character, or of any good works which may be foreseen. Moved only by pity he devises a plan for their rescue from sin and its consequences—a plan in which grace is the leading feature. Out of free favour he has provided, in the death of his dear Son, an atonement by means of which his mercy can be justly bestowed. He accepts all those who place their trust in this atonement, selecting faith as the way of salvation, that it may be all of grace. In this he acts, from a motive found within himself, and not because of any reason found in the sinner's conduct, past, present, or future. I tried to show that this grace of God flows towards the sinner from of old, and begins its operations upon him when there is nothing good in him: it works in him that which is good and acceptable, and continues so to work in him till the deed of grace is complete, and the believer is received up into the glory

for which he is made meet. Grace commences to save, and it perseveres till all is done. From first to last, from the “A” to the “Z” of the heavenly alphabet, everything in salvation is of grace, and grace alone; all is of free favour, nothing of merit. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,” “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

No sooner is this doctrine set forth in a clear light than men begin to cavil at it. It is the target for all carnal logic to shoot at. Unrenewed minds never did like it, and they never will; it is so humbling to human pride, making so light of the nobility of human nature. That men are to be saved by divine charity, that they must as condemned criminals receive pardon by the exercise of the royal prerogative, or else perish in their sins, is a teaching which they cannot endure. God alone is exalted in the sovereignty of his mercy; and the sinner can do no better than meekly touch the silver scepter, and accept undeserved favour just because God wills to give it:—this is not pleasant to the great minds of our philosophers, and the broad phylacteries of our moralists, and therefore they turn aside, and fight against the empire of grace. Straightway the unrenewed man seeks out artillery with which to fight against the gospel of the grace of God, and one of the biggest guns he has ever brought to the front is the declaration that the doctrine of the grace of God must lead to licentiousness. If great sinners are freely saved, then men will more readily become great sinners; and if when God’s grace regenerates a man it abides with him, then men will infer that they may live as they like, and yet be saved. This is the constantly-repeated objection which I have heard till it wearies me with its vain and false noise. I am almost ashamed to have to refute so rotten an argument. They dare to assert that men will take license to be guilty because God is gracious, and they do not hesitate to say that if men are not to be saved by their works they will come to the conclusion that their conduct is a matter of indifference, and that they may as well sin that grace may abound.

This morning I want to talk a little about this notion; for in part it is a great mistake, and in part it is a great lie. In part it is a mistake because it arises from misconception, and in part it is a lie because men know better, or might know better if they pleased.

I begin by admitting that the charge does appear somewhat probable. It does seem very likely that if we are to go up and down the country, and say, “The very chief of sinners may be forgiven through believing in Jesus Christ, for God is displaying mercy to the very vilest of the vile,” then sin will seem to be a cheap thing. If we are everywhere to cry, “Come, ye sinners, come and welcome, and receive free and immediate pardon through the sovereign grace of God,” it does seem probable that some may basely reply, “Let us sin without stint, for we can easily obtain forgiveness.” But that which looks to be probable is not, therefore, certain: on the contrary, the improbable and the unexpected full often come to pass. In questions of moral influence nothing is more deceptive than theory. The ways of the human mind are not to be laid down with a pencil and compasses; man is a singular being. Even that which is logical is not always inevitable, for men’s minds are not governed by the rules of the schools. I believe that the inference which would lead men to sin because grace reigns is not logical, but the very reverse; and I venture to assert that, as a matter of fact, ungodly men do not, as a rule plead the grace of God as an excuse for their sin. As a rule they are too indifferent to care about reasons at all; and if they do offer an excuse it is usually more flimsy and superficial. There may be a few men of perverse minds who have used this argument, but there is no accounting for the freaks of the fallen understanding. I shrewdly suspect that in any cases in which such reasoning has been put forward it was a mere pretence, and by no means a plea which satisfied the sinner’s own conscience. If men do thus excuse themselves, it is generally in some veiled manner, for the most of them would be utterly ashamed to state the argument in plain terms. I question whether the devil himself would be found reasoning thus—“God is merciful,

therefore let us be more sinful.” It is so diabolical an inference, that I do not like to charge my fellow-men with it, though our moralist opposers do not hesitate thus to degrade them. Surely, no intelligent being can really persuade itself that the goodness of God is a reason for offending him more than ever. Moral insanity produces strange reasonings, but it is my solemn conviction that very rarely do men practically consider the grace of God to be a motive for sin. That which seems so probable at the first blush, is not so when we come to consider it.

I have admitted that a few human beings have turned the grace of God into lasciviousness; but I trust no one will ever argue against any doctrine on account of the perverse use made of it by the baser sort. Cannot every truth be perverted? Is there a single doctrine of Scripture which graceless hands have not twisted into mischief? Is there not an almost infinite ingenuity in wicked men for making evil out of good? If we are to condemn a truth because of the misbehaviour of individuals who profess to believe it, we should be found condemning our Lord himself for what Judas did, and our holy faith would die at the hands of apostates and hypocrites. Let us act like rational men. We do not find fault with ropes because poor insane creatures have hanged themselves therewith; nor do we ask that the wares of Sheffield may be destroyed because edged tools are the murderer’s instruments.

It may appear probable that the doctrine of free grace will be made into a license for sin, but a better acquaintance with the curious working of the human mind corrects the notion. Fallen as human nature is, it is still human, and therefore does not take kindly to certain forms of evil—such, for instance, as inhuman ingratitude. It is hardly human to multiply injuries upon those who return us continued benefits. The case reminds me of the story of half-a-dozen boys who had severe fathers, accustomed to flog them within an inch of their lives. Another boy was with them who was tenderly beloved by his parents, and known to do so. These young gentlemen met together to hold a council of war about robbing an orchard. They were all of them anxious to get about it except the favoured youth, who did not enjoy the proposal. One of them cried out, “You need not be afraid: if our fathers catch us at this work, we shall be half-killed, but your father won’t lay a hand upon you.” The little boy answered, “And do you think because my father is kind to me, that therefore I will do wrong and grieve him? I will do nothing of the sort to my dear father. He is so good to me that I cannot vex him.” It would appear that the argument of the many boys was not overpoweringly convincing to their companion: the opposite conclusion was quite as logical, and evidently carried weight with it. If God is good to the undeserving, some men will go into sin, but there are others of a nobler order whom the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. They scorn the beast-like argument—that the more loving God is, the more rebellious we may be; and they feel that against a God of goodness it is an evil thing to rebel.

By-the-way I cannot help observing that I have known persons object to the evil influence of the doctrines of grace who were by no means qualified by their own morality to be judges of the subject. Morals must be in a poor way when immoral persons become their guardians. The doctrine of justification by faith is frequently objected to as injurious to morals. A newspaper some time ago quoted a verse from one of our popular hymns—

“Weary, working, plodding one,

Why toil you so?

Cease your doing; all was done

Long, long ago.

"Till to Jesus' work you cling

By a simple faith,

'Doing' is a deadly thing,

'Doing' ends in death."

This is styled mischievous teaching. When I read the article I felt a deep interest in this corrector of Luther and Paul, and I wondered how much he had drunk in order to elevate his mind to such a pitch of theological knowledge. I have found men pleading against the doctrines of grace on the ground that they did not promote morality, to whom I could have justly replied, "What has morality to do with you, or you with it?" These sticklers for good works are not often the doers of them. Let legalists look to their own hands and tongues, and leave the gospel of grace and its advocates to answer for themselves.

Looking back in history, I see upon its pages a refutation of the oft-repeated calumny. Who dares to suggest that the men who believed in the grace of God have been sinners above other sinners? With all their faults, those who throw stones at them will be few if they first prove themselves to be their superiors in character. When have they been the patrons of vice, or the defenders of injustice? Pitch upon the point in English history when this doctrine was very strong in the land; who were the men that held these doctrines most firmly? Men like Owen, Charnock, Manton, Howe, and I hesitate not to add Oliver Cromwell. What kind of men were these? Did they pander to the licentiousness of a court? Did they invent a Book of Sports for Sabbath diversion? Did they haunt ale-houses and places of revelry? Every historian will tell you, the greatest fault of these men in the eyes of their enemies was that they were too precise for the generation in which they lived, so that they called them Puritans, and condemned them as holding a gloomy theology. Sirs, if there was iniquity in the land in that day, it was to be found with the theological party which preached up salvation by works. The gentlemen with their womanish locks and essenced hair, whose speech savoured of profanity, were the advocates of salvation by works, and all bedabbled with lust they pleaded for human merit; but the men who believed in grace alone were of another style. They were not in the chambers of rioting and wantonness; where were they? They might be found on their knees crying to God for help in temptation; and in persecuting times they might be found in prison, cheerfully suffering the loss of all things for the truth's sake. The Puritans were the godliest men on the face of the earth. Are men so inconsistent as to nickname them for their purity, and yet say that their doctrines lead to sin?

Nor is this a solitary instance—this instance of Puritanism; all history confirms the rule: and when it is said that these doctrines will create sin, I appeal to facts, and leave the oracle to answer as it may. If we are ever to see a pure and godly England we must have a gospelized England: if we are to put down drunkenness and the social evil it must be by the proclamation of the grace of God. Men must be forgiven by grace, renewed by grace, transformed by grace, sanctified by grace, preserved by grace; and when that comes to pass the golden age will dawn; but while they are merely taught their duty, and left to do it of themselves in their own strength, it is labour in vain. You may flog a dead horse a long while before it will stir: you need to put life into it, for else all your flogging will fail. To teach men to walk who have no feet is poor work, and such is instruction in morals before grace gives a heart to love holiness. The gospel alone supplies men with motive and strength, and therefore it is to the gospel that we must look as the real reformer of men.

I shall fight this morning with the objection before us as I shall find strength. The doctrine of grace, the whole plan of salvation by grace, is most promotive of holiness. Wherever it comes it helps us to say, "God forbid," to the question, "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" This I would set out in the clear sunlight.

I wish to call your attention to some six or seven points.

I. First, you will see that the gospel of the grace of God promotes real holiness in men by remembering that THE SALVATION WHICH IT BRINGS IS SALVATION FROM THE POWER OF SIN. When we preach salvation to the vilest of men, some suppose we mean by that a mere deliverance from hell and an entrance into heaven. It includes all that, and results in that, but that is not what we mean. What we mean by salvation is this—deliverance from the love of sin, rescue from the habit of sin, setting free from the desire to sin. Now listen. If it be so, that that boon of deliverance from sin is the gift of divine grace, in what way will that gift, or the free distribution of it, produce sin? I fail to see any such danger. On the contrary, I say to the man who proclaims a gracious promise of victory over sin, "Make all speed: go up and down throughout the world, and tell the vilest of mankind that God is willing by his grace to set them free from the love of sin and to make new creatures of them." Suppose the salvation we preach be this:—you that have lived ungodly and wicked lives may enjoy your sins, and yet escape the penalty—that would be mischievous indeed; but if it be this,—you that live the most ungodly and wicked lives may yet by believing in the Lord Jesus be enabled to change those lives, so that you shall live unto God instead of serving sin and Satan,—what harm can come to the most prudish morals? Why, I say spread such a gospel, and let it circulate through every part of our vast empire, and let all men hear it, whether they rule in the House of Lords or suffer in the house of bondage. Tell them everywhere that God freely and of infinite grace is willing to renew men, and make them new creatures in Christ Jesus. Can any evil consequences come of the freest proclamation of this news? The worse men are, the more gladly would we see them embracing this truth, for these are they who most need it. I say to every one of you, whoever you may be, whatever your past condition, God can renew you according to the power of his grace; so that you who are to him like dead, dry bones, can be made to live by his Spirit. That renewal will be seen in holy thoughts, and pure words, and righteous acts to the glory of God. In great love he is prepared to work all these things in all who believe. Why should any men be angry at such a statement? What possible harm can come of it? I defy the most cunning adversary to object, upon the ground of morals, to God's giving men new hearts and right spirits even as he pleases.

II. Secondly, let it not be forgotten as a matter of fact that THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE HAS BEEN FOUND TO POSSESS VERY GREAT POWER OVER MEN. In the infancy of history nations dream that crime can be put down by severity, and they rely upon fierce punishments; but experience corrects the error. Our forefathers dreaded forgery, which is a troublesome fraud, and interferes with the confidence which should exist between man and man. To put it down they made forgery a capital offence. Alas for the murders committed by that law! Yet the constant use of the gallows was never sufficient to stamp out the crime. Many offences have been created and multiplied by the penalty which was meant to suppress them. Some offences have almost ceased when the penalty against them has been lightened.

It is a notable fact as to men, that if they are forbidden to do a thing they straightway pine to do it, though they had never thought of doing it before. Law commands obedience, but does not promote it; it often creates disobedience, and an over-weighted penalty has been known to provoke an offence. Law fails, but love wins.

Love in any case makes sin infamous. If one should rob another it would be sufficiently bad; but suppose a man robbed his friend, who had helped him often when he was in need, everyone would say that his crime was most disgraceful. Love brands sin on the forehead with a red-hot iron. If a man should kill an enemy, the offence would be grievous; but if he slew his father, to whom he owes his life, or his mother, on whose breasts he was nursed in infancy, then all would cry out against the monster. In the light of love sin is seen to be exceeding sinful.

Nor is this all. Love has a great constraining power towards the highest form of virtue. Deeds to which a man could not be compelled on the ground of law, men have cheerfully done because of love. Would our brave seamen man the life-boat to obey an Act of Parliament? No, they would indignantly revolt against being forced to risk their lives; but they will do it freely to save their fellow-men. Remember that text of the apostle, "Scarcely for a righteous (or merely just) man will one die: yet peradventure," says he, "for a good (benevolent) man some would even dare to die." Goodness wins the heart, and one is ready to die for the kind and generous. Look how men have thrown away their lives for great leaders. That was an immortal saying of the wounded French soldier. When searching for the bullet the surgeon cut deeply, and the patient cried out, "A little lower and you will touch the Emperor," meaning that the Emperor's name was written on his heart. In several notable instances men have thrown themselves into the jaws of death to save a leader whom they loved. Duty holds the fort, but love casts its body in the way of the deadly bullet. Who would think of sacrificing his life on the ground of law? Love alone counts not life so dear as the service of the beloved. Love to Jesus creates a heroism of which law knows nothing. All the history of the church of Christ, when it has been true to its Lord, is a proof of this.

Kindness also, working by the law of love, has often changed the most unworthy, and therein proved that it is not a factor of evil. We have often heard the story of the soldier who had been degraded to the ranks, and flogged and imprisoned, and yet for all that he would get drunk and misbehave himself. The commanding officer said one day, "I have tried almost everything with this man, and can do nothing with him. I will try one thing more." When he was brought in, the officer addressed him, and said, "You seem incorrigible: we have tried everything with you; there seems to be no hope of a change in your wicked conduct. I am determined to try if another plan will have any effect. Though you deserve flogging and long imprisonment, I shall freely forgive you." The man was greatly moved by the unexpected and undeserved pardon, and became a good soldier. The story wears truth on its brow: we all see that it would probably end so.

That anecdote is such good argument that I will give you another. A drunkard woke up one morning from his drunken sleep, with his clothes on him just as he had rolled down the night before. He saw his only child, his daughter Millie, getting his breakfast. Coming to his senses he said to her, "Millie, why do you stay with me?" She answered, "Because you are my father, and because I love you." He looked at himself, and saw what a sottish, ragged, good-for-nothing creature he was, and he answered her, "Millie, do you really love me?" The child cried, "Yes, father, I do, and I will never leave you, because when mother died she said, 'Millie, stick to your father, and always pray for him, and one of these days he will give up drink, and be a good father to you'; so I will never leave you." Is it wonderful when I add that, as the story has it, Millie's father cast away his drink, and became a Christian man? It would have been more remarkable if he had not. Millie was trying free grace, was she not? According to our moralists she should have said, "Father, you are a horrible wretch! I have stuck to you long enough: I must now leave you, or else I shall be encouraging other fathers to get drunk." Under such proper dealing I fear Millie's father would have continued a drunkard till he drank himself into perdition. But the power of love made a better man of him.

Do not these instances prove that undeserved love has a great influence for good?

Hear another story: In the old persecuting times there lived in Cheapside one who feared God and attended the secret meetings of the saints; and near him there dwelt a poor cobbler, whose wants were often relieved by the merchant; but the poor man was a cross-grained being, and, most ungratefully, from hope of reward, laid an information against his kind friend on the score of religion. This accusation would have brought the merchant to death by burning if he had not found a means of escape. Returning to his house, the injured man did not change his generous behaviour to the malignant cobbler, but, on the contrary, was more liberal than ever. The cobbler was, however, in an ill mood, and avoided the good man with all his might, running away at his approach. One day he was obliged to meet him face to face, and the Christian man asked him gently, "Why do you shun me? I am not your enemy. I know all that you did to injure me, but I never had an angry thought against you. I have helped you, and I am willing to do so as long as I live, only let us be friends." Do you marvel that they clasped hands? Would you wonder if ere long the poor man was found at the Lollards' meeting? All such anecdotes rest upon the assured fact that grace has a strange subduing power, and leads men to goodness, drawing them with cords of love, and bands of a man. The Lord knows that bad as men are the key of their hearts hangs on the nail of love. He knows that his almighty goodness, though often baffled, will triumph in the end. I believe my point is proved. To myself it is so. However, we must pass on.

III. There is no fear that the doctrine of the grace of God will lead men to sin, because ITS OPERATIONS ARE CONNECTED WITH A SPECIAL REVELATION OF THE EVIL OF SIN. Iniquity is made to be exceeding bitter before it is forgiven or when it is forgiven. When God begins to deal with a man with a view of blotting out his sins and making him his child, he usually causes him to see his evil ways in all their heinousness; he makes him look on sin with fixed eyes, till he cries with David, "My sin is ever before me." In my own case, when under conviction of sin, no cheering object met my mental eye, my soul saw only darkness and a horrible tempest. It seemed as though a horrible spot were painted on my eyeballs. Guilt, like a grim chamberlain, drew the curtains of my bed, so that I rested not, but in my slumbers anticipated the wrath to come. I felt that I had offended God, and that this was the most awful thing a human being could do. I was out of order with my Creator, out of order with the universe; I had damned myself for ever, and I wondered that I did not immediately feel the gnawing of the undying worm. Even to this hour a sight of sin causes the most dreadful emotions in my heart. Any man or woman here who has passed through that experience, or anything like it, will henceforth feel a deep horror of sin. A burnt child dreads the fire. "No," says the sinner to his tempter, "you once deceived me, and I so smarted in consequence, that I will not again be deluded. I have been delivered, like a brand from the burning, and I cannot go back to the fire." By the operations of grace we are made weary of sin; we loathe both it and its imaginary pleasures. We would utterly exterminate it from the soil of our nature. It is a thing accursed, even as Amalek was to Israel. If you, my friend, do not detest every sinful thing, I fear you are still in the gall of bitterness; for one of the sure fruits of the Spirit is a love of holiness, and a loathing of every false way. A deep inward experience forbids the child of God to sin: he has known within himself its judgment and its condemnation, and henceforth it is a thing abhorrent to him. An enmity both fierce and endless exists between the chosen seed and the serpent brood of evil: hence the fear that grace will be abused is abundantly safeguarded.

IV. Remember also that not only is the forgiven man thus set against sin by the process of conviction, but EVERY MAN WHO TASTES OF THE SAVING GRACE OF GOD IS MADE A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST JESUS. Now if the doctrine of grace in the hands of an ordinary man might be dangerous, yet it would cease to be so in the hands of one who is quickened by the Spirit, and created anew in the image of

God. The Holy Spirit comes upon the chosen one, and transforms him: his ignorance is removed, his affections are changed, his understanding is enlightened, his will is subdued, his desires are refined, his life is changed—in fact, he is as one new-born, to whom all things have become new. This change is compared in Scripture to the resurrection from the dead, to a creation, and to a new birth. This takes place in every man who becomes a partaker of the free grace of God. “Ye must be born again,” said Christ to Nicodemus; and gracious men are born again. One said the other day, “If I believed that I was eternally saved, I should live in sin.” Perhaps you would; but if you were renewed in heart you would not. “But,” says one, “if I believed God loved me from before the foundation of the world, and that therefore I should be saved, I would take a full swing of sin.” Perhaps you and the devil would; but God’s regenerate children are not of so base a nature. To them the abounding grace of the Father is a bond to righteousness which they never think of breaking: they feel the sweet constraints of sacred gratitude, and desire to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. All beings live according to their nature, and the regenerated man works out the holy instincts of his renewed mind: crying after holiness, warring against sin, labouring to be pure in all things, the regenerate man puts forth all his strength towards that which is pure and perfect. A new heart makes all the difference. Given a new nature, and then all the propensities run in a different way, and the blessings of almighty love no longer involve peril, but suggest the loftiest aspirations.

V. One of the chief securities for the holiness of the pardoned is found in the way of CLEANSING THROUGH ATONEMENT. The blood of Jesus sanctifies as well as pardons. The sinner learns that his free pardon cost the life of his best Friend; that in order to his salvation the Son of God himself agonized even to a bloody sweat, and died forsaken of his God. This causes a sacred mourning for sin, as he looks upon the Lord whom he pierced. Love to Jesus burns within the pardoned sinner’s breast, for the Lord is his Redeemer; and therefore he feels a burning indignation against the murderous evil of sin. To him all manner of evil is detestable, since it is stained with the Saviour’s heart’s blood. As the penitent sinner hears the cry of, “Eloi, sabachthani!” he is horrified to think that one so pure and good should be forsaken of heaven because of the sin which he bore in his people’s stead. From the death of Jesus the mind draws the conclusion that sin is exceedingly sinful in the sight of the Lord; for if eternal justice would not spare even the Well-beloved Jesus when imputed sin was upon him, how much less will it spare guilty men? It must be a thing unutterably full of poison which could make even the immaculate Jesus suffer so terribly. Nothing can be imagined which can have greater power over gracious minds than the vision of a crucified Saviour denouncing sin by all his wounds, and by every falling drop of blood. What! live in the sin which slew Jesus? Find pleasure in that which wrought his death? Trifle with that which laid his glory in the dust? Impossible! Thus you see that the gifts of free grace, when handed down by a pierced hand, are never likely to suggest self-indulgence in sin, but the very reverse.

VI. Sixthly, a man who becomes a partaker of divine grace, and receives the new nature, is ever afterwards A PARTAKER OF DAILY HELPS FROM GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT. God the Holy Ghost deigns to dwell in the bosom, of every man whom God has saved by his grace. Is not that a wonderful means of sanctifying? By what process can men be better kept from sin than by having the Holy Spirit himself to dwell as Vice-regent within their hearts? The Ever-blessed Spirit leads believers to be much in prayer, and what a power for holiness is found in the child of grace speaking to the heavenly Father! The tempted man flies to his chamber, unbosoms his grief to God, looks to the flowing wounds of his Redeemer, and comes down strong to resist temptation. The divine word also, with its precepts and promises, is a never-failing source of sanctification. Were it not that we every day bathe in the sacred fountain of eternal strength we might soon be weak and irresolute; but fellowship with God renews us in our vigorous warfare with sin. How is it possible that the doctrines of grace should suggest sin to men who constantly draw near

to God? The renewed man is also by God's Spirit frequently quickened in conscience; so that things which heretofore did not strike him as sinful are seen in a clearer light, and are consequently condemned. I know that certain matters are sinful to me today which did not appear so ten years ago: my judgment has, I trust, been more and more cleared of the blindness of sin. The natural conscience is callous and hard; but the gracious conscience grows more and more tender till at last it becomes as sensitive as a raw wound. He who has most grace is most conscious of his need of more grace. The gracious are often afraid to put one foot before another for fear of doing wrong. Have you not felt this holy fear, this sacred caution? It is by this means that the Holy Spirit prevents your ever turning your Christian liberty into licentiousness, or daring to make the grace of God an argument for folly.

Then, in addition to this, the good Spirit leads us into high and hallowed intercourse with God, and I defy a man to live upon the mount with God, and then come down to transgress like men of the world. If thou hast walked the palace floor of glory, and seen the King in his beauty, till the light of his countenance has been thy heaven, thou canst not be content with the gloom and murkiness of the tents of wickedness. To lie, to deceive, to feign, as the men of the world do, will no longer beseem thee. Thou art of another race, and thy conversation is above them: "Thy speech betrayeth thee." If thou dost indeed dwell with God, the perfume of the ivory palaces will be about thee, and men will know that thou hast been in other haunts than theirs. If the child of God goes wrong in any degree, he loses to some extent the sweetness of his communion, and only as he walks carefully with God does he enjoy full fellowship; so that this rising or falling in communion becomes a sort of parental discipline in the house of the Lord. We have no court with a judge, but we have home with its fatherhood, its smile and its rod. We lack not for order in the family of love, for our Father dealeth with us as with sons. Thus, in a thousand ways, all danger of our presuming upon the grace of God is effectually removed.

VII. THE ENTIRE ELEVATION OF THE MAN WHO IS MADE A PARTAKER OF THE GRACE OF GOD is also a special preservative against sin. I venture to say, though it may be controverted, that the man who believes the glorious doctrines of grace is usually a much higher style of man than the person who has no opinion upon the matter. What do most men think about? Bread-and-butter, house-rent and clothes. But the men who consider the doctrines of the gospel muse upon the everlasting covenant, predestination, immutable love, effectual calling, God in Christ Jesus, the work of the Spirit, justification, sanctification, adoption, and such like noble themes. Why, it is a refreshment merely to look over the catalogue of these grand truths! Others are as children playing with little sand-heaps on the seashore; but the believer in free grace walks among hills and mountains. The themes of thought around him tower upward, Alps on Alps; the man's mental stature rises with his surroundings, and he becomes a thoughtful being, communing with sublimities. No small matter this, for a thing so apt to grovel as the average human intellect. So far as deliverance from mean vices and degrading lusts must in this way be promoted, I say, it is no small thing. Thoughtlessness is the prolific mother of iniquity. It is a hopeful sign when minds begin to roam among lofty truths. The man who has been taught of God to think will not so readily sin as the being whose mind is buried beneath his flesh. The man has now obtained a different view of himself from that which led him to trifle away his time with the idea that there was nothing better for him than to be merry while he could. He says, "I am one of God's chosen, ordained to be his son, his heir, joint-heir with Jesus Christ. I am set apart to be a king and priest unto God, and as such I cannot be godless, nor live for the common objects of life." He rises in the object of his pursuit: he cannot henceforth live unto himself, for he is not his own, he is bought with a price. Now he dwells in the presence of God, and life to him is real, earnest, and sublime. He cares not to scrape together gold with the muck-rake of the covetous, for he is immortal, and must needs seek eternal gains. He feels that he is born for divine purposes, and enquires "Lord, what wouldst

thou have me to do?" He feels that God has loved him that his love may flow forth to others. God's choice of any one man has a bearing upon all the rest: he elects a Joseph that a whole family, a whole nation, nay, the whole world, may be preserved alive when famine had broken the staff of bread. We are each one as a lamp kindled that we may shine in the dark, and light up other lamps.

New hopes come crowding on the man who is saved by grace. His immortal spirit enjoys glimpses of the endless. As God has loved him in time, he believes that the like love will bless him in eternity. He knows that his Redeemer lives, and that in the latter days he shall behold him; and therefore he has no fears for the future. Even while here below he begins to sing the songs of the angels, for his spirit spies from afar the dawn of the glory which is yet to be revealed. Thus with joyous heart and light footstep he goes forward to the unknown future as merrily as to a wedding-feast.

Is there a sinner here, a guilty sinner, one who has no merit, no claim to mercy whatever; is there one willing to be saved by God's free grace through believing in Jesus Christ? Then let me tell thee, sinner, there is not a word in God's book against thee, not a line or syllable, but everything is in thy favour. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief. Jesus came into the world to save thee. Only do thou trust him, and rest in him. I will tell thee what ought to fetch thee to Christ at once, it is the thought of his amazing love. A profligate son had been a great grief to his father; he had robbed him and disgraced him, and at last he ended by bringing his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. He was a horrible wretch of a son: no one could have been more graceless. However, he attended his father's funeral, and he stayed to hear the will read: perhaps it was the chief reason why he was there. He had fully made up his mind that his father would cut him off with a shilling, and he meant to make it very unpleasant for the rest of the family. To his great astonishment, as the will was read it ran something like this: "As for my son Richard, though he has fearfully wasted my substance, and though he has often grieved my heart, I would have him know that I consider him still to be my own dear child, and therefore, in token of my undying love, I leave him the same share as the rest of his brothers." He left the room; he could not stand it, the surprising love of his father had mastered him. He came down to the executor the next morning, and said, "You surely did not read correctly?" "Yes I did; there it stands." "Then," he said, "I feel ready to curse myself that I ever grieved my dear old father. Oh, that I could fetch him back again!" Love was born in that base heart by an unexpected display of love. May not your case be similar? Our Lord Jesus Christ is dead, but he has left it in his will that the chief of sinners are objects of his choicest mercy. Dying he prayed, "Father, forgive them." Risen he pleads for transgressors. Sinners are ever on his mind: their salvation is his great object. His blood is for them, his heart for them, his righteousness for them, his heaven for them. Come, O ye guilty ones, and receive your legacy. Put out the hand of faith and grasp your portion. Trust Jesus with your souls, and he will save you. God bless you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans 6.

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