

Deliverance of Power

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding our guilt and sin, and how the law of God convicts us of our sin, but ultimately points us to Christ as the answer to our guilt and sin.

Duration: 37:40

Scripture: Isaiah 1:6, Luke 19:10, Romans 5:6-7

Topics: "Power"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the love of Christ and the significance of His death for humanity. The speaker highlights four characteristics of mankind: being without strength, without a God, sinners, and enemies. The speaker emphasizes that Christ died for those who were hopeless and unable to change their hearts or past actions. The sermon concludes with a challenge for individuals to reflect on whether they have truly experienced the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Transcript

There are three problems that confront all of us, and we would see these three problems clearly before we see the answer to them. The first problem that you face as a morally responsible person is the problem of what you have done, that is, the sins of the past. God is a just and righteous God, and he has said, the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die.

Thus the first problem is the problem of guilt, that we have incurred because of our revolt and our rebellion against God. What are we going to do about the past? The second problem is what are we going to do about ourselves? It's not only what we've done that haunts us, but it's what we are, what we know ourselves to be, our nature, our traits, our character, and our tendencies, all of which seem to be, have a gravitational pull in the direction of evil. So the first problem, what we've done.

The second problem, what we are. How are we ever going to escape from the tyranny of our own nature and personality? And then the third problem is this, how are we going to be able to do what we've now come to want to do and know we ought to do? And so the third problem is that of power, of ability, to be the kind of person that we know we ought to be, and to have the ministry that we understand we ought to have. Three problems, what we are, what we've done rather, what we are, and how we're going to be able to do what we know we ought to do.

Now I find in this portion here of Romans 7, three laws that correspond to these problems. And if you will turn to Romans 7 in the fourteenth verse, I believe you will see. Now let's begin, however, with the seventh verse, shall we? What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid, I had not known sin but for the law, or I had not known lust except the law had said, But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, brought in me all manner of evil desire.

For without the law, sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid.

But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful. We discover by means of the law our guilt. Perhaps you've had the experience of witnessing in prison to some that you, I hope you've been on the outside of the bars, witnessing to those within them.

My experience in prison or jail ministry is this, that from what you hear from within the bars, our courts have a record of almost ninety-nine and forty-four one hundred percent of miscarriage of justice. I have on one occasion met a man who admitted to his guilt, but only once. Almost invariably on other occasions, it's been a bought judge or jury or a crooked lawyer or witnesses that agreed to gather to justice.

From the conversation of the people within the bars, it seems that all of the good people are within and all of the bad people are without. Now, they have been condemned, but in their own minds they've never been convicted. You see, conviction is not a action of law in the scriptural sense.

Conviction is an attitude toward oneself. Now, obviously the attitude of the law toward these individuals is that they're guilty. We understand that there's a minority of cases, a small fraction, where there could be the possibility of a miscarriage of justice.

This we realize. But by and large, the evidence was sufficient to indicate that the one that is there had reason for being placed behind the bar. They are there, but so frequently they are not convicted.

Now, there's a reason for this. We're rational beings, and everything that we do seems good to us at the time we do it, even if it's bad. For instance, a person that commits theft is convinced that in his condition, with the dire pressures that are upon him and the great needs that he has, and the way that nature has been so unfair to him, and others have so much and he's so little, that it is really fair and right and just that he should steal, because he is a rational being.

And though he knows it from a certain standard without to be wrong, by that inward standard by which he measures his present conduct, it's right. He did a right thing, so with murder, so with every crime that could ever be listed. The law says thou shalt not.

But because the criminal is rational, because he acts in what he judges to be a proper manner, he has convinced himself that for him, in this situation, it's justifiable to commit adultery, it's justifiable to steal, it's justifiable to lie, it's justifiable to murder, because no one has ever had the pressure that he's had or the reason that he's had. And if any judge at any court of law knew all that there is to be known, they would agree that he was acting properly for him at this time to do it. And this is the rationale of all lawbreaking.

It seems right to the person even though it's enormously wrong. So the function of law, therefore, is not only to capture and corner the culprit, but also to convince him that what he did was wrong. And thus God gave a measure.

He did a very wonderful thing when he gave us this measure. He not only put it without, but he put it within, so that there could be an outward and an inward testimony. Charles Finney has a sermon that is outstanding in its directness and its clarity on this point.

He calls it the outer and the inward witness of the law. He uses another analogy. I've spoken of a yardstick or measure that God puts within.

Finney spoke of it as a millstone. Perhaps you can visualize the old millstone, a huge piece of granite or other hard rock that was chipped and shaped round, a hole for the axle in the center, and then ridges would be cut so that the grain could be ground. Now the function of the millstone was to crush the grain, and so the ridges on the lower millstone corresponded almost exactly to the ones on the upper millstone.

The grain would be poured in the center and gradually work its way to the outside, the while being crushed. And so Finney said when God made man, he put within him a lower millstone. This lower millstone we call conscience, for that knowledge with which we were endowed by the creative act of God.

God, in other words, wrote the law upon the fleshly tables of the heart. Isn't it interesting that our Bible is noticeably lax in two areas. First, it doesn't prove the existence of God, which philosophers have been vainly trying to do for centuries.

You know, some months ago I was asked to go to Brooklyn College in New York City to speak to the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship chapter on the theme, The Proof for the Existence of God. When I got there, my opening statement was, it is utterly impossible for me or anyone else to prove that God exists. And the students looked with wide eyes, why I should say such a thing.

Oh, I said, there's sufficient evidence that he exists, but you ask to prove it, and because the evidence is to be weighed by the individual who questions the existence of God. And that individual could take evidence quite sufficient for another person and simply say, it doesn't prove it to me. It's impossible to prove to a skeptical and unwilling mind that God exists.

But I said, I know he exists. I know it. The Bible is noticeably free from every effort to prove that God exists.

If Genesis began any other way than it does, there'd be real reason to question the Bible, its inspiration and its authority. If, for instance, it started out to prove that there is a God, then we could doubt its inspiration. But you see, God was addressing the book to people whom he knew already had the information that he existed, because he built that information into them.

And it wasn't necessary to prove it, for only those who knew he existed could possibly read the book that he was giving to them. And it would have been utterly redundant and unnecessary for him to have done it, and would have discredited inspiration. But because the Bible begins, in the beginning, God, there's no need for argument, because the only ones who can read those words are the ones who have the knowledge that God exists, already as part of the very structure of their personality and being.

So is the law. God does not prove to anyone by any argument of philosophy that the law is just and holy and good. But however horrendous the criminal may be, however vile a person may be, however degraded they may be, you need not ever prove that the law is just and holy and good, because God has already written that law upon their consciences.

God doesn't prove it is just and holy and good, he states it, because the individual has been built, he's been fabricated, he's been made with the law already as a basic part of his personality. This he's put within, my experience in the mission field a decade ago, proved to me that tribes that had never seen a missionary or heard the name of Christ, knew by that knowledge, that light that lights every man that comes into the world, that the law was right. We didn't have to tell them they knew it.

Now this is that inner millstone. This is the law of conscience. This is that to which we have reference made in Romans the second chapter, when it declares, for when they which have the Gentiles, the pagans, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, and law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their heart, their conscience is the meanwhile condemning or else excusing.

And so the picture is this. God made us with the law as a millstone, using Finney's analogy, turning. But what happens? As the intellect acquires sophistication and rationalization and argument, and as the conscience is seared by practice, this millstone that turns is soon covered with an overlay of chaff and filth and dirt, so that the repeated actions fall upon it, but there's no longer any grinding effect.

And this is where the proper preaching of the Word comes. When a hundred years ago, more or less, certain Bible teachers declared that this being the dispensation of grace no longer needed the preaching of the law, they took from the Holy Ghost the only weapon with which he'd ever earned himself to prepare men for grace. Because there's nothing in the essence of the gospel to convict of sin.

It's the answer to the convicted sinner's need, but it doesn't convict of sin. For by the law is the knowledge of sin. For the law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

And the law was given that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world might become guilty before God. Therefore, before it is appropriate to say, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, it is absolutely necessary for us to say, the soul of the sinner, it shall die. Because until one is aware of his sin, he has no appreciation whatever for the death of Christ.

It is the function of the law, the moral law, the civil law, we understand, was given to guide a nation as they were the object lesson, witnessing to the people around them by their conduct. The ceremonial law was given as types and shadows by which we could understand the Lord Jesus Christ when he came, picturing him in his various office works. And so it is the moral law to which we refer, this revelation of the unchanging and unchangeable character of God.

And it is this law that the apostle says is just and holy and good. Now think of this law in the book as being the upper millstone, and when it is properly applied as belonging to morally responsible men and women, do you see the effect? Here, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the truth concerning God's requirements upon responsible men comes to bear upon the human spirit. But there's already a law that's turning.

Oh, it's covered over with filth. It's covered over with sophisticated arguments. It's covered over with casual indifference.

But as the truth bears upon it, it begins to grind all this filth away. And soon the human spirit is caught between the upper and the lower millstone, and all is ground away until it has done its work of dividing between soul and spirit, and exposing the individual to the fact that he is a rebel against God, and a traitor against God, an anarchist, and an enemy, and certainly a transgressor, and under the sentence of death. And thus it is the good office work of the Holy Ghost in his initial contact with us to show us that what we have done in the past constitutes crime, and that we stand justly condemned before the tribunal of wisdom and righteousness as worthy of death.

Do you see this? Then the first problem is what we've done. Why did we do what we did? We did it because we loved ourselves, lived to please ourselves, and the essence of our crime was that we were idolaters who worshiped ourselves. It's not a very nice picture.

A man, a traitor, and a rebel, and an enemy, and an anarchist. And such he is. And what he did, he's not in trouble with God because of what he did.

The reason that God is angry with a sinner is not because he lied. The reason he's angry with a sinner is because the man is a self-idolater and worships himself and rules his life, and has openly defied God and said that he is God and will do what he pleases, and he will not have this God to rule over him. And the lie is but just a little shot that's being fired over the ramparts of his defiance.

It wasn't the few balls that fell on Fort Sumter that started the Civil War. It was that the section of the country had defied law and government injustice. It was this that made those shots significant.

Otherwise they could have been laughed off. But it couldn't be laughed off when it was understood that it represented the attitude of rebellion, and it necessitated the Civil War. And so it is that the lie that the sinner pronounces is simply an evidence of his open treason against God.

While he's under the sentence of death, what is the answer? Well, the answer to this problem is to what man has done is found in Romans, the fifth chapter. If you turn to it now, I think you'd see why I've chosen it. We look at the sixth verse, because we begin there with this first characteristic of man.

Without strength, God, and without strength to sin, for his rebel turned all the power of his personality into his sin, but without strength to either change his heart and attitude or to do anything about his past crimes. For when we were yet without strength in due time, Christ died for those who had no God but themselves, the ungodly. This is what ungodly means, no God.

They were themselves their own God. But if we look at the eighth verse, but God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. This is the end of side one.

Please stop the machine at this point and turn the cassette over. Look at the tenth verse, for if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son. So we see three things.

We were without strength, we were without a God, we were sinners, and we were enemies. And this gives to us the measure of the love of Christ, that the Lord Jesus Christ died for us. He died for us in our place and in our stand.

He died for us. That's the message of Romans five. This is the next answer to a guilty conscience.

This is answer to one who stands condemned in the presence of God. Christ died for us. This is the answer to the past, this mountain of accumulated guilt, every crime that we've committed against eternal justice and holiness.

Here is the answer. Christ died for us. We'll never get beyond it.

We'll never outgrow our need for this truth. So if I speak to one tonight who's come in without strength to do anything about your past, do you realize this? That if you were to somehow tonight purpose to perfectly please God from today on and succeed in doing it, that that perfect obedience from this moment would God acquire in the remainder of your life enough merit to atone for one past sin. Because God exacts and God demands perfect obedience, and there's no merit for giving him the minimal required.

And so there's without strength to do anything about it. If you've realized how utterly hopeless it is, you may remember what Martin Luther saw there as he did vain penances on the steps in Rome, that it was not by such works that justification came, but the inward illumination given by the Holy Ghost that marked the reformation was this, that just shall live by faith, therefore being justified by faith, that Christ died for us. Oh, guilty sinner, have you ever been lost? Do I speak to some who've been lost? Some years ago I was addressing a company of people, about a hundred in number.

I said, how many of you've ever been lost? Four hands were raised. And now I said, how many of you are saved? And about a hundred hands were raised. I said, isn't this amazing? The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost.

The only ones he sought, the only ones he had any provision for, the only one to for whom he could do anything were the lost, and only four of you have ever been lost. And yet all of you think you've been saved. My friend, he only came to save the hopeless, without strength, the ungodlike, enemies, sinners.

In such a way, have you seen it? Has the Spirit of God done its good office work in your heart and brought you to the place where you've discovered that from the top of your head to the sole of your feet there was wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, that all your righteousnesses were his filthy, pestilential rags? Oh, what's the answer? Someone says, the good people are in church. Oh, no, no. The good people are outside.

The bad people are in church. The only ones that are in the church, his body, are those that were absolutely stripped and broken and crushed and bankrupt by the work of the law, just and holy and good, that showed them that they were dead in trespasses and sins. And without God, without hope, they came to the cross and saw the Lord Jesus Christ dying for them.

This is the message of Romans 5, Christ for us. The law, just and holy and good, condemns us, but Christ died for us. But what's the second problem? What we are.

What we've done? Answered by the death of Christ for us. But what about what we are? Let's go back to Romans 7 and see if there's anything further. Verse 14 is where we'll begin reading.

For we know that the law is spiritual, that I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not. For what I would, that do I not.

But what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent under the law that it is good. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth

no good thing, for to will is present with me.

But how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not. But the evil that I would not, that I do.

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law. Now we have the second law.

That when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into the captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.

Now what is law? Law is the way we've been taught to things. The word comes from Torah, teaching, or from the ancient idea of a shaft, speaking for instance of a shaft of lightning. And so it is that we have acquired in the state of our rebellion certain laws of action, certain traits we've inherited in our very nature and makeup and disposition, certainly, certain appetites and tendencies, certain pressures within and drives and urges, and habits of mind, learned responses.

And so as you stood outside the cross, it not only was what you had done, but it's what you were, the effect of sin within, without crushing, twisting, warping. And Paul calls this a law, a law of sin, a law of sin and death, the manner in which you learned how to respond, both by inner tendency and outer experience and teaching and observation, and that you had now acquired a disposition, if you please, to be selfish, for the essence of sin is selfishness. And now you had a new attitude.

You want to please Christ. Your mind says, this is right, to obey Him. He's to be Lord of my life.

It's time to serve Him with all I am. I've repented of my sin. I've received Him to rule.

I've renounced my government. I'm no longer going to play God. And then you discover that today you start out with to obey Christ, but here's a habit.

Somebody says something to you in all of your past, your attitude has been to fight back and to retaliate and get even, insist on your own way. And this is a law. It's the manner in which you've adjusted to your circumstances.

It's part of your personality. It's intrinsically you. It's not your tissue.

It's not the cells that make up your body. It is the warping, twisting effect of what you've been. It's the carnal nature.

It's the flesh. It's the old man. It's you.

And so you've not only what you did, but now you have purpose to please God, but you discover something within you. And this something within you, you can't push away. You've got to identify it with you.

It's what you were by nature in trait and disposition and learned response when you stood outside the cross and you said, Oh God, forgive me for what I've done. You see, at that point, all of us, I believe, or at least most of us, figured that we were really pretty good stuff after all. We'd done some things that were bad, but if God would just forgive us and give us a little push and help and lift now and then, we'd make it.

We were pretty good. But after we've been forgiven and pardoned and we've purpose to please God and we find this new distance, new desire, new goal to obey him, and we start down the road and then like that, we're hit. We discover that we're reacting the same way we did.

Somebody comes up and so there's just a little lie to protect ourselves. We're just a little cheating to get what we want. And we go to the Lord in confession and in brokenness and ask him to forgive us.

And pretty soon we discover that what Paul's talking about, that with his intellect, with his spirit, he says this is right. But with his personality, with that intrinsic part of him, he finds that there's a conflict. Someone says, I didn't know temptation until I became a Christian.

If that's true, because there is a frustration. Your intellect and your spirit is committed to the lordship of Christ and the will of God, but all the rest of you has been twisted and warped. And so you've got to somehow say, where will I get victory? How am I ever going to get victory? My own experience on the mission field was that I discovered that all through my life I'd unconsciously, not deliberately certainly, but I'd been building certain responses.

I wasn't what I ought to be, and I knew it. As a young preacher, Bible school student here in this city and in this state, I knew I wasn't what I ought to be. And the only way that I could possibly escape from the miserable agony of this was to prove that nobody else is what they ought to be.

And so I just had a censorious mind and a critical spirit, and with that developed a sarcastic tongue. I learned to adjust to it because I had to survive here. But when I got to the mission field, there I found out, one day I was down here in the basement in the kitchen, and they showed me the potato peeler.

They told me about someone that put a half bushel of potatoes in it and forgot about it and came back and scooped up the half bushel in the palm of their hand. Well, the mission field to many of us is like a potato peeler. It just knocks all the superficial adjustments we've ever made right off and gets down to what we are.

And so on the mission field, I discovered this critical mind and this censorious spirit and this sarcastic tongue. Now, I knew I was a Christian because I hated it so. But it would build up and the tension would build up and missionaries put a little pressure on me.

And you know that ninety-nine and forty-four, one hundred percent of all the problems on the mission field are personality adjustment problems. Not climate, not malaria, but it's you. You carry most of the problems with you when you go.

And I did. And so here I was trying to serve the Lord, but this critical mind, this censorious spirit, and I remember going in and putting my fingernails in the palm of my hand and saying, Oh, this was... I promise you I'll never do it again. Never be sarcastic.

I meant it. But listen to your heart. Victory doesn't come from your fingernail, nor from the set of your jaw, nor the retching, twisting of your jaw muscles.

That's not where victory comes. Oh, you can make up your mind. But victory doesn't come from your mind.

Someone said it's your subconscious. That's the source of power. I tuned in on that and I just got more of the same poison I had in my conscience.

No help there. Oh, where... Who shall deliver me from the tyranny of my traits? Who shall deliver me from the despotism of my disposition? Isn't there victory? You see, I was praying, Oh God, help me. Help me not to be critical.

Help me not to be censorious. Help me not to be sarcastic. God could answer that prayer.

If he did, he'd have to just throw the whole foundation of government. The Lord Jesus Christ didn't die to help me. He died knowing I couldn't do it and his help wouldn't avail anyway.

He didn't die to help me do it. He died so that I could come to the place I'd let him do it for me. You see, he's everything I'm not.

And all I have to bring him when I come to is an honest recognition that I'm not and he is. And I don't have and he has. And this is the hard part.

Well, bless God, there came a time back there when I discovered, after getting old, that the answer to the despotism of your trait and disposition is not in self-hypnotism. It's not in some kind of a evangelical cooeyism I'm getting every day and every way getting better and better. It's not that source at all.

It's from a frank, open admission that in me, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. A person in New York said to me the other day, I'm bad. I'm all bad.

I've been bitter. I've been critical. I've been lying.

I'm not fit for this task. I don't deserve this privilege. I shouldn't have it.

And I should be sent away. I said, send away nothing. This is what we've been praying for.

This is what the Lord's been working. You see, this is God's great job. We still have an idea that if he'll just help us a little, we're going to make it.

Have you ever tried to put a rug down that was too big for the room, sort of a 12-foot rug in an 11-foot room? Have you ever tried to? You know, you get there and you say, here's a blump. And so you pat and you smooth and you get it all nicely patted down and you say, and that's why it pops up back there. And you get that patted down, all smoothed out.

Two other places. Just too much rug for the room. It's got to be cut somewhere if it's ever fit.

And so people keep saying, oh Lord, help me with my tongue. And then they get mad at their children. Oh Lord, give me victory over getting mad at my children.

They get mad at their husband. And so it goes. And they're just running from one thing to another, trying to get the Lord to help them.

And the Lord can't help them because they're approaching it wrong. He didn't die to help me to do something that he knew I couldn't do. He died to do something for me and be something to me that he knew I could never be.

So Romans 5 tells us that when we were without strength, Christ died for us. But you know what Romans 6 tells us? That when we found that in us and our flesh there was no good thing, Christ died as us. He died for us to deliver us from the law that was just and holy and good that condemned us.

But he died as us to deliver us from the law of sin and death. See, he wasn't only on the cross for me, but he was on the cross as me. He went there as me.

In the Father's eyes, that was me on the cross, readead with that critical, sarcastic, censorious, oh, damn it, you as well. Christ died as us. Romans 6 tells us in so many words, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed.

So this is the answer to the second problem, what I am. The Lord Jesus died for me to remove the mountain of what I've done. He died as me to break the tyranny of what I was.

So in his eyes, when I realized that when he died, I died. Then we have this testimony in the first part of Romans 7, that he that is dead is freed from the husband, from the relationship. We were married to the devil, we died.

We were married to the flesh, we died. We were married to our nature, we died. And now we're imprisoned and walking in the midst of life.

And so the answer to what I am is Christ as me. But let's go on. There's another law.

We'll turn to Romans 8. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For the law, here it is, the law, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, and that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned, sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

The law of God, just and holy and good, flew me, but Christ died for me. The law of sin and death tyrannized me, but Christ died as me. But here's another law, the law of the spirit of life, the way the Holy Spirit does things.

He put a new desire to please him, but you see, it's one thing to want, it's another thing to do, to be able to do. So the same one that wrote the law upon our hearts, and oh how beautifully Ezekiel saw it, as God spoke to him and said, I will take away the heart of stone, and I will give you a heart of flesh, and I will write my law upon your heart, and I will put my spirit within you, and cause to walk in my statutes. There's the law of the spirit of life, which hath made us free from the law of sin and death.

So what is it? Romans 5, Christ for us. Romans 6, Christ as us. Romans 8, Christ in us.

Isn't that wonderful? The three great needs, what I've done, what I am, and how I'm going to do and be what I ought today. For additional copies of this cassette, or a listing of other Dimension tapes, contact your local bookstore or Bethany Fellowship, 6820 Auto Club Road, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55438.

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