

Freedom From Sin - Part 1

by Roy Hession

Roy Hession's sermon explores the profound truth of freedom from sin through God's grace and the necessity of faith and repentance for salvation.

Duration: 46:53

Topics: "Freedom From Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the theme of the Gospel as good news for bad people. He emphasizes that the Gospel is not only for spiritually tidy and presentable individuals, but for all sinners. The preacher highlights the concept of righteousness from God, explaining that it is not something that originates from within us, but rather is a gift from God. He also contrasts the scope and impact of Adam's sin with the grace and righteousness brought by Jesus Christ, emphasizing that through Christ's obedience unto death, many are constituted righteous.

Transcript

Romans chapter 5, before we get into chapter 6, 7 and 8, we need, I think, to get a grip on this last section of chapter 5. There's no doubt at all that it's been generally thought, of course, that the real division is at the end of chapter 8. But there's no doubt at all there's a very real sort of coming to a point and a pause and a rest at the end of chapter 5. Chapter 6, 7 and 8 then launches out on something which develops from there. So we were quite right in ending at chapter 5, it's a real completeness. But in order to see where the next themes spring from, we must really get a grip on the last few verses of chapter 5, which incidentally I was not able to touch on very much at all.

Romans 5, verse 12, and I am reading from the Revised Standard Version. If you want to do serious Bible study and you want something really accurate, I would advise you don't go to the more modern translations, not even to the New English Bible, they're helpful, very helpful. If you want accuracy, I think either your dear old Authorized Version, with all its archaisms, is very accurate, if you only get to know what the Elizabethan English means, or else the Revised Standard Version.

By the way, I really think that the new nations have an advantage over us, because when the missionaries translate the Bible into their language, they translate it in the language of the day. We have to do, in spite of all the new translations, but still sticking to it, and rightly I think, to our Elizabethan Bible. But you know, it's wonderful to think that understanding of divine truth is not necessarily equated with an understanding of the words.

These things are by revelation, and mighty revivals have visited this land in America and elsewhere through the good old archaic Elizabethan English of the Authorized Version. And so, we don't need to be too bothered. God knows how to make clear even the Authorized Version.

But if you want accuracy of the new version, my view is the Revised Standard Version. Now, I'll read it slowly, it's not greatly different, but it's come afresh to me as I've read it this morning. Therefore, says Paul, as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all men sinned, sin indeed was in the law before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law, yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass, for if many died through one man's trespass, much more hath the grace of God, and the free gift in the grace of that one man, Jesus Christ, abounded unto many. And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin, for his judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace, and the free gift of righteousness, reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience, many were constituted sinners, so by one man's obedience, many will be constituted righteous. The law came in to increase the trespass, but you can't outdo grace.

But where sin increased, grace all the more abounded, so that as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Well, that's the passage to which I hope we shall get this morning. Just a resume, because it's difficult for us to come right in upon studies which have been going on.

The theme of this great writing of the Apostle Paul is an orderly, complete exposition of the Gospel. And we saw that the Gospel is basically good news for bad people. You must have it that way around.

If it's only good news for good people, that disqualifies the whole lot. For Paul is at pains to show in the early chapters there's none that do it good, no, not one. And therefore, if there was only good news for people who were spiritually tidy and presentable, the whole lot of it rightly understood would be excluded.

Even you, my friend, who think perhaps you're not so bad. No, no, no. God knows that all are sinners and he's got good news for bad people.

Now this is the great thing, the astonishing thing, a thing that you would never be able to understand by intellectual reasoning. It has to be revealed. Even the angels, we read, desire to look into and understand this thing.

It caught them all by surprise. They never expected that reaction on the part of God to human sin. They were all set to come and administer the thunderbolts of judgment.

Instead of this, God revealed by Jesus Christ that he'd come from good news to bad people. Now we've been seeing that the central, basic, foundational blessing of God for lost men in this good news is righteousness. We might perhaps turn to the great introductory verse of the whole epistle, Romans 1, verse 16.

He says, I am not ashamed of this gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek for therein, here's the basic blessing, therein is the righteousness of God revealed. Now the righteousness of God revealed is not an attribute of God here at all. When Paul uses this word, he does not normally use it in that sense.

Indeed, the revised version makes it inescapable. He says, but now there is revealed a righteousness from God. A righteousness from God.

Now this is a concept which is difficult perhaps for the modern mind, but so much worse for the modern mind. Instead of adapting our message to the modern mind, we've got to give this message and seek to so explain it that they come up to what should be. A righteousness of God.

As we said before, of God is not genitive. It's another preposition, a righteousness from God, out of God. And as you read this epistle, you begin to see what it is.

This word righteousness is used in the sense of a right standing with God. God has been pleased in the gospel to reveal that he has provided a right standing with himself for the worst and the most culpable of sinners. Indeed, you can use, if you like, instead of righteousness, rightness with God.

There is revealed in the gospel a divine and a perfect unassailable rightness with God for the man who admits he's wrong. This righteousness is not imparted, it's imputed, it's counted to. The moment you count yourself utterly wrong and confess that, then God, for Christ's sake, is delighted to count you utterly right.

And if God says I'm right, I must take it as a fact. But the astonishing thing that only comes to my soul when I'm humbled and broken to confess myself a failure, a sinner, utterly wrong. And the moment a man says he's wrong, God says you're right.

If there's an argument on, everybody says they're right, the other fellow who's wrong, he says you're all wrong. But if God brings a victory in one man's heart in that circle, and he breaks and repents and says, fellows, I'm the one who's wrong. Oh, very nice, that's right, we always fought it with that, all right.

Listen, you know what God says, you're the only one who's right. The one who says he's wrong, God says, now I declare you, I reckon to you, I impute to you this divine rightness within himself. That's the reason why the preacher of the good news for bad people must speak of sin.

Only when a man sees himself a failure, a flop, and under the judgment of God and confesses that fact, that then he qualifies for this rightness, which God is pleased to reckon to the credit. And I tell you, that is what is meant by being justified, being declared right with God. I'm astonishingly saying it's declared of a man who's humble and merciful and condemning himself, but for Christ's sake, he's declared right.

Well, of course, as I said, you will see your need of that righteousness, that rightness with God, that gospel righteousness, unless you see you're a sinner, that you're under judgment. Unless you see, my friend, you are going to hell. You cannot be saved until you're absolutely, positively convinced of your personal damnation.

No man ever gets to heaven who hasn't first been convinced he merits hell and confesses that fact. Therefore, Paul, in the early chapters, has solemn words. And he deals with two classes of people he had in those days, the Jew, the religious man, the Gentile, the irreligious.

And he says in chapter 3, having proved it, we can't go into detail, we have before proved, both Jew and Gentile, that they are all under sin. And God's concern is ever to prove that both the religious and the irreligious are all under sin. Every normal distinction is utterly raised when we stand before God.

Our religiousness doesn't seem to wash one little bit with God. Our respectability, it's only surface, God looks through the heart. And he sees that though there are some who are utterly dissolute, we would have probably done the same had we been in their circumstances, because we've played with sin on a small scale.

Well, why haven't we done it on a big scale? We don't mind doing it on a small scale. Isn't the truth of it, personal interests only held us back? We would be found out. We would be disgraced.

And therefore, even our supposed respectability, I've heard of this, is sin directed. Concentration on myself is sin. Therefore, our very respectability may be based on sin.

I'm doing it just because I'm concerned for myself. And that is proved, I say, I prove myself in this, if I am prepared to indulge in impure thoughts and get pleasure from them. Only thoughts, you say.

You'd do the deed, if you could do it with impunity. You'd get pleasure from the thought, you'd get pleasure from the deed. What stops us doing the deed? Concern for ourselves, what would people think? He has before proved both Jew and Gentile, both religious and irreligious, both respectable and disrespectful, all under sin.

And his concerns we saw, not only to show us that we are without righteousness before God, but that we are without excuse. What things of the law says, it says to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped. Friend, what's the purpose, you think, of your good moral upbringing? The Bible says one big purpose, doesn't it? That your mouth should be stopped.

In that day of judgment, you were not there, you said, but I didn't know it was wrong. You knew it was wrong. You gloried in your high moral principles, but you didn't live according to them.

Without righteousness but worse, without excuse, every mouth stopped. And when God got men there, then there's a glorious but now. There's another righteousness available to the man who sees himself to be like that.

A righteousness not of his own efforts, not of his own goodness, not of his own religiousness. A righteousness of God, from God, unto all and upon all, them that believe. And we saw three things about this wonderful gospel, righteousness, which is reckoned to the man who comes to God as a sinner.

First, which we see grace, prophecy. Remember we had a little time on that, grace, prophecy. Romans 3, 24, being justified gratuitously by His grace.

And we must say something about grace, because it's going to figure so largely in what we're going to say. Do you know what grace is? Well, it's not merely the thing we say before meals. And it's not that sort of help and influence we receive sometimes in the holy communion, receiving grace.

No, that utterly incidental, the real New Testament meaning of this word grace is Romans 11, verse 6. Here you have the great classic definition of the grace of God. And listen, this isn't an extra attribute, this is God. God is the God of all grace.

This is His heart. Verse 6. And if by grace there it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. The moment you feel you've got to qualify, the moment you feel you've got to be a decent fellow first, before God will do something for you and give you peace, the moment you feel you've got to really be spiritually tired and presentable before you can expect fellowship with God, grace is no more grace.

Grace is for those that aren't presentable. Grace is for those that are disreputable. Grace is for those that don't qualify.

The whole point of the word grace is it's the undeserved love of God. Intrude a little bit. The necessity to deserve it, to be better, to be nicer, to have right feelings.

Sometimes I felt that I can't really expect to be blessed unless I've got a wonderful feeling of something or other. And I'm coming to come to God with the right feelings. The trouble is I don't often get them, and I'm in despair.

Then the Lord says you're trying to find something in yourself on which to build. We sang twice yesterday, or once certainly, about coming to Him as the empty soul. Empty of feelings.

Empty of righteousness. Empty to commend myself. To confess yourself in that place seems to be like cutting your own throat.

Actually you enter into all the fullness of God. You don't make your condition worse, you utterly improve things with God. For God's grace is for people who are empty.

The moment you bring something of your wretched righteousness in, grace is no more grace. And so he gives the opposite to it. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace.

Otherwise work is no more work. Work is either going to be wholly of grace, or wholly of work. God will not have an amalgam of works and grace for your salvation.

You're either going to be saved wholly by your respectability, or wholly by the undeserved grace of God. Well you never will be by your own respectability because it never is enough. It's got to be of grace.

Grace, prophecy. To the penitent soul, this wonderful right standing with God is the basic blessing. And when you've repented and come back to God through Christ, he says, go in peace.

You go down to your house of justice, I declare, right. You have peace with God. And an internal miracle takes place.

New birth. Same chassis, new engine. Grace, prophecy.

And that, my friend, without any reference to your good or your bad. No wonder we call this good news for bad people. It gives even a fellow like me and a fellow like you a chance.

I believe the gospel is designed to give sinners a chance. It's designed to give failing saints a chance. And never get the idea you get saved by grace, but you go on by struggle.

No, it's grace from beginning to end. Poor sinners. Nothing at all.

Finding in Jesus and in grace all that you need. Letting him live in you and do what you will, but that's a further development. Grace, promise.

Then we see in Romans 3, we say, didn't we, that the blood, security. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ, whom God has set forth to be of appreciation, through faith in his blood. The wrath of a sin-hating God with me can have nothing to do.

My Savior's obedience to blood hides all my transgressions from you. Jesus, the sinner's friend. We hide ourselves in thee.

God looks upon thy sprinkled blood. It is our only plea. But for that blood, but for the judgment bearing of our Lord Jesus on Calvary for us, it would be utterly immoral of God to declare him to be right, who is in reality wrong.

What judge or an English court could do such a thing? He'd be losing his job immediately. He's got to condemn the guilty and acquit only the innocent. But God delights to declare the guilty to be acquitted.

On what ground? How do I get this righteousness? The blood, security. Jesus, thy blood and righteousness, my dear beloved. My glorious blood.

And then we saw that faith received. Grace prophesies. The blood secures it.

Simple faith receives it. And faith is simply taking God at his word in all our emptiness and daring to believe that what he says is proper. If I qualify as a sinner, which I do, then this righteousness is mine.

Nothing more than that. I want to say three things that I've not yet said about this faith. And it's very important.

Because this is the great thing. Being justified or declared right with God by faith. Now, that faith always implies repentance.

I don't think he uses the word repentance very much because he's got to set faith in contrast to something else. He doesn't want to fog the issue. But repentance is always implied in this faith that receives the righteousness of God for your people.

If you look at Romans 4, verse 5, You may not have anything else in the world to commend yourself, but if you're a man who dares to believe this of God and come to him like that, God will count that confidence in himself for a righteousness which you don't otherwise possess. Right. But notice this.

You're to believe on him that justifies your God. You're to believe on him who declares him to be at right who's wrong. Friend, how can you believe on him in that way if you don't confess yourself to him? It doesn't say you can't believe on him who justifies those who are right.

I'm right, Rob, it's up to you to justify me. No, no. He's the one who justifies those who are wrong.

The ungodly. And if you're going to qualify, you've got to put yourself in that category, which is repentance. And not just once, but to live as knowing yourself to be that sort of man apart from God.

That's what you are meant to be. And in a new expression of that old nature, only quite shows me where I am. And you go back to that category, admit yourself to that, acknowledge you don't justify yourself, and then you're free to believe on him who justifies those who admit they're wrong.

The whole essence of it shows. It's implied. And so it's repentance.

And it's faith. And you won't know this blessing, neither will I, unless I'm prepared to be in that position, to come off my pedestal. And say, Lord, this shows what I really am.

I'm wrong. But I know I've got an advocate in my right hand whose blood is sprinkled on the mercy. I come and I'm taking your word.

And because I've come, you're preparing me right. So this faith implies repentance. Second, it is always contrasted with something else.

If you talk about faith, you'll get the wrong idea unless you see that to which it is contrasted. Everybody believes. Oh, I believe in God.

You must have faith. That's not the faith spoken of here. It's a faith which is in contrast to something else always.

It's in contrast to works. The great issue is, is a man declared right with God by his works, by his respectability, by his religiousness? Or is it a sheer gift that's received simply by daring to believe that God says you're right when you think you're wrong? It's always in contrast to works. Works comes to God or tries to come to God with full hand.

Something in my hand I bring. I'm not so bad. I'm a good father.

I'm respectable. They made me warden or something. All helps, you know.

Lawrence Barnes often tells the story that I always chuckle at. In fact, I always interrupt the meeting when he tells the story. It always amuses me.

I don't know why, particularly. But he preached in a certain Anglican church. And in the vestry afterwards, I think one of the wardens was counting the money.

Oh, no, it was a crown, I think, who was there. And he asked this man, and he bothered with all the modesty he could, was he sane? Of course, that's always a very awkward question. Are you a Christian? Oh, yes, you were church.

Yes. You can't say you are unless you are. It sort of sticks in the throat.

The most you can get is you hope so. But in answer to this very polite question, and knowing Lawrence, the only one I know is his gentleness, the man, all he said to him is, Forty years in the choir. As if that had anything to do with them at all.

Completely irrelevant. You see, hoping that that would help something, mean something, doesn't mean a thing. As regards your relationship with God, works come to full hand, oh, that subtle way.

Oh, so subtle. May the Holy Ghost show us sometimes, continually, where we are trying to come with full hands. But faith comes with empty hands.

Nothing. Nothing in my hand, especially the last thing that's happened, shows me what I have, and I've got not a stitch of righteousness. That's the way.

And as you come to Jesus like that, you are declared as right with God, as the blood of Christ is made. We're now, for the remaining twenty minutes, a quarter of an hour, we're going to regard ourselves as

having done a little recapitulation. In fact, that we've really expanded rather more than we did even then.

Right now. But it's a great gospel, isn't it? Now, Paul, that's more or less where he ends up, because he tells us the results have been justified by faith in Romans 5, and one of the great results is that you will rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And we did some little rejoicing on Thursday morning, Friday morning, in the hope of the glory of God.

In fact, some of us got, we're all set. We're all ready to take off. In fact, one dear woman said, you know, I know they did, a little while ago, an operation for cancer destroyed all her belongings, but everything tied up, all set to go.

Quite great. But she was rather disappointed, because the Lord said, no, a few more years back. And really, this was just meant for me, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God.

If you are declared right with God, you not only have peace with God, but you can be as utterly certain of glory as you possibly can. He wouldn't love you in your sin and justify you by his blood and then turn you out of heaven at that last day. Of course.

We'll be happier when we get to heaven than we are here. But we won't be any more secure than we are here. We'll even have the first glimmer of a doubt.

You can rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Well, then he concludes with this last little section, verses 12 to 21. I have mulled over these verses for years, tried to make analyses of them.

They seem a little complicated, something lovely hidden away. But I've come to see that I don't think Paul was really setting out to teach doctrine so much at this point. It is really a final, before he takes his breath, before starting chapter 6, an exulting in the grace that he's displayed, he's revealed.

It's a sort of description of praise. Of course, Paul being what he is, he couldn't say anything, even a word of praise, without bringing in terrific truths on which he grounds his praise. And there are terrific truths here, but basically, he's just having a little rejoice at this amazing grace.

And he contrasts two reigns here. We read the passage. The reign of sin, initiated by Adam, and the reign of grace, initiated by Jesus Christ.

And his purpose is to exult with us that grace does better, infinitely better, and is infinitely more extensive than sin. The reign of grace. Oh, he can't get over it, compared with the reign of sin.

The reign of sin, God knows, has done some terrible things in our world. But oh, how much greater, more glorious, is this reign of grace which he's been telling us about. If you can see, in the last verse of chapter 5, very clearly, the two reigns in the one verse.

As sin has reigned unto death, even so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast-wind it in either direction.

Now, here I'm going to come to something which I think is very helpful. It's come to me recently, something my brother Stanley wrote, just highlighted it for me, and it's introduced me to some lovely, precious things that I want to share with you. Will you notice that God does not counter sin with good? That's man.

Man's opposite to sin is good. If you've been wrong, try and be right. That's what our law courts do.

That's all they can do in the nature of the case. Here's crime. All they can do is to say, here's the good, and call it to the good, and judge you when you don't succeed, when a man's bad.

Not God. In God's economy, the opposite to sin is not good. The opposite to sin is grace.

God counters sin with grace. And we've seen what grace is. Grace, grace, God's grace.

Grace that will pardon and cleanse within, and not only that, but renew and restore and dethrone sin in our lives. All the work of grace. Not my work for him, but in his work for me.

There is the great gospel contract. God counters sin with his terrible reign, with grace. And he says, has sin had a reign? Has sin done damage in my creation? And is grace not going to have a reign? He says, which is going to be greater, man's sin or God's grace? There's some chance along that line.

If all God's got for you is to tell you what you ought not to have done it and try it better the next time, you're still left with yourself, trying to keep God's good advice. But that's not God's way, to counter sin with grace, which puts the onus on him. This is something he's going to do for those that don't deserve it.

Oh, no wonder, poor rejoicers. Oh, he says, here's a way by which all the damage that Adam has done in the world can be a thousand times recovered. First of all, he compares these two reigns.

He says, strange as it might seem, there's some points in which they're similar. And what's that? Under these two reigns, one man has affected many. Through one man's transgression at the door of the human race, sin has come into the world, and death because of sin, for all of sin.

One man. You are what you are, my friend, because of one man. You've got that nature.

You are the difficult person you're hurt. I am because of one man. When he fell, the whole race fell with him.

And there's symmetry in our world because of one man. God never intended death to come. What he would have done about the world by now, I don't know.

It would have been over-populated. I have an idea what he would have done. I'll tell you sometime when we're on that theme.

It would have been all right. He didn't worry. As by one man's sin entered the world, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned.

Now, the Revised Version all put, changed the word, not have sinned, but all sinned in a point of time. The Bible says, all sinned in one point of time. What was that point? When he sinned.

God accounted for the whole race from which was to spring from as having sinned at that time. Even if you never committed a sin, you'd go to hell, nonetheless, because of Adam's sin. Actually, you were repeatedly sinned many times over, so it's all right.

You've got no cause for complaint. But we all sin, when Adam sinned. Now, listen to this.

I can understand someone complaining of that. That's hardly fair. Well, Paul says, I'm not going to argue with that, but I've got to say this.

Just as one man affected many under the reign of sin, another man has likewise affected many. And he's affected the many who didn't deserve to be affected, who, quite apart from Adam's sin, have sinned many times themselves. And so he says, just as by one man's disobedience, the many were constituted sinners, quite apart from what they've done.

Do you see that, Fred? Quite apart from what you've done. You are conscious of sinning. You haven't got a hope apart from Christ.

If you were as good as you sometimes say you are, you'd still be lost because of that man's sin. You say, that's not fair. Well, wait a minute.

It's countered by something that isn't fair either. Is it fair? What do I deserve this either? Because in spite of the fact that I'm condemned for Adam's sin, I'm also condemned for my own. And yet, just as by one man's disobedience, the many are constituted sinners, so by the obedience, the obedience unto death of our Lord Jesus on Calvary, the many are constituted raptures, utterly gratuitous.

And so we have no cause for complaint. Without going into too much detail, there are three such comparisons. If you like, you can see them in the last verse 19 as the one comparison.

Well, we won't go into the details too much of that now. There isn't time. But then he contrasts.

Verses 15 to 17, there are contrasts, three contrasts. Not enough to compare to say they're alike. Oh, but he contrasts.

How much more has the second man done for all those who put their faith in him than the first man did for all those that are linked with him. He contrasts, first of all, the scope of these two. Verse 15, But the free gift is not like the trespass.

For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift of the grace of that one man abounded unto many. Oh, the contrast. The scope, many died, but grace and righteousness and life have abounded unto many.

As that old Christmas carol said, sing, He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found. There's not one little bit of territory to which sin has extended and spoilt things, but grace extends as far as that. I tell you, no matter what the situation is in our life, grace finds no difficulty in that situation.

There's not a thing but grace can gloriously recover it. Recovering grace. Oh, the scope.

And then the effect, verse 16, And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's trespass. For the judgment following one man's trespass brought condemnation. One man's trespass brought condemnation to many, like he said.

But the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. Out of my many, many sins I'm brought into life. No cause for complaint is there.

God has done better than sin ever done. And then the contrast of the effect. Because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man.

If there much more were those to receive the abundance of grace, reign in life. That man brought death. This man brings life, abundance of it, reigning it, here and now, rejoicing, on top and not underneath.

And I'm there to stand with him in God. And so he just has this little rejoicing. Now in the last minutes, I want you to look at the last verse of this chapter.

And here, you really have these two ways. First of all, As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. First of all, the reign of sin.

Wherein, do you think, does the power of sin consist? And I'm going to say something which has recently been coming afresh to me and I'm utterly sure it gives the clue to these scriptures. You think that the power of sin consists in its ability to form a head. So you keep on doing it and can't get free.

I would not say that's the basic power of sin. I would not say that's the devil's purpose in getting you to sin, just for you to acquire a bad habit. The power of sin consists in its ability to accuse you, to prove you, to condemn your conscience, to give you despair, to give you a sense of being an outcast, to give you a sense of not being able to get over it.

That's what the power of sin consists in. And that's what the devil wants to do. You know, he doesn't want you to steal.

Just for you to take something that doesn't belong, merely that, no, that's not bad enough. He's got something much worse in store for you. Having done it, he then accuses you.

That's it. And you're half condemned. And you're going to be the burden of past deeds for a lifetime.

Skeletons in the cupboard. And you sit down, you're no good, you're finished. That's the power of sin.

I would say 75% of the power of sin is that. When Paul uses sin, he uses not only the act, but all of the devil builds upon the act. And he builds a vast superstructure that reaches up to heaven and can shut the sky out of your sight.

The smallest sin can bring a tremendous darkness. That's what he's taking. You don't feel free with others, you don't feel awkward in this room with you.

What would they think? Terrible. They'd think I'm on top and I'm nothing of the sort. You can't pray, you can't give a test, you can't be free with anybody.

And maybe, it wasn't anything terrific in the world's eyes, but there was that sin and on that was devil. That's what he did. That's the whole thing in the New Testament is what is called sin.

And that's what Paul means when he says the gospel gives you freedom. Sin shall not have dominion over you. I used to think that that word dominion meant I won't go on repeating it.

No, he's dealing with this big of sin. Don't you see, a man may commit one certain sin in his life, in his youth, and never repeat it, but he could be under the dominion of it for the rest of his life. Accused by it, fearing its consequences, fearful it will be found out, not wanting to meet that girl perhaps that he's ruined.

See? Under dominion. That's the sense to which we're under the dominion of sin. It doesn't only go for those sorts of things, but everything.

Under its dominion. It's accusing me. My heart condemns me.

I'm not free. I can't look up to God. I'm not free without a Christian.

You're under the dominion of sin. Oh, my sin has ran. Now, what's our answer to the dominion of sin? Well, I suggest you want to see the normal answer is goodness and the call to goodness.

The standard I ought to espouse. The law. How ought to be better.

But, my friends, that makes the power of sin over you stronger, not weaker. Because Paul says the law enters. Moral principles enter.

That the offense might abound by squaring up your shoulders to be a better man and say, I'm going to keep this for I live as a Christian. You've already seen what's required of you. And the net result will only be that you'll see how far you've fallen.

And moral principles, law, firstly, has the effect of increasing our sense of sin, not diminishing it. Furthermore, it increases the power of sin over me in that it puts a whip into the devil's hand with which to thrash me the more. I had not known sin by the law, says Paul.

I had not known it was wrong to covet unless the law has said, thou shalt not covet. That sin, taking occasion by the commandment, rotted me into a manner of coveting and all the time the devil gave me. I never knew I was so condemned until I really tried to be better.

And therefore, if the power of sin consists in its ability to condemn us, our trying to embrace higher moral principles and do better will only increase its power and you will get more and more miserable, more and more bound by it. And, my friends, that's the utter futility of only giving a man good advice rather than good knowledge. You're pushing him more into condemnation.

Now, to prove what I'm saying is scriptural, you can look, if you will, to 1 Corinthians 15. And there you have it so clearly that it's said at the end of the chapter. Verse 56.

1 Corinthians 15, 56. The sting of death is sin. That's why people don't want to die.

Sin. They're frightened. They're not right with God.

Now, listen. And the strength of sin, wherein does the strength of sin lie? The strength of sin is the law. Who thought the law was going to get you out? I promised you more in than ever before.

And the end of the reign of sin is death. Death to your hopes of peace. Death to happiness.

And if you haven't trusted Christ, death for all eternity. Not cessation of being, but the lake of fire. That's the metaphor.

If the metaphor is fire, what must the reality be? Friend, I beg you to flee from the law to come. It's either or. As sin has reigned unto death.

Oh, the reign of sin in my life and in yours and in the world. Is that going to be the end of the story? Is God going to be defeated? Is there no answer? No. As sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign in an infinitely more extensive way through righteousness unto eternal life.

Yes. Grace reigns how? Through righteousness through Jesus Christ. We read in that revised version one act of righteousness of the Lord Jesus and Calvary was his act of righteousness.

It was the most righteous thing that ever happened in the world when God forsook his son and left him to die alone. It was the justest thing that ever happened in the world. He'd taken responsibility for my sin.

Oh, not too bad, my sins. I suppose you'll get by all right. Not too bad.

So great were our sins, so blessed that they even extinguished for the time being his relationship with the Father. This was judgment during its most drastic work. But it's over.

He exhausted it. There's none for you. Grace reigns now through righteousness fully done and exhausted unto eternal life.

And oh friends, wouldn't that be a lovely testimony you might have at the end of this week. I've had such a lot of knowledge of the reign of sin but now I'm under the reign of grace and repenting and rejoicing. I know I'm right with God but sin with God I'm feeling his power breaking the old habits even then all goes as well.

And I'm no longer under the name accused but I've come to Christ to take up a place in the sin. I know I'm right with God as the blood can make. Now this conception of sin and the law is going to be very much dealt with.

And that verse is going to be quite basic. As sin hath reigned unto death the law even increasing its reign rather than diminishing it. Even so great on another menu basis reign toward poor helpless lost sinners like that through the righteousness of a one man account unto eternal life a life that begins now bubbles up in the heart and goes on without cessation on into glory.

Now what of God? What grace? Let us pray. Lord Jesus we cannot thank you enough for this indelible grace. This grace that even our sins can't thwart because it's for sinners.

Oh God this grace that only can be thwarted by our unwillingness to admit we're what we are nor give us a new willingness to give up our righteousness and our excuses and to qualify to be subject to this reign of grace that pardons and cleanses and relieves give us to see this new standing that we may have with you the righteousness of thy precious blood and all we are we shall know what it is to be fully out from the reign of sin no longer under the law but under grace. Now interpret these things to us make us humble may thy dear Holy Spirit himself teach us in these days together we ask of him thy dear name Amen The grace the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the blood of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore Amen

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