

Out of Bondage Into Freedom

by Stephen Olford

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the principle of sin and the need to claim Christ as Savior, Sanctifier, and Sovereign in order to experience deliverance and liberation.

Duration: 40:07

Scripture: Romans 7:24, Romans 8:1-2, Romans 8:15, Romans 8:21, Romans 8:28, Romans 8:37

Topics: "Freedom"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the theme of victory and freedom in the believer's life. He refers to Romans chapter 7 and emphasizes the cry of a victim and the desperation of a defeated man. However, he also highlights the consolation of a determined man who looks to Jesus Christ for victory. The speaker then moves on to chapter 8 of Romans, where he discusses the liberation of a delivered man and the absence of condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. The sermon encourages listeners to claim Christ as Savior, sanctifier, and sovereign in order to experience true freedom from sin and bondage.

Transcript

I don't know anyone who puts you more at ease than our beloved friend, Haffey, as we affectionately call him. And it's certainly a joy to renew fellowship with him after those precious days at Haringey. In my judgment, one of the greatest crusades Dr. Billy Graham ever conducted, even though he's been all around the world.

There's something about Haringey that made an impression on me that I don't think has ever been quite repeated in the history of Dr. Graham's evangelistic crusades. And to have Haffey on one side and Fester on the other, I'm fine. And it's overwhelming to see such a tremendous crowd on the best afternoon we've had.

I expected you all out boating. But frankly, if you hadn't come, there would have been an awful wooden look about this place. I want you to turn with me, if you will, to Romans chapter seven.

Romans chapter seven. Our theme today is the life of victory, the life of freedom, as was so beautifully expressed in the opening prayer. Last night and all day yesterday, in fact, we were thinking of failure and sin.

But in the unfolding of God's truth at Keswick, I always look forward to the Tuesday emphasis, as the word of God is expounded in terms of victory for the believer's life. And I would like us just to break in, though I'd ask you to keep your New Testament open, at chapter seven of Romans, and verse 24 onward, the cry of a victim, and then the shout of a victor. Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

So then with the mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has 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, or as a sin offering, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.

Walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. I want to speak for a few moments on the theme of out of bondage into freedom, or if you prefer, from slavery to victory. Out of bondage into freedom.

This seventh chapter of the epistle of Paul to the Romans is the greatest autobiographical account of his own inward struggles we find anywhere in the whole sweep of his writing. And the Holy Spirit has preserved to us this inspired piece of literature in order to teach us some fundamental lessons in the experience of a Christian who comes out of defeat into victory, out of bondage into freedom. Now scholars have raised the question as to when and where Paul passed through the experiences mentioned in this amazing chapter.

Have you ever counted the number of eyes in chapter seven of Romans, and then the number of times the Holy Spirit is mentioned in chapter eight? Some say that it happened possibly during those three days and three nights, or thereabouts, after that blinding revelation of the risen Lord, when physically he was literally blind and had to be led into Damascus, and into a home in the street called Strait. And there as he prayed and fasted, God met with him, and something happened in his life. He received the commission from Ananias, God's servant, concerning the plan of God for his life.

There are others who maintain that possibly this is the experience that Paul had in Arabia during those some three years, when God prepared him for that tremendous ministry we know of as we read the Acts of the Apostles, the writing of these tremendous epistles under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What is important, however, is that Paul's experience, as one great theologian has put it, is every man's experience in Christ. In other words, our present experience is either one of slavery, even though we're Christians, for even though the first part of Romans 7 refers to his unconverted days, the passage under consideration this afternoon is quite clearly during his converted day.

And Paul speaks of coming out of slavery into victory. And the lessons he learned by the Holy Spirit I hear forever, for you and I, for you and I to learn and to apply. And so I'm going to take you in three steps into what I feel is the message of slavery to victory, or out of bondage into freedom.

My first point is the desperation of a defeated man. The desperation of a defeated man. Back to our text, 24.

O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me? Now, of course, there was a time in Paul's experience when he imagined that he was well-nigh perfect. He could say with some considerable justification, quoting from Philippians 3, 5, and 6, circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin and Hebrew of the Hebrews as touching the law of Pharisee concerning zeal persecuting the

church, touching the righteousness which is of the law, lameless. But little did he know what the Holy Spirit was about to reveal to him.

Because as you read through this whole passage that's under consideration, we discover that Paul was convicted by God the Holy Ghost, primarily of the sin of covetousness. By the operation of the Holy Spirit, his eyes were opened to see two things. I want you to notice here.

First of all, the indwelling principle of sin. The indwelling principle of sin, verse 23. His actual words are, I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin in my members.

Like thousands of Christians across our land today, and indeed across the world, and perhaps here this afternoon in this tent, Paul was attempting to curb and correct sins in the plural in his life without reckoning with the principle of sin, singular, in his life. He was so occupied with the fruit that he had forgotten about the root. And he had forgotten that this is really where it all comes from, the sin nature, the principle of sin in our life.

And in his attempt to try and curb and correct the mere symptom, he became a man utterly desperate. And he cries out, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? Tell me, my friend, have you discovered this principle of indwelling sin, or are you engaged in some futile effort to curb and correct the outward expression of this indwelling principle of sin? To continue in this fashion will bring you inevitably into a state of despair. To return to our figure of speech, it's just like a man who attempts to kill a thriving tree by pruning its branches.

Or to change the illustration, it's like a man who finds that he has the dread disease of leprosy, and forthwith endeavors to cure it by covering the eruptions on the body with some mild ointment. In the first instance, the tree can't be dealt with unless you get at the root of that tree. Nor can leprosy be dealt with unless you get right down to the core of the disease.

This then was the great discovery that Paul made. His problem wasn't the sins that he was committing, but rather the sin to which he was committed. He was chained to it.

He says, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? But this indwelling principle of sin led to something worse. The infecting pollution of sin. Paul speaks of the body of this death.

Let's hold that for a moment. The body of this death. To describe this infecting pollution of sin, Paul uses a vivid, dramatic, and gruesome picture here.

In his day, there was a Roman form of torture that was used on certain types of prisoners. It involved the union of a live prisoner with the body of a dead person. And the result was obvious.

The decaying corpse would pollute the live person, and eat into the live person, erode into the live person, until inevitable death ensued. It seems as if the apostle could not conjure up a more apt description of what he considered his old nature to be. This is the law of sin.

This is the body of death. This is the corrupting mass. This is the polluting thing that spoils our lives, even as Christian men and women.

So changed was this man in his attitude to the matter of sin. When he discovered what it was, and how chained he was to it, that he cries, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? Tell me, is this your experience? Are you utterly helpless in the struggle to rid yourself of the polluting aspects of this principle of sin in your members? So far as Paul was concerned, I want you to notice that this infecting pollution penetrated, first and foremost, his devotional life. He says in verse 23, I see another law in my members, bringing me into captivity.

Paul was a religious man, as we all know, even before his conversion. But certainly after his conversion, he was deeply taught in the law. He was one of the most successful students of the Rabbi Gamaliel.

He was fit for any level of intellectual or religious life. He was pure amongst his contemporaries. But almost with utter despair, he admits, 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 captivity to the law of sin in my members. In other words, the pollution of sin had penetrated into his devotional life, his acts of worship, his prayer. He sensed the influence of death.

Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I wonder how many of you here, if you're really honest, would have to say God is dead. And I'm not quoting recent theologians who propounded that theory. I'm speaking to Christian people within the Christian family.

Somehow God is dead. He seems remote. Prayer is dead.

My reading of the Bible is dead. My quiet times are dead. Church is dead.

Christian service is dead. Everything I seem to touch is dead. I know I'm born again.

I remember the date. I remember the hour. But somehow or other, God isn't as real as he used to be.

The Lord Jesus isn't a vital reality. The Holy Spirit isn't the indwelling reality I used to know. Prayer isn't a reality.

The reading of the Word of God isn't a reality. Somehow or other, there's a deathly touch upon my life. But we notice not only did it affect his devotional life, but his vocational life.

Look at verses 18 through 19. 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 I would, I do not. But the evil which I would not, that I do. When he wanted to do good, evil was present with him.

And even the evil which he wanted to conquer, he found himself doing. So that everything he thought or spoke or performed was tainted with the pollution of sin. In me that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.

I feel polluted, he said. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this chain that binds me to the body of death. If you're honest with yourself, this is your problem also.

And I want to say that for many years as a Christian, for many years as a Christian, born of Christian parents, brought up on the mission field, taught the Word of God from my infancy in that beloved land of Africa, which I always feel is the land of my birth, I knew this. I knew this until God set me free, as I trust

He'll set you free here this afternoon. This is a conflict.

It is what the psychiatrist calls a dichotomy between your organized and disorganized self. You have to admit again and again that you're a Jekyll and Hyde, and so your cry is the desperation of a defeated man. And as sad and sad it is, this dark picture is so true of Christians all over evangelical circles today.

And however we might try to hide it, you know very well that you're beaten. You're beaten in the area of your thoughts. You're beaten in the area of your emotions.

You're beaten in the area of your passion. And what we're hearing about this morning with such authority and solemnity is so true of many of us. We sin with our eyes.

We sin with our hearts. We sin with our hands. We sin with our feet.

We sin with our bodies. However as grim as this picture is, thank God there's the breakthrough of hope and light here. Because I want to tell you it's only when a man has attempted to try and curb and correct his sins without dealing with the principle of sin, as God teaches us here, that we come to the place of desperation.

And thank God for every desperate Christian here this afternoon. But I want to tell you that it's when we come to desperation that we come to an end of ourselves. The desperation of a defeated man.

But quickly look with me now at the consolation of a determined man. The consolation of a determined man. Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Now then, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Like all of us, Paul had looked everywhere else. He'd sought refuge in the law, which only condemned him. For sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived him and slew him.

Roman 7 11. He sought help from his friends only to find that they were as bad as he was. He looked within only to cry, oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? At last he turned his eyes to heaven and exclaimed, I thank God.

During the dark days of the struggle for liberty in Italy, most of the people looked upon Garibaldi as their great liberator. Prisoners hurried away to loathe them dungeons. But they would be encouraged as they were dragged in chains by hearing people whisper along the pathway, Garibaldi is coming.

Garibaldi is coming. Garibaldi is coming. Courage! Garibaldi is coming.

Men would steal out at night and chalk on the walls and pavements. Garibaldi is coming. At last he came and set his people free.

How wonderful to know that a greater than Garibaldi has come to set his people free. He is our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul came to this point of realization when he turned from himself, from the law, from his friends and said, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And I want to tell you that the consolation of a determined man, first of all, is an act of thankful anticipation. I thank God. He knew his Old Testament well enough to recall that ultimately victory is of the Lord, Proverbs 21, 31.

Power belongeth unto God, Psalm 62, 11. Salvation is of the Lord, Jonah 2, 9 and so on and so on. And so he looked away, I repeat, from the law, from his friends, from himself, to God himself with thankful anticipation.

And he said, I thank God. And I don't believe anyone can come into victory. No one can know the heart of the message of Keswick until they look away and can say with absolute confidence, the confidence and consolation of a determined man, I thank God there is a way of victory.

There is a way of triumph. There is a way of conquest. But there is something more.

In this consolation of a determined man, there was not only the look of thankful anticipation, but will you notice, secondly, there was the look of trustful appropriation. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I do invite all our young friends here this afternoon to sell your shirt if necessary, or if you happen to be a lady you can sell whatever else you like to sell, and buy the Sainly Hanley Moles commentary on Romans.

Dr. Hanley Moles in his commentary on this part tells us that this text spells out for us the full adequacy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring us out of bondage into freedom. For with spirit-led discernment, Paul uses every name and title of our Redeemer to guarantee deliverance and victory. Will you notice, this isn't just exaggerated language, this is not a pileup of words.

Paul says, I thank God through Jesus Christ Lord. Look at that for a moment. There is Jesus, which means Savior, Deliverer.

The heavenly Joshua, who brings his people into the promised land, and even though there's still war in that land, and will continue to be war until we get to heaven, yet there can be rest for the people of God, because once we're under Joshua, it's victory. The Jerichos go down, and the Als go down, and it's victory all along the way. Why? Because we're carried in the train of the Savior's triumph.

Victory. But notice, not only Lord Jesus Christ, in this we emphasize Jesus, the Savior, but it's Christ, the Sanctifier. The title which so frequently is associated with his indwelling life as Sanctifier, let me substantiate that for a moment.

Christ in you, the hope of glory, Colossians 1 27. I live yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me, Galatians 2 20. Christ in you, unless ye be counterfeit, reprobate, sham, says the Apostle in 2 Corinthians 13 5. And so he's both Savior and Sanctifier.

But something more. I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. He's more than Savior, he's more than Sanctifier, he is Sovereign.

He is Lord, a title which declares his Mastership, his Sovereignty. What a wealth of meaning there is then in this brief statement of the despairing Paul when he exclaimed, I thank God through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Now I know when you were converted, you received all of Christ, you don't receive him by installment, he came into your life, and you were gloriously saved, and the mighty Spirit of God regenerated you.

But I want to tell you that that was not a fixation point. You soon discovered that there were two natures now within you, the old nature of which we've just been speaking, which pollutes the principle of sin, the pollution of sin. And we've had to learn, if you haven't learned it before, you're going to learn it this

afternoon, that it's not only an initial act of making him Savior, Sanctifier, and Sovereign, it's a continual attitude, and for some of us we come to a new recognition at Keswick, that only when he is genuinely Savior and Sanctifier and undisputed Sovereign, Lord of every thought and action, Lord to send and Lord to stay, Lord in writing, speaking, living, does the miracle happen, the miracle of victory and deliverance.

And I want to ask you, have you made him Savior, Sanctifier, and Sovereign? Have you turned to God in thankful anticipation, trusting him for full salvation? Have you appropriated all that our blessed Redeemer means as Savior, Sanctifier, and Sovereign? For when you do, a miracle happens. For we move straight on to my closing thought, the desperation of a defeated man, the consolation of a determined man, and finally the liberation of a delivered man. For we break right into chapter 8, there is no division in the original Bible, 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 of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me what? Free, free, gloriously free from the law of sin and death. Until a person has truly claimed Christ as Savior, Sanctifier, and Sovereign, not only in that initial sense of salvation, but in the continual sense of day by day affirmation, there can never be deliverance from the principle of sin and the pollution of sin. But once Christ is given his rightful place in the life, the mighty Spirit of God effects the liberation, which in fact is two things, with which we conclude this afternoon.

First of all, deliverance from lawful condemnation. Deliverance from lawful condemnation. For let me remind you, you are condemned and you deserve to be condemned, and likewise myself.

Why? Because we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God. But says verse 1, there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. What a glorious truth is embodied in that statement.

Paul goes on to tell us what he means by this when he says, for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sin offering condemns 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. This does not mean that the law has no further function in our lives, we learned that this morning, but it does mean that we are delivered from the condemnation and curse of the law, and that in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as indwelling Savior, indwelling Sanctifier, indwelling Sovereign, I'm telling you something can happen. All the righteousness of the law that we were hearing about this morning and yesterday morning, for which we hunger, all that can be fulfilled in us by the power of the mighty Spirit, setting us free from the law of condemnation.

But there's something even more wonderful, in one sense that is past tense, but there's something we can know moment by moment, not only does he set us free from the law of condemnation, or shall I say lawful condemnation, but we are delivered and set free from sinful gravitation. Will you see verse two and its meaning for you and me this afternoon? For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free and goes on making me free from the law of sin and death. For let us remember that right through to the end of our Christian journey, we shall carry with us the old nature, and with that old nature there's a sinful gravitation, a pull downwards all the time.

For we don't teach here at Keswick the eradication of sin. That won't happen until we get to glory. Nor do we as antinomians, God forbid, teach the perpetuation of sin, going on sinning and sinning and sinning without victory.

No, no, no. We teach the law of counteraction, that even though there is a sinful gravitation, because we're no longer under condemnation, we can know by the power of the Holy Spirit a counteraction to set us free day by day from sin. You see, once you thank God for victory and you've made the Lord Jesus your Savior, sanctifier and sovereign, our law comes into operation.

It's called here the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. And it's a law which transcends the law of sin and death, cancels it out. May I illustrate it? Some time ago I boarded a plane at the Kennedy Airport in New York City for Dallas, Texas.

The day was very foggy and wet. In fact, I doubted whether we would ever take off. But presently, we taxied to the point of departure and waited for the go signal.

Then with a mighty roar, those engines started up. And we began to move forward with such speed that we're thrown back into our seats. The law of gravity did everything in its power to hold those tons of metal and baggage and petrol and people from ever leaving the ground.

The law of gravitation was saying, you're not going up, you're not going up. But something happened. Another law came into operation, even the law of aerodynamics, which canceled out the law of gravitation.

And in a moment, we were in the fog and then through the fog into the clouds and then through the clouds into sunshine. And we were free, flying right for our destination. Isn't that grand? That is only a parable of what can happen in your life.

The law of sin and death can be canceled out by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. We can be delivered from the indwelling principle of sin and the indwelling pollution of sin by the mighty releasing power of the Holy Spirit when we're prepared to do what the Reverend John Stott said this morning, I will not look, I will not do, I will not go in order to involve myself in sin. And that's my position, Lord.

But in my strength, I cannot do that. So I'm trusting your Holy Spirit to enable me. For as Romans 8 and 13 puts it, if we live after the flesh, we shall die.

But if we through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. For let me tell you, you just can't say no by your own strength. You can't just hold back your hands by your own strength.

You can't cease to go places where you know you oughtn't to go by your own strength. We've got to have the release of the mighty power of the Spirit. And thank God this is possible.

It's possible for you. It's possible for me. It's possible for all of us here this afternoon.

There is the desperation of a defeated man. There is the consolation of a determined man. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But thank God there is the liberation, the liberation of a man, a woman, a young person here this afternoon who's prepared to say, by faith I thank God that when the Lord Jesus died at Calvary, He dealt with this issue of condemnation once and forever. And by the shedding of blood, He set me free. But more than that, He didn't stay in the grave.

He rose the third day, and He's gone to the throne. And He's communicated that resurrection life to me. And that resurrection life is the life of liberty.

And by the power of the Holy Spirit, that resurrection life can be in me a law of life, setting me free from the principle of sin, from the pollution of sin, so that I can know what it really means to follow in the train of the Savior's triumph, to be more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Now for many of us, this may involve an act, an act here this afternoon of complete surrender to Jesus as Savior, to Christ as Sanctifier, to the Lord as Sovereign. There must be an initial act, but that initial act must be followed by a continual attitude of allegiance and obedience, allegiance and obedience.

One of the only times I ever heard the great Bishop Taylor Smith speaking to young people, I remember how he told how every morning before he left his bed, before he threw through the clothes off his bed to have his quiet time, for he was tremendously disciplined in having his quiet time day by day. He would say, Lord Jesus, this bed is the altar, my body is the sacrifice. I reaffirm the fact that I'm utterly and totally Thine, and even as I pray, I want You to be afresh in my life, the Savior, Sanctifier, and Sovereign of my life.

This day, Lord, I want You to live Your life out through me. The onus of living is on You. I want You, through my mind, my heart, my will, to be all I need.

And I know that there is no demand made upon my life which isn't a demand upon Your life in me. By Your Spirit, release me to live the life I ought to live. It made a deep impression upon my life.

It taught me the way of victory. My friend, you may have stepped into this afternoon saying, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? I want you to go out of these exits this afternoon saying, I thank God through Jesus Christ, my Lord, and the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free. Let us pray.

Will you just lift up your heart in thanksgiving? I don't believe prayer is ever real if you can't say thank you. If you've really prayed, you can say thank you because you know God has answered the desperation of a defeated man, the consolation of a determined man, the liberation of a delivered man. Will you say, I thank God through Jesus Christ, my Lord, I can be set free by the power of the Holy Spirit, not just for this afternoon, but day by day and every day until I see my Savior face to face.

Thank Him, trust Him, and go on your way rejoicing. Lord, seal with thy Holy Spirit the ministry of thy word to hearts. May this Tuesday at Keswick, in this tent, register a milestone for many young and old as they enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

For Jesus' sake, Amen. Just a verse or two of a closing hymn. Let's make it a prayer from our hearts before our chairman dismisses us.

Number 36, number 36, and I'm going to suggest we just sing the first and last verses of this very blessed hymn. Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole and even though you sing the word whole there, would you interpret it in the light of the message this afternoon? Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly free. You'll sing whole, but your meaning free.

I want thee forever to live in my soul, break down every idol, cast out every foe. Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

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