

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

BELIEVERS FREE FROM THE DOMINION OF SIN.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”—Romans vi. 14.

OUR constant hearers will remember that a Sabbath or so ago we spoke upon “Submit yourselves unto God.”* It is both the way *to* peace and the way *of* peace to submit one's whole self unto God. Nor is it an irksome task to a true believer, but the desire of his heart, the pleasure of his life. He shudders at the idea of yielding his members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but according to the language of the verse which precedes our text, he yields himself unto God as one who has been made alive from the dead, and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Complete consecration of every faculty of mind and body unto the Lord is our soul's deepest wish. We can sing most sincerely that sweet consecration hymn—

“Take my hands and let them move,
At the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be,
Swift and beautiful for thee.

“Take my voice and let me sing,
Always, only for my King:
Take my lips and let them be,
Filled with messages from thee.

“Take my will and make it thine,
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as thou shalt choose.

“So that all my powers combine,
To adore thy grace divine,
Heart and soul a living flame,
Glorifying thy great name.”

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But, beloved, we find another law in our members warring against the law of our mind. To the full yielding up of all our members we find a hindrance in the sin which dwelleth in us, that sin which finds its haunt and hiding place in our mortal body, in the desires, passions, and appetites of our animal nature. These within proper limits are right enough; it is right that we eat and drink, and so forth, but our natural instincts are apt to demand indulgence, and so to become lusts. Our mortal body, in its natural desires, affords dens for the foxes of sin. The carnal mind, also, readily leans to the indulgence of the body, and thus there is presented a powerful opposition to the work of grace. Every true child of God must be conscious of the presence of the rebellious power and principle of sin within him. We strive to keep it under, to subdue and conquer it, and we hope to see it utterly exterminated at the last, for our case is like that of Israel with the Canaanites, and we long for the day when "There shall no more be the Canaanite in the house of the land."

Sin is a domineering force. A man cannot sin up to a fixed point and then say to sin, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." It is an imperious power, and where it dwells it is hungry for the mastery. Just as our Lord, when he enters the soul, will never be content with a divided dominion, so is it with sin, it labours to bring our entire manhood under subjection. Hence we are compelled to strive daily against this ambitious principle: according to the working of the Spirit of God in us we wrestle against sin that it may not have dominion over us. It has unquestioned dominion over multitudes of human hearts, and in some it has set up its horrid throne on high, and keeps its seat with force of arms, so that its empire is undisturbed; in others the throne is disputed, for conscience mutinies, but yet the tyrant is not dethroned. Over the whole world sin exercises a dreadful tyranny. It would hold us in the same bondage were it not for one who is stronger than sin, who has undertaken to deliver us out of its hand, and will certainly perform the redeeming work. Here is the charter of our liberty, the security of our safety—"Sin shall not have dominion over you." It reigns over those who abide in unbelief, but it shall not have dominion over *you*, "because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The whole world lieth in the wicked one, but "ye are not of the world," and therefore "sin shall not have dominion over you." If we are distressed by the fear that sin will ultimately get the mastery over us let us be comforted by our text. Holy jealousy leads us to fear that though we have for many years been enabled to maintain a spotless character before men, we may in some unguarded hour make shipwreck of faith and end our life voyage as castaways upon the rocks of shame. The flesh is frail and our strength is perfect weakness, and therefore we dread lest we should make some terrible fall, and bring dishonour upon the holy name by which we are called: under such feelings we may fly for comfort to the rich assurance of the text, "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

Three things will demand our consideration and afford us consolation this morning. The first is, *the peculiar position* of believers,—“Ye are not under the law, but under grace;” secondly, *the special assurance* made to them, “Sin shall not have dominion over you;” and thirdly,

the remarkable reason given for this statement, "Sin shall not have dominion over you : for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

I. First, then, here is A PECULIAR POSITION,—“Ye are not under the law.” All men are under the law by nature, and consequently they are condemned by it because they have broken its commands; and apart from our Lord Jesus men are only reprieved criminals, respited from day to day, but still under sentence and waiting for the appointed hour when the warrant shall be solemnly executed upon them. But believers are regarded as having died in Christ, and by that death they have escaped from under the law : they are clean delivered from the law by the fact that their Redeemer endured the penalty of the law on their behalf, and at the same time honoured the law by rendering perfect obedience to it : thus in a two-fold manner meeting all the law's requirements, so that it has no more demands upon his people.

“Not under the law,” being interpreted, means that we are not trying to be saved by obedience to law ; we do not pretend to earn eternal life by merit, nor hope to claim anything of the Lord as due to us for good works. The principle which rules our life is not mercenary, we do not expect to earn a reward, neither are we flogged to duty by dread of punishment. We are under grace—that is to say, we are treated on the principle of mercy and love, and not on that of justice and desert. Freely, of his own undeserved favour, God has forgiven us for Christ's sake. He has regarded us with favour, not because we deserved it, but simply because he willed to do so, according to that ancient declaration, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” The Lord did not choose us because of any goodness in us, but he hath saved us and called us according to the purpose of his own will. Moreover, our continuance in a state of salvation depends upon the same grace which first placed us there. We do not stand or fall according to our personal merit ; but because Jesus lives we live, because Jesus is accepted we are accepted, because Jesus is beloved we are beloved : in a word, our standing is not based upon merit, but upon mercy ; not upon our changeable character, but upon the immutable mercy of God. Grace is the tenure upon which we hold our position before the Lord. “For by grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God ;” “but that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident : for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith : but, the man that doeth them shall live in them.”

Let us endeavour to recount the privileges of this position by mentioning the evils from which it releases us. First, *we no longer dread the curse of the law*. Those who are under the law may well be horribly afraid because of the penalties which are due through their many failures and transgressions. They have broken the law, and are therefore in constant danger of judgment and condemnation. The careless try to shake off the thought as much as possible by putting off the evil day, by forgetting death, and by pretending to disbelieve in judgment and eternal wrath ; but still more or less this thought disturbs them, a dreadful sound is in their ears. When men are once awakened the dread of punishment for sin haunts them day and night, and fills them with terror ; and well it may, for they are under the law, and the law will soon cast

them into its prison, from which they will never escape. Every transgression and disobedience must receive a just recompense of reward. Now, believers have no fear as to the punishment of their sin, for our sin was by the Lord himself laid upon Jesus, and the penalty was borne by him: "the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Substitution clears the Christian from all debt to justice, and he dares to challenge the law itself with the question—Who is he that condemneth, since Christ has died? Yea, he goes further, and challenges an accusation—Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect, since God hath justified? No penalty do we dread, for we are forgiven, and God will not pardon and then punish. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Will God punish those from whom he has removed transgression, or cast those into hell whose sins he has cast behind his back? Impossible. Hence, when we see the stern array of the judgment seat, and hear the threatenings of vengeance, we who are believers rejoice to feel that these terrors have nothing to do with us. The Great Surety has secured his people from all risk of wrath. The undying worm is not for them, the unquenchable fire is not for them, neither shall the pit shut her mouth upon them, for they are not under the law.

Then the believer *no longer drudges in unwilling obedience, seeking to reach a certain point of merit.* The man under the law who is awakened and aroused very frequently tries to keep the commands in order to attain, at any rate, to a fair measure of goodness. For this he labours very hard, as men who tug at the oar to escape from a tempest. If he could but reach a certain degree of virtue he would feel safe; if he were equal to such an one he would be at rest. Alas, he has no power to attain even to his own ideal; he finds his resolutions written in water, and his goodness vanishes like the morning mist. His servile works are ill done, and fail to yield him peace of mind. Now, the believer is under no such drudgery; Christ has fulfilled the law for him, and he rests in that finished work. He does not aim at high attainments in order to win the favour of God; he has that favour; it has come to him freely and undeservedly, and he rejoices in it. A high ambition moves him, but it is not that of saving himself by his own works. He obeys out of love; he delights in the law after the inner man, and confesses with Paul, "the law is holy, and just, and good"; he wishes that he could live without sin, but he never dreams that even then he could make an atonement for the past, nor does he fancy that by his own merit he is to obtain salvation for the future. The work through which he is saved is complete; it is not his own work, but the work of Jesus, and hence, when he sees his own shortcomings and iniquities, he does not, therefore, doubt his salvation, but continues to rest in Jesus. He is no longer a slave, flogged with the whip of fear, and made to labour for his very life, and gather nothing for his pains; but he is free from the principle of law, and works from a principle of love; not to secure divine favour, but because that favour has been freely manifested towards him.

The Christian man is now *no longer uncertain as to the continuance of divine love*. Under the law, no man's standing can be secure, since by a single sin he may forfeit his position. If a legalist should be able to persuade himself that he has reached a sufficient point of merit and is safe, yet he cannot be sure of continuing in his exalted position, for like the flower of the grass all human comeliness withers away. However meritorious a man may conceive himself to be, yet he may fall short of the standard even now; and if not, in the future he may spoil it all. The learned Bellarmine, one of the great antagonists of Martin Luther, once gave utterance to language which I cannot verbally remember, but which was to the following effect; of course, being a Papist, he believed in justification by works, but yet he observes that, "nevertheless, seeing that even in the best of men good works are usually marred by sin, and seeing that no man can know when he has performed quite enough good works to save him, it is upon the whole safest to trust only in the merits of Jesus Christ." We agree with the cardinal and accept the safest way as good enough for us. Safest, indeed, it is to us, for it is the only way which we can tread, since all the good works we have ever done are defiled and polluted either in motive beforehand, or in the spirit in which they were done, or by proud reflections afterwards; so that we dare not trust even in our prayers and devotions and almsgivings, or repentances, but must rest upon the merit of Christ alone. The merit of Christ is always a constant and abiding quantity; if, therefore, we rest thereon, our foundation is as secure at one time as at another. The merits of Jesus will be throughout eternity sweet before God on our behalf. Is he not "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"? Hence the confidence of the believer rests upon a foundation which will no more be shaken in the future than it is to-day. Glory be to God, he doth not cast away his people whom he did foreknow; he doth not love to-day and hate to-morrow; nor favour with his grace the child whom he has adopted and afterwards disown him. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." We are clear from the bondage of the law, since we are no longer under the covenant of works, but have come under the covenant of grace, which is founded upon promises which nothing can disannul.

In consequence of this the believer is *no longer afraid of the last great day*. Shall all our sins be read and published before an assembled universe? "If so," saith the man who is under the law, "it will go hard with me." Judgment is a terrible word to those who are hoping to save themselves, for if their doings are to be put into the balances they will surely be found wanting. But judgment has no terror in it to a believer: he can sing with our poet—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While through thy blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

Will the sins of believers be published at the last day? If it be to the glory of forgiving love, let them be. Who among us need be afraid since at the end of the whole list there shall be written, "and all these

were blotted out for Jesus Christ's sake." And if not published at all because all our sins were cast behind Jehovah's back, and if instead thereof the Judge shall only proclaim the good works of his people and say, "I was hungry and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; and inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me," then we may well welcome the last assize and cry "Welcome, welcome, Son of God." If the book of record shall be opened which might justly condemn us, yet it is written, "And another book was opened, which was the book of life." If our names be there we have nought to fear.

One word may be added here, namely, that the believer being no longer under the law has *no slavish dread of God*. As long as I am at enmity with God, guilty of breaking his law, and liable to his righteous wrath, I dread his name and shrink from his presence. The soul under the law stands as the Israelites did, far off from the mountain, with a bound set between themselves and the glory of God. Distance and separation are the natural condition of all who are under the law. Far hence, cries the heart of man, when it beholds God touching the hills so that they smoke; and when it hears the voice of God like a trumpet waxing exceeding loud and long it beseeches that it may not hear such words any more. Not so the believer, for his heart and his flesh cry out for the Lord, and he pants to come and appear before God. We have access with boldness to the throne of the heavenly grace, and we delight to avail ourselves of it. Through the Mediator we have fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost has made us long to be brought nearer and nearer to our divine Father. Our God is a consuming fire, but that consuming fire has no terror for us, since it will only melt the alloy from the gold and remove the dross from the silver. The law could only say to us, "Depart, ye cursed," but grace saith, "Come, ye blessed." The law said, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet"; but grace cries with a voice of pity, "Whosoever is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him come." We have accepted the call of grace, and now we know the Lord and love him. Perfect love has cast out fear, for fear hath torment. We are not under the law, but we have "known and believed the love that God hath to us."

Now I speak to you Christian people, even to you who believe in Christ, and I beg you to understand this freedom from the law, and then to hold it fast, for there are some of you who return in a measure to the legal yoke, whereas the apostle says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Do you feel helpless, cold, and heavy, and do you therefore conclude that you are not saved? Are you not coming under the law, and measuring the power of the grace of God by your own deservings or excellencies? If you judge your standing before God by anything except your faith in his promise, you will bring yourself into bondage. You can walk by faith, but you will stumble if you try any other way. There is but one deliverance for me when I question my own state, and that is to fly to simple faith in Jesus. When Satan says, "You are no saint," do not argue with him, for he is too subtle for a poor soul like you. Yield the

point and say, "It may be I am no saint, nor are you either." "No," saith he, "you are deceived, you are a hypocrite." Reply to him, "If I am not a saint, I am a sinner; and being a sinner, I find it written that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I put myself in that list, O Satan, and even thou canst not deny that I am such. I believe in Jesus, and believing in him I am justified before God by the righteousness of my Lord, and I have peace with God through Jesus Christ." Beloved, this is safe standing. If we are indeed saved by the righteousness of another, why do we question the power of that righteousness to save us because of our own conscious feebleness? for we are not saved by our own strength or feebleness, but by the power of the Lord Jesus. If we are standing with one foot on the rock of Christ's finished work and the other upon the sand of our own doings, then we may well stand or totter according to which foot we are trusting to; but if we set both feet upon the rock then we may stand fast though the sea roar and the floods sweep the sand away. Mind you do not try the double foundation, for it will never answer. Partly Christ and partly self will soon come to a failure. No, our great Redeemer cried, "It is finished," and it is finished, and those who rest on him have a finished salvation, for they are not under the law, but under grace.

II. Now, secondly, we come to THE SPECIAL ASSURANCE of the text: "Sin shall not have dominion over you." *This is a very needful assurance, especially at times.* Sin is a great working power, and all around us we see its hideous operations: it is an evil as incessant in its activity as it is deadly in its results. As we look at its forcible workings, we cry in alarm, "It will surely drag me down one of these days," but the dread fear is removed by the cheering voice of the Holy Ghost, who assures us, "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

Alas, we not only see the evil working in others, but it assails ourselves: our eyes are drawn aside to look on vanity, our ears hearken to evil speaking, and our heart itself at times grows cold or wanders. Then we are apt to be cast down and to doubt. Here the sweet assurance cheers us—though you be tempted you shall not be led astray, for "sin shall not have dominion over you." "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Stand in the strength of faith and in the power of the precious blood, and though you are beset with evil suggestions a thousand times a day, and every sense is assailed by the witcheries of evil, yet "sin shall not have dominion over you." Cheered by such a word as this we remain on our watch-tower, and are not overcome of evil.

Sometimes sin forces its way into our souls and rouses our inward evil to an awful degree, so that the imagination sets fire to our lusts, and the smoke of the conflagration blows in the eyes of the affections, and almost chokes the understanding. Yes, sin may invade your soul, and for awhile find a lodgment there, so as to be your plague and torment; it may even crush you down, rob you of your comfort, injure your graces, and create intestine war to the detriment of your peace, but it shall not have dominion over you. Those of you who are acquainted with John Bunyan's "Holy War" will remember how wonderfully the glorious dreamer describes Diabolus besieging the town of Mansoul after it had been occupied by the Prince Immanuel. After many battles and cunning plots the enemy entered into the city, filled all the streets with the yells

of his followers, and polluted the whole place with the presence of his hosts; but yet he could not take the castle in the centre of the town, which held out for Immanuel. That castle was the heart, and he could by no means secure a footing in it. He beat his big hell drum almost day and night around the walls, so that those who had fled to the castle had a very terrible time of it, and he set all his huge machinery to work to batter down the walls, but he could not enter. No, sin may for awhile seem to prevail in the believer till he has no rest, and is sore beset, hearing nothing but the devil's tattoo sounding in his ears—"Sin, sin, sin;" but nevertheless sin shall not have dominion over him. Sin may haunt your bed and board, and follow you down the streets in your walks, and enter the very room into which you withdraw to pray; but your inmost self shall still cry out against it, for "sin shall not have dominion over you." Sin may vex you and thrust itself upon you, but it cannot become your lord. The devil hath great wrath, and rages horribly for awhile, knowing that his time is short; but he shall be subdued and expelled, for the Lord our God giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ.

Sometimes, alas, sin not only enters us, but prevails over us, and we are forced in deep anguish to confess that we have fallen beneath its power. It is terrible that it should be so, even for a moment, and yet it would be idle to deny the mournful fact. Who among us can say, "I am clean, I have not sinned"? Still, a temporary defeat is not sufficient to effect a total subjugation. Sin shall not have dominion over the believer, for though he fall he shall arise again. The child of God when he falls into the mire is like the sheep which gets up and escapes from the ditch as quickly as possible; it is not his nature to lie there. The ungodly man is like the hog which rolls in the filth and wallows in it with delight. The mire has dominion over the swine, but it has none over the sheep. With many bleatings and outcries the sheep seeks the shepherd again, but not so the swine. Every child of God weeps, mourns, and bemoans his sin, and he hates it even when for awhile he has been overtaken by it, and this is proof that sin hath not dominion over him. It has an awful power, but it has not dominion: it casts us down, but it cannot make us take delight in its evil.

There are times when the believer feels greatly his danger: his feet have almost gone, his steps have well nigh slipped: then how sweetly doth this assurance come to the soul, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." The Lord is able to keep you from falling, and you shall be preserved even to the end.

This assurance secures us from a very great danger: from the danger of being under the absolute sway of sin. What is meant by sin having dominion? Look and see; there are men who live in sin, and yet they do not appear to know it; sin has dominion over them by spreading a veil over their hearts, so that their conscience is deadened. They are so enslaved as to be content in bondage. You shall not be so; you shall be enlightened and instructed, so that when you sin you shall be well aware of it. Self-excuse shall be impossible to you. Many men live in gross sin, and are not ashamed, they are at ease in it, and all is quiet; but it shall not be so with you, in whom the life of God has been implanted. If you do wrong you shall smart for it, and your nest shall be stuffed with thorns. God has so changed your nature by his grace that when you sin you shall be

like a fish on dry land, you shall be out of your element, and long to get into a right state again. You cannot sin, for you love God. The sinner may drink sin down as the ox drinketh down water, but to you it shall be as the brine of the sea. You may become so foolish as to try the pleasures of the world, but they shall be no pleasures to you; you shall cry out with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." That marvellous man tried the world at its best, and was disappointed, and you may be quite sure that where he failed you will not succeed. If the Lord loves you sin will never yield you satisfaction. In worldly company you shall be all the while like a man who sits upon thorns, or walks amid vipers and cobras; and in worldly amusement you shall feel as if the house would fall upon you. An ungodly man under the dominion of sin loves sin, but that you shall never do. He wishes he could sin more, for he has upon him the thirst of intoxication; but as for you, you shall never be made happy by evil, but ~~shall~~ groan under it if you ever yield to its power. You shall hate yourself to think you ever consented to its solicitations; you shall be wretched and unhappy and shall find no rest till you return unto your Lord. Your nature has been so changed that you cannot henceforth give a moment's entertainment to sin without feeling like one who carries burning coals in his bosom, or thrusts thorns into his flesh. No, beloved, if you be indeed a believer in Christ you must fight with sin till you die, and, what is more, you must conquer it in the name of the Lord. You are sometimes afraid that it will vanquish you, but if you be of the true seed it cannot prevail. Like Samson, you shall break all its bands. You shall rise superior to habits which now enthrall you; you shall even forget those strong impulses which now sweep you before them; your inward graces shall gather force, while the Holy Ghost shall help your infirmities and you shall be changed from glory to glory as by the presence of the Lord.

This assurance is confirmed by the context—"Sin shall not have dominion over you," because you are dead to it by virtue of your union to Christ. You died with Christ and you have been buried with Christ, how then shall sin have dominion over you? Besides, you live in Christ in newness of life by reason of his living in you. How can the new nature live in sin? How can that which is born of God live like that which is born of the devil? No, no, it cannot be, Christ has undertaken to save you from your sins, and he will do it: he will keep you watchful, prayerful, vigilant; he will instruct you in his word, he will help you by his Spirit, he will perfect you in himself. You are bound for victory and you shall have it; thanks be unto God who gives it to you through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

III. Now I come to my last head, which is, **THE REMARKABLE REASON** that is given for sin's never having dominion: "For ye are not under the law, but under grace." "There, there," says many an unconverted man, "did you ever hear such doctrine as he has been preaching to us this morning? Not under the law! Well, then, we may sin as we like." That is your logic, that is the way in which a base heart sours the sweet milk of the word; but it is not the argument of a child of God. Mark how Paul puts it: "What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." He flings away the inference with horror and detestation, crying, "God forbid!" Let me just show

you why being under the law is not helpful to holiness, while being under grace is the great means of it.

Those who are under the law will always be under the dominion of sin, and it cannot be otherwise. First, because the law puts a man under the dominion of sin by pronouncing sentence of condemnation upon him as soon as he has transgressed. What does the law say to him? "Henceforth you are guilty, and I condemn you. He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all. Thus the law shuts a man up to being a sinner, and offers him no space for repentance. It accuses, condemns, and sentences, but affords no hope and offers no encouragement. It is not so with those who are under grace; to them grace saith, "You are sinners, but you are freely forgiven; your iniquity is pardoned; your transgression is put away; go, and sin no more." Thus relieved, the penitent lifts up his head, and cries, "Enable me to praise thee, and grant that I may be upheld by grace in the way of uprightness." The amazing love of God when shed abroad in the heart creates a desire for better things, and what the law could not do, grace accomplishes.

A man under the law is by the law driven to despair. "What," saith he, "am I to keep this law in order to be saved? Alas! I have already broken it, and if I had not, it is too high and holy for me to rise to its full height." Therefore he resolves that he will not attempt the task, and he sinks into indifference; or, in some cases, he bethinks him of the old proverb, that you may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and he resolves that he will take his fill of sin. Because there is no hope, he will plunge into iniquity. He vows that if hell must be his portion for ever, at any rate, he will enjoy the sweetness there is in sin while he may. So the law, because of the evil heart it has to deal with, excites such a condition of heart that sin is confirmed in its dominion. Being threatened, the rebellious heart hardens itself, and defies the Lord; and then concluding that peace is impossible, it continues more and more to fight against the Lord. Not so the child of God, he saith, "God, for Christ's sake, hath cast my sins behind his back, and I am saved. Now, for the love I bear his name, I will serve him with all my might, because of all that he has done for me." Thus the grace of our Lord Jesus, by its freeness and richness, breaks the dominion of sin which the law only served to establish and confirm. Not that the law is evil, God forbid! but because we are evil and rebel against the holy law.

A man under the law does not escape from the dominion of sin because *the law rouses the opposition of the human heart*. There are a great many things which people never wish to do, nor think of doing till they are forbidden. Lock up a closet in your house and say to your wife and children, "You must never enter that closet, nor even look into the key-hole." Perhaps they have never wanted to look into the dingy old corner before, but now they pine to inspect it. A number of bye-laws have lately been posted up as to the use of Clapham-common, and I am half afraid to read them, for fear I should want to break them. I dare say that many things which I never desired to do are now strictly prohibited, and I shall feel vexed with the commissioners for lessening my liberty. I should not wonder but what numbers of persons, who never visited the common before, will now become sinners against the new laws. Law, by reason of

our unruly nature, excites opposition, and creates sin, for what a man may not do he immediately wants to do. He who is under the law will never escape from the dominion of sin, for sin comes by the law by reason of the iniquity of our hearts. But when we are not under the law, but under grace, we love God for his love to us, and labour to please him in all things.

The law moreover affords a man no actual help. All it does is to say, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not"; it can do no more: but grace gives us what the law requires of us. The law says, "make you a new heart": grace replies, "A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you." The law says, "Keep my commandments"; and grace answers, "Thou shalt keep my commandments and do them." Grace brings the Holy Spirit into the soul to work in us holy affections and a hatred of sin, and hence what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, grace accomplishes for us by its own almighty power.

Further, the law inspires no sentiment of love, and love after all is the fulfilling of the law. If you are told you shall and you shall not, there is nothing in this to inspire love to the lawgiver; law is hard and cold, like the two tables of Moses. Law does not change the heart or remove enmity: it tends rather the other way. Law never excites enthusiasm for that which is right, it is too stern and chill to touch the heart. Mere law does not even raise in a man's heart a high ideal of what he ought to be. Look at the legalist, the man who hopes for salvation by the law, he looks upon religion as a task in which he has no delight; he is a bondsman, and nothing more. He does as much or as little as he is forced to do, but his heart is not in it. The men who think they have kept the law of God are evidently very far from understanding its meaning: they have a very poor idea of the mind of God or they would not have thought that they had fulfilled the will of God with such a poor, miserable, hypocritical righteousness as theirs. The Pharisee thought he had kept the law, for he fasted twice a week, and paid tithes of all he possessed, and yet the same man could go and swallow a widow's house behind the door and do all sorts of abominable actions. It is clear that he had formed a shockingly low notion of true holiness; in fact, he had degraded the law into a mere external ordinance, which took note of the outside of the cup and platter and left the inside full of filthiness. But see what grace does: it fires a man with enthusiasm and sets before him a lofty idea of excellence. It causes him to love the Lord, and then it gives him a high idea of purity and holiness. Though he rises many grades beyond the Pharisee, yet the believer cries, "I am not what I should be;" and if he becomes the most zealous, consecrated man that ever lived, the law is still beyond him, and he still asks that he may be able to rise to greater heights of holiness and virtue. This grace does, but this the law can never do.

The most pleasing service in the world is that which is done from motives of affection, and not for wages. The servant who only does his work for his pay is not valued like the old attached domestic who nursed you when you were a boy, and waited on your father before you. No money can purchase such service as he renders, it is so thoroughly hearty and prompt. If you could not afford to pay his wages he would stop with you; and if anything goes awry he puts up with it, because he

loves you. You prize such a man above rubies. So is it with the child of God. The mere legalist does what he ought, or at least thinks he does so; but as for heartiness and zeal, he knows nothing of such things. The child of God, with all his feebleness and his blundering, is far more accepted, for he does all he can out of pure love, and then cries, "I am an unprofitable servant, I have done no more than was my duty to have done; the Lord help me to do more." God accepts heart service, but heart service the law never did produce, and never will. The only true heart service in the world comes from those who are not under the law, but under grace; hence sin shall not have dominion over those who are not under the law. The spirit of the world is legal, and its wise men tell us that we must preach to people that they must be virtuous or they will go to hell, and we must hold out heaven as the reward of morality. They believe in the principle of chain and whip. But what comes of such doctrine? The more you preach it, the less virtue, the less obedience there is in the world. But when you preach love the effect is very different—"Come," saith God, "I forgive you freely. Trust my Son, and I will save you outright, though in you there is nothing to merit my esteem. Accept my free favour, and I will receive you graciously, and love you freely." This looks at first sight as if it gave a licence to sin, but how does it turn out? Why, this wondrous grace taking possession of the human heart breeds love in return, which love becomes the fountain of purity and holiness, and such as receive it endeavour to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Beloved, do not get under the law, do not yield to legal threats or legal hopes, but live under the free grace gospel. Let the note that peals on your ear be no longer the thunder of Sinai. "Do and live," but let it be the sweet song of free grace and dying love. Ah, ring those charming bells from morn till eve. Let us hear their liquid music again and again. Live and do; not do and live: not work for salvation, but being saved, work; being already delivered, go forth and prove by your grateful affections and zealous actions what the grace of God has done for you. "Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS v. vi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—911, 647, 646.