

## THE LAW'S FAILURE AND FULFILLMENT

### NO. 2228

A SERMON  
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1891,  
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*“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 for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*  
*Romans 8:3, 4.*

THE law of God is perfect. You cannot add anything to it, nor take anything from it, without spoiling it. If you will read the ten commands, and understand them in their spiritual meaning, you will find that they are far-reaching, and that they deal with every sin. I noticed, some time ago, that a learned prelate said that he could not find any commandment against gambling. Where were his eyes? Is it not plainly written, “You shall not covet”? What is gambling but covetousness in action? Most manifestly, the gambler desires his neighbor's goods, and this desire gives zest to the vice, which the law of God quite plainly condemns. Depend upon it, there is nothing wrong but the law condemns it, and there is nothing right but the law approves it. The Decalogue is an absolutely perfect law.

If you take the soul of it, what I may call the summary of the law; it seems to me to be even larger in brief than it is in the lengthy form. Here it is. First, in the Old Testament in two different passages, one in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, and the other in the nineteenth of Leviticus, and then as given by Christ in answer to the question of a lawyer, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” Wonderful law, summed up in one word, “love,” but comprehending in its circle every form of duty which springs out of our relationship to God or man! Well may Paul say, as in the previous chapter, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” If evil is worked, it is not the law of God which works it, for that law is the expression of the nature of the Eternal, and reveals His holiness and justice; but as “God is love,” the law which He gives is also comprehended in the same word—love. “We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.”

But there are some things which the law cannot do. It cannot produce a new heart in a sinner. It cannot save a lost soul. It cannot justify a guilty person. It cannot draw a wanderer back to God. The law, as originally given to Adam, a perfect man, had he carried it out, would have glorified God, and would have produced in him a perfect life. But we are not in the same position towards God as Adam was, and we are not free from the taint of evil as he was. We have fallen, and there is now in our nature that which Paul calls “the flesh,” which lusts to envy, and turns aside from God. This has made the law weak for the accomplishment of God's purpose of justification or salvation. The law of England, where it is true and good, protects honest men, and deters many from committing crime; but it is practically powerless in the case of some habitual criminals, who seem to have inherited the tendency to criminality. The defect is not in the law, but in the person with whom it has to deal; so the law of God becomes weak through our weakness. There are some who cling to the law, and expect to be saved by their own doings, but they are leaning on a broken reed. To free from guilt and condemnation is what the law cannot do, not on account of any fault in itself, but because it is weak through our flesh.

What, then, is the purpose and limit of the law? *It sets before us a straight path.* Right up the mountain side I see the way to the summit. But I have fallen into an abyss. I am bruised and broken; I cannot

stir an inch. What is the use of a straight road to me? Here I must lie, at the bottom of the crevasse, and perish, unless something more than a straight road is shown to me. The way is before me, but I am weak, and cannot stir. The law tells us what we ought to do, but that does not enable us to do it. Still, it is useful to know the way in which we should go, for that will show us how far we have fallen, cause us to be discontented with our present state, and prepare us to accept help, if help should come. The law can do that.

The law is also very useful because *it shows us our deflections and stains*. It is like the mirror which my lady holds up to her face that she may see if there are any spots on it. But she cannot wash her face with the mirror. When the mirror has done its utmost, there are the stains all the same. It cannot take away a single spot; it can only show where it is. And the law, though it reveals our sins, our shortcomings, our transgression cannot remove the sin or the transgression. It is weak for that purpose, because it was never intended to accomplish such an end.

The law also serves another purpose: *it upbraids us for our sin*. Did you never feel its ten-throated lash coming upon the back of your conscience? What furrows these plowers make! "Condemn him," says whole ten-throated law. The first commandment says, "Condemn him; he has broken me," and the second command says, "Condemn him: he has broken me," and the third says, "Condemn him: he has broken me." Not one of them is silent, all clamor for their due, and if you know your own heart truly, you confess that not one charges you falsely, seeing that hate is murder, and the thought of folly, sin. When conscience is really awake, what pain, what anguish the law will bring to the spirit! But it cannot heal you. It cannot speak peace to you. It cannot forgive you. To convince and to condemn is all the law can do. It is too weak to save even one poor sinner.

Again, the law can tell you what you ought to do, but *it gives no inclination to do the right*. On the contrary, without any blame to the law, it often creates inclination to do otherwise. Paul says, "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." There are some things men would not think of doing if they were not forbidden, but the very forbidding of them makes some desire to do them. Many a thing which is commanded we might have freely done if it had been left to our own choice, but such is the perversity of our nature that, being commanded to do it, straightway we refuse. We kick against the commandment. The law does not sweetly incline us to holiness, but, through the weakness, or, rather, wickedness of our flesh, it often stirs up the obstinate and rebellious propensities which are in our nature. Certainly the law does not incline us to righteousness, but "sin, taking occasion by the commandment," works in us all manner of evil.

The law is weak in another way. *It does not lend us any aid* towards the fulfillment of its commands. It says, "This do, and you shall live. Make the bricks; make the bricks," but it gives us no straw with which to make them, nor can we find any in all the land; so we are worse off than Israel in Egypt. The law in and of itself does not contribute to our obedience to its commands, nor does it restrain us when we go astray. It thunders out, "You shall not kill," but when the heart darts its thought of bitterness, or the hand raises the assassin's knife, it does not hinder; it looks on cold and unmoved. It aids us not in any way; it does not, because it cannot. Only grace can do that. We have to look to another source for help in holiness.

And when we have broken the law, *it brings no remedy*. Of mercy the law knows nothing. You have broken the law; there is the penalty, and you must bear it. Through having committed sin you have brought upon yourself a grievous malady. The law points out the malady, but it never brings any medicine with which to cure it. It pours in no oil and wine; it is no good Samaritan. It is not the law's business to do that. When Her Majesty's judge is on the bench, his business there is to administer the law, and to see that the rules of the nation are carried out fairly and justly. He does not sit there to provide for the poor or to help the sick, but to judge men, and condemn the guilty. This is all that the law was meant to do. In that it is weak through our flesh, there are some things which the law cannot do.

On one occasion some workmen were quarrying some rocks, and having made all ready for a blast—drilled the holes, filled them with gun-cotton, and connected the fuses—they warned everyone away from the place of danger. Then the fuses were lighted, and the workmen themselves withdrew, but, to their horror, they saw a little boy, attracted by the lights, running towards them. Those strong men raised

their voices, and shouted to the boy, "Go back! Go back!"—they could do no more. But of course the boy, having the same nature as the rest of us, only went the more quickly forward, and into the danger. Still the men cried, "Go back! Go back!" They were like the law, powerless; not because their voices were weak, but because of the material with which they had to deal. But the mother of the boy heard the call, and seeing the fearful peril in which her child was placed, she dropped on one knee, opened her arms wide, and called, "Come to mother! Come to mother!" The boy stopped, turned, hesitated a moment, and then ran to her embrace, and in listening to her call, and obeying it, he escaped the danger which threatened him. What all the shouts of the strong men could not do, the gentle voice of the mother accomplished. Their voices were like the law, which says, "Go back! Go back!" Her voice was like the sweet sound of the gospel, "Come to Jesus! Come to Jesus!" "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son" easily accomplished. Behold here the wisdom, and might, and love of Jehovah!

Is it not a grand thing when a wise person, seeing a difficulty which he did not produce, comes in and sets everything right? Through our sinful flesh there has come a great warp in the original order of things. God cannot be glorified by the law, for we have broken it; and we cannot be saved by the law, for we still continue to break it; but God Himself comes in, to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. I want to show you, first, *God's glorious method*; and when I have shown you that, I will speak of *God's glorious accomplishment*. These two things will serve us both for instruction and stimulus.

**I. First, GOD'S GLORIOUS METHOD.** Here we are with a law which we have not kept, any one of us; a law which we never shall keep. There is no hope of salvation by the law. What happens, then? Does He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him forever? If He does, what are those means?

Hear these words, "For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending"—listen!—"God sending," not God waiting till we went to Him, but, seeing our misery and helplessness, *He sends*. From yonder throne, beyond your sight, and higher than your loftiest imagination, He sends. His thoughts are with poor, struggling, guilty, unworthy men; He sees that the law cannot help men, and that they will never glorify God by the law, except it be by being made to suffer the punishment due for their sin. Therefore Jehovah interposes; God sends. I say again, He does not wait for us to come to Him. If we had sent an embassy to Him, and waited at heaven's gate many long years, and He had at last deigned to answer us, it would have been a wonderful instance of love. But now He sends an Ambassador. It is He who has been offended who seeks to make peace and not the guilty and the offending ones.

Read on farther. "God sending"—an angel? An archangel? No! "God sending His own Son." Hear this. *He sends His Son*. The case was so desperate that only God Himself could meet it. Well, Jesus Christ, God's own Son, is very God of very God; and He can do it. But shall He leave heaven? Shall He come down to earth? Will He be a servant? Will He who can command so humble Himself as to be sent? Will He, before whom angels bow with veiled faces, go on an errand down to earth? It is even so; "God sending His own Son." He had but one, His Only-begotten; but He determined to have many, and so He sent His one Son that He might in "bringing many sons unto glory," show to all worlds the riches of His love and grace. From all eternity the Son was in the bosom of the Father, and no less than He shall be chosen to be an ambassador of peace to the sons of men—

*"Hark, the glad sound, the Savior comes,  
The Savior promised long!  
Let every heart prepare a throne,  
And every voice a song."*

But how does He send Him? *He sends Him in the flesh*. This is the amazement of angels, the astonishment of all thoughtful beings. God sends His Son to take our flesh into communion with Himself; not to be an angel—"for verily He took not on Him the nature of angels"—but to be a man, and to come here, as you and I come here, by birth. In Bethlehem's manger He lies, the offspring of a woman. At that woman's breast He hangs, a babe. Yes, He that made the heavens and the earth, "being in the form of God, counted it not a thing to be grasped," as the Revised Version gives it to us, "to be on an equality

with God"; yet—oh, the amazing condescension—He has “emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.” He has veiled Himself under the form of an infant; and there He is, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.” The incarnation of Christ is a great reality which we can never understand, but which we devoutly believe, and believing it, we have before us God’s way of doing what the law could not do. He sent His own Son in human flesh.

But Paul puts it in a way which increases the wonder. God not only deigns to send His Son, but *He sends Him in the likeness of sinful flesh*. Christ did not come in sinful flesh, but He came in the *likeness* of sinful flesh. He came in the reality of flesh, but not in the sinfulness of flesh. His flesh was like sinful flesh, but it was not sinful flesh. It was real flesh, but it was not sinful flesh. It was the likeness of sinful flesh, for, as you looked upon Him, you could not tell Him from anyone else. That marvelous prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled; “He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” This was the likeness of sinful flesh which He assumed—to be poor, to be hungry, to be thirsty, to be despised, to be rejected, to be homeless, to be friendless, to be forsaken, to be betrayed, to be scourged, to be put to death. Yes, it was necessary that He should be “numbered with the transgressors,” though without fault. “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.”

There is in the world this strange thing called sin; a discord which mars the harmony of God’s universe; a blight which makes evil that which God at first pronounced to be “very good.” Sin! We cannot get away from it; we know more of it than of our most familiar friend; it meets us everywhere, and in everything. Sin! It is the history of humanity. It is the history of the Bible, for why else was it written? It is the history of this building; why else was it built? It is the history of the ordinances of worship; why else were they instituted? Best of all, it is the history of the Christ of God.

This is a very wonderful story which I am telling you, but I have not told you all yet. When the Father sends His Only-begotten and Well-beloved Son, *He sends Him on account of sin*. “For sin.” Why did You come here, sweet babe, away from the royalties of heaven? “I came because of sin.” What brought you here, dear child, sojourning twelve years at Nazareth? “Sin brought Me here,” says the boy. “I came on My Father’s business, and that is, to put away sin.” What brought You here, dear Lord, coming up dripping from the waters of Jordan? “Ask My servant John,” He says. And John answers, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” If I question our divine Savior at any period of His life, and even at His death, “Why are You here?” He will tell me, “I am here for two reasons, for love and for sin: here because men have sinned, and here because I love them, and would save them from their sin.”—

*“’Twas love that sought Gethsemane,  
Or Judas never had found Thee;  
'Twas love that nailed You to the tree,  
Or iron never had bound Thee;  
'Twas love that lived, 'twas love that died,  
With endless life to bless us;  
Well have You won Your blood-bought bride,  
All hail! You glorious Jesus!”*

I must ask you to notice the marginal reading here; “by a sacrifice for sin.” The Revised Version has it, “God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” *He sends Him to be a sacrifice for sin*. Christ came here to be offered up as a sin offering. Our sin was laid on Him; and when God came to visit sin He found it laid on Christ, and He smote it there. There God cursed the evil thing, for Christ “was made a curse for us.” Yes, He killed it, for Christ drank of the cup of death, even as we read, “that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” Wonderful is this doctrine! In that the law was weak through the flesh and could not save us, God sent His own Son to be incarnate here in the likeness of sinful flesh, to be offered up as a sacrifice, to be presented as the atonement for human guilt, “For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the Just for the

unjust, that He might bring us to God." He has once suffered, "to declare at this time God's righteousness, that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus."

Only one other word and I have completed the first verse. God does all this, and *He thus condemns sin in the flesh*. "For sin" or "by a sin offering," we read, He "condemned sin in the flesh." Christ's death condemned sin. You may find strong words with which to censure sin, and you may talk of the bitter effects of sin, but no words can be too strong, no picture too dark, to set forth the evil thing. What a curse sin is to this world of ours! You point me to the graveyard, and you say, "Who slew all these?" Sin. You point me to the prison, and you say, "Who bound all these?" Sin. You point me to the misery of this great city, the drunkenness, the wantonness, the selfishness, the crime, and you say, "What caused all this?" Sin. And you may even lift the veil, and bid me gaze into the awful future, where souls lie beneath the ban of God, accursed forever, and ask, "What brought man into such a plight?" Sin. Sin did it all, and we will, we must, condemn the cause of such horrors. But, I tell you, sin was never so condemned as when Jesus died. By His death, Jesus in effect said, "Sinners have died: sinners have been cast into hell. Their sin deserved it." But He said more than that, for when sin was laid on Him, it was taken by Him as a deed of love. It was not His sin. He had done no ill. That the sin was on Him was an act of supreme grace. He took the awful load willingly, and bore it in the place of guilty men. He was innocent, yet, because of man's sin, He must die: *even He must die*. This blot must put out, not the candles and the moon and the stars, but the sun Himself. This poison is so virulent that not only must the mortal die, but the Immortal must bow His head, and give up the ghost. Oh, sin; you are a poisonous thing indeed to slay God's own Son! All heaven and earth unite with one voice to say that you are hateful and abhorrent. You are condemned!

If there is a king in a country, and he has made a law, and there is one who is brought before him and condemned, and that person is his own son, we may be assured of his strict justice. If the king carries out the law upon the prince, and puts him in prison, everyone is assured that he respects the law. If there is proved against the prince an offense whose penalty is death, and the king gives up even his own guilty son to death, you see how he vindicates the law, and how he abhors the offense charged against the prince. And God never showed His justice as well as His love so much as when He gave up His Son; and He never showed His hatred of evil so much as when, sin being by imputation laid upon Christ, He bade Him die, and Christ "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now is sin condemned as the vilest thing in the universe. It has slain the Christ. It has forced the hand of divine justice to smite down even Christ Himself instead of guilty men.

This is the story more marvelous than all the annals of earth. I have told it to you in simple language. You will hear some men talk very grandly about it, with much argument and vain philosophy: that is not my business; I have only to tell you the story as it stands. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." This is God's glorious method of salvation and deliverance from sin.

**II.** Now I am going to show you, in a few words, what is, through this, GOD'S GLORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT. The result is "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This righteousness is fulfilled in two ways.

First, *in Christ the righteousness of the law is fulfilled*. It is vindicated. This is how the matter stood. God has justly annexed a penalty to sin. It is right that the offender should be punished. I, guilty by God's law, am condemned to punishment. But I am one with Christ. Christ is my Adam. He stands for me. I am a member of His body, joined to Him in mystical, yet real, union. He comes in and answers for me; takes the sin as though He had committed it, though He could never commit sin; bares His neck to the ax, and suffers what I ought to have suffered, or suffers what is more than equivalent thereunto, and so God's law is vindicated. I have died, for I am one with Christ, and He died for me, and I have died in Him. I have borne the wrath of God, for I am one with Him, and He bore the wrath of God for me. Thus the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in every believer because his accepted Substitute and Surety has borne the punishment. The two doctrines of "Substitution" and "Union to Christ" must always go together. The second explains the first, and the first becomes possible because of the second. Christ's

death was a substitution for me because in the covenant of grace I am united to Him by bonds which can never be broken.

“Then that is an end of the law,” says one. Stop, the law has one great demand—obedience! If a man disobeys, and is punished, he does not thereby escape from the duty of obedience. The law is still upon him, saying, obey, obey! “Oh, but I have been punished for past offenses.” Even so, but you still are bound to obey. The law is always our creditor for a perfect obedience. Where, then, have we this? I answer, Christ fulfilled the law. There never was such a law-fulfiller as He. He did it willingly; He did it from His heart. “Lo, I come,” He said, “in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your law is within My heart.” He did it scrupulously. In Him was no sin. “I do always those things that please Him,” said He of His Father. He was perfect. He kept the law in every jot and tittle. There could not have been such obedience rendered to the law even by sinless Adam as the Christ rendered to it. Adam had not the quality of being which would have rendered him capable of offering such an overflowing obedience as Christ rendered. Christ is God, and if He becomes obedient to the law, if He is born under the law, comes under it and carries it out, the law receives from such a Person, so marvelously constituted, a higher fulfillment than it could have received from any mere man. I take, today, the perfect obedience of my Lord, and appropriating it by faith to myself, I call Him, “The Lord my righteousness.” I do not presume in so doing, for it is written, “This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and “of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” In Christ Jesus you have done for you what the law could never have done. The righteousness of the law has been fulfilled in you. You have borne the penalty; you have obeyed the law in the person of your Covenant Head and Representative.

Now I take the words in the second and inferior sense, which is still very precious. *The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the Christian by the grace of God.* When we believe in Christ we not only receive pardon, but we also receive renewal. I am told that the teaching of certain people, nowadays, is that the believer only gets pardon to begin with, and a long time afterwards he gets the clean heart. But I say, on the authority of God's Word, that no man is pardoned unless he has a clean heart. God gives the clean heart at the time He gives the pardon. You must never divide the renewing of the Holy Spirit from the pardon of sin. They go together, and he that receives the pardon of sin receives a new birth, and is made a new creature in Christ Jesus there and then. The work of regeneration and the act of faith which brings justification to the penitent sinner are simultaneous, and must in the nature of the case always be so.

At the present moment, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the new-born, grace-renewed mind. There is a present obedience actually rendered. We have to own to faults, imperfections, and sins; but at the same time we do strive to be holy. I speak for all of you who love Christ. You do long to obey Him. Yes, and you do obey Him. You have laid aside the works of the flesh. If you are believers, you cannot do what you used to do, and you are striving to do things which once would have been irksome to you. You are honest, you are true, you are righteous, you love the Lord. You make Him, and not an idol, to be your God. You are seeking to do to others as you would that they should do to you. You love God, and you love your neighbor. And though not perfectly, yet in a large measure, by the exercise of the grace of God, the law is fulfilled in you in a way that it never could have been fulfilled as mere law. You obey God now, and attain a measure of holiness through what Christ has done for you—a measure of holiness that you never reached when you tried to be saved by good works. It is a noteworthy fact, that while work-mongers cry up works, they never have any worth talking about; and while believers in Christ decry their own good works, they abound in them. I try to live as if my salvation depended upon my works alone; and yet I do so knowing all the while that I am justified by faith, through Jesus Christ, and not by the works of the law. Thus present obedience is actually rendered.

Now we must go a little further. There is perfect obedience rendered in heart. You know how Paul puts it. He says that the things that he would do, somehow he did not always do, and that caused him grief, and the things that he would not do, but hated to do, he sometimes did, and that caused him grief; but he says, “If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.” The child of

God is not perfect in his life, but he wills to be so; he sighs to be so; his heart is set on it. It reminds me of Mr. Bunyan, when he says, "You see a man sent for the doctor, and riding on a horse that is rather sluggish, but see how he keeps kicking and whipping; whipping and kicking; pulling and tugging. He would go quicker if he could. So in his heart he is all the way to the doctor's when he is only half-way. He is all the way there in his mind, though, alas, his horse keeps him back." It is thus that we are hindered through the weakness of the flesh. O brethren, if we could be perfect, we would be in heaven, for I cannot imagine a higher heaven than to be perfectly like Christ! A sinner, if he could have his way, would like to have some nice little smug sins all to himself, and never be called to account for them; he would choose forever to have no God, and no law. How delicious that would be to him! And then if he let his evil heart have full sway, he would desire to have his glass, and his merriment, and his debauchery free from any restraint. His liberty would soon run into license. That would be the highest pleasure to the child of the flesh. But the child of God hates sin as sin. He loves holiness as holiness; and if he could go to heaven and sin, it would be no heaven to him; and if God could reward him for sin—though such a thing is impossible, and the very thought of such a thing is almost blasphemy—yet would he hate sin as sin, and flee from it. Even when it most condemns him, he would have the law of God no other than it is. Not even for his salvation would he have God bate one jot or tittle of His justice. He is jealous for holiness, and seeks not to be saved *in* sin, but to be saved *from* it. As far as his renewed heart is concerned he cannot sin, because he is born of God. His new nature clings and cleaves to holiness, and the new nature is perfect, made perfect in the image of Christ, and it will never rest till it has stamped out the last spark of sin in the members. Thus a perfect obedience is rendered in his heart. The child of God says, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before my eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me."

Once more, what the law could never do—for it never made a man even wish to be holy, much less made him live a holy life—Christ, by coming in the likeness of sinful flesh, has done; for there is that in every believer which will be perfect holiness before long. Absolute obedience is observed in heaven. We shall, by and by, break through all the enthrallments of the old life, and come into the land of the hereafter, where, says the Christ who has done all for them, "They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." Up yonder the life that is in every palm-bearer is the life that he had here below. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life," that is, he has it here, and in heaven it will be the same life, but it will be that same life developed; and when developed it will be absolute perfection; not perfection in name, nor perfection in measure, but perfection absolute, and fully developed. We shall be absolutely free from every disobedience, and absolutely perfect in every good work, doing God's will and delighting to do it, world without end.

In the third place, I would have you remember that *this righteousness is fulfilled through the Lord Jesus Christ*. We fulfill the law, but not in any strength which the law gives to us, nor in any power of our own. The obedience of the law is fulfilled in us out of gratitude to Christ for what He has done for us. We flee from sin out of hatred of the things that nailed Christ to the cross, and put Him to death. What the law could not do, the dying Christ has done. His sacrifice makes us hate evil. Naming the name of Christ, we "depart from iniquity," for we realize that it was not only Roman soldiers and rabble Jews who nailed Him to the tree, but it was our sins that did it. Those little sins of ours were like thorns in His blessed brow; those ordinary commonplace sins were like nails in His hands and feet; that giant sin was like a spear to pierce His side. And yet—

*"His love to man, so sorely tried,  
Proved stronger than the grave;  
The very spear that pierced His side  
Drew forth the blood to save."*

O you who have long toiled in the vain endeavor to give up your sins, come and look at the cross today! See there what your sins have done, and learn to hate them with a perfect hatred. See how sin stooped to the meanness of betrayal, and killed the Prince of life, who went among men healing and helping them, doing nothing but good. Your instinct rises against oppressors; will you not seek to throw off the chains of the sin which worked so cruel a deed that day at Calvary? Sin is your enemy. To you

who believe in Christ, I would say—Remember that on the cross you were crucified, for when Christ died, you died. Now, say to yourself, that if sin that day crucified you, then today you will crucify sin. “I am crucified with Christ,” says Paul, “nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Thus, because God sent His Son, and condemned sin in the flesh, we condemn it, too. His death becomes to us the gate of life!

More than that; not only do we seek to avoid the evil because of the sacrifice of Christ, but gratitude to Him incites us to do good. Shall He do all this for me, and I do nothing for Him? Shall He die for me, and shall I henceforth not live for Him? If He gave His life for me, then I will give my life to Him. He has bought it; He deserves it; and He shall have it. I will no longer live to the flesh, since in the flesh Christ condemned my sin. What a wonder it is, that the Lord Jesus by His atonement could condemn sin, and let the condemned sinner go free! Surely, the delivered soul will henceforth count it the greatest joy of life to serve Him “who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” Thus, what the law could not do, the Sent One, by His wondrous work fulfils. He takes us from under the bondage of the law, and in being delivered for our sins, He also delivers us from our sins. “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.” Thus, grace triumphs against the flesh in giving us liberty. “Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness.” Thus the holy law is cheerfully fulfilled.

To crown all, *this righteousness is fulfilled in the energy of the Spirit*: “in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” God not only works *for* us, but He also works *in* us “both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” The Spirit applies the work of Christ to the soul, since it is because of the work of Christ the Spirit is given, while both are to the praise of the Father. “It needs the three Persons of the Trinity to fill up the triangular heart of man,” as one of the Puritans puts it. Why should not everyone whom I address receive, by the Spirit, this new life at this moment? Then it will grow, for we “walk after the Spirit”; we do not stand still. As we obey the law of God, we shall receive more and more of His power, for it is written of the Holy Spirit, that He is “given to them that *obey* Him.” He first teaches us to obey, and then, when we obey, He dwells with us in greater fullness, and, when we are filled with the Spirit, then “the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

I have now set before you God’s glorious method and achievement. May you accept the one, and have your part in the other! Sin is condemned and righteousness fulfilled for everyone that believes. That is what the Christ has done by coming here below. Blessed be His name! Amen.

### PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 8.

### HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—240, 298, 299.

Readers of the Sermons will rejoice to know that on Monday (October 26<sup>th</sup>), Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon traveled in safety from London to Calais, and bore the journey as well as could be expected. By the time this Sermon is in the hands of our readers, they hope to be at their destination in the sunny South. Praise for past mercies, and prayer for blessings still needed, may be sweetly blended under the present happy circumstances.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

### PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

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