

DEAD, YET ALIVE**NO. 2933****A SERMON****PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 1905****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON****ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 6, 1876***“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,
but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.**Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”**Romans 6:11-12*

HOW remarkably interwoven and intertwined are the duties of believers and their privileges! Indeed, it is often very difficult to say which is a privilege and which is a duty, for that which is a duty under one aspect is a privilege under another aspect, and that which is evidently a privilege may involve sin if it be not enjoyed and therefore it has something of duty about it. I think there should be no dividing asunder the duties and privileges which God has manifestly joined together, and that we should count it our highest privilege to do His will in every duty which He has enjoined upon us.

Equally remarkable is it how closely the privileges and duties of the Christian life are connected with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because we are one with Him, therefore are we beloved of the Father, therefore are we redeemed from death and hell, therefore are we separated from the world, therefore are we dead to sin, therefore do we live unto the Lord, and therefore do we confidently expect a final triumph over all our adversaries until the last enemy of all shall be put under our feet.

You get nothing, dear brother or sister in Christ, except as you get it through Christ. Apart from Him, you would be miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked—as you were until you came to Him. But in union with Him you are rich to all the intents of bliss. All things are yours because you are Christ's. And while the Father views you as one with Christ, He will bless you—and while you view yourself as one with Christ, you will be conscious of the blessing, and at the same time, will be led to devote yourself more completely to the pursuit of holiness and the fear of God.

I have been specially praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in handling a subject which belongs not so much to the worshippers in the outer court, where we preach the Gospel to all, as to those in the inner court, where we speak only to those who are, we trust, already saved. If I have the gracious guidance of the Spirit of God, my words will drop as dew upon the hearts of those who are living unto God—and they will be refreshed and encouraged.

But I could not bear the thought that my sermon should have no bearing whatever upon those who are, at present, outside the visible fold of Christ. Therefore, at the very outset of my discourse, I let you all know that I am preaching now specially to the Lord's own people. Judge you yourselves, therefore, as to whether you belong to that privileged company or not.

And if you have not believed in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, know that you have no share in the privileges of the covenant of grace. And while I am preaching to believers, sit you down, and sigh from your inmost heart over the sad fact that you are an alien from the commonwealth of Israel. If the Lord, by His gracious Spirit, will lead you to do so, He will hear that sorrowful sigh of yours, and I trust that you will be led, sighing and crying, to the Savior's feet to believe in Him to the salvation of your never-dying soul. Then will you enter at once into all the privileges which belong to the children of God—those privileges about which I am now to speak.

The two verses which form my text seem to me to set before us, first, *a great truth*—a great fact which is to be the subject of our reckoning—“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed

unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” And secondly, *a great lesson to be put into practice*. “Let not sin *therefore*”—for the argument is carried on from the former verse—“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

I. What is the meaning of the first verse? What is THE GREAT TRUTH which is taught to us by the Holy Spirit? It is this—“Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

It is quite certain that God never asks believers to reckon anything to be true which is not true, for to reckon a thing to be what it is not would be to build upon a false basis, and in fact, to argue upon that which is false. This would not be consistent with the character of God Himself, nor with the nature of the Gospel, which is, essentially, a proclamation of truth.

There are no suppositions and imaginations in the Gospel—it tells of positive sin, positive punishment, positive substitution, and positive forgiveness—for God would not have His people reckon upon anything which is not absolutely true. Therefore the text does not mean that you are to reckon that there is no sin in you, but that you are “dead indeed unto sin.” You are not to reckon that which is falsehood—that which God the Holy Spirit intends you to reckon is a matter of positive, undoubted fact. If you read the context, you will see what that matter of fact is.

It is, first, *that every believer is truly dead to sin, because Christ has died to sin*. The Lord Jesus Christ is our covenant Head. And what He did, He did in the room, and place, and stead of His people—He did it all representatively on their behalf, so that what He did, they virtually did through Him as their Representative.

Always remember that the federal principle has been adopted by God in His dealings with the human race from the very beginning. We were all, representatively, in Adam, and hence, Adam’s sin brought us all into transgression and condemnation, so that we have all become partakers in the result of Adam’s one sin. It was not actually ours, but it became ours by imputation and it brought upon us all its terrible consequences, because Adam was our federal head.

In the same way, the Lord Jesus Christ is the federal Head and Representative of His people—and what He has done, He has done on their behalf and it is reckoned as though they had done it themselves. Beloved, it was due from us that, having broken God’s law, we should endure the punishment resulting from our disobedience.

That punishment was death, for, “the soul that sinneth it shall die.” There must therefore be passed upon us, if we are ever to be clear at God’s judgment bar, a sentence that shall be an adequate punishment for sin. That sentence is so overwhelming and so dreadful that nothing can describe it but the term death.

Can that ever happen to us? It has happened to us. We who believe in Jesus Christ have been confronted with our sins, accused of them, condemned for them, and punished for them. The full penalty, or that which was tantamount thereunto, has been exacted from us. We have died the death that was sin’s due reward.

“But,” someone asks, “how is that?” I answer that the apostle tells us, in this chapter, that we have done it, representatively, in the person of Jesus Christ, our great federal Head, Surety, and Substitute. Can you grasp the great truth that, whatever was due from us to God’s justice has been fully paid by Christ? Whatever of suffering was necessary as the result of sin, from the penal side of the question, has been already endured by Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Hence, Christ took our sin upon Him, though in Him was no sin of His own, and He died unto sin, bearing the penalty of it. As the inevitable consequence of His sacrifice upon the cross, He is clear from the sin that was laid upon Him, and so are all His people, in whose stead He suffered. Toplady truly sang,—

*“Complete atonement Thou hast made,
And to the utmost farthing paid
Whate’er Thy people owed:*

*Nor can His wrath on me take place,
If shelter'd in Thy righteousness,
And sprinkled with Thy blood.*

*“If Thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath divine:
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand
And then again at mine.”*

I may make this truth plainer by a comparison, which is impossible in the case of men, but which may illustrate the point we are now considering. Suppose that a man has been found guilty of a crime which is a capital offense according to the law of his country? The only way of dealing with him, in justice, is that he should endure the penalty for his offense.

Suppose the sentence to have been carried out, the man has been put to death, and has been buried? But after that, he has risen again—can the law touch him now? Can any charge be laid against him? Can he be brought a second time before the tribunal? Assuredly not. The same justice, which brought him to the bar before, and punished him, now stands up and declares that he cannot be touched again, for how shall he be twice charged, and twice tried, and twice put to death for the same offense?

This cannot happen, as I have said, among men—but it has happened in the case of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For all His people, He has borne the death penalty and He has risen from the dead—and they have borne the death penalty in Him and risen from the dead in Him. Wherefore, let them rejoice that, in the person of their Redeemer, they are dead by sin and dead for sin—for such is the meaning of this passage.

I wish that all of you, who believe in Jesus, could get a firm hold of this blessed truth, for, if you do, it will make your heart dance for joy. We are emancipated because our ransom price has been fully paid. We are set free from the law, not by the law waiving the penalty due to our sin, for the penalty has been endured in the person of One who had the right to endure it, for He was His people's Representative. And what He endured on their behalf is reckoned as though they had personally endured it, so that each one of them can say, with Toplady—

*“Turn then, my soul, unto thy rest:
The merits of thy great High Priest
Have bought thy liberty:
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee.”*

Further, the apostle says that we are to reckon ourselves “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This is the other side of the great truth which is implied in our union to Christ—that every believer is truly alive unto God because Christ is alive unto God. We know that Christ is alive unto God, “Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more”—and we also know that the new life, of which the apostle is here writing, is a life that we share with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ because of our union to Him.

Christ died and was laid in the grave, because He was our Surety and Substitute. Our great debt of sin was laid to His account, but His death discharged all our liabilities. What then? The receipt for our debt—the token that our sin had been forever put away—was that Christ should come out of the prison of the grave. As one of our rhymesters says—

“If Jesus had not paid the debt,

He ne'er had been at freedom set."

He “died for our sins,” but He also “rose again for our justification.” When the bright angel flew from heaven, and rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulcher, and Jesus unwrapped the cerements of His tomb, and came forth in the glory of His resurrection-life, all for whom He died and rose again were acknowledged as justified before God through His righteousness and cleansed from all sin by His blood. And now, beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, this is our joy—that we are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A little while ago, we were dead unto God, for the sentence which He had pronounced upon us made us virtually dead unto Him. We were under condemnation, “the children of wrath, even as others,” but now that Jesus Christ has risen from the grave, we are no longer dead unto God, but we are alive unto Him—and He looks upon us as those who have been delivered from the sentence of spiritual death, and who cannot again come under that penalty, since Christ, who stood in our place and suffered in our stead, has forever put away from us, not only our guilt, but also all its dread consequences.

*“We were lost, but we are found,
Dead, but now alive are we;
We were sore in bondage bound,
But our Jesus sets us free.*

*“Therefore will we sing His praise
Who His lost ones has restored,
Hearts and voices both shall raise
Hallelujahs to the Lord.”*

Further than that, as the text says, “Likewise,” the very word here used bids us run the parallel as the apostle has done. He says, “Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.” See, then, what this means in reference to us who have believed in Him. Jesus Christ will not die twice. The sin of His people, that was laid upon Him, brought Him down to the grave. But there He buried it and He rose again, no longer bearing the sin for which He had paid the penalty. And that sin cannot be laid upon Him a second time and therefore He shall never again need to be crucified.

Beloved, do you not see that, if your sin was really laid upon Christ and you died unto sin in Christ, you can never have that sin laid to your charge again, under any circumstances whatsoever, unless Christ can die again? By one sufficient punishment, our offense has been put away even from the sight of God—can that offense, then, be brought against us and laid to our charge a second time?

Nay, verily, for if it could, it would be needful that our great Substitute should bleed and die a second time. But as that cannot be, the sin of the believer can never again be imputed to him and can never again rise in judgment against him. While Christ, the ever-blessed Savior, continues to live, His people must also continue to live. What a glorious truth this is!

I, then, if I am a believer in Christ, have, through my union to Him, borne the penalty of sin, I have died in Christ, and the life that I now live before the living God is a life that is uncondemned and uncondemnable, and which can never expire, because never can sin be laid to its charge again.

Beloved brother or sister in Christ, how I wish that you could get a firm grip of this blessed truth, so that you could enjoy it to the fullest in your own soul! It is not always easy to realize your union with Christ—to see how He takes your place and you take His—to mark how He is bruised for your iniquities and how the chastisement of your peace is laid upon Him—and that, in consequence—you take His place as accepted and beloved by the Father, that you are raised from the dead, and honored even to share His glory in the highest heavens, for He has gone up there as the Representative of all His people, and you are also raised up together with Him, and made to sit with Him in the heavenly places.

And as He is to come again, in all the glory of the Father, to subdue all things unto Himself, so are you to reign with Him, for He has said, “Where I am, there shall also my servant be,” and “to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” What a glorious truth this is, that all believers are dead, raised, living, exalted, and glorified in Christ Jesus!

Now, beloved, having given you that meaning of the passage—and I am persuaded that it is its true signification, and that no other will bear examination—I want to warn you against the interpretation that some have tried to put upon the apostle’s words. They say that they are dead to sin and alive unto God. And they tell us, perhaps, not in so many words—that now they do not sin—they live in a state of perpetual sanctity, and are no more affected by sin than a dead man would be affected by that which goes on in the house wherein his corpse is lying.

These people say that their life now is one, if not of absolute holiness, yet, in a certain sense, of perfect holiness. I conceive this to be one of the most dangerous delusions of the present age—apparently specious and supportable by Scripture, but in reality, without any solid foundation and full of a thousand dangers.

There are two ways by which a man can persuade himself that he does not sin. The first is the Antinomian method, by which he says that he is not under the law and that therefore whatever he does is not sinful. If another man were to do a certain thing, he would be very wrong—but if he himself does it, he, being a specially chosen one, is in a condition in which it is not reckoned to be sin or is not laid to his charge.

Well, beloved, I can only say that when I have read certain caricatures of this doctrine—and it is most natural that ungodly men should make fun of it—I have thought that the caricature was richly deserved and that any contempt that could be poured upon such atrocious falsehoods was well merited. For sin in a Christian is quite as much sin as it is in anybody else. Indeed, it is a great deal more sinful, for never does a black stain seem so black as when it falls on spotlessly white linen—and never is sin so sinful as when it is committed by one who is greatly loved by the Lord and is the subject of peculiar favor. May Antinomianism never mislead either you or me, beloved!

The other way of perverting this truth is to say that you do not sin at all—to stand up straight, like the Pharisee in the temple, and say that you have attained such a condition that you do not now sin. If any of you, my dear friends, are in that condition, the sooner you get out of it and humble yourselves before God for ever having dared to get into it, the better will it be for you.

Our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostle never meant that we were to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin in such a sense that we never sinned at all, or that sin did not affect us as it affected other people, because that is not the truth. I appeal to every man who has a conscience, and I trust that even the believers in this super-fine holiness have some trace of conscience left, so I appeal to them whether they are or not conscious of sin.

My dear brother or sister, if you are not guilty of a single sin of commission—if you never utter an unkind or angry word—if you never speak unadvisedly with your lips—if you never break one of the ten commands in the letter by an overt act of sin—if there is never about you any trace of pride, or covetousness, or wrath, or anything else that is wrong—can you say that you are free from sins of omission? Have you done all you should have done in as high and noble a spirit as you ought to have displayed in it?

O my brother, if this is your belief, you must be strangely different from what I have ever been able to be, for when I have done my very best before God, I have always felt that my best was imperfect and marred by sin. I have had to mourn over many omissions even when I have diligently labored to obey my Lord and Master perfectly.

And in reviewing any one day of my life, I have never dared to congratulate myself upon it, but with tears of repentance, I have had to confess that if I have not erred by overt sin, yet I have somewhere or

other come short of the glory of God. My dear brother, do you really believe that your motives and the spirit in which you have acted have been perfect in God's sight?

It is quite unaccountable to me, if you look into your own heart and try to trace all your sacred motives, and desires, and imaginations, and all the tendencies of your nature—and yet say that you do not sin against the Lord. Have you the same standard of holiness that we have? Surely you cannot have, if you think you have attained it. If you have the same standard that we have, I am certain that you have not attained it.

The holiness that a Christian ought to aim at is to be absolutely as just, and righteous, and pure as God Himself is. This is the mark that He sets before us—"Be ye holy, for I am holy." "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." If you say that you have reached that perfection, I believe that, if you let your conscience speak the truth, it will tell you that you are under a great delusion and that you are utterly self-deceived upon that matter.

As to the notion that reckoning yourself to be perfect will help you to be so, I tell you flatly that it will most effectually prevent you from becoming perfect. Reckon that you are sinful, admit that sin far too often prevails over you, and then go humbly to God, and confess that it is so, and seek from Him grace to keep you, day by day, from the power of reigning sin. And you will, in that way, make a real advance in sanctification and true holiness.

But if you reckon that you have reached this blessed condition, you will never reach it. If you sit down in carnal security, you will rest in contentment with yourself, but you will never be what I trust you really desire to be. Your experience will be like that of the artist who at last painted a picture with which he was perfectly satisfied, and he then said to his wife, "I may as well break my pallet and throw away my brushes. I shall never be a great painter now, for I have realized my ideal—I am perfectly satisfied with this picture that I have produced."

Far better is it for you to have a sacred dissatisfaction and hallowed discontent with all that you are. That forgetting of the things which are behind and reaching forth unto those that are before, that pressing forward toward the mark for the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus to which the apostle urges you, that seeking to fight from day to day with the temptations that surround you, not reckoning that you have won the victory yet, but believing that you will win it though the blood of the Lamb—this is what we long to see in you—not to behold you sitting down in calm content and saying, "It is all done. I am perfect."

For, believe me, my brother—or, if you do not believe me, you will find it to be true sooner or later—you are *not* perfect by a very long way, as the devil knows, and as God knows, and as many people beside yourself know, who see what your daily life is and mark your conversation.

II. Now, having thus spoken concerning this great truth, and having shown you in what way we are dead unto sin and alive unto God through our union to Christ, I want to point out to you THE GREAT PRACTICAL LESSON WHICH THE TEXT SETS BEFORE US. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."

This is the great fact that you are ever to remember—you are now an altogether new man. In Christ Jesus, you have died, and been buried, and have risen again. Surely you will not now have anything to do with sin, will you? You must hate it, for it has done you such serious mischief. It was sin that slew you in the person of your Substitute and Savior, but now you have been born again and you are a new man in Christ Jesus.

You are not going back to sin, are you? Oh, no, your whole soul abhors it and you endeavor now, from this time forward, to be entirely free from its dominion. You mourn that sin is still within you and that it still has great power over you. That power it will try to use and it aims at getting complete dominion over you. It seeks to make you again what you formerly were—its subject and its slave.

You are told, in the text, not to let sin reign in your mortal body and *this injunction implies that sin is already there and that sin will seek to get dominion over you*. Be not surprised, young converts, if you find sin to be terribly fierce within you, and if sometimes it seems even to be stronger than divine grace.

It is not really so, but it may appear to you sometimes to be so. And rest assured of this—that sin in you is so strong that, unless God the Holy Spirit shall help you, it will get the victory over you. It will fail to get the victory over you, because God will help you, but if He did not, the smallest soldier in the army of sin would be too strong for you, however powerful you may think yourself to be.

Sin in a believer can never reign over him because he is dead to the reigning power of sin. O King Sin, I am no subject of yours! I was once, but I died and now I have risen again in Christ, and I am no subject of yours. What, then, does sin do, if it cannot reign over the believer? It lurks inside the soul like an outlaw whose banishment has not yet taken place.

John Bunyan's description of the Holy War is a matter of true experience. After the Diablonians were overthrown in Mansoul, many of them remained hidden away in dens and corners of the city, and although diligent search was made to find them, there were always some of them hiding away in the back lanes and side streets, where they could not easily be discovered. It is just so with sin. As a reigning king, sin is dead to you, and you to it, but as a sneaking outlaw, sin is still lurking within your soul. It is plotting and planning to get back its former dominion over you and not merely plotting and planning, but it is also warring and fighting to that end.

Oh, with what terrible force does sin sometimes assail a believer! Just when he least expected it to come, some old lust reappears. "Oh!" he cries, "I thought that evil passion would never again assail me." Perhaps when he is on his knees in prayer, a blasphemous thought is suddenly injected into his mind—and when he is engaged in his business, endeavoring to provide things honest in the sight of all men—he finds a temptation to do something which is unjust put in his way, and though, at first, it seems as if he would consent to it, yet, by the grace of God, he is enabled to get the victory over it.

The very best man in the world, if he were left by divine grace only for five minutes, might become, and probably would become, the worst man in the world. Left to himself, impetuous Peter begins cursing and swearing, and thrice denies his Master. This vile outlaw, sin, that is always fighting within us, will be king if it can. It will rally all the forces of the world against us, it will call the devil himself to its assistance, and so seek to get the reigning power again—but it never can, for we are not its subjects, we are not under its dominion and we never will be. The almighty God, who has redeemed us from going down into the pit, will never suffer us to again be the slaves of sin, yet we are constantly to be on the watch against its attacks.

The text also implies that *the point of assault of sin upon you will be your body*—"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." It is generally through our body that sin tries to bring our soul into captivity. There are natural wants of the body which must be attended to, but every one of these wants may become a sinful craving, and we may so excessively minister to the want that, by and by, it becomes sinful lusting.

That a man should eat to appease his hunger is right, but alas! gluttony often follows. That a man should drink to quench his thirst is right, but there are divers drinks which lead to drunkenness, and so, even through two such perfectly justifiable natural wants as eating and drinking, sin may come in. There are a great many other needs, emotions, and passions of the body which are, in themselves, properly considered, not sinful—but every one of them may readily be made into a door through which sin can enter.

Nay, it is not only the wants of the body, but also the pleasures of the body which may lead to sin. There are bodily enjoyments which are perfectly innocent—but it is very easy to pass beyond that line and to indulge the flesh with that which is evil. Even the pains of the body may become the means of attack upon the soul, for great pain will often bring depression of spirit and despondency—and through despondency comes doubt.

Ay, and pain sometimes causes murmuring, and murmuring is really rebellion against God. This poor flesh seems to be the battlefield in which the fight with sin is continually to be carried on. Sin makes frequent incursions into the region of mind and spirit, but it generally begins with the body. How strenuously therefore must we see to it that we obey the apostolic injunction, "Let not sin therefore reign

in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof,” but rather let us yield these our members to be the instruments of righteousness and purity.

Watch and pray, beloved. Do not imagine that the stern battle is over, it is only just begun. As long as you are in this mortal state, you are to put on the whole armor of God, and to strive, and agonize, and wrestle against sin in the power of the blood of Jesus Christ, who will help you by His ever-blessed Spirit. But to suppose that the battle for purity is over is to suppose a falsehood, which will seriously endanger the sanctity of your lives.

The apostle uses one word which is very comforting to my mind—“Let not sin therefore reign in your *mortal* body.” I am very glad to read that word “mortal.” If this body were immortal with its present tendencies, then might it continue to be a field of battle for the believer forever. But it is mortal and when it dies, then shall its tendencies, which now incline us to sin, die also.

“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,” for flesh and blood always will have a tendency towards that which is evil. But brethren, we are going to have this flesh and blood behind us when we die. We shall be re-united to our body after it has been refined, for the grave is the refining pot for it, but until we die, this body will be the nest of sin—and within our flesh, as Paul truly says—“there dwelleth no good thing.”

Through being cumbered with this flesh, many a true child of God will, perhaps, have to cry even upon his dying bed, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Thank God, then, that it is a mortal body in which this warfare is waged, so that when it dies, the fight is over and the emancipated spirit shall then rejoice in the fullness of the glory of God. But not till then, neither need you expect it, for if you do you will be grievously disappointed when you find that you have been buoyed up with a false hope, based upon self-conceit—and not upon the work of the Spirit of God at all.

The pith of the matter lies here, brethren. Reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin, because in Christ Jesus, you died unto sin and *let that truth strengthen you to fight sin*. As long as you have any question about whether God counts you among the guilty, you will never have courage to contend with sin. Evangelical doctrine is the battle-axe and the other weapons of war with which the believer is to fight against sin.

That I am saved—that I am fully absolved from guilt—that I am accounted just in the sight of God—that I am saved to all eternity—this is a firm foundation for me to stand upon. And now, relying upon the power of God’s grace, I may confidently say, “Sin shall not have dominion over me, because of this amazing mercy which I have received. Because of this high calling to which God’s infinite love has called me, I will cast down every sin that dares to lift itself up. I will take by the throat everything that is hostile to God and I will labor to perfect holiness in the fear of God.”

Tell the sinner that he must do this and that, and he is conscious of his want of power, and therefore he does nothing. But go to him, God-sent, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and say to him, “Your sin was laid on Jesus, so you are free from it, for Jesus bore its penalty. You are saved, for in Him you have virtually died and the law cannot now touch you—you are a dead man as far as it is concerned. Sin cannot accuse you, for you are dead to it”—and what does the man say?

Why, with great surprise in his soul, he is yet enabled to believe it and he sees, as it were, the mountains cast down, the valleys filled up, a pathway made in the desert for God to come to his soul and for him to come to his God. And in the joy of pardon freely given through his Savior’s precious blood, in the bliss of salvation graciously bestowed without money and without price, he shakes himself from the dust, arises from his former love of sin and says, “Now, sin, I am dead to you and I will never permit you to be king over me. I am no longer under your dominion and I will drive you out of my being altogether. You will not reign over me. I will, by the power and grace of Him who has bought me with His blood, live to the praise and glory of God alone.”

Now, brethren and sisters in Christ, most earnestly do I desire that you may so live that you will never doubt your eternal union with Christ and your consequent perfect acceptance with God. I pray that

you may exercise an unstaggering faith in the finished work of Christ culminated on Calvary's cross. And then I say to you, "Think what manner of persons you ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness." Never tolerate any sin in yourselves. Never wink at it or imagine that it is less in you than it would be in others.

Grieve over every shortcoming, every failure, everything that is not according to the perfect rule of righteousness and watch every day, and every hour of the day, calling on the aid of divine strength that you may be enabled to watch, and believing, at the same time, that that strength will be given you, for the promise to you is, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

This will make sure work for holiness. You will not be puffed up, but you will be built up. You will not go bragging about how holy you are, your own mouth condemning you all the while, but in silence before the Lord, you will sit down to admire the grace which has looked in love upon such a poor unworthy worm as you are.

While you will seek to do that which is right and will hate every false way, you will, at the same time, take your place with the publican in the temple and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Seek to be as holy as the angels, yet be, all the while, as humble as the publican. Recollect that it is grace which has made you what you are and that it is grace which must keep you faithful to the end. If grace did not keep you, you would be a castaway.

But you shall not be a castaway, for, "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." I pray that every member of this church and of Christ's church at large, may be very careful in his living, very watchful, very devout, very earnest. O professing Christians, you are not what you should be! A great many of you seem to forget altogether the sacred obligations of the love which has been from eternity fixed upon you. Confess this sin, mourn over it, and seek the power of Christ to help you against it—and henceforth may your course be as "the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

I fancy that I hear somebody in the congregation say, "These godly people seem to have a hard fight of it." They do. It is not easy work to get to heaven, even by grace, for, though we are saved, yet it is a pilgrimage to heaven and a stern fight all the way.

What we have to say to unconverted people is this, "If the righteous scarcely"—or, with difficulty—"are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If he who zealously desires to follow after holiness has such a stern fight for it, what must be the end of the man who never denies himself, but indulges his sinful passions and casts the reins upon the neck of his lusts?

O Christian, yours is the lot of a soldier and you have to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"—but you are comforted because by faith, you can see the crown of life which fades not away, and which is reserved in heaven for you, and therefore you keep on contending. But as for you who never fight against sin and who feel no agony within, it is very evident why you have no inward struggle—it is because your whole nature goes one way.

Dead fish float with the stream—it is the live fish that swim against it—and if you never feel any inward contention and striving—if you never have to cry, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not"—if you never groan under a sense of sin, I close my sermon by saying that I pray God that you soon may do so, and that your groans may be uttered at the foot of His cross, who will look down upon you as you lie there in utter weakness and misery, and who will say to you, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee."

May we all learn that Christ is everything and that we are nothing. That He is holiness and that we are unholiness, and may the Lord give us the grace to be found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.