

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

NO. 3400

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 1914
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 9, 1869

*“And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year.”
Leviticus 16:34*

WE have taken these words for our text, the whole chapter, however, will have our attention.

I must be allowed to say at this time, though I seldom say anything in the way of an apology, that this is not the place, nor would time serve us, to go into a full exposition of the very wonderful teaching of this chapter. If we may ever set any portion of Scripture before another, this is one of the most precious chapters in the whole compass of revelation, and in some respects the most remarkable of all. It is so full of wonderfully deep teaching that, instead of a sermon, it might require a volume, and then, perhaps, we should scarcely have done more than skimmed the surface.

And there are difficulties, I may also add, connected with the interpretation, very great difficulties, which have puzzled the most learned of the Reformed and of the Puritan divines, and I do not at all attempt to solve those difficulties, nor profess that all I say might be able to support and carry out. I desire to give, instead of any attempt at criticism or deep explanation, a simple exposition of this chapter, bringing out of it, I hope, some truths which, if they do not belong to the chapter, are, nevertheless, exceedingly precious ones, and will, I hope, be useful to us all.

In a remarkable way God dealt with Israel in the wilderness. There were special tokens of His peculiar presence, as in the cloudy and fiery pillars which were the emblems of His presence, and in the bright light called the Shekinah, which shone between the wings of the cherubim which overshadowed the Ark. But God cannot dwell where there is sin. He is a holy being. “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts,” is the song which continually rises into His ears. In order, then, that He might dwell in the midst of Israel without compromising His character, He was pleased to appoint one day in the year which was called “the day of atonement,” which should be considered to purify the camp, and make it fit to be the dwelling place of JEHOVAH.

Now, God has promised that He will dwell among men, and He does dwell among His own people at this very time. He dwells with them in a remarkable way. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul. God is the heritage, the friend, the companion of all His people, but He cannot dwell with these believing men, because of their sin, unless an atonement be made. The annual atonement among the Jews was the picture of the great atonement, the real atonement, the effectual expiation, which, not once a year, but once for all, the Lord Jesus Christ has offered, and which now renders it possible for God to walk with men, and dwell among them.

In the ceremonial of the atonement, in the chapter before us, there are four things that struck me. The first is—

I. THE WAY IN WHICH THAT REMARKABLE CEREMONY SET FORTH THE SACRIFICE MADE TO GOD'S HONOR.

My brethren, the offense of man against God was, so to speak, a stain upon God's honor. Man set himself up in rebellion against the Most High. He stood out, therefore, against divine sovereignty, he impugned the divine love, his offense blasphemed the divine wisdom. Every one human sin is an attack upon the whole character and life of God, and sin itself is a dishonor done to the glorious attributes of

JEHOVAH. Before God can be reconciled to man and deal with Him at all, except by way of retribution, there must be something done to restore the divine honor.

Now, we have it declared, in this revelation, which comes to us from heaven, that Christ has restored the divine glory fully, and that since He suffered on the tree, the just for the unjust, God can be gracious without a violation of His justice, and He can dwell with us, with us poor fallen creatures, without the marring of the luster of any single one of His attributes. The model man has honored God more fully than sinful man ever dishonored Him, and if God was angry with the race for our sins, He is now towards the race full of tenderness and pity, because of the transcendent goodness of the new Head of the race, Christ Jesus our Lord, who has magnified God's law and made it honorable.

Now, this is the truth that was taught in the first part of the ceremony on the day of expiation. It was taught thus. Two goats were brought to the door of the tabernacle, lots were cast, and the first goat was selected to teach this lesson. The goat was brought by the people. It was their common property. It would not have sufficed, it would not have been of any use at all if it had not been so. Read the chapter, and you will see. Learn from this that *the compensation to God's honor for man's sin must come from men*. It was a man in the garden who dared to rebel, it must be a man, another man, who shall honor God's law, so as to set the race in a fresh relationship towards God.

The goat is given by all Israel, the atonement to God's honor must come out of our race, and hence it is that our Lord is the son of Mary, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, qualified, being a man, to perform the obedience required of man, and to right as a man for men, the wrongs which man had done to God. Note that first.

The goat which was brought *was given up to the appointed priest*. God will have everything done according to order. The sacrifice must not be left to the whims and fancies of men. So the man who shall offer up the sacrifice to the divine honor must be appointed of God, as Aaron was. And so our Lord Jesus Christ was God's chosen one, appointed by God to stand in the gap, and for us to vindicate the divine glory which we had tarnished by our iniquities.

This goat, being thus offered, *must* be presented to God, *but there must be something with it*. Sweet perfume must be cast upon the live coals, and the sweet smell must go up before the mercy seat. So before God can ever be satisfied for the wrong done to Him by the fall, and by our common sin, there must be an offering of sweet merits unto Him, which, let me say, Jesus Christ has most abundantly offered. He took His hands full of the most blessed compound of all the graces and all the virtues beaten small, for there was an exact obedience to every jot and tittle of the divine law. Christ's obedience was perfect in its kind, in the most minute respects, and this merit has been brought before our God, who is a consuming fire, and burns up every evil work, but as He lays hold upon this work of Christ, He makes a sweet smell of it—which is poured out throughout heaven and earth—"the savor of a sweet odor" in the nostrils of the Most High.

Do not let me cover up, however, what I mean, under the cloak of allegory. I mean this, that if God is to accept our race of men, and deal with it on the footing of mercy, and all that we have done against Him, and somebody must be found who can be so obedient, so delighting in God's will, that there shall be a sweet offering made, as morally and spiritually acceptable to God's Spirit as sweet perfume is to the nostril of man, and that has been done.

When they talk in heaven of man's sin—if they ever there speak of it, and wonder how God can bear with man, some bright seraph speaks of man's perfect obedience, even unto death, and they say to one another, "What man, what man is this?" and they clap their hands with joy as they say, "'Tis he that sat at the right hand of the Father, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of David."

One man threw down the race, but another man has lifted it up. One man brought ruin by the fall, another man restored it, and made the race acceptable to God. If man dishonored God, yet man has more honored Him than he dishonored Him, now that Christ has become the great representative man.

All the glory of redemption is greater than ever there could have been of dishonor to God by sin. I believe that God is more honored by the world having sinned, and having been restored by Christ, than

He could have been if there had never been sin upon this planet, and if a perfectly sinless race had tenanted its bounds.

After this burning of perfume, *the goat must die*. Nothing could permit the justice of God to look upon man at all until there had been something more than merit. There must be a penalty. "Die he, or justice must." Man must die, or God's justice must die. There must be blood—life poured out for sin. Now, when that goat was put to death, and the blood flowed forth into the golden bowl, then, brethren, you saw before your eye of faith, Jesus Christ put to death upon Calvary. He who needed not to have died, the Perfect One, voluntarily offered Himself up as the victim to justice, suffering in His own person, so as to compensate the justice of God.

Do not imagine that Christ died to placate divine vengeance—not at all, but that it is sternly necessary if God is to govern this universe at all, that sin must be punished. The very pillars and the foundations of moral government would, not to say, be shaken, but actually be torn up if sin should be permitted to go unpunished. Now, to vindicate the justice of God, the sword is drawn, and who suffers?

Not the race. Behold, myriads of the race go streaming up to everlasting felicity. Who suffers then? Why, a man, so marvelously perfect, and withal so majestically glorious, that His sufferings are a recompense to God for all that sin had done, and so made an effectual expiation for all the transgressions that had dishonored God. You will observe that I am speaking in very popular, and comprehensive, and general terms, and designedly so, because I believe I am speaking the infallible truth of the mind of God, for so far as God is concerned, the atonement that Christ made was universal in its worth and efficacy.

So far as the vindication of the justice of God and all His other attributes are to be considered, that vindication was absolutely complete, and whether one man had been saved, or fifty men saved, or all saved, or none saved, it would have made no difference. The work was done, God's honor was clear, God's attributes were glorified, and this was perfectly done by the putting away of Christ.

Once more. *The blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat seven times*. That was typical of Christ, who goes up into heaven, in His own proper person, and there displays before God, and the holy angels, and elect spirits, the tokens of His passion, the ensigns of His suffering, taking the blood up to God that henceforth when the Eternal mind thinks of sin, and the dishonor done to God by sin, it might think of the sufferings of the blessed man, Christ Jesus, and see how all dishonor is forever put away.

You know when you are reading Scripture, dear friends, you find a great many passages which speak about Christ's dying for all men, and about God's having reconciled the world unto Himself, and I know you are apt to say to me, "You teach us particular redemption, that Christ only died as a Substitute for some men." That I always say, and stand to, and believe to be a Biblical doctrine. But do I, therefore, clip away other texts? No, not in any degree. I believe them as they stand. I count it treason to try and clip a text, or to make it say the contrary of what it does say.

So far as God's honor was concerned, the death of Christ for men so obliterated human sin, as such, that God could, without dishonor to Himself, deal with mankind. Hence it is that the wicked live. Hence it is that they enjoy innumerable mercies, hence it is that there is a good, strong, substantial ground for offering the Gospel to every man, and a righteous reason for commanding every man to believe in Jesus Christ that he may be saved.

This was the first teaching of the day of atonement, and every Jew, when he saw, ought to have understood the presentation of that blood within the veil, that now God no longer looked on the race as being a race that He must curse and must destroy, but looked upon it with mercy, and was prepared to treat with it on the footing of tenderness, and that now there was a Gospel presented to the sons of men.

Oh! I do so love this thought, that my sin, which did dishonor to God, which did as much as say that He was not a good God, that it was better for me to hate Him than to love Him, better for me to be His enemy than to be His friend, made out as though His commandments were grievous, and that it gave me pleasure to break them—all the mischief towards God that my sin could ever do is all put away by the holy life and the blessed death of Christ Jesus my Lord, and put away forever, forever, forever, so that God can now deal with me on the terms of grace.

But my time flies, and therefore, I come to the next point—

II. SIN IS NOW UTTERLY DRIVEN AWAY.

There was another goat, and this goat was to live, and not to die, which set forth quite another truth. I do not think the common explanation of this is at all correct, and all the expositors I have met with are clear that it is not correct. Some have said that the scapegoat typifies our Lord Jesus bearing our sins away in His resurrection and ascending into heaven. The incongruity of the metaphor has always struck me, but there are reasons in the Hebrew text which prevent our believing that that could have been the meaning of it.

The living goat was taken by a fit man right away into the wilderness, and there it was left. What became of it afterwards we do not know. Painters have depicted it as expiring in the midst of desolation, in the agonies of famine—a mere fancy picture. The scapegoat did not, very probably, die sooner than any other goat and it is not at all necessary that it should. We never need enlarge a topic beyond what Scripture says. Indeed, there is often as much teaching in a type's stopping short as there is in its going on.

These two goats had each its name. One was said to be for JEHOVAH—that represents Christ, I say, as making recompense to God's honor. The other is said to be for Azazel, which, if I understand it at all, means "for evil." What, then, was that other goat offered to the Devil? By no means. He is not evil, but one of the ministering spirits in the service of evil. Evil made Satan what he is. He is its slave, its chief plotter and schemer, but still not evil itself.

Did you ever notice—you must have noticed—that the wrong of evil, the sinfulness of sin, even if it were forgiven, works nothing but evil, so that if God were to forgive us all, but leave the evil in us, we should be in hell for all that, because evil of itself holds hell, and works towards its being realized by us. Evil is in itself essentially misery, and it has only to work itself out, and it will be so.

Now, how am I to get rid of this sin that is in me as to the evil consequences inherent in the evil? Suppose God to be perfectly reconciled to me so far, yet still there is an evil that mischief brings upon me in itself, apart from God, and how do I get rid of that? Why, through the scapegoat. The sin of the people was, first of all, transferred to this scapegoat—all confessed and all laid on the scapegoat. Then, by divine appointment, the scapegoat, being chosen by lot, and the lot being guided by God, it was accepted as being the substitute for the people. The scapegoat was then taken away, and what was done with it? Why, nothing was done with it but this—it was relinquished—it was given up.

Now, can I get out what I mean? I am very much afraid I cannot. Our Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself the sin of His people, and He was given up to evil, that is to say, to all the power that evil could put out against Him—first in the wilderness, tempted from all quarters, tempted by the temptations of Satan, and then, in the garden, tempted in such a way as you and I never were—the powers of evil let loose upon Him as they never were upon us. Did He not say, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness"? And so dreadful was the assault of evil upon Him, the devil going forth as the type and incarnation of evil, that He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground whilst especially on the tree, where the conflict reached its climax, was He given up.

That cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" is like the cry of the goat when it is given up, quite given up, and led away. Evil was permitted to work out in Him all its own dread hatefulness and havoc, to which it must bring our spirits, unless God interpose to stop evil from making the soul become unutterably wretched, even unto death.

I do not know how to get out the thought which seems to be in my soul, but I do rejoice to think that all the evil I have ever done shall not go on to plague and vex me, because it has vexed and plagued Him, that all the essential misery that lies in my past sin, which must, even if God forgave it, still come back to sting and torment me throughout all my existence, was so laid on Him and so spent all its force and venom on Him, who was given up to it, that it will never touch me again.

You know, brethren, there was no other man who could have borne all that power of evil but our Lord, but it all fell on Him, and yet it never stained His matchless purity and perfection of character. The

misery of it came to Him, but the guilt of it could never defile Him. The misery of sin spent itself on the lonely One who was given up to its awful force, but it could do no more. The type says nothing about the scapegoat, whether it died or not, and Christ did not die because of the misery of His spirit, He died for quite another reason, and in another sense, laying down His life for His people.

There is something, I think, interesting in this if we can carry it out, but there is this to be said—by that scapegoat being thus given up *the sin of the congregation was taken away*, all taken away, and all gone. And so, through Jesus Christ having borne our sicknesses and carried our sorrows, the whole force and power of evil to do damning mischief against a saint has been taken away forever from everyone of us, who have laid our hands by faith, upon His dear and blessed head. It is gone, the sin is gone, gone into the wilderness, where it shall never be found against us any more forever.

I must hasten on, however, for time flies. There was yet a third part of this expiation. Did you notice it? It is a grand thing when we can see God's honor clear, it is a grand thing, next, when we can see ourselves clear as to the effects of evil by Christ's taking evil quite away.

The third grand thing is to see—

III. SIN ITSELF MADE THE SUBJECT OF CONTEMPT.

God cannot dwell with us if sin is petted and loved, sin must be detested and loathed. Now, read on in the chapter, and you will find that the bullock and the goat which were there, and whose blood was taken into the holy place, were afterwards burned without the camp—see the twenty-seventh verse. They were burned, and burned with ignominy, burned outside the camp in the common sewer, the kennel of the camp, and burned, too, under circumstances that imply disgust. “They shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung”—put in purposely to show what a contempt was to be put upon the beasts that had been for a while made to take and to typify sin.

That burning outside the camp looked to a stranger like the burning of a heap of rubbish. There was a foul smell of the burning flesh and refuse. Persons as they passed turned their heads away to avoid the ill odor. They would say, “What is all this?” “Why, this was a sin-offering, and when the blood, which God accepted, had gone, this was what was left—the filth of sin, and the people were just being taught how they should hate, loathe, and destroy it. Every man that touched it washed himself, and no man could touch any of these things that day without bathing again and again, the thing was so detestable.

Now, in the person of our blessed Lord, sin is made most detestable. Did you ever hate sin really, until you learned to love Christ? I will ask you, when do you hate sin the most? Why, when you love Christ the best. I believe you shall always find that in proportion as you understand and see the work of Christ you will see in that work, as in a glass, that Christ has made sin to be the most loathsome and disgusting thing that was ever heard of, for what do the angels say—“Man sinned, did he? Oh! foolish man, to sin against his God and his Maker!”

“Ah!” says one of the angels, “but he did worse than that, he sinned against the God that loved him so, that He would sooner let His Only Begotten Son die, than poor man should perish.” “Oh!” they say, “what a shameful thing to sin against so dear and kind a God!” If God were a tyrant, it might not seem atrocious to rebel against Him, but when He becomes so dear and tender a Father as to give His Only Begotten Son, away with you, sin! Talk of the Devil! He is not black compared with you. O sin, you are the Devil's tempter, the Devil's ruin! You make him black. It is sin, sin that is so foul a thing that I can liken it unto nought. There is nought on earth, there is nought anywhere in hell, that can be likened unto it. Sin is made to appear exceedingly sinful and loathsome to the uttermost degree through the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Now, these are three grand things for God to have done in this world—after man sinned, to have made His name as glorious as ever, after man's sin, to have set pardoned man straight, as straight as ever from his sin, and after that, to have made sin, which came with the apple in its hand, and which comes every day now with painted face, and with the cup in its hand, filled to the brim with sweet wine, seem hateful, and to be really so! Oh! it is a grand work, that which Christ has done, and blessed be His name!

Now, the last point—and I shall want your earnest consideration for a minute or two—is this. I must call your attention to—

IV. THE BEHAVIOR OF THE PEOPLE DURING THE WHOLE OF THAT DAY in which this wonderful panorama was made to pass before them.

During that day *they were to afflict their souls*. Do you want to have your sin forgiven? Put away your jollity and your mirth. A repenting sinner had need to be a mourner, and brethren, when sin is put away, how the forgiven sinner afflicts his soul! He is happy, he never was more happy, never so happy, but how grieved he is to think he ever sinned!

*“My sins, my sins my Savior!
How sad on Thee they fall;
Seen through Thy gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all.*

*I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me,
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.*

*My sins, my sins, my Savior!
Their guilt I never knew
Till, with Thee, in the desert,
I near Thy passion drew.*

*Till with Thee, in the garden,
I heard Thy pleading prayer,
And saw the sweat drops, bloody,
That told Thy sorrow there.”*

Oh! there is never, never such affliction of soul for sin as when you see the great atonement. Let me invite you to hate sin tonight, you pardoned ones. Take care to do it. And you unpardoned ones, rend your hearts, but not your garments, and turn unto God with afflicted spirits and say, “Lord, through the precious atonement of which I have heard so much tonight, blot out my sins!”

The next thing concerning the people that day was that *they were to do no servile work that day*. There was to be no hewing of wood, no drawing of water, nothing was to be done throughout all the camp by way of labor. So, when a soul comes to the atonement of Christ, it has done with all its works of righteousness, and all its deeds of human merit. You can never have the atonement of Christ while you are working out your own works and trying to be saved by them. And the believer that has once come to take Christ to be his Savior will never try to get any merits of his own. Oh! he has thrown away forever the fooleries of self-righteousness. He sees the absurdity of hoping that foul, black hands can ever present a fair, white sacrifice to God. He takes his lord, and he has done with his own doings.

Once more, it was to be to the people *a Sabbath unto the Lord*. That day was not the seventh day of the week, but still it was to be a kind of Sabbath. And what a glorious Sabbath the atonement always makes! Why, I feel a Sabbath tonight, apart from the Sabbath day. I have a Sabbath in my soul, to think that the sin of man has not, after all, done lasting damage to the throne of God. I feel so happy to think, next, that there is a special sacrifice made for the elect, by the scapegoat’s having taken away their sin, so that the evil of their sin will never come on them. I feel so thankful tonight to think that God has made sin to appear to be exceeding sinful. These three grand things ring a peal of bells in my soul, for now I feel content, for God is satisfied, to come to God, because I can see why He should let me come to Him.

I can understand now how it is that He should let a fallen creature hold converse with His thrice holy self, after His great work is done, and it is better for me, and better for you, that we should come to God by so good, and reasonable, and proper, and glorious a way, rather than that we should have been permitted, had it been possible, to come by any breach of the law, or by any setting aside of the divine command.

I do not think I should have been happy had it been possible for me to go to heaven, and God's honor had thereby been sullied, for God's honor is the very happiness of a reconciled creature, and if that had suffered any loss through me, I should have been miserable. But it shall suffer no loss or stain. Christ has completely undone the mischief of the fall, glory be to His blessed name for this!

And now, beloved in the Lord, I wish that I could speak in the name of you all, and accept the man, Christ Jesus, tonight as our representative. Remember, though He has done this much for us all, that God can dwell with us, yet He has not taken the sin of us all upon Himself, but only of so many as stand and confess their sin and trust it with Him. Come, will you do it? Poor sinner, will you do it for the first time tonight? Backslider, will you do it again? You believers that have lost some of your evidences, will you do it anew tonight? Oh! I wish I could now say these words, and you could all say "Amen" from your hearts—

*“My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine;
While, like a penitent, I stand
And here confess my sin.”*

Well, if you won't have Christ for your Savior, I will have Him for mine, and there are thousands of you here who will say, "Yes, and He shall be mine too!" The longer I live the more I love to rest upon Him. I did try to rest somewhere else once, but the dream is over and now the more I think of my Lord, the more firm I feel the conviction that He is a rock that will bear the weight of my salvation.

The more I think of what that glorious Man, that blessed Son of God, who is as much God as He is man, has done for me, the more do I feel that if I had fifty thousand times the sin I have, I would rest on Him, and if I were as wicked as all men put together, I would rest on Him still, believing that no amount of sin could outweigh His merit, and that no extent of iniquity could ever surpass the infinite bounds of His eternal grace. He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him. Come to God by Him, poor sinner, and may God the Holy Ghost lead you, and He shall have the glory. Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ROMANS 6:1-19

Paul finishes the last chapter by saying, "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." "What shall we say, then?" What inference shall we draw from the super-abounding of grace over sin?

Verse 1. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" That were a very horrible inference. It is one great instance of the shocking depravity of man that the inference has been drawn sometimes. I hope not often, for surely Satan himself might scarcely draw an inference of licentiousness from love. Still, some have drawn it.

2. *God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

Now, he goes on by an argument to prove that those in whom the grace of God has wrought the wondrous change cannot possibly choose sin, nor live in it.

3. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

That is the very hinge of our religion. His death, not into His example merely, nor primarily into His life, but “into his death.” In this we have believed—with a dying Savior we are linked, and our baptism sets this forth. We “were baptized into his death.”

4. *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

The operations, therefore, of the Spirit of God forbid that a saved man should live in sin. He is dead, he is raised into newness of life, at the very entrance into the church, in the very act of baptism, he declares that he cannot live as he once did, for he is dead, he declares that he must live after another fashion, for has he not been raised again in the type, and raised again in very deed from the dead?

5-6. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

There has a death has taken place in us, and though there be relics of corruption still alive, yet they are crucified, they will have to die, they must die, they are nailed fast to the cross to die in union with the death of Christ.

7. *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

The man is dead. The law cannot ask more of a criminal than to yield his life. If, therefore, he should live again after death, he would not be one who could suffer for his past offenses. They were committed in another life, and “he that is dead is freed from sin.”

8-9. *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*

Or death will have dominion over Him no more, He will never come a second time under death, and neither shall His people. “For in that he died, he died unto sin once.” There was an end of it in the sense of once for all, no second death for Christ.

10-12. *For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 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.*

Peradventure, there were some who would say that in their spirits truth and righteousness were supreme, but that in their bodies sin had the mastery. Aye, but that will not do. There must be left no lurking place for sin within the complete system of our manhood, it must be hunted out and hunted down thoroughly, out of the body as well as out of the mind.

13. *Neither yield ye your members as instrument of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

We do not, I think, make enough of the passive part of our religion. We are often for doing, and quite right too, and the more active we can be the better, still, before the doing there must come a yielding, because we remember who it is that works in us, “both to will and to do of his own good pleasure,” and our activities, after all, are not so much our own as we deem, if they are right. They are the activities of the divine life within us, of the Spirit of God Himself working in us to the glory of the Father. One great point, therefore, is to yield ourselves up, our members, to be weapons in God’s hands for the fighting of the spiritual war.

14. *For sin shall not have domination over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

The reigning, ruling principle now, is not “You must, you shall,” for reward, or under fear of punishment, but God has loved you, and now you love Him in return, and what you do springs from no mercenary or self-serving motive. You are not under law, but under grace, yet in another sense you never were so much under law as you are now, for grace puts about you a blessedly sweet, delightful law, which has power over us as the word of command never had. “I will write my law in their hearts, in their inward parts will I write them.” Aye, that is the glory of the new life, the delight of him who has passed from death unto life.

15. *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?*

Oh! this old question keeps coming up! Somebody wants to sin. Well, if he wants to sin, why does not he leave this business alone, and go and sin? What has he to do with these theological questions at all? But still, he wants, if he can, to make a coverlet for his wickedness, he wants to enjoy the sweets of the child of God, and yet live like an enemy of God, and so he pops in his head over and over again, “May we not sin because of this or that?” To which the apostle answers again, “God forbid.” Oh! may God always forbid it to you, and to me, may the question never be tolerated among us.

15-16. *God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

If you are doing the deeds of sin, you are the servants of sin, and only as you are doing the will of God can you claim to be the servants of God. “Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” That becomes the index of our condition. The man, then, that lives in sin, and loves it, need not talk about the grace of God, he is a stranger to it, for the mark of those that come under grace is this, that they serve God, and no longer serve sin.

17-18. *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*

“Bondservants,” you have got in our new translation, for so it was, and the apostle seems to excuse himself for using such a word by saying—

19. *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

As you submitted yourselves to sin most cheerfully and voluntarily, and yet were slaves under it, so now come and be slaves under Christ with most blessed cheerfulness and delight, endeavor now to lose your very wills in His will, for no man’s slavery is so complete as his who even yields his will. Now, yield everything to Christ. You shall never be so free as when you do that, never so blessedly delivered from all bondage as when you absolutely and completely yield yourselves up to the power and supremacy of your Lord.

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.