

SB
490 1363 0
Lap 812

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

19
2014/97

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 3 July 1920

ROMANS 7 v 24 and 25

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver
me from the body of this death? I thank
God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with
the mind I myself serve the law of God;
but with the flesh the law of sin."

This important chapter teaches several very striking truths. It begins by stating two very mighty and very arresting truths; first, the dominion which the law has over men; as long as they live the law has dominion. And this truth is illustrated by the marriage union and the fact that as long as the husband lives his wife is united to him and subject to him, not free to become another man's wife. And this sets out what few, comparatively, know - a terrible thing it is indeed to be ignorant of the law, of its authority, its binding authority - that, just as a husband has a right to his wife, so the law has a right to a sinner. And, because the law is God's revealed will, the declaration of His mind to man, the law is, as it were, God's claim on the man, on all men. It just claims submission to God which, in other words, is obedience, and to all who render not obedience, implicit, perfect obedience, it has but one word to say, and a terrible word it is: "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them". O, sinner, ignorant of this, you may think yourself free, free to come to chapel or stay away, free to do this, free to say I will go into such a city and dwell there a year and I will buy and sell and get gain, and when I have enough to be independent I will retire. You think yourself free to say all that and plan all that, little knowing, not thinking, not believing, that the law is a living word, that God is a living God, and that He, the living God, will one day require an account of you. As long as you live in sin the law has authority over you. This leads to another truth, that when a man dies then the law has lost its dominion. As when the husband dies the law of the husband ceases to operate on the widow and she is free, so when a man

is dead by the operation of the law on his conscience, then the law, so to speak, loses its authority; it can do no more than kill him. As when the law of England as to murder, hangs a man and the man is dead, it can go no further with him, so the law of God will go no further than death. May it be in this world that it will cease to have any authority over you, for if you live through eternity you will find that the law will make sin very terrible to you. But, when one is slain, as when Paul says: "I through the law am dead to the law", then the law ceases to have dominion and the sinner slain is free, and if God will raise him up and unite him to Christ the law will have nothing to say against it because it has executed life and can ask no more. Well, if we are dead to the law those, and as many of us, as are so dead to it, we have reason to fall on our knees and sing with all our powers the high praises of God for bestowing sovereign grace upon us. But here some may be met, and some may be meeting me, with a mental objection and say that though they feel they are dead and have no power to obey the law, yet they understand a little of what Paul means when he says, "when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which are by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death". This will explain a good deal - may God explain it to you - a good deal of your experience. Those of you who are under the law as yet and not married to Christ by a sweet manifestation of Him and faith laying hold of Him, you often feel as if sin has dominion. It reigns, it rages. It takes the form of terrible unbelief; it makes you say that you cannot understand how God can be just and save you. You cannot see how it is possible that a person with all the sin in him that you have and the motions of sin, the passions of sin, hypocrisy and pride and vanity and covetousness and all manner of evil, how it is possible that such a person might be saved and God to be glorified. You will understand it all when you are delivered and Jesus Christ takes you up and makes you realise something of union with Himself, and the fruitfulness to God which you desire, you will realise then as coming by Jesus Christ, as Paul says to the Romans: "But now we are delivered from the law" - it has killed us and we are delivered from it - "that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter". All the humility, the peace of conscience, the joy of heart, the submission of will, the subjection of your understanding to God, all these things are by Jesus Christ. Not by the law; that stirs up

sin, sin, being provoked by a holy commandment coming across its path. It is like a man intoxicated who, being told not to go a certain way, the more insists upon going that way. Sin is a terrible thing under the provoking operations of the law. But now, when Christ comes - O, that He would come this morning to some of you who are in bondage - when He comes He brings life and liberty, and, as Paul says in the 8th chapter of this epistle, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death". Well, these are two mighty truths which are taught by the Apostle, inspired by the Holy Ghost, in this chapter. And the third thing to notice is how that a child of God thus delivered yet finds in himself the motions of sin and finds a great conflict between two lives, the life of sin and the life of God; the one panting for heaven, and the other yearning for its old associations and every gratification. And neither will give in; therefore there is a conflict. Grace wont give way; no. Grace shall conquer sin, wont give way; no, but sin shall be subdued. "He shall subdue our iniquities" "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace." This shall do the thing; this shall accomplish all your desires; this shall answer every request of your spirit to God. Grace shall set you free. But the conflict goes on and the good that a sinner would, the belief, humble, implicit belief in God in Christ that he would, he cannot. And the evil of unbelief, doubting, questioning, fretting, rebelling, that he would not, he finds himself doing. And this conflict brings him into a kind of bondage; not bondage of the law, for he is delivered from that, but a bondage in his spirit. Any sin that at any moment captivates you - any child of God here - makes you its slave for the time. "Know ye not that to whom ye obey his servants ye are to whom ye obey whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness". Say that some day you begin to look at your circumstances, perhaps look at your liabilities and then looking at what you have to meet them with, and you are afraid, and unbelief comes in and says, you will never get through, and your prayer to get honourably to your grave wont be answered. Here is something that catches you as a similar kind of thing caught Moses. Said he to the Lord, if all the beasts of the earth and all the fowls of the air were brought together would they suffice the people for a month?, and you may think how shall I get through. Here are pressing necessities, here is a short supply; what am I to do? And you do not

know; unbelief will never tell you what to do, except to lie down and die. But Christ will tell you what to do; go to Him. Here is a conflict; so all through. Suppose a prayerless spirit comes - alas it often comes, would that we did not know it; I wish I did not know it, I wish I were not able to speak to you about it as from experience; No; worse than prayerlessness, a horrible aversion, this comes - the new man, the hidden man of the heart, says, I would seek unto God, I would commit my case to Him, I would not live like this. I would lay my case, yea my soul, myself and all that I have and all my concerns and interests, I would lay them all before the Lord. But this wicked spirit, this wicked spirit comes and says, you had better plan, you had better do this and if you do not catch that train, if you do not do the other things, matters will go wrong and get worse and worse. There is a conflict. When you would look to God, love His way, His Word, so inspired as to be infallible; His truth, so precious, as when known, sets the soul free; and instead of this there arises a awful feeling teaching painfully that truth that is set out by the Apostle: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be". And these two clash, and clashing, they make a thunder and a noise and a tumult in your soul, and you learn what the Apostle says is true: "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing". This, going on, brings a man into the condition of the Apostle Paul expressed in the text: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Do you understand it? Do you feel it? O wretched, unhappy man that I am, who shall make me live? Otherwise, who shall get a victory over me and in me, a wretched man? You may, perhaps, even be lower than this. You may one day find yourself saying - you may often have said, some of you - is it possible for a child of God, one blessed with the life of Christ, and the fear of God in him, to do the things I do? My friends see not what I am. They think that I am a Christian, they bring no charges against me of improper conduct, but I see my heart, I feel my sins. Can one have the life of God in him and do the things that I do? If such questions have ever been in your minds, then you have perhaps a sort of double wretchedness, and can endorse this word and use it for yourself. "O wretched man that I am". This does not look like real religion, does it? since the Scripture speaks so much of joy in the Lord, of rejoicing in Christ Jesus, of having no confidence in the flesh; since Christ said "My peace I give unto you:

not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid", This does not look much like that. And if the Apostle Paul had not felt it, if he had not been inspired to write this, we might well, comparing our state with such Scriptures I have just hinted at, say, we must be wrong. But here is an eminent saint, an apostle, a man exercised greatly, a man who had an obedience of grace, who had intimacy with Jesus Christ, remarkable acquaintedness with Him, saying, I cannot do what I would do, and I am driven into things that I hate and would never look at, much less do, if I could help it. He says "O wretched man that I am" How far from the Lord I live, how unlike the Lord I am, how contrary to my own desires and designs I am. How feeble are my efforts, how unavailing my tears. O wretched man, what will become of me? Who shall untie and remove from me this corrupt myself, this body of sin and death. Do you sympathise with Paul? I would not like a religion that has no sympathy with the Apostle Paul in this, his trial. Go on saying it if it is in your heart to say it, O child of God. Stare your defeats in the face, avert not your gaze from your shame. Look at the things as Paul looked at them. He is not a wise man who, having a sore boil, hides it from himself, and tries to hide it from others. An honest man wants to know the worst of things, like a man in business perfectly honest and there comes a bad time with him; he does not say blindly, now I will take no notice, I will just let things go, hoping for a better day. He says I do not want to live in debt, I will just see how I stand. So he takes stock, an accurate stock of things and he finds himself on the wrong side; he is not solvent. He is troubled; he calls his creditors together. The child of God is honest; he sees his deficiency, he feels his defeats, his shameful defeats. He wants to know exactly how things are with him, and between himself and God, and so he comes with the Apostle. Lord, I am wrong; I feel, I find, I am defeated, I am overcome, I am shameful, and I am ashamed. Is there a remedy in heaven? Lord, bring it to me. Is there a hand can deliver me from this burden? O, stretch out Thy hand. Pluck Thy hand, Thy right-hand out of Thy bosom and come and save me. "Who shall deliver me?" The apostle is taught, and he gives the answer; he gives the answer in grateful thanks: "I thank God" - there is no ground of despair of this, my case - "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord"

We will look at this as enabled. Jesus Christ; who is He? Almighty God with our nature in union with His divine Person. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Poor, afflicted sinner, this is Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son, wrapped in humanity; the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Look on Him, ye saints. See Him crucified and ask what was it that brought Him to that direful condition. What was it, but sin? What brought Him from heaven? Love. What brought Him to the cross? Sin. But why did sin bring Him who is sinless to the cross? Substitution, imputation. Of this truth of imputation, that gospel teacher Isaiah, declares by the Holy Ghost, of the Father, and of Christ: "He hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" Look ye saints, mourning saints, the sight is glorious. God's Son wrapped in humanity to die for crimes that you had done, for defeats that shame you, for sin that makes you afraid with amazement. A sight will glad weeping eyes. O, it is the sweetest, the gladdest sight that ever can be had on earth. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced". You will not mistake this when you get it. Many false Christs deceive people, but when you get this you will not be mistaken, and you will find one effect most sweet; you will have the most grateful contrition; you will mourn for Him as for an only Son, and 'tis a word much to be observed; that every family getting this sight shall mourn - the house of David and their wives apart - all shall mourn apart because this is a personal thing, and it comes to persons, it comes into their consciences, it comes to their malady. 'Tis a plaster of figs for a sore boil; the body of the prophet stretched on the body of the dead lad. It is the remedy, the cure of all the ills that a living soul confesses and suffers. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Thank Him; what for? Why, for deliverance from the body of this death. And this deliverance, we may say, is two-fold; the first often repeated, the second, once and only once and for ever done. Often repeated - that is every time you get a sight of the Lord Jesus by faith. Every touch of His mercy that the Holy Ghost brings, every application you receive from Him of the blood of Jesus Christ, will beget in you the most comfortable deliverance from the evils you confess and from the body of death that you mourn and carry so mournfully. And this proves that all the fruitfulness of God's people comes from Jesus Christ. You have never looked on a bunch of grapes - whether you have thought it at the moment or not - without seeing the virtue of the root and you

will never have a holy affection without the virtue of Jesus Christ being in you to produce it. You will never feel obedience to Christ without the grace of Christ; never be humble without the grace of Christ. The whole is produced by Him. It is a beautiful thing to be a Christian, a true Christian. Let My Name be named on them. However the people at Antioch were first called Christians, we may not know, that is, we may not know exactly the feelings that produced the name in the hearts of the people, but this we do know, that when the Name of Christ is really named on a sinner, the highest honour and the sweetest mercy and the most effectual grace, God bestows on that sinner. Look then for victory by Jesus Christ. Look for all your victories over indwelling sin through Jesus Christ. Never expect liberty in your souls but by Him. Never expect peace in your consciences but by His blood. Never think you will get access to God and power over the angel to prevail, but by the merit of Jesus Christ. And this will exalt Him unspeakably in your affections. You will enter most sympathetically into the language of the Psalmist who says: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". To whom shall I go, on whom call, on whom wait, for whom look, but Jesus Christ. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" And this answers to His own Word: "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also", so that a man lives in heaven when he knows that Christ is his treasure. His very heart, his affections, the best of him, Christ has. When He gets your heart He has got the whole of you. I thank God for the prospect. There is a prospect before us dear friends, a wonderful prospect. The day is coming when, to speak as Dr Goodwin did, when all these croaking toads of our corruption will fall off, when we shall feel, as Dr Owen felt, on his death bed, when one came and told him that his last work, that wonderful work on the glory of Christ was put to the press. "Ah, brother", he said, "I am going to see the glory of God as I have never seen it yet." "I thank God through Jesus Christ".

And what is the effect of this? "So then with the mind I myself" - I, regenerated and justified and sanctified Paul - "serve the law of God", that law of life in Christ Jesus. I serve Christ, I serve Him in my spirit, with tears and temptations, as Paul speaks in another place of himself; serving the Lord with all humility and many tears and temptations. You serve Christ, and this will let you into a secret

that may, presented to the eye of reason, be a particular stumbling, where Paul says: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God". Well, it does seem a strange thing, looked at by cold reason that has such an astigmatism upon it that it can see nothing properly, but, seen in the light of this - "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God", I, the hidden man of the heart, I look to the Lord, I look to Him in my troubles, I look to Him in my mercies, I see Him in them both, and my spirit goes out in thankfulness to Him, and I honour Him as that blessed One in whom, in a double sense, I live and move and have my being - good living, this. The Lord give us to live this life. Still, there is a contrary part which we must have till we die. "But with the flesh" - that old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts - "the law of sin" which is in my members. There is nothing too bad that the world and Satan can propound to the old man for, depend upon it, he will accept everything. But there is nothing too holy that you can speak of to the hidden man of the heart that will not find acceptance with him. Do you know these two parties? Some do, I believe. These two parties; life and death, grace and sin, holiness and corruption, and, coming against each other, they create a commotion and trouble and when the one, the evil, prevails, then says the sinner in his defeat and shame and sorrow: "O, wretched man that I am". Will it ever come to pass that I shall live a different life from this, a better life than this? Then, when the grace of God comes, and Jesus Christ appears and peace prevails, then, says the sinner, I serve God, I believe Him, I love Him. I believe Him, even as Paul believed Him, when he knew that the ship was to be wrecked, but that all should be saved with him. He said to those on board, be not afraid; I believe God that it shall be even as He said unto me. So the blessed faith of a child of God speaks. The Lord give us to understand this life and this death and to believe in God to the saving of our souls.

AMEN.