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Sermon preached by Mr S Delves at Scaynes Hill Chapel
on Monday afternoon May 26,1969

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:22-23.

How very instructive to us are these parts of the Scriptures, I do feel that the epistles are especially profitable to us to instruct us in the principles of gospel truth, and gospel experience, and gospel practice. I know that all Scripture is by the inspiration of God, and in the different ways and purposes perhaps more to one generation than another. All Scripture is profitable but it seems as though, the Holy Ghost especially inspired the apostles to gather up into their epistles the whole sum and substance of the truth, and set it forth in that instructive way and manner. But O, how much we need, whether we preach, or whether we hear, that the same Holy and blessed Spirit of truth who inspired the apostles to write in this way, should give us understanding therein ourselves, and especially to convey and apply these truths to us that we may be profited in them in every good word and work. I must say that I have often felt with regard to these Scriptures that the well is deep, the well of truth, but I have nothing sometimes to draw with.

I hope the Lord will help this afternoon and enable me to bring forth from this word spiritual and profitable truth for you to hear, and to receive, for there is a very vital test, and everyone stands in a personal way to it, either as being still in the state of sin, or as being freed from it. And may it please the Lord to shew us our own personal state in these depths of truth and blessedness that this work of God's grace and power has been wrought in us, that we have been made free from, sin, and become servants unto righteousness; so that we could understand more clearly what we have been made free from, and how we have been made free from it, and what blessed and eternal consequences will come to us through the delivering hand and power of God; and then what everlasting life is that is set before us in Jesus Christ. Why, my friends, we should not know how to be thankful enough that God has delivered in such a way as this, and not left us to go on helpless and hopeless to perish in it. If the little light I might be able to set before you from these words of truth might convey some instruction and some confirmation to you that the Lord has really wrought this in you, surely it would raise up in your heart a spirit of thankfulness to Him. For if the apostle Paul who understood so clearly and fully, and so deeply, both for himself and for others; if he could say, "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." If he could feel so thankful for them, they had cause to be really thankful for themselves.

Perhaps it is not easy to expound this with clarity. I feel much to need help in handling this so vital and blessed a word, that the exposition of this word may not be a difficulty. I think the major difficulty is that it often seems hard to those who are in this case, having been made free from sin, and become servants to God, to make those Scriptures agree with their state of heart and mind. It may seem as if there is a contradiction, that there is something wrong somewhere because they cannot feel they have been made free from sin. And perhaps some have already said it. O if only I

could feel I was free from sin! But I feel to be anything but that. There seems so much sin in my heart, and it seems to work in such a way as to fill me with a sense of guilt and confusion. I don't see how I can be free from sin when sin is so strong in my heart and cause me so much shame and distress. This is one of the greatest difficulties in these Scriptures to make them and our experience agree; if they do not agree, what then? The Scriptures are right, and if my experience does not agree with the Word of God, my state is wrong. That is true; of course, it is! The Word, of God is right, and if our state of mind, heart, and conduct, does not agree with the Word, of God, then we are wrong. But I would not have you come to too hasty a conclusion with regard to this, I hope if you will have patience with me, and the Lord gives me grace and wisdom to handle this word aright, before we finish you may feel there is very much more encouragement than condemnation for you, perhaps the word may be more confirming than otherwise. Anyway, may the Lord give the words, that application to us, and the effect in us, that is right in His sight, and what will be for our good and for our profit. For as the Lord may help me I will take the subject along the evident line of truth underlying it. That is, first to speak a little of the condition from which the apostle says you are made free, 'Being made free from sin.' And then speak a little of the way in which God by His grace makes us free from sin; and then to consider that the effects of being made free from sin is to become servants to God, that that service to God is unto holiness: and then lastly to contemplate a little the end of all this, that it is everlasting life. Everlasting life! "For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now we must consider first this condition of sin from which, by the grace of God, believers are made free - they were all in it once. All! But they have been made free from it. It has come to me that, I might better expound this point, and shew you this condition, if I speak of sin as being the state and condition in which, all men are in their unregenerate state, and in the common and universal ruin of human nature through sin. I will speak then in that way, and speak first of the state of sin from which the grace of God makes believers free. It is a state of sin. It is a state of sin in the soul itself. It is a state in which all men are naturally born, they inherit this condition of sin with their natural life; it is original. That is to say, it is original in human nature. It did not originate in the individual itself. We know how sin entered the world, this evil thing. Where it came from originally is a mystery. We know how it came into our nature, there is no mystery about that, the Word of God instructs us clearly. Man was made upright, innocent, and entirely free from sin; and that Satan had fallen from his original condition as a created spirit, and no one knows how many of the angels fell from their first estate on the same dreadful occasion, Jesus Christ referred to it, He said 'I saw Satan as lightening fall from heaven.' I think William Huntington put one forceful expression to this mystery about the origin of sin as sin, 'Sin was by itself conceived.' And perhaps that is as far as we can get as to where sin first came from; but we know how it came into our nature, we know that Adam and Eve were tempted by the tempter and yielded to the temptation, and broke through the divine prohibition and acted as rebels against God, and did that which God had forbidden. "By one man's disobedience sin came into the world, and death entered by it sin," and as I have sometimes said, it was as though there was a spring of water clear and pure, and some malicious person put some poison into the spring, so the water which flowed from that spring poisoned every stream. If you poison the fountain you poison every stream that flows from it. That is how our nature came to be so sinful. Your parent's nature was poisoned. This is a truth which needs to be clearly set forth, that human nature is fallen nature originally, that everyone inherits a fallen nature. How clearly David saw that. Perhaps at first he thought his sin was his own personal matter, he fell into temptation,

but he came to see that act of sin came from a bitter root in his nature, he was born with a sinful root, "I was born in sin, and shapen in iniquity; in sin did my mother conceive me." So it comes about that there is in every person in their fallen state this condition of sin. And there is an awful power in sin. Sin is a powerful evil. I am sure I speak rightly and truly when I say that sin is the most powerful evil, the most powerful thing in existence except the grace of God. And it is mercy for us beyond words that the grace of God is stronger than sin. But sin is stronger than anything else except the grace of God. No men can possibly overcome it by himself, for it is deeply rooted in his nature and in his own heart. No man can break from it, whatever resolves he may make, however he may spend himself to overcome his sin.

I am putting this before you in this emphatic way because I want presently to exalt the grace of God in this matter. It is so wonderful because it frees a man from such awful conditions, and frees a man from such a terrible state. Brethren, we do not half realise what sin is, what a power and guilt there is in it, and how strongly it is entrenched in our nature. Let me dwell a little longer upon and it I shall not make the background to this text blacker than it really is. There is a state of sin; everyone is in a fallen condition. It is not a question of what anyone says, it is a question of what they are. There is a tendency with many to look upon sin in an external way rather than the internal evidence of it in the heart. What then is this state of sin? It is a state in which sin prevails. Now when sin prevails it keeps the soul, the mind, and heart and life under bondage to it. It assumes different forms of course, for instance, there is hatred, there is pride, and "Every one that is proud in heart is abomination to the Lord." Men do not look upon pride as being the sin that it is. But God looks upon it as the sin that it is; for if there is one thing the Scripture instructs us as abomination in the sight of the Lord it is pride. And of course pride was the very way in which sin penetrated into our nature; Satan tempted Adam and Eve to be proud. 'You will be as gods, you will be so wise, it will be so wonderful, you will be as gods if you eat of the fruit.' And Satan injected that feeling of pride into our heart, and everywhere that pride prevails in the heart, that state is abominable in the sight of God. And covetousness, jealousy, and lustful desires he injects into the heart. I need not to go deeper into these things, we know them.

This is the sin which prevails in every man by nature. This is the state he is in; evil principles prevail in his soul and in his mind. It makes it that he has evil thoughts, and evil feelings, evil imaginations; he speaks evil things, and so on because he is in a state of sin. This state of sin is a state of utter and absolute death regard to God and godliness. "Dead in sin" the Scripture describes it, with no more life of a holy and spiritual nature, with nothing more of God than a corpse has of natural life. Dead in sin! From this inward state of sin all outward outflowing of sin springs. There is a negative, and a positive side to this. There is the negative side; men do not fear God because sin prevails in them. I am sure that I am not putting this dark side of the matter any more positively than the apostle puts it in the 3rd of Romans - all this is described in that chapter, both Jew and Gentile. The Jews with all their religion, the Gentiles with all their idolatry, they were all under sin, there was no fear of God before their eyes. There might as well be no God at all for all they fear and respect and regard His holy name and word. And even if they do make some appearance of the fear of God, it is only the fear when sin prevails in their heart; it is something outward perhaps, but not that inward fear in the heart. Oh, there is no fear of God before their eyes, how can there be? And there is no love to God in their heart, how can there be any love to God when everything that is opposite to His holy name, and nature, and mind, and will, and word, is prevailing in their heart, how can they love God? They

can hate Him, but they cannot possibly love Him, because sin prevails in their heart. The Lord Jesus in answer to a question of the young ruler, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life" gave him not the Ten Commandments in detail, but the substance of them. He said, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, spirit and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself.' That is to say, with all thy powers and affection you must love God, because He gave you all those faculties to love, and you must love Him with them. But then that is impossible when a man's heart is estranged from God, he just cannot love God, he cannot bring forth one iota of affection to God, to His great and holy name; his state is entirely negative to the love of God, 'There is no fear of God before his eyes,' and there is no love to God in his heart, he is under the power of unbelief.

Unbelief is a rejection of the truth, and unbelief prevails in every heart where sin reigns. In fact, I believe unbelief is the strongest power of sin in its reigning power in the soul. The Lord Jesus seemed to imply that when He said, "When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, of sin because they believe not on Me," as though their not believing on Him would be that which the Holy Spirit would especially convince them of. So He did convince them of it when He came with such power at the day of Pentecost, it was unbelief that pricked their hearts when the Holy Spirit convinced them of it. But can there be any love when unbelief prevails, when sin captivates the affections, how can there be any love to God when there is no principle of spiritual love and light in the soul? Well, that is the inward state of sin, the negative side, what men cannot do because sin prevails in them. But look at what we can do, look at the positive side. Look how men sin, for instance, how they sin with their lips in one way and, another. Some sin by taking the name of God wantonly and wickedly in vain. It is as the Psalmist said, "Their throat is an open sepulchre: they flatter with their tongue." They live in sinful ways, many live in adultery unashamed, and practice dishonesty one with another: and if they get away with it they think they have done something very clever. So sin in the negative side lives in their heart, they cannot love God, cannot fear Him, cannot believe in Him. On the other hand they can blaspheme; they can speak falsehoods, take His name in vain and can sin in one way and another. What an awful thing it is to be under the dominion of sin. And my friends, there is something else. There is something else, and that is, over this dark, ignorant sinful state in the soul there hangs a dark threatening cloud of divine anger. There does. There hangs a cloud of divine anger because there is continually springing up from this condition in the soul that which is continually provoking divine anger. The threatening cloud of divine wrath hangs over the soul, I can scarcely go into this now; it is too sad and too awful.

But then, my friends, there is another side to this matter, 'Being then made free from sin.' Free from this condition that is greatly provoking - this sinful condition. There is a being made free from this. And if the condition is as bad or worse than I have depicted it, the condition of being free from it is more wonderful and bright than I can describe it. The apostle felt that so clearly with regard to these Roman believers; he said, 'God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin,' but ye are not now in that condition, you were, but you are not now, God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin you yielded yourself to it willingly and readily, you yielded yourself to it, but now, he says, 'being made free from, sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you.' I must leave until this evening to speak of the mercy and redeeming blood that frees man from this awful condition and dreadful state and causes them to bring forth fruit unto holiness and that which ends in everlasting life. There I must leave it. Amen.