

"NOT UNDER LAW, BUT UNDER GRACE"

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."
Romans 6:14.

The consciousness of sin has characterized man in all ages and places. All the religions of mankind recognize the evidences of evil. In the ancient Egyptian religion, the sun or light was the type of good, and night or darkness, that of evil.

The saddest thing in the life of many Christians is the presence and power of sin. There are those who would gladly give all they possess if only they could resist temptation and live a life of unbroken fellowship with God. It is a painful but familiar fact that there are multiplied thousands who know Jesus Christ as their Saviour, but who have experienced very little beyond conversion. Their experience is one of victory and defeat; today on the mountain top and tomorrow in the valley.

There are some Christians who try to mix law and grace. They do not think that they are doing this, but they are. They teach that you are saved by grace and kept saved by works. Is not this mixing law and grace? Moreover, they are shocked when we tell them that the believer does not have to keep the law in order to be saved. They contend that such teaching will give men license to sin. But, will it? God's Word teaches that the truth of grace will give men liberation from sin, something which the law could not do. Here are the Holy Spirit's words to this effect: "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

That does not mean that merely fornication and drunkenness shall not have dominion over you. It does not mean merely that the vices of the world shall not have dominion over you. It is just as true of heart sins. It means that envy, jealousy, anger, malice, pride, selfishness, covetousness and worldliness shall not have dominion over you. This teaching was new and startling when Paul recorded our text.

The story of salvation is given in a very striking fashion in Paul's letter to the Romans and is epitomized splendidly in our text and its context. Salvation includes all of the riches of the blessings involved in the life of fellowship with God into which He brings us by His grace.

I. An Apprehension Of God's Grace.

After the Civil War many slaves in remote sections continued in their slavery, due to the fact that they did not know they were set free. A knowledge of their freedom was essential to its experience. Likewise the child of God must know of the glorious liberty from sin which grace has provided before he can claim that liberty.

The good news of what grace has wrought on our behalf is found in the Bible. From its pages we shall learn of this precious and all-important truth.

For a moment let us consider what it reveals concerning our natural state. We were alienated from God. We were the "servants of sin" in practice (Romans 6:17). We were the "children of wrath" by nature (Ephesians 2:3). There was no good thing in us. We had no merit before God, and we could not gain any.

God hated our sin, but He loved our souls with an infinite love. So He sent the Son of His love into the world to be our Sin-bearer. On Calvary's cross Christ, the sinless One, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (II Corinthians 5:21). He was our Substitute that day, enduring the untold agonies of hell to atone for our sin. We cannot imagine the terrible anguish of that dark hour. While His physical suffering was great, it could not begin to compare with the sorrow in His

heart. We catch an inkling of His grief and heartbreak in the cry recorded in Mark 15:34, "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

By virtue of simple faith in Christ's finished work, the believer has a perfect standing before God. He is clothed in "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Romans 3:22). He is delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13). He is reconciled to God and stands holy and unreprouvable in His sight (Colossians 1:22). To sum it all up, he is blessed with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

To the blessings of his standing the believer has access by faith according to Romans 5:2: "By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Hence, whatever the believer needs in the way of righteousness or deliverance is at his disposal. He has access to it by faith. But better still, he has access to the very presence of God. He may come boldly to the throne of grace to find help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

"For ye are not under the law, but under grace." Words could not be plainer to tell that salvation is not of works or of man's merit or of man's morality. Words could not be plainer to tell that salvation is not of law or of man's obedience to law. Men are saved by grace, and saved men are under grace and not under law. Any man who is trusting to what he can do to be saved has a false hope. We are saved by grace and we are under grace.

The truth of salvation by grace cannot be separated from the truth of the security of the saved. It is here declared that salvation by grace assures the security of the saved. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." The security of the believer is assured in the salvation of the believer. Security is not an addition but a part of salvation. It is the assurance of salvation. It is not always the experience of a saved man to have assurance of salvation, but it is always the privilege of a saved man to know that he is saved and can never be unsaved. The security of the believer does not mean that he is sinless, but it does mean that sin shall not have lordship over him, that sin shall not hold sway in his life. What an encouragement to the believer!

II. An Appreciation Of God's Grace.

As we contemplate what God in His wondrous grace has done for us, gratitude should fill our hearts to overflowing. Moreover, it should be very practical, constraining us to devote our lives unreservedly to our blessed Lord. This is God's plea for the surrender of our lives to Him in Romans 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

What was it that caused the Apostle Paul to serve the Lord so wholeheartedly? It was his appreciation of God's grace. Listen to his testimony in II Corinthians 5:14-15: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

If we find in our hearts a lack of appreciation for God's grace, the reason is our forgetfulness of our sin, which includes a forgetfulness of God's free forgiveness. The following incident in our Lord's ministry substantiates this thought.

Our Lord sat at meat one day in the house of Simon, a Pharisee. During the meal a woman entered and stood at the feet of Christ Jesus weeping. With her tears she washed His feet and wiped them with her hair. Then she kissed His feet and anointed them with ointment. She was a great sinner, and she realized it, but she also realized that the Saviour in wondrous grace had forgiven her sin. So now she was manifesting her love and devotion to her Lord. Simon, the Pharisee, on the other hand, did nothing to manifest his gratitude, for he did not have any gratitude to manifest. What had the Lord done for him? He did not consider himself a sinner, hence he did not feel any need of the Lord's forgiveness. He loved little, or none at all. With these two souls in mind our Lord made this significant statement: "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47).

In which class are you; that of the woman, or that of the Pharisee?

III. An Appropriation Of God's Grace.

Grace provides everything we need, and puts all at our disposal, while faith reaches forth its hand to appropriate. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2). Grace has provided a perfect victory over sin through the channel of fellowship with God. By faith we may enter into that great privilege and enjoy constant and increasing victory.

The need of faith is declared in Hebrews 11:6 which says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." The fact that fellowship with our Lord insures victory is presented in I John 1:7, where we read: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

With great joy let us enter into the precious fellowship which grace has provided. Let us open our hearts and lives unto our Lord so fully that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. Then we shall experience the freedom promised in Romans 6:14: "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." The measure in which we fellowship with Him will determine the measure of our victory.