



**Power to Overcome and
Repress Sin**
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Power to
Overcome and Repress Sin

In Four Sermons

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By

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Power over Sin

Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins - Matt 1:21. God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? - Rom 6:2. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof - Rom 6:12.

Many people think that if they are saved from the punishment of sin, saved from hell, it is all that can be wished or expected; but it is not. God's children are saved from sin now to fit them for that future when they shall be saved from its punishment.

There are three things from which Jesus saves us: first, sin; second, its power; third, its punishment: and he that is saved from one is saved from all. It is a perfect, and full, and free salvation. You will notice that in our first text sin is plural: *"He shall save His people from their sins"*; but in the text, *"the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin"*, it is the singular - He saves His people from sin as a principle, and from their sins as the fruit of that principle.

When a man is to be saved, his conscience is first touched, not his will; he sees himself unclean - alienated from God; even if his life has not been outwardly wicked, at the least it has been ungodly; he begins like the jailer to cry out, *"what must I do to be saved?"* This may last a longer or shorter time; some go mourning days or weeks, months or years, others find the wound and the cure in an hour; such may have been the people on the day of Pentecost, but all must pass through this stage. *"The sinner, not the righteous, Jesus came to save"*. At first one only feels that one is pardoned, but soon there comes the need of cleansing, the root of sin is still there. There came forth water as well as blood out of Jesus' side. There may be peace with God, and not the peace of God, keeping heart and mind, ruling

the heart; before that there must be a broken will, complete resignation and submission to God's will.

Pardoned, not happy. There is another power needed beside the blood - the Holy Spirit. Before sin can be subjugated, its power must be known and felt. This comes gradually. Little by little the depth of the heart is revealed. One could not bear, at first, to see it as God sees it.

Justification is entirely Christ's work; the power, the power of sanctification, rests with us. The fifth chapter of Romans deals with justification by identification with Christ; in the sixth, seventh and eighth chapters we see deliverance through knowledge of and acquaintance and communion with Christ in His death.

Justification is perfect at once and for ever. It only needs faith to believe God; it is not strong faith, but faith. *"Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief."* The strongest evidence of faith is our own knowledge of it in our own hearts. Justification is entirely Christ's work, not so sanctification. *"Let it not have dominion over you."* *"If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."* *"Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord."* But let not this discomfort you, it is not a command of the law, but a dictate of the gospel; and God has not left us without the power to do it.

It is not necessary for a Christian to commit a single sin; for if he must sin once, why not twice? And then where is the salvation from sin?

But how are we to avoid sinning? Romans 6 tells. *"God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* It is the known

and realised identification of ourselves with Christ and His cross that gives the power to overcome.

Lusting is not dominion; it is yielding to and obeying of the lust that constitutes dominion. The root of sin will be in us till death. We shall know our sinfulness, but there is no need that it should be outwardly manifested.

The power is symbolized by baptism - dying with Christ, rising with Him, putting off the old man as one puts off the wet clothes, putting on Christ as one puts on the dry garments. God provides the power - Christ and His cross.

Sin exists. He does not say, 'eradicate it' but *"let it not reign."* The Canaanites were in the land in the time of Joshua, but they did not reign; they were *"hewers of wood and drawers of water,"* typifying the subduing and repressing power of the new man over the old habits and sins. Christians are a seeming paradox. *"You are dead,"* therefore *"mortify"*. *"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."*

The Twofold Power

Sin shall not have dominion over you - Romans 6:14

This word is not spoken to all, but only to a few; not even to all Christians, but only to those who have a certain degree of knowledge, and have reached a certain stage. Babes in Christ do not jump at once into the *“perfect liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.”* When Jesus was born into this world it was light coming into the midst of darkness. People were astonished and amazed at Him. His own mother did not comprehend Him, much less others. *“As He was, so are we in this world.”* Are we? Are you?

He was the Light of the world; He was the Salt of the earth; He was a City set on a hill; He was a Witness for God, so are we. *“The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.”* *“Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.”* This is true of churches as well as individuals; so the churches spoken of in Revelation are likened to *“golden candlesticks,”* shedding light all around, either they are not real and true, or something is wrong. If it was not so, sin might speak, and it might be heard - but it *“shall not have dominion over you.”* Where is the light, the salt, the witness, if our lives do not show it? We may as well be dead; yea, and perhaps better if we were; for we deliver a false witness, and dishonour God; injure the world, and hurt ourselves. If one was obliged to sin it would be different; but it is not right for even devils to sin, how much less those to whom the power is given to overcome. There is a new school arise, the doctrine of which is, that sanctification is derived from faith in Christ in the same was as justification. Romans 5 speaks of justification, and it is full of faith; but in chapters 6, 7, 8, that speak of sanctification, faith is not once mentioned. *“Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”*

“Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be nullified, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” That is the utmost we can do as long as we are in the body, not to serve sin.

If grace triumphant reigns, then what is to hinder a man from *“continuing in sin that grace may abound”*? This is answered here. In chapter 5 we are justified by faith; all are equal here; then comes peace. What have we instead of faith in chapter 6? Death and the cross, ten times. In chapter 8 the Holy Ghost is mentioned sixteen times; in chapter 7 not once, but sin triumphant. The end of chapter 7 is not a condition that a Christian ought to be in.

Where you have the cross and the Holy Ghost you have victory. Chapter 7 is not an example of a natural, nor yet of a wholly spiritual man. The natural man does nothing but evil; there is no conflict in him, because he only has one nature. The intelligent and confirmed Christian obeys Christ in his heart of hearts, bringing his every thought into subjection. Chapter 7 seems the transition state - the will to do, but no power; conflict, but slavery. There may be dislike, but no power to fight. The man is in chains, and his cry is the cry of undoubted misery and slavery; it is the new nature under the law, without the cross or grace, and the law is the strength of sin.

Where is sin under foot? By the twofold power of the Holy Ghost and the cross, the flesh dead, in Romans 6. The Holy Ghost is the only strength and power through the cross of Christ that can overcome the power of sin. We know that when we commit one sin we are for the time put out of communion, and a continual succession of sins puts out of communion altogether. The Holy Ghost is still there; there is life, but not health, not the manifestation of that life. Exhibit Christ, and glorify Him before men. God knows all about it; but we are to let our light *“shine before men, that they may see our good*

works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” The Spirit led Jesus to the cross; He did not fulfil His own will. The Spirit led Him into the wilderness. Whatever we do to please ourselves is serving ourselves. *“I came not to do mine own will.” “Even Christ pleased not Himself.”* Service to God is doing His will. In order to serve, we must know; in order to know, we must seek. We must not neglect primary duties, not go and preach and teach when it is God’s will we should stay at home, and live for Him there. As in 1Corinthians 7:20: *“let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called,”* provided that calling be an honest, upright one. Jesus did not leave Nazareth till He was thirty years old, not till God sent Him.

What is the reason that Christians in general are so defective in holiness? I believe it is owing to the prevalence of grieving the Holy Spirit; it is like cutting off our right arm. *“If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”* Where is our power if He is grieved? He retires, not leaves us; He withdraws, and the flesh comes forward and takes His place. If your best front rooms are not clean and pleasant you retire to the back ones. Oh, keep the chambers of your heart sweet and purified for this Holy Dove to dwell in! Samson’s strength lay in his devotion to God, in his being a Nazarite; he was to drink no wine - a type of no unnatural fervour or excitement in the Christian, but only the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Only when his hair grew again did he regain his strength, and then the victory cost him his life. Many Christians only conquer on a death-bed. Better late than never; but better, far better, that the will

be broken, the sin subdued, in health and strength. *“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.”* The new nature has no power of itself; it can only will; it in itself is not so strong as the old. Jacob was weaker than Esau. *“Put on the strength, O Zion.”* Words have no power. The Holy Ghost is our strength to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. If He is with you and in you, you have always power to overcome. You will not sin if He dwells in power in your heart; therefore the moment you sin, even in thought, lift up a prayer for forgiveness. Grieve Him not. Remember the Holy Dove within you, and let there be no thorns to pierce His gentle breast, and He will be your Comforter, your Mortifier, and your Strength.

Full Salvation

If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live - Romans 8:13. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body - 2Corinthians 4:10. He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin - 1Peter 4:1.

Full salvation consists in our having Christ *for* us and *in* us. We must have *both*. Souls go mourning because they do not know Christ *for* them, standing for them, answering all the claims of justice. Knowing this is the experience of salvation, and the soul that knows it enjoys peace, and rejoices in God in Christ Jesus. More know Christ *for* them than know Christ *in* them as the power over corruption. Many Christians know that the yoke of sin is on their back, though it is not on their conscience. This eighth verse is the pith of Romans 8. There are three persons spoken of in it; ye, the flesh, the Spirit, and it is of these three the chapter treats. There are seven parties connected with one regenerate man. The spirit, soul and body; everyone has, - good or bad. The bad principle is also in all, the flesh, not the body. "The flesh lusts against the Spirit". The regenerate have the new Man. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit". The Holy Ghost is in us, and the devil must be close if we are to wrestle. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers". Satan whispers in our ears and hearts. May the Holy Ghost lay hold of our new nature, and may all our parts be subject to Him and under Him. This new nature is in the centre of opposing influences. Which shall be obeyed? "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh". The one always suggests evil and the other good. We are not impelled, not compelled to good, but attracted. "Ye are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh". The Holy Ghost is given to be our Guide and

Comforter. “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live”. If we are Christ’s, His life is ours. Our spiritual life shall tend towards death. Not absolute death; for as Christ cannot die, no more can we, but we shall grow cold, weak, unhappy, useless; while if we “mortify the deeds of the body”, we shall be healthful, active, energetic, useful, happy, and shall “run in the way of God’s commandments”. The process is that we are always either grieving or pleasing the Spirit and the flesh. When we please the Spirit we increase, when we grieve Him we lose our vitality. We have in us two opposite kinds of life and death. This leads to the second text - *“always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus”*. *Dying*, not that the life may be *in*, but that it may be *manifest*.

*“When shall my true life divine
Through this fleshly covering shine?
When, in every look and word,
Shall my Lord be seen and heard?”*

When the life of Jesus is manifest in our life.

This brings us to the last text - *“he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin”*. The Christian life is a life of suffering and ceasing. As long as the flesh is not mortified, it will be putting forth its fruits, and we must nip them in the bud. Suggestions to sin put down is *suffering*, but it is *cessation*. *“Always bearing about”* - in the shop, house, street, church. Suppose any one insults me to my face, and I bear it with the utmost meekness, like Jesus: *“if I have done good, why smitest thou me?”* If we do the same, then the life of Jesus is *manifest* in us. Man fails under every dispensation. If you read Joshua and Judges you will see it is perpetually conflicts, defeats and deliverances; always doing wrong, punished, delivered. It is the same with us now. The land of Canaan was never quite subdued, though it

ought to have been; and the time of the Judges was the worst. Many - most Christians, so far from mortifying the deeds of the body - do not know what they are. "My people perish from lack of knowledge". When the Holy Ghost is so grieved, the spiritual perception is dimmed, and they do not see things to be wrong. A man who cannot see well will call a beautiful picture a daub, and a daub a beautiful picture. Unless our sight is made clear, we shall not see to be wrong what others do. One sees no harm in what another sees to be grossly inconsistent. Some plead that the people they know see no wrong in it; but if we to see how others act, we ought to neither go the babes in Christ nor the backsliders, but to those "whose praise is in all the churches". We have the word of God for our example and guide. We have in Christ provision from the guilt and the power of sin, and we are not free till we are saved from both.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able with all saints to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God". That can only be by the Holy Ghost. He dwells in you, and speaks continually, if you will hear. Listen to Him quietly. Get alone. The purest, sweetest, most sanctifying enjoyment is when alone with God. If after prayer-meetings, sermons and such you like to be alone, they have done you good; if you do not, you may know it has been excitement, froth, evaporation. When you speak alone with God you shut the flesh out. If you cultivate private communion with Him, "thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee saying, this is the way, walk ye in it". Follow, needing not like the horse and the mule to be held in by bit and bridle. Be guided by Him. Please the Spirit, and you will be strengthened, and grow in grace. All will see it but yourself (it is a bad sign if you do). The face of Moses

shone when he came down from the mountain where he had been interceding with God; but though the people knew it, he did not.

God help you to know Jesus standing before God for you.

Watch and Pray

Take ye heed, watch and pray - Mark 13:33. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints - Ephesians 6:18.

This subject - watching and prayer - is near akin to what we have been speaking of previously. The power against sin, as we have seen before, is, the Holy Ghost and the cross of Christ; but if we do not habitually recognize Him as our ever indwelling Guest, He must withdraw and make us feel our own weakness. Watch as well as pray. Watching is always coupled with prayer. It is co-equal and co-ordinate. This is not the view taken by the generality of Christians, at any rate not the practical view; they think it awful wholly to neglect prayer, not so watching. They feel it their duty to pray, but do not feel it equally their duty to watch. These are the two wings by which God's birds of paradise mount to the skies. "*Take ye heed, watch and pray*". Consider what it is to watch. In these days the scriptural idea is almost lost through the meaning of the word in our language changing. We think of watching, being alert, looking out, expecting something. In the Bible it is always associated with night. "The shepherds were watching their flock by night". The Romans divided their night into four watches, during which it was supposed the world was asleep. Here there is no idea of literal darkness and sleep, but moral darkness and slumber. Christ points to the moral darkness of the world. All men are fast asleep. Christians must not sink into the same slumber. Darkness, quietness, and fatigue all naturally tend to produce sleep. The world is at ease, quiet, and its atmosphere tends to send the Christian to sleep; but "when they shall say, Peace and safety: then sudden destruction cometh upon them". "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief". Many pray and don't keep awake. Have your mind always on the alert, constantly looking out, discerning the differences between good and evil, as God distinguished and divided the light from the darkness. We must avoid the evil and embrace the good. We must be awake to see things as God sees them; if we are not, we shall turn all upside down. The chief thing is having an eye to the uncertainty of life. "In the midst of life we are in death". When we do not realize this we make ourselves at ease. If

we experience and feel that God is able to take us away at any time and may, we will keep awake and ready for Him.

We cannot conquer without the Holy Ghost, but He will not work without us; He will not treat us as blocks of wood and stone. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build"; but they must labour. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain"; but he must watch. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live". He works through our conscience, our sense of duty, our faculties. "Take heed - keep awake - pray". We lose much of the efficacy, the comfort, and the answers to prayer through not watching or keeping awake. Think a little of your apparel before coming into the presence of the King. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him". We ought not to come into His presence without considering our moral clothes. Keep awake before prayer. Do not go direct from vain, foolish, flippant conversation into His presence; it is like rushing from one extreme to another. Do not misunderstand me; it is not necessary to spend time in private prayer before being fit to join in public worship, only be on your guard not to let vain, foolish thoughts and words engage you first. The priests had to wash their hands before they approached God; and David says "I will wash mine hands in innocency, and so will I compass thine altar". He did not mean literal washing. "Lifting up holy hands"; and surely we have need to wash our hands and rinse our mouths. "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be". *"Watch and pray"*.

Fellowship depends on unity of feeling. No wonder we experience so little of the communion of saints. When people are drowsy and sleepy, they can do nothing very well. Old Gurnall says -

"Pray with the warmest, leave thy six or seven,
For where most prayer is, there is heaven"

But what can be worse than a large, cold, dead prayer-meeting? Keep awake in the midst of prayer.

Think, are you on your knees? All right so far. Where are your hearts? God does not look at posture, but at the heart; yet it is fit to be reverent in posture, it is a help to us. The Mahomedans are very particular about posture. They will drop down in the streets, or wherever they are, at certain hours, no matter who sees them, but it is all a solemn mockery.

Prayer without the Holy Ghost is a body without a soul. "Guard well thy thoughts, for thoughts are heard in heaven". Suppose a man is condemned to die for treason. He seeks and obtains access to the king, and comes with a very earnest petition. While he is speaking, a butterfly flies past him. He leaves his petition to chase the butterfly. That is what you have often done.

Thoughts will come into our minds and hearts, and we cannot help it; but we need not follow them. When we do, we are drowsy, and our prayers do not reach up to God. We need no effort to kneel and to bow the head. A great and effectual preservative against thoughts rushing in, is fervency by the power of the Holy Ghost ungrieved. Flies never settle on a boiling pot. If our hearts are warm, thoughts may flit about us, but they cannot settle. When the vultures came to the flesh of Abraham's sacrifice, he drove them away. When our hearts are fervent - boiling, as it were - away go vain thoughts. Another condition to effective prayer is, that we are free to forgive all who have injured us. If we do not forgive, our prayers come down upon us again. "Lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting". "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us".

Watch in prayer. These days are days of religious excitement, endless conferences, reunions, prayer meetings. What is the result? Is there any manifest improvement in the tempers and such of Christians? They get pleasure, not improvement. There is no profit unless the conscience is touched. Many people are so pleased to hear their own sentiments repeated. They say "How grand! How beautiful!" When if they had to say "How solemn! How humbling! How instructing! How heart-searching!" It would have been better for them; for they have got more harm than good. It is as if they had gone suddenly out of a very warm room into intense cold. We need the mantle of watchfulness, and the comforter of self-control, to keep our hearts warm, and

not let all the steam escape through the funnel of talk. “Babbling brooks are shallow”; “still waters run deep”; “birds that flutter least are longest on the wing”.

Watch after prayer. Before, in, after. Many Christians think it their imperative duty to pray and work; but they have only done half. It may be they have been praying earnestly; but what good has it done them if their thoughts and words are given the rein to immediately after? If you sow seed in a field, and leave the gate open, the swine will tread it all down. Shut the gate if you want benefit. Shut your mouth. “The talk of the lips tendeth to penury”. It is a great attainment to hold your tongue. We do ourselves much harm, as well as others, through an unguarded tongue. The Holy Ghost withdraws, calls in His influence, because He is grieved. He is so very near! Think of Him when you speak, wherever you go, whatever you do. He is so tender, so gentle, so sensitive! Do not touch Him with defiled fingers. You lose your strength, your Comforter. Do not grieve Him, cherish Him. He will be your strength to pray, to prevail, to conquer, to the praise of God, and to your own happiness here and hereafter.

Recorded in the small book of 'Acceptable Words', published after the death of Arthur Augustus Rees, these four sermons on the power to overcome and repress sin are as helpful and meaningful today as they were when preached in 1873.

'Acceptable Words' was published as a little volume devoted to the object of raising funds for the purchase of Bethesda Free Chapel after the death of Pastor Rees.

Rees was the founder and pastor of Bethesda Free Church, Sunderland, from 1845-1884.



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