

## Free From Sin

Romans 6:14

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

For several months we have been talking about a universal problem of mankind. All civilizations have ways of expressing it but our western civilization has found the classic expression of it in a verse here in this book. It's that expression that some of you will recognize immediately when I read it in Romans 7:19.

Romans 7:19, "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do."

That's the universal problem, moral impotence. The contemporary psychologists and philosophers call it the sheer perversity of the human will. It's really this problem that has given the lie to the naïve belief that men and women could be educated into good behavior. Especially here on the United States, we've discovered that men and women can know what is right, can be filled with good intentions to do what is right, but they still are unable to do it. That's because of some invisible supernatural power that they don't seem capable of controlling inside themselves.

You can be very clear about what you ought to do and you can know very well why you should do it and yet you find that this power seems to work against your own will. It appears that it's even working against your own will to make you do what you don't want to do. Now, no one has given this any authoritative kind of name except the people who have written in this book. They have named it. You can find the name there in the verse following Romans 7:19. People have often given the name to the results it brings about in their lives: envy, jealousy, anger, and irritability. But the power itself they have never given a name to. But here Paul does give a name to it.

Romans 7:20, "Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin." The Greek word is actually 'hay hamartia'. Those of you who know Greek know that 'hay' is 'the'. It's the definite article. Paul says, "But it is 'the sin' which dwells within me." It's been a tremendous step forward for many of us in our struggle with our defeated Christian lives when we at last agreed that, it was not 'I myself' that was getting irritable, envious or losing my temper but it was a power inside me that seemed to work alongside my own will. It was a tremendous step forward for many of us when we realized that there was a power inside of us called 'the sin'.

Really, until we found that our brothers and sisters, many of us just used to beat ourselves to death. We used to condemn ourselves every time we lost our temper, or got angry. We attacked and beat ourselves and came into bondage about guilt and about failure and moral impotence. It was a great step forward for many of us when we at last set ourselves apart from this power inside us that was doing this kind of thing and we began to regard it as apart from ourselves, as an enemy. We ceased to identify it with ourselves. That's a great step when you take that step.

Many of us have found some degree of deliverance by doing that. Now the opposite of doing that is to keep on thinking that it's me, I am doing it. It's me that's failing. All you do is fall into a vicious circle: self-effort and then guilt, victory and then defeat, falling down and then trying again. It's hopelessly getting deeper and deeper into the defeat syndrome which is the kind of attitude full of self-deliverance and trying to save yourself. That whole attitude of self-deliverance, failure, defeat and guilt complex is all that makes up the attitude of people who

live under the law.

Now that's what Paul means in the verse that we're studying this morning when he uses that phrase in Romans 6:14. It's that whole syndrome of self-deliverance, self-help, New Year resolutions and self-effort. It's trying and striving and exercising your will power as best you can.

Romans 6:14, "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."

Now that's what that phrase 'under law' describes. It's the self-effort kind of approach to this universal problem of mankind. Under law are the Greek words 'hupa' 'nama' and it means that you're right under it. When people are under the law it means not just people who are supposed to fulfill the law. It means people who think they can fulfill the law by their own strength and power.

We need to be careful of that because a lot of people say, "You're under law when you're supposed to obey law." Well you're supposed to obey the law. There's no question about that. God makes that plain. Jesus Himself says, "I came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it." God never argues in the Bible about whether you're to fulfill the law or not.

What he does argue about is whether you're trying to fulfill it by your own power and strength -- by simply trying hard and exercising more will power. You're trying to destroy something inside you that only he can destroy. He says that people, who are in that state, are people who are under law.

They can't obey it on their own, but they're trying. For any of us in whom there dwells a resistance to God's way of deliverance, we are under law. Even a Christian, who is trying hard to obey the law, can still be under law. He or she can be under law if they think they have to get hold of this power of sin on their own and somehow beat it to death. That's what most of us try to do.

We know this thing is inside us but we decide by more resolutions, by better prayer schedules, by better church attendance, by trying harder, by reading Dale Carnegie, by taking cold showers, by exercising more will power, we'll somehow suffocate and strangle this power of sin. Now you're under law when that's your kind of attitude. That's destined to be an attitude of trying and falling and trying and falling and trying and falling until eventually you become indifferent to the whole business of sin and guilt. Then you lose completely any sense of God's presence.

Now loved ones, that's what a person under the law is. I think it's important to see that. A lot of us in these days think, "Yes, you're under law if you have to obey it. I am glad we don't have to obey the law." Well loved ones, there's nobody in that position, we all have to obey the law -- not only the civil law but the law of God. But a person who is under the law is a person who is trying to do that on their own and is trying to ignore this power of evil within them. That's what most of us do, you see.

Most of us accept Satan's deception just like fish taking the bait. We accept it and say, "You're right Satan. It's 'us' that's wrong. It's us that have to get ourselves out of this by exercising will power, self-effort and New Year resolutions. It's us that have to overcome it." Satan is so happy because he knows he's giving us a job that is impossible. Why? Because Paul always makes a distinction between 'haya hamartia' and 'hamartia'. Now, doesn't that enlighten you?

The first one is 'the sin'. Paul makes a distinction all the time between 'the sin' and 'sin'. In our present verse Romans 6:14, he just talks about sin. But what we are talking about at the moment

is 'the sin', meaning the power of sin. What is the power of sin? Someone has described it this way, "This power is an influence or evil will that emanates from the rebel spirit of evil whom Jesus calls Satan, who established a whole way of life and set of values based on the belief that there is no creator, who can be trusted like a loving Father."

Now this power is an influence or it's an evil will that comes from the rebel spirit in the universe whom Jesus designates Satan. In other words, when you talk about 'the sin', you're talking about the actual power of rebellion and independence of God that can be felt and sensed. It can also be passed on to other people. Loved ones, you get some kind of idea of that power in the type of ritualistic slaying that Charles Manson took part in.

There you begin to feel the very power of evil right there. Or in a group of kids who are taken over by a mad, animal like frenzy and utterly lose control in some graduation party. They are game to do anything at all. Or you see it in a bunch of drug addicts who are completely shot on heroine. There's just a presence of the power of sin among them. Now loved ones, that's what 'the sin' means. It means the very power of Satan that makes you rebel against God. It's the power that produces that vehemence in your temper that even you don't understand.

Isn't it true? At times you've lost your temper and you've been surprised yourself. You've wondered, "I know I can't keep my temper too well but that surely isn't me?" Or it's the power that produces the incredible bitterness in resentment towards another person that you feel. You know those situations where there's a cause for resentment of some kind. But the resentment that you find taking hold of you is not in comparison at all to the apparent external cause. It's utterly out of proportion to it. It's taking hold of your whole life and it fills your mind.

Brothers, I think it's the same thing that takes hold of us in lust. We can't get away from it. It seems to fill our minds and our thoughts are everywhere. It's the power of sin that does that. Now loved ones, that's why God makes a distinction in his word between that kind of power that can take hold of a whole administration and turn it into a lying deceptive group of liars. It's that kind of power that can take hold of hypocritical church people and make them say one thing and do another. It's an incredible, invisible, spiritual power that is invincible as far as our own human efforts are concerned.

I remember in my own life it was a tremendous step when I saw not only that the defeat in my own Christian life was due to a power beside myself but it was a tremendous step in my own Christian life when I saw that I couldn't deal with that power. I am afraid that many of us are under the deception that we can deal with that power. While I was under that deception it was like struggling in quicksand. You struggle, and the more you struggle, the deeper you go down. And of course, that's God's good plan.

It's God's good plan that that would happen. Now why does that power have any control of you and me? After all, most of us here would say, "We don't want to rebel against God. We don't want to get independent. We don't want to be bad tempered. We don't want to be jealous. We don't want to be filled with lust." Now why is that power in control of you? After all, it is a spiritual principle that no spiritual power in the universe can take control of any human's will unless that human being is willing for it. That's a spiritual principle.

No spiritual power, whether God or Satan can take control of anybody's will or mind or emotions unless that human being is willing for them to do it. So why is this power able to control us? I

remember asking the Holy Spirit to lead me into truth about that. Jesus, you remember said, "The Holy Spirit will lead you into all truth." I remember asking the Holy Spirit, "Will you show me why this is so? Why does this power take hold of me at times when I don't want it to?" And bit-by-bit the Holy Spirit began to show me something inside that was more grotesque and more monstrous than anything I ever thought belonged to me.

Dear ones, it was an attitude that I had never really seen before until he showed me it. It's referred to in different ways in the Bible. If you'd like to look at Romans 7:24-25, you'll see one phrase that is used to designate it there. Paul said that the defeated Christian life is not God's will at all and it's not where Paul was left. A lot of us read Romans 7 as if Paul's final word is so then I do not do what I want but the evil I want to avoid is what I do. Well, that isn't the final answer at all. Romans 7:24 and 25 is the final answer.

Romans 7:24-25; "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Then he answers, "Thanks be to God", that there is a deliverance "through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Then here is the phrase that describes this spy within us that unites with the power of sin. "So then, I of myself", now that's it. "I of myself", and the Holy Spirit revealed to me a whole "I of myself" attitude that I have never seen before.

There was a whole attitude of independence and rebellion against God that I had covered up with a whole lot of pseudo-Christianity for years. The Holy Spirit began to show me there is some attitude within you that has an aversion to God. I would say, "Oh no, I love God. I want to pray to him. I want to serve him." But the Holy Spirit kept getting me down to it, "There is a something inside you that has an aversion to God. It's that something that allies with this power of sin from Satan.

It's that attitude that is a spy within you and that opens the door and let's the power of sin into your life. I kept refusing to believe it because I was a pastor. I spent all my days trying to serve God. I enjoyed going to him in prayer quite often. At other times I didn't enjoy it but there were times when I really did enjoy going to God in prayer. I kept arguing with the Holy Spirit, "No, that isn't really me." But he kept showing me more and more of that old 'I of myself' attitude.

It's that attitude that wanted to be God, which wanted its own way. It persisted in insisting on its own rights. It was game to be religious and to appear very prayerful, but it wanted its own way as far as God was concerned. Now that attitude is referred to in different ways. Galatians 5:17 is one of the other words that is used to talk about it.

Galatians 5:17 – "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit", and that's another word used, the 'flesh'. It's that attitude within us that wants to be independent of God. Though a great deal of us wants to depend on God, this attitude wants to be God itself. You know that we've used the word in the past months, the 'old self'. It's the 'old self' that wants to run its own life and have its own way. It's the old self therefore that produces bad temper because bad temper always comes out when you feel things aren't going the way you planned them to go. Things aren't going the way you wanted them to go and they're getting out of your control so you lose your temper in order to bring them back into your control.

It's the old self that produces the cold war between husband and wife. He won't do what you tell him. Therefore you'll call him back to heel just by running a cold war. He'll get tired before you do. It's the old self that takes that attitude.

And it's the old self that takes that attitude with our roommate, dear ones.

We decide we'll bring them back to heel like a dog because we'll run them into the ground emotionally. It's the old self that wants its own way and that wants to do that kind of thing. The Bible calls it 'flesh'. It calls it the 'old self' and it describes the attitude that the old self has very clearly dear ones.

Romans 8:7 leaves no room for us saying that there's a little good inside us. It talks about the attitude that this old self has.

Romans 8:7, "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot." It would help us a great deal if we recognize that that's what happens right within us. If that old self is still alive inside us, God can tell us to tithe and we'll tithe without tithing. That's right, the old self is subtle. It'll appear to be obeying God's commandment yet it will get its own way by some little compromise.

The old self will get its own way because it is hostile to God. It has no interest in obeying God. It's subtle and shrewd. It'll give you lots of signs that you are a very religious and Christian person as long as it can still get its own way. It is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot. And loved ones, it never does. We bluff ourselves and think, "Oh no, brother, sometimes it does." No. It never does.

The old self makes you think it does, but it continues to get its own way deep-down in your life. That's where "dis peace" is and that's the old self. Now the big step that I took in my life was when I discovered that God had done something with it. I tried for a while to strangle that as I tried to strangle the power of sin. I tried to tame the old self. I thought all it needed was discipline. You ought to discipline it and get it used to obeying God. But I wasn't up to its subtlety and cleverness. Because it really had the subtlety of Satan himself. It kept getting away from me and dodging me. I couldn't track it down with all the introspection that I practiced.

It was just a great step when I saw the truth that we have shared, that God has actually already dealt with that old self. That old self was crucified with Christ. God in fact took that old attitude of self-centeredness and self-deification and he placed me in Jesus on the Cross 1900 years ago. He destroyed that old self there and then. That was a great relief when I thought that that had actually happened. It's there in Romans 6:6 and it's good to look at that verse because it shows you what effect that had on the power of sin.

Romans 6:6 – "We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin."

It's 'hay hamartia' or 'the sin'. In other words, the old self is the middleman. It's the old self that links up the power of sin, independence and rebellion against God (that power that we can't control because it's under the control of Satan); it's the old self that links that power up with our body. And what God did was to knock out the middle man.

He knocked out this middle man -- the old self that kept opening the door and letting that power of sin in. It was just such a relief when I realized that God had destroyed that power. That's what we mean in Romans 6:14 when we come to that last phrase there in Romans 6:14, "For sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law, but under grace." That's what it means to be under grace. It's to realize that God of his own good, free generosity has destroyed all the evil that is giving you all the trouble in your life. He has destroyed the old self that wants its own way. He alone has destroyed it.

Our responsibility is to stop trying to suffocate it ourselves. Our responsibility is to believe it to death, to believe it to death. God has already destroyed it and our job is to believe God. Then it will become actual and real in our own lives. I remember when I first saw that this believing involved two things: it involved considering and it involved submitting. And over the past weeks we have talked about those two things.

Romans 6:11, you remember, talks about the considering. This is the way to make this real. We are mad people in that we will hear that God destroyed the power and yet the old self will still want to destroy itself. That's the subtlety you see. We find something inside us that really wants to go after this old self. We say, "Oh, that's my will. My will is getting better so my will really wants to destroy my selfish will."

You're lost. The selfish will never wants to destroy the selfish will. But it makes some thrashing, kicking and some effort. We are bluffed by it. We hear of this message that the old self has been destroyed with Jesus but then we find the old will trying to act against the selfish will. We accept the bait and the deception again. We say, "That may be true what pastor has said but no, my will seems to be getting hold of the thing."

Loved ones, your selfish will is not able to destroy your selfish will because it does not really want to destroy your selfish will. The only one who can destroy it is God. He has done that in Jesus. The only way we can have that made real in us is not by self-effort but by believing. And believing means considering and submitting. Now look at the considering in Romans 6:11.

Romans 6:11, "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." You remember the Greek word 'logidsu' means not only to think intellectually that you're dead to sin. It's not autosuggestion, "I am dead to sin, I am dead to sin, I am dead to sin". It's not that. We're just pretending with autosuggestion. It means treating yourself as really dead with Christ.

It means treating yourself as really crucified with him and as having no right to your own way, no right to other people's respect and no rights to other people's praise. 'Logidsu', or considering means treating yourself as really crucified and really dead. Now you can see that that involves a willingness. It doesn't involve the exercise of your own will, which you are unable to do, but it involves a willingness to be crucified.

It involves a yieldedness or a willingness for God to get rid of that selfish will. In other words, 'lugidso' is not just 'think that it's so and it'll be so', it's 'treat yourself as really willing to be crucified'. So you see there's no point in saying, "Oh yes, Lord I consider that I am crucified with you", and someone comes to you, insults you as they insulted Jesus and you whip right back with sarcasm. That's not a willingness to be crucified with Christ. That's a mental ascent to the truth that you were crucified with Christ but an absolute unwillingness to be treated by others as if you're crucified with Christ.

Or someone takes your coat and you get mad because you spent so much money on that coat. That is a mental ascent to be crucified with Christ but an absolute unwillingness to be treated as if you're dead. "No, I am very much alive. I want my own coat. I am alive and I need it." So 'considering' really involves willingness to be crucified. And that willingness needs to be expressed at a given point in time. You remember that comes out in Romans 6:13b that we read a couple of weeks ago.

Romans 6:13b, "Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness." The Greek word is 'paristano' and it means 'stop yielding' your members to sin as instruments of wickedness. Then it says, "But yield yourselves to God as men who have brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness." Yield yourself" -- there the word is 'paristasata' which is the aorist tense. It means yield yourself at a given point in time. Dedicate at a moment in time, yourself, to crucifixion with Christ.

You remember we emphasized that considering that you crucified with Christ is not just a matter of continually trying to brainwash yourself, "I am dead with Christ, I am dead with Christ." It's really a matter of asking the Holy Spirit to show you, "Where am I not willing to be dead with Christ, so that I can come to a point in time where I reach the ground of my heart and I am willing to really be crucified." It's very important brothers and sisters that the Holy Spirit sets that seal upon you at some time in your life that you are really at the ground of your heart and you are really willing to be crucified with Christ.

You are willing not to have your own way anymore in your life. You're willing not to insist on your own rights anymore. You're willing not to assert yourself or defend yourself anymore whatever it may cost you, even if it costs you death itself. It's very important to come to the point that the Bible talks about there, a definite time when you yield yourself to this crucifixion with Christ, a time of full consecration. It's from that instantaneous moment of readiness to die with Jesus that will come the power of the grace to walk in the submission.

The second part that you do is you consider yourself crucified with Christ. You submit. Submission has two sides. You get the negative side in Romans 6:13a. "Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness." Stop providing for sin. Stop expecting to get irritable because you have only had five hours sleep the night before. Stop expecting to lose your temper when a certain situation crops up that always makes you lose it. Stop expecting other people to make special allowances for you that day because you were late in bed the night before. Stop providing for sin. That's the negative side of submitting.

The positive side is Romans 6:13b. "Yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments of righteousness." Begin to bank on the life of God coming through you to submit to the life of God. Begin to bank on God filling your mouth with words when you go forward to witness to somebody. Begin to bank on God filling you with love and with consideration for the person that you've had resentment towards.

Begin to bank on God coming through with the power of his Holy Spirit. That's the way the reality of Christ's crucifixion is made real in you -- by believing and submitting. It's by considering yourself crucified with Christ and coming to a real time when you are willing for that to take place. Then it's submitting yourself utterly to the Holy Spirit day-by-day.

Now, loved ones, the miraculous result in my life (I came into it maybe 8 years ago), was Romans 6:14 and it's good just to see it.

Rom 6:14, "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace." The word sin there is not 'hay hamartia'. It is not 'the sin' or the power of sin but it is sin. It is inward sin of any kind; jealousy, envy, self-pity, anger, pride, all those things that destroy our lives. God's promise is real that that kind of thing will no longer have dominion over you in your own life.

It's a real freedom from sin in your own daily life. That's what God's will is for us. That's why Augustine said, "Grace does not only dismiss or remit sins but it makes it so that we ourselves do not sin." So Augustine said that grace not only remits our sin but it makes it so that we do not sin. Martin Luther put it this way, "The Holy Spirit sanctifies people not only by the forgiveness of sin but also by the laying aside, expelling and destroying of sin." Loved ones, many of us who have been Lutherans have maligned Luther.

We said, "Oh no, Luther taught us that we couldn't avoid sinning everyday in our lives." Loved ones, this is Martin Luther speaking, "The Holy Spirit sanctifies people not only by the forgiveness of sin but also by the laying aside, expelling and destroying of sin". That's why a certain man in England 300 years after Luther said, "He breaks the power of cancelled sin. He set the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean. His blood avails for me."

That's what the world wants to see – a body of men and women who do not just say, "Our sins are forgiven", but a body of men and women who live in victory over sin. That's why the Bible says that sin will no longer have dominion over you because you are not under law but under grace. You know what we've been. We've been a bundle of little objectors. We've said, "That's right. We're not under law so we don't need to obey the law. Therefore it doesn't matter whether I lose my temper or not, I am under grace. God will forgive me. It doesn't matter what kind of miserable life I continue to live throughout the rest of my day."

That's a travesty. God's word is sure and firm. "Sin will no longer have dominion over you because you are not under law, but you are under grace." You're not trying to obey the law on your own but you have allowed that old self to be destroyed. It's now the power of the Holy Spirit obeying the law through you.

I really thank God that that's his will for us. Don't get shook up if you're not in that spot yet. Instead see that that's where God wants you. And don't fight it with clever exegesis. You have to wipe out too many parts of the Bible to do that. Just believe God's word and say to him, "Lord, I want the power of cancelled sin broken in my life. I want to live like Jesus." He will enable you. Let us pray.

Dear Father, Watergate (a government crime ring in the U.S.) has brought before us the need not only to speak high and holy words, not only to express intentions towards law and order, but to live it. Father, our whole nation is in a crisis because we have not lived what we were preaching. Father, we see brothers and sisters rightly turning away from you and from your word because so many of us have been preaching what we did not practice.

Holy Spirit, we trust you to deal with us now and show us that it is not the way of self-help that brings victory over sin. It is the way of deliverance through experiencing the Cross and the crucifixion of Christ in our own lives. We would trust you to make that real in each of us here this morning. Make it real in these coming weeks and months so that there will begin to be a light and a way. There will begin to be a group of people, who practice what they preach -- who not only talk about Jesus but live like Jesus.

Father we trust you for that. We trust you for your glory and for your working in our homes, in our families, in our dormitories, our schools and in our offices. We trust you so that people may begin to see you living in front of them and not just hear us talking about you. We trust you Father for

this. Amen.