

Deliverance from our Sinful Nature 2

Sermon Transcript by Reverend Ernest O'Neill

It's true where we talk about God's truth that you could expect him at times through the service to give you revelation, so you should not be surprised when God makes it all clean and clear to you. That especially happens when there's a hunger and expectancy for that.

Last Sunday we were talking about the great lie that keeps so many of us here from victory in our lives. Do you remember we said that it was the lie that Romans 7 is a description of Paul's daily experience after he met Jesus on the road to Damascus? Of course, if that's what it is, then we here are hopeless.

You can look at it in your Bible if you will. Romans 7:15, and if this is the description of Paul's daily experience after he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, then there isn't much hope for us. Romans 7:15-19, Paul says, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do."

Many of us have believed the lie that that's a description of a normal Christian life. Of course, last Sunday, we saw that it wasn't at all. That Romans 7 is, in fact, a flashback in Paul's presentation of what Jesus has done for us in his death. It's a flashback to the old days of frustration that he experienced as a Jew trying to obey the law. And he uses that flashback as an example of how the law was of some value in those old days but how it could not deliver him from his sinful nature. So, Romans 7 is not a description of a normal Christian life but is a description of a Jew frustratingly trying to obey the law despite the sinful nature which he has.

Now, you remember, that the whole presentation he makes is what Jesus has done for us in his death. In Romans 4 and 5, you remember, he describes how our faith that Jesus has died for us, God treats us as righteous because of that faith. Even though we really don't know why Jesus died. You'll see that if you look back at Romans 4:23, "But the words, 'it was reckoned to him,' were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also.

It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus, our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification." Many of us here stopped fearing God because we had faith that Jesus had died for us. We didn't know why but we believed God's Word that he had died for us and we immediately sensed that God was our Father and we were born of the Spirit.

Then, Paul, you remember, in chapter 6, goes on to tell us what Jesus had actually done for us in his death. How he had taken our sinful nature and had destroyed it there in his own death. You can see that in 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." Then, Paul says; now the sinful nature is gone now. We don't have the same need of the law as we had when the old sinful nature was rampant inside us. Then, the law was there to control the sinful nature and to make it clear to us

that there was a sinful nature there.

But, now, there is no sinful nature so we're actually freed from the law. In Romans 7, he points out that we're free now from the law as our primary guide in life. Because, in Romans 8, he says, there's a new spirit that has replaced our sinful nature and that's what will now guide us in our lives. Yet, in Romans 7, he says, now, this doesn't mean that the law was no use and he brings in this parenthesis, you remember. He says, now, we're freed from the law and we can now follow the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Now our sinful nature is destroyed, but now the law did serve some purpose.

In the old days, it showed us how sinful our sinful nature was. You see that in Romans 7, if you like to look at it in Romans 7:13, "Did that which is good, then, [the law] bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure." Then, he goes into how the law did that for him when he was a Jew. So, there is that great parenthesis in there that runs from Romans 7:7, "What then shall we say, that the law is sin?" Right down to the last verse of Romans 7:25. Then, you see, he gets back on track in Romans 8:1.

You can see, of course, it follows right through and you'll see that, loved ones, if you like to follow through the sequence, I'll just give it again. Read Romans 4:23. This time I'll just give the references and read them slowly. Romans 4:23, "But the words, 'it was reckoned to him,' were written not for his sake alone [Abraham's], but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus, our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification."

Then, Romans 5:1, "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That's the first thing Jesus has done for us. The second thing is Romans 6:1, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" Then, verse 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."

Then, Romans 7:1, "Do you not know, brethren, for I am speaking to those who know the law [Jews]--that the law is binding on a person only during his life?" Then, verse 6, "But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit." Then, he goes straight on to Romans 8:1, you see, "There is therefore now no condemnation, for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

So, loved ones, we saw last Sunday that, no, Romans 7:7-25 are a parenthesis that Paul sets in there showing what the law was once to him. It made sin exceedingly sinful to him but it certainly could not deliver him from a sinful nature. Therefore, he says, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, Our Lord! So, then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin." [Romans 7:25] But, thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, we're delivered from that now. Then, he goes straight on to Romans 8:1 and says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." loved ones, that's what we said last Sunday about the interpretation of chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 of Romans.

Now, if that is not a description, that of Romans 7, of a carnal Christian, if that's not the description of a defeated Christian, if that's the description of a Jew under the law, why do so many of us who are defeated Christians feel it's so like our experience? Well, because both the Jew and the carnal Christian are living under the Old Testament, or the old covenant.

The carnal Christian knows a little more of why he's forgiven but they're both living under the old covenant. Now, I'll show you what I mean. They both respect the law, both the Jew and the carnal Christian respect the law. Romans 7:22, "For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self." Most of us who are carnal Christians, we know that the law is right. We know God is right. We know that we shouldn't murder. We know we shouldn't be angry. We respect the law and we know we should be like that.

So, both the Jew and the carnal Christian respect the law. Both of them know that God has forgiven them. Both the Jew and the carnal Christian know that God has forgiven them. If you doubt the Jew, look back at Psalm 103. Some of the verses that we often repeat as Christians come from this Psalm. Psalm 103:3, of course, is quite explicit.

This is what the Jew knew. He didn't know why God forgave him, didn't know the great work that had been done in God's heart and eternity when Jesus had been crucified, but he knew that for some great reason, God had forgiven him. Psalm 103:3, "who forgives all your iniquity." The Jew knew that. Or, if you look over the page to verse 10, "He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."

These are the verses, you see, we use to describe our own state as justified and forgiven Christians. loved ones, the Jew knows that he is forgiven his sins. He doesn't know why, but he does know he's forgiven. So does a carnal Christian. Those of us who are defeated Christians, we still know that God has forgiven us. We go before him and we confess our sins daily to him and we know that he forgives us because of Jesus. So, both the Jew and the carnal Christian know forgiveness.

But, they both know moral defeat. The Jew knew it in outward sins. Romans 7:19, "For I do not do the good I want." And, of course, the carnal Christian from time to time breaks out into that. It needs to be a crisis at that time but he from time to time breaks out in that. But, he doesn't know it just so continuously as the Jew knows it. "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do."

But, the carnal Christian knows moral defeat as far as inward sin is concerned. You see that there in the previous verse, Romans 7:18. The carnal Christian knows this, "For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh." The carnal Christian may not do outward sin as often as the Jew does it but he feels sin within. He feels anger at times. He feels a tendency to get irritable and lose his temper at times. He feels the urgings and the writhing of sin within him. So, these are some of the reasons, you see, why we are drawn to this chapter 7, even though it is a description of a Jew under the old covenant. The fact is a carnal Christian is very like that Jew. Because he respects the law and he knows he's forgiven and yet he senses moral impotence or defeat in his life.

And, then, fourthly, neither of them knows deliverance from the sinful nature that was promised to them even in Old Testament days. Neither of them knows that. It's promised, you remember, back there

in Ezekiel 36:26. What God promised is a new nature for us, a deliverance from the old sinful nature. Ezekiel 36:26, "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." That was a promise to the Jews of the old covenant. "And I will put my spirit within you." This is all regarding the new covenant that God is going to make with them. Verse 27, "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances."

That's the new covenant, loved ones. The new covenant is not simply the forgiveness of our sins. The Jews experienced the forgiveness of sins. The new covenant is the cleansing and deliverance from the old sinful nature. The Jew could never know because he had not yet learned that Jesus had been crucified.

Now, why are so many of us not delivered from our sinful natures? That's what I'd like to try to talk about and pray that Jesus will speak to your heart and mine. Why are so many of us here not delivered from our sinful natures? I do think honestly for many of us it is sheer ignorance. I think that's one reason.

I think many of us honestly have not known that it was possible and I would ask you to be kind, too, to yourselves. Yet, it's better to be hard on ourselves also before God. But, be kind to yourselves, too, because just the fact that I've told you it, even that isn't necessarily you hearing it. I think many of us have been ignorant of the possibility of being delivered from our sinful natures. I think, for instance, many of us have never understood Romans 7 and I think we've never understood how to interpret it. And, we've just waffled between chapters 7, 6, 5, 4, and we've never known what they meant. So, I think with many of us it is sheer ignorance.

Now, there is an example of that in the New Testament, if you look at it. It's Acts 19:1-And, of course, deliverance from the sinful nature and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that is the same work that God does. He displaces the sinful nature by filling you with his Spirit. "While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said, 'No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They said, 'Into John's baptism.' And Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied." I think some of us are in that position. They had had John's baptism and John, of course, told them look for the one who is greater than I who is coming. But, they never were baptized into Jesus' death and they had to be baptized into his death. I think many of us are in the same situation.

I received Jesus when I was 17 and I believed that he had died for my sins and I believed that God had forgiven me. I lived in that, I suppose, blissful ignorance but it wasn't really blissful. It got pretty murky after a while. But, I lived in that up and down Christian experience until I was 31. It wasn't until I came to the States and met a certain man that I heard anything about being baptized into Jesus' death.

So, I think many of us, even those of us who were at seminary and those of us who have studied the Bible a lot and talked about it, many of us have been ignorant that not only did Jesus die for us but we died with him. We died with him not just to be miserable and depressed but so that our sinful nature could be destroyed and we could be freed to obey God.

I think even some of you have been baptized as Baptists in the Baptist Church and many of us as Lutherans, Methodists, others who have been baptized as infants. We were baptized but we really didn't know the significance of it at all. We never knew Romans 6:3, "Do you not know that those of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" We were baptized into his death so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. I think we never knew of that.

Now, loved ones, I think we are under obligation now to find out what that all means. I think one reason many of us have not been delivered from our sinful natures is that we never knew it was possible. We felt that we were to be borne down by the sinful nature throughout our lives and maybe at the moment of death we would be delivered from it.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, those of you who were like that, I would encourage you to do what I did myself. I just got down to the Bible verses and I got down to the books that talked about this and I started to make up for my poor education. I was just hungry and determined to get hold of it. I would urge you to do that.

Don't just listen to me preaching it. Don't do that. Don't just listen to what I say. Look into God's Word. Study Romans 6. Study Colossians. Then, study the dear books that talk about this. Don't study the ones that don't talk about it. That will do you no good. Study the ones that DO talk about deliverance from our sinful nature and the possibility of living above sin.

But, I think one reason is we're ignorant. We don't know. God looks upon us with love and kindness in his heart and draws us on and continues to faithfully forgive us our sins knowing all the time that there is a better way for us and praying and working, of course, that we will see it. I think that's one reason.

I think another reason is because we haven't exercised definite faith for such a deliverance. Now, you get that in Acts 8, loved ones. It tells us about people who had been baptized in Jesus' name. People in Acts 19 hadn't been, you see, and didn't even know it was possible. But there were these people in Acts 8 who had been baptized in his name but they hadn't exercised definite faith for their deliverance. Acts 8:4, "Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to a city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ."

Then, in verse 12, "But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." You see, they believed the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized into that name. Verse 13, "Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And, seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed."

Then, verse 14, "Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and," you see, specific prayer and faith, "prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for the Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit."

I think some of us have never exercised specific faith in the fact that our carnal natures and our sinful natures were crucified with Christ. I read one of these old books last week, and the dear

guy, they're so good, these old men are so clear on things. He said, "Faith that is not definite faith is not faith at all."

Faith that is not faith for something definite is not faith at all. Don't you think we in our generation exercise a lot of that general kind of faith that isn't faith at all? It's faith that we hope will not embarrass God if he doesn't come through. So, we kind of exercise a general faith and its goodness and love. But we don't experience definite faith for a definite blessing. Of course, they didn't. They were baptized in Jesus' name but they didn't exercise faith for the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

I think many of us here are not delivered from our sinful natures because we have never exercised definite faith for that specific grace and so we've never experienced it. I remember if I could steal Mark's testimony. I remember Mark Behlen saying that he had sought and sought, and gone round and round and introspected and introspected and had everything set. It's as if you have the whole table set but you have to ask Jesus to come in. But, he had everything ready and he was waiting for it to dawn upon him and then at last he realized the sinful fact that he had to exercise faith for it. He had to exercise faith that he had in fact been crucified with Christ and that he was delivered from his sinful nature.

Loved ones, I think some of us are in that situation. We have not exercised definite faith for it. All kinds of reasons why we don't, of course. For so many of us it ties up with a fear that maybe it might not happen but all that proves is that there's some way in which we're still standing up on our own hind legs, independent, and kind of hoping that we'll be able to prove to ourselves and everybody else that it's happened. Well, in fact, blind, naked faith cannot do that.

When the self is crucified with Christ, there is no self even to hope that it might happen or to be afraid that it doesn't happen. Some of us because we haven't exercised definite faith, some of us because we're not desperate enough, I think that's it. I don't think there's an age, loved ones. I don't think there has to be a certain age to experience deliverance from sin or from our sinful nature.

But, it does seem that you have to get desperate enough. I think that's it. I don't think you have to be 20, or you have to be 30, or you have to be 40, but it does seem that you have to be desperate enough for it. You can see that in Romans 7:13, loved ones. Paul talks about this as being one of the purposes of the law. Romans 7:13, "Did that which is good, then, bring death to me?" The law you see. "By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure." I think that has to happen.

I think the purpose of the law is to get in behind our bluff and get in behind our self-righteousness and behind our hypocrisy and behind our rationalization and get in behind and show us we are under the power of an enemy that we cannot overcome ourselves and that we have to be delivered from by God through Christ. So, the purpose of the law is to make sin exceedingly sinful.

Of course, you can see how again our society has kind of worked against us because that is thought to be very bad psychology. You should not let the wee soul think that he is failing in any way. Don't let him think for a minute that he's inadequate. You have to build up this feeling that he's adequate, even though he's miserably inadequate. You have to make him feel he's adequate. Of course,

it's utterly opposed to God's method. God's method is with that dear surgical knife of the law to cut away at the disease, to cut at it and cut at it until all that can be shaken is shaken. All that can be cut away is cut away.

With today's kind of attitude to the law and our tendency to indulge each other and to make each other think we're right even when we're wrong, there is very little readiness to sit under the knife of the law. We won't sit still, that's it. We won't sit still long enough. We won't stay on the table long enough for the surgeon to get that dear knife at us. No, loved ones, I pray that especially I do think that God is stabilizing certainly the whole religious world in a sense -- a lot of things are being shaken out that needed to be shaken out. I think that at last we may be getting a little group here, I don't care how big or small it is, but it's a little group that might sit still long enough for God to get at them.

I think you have to, you have to see that sin has got the upper hand of you and that there is no way you can get rid of it and that it's as difficult to divide sin from you as it is to divide the bones from the marrow. It's just very impossible to tell what is sin and what is you and the only thing to do is to crucify them both and then you're sure. So, some of us are not desperate enough.

Now, if you're not desperate enough, really it's up to you to get desperate. It's up to you to hold your feet to the fire. Hold your feet to the law of God. See that that's God's best for you. Every time you fail, take his forgiveness but go back again and get to it.

That's the fourth reason, I think. Some of us have diluted the victory that is possible in the Christian life. We've rationalized away the victory that is possible and you can see the victory plainly set forth, loved ones, in Galatians 5. It's all through the Bible. But many of us have diluted this victory until it just describes us in our own carnality and so we have accommodated ourselves to inward sin. Galatians 5:19, "Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity....." And, we dilute that. We think an evil thought and we say, "So what, so does everybody."

"Licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity." Just enmity. We need to pray that God will make us hard on ourselves. How many of us here have felt enmity? Even this past week? You know what enmity is, it's a feeling against a person. It's a feeling other than love. It's a feeling against a person. I feel hostile to that person and that's sin. That's straight from the pit of hell, you see. We're not helping ourselves by rationalizing that. We're not, loved ones, we're not. We're preventing ourselves getting desperate enough to be delivered by faith. Enmity is a sin and we need to beat our heads with that. We need to beat ourselves over the head with that. That is sin. Enmity is sin. We shouldn't joke about it, you see. We think we're being kind to each other. We're not. We're making the slope down to hell slipperier when we encourage each other to accommodate ourselves or rationalize ourselves about enmity.

".....Enmity, strife, jealousy." Ladies, we say you're the jealous ones but, we men are just as jealous. Especially when we get jealous about what somebody else has done or we just wish we were them or we feel, boy, they shouldn't be praised the way they are. That's jealousy. That's from the pit of hell. That's a sign that the cancer of sin is within us. Oh, it's good to see that. It's good. There's hope for us if we side with God against ourselves. There's hope, loved ones. If we keep standing over against Satan. We'll say, all right, we're doing those things but we know they're wrong and, Lord, we know these are wrong and we hate them with all our hearts and we confess them again to you and repent a thousand times. That's it, loved ones.

But, you see, "...enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." We should stop. It's silly stuff, loved ones, looking away from that verse. That's just silly and saying, that's me, that's me. Yeah, that is you, if you stop confessing your sins and repenting and if you stop seeking full deliverance. But, while you keep on confessing and repenting your sins, however long you have to seek for deliverance, you are a child of God, as long as you keep walking in the light, walking in the light is continually walking toward the light saying, Lord, I see it, I see it, I see it. It's refusing to turn your back on the light and walk away from it. That's it.

Loved ones, you're always right while you're doing that. You're always right when you're looking at that verse and staring it straight in the eyes and saying, "I warn you as I warned you before that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Such am I, Lord. I won't inherit the kingdom unless you deliver me and, Lord, I confess this sin and repent of it again and forsake it again but, Lord, I seek the deliverance from this sinful nature that produces this in me. That's it, loved ones. Whoever hungers and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled. Instead of this silly stuff that we do where we play over that verse, and say, oh, no, no, that'll upset me. Well, it should upset you. But, it should upset you in driving you to the Deliverer and then, a beautiful picture of the normal Christian life.

But, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such there is no law and those who belong to Christ Jesus have already crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. See the victory that God has promised for us. See it, in I Corinthians 13. That's a beautiful chapter. I Corinthians 13, just the few verses that are most plain in their description. You see the fruit of the Spirit is love.

What is love? Well, verse 4, "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude." Then, we're to be able to say, I am love. I am patient and kind. I am not jealous or boastful. I am not arrogant or rude. Because I am great, because I have made myself this way? No, because Christ has delivered me from what I was and he lives within me and this is what he is like. I do not insist on my own way. I am not irritable or resentful. I do not rejoice at wrong. I rejoice in the right. I bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things. Let that dear word be a blessing to us, you see. It may be a blessing in that it describes us exactly or it may be a blessing in that it cuts deep into our conscience. But, let it be a blessing.

Let us eat God's Word. My dog had a go at this Bible tonight. One of the prophets says, "I eat the Word of God." Let us eat God's Word. Let us take it into us and know it and remember it and delight in it and stop this silly, silly business, of turning away from the hard verses. The hard verses are the best verses. They're the good verses. They're the verses that will drive us to desperation.

There's that one, in I John 3 and we should just look at it and rejoice that God has described so plainly the supernatural holiness and victory that he wants us to live in. Instead we attempt to reduce the Bible to the level of humanist, half-hearted failure that we experience. I John 3:5, "You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. Anyone who abides in him does not sin; anyone who sins has not seen him nor has he known him."

Remember, loved ones, we're saying sin is conscious disobedience to God's law. I don't know that any of us here are troubled with a lot of guilt over the things that we do wrong that we don't know

about. God's Word is not talking here about mistakes or errors that we all make day by day. He's not even talking about involuntary sins where you've done a thing and suddenly, oh, I shouldn't have done that. God isn't concerned about that. Immediately you know the lightness that comes to your heart when you realize it and confess it.

But, it's these sins, it's the besetting sins. The things that we've tried to get away from a thousand times. No one who abides in him sins. No one who sins has either seen him or known him. "Little Children", it's as if John knew there'd be trouble. "Little Children, let no one deceive you. He who does right is righteous, as he is righteous." And, of course, the whole world will tell us that. They'll say, well, that's what we expect you Christians to be. We expect you to be righteous. "He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning.

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. Any one born of God does not commit sin; for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God. By this it may be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother."

Loved ones, face the victory that God describes. I don't know what is the situation with you. I do not know why you are not delivered from your sinful nature but you may have recognized some of those things. You have to decide what it is. You have to see, no, God has set this before us. He has set before us a victory that is possible and in this present life. Many of us, I think have been claiming that part of it is we've been brought up on certain traditions. And really the truth is that we may well have grabbed on to the piece of the tradition that suited our carnal natures and if we were honest and looked at these dear guys, we'd see they all teach the same thing.

So many of us are Lutherans and we say, oh, well, in Lutheranism, we are taught to believe that we have to sin in act and word and thought every day. Well, that wasn't Luther. Luther says, "The holiness of common Christianity is this, that the Holy Spirit gives the people faith in Christ and sanctifies them thereby. That is, makes a new heart, soul, body, work and being and writes the law of God, not on tables of stone, but in fleshly hearts. This the Holy Ghost affects and sanctifies and awakens the soul to a new life which will be more perfect than that other life. The more perfect than the other life is the same as we believe, that there will come a time when we'll get new minds that are flawless in their operation, emotions that are absolutely flawless, perfect bodies.

This is Christian holiness. For he that does not believe on Christ is not a Christian and he that does not have the Holy Ghost against sin is not holy." There is a tendency for us to say, oh, Luther taught imputed righteousness. Well, it's so plain. "He that does not have the Holy Ghost against sin is not holy. The church is to be called the Holy Christian People, not only in the times of the apostles who are long since dead, but until the end of the world. We are to know that there is always on earth in life a Christian holy people in whom Christ lives, operates, governs, through redemption, through grace and forgiveness of sins and the Holy Ghost through enlivening and satisfaction, [through a Latin verb, vivavactionum] and satisfying, through daily cleansing of sin and renewing so that we do not remain in sin but can and shall lead a holy life in all good works and not live in old wicked works." I should read that again maybe for all of us who are Lutherans. "And, the Holy Ghost through daily cleansing of sin and renewing so that we do not remain in sin but can and shall lead a holy life in all good works and not live in old wicked works."

Loved ones, the truth is even dear guys like Calvin, and certainly Luther and others, they all saw

the same light, that Jesus came to take away our sins and that he is able to take away our sins in this present life and give us deliverance from our sinful nature and that it is possible for us to experience it.

I'll just read one testimony because I think it helps us. This is the book that the man gave me when he told me first about the possibility of victory. It's written by an old bishop, an old Methodist bishop, and, of course, the language tends to be a little more academic in that way. "And, still I went to conference." He was going to be ordained as a minister. "And, finally stood before the altar of ordination somewhat unhealed of sin. But notwithstanding all my defects, I am persuaded I am a sincere and conscientious soul. As every candidate is required to do, I answered all the disciplinary test questions in the affirmative. Have you faith in God? Are you going on to perfection? Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life? Are you groaning after it? When this last question was put and answered, I remember that I felt some misgiving respecting my positive response.

The question raised in my conscience was whether I so intensely desire this as to justify the strong phrase "groaning after." The language of my soul immediately was, if I do not, I will until that great grace is obtained. I will groan after it. I will pursue it with travailing pangs. I will never relax my efforts nor ungrasp my hold. The words best suited in my case and often sung were these, they remind you of Peniel where Jacob wrestled with the angel, 'But who I asked Thee who art Thou? Tell me Thy name and tell me now. In vain I struggled to get free. I never will unloose my hold. Art Thou the man that died for me? The secret of Thy love unfold. Wrestling I will not let Thee go 'til I Thy name Thy nature know.'

About three months after this date, God in his love gave me the evidence of full salvation." This may help some of you. "Observe I did not approach it gradually by any sensible increase of joy or power. My soul did not flower up into it by successive blessings. I was being blessed sometimes more and sometimes less as I had been for years. But, remained as far from the actual grasp of that great salvation an hour before it came as I had been for nine years."

Do you see the business about exercising faith? See what he says, though it's rather stilted language, but you see the point of it. "I remained as far from the actual grasp of the great salvation an hour before it came as I had been for nine years." Because some of us kind of think, oh, we grow into it. We gradually move toward it. It comes in a moment, by faith. "And, I suppose it would have continued so but for one mighty resolve and that was to bring on a crisis."

Really, you must want it so badly that you say, "Lord, I'm determined to come to this point where I exercise faith." "I found I must fix a time and limit my faith to it. My course had been," and this will describe some of us, I think, "My course had been like that of a man traveling on and on to reach a beautiful horizon. It was always lovely, always in sight, but always receding. So it is growing in grace. Forever growing, and never arriving. "Therefore, under the conviction that it must be now or never, I dismissed every other subject, suspended every pursuit and retired into a room, bowed all alone before God and pleaded for immediate redemption, immediate deliverance, immediate cleansing from all sin, the fullness of the Spirit, and perfection in love."

I think many of us have done that and I did it a thousand times until one time I did it. So, don't be afraid, you see. Don't say, oh, I did it, I made my big effort and it didn't work, okay, carry on. There's nowhere to go. Where shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. There's nothing else to do. You have to get back to that place and do it again, and do it again, until one time you

come through it.

"I soon realized the unfailing truth of these words, 'Faithful is He that calleth you who also will do it.' Somehow, I was moved and inspired to trust, first, that it would be done, second, that it was being done and, third, that it was done. Not that my faith was actually divided into three stages. Not that I stopped in mental action on either of these three points but, these three elements seemed to conspire and come together in my belief. It was all very summary and all methodical.

In conjunction with this process of trusting and praying, a joyous impression, evidently a divine conviction amounting to an evidence came upon my mind to the effect that God had graciously granted my request, that I was healed of all sin, that I had entered into rest from sin, that its corroding had ceased. I was happy but not ecstatic. The prevailing feeling seem to be that of rest, satisfaction, great peace and a consciousness of cleansing and sanctity. My joy was more solemn and sacred than ever before. My soul seemed hushed into silence before the Lord on account of His nearness and realized indwelling and the over-shadowing presence of the Holy Spirit. My experience was not only that of victory over sin but absolute deliverance from it."

Maybe I should repeat this because, I think, some of you push me on it, and, boy, you certainly don't want to tell your own experience when you are asked that. But, here's another's experience. "My experience was not only that of victory over sin," he's suppressing it or repressing it or beating it down, "but absolute deliverance from it. It didn't rise within me. It's indwelling had ceased. The love of sin and the tendency to it were gone." The love of sin and the tendency to it were gone. "I had been saved from the guilt and reigning power of sin before," when he was a Christian, as we all are, we're saved from the guilt of sin and we're saved from its ruling in our lives. It no longer rules.

"But, now I felt that the lurking, hostile and warring in-being of sin had been taken away. The usurper had been dethroned and cast out and perfect love had been enthroned in its stead. The prayer was answered. The seed of sin's diseased spirit of help removed. I did not feel that I could not sin but that I would not on the principal that I would not put my hand in the fire or bespeak myself with filth. Though so unnatural a thing were possible. It was a deliverance from the internal existence of sin. Though not from the capability of sinning." You can always sin. "The inherent quality of sin and bias to it were gone but the willpower to originate it again and the susceptibility to its re-entrance remained." So, you can sin again if you choose. "My whole being became adverse to sin so that I could not enter upon its commission without doing violence to my renewed nature. Principles of fixed purity and abhorrence of sin would have to be broken down before the habit or being of sin could reassert itself or receive the slightest indulgence if by any temptation, infirmity or surprise I might be betrayed into it." Then, he describes the difference, between that and the new birth.

But, loved ones, that's it. That's what every man or woman has come into in different ways, in different forms but the heart of it is the same that they have come to a place where they have realized that their sinful nature, that has prevented them obeying God for so long, was crucified in Christ and they have exercised faith in that. Faith, remember, is belief that that is so and a willingness to live that way and that's what it is. So, it's faith in two ways because it's faith as a crisis that that has been done and it's continuing faith that this is the situation, this is the case. So, it can dawn upon anybody here tonight, as it's dawned upon one person at least last Sunday.

It can come upon you but you do have to seek. God will answer you. He may not answer you at the moment you are expecting him to answer you, but he will answer you. But, you do have to set your heart about it and set your face steadfastly toward Jerusalem and say, I will not let you go unless you bless me.

If you doubt that it is possible, ah, you haven't a chance. If you doubt because that old self inside you does not want this at all, does not want it. That old self wants to be rid of this whole message of victory, so if you are not armed with God's Word, you will be defeated. So, I would encourage your dear hearts. Encourage you to seek it. I'm determined I'll preach it until, I don't know, I don't think you can throw me out. I suppose I can pull the thing down like Sampson but there's only one thing worth doing and that's coming in to full deliverance and full victory, loved ones.

That's what God has for each one of you. There's a desperation needed but it is not the desperation of the unsaved soul. You see, it's not that. It's not, I'm going to hell, I'm going to hell. It's, Lord Jesus, how can I who have been saved by your death, how can I put another sword in your dear side? Father, you, who are my Father, how can I hurt you again? That's it. It's that desperation, that hunger and thirst to be all that Jesus has died to make you. And, oh, to be clean. That's something. To be clean, clean inside from all that murk and dirt. That's so good. That's for everyone of us. That's right.

Dear Lord, we thank you that that's your great gift to us. Cleanness. Cleanness from the bottom of our hearts, right the whole way up, through all our will and our mind and our feelings in our body. Clean. Conscious and clean before you and able to say with David, "Answer me according to the integrity of my heart." Lord, thank you that that's your will. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you took each one of us personally and separately and you allowed us to be destroyed forever and then remade new and clean as you rose from the dead. Now, Lord, we thank you for that. Thank you that it's something that has already happened and all that is needed tonight is faith, our faith in that fact.

Lord, it's such a simple thing. We believe that the car is sitting there in the parking lot and we believe that when we go down and turn the key the engine will start and we'll drive home. We believe in that fact and yet that fact is so uncertain compared with this fact that we sin. Looking throughout the scripture and written into history that when you died, Lord Jesus, our old sinful nature died. You simply ask us tonight to put our faith in that fact and to go out of here and do the same thing as we do when we put the key into the ignition.

We want to live like that from this moment. To live not expecting dirt or envy or pride to rise up within us and to walk in accordance with the fact that all that is evil within us has been destroyed in you and we've been made new and clean by you, dear Holy Spirit. Lord, I pray some loved one will at this moment exercise that faith and enter into deliverance tonight for your glory. The grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and throughout this week and forever more.