

The Day Saul Died

By Dr. Sinclair B. Ferguson

Text: Romans 7:7-13

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OPENING PRAYER:

Our gracious God and heavenly Father, together we praise you for the wonder of your presence with us by the power of your Holy Spirit. We thank you for the gift of your word and for the prophetic teaching ministry of our Savior Jesus Christ. We praise you that his presence with us is the presence of the one who preached in the synagogue in Nazareth and in Capernaum. Who preached to the Sermon on the Mount, who preached to his disciples after his resurrection. We pray that as that same Lord Jesus Christ is with us this evening, that he by his Spirit will be our teacher and our guide, and that as our faces are bowed before your word, that the words of your Word may be living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. And that by the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ to us tonight our minds maybe clarified, our hearts may be strangely warmed, our wills may be gladly bowed to his Lordship and in devotion to his service and kingdom. So as you engage, Lord Jesus Christ, in the dialogue of your word with our souls and minds this evening, we pray that you would speak because your servants are eager to listen. And this we pray together for Jesus our Savior's sake. Amen.

Please be seated.

SCRIPTURE READING:

Well, I think we may need to sing *A Debtor to Mercy Alone* some Sunday night soon in the future. It is one of the great hymns of the Christian church but I suspect that perhaps the hymn is a challenge to us because maybe the words are unfamiliar to you. And the tune, the Welsh tune, Truin, is unfamiliar to you. But we shall learn — and as we give ourselves in praise through the words of that hymn, they will be etched memorably on our hearts and consciences. They contain some of the most encouraging words in all hymnody, don't they? "More happy but not more secure, the glorified spirits in heaven." That's a great way to live the Christian life.

Well, we are turning again this evening to Paul's letter to the Romans and this evening we are in Romans chapter 7 and we're going to read from verse 7

through verse 13. You'll find the passage is in the pew Bible, page 943. And we pick up where we left off a couple of weeks ago as Paul is answering the questions that arise from his statement in chapter 6 in verse 14: "Sin will have no dominion over the Christian." Sin is still present in the Christian but the glorious thing about being a believer is that sin no longer has dominion over you and part of the reason for that, Paul is saying, is because Christians are no longer under law but are now under grace.

Well, he says in verse 6 here, we are now free from the law, released from it; we have died to that which held us captive; we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing 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.

SERMON:

Well, we have seen on occasion as we have been studying through Paul's letter to the Romans that there is a rumor going around the first century about the Apostle Paul and his teaching, and that rumor is that the Apostle Paul has destroyed the law of God. He preaches against the law, and he has already given a little indication in the early chapters of Romans that this was an accusation that hunted him throughout his ministry. His emphasis on salvation by grace apart from the works of the law had been misunderstood and misinterpreted, sometimes apparently deliberately by people. So Paul is being accused of making the law of God null and void, no place for the law of God in the life of the Christian. And yet Paul has already made it perfectly clear at the end of chapter 3, he says, "Do we then abolish the law by this message of justification by free grace through faith in Jesus Christ?" And his answer is, "Not at all. We rather establish the law." And the point he's making there and will continue to expand throughout this epistle, is that the law can never accomplish what the law

commands. Only Jesus Christ can accomplish what the law commands. And the glory of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ has accomplished what the law commands. He has borne the penalty of a broken law and he has lived a life of perfect obedience to the law. And now as Christian believers look to him, as they look to him rather than look to the law, they discover that the requirements of the law, as Paul would go on to say in Romans 8:4, the requirements of the law begin to be fulfilled in them who no longer walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

But Paul's language about the law is both dramatic and radical. You might say, "Paul, if you just toned down that radical language, things would be much easier for you and for me." But his response to that would be, *Unless you understand the radical nature of the Christian's new relationship to the law, you will never really understand the glory and the privileges of the Gospel and you will never, as it were, be energized to fulfill God's law. It will never be your happy privilege to live in obedience to God's law until you are delivered from God's law.* That is why he emphasizes in chapter 6 and verse 14: sin no longer has dominion over the Christian because the Christian is no longer under the law. So long as you place yourself under the law, you can never be set free from the dominion of sin. And until you are set free from the dominion of sin, the paradox is you can never be obedient to the law of God. But of course, all of his statements as he works this out become increasingly radical. For example, he has taught us in these opening verses in chapter 7, that the believer has died to the law. And the believer needs to die to the law in order to belong to Jesus Christ, but having died to the law, we are now married to a new husband, Jesus Christ, and we begin to bear fruit in Jesus Christ that is in sweet harmony to the law of God.

So it's very clear as Paul spends an entire chapter on this issue, the question is: what then is the relationship between the law and the Christian believer? The Christian believer and the law of God? And Christians throughout the ages have recognized that this is one of the major advance points of understanding the Gospel and therefore living in the freedom that the Gospel gives. Martin Luther says in his famous commentary on Galatians, "A person who is able to distinguish between the law and the Gospel is a happy man and a real theologian." And John Newton, perhaps the wisest pastor the Church of England has ever had says in one of his shrewd letters, volume 1 of the 6 volumes and letter 30, if I remember rightly, "At the bottom of most religious mistakes is a misunderstanding of the role of the law of God." And there are all kinds of ways that we could demonstrate that in the lives of Christian believers: those who are legalists; those who are in the technical language Antinomians, who are against the law having any place in the Christian life. You see, at the bottom of these mistakes, John Newton is shrewdly saying, lies an inability to understand the role that the law plays in God's purposes in the Gospel.

And so Paul has been saying — if I can very briefly try to summarize where we are in Romans, he has been saying by nature we are under the wrath of God but Jesus Christ has borne the wrath of God for us in his propitiation and sacrifice on the cross so we are free from the wrath of God. But he has also said that we are sinners by name and by nature. But now he says in Jesus Christ we have died to the dominion of sin and we are free from bondage to the dominion of sin and we walk in newness of life in union with Christ in his resurrection power. And now he's saying: *But yes, we have also died to the law through the body of Christ in order that we might serve in the way of the Spirit.* The paradox is this: that in order to keep the law, we have had to die to the law; so long as we are under the law, we are not free from the dominion of sin to serve our Lord Jesus Christ with joy.

But of course, all this raises a fairly obvious question and it may already be in your mind, it's the very question that Paul asks in verse 7: *if you're saying all these things about the law, that you need to die to the law, that you need to be in a position where you no longer are under the law, what then shall we say? That the law is sin.* Now, in a sense you should have been asking that question as you have tracked along. These radical things Paul is saying about the law, they sound almost shocking. Say that kind of thing and people will live anyway they want and they will not be obedient to the law. You need to say to people there must be laws, laws, laws, laws. Now, I think it's very easy to prove that that is not God's way for this reason: the more laws there are, the more sin there is. We have lived through a century where our politicians not seeing that only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can transform lives, have been put in a position by our increasingly secular society of saying, *You've got to control people," so more laws, more teaching, more telling the youngsters how to live.* Let me give you the clearest example, more sex education, and what is the result? Well, it's the very thing that Paul says here: when there is only law, there is only an increase of trespass because the law can't change the human heart and God never gave it to change the human heart. Only the Gospel can change the human heart and when the Gospel changes the human heart, the person who has come to faith in Jesus Christ embraces God's commands because they become his or her joy to live in detailed obedience to the person whom they have come to love, and all of this Paul is really wanting to teach us in these chapters 6 and 7 and 8 and the marvels of the Christian life.

But what are you saying, Paul, that we have died to the law? You are saying here that the law aroused sin. Verse 5. "While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law," and then you're saying we need to be released from the law, verse 6, "Now we are released from the law." Are you saying that the law is sin, that the law is evil? And then his second question in which we will

spend only a moment this evening, later on in verse 13: are you saying that God's good law is the cause of evil?

Well, let's take that first question this evening. What shall we say then? That the law is sin? And Paul's answer is so similar, isn't it? Indeed it's identical to answers he has already given us in chapter 6 and verse 2, and chapter 6 and verse 15: if you say that, you haven't understood the Gospel. You need to understand we have a radically different relationship to the law now that we are Christians, but if you say: *is the law then sin, is the law itself evil, you have not really grasped what I have been saying to you.*

Well, what then is the role of the law? If the law can't save me, what does the law do? And I want you to notice that in these verses the Apostle Paul says a whole series of things that help us to understand how it is that God's law functions.

First of all, the law reveals sin in its true colors. Verse 7. "If it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin." That's his general principle and then he gives us an illustration and I believe it's a personal illustration, "I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'"

The illustration of this in the ministry of Jesus, a young man who is apparently particularly rich but also profoundly honored in his society, he is a ruler in his local synagogue although yet a young man and he has heard about Jesus, he comes to Jesus and he says, "Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus doesn't say, *Trust in me*, does he? Jesus says, "You know the commandments. The commandments of God promise life to all who will perfectly obey them." That's true, isn't it? That's the teaching of Scripture. You perfectly obey the commandments of God and you will have eternal life. Then the young man says what? Do you remember? He says, "Good Master, give me something else to do because I have done all that." And Jesus says, does he say, "*Il give you something, give you an eleventh commandment?*" No, what Jesus does is he puts the tenth commandment in other words, doesn't he? "Well then," he says, "if you've kept them all, it wouldn't be any problem to you this afternoon just to go and sell everything you have, go and give it to the poor, and then come and follow me." He's not giving him an eleventh commandment, he is explaining what the tenth commandment means to him personally. And the man discovers that his wealth has super glue all over it and he can't let go of it and he goes away sadly. Jesus loved him.

Do you know how many people we are told in the Gospels Jesus loved? We know about a disciple who says he was the disciple Jesus loved. It's very very unique that Jesus looking on him loved him and he let him go. Why did he let him go? Because there was no way under the sun this young man was going to come and trust in Jesus so long as he thought he had kept the commandments and so

long as he couldn't see when Jesus, as it were, expounded the tenth commandment, "You shall not covet," simply in different words. And he couldn't see that's what Jesus was doing. And he went away apparently thinking that he had still kept the law but there was still something else to do.

To use Paul's language here, the young man knew the law but in the sense that Paul seems to mean it here, the law had not come to this young man with that kind of force that convicted him of his sin of covetousness. And I find it fascinating actually that when Paul says here as he does, "If it hadn't been for the law, I wouldn't have known sin, I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' But," he says, "sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. I was once alive apart from the law, but when that commandment came, sin came alive and I died." What is he saying here? I think he's saying this: now I should put this in parenthesis, I'm going completely out on a limb in saying this; you will not find this in the books but I think he's saying this: I think that it was the tenth commandment, "You shall not covet," that came alive in the life of Saul of Tarsus and was one of the means by which he was awakened to a sense of his sinfulness.

Let me explain how I think that happened. It's very simple. Paul says first of all in Galatians 1, his ambition in life was to be Number 1 in Jerusalem in his peer group in spirituality and religion. He was driven in order, as it were, to outrun all of his peers in a knowledge of God's truth and an ability to apply God's truth and in the consistency with which he lived in God's truth. He wanted to be able to say and indeed he says in Philippians, he was able to say in Philippians 3 precisely what the rich young ruler said, "All of these I have kept from my youth upwards. As to the law," he says, "I was absolutely blameless." Well, was he? Of course he wasn't absolutely blameless but he thought he was absolutely blameless just as the rich young ruler thought he was absolutely blameless.

And then something happened. Saul of Tarsus, Tarsus is in Cilicia. There was a young man appeared in the synagogues in Jerusalem who came to faith in Jesus Christ. He was a man with a Gentile name but a Jewish background, Stephen was his name. He was converted, we know not how, to faith in Jesus Christ. He was appointed, you remember, as one of the seven in Acts 6 by the apostles. He became an apostolic lieutenant but he had an amazing gift for preaching. He had an extraordinary ability to expound the Scriptures and we are told this in Acts 6, that Stephen was full of the Spirit and of wisdom, he was full of grace and power, and – listen to this – "Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia," that includes Saul of Tarsus, "rose up and disputed with

Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking." Now, Saul of Tarsus had never experienced that before.

I remember in my very early years teaching seminary, students coming in to me and saying after they had gotten their exams back, "I didn't get an A." And I would say to them, "Can I see your exam paper?" And they would show me their exam papers and I would say, "Sure enough, you didn't get an A, you got a B+." And then say to me, "But I didn't get an A. Why did I not get an A?" And I would say, "Let me see your exam paper again." And I would look at the grade and I said, "You didn't get an A because I gave you a B+." And then the truth would come out, "But I have never had anything but an A." Now maybe it was my Britishness but I thought this was a piece of impertinence and so at that point I would say, "You have now, my dear brother."

But you see, Saul of Tarsus was a straight A student. Some of you are like that. And some of you are probably driven, some of you students are probably driven by the same motivations and nothing could upset you more than that somebody would beat you down in the thing that you are really good at, and what would that evoke in your heart? Well, covetousness.

The law came. You see, this is what Paul is saying, he's saying, *You know, the law kind of hangs around there and then situations arise, sin manifests itself in my heart and that's when sin explodes in all of its manifestations.* Saul of Tarsus had really only two choices: he could embrace Stephen and say, *Let me be your Number 2, Stephen, because I want to embrace your Christ;* or he could seek to destroy both Stephen and his Christ and that's the route he chose. But the interesting thing as we see, he was a Pharisee, Pharisees did not by definition try to destroy the church of the Lord Jesus. We know that because Nicodemus was a Pharisee. He never tried to destroy the church of the Lord Jesus. We know that because Gamaliel was a Pharisee and at one point at least halfheartedly he defended the church of the Lord Jesus. So why was Saul of Tarsus so fizzing mad against the church of the Lord Jesus? What's the explanation for that blaze in his mind that causes him to persecute the church, to advance beyond all those who were of his peer group? Well, this is the answer: the law came, sin revived, and Saul of Tarsus who thought he was alive, died.

And this is what he was saying: the law reveals sin in its true colors and the mask of his supposed blamelessness was stripped away. That's actually why some people who get to know Christians, maybe this happens particularly among young people but it's not exclusively among young people, some people encounter a living Christian or a living group of Christians or a group of living Christians for the first time and they go stark staring mad. Ordinary, nice, decent people and poison comes out of them. Why? Because the law has come and their sin has been revealed for what it is and there are only two things they can

do. They can come to us in humility and say, *I see that God has done something in your life he has not done in my life, point me to your Savior.* Or they can do everything they can possibly do to try to destroy you and to try to destroy your Christian testimony. And that happens all the time. And this is what Paul is saying: the law reveals our sin in its true colors.

Second, Paul says not only that but the law is employed by sin as a kind of bridgehead. This is a very interesting thing he says. Do you see it? Verse 8, he says, "sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment," and then again later on you see it in verse 11, "Sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me." Now I think he is, in part, thinking about Genesis 3 there, don't you? How God had given them a law, "Everything is yours but don't eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." He had given many commandments. *Have it all. Fill the earth. Exercise dominion. Go and enjoy yourselves but if you're going to enjoy yourself in my company, don't eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.* And you see, that served as a kind of fulcrum that the serpent used in order to deceive particularly Eve. And he comes along and he says, "What kind of God is this who gives this kind of commandment to you that you are not to do this? He's a God who wants to deprive you. He's a God who sets you in this lavish garden and then he is always saying *no, no, no.* Now, it comes out in our children, never mind in the garden of Eden.

Can I have this, daddy?

No, you can't.

Why can't I have it?

Because it's not good for you. "

Daddy, please let me have this.

No, you can't have this.

Daddy, you never let me do anything.

That's how it works and in this sense, says Paul, *the law provided a kind of bridgehead that the serpent could use that sin could get hold of — and that's how most people think about God's law, isn't it?*

They don't understand that the God who gave the law is so infinitely kind and generous and supplies such a plenty of blessing that he's willing to give his only Son to the cross in order to have fellowship with us and in order that we should enjoy him and his creation again. He's infinitely generous and yet you see in the

eyes of sinful men and women, he is infinitely restrictive. And how does it work? It's because the law that seems to be employed by sin as a kind of bridgehead of operations to turn us against God himself.

Thirdly, says Paul, *the law actually then acts as a kind of catalyst for sin*. Now, I'm the last person in this room who should ever be speaking about chemistry in any form but if I remember what a catalyst used to be, a catalyst is a substance that produces a chemical reaction or quickens a chemical reaction but is unchanged by that chemical reaction. And Paul says, *Do you see this is how God's law has worked in your hearts? We were hearing about that from Jonathan earlier on.* God gives us a commandment and saints seek to embrace it and live in accordance with it because they know that this is the directive of their dear and generous heavenly Father, but as sinners, we react against it and there is this determination within us, nobody will tell us what to do, not even God. Perhaps especially not God. And the fact that there is a law there and there is God's authority in it. Engenders within us by reaction to it, it serves as a catalyst of not a chemical reaction but a spiritual reaction. The law doesn't cease to be good, Paul is saying, but it acts as a catalyst and it produces within us as we kick against it this kind of reaction.

Well, we should have all the ministers here this evening giving our personal confessions as to how we experienced this as children but my memory is of going to the great parks that there were in the city in which I was brought up because there was a good deal of mischief in the city, they were full of these people who had the dignified title of Park Keeper. We always called them Parkies and the Parkies, you see, were the guys who put on the grass the sign that said, "Don't walk on the grass. Keep off the grass." So what do we do? Well, of course we go onto the grass. Why do we go onto the grass? Because the Parkies tell us we are not to go onto the grass.

Perhaps the most famous illustration of that in history is the description that Augustine gives in his great *Confessions* as he looks back upon God's dealings with his life and he remembers a time when he was 16 years old and he went into an orchard owned by a neighbor and he stole some pears. And in later years he becomes very reflective of this and he analyzes all that was going on in his mind and this is his bottom line: he says actually the pears in our orchard were far better than the pears in that orchard. We didn't steal them because they were juicier or bigger, the only reason we stole them was because they belonged to somebody else and we weren't supposed to have them and the pleasure lay not in the taste but in the sin. That's how we are. That's why the letter of Hebrews says there is such a thing as the pleasures of sin. Of course there are pleasures in sin. Of course there are pleasures in sin but they don't last very long.

And, you see, Paul teaches us a little more about that. Not only is the law revealing sin in its true colors and employed as a bridgehead for sin into our lives and acting as a catalyst of sin, the law is particularly an instrument of the deceitfulness of sin. I would never do this but I've sometimes wished I could have a video camera in my office to video what sin looks like when its implications have been revealed to an individual who has sinned. And to see a man with his head in his hands, his whole life in shreds saying, *I can't understand what came over me*. And here's Paul's answer: "Sin," he says, "deceives me and employs the law in order to do that, twists the law in order to do that."

Here was the law for Eve. *Eve, I'm giving you everything here. Enjoy it with your husband. Run around the garden with nothing on. Take the fruit of all the trees. Make babies. Enlarge the garden. Have dominion over the whole earth. I'm giving you the whole world so that there may be times each day when we can walk in the garden and talk about what we're doing together, how I'm ruling the whole creation and you're enjoying this miniature creation. But don't eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Don't do it.* And because of that word "don't," the serpent comes along and deceives. Don't is bad for you. Boy, we're awash with that, actually, aren't we today? Don't. The worst word in the English language is "no." Well, it's the best word when God says no, but they were deceived. As we were saying this morning, why were they deceived? Because they saw with their eyes instead of with their ears. All they saw was that the tree was absolutely delightful to look at and the fruit looked as though it was delicious. Of course it was delightful to look at, of course it was delicious because God had made it. But they didn't hear, "Don't eat of that tree," and so they were deceived.

And so, fifthly, says Paul: the law brings condemnation for sin; it reveals sin in its true colors; it's employed by our sin to make a bridgehead into more of our lives; it acts because we are sinners as a catalyst that produces this spiritual explosion; it's used in order to deceive us. Now's here is how it always happens, it always happens this way: when we no longer think about God's law as being the law of the dearest, most gracious, gentle, generous, patient, kind, loving, heavenly Father. The moment you divide God's law from God's graciousness, you're a goner because now there's a gaping hole in your defenses. *Why should I obey him if he doesn't really love me?* But when you come to understand, as Paul is saying here, that God's law is God's gracious gift to us, you'll never be deceived. But alas, deceit that brings condemnation, as Paul says in verse 10, it promises life to us, "Do this and live," but because of our sin, that pronounces upon us the sentence of death.

So here's his conclusion, all of this is just to reach the conclusion: the law is not sin, the law is not evil. Indeed, look at his conclusion: the law as a whole is holy and the commandments, in particular, are holy and righteous and good.

How many of you remember Casey Jones? Any of you remember Casey Jones? Maybe it took 40 years for Casey Jones to come to the United Kingdom, these 25 minute black-and-white programs in which unbelievably the hero of the whole thing was a guy who drove an old steam engine and the song that went with that. I can't believe, nobody seems to recognize Casey Jones, the song that went with it was Casey Jones as a steam'n and a rollin' Now, how did Casey Jones's steam engine get to its destination with all that power in the engine boiler? Because there were rail tracks that kept the wheels going in the right direction. That train would never have moved if there wasn't power in the engine but it would never have got to its destination unless there were train tracks on which it would run.

Now, that's how the Gospel works. The law does not give power in the engine of the Christian but when the Holy Spirit gives power in the engine of the Christian, the way in which the Christian arrives in growing sanctification is by that marvelous, almost relentless obedience to the words of a gracious and holy and righteous and good God. A paradox there, isn't it? If you see the law on its own, it will kill you, but if you see the law in the hands of your gracious heavenly Father, having been born again by his Spirit and living in faith and love for the Lord Jesus Christ, then God's law is like God, it's holy and obedience to it is holiness.

God's law is righteous, that is, it's an expression of his covenant faithfulness to you and it will work its way into your life to create covenant faithfulness and character. You grow in godly character by growing in fruitful obedience to the commands of your heavenly Father. And God's law is good. Not like the medicine my mother used to give me when she would say, *I know you don't want this, Sinclair, but take it.* And I'd say, "It doesn't taste very good." And she'd say, "The reason it doesn't taste good is because it does good." But God's law is not like that, God's law does good and actually it only does good to those who see that it tastes oh so good.

My dear friends, in a world in which men and women are making shipwreck of their lives because they disobey God's law, we're the people who should see that most clearly. What a privilege it is to have God's law. To live in God's law. To know that he's our heavenly Father and he has given us these loving directions. Just as Jesus said, "If you love me, then keep my commandments." As the children might say, "It's actually easy as pie," as long as you have the power.

Well, Paul's second question: is the good law responsible for evil or even death? "No," he says.

And then the strangest thing happens in Romans. This is actually the strangest thing in the whole book of Romans. This whole section that we've been reading this evening, 6 through 13, is all about the past and from this point onwards to the end of the chapter with one glorious exception that is right at the very end of the chapter, everything Paul says is in the present and these are the most excruciating verses in all of Romans. These are agonizing verses and they're all in the present tense. So my question is: what's the meaning of this change of verb tense? You wouldn't have believed you could be interested in that question, would you? Interested in the change of a verb tense? Well, if you can live without knowing for another week, we'll wrestle with that next Sunday night.

But you see what Paul is saying here, it makes us cry already what he cries out at the end of this chapter, "Who can deliver me? Who can deliver me from the condemnation of the law? Who can deliver me from my sin that the law condemns? Who can open my eyes that I can see the deceitfulness of sin working in my life?" And his answer, well, I wouldn't keep this back from you, his answer is, "Thank God, Jesus Christ can deliver me."

And so we end this night where we end every Sunday night, the day you do not want Sunday to end this way is the day to come and tell me, *Sinclair, we're needing another minister*. We end this Sunday night where we end every Sunday night whoever is our minister, at the feet of Jesus Christ, trusting him as our Lord and Savior, and saying with Gerhard Tersteegen,

"O Jesus, full of pardon and grace, More full of grace than I have sin."

Is that your Jesus tonight, more full of grace than I have sin?

"Yet once again I seek your face, Open your arms and take me in And freely my backslidings heal And love this faithless sinner still."

That's a Jesus I need. Thank God that's the only Jesus there is. He's not half full of pardon and grace, he's not full of pardon and grace for half of your sins, he's not full of grace for your private sins but not your public sins or your public sins but not your private sins. He is, in fact, more full of grace than you are of sin. But here's the point: you never discover the fullness of the grace, do you, until you discover the depths of the sin.

Let's pray together.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank you so much that every verse in your word is connected in one way or another to our Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you for the teaching of this chapter that helps us both to see our sin and to understand the extraordinary role that your law plays in bringing us to faith in Jesus Christ and then setting us on the tracks by which empowered by your Spirit we can live for your glory. Lord, look upon us as we so often in our sinfulness when it's exposed to us, we cry out that we long for a Deliverer. Thank you that Jesus Christ is such a Deliverer that no matter what our sin and our failure hidden so often from others, even those who know us most intimately in the secret depths of our souls, that Jesus has more grace than there can ever be sin in our hearts. How we thank you for him and pray that in this week as in every week, we may rest in him and find him all sufficient. We pray this in his name. Amen.