

The Gospel of Salvation

Evangelistic Addresses

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THREE EXCEEDING THINGS

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:1-7).

TEXTS

"That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." (Romans 7:13).

"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:7).

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." (Ephesians 1:19).

THE title of this sermon is borrowed from the preaching and book of a great divine of a generation ago. The sermon is as the HOLY SPIRIT has laid it on the heart of this humble preacher. The Bible is quite chary of adjectives. It does not deal in superlative hyperbole. It is brief and to the point in most places. When it does use an adjective there must be a great reason for it. When the SPIRIT of GOD leads the writer to use an unusual descriptive word, there is always ample need for it. The word "**exceeding**" thrice repeated in the texts of this sermon calls our attention to three tremendous truths. First, there is the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Second, we have the exceeding riches of His grace. Third, you will note, is the exceeding greatness of His power.

May the HOLY SPIRIT lead us, instruct us, bless us as we study these three exceeding things.

The exceeding sinfulness of sin is demonstrated in many ways. The whole world with every soul everywhere, unbelievably seeking its own, is a vivid picture of that fact. Wars, pestilences,

diseases, depressions, crime, litigations, divorces, cemeteries - all these are an exclamation point to the terrible certainty, to the fearful hold of sin so widely swaying the world. There are, however,

I. The Exceeding Sinfulness of sin

Sin defies GOD. It is even as Paul said (Romans 1:18-32):

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse; because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as GOD, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of GOD into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause GOD gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the women, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind; to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affections, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of GOD, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

The sinner boldly, brazenly, braggingly shakes his fist in the face of GOD and cries: "Yes, I know what you want me to do, but you are not big enough to make me do it."

Oh, soul, that is a terrible position to take.

The infinite majesty and power of GOD are directed against you. There is no danger can befall you greater than the wrath of GOD descending upon your head.

Take you a six-shooter, a Colt gun, load it in every chamber, place its muzzle against your forehead, pull the trigger. You are safer even then than when you defy GOD by continuing in sin, in disobedience.

Go to the nearest drug store, obtain you a flask of carbolic acid. Pull out the stopper. Empty the burning contents down your throat. You are safer even then than with the hellhounds on your

trail, baying the curse of GOD upon your unforgiven sins.

Walk into the den of the ravenous lion. Open its terrible jaws. Thrust your neck into that cavernous mouth. Let go to hear the crunching snap of that fearful trap. You are infinitely safer even then than when you fall into the hands of the living GOD, an unconfessed and unforgiven sinner.

Yes, the exceeding sinfulness of sin is shown in its blighting, blinding, binding effect upon the mind of the man who thrusts his own disobedience into the teeth of GOD, knowing that there is a day of settlement, of reckoning, of judgment certain to come.

Sin denies CHRIST.

What a tragedy that is, CHRIST, the Son of GOD, the blood-stained victim of Calvary, trodden under foot of the unbeliever,

His love spurned,
His blood rejected,
His forgiving grace cast behind the back!

It is as if the dying man were to refuse to take the medicine that alone could insure his continued living.

It is as if the murderer on his way to the execution chamber were to turn down the offered last-minute pardon. There is no hope outside of CHRIST. There is no other means or method known to GOD or to man by which sins can be forgiven and sinners regenerated. To continue in transgression is bitterly, blasphemously to decry the blood atonement of Calvary's agony. At no time does sin appear so exceedingly sinful as when it stands in the shadow of the cross and deliberately turns its back upon it. No wonder the Lord cries:

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Sin destroys the soul

This is an eternal truth. The ages have proved its veracity. No man, defying GOD, denying CHRIST, has ever, or will ever, escape the destruction of sin. Regardless of our attitudes, of our aspirations, of our ambitions, the soul is the most valuable possession any of us have.

It can be harmed in only one way, by sin.

It can be helped in only one way, by salvation.

Sin is the fever of the mind, making it beside itself in its chase after the wicked, the forbidden. Sin is the tuberculosis of the heart, debilitating it, robbing it of its strength and vigor, making it an easy prey for Satan.

Sin is the cancer of the soul, a corruption of soul matter that causes its painful rotting deterioration and death.

Sin is the fertile root from which all other trouble grows.

Sin is exceedingly sinful because it is the death, inevitable, universal, eternal, of the soul.

II. The Exceeding Riches of GOD's Grace

But, thank GOD, Paul doesn't stop there. If he did, of all GOD's creatures, we would be the most miserable. There would be no hope for us, no help, no chance of escape. Life would be a ghastly tragedy, with no lightening relief, no brightening hope. It would not be worth while living. The price would be too great to pay. Paul goes on. He speaks of the exceeding riches of GOD's grace.

Grace is patience, love, longsuffering, compassion, mercy, pity, sympathy. And, more than these, GOD is Grace. Grace is GOD. High as the highest Heaven, deep as the deepest sea, long as the length of eternity, wide as the need of man, Grace is by far the mightiest attribute of GOD. It is GOD Himself. It is very GOD. That is what John meant when he said, "**God is love.**" There is no human language that can describe it, no illustration that can limit it, no simile that can confine it. You might as well try to describe GOD as to describe grace. You might as well strive to draw an exact likeness of GOD as to attempt the portraiture of grace. Yet there are some attributes of grace that I should like to press upon your hearts this hour.

It is ennobling grace.

"For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of GOD: not of works, lest any man should boast." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

- It lifts us out of the slavery of sin into the sonship of salvation.
- It lifts us out of the degradation of Satan's labor into the delight of the Saviour's love.
- It lifts us out of the bondage of endless fear into the bounty of eternal favor.
- It strips us of the rags of transgression and clothes us with the robes of triumph.
- It washes us of the bleak, the black, the blighting.
- It knocks off the shackles of shame and sorrow.
- It translates us into the Kingdom of GOD and His Son.
- It strengthens our hearts,

- It inspires our minds,

- It encourages our souls.

Where education, position, property, prestige, have totally failed, this grace has completely triumphed. There is many a man preaching the Gospel today who was rescued by grace from the gutter of the devil's offscourings. There are women today who are beautiful mothers in Israel, whose lives were stained and stagnated by the corroding corruption of Satan's degradation. Grace lifted them out of the mire. This grace ennobles because it revives the divine, restores the God-given, regenerates the CHRIST-endowed within us.

This grace is enabling.

That is what Jude meant when he said, "**Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.**"

That is what Paul meant when he said, "**I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.**"

It was true then.

It is true now.

It was true for them.

It is true for us.

GOD does not save us and say to us, "Root, hog, or die." He never leaves us alone. By day and by night, at home and abroad, in every detail and circumstance of our lives, GOD walks with us, talks with us, calls us His own. Every need is anticipated. There is provision for every problem. All of our difficulties are known to GOD. His hand is ever outstretched to guard us, lest we dash our foot against a stone. Whatever we lack, He supplies. There is no good thing wanting to them who love GOD. It is He who fights our battles for us. It is He who overcomes temptation in us. It is He who resists the devil until he flees from us. Oh, brother, oh, sister, just let GOD have His way with you. That is the sum and substance of all our religion.

This grace is enduring.

"**Can a woman forget her sucking child,**" cries Isaiah, "**that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.**"

That is the promise of GOD. That is the guarantee of eternity. Language could be no stronger, words no plainer.

We are GOD's by the right of creation. When we accept CHRIST as our Saviour, we are GOD's by the right of redemption.

His grace has paid too great a price for us for Him to let us go. There is none stronger than GOD. There is no possibility of His ever being overcome. He would have to be conquered first ere He would permit the enemy to assail our souls beyond escape.

A story is told of a young man who came to his pastor disturbed about his soul's salvation. "Elder," said the young man, "back yonder I gave my heart to CHRIST. I believed I was saved. For a while I ran well, serving GOD, enjoying my religion. The devil came along. He tempted me. I fell. I have cried for forgiveness to GOD. How may I be sure that what you say is true, that GOD never gives up one of His children, that the devil cannot completely win over me? Give me some word of GOD that will restore the joy of my salvation, the confidence of my soul."

The old man of GOD smiled at him. "You are not the first one, son," he said, "nor will you be the last one whom the devil tries to cheat out of the blessing of assurance. Reach me yonder Bible. Open it to Colossians 3:3. How reads it?"

"For ye are dead," read the young man, **"and your life is hid with Christ in God."**

"Now, see here, son, this is the way it is. Suppose you were a keg, and CHRIST a barrel, and GOD a hogshead.

Suppose you top that little keg, which is your life, and put it in the barrel, which is CHRIST. Suppose, then, you top that barrel, which is CHRIST, with yourself in it, and put it in the hogshead, which is GOD. Suppose, then, you top that hogshead. What would the devil have to do to get to the keg? Why, son, the old devil would have to break the hogshead, that is; whip GOD; smash the barrel, that is, whip CHRIST, before he could get to the little keg, which is you. The old devil might be able to hurt you, but GOD and CHRIST are just too many for him."

That is what I mean by enduring grace. It surrounds you with all the love and power of GOD, as with a host with conquering banners.

In order to destroy your soul the devil would have to overcome the armies of GOD and bring to nought the will and promise of GOD for your lives. That is palpably impossible. GOD's grace is not for a day, nor for a time. It is as eternal as GOD Himself. It cost Him too great a price to pass it on to us for Him to trifle with it, or to permit anyone else to trifle with it. It is permanent grace. The universe will come to an end, but the grace of GOD will endure forever.

It is yours for the having.

It is yours for the taking.

It is yours for the believing.

It is yours to enjoy through the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

It will solve every one of your problems.

It will smash all your doubts and discouragements.

It will free you from your fears, release you from your questionings.

It will be a cloud of guidance by day and a pillar of fire by night.

III. The Exceeding Greatness of His Power

From the exceeding sinfulness of sin through the exceeding riches of GOD's grace, Paul leads us to the exceeding greatness of GOD's power. This power is exceedingly great. It has shown its might in numberless ways, sometimes in punishment, sometimes in benediction, always in miraculous display.

It destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.
It slew the first-born of Egypt.
It split the Red Sea,
parted Jordan,
laid the walls of Jericho flat,
caused the sun and moon to stand still,
brought Mount Carmel's fire from Heaven,
raised JESUS from the dead,
shook Philippi apart to release Paul and Silas.

It has been effectively working through the ages. It is the gift of GOD to us. Alone, we are helpless, hopeless, outnumbered, overcome, defeated! In the power of GOD, Goliaths fall before us.

It is exceedingly great in its power to save, for it is written, "**Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.**"

For nineteen hundred years it has rescued the perishing, cared for the dying, snatched them in pity from sin and the grave. It has wept over the erring one, lifted the fallen, shown that JESUS was mighty to save. Standing unshakably on the Word of GOD, and on the experiences of the centuries, as dogmatically, as unhesitatingly as GOD gives me utterance, I offer to you, to everyone of you, the boundless, limitless, universal, free, effective, efficient, victorious, crowning power of GOD unto salvation; offer it bountifully, abundantly, completely, freely, to every one of you. Surely there can be no question in any of your minds of the exceeding greatness of the power of GOD to save. You have known too many experiences, both personal and in others, of it.

This power is exceedingly great in its ability to supply all of our needs. "**He that spared not his own Son,**" cries Paul, "**...how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?**" "**If ye then, being evil,**" said JESUS, "**know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him?**" These are the promises of GOD.

Add to them the further declaration of CHRIST: "**Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you,**" and what have you? You have the assured guarantee of GOD's Word that nothing shall be lacking in your lives, whether physical, financial, spiritual; whether for yourselves, for your loved ones, for your daily tasks, or for your work, both secular and in the Lord. It is easy to believe that. If GOD loved you and me enough to pay with His Son's life for our redemption, surely He loves us enough to feed us, to clothe us, to shelter us. The exceeding greatness of His power is a guarantee that His abundance

never will be exhausted, that we shall never plead with Him in vain, that the stresses and distresses of our lives will not in any way affect His bounty.

The exceeding greatness of His power is shown, last of all, not only in His ability to save, not only in His abundance to supply, but also in His assurance to sustain, to sustain us on earth and to take us to Himself in Heaven, when our little day's work here is over. There are no words sweeter than the message of Peter: "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of GOD through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**"

These words are music to the ear,
honey to the taste,
balm to the soul,
courage to the heart.

Behind them stand GOD, CHRIST, the SPIRIT, the angels, time, and eternity. They are backed up by the will of GOD, the work of CHRIST, the word of the SPIRIT. Heaven and earth may pass away, but this guarantee will eternally remain.

What more is there left for me to say? What more is there left for you to do?

You know now the exceeding sinfulness of sin. You knew it before today, perhaps not quite so definitely, not quite so clearly. The HOLY SPIRIT has pressed upon your souls the impact of the word of GOD. You see yourself hopelessly, helplessly undone, your life, your death, your eternity, hanging in the balance.

You have been told of the Grace of GOD, vast as the universe, mighty as a tornado, sweeping as a landslide, the passion of GOD's great heart reaching out to help you, to bless you.

You have heard now of the power of GOD, the power for your every need, the power that GOD has been pressing upon His children since the beginning of time, the power without which you are a perishing sinner.

You know these things.
Will you heed them?
Will you close with them?
Will you make them your own?
Will you look up into the face of GOD?

With the vision of your needs before you, with the promise of GOD's love pressed on you, will you say "Yes" to the pleading invitation of the HOLY SPIRIT?

The exceeding sinfulness of sin would smash you into hell.
The exceeding riches of GOD's grace would blot out your transgressions.
The exceeding greatness of GOD's power would make this salvation effective to your souls.

Close with this mercy today.
Step out into the fullness of GOD's grace.
Let the tidal course of GOD's power fill your soul, conquering sin, enthroning CHRIST,
enduring with the SPIRIT.

~ end of chapter 9 ~
