

Who Shall Deliver Me From the Body of This Death?

by William Edwin Boardman

The sermon explores the contrast between Christians who struggle with sin and those who find freedom through faith in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 16:11, Daniel 3:25, Daniel 6:22, Matthew 11:28, John 15:4, Romans 7:24, Romans 8:1, Ephesians 3:20, Hebrews 13:5

Topics: "Sin And Deliverance", "Victorious Christian Living"

Description

William Edwin Boardman preaches about the contrast between Christians who only question their deliverance from sin without fully experiencing the joy of being delivered through Jesus Christ, and those who understand and rejoice in the freedom and power of being delivered from the bondage of sin. He illustrates this contrast through the story of a man saved from a fall and a woman longing to live constantly in the presence of Jesus. Boardman emphasizes the importance of having a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus as a present Savior, leading to a life of victory and joy.

Transcript

THE CONTRAST.

"WHO SHALL DELIVER ME FROM THE BODY OF THIS DEATH?

I THANK GOD, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD."

There are Christians of two classes in the world -- not to mention others at present -- both fond of the apostolic saying placed as a motto above, but very different in experience and position.

They of the one class repeat only the first part of the text -- the question -- leaving off the answer to it. That gives the key to their experience. They of the other class repeat both question and answer, with intelligent zest. Those of the first class have come to the full and painful understanding of sin dwelling in them as a body of death. Chained to them as a Roman soldier was chained for years to the Apostle Paul; and as dead bodies have been chained to living men. They have come to feel the bondage of sin, but they have not yet come to know the joys of deliverance, and the sweet liberty of the children of God.

Not that they are not Christians. Not that they have never been converted to God. They have been truly converted, or the name Christian, would be a misnomer for them. But they have learned only that their sins are forgiven through faith in the atonement of Jesus. They have not yet learned that Jesus through faith in his name is the deliverer from the power of sin, as well as from its penalty. They believe in the blood of Jesus as their sacrifice for sin, but they are struggling by resolution, with Jesus to aid it -- it may be -- to free them from the bondage of sin.

Perhaps they have come along so far as to see and feel that resolution, even in the strength of Christ, is a poor deliverer, that it fails ever and anon. And yet they see nothing better, and so they cry out, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

And there they stop. There their experience stops. So far they have come, but no farther. While they, of the second class referred to, ask the question, indeed, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? but answer it in the same breath by finishing the quotation, in the apostle's exulting words: I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

They have learned that there is deliverance now here in this life through faith in Jesus. While the others sigh and groan in their bondage as if there was no deliverance this side the grave. They have learned experimentally, they know, that Jesus Christ our Lord, through faith in his name, does actually deliver the trusting soul from the cruel bondage of its chains under sin, now in this present time; while the others have learned -- not that Jesus does deliver -- but that their own resolutions in Jesus' name, do not deliver them; and not knowing that Jesus can do it, they turn with a sigh toward death as their deliverer from the power of this death, as if death was the sanctifier or the sanctification of the children of God.

They of the one class, if asked for the truest and most graphic delineation of the Christian's condition in life here in this world of temptation and sin, will point to the seventh chapter of Romans, and say, "There you have it. That, of all others, describes our state and our struggles here below -- a law in our members warring with the law in our minds. We see the right but do the wrong. We would do good but evil is present with us. We resolve, but soon, alas, sin overcomes us. Then we resolve, no more in our own strength, but now in the strength of the Lord. And yet, notwithstanding this fortifying of resolution by acknowledging its weakness and looking to Christ for aid to keep it from breaking -- alas, it is soon broken, all the same as before."

They of the other class, if asked for the inspired symbol of their condition, would point us to the eighth chapter of Romans, and say: "There you have it. Once, indeed, we were in the seventh, but thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us deliverance from the body of death, we have now found our way out of the bondage of the seventh, into the sweet liberty of the eight. The chain is broken by the power of Christ. We are freed from the dead body of sin. We are now linked by the three-fold cords of faith, hope and love, to the living Saviour as our deliverer from present corruption, and from all the power of sin.

The dead body is dropped. The living Jesus, sweet Jesus, precious Jesus, gracious Saviour, constant Friend, mighty Deliverer, has taken its place -- ever with us.

Once, indeed, we were in the seventh, but then we were at best only as servants in our own Father's house; but now we have -- through faith in Christ -- received the spirit of adoption, and have become in the fullest and happiest sense, sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. Then we feared before Him as servants in presence of a Master, but now we dwell in love with Him as children with an affectionate

Father, and as the bride with a loving bridegroom.

Our bondage is gone -- freedom has come. Our sighs have given place to joys -- our fears to hopes. Our vain struggles to a sweet confidence in the strong arm and loving heart of Jesus."

Now how shall this contrast be made more striking?

The grand difference between the two classes is, that the one has and the other has not found Jesus, as a present Saviour from the present power of sin. The one still sighs in the bondage of the sad and sorrowful problem, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

While the other now exults in its blessed solution, giving thanks to God for triumphant deliverance already wrought, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

This -- but this also involves another grand difference which must not be overlooked in the contrast.

They of the one class have a Saviour in Jesus it is true -- but he is a Saviour afar off -- up in heaven, as they think of him, and not with them now here upon earth. While they of the other class have Jesus ever with them -- a very present help in every time of need -- a friend which sticketh closer than a brother.

THE CRIPPLE.

A poor youth came to the shores of America from Old England, a few years ago, bringing with him only the prayers of a devoted mother whom he left in the home of his birth.

His faith stood then only in the teachings of his mother. The living faith which is the vital union between Jesus and the soul he had not.

Falling in company with Universalists on his way westward from New York, his traditional faith was soon shaken from its sandy foundation, and then the legitimate fruits of his new notions about universal salvation were quick to ripen, and most abundant in fruitage, though, alas, their fruits were not very fair to the eye nor very sweet to the taste.

Bitterly did he rue it afterwards.

He fell into loose habits and loose company. The Sabbath was turned into a play day, or a work day, as best suited to his pleasure or his purse, and vice ceased to be contraband even. His feet were on slippery steeps, and swiftly sliding, when suddenly the Lord arrested him by a casualty from which he was saved alive by a singular -- miracle, shall I say? Almost a miracle it certainly was.

At work on a frame, then in course of erection, his foot slipped -- he tottered -- reeled -- fell, he was at work on the second story -- and falling he was caught by a joist below. He fell backwards and the small of his back came upon the timber. He was taken up alive, but with little hope of his living a single hour.

His agony was awful, and as he recovered from the first stunning effects of his fall, his returning sensibilities seemed more and more alive to suffering every moment.

Nothing relieved him. The severity of his pain constantly grew greater for many hours. At last in the madness of despair, he sent for a quantity of whiskey, and drank enough, as he hoped, to drown his suffering, and let him die in insensibility -- but it failed to intoxicate. Strangely enough, it gave the relief

which all the physician's medicines and skill had failed to give, and he began to recover.

With the thought of recovery came also a review of his past life. Remembrances of his home and his mother came upon him, and now his life of dissipation, with the opiate of Universalism, which had lulled his fears of God and Eternity, was to him like a dream when one awaketh. He felt it to be all wrong, all false. He saw his delusion, and most bitterly lamented his folly and sin.

Weary nights and days he prayed and struggled for peace and pardon. Sleep seldom visited his eyes. Fears were his daily food. His cries prevented the dawn of the morning. His sins grew heavy -- a load too great to be borne.

At last, one night, overborne with weariness, he fell into a troubled sleep, and in his sleep he dreamed.

He thought he had fallen into a ditch, not very deep. It seemed to him at first easy to make his escape, but when he attempted it, he sunk down deeper and deeper with each successive struggle, until at last he found himself sinking in the mire over his head, and just about to be drowned in the filthy waters of that horrible place.

Just then, lifting up his eyes, he saw stooping over him, the bending form of a strong man, with his hand outstretched to save.

"Oh that he would save me!" thought the young man, and he ceased to struggle to save himself. Then the hand of the rescuer grasped him firmly, and lifted him easily out of the mire, and placed him upon the bank of the ditch, and in a moment he had stripped him, washed him, and clothed him anew -- and just then the troubled dreamer awoke from his sleep.

"Ah!" said he to himself, "I see. I see. I can never save myself -- all my struggles are in vain, and worse than in vain. I do but sink deeper and deeper. Jesus must save or I must perish."

And Jesus did save. His feet were taken from the horrible pit and the miry clay. He was washed and clothed, and made happy in a sense of sin forgiven, and the hope of Heaven.

His spirits rose, and his health returned -- that is to say, the health of his body, from the waist upward. From the small of his back downward he was paralyzed and shrivelled away. From his waist upward he grew fat and fair.

He applied himself to sewing for employment and for a living, and soon acquired skill to earn a fair maintenance, with something to give to the poor and to the treasury of the Lord.

He as happy until by and by thoughts of his desolation began to grow upon him. Others, God had set in families; to him this was denied. None would ever love him as he longed to be loved. He should never have wife or children bound to him by the tender bond of matrimonial or filial affection. His heart yearned for the endearments which he felt in his soul he was created to enjoy. And as the certainty pressed upon him that he could never enjoy them, his heart sunk within him and seemed to he withering away like his limbs.

"Alas!" he thought, "must it be so? Yes, it must indeed. None could ever love me as the bride loves her husband. I can never have one to love and cherish, as the bridegroom loves and cherishes the chosen companion of his life."

Again he became intensely wretched. His troubled soul denied him the embrace of even "tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," until at last, in sheer exhaustion, he fell into wakeful slumbers, and dreamed again as before. In his dream he seemed to be entangled in logs and trees, lying criss-cross over the ground in utter confusion, as they are sometimes found in our forests, where the hurricane has done its work, and made what is called a windfall -- no tree left standing, but all blown down, one over the other, in all conceivable positions.

In the distance, he saw Jesus standing, and at once began struggling to make his way over the logs to the Master, but could not. He was foiled in every attempt, and at last gave up in despair; and then, looking up, there was Jesus standing with outstretched arms, before him. And O, so lovely and so loving. The Saviour clasped him in his arms, and spoke words of endearment, assuring him that he would be ever with him; would never forsake him, but love him freely, as the bridegroom loves the bride, and cherish him as his beloved forever.

He awoke, and behold it was a dream, and yet not all a dream. Thenceforth the longing of his soul for one to love him, and be beloved, was satisfied. Evermore Jesus was with him, the bridegroom of his heart:

THE INQUIRER AND HER WISH.

There came to a little meeting of those who had already learned the secret of living in the faith of an ever present Saviour, and of those who were desirous of hearing about it, a very lovely woman, a wife and a mother; a Christian for many years, and yet by no means satisfied with her state and condition.

But let her tell her own story. The opportunity was given; it was in the parlor of one of their number, and ladies only were present. She spoke with a pathos that touched every heart -- "I have been many years a Christian; I would not give up my hope of heaven for a world. It is founded upon the precious blood of the Son of God. I have committed my soul to him, and I believe he will not forsake me in the hour of death, or condemn me at the judgment. And sometimes I feel him very near to me, and then I am very happy. No tongue can tell how sweet my peace is at such times. It passes all understanding. But then again my heart wanders from him, and I try to get back to him. I pray, and repent of my wanderings, and resolve to keep my heart more diligently, and promise the Lord if he will only restore me I never will wander again; but alas for me! too often all my resolutions and promises, and cries and struggles, are vain, and I am forced to give up and live on, conscious that I am left by the Saviour, so that I could repeat, with some sense of its bitterness, the agonized cry of the dying Redeemer himself, in the hour of his darkness: Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani! My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Now I have come here to learn from you, dear friends, if you will teach me, how to live so as to have my Saviour ever with me.

I am like a wife who tenderly loves her husband, and longs for his society, and would fain make his home so agreeable to him that he would never leave it for the club or the theatre, or the opera or a party, or any other place, however fascinating; but who, for want of wisdom or skill, so fails as ever and anon to be forsaken by him for a time, and for times that seem wearisome and long to her; and who is utterly at a loss how to change her own course so as to win and secure the constant presence of her husband at home.

Once I had a father -- noble man -- he is now reaping in heaven the reward in glory of a life of singular devotion to Jesus upon earth. He was a wonder to me. He seemed to have the presence of Jesus from morning till night, and from year's end to year's end, always from my earliest recollections. I do not

remember ever to have heard him make the complaint made by so many, and alas! made so often by me -- of the absence of Jesus. His face kindled up in a moment at the mention of Jesus, and all his prayers and all his words and ways showed that he was full in the faith of that assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway, to the end of the world."

My ease was so different that I often wondered at it.

One day, shortly before he took his triumphant departure to heaven -- I was then about eighteen -- I asked him, saying father, how is it? I frequently wander away from my Saviour, and find it hard to return. You seem always to have Him present with you. Do you never get away from Him?

"Never, my dear child, never; never so but what I can get back in one minute."

I shall never forget his words or his looks; and I have come now to meet you here, and learn, if I may, how to live always in the faith of the presence of Jesus as my beloved father did."

This secret of living in the faith of an ever present Saviour -- loving, tender, watchful, faithful -- is the secret learned by those of the eighth chapter class, and this is the secret of their zest in repeating the triumphant answer to the sad question, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And this is the secret which they, of the class of the seventh chapter, have not learned, and therefore it is that they still sigh in their bondage and groan under the weight of the body of death.

It is quite remarkable, however, that while these last point to the seventh of Romans as the exposition of their state and condition, they always clip this graphic chapter at both ends to make it suit their experience. It opens with the beautiful representation of the matrimonial relation as that between Christ and his followers, and closes with the exultant note of deliverance from the very state of bondage to which these sighing ones point as their own.

A moment's thought should make them see that they are not honoring the Bridegroom Deliverer when they point to this hopeless bondage; this struggling, sighing, groaning condition; this slavery to sin; this wedded state with a Body of Death as the Bridegroom -- as the state and condition to which he has introduced them. A poor bridegroom, surely, he must be, who holds his bride as a slave, sighing and groaning for liberty, and crying out, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!

And a poor bride must she be, whose heart goes abroad for its pleasures away from the embraces of her groom; so fascinated by the contraband delights of the world, that even when she would be true to her home and her spouse, she is always haunted by thoughts and desires after others!

Perhaps there is no more striking example of the contrast between the two classes, than that which is presented in the Bible between the two states of the apostles themselves, before and after the Pentecostal baptism.

Like the twelve found at Ephesus by the apostle Paul, if the question had been asked them before the day of Pentecost, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? The appropriate answer would have been: We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And like Apollos, before he was taken by Aquilla and Priscilla, and instructed into the way of the Lord more perfectly, they had as yet only the baptism of metanoia conversion -- a change of heart -- and not yet a heart filled with the faith of a

present Saviour, wrought in them by an indwelling Holy Ghost.

Those two disciples, on their way to Emmaus -- O, how pensive! how sad and sorrowful is the thought of a Saviour, absent from them. They thought it should have been He that would have delivered Israel. But alas! he was dead -- he was gone, and Israel was not delivered. A Saviour passed away, mighty in word and deed, but gone not with them.

O, how different from Pentecost onward. A Saviour ever with them. Mighty in word and deed, and always present. Always directing them where to go; always, in every moment of trial, putting words into their hearts which all their adversaries could not gainsay nor resist; always, in every temptation, making a way of escape; always hearing their cries unto Him; always giving power to their words, spoken in weakness; always gladdening their hearts, even in dungeons and in the stocks, and in the fires and under the scourge.

Paul and Silas, with their bodies lacerated, bloody, sore and stiff in their gore from the terrible scourge laid upon them each forty strokes, save one -- thrust into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks; were yet happier there in their prayers and praises to a present Saviour, than the eleven were in their liberty and in their safety, with all the assurance that Jesus was risen from the dead which their own eyes, from seeing him, and their own hands, from feeling the print of the nails and the print of the spear could give them, while yet their faith was not sufficient to see and feel and know that he was present with them in invisible reality and power.

To know that Jesus is with us, and that He will keep us by His own power, and wash us in His own blood, and lead us by His own hand, and uphold us from falling, or lift us when fallen, and watch over us day and night -- our Shield, our Friend, our Shepherd and King, our God and Saviour! O, this is the crowning happiness of the Christian's heart and the Christian's life in this the house of his pilgrimage! Give me rather to stand with the three in the furnace seven times heated, and the Son of Man with me there; or with Daniel in the den of lions, and Jesus with me there; yea, a thousand times rather, than to recline or walk, or feast, in the palace of a king, if the King of kings be not with me there!

From this contrast of the two states and stages of experience, as they affect the Christian in his own heart and life -- giving to his course the cast of sadness and sighing under bondage in the one case, and of exultant joys in the glorious liberty of conscious deliverance in the other -- we must now pass to these things as they affect the Christian in the power of his usefulness as a soldier of the cross, and as a worker together with God in the spread of His gospel. But this must form the subject of another chapter.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-edwin-boardman/who-shall-deliver-me-from-the-body-of-this-death/>

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