

Freedom  
*from the*  
Seven  
Deadly  
Sins

BILLY GRAHAM



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*Freedom from the Seven Deadly Sins*

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# Preface

With great expectation, the release of *Freedom from the Seven Deadly Sins* is adapted from Dr. Billy Graham's popular long-running radio program *Hour of Decision*. This series was broadcast seventy years ago as God opened doors for this beloved gospel preacher to proclaim the good news of God's love and forgiveness and Christ's salvation. Lifting up God's written truth, he stepped into the global arena saying to millions of listening ears: "You have not come to hear what I have to say, but what God has to say!"

Glean from Dr. Graham's powerful points that explode with passion for living life God's way. This revered author stated, "I have never met a person at peace who practices sinful behaviors. For Pride causes us to stumble. Anger is our enemy. Envy and Greed exact a terrible price.

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Laziness defeats us. Impurity scorns. And Gluttony causes our minds to dwell on indulging earthly satisfactions. Instead, the Bible says, ‘Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh’ (Galatians 5:16).”

We are pleased for this book to emerge in the twenty-first century with the message that still resonates in human hearts, delivered by the most influential evangelist of the twentieth century. People from around the world come to study his work and ministry documented in every form of communication known to humanity. The historical treasury and the perpetuation of his ongoing ministry is fully displayed at the Billy Graham Archive and Research Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. His well-respected literary collection continues to declare the Word of God—that never changes—because it stands the test of time and lives on in power and grace, just as the Bible says.

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# Introduction

After a minister had spoken strongly against sin one morning, one of his members said, “We don’t want you to talk so plainly about sin because if our boys and girls hear you mention it, they will more easily become sinners. Call it a mistake if you will, but do not speak so bluntly about sin.”

The minister went to the medicine shelf and brought back a bottle of strychnine marked Poison. He said, “I see what you want me to do. You want me to change the label. Suppose I take off this ‘poison’ label and put on some mild label such as ‘peppermint candy.’ Can’t you see the danger? The milder you make the label, the more deadly the poison.”

For decades, we have been putting a mild label on sin. We’ve called it “error,” “negative action,” and

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“inherent fault.” But it is high time that we put a Poison label back on the poison bottle and not be afraid to be as plain as the Bible is about the tragic consequences of sin.

Pope Gregory the Great, at the end of the sixth century, divided all sins under seven heads. He said that every sin that a person commits can be classified by seven words. He named the sins: pride, anger, envy, impurity, gluttony, slothfulness (laziness), and avarice (greed). They have been called down through the centuries as “the seven deadly sins.” These sins are nowhere collectively mentioned in a single passage in the Bible, and yet they are all condemned separately in many places. Thomas Aquinas and most of the great theologians have agreed with Pope Gregory, and these seven deadly sins have become a recognized part of moral theology.

These sins also became the subjects of poets. The scheme of Dante Alighieri’s “Purgatory” follows the order of the seven deadly sins. They are also discussed fully in Geoffrey Chaucer’s “Parson’s Tale” and in Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*.

# Pride

*“When pride comes, then comes shame;  
but with the humble is wisdom”*

(PROVERBS 11:2).

**T**he first of the seven deadly sins is pride. It naturally comes first—for as we read in Proverbs 16:18, “Pride goes . . . before a fall.” Pride is thus the mental and moral condition that precedes almost all other sins. All sin is selfishness in some form or other, and pride consists essentially of undue self-esteem, delighting in the thought of one’s own superiority over his fellows. Scripture reminds us, “Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; though they join forces, none will go unpunished” (Proverbs 16:5). Again in Proverbs 29:23 we read, “A man’s pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor.”

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The pride that God loathes is not self-respect or a legitimate sense of personal dignity. It is a haughty, undue self-esteem out of all proportion to our actual worth. It is that egotism which is repulsive to both humans and God. It is that revolting conceit which swaggers before individuals and struts in the presence of the Almighty. God hates it. It is an abomination unto Him, which means that it makes Him shudder. God has told us in Psalm 101:5, “The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I will not endure.” God cannot stand or endure pride. He hates it!

Pride may take various forms, but it all emanates from the haughty human heart. Some take pride in their looks, others in their race, others in their business, others in their social life. In other words, pride may be spiritual, intellectual, material, or social. The most repugnant of these four is spiritual pride. This pride of the spirit was the sin that caused Lucifer, the devil, to fall. This is where sin actually began.

We read in Isaiah 14:12–15,

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!  
How you are cut down to the ground, you who weaken the nations!

For you have said in your heart: “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;

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I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north;

“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.”

Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.

Here we find Lucifer saying, “I will,” five times. *“I will be above God.”* It was the pride of his heart that was the first sin ever committed in the universe. When we, like Lucifer, begin to feel that we are self-contained and self-sufficient, we are on dangerous ground.

Spiritual pride, because it trusts in one’s own virtue rather than the grace of God, is earmarked for God’s judgment. It induces in us a contempt for others and makes us contemptible to those about us. It says with the repulsive Pharisee of old, “God, I thank you that I am not as other men are.” It is smug, self-satisfied, and full of conceit. God loathes spiritual pride because it presumes to be good in its own right. It is the strutting of a tramp clad in filthy rags who imagines that he is the best dressed of all men. Spiritual pride would be humorous if it wasn’t so tragic. God has sounded a stern warning for these descendants of the Pharisees. He has told us in James 4:6, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

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There are some people who think they have a corner on the gospel. They have become conceited, smug, proud, and pharisaical. There are others that glory in their self-righteousness and think that they are better than other people. They don't do this, and they don't do that. They keep the letter of the law but have long since forgotten the spirit of the law. They are guilty of spiritual pride. There are also others who think themselves to be pure and all others impure. They have forgotten that there is no such thing as a completely pure church. Jesus taught that the chaff and the wheat would grow together, and that we would not be able to distinguish them until the end of time. Yet we have many Pharisees today going about trying to throw the chaff out of the wheat, doing that which God said could never be done until Christ comes again. We have many going about pulling specks out of other people's eyes when they have beams in their own eyes. They have a haughty, superior, "chip on the shoulder" attitude. They spend their time criticizing and gossiping about others. This is the worst pride of all.

Another form of pride is intellectual pride. The Bible says to those who suffer from this kind of spiritual delusion, "Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as

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he ought to know” (1 Corinthians 8:1b–2). This kind of pride manifests itself in arrogance toward the unlearned, the illiterate, and the oppressed. It forgets that our mental capacities were given by God, and that the knowledge we attain is largely the labor of others. Is this a reason for intellectual arrogance? Paul said in Romans 12:16, “Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble.”

The Greek philosopher Plato (fourth century BC) once entertained some friends in a room where there was a richly ornamented couch. When Diogenes of Sinope entered Plato’s house, he trampled upon his carpet, saying that he “trampled on the empty pride of Plato,” to which Plato retorted, “How much arrogance are you displaying, O Diogenes! when you think that you are not arrogant all.”<sup>1</sup>

Intellectual pride is too often the enemy of the gospel of Christ because it gives its possessor self-confidence rather than God-confidence. We read in Proverbs 3:5, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.” But the intellectually proud are not like that. They like to put God in a test tube, and if He cannot be put in a test tube, then they cannot accept Him. They do not like to lean on Him and trust Him. They cannot understand that faith goes beyond

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learning, knowledge, and even reason, and accepts that which may not even appear logical to the mind. To have knowledge without faith is to use only half of your mind. The psalmist said in Psalm 111:10, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”

True religion, contrary to the conception of some, increases your intellect rather than distracts from it. Paul, himself an intellectual, said in Romans 12:2, “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The kind of intellectual pride that is given to intolerance, bigotry, and smugness, God hates. God abhors intellectual pride. He says in Proverbs 26:12, “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

Still another manifestation of pride is the pride of material things. Material possessions, like other blessings, flow from God. The Lord says in Deuteronomy 8:18, “And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth.” In 1 Chronicles 29:12 David said, “Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all.”

In material pride, self is enthroned instead of God. Secondary things are exalted to a place of first importance, and life gets out of balance.