

Romans

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Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

[0 : 00] As the Lord may help me to speak for a short time this afternoon, I will ask your attention to the Epistle to the Romans, the twelfth chapter, the first verse.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Epistle to the Romans, the twelfth chapter, the first verse. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

I'm sure you good friends at Union Chapel, and others for that matter, always like to hear your late beloved pastor's name mentioned, and some of his characteristic sayings brought for you again.

For, you know, he had certain very characteristic sayings, and this is one of them. He said, there's thanksgiving and thanksgiving.

[1 : 49] And that's very true. There is thanksgiving, and there should be. But it shouldn't end at that. There should be thanksgiving as well.

He meant, of course, by thanksgiving, that our lives should be a tribute of thankfulness to God, as well as the expression of our tongues.

Now, my text expresses exactly that. This is thanksgiving. I thought, well, if we read thanksgiving psalms, sing thanksgiving hymns, and offer a thanksgiving prayer, it would be very suitable, and with the Lord's blessing profitable, if I attempted a thanksgiving sermon.

Well, now, this is as I have said, exactly that. The apostle so expresses the mind of the Holy Spirit in this way.

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice. Now, that's thanksgiving, to present your bodies a living sacrifice.

[3 : 13] And so you perceive that the subject is in the nature of a gospel admonition resting upon the gospel principles.

That is, to say, the mercies of God. For there is, as you know, a very deep and great difference between legal commandments and gospel admonitions.

And they differ in different ways. They differ in different ways. For instance, they differ in the manner of their expression.

Now, the commandments of the law has a demanding note about it. Thou shalt, and thou shalt not. And, of course, that is entire agreement with the principle of law as such.

The law requires commands and denounces. But now the gospel speaks differently. It doesn't speak in a way of demanding, but of beseeching.

[4 : 37] There is a true gospel ring in this word, I beseech you. The law doesn't beseech, it commands.

The gospel beseeches. There's a difference in the way in which the commandments of the law and the admonitions of the gospel are expressed.

And then further, to make this point clear, there is a difference between the foundation principles on which the law rests and the foundation principles on which the admonitions of the gospel rest.

Now, the requirements of the law rest upon our creatureship. God has a right to the obedience and service of those that he has created with faculties capable in their nature, though alas so alienated by sin, but capable in their nature of rendering that obedience to God.

That he requires. For it should be understood that God requires in his law nothing but what man in his creatureship as created was capable of rendering.

[6 : 22] that he is not capable of rendering it now and so comes under the condemnation of the law is entirely owing to sin.

Now, the commandments of the law rest on the principle of creatureship. Now, the admonitions of the gospel rest on the principle of God's mercy and love and grace and upon that new creatureship that the Holy Spirit creates in the hearts of all who are born again.

And I'll just mention another point while I'm trying to make this clear to you.

And that is that as these two, the commandments of the law and the admonitions of the gospel differ in the spirit in which they are expressed and the principles on which they rest, so there's a great difference in the spirit in which they are to be obeyed.

All gospel obedience must have in it the spirit of gospel affection, of a gospel spirit, so that that obedience is not rendered for life, this do and thou shalt live, but from life.

[7 : 53] Because life has already been imparted to the soul by the Holy Spirit and so rendering that soul able to feel and respond to the gospel principles of God's love and God's mercy.

Well, now, that is all I need to say upon with regard to that distinction. But it is a distinction I feel needs to be understood and needs to be felt.

Because as long as we're under God's law, we can only feel a sense of guilt and condemnation. But when we are brought by faith from the law to the gospel, then we feel a different influence acting upon our spirit and attracting an obedience to God's word and will of an entirely different nature.

So the apostle, in this admonition, in which he would direct believers to present their bodies a living sacrifice, puts it thus, I beseech you therefore brethren.

But he doesn't leave it only on that principle of a tender entreaty, but he puts before them the consideration that should and would, if it were blessed to them, dispose their hearts to do what he beseeches them to do.

[9 : 36] And that is the mercies of God. So now I will speak to come at once to that principle.

I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God. For unless anyone so feels their need of God's mercies and are so blessed to feel the richness, sweetness and effect of God's mercies, of course they cannot enter into the fullness of this word.

But I hope those of us who have been favored may this day feel to respond to this word. The chapter breaks the connection which I think is rather a pity in this context.

For of course as you know the original epistle was not at all divided into chapters at all. Now the last verse of the preceding chapter connects very well with our text.

For of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be glory forever. Amen. The connection is this.

[11 : 04] All the mercies that my text brings before our minds they're all from him they're all through him and they're all to him.

See? They're all from him all true mercy in any way whatever in which it comes to us it all has its source its eternal spring in the very heart of God.

For God is essentially he is infinitely merciful no words can express and no mind can understand and no heart can fully experience what mercy there is with God.

You see everything with God is infinite without bounds without comprehension we can only say of it as the apostle said oh the depth he speaks of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God and we might equally say oh the depth of that mercy that flows from that infinite merciful heart of God to such sinners as we are.

I thought when I read that sound this afternoon about the river of God being full of water how like the mercy of God that is. It is like a river that is full of mercy and flowing from a source that can never lessen never dry and never cease to flow forth in such boundless streams of mercy.

[13 : 02] It's all of him it's all of his it's all of his compassion tenderness towards us that the mercy of God flows so constantly from him and you see it all through him and we can quite rightly see the Lord Jesus Christ in this according to that word every mercy every favor comes to us through Jesus blood if ever the mercy of God has come to me and I verily feel it has and to you and surely I must be speaking to some who have felt that it has come to them well it's all come through Jesus Christ for God has so appointed it that it is only through the merit and person of the mediator that he can justly and rightly show such boundless mercy it's all through

Jesus Christ he is the mediator between God and men it is all through his merit it is all through the atonement that he has made for sin that mercy comes to us and as I have sometimes said and sometimes felt that the mercy of God and every spiritual blessing for that matter coming as it does through Jesus Christ seems to gather into it something of the sweetness and savour and richness of his very name and person and brings that with it into our hearts just like perhaps water that may flow through some particular channel gather something into it from the channel through which it flows and conveys it

I'm sure there are times my friends when God's mercy not only comes to us so sweetly and richly that we feel a sense of the dear Redeemer's love his dying love and precious blood in it and as it is so so our hearts look for it and pray for it in that way mercy through blood I make my plea mercy through blood oh God be merciful to me for of him and through him are all the boundless streams of God's mercy and it is well indeed that it should be so because this answers to the feeling that we have of our unworthiness that God's mercy should come to us and that is a right feeling to have but the sense of our unworthiness should not make us feel as though we could not pray for and hope and hope for

God's mercy to come to us because it cometh through one who is always infinitely worthy God's mercy comes worthily through Jesus Christ to unworthy sinners like we are and then as God's mercy is of him and through him so it is always to him for whatever comes from God in a way of grace or mercy or blessing to our heart always returns to him in a way of praise and thanks giving it's all to him and never to ourselves nor to any other creature or minister who may perhaps have been instrumentally in his ministry a means through which the mercy of God has come still we don't we we don't ascribe it to the instrument but to him alone well now there's something

I feel very beautiful spiritually and experimentally in this I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that are of him through him and to him that you present your bodies a living sacrifice now let us consider then for a few moments this theme of the mercies of God because that is fundamental to the whole subject I wish I could speak of God's mercy this afternoon with a feeling I once had in my heart under the inflowing of God's mercy that perhaps if I did it I shouldn't be able to speak at all really I remember once I was so favored in a time of affliction and times of affliction haven't always been times of favor to me spiritually

[18 : 59] I've said sometimes I've had my darkest and my brightest times in affliction my most depressing and my most uplifting but one of the sweetest times I had in affliction was in the Kent and Sussex hospital when the Lord so favored me with the inflowing of his mercy into my soul that I just couldn't speak it was with me as that him expresses it dissolved by thy mercy I fall to the ground and weep and I did literally weep to the praise of the mercy I found I'd like to preach God's mercy this afternoon with that feeling without being overcome with that emotion thy mercy my God is the theme of my heart the joy of my heart and the boast of my tongue now I wish it might be today the joy of our heart and I wish it might be in that right sense the boast of our tongue well perhaps it might be if the

Lord would bless what little I might be able to say concerning it let us consider then the mercies of God in different ways first in the somewhat general way and then if I might be so directed in a more distinct and characteristic way for instance I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God because they are so continuous every day the mercies of God surround us it isn't a question of our feeling in this matter so that if we are not under a sense of God's mercy God's mercy is not surrounding us no God's mercies are so continuous in some ways they continued to us from the day we were brought into being in this life at all

God's mercy surrounded us in our infant days they surrounded us as we grew up into life they surrounded us if our hearts turned away from the ways of truth they surrounded us if we were preserved in the ways of truth they surrounded us if after a wandering in our mind and our spirit and our ways we were brought back again to his dear feet they've surrounded us all our days even to this time oh how constant how unfailing how faithful are the mercies of God the Selmist said concerning them if I should number them they are more than the hairs of my head they are without number then again this should affect us that the mercies of God are so suitable to us in every way of our need there's a certain suitability of God's mercy to us our needs are very very very great but

God's mercy meets our need at every point in every feature in every necessity whether physically providentially or spiritually we can never be in such a case as that the mercy of God is not suitable to meet that case and relieve our need in it the mercies of God are so varied and they meet our need in so many ways and the mercies of God too are so such a nature as I've said as to affect our spirit there's something so very softening in a sense of God's mercy so humbling so attracting to him so uplifting so sanctifying for there's nothing like a personal feeling and experience in matters like this to theorize about

God's mercy is one thing to feel our hardness depart under its thawing influences is another and then it is that we can truly present our bodies a living sacrifice continuous undeserved varied and heart affecting our God's mercy I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God let us consider God's mercies more in detail where can I begin or end God's mercies we may regard in providential ways of course and that will occur to you this afternoon that it is a suitable word for a thanksgiving service but rather

[25 : 02] I will dwell more upon God's mercies in their spiritual bearing not but what God's mercies in providential ways call for our thanksgiving and in physical ways as well some of us have had a wonderful experience of God's mercies in appearing for us and strengthening us and healing us and delivering us from afflictions with some of us severe afflictions that have brought us to the gates of the grave and the mercy of God has appeared for us and it's a merciful healing that has restored our strength our sight perhaps or some other trial physical trial that we may have been under it was God's mercy whatever means were used but let us come to the spiritual side of it

I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God well let us fall to consider God's pardoning mercy for mercy really is especially for our case with regard to our sinfulness of course the expression mercy must not be limited to the forgiveness of our sins the very expression mercy really means compassion tenderness and regard for one who is in distress or in trouble such a regard as disposes the one who shows mercy to relieve and comfort and heal the Lord Jesus said concerning the good

Samaritan who when he saw the man wounded and robbed and half dead went to him and poured oil and wine in his wounds and provided for his other necessities the Lord said which of the three was neighbor to him that fell among thieves and the man answered rather reluctantly perceiving to what the allusion tended the still he couldn't have saying I suppose he that had mercy on him now there's no question of the goods of marriage and forgiving the other man anything it was a question of his compassion and tenderness and responsiveness to the poor man's distressful condition that disposed him to relieve and comfort and provide so that mercy in the term must not be confined to the point the one point of forgiveness but with us feeling as we do that it is with regard to our sinfulness that we especially need God's mercy and because

God's mercy does appear for us in the forgiveness of our sin we tend very much to join together mercy and forgiveness but there is mercy in forgiveness who is a God like unto him that pardoneth the transgression of a remnant of his heritage he retaineth not his anger forever that is he is not implacable unwilling to pardon once offended slow to forgive no he retaineth not his anger because he delighteth in mercy and because he delighteth in mercy what then he will turn again he will have compassion upon us and he will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea that's God's mercy and he delights in it and that's a very encouraging word because consider my friends that if a person even as we measure this matter by our own very small measure but still we know that if a person delights in anything he will do that more readily and to a greater extent than though he would do it if in some way a necessity was laid upon him necessity will make a person do as much as they must and no more but delight will make a person do all they can beyond what is necessary because they delight to do it and that's our small measure but God condescends to use that to express how readily how freely how fully his mercy moves to sinners he delighteth in mercy if he delights in mercy then he will show mercy very readily especially now there's no reason why he shouldn't through

Jesus Christ so the psalmist says as high as the heaven is above the earth so great is his mercy toward them that fear him that is in forgiving all their greatness of sin for though my sins one says like mountains rise and swell and reach to heaven mercy is above the skies above those mountains infinitely above them and I shall stand forgiven mighty is my guilt's increase and that's something to feel distressed about and ashamed of mighty is my guilt's increase but mightier thy mercy store then love me freely seal my peace and let me rove no more

[31 : 56] I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that pardon every transgression cover every height of sin cast all the guilt into a depth that can never be fathomed the depths of the sea they will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea don't you feel that this is a good gospel for a poor sinner to preach to sinners one who has felt his own guilt and felt the mercy of God in pardoning it that has said time and time again have mercy upon me O God according to thy loving kindness and according to thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions isn't it a good gospel for one who has prayed that prayer over and over and over and sometimes felt that

God has regarded it to stand before you this afternoon and besiege you brethren by the mercies of God consider my friends how the mercies of God reach us in our sad wanderings and they are sad wanderings and baronizing wanderings too because wanderings of heart from the Lord are sure to bring us into barrenness of soul and that's a bitter experience and we may be in that for a long time too if I might so say it's much easier to wander than it is to have our sense of nearness and peace and comfort restored in our hearts I believe that the

Lord chastens his children for their backslidings by withholding from them the comforts and consolations of his love and his presence and his favor because there are no consolations of whatever may be our trials and distresses there are no consolations like the love of Jesus Christ which is the love of God in Jesus Christ in our hearts like a sense of peace calming our troubled spirit and giving us to feel that it is well that comfortable spiritually comfortable quietness of mind and spirit as it is written when he giveth quietness who then can make trouble the answer is simple no one can while that quietness prevails in the heart backslidings of heart of affection of desire neglect of God and perhaps the throne of grace bring us into a very desolate and soul impoverished state and we say

Lord do bless us again do visit us again the visit doesn't come nor the blessing fall upon us and that may well be God's way of chastening God's way of chastening by withholding the consolations and comfort of his love but is that always so always to continue no that's a good word of the Lord by the prophet Jeremiah it's a true gospel word I will heal their backsliding I will love them freely for why mine anger is turned away and that doesn't mean penal wrath but fatherly displeasure at their ways my anger is turned away and I will heal their backsliding and how does he heal their backsliding but with a fresh and renewed sense of his rich mercy for when we are wounded by sin and scarcely a prayer can repeat then the mercy that heals us again is mercy transportingly sweet there's no question my friends but the more we know experimentally it may be through very painful ways but the more we know experimentally of God's mercy the richer and deeper and sweeter and more wonderful that mercy is made to us to appear to be

I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God the mercies that are forgiven so many much sin and restored your and my wandering spirits so many times and then I would like to speak as well as I can of God's mercy in its healing virtue the psalmist in the 103rd psalm appears to have been in a very favored state of mind the mercies of God were evidently resting upon his spirit very sweetly and causing a response from all that was within him or at least the psalmist desired that it might be so bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me well David why why says God's mercy has healed my soul who healeth all by diseases now God's mercy is healing to the soul sin is wounding sin always wounds every sinful thought wounds conscience really leaves its defect we can be very much wounded by sin and it isn't only wounds but there's a malady within us sin is a malady a disease of the soul now there's only one remedy for that malady

[39 : 10] God's healing mercy that puts everything right let me mention another point now I'm trying as best I can to preach the mercies of God and to exalt this divine perfection of his gracious character I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that continually sustain your spiritual life we live spiritually on God's mercy spiritual life is a wonderful life in the nature of it it is really the life also of Jesus Christ in our mortal bodies it's brought forth in us by the Holy Spirit in regeneration no one lives to God before they are born again but when they are born again though they do not immediately feel to be alive to God that spiritual life is already brought forth in their soul that's

God's mercy quickening mercy but that life needs to be continually maintained it is not self-sufficient it is not that once the Lord gives a man spiritual life then he can live and live because that spiritual life is sufficient for itself it's anything but that it's certain it will never die once it's been imparted eternal life is eternal life and you cannot make that to be eternal life that may come to an end but you know there's a difference between possessing life and living that's just to say between the principle of spiritual life in the soul and its spiritual activity now for our spiritual activity the activity

I mean of faith in believing hope in hoping love in loving prayer in praying humility in humbling for all this we need God's mercy to continually sustain and influence and revive that spiritual life full counselors forever if God visits us with his mercy makes his mercy sweet in its influence effectual according to our need every spiritual principle revives under it and responds to it all we do with all our heart believe in a merciful God we do love him we do hope in his mercy we do feel attracted to his precious name I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God why if I did know more this afternoon and what little I've been able to say if I did know more than draw forth afresh the longing of your heart that God would again visit you manifest his mercy to you and in you bring afresh forgiveness of sin healing restoration and spiritual communion and make everything right in your soul before God that you may feel as God wrong then if I could be the means of drawing forth from your heart again a real deep ardent longing for God's mercy well then you haven't heard unprofitably

I close with that word that comes upon my mind suitable to him that remembered us in our lowest state for his mercy endureth forever that redeemed us from our enemies for his mercy endureth forever that giveth food to all flesh for his mercy endureth forever oh give thanks unto the God of heaven for his mercy endureth forever amen friends will please remember the collection this Thanksgiving day is for this cause of God and truth