

Romans

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Preacher: Collier, Gilbert (1900-1984)

[0 : 00] The word on my mind is found in the epistle of Paul to the Romans, the sixth chapter, and the word's found in the seventeenth verse.

The seventeenth verse of the sixth chapter of the Romans. But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

The sixth chapter of the Romans, the seventeenth verse. It is requisite for all creatures to render thanksgiving to God.

We owe our being and our breath to him who made all things.

And all the sustenance that we receive from the beginning of our days to the end comes from the hand of God.

[1 : 51] All providential good is his gift bestowed so wondrously and liberally upon even those who are enemies of God and who are alienated from God by their wicked works.

It is requisite for all men, therefore, to thank God. And yet how very few do.

Human ingratitude is one of the solemn features of man's depravity.

Human ingratitude is one of the solemn features of man's depravity. And even we who profess to be his people, how far short we come in right, humble acknowledgement of God.

The believer's complaint against himself is his ingratitude of time, failing to recognize the wondrous goodness of the Lord and the all-sufficiency of his providential provisions.

[3 : 43] We are here today for this end and object of recording our thanksgiving unto God.

And while we do so for the bounteous provisions that once more have been afforded to us and to all mankind in God's faithfulness and goodness, in the supplies that have come from the earth, we need to thank God for these things.

But I hope we shall come this afternoon into a thankful spirit for those greater mercies, for those lasting benefits, the benefits of his grace, of which our text speaks and sets forth before us so wonderfully of the mighty, glorious works of a mighty God and of mighty grace.

And those of you here who have thankful hearts for these things, I hope by God's grace through our meditation you will be made more thankful.

and if there are any who have never been able to thank God for these mercies, I do humbly hope that through God's rich goodness to your soul it may be a beginning of thankfulness unto God in your experience.

[5 : 49] for while all men must and should and have great cause to thank God for many wonderful things temporal in character, only a comparative remnant can truly thank God for such wondrous mercies as are set forth in our text.

And I do trust you may see that you are among those who can, like Paul, say, God be thanked.

What a wonderful thing it is, my friends, to really recognize the hand that supplies our need.

And not to fail in as many are capable of doing or even recognizing or acknowledging even in the least manner the goodness of him upon whom we utterly depend for all things.

It's appalling spectacle that oft times is presented to us, to our minds, of the ingratitude of our fellow men, who take all things temporal for granted, as if they not only control them, but receive them as a right and also were worthy recipients.

[7 : 54] The gross ungodliness is a very appalling thing, even in our nation and even among our own people.

there was a few years ago I remember some people saying, we are not having a harvest thanksgiving service this year for we do not feel it right to thank the Lord for what he has not given.

and I remember the same people the following year saying to me that they had had half the crops that they had had the previous year and I said, well I will remember that last year you said there was no thankfulness to God.

all the appalling wickedness and hardness of heart that is capable of manifesting itself even in our fellow men and in our own hearts also.

Well now to come to the text Paul says let God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin. He is not thanking God that they were servants of sin because that would be no reason whatsoever to thank God for God abhors sin in every shape or form and he abhors it in his people but what Paul is saying here by the spirit is this that he thanks God that these people of whom he is speaking were servants of sin but are not now servants of sin.

[10 : 12] You see he uses the past tense they were servants of sin but a mighty wondrous change has taken place which God has accomplished and accomplished by his grace and that change has been so vital and fundamental that has altered entirely everything in regard to these subjects of grace that now they no longer serve sin but are the servants of God.

This is what he is thanking the Lord for. He's thanking God for that tremendous wondrous grace wondrous grace that God has put forth to save his own and to deliver his own from the bondage and corruption of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God and what greater wonder there can be the best that ye were the servants of sin and when he thanks God there's no doubt whatsoever that he has in mind that glorious trinity of persons in the

Godhead the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost for all the divine persons in the glorious Godhead are engaged wondrously incomprehensibly in the salvation of poor guilty sins in the bringing of such out of the depths of the ruin into the precious mercies and sweets and enjoyments of salvation he thanks God he attributes therefore rightly so all the glory of this great change and this great deliverance to God and to God alone there's no semblance of that sentiment here that we often hear in other places that man takes a part or must play some part in his salvation or as some poor blind men have said that

God cannot save unless men are willing to be saved as I once heard a man say which appalled me in the time when I heard it a sinner can hold God at arm's length and say to God thus far thou shall come and no farther not a semblance of that sentiment is found here in God's truth God be sent God first God last and in everything and in all things let God be praying for all the glories and wonders of salvation so God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin it's a kind of rejoicing a hymn of rejoicing for the liberation of a slave what that what a wonderful moment it must have been to those poor slaves when they were emancipated from their terrible servitude and

Wilberforce the statesman who was largely instrumental in bringing about that liberation was undoubtedly a man who knew something of the slavery of sin and the bondage of corruption and the liberty of the gospel and I believe it's not incorrect in this that he had many consultations with John Newton who in his unregenerate days was engaged in slave trading and consequently sank to the very lowest possible depths of human degradation and yet was lifted up by God's grace to such prominence

[15 : 58] Newton knew a great deal about slavery in the human sense of the word and doubtless he could see the great advantage of being liberated and Newton loved the gospel all the more because of what it had done for him and how it had delivered him from the very depth lifted him up to the great heights of confidence and hope salvation God be thanked that ye were once slaves but now ye are free God be thanked for all the means used in that liberation we were reading this afternoon of that wonderful declaration made by God concerning his people shall the captive exile or the captive be freed shall the lawful captive be freed lawful captive something very different from the slave captive in the human realm here was a captive that was lawfully captivated captivated by reason of the law and its requirements and demands you might almost say a doubly enslaved creature is a sinner he's in captivated by his own guilt and sin and he's captivated barred from all hope of liberty by the law the law will never give an inch of hope to a sinner you know the law demands but gives us neither feet nor hands to obey but the

Lord asks that question shall the captive be delivered shall the lawful captive be delivered and then he answers the question that he places and he says this they shall be delivered and all the wondrous of that deliverance the greatness the magnitude of it the richness of the grace that accomplishes it the mighty power of God's love in Christ that brings it about so then here is a great and wondrous song of thanksgiving for the liberation that God has accomplished by his grace it's not a liberation from a sentiment or an ideology or anything of that kind it's a liberation from a state of bondage guilt and sin estrangement from

God ignorance of God total disobedience of all that he is and all that he commands and here is the glorious wondrous deliverance from it God be thanks well you know my dear friends if you have any realization in your soul or any experience of this the wonder of it and if there has been measured out to you the precious grace of God that has brought you out of that captivity made you hate the chains and long for real liberty and if the Lord has come and taken off those terrible chains that once you loved and have set you free your very heart and spirit rises up with the dear apostle and says

God be thanked God be thanked so then we come to the second thing that he thanks God for and it's a very important thing indeed he says this God be thanked that he were the servants of sin but he have obeyed from the heart I love that word you know from the heart it seems to strike at the very reality the very core of all true spiritual experience it's from the heart not the mind only great many people can have good changes great changes in their minds and many people can have a vast reformation even in their lives but their heart may never be touched never be taught never be affected by the grace of

God the heart my friends real religion is essentially a heart religion all through from beginning to end it's there that the Lord deals with his people it's there that he plants his own image it's in the heart that he makes the springs of the grace to rise to flow and there he makes his people know the power and reality of his love the Lord said on one occasion he said this he said out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speak you know good many people you can come across in your experience in life they speak well but you know somehow the heart isn't behind it all and what can be more empty or more unprofitable and unreliable than a speech that is not joined with the heart and

[23 : 54] I dare say you feel sometimes very guilty when you come to the Lord and the throne of grace that your words have not been in true alignment with your heart you've asked the Lord to forgive you and your prayer has been many a time Lord make my heart right and let my words come forth out of my heart and then the apostle Paul writing to the Thessalonians he says this the Lord direct your hearts into the love of Christ you see all these scriptures show to us how important a heart religion is you never can find anything lastingly real or satisfying in a formal religion or there's an amount of it all over the world a great deal of it in you and me we need to be delivered from it we need the work of

God's grace to bring us right out of a formal religion we fall into it naturally so easily there's something about us that is so suited to form we feel there's reliability in it and it's an essential need for us if we are to show to any creature our religion we must have a form but here is something that is outside the realm of form altogether heart that ye have obeyed from the heart from the heart and my dear friends I believe when the Lord gives you a real thankful spirit for his grace he will give you also a very tender heart and a very soft heart we do need this we cannot give it to ourselves and we often lack it in a great measure but a touch of a divine hand the communication of divine love to ourselves softens so sweetly and brings the sinner down with weeping eyes at the feet of a beloved

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ yes but ye have obeyed from the heart and then you see he says ye have obeyed and now what is this obedience well first of all it's a contrast a tremendous contrast to the disobedience and doubtless Paul would have us know this that these poor sinners whom he thanks God on their behalf here in our text were sinners that had come to know and realize the great difference between disobedience and obedience they were one time children of disobedience they turned away and from everything godly and gracious they had no fear of

God in their heart no desire to follow him or to obey his voice they were children of disobedience and they came to realize it and now gladly willingly in the day of God's power they fall humbly before him seeking his will desiring no will but his and longing for him to guide them teach them and lead them forth obedient to the heavenly vision and I think God this dear writer of the epistles of the Romans he knew and he would have us know also what this obedience means when he came to

King Agrippa before him and related to him the wonderful dealings of the Lord with his soul on the way to Damascus he says to him in such beautiful language you read it in the Acts he says oh King Agrippa I heard at midday I heard a voice from heaven speaking to me in the Hebrew tongue Hebrew tongue his own tongue the Lord doesn't speak to his people in a foreign tongue you know he speaks to them plainly he makes them understand in words that they can understand and by acts of mercy that they can well receive and know he speaks he spake to me in a Hebrew tongue he says and said unto me

[30 : 00] Saul Saul why persecutest thou me and I said unto him who art thou Lord he said I am Jesus and then he says to Agrippa after telling him what the Lord commanded to him and gave him he says I have not been disobedient to the heavenly vision that's what it means my friend when Christ commands his people obey you know one can be obedient where there is no command but where there is then sweet obedience follows by the same grace that commands the sinner to repent so we have obeyed from the heart and then another aspect of this obedience is certainly seen in the walk conversation and attitude of these poor sinners of whom

Paul thanks God on their behalf for their wonderful deliverance it's an obedience of attitude you know grace and only grace will make our attitude toward a multitude of things vitally different it makes the attitude of a sinner to sin altogether fundamentally to be changed once we loved sin naturally did and delighted in it was pleased with its scope and its fruits but now through grace we are given a heart that hates even and mourns over sin and cannot be comfortable in sinning who feels grieved at the very approach of it and dreadfully guilty at the stain that is received by it the whole attitude is changed by grace of a sinner towards sin and again it's a total change in regard to the world you know we find so often the world is very close very near to us affects us more than we realize it does comes into the church has its influence even among the godly but it's not the outward world but the inward world that the attitude is changed totally so by grace and what a needful thing this is to have a real change of attitude toward the world if ye were of the world said the dear redeemer the world would love his own but because ye are not of the world but

I have chosen you out of the world therefore the world hateth you and it hateth you because the attitude you take toward the world is totally changed only grace can do it you know it's a wonderful thing and you come to think of it my dear friends that God keeps his people in the world does not take them straight away to heaven when he gives them grace why does he do it to teach them that though they are in the world they are not of the world that's what he does it and he will do it that will be the outstanding feature of all his dealings with all his people they will be taught this that the world is not their home not their rest that they look for another home and another city whose builder and maker is God and there's another change change in allegiance an allegiance to man to self and to all things wonderful change when there's an allegiance formed in the heart to

Christ loyalty to the Lord is a very blessed grace loyalty to his dear name our dear martyr fathers they had loyalty to the name of Jesus they loved it so dearly that they were ready to lay down their lives for the sake of his dear name that's loyalty wonderful change grace makes you see to turn the heart right round from alliance and allegiance to sin and the world to self to all things that are good and great among men to follow the Lord to be ready to esteem the reproach that it belongs to him and his people far greater of value and importance than all the wealth of this world that is allegiance which only grace can form do you find your soul drawn to

Jesus Christ do you feel there's one that you can never leave though you oft times fear you may be left to do is the one that is supreme in his attraction one whose dear person and name draws your affection and binds your soul so sweetly are there times when you can be called off every other thing however attractive absorbing or commanding it may be and you're given no pleasure in it your pleasure is placed in pleasing him this is real gracious allegiance to

[37 : 51] Jesus Christ God be thanked for it oh it'll be a wonderful thanksgiving day if we can see this feel this in our own souls and it'll be worthy thanks to be rendered to God for this that ye from your hearts have obeyed and what have you obeyed the form of doctrine not not a doctrine of form but a form of doctrine and that is not doctrine in a formal way or a formal sense but it is this the precious formation of the gospel all the fullness and glory of that gospel ye have obeyed from the heart the gospel of

Christ gospel of salvation ye have obeyed it says the apostle and thanks be to God for it for disobedience but thanks be to God that the gospel has ever had any effect upon us some of all of us here in this chapel this afternoon can say with truth that we have heard the gospel some of us many times and for many years and perhaps the most faithful presentation of the gospel that it is possible to hear but that is not the point has it ever been made graciously effectual in our own souls and cases has the Lord dealt with us through the gospel applied his own sweet grace and power to our hearts in the gospel this is what

Paul is thanking God for not only for the gospel itself which is glorious beyond all comprehension but for the powerful gracious effect of the gospel in the heart life and experience of all the true believing people of God God be thanked well my dear friends may the Lord enable you and me to thank him for these proofs these favors we do desire to thank the Lord for the providential good bounteous harvest health and strength continuity of our comforts and our liberties these are great favors we would desire to thank the Lord for them but here is transcending causes for our thanksgiving as many of us as can thank God for our salvation in Christ through the gospel in our hearts amen

I would just say that the collection today is for the gospel standard aid and poor relief society