

- ***READ Colossians 3:12-17*** In Paul's letter to the church in Colossae, he puts great emphasis on allowing our faith in God and Christ Jesus to dominate our lives. Notice the language that he uses just in these few verse we just read. He tells those who have been chosen in God to make sure that their hearts are set upon these godly characteristics. Not just that they should do these things, but that they should be these things. He says that the peace of Christ ought to rule our hearts, and that the word of Christ ought to richly dwell within us. Every ounce of our being is to be consumed by God and our Savior Jesus Christ, and he solidifies this truth by stating that everything we do ought to be done in the name of Jesus Christ.
- In these verses, Paul also puts great emphasis on making sure that those who are in Christ recognize that they ought to be a thankful people. Three times in these six verses, I see that Paul mentions being thankful. And it isn't just that we ought to be thankful on the inside, but he shows how our thankfulness can be expressed externally. That thankfulness that should fill our hearts can so often be expressed through our singing. We know that when we sing we are speaking and expressing our thoughts and our hearts to one another. If we are a people, as we ought to be, who are thankful to our very core then it would make sense that much of the message of our singing is one of thanksgiving. There are many songs that we sing that express strong messages of thanksgiving, but maybe none speaks so beautifully of this thought than *"O Thou Fount Of Every Blessing."*
- Some weeks back we looked at the song *"Night With Ebon Pinion"* to consider some of the unfamiliar language in that song, and I had many people express gratitude for finally understanding what ebon pinion meant. I want to consider this song along the same lines because in this beautiful song we sing of a couple of things that might not seem all that familiar to us. For starters, this song which is over 250 years old speaks of Ebenezer and fetters. Last I checked, the words thankfulness and Ebenezer don't quite go together well in my mind because I think of Ebenezer Scrooge from the Christmas Carol. He certainly wasn't a man who was thankful, so what was Robert Robinson referring to when he put in the line, *"Here I raise my Ebenezer?"* And what is a fetter, and how does it bind my heart to God? These are questions that I hope to answer this morning, and it just seemed to work out really well to consider the song on this Lord's Day with the holiday of Thanksgiving right around the corner. Let's be able to truly sing with the understanding when we sing this wonderful song moving forward by considering the message of *"O Thou Fount Of Every Blessing."*

I. God is the source of all blessings.

- A. Let's first consider the opening words and establish the main theme of this song. The opening words are actually the title, *"O Thou Fount Of Every Blessing."* But who? Who or what is being referenced as being the fountain from which every blessing flows? This imagery is certainly a beautiful one in that when we sing this song, our minds probably image something of what we see on the background of our slides. We sing of this fountain from which flows blessing upon blessing, but who or what is this fountain? Of course, we know and understand that this song is sung as a song proclaiming that God is the one from whom all blessings flow.
- B. This idea of God being the source of blessings is one that is extremely common throughout the entirety of Scripture. Consider some of the following verses where inspired writers simply took the time to proclaim the goodness of God and His never ending blessings:
 - 1) *"Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them: The Lord bless you, and keep you; The Lord make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.' So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them.' (Numbers 6:22-27)"*

- 2) *"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, Yet those who wait for the Lord Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary." (Isaiah 40:28-31)*
 - 3) *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him." (Ephesians 1:3,4)*
 - 4) *"You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:15-19)*
 - 5) *"Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures." (James 1:16-18)*
- C. When we sing this song, we are simply reemphasizing the plain teaching of Scripture that all blessings are a result of our Father in heaven who loves us so greatly. But it isn't just that we declare that this is a statement of fact and leave it at that, but this song goes on to speak of the natural response that ought to be had from our understanding that God is the fountain from which all blessings flow.

II. His blessings call for a response of praise and adoration.

- A. *"Tune my heart to sing thy grace; streams of mercy never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise. Teach me ever to adore thee; May I still thy goodness prove"* This is that natural response that should overflow from our hearts when we consider the blessings that are continually flowing from God onto us. That is exactly what we read earlier from **Colossians 3:12-17**. The natural response is for us to be so thankful for who God is, and what he has done for us that we can't but help to sing praises to the name of God and glorify His name.
- B. Throughout the Bible we see this response from numerous individuals who were experiencing the blessings of God, and they thought it a good thing to sing about it.
 - 1) *"O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, let us shout joyful to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms." (Psalm 95:1,2)*
 - 2) *" Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the Lord Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations." (Psalm 100)*
 - 3) *"...Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises." (James 5:13)*
- C. It isn't just that we are proclaimed and declaring that God is the fountain from which every blessing flows, but this song is the natural outpouring of our thanksgiving to our God who is just so good to us. We must recognize that our thanksgiving to God should be expressed more than just on the 4th Thursday of November. In fact, I would say that every first day of the week is a day of thanksgiving and outpouring of gratitude toward our God who has been so good to each and every one of us. None of us are excluded from the goodness of our God that fills us with more than just thanksgiving.

III. We are filled with joy and love as we look back and consider all that He has done for us.

- A. This song goes on to express how the goodness of God produces within each of us joy and love for God for His blessings. "While the hope of endless glory, fills my heart with joy and love." We express these feelings of thanksgiving because we are a joyous people who have come to love our God so much for the blessings that continually flow from Him. It is at this point of recognition of our situation...that we are helpless yet helped by a great God...that we come to the portion of the song about Ebenezer.
- B. *"Here I raise my Ebenezer; hither by thy help I've come; and I hope by thy good pleasure safely to arrive at home."* So what exactly is being referenced here? This unknown/well known portion of the song comes from **I Samuel 7**.
 - 1) In this portion of the story of Israel, they are embattled with their old foes the Philistines. Israel is camped at Mizpah, and the Philistines are gathering to go up to meet them, and the Israelites are afraid. They go to Samuel and beg that he might *"not cease to cry to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines."* (**I Samuel 7:8**)
 - 2) So Samuel takes a lamb, sacrifices it, and cried unto the Lord that He might deliver the Philistines into their hands. The Lord came to the aid of His people and created a great thunder that confused the Philistines to the extent that Israel was able to easily defeat them.
 - 3) It was after this point that Samuel takes a stone and sets it between Mizpah and Shen. He names this memorial stone "Ebenezer," and said *"Thus far the Lord has helped us."* (**I Samuel 7:12**) The next verse goes on to tell us that the Philistines were no longer a burden to Israel all the days of Samuel because the hand of the Lord was with Israel against this enemy. (**I Samuel 7:13**)
- C. From this story, we come to understand that when we sing *"Here I raise my Ebenezer"*, what we are singing is a declaration that one of God's greatest blessings that He has given us is that His hand is with us in this life against those who might seek to defeat us. When we sing this song, we are being reminded, as that memorial rock would do, that our God is the one through whom we have made it all of this way. The truth is that when each of us sings this song, it should bring to mind the different journeys in which each of us has traveled thus far in this life. We are a diverse group of people who have come from many different places, but we have all arrived at this point in our lives because of God's grace and mercy through Jesus Christ. *"Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God; He to rescue me from danger interposed His precious blood."* We might have gotten here from different places, but we have all arrived here because of the same great God who's hand has been with us and who's hand we hope will continue to go with us.

IV. His grace and love demand our full devotion.

- A. We must remember that memorial stones that are erected and songs such as these are sung are not simply used as a means of looking back, but they also serve as means of encouraging us moving forward which is where the final verse of the song takes. *"O to grace how great a debt daily I'm constrained to be. Let Thy goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to Thee; Never let me wander from Thee, never leave the God I love; Here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above."*

- B. It is that grace of God which *"has appeared, bringing salvation to all men."* (**Titus 2:11**) But the thought we are singing isn't just that it has appeared, but that it continue to be with us, and thus we should continue to live in it. Yes, God's grace has appeared and we enjoy the blessings of it in the fact that we are forgiven of our sins through faith in Jesus, but Robinson goes on to express his deepest desires to continue to remain in that grace. *"Let Thy goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to Thee."* A fetter is a type of restraint, that keeps the wrists or ankles close together so that a person cannot escape anywhere fast. They don't allow a prisoner to get away from his/her captor. This is the imagery that Robinson is looking for going forward with God.
- C. We might consider what Paul said in **Romans 6:16**, *"Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?"* The imagery of Robinson is quite accurate, and he is expressing his desire, and we are expressing our desires to be bound to God through the grace which has been given to us. We are expressing our desire to never wander away from Him, but to continually be living in that grace that will seal us for those courts that we hope to be in one day.
- D. Back in **Titus 2**, we see how it is that we can live in that grace and be bound to God. It is through allowing God's grace to teach us how to live rightly in this life. It is through deny ungodliness. It is through looking forward in hope. It is purifying ourselves through Jesus so that we might be zealous for good deed. (**Titus 2:12-14**) Through be committed to these things, our hearts truly can and will be sealed for that home above, and nothing that this world can throw at us will free us from the love of God. (**Romans 8:37-39**)

There are some songs that we have sung all of our lives, but because we haven't taken the time to truly examine the words, we are often robbed of the powerful thoughts and meanings that these songs put forth. I can't tell you how many times I have sung this song in my life, but I can tell you that from here on out, I will sing it with a renewed sense of understanding as to how it is that God truly is the fount of every blessing and what that truly means to me. I hope you will be able to say the same thing as we go on from this day singing this great and beautiful song.

PRAYER *Father, we certainly acknowledge you as the fount of every blessing. It is through Your love alone that we are blessed as we are in this life. We are in awe of the fact that you love each of us individually and that you would collectively love all of mankind to the point that you would give your Son as a ransom for many. May each of us be able to sing this song with renewed fervor, and may we all truly raise up a declaration that it is only by your hand that we have made it thus far, and that only by your hand will we make it home. Strengthen us to always give our hearts to you, and if there is one here this morning who has not...we pray for them to do so. May you continually seal our hearts for that great day of judgment and may we be all found righteous in Your sight. In Jesus our great Redeemer we pray, amen.*