

Being Thankful

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[0 : 00] Our God is worthy and deserving of our praise, isn't he? And I hope that we remember that.

! Romans chapter 9.

We've kind of been working our way through Romans. And the book of Romans really lays out the gospel message. The message that Jesus Christ came to share with this world and with us. And that continues here in Romans chapter 9. And we are going to begin in verse 14 of Romans 9. And I know you just sat down. But if you found that, I'm going to ask if you're able, if you would stand as we read God's word this morning.

Romans chapter 9, beginning in verse 14. And this is what God's word shares on this day. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

[1 : 22] For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. And I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.

For the scripture says to Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Therefore has he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens. You will say then to me, Why does he yet find fault for who has resisted his will?

Nay, but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor?

What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared to glory, even us whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.

[2 : 38] As he says also in Hosea, I will call them my people which were not my people, and her beloved which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said to them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God.

Let's bow our heads this morning. Lord God, as we come to you this morning again, we thank you. Lord, I thank you for just each one of us that have come into your house today. I thank you for from the young to the old.

I thank you for all the children that are here, and just, Lord, the blessing of family. And I pray, Lord, that each one of us would just have our ears and hearts opened right now to the message you have for us. Help us to understand that you do have a message for us, not for the person that's beside us, for our spouse, our parent, our children, our grandparent, but, Lord, for each one of us.

So help us to truly listen. And, Lord, I pray that we would respond to your word. And, again, we just thank you for your presence in this place. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

You can be seated today. You know, as we look at this scripture in Romans, there's some things that I think that maybe are hard to not understand, but hard to admit to, that as Christians we need to make sure that we fully comprehend.

[4 : 00] In verse 15, it says, Who is the one that shows mercy? God.

What is mercy? Not getting what you deserve. So, if mercy is not getting what you deserve, then it is really important to understand what we deserve.

And this is the part that sometimes we don't really like thinking about. But what do we deserve? And the reason I ask that is because our world tries to tell us that we deserve a lot, doesn't it?

You really think about it, and the world around us will try to tell us, Well, you certainly deserve to be happy, right? To do whatever you need to do in life to make yourself happy. You deserve that, right?

Right? What else do you deserve in life? What else does the world try to tell us that we deserve? All you can get. We deserve to be able to go out there and accumulate and get whatever we can.

[5 : 05] We deserve that much. What else? How about respect? Does the world teach us you deserve respect from everybody around you, right?

All these things the world tries to tell us we really deserve. And we live in a society where what we think we deserve keeps growing and growing. We think we deserve to have a life where we're happy.

We deserve to have a life where we have wealth. We deserve to have a life where all of our needs are taken care of. We really live in a world where that is conditioned into us. We deserve more and more and more. What is it, as human beings, that we truly deserve?

We don't really deserve any of those things, do we? But what we do deserve, in God's eyes, is what?

Think about this for a minute. Apart from God, what do we really deserve? Punishment. Well, we don't like to hear that, do we? Why do we deserve punishment?

[6 : 08] How many of you like to be punished? I mean, when you were kids, you thought when you woke up in the morning, I really hope I get punished for something today. We don't like that, do we? And we do everything we can to avoid punishment, right?

I mean, think about it. Even when you're a young child, and this was impressed on Tammy and I so very clearly with our first child. Hannah was only, you know the circumstance I'm talking about. I've probably shared it before. She was only like two years old. And Caleb over here was a baby. I mean, like you'd carry him around in the thing. He couldn't crawl, he couldn't roll over, he couldn't do anything yet.

Four weeks old. See, my wife has a much better memory than I. Caleb here was about four weeks old. And what did Hannah do? I don't remember what she did.

She did something. Then lay the road. Yeah, I thought you'd remember, because I don't. Hannah did something. And we ask her, Hannah, did you do that? And she knew that if she said yes, guess what?

[7 : 10] She was going to get punished for it. She was only two years old. So we ask her, Hannah, did you do that? And what do you think she said? No. No. I didn't do it.

She even went further than that. You know what she said? Caleb did it. And we're like, Caleb can't even roll over yet, Hannah. He did not do it.

You did. And that really made the impression on us. You know, we didn't teach her to lie. We didn't say, Hannah, this is how you get out of trouble.

You lie about it so that you don't get punished. We didn't tell her that. How did she know to do that? And it didn't work, obviously. She got punished. But how did she know to lie to try to get out of that punishment?

How did she know that? It comes naturally, doesn't it? That is the fleshly part of us. Apart from God, that's what's left.

[8 : 08] That fleshly part. That sinful part. And we don't have to teach that to each other. That comes out naturally. And apart from God, because of that sinful nature, do you realize what we deserve?

Punishment. We deserve punishment because of that sin. And that's why God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, so that we don't have to have that punishment. God sent His Son because God is a merciful God.

Mercy is not giving someone the punishment that they deserve. And it says here very clearly that God is a merciful God. And the thing that we have to understand in verse 16, it says, It is not of Him that wills, nor of Him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.

We don't do anything to earn that mercy. We're not good enough to do anything to earn that mercy. God shows it to us because our God is a merciful God.

We haven't earned it. We can't do enough to earn it. No matter how much we do, we still can't do enough. We're not capable of it. And again, that's something for us, I think we sometimes have a hard time with, to realize that there are things in our life we are not capable of.

[9 : 23] Again, what does the world try to tell you? You can do anything. You put your mind to it. Is that true? I mean, it sounds good, but is that true? It's not true.

You know, we tell kids that. We tell kids in school that. You can do anything you put your mind to. But really, when you think of the truth of that, that isn't factual.

You know, when I was younger, one of the things I enjoyed, I enjoyed playing basketball. I wasn't very good at it, but I enjoyed it. Played through high school. But if I had said, All right, I want to be an NBA player, and I'm going to put my mind to it, I think that would have happened.

Everybody go like this. It would not have happened. I remember one practice we had, my coach was talking to the whole team, and he said, Look at Baker over here.

He's a slow white guy that can't jump. And he was right. I was slow. I couldn't jump. I wasn't all that good. No matter how hard I worked, I wouldn't get there. I couldn't.

[10 : 27] Not possible. Just like if I told you to stand over at this wall and jump and land clear over here at the other end of the room. Could you do that? Some of you are like, I can't jump at all.

Of course I couldn't. What if you train? What if you really put your mind to it? It's just not possible, is it? The same is true when it comes to earning God's mercy.

We're not capable of it. It doesn't matter how many good things we do in our life. And so often that's people's thought. If I just do enough good things in life, it's going to outweigh the bad things I do, and I'm going to be okay.

Have you ever talked to people with that mentality? My good just has to outweigh the bad? That's a nice thought, but again, guess what? It's not true. There is no amount of good that we can do that's going to earn God's mercy.

It is not us. It's not of Him that wills it, nor of Him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. We have to understand that. God chooses who He's going to show mercy on, and you know who He's going to show mercy on?

[11 : 32] Those that follow His Son, Jesus Christ. Those that accept Jesus Christ. If we do that, God says He's going to show our mercy, His mercy on us. Folks, that's a wonderful thing, isn't it?

Do you like to get out of punishment? I do. I guess nobody else does. And you know, when we start talking about the punishment that the Bible speaks of, the sin that we have, if we don't accept Jesus Christ, and I know often we don't like to hear this, but what is the punishment for that sin?

We don't have Jesus Christ to forgive our sins. What is the... Everybody got real quiet. Did you notice that? What is the punishment for that sin? Death. Okay, we can say death, and that's true, but what does that really mean?

Death. Hell. We don't like to hear that word either, do we? Folks, the reality is, the sin in our life, if we don't accept Jesus Christ, that sin is going to remain there, because He's the only way to have our sin forgiven.

And if we have that sin in our life, there is a penalty, there is a punishment for that, and that is death, but that means an eternity in hell. That is what the Bible says, period. It's not Pastor Chris just up here talking.

[12 : 44] That's what the Bible says. There is a punishment for sin, but God is merciful. He doesn't want to give us that punishment. That's why He sent His Son, Jesus Christ.

And you know, you may be thinking, what does all this have to do with Thanksgiving? You know, this is our Thanksgiving kind of service. We're having our meal afterwards. What does all this have to do with Thanksgiving? Well, folks, it should have everything to do with Thanksgiving.

But so often, we start thinking about Thanksgiving, and we think of things we're grateful for, and things we're thankful for. And what comes to our mind so often? What are some of the first things that come to our mind? That's what should come to our mind.

But you know what often comes to our mind? First, we're thankful for the food we have to eat. We're thankful for the homes we have, the shelter, the family around us. And don't get me wrong. Should you thank God for all those things?

Yes. But you know what we need to thank Him for even more than that? For His mercy. For His plan for us.

[13 : 45] That He can make a home in heaven for us. That we can have our sin forgiven, so that we don't have to have that punishment. Folks, that is what we need to truly be thankful for. More than just the physical, we need to be thankful for the spiritual things in our life.

That is vital for us as Christians and as believers. And, you know, it goes on to talk about that. Look on down in verse 25. It says in Hosea, and this is from the Old Testament in the book of Hosea, I will call them My people which were not My people, and her beloved which was not beloved. You know what we need to be thankful for? That we can be the people of God. That we can be part of His family. That is what we truly need to be thankful for. We need to think about what we were and what we are.

It says, those that were not My people have become My people. You know, that is a story for each one of us, isn't it? Before you accepted Christ, if you have accepted Christ, but before you did, were you the people of God?

Were you part of God's family? No. But when you accept Christ, you become part of the family. Is that something to be thankful for? Yes.

[15:05] You know, to be part of God's family, to be His people, folks, that is an amazing, miraculous thing. To be part of God's family, but it also means that there are some things God expects of us.

I want you to turn in your Bible, turn on back in the Bible to 1 Peter, because it also talks about being God's people. Turn to 1 Peter.

Chapter 2. I know I always say these are verses I like. There are a lot of verses I like. 1 Peter 2, verses 9 and 10.

And this is talking, if you're a believer, if you have Christ in your heart, this is talking to you. Okay, so it's talking to all of us that are believers. But you are, it doesn't say you might be, it doesn't say you could be, it says you are.

You are a chosen generation. You're a chosen generation. Why are you chosen? Why are you chosen? Because Jesus chose us.

[16:10] Jesus called to us and said, I want you to accept me. I want you to be part of God's family. I want you to have a relationship with God. Does it feel good to be chosen? Oh, you didn't have any hesitation about that.

It feels good, doesn't it? We know what it's like to be chosen. It's a good feeling. It says we are chosen. But it doesn't end there. You are a chosen generation.

And then it goes on to say you are what? A royal priesthood. Do you feel royal this morning? I don't know.

Do you feel like a priesthood? We don't even really maybe understand what that means. What does it mean to be a royal priesthood? Having access to the king?

You know, in the Old Testament they had a priest, right? And the priest is the one that made sacrifice for all the rest of the people. That was the priest's job. But really what his job was to be the go-between between the people and God.

[17:12] To bring people into the presence of God. That was the job of the priest. If we are a royal priesthood, what does that mean our job is? You think it means it's our job to bring other people into a relationship with Christ?

Everybody say yes. That's part of our job. Being part of God's chosen people means that we need to share with other people to bring them into the family too so that they can have a relationship with God.

How are you doing at that? You don't have to answer out loud. I'm just asking. How are you doing at that? Are you sharing with other people? Are you introducing them to Jesus Christ? Are you telling them what it means to be part of God's family?

That's part of being a royal priesthood. And you know what? It's a pretty special position. God says that's what He has given us. A royal priesthood. It doesn't stop there. It also says we are a what? Holy nation. Do you feel holy? What does it mean to be holy? Without sin.

[18:17] That's what it means to be holy. How many of you feel holy? Why do we sometimes not feel holy? How many of you did something wrong this week?

Admit it. I'm guessing probably all of us did, didn't we? Whether it was... And sometimes you think, well, I didn't physically do anything wrong.

I didn't hurt anybody. I don't think I lied to anybody. Did you have any thoughts you shouldn't have had? Did you have any jealousies? Did you have any grudges? Did you have any of those things? Were you, and you all know, this is one of my many faults, were you driving and got angry at somebody that you shouldn't have?

Did you think thoughts about them you shouldn't have thought? Okay. That's all sin, right? Right? Some of you are like, yeah, that happened on the way here. I hope none of you are like, that happened out in the parking lot.

I hope that isn't it. But we all fall short. We all sin. That is why we sometimes don't feel holy because we recognize that we sin. But again, it says that we are a holy what?

[19 : 20] A holy nation. We are holy. So how are we holy? We don't feel it. How are we holy? Again, we haven't earned it. It's nothing that we do. It is through Jesus Christ.

When we have our faith and trust in Him and our sins are forgiven, all those shortcomings we have are forgiven. That is what makes us holy. It's nothing that we can, we're not good enough to do that. If you resolve this morning, I am not going to sin this week. I am not going to do it. I'm going to go this whole week, no sin at all. How long do you think that would, how long do you think you could do that?

Some of you are like, yeah, I wouldn't get out of the parking lot. Really, how long do you think you could do that? An hour? An afternoon?

Maybe? A day? That would be a long time, wouldn't it? Again, it's something, folks, that we cannot do on our own. We can't. Look at the person next to you and say you can't do it.

[20 : 24] I know that's not something we do very often, isn't it? Again, most of the time, we want to tell each other, you can do it. But look at them and tell them, you can't do it. Tell them. For those of you not up front, my wife looked at me, you can't do it.

With way too much pleasure. And she said, neither can she. That is the reality of it. And we're not used to telling people you can't do it, are we?

That's not a normal thing. But is that reality? We cannot do it. And that, folks, is why we need to so much be thankful for the mercy of God.

Because apart from Him, we are not good enough. We cannot do it. It is only because of God's mercy and His forgiveness that He shows us through His Son, Jesus Christ, that we can ever be holy.

Are we thankful enough for that? Probably not. But I hope we're reminded of that this morning. And we've got to get to the last one. It says, we're not just a holy nation, but we are a what?

[21 : 36] Yeah. I always like the way the King James puts it. It says, we are a peculiar people. Interesting word, isn't it? I know, you're thinking the person next to you is a little peculiar.

What it really means is, it means we're different. It means we're supposed to be different. We are supposed to be different from the world around us. And you know, I've been reading through, again, so much of the Old Testament.

And in the Old Testament, especially in the books of law, you get into numbers and some of those where God says that people need to do this and this and this. And there are a lot of things that people needed to do.

But so many of those things were so that they wouldn't be like all the other nations around them. God expects us to be different from the world around us. That doesn't mean better than the world around us.

It means different in that we follow, we follow something different than the rest of the world. We don't follow the thought of the day. We don't follow what's popular of the day.

[22 : 40] We follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. We are to be different in that way. And finally, I want you to look at the last part of verse 9 in 1 Peter chapter 2.

You're a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people that you should, what does should mean? It means this is what you ought to be doing, right?

That you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light. What does it mean to show forth the praises?

It means praise God. It means to be thankful. Praise and thanksgiving, really, they tie together in a lot of different ways. We're not going to talk about the difference, but to praise God. It means to thank Him.

It means to give Him our gratitude, to show our gratitude to God. That we should show forth the praises of the one that has called us out of darkness. He took us out of darkness. That's what we were. And He put us in what?

[23 : 38] The light. That's what we are now if we have Jesus Christ. We weren't holy and now we are. We weren't His people and now we are. We were sinful and now we're not.

We weren't holy and now that's what God has done in our lives. Can we do it on our own? Do we deserve it? Did we earn it?

But God allows us to have it because of His mercy and His grace and His love. This week I know we celebrate Thanksgiving. And Thanksgiving can mean a lot of things to us.

Often we just think about getting together with family. We think about eating a lot of food and we think about those kind of things. And that's all good. But I truly want to encourage you this Thanksgiving to remember to thank God.

Not just for those physical things in your life. Thank Him for those. Thank Him for the spiritual things. The mercy that He has shown you. The darkness that He has taken you out of.

[24 : 37] The sin that He's taken you out of. And the light that He has brought you into. Thank God for that. Thank God that you can be holy in His eyes because of what Jesus did. Because again, could you do it without Jesus?

No. Remember to thank Him for that. And you know, this morning if you're here, if you've never accepted Jesus Christ, guess what? You're still in this group over here that's not holy in God's eyes. But all you have to do is ask Jesus into your heart and believe in Him. Believe what He did for you and have a desire to live for Him and ask Him to forgive your sins. And you know what God does then? He takes you out of the darkness and brings you into His light.

He makes you into something holy. If you've never done that, make that decision this morning. Don't put it off. Ask Christ into your heart this morning and maybe you did that many, many years ago.

If you have, remember to thank God for what He has done in your heart and in your life. Let's bow our heads. Lord God, we just thank You once again for this morning that You have given us.

[25 : 41] And Lord, I pray that You would remind us what You have done. That we, the ones that were not Your people, You've made us Your people. The ones that weren't holy, You have made us holy. It's nothing that we've earned, nothing we've done on our own.

But it's because of Your mercy and Your grace. It's because You loved us enough to send Jesus Christ to live and to die for us that when we put our trust and faith in that, that we become holy. That when You forgive our sins, we become holy in Your eyes. We're not capable of it apart from Jesus Christ. Help us to remember that and be thankful for that.

Lord, if there's anyone here that has never accepted Jesus, I pray this morning would be the morning they do that. And Lord, for those that accepted Jesus many years ago, remind them of what that means, of the difference that it makes, of the mercy that You've shown.

And remind us to show forth Your praises and to be thankful for the spiritual change that You've made in our hearts and in our lives. Thank You for all these things, Lord, and it's in the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

[26 : 44] Amen. This morning as we sing, the altar is open. If you have a need, come and talk to God about it. If you want me to pray with you, I would love to. If you just want to come to the front and pray and talk to God, that's okay too.

The altar is open as we sing. Becky, this week we just want to encourage you to remember as you're thankful for the physical things in your life and for the spiritual things in your life.

Remember who you need to be thankful to and that is the God that has given us every good gift in our lives. So remember to be thankful to our Lord this week. Remember that we have a meal prepared.

We invite each one of you and I hope you all stay as we share together. It should be pretty close to being ready down there so as we dismiss in prayer, we're also going to ask God's blessing on our food. So let's bow our heads as we pray.

Lord God, thank You again for this time that You've given us. Lord, we thank You for Your Word and I pray that You would just remind us that the things that You have given us are not things that we have earned. But Lord, they're things You have given us because of Your mercy and because of Your grace.

[27 : 46] And Lord, we have so much to be thankful for. Remind us of that and help us to be a people that are thankful. Lord, we are thankful for the food that's been prepared and the time we can share together as we eat it.

So just bless this time we have to fellowship together. Watch over each one of us, Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ we pray and all God's family said, Amen. God bless you and have a wonderful

Thanksgiving.
Please stay for the meal too.