

THEN SINGS MY SOUL 5 **“COME THOU FOUNT”**

Robert Robinson had a rough beginning. His father died when he was young, and his mother, unable to control him, sent him to London to learn barbering. What he learned instead was drinking and gang-life. When he was 17, he and his drunken friends reportedly visited an even drunker fortune-teller. Relaxed by the alcohol, they laughed as she tried to tell their fortunes and futures. But something about the encounter bothered Robert, and that evening he suggested to his buddies they attend the evangelistic meetings being held nearby; led by the Methodist Evangelist, George Whitefield. They intended to ridicule, pester and interrupt the meeting.

Whitefield was one of history's greatest preachers, with a voice described as part foghorn and part violin. That night he preached from Matthew 3:7: *“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”* Bursting into tears, Whitefield compelled; *“Oh, my hearers! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!”*

Robert immediately sobered up and sensed Whitefield was preaching directly to him. The preacher's words haunted for nearly 3 years, until December 10, 1755, when he gave his heart to Christ.

Robert soon entered the ministry, and three years later at age 23, while serving Calvinist Methodist Chapel in Norfolk, England, he wrote a hymn for his sermon on Pentecost Sunday. It was a prayer that the Holy Spirit would flood into our hearts with His streams of mercy, enabling us to sing God's praises and remain faithful to Him, throughout our days. “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” has been a favorite of the church since that day. It has been edited and reduced to the three verses contained on page 400 in our hymnal...but originally it was written with these five verses: follow in your hymnal and notice the differences:

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it, Mount of Thy redeeming love.

Sorrowing I shall be in spirit, Till released from flesh and sin,
Yet from what I do inherit, Here Thy praises I'll begin;
Here I raise my Ebenezer; Here by Thy great help I've come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure, Safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger, Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger, Interposed His precious blood;
How His kindness yet pursues me, Mortal tongue can never tell,
Clothed in flesh, till death shall loose me I cannot proclaim it well.

O to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above.

O that day when freed from sinning, I shall see Thy lovely face;
Clothed then in blood washed linen How I'll sing Thy sovereign grace;
Come, my Lord, no longer tarry, Take my ransomed soul away;
Send thine angels now to carry Me to realms of endless day.

Did you see it? Without question this is a hymn of praise for God's great Fountain of Blessing, but there is a deeper meaning, a richer theme, a darker reality, a daunting issue, a personal struggle...did you see it? It has to do with sin...and that shall be our subject for this morning. There are five lines in the original song that deal with Richard's struggle against sin. Unfortunately, only one of those lines has endured the editing, and thus, it is not surprising that some miss the reference...we will not miss it any longer!

The problem of sin is an ever present reality in our world. The newspapers and televisions bring its ugly reminders to our homes every day. The sliding scales of justice, fairness, law, and even mercy have attempted to erode the severity and reality of sin, but its ultimate consequences will never be eradicated. Our sin-soaked, guilt-laden, smut-filled, evil-dominated, world..."out there"...has come home to roost in America, in North Dakota, even First UMC...shoot...even in my heart...and yours too!

We all can learn a valuable lesson from Richard Robinson's personal struggle with sin...*Prone to wander, Lord...I feel it...prone to leave the God, I love!* Today we are going to figure out how to deal with sin. It's a big deal, so we better get started

1. HOW TO DEAL WITH SIN BEFORE SALVATION...

...BE JUSTIFIED BY RECEIVING FORGIVENESS

"Sorrowing I shall be in spirit, till released from flesh and sin..."

For most of us, at least those who would be ultimately honest, before we met Christ, our lives were dominated by sin. John the Apostle said that all who sin; are slaves to sin. Some of us struggled more, some less, some committed more, some less, some with greater severity, some with less, some with more far reaching consequences, some with less...*but all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory that God has set before us!*

To live in denial of the sinfulness of human beings is to live as the ostrich with its head in the sand. I am continually amazed at political pundits; world, national, regional and even local leaders who while discussing the abyss into which many claim we are sliding...do nothing to recognize the innate and internal truth that we humans are a sinful bunch, and when left to our own devices...especially those beyond or before Christ...we will choose sin!

Jesus Christ was sent to earth by God, His father, to die on a cross, so that the power of sin might be broken, and so that the consequences of sin might be erased. That is the gospel...the Good News in a simple nut shell. That is the reality Charles Wesley wrote about in his famous Hymn: O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing...*"He breaks the power of canceled sin...He sets the prisoner free."* All who by faith acknowledge their sinful nature, and choices, can receive forgiveness and be set right before God, it's called being justified...just as if I'd never sinned. I know it sounds too good to be true...but it is. I know it sounds too easy...and it isn't! It cost God His Son, Jesus His life...and it will cost you everything you are, and everything you have.

The way we deal with sin (before we have met Christ) is to confess it, repent of it, and ask God to forgive it. Luke described it like this:

*...to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive **forgiveness** of sins...* Acts 26:18

2. HOW TO DEAL WITH SIN AFTER SALVATION...

...BE SANCTIFIED BY REMAINING FAITHFUL

*Clothed in flesh, till death shall loose me I cannot proclaim it well.
Prone to Wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love...*

Though I recognize the reality that there are likely a number of folks here today who have yet to deal with their sinning by way of Justification...I know the greater majority of us have settled our salvation, have been justified and forgiven. But I also know that there are many of us who still wrestle with the reality of our own sinfulness... even after we have been forgiven. The paradox of God's Grace, Jesus' forgiveness and our sinning; even after we have been saved has been the undoing of many well-meaning souls who couldn't come to terms with their sinfulness, their humanness.

It appears to me that though the answer is multifaceted in nature, it is founded on the principle that Sanctification, Christian Perfection, The Second Blessing, The Lordship of Christ, The Filling of the Holy Spirit, The Baptism of the Spirit...(all different ways of referring to the same experience)...are based on the principle that each is a process. Only a very few are Sanctified in a moment; most are made holy through a process of faithfulness; daily, even boring, faithfulness. John Wesley said "we are going on to perfection." The ironic reality of Sanctification, of living by faith; is that though there comes times of definite decision; those decisions are made and worked out on the anvils of life, as we repeatedly renew our commitments, our covenants, and our callings.

To deal with sin in our lives as Christians, takes a different approach. We can no longer rely just on the grace of God...we must now become some responsible for our own part in 'working out our salvation.'

That working involves learning daily, even hourly habits that keep us connected to the source of the power, and forgiveness. It's not that we are saved by grace and now must earn our sanctification; it's just that we bear a greater role of responsibility after we are saved. There comes a point when every child becomes responsible for feeding him/herself. We are sanctified by remaining faithful, and we deal with our sins after salvation the same way we did prior; we admit them, we admit our powerlessness over them, and we humbly ask God to forgive us, and help us keep ourselves in the proper places to avoid as much sin as possible, but confess it when we mess up.

Does it make sense to you that God would expect us to become more responsible for our sinning, the more we become like His Son? Doesn't it make you want to work harder to live by faith? Doesn't it make you want to become more like Jesus? It should! Listen again to Luke...the same verse:

*...to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are **sanctified** by faith in me. Acts 26:18*

3. HOW TO DEAL WITH SIN UPON DEATH...

....BE GLORIFIED BY FINISHING WELL

*O that day when freed from sinning, I shall see Thy lovely face;
Clothed then in blood washed linen how I'll sing Thy sovereign grace...*

I want to finish well...and that (for the most part...or at least some part) is up to me. I know God wants nothing more than to be ultimately faithful to me, and you...but I want to be more faithful, and finish well. I want to be like Paul at the end of my days:

*I have fought the good fight, I have **finished** the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7*

The road to heaven is literally littered with the lost souls of men and women, boys and girls who have begun an adventure of following Jesus, who got lost along the way. Maybe their sin after salvation was their undoing.

Maybe they just got lazy or bored, or apathetic. I don't know the reasons, and I don't really want to find out. I just want to finish well.

I want my life to have counted for something. I know the ever-present reality of sin both before and after being saved, and I'm embarrassed by both. But neither will undo me! I will struggle till my last breath to overcome my stupid humanness as far as sinning is concerned; and lay it down with great relief and joy on the day of my home-going. But until then I will embrace my spiritual humanness, as far as living is concerned. Christ is making me more fully human, not less human, the longer I go on with Him; you too! I pine for the day when my humanness is over, and the sinfulness that has dominated me down here is done; but I also lament that when that day comes, I'll cease enjoying this life and all its peculiarities that I have legitimately come to love. I look forward to being glorified...but not too soon; I'm having too much fun being a husband, a dad, a pastor, a friend, and a man. Not that I won't be those things in heaven, but I'll no longer have the tempering possibilities while rubbing shoulders with unbelievers, and other saved sinners just like me. No, I'll trade them for the sweet reunions with loved ones and friends whose sin struggles are over. I guess I'm just a little freaked out about getting angel wings.

Don't you want to finish well? Then you have to start well. If you have yet to settle the issue of your sins being forgiven; then begin at the Cross today. If you have been wondering about the fact you are still sinning...settle that issue with the Holy Spirit today. It's not that God will fix you up so you can't sin...it's that God will fix you up so you can't sin and enjoy it! Then we can finish well, be glorified, be prone to wander no more.

Here is where I raise my Ebenezer, my helping stone, my roadway marker, my altar of decision, my line in the sand. I've cast my lot with the God of the universe, and His Son its creator. I'm not what I'm going to be, but thank God I'm also not what I once was. I'm not finished, but I will finish well...by faith, by hard work and holy struggle, by God's good grace that's poured from His never ending fountain. AMEN and AMEN

THEN SINGS MY SOUL 5 "COME THOU FOUNT"

1. HOW TO DEAL WITH SIN _____ SALVATION...

...BE _____ BY RECEIVING _____

"Sorrowing I shall be in spirit, till released from flesh and sin..."

*...to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive **forgiveness** of sins...' Acts 26:18*

2. HOW TO DEAL WITH SIN _____ SALVATION...

...BE _____ BY REMAINING _____

*Clothed in flesh, till death shall loose me I cannot proclaim it well.
Prone to Wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love...*

*...to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are **sanctified** by faith in me. Acts 26:18*

3. HOW TO DEAL WITH SIN _____ DEATH...

....BE _____ BY _____ WELL

*O that day when freed from sinning, I shall see Thy lovely face;
Clothed then in blood washed linen how I'll sing Thy sovereign grace...*

*I have fought the good fight, I have **finished** the race, I have kept the faith.
2 Timothy 4:7*