

Hymn Focus: "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" by Robert Robinson

Text: Romans 5:6-11; James 1:17

Introduction

- **The Symptoms:** People struggle to keep things in tune. Guitars warp, pianos drift, and our spiritual lives naturally veer off course.
- **The Diagnosis:** The human heart is inherently prone to spiritual dissonance. Left to ourselves, we drift away from God and try to fill our lives from broken, earthly things and ideas that cause problems and discontentment.
- **The Truth:** God is the unceasing fountain of grace who tunes our hearts, rescues us from our wandering, and seals us for eternity.

I. Our Divine Help (The Source of Grace)

- **Hymn Lyric:** *"Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace..."*
- **Exposition:** God is not a stagnant pool; He is a fountain of living water. Because sin has warped our inner dispositions, we cannot praise or love Him on our own power. We must invite Him to mechanically tighten and adjust the "strings" of our hearts so we can harmonize with His holiness and yield to His will to love as he taught us.
- **Application:** Stop trying to fix your spiritual life with willpower. Ask the Divine Conductor to tune your thoughts, desires, and habits today. "Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be." - Thomas à Kempis, book The Imitation of Christ

II. Our Spiritual Ebenezer (The Remembrance of Grace)

- **Hymn Lyric:** *"Here I raise my Ebenezer; hither by Thy help I'm come..."*
- **Scripture:** **1 Samuel 7:12** — *"Then Samuel took a stone... and called its name Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.'"*
- **Exposition:** An "Ebenezer" is a "Stone of Help." In times of crisis, the human default is panic and amnesia regarding God's past goodness. Samuel built a physical monument so Israel would look back and remember God's deliverance during enemy threats and defeats. The Cross is our greatest remembrance of How, When, and Where Christ delivered us. Even the Sacraments serve as reminders of our salvation and the work of Christ which remain a present help in times of trouble.

- **Application:** What are the Ebenezers in your life? We must intentionally look backward at God's past track record to find the courage to move forward into unknown trials.

III. Our Persistent Shepherd (The Rescue of Grace)

- **Hymn Lyric:** *"Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God..."*
- **Scripture:** **Luke 19:10** — *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."*
- **Exposition:** Salvation is entirely initiated by Christ. We did not find God; He tracked us down. When we were rebellious strangers, Christ stepped into harm's way (*"interposing His precious blood"*) to ransom us from the grip of sin and death.
- **Application:** If you feel like a stranger today, realize that the Shepherd is actively looking for you. Salvation is not about your reach toward heaven, but His reach down to earth. God's heart is to save and restore.

IV. Our Heavenly Bond (The Security of Grace)

- **Hymn Lyric:** *"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; here's my heart, O take and seal it..."*
- **Scripture:** **Ephesians 1:13** — *"...you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit..."*
- **Exposition:** This point demands raw honesty. Even after salvation, we still struggle with the gravity of sin. We love God, yet we feel the urge to stray. The world is a sticky trap that entices us to fight and devour each other with even good things but not heavenly things. Our only hope is to ask God to bind our wandering hearts to Himself using His grace as a "fetter" (a secure chain), and to stamp us with the permanent seal of the Holy Spirit.
- **Application:** True security doesn't come from our grip on God, but from His grip on us. The evidence of this security is a continual pattern of confession, of repentance, of forgiveness and of reconciliation. We are becoming more and more like the One who is saving and helping us. His voice becomes the one we are getting tuned to. His help is the one we continually seek. His ways are the ways we look for and his thoughts mean more to us than anything else.

Conclusion

- **Summary:** God tunes us, remembers us, rescues us, and restores us.

- **The Challenge:** The story of the hymn writer, Robert Robinson, reminds us that the "streams of mercy" never stop flowing. If you have wandered, you have not outrun the fountain. If you are hurting, you are not far from the Helper.
- **Call to Action:** Come back to the fountain today. Let Him retune your heart, remind you of His goodness, and refresh you from His heavenly courts above.

Robert Robinson (1735-1790) had a rough beginning. His father died when he was 5 years old. As he grew older, he was too much for his mother to handle, so she sent him to London to learn barbering by age fourteen. Instead, he got good at drinking and gang-life. At age 17, he and his gang of bad intentions got a fortune-teller drunk on cheap gin and a free fortune reading. That night, Robert and his friends went to Whitefield's Tabernacle "to mock the preacher and pity his hearers." Instead, Robinson was haunted by Whitefield's sermon on Matthew 3:7: "Brood of vipers Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Whitefield wept as he warned his hearers of the Final Judgment. The Holy Spirit continued his work in Robert's heart for the next three years until finally, on December 10, 1755, he "found full and free forgiveness through the precious blood of Jesus Christ." He would soon write in his famous hymn "Come, Thou Fount":

*Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed his precious blood.*

Soon thereafter Robert thought about entering the ministry, and he started preaching hour-long sermons to himself. A couple of years later, at age 22/23, he returned home, got married to Ellen Payne, with whom he would have twelve children!

Robert set up an Independent Calvinistic Methodist church in town. Later he received adult baptism and eventually became a Baptist pastor. In January 1759, he moved to Stone-Yard Baptist Chapel, Cambridge (St Andrew's Street Baptist Church), where he remained the rest of his life.

An expression in the third verse of the Hymn seems to be prophetic in the later part of Robinson's life:

*Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love.*

Through intellectual search and the influence of the Unitarians, Robinson lapsed into sin, unstableness, and uncertainty about faith. It is believed he grew mentally unstable after the death of his 17-year-old daughter Julie in 1787. He faced a financial crisis that could have sent him to debtors' prison. And many of his friends had turned against him due to his broad tolerance of dissenting ideas from Orthodox Christianity.

In fairness to Robert Robinson, however, Bruce Hindmarsh wrote:

"Thinking of his suffering at this distance, the final verse of his great hymn takes on more poignancy. The verse isn't sung much anymore, but we can perhaps imagine Robinson at the end singing its first quatrain, trusting, as we all must, in Christ's "boundless grace" as the ultimate hope in the face of death:"

*On that day when freed from sinning
I shall see thy lovely face,
Clothèd then in blood-washed linen
How I'll sing thy boundless grace.*

**Keep Near the Fount of Blessing,
Preston**