

Serve the Lord with Gladness

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[0 : 0 0] Please take your Bibles and turn to the Old Testament book of Nehemiah, 1 and 2 Chronicles, then Ezra. After Ezra, you'll find Nehemiah in chapter 9.

We're going to begin reading in verse 5, the second half of verse 5, and we're going to read through verse 37. And let me give you a little bit of the context. After the remnant of Israel returned to Jerusalem from their captivity, they gathered together.

And for a quarter of the day, they stood and they heard their leaders declaring and explaining and reading the book of the law. And then they spent another quarter of the day in confession of their sins and in worshiping the Lord.

And so we're going to pick up the reading at their prayer of confession. It's the last half of verse 5. Stand up and praise the Lord, your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting.

Blessed be your glorious name. And may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry hosts, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them.

[1 : 3 1] You give life to everything and the multitudes of heaven worship you. You are the Lord God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham.

You found his heart faithful to you and you made a covenant with him to give his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Girgashites.

And you have kept your promise because you are righteous. You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt. You heard their cry at the Red Sea.

You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them.

You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day. You divided the sea before them so that they passed through it on dry ground. But you hurled their pursuers into the depths like a stone into mighty waters.

[2 : 3 6] By day you led them with a pillar of cloud and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the way they were to take. You came down on Mount Sinai.

You spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right and decrees and commands that are good. You made known to them your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses.

In their hunger, you gave them bread from heaven. And in their thirst, you brought them water from the rock. You told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them.

But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked and did not obey your commands. They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them.

They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

[3 : 50] Therefore, you did not desert them, even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt.

And when they committed awful blasphemies, because of your great compassion, you did not abandon them in the desert. By day, the pillar of cloud did not cease to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take.

You gave your good spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst. For forty years you sustained them in the desert.

They lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out, nor their feet become swollen. You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them even the remotest frontiers.

They took over the country of Sihon, king of Heshbon, and the country of Og, king of Bashan. You made their sons as numerous as the stars in the sky, and you brought them into the land that you told their fathers to enter and possess.

[4 : 55] Their sons went in and took possession of the land. You subdued before them the Canaanites who lived in the land. You handed the Canaanites over to them, along with their kings and the people of the land, to deal with them as they pleased.

They captured fortified cities and fertile land. They took possession of houses filled with all kinds of good things.

Wells already dug, vineyards, olive groves, and fruit trees in abundance. They ate to the full and were well nourished. They reveled in your great goodness.

But they were disobedient and rebelled against you. They put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets who had admonished them in order to turn them back to you.

They committed awful blasphemies. So you handed them over to their enemies who oppressed them. But when they were oppressed, they cried out to you.

[6 : 01] From heaven you heard them, and in your great compassion you gave them deliverers who rescued them from the hand of their enemies. But as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight.

Then you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they ruled over them. And when they cried out to you again, you heard from heaven. In your compassion you delivered them time after time.

You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances by which a man will live if he obeys them.

Stubbornly, they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen. For many years you were patient with them. By your spirit you admonished them through your prophets, yet they paid no attention.

So you handed them over to the neighboring peoples. But in your great mercy, you did not put an end to them or abandon them. For you are a gracious and merciful God.

[7 : 10] Now therefore, O our God, the great, mighty, and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love, do not let all this hardship seem trifling in your eyes.

The hardship that has come upon us, upon our kings and leaders, upon our priests and prophets, upon our fathers and all your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until today.

And all that has happened to us, you have been just. You have acted faithfully while we did wrong.

Our kings, our leaders, our priests, and our fathers did not follow your law. They did not pay attention to your commands or the warnings you gave them.

Even while they were in their kingdom, enjoying your great goodness to them in the spacious and fertile land you gave them, they did not serve you or turn from their evil ways.

[8 : 12] But see, we are slaves today. Slaves in the land you gave our forefathers so they could eat its fruit and all the other good things it produces.

Because of our sins, its abundant harvest goes to the kings you have placed over us. They rule over our bodies and our cattle as they please.

We are in great distress. Let's hear the preaching of God's word. Well, we have lived another week on the receiving end of God's great goodness.

Indeed, the goodness and mercy of the Lord have followed us all the days of our life. And in Christ, after this life is over, we shall dwell in his house forever, where his goodness to us will hit a new high with one new surprise after another.

Such is the goodness of our God. And last week we saw that God's eye follows his goodness. He's watching to see our response, what we will do in response to his goodness.

[9 : 24] And so that's what we're taking up as we conclude this series. Series of messages now on how to respond to the goodness of God.

We saw right off the bat that it's with praise and thanksgiving. And last week we saw that our prayer life is to be shaped by God's goodness. It's to draw us like a magnet to ask from him.

And it's to be something that we plead in prayer. You are good and you do good, so teach us. Do us good. And it is to make us expectant after prayer.

Having laid our requests before him, we can go on our way waiting in expectation. Ask, plead, expect.

A-P-E. So is God's goodness giving your prayer life the ape shape? It's to affect our prayer life.

[10 : 27] Now, today, our third response is God's goodness is to motivate us to serve him with gladness. And this point is powerfully made in Israel's confession of sin that was just read in Nehemiah 9.

The true wickedness of Israel's sin against God can only be seen in the light of God's amazing goodness to them. So in this prayer, we have a recounting of Israel's history.

All the way back to their first forefather, Abraham. And it's a history of God's repeated and overflowing goodness to them as his people.

Six times he used the word good or goodness. But beyond the mere use of such words, what he describes is just oozing with God's goodness all the way.

First, just in choosing Abraham and his descendants to be his favored people. Entering into a covenant relationship with them. To bless them. Promising to bring them to this land of Canaan.

[11 : 32] And then his goodness in setting them free from the cruel slavery in Egypt. Hearing their cry at the Red Sea. Opening a way through it for them and closing up their enemies after them.

Speaking to them at Mount Sinai. By giving them his good laws. Providing for their needs in the desert on the way to the promised land. With bread from heaven to satisfy their hunger.

And water from the rock to satisfy their thirst. So that they lacked nothing. Even their clothes did not wear out. We're told. Or their feet swell up in the hot desert sands.

His goodness in leading them with a cloud of his presence. A light by night and a shade by day. Driving out kings and nations before them. And handing over everything to Israel.

Fully furnished homes that they had not built. Filled with many good things. Orchards and vineyards they did not plant. Wells they did not dig.

[12 : 33] Such greatness that they just reveled in it. They celebrated and partied in it if you will. And yet throughout this narrative of the history of Israel.

Is sprinkled the descriptions of Israel's response to all this goodness that they are receiving. Having rescued them from bondage.

And taking them through the deserts. And to the promised land. And now telling them. Now go in and take it. As I swore on oath to give it. But they.

Our forefathers became arrogant. Stiff-necked. Didn't obey your commands. Refused to listen. Failed to remember. The miracles you performed. They became stiff-necked. And in their rebellion.

They even appointed a leader to take them back to their slavery. They even cast an image of a calf. And said. Well this is your God that brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And they committed awful blasphemies.

[13 : 36] Against their good God. So though God was good to them. They refused to serve him. But more amazingly.

God's response to their rebellion. Was more goodness. Yes. His goodness in disciplining them. And sending them back to the desert for 40 years.

And yes. A whole generation died in the wilderness. For sure. But he didn't desert or destroy the whole bunch. But show goodness. The goodness of his forgiveness.

Grace. Compassion. And love. And bringing them. All the way through. The desert again. Not withholding the manna. And the water. And the cloud.

And the fire. And his good spirit. Which he had every reason to withhold. But giving again. Giving. Out of his abundance. To them.

[14 : 30] Such that they. Were brought into the promised land. And reveled in his goodness. But they were. But. Again. We read.

They were disobedient. And rebelled. They put your laws behind their backs. Killed your prophets. Who brought them warnings to repent. Committed awful. Blasphemies. Again. God disciplined them.

Turning them over to their enemies. Who oppressed them. But when they cried out to God. It was more goodness. He. He. He delivered them. He rescued them. But as soon as they were at rest.

They. Again. Did. Evil in your sight. And so began the. The whole cycle. Of. Of God's discipline of them. Handing them over to the enemy. They're crying out.

In distress. God's goodness in. Delivering them. And then once. Out of trouble. The whole cycle. Repeated. Showing.

[15 : 26] But God showed his. Goodness. And his forgiveness. Delivering them. Time. After time. Do you hear patience in that. Phrase. Time. After time. The goodness of God's patience.

So. What we see in this history. That is not only the amazing. Goodness of God to Israel. But their response. To that goodness. It wasn't just a slip up. On a bad day. Like we all have.

Now this was a habitual. Lifestyle. Of Israel. Stiff necked. Response. They did not. Serve the Lord.

And those aren't my words. That's the summary. Of all that we've just. Had read. And now summarized again. That's given at the end. Of. In verse 35. Even while they were in their kingdom.

Enjoying your great goodness. To them. In the spacious and fertile land. You gave them. They did not serve you. Or turn from their evil ways. And in those words.

[16 : 26] Then we find our next response. To the goodness of God. Which is to serve the Lord. With gladness. That's what God. Is watching for.

When he's good to us. Are they praising me? Is it affecting their prayer life? And now. Are they serving me. With gladness? We don't.

Appreciate the greatness. Of Israel's sin. Of not serving God. Unless we're. We see just how amazingly. Good God was to them. And that's what. Made their sin. So great.

That's why God. Included in the covenant. That. That if Israel. Would behave this way. That he would bring curses. Upon them. And says. In Deuteronomy 28.

Because you did not. Serve the Lord. Your God. Joyfully and gladly. In the time of your prosperity. Therefore. In hunger and thirst. Nakedness. And dire poverty. You will serve the enemies. The Lord sends against you.

[17 : 25] You didn't serve the Lord. In the days. Of his goodness. Shining upon you. So think of it this way. How are we to respond. To evil treatment.

From others. Somebody says a nasty word. To you. How do you respond? Romans 12. 17. Romans 12. Says.

Do not. Repay. Anyone. Evil. Evil. Evil. Evil. Evil. Evil. Evil. We're rather to. Overcome the evil. With good. So. If it's a sin.

To return evil. For evil. How much more. Is it a sin. To return. Evil. For good. And that's what.

Israel. Had done. Over. And over. And over. And over again. God was good to them. And they repaid. Good. With evil. So that's the point. That.

[18 : 21] The Holy Spirit. Is driving home. In Nehemiah. Nine. And by the way. That's what every unconverted sinner.

Is doing every day of their life. Whether they realize it or not. God is being good. And they're on the receiving end. Of that goodness. Every breath of air.

Every bite of food. Every bit of sunshine. And blessing. The pleasures of their five senses. Being filled up with the creation. Family. Friends. Freedom.

Health. Jobs. Opportunities. Houses. Cars. Clothes. Medicines. Doctors. Life. And health. And though they live on God's good earth. And enjoy his great goodness. They repay him evil for good.

How? Just by not serving him. That's it. Just not serving him. So we learn from all of this.

[19 : 23] That serving the Lord with gladness. Is the fitting response to the Lord's goodness. It's that goodness is also the key motivation. To move us to such glad service.

That's what Samuel was telling Israel in his farewell address. In 1 Samuel 12. Be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully. Consider what great things he has done. For you.

For your good. Your advantage. Your benefit. And as your response. Serve. Serve the Lord. Faithfully. So what does this service look like?

What does it mean to serve the Lord? There's a lot of wrong ideas circulating. About serving the Lord. You know some people think that to really serve the Lord.

You need to become a minister. Or a foreign missionary. To go into some full time service. For us. The medieval Roman church taught. That to really serve the Lord. You needed to become a celibate monk.

[20 : 21] Or a priest. Or a nun. And Roman. Martin Luther. Followed that teaching. And was that celibate monk. And priest. Until the Lord opened his eyes.

And he and the other reformers. Saw the error of such teaching. And began to correct it. And teach that serving the Lord is for all callings in life.

As Luther would say. That the baker in his kitchen. The blacksmith in his shop. The farmer in his field. The mother in her home. Can serve the Lord there.

Just as much as the preacher in his pulpit. So what does it mean to serve the Lord? Well we can learn that. By seeing in Nehemiah 9.

What. Israel did not do. Because. The summary of what they didn't do. Was they didn't serve the Lord. Well what did they not do? Well they didn't listen.

[21 : 19] Did they? God came to them with his word. That word revealed his will. That word. Made claims upon their lives. And what did they do?

They turned their back to him. Stiff neck. They would not listen. And they would not turn from their evil ways. And walk in his ways. So.

Opposite. What is it to serve the Lord? It's to turn our face toward him. And when he speaks. To listen. To pay attention. And to obey his word.

And to repent of all of our evil ways. And bring them in line with his ways. Say too simple. Well that's the Bible's definition.

That's how the Bible describes. What it means to serve the Lord. It means to obey him. It means to do his will. To obey his word. It's to do.

[22 : 20] What he wants. Because he wants it. Whether on the farm. The kitchen. The shop. The school. The work. The play. The worship. It's a whole life. You see. Live for him. Serving his will.

And that's to be our response to his goodness. To serve him gladly. Let me give you two ways. That we serve the Lord. Two major categories. If we could divide this serving the Lord.

In two categories. We serve the Lord by doing his will. And suffering his will. Let's look first at by doing his will.

You remember when we had our study on the identities of the Christian. That one of those identities is that we are servants of the Lord. That's what we are.

And so we're supposed to act like it. And servants exist not to do their own will. But the will of another. The will of their masters. Their owners. And so that means they don't show up in the morning and inform the master.

[23 : 18] Well today I'm going to do this and that. And neither do they when the master tells them. No today you're going to do this and do that. Do they say that I don't want to. I don't feel like it.

I'd rather do this. No. That's neither here nor there for the servant. It's not his concern at all. As servants of the Lord. We don't set the agenda for our lives.

Much less for one day of those lives. We exist to serve him and to do what he wants. It's interesting that we're not the only servants in the universe.

The end of Psalm 103 tells us that the angels are his servants. So maybe we can take a lesson from the angels. How do the angels serve him?

Psalm 103. 20 and 21. Praise the Lord you his angels. You mighty ones who do his bidding. Who obey his word.

[24 : 18] You his servants who do his will. Three times. Lest we get all spiritual about what it means to serve the Lord.

It just means doing his will. Obeying him. Doing his bidding. You know that's the very thing that Jacob saw in his dream when he used the rock for the pillow.

Remember? Kids. He had a dream. A vision that the Lord gave him. And there was a ladder. A stairway reaching from earth all the way up into heaven. And on that ladder were angels.

What were they doing? Well they were going up and down weren't they? On the errands of the Lord. And they came from the Lord with the assignment down to the earth. And did it and returned back for the next assignment.

That's what an angel does. That's what a servant of the Lord does. They've come to earth to do his bidding.

[25 : 16] They returned to heaven for the next assignment. So as servants of the Lord. The burning question with us is not what do I want to do. That's pumped into our young people.

And our older people. Rather the question that ought to be the burning question with us is the same question that Saul of Tarsus asked when he was introduced to the Lord of glory for the first time on the road to Damascus.

And down on his knees he went and he says what would you have me to do Lord? That's the question of the servant. And do you know how he answers that question?

Not with a still small voice in our ears. But in 66 books that have been bound into one called the Bible.

And every word is God's word. It's the revelation of his will for us. And it's here we learn what pleases the Lord and what we are to do and not do.

[26 : 23] Both as to our outward behavior and our inward attitude and thoughts. It's the revelation of his will in commandments and precepts and examples.

So we are to read our Bibles as servants reporting for duty. What would you have me to do Lord? I'm your servant.

And I exist to serve you. And your will. And when what God wants collides with what I want.

No to self. Yes to God. No to self. Yes to God. To serve my master.

My new master. Whose I am. And whom I serve. So that's what it means to serve the Lord. Doing his will. And you do that wherever you go.

[27 : 22] Whatever you're doing. All day every day. Not perfectly. But purposefully. Preeminently. And your shortcomings and sins. Are the things that bring you.

To confess. To confess. Like Nehemiah 9. That God's been right. And we've been wrong. To ask his mercy. His overflowing goodness.

To forgive us again. And to give us help. To serve him better tomorrow. He's good. But we serve the Lord.

Not only by doing his will. But also by suffering his will. What do we mean by that? Well sometimes God's will for us. Is to take us through painful trials. Agonizing afflictions.

Perplexing. Providences. We're talking now. Not so much of his will of precept. As his will of providence. Of what he orders for our lives.

[28 : 21] And though we may be praying like crazy. To have them remove. These afflictions and trials. Until he does. We accept them. We accept them as from the Lord.

Lord meaning master. Who orders all things well. Concerning us. And so we serve the Lord. By suffering his will.

Not demanding our way. Not pouting and complaining. When we don't get it. But sweetly submitting. Our will to his. And getting on. With what he's chosen now. Is his assignment.

For how he wants. Me. To serve him. At least for now. This is his providence. This is where. And how I am to serve. Serve him. How do I respond?

I serve him. By suffering his will. We sang that song. Of little Samuel. In the temple. And old Eli. Sleeping soundly.

[29 : 20] The voice. Samuel. Samuel. He runs to Eli. What is it master? I didn't call you. Go back to bed. And he goes back.

Again the voice. Samuel. Samuel. He runs to Eli. What do you want? I didn't call you. Go back to bed. Happens again. And this time.

Eli. Perhaps. Has been awake. Enough. That he. He figures it out. God's calling the boy. That's who's calling him. So the next time. You hear the voice.

Samuel say. Speak Lord. Your servant is listening. It's a wonderful thing. For. A servant of the Lord's response. How. We come to his words. Speak Lord.

Your servant is listening. With an idea of obey. And we know that part of the story. Well. But. But do you know the message. That God gave to Samuel. After he said.

[30 : 17] Speak Lord. Your servant is listening. He. He talked about his judgment. Upon the house of Eli. Old Eli. Because of. The sins of his two sons.

And he not restraining them. A message of judgment. That would cause the ears to tingle. Of everyone who heard it. So in the morning. Eli says.

What. What did the Lord say to you Samuel? Tell me everything. And he told him. Everything. Everything. And his ears did tingle.

But here's. His response. To the devastating judgment. It is the Lord. Let him do.

To me. As he thinks best. He bowed. Humbly. And suffered. The will. Of God. And that's how we serve him as well.

[31 : 20] There's many examples in our Bibles. None better though. Than the suffering servant. Of the Lord. Right. The suffering servant. That's what Isaiah.

Refers to him. Here's the Lord's perfect servant. God's own son. Made flesh in Jesus Christ. And he's come to do. His will. That's what he says. That's why I'm here. Man on a mission.

To fulfill the assignment. My father has given me. And the hardest commandment. Ever given to anybody. Was given to this servant. When.

The father said to the son. Son. You go. And become a man. And be damned. And die. To save your people. And this servant of the Lord.

Humbled himself. And he did. The father's will. And he suffered. The father's will. He came as a man. Was obedient unto death. Even the death of the cross.

[32 : 17] And we see him. Just hours away from that death. On. The evening before. In Gethsemane. And. He is overcome.

With sorrow. To the point of dying. Before he gets to the cross. And he's sweating bullets. Of blood. Because he's staring.

In the cup. That the father. Had given him to drink. He's looking at the assignment. That his father has given. Servant son. This is it. This is.

And now he's. He's just hours from it. And as he looks into that cup. He sees that. In a matter of hours. It will be. His lot. To bear the sins of his people. To the place.

Where God's wrath. Will punish those sins. And he. Must drink. The wrath of God.

[33 : 13] For sinners. The very thought of it. Caused everything. Within the holy heart of Jesus. To recoil. And ring from him.

This cry. My father. If it is possible. Let this cup. Pass. From me. Yet. Not.

My will. But yours. Be done. Now that's the motto. Of the Lord's servant. Not once.

But. Three times. That night. Not my will. But yours. Be done. No.

To my will. Yes. To your will. And that wasn't a response. That was unique. Just to this night. Alone. It was the. The life's motto.

[34 : 09] By which he lived. As the Lord's servant. Thirty four years earlier. When Jesus. When. When Christ came into the world. Into the womb of Mary.

This is what he said. Only God would know that. Right. This is what he said. Hebrews 10. And. Psalm 40. Here I am. I have come to do.

Your will. Oh God. So. That's how he entered the world. Thirty years later. He's in the midst of his ministry. John 6. I have come down from heaven.

Not to do my will. But to do the will of him who sent me. And now on the night of his arrest. John 14. 31. The world must learn that I love the father. And that I do exactly.

What he commands. The servant. He's here as the servant. Do you see why Isaiah calls him the servant of the Lord? He's the one that perfectly does his bidding.

[35 : 09] Obeys his commands. Performs his will. And the will of the Lord prospered. In his hands. Even though he was greatly tempted to do otherwise.

And don't ever think he wasn't. Say oh he's God. No. He was man too. And he was tempted. At every point you are. To disobey that will.

To disobey that command. And to take an easier route. But he's not here. To do what. His flesh would like.

His body would like. I'm here to serve my father's will. Now that's how we're to serve. The Lord. All his life.

He served God by doing his will. And suffering his will. Even down to that last. Drinking of the bitter cup. Serving. God by doing and suffering his will. That's how we are to serve him.

[36 : 10] I'm not my own. I'm his servant. He assigns my service to me. Whether doing or suffering. And suffering saints. Know this. That suffering his will.

Is every bit as much his pleasure. In you. As doing his will. Does suffering have you laid aside. From things that you used to do. Maybe you're getting older. You can't do what you used to.

You're suffering his will. He's just as pleased. When we suffer his will. As unto him. Than if we were out. Doing a thousand things.

For him. We serve him either way. Doing or suffering. Whatever he assigns. Now where do you find the motivation. For that kind of service. This is our response.

To how good God is. To us. So if that's true. In the Old Testament. As we see in Nehemiah 9. It's only much more true. In the Niagara Falls.

[37 : 05] Gushing of his goodness. In the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. Here's the ultimate. Good. For our evil.

We don't serve him. He's good to us. And we turn our back to him. He says. Do this. This is my claim on you. You're my. I made you. And we. We ignore him.

We don't pay attention to him. And what does he do? He. He does the ultimate good. And sends his own son. To be damned in our place. What goodness.

Now there is the motivation. For our serving him. Gladly. That's what the apostle Paul. The servant of the Lord found. So he spends. The first 11 chapters.

In Romans doing what? Just. Showing what rotten sinners we are. In response to how good he is. And yet. How he was even better. In sending his son.

[38 : 01] And dying on the cross. For hell deserving sinners. And offering salvation to us. Not to be earned. But just to be received. As a free gift. And so he says.

In Romans 12. Therefore my brothers. In light. Of God's mercy. In view. Of God's mercy.

Offer your bodies. As living sacrifices. Holy. Pleasing to God. Which is your reasonable service. Wouldn't you say. That's reasonable. God has his son.

Damned for you. And he. He asks you to. To now. Serve him. Serve him. Paul's. Paul's. Paul's.

Own sacrificial service. To Christ. Is only. Explainable. In this motivation. That he could never. Get over the fact. That. The son of God. Love me.

[38 : 57] And gave himself. And gave himself for me. And so he laid himself out. On the sacrifice. And service. Of serving others. Bringing them to Jesus. And. And. And doing what God.

Had given him to do. He tells us. It's. It's this goodness. Of his love in Christ. Him becoming sin. For us. That. That. Through him. We might become the righteousness.

Of God. This. This love. Constrains me. To no longer live for myself. But for him who died for me. And rose again. Standing before the goodness.

Of his love at Calvary. We say. I'll live for him. Who died for me. The Niagara. Of God's goodness.

In the Old Testament. Exodus 21. Hebrew servants. Were to go free. Every seven years. So they'd serve for six. And then they're free. Free as a bird. But.

[39 : 57] If the servant said. I love my master. And I want to continue. Serving him. Well then he'd bring his ear. To the doorpost. And the master would. Take an awl. And pierce his ear. And he would become.

His servant. For life. Now what would ever move. A man. To want to become. A servant for life. If it were not. The goodness.

Of the master. And that's why. Every child of God. Is a lifer. We're his servants.

For life. We've seen his love. On Calvary. We can't get over it. Here. Here's my heart. Take and seal it. Here's my ear.

Come and bore it. Let me be your servant. Forever. And that is our response. To God's goodness. To serve him gladly. Both doing and suffering. His will.

[40 : 52] And in that. We find motivation. For such service. I want to close. With two stories. One an old man. And the second. A young man. I'm sorry.

Ladies. Don't have. A lady story. But. Nothing. In gender. Is. Important. Here. Plies to you.

As much as. Young and old man. First is Polycarp. He. Is around 100 years old. So he was an old man. And. And he had been a disciple.

Of the apostle John. How would you like that? And he. And so he became. He rose to be a leading minister. In the church at Smyrna. Smyrna is one of the seven churches.

That Jesus wrote a letter to. And sent it there. In Revelation 2 and 3. And you can read the letter. That he sent to Smyrna. And that's where. Our man Polycarp. 100 year old man. Is now. Minister.

[41 : 45] Later. But the letter said. Do not be afraid. Of what you're about to suffer. Be faithful. Even to the point of death. And he will give you the crown of life. Those were the words from Jesus.

And in the middle of the second century. That fierce persecution. Did break out. The old minister safely hid. Until he was betrayed. By an unfaithful servant.

Who turned him over to his enemies. He calmly surrendered. With the words. God's will. Be done. He suffered.

The will of God. And God was pleased. Polycarp was brought into the stadium. Filled with lawless heathen spectators. This comes from the.

Through the centuries. Banner of truth. Church history book. And in those days. The test that was applied to Christians. Was that they must call Caesar. That is the Roman emperor.

[42 : 39] They must call him Lord. They must confess him to be divine. And so the proconsul. Required Polycarp. To confess Caesar as Lord.

Under oath. But he was firm. In his refusal. I have wild beasts. Said the proconsul. If you. If you refuse. I will throw you to them. Then send for them.

Polycarp answered. If you despise the wild beast. I'll send you to the fire. He said. Swear. I swear. And I will release you. Curse the Christ. Polycarp's answer.

Eighty and six years. I have served. Christ. And he has done me. No wrong. How then. Can I blaspheme. My king. Who has saved me.

How could I ever repay. His good. With evil. He saved me.

[43 : 42] That's the highest. He's not done me any wrong. Only good. All my life. And that goodness. You see. Secured. His. Glad service. For eighty six years.

And even. To the bitter end. And as they burned him at the stake. He prayed. Lord God. Father of our blessed Savior. I thank you. That I've been deemed worthy.

To receive the crown of martyrdom. That I may die for you. And for your cause. It was. God's goodness. You see. That turned.

His service. To the Lord. Into privilege. And honor. Only the best of masters. Can produce such servants. The old man.

Polycarp. Now a young man. William. Borden. William was born in 1887. In Chicago. To the very wealthy. Borden family.

[44 : 36] It's the Borden dairy company. I'm not sure if they're still in. In business or not. But they were known for their mascot. Elsie the cow. Well known family. Rich family. And for his high school.

Graduation present. Maybe I shouldn't mention this. Some of you are graduating. His parents gave their 16 year old son. A trip around the world. Some of you would love that.

And as he traveled through Asia. Middle East. And Europe. He felt a growing burden. For the world's hurting people. And a burning desire.

To take the gospel to them. One friend. Expressed shock. That Bill was throwing his life away. As a missionary. And it said that in response.

He wrote two words. In the back of his Bible. No reservations. He entered Yale University. Began his studies. Where his service.

[45 : 33] And commitment to Jesus Christ. Was obvious to everyone on campus. And an entry in his journal. Gives the reason. It was his life's motto. By which he lived. Say no to self.

And yes to Jesus. Every time. No to self. Yes to Jesus. Every time. He started a prayer meeting. On campus.

With a friend. Before breakfast. And it grew. And soon. A revival. Broke out at Yale. In his sophomore year. He and his Christian buddies. Organized Bible study groups.

And divided up among them. Their class. Of around 300 people. Students. So. So that all might. If possible. Be reached with the gospel. So you see them.

This. This group of Christians. Huddle together. Going over the list. Of 300 names. And when names were gone over. One by one. The question was asked. Who will take this person? And when it came to someone.

[46 : 29] Thought to be a hard case. Case. There would be an ominous silence. Then Bill's voice. Would be heard. Put him down to me. Put him down to me.

You see. He's serving the Lord. As his witness. And at the same time. Borden was serving the Lord. In other ways. He was caring for widows. Orphans. And the disabled.

He rescued drunks. From the streets of New Haven. And founded Yale Hope Mission. One of Bill's friends. wrote that. He might often be found. In the lower parts. Of the city at night. On the street.

In a cheap lodging house. Or some restaurant. To which. He had taken. A poor hungry fellow. To feed him. Seeking to lead. Men. To Christ. And yes.

All this. Well. A college student. Kendra. And the president. Of the honor society. Of Phi Beta Kappa.

[47 : 27] And so. Although he was a millionaire. Already. He set his sights. On taking the gospel. To the Muslim. Kansu people. In China. And he never wavered. From that. As he graduated.

From Yale. He turned down. High paying job offers. And he wrote. Two more words. In the back of his Bible. No retreat. He went on.

To do graduate work. At Princeton Seminary. And when he finished. His studies. He sailed for China. Because he was hoping. To work with Muslims. He stopped first. In Egypt. To study Arabic. And while there.

He contracted. Spinal meningitis. And within a month. The 25 year old. William Borden. Died. Borden. Died. And when the news. Of his death.

Was cabled back. To the United States. The story was carried. In nearly every. American newspaper. And his biographer. Wrote a wave. Of sorrow. Went round the world. Because Borden.

[48 : 21] Not only gave away. His wealth. But himself. And in a way. So joyous. And natural. That it seemed. A privilege. Rather than a sacrifice.

As his Bible. Was sent. Back to his family. They found. That prior to his death. Borden. Had written. Two more words. In the back. And underneath the words. No reservations. No retreats.

Was written. No regrets. What will make a man. Live like that. For 25 years.

Or at least. 16 to 25. To do and suffer his will. With no regrets.

Well it's the goodness. Of salvation. In Jesus Christ. That he had tasted. And wanted.
Everybody else. To taste. The same goodness. Made his sacrificial service.

[49 : 18] So joyous. And natural. That it seemed. More of a privilege. Than any sacrifice. So there's
the. Old man. There's the. Young man.

Now how is your. Life. Going to read. You do know. That you. You too. Have a record.
Being written. One day at a time. Who are you serving.

Yourself. Or Jesus. God. Or the world. May we be found. Amazed. At the goodness. Of
God. In Jesus Christ. And that.

Blessed relationship. Of knowing him. So that we're found. Serving him. In what he calls
us. To do. And what he calls us. To suffer. In whatever calling.

He has you. To the glory. And praise. Of our savior. Who gave himself. For us. Maybe.
You say. Well. I'm one of those.

[50 : 15] Who's been receiving. From God. But not serving him. And I see it. This morning. I see
that I've been. He's done me good. And I've done him evil. In response. And he just
keeps.

Doing me good. That's no small sin. That's what we see. In Nehemiah. Nine. And the
greatness.

Of your sin. Is seen. And how much goodness. God has poured out. Upon you. Even
sending his son. That you might. Come to know. The forgiveness. Of sins. That you not
perish.

But have everlasting life. And so. What we find. In Nehemiah. Is if. If we will humble
ourselves. And cry out to him. For mercy.

He's so good. He can't. Push away anybody. Who does that. But. But receives them. And
saves them. No matter how many times.

[51 : 12] We have. Stiffened our neck. Against him. So. That's the good news. God is. God has.
He. He has more good. Than you have bad. And so come to him.

Humble yourself. And. And own what you are. Do you know. That the goodness of God. Is
meant to lead you. To repentance. His word says. Go this way. And you've been going
this way. His word says.

Serve me. And you've been serving yourself. And the world. And. If you will turn. And
come to him. And repudiate that way of life. He'll receive you.

And you can go from this place. Forgiven. Because of the perfect obedience. Of Jesus.
Who suffered. On Calvary's cross. And begin. Today.

To live this new life. In Christ. Stand. And let's sing together. About God's goodness.
Shown in his love to us. In Jesus Christ. Here. Here. It's love. Let's pray.

[52 : 20] Our good and gracious father. Teach our hearts. To. To be amazed. At your great
goodness. To us. Forgive us. Forgive us. That we are no.

Better servants. Of yours. Teach us. To read our Bibles. Asking. What would you have me
to do. And by your grace. Motivate us.

And put more gladness. In our service. As we see our suffering. Servant. Jesus Christ.
Gladly serving us. God. And so. Do.

Make us glad servants. Of him. And thank you Jesus. That you laid down your life for us.
Thank you that your arms are wide open. To everyone. Here this morning.

Whether we've. Sinned against you. And come back to you. For the first time. Or whether
for the thousandth time. We thank you for your receiving goodness. To forgive us.

[53 : 18] And to help us. We bless you then. And thank you. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen.