

WHAT WE WERE AND WHAT WE ARE

Rom. 6:17

Intro: One wonderful thing about the Bible is that it presents the Gospel to us in so many different ways:

- 1) In OT prophecy -- like Isa. 53, or Gen. 12.
- 2) In OT types -- like Ex. 12. of our Lord.
- 3) In the stories we have in the Gospels, and in the teachings
- 4) Over and over again in the sermons in Acts.
- 5) In verse after verse in the Epistles.
- 6) You even have it in the book of the Revelation!

If you just wanted to preach the Gospel from Romans, think of the verses you could choose from!

I am taking one of those verses tonight: Rom. 6:17.

One amazing thing about this verse is that it comes in the section that deals with sanctification, not justification. BUT THIS ONLY SERVES TO EMPHASIZE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO GREAT SECTIONS AND TRUTHS.

Here we see what we were and what we are -- if we know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.

It also tells us how we got from what we were to what we are.

Let us make sure, first of all, that we understand . . .

I. WHAT THE VERSE SAYS.

Three things immediately stand out:

- 1) God is being praised.
- 2) He is being praised for the fact that these Romans are not what they used to be.
- 3) He is also being praised because of what the Romans have done, i.e., "ye have obeyed . . ."

We have no difficulty understanding the first part: "But God be thanked."

But what were these Roman believers in the past?

They were permanently bondservants of their sin natures, unable to do anything about it, willingly obeying this inner nature, sometimes liking it and other times hating it, but always under the Master, SIN, which continually dictated desires and actions which were wrong in God's sight and enslaving.

That is not a very pleasant picture, but it is true of every person who has ever lived -- with one exception: our Lord!

What had happened to change it?

The Romans had done something.

Then, why praise God. We ought to praise the Romans that they were able to get themselves out of this hopeless slavery.

Is it possible that this verse contradicts other verses that deal with the Gospel? Eph. 2:8, 9 says that it is "not of ourselves . . . not of works," but this verse seems to say that it is of ourselves and it is something that we do!

What is the answer?

Read the rest of the verse: "Ye have obeyed . . ."

Their obedience was at some particular time. Omit the "have!"

Their obedience was from the heart, meaning that it was:

- 1) Genuine.
- 2) Something that they wanted to do. They were not forced into it.

"That form of doctrine" -- which means a mold or pattern of that which is taught.

The turning point in the lives of these Roman believers was when they heard something taught!

The last part of the verse is where we need the help.

The best reading of this phrase seems to be, unto which you WERE delivered. It is not that somebody gave you something, but you were given to that which you heard -- just as red hot steel is poured into a mold to make a casting.

Cf. this word, "delivered," or given over to, as we have it in Rom. 4:25; 8:32.

Therefore, it must be "God" who gave them over to what they heard. So we can see why the verse begins with, "But God be thanked"!

## II. WHAT THE VERSE EMPHASIZES.

- A. The main problem that man has: his sin nature.  
Cf. Psa. 51:5.

We sin because we are sinners by nature.

- B. The answer to the problem is in God -- not in man.

This is what Eph. 2:4 indicates so clearly.

- C. The work of God in salvation always has to do with His Word.

Cf. 1 Pet. 1:23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

- D. The necessity for personal faith: "ye obeyed."

This involves:

1. THE UNDERSTANDING. That which is taught from the Word of God must be understood.
2. THE WILL. Paul says that you were the ones who obeyed, who responded to the preaching of the Gospel!

Note the expression in Rom. 1:5, "for obedience to the faith among all nations."

3. THE HEART. It is not something they were forced to do; it was something that they wanted to do, they loved doing it.

- E. We need to be thankful for this.

But this is not the end of it all. In its setting here we must also take a final moment to notice . . .

### III. WHAT THE VERSES ALSO INDICATES.

It is this: The relationship between my initial deliverance and my continuing deliverance, my victory over sin.

Are you having trouble with sin in your life?

Then remember these simple facts:

- 1) You cannot deliver yourself -- only God can!
- 2) Your deliverance is not going to come through any special experience that you might seek. It will come through the Word.
- 3) Your response to the Word is important. You must read it, hear it, understand it, love it, will it for your own life. And this is where we must remember verses like Col. 2:6; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13.

Our Lord said to His disciples in the storm, "Where is your faith?" Cf. Luke 8:25.

- 4) Be thankful -- like the singers of Israel who went out to battle before Jehoshaphat's army only to see the enemy defeated -- utterly!

Concl: Note the story of that great victory in 2 Chron. 20:  
20-24,

And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem. Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth forever.

And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set an ambush against; the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every-one helped to destroy another.

And when Judah came toward the watchtower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen down to the ground."

As Asaph says in Psa. 50:23,

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conduct aright will I show the salvation of God."

We must know that the victory comes from Him, believe His Word, and give Him the glory and the praise!

But what if you do not know the Lord as your Savior?