

See that you receive not the Grace of God in vain

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- [0 : 00] As we join together this evening, we do so beginning with a Gaelic Psalm.
We shall sing to God's praise from Psalm 119, Psalm 119 at verse 9. I'll read these words for you in English.
I offend not thee, O Lord, thou ever blessed art, thy statutes, teach thou me. The judgments of thy mouth, each one, my lips declare tan.
More joy thy testimony sway than riches all me gave. Psalm 119, and it was nine, good, lishing, lad, and hog, and oh, he'll leave a thing, good, cashed.
O Lord, thou hast, I'll leave a thing, good, cashed.
- [1 : 56] O Lord, thou hast, I'll leave a thing, good, cashed.
O Lord, thou hast, I'll leave a thing, good, cashed. O Lord, thou hast, I'll leave a thing, good, cashed. O Lord, thou hast, I'll leave a thing, good, cashed. O Lord, thou hast, I'll leave a thing, good, cashed.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
- [4 : 18] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you.
- [7 : 18] Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.

would bask in the glory that is his, knowing that he is willing to share that with us, imparted to us as those for whom he has gained the victory. He is at your right hand and there he will remain until such time as you have decreed for him to return. And when he does return he will come, not in the humiliation that was his when he embraced humanity in the first instance, but in the glory of the risen Saviour, with God, man, and yet possessing glories that are inestimable. We pray that we would consider that and contemplate that until such time as we will see it for our own selves, just as Job of old anticipated and longed for the day when he would see with these eyes something of that glory. We pray your blessing on your church here on earth, remembering all members offered, wherever they are to be found on the scene of time. We know that there are some who have passed through this world and whose dust is interred to the dust. But the souls of believers are after death. They are made perfect in holiness and they are in your presence and will be so until reunited with their bodies. And body and soul will bask in our glory as we said, in the fullness thereof. We pray that you would bless those that are in the church who are in the world at the present, those who have many crosses to bear because of the faith that is theirs. We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith and we bring them before you and ask for their salvation, to be before them always, even in the face of persecution, that they may know that they are numbered amongst those who are saved, whose redemption has been accomplished and whose glory is assured. Whatever they will be made to submit to in this world, we give thanks that your word testifies to the fact that they are your witnesses and that they will bear testimony to you, the God who created them, who created them, to your Son Christ and to the Spirit that is within them.

So be with them, we pray, whichever part of the world they are in, even in our own corner here, perhaps there are some who unbeknown to us may have to suffer persecution within their own homes, who are the target of the enemy of our souls, who because of their testimony are ill-treated. Remember them, we pray and uphold them. Sustain them with your own spirit that they may look to Jesus as the author and finisher of their faith.

[15 : 19] Remember the preaching of the gospel. May it be blessed to us. And may all preachers go out with the confidence that the word that is preached is sown as seed, and on the four winds it may be carried, not knowing what will prosper this or that.

But we give thanks that your power is such that nothing will fall to the ground without yielding the fruit that you have purposed for it.

We pray that you would bless this world in which we are in, this current time of pandemic. Perhaps there are generations before us that knew little, if anything, of such a situation.

But if not, they knew something else. The new trials, the new temptations, the new wars, the new world wars. We were spared that until now, and we have this as our cross to bear.

And we pray for those that have suffered in body or mind. We pray for those who are grieving and sorrowful.

[16 : 30] Remember those who are under your hand at this time. You have succumbed to the virus, wherever they are. Remember these islands to which we belong, that has been spared to the two.

But we remember the Southern Isles, and we pray for them in the U.S., and ask your blessing to be upon them, that you may spare life, and that you may ensure that the numbers that are exposed to it are limited.

As we pray for such limitations to be in place over our own community here. Remember our towns, our cities.

We pray for the nations of the earth. We pray for governments. Those who are ruling over us may they remember that there is but one who rules and restrains.

All his and our enemies by the intent of his power. Even the King of kings, the Lord of all. We pray for his people.

[17 : 32] We pray for those who are yet to be numbered amongst them. And we pray that you would mercifully call them to yourself and enable them to put their trust in the Saviour of souls.

So hear our prayers and continue with us this short time that we are together, watching over us each one and all gatherings of your people, cleansing from sin in and through the passion of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We ask all with forgiveness of sin in him. Amen. We are going to read this evening from the New Testament Scriptures and reading from Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians.

Chapter 5 and reading into chapter 6. Beginning and reading at verse 9 of chapter 5. Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

[18 : 45] Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God. And I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you vocation to glory on our behalf, that you may have somewhat answered in, which glory in appearance and not in heart.

For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then we are all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, which died for them, and rose again.

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh? Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. All things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to which that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

[20 : 30] Know then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you, in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God, for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you, also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and at the day of salvation have I succoured thee.

Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation. And so on, may the Lord be pleased to add his blessing to this reading of his word, and to his name be the praise.

We read there, where we then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

As a preacher of the gospel, I confess to having more than a passing interest in the mechanics of ministry.

[21 : 59] What I mean by that is the physical presentation of the gospel by men in pulpits or standing on lecterns, rather than reading what they have to say on the printed page.

Now when I say that, it is not to denigrate or disparage in the slightest what theologians have written or the sermons preached that have been transcribed.

That indeed is the staple diet of most preachers. Where would we be if we did not have the works of Calvin or Luther or the writings of our forebears in the Reformed Church of Scotland, Knox and Henderson, and later on Dr. Cunningham and Chambers, or Robbie Duncan and Dr. Kennedy.

But you can only imagine what they were like in real life pulpit oratory. Biography may give us an insight into the mannerisms that they had, but it is never.

And it can never replace the face-to-face experience of a preacher and congregation. I must say I enjoy listening to renowned preachers whose words are the staple diet of most who are following in their footsteps, or at least aspire to, the likes of Martin Lloyd-Jones, or as in the case of our own denomination, the library of more recent recordings of men now no longer living.

[23 : 35] I'm sorry to go on at such length, but the reason for that is that the same thoughts may arise with regard to the preaching of the apostles, Peter and John, Timothy and Titus, but in particular, the preaching of Paul.

And we are able to speak with some authority regarding certain aspects of his ministry that may teach us something about the way in which he presented the gospel, which may be left to the imagination, at least some of it, but the greatest import cannot and need not be left simply to our imaginations.

Turning more particularly to the passage before us, the reason that made me think along these lines arises out of the passage. And the first thing I would really want to comment on is the context in which the verses that we read are found in.

When various Bible scholars look at this passage with a view to explaining its meanings, there are two schools of thought and usually they follow one or other.

One approach is dividing the verses that we have here just simply following the chapter division. Others see the words in the context beginning where we began to read in chapter 5, verse 9 or chapter 5, verse 11 reading on to where we stopped reading chapter 6 and verse 2.

[25 : 42] And the argument is that the latter follows a more logical passage of thought. And I would tend to agree with that.

Because when you look at verses 1 and 2 it's clearly linked with what has just been stated by the apostle in chapter 5. If you are more familiar with the Gaelic, there is a clear link made between 5:24 and 6:1 in Gaelic emission or thus or therefore.

In the ESV we have working together with him then we appeal to you. Another translation has it now because we are fellow workers we also urge you and so on.

That is referring us back to the words of 5:19 following. He has given us or committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation.

Now this is the point I want to make at the outset. Paul has just been discussing essentially the doctrine of reconciliation. At the heart of that doctrine is a fact.

[27 : 02] Jesus Christ died on the cross it is Paul's task as a preacher to declare the fact but it is more than that.

He explains why Christ dying on the cross is all important. Geoffrey Grogan a New Testament scholar writes we are not commissioned simply to preach an event in history but to declare the wonderful meaning that God himself attaches to that event.

reading the words of the passage of this plain for all to see Paul is under constraint to preach this message which is essentially the message of the gospel summarised beautifully in the words God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses unto them.

He further explains how he did this with the words of verse 21 for he has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Now we know that Paul has to preach this gospel. We read elsewhere or we can read elsewhere for if I preach the gospel I have nothing to boast of for necessity is laid upon me.

[28 : 30] Yes always me if I do not preach the gospel. Again we find him saying I am not ashamed of that gospel. In other words nothing but nothing is going to stop me preaching this gospel because of what people think of that gospel or otherwise.

in Romans chapter 15 we read Nevertheless brethren I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort as putting you in mind because of the grace that is given to me of God that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles ministering the gospel of God that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable being sanctified by the Holy Ghost I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God for I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me to make the

Gentiles obedient by word and deed through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God so that from Jerusalem and round about into Elyricium I have fully preached the gospel of Christ and so on this was Paul's calling this was his ministry this is what he was in the world to do and nothing but nothing would deflect him from doing that we know that again and again he finds it on occasion something that he readily refers to and many of these passages we could turn to and think of we want to focus on what we have before us here that reminds us of the desire

Paul had to preach we are told here the specific nature of the constraint God has given has placed him under he has given him this message read again in chapter 5 and verse 18 and all things are of God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation there is no question in Paul's mind God has given him this message to preach he has specified how the message is to be declared again for it in verse 20 now then we are ambassadors for

Christ as though God did besiege the bias there is a message that needs to be proclaimed and there is a manner in which that proclamation should take place he is there as God's ambassador the very name suggested to us what that role entails ambassadors are representative of a government or a royal personage they do not give personal opinions on matters they simply relay their masters opinions or intentions Paul is explicit in his declaration of that what he is saying is no less than this what God is saying I am saying again read verse 20 this was important to

[33 : 06] Paul this was the primary role of his function as a minister of the gospel to declare God's interest to save sinners by means of the cross to declare God's intention to declare God's purpose we dare not underestimate the passion of Paul in proclaiming this we pray you in Christ's dead he says I think the Gaelic translation conveys the emotion of the statement in a better way we pray you from the lap of Christ be reconciled to God Don Carson in his book The Cross and the Christian Ministry refers to Paul as a preacher and he wants to at one stage correct certain misrepresentations of Paul one being that he was a poor communicator and he argues from the scripture the communicative skills of the apostle and the skills with which he reasoned explained and proved that the

Messiah had to rise from the dead his interest was not self-interest but the desire that was focused on one thing and one thing only Jesus Christ and him crucified and he would not be deflected from that by vain glory or the ambitions of men and the second thing based on that we have in chapter 6 verse 1 we read that verse again we then as workers together with him beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain that may seem exceedingly boastful as if Paul is saying that he is in some way in partnership with God workers together with God in Christ but only in the sense that

God has given Paul and the apostles and in fact the preacher of the gospel something to do in his name even those who believe in him and have come to faith in him have been given the self-same testimony to Christ to bear in their own way Paul has this to do and he knows that he is God's ambassador and he knows that he must tell all to whom he has sent with this message the whole of the message in its entirety it's not for him to determine or even to know who the message is to be addressed to sometimes he thinks he knows and sometimes he sets out to preach the word to such a constituent body that he believes are going to be recipients and beneficiaries on the message of the cross but God intervenes and directs him elsewhere if Jonah had his way then the message of salvation to

Nineveh would not have ever taken place because Jonah did not feel did not want the message of repentance to be preached to that group of people for his own reasons he cannot Paul cannot decide for himself what part of the message they are to hear that surely must be understood we beseech you he says again we have this word of emotional value at the present many who preach the gospel are curtailed in different ways from fulfilling the ministry to which they are called even those who are able to meet have restrictions placed upon them which means that they cannot worship God in the way that they used to do there are limitations placed on those who gather there are limitations placed upon the means by which they can worship but one thing cannot change and that is the content of the message the message must be the same and that message is the message that

Paul has declared here in chapter 5 that Jesus Christ is God's way of salvation through him sinners are reconciled to God in one of his letters Samuel Rutherford wrote from prison the following words God knows the heavy and sad Sabbaths I have had since I lay down at my master's feet my two shepherds staves I have often been saying like Jeremiah mine enemies chased me some like a bird without cause they have cut off my life in the dungeon and cast a stone upon me for next to Christ I have but one joy the apple of the eye of my delights to preach

[38 : 54] Christ my Lord and they have violently plucked that away from me and it was to me like the poor man's one eye and they have put out that eye and quenched my light in the inheritance of the Lord Paul with equal or even greater enthusiasm desires to have those who hear of Christ do so to their advantage I think that is what these words mean although there's different opinions as to who he is referring to but I believe that Calvin for example speaks of the doctrine of the gospel which while it may not be common to speak of the gospel like this the context demands such an understanding Calvin's emphasis however takes in the burden placed upon the preacher to be ambassador by force of arguments so us to help with the exhortation more than preach the gospel by means of doctrine but labour so that it is received

Charles Hart specifically ties the words in with the favour of which Paul spoke in chapter 5 namely the infinite grace of favour of having made his son sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in him surely none of who have heard of such a Christ by such a gospel dare despise it whatever reason was given for doing that that seems to have been the case the preacher Bishop Ryall takes time to separate out from those who receive not the grace of God the open and believer who chooses to separate himself from the people of God from those who may be the focus of these words what he believes to be those who who are beneficiaries of the grace of

God in the gospel those who hear God's word preached those who are perhaps regular regular attenders those who who receive as he puts the grace of God into their ears their mouths their heads and even into their houses and no better for it for any number of reasons but all detrimental and this is the concern that the apostle has when he speaks these words he does not want them to be guilty of this guilty of this sin guilty of this damage that can be done to such those who receive the grace of God in vain not everybody gets to hear God's word not everybody has the privilege of hearing the gospel preached not everybody has the privilege of living in a community where there is a church or where there is preaching or where there is

Christians to witness to Christ but those who are they are reminded that that is a privilege something that God has given to those of us who have enjoyed it and for that we will be asked to give an account remember in this passage Paul reminds us that there is a day coming when all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ if I'm not mistaken that's one thing that every one of us will answer for what we have made of the many gospel privileges that we have enjoyed whether we have used them or abused them whether we have grown in grace and in the knowledge of Christ or whether our lives are stagnated and in some cases perhaps no growth has ever occurred by reason of our interest in Christ may God ensure that each one of us pays heed to his word that we might indeed be free from this scandal free from this accusation for we must answer to Christ at the last may he bless to us these thoughts let us pray help us oh God to believe that there is a word that has been preached to us by many a word that reminds us of of the salvation that Christ has wrought by his death we give thanks for the word that reminds us that that he did indeed come and that

God has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that he might be made the righteousness of God in him and we give thanks for all who can say that that we are made indeed the righteousness of God in him may you bless us and remember us each one and all the cares and concerns that we have may we learn to place them upon you and cleansing from sin continue with us we pray now may grace mercy and peace from God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you all now and always Amen birds and Ridic again Ghost the Father God to Je matière into the Word