

# The Grace of God Has Already Appeared

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] We're going to begin worshipping God today, singing to his praise in Psalm 32. You have to forgive me as well, I've been loaded with the cold the last few days and hopefully my voice will hold up.
- That's something to pray for. Psalm 32, we're going to sing at the beginning through to the second half of verse 5.
- So 6 stands as, O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned all the transgression he hath done, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not a sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile nor fraud is found hidden.
- And so we'll sing through to the end of verse 5 to God's praise. O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned. O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned.
- All the transgression he hath done, whose sin is covered.
- [ 1 : 3 0 ] Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not a sin. Let's get the man to whom the Lord imputeth not a sin.
- And all this sin, I give you sin, there is no guile, your glory is not there.
- When as I give every prayer I see, I'm silent what I've done.
- I hope that I'm not there, but because I've rolled out in love.
- For upon me, O day and night, I now give tenly light.
- [ 3 : 0 4 ] So that my mighty dear birth is, in summer's blood divine.
- I bear upon a world to thee, my sin I know all again.
- A night wise life iniquity, I have not done the day.
- I will confess unto the Lord, my best pastor, say I.
- And all my sin I give you, forgive me.
- [ 4 : 4 0 ] That's part of my prayer. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Heavenly Father, how good it is for us to be able to come and worship you this day.
- And to worship you with these blessed words of that psalm. How good it is to know that there is free pardon in Christ Jesus. How good it is to know that sin is covered.
- That the debt of guilt that lies against us is cancelled in Christ Jesus. And we rejoice today that we can sing of the work of Christ, therefore. With that understanding and with that joy in our hearts.
- That all has been done. That all has been done. And the fullness of grace has been revealed. As we stand today at the start of a new year, we therefore cry to you, Lord, and ask that you would bless us.
- Bless us with holding on to that gospel of all else. As we go through our lives, Lord, we know that we often struggle with the simplicity of the gospel.

- [ 6 : 01 ] And we think, Lord, there is more that we have to do. We so often think to ourselves, we have to justify ourselves before you. And we have to be righteous enough to measure up to your standards in order, maybe not for salvation, but to receive blessing upon blessing.
- And somehow we have to earn the favor of Almighty God. We know that that's possible even in the life of the church. That we think that the best way to secure your blessing is to uphold as high a standard as we possibly can.
- And yet, Lord, so often we have to confess what we're really doing when we do that is look to others. We're looking for the approval of people around us.
- We're looking for the satisfaction of thinking that we have attained something. And that we know is phallisaism and pride.
- And it is something that we need to be cleansed from and freed from. Because Jesus himself called these things chains that are put on people. And so, Father, today we ask and pray that you would forgive us for all of the ways in which we would obscure the gospel.
- [ 7 : 30 ] The way we would obscure it, Lord, for those outside who need to come to salvation. But the way we would often, Lord, obscure it for ourselves.
- To limit our enjoyment of the fullness of the grace that you have revealed. And so help us, Lord, to remember as we go into this year that it is all of Christ.
- That it is all of Jesus. That there is nothing that we can do to add to your joy in your people. Because you delight in your Son completely.
- And you see us in him. Father, we ask today that your blessing would be upon this church. And we pray for its welfare in the year to come.
- And we ask especially that you would bless them in a time of search for a new pastor. And we pray, Father, for wisdom for those who have responsibilities in the vacancy committee.
- [ 8 : 33 ] And that you would help them and guide them and direct them. And we thank you, Father, for the freedom that we have in our church to call a minister of our own choosing.
- And we thank you that that was what the free church stood for. And has stood for for all of these years. And we pray that you would help us to therefore seek your face in how that choice is exercised.
- We pray, Father, for the other congregations across our presbytery. Who are looking for ministers at this time as well. And we ask, Lord, that you would raise up laborers to pastor and minister in the work of the gospel.
- We pray, Father, for our college as it trains new pastors. And we want to pray, Father, for the seminary staff and for the work of the gospel that goes on in that place.
- And we pray that you would enrich and bless the church through that ministry. We want to pray, Father, for those who are wearing the responsibilities into moderators just now.
- [ 9 : 40 ] We pray, Father, for the... There's now six of them across our presbytery carrying additional duties within congregations like that. And so we do pray that you would bless and uphold them.
- We pray for our ministers. And that you would prosper their gospel work. That you would enhance their understanding of the gospel. That you would enrich their time in study and preparation.
- That you would bless them for wisdom and all the pastoral duties and the complexities that that involves. That we, as the congregation of your people, would make their lives pleasant.
- That we would adhere to their preaching. That we would listen to what they say. Because we know that they have a concern for our souls. And they seek to do us good.

We pray today, Father, for your blessing on this congregation and all of its particular needs. I don't know, Lord, who's all struggling today with ill health or with recent bereavements.

[ 10 : 40 ] But, Lord, we know that all of these things are compounded at this time of the year. When families come together, often, Lord, it's reminiscing on those who have parted from us.

And so we ask and pray that today you would bless and comfort the flock of God in these days. And that you would uphold us. That you would strengthen us. That you would keep us.

And that in all things you would help us to glorify you in every aspect of our lives. We want to pray today, Father, for your blessing on the witness of this church.

We pray for this community around about. That you would open hearts to receive the gospel. Help us to remember the great privilege that we have to be lights in the darkness.

And may you bless us and help us to be faithful to the call of the gospel. That we would be ambassadors for Christ Jesus. That we would earnestly and ever always to make him known.

[ 11 : 38 ] And to reveal more of the riches of the gospel through our lives. So, Father, bless us and uphold us in this time of worship today. And prepare us for the year ahead.

And help us, Lord, to have priorities. I don't know if people have set for themselves resolutions. But, Lord, may we as your people resolve to make you known. May we resolve to make Christ better known through our actions and our words.

And we ask this in Jesus' name, with the forgiveness of our sins. Amen. We are going to read this now in the New Testament.

In Paul's letter to Titus. We are going to read Titus chapter 2.

We will read it maybe a wee bit into chapter 3 as well.

[ 12 : 51 ] This letter is addressed to a young minister. Titus had been an apprentice of Paul's.

And Paul has left him on the island of Crete. And where he was to establish the church. He has got two responsibilities. In chapter 1, Paul outlines the responsibility to select and equip, train and appoint elders.

And then, secondly, he has a responsibility to his own preaching. And so that is what chapters 2 and 3 are really about. So chapter 2 we'll read from the beginning.

This is written in the English Standard Version. But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love and in steadfastness.

Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behaviour. Not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good. And so train the young women to love their husbands and children.

[ 14 : 01 ] To be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands. That the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled, showing yourself in all respects to be a model of good works.

And in your teaching, show integrity, dignity and sound speech that cannot be condemned. So that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith. So that in everything, they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. And to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age.

Waiting for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Who gave himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness.

[ 15 : 14 ] And to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works. Declare these things. Exhort and rebuke with all authority.

Let no one disregard you. Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities. To be obedient, to be ready for every good work. To speak evil of no one. To avoid quarrelling and to be gentle.

And to show perfect courtesy towards all people. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray. Slaves to various passions and pleasures.

Passing our days in malice and envy. Hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, He saved us.

He saved us. Not because of works done by us in righteousness. But according to his own mercy. By the washing of regeneration. And renewal of the Holy Spirit.

[ 16 : 17 ] Whom he poured out on us richly. Through Jesus Christ our Saviour. So that being justified by his grace. We might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

This saying is trustworthy. And I want you to insist on these things. So that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

These things are excellent and profitable for people. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions and quarrels about the law. For they are unprofitable and worthless.

As for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice. Have nothing more to do with him. Knowing that such a person is warped and sinful.

He is self-condemned. When I send Artemis or Tichius to you. Do your best to come to me at Nicopolis. For I have decided to spend the winter there.

[ 17 : 16 ] Do your best to send Xenos the lawyer and Apollos on their way. See that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works. So as to help cases of urgent need.

And not be unfruitful. All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in faith. And that your grace be with you all.

Amen. This is God's word to us. We are going to sing again to God's praise. This time from Psalm 119. We are going to sing the second part.

Verse 9. We recall that passage we read. Paul is speaking to young men and young women. Old men and old women as well.

And the theme of his letter I think chimes with what is written in this psalm. Like what means shall a young man learn his way to purify? If he according to thy word there to attend to be.

[ 18 : 15 ] Unfeignedly thee have I sought with all my soul and heart. O let me not from the right path of thy commands depart. As we know with the fullness of the revelation of scripture.

That seeking after God is to be found ultimately in the person of Christ. That's where purity is to be found in pursuing Jesus.

So let's sing these words with that understanding from the New Testament. By what means shall a young man learn his way to purify? By what means shall a young man learn his way to purify?

- And be according to thy words. There few God yet will be.  
 Unfeignedly thee have I sought with all my soul and heart.
- [ 19 : 42 ] O let me know from the right path of thy home has depart.  
 Thy Word I live, my heart I live, my heart I open to thee.  
 O Lord, thou ever blessed are thy sky, just each of me.  
 The judgment of thy night, my day, one night, this be cleared out.  
 For joy thy death filled my dreams with a riches of me.
- [ 21 : 12 ] I will thy holy retest with my meditation.  
 And carefully as I'm rich, they come to thy wish, each one.  
 Upon thy God's good, my dear God shall constantly be set.  
 And by thy grace I never will, thy holy word forget.  
 Please turn back and understand your Bibles to Titus chapter 2. You can read again at verse 11. Titus 2, verse 11.
- [ 22 : 47 ] For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. And to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in present age.  
 Waiting for our blessed hope. The appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Who gave himself for us. To redeem us from all lawlessness.  
 And to purify for himself a people for his own possession. Who are zealous for good works. Let's go and pray. Heavenly Father, we give you thanks that we are able on the first day of the year to take time around the scriptures.  
 And to read and reflect on what you have said to us. We pray your help and your blessing today. As we study these words.  
 Help us to take them to heart and to understand what has been said to us. We ask this in Jesus' name and amen. I'm going to just attempt to say a wee word to the boys and girls who were here earlier.
- [ 23 : 57 ] And if you'll forgive me, I'll maybe do that right now. Just for a wee second. So, when I was young, which is about the last century.  
 I had a summer job working at Gold Island. I was thinking about it last night. I was on the ferry last night coming in. And I was going past.  
 And I was telling my daughter, Hannah, who's nine, about when I worked at Gold Island. And I had two jobs there.  
 The latter job was much more pleasant than the former one. The latter job I was working at Fleming Engineering. And I was running the stores there for a while. But before that, the first job I had at Gold Island was working in the prawn processing factory.  
 And I don't know if any of you have ever worked in a prawn processing factory. But there's something very distinctive about it. That follows you home. Can you tell me, do you think any of you young guys, can you tell me, what do you think would follow you home from that prawn processing factory?
- [ 25 : 11 ] Do you think it's the prawns themselves? Do you think the prawns decide at the end of the day, we'll go after Gordon and we'll follow him home? And they'll be getting after you with the little claws going.  
 It's not the prawns that follow you home. It's the smell of the prawns that follows you home. So when I would go home, really it was the first day that I went home in particular.

I phoned my mum and I said, will you come and pick me up? And my mum said, yes, sure, no problem. And she never picked me up again from work. After that I always had to get the bus home from work.

Because my mum didn't want the stink in the car. And so that first day when I went home, the car stank, because I stank. And then I went into the house and my mum was like, the back door, you're not coming in the front smelling like that.

So I had to go in the back door and I had to take off just about every item of clothing I was wearing. Everything got left in a huge pile at the back door. And then I had to go and have a shower and get cleaned up and washed straight away.

[ 26 : 14 ] So that the smell wouldn't be sticking to me and clinging to me. And then what do you think I did after I finished having my shower? Do you think I would go back to the back door again?

Do you think I'd go back and put on the same smelly, stinky shirt and the same stinky jeans and the smelly jacket that I had?

Do you think that's what I did? No, that's not what I did. Because that wouldn't be wise, would it? What you'd want to do is you'd want to have your shower getting cleaned up on the inside.

You'd want to put on clean clothes on the outside as well so that you are ready to sit with your family and have dinner.

So that you can sit in the living room and watch telly with other people. So that you can go out with your friends and not stink out their car as well. Basically, so that you can be fit for getting on with the rest of your life.

[ 27 : 14 ] And I'm sure some of you, maybe a few of you have had jobs like that. Where when you come home, the first thing you do is you have to get completely clean in order to fit in in family life again.

And that's what we're reading about today in this passage in Paul's letter to Titus. Paul wanted Titus to remind the people that he was preaching to, the people all over the island of Crete.

He wanted to remind them that three things have happened. That in the past, something has happened. In the present, something is happening.

And in the future, something is going to happen. And it's just like that story of coming home from a smelly prawn factory and having to get cleaned and washed on the inside.

And then stay clean so that you can fit in and be clean for what's coming up next. And that's what we're going to be thinking about as we look through this passage today.

[ 28 : 22 ] So if you'll turn your Bibles to that verse we read. Verse 11 in chapter 2. Paul says, For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

And that is the starting point in the story. That is the walking home from work in the prawn factory and getting into the shower, getting stripped of all of the stinky clothes and the smell of that place and having all of it washed off you.

The grace of God has appeared. God has done something. And that is completely transformative.

Let me stop and think about that today. God has done something. As we go into a new year, that's often what we think, isn't it?

We think always about what's coming up next. And sometimes we think about our past. I mean, maybe as you're thinking back over the last 12 months, you may be sometimes thinking about all the things you've done wrong. You might be thinking about all the things that have been just miserable in your life.

[ 29 : 34 ] You might be thinking about all the things that have been really challenging and really difficult. I want to say to you today, on the first day of the new year, let us remember, this is an opportunity for us, to remember the grace of God has already appeared.

The simple truth is, we're looking back on Christmas. Christ has already come. It's not a week ago, obviously, but certainly 2,000 years ago, God the Son came and fleshed, born of a virgin, in the village of Bethlehem, and he lived his life.

And the grace of God appearing included not just the miracle of the virgin birth, but the marvel of the cross and the empty tomb.

The grace of God has appeared. And Paul goes on about this as he continues into, that's why we read into chapter 3, really, because Christ our Savior appeared, justified by his grace, so that we can become heirs of the hope of eternal life.

And all of this is possible because Christ in appearing, he saved us. His first appearing was to bring salvation for men and women just like us. The word Paul uses, actually as he goes on here, is in verse 14, he gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness.

[ 31 : 10 ] So Christ brought salvation to us. It wasn't free. The salvation that God has brought to us cost Jesus his life.

He gave himself to redeem us. The grace of God wasn't grace given to Jesus. It was grace, something free and bountiful, a gift given to us at the cost of our Savior's own life.

And so the cleansing that we talk about as Christians, the work of redemption, the work of purchasing our salvation, of buying us back, of taking us from that horrible stink of sin and death that clung to us is the cost that Jesus bore for sinners like us.

Paul's saying very simply, Jesus has already done this. The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people.

If you pause and think about that little expression at the end there as well, it's for all people. Now that doesn't mean that everyone will be saved, but it does mean that salvation is available to everyone.

[ 32 : 40 ] The invitation is there to say come and get clean. Come and get cleansed of that sin and stink of death. come and get washed.

Come and get redeemed. Come to Jesus for this. It's a free offer, a well-meant free offer of salvation for every single person today in Kalanish and in Freasculat and across the island and across the country and the whole world.

A free offer that comes to us and says grace has already appeared. all that's necessary for your salvation it's already been done and nothing more needs to be added to that.

That's sometimes one of these things that we struggle with a lot but don't we? We sometimes say to ourselves that can't possibly be true. I heard a great illustration once it was about someone who puts their money into a can machine, a coke machine.

And when you put the money in, the machine has your money but the can of juice hasn't fallen out yet. And sometimes we're a bit like that in that intervening moment we think there's something more we have to do.

[ 33 : 59 ] And if you think about that, there's a little delay with a can machine and the coke coming to you. You're tempted sometimes aren't you to kick it or whack it on the side. I think I need to hurry up the can. I'm falling down here. But actually, if the machine's working properly, there's nothing you can do to speed up the workings of what is going on inside there.

And our salvation is like that. We say to ourselves often, well I've put my faith in Jesus, but there's something more I need to do. And you think to yourself, well I need to give it a wee whack on the side something just to nudge things along a little bit, just to make things a little bit more complete.

And so we say to ourselves, God is going to love me more, more securely, if only I'm a if only I could elevate myself up to a slightly higher standard, then everything would be a bit better for me.

I want to say to you, just forget it. As we go into a new year, as I was praying, that we would use this year to show Jesus more clearly, that we would resolve to do that, that's one of the ways we can do it, is we can stop pretending that our righteousness makes God love us more.

God's love for his people is rooted in the work of Jesus. The grace of God has appeared already. It's not appeared a little bit, you know, like the grace of God isn't just peeking out from the side of a curtain and saying hi, like you do with a baby.

[ 35 : 39 ] The grace of God has appeared in its fullness. Jesus has done everything and there is nothing that we can add to improve on our redemption, to improve on our inheritance, to improve on our acceptability.

There is nothing we can do to make ourselves better before God in order to receive his grace. that kind of thing, that error that says otherwise, the Bible has a lot of things to say about that.

It calls it self-righteousness, the stench of the phallacies. It's one of the biggest obstacles there is to the gospel.

So let us resolve to remember the past. The past is not merely the stories of our lives and all the challenges that we may have experienced.

Our past as Christians is to remember the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people. That's the past.

[ 36 : 55 ] But then there's also the present. Paul, after telling Titus to preach that the grace of God has appeared, he goes on to make two other points. The first of these is simply that he wants Titus to preach about salvation for the here and now.

So if you follow the logic of verse 11, for the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people. And then Paul says he's training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled upright in godly lives in the present age.

That verse, verse 12, is not something separate from the salvation of verse 11. The salvation of verse 11, the salvation that Jesus has accomplished, continues in the next verse with what Jesus is accomplishing in our lives right now.

Let me stop and think about that. Simply put it this way, good living, good works, righteousness doesn't buy salvation, but salvation trains you to live well.

I think very often what we do as humans, and this is not just as Hebrideans or as Scots or as Gales or anything else, I think this is just the human condition. Because of our sin and our rebellion against God, the whole race is infected with us.

[ 38 : 35 ] We want to put the cart before the horse. We want to get things back to front. And what we do so often is we say, well, I'll need to do these good things in order to receive the blessing and the benefit of it, to receive the security.

And we think that in our work, that's the way our work all the great, isn't it? We get rewarded for the work we do. But Paul says the gospel and the message that he wants Titus to preach is the reverse of that.

He says, I want you to preach the gospel. I want you to talk about the good things that God has given in order that people will live with good works.

The good works follow the gospel. Some of the Christians really thought this way. Paul wanted to make it really clear to Titus that that's just not the case.

that's why I think Hebrideans are the same. We're just like Cretans. We think the same way they did. Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons.



[ 39 : 50 ] Paul says, he's not saying that himself. It's a quote from one of his own poets. Our poets say the same about us. Maybe they do. But the point is that they're no different to us.

people everywhere since the Garden of Eden have always been the same. We think we can be good enough by ourselves. But Paul is saying the gospel, the revelation of the grace of God, the good news of what Jesus has already done, it is that which changes us.

God changes us, perfects us, makes us fit for his service here and now, by giving us the gospel more clearly.

So as we go through our lives and as we reflect more and more on what we're hearing from the Bible, as we try to understand better what it is that's given to us, we discover that God himself is redeeming us in order to be something in this world, to be lights, to be salt, to be a witness, to be ambassadors, to be his witnesses, his people.

See in verse 14 that Christ has come, he's already given himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

[ 41 : 42 ] And the point is that Paul doesn't want Titus to preach in such a way that people get up out of their seats on a Sunday having heard him preach walk out the door saying, I must be a better person.

He doesn't want people to get up out of their seats and say, I have to work hard and be better. He wants them to understand that what Jesus has done for them alone is enough to make them better and to believe that they've been changed, to believe that they are transformed.

It's like me back when I'm trying to scrub off the stink of these prongs. I can't kind of finish my shower and think, no, I still stink, I need to go back in. I still stink, I need to go back in.

And then when I come out saying to myself, I need to do better, but the first thing I'll do is go back and put on the old clothes that I was wearing before. No, the gospel of God has appeared. The cleansing is complete.

The old has been cast off, thrown into the laundry, never to be seen until tomorrow morning, and the new is now ready and clothed for new service. Made accepted, made right, made ready to serve.

[ 43 : 03 ] And so I can go into the kitchen and I can help my mum make dinner, or I can go into the living room and help my sister with her homework. And I can do these things because I've been cleansed. And it's the same for Christians.

When we walk out the door of church, we're walking into the field of harvest that God has laid out for us. And he has equipped us here to go out into that.

And so our resolution has to actually be coming to church. Coming and saying I need to hear the gospel today so that I am ready to go out into the world. Not leaving church and saying I need to be better, but coming to church and saying God remind me of what you have done in my life.

Remind me of what Jesus has made me. Remind me of the transformation that has already come, of the salvation that I have already received, of the purification that Jesus is accomplishing in my life, so that I am bold when I go out the door of the church.

Bold to walk as a child of God. Bold to walk as an ambassador of salvation and hope. Bold to walk as a messenger of the gospel.

[ 44 : 19 ] I think if the church on this island had a measure of understanding of where we are. Not how desperate things are because our congregations are aging, and because there's a secularism creeping into an island's culture.

But if the church on this island had an inkling of who we are in Christ, if we had an inkling of the confidence that that gives us as Christ's ambassadors, of the boldness that we therefore have to walk into the dark places of this world as bright shining beacons of hope and light, then the world and this island would be transformed.

Because the grace of God has already appeared. And because God in his grace has already decided that Crete would have Titus, the colonists will have you.

God has already said you are the ones who are going out as my witnesses into this community. God has to God has for this village and for the villages round about.

He means for us to be his people, zealous for good works where he's put them. God has to God has be his God.

[ 45 : 46 ] So we need to avoid thinking that our good works are necessary to attract more of God's attention or somehow necessary to make us more fit for God's appreciation and therefore his salvation of us.

We need to remember that Christ has appeared and that his appearance and the proclamation of that, the preaching of the word, is training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, to live self-controlled, upright, godly lives in this present age.

The present for us as Christians is one of service. There is one final point that Paul makes as well just to conclude on this and it is that Paul secondly says to Titus, remind them of their future.

So your preaching is to be about the grace of God that has appeared, the work of Jesus, the present how they live as those who have received the gospel, but then also how they hope as those who will receive the second coming of Jesus.

Verse 12, verse 13, sorry, waiting, Paul says, for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[ 47 : 09 ] I think what Paul is saying there is that we live as people with a goal.

I often think we are inclined to reflect on hope a bit like we were yesterday.

yesterday, yesterday, my wife and kids, we've been in Inverness for a few days after Christmas, and we're looking at the weather forecast, and there's weather warnings, and Kalmack are saying, there's liable to be disruptions, and there's going to be ferries off, and all sorts of things.

I don't know, I phoned Thomas and said, I might not make it for New Year. I don't know who Thomas called, but Thomas had a contingency about it. And so, in the morning, we're looking at the weather, and we're thinking, oh man, this is just awful.

Kalmack have sent a message through saying, we're going to chance going at three o'clock tomorrow afternoon, come for three o'clock, so we're all right, let's go, and we're heading up the road. And we're thinking, we have to come back, we might have to come back down the road, and we might have to go back over to my brother-in-law's in Inverness and stay a few nights over New Year until we get back across the island.

[ 48 : 27 ] And you're feeling, you know, you're feeling like you've got hope, you know, you're going for the ferry, but you're thinking it's not going to go. And I think as Christians, we fall into that trap a lot of the time. We think our hope is our, oh, might, who, don't, what.

But then you contrast that with the hope of a couple who are getting married in a few months' time.

And they're making plans. I don't know if you've ever stopped, I mean, those of you who are married will have experienced this yourselves, but I don't know if you've ever stopped and watched a young couple preparing for their wedding.

It's like everything is just, there's detail in what they're doing, you know. and they're hoping for that day. It's all about that day and the start of their lives together.

And there's a lot of attention paid to the florists and the photographers and the church and the caterers and the musicians and the minister and the bridesmaids and the best man and the geek and I'm trying to remember all the stuff from my way.

[ 49 : 42 ] There's a big long checklist of stuff. But at no point do you entertain the thought, this ain't happening. That's the point.

All of the plans are because this is going to happen. For us, it was on the 10th of July, we are getting married. And all the stuff that we're preparing, all the stuff we're planning for, it's all going to happen.

And so, you know, come the 10th of July, about quarter to 12, I'm trying to remember what time it was our wedding, but, you know, around about quarter to 12, I'm sitting in the vestry of Nearing Free Church.

And I'm not saying to really, who's standing there as my best man, saying, I wonder if Delina's going to come today. You know, she's coming. She's probably in the car already.

You know, this is what we've been looking forward to. This is what's happening. And for that reason, Paul is saying, as Christians, we are waiting for the blessed hope, the appearing and the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[ 50 : 54 ] As a bridegroom is waiting for his bride to arrive at the church, we're waiting with that sense that this is going to happen. And the reason we can have that confidence is because the grace of God has already appeared.

And because right now, as we're waiting, God is equipping us for his service. And that means he is one day going to come.

It's not a vague sense of hope. It's not an uncertainty. It's not a strangeness about it. It's just this. Christ is coming.

However hard things might get, however many challenges there might be along the road, again, you see that as you look at a couple preparing to get married.

There's challenges come along. You realise that, you know, actually, you have disagreements. But you're still going towards the goal.

[ 52 : 01 ] And it's the same for us as Christians. Because Christ has already come, because Christ has already died for us, because the guilt has already been taken away, because the shame of our sin and rebellion has already been dealt with, he's coming for us again.

He's purifying us for his own good pleasure. And one day he's coming. And one day the heavens are going to be torn open, and the Messiah is going to come.

And we will all see him. One day he's coming. And so as we enter a new year, let us enter with that confidence, that hope is possible, because grace has already appeared.

Let's look back and remember what Jesus has done. Let us live daily in the present, in the strength that Jesus gives us, and let us look forward to his future hope, because he is coming back.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, fill us with confidence to go out into the world this year. Fill us to be confident as bright lights for Christ.

[ 53 : 20 ] Make us bold in how we seek to make the gospel known. Make us bold in how we do good works. And not because we're looking for a reward, but because we want to be like our saviour, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross and despised the shame.

And help us therefore to have that same sense of joy before us, that our hope is not in this world, our hope is not the good things of this world, our hope is the glory that is to be revealed in Jesus when he comes again.

Help us to hold on to these things and to be inspired in your service in this coming year.  
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to conclude singing in Psalm 16, verse 8.

Psalm 16, verse 8.

Before me still the Lord I said, since it is so that he that ever stand in my right hand I shall not move be. Because of this my heart is glad and joy shall be expressed. Even by my glory and my flesh in confidence shall rest.

[ 54 : 32 ] Because my soul in the way shall not be left by thee. Will thou give thy holy one corruption to see there will be shown the path of life of joys that is the school store before thy face at thy right hand are pleasures evermore.

As the hope of Jesus that the resurrection will be his and as the hope of ourselves that the resurrection will be ours because of Christ. Grace has appeared therefore let us sing with joy.

Before me still the Lord I sing Lord I sing in his soul that he doth ever stand at my right hand I shall not move with thee I shall not move with thee because of this my heart is glad and joy shall be expressed in by glory and my flesh!

in confidence shall rest in confidence shall rest in confidence rest because my soul in faith to dwell shall not be led by thee nor will thou give thine glory one shall be blessed to see!

shall be called up shan to sea thou wilt be sure that that of life of joy there is for the who full storm thy face at thy right hand our pleasure shall be Lord our pleasure shall be Lord our now the grace Lord the love of

[ 57 : 58 ] God the Holy Amen