

Chosen in Him

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[0 : 0 0] in prayer as we unite our hearts together. Lord, we thank you for this time together once more, this time to worship you, this time set aside from the busyness of our lives, this time set aside from this world, this time to draw together as brothers and sisters and as friends also joining us, this time around your word, this time singing your praises.

Help us, Lord, to understand that this is a privilege that we have. We're not just here because of weekly pattern. We're not just here because it's what we've always done. But every time we have a chance to gather together, we are doing so in the presence of our holy God.

Help us understand that glorious truth. We don't come here today just to perform a duty. We're not here today just to do some actions and sing some words and read and go home.

We are here today to worship a holy and living and present God, one who sustains the whole universe with a word of your power, one who at this very moment is present with us here today, present in your perfection, your holiness, your glory.

This very day we come before a God who is holy, holy, holy, whose years have no beginning or no end, who is fully perfect in all that he is and all that he does, whose power is glorious.

[1 : 3 0] It's to him we come this day. Help us then to have a right heart, a right mindset to come to this time of worship, to this holy place. Not holy because of the bricks and stones of this building which will one day crumble, but holy because your people are here worshipping you together.

And where your people worship you together in spirit and in truth, there you dwell amongst them. You give us that assurance that you have made your home in us and with us. So wherever we are in this world, day by day, at home, at work, that we have you within us, living in us, moving in us, as the spirit guides us and leads us.

We come therefore with confidence just now before you. Not confidence found in ourselves. Not confidence of that clean start we can bring ourselves for this new year.

But no, the confidence of a clean start given by the saviour who calls us his own. And those of us who know and who love Jesus, we can know for certain this day as we understand ourselves we have sinned this new year already.

But we can come this day knowing that that clean start is ours and eternally ours because we are washed and cleansed in the blood of our saviour who has called us clean and has called us perfect through his finished work, who has called us his own.

[2 : 5 6] Help us then with confidence to serve you well. We do pray, Lord, for our service in this place. We pray for our Christian witness, our Christian service, in our own homes, with our own families, with those we are so close to, those who we love so dearly.

Pray, Lord, for our witness. We ask our witness would be worthy of our saviour. Help us in all that we do, in our conduct, our words, our actions, our very thoughts. Help us to glorify you as we seek to be a glowing witness to those around us.

Help us to be salt and light. Help those who see us and those who know us best to see a change in us, to see us as those who know and who love Jesus.

We pray for our witness at home, that place where it's often so hard to be a good witness. We pray just now for those who we struggle with the most to share the gospel, those who are nearest to us.

Pray just now for our family members. We pray, Lord, for parents and for children. We pray for siblings. We pray, Lord, for those who we love so dearly, but oftentimes who we struggle with the most to share the glorious good news.

[4 : 11] We pray, Lord, for gospel opportunities to share the good news with family members. We pray the same for our neighbors and for those in this community. Help us as a congregation here to be salt and light in this place.

Help us to magnify and glorify the name of our beautiful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Help all that we are and all that we do seek to praise and share the good news that he has come to live a perfect life and he died that death and he rose again in order that we can and may and will be saved if only we turn to him.

We ask that simple gospel truth will be known and heard throughout North Tolstair this new year and indeed this new week. Pray just now for those of our number here who are yours and who love you and who seek to serve you.

Pray for us, Lord, today in our encouragement as we come around your word. Help us to be built up in your word. Pray just now for your people here who are feeling far away from you for various reasons, who are suffering.

Lord, be with them and be a comfort to them. Pray just now for our friends who gather with us today, friends who have gathered perhaps in this place for many decades and many years but who as of yet haven't made that gospel profession, who as of yet haven't said publicly that they know nor love Jesus.

[5 : 34] Pray just now for the number or any here who do know Jesus but who as of yet have not made that public profession. We ask that this year would be the year that you afford them the bravery to publicly profess Christ as their Saviour, the one they have known perhaps for many years who would now declare him publicly to be their Lord and Saviour, therefore following the command you have given them to follow.

Pray just now for any here who have questioning hearts, who are wondering, what it is to follow Jesus, what it is to know him, who are wondering if he is for them. We ask your word would reveal to them once more that he came to live and to die.

He came to give his life as a ransom for many. He came so that all who believe in him would know sure and certain forgiveness and that is for them too.

Pray just now for the many in our village, many in our families across the island, across Scotland, across the nation who are connected to us, who do not pray for themselves, who have never and who perhaps humanly speaking will never pray for themselves.

We bring them before the throne just now, the many names, the many faces that come to our minds just now. We pray for them. We ask you would speak to their lives and bring them to a saving knowledge of yourself.

[6 : 55] Help us, Lord, as we seek to venture out into this new year. Help us to serve you well in this congregation. Help us to serve you well in this community. Help us to be salt and light and bold and brave witnesses that your name would be glorified across North Tulsa.

Lord, from the Glen all the way to Gary, we would see your name known. I pray just now for our brothers and sisters who worship next door. I pray, Lord, for their service of worship to do.

I pray for one who leads them. I pray for them just now in a time of vacancy. We know this is a difficult time when a congregation is vacant for some years. Lord, we ask you to be with them and support them. I pray for wider gospel work in Tulsa.

The gospel work does not belong to us. I pray for them just now our brothers and sisters in this village who worship in other churches. I pray for their gospel good. We pray for their growth in Christ.

Pray for ourselves not as a church family but as a wider church family in North Tulsa of all your people here. Pray for the fervor of the gospel in this place. We would see and hear soon of days of thanksgiving and days of prayer where Jesus is known and loved across this village, across this area.

[8 : 09] Until we see these days of blessings, Lord, give us patience, help us to serve you well. So pray for ourselves. We pray for the wider denomination that we bring before you today, Grace Church in Montrose.

We thank you for them as they are still relatively new to the free church. We pray for them as they transition away from what they once were and the issues and the struggles they once had to engage in as they now join with the free church.

We pray for them. We thank you for them. We thank you for their forbearance. We thank you for their bravery in joining us. Pray for you bless them and bless them as they seek to reach out into their area.

Pray for the wider area of Brechin as we have read recently that there are 7,000 people in that village, that town and not one evangelical congregation. Pray for Grace Church as they seek to, in the future, church plant into that area and to bring the gospel to these 7,000 souls.

We also remember locally Carlaway Free Church. We pray for them just now. We pray especially thanking you for the connection they have to their local Church of Scotland as they meet next door.

[9 : 26] Thank you Lord for our shared Sunday school, occasionally for shared meetings, for shared communion table. Lord, we give you praise for that, that we see in action and brotherly unity as two churches who love and who worship you meet together.

We ask that to be our case in the future. Remember Carlaway, we give thanks for recent church renovation. Lord, for the success of that and for the way that has been a blessing to the congregation.

As we pray for ourselves locally, we also remember the wider gospel work in our nation but also in a wider world. We pray especially this day for the work of OMF remembering especially the work in Southeast Asia.

Lord, you alone know the details of that work. Especially if the work done this past year among some of the predominant Muslim villages. We pray Lord for your people there and for the difficult time they have in sharing the gospel and the imminent danger they find themselves in day after day simply for declaring their love for a saviour who has come to save all who come to him.

We pray that your gospel will be grown in these villages and we hear of gospel work in that place. We hear of gospel growth of those who lived a life away from you coming home to you finally.

[10 : 47] We give you praise as we see perhaps the gospel flame in our own land burning quietly these days. We give you praise for the glowing flame in other nations across this world.

That reminder that you're not the God just of Scotland but you're the God of this whole creation and your people are across this world. You have your people in all these places. You're proud for the whole of East Asia the many millions indeed the billions of people who live in that part of this world across all these many nations all these people groups all the cultures and languages and you have your people there and your church is flourishing in towns and villages we will never hear about.

Lord you have your people there. Encourage us Lord with that we ask. Help us for those in our own number closer to home who are going through hard days those who have faced a hard week perhaps those who are facing health worries family worries financial worries Lord you know the details.

Pray just now for those who are mourning recent loss still and those who are mourning as this time of year this new year begins who are mourning the loss of this past year who are mourning a loss perhaps of many years ago those with various reasons for their grief those who are mourning parents who have not been kind to them children who perhaps have left mourning brothers and sisters who have ill-treated them mourning friends perhaps who have gone against them those who are mourning all the problems and the pains of this life they are too many to number we bring those who are hurting before you today and remembering that where we fail in our comfort you do not you are the God who gives ultimate comfort help us then to have our minds and hearts focused on worship today as we do bring our worship before you as a pleasing acceptable sacrifice knowing as we heard recently that our Lord Saviour Jesus Christ he tells us that he calls us sweet and he calls us lovely help us then to draw before that place understanding we have a Saviour who longs to hear us and who longs to see us ask all these things in and through his precious name's sake

Amen let's turn to read in God's word book of Ephesians chapter 1 Ephesians chapter 1 we'll discuss more later on but we're beginning a new series which will take us God willing all the way through January Ephesians 1 on page 917 we'll be looking through the book of Ephesians and seeing that great theological truth what it is to be united with Christ for we're in Jesus Ephesians chapter 1 page 917 let's hear the word of God Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him in love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus

[14 : 27] Christ according to the purpose of his will to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved in him we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him things in heaven and things on earth in him we have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will so that we who are the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory in him you also when you heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation and believed in him were sealed with the promised

Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory for this reason because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints I do not cease to give thanks for you remembering you in my prayers for the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him having the eyes of our hearts enlightened that you may know what it is to the hope to which he has called you what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come and he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church which is his body the fullness of him who fills all in all give praise to God for his holy and his perfect word let's again sing the God's praise again from the

Scottish Psalter this time from Psalm 102 Scottish Psalter Psalm 102 the first version of the Psalm page 366 we can sing verse 24 down to verse 28 Psalm 102 the first version verse 24 down to verse 28 my God in the midtime of my days take thou me not away from age to age eternally thy years endure and stay the firm foundation of the earth of old time thou hast laid the heavens also are the work which thine own hands have made Psalm 102 verse 24 to the end to God's praise my God in the midtime of my days take thou me not away from age to age eternally the heavens the heavens love past lead the heavens

The heavens walk so long the world Which I will not submit Thou shalt forevermore in good The things shall perish all In any one of them are sold Life to a God-man shall The rocks of heaven shalt

Then change a place of angels be For though the sea are come Thy years are to eternity The children of thy sermons should be God-man shall OPM SULT O your mercy shall be established true.

[20 : 51] Turning back to the chapter we had, Ephesians chapter 1. We're looking mostly at chapter 1 verses 3 down to verse 6 and chapter 2 verse 10.

For today we can take verses 3 and 4 for our text, but looking at really the whole section. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. And so on down to verse 6.

As I said, this is the start of a short series and it's one we'll come back to, God willing, in the years to come. Sometimes I know we get a bit worried if we put too big a theological term on things.

But just for our own knowledge, this is the great theological truth we'll be looking at of our union with Christ. What it means to be in him. And we'll have four weeks looking at that.

[22 : 04] The four weeks doesn't even begin to do an introduction for us. So for these four weeks we can just take four broad categories. And we'll take it logically as best we can.

We can begin with eternity past. We're in Christ. What that means in eternity past. What that means for our salvation.

What it means for our assurance. And then what it means for our future glory. Taking the whole swathe of all that we know and all that we'll experience. So from time eternal in the past to glory eternal in the future.

And how being in Christ, how that impacts all of that. Why it matters to us for all of that. And this week we begin with eternity past.

Or to give that a title perhaps. Begin with the fact that we are chosen in him. In him. If you have time this afternoon, this evening, you can go through chapter one alone.

[23 : 10] And see and note all the places you have in him. Or in Jesus. Or in Christ. And you'll see the book of Ephesians is a book.

It's all about our union with Jesus. And the danger perhaps is when we discuss theological terms. We forget that these theological terms are actually there for our benefit.

This is not just some dry theology to learn on a Sunday morning. No, this is there to encourage us as Christians. So how are we encouraged this week by these first few verses.

Verses 3 down to verse 6. And chapter 2 verse 10. What do we tell us about us being chosen in him? First of all, we're chosen for life in him.

Chosen for life in him. Verses 3 down to verse 6. We're chosen for life in him. First of all, verse 3 then.

[24 : 12] In him we have all our blessings. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

We touched on this in part a few weeks ago. We saw and we said that sadly many people want all the blessings of Christ without actually wanting Christ.

In other words, they want peace with God. They want to be in heaven forever. They want to be their family in heaven. They want to have what it is to know God's love for them.

They want all the blessings of Christ without actually receiving and knowing Christ himself. But we see here in Ephesians that can never be the way.

We must know him first. And through knowing him we then receive all the blessings that flow out of knowing him. Many people want to be right with God.

[25 : 16] We want peace with God. We don't have that without first having Jesus. So we see in verse 3, God has blessed us in Jesus.

He has blessed the Christians in Jesus with all the blessings. What are the blessings that Christ gives his people? Brothers and sisters, what blessings do we receive from Jesus? Well, I'll name a few of them but there are many, many more.

Election. We were known from before time itself and loved from before time itself.

Adoption. He now calls us his own precious children.

Redemption. We've been saved. Redeemed. Forgiveness. We can know that the slate is clean. The calendar is now clean. The new start is there for us as Christians.

And a future of hope and glory that heaven awaits all the Lord's people. No matter how rough our walk in this life was, heaven awaits us. And that's just the promises we have in chapter 1 of Ephesians.

[26 : 26] Never mind the rest of Scripture. Scripture is full, as you know, of all the promises of blessing we receive in Jesus and having him as our Savior. Savior. If we love him, if we know him as Savior, in him we have all these blessings.

In him we have all the goodness that God gives us. Brothers and sisters, I don't know what kind of start of a year you've had. I know for some, this last year into this new year, it's a difficult time for various reasons.

Even our own congregation, I know it's not easy. But if nothing else, this new year looks to be just as miserable perhaps as the last year. Remind yourself in verse 3 and verse 4, But in Christ you have been given these glorious blessings.

Hope now, hope in the future. Peace now, peace in the future. Safety now, eternal safety in the future. All of these things you have in Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, not because we deserve them, we certainly don't. Not because we earn them, we can't. They are ours. And the gospel does not become a Christian, then in time earn these extra benefits.

[27 : 44] That's not how Christ works. That's a heresy. That's a blasphemy. In Christ he blesses us with all these good gifts. In other words, if you know him, if you love him, brother and sister, this very moment you have full assurance of eternal life.

Full assurance of hope with him. With peace with him. And eternity spent with him. Full assurance of his love for you. All these are yours right now.

If you're found in Jesus. So in him we have blessings. Also we see in verse 4, In him we are chosen. We are chosen for life. Even as he chose us in him, in Jesus, before the foundation of the world, we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love he predestined us for adoption. In him we are chosen. Now we've touched plenty of times, both next door and here, on the doctrine of election.

And that is not a doctrine we're really discussing today. But just to remind ourselves, to the shame of the church, the doctrine of election, and even the early church fathers discussed it.

[28 : 54] So this is not a new problem for us. The reformers have the same problem. The confession of faith, when it deals with election, it warns ministers and preachers to handle it carefully.

Why? Because, to our shame, we have taken the doctrine of election, and we have used it for what it's not meant to be used for.

We've said this before. Every time we see the doctrine of election found in scripture, that God chooses his own beloved people, why is it there? Why is it in scripture?

It's never there to make a theological point alone. It is always there to encourage. When Paul writes to the Ephesian church about the doctrine of election, that the Lord in Jesus has chosen us as his precious people before the foundation of the world, that's there to encourage them.

As you face the Rome, as you face the wrath of Rome, as you face the destruction of Rome, in Ephesus, as you face the pagans trying to kill you, which they are facing in Ephesus, as you young, struggling church, face the full horror of this world, as they murder your brothers and sisters, as they tie you and flay you alive and burn you alive on the roadsides, as you face the full reality of loving and serving Jesus, dear Ephesian Christians, know that before time, you were loved, you were chosen, you were special to the Lord.

[30 : 25] That is the tone that the theology of election is taught in Paul's letters. That's why it's there, it's to encourage us as Christians.

It's not some cold, mechanical process. Why? Because note what verse 4 says. When the Lord chooses his people, how does he choose them? He chose us in him, in Jesus.

Not chosen because of ability, not chosen because of personality, personality, not chosen because of how godly or how good we'll be. No, we're chosen in Jesus. Not chosen because God looked forward into time and saw who would choose him.

No, we're chosen in Jesus. We're loved in Jesus. Jesus. Now for many I know, over many years, the doctrine of election has become an excuse for many.

And you say, well, I'm not saved yet, therefore I'm not chosen, therefore what's the point? We covered this before in our first few weeks together. It is God's revealed will and there's God's, as it were, private will, we could call it for today's use.

[31 : 45] His, his revealed will, his private will. His private will, God elects, God chooses, God does what he wants for he is God.

His revealed will says to us, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what? And be saved. And be saved. If at any point you think, well, I'm not going to be elect, then you're putting words in God's mouth.

The Lord says to you, believe in Jesus and be saved. It's as simple as that. The doctrine of election is for the Christians to think about. It's for our encouragement.

Until you're saved, it means nothing to you. Until you're saved, all you have to hear is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and find in him salvation and love and peace and forgiveness.

elections for the Christians. Because it's for our encouragement we're told this theology. Why? It tells us that not one of us here today if we love Jesus, not one of us managed to sneak in by accident.

[32 : 50] If we're here today, if we love him, if we know him, we're reminded that in Jesus we have been chosen. Before time itself, no matter how shaky our faith is, no matter how weak we begin this new year, and brothers and sisters, I know many of us, we begin this new year feeling weak, feeling small in our faith, feeling useless in our faith, feeling useless in our service towards our Savior, we're reminded that in him, in him, in verse 4, we were chosen in Jesus before the foundation of the world.

In other words, how shaky, how small, how useless you feel as a Christian. Before time, dear brother, dear sister, you were known, you were loved.

There's no mistake, he is yours, and you are his. Before time, you were called, as verse 4 tells us, to be what? To be holy and to be blameless before him.

You say, well, I'm not holy, I'm not blameless. I'm very unholy at times. I have done many things that gave me great guilt. Well, dear Christian, before him, at this moment, you are holy, you are blameless, because you've been cleansed by his blood.

You know this, we know it, we forget it so easily. We're chosen in him. That brings us to the next blessing we have in verse 5.

[34 : 24] We're chosen in him, we get our blessings from him. In love, verse 5, in love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ.

Note here that the whole predestining work, the whole work of the election of the Father, it is a work of love. Why? Well, verse 5 tells us it's a work of love because the whole work of election is to give us adoption so that we can be taken in and become part of the family of God as sons and daughters.

I know many of us here, I know your stories up to a point, I know your current life story up to a point, I don't know the details and it's not my job to know the details.

I don't know if parents have wronged you or if grandparents have wronged you, I don't know what your family dynamic is, I know there's many here who are hurting because of painful family dynamics.

Brothers and sisters, we come to one who loves us, a father who adopted us, a father who calls us his own. Earthly parents may let us down, he does not.

[35 : 44] He calls us his own. It's done through Jesus. Again, it's not some cold mechanical process, no, he adopts us through the work of the son.

In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ. It's done through Jesus. The Lord's eternal love to rescue his people through Jesus, through the son coming down and taking on full humanity.

It's all done through that finished work. His perfect life of obedience, his death, his resurrection, all so that we can become sons and daughters of the Lord.

It's done through Jesus, also it's done for Jesus. It's done for Jesus. I read just Hebrews chapter 2 verse 11.

Speaking of Jesus here, that is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, I will tell of your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.

[37 : 01] And again, I will put my trust in him and again, behold I and the children God has given me. in Jesus, through his finished work, his life, his death, his sacrifice, has been raised again.

Brothers and sisters, you have the full hope of full adoption. Nothing in your life, nothing in your personal life, not the devil himself, nor his angels, no dominion, no darkness, no power, can separate you from the love of Christ.

Why? Because through his finished work, he has secured for you the status of sons and daughters. And if he calls you a brother, if he calls you a sister, see here in Hebrews chapter 2, then nothing can take away that title from you.

Not your own sin, not someone else's sin, not the world, not the Satan, not the devil, not the angels, nothing. It's all yours because it's yours, we said in the start, and the blessings he gives you.

It's yours because we are found in Christ. We are here but he is over us and we are in him. In him we were known and loved before time.

[38 : 22] In him we have seen and been shown eternal care and grace. In him we have a sure and certain adoption. We can call ourselves sons and daughters of God without caveat, without fear.

We can cry out to God and say Abba, Father. We can call God Father and know he calls us his sons and daughters without qualification. We don't come fearing before his throne, trembling as servants.

No, we come as friends, as sons and daughters. Yes, we seek to serve him but we do so as his family, not as slaves anymore. In him, in Jesus we have life, blessing.

In him we are chosen, in him we have adoption. So we're created for life in him, chosen for life in him.

And to say briefly, we're chosen also for a purpose in him. If you turn please to Ephesians chapter 2 verse 10.

[39 : 39] Speaks about our salvation. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

we are saved out of love, chosen in love, but chosen in Jesus for a purpose. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.

Just a few points here. First of all, we were crafted, created, formed, very carefully. There's no accident by God.

We are his beloved workmanship, each one of us, our own personalities, our own quirks. We all work different ways and we praise the Lord for that.

With the Lord's help, next Sunday evening we'll start a new series looking at what the church actually is. The first point is the church is a body. Every part of that body works differently.

[40 : 44] Every one of us, we are so different, we are so strange in many ways, we're so odd in many ways and it works. We all have our own strange ways of doing things and thinking about things and that's good, it's healthy.

He has created us well. Also he's made us beautifully. There's something beautiful in verse 10. We are his workmanship.

We are his workmanship. Now workmanship is a good word but the reality of that word, it goes much deeper. That word workmanship, is poema.

Poema in the secular Greek world, it was the word you would use for the beautiful image a poet crafted in his poems.

So you've got a poet who writes poems and in his poems he crafts, he creates this beautiful image of poetry. That is the word poema. We are God's crafted poetry, quite literally.

[41 : 50] This is not for today's sermon but one thing to note, almost every time God speaks in the Old Testament, all the promises, all the warnings, all the judgments, all the hope he gives, God in Hebrew almost always speaks in poetry, in Hebrew poetry.

Now we'll cover that in a whole different sermon series. If it's not some new theology, that is there, it's in the Hebrew text. You can read it yourself, you can see it yourself. In the Hebrew Bible we saw a few weeks ago next door, it's laid out that way.

When God speaks, it is spoken in stanzas. God speaks in poetry. Why? Because God's words are beautiful.

God's words need to be heard. And when God calls us his workmanship, he says we are his poiema. We are his poetry.

We are beautifully made. Precious in our creation. Not just our souls, but our very bodies. This takes in both things, both soul and body.

[43 : 04] We are beautifully made. In our modern world, we have this idea that our body is just a container for our soul. That's heresy. That's blasphemy. That is the old Gnostic way of thinking.

That first or second century heresy. In our culture, we've maintained that view, haven't we? That we are worth. We know that the body, it is a body.

It goes back to the ground. But think of our own funeral culture. Think how carefully we handle the dust. Think how carefully we put the body down into the grave.

To the grave diggers of our congregation, our community, we are thankful for them. You see them, they dig that grave so perfectly, so carefully. They take the time to fill it so carefully.

The undertakers do their job so carefully. In one sense, a body is just organic material, yes, but no. We are created wonderfully, beautifully by God.

[44 : 04] Both soul and body, we are his, and both deserve equal glory. And one day, our bodies will be brought back to life again, perfect, incorruptible of all the glory and beauty.

We are his workmanship, created for a purpose, crafted in Jesus, created in Jesus, literally crafted in Jesus, created through him, created for him.

We are precious to him, made in him, made for him. Brothers and sisters, all that we have, it belongs to him and he gives it to us joyfully and gladly.

And crafted for a purpose, very briefly, as we conclude. Crafted for a purpose, created to do good works in him, created and crafted to serve him.

Perhaps we hear good works and we think, oh boy, that's a dangerous word to discuss, that's a worrying term to use. I thought our salvation isn't by good works, it's not. This is talking to Christians.

[45 : 11] We're not saved by good works, we're saved by grace and by his glory and his death and resurrection, we said it before. But once you are saved, then your good works begin.

Why? Because before you're saved, your good works mean nothing. You don't impress God, God doesn't see them, God doesn't care about them, he just needs nothing from you.

But once we are saved, then we do good works. Why? Because we do it now for his glory, for his sake. We're created for a purpose, created to serve him well, created to serve him in our homes, in our congregation, in our community.

2 Timothy 19 gives an explanation of this. He has saved us and called us to a holy life. Not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace.

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time. Brothers and sisters, I don't know, perhaps this past year you have felt as if you were of no service to the Lord.

[46 : 24] Perhaps this year you felt as if your life and your actions and you've got nothing to offer the church, you've got nothing to offer the gospel work. If you felt that way you are in good company.

Myself and your fellow brothers and sisters, we've all felt that way. Though for a second think I haven't felt that way myself even this past year, we all have that sense of I'm not serving well.

I could be serving better. We're reminded in Christ Jesus you are loved, you are crafted carefully, and you're created to serve.

You have value, you have worth in the kingdom of God and you have skills and talents that God can use every one of us, every one of us.

And as we begin this new year with all the plans and ideas, my hope is and my prayer is you would go home and the next few days, next few weeks, please do, Jane, do this, please do.

[47 : 25] Please pray to the Lord and ask that he would perhaps reveal to you the skills and talents that he's given you or if you know what they are, then don't be shy about it. We need you.

You are part of the church and the church needs all the skills and talents of its body, of its members to work together. Why? Because you were made to serve and made well to serve well.

in him you have purpose. In him, brothers and sisters, we have purpose. So in him we have life, chosen in Jesus for life and chosen in Jesus for a purpose.

All we have is in him. Our eternity is in Jesus. Our hope is in Jesus. Our very life's purpose is in Jesus.

It's all in him. It's all through him. It's all because of him. And because it's all involved and part of his salvation, his free grace, his work on that cross, the good news is that everyone here who as of yet has not entered into that free work, it is there for you.

[48 : 38] You've heard this week after week, the last few months, the whole of December we were trying our best to make so clear the open offer of the gospel. gospel.

Once more, allow me to push it once more. You can come today and know this grace for yourselves. You can come today and know this forgiveness for yourselves.

You can come today and know what it is to be loved, what it is to have a full blessing of Christ, what it is to know full life in him. It's for you.

All you have to do is come to him. It's as simple as that. I can't say anything else, I can't add to anything else, I have to close my Bible because that's the end of it.

You come to him who has prepared the way for you. Just come. Come and confess, come and receive from him the full goodness and love he has prepared to give you from before time itself.

[49 : 42] It's all yours. It's a free offer. Come and live the life you are created to live. Let's bow our heads now, a word of prayer.

Lord, we thank you for the gift of your word once more. Thank you for the reminder that in Jesus we have our full hope and salvation, that in him we are known from before time itself, that in him we are crafted and created.

beautifully and carefully to serve him both body and soul, that in him we have been offered the great gift of salvation, that in him those who receive it receive blessing upon blessing and mercy and love and peace and eternal joy, that in him we have been given roles to work out in this world, that in him we have the sure hope of a future spent with him in glory.

Help us as your people today to grow in our hope and knowledge, that in him we have all that we have. And we pray once more that those here who as of yet can't say that they are in him, who can't say that they are in Jesus, we ask this day, Lord, that you would open your word to them once more and they would know, they would love him and be found in him at the start of this new year.

Ask all these things in and through and for Christ's precious name's sake. Amen. Amen. We come to sing our final item of worship, Scottish Psalter, Psalm 48.

[51 : 14] Scottish Psalter, Psalm 48. It's on page 273 of the Psalm books.

It's called Psalter Psalm 48 on page 273. If you notice, all our Psalms today have been dealing with God's eternity, with the eternal nature of God's time frame and God's person, and a reminder that that eternal God saves us in our mortality.

Psalm 48. We can sing from the second half of verse 8. In our God's city, which his hand forever establish will, we off by loving kindness thought, Lord, in thy temple still, Lord, according to thy name, through all the earth's thy praise, and thy right hand, O Lord, is full of righteousness always.

Psalm 48, the second half of verse 8, down to verse 14, to God's praise. ■■■■, And God's verse 16, to sing full of dominues, high timeizer virtuoso, and and her authority, ex.

and cin■ get securing our drive. We hope thy love in our net song Lord, in thy hand hastå, O Lord, that are wood to thy name Through the earth thy peace as thy ■■■■, O Lord, it's full of righteousness of Him.

[53 : 20] Because thy judgments are made yours, Bless a young once read earth.

Ooun to thy notrege,■■■■■ fiddle daisy on earth.

Xoayla né. For us, the higher men of hell, Consider ye her goddesses, And my her poor as well, That you may tell us, Can't be for us, or God of mine, A God forever, For evermore, Seen unto death as high.

In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, In the love of God the Father, And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, For of you now and forevermore. Amen.