## The Christian's Assurance in Death

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Date: 31 May 2020

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[0:00] We extend a very good morning to everybody as we seek to engage in worship and we pray that wherever you are and however you are that you will know and all whom you love the blessing of God as we seek to meet with God this morning.

And we're going to read a few verses first of all in 1st John, John's letter the first epistle and chapter 3.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

Amen. May God bless to us that reading of his word. Let us pray. Lord our God we give thanks again for being able to meet together.

[1:14] We give thanks Lord for every person who is able to gather before you in the quiet of their own home or in whatever situation they are in but able to view this.

We give thanks Lord for making this provision for us because while the churches are closed the church is still brought to people's homes and we give thanks for that.

We give thanks Lord that you are God and sovereign God and you are the God of heaven and earth. This is your creation. You have made all things and we give thanks for that and we pray that more and more we will come to realise the awesome wonder of your creation.

When I look up unto the heavens which thine own fingers framed even to the moon and to the stars which whereby thee ordained. That's what the psalmist said and we pray that we will join with the psalmist in being able to recognise the beauty and the wonder and the glory of what you have done which is reflecting something of the wisdom and power that belongs to you.

And when we look at just how marvellous we are, how intricate we are, the make up of us and we give thanks Lord for your creation. But we give thanks above all for your salvation.

[2:30] For you are the God who has come into this world to deal with what we have done with your world. Of where we have rebelled against you. Where we have done that which is wrong.

And we give thanks that you have made provision in sending your son, the only begotten son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And we pray that we may truly believe in him and trust in him.

Pray for everybody who is worshipping you today. And we pray that we will have hearts that are open to your word. That we will hear for God the Lord will speak. We give thanks for this word.

May we never tire of it. Every day may we come to it and discover new things and even old things being made new. We pray that every day we will get enough to sustain us and to keep us and to help us in all that we are about.

In our homes, in our families and in our different relationships. We know that this has been a difficult time where relationships are often being put on hold. And where we miss the day to day contact with loved ones.

[3:36] And so we ask, Lord, that you will bless us in these times. And as we hopefully will move through different stages of easing the lockdown, we pray, Lord, that all the time you'll protect us.

And that you'll grant wisdom to our leaders in London and in Edinburgh and here locally in our council. So that decisions will be made which are right and which are good for us and good for you.

Where your law will be reflected in the society in which we live. We pray, Lord, for those who are ill, those who are sick, those who have been laid aside at this time.

We pray for all the different illnesses. And so often we, because of the COVID-19, we so often are not thinking about all the other illnesses which are still on the rampage.

With cancer in all its different forms and heart disease and blood pressures and all the different things that afflict us. That these things are still wrecking their own havoc and bringing their own pain and sorrows and heartaches to bear in people's lives.

[4:44] And so we pray that you will bring comfort to every broken heart. That you will bring healing to every wounded heart. And we pray that you will be with those who have lost loved ones.

We commit them to your care and keeping. Thanks, Lord, for all who are working tirelessly at the forefront with regard to battling COVID-19 which we are so often seeing as a devastating effect upon people's lives.

We give thanks, Lord, for those who have been bruised and battered on the front line. We're day in, day out. They are facing death. We're dealing with death.

We're counsellors. They're dealing with people maybe at different levels just now as family are not able to be present.

So we give thanks, Lord. Oh, Lord, we give thanks for all our carers. For those in homes who are working diligently, often in difficult circumstances. For those in our community.

[5:48] And we give thanks, Lord, for the wonderful work that they do. And day in, day out where they're attending to those who are no longer able to attend to themselves. And truly, Lord, we give thanks for them.

And for all who keep the arteries of our country running in all the different services. Lord, we give thanks for them. Lord, pray to bless our leaders and bless all in authority over us.

And, Lord, we pray that we will have love for one another. That we will not be seeking to devour one another. But we'll be seeking the best for one another.

And the best for our countries. Oh, Lord, we pray that it will please you to help those who are seeking to find a vaccine.

And they'll find ones shortly that will prove truly effective. And that drugs will be found that will prove to be effective in curing and helping. And taking the worst off this illness.

[6:47] We ask, Lord, that you will bless your word to us. That we will hear what God the Lord will speak. Pray, if any today don't know you, a Savior, that even today might be a day. Where there will be rejoicing in heaven over those who come in repentance before you.

Oh, Lord, we pray that we might all have a spirit of repentance. And ask that you will forgive us our sin. Do us good, then, we pray. Watch over us and lead us in the right way.

Remember again the home and sky. And we're three there. And we pray, Lord, for them. What a distressing time it has been. And we commit each and every one to your care.

Bless us, then, we pray. Bless the world here today and this evening in our own congregation. And reaching out. But also everybody, wherever they are, that proclaims the word of your truth.

Forgive us our sin, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. I'm just going to say a wee word to the young folk. And tell you about a young Christian man who was travelling in a train.

[7:53] And he was reading a Christian book. And opposite of them, there was a gentleman who was reading a paper. And after a wee while, the young Christian man put his book down.

It was a Christian book he was reading. The man across from him said, Do you believe in God? And the young Christian man said, Yes, I believe in God. Do you?

Oh, no, he said. How can you believe in someone that you have never seen? I can't believe in anything that I have never seen. Or someone that I have never seen.

I can't believe in that. And I need proof. So the young man said to him, Do you believe in the wind? Of course I believe in the wind. Why do you believe in the wind?

And he said, That's a kind of stupid question. I believe in the wind. Although I can't see the wind. He said, I see the result of the wind. I see the trees bending over and the leaves blowing on the ground.

[8:52] I see the sea being turned and beginning to churn and the waves because of the wind. I can see that. And I can also hear the wind.

I can hear the wind roaring in the chimney. I can hear it whistling at the windows. And I can feel the wind, even though I can't see it. I can feel the effect of the wind. And I said, Blowing in my face?

He said, That's a kind of stupid question you've asked me. Oh no, said the young Christian man. He said, I'm going to tell you that is exactly how it is with God.

Because although we cannot see God, nobody is able to look on God. God is a spirit. But we see the result of God.

We see the effect of God everywhere. The creation, the sun, the moon, the stars, the sea, the grass, the sheep, you, me, everything.

[9:53] Everything speaks to us of God. Psalm 19 tells us this. This is what he said. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Psalm 8 tells us, When I look up into the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon of the stars, which you have set. So you see, the whole creation speaks to us about God.

We see the result of God. God's work in people's lives that have been changed, wonderfully changed. And again, we hear God whenever we come to the Bible.

Because that's what we're told. I'll hear what God the Lord will speak. To his folk he'll speak peace. And whenever we open the Bible, we are actually hearing the word of God.

This is God's word to us. And this book, the young man said, is a guide for our life. God wants the best for us. And so he's given us this book to show us a way to go, to lead us in the right way.

Above all, to lead us to himself. And when we come to know him, then we come to know life far more than a life, however good your life is, a life without God is not a full life.

It's not that you come to know God in Jesus Christ. And that's what the Bible shows us. We hear the way, but we also feel God.

Man said, how can you feel God? When you come to trust the Lord Jesus Christ, you have God in your heart.

The Holy Spirit has come into your heart. And we know that God is in our heart because first, the word of God tells us, and secondly, we feel it.

We don't always feel it. But often we're aware or made to know that, you know, the Lord is here. The Lord's with me. I can feel the calmness and the peace of his presence.

[11:58] I can feel his love in my heart. Nobody can take that away from me. Jesus said that, my peace I give you. I give you not as the world gives.

You see, once that peace comes in, it's settled deep down. So you see, just like the wind, you can see the result of God.

You can hear God and you can feel God. Man didn't say any more. He just pulled up his paper. But I'm sure that young man left him plenty to think about.

And I want you every day to say, Lord, help me to see you more. Help me to see you in your creation. Help me to see you in salvation. What does that mean?

Help me to see Jesus. Because Jesus himself said, he or she who has seen me has seen the Father. The way to see God is through Jesus.

[12:57] And ask every day, Lord, come into my life so that I will know you really there. That I will know your presence and your love. Nothing greater. Let's say the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Now we're going to read God's Word and we find this in the book of Psalms and in Psalm number 17.

Hear a just cause, O Lord, attend to my cry. Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit. From your presence let my vindication come.

Let your eyes behold the right. You have tried my heart. You have visited me by night. You have tested me and you will find nothing. I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.

[14:09] With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips, I have avoided the ways of the violent. My steps have held fast to your paths. My feet have not slipped.

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God. Incline your ear to me. Hear my words. Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Saviour, of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

Keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me in the shadow of your wings. From the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me. They close their hearts to pity, with their mouths they speak arrogantly.

They have now surrounded our steps. They have set their eyes to cast us to the ground. He is like a lion, eager to tear, as a young lion lurking in ambush.

Arise, O Lord, confront him, subdue him. Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword. From men, by your hand, O Lord, from men of the world whose portion is in this life.

You fill their womb with treasure. They are satisfied with children and they leave their abundance to their infants. As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness.

When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. Amen. May God bless to us this reading of his own holy word. And I want us to think in particular of these last words in the last verse.

As for me, I will behold your face in righteousness. When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

I often take a walk through the cemetery. Of course, part of my work is that I'm often involved in the cemetery. But I also, sometimes when I go for a walk, I like to take my time wandering through the cemetery or the winding roads of it and looking at the different gravestones.

And often you'll think of people, you'll remember and you'll say, oh, there's so-and-so and there's so-and-so's father and such like that. I often like to read what it says on them. And sometimes at the bottom it's got a, sometimes it's got a wee verse or a wee comment or something.

[16:38] And I saw one recently, in fact, a man I knew very well, a man who died not terribly long ago. And I saw on the bottom of the stone until the 12th of never.

And that really got me thinking because I said to myself, I've never seen, I don't understand what that is. So I mentioned it to somebody else and they said, that's from a song by a man, Johnny Mathis, until the 12th of never.

And it's a love song. And it's really saying that love is never ending. And it talks about different things and that the love will go on beyond other things until the 12th of never.

And I thought, that's really nice. So every so often you come across things. Recently I saw on the back of a gravestone the great verse of John 3, 16, for God so loved the world.

This person who died wanted this written for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting. Like in big bold letters.

[17:45] Then as I walked along I came to where my grandfather's grave is. And he was a minister here in Stornley. And when he died the congregation put a great big stone up.

And on the stone they had put the verse that those who turn many to righteousness shall shine like the stars forever and ever.

I was saying, that's a beautiful verse. That's from the book of Daniel. But underneath there there's a plaque just a wee plaque like almost in the shape of a book that my granny and my mother had put just below the stone.

Something that they themselves had put. And they had put this verse on it the verse that we're looking at today. As for me I shall behold your face in righteousness.

When I awake I shall be satisfied with your likeness. And in a sense this verse kind of stops you in your tracks. When I awake because so many people think well death that's the end.

[18:48] It's not the end. The Bible talks of death like a sleep. And that's what this is telling us about that when I awake I shall behold your face in righteousness.

And so this is something that really kind of stops us in our tracks and say okay here's this symmetry and it's it's full of people who have died. But it's talking about what goes on after we die.

Now many people question life and they wonder what's life all about? A lot of people who say you know what is the purpose of my life here? Why am I here? And there are times when people stop and they think and people sometimes say I really don't know what it's all about.

And that's the beauty of God's word because God's word gives us a sense of direction a sense of hope a sense of understanding where we're brought to see that there's another aspect to life the most important aspect of life and that is the spiritual.

Now David in this psalm recognizes that there are people who never really think about anything but this word. He calls them in fact the men of the world whose portion is this life.

[20:05] These are the people who they never really think about God. They live their life as if this life is all that there is. And everything that they get out of life they just live for this.

they never think of the God who provides and nourishes and clothes and makes all the provision in life the abilities to do what we do all these things they don't think of God.

They just live in this world for this world and nothing else. But a lot of people also recognize not just people who are in church but lots of people recognize that death is not the end.

And there are many people you go to a lot of the songs even songs of this world and you will find a recognition of that that we leave absolutely everything behind. It was John Lennon who sang when you are dead you don't take nothing with you but your soul think.

Now that's quite something. When you are dead you take nothing with you but your soul think. And I would say that that is something that every person ought to think about because that's exactly what David is talking about here.

[21:24] He says the man of the world these people who just live for the world they're satisfied with yes the good things of this life but they leave their abundance to their infants.

Everything they've amassed it's gone. Can't take it with them. Not a thing not one penny that we've ever earned. Not one achievement that we've ever won title or honor or anything.

It's all left behind. All that we have is our soul as we enter into eternity. And that's why the Bible is one of the wonderful things the Bible deals with realities.

There's no escapism. Brings you to face things straight on. Now David was somebody who lived a life of faith. He lived to the Lord and for the Lord all the time.

But David knew that God was going to be with him in life was going to be with him in death and was going to be with him after death. And I want us to look at two things. The first is the main thing and just a word and a second.

[ 22:33 ] The first thing is to look at here the Christian's future and then the Christian's assurance. And this verse shows us that the believer's full joy will be in the world to come.

In this world we've experienced many, many joys. And most of us enjoy living. I know some people really struggle in life and some people struggle with real depression in life and it's hard going.

But many people they enjoy living life. We enjoy life. There's a lot of good things in life. But there is never complete satisfaction. It doesn't matter what we get or what we achieve.

There is never complete satisfaction. There's always something to spoil it. Supposing you have the best meal in the world and when you finish it you say you know something I am completely satisfied.

The next day you're going to be hungry again. Same when we drink and we're satisfied next day we're going to be thirsty again or later on in the day. And even even in the good things there comes a point sometimes even in the best things in life we just say I can't take any more.

[ 23:47 ] Take for instance laughter. There's sometimes you can be in a situation and maybe with friends and you're going through a time of laughter and storytelling and all this kind of thing and you reach a point and you say I can't laugh anymore.

I'm out. I can't. I've had enough. And even in the best things in life we can sometimes say you hear it said you can have too much of a good thing.

But you know in glory that will never be the case. There will be a perpetual satisfaction. It will never be the state that we will never ever say there's too much of a good thing.

Because we will be suitably prepared and ready to take the fullness of all that is there and all that we will enjoy forever and ever and ever.

Constant satisfaction. In this world you can't get that. I can get no satisfaction. Well in glory you will. Constant satisfaction.

[ 24:47 ] The Bible tells us that. And one of the wonderful things is that God is actually working in us. All the time preparing us for the enjoyment of that satisfaction.

and the Bible tells us this. One of the many wonderful things about the Bible is that when you as a Christian when you as somebody who has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ when you're going through the tough times and life seems unfair and you're hurt and you're broken and you're sad and you're down and you're in pain and you're going through all these things and you're saying what's this about?

what's happening? God is actually telling us. These things they might not be nice to experience just now but God is actually he's using all these things to prepare us for the glory.

As it tells us in Corinthians our light affliction and very often it doesn't light can be pretty extreme but compared to glory our light affliction which is but for a moment and often it doesn't feel like a moment it feels like it's going on and on and on.

Our light affliction which is but for a moment works in us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

[ 26:15 ] And so you put it in scales. Light for a moment. Eternal weight of glory. glory. So God is at work in your life.

He's refining you. He's purifying you. He's molding you. He's shaping you. And that's what he says that God works for those who love the Lord. He's actually working all these things for your good.

And although maybe today you can't see it and you say how do you mean that? I guarantee that the day will come when you are in glory and you will say Lord I now understand.

I can't in any way understand some of the things that go on. But I believe that one day I will and I will realize that the Lord was right.

And so the psalmist says that he expects to see God's face. Now in this world he saw God's hand just the same as you and I.

[27:18] When we say we experience God's hand we experience his hand in leading and guiding and showing us a way to go directing our path and protecting us and helping us.

All these things. But God talks about his hand. The hand of security that holds us to himself. In this world we heard God's voice. My sheep hear my voice.

We've heard God speaking to us. That's what happens when we read his word and we get the faith to lay hold upon it. We're saying God's speaking to me. I'm hearing his voice.

Faith lays hold upon God's word so that we're able as it were to hear it. But David is talking here about God's face.

Now in this world we cannot see God's face. Moses wanted to see God's face. Remember when he was up in Sinai. Let me see your face he said to the Lord and God said no man shall see my face and live.

[ 28:22 ] Moses so wanted to see God's face. God says no you can't. But the wonderful thing is that in and through the Lord Jesus Christ we are able to see in a way that we cannot see in any other way.

However with regard to God's face we know God's face in this world with regard to his favor. That's what the Bible tells us about how the Lord will shine his face upon us.

Meaning that it's like the look of love. It's that look of caring. That look of belonging. In the very same way as it talks about God's face being set against those who do wickedly.

But in glory this is a wonderful thing. We shall be able to see his face because we are brought to another dimension. In glory we will be able to look because we will be changed.

In glory we will be able to look upon the risen glorious radiant face of Jesus Christ. Something that we couldn't do in this world.

[29:35] there are only two men that were able to see. They got a glimpse of the risen Jesus and they both fell down as if they were dead.

One was Saul of Tarshish. Remember in that Damascus experience he was blinded as Jesus revealed himself in his glory. That's who Jesus is. This world still thinks of him very often as if they think of him at all as the babe of Bethlehem.

The man who walked in this world and was crucified. Yes he was all that. But he is now the risen glorified saviour. And with all his majesty and glory that is his.

All authority and power. The apostle John in the book of Revelation he was given a glimpse of Jesus. And it tells us when the vision you read Revelation chapter 1.

And John tries to describe what he saw of Jesus. And it's almost beyond description. And it tells us that when he saw Jesus he fell down at his feet as one dead.

[30:43] And of course the Lord laid his hand upon him. But what it shows us there is that in our humanity in this world we cannot look upon the face of Jesus.

But in glory we'll be able to. Because a transformation takes place. Something happens. And that's a wonderful thing. Because in glory a change takes place.

A radical change takes place. For we are transformed. And we will see him. We'll see him in his glory. And you know we'll never again question him.

In this world we've questioned him loads of times. In glory we'll never question him. And we will see his face. We will see we're told here that as for me I shall behold your face in righteousness.

That's the only way that we can see the face of Jesus. Is in righteousness. And how do we get that righteousness? Well the righteousness that belongs to Jesus is worked in two ways in our lives.

[31:50] Theologians talk about the imputed and the imparted righteousness of Jesus. These are big terms. But really what it is saying is that righteousness is what Jesus is.

What Jesus was and what Jesus is in this world. We're unrighteous. We don't do the right things. Our lives are not perfect. Jesus' life is perfect.

And when we come to faith in Jesus Christ. Do you know what God the Father does? He looks at us through Jesus. And as he looks at us through Jesus.

He sees Jesus' perfect righteousness on us. He's not looking at the sin of our life. As far as the law is concerned we have been forgiven because of what Jesus is.

Jesus has cancelled out the debt. And God is looking on the perfect work of Jesus. And he's looking at us through Jesus. And he says we're righteous.

[32:59] But of course we're still unrighteous in this world as far as our life is concerned and living life. And we do lots of things that are wrong.

Against ourselves. Against other people. And of course all the time against God. But when we come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus through the Spirit is working his righteousness within us. That's what's called imparted righteousness. So when the Holy Spirit is in. The Holy Spirit is at war with all that's wrong in our life.

All the lusts and all the anger and all the hate and all the pride. And all the self-centeredness. And all the lust of the flesh. All these things. So there's a war going on.

More and more he's shaping us and molding us to the point where in death something amazing happens. And it's in death that this amazing thing does happen.

Because the moment of death there is a radical change within our lives. We're told this in the Bible that when the soul severs from the body.

The soul that sleeps in Jesus is brought straight to glory. Bodies are left behind. And they'll be put in the grave. The soul is straight into glory.

As Jesus said to the thief on the cross today. You will be with me in paradise. Not tomorrow. Not next year. Today. I'm going to paradise today.

You will be going with me. And that shows us that the soul. And as our shortest catechism tells us built on the word of God. The souls of believers are made perfect in holiness.

So that that righteousness which is working in us is a complete work. Just in a moment. In a flash. And we are transformed and brought into the presence of Christ.

[35:02] Christ. And then. Only then are we able to look upon him. And as we read at the very beginning from 1 John. It tells us.

We shall see him as he is. And we shall be like him. That's what David said back here. When I awake. I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

Wow. Not just I will be satisfied seeing you. But I will be satisfied with your likeness. Lord. I'm going to be like you.

Isn't that amazing? But that's God's purpose for us right now. He's working in us to make us like Christ. At death. That happens. We're changed. And we begin to mirror the wonderful mediator.

The Lord Jesus Christ. And we can look into his face. But of course. That's what happens immediately. But that's not the end. Because in glory.

[36:04] We are waiting with hope. There is still an expectation and a waiting in glory. What are we waiting for? We're waiting for our bodies. Because of the resurrection. The bodies will rise.

And they will be reunited with the soul. And the body that has faced corruption and has lain in the grave will be made new. Made beautiful. And fitted exactly for the new environment.

And to live forever with the Lord in the new heavens and the new earth. And just in one word. What is the Christian's assurance? Well. Very simply. It's God's word.

Not for. We could never ever state all that we're stating. Were it not that it's in God's word. It would be the height of folly. The height of arrogance.

To start saying. This is what it is to be a Christian. I want to make up my mind what it's going to be to be a Christian. No. God. God has told us. These things we could never ever ever work out for ourselves.

[37:06] That's why the Bible is so precious. So here is our assurance. It's what God's word tells us. And again the Holy Spirit applies that word to our heart.

So that we're fully persuaded of it. And the Holy Spirit also creates a desire within us for this. You know if you love the Lord you are actually looking forward to that day.

You don't look forward to death. Most certainly not. Because we don't know how we're going to die. And it's such an unknown. And it's something that oh no thank you. But we look forward to what's after death.

And that's what David is talking about here. And I hope today that you have this hope within you. Because your life here is going to be short. My life is short. Soon going to be over.

But the wonderful thing is that if we have Jesus and if we're just giving our life to Jesus and say Lord please take my life. Help me as I go through this world.

[ 38:11 ] Because it's an uncertain world. It's shallow. It's empty. Even the best it doesn't last. Isn't it wonderful to have somebody who lasts forever.

Who's always there. Who never changes. Who'll never let you go. And that's what faith does. It takes hold of Christ. And as we said when we're speaking to the young folk we feel.

There's not a Christian but knows what it is to feel. We don't live on our feelings. We live on God's word. But when the Holy Spirit is within there are times we're so aware that the Lord is with us.

You seek to have this so that when you also come to die that you will be able to put on your gravestone as for me I shall behold your face in righteousness.

When I awake I shall be satisfied with your likeness. Amen. May God bless to us this reading of his word. The thoughts on his word.

[39:12] We're going to conclude our service singing from Psalm number 16 and sing Psalms. We're going to sing from verse 8. Before me constantly I set the Lord alone because he is at my right hand I will not be overthrown.

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue with joy will sing. My body too will rest secure in hope unwavering. For you will not allow my soul and death to stay nor will you leave your Holy One to see the tombs decay.

You have made known to me the path of life divine. Bliss shall I know at your right hand joy from your face will shine.

Before me constantly I set the Lord alone because he is at my right hand I'll not be overthrown.

Therefore my heart is glad My tongue with joy will sing My body too will rest secure In hope unwavering For you will not allow My soul and death to stay Nor will you leave your Holy One To see the tombs decay

[41:28] You have made known to me The path of life divine Blessed shall I know At your right hand Joy from your face will shine Now may the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore.

Amen Amen Now may the last I Now me