

Four Terrifying Words - "God Gave Them Up!"

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[0 : 0 0] I'm going to look tonight at the passage beginning at verse 18, taking it through to the end of the chapter and looking at the main features of teaching in that passage.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them and so on.

What is it that leaves our society the way it is? What is it that leaves us in the situation where you find a reputable medical practitioner, a doctor, being forced out of the work that he was doing?

Because he was not prepared to address a man born as a woman as she. What is it that leaves our society with people such as another in the news this past week who was born as a woman, transed into a male, gave birth to a child, and sought legally that a mother's name would not appear on the birth certificate.

Now these are incidents that are set before us and we mustn't think that the whole of society is really pretty much the same as you find there.

[1 : 3 6] This is part of a larger development of course. We're not just picking isolated incidents. These were simply in the news. But they're part of a larger development and movement that seems to have been increasing in pace and momentum over the past number of years.

Attempts that are made to promote that which the Bible and the likes of this passage sees as is ungodly, unseemly, debauched, and offensive to God.

What is it that has led to that? How have we come to that? As I say, it's not a mark of everybody in society apart from us as Christians.

There are people who are not Christians who decry these things, who don't agree with these movements, who don't agree with these perversions. Of course, when we're using such words, we're using words that the Bible itself uses, even though we would be regarded in preaching the gospel, even in the use of these words as being homophobic or transphobic or misogynistic.

All the other words that are bandied about are very relevant in themselves. But when we come to stand by the teaching of the Bible and actually say, well, such and such a lifestyle is contrary to that.

[2 : 5 5] That does not make us homophobic or transphobic, which would mean that we hate people. That we hate people for what they are showing in their lives or commending to others.

We are not people haters. We have to put that across, even though that's what we're going to be accused of and are accused of increasingly. And we're dealing with this passage tonight as we bring out some of the teaching of it.

It's not in any way meant to convey a phobic spirit towards other people. We're not, as I said, haters of people. And nevertheless, we have to, when there are trends in society that gather momentum that we know are ungodly, these are things that we have to bring out in preaching the gospel.

Where are we going to find answers if they're not in the gospel? Where else can we look for answers that are reliable, as far as possible to get answers, except in the Bible and the word that God has given us?

That's why we need to address these matters which we're going to try and do tonight, these societal trends. Is there an explanation for all this?

[4 : 05] Even if we say it doesn't mark the whole of society now, it's still nevertheless something that we're all very obviously aware of. That characterizes certain groups of people that have this kind of lifestyle.

And they, not only that, but they want to live their lives in a way that is completely detached from the truth of God. But even more seriously, these are things which are very, very positively promoted by governments.

Not only in Edinburgh, but in Westminster as well, and throughout the world. It's part of a universal development. And we're seeing it increasingly, that governments are increasingly pushing this agenda at the expense of, or to the belittling of, the Christian agenda or the Christian position.

And we as Christians have to be informed, as we are about that, as much as we can. We as Christians have certainly to know what the teaching of the Bible is, in regard to not only these things themselves, but how these things sometimes come about in a society, and increase momentum in a society.

And we're doing that in a very brief way this evening. So as we look at this passage, it's very plain in this passage that there is a trend, there is a development increasingly mentioned by the Apostle, that actually led to the kind of lifestyles or behavior that he mentions in the later part of the passage.

[5 : 39] First of all, we have to begin with what he says about human rejection of God. That's basically what he says in verses 18 to 23.

Human rejection of God. And as we'll see, the rejection of God is through suppressing his truth. The claims of God, as are set out in the Bible, in the Christian scriptures, in the Christian gospel, what he's saying here is that that's really what led to the kind of behavior that is mentioned, that people suppress that truth.

And as we'll see, the response of God to that is actually to give people up, seeing they are determined to put him entirely out of their agenda, and oppose him so vehemently.

Well, there are three references here to four words that are terrifying words. We'll have to take account of this for our society tonight.

Four or three times Paul uses these four words. God gave them up. God gave them up, as we'll see, to certain things. And what he's really saying, pretty much, is that seeing they were determined to live this lifestyle, and kept on suppressing the truth where they knew these lifestyles were denounced, even if it's just their conscience and from the creation that they saw it, God gave them up to the desires of their hearts, to the lusts of their hearts.

[7 : 17] Let's look at this human rejection of God, first of all, it's important for us. He's saying here in verse 18, for the wrath of God. Now, we'll leave the wrath of God in a minute, because we'll see that the wrath of God essentially is the giving up of these lifestyles, these people to these lifestyles.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness, that's their sinful living, suppress the truth.

And when it says there that they suppress the truth, that word literally means different ways of translating it. Some people think that it means to stamp down the truth, to hold it down, like you would try and hold down a suitcase that was really beginning to burst open.

You just try and stamp it down and keep it down. But a better translation would be, just as you have here, not just suppressing it, like in the sense of stamping it down, but holding it back.

Just like an influence, or if you think of a crowd that's trying to push its way forward, and there are a line of people trying to stop that, whether it's police or security forces or whatever, they're pushing it back, they're holding it back.

[8 : 26] And what Paul is saying is, the truth of God makes its own impact. The truth of God hits the conscience. The truth of God is not unknown to such people, he's saying, but they're holding it back.

They're suppressing it, they're holding it back, they're restraining it. It's not that they don't know the truth. It's not that they don't know what the truth says. It's not that they don't know what the truth commends. But they don't want that truth.

They don't want to comply with that truth. They don't want to obey that truth. They want to put that truth aside. They're holding it back. They're pushing it back. That's what the word suppress there means literally.

That by their unrighteousness they suppress, they hold back the truth of God. Now he goes on to say that that truth of God is known to them from the things of the creation.

And this is most interesting. What he's talking about here is going back in history of course. Really back into the days of the Old Testament. Or even in Paul's own day to the Gentiles. To the pagan nations who didn't yet have the gospel.

[9 : 29] And the truth of God in its written and preached form. Nevertheless, Paul is saying they knew the truth from the creation around them. They knew the truth from what they were able to see of God from the creation.

Look what he says in verse 19. For what can be known about God is plain to them. For his invisible, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world from the things or in the things that have been made.

That have been created. So they are without excuse. Now that's the most important emphasis that the apostle is giving to. And it's important for our own day as well. These people that don't come to church, that have never heard the gospel, that don't want the gospel.

God has not left them without knowledge of the truth. God has not taken away the workings of their conscience. God has not taken away the workings of their mind altogether.

If you follow the teaching of the apostle here, he's really saying that while we have the added advantage of the gospel and of the message of the Bible and of the teaching of a written Bible, the written truth of God.

[10 : 46] Nevertheless, even without that, God has not left himself without witness. These people, he says, knew the truth because God has shown it to them. And not only were they able to, was Paul able to say this, it's not in a general fashion that Paul is saying this, though it falls short of the detail that you have in the Bible.

What he's saying is, for his invisible attributes, God's invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.

Tonight, the people who dismiss the idea of a creator and dismiss the idea of an absolute and the truth of God in the Bible, who dismiss all of these things and say, that's not for me.

It's not truth. Truth is what I make it. They still have a conscience. They still know that they're holding back, suppressing the truth of God that hits their conscience from the creation itself.

Look at the creation. Look at the space exploration. Look at the earth itself. Look at the stars. Look at the universe. Look at what's been discovered about all the galaxies that make up the whole of the creation.

[11 : 55] There are so many, we're told, that can't even be seen properly and reached yet. Look at a human being. Look at the work of bodily functions, of mind, intelligence.

Look at the discoveries about DNA, characteristics of each human being, the uniqueness of each human being. Look at cell formation and cell development. Look at cell formation and cell development.

Look at intelligence itself. All of that is saying to us, God is here. The invisible power and divine nature of God lies behind these things.

That's what nature is crying out to us. That's what people, even without the Bible, are hearing. That's what their minds are actually receiving all the time. It's not that they don't know the truth, God is saying.

He says, they do know the truth because God has shown it to them. And he says, they are clearly, these things about God are plain to them because God has shown it to them.

[13 : 05] And the evidence is plain. You see, this is one of the things we face so often, don't we? From atheistic sources, from people who just simply want to live the lifestyle that they know is denounced in the Bible.

But they say, well, I don't live by the Bible, so I'm okay. I can do it my way. I can live my life the way I please. I don't refer to the Bible. The Bible is okay for you as Christians. If you want to follow that, that's your business.

But don't try and actually impose it on me. Well, God has revealed himself to them through the creation and is doing so today. And not only that, but he says the evidence is plain.

We're accused so often of living by what we call the truth of God. And what we're accused of is, you know, there's no evidence for God. There's no evidence that God exists.

There's no evidence that these things that are written in the Gospels about Jesus, about his miracles, about the things in the Old Testament that are supernatural and miraculous, there's no evidence whatsoever for these things.

[14 : 13] You can believe them if you like, but you can't subject them to scientific analysis, and therefore there is no evidence as such. Paul is saying, there's plenty of evidence. The fingerprints of God are all over the creation.

That's not that people don't realize that, but they choose to ignore it and to dismiss it as relevant. They suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

They live on godly knives that push back the truth of God willingly, that don't want to accept this is, in fact, what God is saying is truth and is true.

And that's why Paul is saying, so that they are without excuse. What are they without excuse about? It's not saying that they are without excuse for being ignorant, for being ignorant of truth, for being ignorant of anything at all about God, because what he's saying is they actually know God.

They're not ignorant. Their mind is not a blank slate. They are without excuse, he's saying, for their activities, for their abandonment of what is true and what is righteous and what is clean, and what is commendable, and what is approved of by God, because he goes on to speak about their idolatry, they're exchanging the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals.

[15 : 47] So they know God. They know God, but they choose to ignore the knowledge they have, and they choose to put it behind them, to try and just keep pushing it back.

And the consequences of that are dire. That's where the wrath of God is seen. So that's really, very briefly, just following through.

You can go back and look at that passage and look at some of the details more fully yourselves later. We're just looking at it in terms of its contours at the moment, but that's essentially what Paul is saying.

The truth of God is known from the creation itself. And the truth of God that's known about the creation is sufficient to leave men without excuse for their abandonment of him, or of the way in which they have distorted worship into just grotesque things that are followed out with their own minds.

And they are without excuse, because God has made the truth plain to them, even from the creation itself. And then secondly, he goes on to speak about God's response in wrath.

[16 : 58] Because if you look at the passage again from verse 18, he says, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

So the wrath of God is mentioned there, and then he comes to explain how they have actually rejected God, and followed their own devices and kept keeping, pushing the truth back.

So what is God's response? Well, in verse 24, you can see the word, therefore. And that shows you that the wrath of God is applied in what follows from verse 24 onwards.

And I'd expect that people who lived like that would actually, you know, be a bolt of lightning from heaven or something like that if somebody lived such a debauched lifestyle, as are mentioned in the remainder of the passage.

You might expect something dramatic like that to happen, just to destroy them, as God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. No, he says, The wrath of God is revealed. The wrath of God is active. The wrath of God is in response to their lifestyles.

[18 : 08] But it's a wrath that's revealed and applied in a way that perhaps we wouldn't ourselves imagine it. Because the wrath of God is revealed in giving them up to the lusts of their hearts, giving them up to the debased mind, giving them up to dishonorable passions.

Notice, incidentally, but it's important also that what you can call religious degeneracy, if you like the corruption of what ought to be worship of God into all sorts of nonsense.

You go back to Canaanite religion, to the religion of pagan Rome, pagan Greece, you'll find all sorts of horrible practices along with beliefs. What Paul is saying is, where you find religious degeneracy, the result of it is almost always moral degeneracy.

You look at our own nation. Why is there so much moral degeneracy? Why is it increasing? Because it's the result of religious degeneracy, of abandoning the truth of God, of exchanging the glory of the immortal God for images that people themselves make, not talking just now of graven images, but other kinds of idolatrous practices.

Because man, you see, we will always be worshipping something. And if we turn away from worshipping God in the proper way, we'll be worshipping something else. And inevitably, it'll involve worshipping ourselves, worshipping our bodies, worshipping our minds, worshipping ourselves.

[19 : 48] That's what he's saying. Exchanging the truth of God for a lie. So the wrath of God is revealed. Now you mustn't think about the wrath of God as just exactly the same as human anger.

John Murray, in his commentary on Romans, describes the wrath of God as God's holy revulsion against all contradictions of his holiness.

God's holy revulsion against all contradictions of his holiness. It's not something where he just jumps into that mode of looking at people in anger, having been something else beforehand.

This is always how God has regarded the contradiction of himself, of his own holy being. Sin, in other words. It's a holy revulsion, entirely consistent, entirely commensurate with his being, every other aspect of his being.

So God's wrath is not something like an impersonal force, something like we warn our children about when we say, you know, don't touch electricity, it'll hurt you, it might even kill you.

[21 : 02] It's not that kind of impersonal. God is a personal being, the great personal being who has created human life, who has created the universe, to whom we are all answerable, whose laws govern the universe, as well as human lives, whose gospel we're actually looking at tonight.

This personal being of God, this personal being who's marked by such characteristics as, if you can use the word, emotion, and if I remember rightly, John Murray uses that, emotion not in the sense in which we know emotion as an uncontrolled reaction to certain events in our experience, emotion in the sense in which God has a consistent and steadied outlook towards everything, including sin.

And that's God's wrath, he says, it's this holy revulsion, it's there, it's steady, it's unchanging, and yet it's that God who has a holy revulsion against sin, who has provided the gospel.

That God is the God who is kind. That God is the God who is loving. That's the God who has made Jesus Christ out as a savior to us. And that's what Paul wants to get to in chapter 3, to come to the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ, which we come to know and possess by faith in him.

But until he gets to that, it's important for him to actually go over these issues regarding the wrath of God. Let's just hurry on and look at what he says then. The wrath of God is revealed and exercised in these three givings up, if you like.

[22 : 50] Now it's not that God gave up on them, it's not saying God gave up on these people, so in fact it's not so much four words, but five, God gave them up to, and he mentions what he gave them up to, verse 24, therefore, in consequence of their own rebellion and consequence of their lifestyle, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and saved the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever.

their impurity did not begin when God's wrath actually came and was exercised against them. God's wrath was exercised against them because they were already impure to the extent mentioned previously.

And what God's wrath is doing is leading them to that impurity and deciding, well, this is my judgment, this is how you want to live so I'll just leave you to it. I'll let you be controlled by your lusts.

I'll let you be governed by the impurity and lusts of your heart and the dishonoring of your bodies if you insist that that's what you're going to do instead of the way that I, through my revelation and the creation itself is leading you, then that's my judgment.

That's my, God is really saying effectively the message of the passages is this. God is saying, well, I'm going to leave you to that. I'm going to give you the desire of your heart. They're going to be your masters.

[24 : 28] It's not freedom, is it? It's not liberty, is it? That's what people will say. I want to be free to express myself, to be myself, to be who I want to be.

I want to join up with others out of the same mindset. I want the freedom to express this. I want the freedom to actually live the way my life should be lived. I want freedom to be involved in relationships the way I want my relationships to be.

Whether it's same-sex marriage or adultery or promiscuity or whatever else it is. It's my choice, people will say. That's what I'm determined to follow. God really comes at certain times and says to society in the past and it certainly fits with our own society today.

God is saying, well, if that's how you want to have it and you think that's freedom, then you go with it. Do you think it's an accident that there are more teenage pregnancies in Scotland than ever before?

Do you think it's an accident that more drug deaths than previously than any other country in Western Europe? Do you think it's an accident that social workers have more to attend to in their work than they can possibly cope with?

[25 : 53] Do you think it's an accident that agencies such as Bethany in the kind of work that they're doing are coming across families in such desperate plight to drug addiction, drink addiction, poverty, debt?

Do you think it's an accident that all these things are increasing? That they seem to be out of control in places in our nation? It's the result of godlessness. It's the result of turning away from God.

I'm not saying that there haven't always been these problems in human society even when there are many more people who lived godly lives than there are now. But Paul is making a connection.

Paul is saying here that God gave them up to the lust of their heart to impurity, the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves. But then he goes on to elaborate on that or to expand on that.

For this reason he says in verse 26, God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature.

[26 : 57] And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another. Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

We mustn't be afraid preaching what the Bible says. It's a shame that we have to do it. We'd rather not have to mention such things.

But they are in the Bible and they do fit with the way things are today. And what he's telling us here is that this giving of them up to impurity and dishonoring of their bodies that actually is something now that's said to be exchanging natural relations.

Women and men. In other words he's talking about homosexual activities. You have to be careful because we mustn't as Christians pick on homosexuality as if it was the sin above all sins.

People rightly accuse some Christians of doing that. We're not going to actually do that. Because for one thing you can see when Paul wrote to the Corinthians who were themselves of course embroiled in such debauched practices in their own lifestyles.

[28 : 13] In Corinth in the Greek world of that day. Before the Roman world of Paul's day. You remember Paul writing to Corinthians 1 Corinthians 6 verses 9 to 11 where he's saying there where he's actually dealing there with chapter 6 and from verse 12 he says the body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.

And then he's in verse 9 before that he said do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God do not be deceived. neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves nor greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God and such were some of you but you were washed you were sanctified.

Now what he's doing there is giving a sample list if you like of sins of lifestyles which are denounced by God and which cannot be taken up by Christians and say well I'm just going to add the word Christian to that and I'll be okay.

Like Christian homosexuals or Christian trans people. I have to acknowledge the complexities in this but what I want to mention is this you cannot just lift out that word homosexuality and say that's what we really have to focus on as these sins because Paul is saying these other kind of sins and behaviors will also not inherit the kingdom of God idolaters adulterers there are people who are married but choose to actually practice sex outside of marriage contrary again to the Bible's teaching so Paul is giving us a sample list there that we mustn't just lift one out of and say well that's the one we really need to focus on nevertheless having said that that is the one that he's mentioning in Romans chapter 1 that is the one he's focusing on there to prove his point what he's saying is that women left natural relations men left natural relations by natural relations the apostle means what God has established in the order of creation the relations that God actually set in the creation when he created human beings in the first place in other words marriage between a man and a woman and also commitment to that within marriage of sexual relations that's nature he says that's God's order that's God's pattern that's God's standard but what he's saying is

God gave them over or gave them up to exchange natural relations they insisted on this so God said do it then I'll just leave you to that I'll abandon you to your own will and you'll find out that that's not freedom it's very much the opposite and leads to all kinds of complications thirdly and he talks about that as shameless he's talking there about men especially committing shameless acts with men receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error a word shameless isn't it amazing that our society has come to the point where shamelessness is exalted as pride where what God says is shameless is praised by human beings pride in the lifestyle is denounced there

[32 : 11] I remember what I said at the beginning we're not homophobic we're not phobic in terms of transphobic or any of those things we're seeking to be true to God to present the truth as God has given it to us and to lovingly and tactfully point out the fact that it's no benefit to human beings at all to be left to their own minds and their own inclinations and their own insistences as this passage is saying and then thirdly it's not just that he's given them up to impurity to dishonorable passions he's given them over to a debased mind and verse 28 now there's a very important connection there and we're coming near the end of the study I do want to try and finish I'm not going to go through all the words that are used to the end of the chapter but I do want to make this point you see verse 28 since they did not see fit to acknowledge God what that literally means is since they did not see fit to keep

God in their mind or in their knowledge to hold God in their mind the way he was revealed to them the way they knew him from creation since they did not see fit since they did not see fit that's the words literally that what Paul is saying that's exactly how it should be translated since they did not see fit to keep God in their mind God gave them up to something else in your mind and in this instance God is saying that's what happened to these people that's what explained how they went on and on further and deeper down into the perversions of their lifestyles because God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done and then he adds something even further which is another characteristic of our age as well he's saying in the last verse of the chapter though they know

God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them what Paul is saying is that these people actually know the truth of God already to the extent that they know at least that this behavior is wrong but because God has given them over to this debased mind they've come to the stage of even though they know this and know that those who practice such things deserve to die not only do they continue to do them but they encourage or give approval to those who practice them that's what you're facing in the society of today I said at the beginning it's a tragedy that we have to be able to say this and to preach about this and to acknowledge this is how things are but it's important that we understand why we've come to this how it's come to this and what we must keep on presenting as

God's truth in the gospel to that situation that we face what's because as I said that's what Paul is coming to people who have been given over to this kind of mind and the more that that increases and if that's going to mark our society it will be far more difficult for me and others to actually preach the gospel in a way that openly is able to say these things already people are facing persecution and loss of work because of this what do we do where's the answer what's the solution well it's not in the mind of men themselves is it or women we need God we need the power of the Holy Spirit now I'm not saying that so that you and I can say there's nothing we can do there's nothing required of us we can do nothing about this ourselves at all there's no contribution required of us as a

Christian congregation as Christian people as gospel people in this world of our day against such movements against such things as we're seeing in the tragedy of human lives that live these lifetimes you have to go on standing for Christ witnessing for Christ writing letters being on social media in a way that's tactful although that's a very difficult area to be in you have to be prepared to put up with persecution or something even or something less than that at least but we have to do it friends because God has given us a mandate to continue to make disciples even looking to those who have gone so badly astray in their lives because only God can come only God can do by coming into our situation and the power of the gospel that's where we began at verse 16 I am not ashamed of the power of the gospel for it is the power of

[37 : 26] God for salvation to everyone who believes we can't change people's lives we can't change people's thinking even though we have to keep presenting the truth to them lovingly tactfully patiently the great thing is God can he did it before he's done it many times before and our only hope as a society is especially when as we said at the beginning from government downwards we have these things promoted set out as policies and the sad thing is in our nation that the major political parties all have the same mindset where do Christians go there are other parties maybe coming up that you can actually support I never ask anyone to support such and such a party that's up to yourselves but we do support decency morality family values marriage all of these things of course people will say to everything I've said tonight if you have people hear it out there as they might we hope people will say and even if you were to tell them well this is really what our minister said can you listen to this is this not the teaching of this passage you're not prepared to really just give it some thought and give it some of your time people object and say I don't accept any of that that's not relevant that's not truth for me and you can say to them well of course that's exactly what the passage is saying because if you come to somebody and say look this is what I'd like you to consider and they'll say to

I don't want that that's not that's not for me what are they doing they're pushing back the truth of God they're already in this passage God has actually taken account of it already in what he said and so we have to present the truth of God as it is this tasteful though it may be to people in society today God is saying to you and to me this is my truth this is my standard and it's not just for select individuals it's for the good of societies of human beings throughout the world throughout the inhabited world this is God's standard God's truth and to depart from it and to keep on departing from it is disastrous may God bless us as a

Christian congregation may bless our witness may bless your witness and your commitment to the truth may he especially bless our people with the light of his gospel let's conclude by singing some words of praise now in psalm number 11 psalm number 11 that's on page 13 singing verses 4 to 7 and although these words talk about God's judgment of the wicked we never lose hope that God will bless his word to the changing of people's lives so that the likes of verse 6 which of course will be the case of the final judgment of human beings nevertheless our prayer is that God will be merciful to people and they will not come to experience that for themselves verses 4 to 7 of psalm number 11 the Lord is in his holy place the Lord is in his holy place the Lord is on his heavenly throne his eyes observe the human race and in his sight each one is known the Lord examines all the just the righteous ones he proves and tests but all those who love wickedness and violence his soul detests upon the wicked he will bring his fight he calls and suffer hard at the scorching wind will beat on them such punishment will be there all for

God the Lord is righteous still in righteousness he takes delight and they alone will see his face who are in heart and life upright now if you let me get to the main door please after the benediction and now may grace and mercy and peace from God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit be your portion now and evermore Amen