

# Saturday Evening English

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 20 February 2016

Preacher: Rev F Renwick

[ 0 : 00 ] Now let's begin our worship this evening by singing to God's praise. It's Psalm 116 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 116. And it's at the beginning of the song, I love the Lord, because my voice and prayer is heeded here.

I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me his ear. Of death the cords and sorrows did about me compass round. The pains of hell took hold on me, I grief and trouble found.

Upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, Deliver thou my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly pray. We'll sing down to the end of the verse marked 7, Psalm 116 at the beginning.

I love the Lord. I love the Lord because my voice and prayer is heeded here.

[ 1 : 15 ] I, while I live, will call on him, further to be his ear.

Of death the corpse and sorrows did about me compass round.

The pains of hell took hold on me, I grief and trouble found.

Upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, Give it up, O Lord, I do thee humbly pray.

O mercy, O mercy, full unrighteousness, yea, gracious is thy Lord.

[ 2 : 39 ] God, O mercy, full unrighteousness, yea, gracious is thy heart. God, say, tell me, I was not no, he did me help before.

O Lord, my soul, do thou return unto thy quiet rest.

For God, say, O Lord, my soul, the Lord to thee, his bounty of his grace.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Now let's join together in prayer. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Amen.

Eternal God, help us this night to remember into whose presence we come. You are the God who created every last atom of this universe.

[ 3 : 49 ] The God who created each and every one of us. The one who has looked over us and guided us and kept us all our days.

And sometimes when we ponder who you are and think about who we are, we want to take to our heels and run and hide.

But there's nowhere to run to. And there is no one to run to. And we praise your blessed name this night.

That in this book of revelation you have given to us, we are reminded that we don't need to run.

That we can come to you in all our wretchedness and in all our degradation and find acceptance.

We pray that as we gather here this night, you would remember us in our need.

[ 5 : 23 ] We have nothing to claim. We have nothing to woo you with other than your promises.

We ask you to forgive us for the days when we don't believe your promises. For the days we don't believe your word.

O Lord, our God, please help us to listen to what you are saying. We pray that you would watch over each and every one of us as we gather here for this hour of public worship.

Help us to sing your praises. Help us to engage in prayer publicly and silently and quietly. Help us to preach the unsearchable riches.

Help us to hear what you have to say in these unsearchable riches. Remember this congregation we pray. The office bearers, the minister, the members, the adherents.

[ 6 : 40 ] O Lord, we come to you in the enormity of our need and we ask for that enabling to worship you in a way that is well-pleasing.

It is strange indeed that human beings can stir the heart of God and we would never, ever dare to presume such a thing but we find it written in your book.

And the day that Noah came out of that ark he offered up worship to you and it was as a pleasing aroma in your presence.

That is astonishing. O Lord, help us, we pray to have the commitment and the dedication that would enable us to offer up that kind of worship.

Remember those who are here this night who are being assaulted and assailed by the enemy of their souls particularly because it is a communion season.

[ 7 : 55 ] give us the wherewithal to deal with them. We cannot deal with them in our own strength but we can in your strength.

And so we pray that you be with us this night to upbuild us and to edify us. And all we ask is in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Now let's sing again to God's praise this time at Psalm 84 from the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 84 at the beginning of the song How lovely is thy dwelling place O Lord of hosts to me The tabernacles of thy grace How pleasant Lord they be My thirsty soul longs vehemently Yea, faints thy courts to see My very heart and flesh cry out O living God for thee We'll sing down to the end of the verse Mark 6 Psalm 84 at the beginning How lovely is thy dwelling place How lovely is thy dwelling place O Lord of hosts to me The tabernacles of thy grace

Thou rest and far away Thou rest and far away My mercy soul longs vehemently My mercy soul longs vehemently My mercy soul longs vehemently The tabernacles of thy grace Give thanks thy grace Give thanks thy force to see My heavenly heart and flesh try out O living God for thee Behold the star O high-dead earth The stars where enter rest

The stars where enter rest The stars where enter rest The stars where enter rest Lord, her self, a purchase in thine is.

[ 10 : 57 ] In thine own alters where she stayed, her young ones for me bring.

O God, almighty Lord of hosts, who art my God and King.

Let's try again thy house as well. They ever give thee grace.

Bless us, Lord God, who strength the Lord, in whose heart are thy ways.

The past in farrow, make us feel, there in Virginia West.

[ 12 : 27 ] O so the river that fallen land, thou close with water fills.

Amen. Let's read God's word as we find it in the epistle to the Romans and that chapter four. Romans chapter four.

And we'll read at the beginning of the chapter. What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather, according to the flesh?

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

[ 13 : 39 ] For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. Now to the one who does not work, but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.

Just as David also speaks of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works. Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin. Is this blessing then only for the circumcised or also for the uncircumcised?

We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised?

It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith, while he was still uncircumcised.

[ 15 : 04 ] The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised, but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is a void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring, not only to the adherents of the law, but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

As it is written, I have made you the father of many nations, in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead, and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

[16:36] In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, so shall your offspring be.

He did not weaken in faith, when he considered his own body which was as good as dead, since he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith, as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

That is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness, but the words that was counted to him were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also.

It will be counted to us, who believe in him who were raised from the dead, Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses, and raised for our justification.

[17:44] Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith, into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.

But God shows his love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him, from the wrath of God.

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

[19:16] More than that, we also rejoice in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Amen.

And may God bless to us that reading from his word. Let's join together again in prayer. O Lord our God, we pray, that as we come to explore this revelation you have given to us afresh this night, that you would give us ears to hear, and you would open our eyes to see exactly what you are saying. Because by nature we are so deaf, and by nature we are so blind. But even in a saved state, so often our eyes can be shut, and our ears blocked, as we engage in our own folly.

But we pray that as we come, we are spared tomorrow to sit at your table afresh, that we would remember from your word exactly what it is all about.

give us as we explore the faith of this father of all believers, Abraham, to look at the solidity of his faith at some times, but also how it wavers at other times.

[20:47] We do thank you for the honesty contained within this revelation you have given to us. You have presented humanity, warts and all. And if we are honest, sometimes it is the warts that console us and comfort us when our faith wobbles, and the enemy of our souls should have us doubt our own standing, and our own salvation.

Remember those who are here this night, who may be assaulted by the enemy at this very moment. Oh Lord, help us, we pray.

And remember our families, wherever they might be this night. We thank you that you are a covenant God, and this covenant is a family thing. But we realize that covenant people of all ages are marked out by the enemy of our souls, and he so seeks to destroy, and he has caused such mayhem.

Oh Lord, our God, hear us as we cry out to you from the depths of our need, and may it be true of every single family represented here this night, that together we would be on the shores of eternity, through each of us having embraced you as saviour and friend.

But we realize it will only be impossible if we each exercise that saving faith. Oh Lord, help us in all our need, and all we ask is in Christ's name.

[22:27] Amen. Now let's sing again to God's praise in the same song, Psalm 84.

Psalm 84 at verse 7. So they, from strength unwearied, go still forward unto strength, until in Zion they appear before the Lord at length.

Lord God of hosts, my prayer hear, O Jacob's God, give ear, see God our shield, look on the face of thine anointed dear.

We'll sing to the end of the Psalm, verses 7 to 12, so they from strength unwearied go. and we'll sing to the Lord at length. And we'll sing to the Lord at length. And we'll sing to the Lord at length. So they from strength unwearied go, and we'll sing to the Lord at length.

And we'll sing to the Lord at length. And we'll sing to the Lord at length. And we'll sing to the Lord at length. And we'll sing to the Lord at length. And we'll sing to the Lord at length.

[ 23 : 37 ] And we'll sing to the Lord at length. So they from strength unwearied go, and we'll sing to the Lord at length. Amen. For in thy courts one day excels a thousand brethren.

My God's will I keep adore and dwell in tents of sin.

For God the Lord's a sun and shield, in grace and glory near.

And when they told no good from them, that a pride he to live.

O thou that art, the Lord of hosts, that man is truly best.

[ 25 : 29 ] Whom I assure it confidence on thee alone thou rest.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Now let's turn to the passage that we've read in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 5.

And we'll read at verse 1. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus a Christ.

Amen. Now let's, by God's enabling, seek to explore something of this area of Scripture this evening.

We want to say something about justification, justification by faith. We want to say something about this peace with God. and we want to just say a little bit about the basis of it all.

[ 26 : 37 ] It is through the Lord Jesus Christ and hopefully if we're spared tomorrow morning we'll explore a little bit more about that third point. It all being through the Lord Jesus Christ.

But first of all let's set these words in their context because verse 1 begins with a therefore and it's therefore connected with what goes before it in the previous chapters and in particular what we read in chapter 4.

But let's look for a little moment as to why we're in this area of scripture tonight. The house of God does not mean that we are exempt from the assaults and the assailings of the enemy of our souls. Sometimes you come to the house of God and it's just a battle zone. Sometimes men stand in the pulpit on the Lord's day or on any other day and it's just a battle zone.

just to be in the house of God doesn't guarantee that the enemy will not assault and will not assail.

[ 27 : 57 ] And it is true of a communion season as we were exploring last night we ought to examine ourselves and the enemy of our souls can have a heyday in that context.

He can throw all kinds of spanners into the works because the sacraments are a means of grace. God knows that. He knows that we need these things.

It's quite astonishing really that people who are gloriously saved on the basis of gift and gift alone exercising faith in the words of Jesus of Nazareth would ever forget what he's done for them.

But you know how it's like and you know what we are like. But God also knows that and God has put these things in place for us.

This do in remembrance of me to think that we would ever forget that God knows us better than we know ourselves and so he has made the provision for us.

[ 29 : 10 ] But the enemy of our souls knows what's going on in the framework of God as well. And he wants to use that time of examination just to bring Christians down to keep them at all possible away from the Lord's table or if they're going to go anyway to make it as difficult for them as possible.

And for that reason we are going to explore the basics of what it is that saves a person this night.

But as I said already there is that therefore that ties in what goes before this particular text.

And what goes before is a mention of Abraham. And what we must remind ourselves of is this.

Abraham had a righteousness that came by faith and faith alone. Now what does that mean? Now it's not that Abraham in his pre-believing days or at least in his believing in the one great living and true God Yahweh God.

It's not that Abraham lived without in a context that was irreligious. It wasn't like that at all. Abraham lives in our of the qualities and it is saturated with religion.

[ 30 : 48 ] It is saturated in paganism and in particular it gives its worship to the moon God. It's not as if this man knows nothing about religion.

He does. But there in the south of a modern day Iraq this man hears the voice of God the eternal God the one great living and true God calling to him.

And Abraham has options. Abraham can say to this God I don't want to know I'm not I'm not interested. I've got my own context and I've got my own beliefs and I've got my own religious thinkings but it's not like that.

And this God comes to him and says to Abraham I'll be your God do you want to be my person?

And Abraham says to God yes I wanted to be that way.

And on the basis of that belief on the basis of that faith Abraham enters into covenant with God and Abraham is gloriously saved on the basis of that and that alone.

[ 32 : 07 ] This epistle to the Romans one of the great truths of it is justification by faith. Do you remember how it was in the days of Jesus of Nazareth where the church of the day basically was saying you know these ten commandments we must obey them and if we obey every one of them we'll make it.

At the end of the day we'll make it. But do you remember what they did? They started building around these ten commandments extra commandments and the thinking was this just to make sure we are obeying them we'll add on these extras and they came thick and fast until there were over 600 of them.

I've got a friend who lived across the road from the local rabbi the synagogue is just down the road and one Saturday which is the Jewish holy day the rabbi came to him he's a Gentile my friend we're all Gentiles I'm assuming that anyway here tonight and he said to him can you go into my kitchen and take the car keys off the hook and open my car because there's something in it I want I'm not allowed to do it because it would be working on the Sabbath and I mustn't work on the Sabbath and my friend did it for him now I wonder what you think of that I wonder what you would call that I think I would call it bondage now let me just qualify that not for one moment am I looking down my nose at that Jewish rabbi because for long enough I thought that I had to sort out my life and make myself good enough in order for God to save me and then it began to dawn no it's not like that he saves you as you are in all your degradation and wickedness and sin on the basis of you believing that he's done something to deal with your sin it's as wonderful and as simple as that and you know when you embrace him on the basis of faith and it's just like a bang to your soul the problem of the rabbi doesn't leave us because you know what the problem for us very often is we don't live the way we're meant to live we're wayward and we're careless and we get ourselves into all kinds of difficulties and you know what the enemy of our soul says when we're wandering from God and not doing what we know we should be doing and very often it's the same old sins isn't it you know the enemy of our souls whispers in our ears don't you dare go back to God you've been to him a thousand times of that sin you cannot go again and we believe him and we start thinking in terms of I've got to sort myself out I've got to dust myself down and I've got to make myself good enough in order to get back to God let's not go there anymore it isn't like that it was never like that in our coming to him in the first place now I'm not saying that we stick our heads in the sand and stick it all under the car I'm not saying that either but I am saying what we do with it is we come as we are and we tell him it as it is and we plead for this mercy that he provides for those who come on the basis of gift love and I want us to remind ourselves about this man Abraham he enters into covenant with God and he is the father of all believers and the way he operates at times is just so astonishing his faith is so rock solid do you remember how it was after he waited for these 25 years for the child of promise to come along and he knows there's all these promises that are tied up with a child of promise he knows that there will be blessing to every nation on the face of the earth and it's tied up with a child of this son of promise this seed and then one day

[ 37 : 16 ] God says to him write Abraham take this son of promise and get yourself to Mount Moriah and the son is saying we have the wood and we have the fire but the big question is this where's the sacrifice and I wonder if you and I could take a child and raise the knife Abraham the way Abraham did I wonder how did he manage to do it well Hebrews tells us he so believed that this God would resurrect Isaac from the dead that he was willing to raise the knife but of course God the final moment says right stop

Abraham you have proven something to me but I want us to remember this it wasn't always like that with Abraham it wasn't always he was married to a very good looking woman and he feared for his

life when others would see the beauty of his wife just tell them you're my sister and there was a half truth in that but a half truth is a lie where was his faith then do you know Abraham sat at the door of his tent one day and three men passed by and ultimately it's revealed to us they were angels and one of them was the angel of the Lord some people believe that it was a pre-incarnation appearance of Christ and they were told

Abraham and Sarah that this child of promise that they've given up on is going to be born and you know what Sarah did she laughed now there are all kinds of laughter in this world there's a laughter in a situation that's humorous there's laughter in a situation that's joyous there's even laughter in a situation of nervousness I don't know if you've been in that situation I've been in it where you're really nervous and your response is to laugh and it gets you into real trouble because people mistake it for one of the other kinds of laughter and of course another kind of laughter is the laughter of ridicule and that's the laughter that Sarah engaged in she laughed at how ridiculous this statement was that she was going to have a child in her old age and you know when she was challenged she told a barefaced lie just like that

I didn't laugh oh yeah but you did laugh and if you go a few verses earlier in that area of scripture you'll find that it wasn't just Sarah that laughed it was Abraham that laughed as well don't be so ridiculous what I'm getting at is this I'm not justifying what they did I'm not condoning it and I'm not excusing it but I do want us to notice the realism of this book before us the realism of God's revelation because he's still a believer even when his faith is wobbling and he's getting himself into all kinds of difficulties he must come in confession to God and this Abraham doesn't earn the salvation he's got not a bit of it you know the Jews in Christ's time were saying we have Abraham as our father we have the sign of the covenant we are circumcised people we've done what it takes we've earned our way to heaven we've earned our salvation and Jesus was saying to them you cannot earn your salvation all these laws you're into you'll never be saved by keeping them but there is another way of entering into heaven and it is through faith in me as redeemer saviour and a friend and you know this almost the crowning point of the they're being saved on the basis of works this sign the sign of circumcision what does this area of scripture say to us about it is this blessing then for the circumcised or also for the uncircumcised we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness how then was it counted to him was it before or after he had been circumcised it was not after but before he was circumcised when

[ 42 : 56 ] Abraham left out of the colonies called by God he goes away up north to Haran on the border of modern day Iraq and later on he will come down into the land of Israel when was he circumcised when did he receive this sign of the covenant 24 years later for 24 years this man is gloriously saved on the basis of taking God at his word a righteousness that is based on faith where there's no sign of the covenant what's that all about the argument is this isn't just for Abraham this is for you and I so that we will get it right this thing called justification and what is it justification it's from the law courts it's legal it's forensic and we might understand it a little bit better if we look at what justification is not before we come to looking at what it is what is the opposite of justification the opposite of justification is condemnation you know in some states of the United

States of America tonight there are people on death row it's not that they're heading for condemnation it's simply not like that they've been to the law courts they've sat before judge and jury everything has been looked at a judgment has been arrived at they're found guilty and they are condemned they are waiting they are awaiting their execution you know sometimes sometimes when you're speaking to people about the things that really matter and maybe you're trying to woo them along to the house of God to sit under the preaching of the gospel they're not for it why not they have got this sense that God is holy and they also have a sense that they themselves are not holy so their way of dealing with it is

I'm not going to go anywhere near this God because if I go near him I'll be condemned so I'll just keep well away but you know it isn't like that whether they come near or not makes no difference whatsoever to their standing before God they are condemned anyway and you know some people when they come to this revelation of God and they read that they are condemned by nature and we all are nobody needs any education in rebelling against God it's innate it's in our nature and some people want to rage against this kind of God and say it really is in fear I am a sinner and I cannot help it well if it wasn't for a solution to it being found in scripture maybe they could rage but when this



sin I think it means to separate from sin how do you separate from something unless you identify what it is and that's part of the painful thing of sanctification God takes the layers of our lives and that's why you have people believing people gloriously saved people saying I cannot believe that I've done what I've done I cannot believe that I've said what I've said and perhaps the most painful area of all I cannot believe I entertain the thoughts I entertain we are not the kind of people we once thought we were and we get so down about that that we should remind ourselves what exactly it is that's going on you know

C.S. Lewis wrote a book screw tape letters and I know it's all fantasy but there's wonderful truth in it C.S. Lewis writes in terms of a senior devil speaking to a junior devil trying to train the junior devil as to bring down how to bring down these Christians and he says something like this you know there are times when the presence of God the believer is aware of that and there's not much we can do about that but there are other times when the believer is not aware of the presence of God it's like God taking away all the props and the stays and you know what happens in the prop do you know what happens when he takes away our props and stays we begin to stumble but Lewis goes on to say in his writings God loves these stumblings because there's this determination to go on without the props and the stays being there and Lewis goes on to speak about desire going and you know what it's like when desire is gone the real desire that when the presence of God is around you do as well there's this wonderful desire to obey because there's this peace in your soul but when the peace of your soul has gone and desire has disappeared but he speaks about people who are in that kind of situation saying but I'm going to obey anyway the senior devil is saying to the junior devil never is our cause in greater danger than at moments like these and if that is true and it is true never is the cause of Christ more highly exalted than at moments like these you get it with Job there is a man who is desperate to have the presence of God because he has so many questions he wants to put God's way and God's nowhere to be seen and God's nowhere to be experienced and all he's got is a wife who is saying curse that God of yours and die and in the midst of that context he says though he slay me yet will I trust him never is the cause of the enemy in greater danger than at moments like these yes peace with God is that objective thing that comes to justification by faith but that subjective experience of God's presence and peace sometimes it's blown far far far away but it doesn't for one moment change your standing before God what is that standing again it is justified by faith what does justification mean it means you're spotless and sinless but how on earth can that be it is on the basis of substitutionary atonement and that's where the Lord Jesus Christ comes in this glorious standing we have this peace with God that we have it's on the basis of what Jesus of Nazareth has done in our stead in our place as our great substitute that gives us atonement and remember what atonement is it is at one meant at one with God and hopefully tomorrow morning we will explore something of what the Lord Jesus Christ does for us in this great work of atonement but as you examine yourself and as the enemy of your soul would have you all over the place and as he tells you how great a sinner you are you tell him yes it's far greater than you've ever imagined but you know what I have been justified by faith I'm no longer God's enemy and if that is the case all is well with your soul all is well with your soul and you should honour this God and this Jesus who has done this for you Amen let's pray