

Sunday Evening Service (English)

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[0 : 00] as a description of that day of judgment. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies, who is to condemn. Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

And then in the verses that follow, Paul has in his mind judgment day and today and the time between today and judgment day for the Christian.

[1 : 06] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. Knowing all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen. Amen. Now as we pray again, I wonder if you would permit me to pray for your island where you live, and for this town.

I've been blessed to come in as an outsider, encouraged wonderfully by the spiritual strength that I see. You may not see what I see tonight as spiritual strength.

[2 : 26] It may be familiar to you. Let me encourage you that the rest of Scotland needs your spiritual strength. The rest of Scotland, as I was able to say on Friday night at the After Service Fellowship, needs you disproportionately to give more of your young men to be gospel ministers in this land.

I will pray that all the strength that is your heritage and your present will remain and be a blessing to the wider nation of Scotland.

So let me pray for you. Our Father, we thank you for this island. We thank you for Lewis and Harris. We thank you for all the spiritual heritage that is in these islands. We thank you for what has happened in history.

In places like Barvis and Carlaway. And Lord, we thank you that there is all over this island, in churches, not just church buildings, but in living churches, a living witness to the legacy of God breaking in in power and in significance in this part of Scotland.

[3 : 52] Lord, there are great challenges ahead in our nation. And there are no doubt great challenges here in this part of Scotland. But my prayer, as someone who ministers in the south of Scotland, in the capital city, which is so very secular and so very far away from the gospel, is that those on this part of Scotland, these islands, will be strong, will be courageous, and the spiritual heartbeat here will beat on strongly and stronger.

Lord, will you raise up from this part of Scotland men to be Christian ministers and leaders in the church across the length and breadth of this land.

And will you raise up churches here that are real beacons and real beacons of light into these communities with hearts to proclaim the gospel, to share the gospel.

And Lord, will you burden the people of Lewis and Harris to be praying people, to pray that God would pour down his spirit on Scotland once again, on the islands, on the cities, in the villages, in the towns, to do it in a way that is relevant and accessible for this generation, but to do it in a way that is unmistakably a work and an agency and a power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Lord, have mercy upon our nation. Be pleased, be pleased for the sake of the glory of your own name, if nothing else.

[5 : 38] Be pleased for the sake of the glory of the name of your Son, whom you love, to revive us once again. And Lord, for this church fellowship here, we pray your blessing upon it, upon all those who are in leadership, upon all members and adherents and regular worshippers.

May each and every one grow deeper in their knowledge of spiritual things, grow more in the likeness to the character of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, be more enlivened to evangelism, and be willing and ready to play their part in your purposes for this nation.

And Lord, as we come shortly to your word, what a powerful passage we have before us. We pray, Lord, that as we have already prayed, that you would speak to every soul and every heart here.

So we ask that in Jesus' name. Amen. Now before we come to Romans 8 together for the last time, we go to sing from St. Psalms, number 25, and verses 1 to 7.

You'll find that on page 29 of the Psalm books. Number 25, verses 1 to 7, and once again we'll stand as we worship God.

[7 : 19] To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. I trust in you constantly, do not let me be put to shame, nor let my foes gloat over me.

No one who sets his hope in you will ever suffer such disgrace, but those who walk with treachery, humiliating shame will face.

O Lord, O Lord, be built to me your ways, and on your path, help me to know, direct and guide me in your truth, instruct me in the way to go.

You are my Savior, and I am my God. All day I hope in you alone, remember, Lord, your love and grace, which from past ages you have shown.

Do not recall my sins of you, or my rebellious evil ways.

[9 : 53] Remember me in your great love for you, O Lord, are good always.

Now, before we turn to Romans 8, let me unload something that's in my mind, and it's been in my mind for the last 20 minutes, and because it's been in my mind for 20 minutes, if I don't tell you what's in my mind, it's going to be in my mind for the next 20 minutes.

And whether it's right that I say it to you or not, I don't know, but it's very much in my mind as we've sung and as we've prayed. I have in my mind that section of Scripture that is the beginning of Daniel, Daniel chapter 1.

Daniel chapter 1, Daniel and his friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, have been taken into exile in Babylon. Daniel is a young man. He is 15, 16, 17 years old, something like that.

And Daniel chapter 1, verse 8, is the pivotal verse in that chapter, and in that young man's life.

Daniel chapter 1, verse 8, says this, but Daniel resolved in his heart not to defile himself with the royal food and the wine.

[11 : 26] And what that means is that Daniel made a decision at that age in his life, not concerning the food and the wine. That's not the issue. Daniel's decision was concerning where his life's allegiance was to be as a servant, as a minister of God.

Jonathan Edwards, a great revival preacher in America, made a similar decision, aged 15. He wrote a series of resolutions, one of which was, resolved never to do anything in life or body as far as I am able, that will not fail to bring glory to my God.

Now there you go. That's what's in my mind. Maybe there is someone here, aged 15, 16, 17, and tonight God wants you in your heart to pledge to be willing to be a servant of the Lord, a minister of the gospel perhaps, sometime in the future.

Now, Romans chapter 8. My mind is clear. These things rarely happen to preachers, but sometimes they do.

And a wise preacher said to me, if they are in your mind, say them out loud. And if they're not of God, well, they'll pass by. And if they are of God, God will convict that person by his Holy Spirit that it was them he meant to speak to.

[12 : 50] So Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8 is in our Bibles principally for one reason, and that is assurance, confidence for the Christian.

Why, why, why do we need confidence and assurance as Christians? Because we live in this world and in this body that you see before you. We need assurance because of the problem that is the battle with temptation and sin in my life as a Christian and yours.

When I was preaching on this verse in Chalmers in Edinburgh, I said to the congregation, has anyone in this church experienced the battle with sin and temptation today?

We were in Africa. All sorts of people would cry out, Amen, yes brother, we're in Scotland. And one boy put his hand up in the front row of the church and said, yes me, and of course we all share that with him.

The problem is real. It leads us to doubt we've been forgiven. It leads us to doubt that we can make progress. It leads us, like the Apostle Paul, to cry, chapter 7, verse 23, wretched man that I am, to which God replies, one, no condemnation for you.

[14:10] There is no penalty for sin. Two, the indwelling Spirit has come to live in you and has liberated you in the very core of your being from the power of sin. Three, that indwelling Spirit speaks, whispers gently to your soul and says, you will be raised with a resurrection body free from the very presence of sin.

So, Christian, do not doubt. No condemnation. Do not allow your heart to harbour any guilt.

Now, feel the consequences of sin, yes, but not guilt if you are not guilty. And do not doubt that you can make real progress as Christians living a godly life.

You can do so in the power of the Holy Spirit. Somebody asked me at the fellowship on Friday night, why is it if I'm a Christian and the Holy Spirit is in me that when I try to make progress it feels like I'm not making any progress and it feels like I'm just more and more conscious of sin and I smiled when he said that because what is happening in that person's life is that his conscience has been brought alive by God.

It doesn't feel like we're becoming Christ-like. It feels like sin is a battle and a struggle and an enemy.

[15:43] It's something that dogs our flesh and to feel that, to feel the battle is to feel the Holy Spirit invading our body and changing us. To be encouraged in the battle with temptation and sin.

Romans 8 also addresses that deep and heartfelt problem that is suffering and death in our lives as Christians. I knew for sure when I came to Stonaway when I chatted to you I knew for sure one thing whatever else you told me of your lives some of you would tell me of what I know is in every life and behind every door and every city and that is the struggle with suffering and day.

The problem is real. It leads us to doubt that God loves us. It leads us to doubt that God will bring us safely home to glory and the wonderful answer from Paul that we saw last night one you are a child of God you have received the spirit of sonship and if you have the spirit of sonship you have the spirit of Jesus the son inside of you.

The Holy Spirit tells you testifies with your spirit your soul that you are a child of God you call him father like a little child there are some little children here tonight little children I wish we still had little children they're big children now but when they were little children they depended on their dad for everything and their mum for every need Christian do not doubt that God loves you and be willing to depend on him for your every need you are a child of God you are a child of God in the battle that is journeying through this life of suffering and pain and because you are a child of God you are an heir you are an heir with Christ an heir of a glorious inheritance Prince Charles is an heir to the throne he's not king yet when I was a child my granny gave me premium bonds to be cashed in on my 21st birthday

I wish she'd given me Lego she gave me premium bonds they're worth nothing being an heir means an inheritance is not yet received but the Holy Spirit says to me and to you if you are in Christ you have a glorious inheritance because you have Christ's inheritance and what is that inheritance one it is a resurrected earth a new creation not somewhere else in the cosmos this planet earth that we live on resurrected and redeemed and made new and however beautiful and majestic and glorious Lewis and Harris are they are nothing compared to what a resurrected Lewis and Harris will be physically and for now the creation groans go across to the west coast of Harris today with a gale and you'll tell me it's a breeze afterwards and not a gale what will you hear from the sea the groaning of the creation the danger in the creation the power that is fallen power in the sea and the creation groans and we groan have you groaned do you groan do you really groan do you groan as Christians as you experience suffering and death do you groan as you watch others and one of the great truths of Romans 8 is the Holy Spirit groans with us the creation groans longing for its redemption

[19:41] I groan you groan longing for our resurrection bodies and the new creation and the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit God himself groans and the groaning of the Holy Spirit is too deep for words to

describe even the Apostle Paul doesn't try he can't and the Holy Spirit groans out prayers to God for us that are perfectly in conformity with the perfect will of God for our lives and on that road to glory which is a road of suffering in this world and sickness and pain and tears and day if you are young here tonight you may not have experienced that some of you will have but if not you will the road to glory for the Christian is a road that is overshadowed and undergirded and hemmed in by the solid sovereignty of God and God will get you home to glory he cannot do anything else if he lives inside of you by the Holy Spirit so Christian struggling with fear and the shadows and the darkest shadow of all that is the valley of the shadow of death and death itself do not let the devil ever whisper into your heart and soul and he will do not ever allow him to cause you to doubt that God loves you and that God will bring you safely home to glory

Romans 8 is written that Christians might have assurance and confidence in the gospel I return to Edinburgh tomorrow as I said I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with you I will pray for you as a congregation you are in some ways bonded on to me for I have had four sermons in a row with you I have learned to just to love you a little bit be assured I will pray for your assurance in the gospel Romans 8 invites us to do something else and with this we wrap up our studies in Romans 8 Romans 8 invites us in every verse and in every word to make a decision about where we stand to make a decision about our status before God and so for example verse 1 there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus question are we in Christ Jesus or are we not in verses 4 and following

Paul contrasts those who live according to the spirit and have their minds on the things of the spirit that is the Christian Paul describes a Christian as someone who lives according to the spirit and has their mind their inner being their orientation directed down the road that is the spirit's road and the person who is not a Christian he describes as someone who walks according to the flesh and has their mind said on the things of the flesh so do you belong do you live do you walk according to the spirit the Christian or the flesh the non-Christian or verse 9 anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him do you have the spirit of Christ within you or not if you have the spirit of Christ you belong to him if you do not have the spirit of Christ you do not belong to Christ where do you stand is this nitpicking or does it really matter

I'm told Lewis is football well I was going to say mad interested at least one of the things I've discovered here is that no one knows anything about rugby I asked about 24 people this morning what the rugby score was yesterday and no one knew football I suspect would be a different matter let me suggest to us that there is no such thing as a Rangers supporter and a Celtic supporter at the same time you're one or the other you cannot be both and who you are your identity matters it matters when you go to Ibrox or Celtic Park where you sit if you don't know who you are there may be eternal consequences and how much more it matters spiritually and eternally eternity you know eternity is how long eternity bears no finiteness eternity is 10,000 times 10,000 years that is where you and I are headed this life is but a breath it matters whether we are in

Christ Jesus or not whether the Holy Spirit indwells us or not whether we walk according to the spirit or we walk according to the flesh you are in Christ Jesus or outside of him there is my friends no middle ground there is no neutral territory there is no no man's land every man every woman is either in Christ or outside of Christ Jesus so where do you stand tonight not my question God's question where do you stand tonight in terms of all eternity that stretches out for us the decision you make I make in this life which is a short life which is a breath the writer to Ecclesiastes described our life here as a breath compared to eternity our decision will have consequences for all eternity so where do you stand tonight now

[26 : 00] Romans 8 verses 31 to 34 take us forward in time to judgment day that is the setting the day we stand before Jesus Christ as judge now the clear and consistent teaching of the Bible the clear and consistent teaching of the Lord Jesus himself especially the Lord Jesus is that all people Christian people and people who are not Christians will be physically raised from the dead to stand before the Lord Jesus as judge all people there will be a day when every single one of us in this room stands before the Lord Jesus as king and judge now try to picture that in your mind's eye a real day with you with a resurrected physical body standing before the Lord Jesus as he is now with a physical resurrected body standing before him as your judge and there will be two verdicts and only two one guilty and condemned two not guilty and not condemned two verdicts and two eternities for those who are guilty and condemned everlasting judgment in hell and for those who are not guilty and not condemned everlasting glory in a new creation the gospel is not hard to

understand there is one saviour there are two ways to live in him or outside of him and there are two verdicts on judgment day guilty or not guilty and there are two eternities guilty and condemned not guilty and welcomed into a new creation so picture yourself standing before the

Lord Jesus that day and listen to the words of the prosecuting council demanding the verdict of guilty and condemned he or she should be declared guilty and condemned the prosecuting council demands a guilty verdict condemned what will we say in our defence to the prosecuting council will we say we never knew that is no defence if you live on Lewis it is no defence if you live in the western part of the globe it will be no defence when the Lord Jesus returns for his great commission to tell all people the gospel will be done will we say we never knew that is no defence we heard the gospel many times and so the verdict will be condemned everlasting judgement will we say we never got around to making a decision but never did there is a man in my congregation

I have him in my mind he week after week after week listens intently listens intently to the gospel and never yet has made a decision to trust in the Lord Jesus that will be no defence it is no defence if we have the opportunity but never took it procrastination is the thief of time procrastination is the thief of eternity the verdict will be condemned to those who say we never got around to making a decision will we say we were born into a Christian family grew up in a Christian church I was born into a Christian family what a privilege it is when your parents kneel down by your bedside and pray every day what a privilege it is when your parents take you to a living gospel church where you hear the gospel what a blessing I have had all through my life to be in a living gospel church like this what a blessing and what a privilege and yet

I came to realise that God has no grandchildren God only has children and I had to make a personal decision will we say we were born into a Christian family or attended a Christian church the Lord Jesus will say the verdict is condemned unless there is a personal decision everlasting judgment or will we say we have lived a good life relative to others well that is no defence because God demands righteousness God cannot forgive us on the basis of the very best the very summit of self righteousness he demands righteousness we cannot ever attain that the verdict will be condemned everlasting judgment or will we have nothing to say fall at the feet of Jesus and plead for his mercy with all my heart

I want to say to you and those in my congregation that if you fall at the feet of Jesus on judgment day and plead for mercy he will say to you all is forgiven with all my heart I want to say that to you but I cannot for scripture makes it clear that now not then is the time for decision for then is the day of judgment not the decision day if we have nothing to say in our defence on judgment day the verdict will be condemned everlasting judgment now my friends this is not a hypothetical day it is not a hypothetical question if you think it's a hypothetical day or a hypothetical question let me ask you this is Jesus a hypothetical saviour he's not he's real there is a judgment day what will you say to the Lord Jesus in your defence as we stand before him as judge now there is only one defence there is only one defence and thank

[32 : 03] God there is one there is only one defence and that defence and the only defence is the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ that Jesus was condemned that I might not be condemned that is the only defence we can bring to the charge condemned and that is the defence that will silence the prosecuting council and see us welcomed into the glory of the arms of our heavenly father and a new creation and it's that defence the cross of Christ that Paul describes in verses 31 to 34 now let's read these words again and picture yourself on judgment day will this be your testimony what then shall we say to these things if God is for us who can be against us he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also with him graciously give us all things who shall bring any charge against God Christ

Jesus is the one who died more than that who was raised who is at the right hand of God what an emphatic statement that is it is the perfect offense there is no charge to answer no guilt no condemnation because Christ has died three times in these verses Paul mentions the cross 32 he who did not spare his own son 33 it is God who justified 34 Christ Jesus is the one who died Jesus Christ has borne the condemnation for my sin and use that is the perfect defense because his sacrifice was the perfect sacrifice he bore our hell that we might share his heaven and to that defense the prosecuting council on judgment day is silenced there are no supplementary questions from the prosecuting council there are no calls for a recess no objections your honour the prosecuting council throws in the towel for they have nothing to say against us now if

Paul is getting us to look forward in our minds to judgment day and is telling us that the verdict on that day will be based on our decision now in this life regarding the cross what does that mean now listen to this and if you've drifted away a little come back this is very important it means that we can know now today right now as we sit here what the verdict of judgment day will be because we are not waiting for Jesus to die on the cross he has already died on the cross and been raised we gathered round the Lord's table this morning and look back to the cross not forward Jesus has died and been raised and so we can know the verdict of judgment day and remember the verdict of judgment day is based on our decision today in relation to the cross we can know the verdict of judgment day because the cross is behind us

Jesus has died and been raised and that is the wonderful truth about the Christian gospel we can know the response of the Lord Jesus will be on the day that heralds all of eternity tonight we can know because Christ has died but there's something else and that is this the word of God gives us a side of the future tonight that future day judgment day but remember that future day that judgment day is not decision day that future day is judgment day today is decision day not tomorrow but today don't bargain on an endless tomorrow today tonight if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts yield to him believe on him look to him to his cross for your salvation for the forgiveness of your sins and the last word as we close from

Romans 8 is for those who are Christians for those who are in Christ Jesus for those who have believed on him for their salvation the last word from Romans 8 is for Christians maybe you became a Christian 50 years ago maybe you became a Christian five minutes ago maybe you are on the very cusp of becoming a Christian drawn irresistibly by the Holy Spirit listen to these marvelous words 35 to 38 these words are like a lifeline at one end of the lifeline there is the cross of Christ at the other end of the lifeline is the reigning Lord Jesus who will welcome the Christian with open arms on judgment day and bring them home to the new creation that lifeline is fixed to the cross and to the glory of the new creation and as a Christian what you have done in believing in Jesus as your saviour in believing that his death and resurrection is the means of your salvation what you have done as a

[37 : 45] Christian is grasp hold of that lifeline at the cross and that lifeline that you have grasped hold of means you are saved rescued safe and you will be brought safely home to glory and no one and nothing can cut that lifeline and so Paul writes verse 35 who shall separate us from the love of Christ imagine yourself holding on to that lifeline at the cross and the other end of that is the Lord Jesus at the gates of glory you hold on to that lifeline who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword no Paul writes for I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor demons nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all of creation just think of the list as you hold on to the lifeline the lifeline that holds you to Jesus as you get tossed around in the storms and the seas of life tribulation distress persecution famine nakedness danger or sword neither death nor life neither angels nor demons nor things past nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation in other words if you can think of anything else that's embraced too in what

Paul says when you lay hold of the cross when you grab that lifeline what did God do he laid hold of you with a grip with a love that will never that can never let you go until he welcomes you with open arms into his new creation how strong is God's grip on the Christian God himself lives in you rooting you to that eternal glory I have a lectern in my study at home with a plaque on it with a text of Romans 8 27 in all things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us that lectern with that plaque was given to me by the widow of a man called Richard whom I got to know well and loved who died young of cancer we read Romans 8 verses 35 to 39 again and again and again I read these words as he physically died and his soul went to be with God he died in Christ Jesus so where do you stand tonight come in from the cold if you are outside listen to the wind swelling around this building think of that spiritual storm that is to be without Christ come in from the cold if you are on the outside come to the light if you are in the darkness come to an end of yourself come to the cross come to Christ and lay hold of that lifeline and let God lay hold of you and he will bring you home now is the time for decision judgment day is the day of judgment today is the day of decision now tonight trouble i think

Our Father, in many ways, in light of these great truths in Scripture, our words are inadequate.

So we rest now in this moment on the groaning, the prayers, the intercession of the Holy Spirit in words that we can hardly express.

[42 : 09] Lord, we pray that his assuring, convicting power would be abroad in this room and in many lives, whether to bring assurance into doubt or whether to bring assurance for the very first time.

Lord, have mercy upon every one of our souls and upon the souls of all those we love. And bring us safely home, all of us, to that eternal glory that we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, to finish our worship this evening, we're going to sing from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm number 23.

And you'll find that on page 229 of the Psalm books. Psalm number 23 from the Scottish Psalter.

And we'll stand as we praise God together. Psalm number 23 from the Scottish Psalter.

[43 : 56] Psalm number 23 from the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm number 23 from the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm number 23 from the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm number 23 from the Scottish Psalter.

Goodness and mercy of my life shall surely follow me. Psalm number 23 from the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm number 23 from the Scottish Psalter. The mercy of my life shall surely follow me.

[46 : 15] And in God's terms, forevermore, my dwelling place shall be.

And so may the grace of this Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and for all eternity. Amen.