

Paul Takes a Break for Worship

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[0 : 00] A very warm welcome to you all this evening to this service from Stornoway Free Church on what is here a very, very warm summer evening and I trust that wherever you are, whatever the weather, whether it's warm or otherwise, I trust we'll know together the warmth of God's love, the warmth of the Gospel coming to feed our minds this evening.

Let me begin by drawing your minds to read from Romans chapter 11. Romans chapter 11, that's verses 11 to 24. I am speaking to you Gentiles.

Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous and thus save some of them.

For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump.

And if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off and you, although a wild olive shoot were grafted in among the others, and thou shared in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant towards the branches.

[1 : 40] If you are, remember, it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.

That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief. But you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe.

For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God. Severity towards those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness, otherwise you too will be cut off.

And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in. For God has the power to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree?

And we'll continue with the reading later on to read the rest of the chapter. Let's meantime engage in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord together. O Lord, O gracious God, as we read your word, and as we come to meet with the many mysteries and the many depths that we find in your dealings with us, we thank you, O Lord, that we come to you tonight as one who is so worthy of our praise and our adoration.

[3 : 18] We bless you for everything that is revealed about you, and especially those things that you have revealed about your greatness. And all the things that we know in your word are together a sum of your greatness.

We thank you tonight for the privilege of being able to come to you. Lord, we confess that we so much fail to estimate the privilege we have, because we don't realise the extent of our sinfulness. Neither do we realise the greatness of God. Lord, we come to you, Lord, and the incompatibility between our sinfulness and your greatness and holiness. Help us, Lord, we pray, all the more to wonder at the way in which you draw us to yourself, and the way in which you have provided for us access through our Lord Jesus Christ, the way in which you have provided salvation for us, who are not worthy of the least of your mercies.

Lord, we come with our confession of our sin. We come realising that our sin is much deeper and much more ingrained in our being than we are prepared to admit and understand.

We thank you, O Lord, that the provision you have made for us is a provision that is designed to redeem us from our sins, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, to present us faultless before your glory, ultimately in heaven, with great joy.

[4 : 46] We thank you, Lord, for the gospel that brings us the knowledge of these things, and through which you draw your people to yourself. Lord, we pray tonight for the ability given of your Spirit that we might be able to enter something anew of the wonder of your redemption, the wonder of that which is described in your word, and the way in which you have described it so that we might adore you.

We come to you, O Lord, confessing our need of you, and asking that you would make us all the more dependent through faith. We pray that you would redeem us and deliver us from any sense of our own sufficiency, from any way in which we might seek to understand the gospel apart from you. We ask, O Lord, that you would give us to see that we are debtors to your grace, and that we never place you in debt to us. We ask, Lord, for your blessing to be with all your people throughout this day.

We pray that, as the word of God has gone forth in many places by different means, we pray for your kingdom to be extended for many people to be born again and converted, brought to a knowledge of Christ as the Saviour of sinners.

We ask, O Lord, tonight that you would be pleased to extend your kingdom through the preaching of the gospel. And while we find ourselves in such difficult and challenging circumstances so different to what we are used to, yet, Lord, help us, we pray, to benefit from this too.

[6 : 22] Every providence that you give us has meaning and purpose. We pray, O Lord, whether we understand the meaning or the purpose or reason why you have placed us in the restrictions we presently have.

Lord, we ask that they make us more dependent upon you and realise that it is in you that we live and move and have our being.

Make us too know also, Lord, our smallness in comparison with the great powers that are in the creation, even the power of such as this virus, to overtake humanity and take so many lives. Gracious God, we ask that you would humble us in your presence, that you would give us more and more to know of the need of repentance, of faith, of trust, of loving you with all our hearts. We ask you, blessing, to be with those tonight who mourn the passing of loved ones. We think of those, Lord, in our own community here who are presently mourning the passing of loved ones, even though it be not through the COVID virus.

[7 : 31] Nevertheless, we know that there are many whose hearts tonight are sore. We pray for those who belong to us as a congregation and those that we know in our community, O Lord, have experienced death in recent days in their families.

We commend them to you and ask for your peace for them. We pray for those who are anxious, those who may be concerned, as to how long their situation will continue.

Those who have not seen other people for many weeks, who are locked up in their own homes and in their own rooms and care homes. Lord, we pray that your blessing will be with them.

And still us, we pray, in our anxieties, whatever may give rise to them, and help us to know that you are God. We pray your blessing, too, for all who continue to minister to us as a people during these days.

Not only the nursing and medical staff, but other related agencies, too. And we ask that you graciously provide for us, O Lord, a means by which this virus will be uplifted, will be taken away, and will be overcome.

[8 : 39] We pray that you would grant your blessing as a people to us in this nation, so that we may recover and come to build upon the things that have made us in the past, a people who were known as people who depended on God, and whose Christianity was known throughout the world, even though we acknowledge, Lord, that there were many different ways in which that was not as it should have been.

We pray your blessing tonight for the people of America, Lord, as they are overtaken with so much violence in their cities. We ask that you would bless that great nation, bless the administration of the White House, and all, O Lord, who seek to reestablish law and order and peace.

We pray for all the cities affected in the violence. We pray that you would remove from our society, O Lord, through the grace of the gospel, such prejudices as we find in our own hearts so easily and readily, prejudice against other people for their colour, for their way of life, for their beliefs, and so many other ways, which our prejudice comes to light.

Lord, help us, we pray, to follow the teaching of your word, so that we may live lives that are peaceable, and especially for the gospel's sake.

And so now we ask that you would continue to bless us here as we wait upon you, and especially bless us through your word as we read it, and as we give our minds to its teaching.

[10:14] O Lord, our God, receive us graciously, we pray, and pardon our sins for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Now, word to children, young ones that are present tonight.

We're glad to have you again, as usual. And we're looking at another of the birds of the Bible tonight. This is the third bird in the Bible. We're looking at the stork. It's not a bird that we find here in Stornoway, as far as I know.

I've never seen a stork in Stornoway. I don't know if anybody else has, probably not, unless they've wandered from their root. The stork is mentioned in the likes of Jeremiah, chapter 8, and at verse 7. And there is Jeremiah saying, Stork is a large bird.

Very, very long legs and a long beak. There are different types of storks, different places throughout the world. And the stork is also a migratory bird.

[11:23] And that's what Jeremiah is actually dealing with here. Because the people that Jeremiah belonged to in Judah had gone astray from the Lord. They had actually forgotten the ways of the Lord.

They had wandered off into all sorts of other practices, instead of being obedient and faithful to the Lord God. And what Jeremiah is saying, really, is something very, very sad.

It says that in nature itself, amongst these birds, there is a better understanding of things than there is with the people of Judah. He is saying the stork in the heavens knows her times.

The stork knows when to migrate, when to go to other lands. They were probably, in the Middle East there, very much aware of storks coming from lands further north and travelling south across the place where they lived there, in Judah, Israel, on their way down to South Africa, and then coming back again.

So they would see the storks flying across them. They would also see them landing there, and also some of them that actually lived there probably much of the time. But it's the migration of the stork.

[12:37] And he mentions also the turtle, the swallow, and the crane. It's an amazing thing to realise that a little swallow, as you can see here in the summertime, when the time is right, it actually goes from here to South Africa.

Tiny little bird, and yet it makes its way down to South Africa in its migration route. And here is Jeremiah saying, The birds know to do this, but my people don't know the rules of the Lord, the ways of the Lord.

They have forgotten them. And so tonight, children, it's so important that just like the birds know when to migrate, when to travel, and their ways in that respect, that we too would know the rules of the Lord, the ways of the Lord, that we would know when to come to God, the importance of praying to God, the importance of worshipping God, the importance of doing what we're doing today, which is giving God his place in our worship on the Lord's day, the importance of the Lord's day itself.

These are all the rules, the ways of the Lord. And so, as we come to learn from the Bible all about that, we actually want not to be like the people of Israel or Judah long ago, but to be obedient to God.

So that just like the birds know when to migrate, when to travel, we too would know our relationship with God, how important it is, when to come to him, what to do when we go to him, when we read our Bibles, when we come to pray, when we come to join together in worship, and how important it is to have these routes and these travelings as we actually go through life.

[14:30] Let's now say the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Now let's read the rest of chapter 11 of Romans.

If we read from verse 25 to 36, and then we'll come back and read and look at verses 33 to 36 for a short time. So from verse 25, Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers.

A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way, all Israel will be saved. As it is written, the Deliverer will come from Zion.

[15 : 39] He will banish ungodliness from Jacob. And this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins. As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake.

But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Just as you were at one time disobedient to God, but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you, they also may now receive mercy.

For God has consigned all to disobedience that he may have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are his judgments! How inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? For who has been his counsellor? For who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. And if we turn to look at these verses 33 to 36, we can call this Paul taking a break for worship.

[17 : 00] From the beginning of Romans, Paul has been giving such a thorough treatment of the gospel to us in these 11 chapters. Point after point, doctrine after doctrine, he gives this thorough treatment to the way he presents to us the righteousness of God in Christ and how that is actually made available to us through the gospel.

That's where he begins in chapter 1, verses 1 to 6, the gospel which is in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. And throughout these chapters, Paul has been dealing with huge, vast areas of truth. He deals with God's righteousness, God's wrath, God's grace, God's Son, Jesus Christ, Christ's death, the people of Israel, the relation between them and the Gentiles, the history of the world, eternity, God himself.

All of these wonderfully huge topics and subjects Paul has been dealing with throughout this letter, these chapters. And you can compare them in a sense as one writer has to someone climbing steadily up a high hill or a mountain.

And as the person is climbing up the mountain, you've probably seen something like this yourselves if you've been hill walking or climbing. As you go up, you take in some views. As you climb up, you see things as you go on and you don't stop for that moment.

[18 : 32] You just carry on and you see some other things and you carry on until you come to the point where there's a viewpoint and you say to yourself, I really have to rest here for a wee while.

I need to take in the view and just go over with my eye what I've seen on my way up to this point. And that's essentially what Paul is doing theologically or spiritually here.

He's been climbing up this hill of the Romans, this hill of his treatment of salvation in Christ and he's now come to a viewpoint. And as he's been dealing here, especially in chapters 9 to 11 with the way that the Jewish people refused Christ through their refusal, the Gentiles, that's you and I, non-Jews, were grafted on to the vine as he puts it here so that we come to share in salvation in Christ.

And that's with a view to eventually the Jews too will come back to realise that Christ is the Messiah. And he stopped here to admire the view.

And this is really what he says as he looks out over all of that ground. He says, Oh, what a wonderful sight. Oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

[19 : 52] That's what he's dealing with. That's what he's treating of. And as he pauses here, he's pausing really to worship because these are words of worship. He's just engaged in worship.

He's no longer wanting to add to what he said. He's going to come back to that in chapter 12 where he's going to lead to the practical application of the great doctrines that he's been dealing with. But here he's pausing.

He's taking in the view and he's really coming to worship and adore God for all that he has come to know of the gospel. So let's sit alongside Paul.

Let's just sit alongside him here as he comes to sit at this bench, if you like, and takes in this great panorama that he sees beneath him and sees some of the wonderful things that he says here in these verses.

There are three things, especially, that you might use as headings. First of all, here are two exclamations in astonishment. And secondly, here are three questions in admiration.

[20 : 57] Thirdly, here is one statement in adoration. Now what I'm saying, astonishment, admiration, and adoration, it really is just pretty much the same thing.

The whole of this passage, these three verses, are all about astonishment and admiration and adoration of God and worship and devotion as Paul is doing this. But as we take the two exclamations and the three questions and the one statement, they together combine to form this wonderful outburst of praise, this magnificent great exclamation of praise that Paul is engaged in. So firstly, two exclamations in astonishment. These are, oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. That's the first thing.

And the second one is, how unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways. Now I'm dividing it up like this just hopefully to make it a little bit easier to follow it, but it already comes together as one great unit of teaching.

Here's the first exclamation, oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. Now when he says riches, I think it's best to apply the word, understand it in terms of both the wisdom and the knowledge of God are presented as if they're God's riches, God's assets, if you like.

[22 : 27] The assets of God in his wisdom and in his knowledge. And as he deals with this, it forms part of this great fabric of praise. And you see what he's saying is all the depth of it.

It's like someone actually beginning to walk out into the ocean, someone beginning just at the shoreline there on the sand if you like and just beginning to walk out further and further and then realizing there's a lot more depth to this than I thought and then the further on you go you realize I can't possibly go any further.

This is just too deep. You know how it is yourself when you go out. When you leave the shore you can perhaps see right down to the bottom depending on where you are. Mostly you can. The water is clear then you go out a little bit it becomes less clear and eventually you can't really see much at all and you come out into the depths and it's just dark.

And what Paul is doing is saying this is where I'm at. This is where I actually have been given by God to know and to realize the depth of the riches and the wisdom and knowledge of the depth of these riches of God's wisdom and knowledge in our redemption and our salvation and the things that are bound up in our salvation.

There's such depth in this he says and there are depths that are themselves a cause of Paul's Paul's admiration and Paul's worship and Paul's praise in this passage.

[23 : 50] The knowledge of God God's knowledge is complete. God's knowledge is inclusive of every single thing that has ever happened, that is happening now, that ever will happen in the course of the world's history of the universe's formation and history.

The knowledge of God is complete. He doesn't need to learn anything. He doesn't need to wait for something to happen before he comes to know about it. This is the complete and inclusive knowledge of God.

You remember Psalm 139 how David was so taken up with this knowledge of God where he exclaimed himself at the beginning of the psalm there that God had surrounded him as it were and hemmed him in with this great knowledge.

He knows, he said, what I'm going to say before I say it. He reads my thoughts. He sifts through the pattern of my mind. Everything before and afterwards and during is known to him.

And again in Psalm 139 that's for David. That's a source of praise and of wonder and of adoration of God. But Paul is dealing here with the wisdom of God as well as the knowledge of God.

[25 : 05] We're really going through this fairly quickly. They're huge subjects of course. The wisdom of God along with the knowledge of God is something for which Paul breaks into praise.

Now the wisdom of God is his arrangement of things in the history of the world and remember Paul is dealing especially with redemption, with salvation and the arrangement of God's the arrangement of history itself in the way that it fits in with God's ultimate purpose in redemption.

The arrangement of things by which God works all things to his own ends for his own purpose for his own glory. He knows all pieces of this vast jigsaw of time and of eternity of human history of everything that fits together as he has devised it as he has planned it.

This is what Paul is saying. He's viewing this from his panorama point from his viewpoint. He's looking down on this the first 11 chapters and this is what he's saying. Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.

You know a lot depends on what kind of God we worship what our own perception of God is. Is he a God for us tonight at our own whim and beckoning?

[26 : 30] Is he a God that's so totally outwith our control? Is our God the same size as ourselves? Or is he this God this great God this God who has so many aspects to his character that even the Apostle Paul here is virtually stuck for words so he breaks out into worship instead.

He doesn't try to describe the wisdom of God the knowledge of God the riches of God he just says they're just for me a means a reason to worship him.

The riches and the knowledge of God. How unsearchable he says at his judgments how inscrutable his ways that's the second exclamation in astonishment first one with the riches and the depth of them now he's saying how unsearchable are his judgments God's verdict about everything which fits in with his knowledge and how inscrutable are his ways now that's the same for us for us tonight in all the events of our lives in all our experiences personally individually and wider as well as a people that's surely how we view things tonight in this COVID situation why has it come what's it about when will it go away what will its effects be why has God brought this in his providence well we come to this point with the apostle and say we know that it is in his purpose that he devised it to come at this point that this is always how he had planned it but oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and the knowledge of God how unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways you know if you looked at a tiny insect like an ant let's say climbing up one of the huge pillars of one of the great cathedrals let's say

St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh if you were just in there and you saw this tiny little ant climbing crawling up one of the pillars of that great cathedral as it came to the little pockmarks and little gaps and so on in the pillar and the stonework for that tiny little creature they'd be huge they'd be like craters they'd be like massive gaps much bigger than his own body he has to cross them or go into them and fall out of them and how can that ant possibly know anything of the vastness of the cathedral it's only aware of what's beneath its feet and as it crawls up and reaches up and up higher it goes to the top of the cathedral and there are so many more pillars and the purpose of the pillars is to uphold and keep the weight of that great edifice from caving in on itself how little that ant understands of that building and how it's held together what all of these component parts of it mean it's really in a sense a picture of you and I as we come and look down upon if you like from scripture the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God we're tiny wee ants we're dealing with our own tiny little portion and slice of history our own lives are just like slivers of silver in this vast concourse of the universe there are millions and millions of others like us and ages before us and ages after us how little we understand of this great God of his assets of wisdom and knowledge so we fall down and we adore him and we worship him and we thank him but he has included us in his dealings with the world two exclamations in astonishment secondly there are three questions in admiration as that follows on into verses 34 35 for who has known the mind of the

Lord or who has been his counsellor or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid the first question you see following on from the previous verse deals with the mind of the Lord or the knowledge of the Lord second question focuses on the wisdom of the Lord being a counsellor of God and the 35 is dealing with the matter of grace and mercy in God's redemption who has known the mind of the Lord who has actually created the mind of the Lord this is the mind that created all other minds this is the mind that really has authority over all that he has created this is the mind as we've seen that understands all things and they're working the mind that has that power accompanied with wisdom that insight of God that is perfect and complete how absurd that human beings like you and I would ever challenge God or challenge his wisdom or challenge his knowledge and yet we do so we only have to turn to the likes of Sam too which we so frequently sing why do the heathen rage why do the people imagine vain things what are they saying to each other let us collectively throw off these restrictions of God let's follow our own ways let's follow our own knowledge there are millions in the world like that tonight friend you be thankful that

[32 : 30] God has given you the knowledge of himself in the gospel that God has actually not left you to your own knowledge to your own idea to your own understanding of what is right and wrong what is good and what is bad what is beneficial and what is harmful knowledge that created your mind is the knowledge you go to when you turn to the Bible and it's absurd that we would think that we know better than God that God's claims upon us are things we should refuse and it's the same with the wisdom isn't it who has been the counsellor of the Lord God has never had an advisor he's never had to call in anyone or any group to advise him as to what to do he hasn't formulated his

great plan for the whole of creation by taking advice from someone else and yet isn't it absurd also that we human beings would rather sometimes follow our own plan that we would rather devise our own future our own lives our own present here is

Paul saying who has been his counselor the mind that has devised redemption salvation for us is a mind to be trusted a mind to put all your weight upon a wisdom that you can really depend on is absolutely sure and I think that's probably one of the things that the devil most frequently tempts us to and that's to suspect the wisdom of God even if we would continue to confess and acknowledge the power of God and the greatness of God in so many ways there are times in our lives when the question at least crosses our mind is God wise in doing this why is God allowing this where does this fit in with God being good and God being gracious and God being a saviour how absurd it is that we would think that our wisdom is superior to his grace and mercy who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid in other words

Paul is taking up this matter of salvation the grace and the mercy of God in Christ that's really in many ways what the holy epistle is about but he is saying where did that grace and mercy come from what's the cause of it have we in other words put God in our debt he says who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid do we come before God and say look Lord I have done this now you owe me of course not Paul is saying that is equally absurd because the grace and the mercy that God has provided for us in Christ and continues to extend to us in the gospel is not making God our debtor it doesn't matter what we do what we would try and achieve to build up some merit or reputation with God what God is saying I don't need that it's of no use anyway because it could never stand in my presence and he's saying all that I require I've already done myself I provided it for you in

Jesus my son that I require of you that you accept him that you accept my wisdom that you accept my knowledge in him Paul again wrote to the Corinthians who were so taken up with philosophy and the things of Greek knowledge in their past he says this is what we do we preach Christ crucified stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks but that's what we preach because that's where God's wisdom is in the life the ministry the death the resurrection of Christ two exclamations in astonishment in worship three questions in admiration in worship and finally one statement in adoration in worship now you notice these three little words in verse 36 here from through and to and a lot of the meaning is actually bound up in the use of these words for from him and through him and to him are all things and

Paul is really saying everything everything not only that you can think of everything that is everything that exists with God everything in all of this great swathe of teaching in Romans 1 to 11 everything in the universe past and present and future everything in history everything in eternity all things are from him and through him and to him it's all about him it's all about his glory it's all about his honor and you know that answers the questions that we often sometimes understandably in all our limitations and sufferings that come our way questions that we ask and God allows us to ask them even if we don't get an answer to them questions like where is God where is God in this suffering where is God in this COVID-19 outbreak where is God to be found is he no longer gracious you find all of these sort of things in the Psalms as well where is God has he forgotten to be gracious has he turned his back upon the world has he turned his back upon me where is God in my pain where is God in my suffering or the question how how can this be how is this right through him how is it in relation to God that such things that such things exist in this world as we find in it in our own lives as we find them developing and the third question might be why why is it happening that's the more common one probably why is it happening to me

[38 : 45] I'm a Christian I believe in God I trust in him I've walked with him in my life and yet I see this in my life this suffering this pain this loss this inexplicable event this unexpected thing why why has it happened now these are the questions where how and why that you actually have to bring into line with this verse from him through him and to him are all things every single iota from him through him and to him and one other thing just before we finish and that's notice how Paul here is actually putting together very closely and keeping together closely theology and worship theology and praise tied together because for one thing out worship as Paul's worship here is a response to God's revelation to what God has revealed of himself to the great things that God has brought about in his redemption in Christ out worship is a response to that and worship without theology without doctrine without the spine of Bible teaching well worship very often then becomes idolatry or go the other way as well put it the other way theology without worship is mere academic study

I've come across many people in my life who are experts in Bible texts in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament in the Greek text of the New Testament who had no love for God for them it was an academic exercise an exercise just in the history of the text or the transmission of the text but there was no faith and no loving response to the text you see it becomes a mere academic study if you have theology without devotion theology without worship so we have to keep these together as well in our own lives tonight you want in your life to have a devotional theology and a theological devotion you don't want to study the Bible just for the sake of knowing doctrine you want that to be an adoring study as Paul is setting before us here and you don't want your devotion to be devoid of theology or doctrine either because then it becomes just an academic exercise and a thin exercise at that compared to the rich and spiritual fear that you have in the gospel now here we are we've stood or sat with Paul at this vantage point this viewpoint as he's looked over this great panorama in chapters 1 to 11 setting out the greatness of this God the depth of the riches both of his wisdom and knowledge questions that arise over his knowledge and wisdom and grace and mercy the greatness of that the vastness of that the hugeness of this God the grandeur of this God the magnificence of this God the incomprehensibility of this God in the sense that he goes past so much of our ability to understand and yet here is the thing isn't it amazing that this God takes such an interest and concern in you and I that he would bother with the likes of us rebels against him and against his will by nature isn't it amazing to yourself tonight as you read these verses as you've sat with the apostle Paul and as we've shared together with him very inadequately

I fear this great vista that he's looking out on of God's redemption in Christ isn't it something utterly amazing to yourself that this God for all his greatness has come into your life has thought upon you has provided salvation for you has thought of you to the extent that he sent his son to die for you to die the death of the cross so my concluding question to myself first as well as to yourselves who listen it's not do you understand God's great plan because to that I and you have to say only in as far as I understand the very borders of it I cannot understand much of the depth of it so the question is not do you understand all of God's great plan no the question is this do you trust this God have you taken what God has revealed of himself as the basis of your trust have you come to know him this God as your redeemer as your salvation let me close with the words of 1st John chapter 5 we looked at this not too long ago before the lockdown when we came to finish off our studies of 1st John this is what he says and this is what we leave tonight with our own minds to follow it little children keep yourselves from idols in other words

I think he was saying don't go for any alternative to this great God Lord we thank you again that you have provided so richly for us we cannot measure these great assets of your redemption in Jesus Christ they are far beyond our ability other than to see so much of the requirements and so many of the things that are essential for us to know Lord we know that there are depths beyond what we have the capacity now to understand but Lord we thank you tonight that your acceptance of us is not based on the level of our knowledge on the ability of our minds to understand your ways but on the way that you accept us for Jesus sake and we thank you for him and we thank you that in him you are pleased to receive us and to continue to bless us hear us now we pray pardoning all our sin for his name's sake

Amen our concluding psalm tonight is Psalm 93 and that's in the Sing Psalms version to page well I don't have a page number Psalm 93 and it's to the tune St Magnus we'll sing the whole psalm the Lord is King His throne endures majestic in His height majesty the Lord is grope with majesty and armed with strength and might the world the world is founded firm and should remove it cannot be your throne is strong and you are God from all eternity the seas the seas

[47 : 50] O Lord have lifted up they lifted up their voice the seas have lifted up their waves and made a mighty noise rise the Lord enthroned on high is strong more powerful is he than thunder of the oceans waves are breakers of the sea your royal statutes Lord stand firm and changing is your word and holiness adorns your hands for endless days

O Lord now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and ever more Amen thank you once again for your participation with us in this short service of worship I trust that the Lord will bless you through his word and continue to keep you safe in the days to come thank you