

Called and Saved by Grace

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Date: 10 January 2021

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[0 : 0 0] I will extend a very warm welcome to everybody this morning and on behalf of Stormy Free Church and we welcome you to the service today and we pray that as we engage with God's Word that we will hear the voice of the living God speaking into our soul and that the Word of God will be a blessing to each and every one of us.

We're going to begin by reading from Psalm 61 and this is in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 61, O God, give ear unto my cry, unto my prayer attend.

From the utmost corner of the land my cry to thee I'll send. What time my heart is overwhelmed and in perplexity do thou me lead unto the rock that higher is than I.

For thou hast for my refuge been a shelter by thy power. And for defence against my foes thou hast been a strong tower. Within thy tabernacle I forever will abide.

And under cupboard of thy wings with confidence me hide. We're now going to pray and just as the psalmist said, O God, give ear unto my cry.

[1 : 1 5] And we pray that the Lord will hear our cry as well. Let us pray. O Lord, as we come before you today we give thanks for another opportunity of meeting with you.

And just as the psalmist said, O God, give ear unto my cry. That's what comes from all our hearts today. Because our dependence is entirely upon you.

We recognise sometimes very poorly, but sometimes very acutely, that without you we can do nothing. We are absolutely dependent upon you for everything because it is in you that we live, move and have our being.

And we give thanks, O Lord, for the way that your word tells us about these things and shows us things about you and about ourselves that we could never ever work out just in our own mind.

And that is part of the problem of life is that we think that our own understanding and our own ways and our own sense of knowledge is sufficient to guide us and to take us through this world.

[2 : 2 4] But you have given us your word which opens up to us new ways and brings a depth of understanding and meaning to life.

And we pray that we might appreciate your word more and more and that it might be truly the rule for our lives. You have to confess, Lord, that so often we are guilty of putting your word aside and choosing to do our own thing and like almost putting our fingers in our ears spiritually so that we don't hear what you're saying.

Because very often your spirit will touch our heart, your spirit will prompt us, your spirit will remind us of what is right and yet some days we choose to do what is wrong.

We ask, Lord, that you'll forgive us for this. Forgive us, Lord, for our stubbornness and our self-will and our selfishness in so many things.

And help us to be more and more obedient to you and that there will be a growing desire within our heart to follow you with all our heart. Help us to see you better.

[3 : 31] Help us to understand the importance of holiness. Because your word reminds us that without holiness no one shall see the Lord. And we pray that we might see you better and that you will fill our vision.

Because if you are in front of us, if our eye of faith is clear, then it makes such a difference to our walk through this world. So help us, Lord, in that way.

Because help us to have you always before us. Pray that you will bless every single one of us. Bless our homes and our families and all whom we love. Help us, Lord, in the face of where we are today.

Again, as a nation, there is this lockdown closing us down, which affects every person in different ways. Our lives have changed dramatically from this time last year.

And yet, Lord, we know that in and through it all, your voice is speaking to us. And we pray that there will become a growing national consciousness of the Lord in people's hearts.

[4 : 39] We fear that people might become harder rather than softer. Because your word and your providence does this very thing that either people become harder or they become softer under both your word and providence.

But we pray that there might be a softening in people's hearts. Be a softening in our leaders' hearts. Oh, Lord, touch them, we pray, so that they will look to the God of heaven.

So that they will be guided by you. Because the wisdom of this world will never lead us in the right direction. We ask then, Lord, that you will be gracious to us and that you will watch over us according to our varied needs.

We pray for those who are sick. We commit them to your care. And we know how illness can so affect life. And that there's anxiety with family members.

And there is anxiety with regard to those who themselves are ill. And we ask, Lord, that your gracious healing hand may be upon them. We pray for those who may have received bad news and that their lives have been thrown upside down because of this.

[5 : 53] We pray, Lord, for those who are suffering because of death. We know that death is such a robber and such a destroyer of everything that we know and is foundational in our lives at a human level.

And where we are robbed of those who mean so much to us and meant so much to us and who were integral to our life and to the happiness of our life. And so we pray for every broken heart, every heavy heart, every tear that rolls silently down a cheek, may be oblivious.

Other people may be oblivious to it. But there's a real pain in the heart. And so we ask, Lord, that in your mercy and in your grace that you will heal the broken heart. And New Year is often a very difficult time for people.

And so as we pass through New Year, we realise that sometimes the pains and the sorrows are more intense than ever they were. So we ask, Lord, that you will be with all who sorrow and all who mourn.

We pray, Lord, that you will guide us throughout this year. And we ask, Lord, that this year will be a year where we will know your blessing. Help all those who are in difficulty through this pandemic.

[7 : 06] And we know that the knock-on effect from it is absolutely incredible. It's affecting every area and every strand of society.

It has turned many things in its head. And we ask, Lord, that you will be with our young people this whole last year almost. We've been coming close to 10 months where their whole schooling and everything that they've been familiar with.

And they're linking up with friends and all these things that have been so vital to their growth and to their development have been stopped. It's been thwarted in so many different ways.

Be with our teachers, Lord. We give thanks for them. As they have to adjust to new situations. We give thanks, Lord, for the fact that the online learning is possible for many.

And we give thanks, Lord, for our Sunday school and for the online work that is done. Lord, what a great work that's been done. And where there's a work within the homes in a wonderful way.

[8 : 13] And we give thanks for the varied gifts that our Sunday school teachers and our leaders have. And the things that they're able to do. And we give thanks for all those who work tirelessly behind the scenes.

You know them. And we ask, Lord, that you will reward them in your own way. And we pray that you will bless us. We ask, Lord, that as we come under your word, that it will benefit us today.

And forgive us, Lord, for when we don't speak. Maybe there are things we should say and we don't. And maybe things that we shouldn't have said and we say them. Forgive us, Lord, in these things.

And we ask now that you will go before us and guide us in everything. Lord, deliver us in the face of this pandemic. As it seems to be multiplying day by day.

Oh, have mercy upon us. And we pray that the vaccine will be rolled out. And so that more and more and more people will receive that vaccine. And that gradually we will begin to see that the numbers that are testing positive.

[9 : 23] And those who are having devastating effects from it. That the numbers will lessen and lessen and lessen. Oh, Lord, we give thanks for medical science. But we give thanks, Lord, that you are behind all these things.

Watch over us, we pray. Bless our NHS staff. Bless our carers in homes and communities. Bless all our emergency services. And all who keep the country running in so many different ways.

Maybe there are people like lorry drivers and posties and bin collectors. And just there's so many things that we could list that maybe sometimes they're forgotten.

And there's train drivers and bus drivers. And people who, day by day, are helping to keep society moving. Watch over us and protect us, we pray.

For giving us our every sin, in Jesus' name. Amen. Just a wee word to the young folk. When I was in school, I used to collect, I suppose, like all young people used to do.

[10 : 30] And I'm sure they still do. Collect cards, football cards. I know that when there used to be stickers. You'd get books.

Collectors' books. And you'd buy stickers. I know like when Norman was young, you used to get these. We had sort of little booklets with football stickers.

And you would stick them into this big book that you got. But when I was wee, we used to get cards in little packets of sweet cigarettes.

You don't get them now. At least I don't think so. Because back when I was a boy, people didn't realize how dangerous smoking was. And an awful lot of people smoked. A lot of, an awful lot of grown-ups smoked.

And then people discovered how terribly bad smoking is for you. That it's a real killer. And so, of course, now people don't smoke.

[11 : 29] And I hope you will never smoke. But when we were young, there was a packet, wee packet, with ten little candy, sort of sticks, like little cigarettes, with a wee red end to it.

So that it looked, when you put it in your mouth, it looked like a cigarette. And there were sweetie cigarettes. But there was a football card in them. Sweetie cigarettes, they tasted all right.

There was sweet candy. But none of us ever bought them for the sweet candy. There were other sweets we preferred. We bought them because of the footballer that was in.

There was a card with a footballer. There were 50. And every boy wanted to get the full set. And it took me a long, long time to be able to get that set.

And there were the great players of the day, like Dennis Law and Bobby Charlton and so on. And what was always very annoying is when you bought your packet of sweetie cigarettes, first thing you'd do is when you'd open it, and you'd say, Oh, no, I've got him already.

[12 : 37] And I still remember there was a player, I didn't know anything about him, but a player called Alex Elder who played for Burnley. And nearly every second packet I opened, I would say, Oh, not him again.

It was this Alex Elder from Burnley. And I was saying, they must have made thousands and thousands of them. But anyway, what you did was, when you got doubles, you kept them.

You didn't throw it away, saying, Oh, I've got that already. What you did was, you would see your pals and say, Any cards you want to swap? And you would look at the cards they had doubles of.

And I would show the cards that I had doubles of. And they would see one that they didn't have, and I would see one that I didn't have. And so we'd swap.

And so we'd go away happy, because we'd got a card that we didn't have before. And so that sort of exchanging and swapping was very much part of life.

[13 : 41] And it still goes on. Maybe not with the cards like that. And of course, there aren't the sweet cigarettes now. But swapping and exchanging still goes on.

That's why websites like Buy, Swap, Sell are so popular. Because people can either sell things on it, or buy things, or even swap things, exchange things.

And so people exchange PlayStation, or Xbox games, or things like that. There's lots of that goes on, even to this day. And sometimes after an exchange, if you swap things, I knew two of my friends swapped their cars.

They had one like the other fellow's car, and vice versa, and they swapped cars. But sometimes after an exchange, you can go away and say, Oh, you know, I don't think I did very well out of that.

Or sometimes you can go away and say, Oh, I think I did really well out of that. Or sometimes you go away, or sometimes both people are happy, sort of, anyway, after an exchange.

[14 : 53] Well, today, in the sermon, we're going to talk, it mentions the greatest exchange, the greatest swap, if we can use that word, the greatest exchange that ever took place.

And it's what Jesus did. Because, you see, we're all sinners before God. God is not happy with us because of our sin. And our sin brings death, and it brings us to be separated from God.

And it's an awful place to be. And it's horrible because there's nothing good about it, and the end isn't good. But Jesus came to deal with that.

And Jesus, you know, this is what's in the text that we're going to look at today. It says that Jesus brought life and immortality to light to the gospel.

And these are big words. Life and immortality. Immortality is living forever and ever and ever. So, what Jesus has brought is life where he gives us spiritual life, where the Holy Spirit comes to live within us, and gives us his joy, his peace, his contentment, his goodness.

[16 : 13] All these things come into our lives. And that's real life. But then, gives life forever. So that when we do die, it's only for a while.

Because the Bible tells us that our bodies will rise again. But that whenever we die, we go to be with the Lord. into the most wonderful blessing ever.

And it, as everything opens out before us of what God is going to do way in the future, we're told there's going to be new heavens and a new earth. And there'll only be righteousness there.

And we will live in this wonderful place forever and ever and ever in the presence of the Lord Jesus. Life forever.

That's the swap. That's the exchange. Instead of sin and death. And you know this, there is not a greater exchange in the whole wide world.

[17 : 15] Imagine sin, darkness, death. Jesus says, I'll swap it for you. You know what, I'll take that on me.

and I will give you life and life forever and ever and ever. There was a famous missionary and a group of friends who went to Ecuador and they went to into the tribe, amongst the tribes, and they went to a particular tribe, I can't remember the name, that didn't know anything about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And Jim Elliot was somebody who really wanted to tell people about Jesus. but a while before Jim Elliot had written and this is what he wrote, he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

Isn't that wonderful? He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. And that's what happens when we become a Christian.

we give our life to Jesus which if we don't we'll lose it. And when Jesus will give us his life which we cannot lose, we have it forever and ever.

[18 : 37] The great exchange. You make sure that that exchange takes place in your life as well. Let's say the Lord's Prayer. Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. We're going to read God's word now and we're going to read from 2 Timothy and chapter 1.

2 Timothy chapter 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.

[19 : 54] As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelled first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now I am sure dwells in you as well.

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do, but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you, you are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenus.

May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me.

[22 : 00] May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day, and you will well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

Amen, and may God bless to us this reading of his own holy word. And I want us this morning to consider the words, verses 8, 9, 10, 10.

Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me as prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, and so on.

Now, in this wonderful chapter, Paul, we find his writing to the young Timothy. Recently, we looked at verse 12, but it's these two or three verses leading up to verse 12 that I want us to focus on today.

Paul is a prisoner in Rome, this is not the first time he's been in prison, but this time it's different because Paul is waiting for his execution, and it's quite extraordinary how the tables have turned, because there was a day when Paul lived on the other side of the fence, and Paul himself was a persecutor.

[23 : 40] Paul was involved in the capture, and in the death, and in the suffering, and the imprisonment of Christians, but now as a Christian, it's gone full circle, so to speak, he is now waiting for his execution.

He tells us that later on in this letter. And it's quite extraordinary, if anything shows the evil of the human heart, and the sheer twistedness and perverseness of sin, it is where people are being put to death for no other reason than that they love the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Jesus warned his disciples that a day would come when people thought they were doing God a favour by putting to death those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ.

And from the first martyr, Stephen, all the way down to this very day, there have been people have been executed today, and have been executed all the days since Christ's coming into this world because of their love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And indeed, before Christ came into this world, those who followed the Lord often found themselves in prison and being put to death because they proclaimed God's word faithfully.

[25 : 00] And it shows, as we say, the sheer distortion of sin in the human heart, where people call good evil and evil good. The most perfect person that ever walked this world is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Since the fall, there has not been any display of perfection ever displayed in any person, except that of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, the world could not wait to get rid of him.

For he had three years of a public ministry. The world couldn't stand the perfection and the beauty and the righteousness holiness and the holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They couldn't wait to get rid of him. That's what sin is like. Sin is so distorted and so perverse. And so Paul knew all about this.

He knew both sides of the coin, but here he is waiting. And he's not feeling sorry for himself because in this particular letter, he's trying to encourage Timothy because he sees in Timothy this young man who he believes despite his timidity and despite his illness and despite his youth, has a potential to be a great servant of the Lord.

[26 : 22] And so Paul is setting out certain truths and principles for Timothy. And he's doing so in order to show him the importance and the privilege of working and serving for the Lord.

And always remember that. It is important to serve the Lord. And you can serve the Lord wherever you are. It doesn't matter your age. It doesn't matter your abilities.

It doesn't matter what gifts. God has given you something where you're able to serve him. And it's so important and it's a privilege. And at the end of the day, we don't serve for the reward, but at the end of the day, everything that we do by faith for the Lord carries its own reward.

Now, we see that Paul is trying to stir Timothy up to be courageous and to be enthusiastic. That's why he's saying in verse 6, For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you.

Courage and enthusiasm, you know, they're kind of important qualities, virtues for life in general, but they are absolutely essential in the life and in the witness and the work of the gospel.

[27 : 36] Courage and enthusiasm are both so important in the Christian life and in the Christian faith. And then in verse 8, Paul says, Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or me as his prisoner.

And you know, there is a temptation to be ashamed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ because, as we said, Christians are put to death for their faith.

And it's an extraordinary thing how people, once they become Christians, are often marginalized, they're ridiculed, they're belittled, they're despised.

And it's not so difficult when people are older and more mature, but it's hard very often for young people. And if you're a young person and you feel on your own, it's hard, don't let, I have total sympathy for you, it's hard, hard sometimes to stand alone for Jesus Christ.

It's hard to stand, if you're the only Christian or the only person who's sympathetic to the Christian faith in your home, that's hard. if you're the only Christian at work, that is hard.

[28 : 57] If you're the only Christian in your class and school, that's hard. These things are difficult. You make no bones about it. God will give you the strength and he'll enable you, he'll give you his grace.

And in an amazing way, it is through this that God's witnessing to God, often in difficult circumstances, is the way that the gospel actually grows and develops.

And you may not think today that your witness counts for much, but let me assure you it does. And one day, this good seed that you're sowing by your witness will one day bear fruit.

And so, as I say, it's not an easy thing. So there is this tendency, often, to be ashamed. ashamed. And Paul highlights two areas where we can be ashamed in the testimony of the gospel and ashamed of God's people.

And we are ashamed sometimes of the testimony of the gospel. In other words, there are times when we should have stood for the truth and we didn't. There are times that we've been in a particular situation and we know full well that we should speak out, but we don't.

[30 : 15] And on these occasions, we are not witnessing well. We are not defending the cause. We are not witnessing for the Lord in the way that we should.

And as I say, it's not easy to do. And again, we can be ashamed of God's people. Paul was a prisoner for Christ and it would appear that most people abandoned Paul.

Paul talks about that. Most of them just left him once he went into chains. I was saying, goodbye, Paul, we're out of this. And that sometimes happens in the Christian faith.

It happened to the Lord Jesus Christ that when he was arrested, his disciples forsook him and fled. They said, oh, a fear to go over of them.

Although Peter and John, they went back. But of course, we know what happened with regard to Peter. Don't turn your back on your Christian brother or sister in their hour of need, particularly when they're suffering in the faith.

[31 : 25] It's important that we stand with them, that we encourage them, that we give them a word, that we pray for them. Because it's the worst thing that you can do is to see a brother or sister standing for the faith in difficulty and just sort of saying, I'm having nothing to do with this.

It means a lot when somebody will come side by side or somebody you're aware, even if you know that they're praying for you. So Paul says, don't be ashamed of the testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ and don't be ashamed of other Christians.

Christians. You know, it's an awful thing where we can be ashamed to be seen that I might be speaking to somebody who's listening in today and you don't want to be associated with Christians although there is part of your heart that is moving in that direction.

You're in a dilemma because you say, I know what is right and I know where I want to go but I don't want to be seen, I don't want the world to see me associated with.

I don't want to go to church. Maybe there are some people just now who have been listening in during our lockdown and they're saying to themselves, you know, when this is over, I really would like to go to church but I don't know what church is about.

[32 : 51] I don't know how will I be received, what will it be like and I don't know what will people say, what will the church say, what will the world say if they see me making their way to church.

Don't think like that, go. Just go because God will bless you. It's the greatest thing that you could do is to meet with God and to meet with God's people.

And then Paul reminds us why we shouldn't be ashamed because of what the Lord has done for us. You don't be ashamed of the Lord. Paul says, remember what he has done for us.

He has saved us. Now, far too often we tend to forget or really dwell upon what it is that God has done.

He has saved us. And when you save, two things happen. There's a saving from and there's a saving to. You're saved from where you are and what's going to happen to you and you're saved from that into something else.

[33 : 55] we are saved from sin, from sin's power, from sin's corruption, from sin's guilt, from its destruction, from its utter ruin.

All these things have been done away with in Jesus Christ. That doesn't mean, of course, that sin doesn't still impact our lives.

It rages. As has often been said, sin rages, but it doesn't rain. Christ rains now. Sin has been dealt a mortal blow.

It still causes havoc within our life. There are days we feel that it's king in our heart, but it's not. It's a new king. Even although every day sin is trying to usurp the authority of Christ, within us.

But the wonderful word is this, that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. If you have been saved, you've been saved from the condemnation that sin brings.

[35 : 07] So that's what you're saved from. There's a whole sermon in that. There's a whole sermon on what we've been saved to. Because we have been delivered. We have been delivered into the kingdom of God.

we have been given eternal life. The life that we begin to enjoy in Jesus Christ is our life forevermore. What we get here now is just the beginning.

It's just the foretaste. It is just the very start of what will grow and grow and develop forever and ever in the fullness of glory.

Our lives have been changed because the Holy Spirit has come to abide within us. And the Holy Spirit, the third version of the Godhead, who is equal in power and glory to Father and Son, He has come and He works within us because He imparts to us of who He is.

Because He is there, then His love and joy and His peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control become part of our lives.

[36 : 22] Isn't that incredible? What a change. That's life. You know, there's so many people out there today and they would give anything to have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control in the center of their lives, what the Christian does.

We're made heirs and joined heirs with Christ. The Lord is preparing a place, He's going to prepare a place for us, He did that on the cross, He's going to prepare a place for us, He's coming again to take us to be with Himself forever.

We know that all things are working for our good and that's just the start of what He has done, that's part of the salvation and the salvation affects not just our soul, even our body, everything.

And so, that is why we should always be thinking upon this salvation. And then we're told here that we're called to a holy calling.

Now, the call is holy because the call comes from a holy God. But it's a call to holiness. Now, some people don't think very much of holiness, they say, well, holiness, okay, you're a Christian, but you don't have to be a holy Christian.

[37 : 41] Yes, you do. Because we're told very simply, in the Bible, without holiness, no one shall see the Lord. And it is only in and through the Lord Jesus Christ that we can see the Father.

It's the only way. And this is the only way of holiness. holiness. And you know, the holier our life is, the more our life is set apart to the Lord, the more that our life is lived to and for the Lord, the clearer our sight will be of the Lord.

You know, sometimes sin really clogs up our sight. And when we are not living the holy life that we should, you know, we don't see the Lord properly.

You and I know that very well. And you know, there are times you're sort of making your way about it and you say, oh, you know, I just am not seeing very clearly. I don't have 20, 20 spiritual vision.

I'm just not seeing the Lord clearly. And then when you look in in your life, you say, oh, no wonder. Because my life isn't the holy life it should be. And the holier our life is, the clearer our vision is, the clearer our sight is of the Lord.

[39 : 03] And that's what the Lord is desiring of us, that our lives would be set apart for him in order that we would seek to bring glory to God all the time.

And you see, a holy life is a life of discipline. Where we are disciplined, where we are pursuing holiness, it's what we are, there's this kind of discipline, self-control within our life.

There's a focus in our life. It's a focus on the Lord. He is there in everything, all our decisions, all our desires, everything.

It is aimed to be God centred. The great cry of the holy life is the cry of John the Baptist. He must increase, I must decrease.

And of course, though your desire is for holiness, and you're seeking to live the holy life, we know far too often at the times our life is anything but holy.

[40 : 09] But you know that through Christian, they grieve and they mourn over that. Because when our lives are, what we would say, unholy, when our lives are a mess, and we're not long like that when we turn to the Lord and say, oh Lord, have mercy on me, forgive me, this is not the way I want to be living.

I want to live, because the Holy Spirit, you see, we can grieve the Holy Spirit so quickly. And when the Holy Spirit is grieved, and then we realize, oh Lord, those things are not as they should be, and we go back to the Lord, asking, oh forgive me Lord, turn me, turn me again so that the focus will be upon you, that I will have you every day in front of me, that I may follow you with all my heart.

And this call was, and still is, a powerful call. You see, there came a day when the Lord called you, and it's like your name was on the call, it was personal, it was powerful, it was persuading, and you heard it in a way that you never heard it before.

You know, there were many times you heard the call of God in his word and in his providence. There were times, I look back at my, I remember a time, and I was standing at the grave of a young friend of me, when I was a young man, very young, just 20 or 21 there about.

I never forget that and I said, that could be me. And it shook me to the core, and I remember thinking, I really need to seek the Lord.

[41 : 47] And that night, that's always in my thinking, I must become a Christian. You know, very quickly these thoughts faded. And so often in life, that's the way it is. There are times you come close, and then you fade away.

But you know, there comes a time when the call is powerful. And as I said, it's powerful, it's personal, it's persuading. And you hear in a way that you never heard before.

And the obstacles and the barriers and the difficulties and the things that you couldn't make any sense of, all of a sudden, through the blur, the blurriness of your vision, trying to see them, all of a sudden, there's a growing clarity.

And you begin to see and you begin to understand and you're hearing that this voice is for you, that God is calling you. Sometimes it's in a moment, it's in a day, sometimes it's over a period of time.

From our side, from God's point of view, it's not, it's one that's just regeneration once and for all. But the outworking of it in our own experience is so varied.

[42 : 57] That's why testimonies are so varied. And you know, if you've never heard that call, if you've never felt the Lord calling you, I would say to you, ask the Lord even today, even now, during this service, and say, Lord, I've never ever really been powerfully persuaded of the importance of becoming a Christian.

I have never fully understood, I've never heard your voice in the gospel. Speak to me now, Lord. Lord, call me with that power, that will change me, that will turn me, that will enable me to follow you with all my heart.

And you'll notice that we weren't called because of our own works. You know, we weren't saved because there's some kind of goodness in us.

Some people think that people are saved because God saw that they were the kind of people who would believe that there was something good within them. And God says, I'm going to save him, man, because they're kind of naturally good people.

It's not like that. You know, the Bible tells us all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. None of us have reached the mark. We're also told that there's no good thing within us, in and of ourselves.

[44 : 17] So that that sin has so separated us from God that there is no person in and of themselves that is worthy of salvation, that can attain salvation, are not one who can exercise that faith in and of themselves that will save them.

And that's a sobering thought. It doesn't matter what we do, it's not our works. And that's one of the reasons why people hate the gospel, because it removes anything that we can do.

We are entirely dependent upon, and that's what it goes on to show us, that it is of grace. But we see very clearly that salvation is of God's own purpose.

If God hadn't purposed to save, you and I couldn't be saved. If God hadn't purposed and planned salvation, there would be no salvation. It's all of grace.

And you know, the wonderful thing is that God didn't put an emergency package into play when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden. No. He had this purposed and planned from all eternity, because it tells us before the ages began, before this world, before anything, God had purposed and planned all this.

[45 : 41] And that's such a comfort to know, that God is in control all the time. That before you and I came into existence, grace, even before the very creation of the world, before the ages began, God had it all worked out.

And it's all of grace. It's by his grace. And you might be saying to yourself, where does that leave me? Well, I'll tell you, right now, if you're outside the kingdom, if you don't have Jesus Christ as saving, think upon that grace.

It's grace, God's grace that has you listening to this service today. That's his grace, because there's loads of people aren't, but you are. That's God's grace that has put you in the place where you're hearing the gospel.

And it is as we hear the gospel, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. And you say to the Lord, Lord, your grace to me is wonderful, because you have put me in the place where I'm hearing the gospel.

Lots of people haven't. This is the beginning. and ask the Lord even right now, Lord, grant me the grace. Give me your grace.

[46 : 55] Help me to receive you. Help me to trust in you with all my heart. Because his grace, see, his grace is inviting you to be saved.

And his grace will enable you to believe. Ask him to help you to believe. So Jesus has come, and he's done it all, and you notice what also it is saying here, that Christ has abolished death.

This is what he has done. This is all part of the salvation. There's a threefold aspect to death. There are three deaths. There's, first of all, physical death, which is the separation of our soul from our body.

There is, secondly, there is spiritual death, which is how we are by nature, where our souls are separate from God. That's, we're told, we are dead in our trespasses and sins.

So there's physical death, and there's spiritual death, but then the Bible shows us there's then eternal death, which involves separation of soul and body from God.

[47 : 59] Not just soul, but soul and body forever. That's hell. And so Jesus has come in order to, this is the beautiful word, take note of it, Christ has abolished death, abolished the separation from God, and although there will come a time when our souls and bodies will be separated, it is only temporary because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

He has won victory over that, and our souls and our bodies will be reunited together in the presence of the Lord forever. That is a fullness of what he has done.

so Jesus has taken our sin upon himself. That is why on the cross he experienced what constitutes the separation.

That is hell. He took that upon himself for us in order that we might have life and immortality.

we are speaking to the young folks, speaking to the children, it is the greatest exchange, the greatest swap, the greatest exchange this world has ever known.

[49 : 14] Sin and death, life and immortality. That is the offer. What are you choosing today?

Are you going down the road of sin and death? or do you want to go down the road of life and immortality? If we can quote the words of Jim Elliot again, he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

Let us pray, Lord, we pray to bless us and that we will hear and heed your word. Cleanse us from our sin, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. We are going to conclude singing from Psalm 118 in Sing Psalms.

Psalm 118, Sing Psalms, verses 1 to 7. O thank the Lord, for he is good, is steadfast, love endures always. Now let the house of Israel say, his love will last throughout endless days.

Psalm 118, and verses 1 to 7, from Sing Psalms. Amen. O thank the Lord, for he is good, his steadfast love endures always.

[50 : 36] Now let the house of Israel sing, his love will last through endless days.

And let the house of Israel sing, his love for heaven will endure.

They go to the Lord, hear, his love will stand forever true.

I cried in anguish to the Lord, he answered me, not saithly, be.

The Lord is with me, and all dear, what harm can be the due to me.

[52 : 02] The Lord is with me constantly, me. He is the one who gives me aid.

I look with triumph on my foes, I will not need to be afraid.

Now may the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore.

Amen. Thank you very much for watching and taking part in the service today and do again tune in this evening at half past six when the service will be conducted by the Reverend James McKeever.

Thank you.