

What's in a Blessing?

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Preacher: Rev Dr Colin Dow

[0 : 00] I'm delighted again this evening to welcome Reverend Colin Dow to the pulpit.! He was saying this morning he was here as a student placement 24 years ago.! So some of you will remember him, I'm sure.

Some of you might be a new face for you, but we're delighted to have him with us. Colin is a minister in Crow Road Free Church in Glasgow, what was previously St. Glasgow City Free Church.

And we're thankful for the ministry tours already today and look forward to his ministry this evening as well. We pray God's blessing on Colin and the family. We've been delighted to have them with us as well today as they return to Glasgow in the coming days as well.

Let the Lord be with them. Thank you very much for your warm welcome. Let us worship God and sing to his praise in Psalm 146.

Psalm 146 from St. Sams. This is page 191. We shall sing the whole psalm to the praise of God.

[1 : 04] Psalm 146 from verse 1 to verse 10. Praise the Lord, my soul will praise him. I'll extol him all my days.

While I live, to God my Saviour, from my heart I will sing praise. Let's stand as we sing to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Thank you, Father, my soul will praise him.

Thank you, Father, my soul will praise him. Thank you, Father, my soul will praise him. Thank you, Father, my soul will praise him. Oh, praise him. I'll extort it all my days.

I'll I live to God my Savior. From my heart I will sing praise.

God, who do trust in princes? Mortal men who cannot say.

[2 : 10] All their plans will come to nothing. When they perish in the grave.

Blessed is the one who truly looks for heaven. To Jacob's God.

Blessed is the one who places all his hope upon the Lord.

He who made the earth and heaven. And the sea split all their store.

He who gives his heavenly promise. He who is faithful evermore.

[3 : 18] He delivers from oppression. And relieves the hungry's might.

He releases those in prison. To the life the Lord gives sight.

He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know.

He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know.

He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know.

[4 : 19] He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know.

He who does not know. He who does not know. He who does not know. Let us pray.

O Lord our God, we join with the psalmist in calling upon our souls to praise you and to extol you all the days of our lives.

For you are God, our Savior. You are the one who made the heaven and the earth, the sea with all its store.

You are the one who keeps every promise. You are the one who is faithful. You are the one who delivers us from oppression and relieves the plight of the hungry, who releases those in prison and gives the blind their sight.

[5 : 29] You are the one who raises those who are bowed down. For you, O Lord, delight in righteousness, protecting and caring for strangers, for the widow and for the fatherless.

You are the one who frustrates the purposes of the wicked. You reign to every generation, O Lord. For over a hundred years, the message of your sovereignty has been proclaimed from this pulpit. That our God reigns. You reign then, you reign still. You will always reign as King and Lord. And so our souls praise you. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one true and living God, help me worship you for who you are and for all that you have done.

Our relentless Redeemer. We thank you that you have demonstrated your love for us in this. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have beheld his glory. How then do we see the glory of God on the cross?

[6 : 42] If it is not that your own Son, O Lord our Father, was humiliated and crucified in our place, bearing the punishment our sin deserved, bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood.

Hallelujah. What a Savior. We draw near to you tonight in the name of Jesus as your people. We thank you for the faith that you have given us, for even the faith by which we are saved is a gift from yourself.

Lord, we may have small faith, we may have great faith. It's not our faith that counts, but the one in whom we have faith. We thank you that you, O Lord, are forever committed to us in love and covenant promise.

You have said, I will never leave you, I will never forsake you. Behold, I am with you to the very end of the age. Our Lord God and loving Heavenly Father, we pray that you would comfort those in distress.

We pray that you would give hope to those in despair. We pray that you would give strength to those who are exhausted. We pray that you would give joy to those who are depressed. We pray that you would give serenity to those who are anxious.

[8 : 11] We thank you that you are the God of our hearts, the God who overcomes our hearts and is greater than our hearts. We pray that you would speak truth to us this evening.

We pray for our church here. We ask that you would open the floodgates of heaven and send your spirit to begin a movement in these islands once again that would cause people to fill the church, to rush into the church, eager to hear the good news of Jesus Christ and be saved.

We pray, Lord, that you would do a work here in Kenneth Street. Once again, Lord, we thank you for Callum Smith here. We thank you for Callum for his gifting and for his godliness.

We thank you for the way that he shepherds and cares for this congregation. We pray that you would bless him and Johan and the family richly in their ministry among us. and we pray, Lord, that as he looks for a colleague and as we look for a colleague that you would give us unanimity of heart and spirit, focusing our minds upon what you would have for us, not upon what our personal preferences may be.

We pray for our denomination as a whole. We ask, Lord, that you would help us to remain faithful to your word. We do not stand on the laurels of our heritage.

[9 : 41] As much as we look forward to a dynamic future of your blessing. We pray for the growth of the church all over Scotland. Lord, we ask that you would work powerfully in every pulpit from which your word is preached this evening.

We remember the missionary endeavour of your church all over the world. We thank you for the growth of your church in many nations. We also remember those nations where there's great challenge.

We remember the nation of Japan where a tiny church is faced with further decline. We pray for your people there in that highly populated country, technologically advanced and yet spiritually dead.

Lord, will you not open the floodgates of heaven and pour down your spirit upon that great nation?

We pray, O Lord, for our world. We ask, Lord, that you would make wars to cease, that you would frustrate the purposes of wicked men, that you would relieve the plight of the oppressed!

And the hungry. And Lord, we pray for our politicians and those in authority over us. We especially remember them as they debate the proposed euthanasia bill.

[11 : 04] And we ask, O Lord, that your word would take front and centre in all of their decisions.

Lord, we ask and pray for this bill not to go forward, for it to be defeated in both Holyrood and Westminster.

And we ask that rather than ending life, which is your prerogative, you would help us to invest our care and resource and money in preserving life and giving dignity to those who are dying. And Lord, we consider now our own personal needs. We are hungry for your word this evening. That's why we're here. So will you fill us with a new vision of Jesus Christ? But Lord, there may be some among us here this evening who do not yet know you, who are here by force of habit, or because they have been forced to be here by their parents or by peer pressure. But do not know you. They have not yet discovered the great meaning of life and the pearl of great price that is to be found in Jesus Christ.

[12:17] Lord, will your spirit do a work among us this evening that breaks open the hardness of our hearts? will your spirit do a miracle of grace within us this evening to transform our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh?

Help us all, O Lord, this evening as we come to come with that attitude of those Gentiles who came to the disciples saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

Now we ask all these things with the forgiveness of our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing again this time in Psalm 1.

This is on page number 200. It's from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 1. That man hath perfect blessedness who walketh not astray in counsel of ungodly men nor stands in sinner's way. nor sitteth in the scorner's chair. But placeth his delight upon God's law and meditates on his law day and night. Psalm 1, the whole psalm to God's praise.

[13:33] best best best nor stands in sinners' way.

Lord sitteth in the scorn's ship, and raiseth his delight.

At most grog, so grog, so grog, so grog, so grog, so grog, so grog, so grog, so grog, We shall be like a tree that goes near planted by our earth.

Which in this season yields its fruit, and its sweet faith ever.

And only thou shalt prosper well, now with it are not so.

[15:32] But like they are bound to virtue, which when right to our goal.

In judgment therefore shall most and such as the God we are.

Nor in the assembly of the earth shall we yet men appear.

For while the way of God remain, unto the Lord is Lord.

Where as the way of the earth shall white be overgrown.

[17:03] We are going to read now in God's word from the book of 2 Corinthians chapter 13. 2 Corinthians chapter 13.

2 Corinthians chapter 13. This is the word of God. This is the third time I am coming to you.

Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. I warn those who sinned before and all the others. And I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit.

That if I come again I will not spare them. Since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you. But is powerful among you.

For he was crucified in weakness. For he lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him. But in dealing with you. We will live with him by the power of God.

[18:22] Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves. That Jesus Christ is in you. Unless indeed you fail to meet the test.

I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test. But we pray to God that you may do no wrong. That not that we may appear to have met the test.

But that you may do what is right. Though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth. But only for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong.

Your restoration is what we pray for. For this reason I write these things while I am away from you. So that when I come. I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority.

That the Lord has given me for building up. And not for tearing down. Finally brothers. Rejoice. Aim for restoration.

[19:26] Comfort one another. Agree with one another. Live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the love of God. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Be with you all. This is the word of God.

Before we turn back to that passage. We'll sing in Psalm 19. On page 23. Psalm 19. On page 23.

From which we shall sing. Verses 7. To verse 14. Psalm 19. Page 23.

From verse 7. The perfect law of God. Revives the soul of man. His statutes which are sure. Make wise the simple one.

[20 : 25] The precepts of the Lord are right. And fill the heart. With great delight. Let's sing Psalm 19. From verse 7 to the end. To God's praise. The perfect law of God.

Revives the soul of man. His statutes which are sure.

Make wise the simple one. The precepts of the Lord are right.

And fill the heart with great delight. God's praise. For great, the earth commands.

Share light on what we see. The fear of God is pure.

[21 : 38] At last eternally. The standards of the Lord express.

His perfect truth and righteousness. The power of God is pure.

The power of God is pure. The power of God is pure. The power of God is pure. The power of God is pure. The power of God is pure. You can discern His cause, forgive my hidden sin, keep me from willful deeds, may they not rule within.

And then I shall be free from blame and guiltless of transgressions.

Lord, let the words I speak, be pleasing in Your sight, and may my endless thoughts be in Your judgment right.

[23 : 45] O Lord, You are the rock to me, You have redeemed and sent me free.

May I begin by once again thanking you from the bottom of my heart for the welcome that myself and my family have received this weekend up here.

It's been wonderful for Kathmer and myself to renew friendships. You don't seem to have changed one little bit in the last 24 years. As I said this morning, I have far less hair and far more children than I had back then.

But you don't seem to have changed at all, except the man standing beside me, Callum Smith. He is your minister now. My first experience of Callum was when he was inducted to Dumfries Free Church.

And over the years, I felt very blessed to work with him on the presbytery. And it's wonderful to see him as your shepherd at this time. But of course, we pray for a colleague for him.

[25 : 04] Please turn with me back to 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 14. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

At the end of every service of worship, the presiding minister will raise his hands and pronounce the benediction. The word benediction literally means blessing or more literally to speak well.

The minister on behalf of God dismisses God's people with his blessing upon them. The service concludes with the minister, or God rather, speaking well over his people.

Pronouncing both his pleasure in them and his intention for them. His pleasure in them in that they are his children whom he loves, protects, and will provide for.

And his intention to strengthen them for all the challenges which lie in the week ahead. So the benediction is an essential component in every Christian service of worship.

[26 : 25] It is the public announcement of God's blessing upon his people. As Christians, we are to listen carefully to the benediction.

Recognizing it's for us. It's God's gift to us. It's God's words of pleasure and intention for us.

Whatever issues I may be facing, whether grief or depression, whether joy or thankfulness, anxiety or doubt, be it peace or tranquility, God wants me to experience his pleasure in me as his child and his loving intention toward me.

Now the benediction that I choose to use most often is this one taken from 2 Corinthians 13, 14.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Now we're tempted, are we not, because we've heard these words so often, not to think too deeply about what they mean. In truth, we're rather spoiled by them because there's a richness here which goes beyond anything the world can offer us.

God blesses us not so much with grace, love and fellowship, although these are wonderful things.

God blesses us with himself and in essence says to us, I will know you this week and you will know me this week.

[27 : 57] I'll be with you through all the trials of this week. Know this, my beloved child, I take great pleasure in you. I love you and I'll be with you always.

Out of this benediction in 2 Corinthians 13, verse 14, we could say many things, but I want to reflect this evening on just three. First of all, it tells us about God.

Then it tells us about salvation. And then it tells us about prayer. Tells us about God, salvation and prayer. At the end of the service this evening, listen carefully to the good words of this benediction. They are for us as a Christian church. And they are for us as individual Christians. First of all then, these words tell us about God.

These words tell us about God. My wife and I were privileged recently to travel down to Newcastle to attend a celebration for the ministry of Dr. Ian Hamilton.

[29 : 06] Known to many of us, Ian is an influential Christian pastor, writer and theologian. He has influenced many of us, myself included, for the good.

And inspired us to be the best servants of Christ it's possible for us to be. At that celebration dinner, one of the speakers highlighted some of the distinctive emphases of Ian's preaching.

And he read something that Ian had written some years ago. Ian wrote these words in a banner of Truth magazine. We as Christians worship one God in three persons.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the chief and distinctive doctrine of the Christian faith. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It's a mysterious doctrine without any earthly pattern.

But it's a doctrine we must believe if we are to call ourselves Christians. It's a doctrine clearly taught in the Bible even if the word Trinity is never used.

[30 : 36] We serve one God. But the Father is God. And the Son is God. And the Holy Spirit is God. The early fathers of the church, like Athanasius of Alexandria, stood firmly on the truth of the Trinity.

This year marks the 1700th anniversary of the formulation of the Nicene Creed. The fundamental confession of the Christian faith. In my church, we'll be studying the Nicene Creed a little later this year.

Athanasius was the key figure in its formulation. We may be familiar with some of the language of the Nicene Creed by virtue of the Christmas carol, O come all ye faithful, where in verse 2, it quotes verbatim some of the language of the Creed.

The Apostles' Creed, O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

The Apostles' Creed, for as valuable as it is, does not definitively declare the divinity either of Jesus as the Son nor of the Holy Spirit.

[31 : 52] As such, a Mormon or a Jehovah's Witness can recite the Apostles' Creed. But not the Nicene Creed. For in unmistakable terms, the Nicene Creed declares, The Son is God, the Father is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.

They are not of a similar essence to God. They are the same. Later, the Nicene Creed declares, I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, he is to be worshipped and glorified. People often ask whether Christians worship the same God as Muslims or Jews.

The answer is an emphatic no. No. We believe in the divine trinity.

It is the cardinal doctrine of our faith. Both Jews and Muslims worship a God who we may describe as a monad. One God, one person, who alone, eternally has been alone, and as alone, has nothing else other than himself to love.

[33 : 14] For the Christian, because God is trinity, love stands central to the being of God. The Father has always loved the Son and the Spirit, for they are not him.

The Son has always loved the Father and the Spirit, for they are not him. And the Spirit has always loved the Father and the Son, for they are not him.

Such a strong inner Trinitarian love allows that infinite, eternal, and unchangeable love each person of the Trinity has for the other to spill over into all he's created.

It's the doctrine of the Trinity which allows the Apostle John to say, God is love. So to the answer of whether Christians worship the same God as Muslims, Jews, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, the answer is an emphatic no.

There is no common ground between the God of these religions. For their gods are monads, our God is divine Trinity, three in one.

[34 : 24] The God who offers himself to us in this blessing, this benediction, is the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the fullness of his Trinitarian glory.

The great church father, Gregory Nazianzus, beautifully said, No sooner do I conceive of the one, than I am illumined by the splendor of the three.

No sooner do I distinguish him, than I am carried back to the one. No sooner do I conceive of the one. No sooner do I conceive of the one. It's a beautiful mystery. Don't feel threatened by it.

Feel invited by it to participate, even as the overflow of each divine person's love for the other overflows into the life of the church and into the life of individual believers.

Now one of Ian Hamilton's famous phrases is that every doctrine of the Christian faith must be practical or it's of no use.

[35 : 32] Every doctrine of the Christian faith must be practical. The doctrine of the Trinity is the cornerstone of our faith. So it's not surprising it is the most practical of all the doctrines of Christianity.

What warrant do I have to believe that God loves me?

How do I know that God loves me? When I've failed him, when I've backslidden, when I've become spiritually cold, when I've sunk into pits of depression and anxiety where I cannot but hate myself, when I've fallen away from him, what assurance do I have that God loves me?

It is because by virtue of his being Trinity, God is love. It is more natural for him to love than it is for me to breathe.

Among many other warrants, this is the most powerful, the eternal, infinite, and unchangeable inner Trinitarian love between Father, Son, and Spirit which overflows into our daily experience as Christians.

[36 : 52] Shall such love now hate me who it has loved since before I was born? Shall he now hate me?

Shall such love cast me away now who it has held close to its heart since before the sun began to shine in the sky? Shall he?

If I am united to Christ, the Father cannot look upon me, yes, even the ugly, messy, sinful me, without seeing the glorious righteousness of his Son, and he loves me.

Furthermore, if the inner Trinitarian love of Father, Son, and Spirit has overflowed into my life, surely that love should overflow from my heart into the lives of others.

Why do we bear with one another, forgive one another, and comfort one another? We do it because the love of a Father for a Son and the Spirit has flooded our hearts with the love of God, a love which spills over into our love for others.

[38 : 07] And so the Apostle John writes, Beloved, if God so loved us, then we ought to love one another. You see, this wonderful doctrine of the Trinity, far from being an abstract theological doctrine, is the most practical of all Christian doctrines.

It serves as the foundation for all we are to believe concerning God and for our life together as Christians. When hands are raised at the end of the service and a blessing is pronounced, it's as if God himself is saying, Go, my children, live in love, even as the Father loves the Son and the Spirit and the Son loves the Father and the Spirit and the Spirit loves the Father and the Son.

So this blessing tells us, first of all, something about God. Secondly, it tells us something about salvation. Tells us about salvation.

This benediction is remarkable on many accounts but chief among them is what it tells us about the source and the means and the purpose of our salvation.

Here we have the Christian gospel in miniature. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

[39 : 33] The source of our salvation is to be found in the love of God the Father. The source of our salvation is to be found in the love of God the Father. God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son.

We wrongly attribute to God the Father the sternest of all the divine attributes. wrath, judgment, righteousness, etc. But time and again the Bible wants us to understand that the source of our salvation is to be found in the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable love of the Father.

God, to be understood as the Father, demonstrated his love for us in this. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God the Father is simply filled with love. In 1 John 3 verse 1, see what kind of love the Father hath lavished upon us that we should be called children of God and that is what we are.

It's a love with no beginning and no end, no start and no finish. A love for us as infinite as God himself is infinite.

[40 : 48] It can't be measured or calculated not even by our actions. It's an unconditional love. No human love is unconditional but God's love for us carries no condition.

If someone was to ask me this evening why I am a Christian, I could only answer I love him because he first loved me. And then if that someone was to explore with me why God loved me, all I can say is that God loves me not for any qualities I have, not for anything he can make out of me, but because it's in the nature of God the Father to love.

Many of us are fond of the Christian singer-songwriter Stuart Townend, how deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure.

if the love of God the Father is the source of our salvation as Christians, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is the means of our salvation.

How our becoming Christians came about. The mechanism of our salvation is the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians 8 verse 9, the apostle writes, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for our sakes he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich.

[42 : 23] When we think of Jesus we cannot but think of the grace of God toward us. Because of Jesus we did not receive what we deserved.

We received what we did not deserve. On account of our sins we deserved the condemnation of death but on the cross Jesus was punished for our sins and died to bear our condemnation.

On account of our sins we did not deserve the riches of the mercy and glory of God but on the cross Jesus earned them all for us and has freely gifted them to us.

Our salvation may have cost us nothing but it cost the glorious son of God his life blood shed on the cross for us. What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer that is no more for heaven now to give.

Because of Jesus Christ I who deserved to die eternally now by faith in him shall live eternally in the glory of my heavenly father.

[43 : 34] because of Jesus Christ I whose sins were once as crimson as blood now by faith wear the white robe of the righteousness of Christ.

Well if the love of God the father is the source of our salvation why we are Christians the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the how of our becoming salvation the means the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is the purpose of our becoming Christians the purpose in the upper room discourse in John between John 14 17 Jesus tells his disciples what will happen to them after his death and resurrection and he says I will ask the father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him you know him for he dwells within you and will be in you later Jesus says if anyone loves me he will keep my word and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him in other words the Holy

Spirit whom when we believe the father sends to live within us is the presence of the fullness of the triune God with us in and through the Holy Spirit we have fellowship with God the father God the son here then is the purpose of our salvation that we may know God and have fellowship and communion with him in his high priestly prayer in John 17 verse 3 Jesus describes what eternal life is this is eternal life he says that they know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent God when we read these words the fellowship of the Holy Spirit we are to think of how the Holy Spirit brings to our hearts the glorious knowledge of the fullness of God

Father Son and Holy Spirit that is why this is a benediction offering us Son Father and Spirit one God oh yes in this blessing God is offering us grace love and fellowship but more importantly he is offering us himself he is saying to us I will know you and you will know me this week I'll be with you through all the trials of this week know this my beloved child I take great pleasure in you and I will be with you always in the raising of hands at the end of the service God is reminding us of the purpose of our salvation that he himself shall be our inheritance our portion and our reward not what he gives us but he himself what does any lover want but the one he loves he doesn't want her money he doesn't want her gold he wants her the triune

God and the mysterious glory of his trinity says to us you can have my grace and you can have my mercy and you can have my fellowship but more than anything else I want to give you myself God goes with us into the week that lies ahead God in the fullness of all he is he goes with us and he says I'll never leave you no I'll never forsake you tells us about salvation well finally this benediction

tells us about prayer prayer one of my senior Christian mentors recently gave me a book to read it's entitled distinct communion and written by Dan Peters who some of you may know building upon the work of the

[48 : 16] English Puritan John Owen in his book communion with God which some of you may have read Dan suggests and proves from scripture and historic theology that we as Christians can enjoy distinct communion with each person of the Holy Trinity that depending upon our situations and circumstances we may pray either to Father to Son or to Holy Spirit Dan seeing something very important in this book which is something I want to work on in my private and public prayers in this book in this verse we read the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all the triune God is inviting us to enjoy his grace and his love and his fellowship but under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul is choosing his words very carefully he's attributing grace to the Lord

Jesus Christ he's attributing love to God the Father he's attributing fellowship to the Holy Spirit it's not as if we can't attribute love and fellowship to the Lord Jesus Christ it's not as if we can't attribute grace and fellowship to God the Father and it's not as if we can't attribute grace and love to the Holy Spirit but under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in this verse Paul attributes grace to the Lord Jesus Christ love to God the Father and fellowship to the Holy Spirit remember the love of God the Father is the source of our salvation the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is the means of our salvation and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is the purpose of our salvation surely the exactness of Paul's words together with the meaning for our salvation opens up a new horizon for how we can enjoy distinct communion with each person of the Trinity if I feel rejected and unloved if

I'm not sure whether God loves me or not I can address my prayers to God the Father because love comes from him if I feel guilty and ashamed not at all convinced of my right to eternal life I can address my prayers to God the Son because grace comes from him and if I feel distant from God and very much alone not at all sure of whether I'll ever feel close to him ever again I can address my prayers to God the Holy Spirit because fellowship comes from him if my problem concerns the source of salvation I can take it to God the Father in prayer if it concerns the means of salvation I can take it to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer if it concerns the purpose of the salvation I can take it to the

Holy Spirit in prayer it's not wrong to pray just to God for he is triune and he is one but for our benefit Paul allows us access into the contributions of each person of the Trinity to our salvation on a daily level why don't you give this a goal in your prayers I am not a fan of sci-fi but I know enough about it to have learned that in the future spacecraft!

will all have shields to defend themselves against the laser beams of enemy spacecraft! Now there's a sense in which when a minister raises his hands at the end of a service of worship and on God's behalf proclaims the benediction God is placing a shield of protection around us so that whatever may happen in the week ahead we shall not merely cope but we shall overcome the blessing is placing a shield of God's protection around us but ultimately as I said earlier the benediction is our glorious triune God's gracious offer to us not just of the virtues of his love and of his grace and of his fellowship but his offer of himself to us the

[53 : 04] Lord the Lord of heaven and earth the sovereign God on the throne he offers himself to us and he pours himself out upon us like a mighty waterfall baptizing us with his glorious and his gracious presence the only remaining question for us is this is this benediction for you is God's gracious offer of himself in the blessing enough for you to respond to him now in faith and trust praying Lord I can't do life by myself I need you will you forgive my sins even as I turn away from them will you grant me eternal life even as I commit myself to following you always will you do this now as even in a moment this minister raises his hands to offer you

God we're going to close as we sing together now in Psalm 130 from the Scottish Psalter page 421 Psalm 130 from page 421 the Scottish Psalter words we all know so well Lord from the depths to thee I cried my voice Lord do thou hear and to my supplications voice give an attentive ear Lord who shall stand if thou O Lord should mark iniquity but yet with thee forgivenesses that fear thou mayest be Psalm 130 the whole Psalm to God's praise verse!

verse! verse to thee I cried! My voice for to are here unto my supplications voice give love a tent in ear Lord who shall stand if thou O Lord to strive in equity!

But yet with thee forgivenesses that fear thou mayest be I wait for God my soul doth wait my hope is in his word more than may us are!

my soul wait the Lord! say for how they to watch night to take!
[57 : 18] to watch the morning night to see! Let Israel open the Lord Lord for with mercy be!
God see God to! will see and! see see us see us in our the earth completed and from all his in the in
the days he is that shall be he may the of the Christ the God the of the Holy Spirit be with you all
Amen who who who who who who who who who who who