

10TH MAY 2020

# FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



[www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk](http://www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk)

We gather to read God's Word and to be still in the Lord's presence on this Lord's Day. Last Friday we celebrated the 75th Victory in Europe Day where our church bell and the church bells in Ross-shire rang out in remembrance for all those who paid the ultimate price for our freedom and the peace that we cherish. As we worship at home today, we also give thanks for another victory on this Lord's Day. The victory of Christ over sin and the grave to bring all who believe in Him eternal life and perfect peace with God.

# PSALM 84: 1 - 4

How lovely is thy dwelling-place,  
O Lord of hosts, to me!  
The tabernacles of thy grace  
how pleasant, Lord, they be!

My thirsty soul longs veh'mently,  
yea faints, thy courts to see:  
My very heart and flesh cry out,  
O living God, for thee.

Behold, the sparrow findeth out  
an house wherein to rest;  
The swallow also for herself  
hath purchased a nest;

Ev'n thine own altars, where she safe  
her young ones forth may bring,  
O thou almighty Lord of hosts,  
who art my God and King.

## PRAYER

Lord God we give thanks for another  
opportunity  
to be still in your presence and to worship the  
Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
We give thanks for your word and praise you  
that  
it is a lamp for our feet, a light for our path.  
We give thanks today for the selfless and  
courageous  
service and sacrifice of those who brought  
peace to Europe,  
and for the good example they have given us.

We pray for nations still devastated by war,  
for their people and their leaders,  
and for those who suffer  
the effects or memories of past wars;  
for veterans,  
for those who mourn,  
and for all innocent victims  
whose lives have been shattered  
by the cruelty of others.

We give thanks for those  
who work for peace and liberty  
throughout the world,  
for the Armed Forces of the Crown,  
and for all who strive  
to bring an end to injustice and oppression.

We pray for the young people  
of our own day  
and for all who will shape  
the future of this nation,  
that they may be inspired  
by those who have gone before them  
to serve as they have been served.

So we pledge ourselves to serve you  
and all humankind, in the cause of peace,  
for the relief of want and suffering,  
and for the praise of your name.  
May almighty God, who has given us  
the will to undertake these things,  
bless us with the strength to perform them.  
Guide us by your Spirit;  
give us wisdom; give us courage;  
give us hope;  
and keep us faithful now and always.  
In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.

(Prayer: Rt Rev Colin Sinclair, Moderator of the  
General Assembly of the Church of Scotland)

# SCRIPTURE READING

## EPHESIANS 2: 1 - 10

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,  
2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,  
3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.  
4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,  
5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),  
6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,  
7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.  
8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,  
9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.  
10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

## LORD'S PRAYER

*Our Father, who 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  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.*

# SERMON


Some years ago, a society for the spread of atheism published a tract exposing the faults of many great Bible heroes. One after another, the leaflet showed the faults of Abraham, Jacob, Moses and David. Under the face of Abraham an inscription read that here was a coward who was willing to sacrifice the honour of his wife to save his own skin. It lists where the Bible admits this and then where the Bible calls him "the friend of God". "What kind of God," it asked, "would befriend so dishonourable a man?"

Under Jacob's picture was the Bible's description of him as a liar and a cheat, and also where God makes him the prince of his people. What does this say about the character of a God who would even call himself "the God of Jacob"?

Next came a reminder that Moses was a murderer, yet God picked Moses to bring his law into the world. David was worst of all. He seduced Bathsheba and then had her husband killed to cover it up. Yet this is "the man after God's own heart," the leaflet complained. What kind of God could find so much to praise in a man like this, they asked, and why would anyone serve him?

How do we, as Christians and followers of the Bible's God, answer this? Well, everything that the atheist tract said about Abraham, Jacob, Moses and David, is true. In fact, it is a wonderful truth! They were all scoundrels and breakers of God's law and sinners to the core. They were imperfect men but by faith they also looked to the perfect God for mercy and forgiveness.

John Newton knew as well that he was far from good and far from God. Remember he was the one who referred to himself as the wretch in the hymn. He knew of his sinfulness, but he also knew of the greater mercy and kindness of God when he penned the words, "Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a 'wretch' like me."



It is amazing to see the Bible's honesty as it does not gloss over the failings of all the heroes of the faith. There is no other religious book in the world that displays the human weakness and sins of its heroes the way the Bible does. The reason for this, quite simply, because the Bible reveals that we've not to put our confidence in man but to place our trust in God.

Also, we see that God wonderfully and compassionately saves people like these heroes of the faith where they become friends with God. That is why we can sing "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear." God "justifies the ungodly," Paul writes (Romans 4:5). And Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:32) So, to answer the atheist tract asking, "what kind of God is this?" He is the God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are save (Ephesians 2:4-5).

This glorious truth that God saves us in and despite our sin is the same truth that Paul teaches in the two words that begin Ephesians 2:4. In the first three verses of Ephesians 2, Paul has shown the truth that we all fall short of the glory of God. Paul admits this and then writes two words that change everything: "But God."

Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments, "These two words, in and of themselves, in a sense contain the whole of the gospel. The gospel tells of what God has done, God's intervention; it is something that comes entirely from outside us and displays to us that wondrous and astonishing work of God."

**But God.** These are the two greatest words in the Bible on which we must completely rest for salvation. When mankind was dead in sin, when you and I were lost and condemned and without hope, God sent His own Son to be the Lamb that was slain for us. Paul writes in Romans 5:8, "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; this is the Good News we all need to hear this day. Paul says, "You were dead in trespasses and sins... But God... made us alive together with Christ."

God sent his own Son to bear our sins on the cross, dying the death that our sins deserve, and in his resurrection giving us eternal life.

This is the Christian message, and Augustus Toplady puts its story on our lips as we come to know of our utter dependence on God for salvation:

*Not the labours of my hands can fulfill Thy law's demands  
Could my zeal no respite know, could my tears  
forever flow  
All for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and  
Thou alone.*

Is that the message that you have believed for your salvation? Have you confessed that you are dead in sin apart from God's saving grace, and that because of his mercy and love you are saved by the work of Christ alone? Can you sing the remaining words of the hymn:

*Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I  
cling.*

These two words, "**But God**", describe not merely how we are saved at first but also how we live our whole lives as believers. It is by God's action and intervention and prompting all through our lives, to which we respond in faith, that he leads us in the way of new life and ultimately brings us home to glory in heaven.

James Montgomery Boice comments, "May I put it quite simply? If you understand those two words, 'but God', they will save your soul. If you recall them daily and live by them, they will transform your life completely."

Those two words help us to realise that we may safely follow God's Word all the days of our lives. Let us, then, respond in faith to all that He does in and through our lives. Let us give all the glory to God, in whose sovereign grace we rest our hope. And let us live with the truth that the Psalmist wrote, "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Ps. 73:26).



## HYMN

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Save me from its guilt and power.

Not the labour of my hands  
Can fulfil Thy law's demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,  
All could never sin erase,  
Thou must save, and save by grace.

Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress,  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace:  
Foul, I to the fountain fly,  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

## PRAYER

○ Holy Father, you have freely given your Son,  
○ Divine Son, you have freely paid our debt,  
○ Eternal Spirit, you have freely bid us come,  
○ Triune God, you freely grace us with salvation.

We marvel that the finite can know the infinite,  
Here a little, afterwards in full-orbed truth;  
Now we know but a small portion of what  
we shall know,  
Here in part, there in perfection,  
Here a glimpse, there a glory.  
To enjoy thee is life eternal,  
And to enjoy is to know.  
Keep us in the freedom of experiencing  
your salvation continually,  
We pray in Jesus Name, Amen.

(Prayer from 'A collection of puritan prayers')

## BENEDICTION

*And now may the grace of the Lord  
Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the  
fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us  
all this day and forevermore, Amen.*



God of justice and self-sacrifice,  
healing and reconciliation,  
Prince of peace and victorious risen Saviour.  
We remember the events of VE day,  
and everything that day signified:  
the culmination of enormous sacrifices made by  
individuals,  
communities and nations,  
the formal conclusion of unspeakable sufferings  
inflicted by humanity upon humanity.  
gain and loss; victory and defeat; joy and sorrow.  
God who gave himself in sacrifice,  
we thank you for the sacrifice of those who gave  
their lives,  
their loved ones, their health or their freedom to  
strive  
for the cause of justice and to resist great evil.  
We pray for our armed forces of land, sea and air  
and ask for your blessing to be upon them and their  
families  
as they continue to serve Queen and country.  
Lord God our Father,  
we pledge ourselves to serve you and all  
humankind,  
in the cause of peace,  
for the relief of want and suffering,  
and for the praise of your name.  
Guide us by your Spirit;  
give us wisdom;  
give us courage;  
give us hope;  
and keep us faithful now and always.

Amen.