

Testimonies Only

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Date: 19 September 2015

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] piano plays softly Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen.

[4 : 29] welcome to friends and family of Michael and Caleb. Thank you so much for coming along today. Some of you travelled some distance, I'm sure, to be here, and I know they really appreciate you making the effort to share with them on this day of their baptism. Can I encourage you to stay behind at the end of our service? There are some refreshments prepared, so please do stay and catch up and chat and share and talk and have a cup of tea or coffee and so on, please.

Well, this baptism service is something that Christians have been doing for nearly 2,000 years. It may be the first time you've been to a baptism service, maybe something you're not quite sure about, but really what we're doing is exactly what the church has done throughout the world and throughout the ages when people have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, be baptised.

Christ. And in that sense, what we're doing unites us with Christians throughout time and really throughout the world, not just the Christians that are in the world today or those that have lived, but those are in heaven. And the wonderful thing is that it is Christ that unites us and Christ that makes us one, part of his body, part of his people. And our first hymn reflects something of that as we think about the saints, the Christians that are praising God and worshipping him even now.

Whenever we sing, we're joining with them in that eternal chorus of praise. 191, with harps and with vials. That's another musical instrument. With musical instruments, there stands a great throng, presence of Jesus, and sings this new song. So let's stand as we sing. 191.

God, O wondrous reuil, a artist, erasmus, or Bostakh. May we sing this new song. 191. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[6 : 25] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

I know. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. song.

Unto him who has loved us and washed us from sin. Unto him be the glory forever.

Amen. All these longs were sinners defiled in his sight.

Now raiding pure garments in praise may arise. Unto him who has loved us and washed us from sin.

[7 : 24] Unto him be the glory forever. Amen. Three gates of the heaven, the priest and the king. He has brought us and taught us this new song to sing.

Unto him who has loved us and washed us from sin. Unto him be the glory forever.

Amen. thou as the king of earth and surrendered to shame.

and love us till thanks for our sin. Unto him who has loved us and washed us from sin,
Unto him be the glory for ever. Amen.

And I'll give his praises, the voices shall ring, So that others believing this new song shall
sing, Unto him who has loved us and washed us from sin, Unto him be the glory for ever.
Amen.

[9 : 08] Please sit down. Amen. The reality that God is near us and that he is real means that we
can not only sing and rejoice in what he's done for us, but it means that we can come to
him in prayer and ask his help and blessing.

That's what we're going to do now. We're going to pray now. So let us pray. Well, Lord our
God, we thank you again for the truth that you are the God who loves us and that your
care for us is more than we can measure or understand or be able to put into words,
really, because you are the God whose love is a love like no others.

We live in a world where there is hatred in so many places, where there is a lack of love
and compassion and care. But we thank you that you are the God whose love is eternal
and everlasting.

Your love is powerful and real. It is more than just words. It's even more than just actions.
Your love is both active and involving and transforming and changing.

We thank you that it's your love that you have showed upon Caleb and Michael that brings
us here this afternoon. Your love, O Lord, which sent your Son, the Lord Jesus, for them
and for all who will trust in him.

[10 : 36] Your love that took you, Lord Jesus, from heaven to earth to take on the human nature so
that you are and always will be now both man and God.

And it was you that lived in this world, this difficult, painful, suffering world. You who
experienced all the emotions, all the struggles of life in every way, lived like us apart from
the fact that you never sinned, you never did anything wrong, which makes your death on
the cross all the more remarkable.

You were the only person who ever did not deserve to die, and yet you willingly went to
the cross and you purposefully died in our place that we might be forgiven our sins and
made right with God.

And it's because this truth is real and powerful in the lives of Caleb and Michael that
they're here to be baptized. It's because they know and trust you, Lord Jesus, and
because they know that you have forgiven them their sins and put your newness of life
within them that they want to show that by being baptized as you commanded.

We thank you that we can be here to share with them in this occasion, and we pray that
you would help us, help us if we've never known and experienced that love for ourselves,
that forgiveness and the peace that it brings and the joy that it brings and the contentment
and satisfaction it brings, because ultimately that's the reason we're alive.

[12 : 02] The reason that you give us life each day is that we might know you and enjoy you and
experience you and face death without fear, but the promise and the confidence that
because you, Lord Jesus, not only died and rose again and are alive forevermore, so we
shall live forevermore.

Lord, not in this world with all of its tarnishes and all of its stains and all of its
disappointments, but live in that place of perfect harmony and peace where we shall be
free from all that is sinful and evil that is with you.

So, Lord, be with us. Help us to understand and to hear what you're saying to us. Help us
to be encouraged if we're already Christians in our own faith and help, O Lord, those of us
who've never known what it is to trust you, to know you're speaking to us, and, Lord, that
we might have ears to hear.

So, Lord, be with us and bless particularly Caleb and Michael at this time take away all fear and anxiety from them before we ask it. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who indeed loves us and has and will wash us from our stains.

Amen. I want to read before we carry on just briefly an explanation of what we're doing. I think that's important. This isn't some strange ritual, as we might think.

[13 : 22] It is something which, as I said, Christians have always done throughout the ages. And in this service of baptism, converts to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ publicly confess that faith and bear witness to God's grace by which they've come to trust in their Saviour.

The Lord Jesus himself instructed his disciples to baptise the converts of their ministry. There's no magic that takes place in this event.

Salvation is not in the water. They're not being made Christians by being baptised. Salvation is God's gift to an undeserving sinner.

The Holy Spirit brings people to faith and repentance. And through the Holy Spirit's regenerating work, making new, people are brought into newness of life, eternal life, adopted into God's family, saved through the cross of Jesus Christ.

In baptism, a believer does at least three things. First, they confess that by nature they are a sinner and need to be washed and thoroughly cleansed from their sin.

[14 : 32] Secondly, they declare their faith in Christ and their desire and willingness to serve him obediently in this life, suffering as need be for Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, they commit themselves to the people of God, to worship and work in fellowship and in the discipline of Christ's church. As a church here, we share in this service by accepting and acknowledging a fellow member of the body of Christ as a believer, one with us.

We welcome them into our fellowship and pray for grace, that we might be a blessing to them and for grace to receive gladly, humbly, whatever gifts and ministry the Lord shall commit to them for us as well.

The essential thing when somebody is baptised in this way is that they declare that they are a follower of Jesus. And I'm going to ask, first of all, Michael, just to say a few words and to come up here with me now about being baptised.

Well done, Michael. This is something I've put off for a long time now. I should have been done when other people were here, like our Agnes, George Wood, just as my name is, tell me.

[15 : 55] And it was our Agnes who brought me to church at Roosevelt, and Peter Brumby was alive. And I got to know Peter pretty well.

Now, there's been some big gaps, especially through the 80s. I never came to church, and I should have been there. But on the holiday, I could have convinced us in 1994.

I saw 2,000 people praising God, and that really moved me to do that, all in one place. And I've been going back there ever since, and every year to worship God.

And that's it. Yes, everybody. Right.

Okay. Well, you've chosen for us to sing the hymn Amazing Grace. I have, yeah. So we're going to stand and sing that together now. Thanks, Michael. Well done. That's okay. That's number 487 in our hymn books.

[16 : 57] 487 Amazing Grace. Oh, God.

mod let Dominus Once was lost, but now I'm found. Was light, but now I see.

Was grace that told my heart to hear, and grace my fears within.

How precious did that grace appear, the hour I've blessed me be.

- Through many dangers, toils and snares, I am already come.
- [18 : 21] His grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
- The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures.
- He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.
- His death is blessed, and love shall fill, and mortal life shall sing.
- I shall possess within the field, a life of joy and peace.
- [19 : 31] The earth shall fill, His altites know, the sun for where to shine.
- And God who called me, will be forever mine.
- God who called me, and will be forever mine. When I've been left a thousand years, and shining out the sun, I know I've stayed to sing God's praise, and when I first began.
- I've been right. I've got a Bible to hand. I'm going to read now from it. But if you haven't, don't worry.
- Just please listen. I'm going to read from Psalm 51, which is part of the Old Testament. And then a little later on, in a few moments, we're going to think about what God has to say to us about what's happening today in this psalm.
- [20 : 59] Psalm 51. It's a psalm. It's written by King David, who was a follower of God and faith in him. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love.
- According to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
- For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak, and justified when you judge.
- Surely I was sinful from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts. You teach me wisdom in the inner place.
- Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness. Let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- [22 : 09] Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- Do not cast me from your presence, or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.
- Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Save me from blood guilt, O God. The God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
- O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it. You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
- The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. O God, you will not despise. In your good pleasure, make Zion prosper.
- [23 : 11] Build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you. Then bulls will be offered on your altar.
- David's great desire to see God blessing his people, blessing his church. So we're going to think about that in a moment or two. But first I'm going to ask Caleb. He's going to come and talk a little bit about how he's come to this place of being baptized.
- Thank you Caleb. Okay. So I'm going to apologize at the beginning, because I have a tendency to speak too fast.

And I'm going to try not to, but it could happen quite easily. So, okay. I was brought up in a Christian home. Both my parents and my sister are Christians, and have been for as long as I can remember, at least.

So my parents are somewhere in here. I don't know where they are. There they are. Well, one of them. And so I was obviously exposed to church throughout my life. So we went morning and evening for as long as I can remember, to this church mostly.

[24 : 20] But I wasn't a Christian because I went to church. When I was eight, we had the Whitby Gospel Music Convention, and Roger Carlswell was speaking. And I can't remember a huge amount, because I was quite young at the time.

But I do remember that I was challenged by something that Roger Carlswell said when he was speaking. And later on that day, when it was in the evening, I confessed my sins to God, and accepted Christ as my substitute.

I can't remember that much, but I do know that that was when I gave my life to Christ. Now, as I got older, I began to understand more about the doctrines outlined in the Scriptures, and more about the Gospel itself.

I found a camp which I attended in summer, Nock. A few people here have been to Nock. It's great if you haven't been. It was really a blessing on me. It was a week, a solid week, that you went and you did outdoor activities, and then in the mornings you'd have a little Bible studies, and in the evenings you'd have a main meeting, and it was a really fantastic time to grow as a Christian and just be encouraged by all the other young people and all the leaders there.

And it was just fantastic, really. And later on in my teens, I went on beach missions, which a lot of people here also go on. They're great, they're going on them as well. Which they're a fantastic opportunity to reach people on the beaches with the Gospel, and to learn to grow as a Christian.

[25 : 42] So, how did and how does being a Christian actually affect my day-to-day life? Well, I am by no means perfect, as I'm sure you're all aware, but there are some things which I found separating me from being really close friends with people at school.

I didn't swear, I didn't drink, I didn't make crude comments and jokes, all of which are quite common in secondary school, as I'm sure a lot of people are aware. But it becomes more apparent as I went through school that this was the case.

In hindsight, I understand more of why being a Christian changes you. There's a word we use called sanctification, and it means the process, basically means, the process of becoming more Christ-like or more holy.

You see, by being a Christian, I can see that all these things people are casually doing were in some way wrong, even from a young age. So, obviously, I don't follow my conscience of affection. I make a huge amount of mistakes and sin all the time, but I can see that I'm walking a different path to my peers and feel the need to stop sinning because I know it offends God.

So, what else is there in my life which I can testify is the grace of God working in my life? Well, I suppose a pretty big one is evangelism. I mentioned earlier that I started attending beach missions in my teens.

[26 : 59] And, well, I haven't really stopped since. A combination of the fantastic opportunity it presents in spreading the gospel on the beaches, the disciplines it encourages in quiet times and just discussing the gospel, the fellowship with other Christians, being on a team for a week, and how it helps to bring me closer to God for all reasons why beach missions are a fantastic thing for a Christian to do.

So, you know, go on beach missions. So, that's pretty much it, right? I've told you how I became a Christian and how it in turn affects my life. So, I finished? Well, not quite.

I don't think I've quite got across the scale of my faith in God, how it entirely changes my world view. You see, being a Christian isn't just a religion. It isn't just a pastime. It isn't even a way of life.

Being a Christian is entirely giving your life to Christ, accepting that you can't save yourself. You are sinful and in need of a saviour, and that only Christ can be that saviour. It's an absolute. You either are or you are not.

If I wasn't a Christian, my entire focus would be, well, you know, well, we like to think it's not, but really, in the end, we focus on ourselves and how we can make money, having a family, how we can be happy. But because I'm a Christian, it starts, in the work of sanctification, it starts to be focused more around Jesus and how I can serve him with my time on earth.

[28 : 18] Obviously, it's not entirely true. I do focus on myself a huge amount, but there you are. There you are. I have been saved by God's irresistible grace. My sins have been paid for by the atoning blood of Christ as he died on the cross, bearing the punishment I should receive.

So it's a fairly well-known Bible verse. You've probably heard it. John 3, 16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And similarly, in Ephesians 2, verses 8 to 9, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

No, it is not of works. In today's media and today's society, it's often Christianity is portrayed as a religion of doing good things, helping your neighbour, which is true. That's an outworking, but I'm not a Christian because I do good things.

Rather, I try to do good things because I'm a Christian. It's an important distinction to make. Because nothing we can ever do in any way, any of the good things, can contribute to our own salvation, to whether or not God accepts us into his family.

[29 : 31] So I've used this word sin quite a bit in my testimony so far. And well, just in case anyone here was wondering, I'm using that word to mean everything, basically everything wrong that I do.

Because God is perfect, even the smallest sin separates us from him. And nothing good that we do counts for that. So even any sin that I've done immediately separates me from God without Christ.

So, in Romans 3, 23, another fairly well-known one, most of the ones I've quoted are quite well-known, to be fair. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

And again, Romans 6, 23, For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. So when I say, my sins have been paid for, it means that Jesus, by dying on the cross, is being a substitute and being punished in my place.

He lived a perfect life that I couldn't live. So when he was punished and died, he was a perfect sacrifice. So my debt is paid. Now, I've got notes to read Ephesians 2. I'm going to find Ephesians 2, because I forgot to make notes.

[30 : 39] Okay. You've probably heard this before, you've been around the church. But if not, I'll try and read very clearly. And you, he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 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, among whom we all conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

And we were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace and his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. I read that earlier as well, but you know, there we are.

So, when I say... Sorry about that, mate. So, now I can live in the assurance that I am safe in Christ, that I can never be removed from him, and that when I die, or when Christ returns, I have an assurance of heaven.

And in that assurance, I can have confidence in the gospel. I can go to see events at university, we often do evangelistic events, to talk to people, and I can go on beach missions, and I can go on Christian dances, which are like open airs, and I can have an assurance that the gospel we are proclaiming is the truth, and nothing in this world can ever separate me from God.

[32 : 18] I'm going to finish by quickly reading from Romans 8, verses 31 to 39. It's also fairly well known. What then shall we say to these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but delivered him for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen. Who is even at the right hand of God?

Who also makes intercession for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written, for your sake we are killed all day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Yet, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[33 : 30] Okay, is that all? Well done, Caleb. Thank you very much. Thank you. Caleb's asked if we can sing a hymn which means a lot to him, and it's number 501.

Oh, how the grace of God amazes me. 501. We'll stand and sing together this great hymn. O how the grace of God amazes me, It used me from my thoughts, and set me free.

What may it happen so, Tosses will this much I know, Set me as now I show, And live as me.

My God has chosen me, The God of God, To sit beside my King In heaven's court.

Hear what my God has done, O the love that made him run, To lead his every sound, This has come brought.

[35 : 16] Not for my righteousness, For I have love, And for his mercy's sake, Jesus, God's Son, Suffered of Calvary stream, Crucified with peace was he, Great was his grace to live, This way were gone.

And when I think of love, At Calvary, Because its penalty, This trail of me, And this I wonder why, He the simplest one should die, Oh, once so far has died, Christ, Savior, be.

Now all my heart's desire Is to abide, In him my Savior did, In him to hide, My shield and love for he, Thou bring and protect me, From Satan's doubts I'll be, Safe at his side.

O Jesus, hear my prayer, Your grace impart, When evil thoughts arise, Where Satan's heart,
God, drive them all away, And my God from day to day, Keep me beneath the sway,
Take off my heart.

Come now, the Lord of me, Thy tears and voice, Thy me creation home, With joyful noise,
Praise him, the Lord of me, Holding me in sin's domain, And set me free again, Sing and rejoice.