

Monday Communion service

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[0 : 00] Would you turn with me now to the chapter we read in Ephesians, Ephesians chapter 6 and in particular to verse 5. And with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

Now those of you who were able to be out on Saturday evening will remember that we were looking at the second chapter, sorry, mine's kind of blank there.

Look at that passage in Hebrews in chapter 12, talking about the blood of sprinkling, or the sprinkled blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And one of the things that we were noting as we looked at that passage was that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is sprinkled on our conscience and it gives us awareness of peace with God.

Our consciences tell us that there is now no longer a gulf between ourselves and God. There is a state of peace between God's people and the Lord himself.

And we did touch on that note once or twice yesterday as well. And I wanted to direct your attention by way partly of thanksgiving to what the Apostle Paul here says in Ephesians chapter 6 about peace, but also to direct your attention by way of encouragement to the significance of what Paul says about being shod as the, of course, the authorised version has it, or being fitted with the gospel of peace on our feet.

[1 : 51] I thought that there was a good combination, to be honest, of both thanksgiving in these verses and also a word, as it were, for the future. And, of course, when I was led to this passage, I didn't know that as a congregation you would be facing the disappointment of your recent disappointment in your search for a minister.

So, perhaps here we have the hand of the Lord at work as well, directing you to something of significance for you. I think as the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is sprinkled on his people, it's the case that it speaks directly, as it were, almost emotionally to their consciences, and they have this sense of being free from guilt in God's sight.

And there's also another way in which there is this peace given to us, and that's, I think, to do with the way in which the Lord speaks to our minds when we are justified, when we commit ourselves to the Lord Jesus in trust and confidence, there's a way in which we, when we think about it, as we should think about it, we realise that that's the case because God's justice and his mercy are perfectly reconciled and bestowed equally, as it were, and perfectly on every living Christian believer.

God's justice has been satisfied there. The penalty for their sins has been paid. And also his perfect mercy. And we need to remember that mercy and a willingness to forgive are at the very heart of God's attributes.

That's highlighted even way back in the Old Testament prophets. And when we think on these things, I think of this twofold confidence that we have that indeed it is the case that God is at peace with us.

[3 : 49] We have it directly, as it were, to, if we can put it like this, the emotions of our consciences. And we also have it rationally when we reflect on how justice and mercy both are perfectly satisfied.

Words of the psalmist, truth met with mercy, righteousness and peace, kissed mutually in the words that we all know so well. But in particular, I want to look at how what Paul says here in verse 15 embodies those two aspects, really.

And with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. Now, perhaps just by way of introduction to that, I could trust your minds back to David and Goliath.

You remember the story, David volunteered to go out and fight Goliath. And the first thing that King Saul did was to suggest to offer him his full armour.

David tried it on and found that he didn't have any expertise or facility with it. He just didn't feel it was right. And he said, no, I'll go out armed with the weapons that I know.

[4 : 59] And he went out and he chose the stones from the book. And he went armed with his sling against Goliath. And the famous Israeli general, Moshe Dayan, who commanded the Israeli army in the first Arab-Israeli war back in the 1960s, he was a scholar as well as an exceptionally able general.

And he said that we need to remember that David had the perfect equipment and also the perfect strategy. And he said that David was victorious against Goliath.

First of all, because he set aside conventional armament. And then secondly, because he chose the dress and the weaponry suitable for battling his unique foe.

And that, I think, really sums up from the human perspective. Because it was the Lord who gave him the wisdom to do that. And who had given him the skill to throw that, to sling that stone with the unerring accuracy.

That really, I think, can be used as a symbolic of what Paul is driving at here. Indeed, in all the different aspects of what's been called the Christian's complete armour.

[6 : 21] And I think it's worthwhile just for the historical record, but if you really read the Old Testament record carefully, you'll notice that there's a change in the shape and in the tactics of armies after David became king.

If you read through carefully in the records in Samuel and Kings and Chronicles, and compare it with what happened before, you find that when they give the details of the armies of Israel, there's slingers, and there's archers, and there's more reference to cavalry.

And there's a very good indication, I think, that David was an even better strategist and tactician than Moshe Dayan was by a long, long shot.

You've got a change from heavily armoured, relatively immobile warfare to lightly armoured warfare of movement.

And I think that David probably is the man who changed the nature of warfare in the Middle East. And so therefore it's particularly relevant or helpful what Dayan said about David.

[7 : 32] Because that's really the situation which we are in. The Lord's people, still today, and we all experience, I think we all know about this, are so tempted to fight spiritual battles using largely human weaponry.

And Paul is saying, don't make that mistake. You're in a spiritual warfare and you need to fight spiritually. And if you really look carefully and reflect on what Paul says there from verses 10 through to the end of this chapter, we actually get an insight into the size and the mass ranks and indeed also to the tactics of the enemies of our soul.

And we need to grasp that. And I think, you know, there's a whole range of Christian experience which becomes clearer and we can understand it better if we bear that in mind.

And dare I say it, perhaps I'm going too far here, but when the Lord's people experience setbacks, yes, of course, the Lord is sovereign and he's supreme and he's working things out in accordance with his providences.

But sometimes, in his providence, he seems to give scope to the devil to interfere. Not to overthrow, but sometimes, as it were, if we can speak like this and we do so reverently, from our perspective, to delay the Lord's intentions almost.

[9 : 10] Now, we know, of course, that's not true. But that's how it seems. And it may well be that as a congregation, that's one dimension to what you're experiencing at the moment.

I'm not saying that one minister or another is in some way the instrument of the devil, but the devil does have power, a certain amount of power.

Not unlimited power, but he does have some power in the world of spiritual matters. But the important point that Paul is making here, I think, is that if we could see the size and if we could see the mass ranks and if we could understand something of the strategies and the tactics of our spiritual enemies, then we would flee to God's armory for new equipment and for new training of a spiritual nature in both cases.

Now, these verses here, they draw attention to the commander-in-chief of the enemy of all the Lord's people, Satan himself. And if you bear in mind that there's these somewhat cryptic expressions against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this evil world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms, difficult to actually put your fingers on

exactly what Paul is talking about there, but the actual word which talks about the word, the rulers of the spiritual realm, it's a word which we could translate, which literally actually says cosmocrats, against the cosmocrats.

And I think we get a wee insight into what that means if you go back to Daniel. And you remember that the archangel says to Daniel that he was on his way to tell Daniel about the Lord's acceptance of his prayers and something of his purposes, and he was delayed by the prince of Persia.

[11 : 08] And I think you can draw conclusions from that, that in some way or other, there are evil spirits who are given positions of responsibility over different groupings of men.

and as it were, they're the devil's brigade commanders or something like that as he seeks to interfere and to disrupt and in his perception to destroy the intentions of God.

We're up against Satan, we're up against Satan's cosmocrats, if we can use that word, I suppose if there was young people here they would probably latch on to that sort of expression, against Satan's lieutenants and his foot soldiers and we'd realise, we'd be horrified at what we're up against and we'd realise absolutely that it's the spiritual warfare the Lord's people are involved in and we do have to use spiritual weapons and we do need to train ourselves spiritually and to be trained spiritually.

So, Paul gives this picture of the Christian's complete armour and I want to, in particular, just to focus your thoughts this evening on the footwear, what we might call, but I think have been called by some commentators, the Christian's war boots, which is, perhaps surprisingly, the gospel of peace.

Well, I think the first question we need to ask is, what exactly is Paul envisaging, what exactly is he talking about here, when he talks about the Christian's footwear?

[12 : 48] Well, it's almost certain that when Paul uses that expression, he's thinking about the Roman legionaries, and it's difficult to get a quite right word, I mean, I think probably if we had the young people here, they'd give us a really accurate picture of what the Roman soldiers, the Roman legionaries, wore, but they wouldn't be quite sure whether to talk about boots, or whether to talk about sandals.

In actual fact, they were sort of halfway in between. They weren't, their feet weren't fully covered, they were partially covered, but they were strong, open-toed, leather boots, shall we say, with heavily nail-studded soles.

They were tied to the ankles and to the shins with leather straps. That's what Paul's thinking about. Now, I think the really important thing to bear in mind is that these were not running shoes.

They weren't running shoes at all. If you like, they were more like football boots. And those nails in the bottom were intended to give the feet traction, and to prevent the soldier sliding.

Now, that's very important. You know, we know that the Apostle to the Hebrews uses the illustration of the Olympic Games and running the race that's set before us, but that's not the imagery that Paul's using here.

[14 : 15] He's using the imagery of a Roman soldier, and the Roman legions did not run into battle. It was the various barbarian forces that tended to run into battle, like the Caledonians, and like peoples from all over the place.

When the Roman legions advanced towards the enemy, they advanced walking. And they got their strength and their ability to push the enemy back, partly at least from the fact of these boots that they were wearing.

And they were utterly unsuited for running. In fact, the historian Josephus, who wrote about the Jewish war when the Romans finally sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. And the Romans had entered Jerusalem, and the Jews fought ferociously, especially as the Roman troops got closer and closer to the temple.

The Roman forces recaptured the Tower of Antonius, which overlooked the temple, specially designed so that the Romans could keep an eye on what was happening in the temple precinct, and if there looked like anything like a revolt, they could put their troops in quickly.

[15 : 28] Well, they captured the Tower of Antonia, they had started to enter the temple precincts, and the Jews fought ferociously, but they were steadily being pushed back.

But then, in a sort of last-ditch effort, the Jews broke the Roman advance, and they started to push the Roman legionaries back. And the Roman legionaries actually really started to retreat quite dramatically quickly.

And up in the tower, beside the Roman commander, there was the senior, I suppose we could call him the senior sergeant major in the Roman army that was besieging and attacking Jerusalem. And he was so horrified at the Roman legionaries being pushed back at the last moment almost, that he asked permission to go and rally the troops. He went down, got to the front of the troops, rallied the troops, and the Romans started to advance again. And then, in the sort of final last throw, the Jews threw everything that they could. And it didn't work. And they started to retreat. And this Roman sergeant major, I suppose he was the senior centurion in the army or something like that, he led his Roman soldiers in a charge over the flat paving stones, flagstones, I suppose, of the temple precincts. [16:53] And he ran after them. And then he lost his footing and went head over heels. And the Jews realized what was happening, they quickly doubled back, killed him on the spot, and the Roman troops fell back for another couple of days, another couple of days before the Romans finally took the temple.

Now, that shows you the significance of this. These were shoes which were not intended for running. They were intended to give you good purchase. They were intended to give you traction. And if we look a bit more closely, we see there's this expression, your feet fitted.

Like the AV says, shod, doesn't it? Literally the word is, your feet bound under with the gospel of peace. It's difficult to say whether Paul's putting the emphasis really on the way in which the foot was protected like this, or whether it was on the protection itself. It doesn't really matter. It can mean both, I suppose. But Paul is saying that the readiness is to do with the way in which the Christian, with his feet shod, fitted with the gospel of peace, has his feet firmly planted on solid ground.

[18:17] and thus established, the enemy is not going to be able to push us back. Rather, the Christian, the Christian church is ready to advance when it's got feet fitted with the gospel of peace.

The spiritual lesson, I think, is clear. It's the gospel of peace. It's the peace that comes to us in and through the gospel, which makes us immovable in the spiritual battle.

It's a paradox, isn't it? There's so much in scripture that's paradoxical. You know, things which, when you first look at them, doesn't seem as if it can possibly be true, but then when you think about it, yes, it is true.

And it's the case here. Appropriating the gospel of peace, which comes by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ, makes us ready for war.

That's what Paul's saying. And I think, therefore, we have to think about what is this peace that Paul's talking about here, and using the picture of the Roman legionary war boot, to enable us to understand.

[19:45] Well, the first thing, well, there's two sorts of peace, I think, in the New Testament. There's peace with God, and there's the peace of God. Those are the two particular points which I want to look at.

Peace with God. Think, for example, about Romans, chapter 5, verse 1. Paul says there, therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And that verse tells us that, apart from Christ, no one has deep peace. And I think there's a very real way in which everyone, wherever in the world they live, whoever they are, they're aware that of this, what somebody called this cosmic discomfort, comfort, to some extent.

And we see it all around us, don't we, when we think about it. Some people, this sort of discomfort, this lack of peace, leads to a sort of general alienation.

And that partly explains why our society is so disruptive, and why parents so often have problems with their children, even children brought up under the sound of the gospel.

[21:05] There's liable to be this alienation from everyone, from the Lord's people, because basically people who have that do not, have not experienced the gospel, the gospel of peace, which Paul is talking about.

Sometimes, for others, it's a sort of raging awareness that their life is just not right, and it can be intensely frustrating for them, when they can't actually work out what it is.

Some people, as it were, pursue what they think is peace, peace with a sort of passive desperation. They're longing for it to come somehow, but they don't know how it's going to come.

Others in our society go absolutely wild, seeking peace and satisfaction and fulfilment, they'll call it different things. Many people hope it's going to come by getting more money and buying more things and enjoying more and more of the good things of life.

And sometimes they end up seeking it in drink. Sometimes, and I suppose this is particularly true with young people, perhaps these days they seek it in sex.

[22 : 20] Other people, it's knowledge that's the big thing. Have you ever thought about why it is that people spend vast amounts of time watching these quiz shows on television? Well, is it not a sort of search for knowledge?

Even the Guinness Book of Records, I suppose, is part of that. Other people, for other people, they seek peace by religious exploration. That's why people from Scotland become monks in Tibetan monasteries and all that sort of thing.

Go off to India to find truth or knowledge or seek it in Buddhism or whatever. But all that they find is temporary relief. And it seems that the peace that they're looking for just keeps on receding.

It's true, isn't it? You know, buy a new house and then it's not satisfying all that much after all or you buy a bigger and better and faster car or whatever it happens to be.

When people seek peace, real peace, it just seems to keep on receding. But when a person finds peace with God through Christ, it's inexpressibly wonderful.

[23 : 39] And it lasts. It doesn't perhaps last, you don't exist on cloud nine all your lives after you've been saved. Sometimes the Lord's people are quite worried when they don't have the ongoing sense of elation that they first experienced when they made their profession for the first time or perhaps when you sat at the Lord's table for the first time.

And you get people who do great things for the Lord Jesus and then something small intervenes in their life and they immediately say, God must be displeased with me.

Well, God has never promised that all your life you'll have the same sense of elation that you had when you were first converted. You won't find that anywhere in scripture.

Even those who lived closest to the Lord had their moments when they didn't feel they were at all close to him. Look at examples of even men who were closer to the Lord than you or I are going to be.

David, for example, fell into appalling sin and yet he knew the Lord more than anybody else in Israel up to that point. Ever thought about in the book of Psalms how often David says, my God?

[25 : 02] You don't find that in the Old Testament, little David. The first person who had a relationship with God which led him to be able to say, my God, and yet at times he wrote those Psalms which talked about perceived alienation from God.

But at the end of the day, knowing one's sins are forgiven and forgotten by God through Jesus Christ, that's the greatest knowledge that one can ever have. The solid awareness that one is reconciled to God is quite, quite sublime and I suppose in a way perhaps it's clearest that sublime relationship to people when they're just saved or when they realize they've been saved.

Sometimes you need to remember that not everybody had a Damascus Road experience like Paul. Others realized they were saved and had been saved for a long time. But the feeling is just the same.

I think I mentioned how you, was it yesterday or on Saturday, people being converted and saying to their friends, they heard the birds sing like I've never seen them before.

You know, one man is now a free church minister who is converted in London and he said he walked through I'm not sure it was Hyde Park or Regent's Park and that was exactly how he described how he felt.

[26 : 33] Other people talk about floating up to God, there's all sorts of things. But this awareness that there's nothing between me, the believer, and God, but peace, it's just quite marvelous.

And when we realize that, that's when our feet become for the first time shod and planted in this peace.

And we are able to stand firm. against the greatest assaults of the enemy. That's the first thing I think.

Peace with God leads his people to be able to stand firm when the devil makes his assaults. The second sort of peace is what we can call the peace of God.

The peace of God. Remember the Lord Jesus in the upper room on the final night of his earthly life. He said to his disciples and he says to all who follow him, peace I leave with you, my peace I give

you.

[27 : 47] It's in John chapter 14 verse 27. Jesus gives his disciples, he gives his people his personal peace. Now, what is the Lord Jesus talking about there?

Well, I don't think we can actually do full justice to what he gives there. But think about him in Matthew 8, asleep in the storm, in the boat. The disciples were absolutely in fear of their lives. And they go to him and they say, how can you sleep when we were about to drown? The Lord Jesus, that's the sort of peace he's talking about.

That's what unnerved Pilate when he was interrogating Jesus in John chapter 19. Pilate says, don't you know I have the power to slay you or to release you?

And Jesus says, you'd have no power at all, except it was given you from above. Jesus, if you like, if you can use that word which people use these days, he was quite unfazed by the seriousness of that interrogation.

[29 : 06] Jesus, that was Jesus' peace. It comes from above and it rises above all the difficulties around it.

now, I guess we haven't got peace to the extent that the Lord Jesus had it, but he gives his people at least some of it.

And that's why those who have no faith at all, oftentimes find themselves being very impressed by believers. You know, times of bereavement, times of tragedy, times of great difficulty, and they say things to you like, how can you be so calm about this?

Well, in that situation, it's because the believer has the peace of God, which Jesus has bestowed on all his people. I know sometimes we don't have as much of it as we'd like.

Sometimes some people, in terms of their characters and personality, perhaps are never going to be able to display it, and perhaps even enjoy it to the same degree. The full enjoyment of God has to wait till eternity.

[30 : 19] We have to remember that. But, every single believer has something of this peace, the peace of Jesus. And it's true individually, and it's true collectively for the Lord's people as well.

So, could I draw your attention to that also as a congregation? You're in a difficult situation, a long vacancy, you've had a setback.

But remember that you've got the peace of Jesus individually and collectively as well. Never forget it, and don't despair, and you'll weather the storm.

The actual word peace, as mentioned here, is a word which means completeness, or soundness, or welfare, or perhaps best of all, well-being.

The peace of God means well-being spiritually. And when you have the well-being of God himself, of the Lord Jesus himself, then you can see how it can be the case, that you'll be ready for whatever it is the Lord's calling you to do, or whatever it is the devil's throwing at you.

[31 : 46] And it's that sense of well-being, I think, which Paul is referring to in Philippians chapter 4, verse 7, where he says, the peace of God which transcends or which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Jesus' peace and the well-being which he gives to his people literally garrisons like a platoon of soldiers the lives of faithful believers.

That's what Jesus gives to his people. That's why his peace really is way beyond all understanding. It's something to pray for.

If you feel you haven't got it in the way that you should, then pray for it. The Lord sometimes requires us, as we all know, to pray for things which he's only too willing to give us.

And Paul is saying in these verses that no matter what the enemy throws at them, no matter what move the enemy of their souls makes, those who have peace with God and who have the peace of God hold their ground.

[33 : 05] And you know, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is intended to reinforce your awareness of these things.

peace of God's and rightly perceived it will and it does. And surely that's a great reason for giving thanks.

Thanksgiving night of a communion season. One of the things that you must give, you must, as it were, make explicit in your own minds as you give thanks, is the peace that you have as a believer with God and the peace of God which he's given you and which he increases and deepens your awareness of when you sit at the table and eat the bread and drink the wine in accordance with his

commands.

And I think when we think of these things, you can see why it's so important to actually give thanks after a communion season. That's by way of, as it were, leading up to and explaining at least some of the aspects of why after a communion, after sitting at the Lord's table, we should be involved in giving thanks.

But I want to say a word about the future. Remember that the devil never gives up. You know, the realisation of all the things which God gives to us at communion times, all the blessings which he bestows on us all the time, as it were, sounds like a death knell for the opposing cosmic powers, the enemies of the Lord Jesus and his people.

[34 : 59] But you know, the strange thing, perhaps it's not really a strange thing, but from our point of view it's a strange thing perhaps, but in the meantime, it also leads to the intensification of the opposition of the devil to the Lord's people.

You know, in my previous congregation, the communion seasons were, I think, always times of blessing. People actually still used that traditional term feast.

And it was a feast. They were together in each other's homes and they had fellowship with each other and they, as I looked on, I could see that they were moved spiritually, many of them.

And things would be marvelous for about a month. And then the devil would attack again. Rarely had more than a month before something would go wrong or some person would be under spiritual assault or there'd be some rift in the congregation.

It was almost invariable. The devil, perhaps not all the time, makes it as clear as that. It's often more subtle. He knows exactly how to strike.

[36 : 14] And I do wonder, perhaps, that in your own case as a congregation, he had a preemptive strike. All these things are possible.

We don't know all that much about the devil, but we know he goes about like a raging lion, seeking who he can devour, seeking to win away the elect, even if that was possible.

And even if it's not possible, he'll do as much damage as he can. And he redoubles his efforts when he sees blessing. Invariably.

And the Lord's people often give him opportunities. Sometimes it's because of neglect of their spiritual duties.

Sometimes it's possibly wee acts of rebellion, determined to do our own thing for a wee bit or to some extent. And that gives the opportunity to the devil.

[37 : 22] and it leads to the possibility that even the Lord's people can fall in battle. They can panic. They can bolt away from their spiritual duties.

And it's sometimes the case that our fellow Christian soldiers find us a burden instead of an encouragement. I think we need to think about these things and be aware that this is the sort of thing the devil uses all over the world.

All over the world. You know, he can use all sorts of things. I don't know you as a congregation, but it might have been the thought in the minds of some of you that someone was going to make a professionless communion, and they didn't.

And that can be a discouragement. The devil can use that. Sometimes it's the case that people are getting very close to the kingdom. They're almost in.

And you're thinking, perhaps this time, probably this time. And they don't, and they get further away. The devil uses that.

[38 : 41] What can we do in a situation like that? Well, we've got to reopen the lines of communication, and we've got to ask the Lord to give us more of his peace.

Can we just read very quickly what Paul says in the epistle to the Philippians? Philippians chapter 4, verses 6 and 7.

Well, we read from verse 4, Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice, let your gentleness be evident to all, the Lord is near. Then verse 6, Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. And can I say that we should treat that fairly explicitly.

Combine our thanksgiving for what he's given us as individuals and you as a congregation this last communion season with thinking about and praying about what you should be asking him to give you in the days that lie ahead.

[40 : 05] But remember above all, and this is the thought I really want to leave you with, be aware that the feet of the Lord's people are shod with the gospel of peace, the peace of the Lord Jesus.

And that's what makes you ready to advance, not just to stay where you are. I think that's possibly the ultimate explanation of the decline of the free church in the 20th century.

Too many congregations up and down the land were content to be garrisons and nothing more. The thought of advance never entered their minds, they were hanging on to what they had.

And that's the recipe for spiritual defeat. Times of vacancy even are times when congregations should think constructively together about how they can advance.

What avenues is the Lord opening before you? You don't have to wait for a minister. You've got your office fairs, you've got your fellowship, you can work out even now as you give thanks to God for the blessings that he's given you.

[41 : 28] You seek the Lord would guide you as to what you should do next. Not just in terms of calling a minister, but in terms of the work of the kingdom. If you've got your feet shod with the peace of Christ, you will hold firm and you will in fact be able to advance.

May it be the case that in the next days the whole of our church, indeed the whole of the land, here's what's happening in Aberdeen Free Church. May it be so. Let us pray.

The Lord our gracious God, we give thanks for all the blessings that you give us. We call to mind that when you bestow a blessing on us, we are expected to use it, to use it in your service for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as we give thanks, O Lord, for blessings received, we pray that we might be able to use them wherever we are, wherever the Lord calls us, in the great work of extending and building up the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We all have a responsibility, great commission is to all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to witness, as we are enabled, by word and by action to those around us.

[42 : 47] And we pray, Lord, that in the future, this will be a congregation of the people of Jesus, which does great things in his name and for his sake. O Lord, we acknowledge that you have given us blessings.

We acknowledge that you have given us all gifts. We pray that we might have the wisdom and discernment from yourself to enable us to use them as we should. We pray, Lord, for the salvation of those we know who are not yet saved.

We pray, Lord, for assurance for those who are not totally persuaded that they are the children of God. we pray, Lord, that you will build up and strengthen the faith of everyone who has faith.

And may it be the case that the numbers of those who are the people of the Lord Jesus Christ on the way to the heavenly city will be increased and that the glory that comes to the Lord Jesus Christ might increase and be redounding more and more.

Accept our thanks, Lord, for every good gift you give us and bless us with everlasting blessings in Christ. These things we ask in his name and for his sake. Amen.