

Romans 15:5-7

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[0 : 0 0] What are the big questions? What would you say in answer to that question? What are the big questions? Who am I? What's life all about? Is death the end? Should Scotland be an independent country?

Does that qualify as a big question? I think it does. If Scotland does become an independent country, will we lose match of the day on a Saturday night? For some people, believe it or not, that is a huge question. I hope you don't share that perspective, but there you go. I guess there isn't a right or wrong answer to that question. What are the big questions? There are not a single answer, certainly, to that question. Who you are, where you are, where you're coming from, will all influence your perspective and shape your answer to that question? What are the big questions?

But let me suggest three big questions that can be asked of our lives, they can be asked of our church, they can be asked of our nation. Three questions. Where are we? Where do we need to be? And how do we get there? Those are three very big questions that, as I say, can be posed in different contexts, in our own lives, in our church, and indeed beyond. Just being willing to pose the questions is a good start, and if we can answer them and act upon the answers that we discover, then that is real progress.

The benediction or blessing that we're going to consider this morning, that we find in Romans chapter 15 and verses 5 and 6, can be best understood in the context of these three questions posed with reference to the church in Rome that Paul is writing to. The blessing, the benediction, rich in doctrinal truth and practical exhortation as a stand-alone text becomes richer and of even greater practical use when it is considered in the light of the bigger picture that Paul is addressing. Now, that's something I discovered as I started to think about this benediction, and I hope that as I share something of what's been discovered, you will echo my thoughts on this. So, let's proceed asking and answering these three questions of the church in Rome in a manner that would help us gain a better understanding of the benediction, the blessing, in verses 5 and 6 of chapter 15. And we'll pose the questions as if Paul were the one opposing and answering them, which in a sense is what is actually happening in what we have here in these chapters. Where are we? Where do we need to be? How do we get there? These questions directed, in a sense, to the fellowship in Rome, the church in Rome. And as we pose the questions and answer the questions, I hope it will be clear how they also apply to us. First of all, then, where are we?

What does Paul see in Rome that concerns him and even grieves him? Well, what he sees in Rome is a divided church, or perhaps more accurately and certainly more charitably, a church threatened by division. I think it would be unfair to say that it was a divided church, but certainly there were things going on that were threatening the unity of the church in Rome. The issue or reality that has provoked this division or threat of division is the presence in the church of two groups identified by Paul as the strong and the weak. Now, it's important to realize here that Paul is using what we might call shorthand to simplify matters. I don't think it's the case that Paul is suggesting that in the church in Rome, every single individual could be clearly identified as either being in one group, the strong, or in another group, the weak. It was, I'm sure, a little bit more complicated than that. But for the purposes of what he is dealing with, it is helpful for him to identify what he is identifying as these two groups, the strong and the weak. There is, for Paul, clearly a real issue. And the issue is that those who were more mature in the faith, who enjoyed a greater measure of understanding, who are described by Paul as the strong, were in conflict with the less mature believers who were at the lower end of a steep learning curve in the Christian life. And they're described by Paul as the weak. Now, this reality that there were within the church those who were strong and those who were weak was not, and it need not have been in and of itself a problem. In fact, that's a perfectly natural state of affairs in any church, that there would be those who are strong in the faith and those who are weak in the faith. That isn't a problem. The problem isn't that there were those in these categories within the church. The problem was that as a result of this, one or two issues had arisen that was threatening the unity and the harmony of the church. Now, in chapter 14, two of these matters are mentioned by Paul. We'll just pick on one of them for reasons of time because we really want to move on, not only having a diagnosis of the problem, but moving on to what needed to be done and what, indeed, the final outcome that Paul desired was. But if we just pick on one of the problems, one of the problems had to do with the matter of eating clean or unclean food, so described by some.

[6 : 21] Now, for the strong, and Paul considers himself one of the strong in chapter 15 and verse 1, he identifies himself with that group, we who are strong. He considered himself, quite rightly, as somebody who was mature in the faith, who had understanding in these matters.

Now, for the strong, there was no problem with eating any food. Again, this is something that Paul states explicitly there in verse 14 of chapter 14. As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. You can't get clearer than that. Paul, as one with greater understanding, as one of the strong, was clear that there really wasn't a problem with eating any food. However, for the weak, there were problems. And I imagine that there were possibly a couple of problems for the weak that were creating these issues of conscience for them. For some, the matter would have been the Old Testament dietary restrictions that we find in the law given through Moses concerning certain foods that were not to be eaten, that were described as unclean.

And some of the new believers have an understanding that these restrictions still applied. Paul knew that that wasn't the case, but those who were new in the faith, understandably, weren't clear on that, and they thought, well, no, this is still something we need to respect, and so we're not going to eat these unclean foods. It's possible that another matter that was reading its troublesome head would have been a matter that's dealt with by Paul on other occasions concerning meat that had been offered to idols. In the context of pagan worship, meat was offered to idols as part of a sacrifice, and then, having served that purpose, it could be sold for human consumption. And some people thought, well, should we really be eating that meat? It's been polluted by its connection with paganism. And no, we really don't want to eat that meat. Paul says, I'll eat anything. It's not a problem. But for some, for those described as the weak, this was possibly another issue that was concerning them. The weak, as a result of their more limited understanding, felt that they could not in good conscience eat such food. Now, so far, there's not a problem. Paul does not consider the difference of opinion between these groups something of huge significance. Notice how he describes himself in verse 5 of chapter 14.

Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special does so to the Lord. He who eats meat eats to the Lord, and he gives thanks to God. And he who abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. He's saying it's really not a problem. It's not a problem that in the church there are those who think one way on this matter and some who think another way. It's not a big problem. The problem arises in how both groups are responding to their differing points of view, how they respond to each other as a result of holding these different points of view. And Paul sees and identifies the harmful consequences of these differing points of view. Let's just notice very fleetingly some of the harmful consequences. You have, first of all, broken or certainly threatened relationships between the believers. In chapter 14 and verse 3, the man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does. He's not actually saying that this is happening, but it's implied. And you can imagine how they threaten relationships. If some are looking down on others, if others are condemning others within the fellowship, the relationships that make up this fellowship are being threatened. These problems are also serving as a barrier to growth in maturity. In verse 13 of chapter 14, and particularly there in the second half of the verse, instead make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Verse 21, it is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. So the attitudes and the behavior of some were serving or proving to be an obstacle to others.

[10 : 59] You have a fellowship that is distracted from what it is meant to be dedicated to. In verse 17, what does Paul say as he takes a step back and says, look, let's look at the big picture. He says, for the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. He says, look, let's look at the big picture. We're distracted by these matters that are secondary. This is not what the kingdom of God is about. But the fellowship is distracted because of these differences of opinion or how they're being dealt with, certainly. The work itself is in danger of, we might even say, collapse. In verse 20, at the beginning of the verse, what does Paul say?

Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. Now, he's maybe there thinking of an individual who would be destroyed or maybe he's looking at the bigger picture of the fellowship itself being threatened because of this issue. So all of these harmful consequences Paul is seeing and he's concerned about, but what is the ultimate and most grievous consequence of the division? All of these things are very concerning, but there's something greater that Paul is concerned about. And that greater concern of Paul, that more grievous consequence is that in Rome you now have a church that is failing to glorify God in the manner that God intends. For that, we turn to the benediction. We're going to go to the benediction very quickly and then retreat and then get back to it in due course. But notice what Paul expresses as his great desire for the believers in Rome. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus. Why?

So that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is saying this isn't happening now. It's not happening as it ought to. It is not happening as God intends.

This is what we want to happen among the believers in Rome, but it's not happening because of these problems. This is the most serious matter that Paul is identifying as he responds to his own question.

Well, where are we as a church in Rome? Where are you, Rome? Well, this is where you are. You're not glorifying God in unity and harmony as you ought. This is the big problem. Well, that was the big problem for Rome. Well, what about us? What prevents us from glorifying God in unity? What niggling or seemingly trivial matters have become obstacles to the fulfilling of our God-given calling to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever? We need to think about that and say, well, what is it for us that is proving an obstacle to glorifying God in harmony, united as we are being called to do?

[13 : 58] So, I think that answers the first question, where are we or where was the church in Rome? But then the second question is, where do we need to be? Or applying it to the passage in front of us, where do the church in Rome need to be? We can answer this one very swiftly. The answer is there, in a nutshell, in the benediction that we've just read. So that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There in verse 6 of chapter 15. Where they need to be is they need to be a church that is united in the praise and service of God. A church that is united in its focus on God as the one worthy of wholehearted and undiluted worship. This is where the church in Rome needed to be. And of course, this is where every church needs to be. But this requires unity. It requires a healing of the divisions, or in any case, an understanding of how we can live together in harmony in the midst of our differences on matters that are not of the essence of the faith. And we'll come back to that in a moment.

But in answer to the question, the second question, where do we need to be? Where did the church in Rome need to be? It needed to be united in glorifying God. That is what Paul desires for them, and that finds expression in the benediction. Which takes us to the third question, where we'll have to spend a little bit more time. The question that is being posed, or this third question, is how do we get there?

How was the church in Rome to get from where they were to where they needed to be? Where were they? They were distracted by these secondary matters. There were relationships that were being threatened.

They weren't united. They weren't in harmony. They weren't glorifying God as they were called to do. That's where they are. Where do they need to be? Well, they need to be in that place where in harmony they are united in the praise and service of God. How do they get from A to B? How do they get from where they are to where they need to be? What does Paul do to help the believers in Rome get there?

Well, in the first six verses of chapter 15, we can identify four things that Paul does, culminating in the blessing or the benediction in verses 5 and 6. We need to find and identify each of these four things in turn. And when we reach the fourth, the benediction, pause and consider a little more carefully the benediction, but in the context of all that we will have already discovered.

[16 : 51] So what's the first thing that Paul does to help the Roman Christians get from where they are to where they need to be? Well, the first thing that he does is that he tells them what they need to do.

He tells them what they need to do. Now, just very briefly as an aside, before actually identifying what he tells them to do, notice what he doesn't tell them to do. He doesn't tell them that they need to agree with each other on all of these matters. At no point does he say, look, you've really got to agree on these matters. You've got all these different opinions and that's just not working.

You've got to agree with each other. At no point does he tell them that they need to agree with each other. Paul accepts, he recognizes that the differences of opinion that exist are in some sense inevitable and they'll not be easily or quickly resolved. It's not that it wouldn't be a healthy thing in due course for there to be a measure of resolution, but that's not going to happen quickly. And Paul realizes that.

Differing points of view on secondary matters held in good conscience are inevitable in any fellowship. And for the avoidance of doubt, recognizing that is not a charter for chaos. It's not a doctrinal free-for-all that would result where everybody can believe what they please. No, the matters that Paul was dealing with were secondary matters. We've already noticed what he said in verse 17 of chapter 14. The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking. Saying this isn't the heart of the matter. It's a secondary matter. Hence, there is the space, the scope for differences of opinion on these matters.

That's what they don't need to do. They don't need to agree with each other. But let's return to what they do need to do. What is it that they do need to do? Well, the answer to that is in chapter 15, in the first two verses, and then also in verse 7. The first thing that Paul says they need to do is that they need to bear with each other. Verse 15 and verse 1. Sorry, chapter 15 and verse 1.

[19 : 03] We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak. Now, in fairness here, he is directing this exhortation particularly to the strong. He makes that very explicit. We'll see in due course that he has something to say to everybody. But at this point, he is particularly addressing those who are strong. We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak. That's the first thing that they need to do, or certainly some of them need to do. Now, to understand what Paul is saying here, that language of bear with, we could maybe understand it as being, well, you've got to put up with the weak. I know it's tiresome. I know it's irritating. I know it's such a drag, really, to have to put up with these weak, brethren, but you've just got to. You've got to bear with them.

But that is not what Paul is saying. Paul is using a language or using a word that speaks of helping the weak, of carrying the weak. You know, they have these burdens that they carry. Because of their lack of understanding, well, you've got to help them gently and lovingly and carefully help them carry those burdens. And then in due course, they will come to a greater understanding. But in the meantime, bear with them. Bear them up. Carry them. Treat them gently and lovingly as your brothers and sisters. This is what the strong particularly need to do. But then also, all of them, the strong and the weak have to have an underlying concern for the good of the other over and above the good of self. There in that same verse, and moving into verse 2, we who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. You might say, well, here he's still speaking to the strong. But then in verse 2, he says, each of us should please his neighbor for his good to build him up. It's debatable whether he's still speaking to the strong or whether he's broadening it. And he's saying, each of us, and we can take that at face value, I think, and say, well, everybody, each of us should have this as a governing principle of behavior that we seek to please our neighbor for his good to build him up and not to please ourselves. This is a distinctive

Christian attitude. That is what Christians are to be like, seeking the good of the other rather than seeking our own. Notice that that pleasing the other is also governed or constrained by the ultimate goal that what we are seeking is his or her good to build him or her up. So it's not a blanket, you know, please the other regardless of whether it will do them good or not. No, please the other in the measure that it will be for their spiritual good and welfare. That is the mindset that you must have.

So this is what they need to do. They need to bear with one another. They need to be ensuring that they're not pleasing themselves but pleasing the other. And then in verse 7, we have another charge given to all the believers to accept one another. Accept one another then, just as Christ accepted you.

We'll come to that second part in a moment. But the challenge is simply this, accept one another. Accept one another. Notice again, Paul doesn't say agree with one another, but he does say accept one another. So this is what they need to do. And that's the first thing Paul does for them. He says, look, believers in Rome, this is what you need to do to get over this problem that is creating the difficulties that you're facing and not allowing you to glorify God as you want.

[22 : 44] What's the second thing that Paul does? Remember, we're looking at what Paul is doing to help them get from where they are to where they need to be. And the second thing that Paul does is that he points them to Jesus. He points them to Jesus as both their model and motive, as both their example and motivation. It's not easy to do what Paul tells them to do. It's not easy for the strong to bear with the weak. It's not easy to accept one another. It's not easy not to please oneself and to seek to please the other. That's not easy. It's difficult. And in order to help them, Paul points them to Jesus.

He underpins or accompanies his counsel with this directing of their gaze to Jesus. And notice that Jesus is to serve as both their model, both their example, and their motive, their motivation.

Notice in verse 3, where he first directs their gaze in this direction, for even Christ did not please himself. He said, you ought not to please yourselves. And then he says, look at Jesus. He didn't please himself. You've got to be like him. He didn't please himself.

Jesus bore the insults of those who hated God. Paul quotes from Psalm 69 that we've sung already this morning. This is a messianic psalm, very clearly and explicitly messianic, and particularly pointing to the passion of Christ, to his death on Calvary, often quoted in that context in the New Testament. And when we realize that Paul is quoting from this psalm, not only the words of the verse that he chooses to employ, but when we think of the broader picture of the whole psalm where that verse is to be found, we're able to grasp the significance of this quote. Jesus did not please himself, but sought to please or secure the good of others to the extent of giving his own life for others. In this, he is our model as we, in lesser measure, certainly in far great, far lesser measure, seek the good of others. But he's not just our model. He's also our motive as consideration.

Pondering on such loving sacrifice for us, for me, stimulates us to sacrificial service on behalf of others. You see those two elements. Jesus is an example. That's what he did. He didn't please himself.

[25 : 10] Well, if you're his disciples, then you ought not to please yourself. But also, just think about what he's done for you. And may that serve as a motivation to you, that you would not seek to please yourself, but seek the good of others. And there's similar logic, even more concisely, in verse 7.

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you. Just as Christ accepted you. For that just as, that little adverb or conjunction or whatever it's called, it depends how you translate it, what you call it, but that little phrase can be understood, and I think ought to be understood, as both in the same manner. So, just as, or accept one another in the same manner that Christ accepted you. That would be stressing Christ as our example. Think about how he accepted you. Well, that's how you ought to accept others. But also, accept one another because Christ accepted you. In the light of the fact that Christ has accepted you, how can you do anything other than accept your brothers and sisters who he has also accepted? So, again, we have this idea or this picture being painted of Christ as our model, our example, but also our motive and motivation. We have hinging on this tiny phrase, just as, both a huge and radical ask, except in the same manner as Christ accepted you, but also a huge and radical motivation, except one another because Christ has accepted you. But there's a third thing that Paul does.

Remember what we're doing here. We're trying to identify how Paul helps the Romans get from where they are in disharmony, not glorifying God, united, to glorifying God in unity and harmony, and he's wanting to get them there. And he's told them what they need to do. He's pointed them to Christ as their model and motive. But then what he does is he reminds them of a God-given resource to help them. What is this God-given resource that is there to help the believers in Rome? Well, it's the Scriptures. Because then in verse 3, what do we find? For even Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me. But Paul doesn't stop there. He then continues, for everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through an endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Now, the immediate reason that Paul has for making reference to the Scriptures is that he is able to substantiate what he has just said by referring to Jesus. Or he can substantiate what he said about

Jesus from the Scriptures. Where do we discover who Jesus is in order that he might serve as our model and our motive? Well, we find that in the Scriptures. But having mentioned Scripture, Paul goes on to say, he goes on to say, more concerning their usefulness to us as a resource. He says that everything that was written, clearly they are not speaking about every literature that had ever been penned, but everything in the Scriptures, everything that's been written in the Scriptures, at the point of writing, he would have had in mind, presumably, the Old Testament, but in the light of what we know of what the New Testament is described as in the New Testament, we can include the New Testament. Everything that was written, serves to instruct, to build up the believer in godly living.

And also, he says, that the Scriptures serve as a living source of endurance and encouragement that in turn grants us hope. Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. If the believers in Rome are to bear with one another, if they're to seek the good of the other, if they're to accept one another, they will need the teaching, the instruction of Scripture, they'll need the endurance and the encouragement provided by Scripture. And Paul says, you've got the resource that you need.

[29 : 27] You know, you have what you need in order to endure. You have what you need in order to be encouraged in circumstances that might appear very discouraging, or indeed are discouraging. So that's the third thing that Paul does. But then finally, or the fourth thing that he does is the benediction. He blesses them. May the God who gives you endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The benediction or blessing is what we could call a spiritual combo or two-in-one. It serves as both an expression of Paul's deep desire for the believers. This is what he desires for them. But it also serves as a prayer to God on their behalf.

And as we look at the benediction, and as we see how it ties in with the big picture, and crucially, how it balances a recognition of both the absolute need for the grace of God to secure the outcome that is sought, and the onus laid on the believers to obediently lay hold of the resources God graciously provides for them. In the benediction, you have these two elements very clearly presented and seen, especially in the light of what has come before. So let's just look at the benediction. And let's look at it by identifying three aspects of it, very briefly, one by one.

The description of God, the gift of God, and the purpose of God. First of all, we have the description of God. Now, in the NIV, they choose to paraphrase in a way that is helpful up to a point in the beginning of the benediction. What Paul literally says at the beginning of the benediction is, may the God of endurance and encouragement. May the God of endurance and encouragement. Now, that has been interpreted, I think rightly so, as speaking of the God who gives endurance and encouragement. But what Paul actually says is, may the God of endurance and encouragement. What we have is a description of God with a clear implication of what He does as such a God. He is the God who gives endurance and encouragement. He is the fount and source of all endurance and encouragement in the Christian life as we struggle to accept one another just as Christ accepted us. But this is what I want you to be very clear on. I want to try and be as clear on as I can. Are we, as believers, passive in receiving this spiritual resource from God? God is the God of endurance and encouragement. God gives endurance.

God gives encouragement. He is the source of endurance and encouragement. Do we just wait? Do the believers in Rome say, well, isn't it wonderful that Paul is praying this on our behalf? Boy, do we need endurance. Boy, do we need encouragement. But it all is well because Paul is praying for us and God is going to give it to us and we will wait to receive it. Is that what they are to do? Well, what has Paul just said? What has he just said concerning where endurance and encouragement are to be found? Well, you know what he's just said. He's just said that they are to be found, they are to be secured from the Scriptures. So it is God who gives generously and sovereignly, but He does so by means of the Scriptures, that as believers that as believers we need to study, meditate on, and obey. God gives, but He gives through the Scriptures. And so I would say to you, if you are conscious that in the midst of difficulties and hassles and problems, be it in church or indeed beyond church, you don't have patience, you don't have endurance. Well, you can have it. It's there for you. God has given you the Scriptures and in the

Scriptures, and as you study them and as you submit to them, you will receive endurance and patience. Are you discouraged? You need not be discouraged. There is encouragement for you in the Scriptures. Yes, God gives endurance. He gives encouragement. But how does He do so? Through the Scriptures.

[33 : 51] They're there for you. We all have this resource in our hands. That's a description of God. But then the benediction also has what we could call the gift of God. May the God of endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves. This is what Paul desires for the believers, a spirit of unity.

That's what they need. This is what Paul asks God to give them. It is something that God and only God can give. But again, we ask the question, how will they be given this spirit of unity? Or in what circumstances will they be given this spirit of unity? Well, what does Paul say? May God give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus. As you follow Christ Jesus. And again, this is exactly what Paul has just been explaining. Christ is to be their model and motive. God will give them unity in the measure that they follow Christ.

If they refuse to follow Christ, then they should not foolishly expect to be given a spirit of unity. Yes, God is the one who gives it, but he gives it in the measure that they are following Christ.

And as they follow Christ, so they will discover that God grants them this spirit of unity that they so much need. What does following Christ look like? Well, in the context of this passage, it looks like bearing with one another, not pleasing oneself, seeking the good of the other, and accepting one another.

But then the third and final thing of the benediction, the purpose of God. There in verse 6, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[35 : 42] God's purpose is his own glory, that he would be glorified by his people. This, of course, brings us to where the church in Rome needs to be. That's what we identified a few moments ago, where they needed to be, where they needed to get to. They needed to get to that place where, in unity and harmony, they were glorifying God.

This is God's purpose for them. This is where they need to get. And Paul has identified the steps that they need to take in order to get there. And of course, when we bring this to ourselves, this is where we need to be as God's people. This is the place that we have been called to, a place where united and in harmony, we glorify God, we praise God, we serve God. This is what we need to do.

We're given instructions. Our circumstances might be different, but the Bible has plenty instructions as to what we need to do in order to secure unity one with another. Well, we need to listen to those instructions. We need to obey those instructions. But then, of course, we have Jesus as our model and as our motive. And the scriptures say, look, it's difficult. I know it's difficult.

God says it's difficult. But look to Jesus. Look to Jesus. Follow his example. Be motivated by what he has done for you. And we have the scriptures. We have the Bible to instruct us, to grant us patience and endurance and encouragement. We have a God of endurance and encouragement, able and willing to grant us a spirit of unity among ourselves. Well, let's go back to where we began. Three big questions.

Three big questions that we can pose to ourselves as we would examine our own lives, and we can usefully do that. In the context of the passage, the primary concern is corporate. It's the health and well-being of the church, in this case, the church in Rome, but by extension, our congregation here also. Three questions. Where are we? Where do we need to be? And how do we get there? And that final question, wonderfully and helpfully and clearly given to us by Paul in the instructions and in the teaching that he gave to the church in Rome. Well, let us be up and doing. Let us acknowledge where we are. Let us desire to be where we ought to be, but let's go there. Let's get there as we make use and lay hold of the resources that God has given us. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word. We thank you for the Bible. We thank you that all that has been written has been written for our instruction to teach us, to help us, to build us up in the faith. We thank you that your word is a living word that grants patience and endurance and encouragement and in turn hope that as we face the difficulties that we face, as we deal with the problems that we have one with another, we can know that endurance and that encouragement that would keep us going forward that we might arrive at that destination, that wonderful destination of a people united in the glory of God, united in the praise of God, united in the service of God. Lord, take us by the hand and lead us to where we need to be in these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's sing again. Let's sing again from this same psalm that Paul quotes in the passage that we've been giving some thought to this morning in Psalm 69. I mentioned that it is a psalm that is very explicitly messianic, and not only messianic, but particularly focused on the passion of Christ, His death in our place. And the verses that we're going to sing now, as you sing them, you will see how very clearly a reference is made to the cross. Indeed, these verses are quoted, I think it's in John's Gospel, identifying them as pointing forward to

[39 : 54] Jesus at Calvary. Psalm 69 from verse 16 to verse 21 in the Scottish Psalter. It's on page 307.

Page 307, Psalm 69 from verse 16 through to verse 21. Verse 21 very clearly and explicitly describes for us part of the scene there as Jesus died. They also bitter gall did give unto me for my meat. They gave me vinegar to drink, whenas my thirst was great. Psalm 69 from verse 16 to 21 will sing to the tune, Colesville and will stand to sing.

Thank you. Where will you? Jesus ■■■ff liver can forget even below in the closing in the breath of Michael Christians to join.

The crowd is blaming the ■■■ed ones whoish their stern in their hands. As the PSS only will be lesser than the one, but the only black people whoish theirE ■■■ is the same. Everyone shallily end up a bit of pressing. They will do more and less My servant hide thy face, I'm troubled to not end.

From here my soul had victory, made from my closing hand.

[41 : 38] To thee is my reproach well known, my shame and my disgrace.

Those that thine adverse service me are all before thy face.

Preproach have broke my heart, I'm full of grief I look for one.

To pity me, but none I found, comforts had I done.

When also bitter gold it came unto me for my needs.

[42 : 55] May the God of endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus.

So that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.