

# Committed to Us

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, why don't we pray as we come to God's word this morning? The Apostle Paul would write this to the church in Colossae. He says, we're asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding so that you may walk worthy of the Lord.

And so, Father God, thank you that we can approach you because of Jesus and we ask, Lord, that Paul's prayer for this church in Colossae that they would grow in their understanding, that they would be filled with all wisdom and that they would walk in a manner that is worthy of you.

Father, that is our prayer today as your people. Lord, we ask that your spirit would come and would help us. Father, we're so aware of our wandering hearts, of our distracted minds and so we pray, Father, that you would come and help us now as we turn to your word.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. I mean, folks, you might want to turn to Romans chapter 8. We're in it verses 31 to 39. Finishing this little series we've been in over the last few weeks.

Thinking about the building blocks of the Christian life. And let me just say, as you're turning that there, the evening service tonight is 6.30. Andy Constable is going to be our speaker. Andy's a good friend of mine.

[ 1 : 21 ] But Andy's one of the pastors at Nidrae Community Church and he's heavily involved with the work of 20 schemes, which you may have heard of, planting churches in some of the poorest areas of our country to the glory of God.

We're going to have just a time this evening as well being able to ask him questions. So we'll have an open Q&A.; Andy's going to come with a few folks from Nidrae. It'd be great to hear about their work and some of the ways that they've seen God at work and some of the things that we can pray about for them as well.

So that's 6.30 this evening. Let me just say as well, on a personal note, let me thank you for those folks who were just praying for us when we were on holidays as a family. Some of you were so kind and you texted us to tell, texted me rather to say that you were praying for us.

And that's just meant so much over the last few weeks that you, for both Alex and I, that you love us and that you care for us. And we just want to say that we love you back and we were so delighted to come back.

So thank you so much for doing that. Let me just give you two thoughts that have been in my mind over the last few weeks, just as we've been away and as we've come back, a few thoughts have been in my mind. Here's the first one.

[ 2 : 22 ] I wonder if you'd tap into any of these. Firstly, there's no place like home, right? No place like home, and that's home with a small h. We found this when we were away.

I don't know if you find this, that you get there. We were sleeping in different places. We were different places on the holiday. And we would get to bed and I would sit there and think, oh, this is not my bed. This is not my bed.

I've got a sore back. The mattress is too firm. These pillows are too soft. I just want my bed. And then you would turn on the shower and you would think, oh, I just want my shower. This temperature is not, I've got it set at the perfect temperature.

This is too hot. This is too cold. The pressure isn't hard enough. I just want my shower. And then I found this well down in England. You would turn on the tap and you have a glass of water.

And you think, oh, I just want my Scottish water back. If you've drunk straight from the tap, especially down in London, you know what I mean. We've got it good up here with the water, haven't we?

[ 3 : 17 ] And I just came back and think, there's no place like home, small h. And then just as well as I've been tuning in to some of the sermons when I've been away and as I've been thinking of my own quiet times and conversations with people, I've just felt in my own spirit, just there's no place like home, capital H.

There's no place like home, capital H. As we've been journeying through Romans 8, we've hit that last week, didn't we? This place that God has prepared for those who are in Christ, whose trust is in Jesus, who are following him as their saviour.

This place where he's working towards, he's bringing all things together in heaven and earth in Christ. Christ, this place, the hope of the Christian heart, heaven, we've been thinking about it there. This place that's marked by things that aren't there. There's no more groaning. There's no more pain. There's no more tears. There's no more death.

It's been swallowed up. Christ has defeated it, and we're there. And it's not just defined by the things that aren't there. It's defined by the things that are there. Or more rather, it's defined by the person who's there.

[ 4 : 26 ] Or the one who we love as Christians, Jesus Christ is there. And what is the song, the Hallelujah Chorus that we read about in Revelation? It's just we're singing his praise.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. And my heart, as we read Romans 8 last week, as Wayne was here preaching about it, we just longed for that day. Come, Lord Jesus.

And as I've walked with many of you and as I've had friends who've gone through difficult times, we say, come, Lord Jesus. There's no place like home, capital H. And as I've felt this in my own heart and as I've thought about the reality of my life as I've looked around, I don't know about you, but that place, it feels a million miles away.

Because there's many things that would cause me, and I'm sure cause you, to doubt it. Or to think that God hasn't got this one. Or somehow it will slip from us. There's external things that cause us to think that, isn't there?

As we live our lives in this world that is seemingly becoming increasingly hostile to the things of the Christian faith, increasingly hostile to the things of the gospel. And as we think we might have it a little bit hard here, just think about our Christian brothers and sisters in places like North Korea, and Iran, Pakistan, places where it's difficult, really difficult to be a Christian.

[ 5 : 47 ] You really are taking your life in your hands as you put your hand up and say, I follow Jesus. External things can cause us to doubt it. And there's internal things that can cause us to doubt it. I know this in my own heart, that the sin that plagues me, that the mistakes that I make again and again and again, is this very unspectacular body makes very unspectacular strides in sanctification and holiness and becoming more like Jesus.

And as I know my own heart that it's so often wayward, so often gets distracted by things, and it can cause us to doubt it, can't it? External things can cause us to doubt it.

Internal things can cause us to doubt it. And the thing, I guess, that I wanted to encourage us is that we're not the first generation of Christians to feel doubt or to feel like this might not happen.

Because remember that Paul is writing to the church in Rome here. Now, historians reckon he's writing this in AD 57. Now, why that is important is because serious persecution of Christians is about to kick off in AD 64, right?

So, less than a decade later, Nero is about to, go all out in his persecution of Christians. You read some historians who were there at the time, and they talk about how Christians were set on fire to light the streets.

[ 7 : 06 ] They were going to be thrown to the lions. And the thing is, what do they need to know? What does the Christian in North Korea need to know? What do you need to know as you stand for Jesus in this world?

What do you need to know? You need to know that God is for you. You need to know that there is nothing that is going to separate you because you're in Christ from his love.

God has got this one. He's got you. No matter how hard it gets, you can build your life on that wonderful truth. God is for us. God is for us in Christ.

He's on our side. And let me tell you what, it makes all the difference, doesn't it, in life, knowing who's on your team, knowing who's on your side. I remember once when I was at school doing the Scottish relay championships at Meadowbank down there, and I lined up in my lane.

It was lane three. And I'm lining up against guys who are much bigger than me, much stronger than me, much faster than me, and I knew it. But the thing was, as they tried to psych me out, I wasn't really listening to it.

[ 8 : 13 ] I wasn't all that bothered with it because I knew we were going to win. And the reason that I was pretty sure we were going to win is because we had the fastest guy in the country at that point on the last leg. And it wasn't my speed that was going to win that competition.

It was his speed that was going to win that competition. All I needed to do was get the bat in and get it to him. And we were home and trying. Makes all the difference, doesn't it, knowing who's on your team, who's on your side.

These verses, friends, if you take one thing from this this morning, let it be this. This is a commitment from our God. To us, to his people. This is his commitment to us, that he will never let us go.

It's a commitment from. Now, automatically, we're suspicious of commitments. And we're suspicious of promises as we live our life in this world. I don't know if you've found this, as you've been watching maybe the TV debates recently with the prime ministerial candidates, as they've been battling it out between them, as they've made big promises, or not made big promises, about what they're going to do with the economy, what they're going to do about Brexit, what they're going to do about climate change.

And it's funny, as the person on the TV has asked the question, the interviewer asked it back, have they persuaded you? Have they persuaded you that they can do this? And what came back every time? No, they haven't persuaded us.

[ 9 : 28 ] I don't trust them. I don't trust their commitment. And I even loved as well, in that one a few weeks ago, the eye roll that happened. If you saw that, somebody rolled their eyes. Love a good British, passive-aggressive eye roll. That's what happened.

Because we don't trust their commitments. But the thing about this, what we have in our hands, is not the word of a politician. It's not the word of a mere man or woman.

What it is here is, this is the word of our three-in-one creator, God. This is his word to us. And as the psalmist would say, we want to lean our whole lives and hope in this word.

And if we do so, we will not fail. These verses are a commitment from God. Friends, again, if you take nothing else from this, know how committed he is to you. God says, I'm committed to you.

I'm committed to getting you home as one of my people, as you trust in Christ. I'm committed on the journey there, no matter how hard it gets, to shower my love upon you in Jesus Christ.

[ 10 : 26 ] Shower that love upon you. The love that I demonstrated as I sent my son to die for your sin on the cross. And I hold your life in my hand, as we saw from the verses in Isaiah, as we started.

God holds our lives in his hand. He's got us. He could not be more committed to us. The great old hymn, I love this hymn, written by Daniel Whittle.

Remember when the first time I came to Bronxville, to the first service, we sang this, and it went like this. I know what of good or ill may be reserved for me, or weary ways or golden days before his face.

I see, but I know who I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day.

This is what this is saying this morning. If your faith is wavering, if you are fearful about the future, if your trust is in Jesus, be assured of God's unwavering commitment to loving you and bringing you home.

[ 11 : 29 ] And all that was by way of introduction, right? Because the power is not in my words, the power is in this word. So why don't you turn to Romans chapter 8, and let's see what God says through his word to us this morning as we tap into what the apostle Paul was saying to the church in Rome.

Picking it up at verse 31 of chapter 8. Paul writes this, What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not even spare his own son, but offered him up for us all, how will he not also with him grant us everything?

Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised.

He also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

[ 12 : 48 ] As it is written, Because of you we are being put to death all day long. We are counted as sheep to be slaughtered. Knowing 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 rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen. This is God's word to us this morning. These words have been so refreshing to my soul this week. We're just going to look at this under two headings. We've not got a PowerPoint this morning. I didn't have time. I moved house, okay? Listen for these headings and we'll try and group it like this.

First of all, what Paul does is he asks some questions to help them see it. He asks some questions to help them see it. Group them together. Four questions from verse 31. Look at it with me. And the thing about these questions is he doesn't ask them simply because he wants a right answer.

Okay? He's not going, oh, Chris Tarrant on them. This is not the chase. This is not what he's doing. He's asking these questions because he's after their heads and he's after their hearts because he wants them to mull over the implications of everything that he's been saying in this section because that's what he means by these things.

[ 14 : 10 ] Right? He's drawn this to a close. Thinking through the logical implications of everything that he said. Follow with me and we'll just think on these. Verse 31. If God is for us, who can be against us?

Who can be against us? And the answer is, I guess, plenty of people can be against us. Plenty of things can be against us. But what he wants them to know is that they can have the world against them.

But if the God of the universe, because of their faith in Jesus, is on their side, if he's in their corner, as their good father, then his say, it trumps it all.

It trumps it all. You know, German reformer Philip Melancthon, he was one of the contemporaries and good friends of Martin Luther when he was dying, when he was on his deathbed.

He asked for a minister to come and simply read this verse to him. If God is for me, who can be against me? If God is for me, who can be against me? Because that's what he needed in that moment.

[ 15 : 16 ] Say it to me again. If God is for me, who can be against me? But how is God for me, you ask? How do I know God is for me? Is this wishful thinking? Well, look what he says, verse 32. He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

He'll give us all things. Maybe you had that experience when you were a child at Christmas time. You opened the present on Christmas morning and you just thought it magically appeared there overnight.

Right? But actually what you realise many years later is that somebody took a very great effort to think about that present. They thought about it, they researched it, they saved for it, they went out to buy it, they wrapped it, they made sure you didn't find it, and they presented it on Christmas morning.

I don't know if you've ever had this experience, I remember this as a child, opening a present and those three dreaded words, do you remember, know those three dreaded words that you read? Batteries not included. Batteries not included, they hadn't got the batteries.

But here's the thing, if you've gone to all that effort, and I know this now as a parent, okay, if you've gone to all that effort to get that present, all that effort to get that present, can I say no parent in the world would see that the batteries weren't there and think, oh, do you know what, let's just put it in the bin and start again.

[ 16 : 40 ] Let's just forget it. A parent would go out and get the batteries, wouldn't they? And they would see it home. Friends, if we would do that, then what he's saying here is how much more would God do that?

How much more would God, having done all the stuff that he's done and sending his son for us and doing the hard part, as it were, how much more will God see it home?

It's, we don't have time to look into this, but there's echoes of Abraham and Isaac in the language here. If God was willing to pay that price, he won't fail to get the job done and he will give us all

things so that it will happen and that all things doesn't mean that he's like a genie that we can rub the lamp and he'll give us our three wishes.

What it means is that he will give us all things that are going to accomplish his purpose. We saw that just before, didn't we? As he conforms us, as his people, more into the image of his son, Jesus Christ, day after day after day after day until one day we're with him in glory.

That's what he's going to do. He will give us all things for that purpose. And if God is for us, verse 33, who will bring any charge against those who God has chosen?

[17:50] Who then is the one who condemns? Because there's plenty, again, there's plenty of stuff that could condemn us. The devil could take his pick from the multiple sins that you and I have racked up in our lives.

But every time he brings a charge, God says, God's verdict, is that individual, because they're trusting in my son, not only are they not guilty, but they are right with me.

They are justified. They are justified. They are right with me. Why? How is that possible? How is that possible? Well, because Jesus died for us.

We've been singing it earlier. He took the death that I deserve to die for my sin, my cosmic treason against the God who made me. He took it on the cross. He took it on the cross.

He paid it all. And he gives me his perfect life, meaning that I am right in God's sight. And do you see what Paul says? He didn't just die.

[18:52] What did he do? He rose again. That's where he is. Heaven's champion. And it's so important that we see the resurrection there. Because if Jesus died and he didn't rise again, friends, we would have absolutely no clue that we were in the right with God.

We'd have absolutely no clue that what he said was true. And if that were the case, if he hadn't risen from the dead, not only would he go down as the greatest con artist in all of history, and if that's true, you have to say the trick has gone remarkably well, not only would he go down as the biggest con artist, but we'd have no assurance that our sin has been paid for.

We'd have no assurance that we're in the right with God like he said he would be. But we have this assurance because of the resurrection. Think of it like the time you go to the shops.

I had this experience a few weeks ago. Went to buy milk from Tesco and I tried to pay with cash. Tried to pay with cash and the person looked at me like, what is this medieval payment method you're trying to do?

But how do you normally pay these dates? You pay with your card, don't you? You pay with your card and what do you do? You either enter your pin into the machine or you hold it against the machine and it reads your details. There's always that moment, isn't there, after you've done that, that you think to yourself, has this really gone through?

[20:10] Has this really gone through? How do I know there's sufficient funds in the bank account? How do I know this payment has happened? And all of a sudden, five seconds later, what happens? You get the receipt. And you think, this has gone through.

This has happened. Well friend, how do I know my sins have been paid for? How do I know it's worked? The resurrection is like the receipt. It's like the receipt. Jesus is risen.

Our sins have been paid for. He sits in the place of power. Do you see, Paul tells him, at the right hand of the Father, that position of authority and power. He is risen. And this is what I found so refreshing for my soul this week.

What is he doing there? Look at it in these verses. What is our king? What is our saviour doing now that victory has been won? And fill your souls with this one.

This king isn't indulging himself. What is he doing? He's interceding for you and I. He's bearing our name before the Father.

[21:10] He lives every moment to pray for us. Do you see, this king isn't partying. What's he doing? He's praying. Every moment of every day, representing failures, sinners like you and I before the Father, praying for our every need.

How encouraging do you find it when somebody tells you that they're praying for you? I find it so encouraging. Friends, how much more should we be encouraged that there is one who ever lives to plead for you and I before our creator God in heaven.

The God who is for us. Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea. A great high priest whose name is love, whoever lives and pleads for me.

What a thought that he is doing that right now as we speak for us, as his people. He's praying for us. You know, we've got that expression in our culture, don't we? Talk about having friends in high places. I mean, not only is that spatially probably true, but friends, we cannot have a friend in a higher place than him.

And I love how Paul drops in there. If you see it in the text, he says, he also is interceding for us. Right? So in other words, who do we have on our team? What do we have going for us?

[ 22 : 29 ] We've got the Father who is for us, who has chosen us, who says we are justified and right in his sight, and also, we have the Son who is praying for us.

Do you see what Paul is doing? He's asking questions to help them see it. Help them see it. Understand what God has done. And so the natural question that comes to us, isn't it, is friends, do we see it?

Do we see it? This is what's going on. Cannot fathom it, but this is what's going on. In Christ, God couldn't be any more committed to us.

And do you see how all the three persons of the Godhead are involved here? God the Father was so committed, do we see it in the text, that he gave his only Son for us? God the Son, Jesus Christ, was so committed that he gave up his life for his bride, the church.

And as we saw earlier in chapter 8, God the Spirit now lives in us and helps us every moment of every day in our every weakness. Our three-in-one creator God could not be more committed to us.

[ 23 : 39 ] Does that not encourage you in your weak faith? That this is not about my ability to get home. This is about he who holds me fast. And having seen all that, he asks him one last question at verse 35.

And with this, he moves from asking questions to help them see it to sketching dimensions to help them live it. Verse 35 brings it all together.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Will anything block God? Will anything hinder his love for us?

And he lists all the contenders, doesn't he? Trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword. Things that Paul knew, of course, apart from the sword in his own life. Things that we will face.

Things that our brothers and sisters around the world know all too well. And that's why he quotes from Psalm 44. If you're wondering what that little snippet is. Psalm 44. You can check it in your own time, but it's a painful psalm of lament.

[ 24 : 42 ] Love it, do you not, that God has given us in his word this prayer book which is the psalms that strike the depths of human emotion but also scale the heights of who this God is. It's almost an invitation from God, isn't it, in life's hardest moments and in life's best moments to pour our souls to him.

He knows, he cares, he understands. But this painful psalm, Psalm 44, is written by God's people who are feeling the heat for being his people. And it's essentially a psalm that says, Lord, what's going on here?

Where are you? Are we going to make it through? And I think Paul quotes it because there are many hard things that will come our way in this life because we follow Jesus.

In other words, this is the usual Christian experience to some degree or the other. But you see how Paul says, even in those things, right, not despite those things, not above those things, not after those things, in those things, we won't be separated from the love of God and Christ.

Nothing, nothing is going to separate us from his love. And he's persuaded of it. Do you see that little word he chucks in there? I love that. In the Greek, it's in the perfect tense.

[ 25 : 59 ] Saying, I'm fully in on this. I'm persuaded. God's got me. I'm fully won by this idea. Nothing's going to convince me otherwise. He's persuaded. He's won. What's he won to?

The truth that we are more than conquerors in Christ. Love it. Let me just get my Greek geek on for you here. The Greek word for conqueror there is the word Nike.

It's in the sports brand. So if you've got trainers on this morning, you've got a t-shirt on, something like that, that's what that means. Nike, conqueror. And what Paul has done is he's, he's taken the word more, he pair, and he's combined it with Nikon, Nike.

And what that means is he said, we are more than conquerors. We are more than victors. We are super conquerors. He's mashed these two words together. It's what he said. It's his way of helping them understand that we are in this untouchable position as Christians because of our position in

Christ.

That we are hyper victors. We are more than conquerors in Christ. You can think about it this week every time you put on your trainers or you put on your top. That's what I am in Christ.

[ 27 : 07 ] More than a conqueror. And because Jesus has made us his own, nothing will separate us from him. Do you see what he says? Death won't. Again, he's just painting the contours.

Death won't. Life won't. Angels won't. Rulers won't. Present things won't. Future things won't.

Powers won't. Height won't. Depth won't. And I'm sure he paused for a breath at this point.

And he added in a sweeper clause just in case he's missed something. Nothing in all creation will.

Nothing in all creation will. Friends, can I suggest just as we bring this towards a close this morning, if we can grasp this, then can I suggest that there is no more freeing place for us to be in life?

That our God has got us. He's got us in his hand. We're to run to him, to ask him, to hope in his word, to put our confidence in him. And I was thinking this week, how should this truth inspire me?

How should this truth impact the way that we live our lives? And I imagine, I was thinking about it, surely this frees us up to take risks for the kingdom. If he's got us, if nothing is going to separate us from his love, we can take risks for him knowing that he's got us.

[ 28 : 22 ] That's exactly what Paul is aiming for, I think, here. Remember, he's trying to stoke up the fires of these, the hearts of these Roman believers, people that he's probably never met. Because what does he want them to do?

He wants them to join them. As they find themselves, remember Rome at this point, in the most strategic city in the world at this time? He wants this church to join him in this great mission of reaching the nations, reaching the peoples of the world for Christ.

And it's this truth that's going to impact them and help them to do that. It's what's inspired generations of Christian ministries down the ages to take risks and to give it all for Jesus. To quote Jim Elliot, he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

Let me just ask you, do you see that in your own life? Would you not love to be more of a risk taker for Jesus as you speak for him? I was thinking on it this week as one of the movers helped me pack up the van for the house.

He said, what do you do? And I told him I was a minister, I was a pastor, and he said, I thought you were in finance, and I took that as a compliment. But he said to me, I didn't have you down this up.

What does it mean? And I had literally 10 seconds to tell him what I did.

[ 29 : 34 ] And do you know what? I said it and I thought, I can make more of that opportunity. I can make more of those opportunities that I have with the people who come into my life every day. I want my hope to be in this truth that he has me.

Now, we bring Romans 8 together. We think about it. What did it start? And read it in the text. What does Romans 8, 1 start? There is no what? Condemnation. And where does it end? There is no separation.

No condemnation, no separation. What building blocks to build our lives upon as Christians? That there is nothing that is going to separate us from the love of God shown us in Christ Jesus.

Friends, there is no place like home. There is no place like home. Just as we quote, I heard a great story this week about the hymn writer Charles Wesley. I didn't know this, but he wrote his last hymn on his deathbed at age 81.

He just wanted to capture his heart in the moment, what he was feeling at that moment. He was so weak that he had to get somebody else to hold the pen while he said it and they wrote it. 81. And as they say, he wrote this hymn to try and capture something of his heart, but he also wrote it to try and capture this truth that he wanted generations of Christians, his generation, but generations to come to sing for themselves.

[ 30 : 48 ] And he wrote this, get these lines, in age and feebleness extreme, who shall this helpless worm redeem? Jesus, my only hope thou art, strength of my failing flesh and heart, oh, that I could catch one smile from thee and drop into eternity.

And 200 years later, who would pick up Wesley's hymn and be so inspired by it that he would want to write it in his own words for his generation to sing it and for generations to come to sing it.

But Matt Redman, he would write, and this is going to be our closing song, and on that day when my strength is failing, the end draws near and my time has come.

Still my soul will sing your praise unending. 10,000 years and then forevermore. Oh, that this would be the song of our hearts.

It's God's people, unspectacular, living our lives for him in Brunnsfield. And let's make an effort to pass it on to one another because there is no place like home and our God could not be more committed to us and nothing, underscored nothing, will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[ 32 : 13 ] So just before we sing our final song, why don't we just have a moment of quiet. And friends, let me just invite you to be still before your maker and to allow these hearts to sink in that if our God is for us, who can be against us?

And so, Father, I thank you so much for this time that we've had in your word.

And I particularly pray, Lord, for my friends here who are maybe doubting this morning or who are hurting this morning that this truth that you are for them in Christ, that your spirit would take it and would it be like a sweet balm to their soul.

And Father, thank you so much for that wonderful truth that if you are for us, who can be against us? I pray, Father, that you would help us have that mindset this week that to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Help us to hope in him. Father, thank you so much for this time we commit it to you in Jesus' precious name. Amen.