

# Worship 12\_19\_2021

Mon, 1/3 2:55PM 30:58

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

god, jesus, paul, people, interceding, life, verse, pray, spirit, condemn, called, true, letter, hearts, written, messiah, justified, love, lord, christ

## SPEAKERS

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00:05

It's time for us to get a little more deeply into God's Word together. So as I invite you to do each week, I hope that you will have a copy of scripture out and open in front of you throughout this time, if that's the personal Bible or Bible app, that's good. If you need something, there are red ones available in all the pews there and will be again in the New Testament this morning and a book that's called Romans after the Gospels and then the book of Acts you'll find Romans will be in Chapter Eight there this morning. One of the most well known and widely performed pieces of Western music is George Friedrich Handel's oratorio Messiah was first performed in Ireland at the Dublin Music Hall on April 13 1742. And people were immediately taken with how incredible this piece of art was, they recognize right off the bat what an incredible thing this was. In fact, there was a review that ran a couple days later in the Dublin journal that said this, in the opinion of the best judges, Messiah far surpasses anything of that nature which has been performed in this or any other kingdom. There was a man named Dr. Edward Synge, who was the Bishop of Elphin, he wrote this on a personal letter after hearing that performance. As Mr. Handel in his oratorios greatly excels all other composers I am acquainted with. So in his famous one called the Messiah, he seems to have even excelled himself. The whole is beyond anything I had a notion of it seems to be a species of music different from any other is lofty praise for a lofty composition. And some of you are well acquainted with it the entire oratorio composes 53 movements, there are three parts to it, it lasts about two and a half hours. And yet, the part that everybody knows best is the Hallelujah chorus. And that's not even at the end, that comes in at the end of part two, scene seven, but it's this pinnacle, within the movement, everything had been building up to that. And it just reaches these new, soaring, rousing, old notes throughout that it's something that has just impressed itself upon the minds and hearts of people. For hundreds of years ever since it was first written. I bring that up because we've been studying Paul's letter to the Romans throughout this fall early part of the winter here. And as we get to the end of chapter eight, we encounter something kind of like the Hallelujah chorus, and Handel's Messiah, the whole letter is incredible. Chapter Eight is especially powerful. And the end of it, though, is something that just soars to these heights that maybe we weren't quite expecting. And it leaves us a indelible impression upon our minds. And our hearts. I'm going to try to show you what I mean by that here this morning. But before we do, let's pray. Great and gracious God, we thank you for this time that we have to be here together today. Lord, quiet, our distracted minds calm, are distraught hearts. Let us hear what it is that you have to say. And then let us respond in ways that demonstrate our love for you and our love for others. And Father, I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditation of all

of our hearts would be acceptable in Your sight for We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen. The letters really been building up to this particular point, there's a lot there's a lot more after that, but just so we remember how it has built up to this point, Paul's writing to a group of Christians that had come from some mixed backgrounds, a number of them had come from Jewish backgrounds, a number from Gentile backgrounds, and they had questions like, Does God relate to all of us? In the same way? Are there different ways that we encounter God? And what about the times we don't perfectly agree? So he's writing to address all of these things? And right at the very beginning, he says, I'm writing to you with the Good News of the Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes Jew, Gentile, everyone. He says, Now, you need to hear that because everyone stands accountable to God. And every single person has sinned and fallen short of God's glory. You can't make that right through your own efforts. You can't be justified, declared in the right through what you do. It's through faith in what Jesus Christ has done. The Spirit unites you to Jesus, what's true of him becomes true of you. And yet there is still a struggle that takes place. And he starts to talk then about this tension, this tension that we exist in the already but not yet. Greg talked about that last week when he preached, there are things that are already true of us. We have been adopted as sons and daughters of a living God, we are given this new status, a new standing. But the fullness of this promise has not yet been brought to bear all of creation even is longing for that time when Jesus will return and usher in the fullness of his new creation. So we live in that tension that time between the times that's what the building up to this and this really is this just stunning crescendo that the letters been building to. So I want you to once again humble your hearts and open your ears because this is the word of the Lord. This is Romans chapter eight verses 26 down through 39. Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. and He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose. For those who before knew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined, he also called and those whom He called he also justified and those whom He justified, he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things that God has for us who can be against us? He did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all. How will He not also with Him, graciously give us all things, Who shall bring any charge against God's elect is God who justifies who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ. So tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written for your sake, we are being killed all day long we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us, for I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers are things present, or things to come nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. That's amazing, isn't it? I mean, there were a few times this week, when I was really convinced that the best thing I could do for you this morning was read out a couple times, and then to sit down. I'm not going to do that sorry to get your hopes up there for a moment not going to do that. There's some powerful stuff here. There's a lot of stuff, but I want to look at it because in this particular section, Paul is offering among many things, he's offering four truths for reminders for things that can assure us of what it means to be living in this time of tension, where we know what is already true, but what is not yet here. So we're going to look at them in the four are this first at the Spirit of God prays for us in our weakness. Second, that God's good purpose for his people is absolutely certain. And third, that because of the work of Jesus Christ, we can say constantly, God is for us. And then fourth, and finally, that nothing, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Now, I'm fully aware that each one of those four could be an entire sermon, but I'm going to offer them to you as a package deal here today, just for sermons for the price of wine. This is your Christmas gift set, Delfield box set for and one here today. But I'm putting them together. Because I

do think that even though we're not going to be able to get into the full depths of each of these ideas together, they show us how to be those who wait with patience, for the hope that we do not yet see, because that's the verse we ended on last week, how it is to be people who wait with patience, for the hope that we do not yet see. The first is to know that the Spirit of God prays for us in our weakness. That's right in verses 26 to 27. Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we don't know what to pray for as we ought. but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. Almost every verse in this chapter says something about the Holy Spirit brings up the Holy Spirit in some way. It's all talking about what the Spirit does to make the work of Jesus true in our life. And here, it is saying that the Spirit helps us in our weakness, because we don't know the way to pray. We can admit that. I don't always know the best way to pray. I don't always know the right things to pray for, I suspect, you feel the same way if you're willing to admit that. But when we are faced with that weakness, when, especially when the hardships of life, just rear their ugly head and the sorrows of life flood the horizon. And it's incredibly important to know that our prayers are not just a shout into the void. They're not that says the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. How do you know that God hears your prayer? Because the Spirit Himself is interceding for you? What if What if you don't say the right things? Or what if you don't say the things in the right way, but here's a little secret. There's no magic formula. There's no like proper sequence of words that unlock something mystical or mysterious here he's saying that we don't know how to pray. We don't know the way to pray that we always should. but the Spirit Himself picks up on that. The Spirit Himself intercedes with groanings that are too deep for words, interpreting, magnifying amplifying even our deepest longings, maybe the things that you didn't even know you longed for, and interceding for you. Again, I can confess that my prayers aren't always for the right things or probably even offered up always in the right spirit. I try to pray for the things that I think or know that I know are good and right and true. But they're often still pretty shallow and self seeking. He's saying the spirit the spirit of God Himself intercedes for us in our weakness. Several times every single day, I have people who email me or text me or call me and ask me if I would pray for them about something. And every time I'm honored, I'm humbled by that I'm happy to do that. I'm willing to do that for you anytime if you ever need anything, but I want you to know that you got something infinitely better. Spirit Himself intercedes for you in your weakness when you don't know how to pray when you don't know what you should pray for when you can't even give voice to those longings that you have the Spirit of God intercedes for you. So as we were trying to live, Paul said in verse 25, as we wait for patience for this hope that we don't yet fully see is the first thing to know that the spirit prays for us in our weaknesses. Alright, here's the second. The second idea that comes out of this is that God's good purpose for his people is absolutely certain. This is found in verses 28 and 29. In particular, God's good purpose for his people is absolutely certainly, verse 28 is a you've probably heard this one. This is even in a section like this. It's a particularly famous verse. It says, We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose. Now, that's a very famous verse. It's also often misunderstood, and misapplied. Often, I suspect that you probably heard some of the ways that happens, it's usually unintentional. I don't think it's a deliberate thing that people do. But sometimes it's put out there, as if it is saying, if you think things in life are bad, you're just not looking at them the right way. They're really good. You just need to, you need to convince yourself that they're really good. You need to learn a new way of looking at it. Or I think a less hopeful way is at the end when it says that all things work for the good of those who are called. For those who love God, all things work for the good. You might hear well, things aren't good in your life right now. It's because you don't love God enough. And if you've ever heard and using those ways, I'm sorry, that is not what this verse is communicating. It's not when it's getting out here. If we want to know what the good is, if we want to know what God's purpose is, let's let scripture tell us because it does right here. Right here it says, This is what the good thing that God is working towards is this is what God's purpose is. And it goes on to say this. For those who me for new, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. That's the good thing for which God is working in your life. That's God's purpose did you be conformed to the image of Jesus. Conformity sometimes

is presented as a negative trait in our culture, you know, we're told that you need to find a way to stand out from the crowd to think different to be unique to swim against the current and in a lot of areas of life, this can be okay, this can be decent advice. But when it comes to our life of faith, when it comes to our discipleship, that's not the advice. There's something that we are meant specifically to reflect there's something that we aren't meant specifically to be we are to be conformed to the image of Jesus to be remade in that image to have his character reflected in our lives. So was Jesus life always easy? Was it always comfortable? Was it free from sorrow and suffering? No, we know that his life led to the cross. That wasn't the end of the story. And we know that but if we want to share in the glory of Jesus, if you want to share in the glory of the resurrection, and Scripture itself says, we also need to follow the same journey that he did, we need to be willing to be conformed to him. In every way, Paul puts it like this, in Philippians. 3:10 is another famous passage, one of letters he wrote, he's talking about his desire to be with Christ and gain Christ. And he says, My desire is that I may know him in the power of his resurrection, and may share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection of the dead. If you work backwards, he says, we want to obtain the good thing we want to be raised just as Christ was raised. But in order for that to happen, he said, You've got to complete the whole journey. You don't just get to skip ahead to the end, if you want to be made like Jesus. He said, If I want to gain Christ, if I want to know the power of his resurrection, then I've also got to share in his sufferings. We don't like always seeing that path laid out before us. But this is God's good purpose that we be conformed to the image of His Son. So verse 28, if you if you've never quite understood it, if you've heard it expressed in ways that aren't exactly what it's communicating, you could paraphrase it like this. You can paraphrase it to say this, God's good purpose is for his people to be conformed to the image of His son, and he's going to work in and through every circumstance in your life to accomplish that. That's what he's doing. He's gonna work all things together for that good purpose of making you more and more like the one who died and rose again. That's his purpose. Now we can be sure that God is going to accomplish that because what God starts God finishes. What God starts, God finishes. This is what you see in verses 29 and 30. Listen again to these ones He said those whom He foreknew, He also pre-destined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those can be predestined, he also called those whom He called, he also justified, those who mean justified, he also glorified. There are a lot of really loaded terms in there. Some people refer to this passage as the golden chain. Maybe you've heard that this unbreakable work of God in the life of a believer and there's again heavy stuff loaded terms. We're just going to go real quickly through your theological vocabulary flashcards here. I just point out a couple of things he's talking about here. He says God for new his people, as God's free act to establish a relationship with his people. It's not God looking ahead and seeing what you would do and then responding to that. It's God's initiative entirely of grace to establish a relationship with his people. And he says those whom God for knew He also predestined. In other words, if God knows someone, he's going to make sure that they come to know him. I know it can be a heavy term with a lot of misunderstanding here biblically. This idea is not something of a like a fatalistic determinism. We're not puppets on a string. That's not what Scripture is talking about there. But it's saying what God intends to happen happens. And the Scripture also holds up to things that are true that is sometimes hard for us to fully reconcile. It says that God is absolutely sovereign over every single thing that happens. And we are capable of real meaningful action and responsible for our actions. Scripture says both of those things are true. I don't know how to reconcile that all the time, everywhere here. But the point in this section is saying, those whom God decided to be in relationship with Him, He made sure we're in relationship with him. And he called them he goes on to say, he called them. Sometimes we speak of the outward call of God, which is the preaching of the gospel. But he's talking about the inward call here, God's spirits make true in our hearts, these things to open our hearts so that we respond to God in faith. If God decided to know you, he said, he's going to make sure that happens, and he's going to draw you to Himself. And if that happens, he said, then we respond in faith, and we're justified were declared in the right before God, that's been a major theme of this whole letter, we are justified declared in the right before God

because of what Christ has done. And he says those who mean justified, he also glorified, he's going to see it through to the end. That's the point he's getting out there. I've started all kinds of projects that I haven't finished before, you probably got all kinds of half started half finished projects around your place as well. That's what we do. That's not what God does. says, If God starts this work, he's gonna see it through to the end those whom he has done these things for He will glorify in the end that is made like Jesus in every way in the full perfection of the new creation. Now, those were the vocabulary terms, vocabulary cards, I want to I want to nerd out with you on grammar for just a moment. And I hope you'll see why this is important. Actually, all of those words there, those are verbs, all those verbs in the Greek language are written in something that's called the aorist tense, and the air is referred to a past tense, completed action. And for most of those that make sense, God for new people, he called me justify them. The word Glorified is also written that same way. You might think, why is he speaking of it as something that is done? It's completed? Hasn't happened yet? Why would he speak of it that way? The point he's trying to make is this that God's purposes are so sure, so certain that we can speak even if the things that haven't happened yet, as if they have happened. That's how certain it is. Sales worth nerding out on that grammar for a moment, right? It's an important thing. It's an important thing that shows up right in there, I say what God starts, God finishes, Paul doesn't go in and define all these terms here. I know, we would maybe like him to add a little more. He doesn't define all these in the depths that we might like, at some point, but he's communicating a point that would come across very clearly. And that is this God's good purpose for his people is absolutely certain. The good purpose that He intends in your life is that you be conformed to the image of Jesus, and that's not going to not happen. If he begins this work in you. He's gonna see it through. So as we wait with patience for this hope that we do not yet see, the first thing we can take comfort in is that the Spirit of God Himself prays for us in our weakness. The second thing we can take comfort in is that God's good purpose for his people is absolutely certain he's going to get it done. He's going to accomplish it in your life. Here's the third thing, then. The third is that God is for us, because of what Jesus has done on our behalf. We can say unequivocally, the God is for us because of what Christ has done. This is verses 31 through 34. In particular, if you have been with us as we've gone through this series, where even if you just read the letter to the Romans at any point on your own, you notice that Paul often inserts these kind of rhetorical questions into his letter. He's having a sort of an almost discussion sometimes with with us with the readers with the listeners. He has a whole series of rhetorical questions right here beginning in verse 31. And the first one, he says, What do we say in response to these things? And that these things is really everything in the letter up to this point, but especially chapter five through chapter eight, what do we say in response to this? That God is for us? And of God's for us, he said, then who can be against us? He goes on as more questions he's saying, who can bring any charge? Who is to condemn? He's saying these things cannot be held against us. He's speaking there of the the eternal judgment of the final judgment, not not what's happening here on this earth right without look right. Right now, your neighbors may condemn you because of your hypocrisy. Your co workers could condemn you because of your work ethic, you might condemn yourself because of some of the failings that you think you have in your life. That's not what he's getting at here. He's talking about in the end at the final day, who can bring any meaningful charge against you? And the answer is no one. Not if you're in Christ, not if what Christ has done for you is true of you. No one can bring any charge against you. There's no one that can condemn. He says the only one who has the right to do so has taken away from you. These are powerful questions that he's asking there. And he answered all and there's no one no one can condemn. No one can bring any charge God is for us. We know that because of what Jesus has done. This is not the only place you see a sentiment like that. By the way, the reason that Hannah read that passage from Isaiah 50 earlier is that you hear you heard some similar sentiments from the Prophet, if you were listening at that point. Isaiah said, But the Lord God is the one who helps me. So I know I shall not be put to shame who shall contend with me, the Lord God helps me who will declare me guilty. It's the same sentiment there. They're saying, If God is for me of God, is the one contending for me. If God is the one who says that I am not guilty, then he said, there's no charge

that anybody or anything could bring against me. He said, That's, Paul, that's really confident. That's incredibly confident. How can you speak that confidently, Paul? And he goes on to say, because this is what Jesus has done, and he maps that all because of what God has done for us. If we know what God has done for us in Jesus, then we can speak that confidently. I read a sort of publication just recently, some recent research that came out from Lifeway. And it was some interesting kind of interesting data showing what Americans think about Jesus, and 80% of all US adults and 98% of practicing Christians agreed with the statement that Jesus is the Son of God. 72% of all US adults and 95% of practicing Christians agreed with the statement that Jesus was born more than 2000 years ago, in Bethlehem. However, when it came to asking what Jesus came to do, the highest one they got was 51% of people agreed with the statement that the Bible says Jesus came to give his life for many, barely more than half of people that and that's exactly what Jesus said in Mark 10:45. So the point is, you're looking at that, okay. People know, some people seem to know some basically true things about Jesus. But they don't know why he came. They don't know what he did. They don't know what his purpose was in coming here. And I bring that up, because that's what Paul describes, in this particular section. Here we saying this is what Jesus did. And this is why we can speak so confidently said God gave up his son, for us all, to God willing to give up his son for us on and he has this little section. And this is a particularly at the end in verse 34. When he says, Who is to condemn Christ Jesus is the one who died more than not who was raised, who's at the right hand of God who is interceding for us, right in that little phrase. He's saying, because of the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus. That's why we can say confidently that there is no charge that can be brought against God's people. That's why we can say confidently that God is for us, because that's what we're looking at. If we see that Jesus came to die, not just for him, Look, everybody dies, right? It's not just the fact that he died. He died on behalf of his people taking their judgment upon himself. And it said more than that, he was raised. More than not, he was raised again from the dead. It goes on to say he's also at the right hand of God, he's interceding for us. And I don't want you to overlook the significance of that little phrase when it talks about Jesus being in the right hand of God interceding for us. In the Old Testament, and the high priest in the Old Testament, the high priest would go into the temple, he would enter the holy place, the inner sanctum, where the very presence of God was said to be, and the high priest would do so bearing the the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, on his chest on the clothing that he had there on his breastpiece the 12 names of the 12 tribes of Israel will be there. That was the high priest entering in the presence of God representing his people and burying their names before God. That's the imagery there was talking about Jesus interceding for us. That's what he's talking Talking About Jesus, the one who is more than that raised again from the dead, he said is at the right hand of the Father constantly representing us in the very presence of God, carrying the names of his people upon him, saying these are mine, and I'm interceding for them. Constantly, is, second and last time will nerd out on grammar in that section interceding for us is the only one that's written as a present active verb. All of them are written as things that happened and are done that one is written as a present active saying he's, he's doing that for you now. He's doing that for you this morning. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father interceding for you right now. That's how we can say confidently God has for us. So there's no charge that can be brought, no condemnation that can be brought nobody that can be against us if this is what is happening for me, because of the work of Jesus. So this is an incredible section where he's saying God is for us. And we know that because of what Jesus has done. We're able to wait with patients for the hope we've not yet fully seen, because the Spirit of God Himself prays for us, because God's good purposes for his people are absolutely certain. And because God has for us, and we know that because of what Jesus has done and is doing right now for his people. So here's the fourth and final one, because of all these things. That's why Paul is able to say at the end, there is nothing. Nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. There's another couple of rhetorical questions. You see that in verse 36, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ. And he lists a few things, tribulation distress, persecution, famine, naked, dangerous sword, that particular last right there. Paul wasn't just picking some random things, he wasn't just pulling a list of concepts kind of out of the air. Those are all things that

he went through. If you read Second Corinthians chapter 11, that's where Paul gives this little catalogue of sufferings that he experienced on behalf of Jesus Christ. So this wasn't just an abstract theory for Paul, he'd gone through these things in his own life, saying none of those things, none of those things, and be able to separate me from the love of Christ. And that's also true for you. So well, I don't know what your list is, hopefully, your list is not as severe as Paul, that's, that's a pretty rough list. Right? Hopefully, your list is not that bad. But I know there are difficult things that you go through in your life, another price and difficult things you're going through right now in your life, and whatever those are for you. You can This is a place you can put them in a kind of list like that and say, Can any of those things separate me from the love of Christ? And the answer is no. No, God's people are not immune to hardships are not immune to suffering. Paul, that's what the reason that Paul quotes, quotes, Psalm 44. There, that's a reference from Psalm 44:22, where it says, For your sake, we were being killed all the day long, we were regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. He's just a way it's a way of him saying, This isn't anything new. This isn't anything new. Life has always been this way. God's people are not exempt from the hardships of life, but those hardships cannot separate them from God. That's why it's something that I know we've explored here together I've offered to before is making this distinction between safety and security. Safety is this idea that nothing bad is ever going to happen to you in any way whatsoever. The Bible doesn't promise that. Security though, is something better. Security is saying that whatever happens to you, no matter how bad it is, that can't be enough to separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus your Lord. That's what it does promise us time and time again, and perhaps nowhere as explicitly as it does right here. That's better, and safety. saying there is nothing that can do this. So that's what builds up to that just crescendo there at the end where Paul says, No, we're more than conquerors. we're more than conquerors because of the one who loved us. He said, I'm convinced I'm sir. There's nothing he gives this list. Death life angels rulers present things present things to come powers heightened, nor depth. And just in case somebody was looking for something that he missed, there's a catch all at the end, he says anything in all of creation. Just fill in the blank, anything you could possibly think of, that can't separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord, the one who is alive, and is interceding for you. So that's the fourth thing that he brings up here as we wait with patience for this hope that we do not yet fully see. We know that there's nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. The fourth Sunday of admin, so later this week, when you're celebrating the birth of Jesus as I trust you will do I want to encourage you to do so with this passage in mind. What we see at Bethlehem is that God is for us because God is with us. And what we see at Bethlehem is the one into whose image we are being conformed as God is working all things together for that good purpose. And as that happens over the course of a lifetime, we wait with patience. Wait a patient for that time when this same Jesus will return to make all things new. But that tension that exists between celebrating what has happened and anticipating what is not yet to happen can be very challenging. And so a passage like this reminds us how we can approach that time by knowing that the Spirit of God prays for us in our weakness by knowing that God's good purpose is absolutely certain, by knowing that God is for us. And by knowing that nothing can possibly separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. So, like Paul said, What then shall we say to these things? I'd suggest we say amen, and amen. Let's pray. Majestic and merciful God, we ask that you would strengthen us this Advent season, that we may wait with patience for the hope that we do not yet see, knowing that hope is real, it is true and is enduring. Give us a fresh experience of your grace. comfort us with Your love. For it's in Jesus name. We pray these things. Amen.