

27.7.25 am

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 July 2025

Preacher: Reverend Donald Macdonald

[0 : 0 0] Well good morning. It's wonderful to be together as we seek to find the Lord and bless! our time together here as we look at his word and as we see it expounded to us. Welcome to! any visitors that are with us. I saw a few faces on the way in. It's great to have you along with us. There will be tea and coffee served just here at the end of the service.

It will be great if you're able to, to stay behind. It will be great to have a bit of fellowship together in the short time over some tea and coffee. And there's usually some baking as well if that tea and coffee doesn't entice you enough. There is, for any young ones, there's a creche if you want, just behind me, through this door, in on the left, there's a creche through here for any of the ones under primary school age if you're wanting to go out. The primary school children, there will be a Sunday school for those, primary one through to primary seven. There will be a Sunday school which will go out the back door and it will be after the second singing. So after the second singing, if the young ones follow the local young ones and you'll make your way to a good place where you'll be able to hear more about the Lord and his life. The evening service tonight will be at 6pm but it will be a gallic service.

So the gallic service will be taken by the Reverend Donald MacDonald again this evening. So do come along, even if you don't have gallic, I'll do the live stream and I don't have gallic myself but it's still wonderful to be in amongst, with God's people, hearing and praising together no matter what language we speak in. There will be a fellowship after the evening service.

I'm not sure what it's about, which is enough to entice you. There will be a fellowship led and there will be a particular topic that we'll focus on. So that will start, for those not coming to the gallic service, that will start at half seven. So if you come along for around half seven, you'll be able to come and hear something that is going on, whether it's a mission, whether it's a testimony, and there will be more tea and coffee. If you look at me, I can hear skinny, so there's lots of tea, coffee and baking in this church.

Tomorrow, from half eleven till half two, I think I've got the times right there, there's a special community lunch and the funds will be raised for Children for Christ Romania. Those of you that don't know, there was a team that went out, they've been over the last few years to Romania to help set up the camps that take place and that are run by Children for Christ Romania. So there's a lunch tomorrow and it'll be in the room next door here, from half eleven in the morning till two thirty, so please come along if you have time, if you're on holiday and maybe it's raining, come in and have some food, that'll be great. And then just one final intimation, we're hoping to run the holiday club, it's maybe been intimated over the recent weeks, between the 6th and 8th of August, so Wednesday, a week Wednesday through to the Friday. But we are still short of volunteers, and I'm looking at a couple of pleas prior to David going off for volunteers. So to avoid having the holiday club cancelled, which we've never had to do, it's always been a great time of blessing. Normally, I'm looking to Lucy, say about 50 to 60 children come in across the week. So it would be a shame for us to have to stop and not be able to do that, just given small numbers of volunteers. But even though it's a three-day holiday club, if you can do one day, come and speak to either Joyce or myself after the service. It would be great to have as many hands together to help share the gospel with these young ones. But yeah, if you don't think you can do three days, you don't have to. If you can do one of the days, that would be fantastic. It would be great to welcome you along. And then finally, just to say thank you to Reverend Donald MacDonald for preaching and for sharing the word with us both this evening and this morning. And we pray that the word, which will be expounded, will be a blessing to us all. And also to give thanks to Donald for his willingness to be available for pastoral care in the absence of our minister over recent weeks. It's great to know that that is available. So thank you very much, and I will hand over to you. Apologies for taking up most of this

time.

[3 : 59] Thank you. Just to say tonight, Nurse Marion is going to talk a little bit about Malawi and Angus and Christy are going to give an update on their work overseas. Perfect. So for those that didn't hear, for the fellowship this evening, so at half seven, we'll be hearing from Nurse Marion about her work in Malawi and then Dr Angus and Dr McKellar about their work overseas as well. So if that's not quite your appetite, I don't know what will.

So please do come along half seven this evening for the fellowship. It'll be great to see you all. Thank you. Thank you for your welcome, and it's a privilege to be with you again this morning. Let us worship God by singing to his praise from Psalm 25. If you're using the Psalter, it's on page 29, but the psalm will be on the screen. At verse 4, O Lord, reveal to me your ways, and all of your paths. Help me to know. And we'll sing from the verse mark 4 to the verse mark 9.

Psalm 25.

instruct me in the way to go. You are my Saviour and my God.

[6 : 22] All day I hope in you alone. Remember, Lord, your love and grace, which from past ages you have shown.

Do not recall my sins of you, or my relentless evil wish.

Remember me in your great love. For you, O Lord, are good always.

Let us engage in prayer.

May it please thee to bless richly each person who has gathered to this service today.

[9 : 12] Help doctors and nurses.

Help each one of us today to look to thee as we come before thee. And grant, O Lord, that as we reflect on a part of thy truth, that it be relevant and applicable to our individual situations.

Bless yourself unto thou hast placed over the congregation holy things. We give thee thanks for this ministry in this part of your vineyard.

Lord, may the cause go from strength to strength. May the cause go from strength to strength.

And may young and old alike come to know the joy of the Lord in their hearts and in their lives.

Amen. And all we would ask today, we ask with forgiveness of sin.

[11 : 18] In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.

Well, you know, one of the advantages of growing old, and not many advantages, but one is, one sees a lot of change. Two weeks ago you had a minister, Kenyai McLeod, is that right?

When I was youth age, I was under the ministry of his grandfather. Can you imagine that? His grandfather was my minister when I was a boy growing up in Storway.

And so over the years I have seen lots of change. In my first career, when I was in banking, in 1971 there was a big change in the country, in the currency that we use.

And these little coins, we didn't have them when I was a boy. Twenty pence piece, you're so used to seeing it. A ten pence piece.

[13 : 11] When I was growing up, it was pounds, shillings and pence. But now it's just pounds and pence. I suppose you prefer the paper. And today, a twenty pound load is probably something like a one pound load when I was growing up.

I've seen a lot of other changes. And you've seen changes too. Perhaps, come a day, you look in the mirror. And you'll say to yourself, it's not really me. Because when I was youth age, my hair was a very different colour than what it used to be.

So, that's what change does. But you've seen changes even in your main street, haven't you? The shop that was owned by Mr. John Morrison. It's under new ownership.

And a whole lot of changes like that take place. And perhaps one day, maybe Harris might when I come. They haven't done it yet, but they came here.

So, there's a lot of changes that have been in my life. But there's one person who never changes.

And that is God. He is always the same. Yesterday, today and forever. God is always the same.

[14 : 46] You can come to him. At your age and at my age. And he takes people to himself. He doesn't deal with us as we deserve. But according to the richness and the fullness of his mercy and disgrace.

So, as you go through life, please remember, there is one who never changes.

And he can be your best friend as you go through life. May God bless you. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you. For children who have brought under the sound of the gospel.

We thank you for parents who bring you. And we pray that you will touch their lives when they are still young. And like Samuel the whole. They may be heard saying, in the secrecy of their own hearts and lives, Be glory of your seven years. Bless them richly. And be with them throughout the rest of the day. In Jesus' name we ask you. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[16:17] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed so, yea, wash thou me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow.

And we sing down to the end of the verse Mark 12. Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me. Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed so, yea, wash thou me, and then I shall be.

Be whiter than the snow. Of gladness and of joyfulness make me to hear the noise.

That so these very bones wish them, as broken may rejoice.

[18:06] All my enemies, brother, thy face hide from my sin.

Create a clean heart, Lord, renew a rise with me within.

Cast me not from thy sight, nor take thy holy spirit away.

Restore me thy salvation's joy. With thy peace let me stay.

Let us now read from the Old Testament, from the book of Judges, chapter 16.

[19:38] And reading at verse 10 of the chapter. Then Delilah said to Samson, Behold, you have mocked me and told me lies.

Please tell me how you might be bound. And he said to her, If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.

So Delilah took new ropes. So Delilah took new ropes and bound them with them and said to him, The Philistines are upon you, Samson. And the men lying in ambush were in an inner chamber, but he snapped the ropes of his arms like a thread.

Then Delilah said to Samson, Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound. And he said to her, If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and fasten it tight with the pin, Then I shall become weak and be like any other man.

So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web. And she made them tight with the pin and said to him, The Philistines are upon you, Samson.

[21:03] But he awoke from his sleep, pulled away the pin, the loom and the web. And she said to him, How can you say I love you when your heart is not with me?

You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where your great strength lies.

And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day and urged him, his soul was vexed to death.

And he told her his heart and said to her, A razor has never come upon my head, For I have been a Nazarite to God from my mother's womb.

If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man. When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up again, for he has told me all his heart.

Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. She made him sleep on her knees, and she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head.

[22:26] Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. And she said, The Philistines are upon you, Samson.

And he awoke from his sleep and said, I will go out as at other times and shake myself free. But he did not know that the Lord had left him.

And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes, brought him down to Gaza, bound him with bronze shackles, and he ground at the mill in the prison.

But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved. Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to take on their God and to rejoice.

And they said, Our God has given Samson, our enemy, into our hand. And when the people saw him, they praised their God.

[23:32] For they said, Our God has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us. And when their hearts were merry, they said, Call Samson, that he may entertain us.

So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars. And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them.

Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there. And on the roof there were about three thousand men and women who looked on while Samson entertained. Then Samson called to the Lord and said, O Lord God, please remember me, and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other.

[25 : 00] And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it.

So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life. Then his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshter in the tomb of Manoah his father.

He had judged Israel twenty years. Amen, and may God bless to us that reading from his truth.

I understand you now have a singing in Gaelic from Psalm 103 and at verse 8.

Perhaps I should read these verses in English. The Lord our God is merciful and he is gracious, long-suffering and slow to wrath, in mercy plenteous.

[26 : 16] He will not chide continually, nor keep his anger still. With us he dealt, not as we sinned, nor did we quite our ill.

Two verses at verse 8. And we remain seated for this singing.

I am a leader of this singing.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[27 : 52] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[30 : 22] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. The book of Judges reflects a sad period in the life of the nation of Israel.

It is a book that highlights the consequences of religious apostasy. The very last verse of the book, the very last verse of the book sums up the period.

In those days, the covenant-keeping God, the covenant-keeping God, the covenant-keeping God ought to be a source of faith and keeping God ought to be a source of continuing amazement in the face of frequent faithlessness.

As one writer says, the book of the book of people with a God-to-furthest people with a God-of-furthest people with a God-given potential for greatness and an unfailing capacity for catastrophe.

[32 : 53] The latter part of the book of the book of God's life. The book says, three years of this book of years, are set before us there. One, haircuts were out for this person. No razor shall come upon his head.

Two, he was a child of promise. The child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb. And thirdly, he was to act as a deliverer in the life of the nation. He shall begin to save his field from the hand of the Philistines. And so I'd like to look at the first two phases very briefly, and then to focus on the third phase in the life of this man. The first phase is marked by his hair being unshaven. The second phase speaks of a time when the hair of his head was shaved.

And the third phase is one of renewed growth. The hair of his head began to grow again. And that's what I wish to focus on particularly. The first phase is he was unshaved. We're all familiar, I suspect, with the historical background of this man. And perhaps what we tend to remember most are his superhuman feats of strength, which set him apart from other men. These occurred in the first phase of his life. We also possibly remember his amorous liaisons, which left him vulnerable to hostile forces and led to his ultimate downfall. Let me mention just one or two things that he had.

Remember, he had done two of his exploits. Remember, at the vineyards of Timnas, he was

attacked by a lion.

And although he had nothing in his hands, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat. His strength came ultimately from God. It showed what the Lord can and will do through this man. And you may remember how the episode of the killing of a lion provided Samson with material for a riddle. Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet. A riddle that one 19th century free church minister, Reverend John Kennedy of Dingwall, saw as presenting to us the mystery of the cross.

[36 : 39] As no meat could come out of the eater unless the eater had been slain, so there could be no redemption for the people of God unless Christ by his death had destroyed him who had the power of death.

No one had the answer to Samson's riddle. The Philistines, who were desperate to find an answer, blackmailed his wife to obtain the solution from him. They threatened to burn her and her father's house with fire.

And she pleaded for an answer from him. And when she received it, she passed it on. He recognized his confidence had been betrayed and he killed 30 men of Ashkelon. He set fire to the grain fields of the Philistines by using 300 foxes. And he slew a thousand men with just the jawbone of an ass.

And what you find in these extraordinary exploits that are mentioned in the Bible, we are reminded how he undertook these exploits.

[37 : 56] And the answer of the Bible is, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. It was by the aid of Almighty God. So the first phase of his life is marked by his head being unshaven.

Second phase, when his head was shaven. We are told in the book how a woman by the name of Delilah gets him to tell the secret of his phenomenal strength.

And incidentally, she is the only woman referred to by name in the Samson story. And after giving her several false stories, he ultimately succumbed to a request.

His strength, he told her, was linked to his hair and Nazarite vow. And as one American commentator wrote in inimitable style, Samson said razor and Delilah saw silver.

She was looking for money. And again, there was the betrayal of trust. And you know how the Philistines were able to capture him.

[39 : 15] And the sad thing is that he did not know that the Lord had left him. It's the most telling and deeply sad piece of information in the life of this man.

Total disregard on his part for the impending dangers as one who imagined he could deal with all dangers and enemies as on other occasions.

But he did not know, and there is emphasis on that in the Bible, that the Lord had left him. We are nothing and can do nothing without God. And how painfully, Samson discovered and learned that lesson for himself.

It was something that the psalmist saw as a huge danger in his own life. You remember how he pled with God, Take not your Holy Spirit from me.

He understood the danger of being without God. So that brings me to the third phase in the life of Samson.

[40 : 25] Neither I nor anyone else need to tell you that ordinarily, When a person's hair is cut or even shaved off, it grows again. Less, of course, your hair has completely fallen out.

Perhaps you are among those who fervently wish for it to grow. Or you might be at the other end of the spectrum.

And you hated growing, particularly if you are very young and you have to go and get a haircut. Or a bind when you are young to have to go to get a haircut.

Yet isn't it strange that our attention is drawn to this fact in the Bible? Something that is not normally an unusual occurrence.

But it's an everyday recurring event in the lives of most people. When their hair is cut, it grows. And you ask yourself the question, Why then is our attention being drawn to this fact in the Bible?

[41 : 31] It seemed to be a factor overlooked by the Philistine people in their determination to have their sport with Samson.

Personally, I believe our attention is drawn to this normal everyday occurrence to demonstrate how restoration was taking place in the life of this man, Samson.

And when I say restoration, I mean spiritual restoration. God was at work. The same God who calls in mercy and love and grace to his people in the days of Jeremiah, Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness and backslidings.

The same God who can testify in the days of Hosea, I will heal their apostasy. I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.

The Lord comes as a father to reclaim his wayward and disobedient children. For despite Samson's refusal to live up to his sacred vocation as a Nazarite and his apparent alarming lack of appreciation for his vocation, yet we know from Scripture that Samson is to be regarded as a man of God.

[42 : 58] The New Testament writer in the letter to the Hebrews places Samson in the hall of fame of faith. And what more shall I say?

For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, and so on. Some are of the view and would teach that a person can be in a state of grace today and fall out of it tomorrow.

Scripture does not advocate such a premise. And it was certainly not the view of the compilers of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

And I'm sure you're all familiar with the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 17, which speaks on this matter.

For they whom God accepted in his beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved.

[44 : 03] The compilers did not state that people cannot fall. For in that same chapter of the Confession, they go on to state, nevertheless they may, through temptations of Satan and the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein.

And so on. So, three reasons. The temptations of Satan and the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means.

Now you may be saying silently, but that's not me. I would never be like that. Well, don't be so quick to think in that way.

Remember what Paul teaches. Let anyone who thinks that he stands, take heed lest he fall. We need to pray daily with the psalmist, uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope.

Again, the psalmist was so conscious of his own inward sin. Who can discern his ennoys? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back yourself, and also from presumptuous sins.

[45 : 29] Let them not have dominion over me. So, it is possible for such a person to fall far outwardly, as well as inwardly. It does not always happen, but there are times when it does.

And yet, the scripture gives encouragement that those who fall in this way, as the psalmist records it, although he fall, yet shall he not be cast down utterly, because the Lord with his own hand upholds him mightily.

So, you see, our remaining in grace depends not on ourselves, but on the unchangeableness of the elective decree of God, which is rooted and grounded in the eternal, unchangeable love of God.

There is the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Christ, the abiding indwelling of the Spirit, the eternal security of the covenant of grace.

And here in this chapter, the words of our text, I believe, seek to draw our attention to the spiritual restoration of this fallen recipient of grace in this way.

[46 : 46] But the hair of his head began to grow again. In my view, this verse, it's not so much taken up with telling us what was naturally taking place in the life of Samson, but what was occurring spiritually in his relationship with God.

We are reminded that irrespective of how far the believer may fall spiritually and we may fall far, we do not fall beyond the ability of God to forgive.

Here was a man who had flouted his privileges and they were great. A man who experienced the pressure, the presence, and protection of the Lord.

But now he is set before us in the depths of weakness and humiliating abasement. And there are so many examples in the Bible of the expansive nature of divine forgiveness.

David who committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah killed. Could there be forgiveness for such flagrant disregard for the holy law of God?

[48 : 00] And you find a humbled, penitent king crying out for mercy, for forgiveness, and restoration. And what do you read? He received mercy. You find it in the story of Peter who denied his Lord, yet was wonderfully restored and confirmed in the apostolic office.

You find the point illustrated in the welcome given to the returning prodigal son. And if you are a sinner today saved by grace, have you not experienced firsthand the wonderful nature of divine forgiveness in your own life?

This is surely the blessed reality for every person who claims the promise of 1 John 1, verse 9. if we confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. As a consequence of the finished work of Christ in bearing the guilt of your sin, you are unconditionally accepted before God.

You have been clothed with the best robe and only the best will suffice to clothe the nakedness of your shame and the shame of your nakedness. So you can testify to the plenteous nature of divine redemption.

[49 : 27] But there's something else that is worth reflecting on. Whilst forgiveness is immediate, restoration can be gradual. It took time for his hair to grow again.

When a significant falling away occurs in our lives, very often it is not the product of a moment. Almost inevitably it is the result of sinful habits which are perhaps the accumulation of years of disobedience.

And a third factor that seems to be suggested by the gradual growth of hair is that the consequences of sin are not erased.

Samson's hair grew. There was new growth. He didn't receive new eyes.

Remember, his eyes were gouged out. When we repent of our sins although they're blotted out in the sense that we are not held to account for our transgressions, yet we cannot erase the past.

[50 : 43] Scripture assures us that God restores failures, but they are not necessarily restored to former areas of usefulness.

Samson lost his sight. He would never be able to do what he could have done had he not strayed from his vows.

Yes, he was forgiven, but his deviation from the path of obedience had left its mark. And we ought not on one hand to minimize the seriousness of sin and its consequences, but on the other hand not to lose sight of the marvelous and gracious reality of divine forgiveness.

So although his sight was not restored by virtue of his blindness, he was able to do what he would not have done had he been in possession of sight.

God was able to turn the consequences of sin into instruments for his glory. You may be here this morning, and you may know what it is to fail as Samson failed, fallen into temptation, and you may be ashamed if the details were in the public domain.

[52 : 08] Perhaps your inclination was to stay away from God and the fellowship of his people, but you see your hair can grow again. Even in failure, God does not abandon his own.

So when we fail, and you know we all fail, we all come short, all the more reason to come to him to claim his forgiveness and let his healing grace work in our lives.

His growing hair, indicative of restoration, began, but it was also indicative of something else, of renewed prayer in the life of Samson.

Lord, O Lord God, says Samson, please remember me. Please strengthen me, only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.

This is only the second instance of prayer recorded for us in the life of Samson. Now, that does not mean, of course, there were only two prayers in his lifetime.

[53 : 22] The first recorded prayer is on the occasion of his killing a thousand Philistines with nothing more than the jawbone of an ass. I have already referred to that feat.

He did it as I mentioned, through and with the aid of the Holy Spirit. And after such a feat in his desperate condition of thirst, he prayed, acknowledging the role of God in his victory.

And you find this written, you have granted this great salvation by the hand of your servant. Shall I now die of thirst fallen to the hands of the uncircumcised? And God split open the hollow place that is at Lehi, and water came out from it, and when he drank, his spirit returned, and he revived.

Does that not strike you as just in passing as a most unlikely source to provide a refreshing drink? And perhaps you can apply that.

How many times have you come to sit under the preaching of the word, feeling listless, unrefreshed, only for the Lord in his great grace, despite your low expectation, to provide a refreshing drink for your soul?

[54 : 41] Here in this chapter, Samson was experiencing the white heat of the fire of trial and suffering, and he prayed, O Lord God, remember me.

There is no mention of prayer in the prison house. It doesn't mean that there was no prayer there, but it could be that as he reflected on his errors, that his mouth was closed in the presence of an all-knowing God.

Can you follow that? Times when your mouth is closed, and you're unable to give utterance, as you come in your shame before God, so that you're unable to give expression to your need before the Lord.

He could not give utterance to his desires for remembrance, his shame was so great, but note the humility of his petition. O Lord God, remember me.

He was asking the self-existing God, the author and giver of life, the one who quickens, sustains, revives, and upholds, Lord, remember me.

[55 : 55] Remember me in my abject state, in my blindness. Remember me as slave, an object of derision. It's a prayer, seems to me, filled with deep anguish and repentance, and just by reading his prayer, you can hear the notes of his deep sorrow, a prayer rung from the very core of his being.

Remember me this once, for you remembered me in the past, and implied in that petition, I believe, is his full admission of sin.

You are the God of almighty power. Strengthen me, your weakened sinful servant.

Acknowledgement of complete dependence, on the power of the almighty.

He's no longer, as it were, taking it for granted. Let divine power empower me to overcome the army who are deriding the God of Israel in extolling their idol god, Deacon.

And do you note how they gloated? Our God has given Samson, our enemy, into our hand. Their celebrations were to prove somewhat premature.

[57 : 13] How foolish to boast in any god, but the living and the true God, the God of great power.

For great is the Lord, greatly to be praised. He is to be feared above all gods, for all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols.

angels. And so Samson did something he would never be allowed to have done in the days when in possession of sight and when he still his hair was unshaven.

He grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested. He leaned his weight against them, his right hand on one, his left hand on the other. Let me die with the Philistines.

And he bowed with all his strength. And the house fell upon the lords and all the people were in it.

And then the writer states, So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed during his life.

[58 : 20] The result of Samson's prayer immediate and spectacular. It was the prayer of faith. How do we know it was the prayer of the faith?

Because it was answered. Prayer. And yet there is something very tragic in these words, is there not?

The dead he killed at his death more than those whom he killed during his life. It truly reminds us that notwithstanding the victory he achieved in his death, how much more might he have done had he not been governed by his sinful inclinations.

but it was a victory. God restores penitent failures. And how we all need to learn the prayer.

Hold up my goings in thy paths that my footsteps slip not. Let us also take note of this.

[59 : 25] Better being a physically blind Samson, but in a faith relationship with God going into the eternal world than a spiritually blind Philistine entering the black night of an eternal damnation.

The first phase marked by his hair being unshaved. The second phase speaks of a time when the hair of his head was shaved and took the menial task of a slave, an object of derision.

But the third phase, the most important phase I believe, where there is restoration, where the grace of God is marvelously at work in restoring this penitent sinner and bringing him back to himself so that he enjoys the blessing of a faith relationship with his Lord and Saviour.

Let us pray. O eternal and ever blessed one, how great the world and oh how great is your mercy and your grace in arresting the lives of not just the careless and the indifferent, children, but also in restoring the lives of those who have fallen and who of us has not fallen and how we need to know

something of the richness and the fullness of the restoring grace that is to be found with thee. Bless our meditation on thy truth, cleanse and the blood. In Jesus' name we ask it with forgiveness of sin. Amen.

[61 : 26] Let us conclude by singing from Psalm 17 if you're using the Psalter, page 217. Psalm 17 under verse 5.

Hold up my goings, Lord, me guide in those thy paths divine, so that my footsteps may not slide out of those ways of thine.

We'll sing from verse 5 to the verse 9. Hold up my goings, Lord. Stand to sing. Hold up my goings, Lord, me guide in those thy paths divine, so that my footsteps may not shine, out of those ways of life.

I call and have on thee, O God, because thou wilt be here, have thou his hearken to my speech, to me in time thy ear.

Thy wondrous love! thy show the blood by thy heart, say, send the trust in thee from those that up against them stand.

[63 : 54] At the apple of thee I lift thee, and thy wings save me close, from you, O messer's compassing, me round as deadly foes.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit, rest on and abide with you all, now and forever.

Amen.