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Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 00] Okay, this morning we're going to look back at the passage that we've read together. I'm going to focus on two verses. I'm going to focus on verse 25 and 26, so I'm going to read them again.

It's speaking about Jesus Christ, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness because in His divine forbearance He'd passed over former sins.

It was to show His righteousness at the present time so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Now I'd like to look at these verses for a few moments this morning. This is Sunday number 17 of 2018, and many of you will just be here and will have come today as a matter of routine. I know we have a lot of visitors today and maybe it's also your routine that's brought you out to church and to worship today.

But as a Christian in your life and in the life of the congregation, you may be heading into a very real, as every week is I guess, a very real week for you.

[1 : 09] Maybe it's a week of exams as I was praying. Maybe it's going to be a week of long hours in the workplace. You may be able to face a grumpy boss. You may have marriage issues that you're facing as you go into the week.

You may be struggling with drink, with ill health, or with debt, or with doubt, or sexual temptation, old age, loneliness. It might be a great week for you.

You might be really looking forward to this week and in a sense thinking, well, I'm not really going to need God very much this week, and no thought particularly of Him.

And you possibly, and I don't know what we're all thinking as we come together, but as you look at these two verses, you may have read these verses, you may not have concentrated as the verses were read, but as you may have thought, what have these verses got to do with my week that I'm entering in?

What is the connection between our worship here, our lives as Christians in worship, and the week into which we're entering, and the lives that we live? I'd like to pause it from Scripture and from these verses, everything.

[2 : 20] If you're going from here and the rest of your week is completely unrelated to your time of worship and to your life of worship as a Christian, then I would suggest to you there's a serious disconnect in your faith between your life of public worship and your life as a worshipping believer.

These verses help us to, they provide for us a lens through which to view everything in your life. See eventually that you will see this week. Think it was Thomas when Thomas Davis was preaching here, he said that our worldview affects how we live, and this is the focus, the foundation of our worldview, what we have in these verses.

It's going to make sense of the senseless for you in the life that you're living this week, and it identifies you with a love that will not let you go.

I'm speaking to you as a Christian today. If you're not a Christian, that's a challenge for you to consider. These verses identifies you with a love, the love of Christ that will not let you go.

Do we get that? A love that will not let us go. Can you for a moment return to your childhood for some of us? It's longer than for others.

[3 : 35] But can you remember coming home from school from somewhere? Maybe it was, oh I said from school. Yeah, from school, or from playing, or from being out in the street or whatever.

And you come home, and you come home, and you come home to a secure and loving home. You come home to mum and dad. Maybe you got lost during the day.

Maybe you got bullied at school or teased, or maybe something frightened you. And you come home and immediately you feel safe and free and happy, and you know who you are at home. You have that identity. Now some of you may not know that, may not have known that. Some of you may have longed for that. But here it is in the original.

Here is the original longing that that is, even that is only a shadow of. It's in Christ. It's in coming home to our living God through Christ.

[4 : 34] That deepest longing for love, for peace and security is one for us by what Jesus Christ has done. And that is in our DNA to want that belonging and that security.

Can I say no one else can give it to you? No workplace, no relationship. Because everyone else will ultimately fail or die to put it bluntly.

In Christ we have this satisfaction and this belonging guaranteed. Now our default position is to forget that in our sinful nature. We choose very often to forget that.

That's why we're slowing down our study here. And we're coming to these verses and spending a little bit longer on them. There may be a little bit of repetition and I ask for your forgiveness for that. It's important stuff. These verses absolutely are crucial. They take us to the very core of our understanding of God, of ourselves, of love and of death, and of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus which we are called to remember today in the sacrament and which we will be remembering in the sacrament shortly.

[5 : 45] What's at stake? Peace and acceptance with a holy God of love. That's what's at stake.

You know you and I as Christians, we don't believe that life is random. We don't believe it's ultimately meaningless. We don't make our way among the seven billion citizens of this planet for a few years and then die to be forgotten as if that's all there is.

Do we? You know we believe in a holy, loving, just, sovereign Creator God to whom we will all give account.

That's what we believe. He's made us to be in a joyful relationship with Him, that belonging, that coming home, that recognition of Him as the one that we were created to worship in joyful service. Now we've seen over the last number of weeks that Romans 1-3 tells us something very significant that we've cheated on Him, that we've betrayed Him, that we've broken His laws of love and laws of life.

[7 : 00] We've rejected His claim on our lives and we've abandoned home with Him. We believed a lie and we've ignored God's warning voice.

Sin and death has entered our experience and ruined everything. So we've seen over the last number of weeks the bad news, haven't we? We've recognized that.

This has been a long haul, this bad news that we've faced. But I think we're beginning to turn the corner a little bit now, a little bit anyway.

But we have noticed and understood and seen that God's, in the first place, God's just wrath has been revealed. We've recognized that. Chapter 1, verse 18, told us that, didn't it?

That the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness. And we've recognized that that whole concept is hugely unpopular today.

[7 : 58] And it's denied, even by many theologians, the wrath of God has been a pagan idea that it's something that's taken from the pagan gods who were wrathful and capricious and needed to be appeased by all kinds of different offerings and gifts.

It's something that's been rejected by so many. We can't have an angry God. It's just not cricket. It's wrong to have an angry God. It's okay to have angry theologians, but we can't have an angry God. We simply must have a God of love and forgiveness.

But we recognize and see this great thread that runs through Scripture that the God of Revelation is not like the crazy pagan gods of history, nor the crazy power, the power crazed individuals and leaders of today.

He's not capricious and moody and unpredictable. He's not like raging like a spoiled child. That is not the concept of God's wrath that is revealed biblically.

[9 : 17] He's not someone who needs costly and intimidating efforts from us to appease Him in ways that we can never do. This is the God that we've seen, a God of perfect love.

We've seen that, haven't we? Who therefore has a perfect anger for everything that destroys that love. A supreme and without blemish jealousy to protect all that is good in life giving.

A right protection for what is good that needs guarded. He hates evil. Love hates what destroys it. Love hates what destroys it.

And he is his perfect love as well as that perfect wrath. And along with his perfect love, he's a God of perfect justice which we've also seen that perfect judgment against all that is unjust and corrupt in our hearts and in the world.

All that spoils, all the trouble that we're in. He takes his great and perfect justice against that.

[10:28] Now we argue that because we recognize it. We see the shadows of God's image all around us in the world. We do, but we see it in our own hearts.

We see it in our own responses in the rage against the rich dictators who will use chemical weapons against their own citizens.

We rage at the poverty that lies in the dust right next door to unmeasurable wealth in the inequality of that. We see it when someone would try to abduct our child or hurt our child, our brother, our sister, or our mother, or our father, or our friend.

We recognize it when marriage vows are broken. When someone we love chooses heroin, we see it in the proper exercise of the courts of law and in the rightful authority in a thousand walks of life. The imperfect, shadowy, broken, but real image of the wrath of God, the justice of God, the anger of God.

[11:36] So where there is love and justice, there will be anger and punishment. How much more when it comes from an infinitely perfect God, the God who is the author of life and the author of love?

One of our own great theologians, Don McLeod, says, it is the deliberate, measured, judicious, responsive God to our collective revolt against His rule of love.

And God's verdict is, there's no one righteous. There's no one righteous, not one. Romans 3 verse 10, we are separated from the source of life, the source of love, and death is our reality.

And that's kind of the solemn reality of the passage, the passages that we've been looking at, the guilt that is ours, not others, but ours for the living God.

So God's just wrath has been revealed. We've seen that in these chapters leading up to these verses. And guess these verses really in the second place, first of two points that we have, in the second place, the question that comes from it is, who will turn away God's wrath?

[13:01] Who is it that will turn away God's wrath? And that's the answer we find in the passage that we've read. We recognize there is a price to pay for the guilt that we face against a holy God.

Who can placate God's just sentence of death over your life and over mine? Who can pluck you from the danger that you are in and I am in if we haven't dealt with that issue before the living God? Who can do what it takes to make us right with God and to take away that sentence of death? We try, don't we, in lots of different ways.

We try to please God and we try to reach up to Him, but none of us have yet got to that stage where we're able to overcome that sentence of death.

In reality, we have nothing to offer. That's the argument of these first three chapters, repetitively and powerfully and in an ongoing way. We have nothing to offer God. We can't put things right with the living God.

[14:11] You know that theoretically, theologically and even in our mind and hearts and it's taking that knowledge and applying it to who we are.

Our ability to love God and to love others perfectly is irredeemably broken. We can tiptoe into it now and again, but none of us can do what we are asked to do.

None of us can offer God anything. Now for the older people here, you'll remember this coin, the half penny. I don't know how long it's been out of circulation.

The half penny, probably not that long, but wasn't it a rubbish coin? It just made holes in your pocket. It was rubbish. You had 12 pence and then you found another half pence and you couldn't get anything with it.

You couldn't buy anything with it. It was a useless kind of annoying coin. I'm glad they got rid of it. It was hopeless, worthless. But you know, it would be like taking that little half penny coin that was small and light and grubby and smelly and taking it to the bank to offer in repayment for a half a million pound debt that was needing immediate repayment.

[15:28] You know, it would be ridiculous to do that. It's a useless, worthless and now defunct coin. But it would, whether there was maybe a half penny land somewhere or a half penny city or a

half penny town, whether it was valuable, then maybe that would be different.

But in the world in which we live and in the bank that you went to, taking a half penny for a half a million pound debt is ludicrous. And so we cannot make repayment to God with our half penny lives because it's nothing.

It might be okay in our own half penny world, but before the living God, it's a ludicrous, it's a ludicrous solution to try and bring to Him.

So we need to listen to what He has done and act on it, just as He has moved to anger and sentencing us to the penalty of death, which is His justice.

So in His mercy, He has moved to forgiveness by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man.

[16 : 32] That is what He has done and that is what we have in these verses. God put forward Jesus Christ as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith.

That is God the Son comes, and in His life and death and resurrection, He turns the wrath of God away from us.

That's what He does. He becomes the focus of God's wrath on the cross. That is the transaction of the cross. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross makes God propitious towards us.

God looks favorably on us. God is able to turn towards us because His wrath is turned away. That is the only fully understandable expression of His love, as Christ expiates for our guilt because we can't.

He pays the price. He receives the wrath of God because He takes our sin. He who knew no sin becomes sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

[17 : 47] We receive His life which was free from any entanglement of sin, where God was pleased with Him, not vengeful towards Him, where He perfectly lived out this law of love both to God and to His neighbor.

And yet He is the propitiation for our sins. He is the one who turns away the wrath of God and we are to come to Jesus by faith.

He covers God's anger. So, this is the answer to your human condition and to mine. It is motivated by His unparalleled justice and love fused together on the work that He did on the cross.

And we recognize that and it is the most important truth that we repeat again and again in our lives. And as we recognize that great act of love, we do recognize that judgment, the Bible tells us, is His strange work.

And it speaks about Him here in His forbearance, passing over former sins, because we recognize that He seeks to deal with our sins and then move on from that work of judgment.

[19 : 15] And when He returns in judgment on the last great day, that will be the end of His work of judgment. In response to evil, one day it will be entirely destroyed.

But currently, He is patient not wanting anyone to perish. Love is the currency of the new creation that we will inhabit as Christians.

And we are to receive this turning away of God's wrath and this receiving of His love as a gift. It was to show His righteousness at present time so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ.

We are simply to accept what He has done as a gift and accept it by faith. He, His wrath has been turned away.

We have been asked to turn to Him, to turn back to Him and are enabled so to do through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

[20 : 19] And it's a hugely significant thing. I'm going to finish at this point what I started, because I think it's important.

Do you see that what Jesus has done, this magnificent work, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, breaking into history 2,000 years ago in this remarkable way, practical, real, loving, just is the lens through which you must view everything in your life.

All the battles, all the struggles, all the joys, all the incapacity, all the mystery of what lies ahead for us, we need to look at it all.

Our worldview needs to take in this sovereign, powerful, unique God of incommunicable and communicable attributes who is nailed to a cross, who turns away the wrath of the Father and who takes our sin and our death and removes its sting.

It makes sense therefore, as He said at the beginning, of the senseless. That's where we find sense. That's where we find meaning and it identifies you with a love that will not let you go. [21 : 43] Do you understand that truth? Do I understand that truth? Jesus Christ, when we come to Him by faith, gives us a love for Him and enables us to be held by Him and He will not let us go through the valley of the shadow of death, whatever that happens to be.

Everyone else's grip will loosen. Our own grip will loosen in life. Jesus Christ will never let us go in His love and that is a lens we must recognize.

And now as Christians, we will remember. So I want you to spend some time when we celebrate the Lord's table and I'll explain how we do things here, especially for those who are visiting with us. Spend some time just considering that, just meditating on that and remembering that's what the Lord's Supper is there for us to do, is to make us and to help us to remember what he is doing. Now if you're not a Christian particularly, I would ask you to consider that. What is the lens through which you're looking at life? What is it that makes sense of all the senselessness for you and are you chasing a love that will let you go?

[22 : 58] Let's bear our heads briefly in prayer. Father God, we ask and pray that you would bless today and bless this truth to us more and more and help us to understand it and bless our time together at the Lord's table and help us to know your presence and know your nearness to us as we remember who you are and what you've done for us and as we take the elements of bread and wine by faith.

We thank you for them. We thank you for the sacrament you've given. We thank you that it is meaningful to us and that you've asked us to remember who you are and what you have done and we pray that you would go before us during this time and it would be a special, meaningful and powerful expression of our unity and of our faith in Jesus Christ.

We ask it in His name. Amen. Now, just to explain a couple of things what I'm going to do now before we serve at Lord's Supper.

A number of times a year we welcome new members into the congregation and today we're welcoming eight new members into the congregation. And what I'd like to do briefly is to introduce them and give a very short summary of their store, their testimony.

And then I'm going to ask them, we have one or two questions that we ask new members to take or to answer and then we will pray together and thank God for them and then participate in the Lord's Supper.

[24 : 40] And the Lord's Supper itself, for those of you who are sitting upstairs, the elements will be brought to you and if you're a Christian you'll take part. If you're not, then please pass the elements of bread and wine on but do consider what is happening.

And for those downstairs, it will be during the singing of a psalm, the ushers will make sure that you know where to come, you will come forward, take the bread and the wine, return to your seats and then we will eat and drink together.

So we will wait and eat and drink together. So I hope that helps. I'll say a little bit more just before we do that. But I want to welcome and just because I think I've summarized their testimony that they've given to us and I'm going to share that with you all.

I think it's very important that we share testimony. I think it's encouraging and the size of the congregation we are now, it helps you to get to know people and also I hope you will welcome them and speak to them if you haven't already and make that effort so to do.

So we also have photographs of them just to make it a little bit easier to know who it is because sometimes if you're sitting in one place, you never see someone who's sitting in another place.

[26 : 02] So Luke and Caroline Campbell, it's an alphabetical order. So Luke was brought up in a Christian home in Northern Ireland, came to faith at 14.

But like many others struggled with whether his faith was conditioned by his upbringing or was genuinely his own. In time, he came to recognize God's grace is very real in his life and continues to learn more of Christ's love daily.

He's a PE teacher at St. George's and is also involved in Christians in sport. And Caroline wasn't brought up in a Christian home but was brought up on an island, another island of Lewis.

But through Sunday School and the church youth group, she came to a growing realization that Jesus has done everything for her in salvation and she just needed to put her life and trust in him.

She knows that our happiness and peace in God is in God not in her circumstances. Caroline and Luke were married and since he's last summer, Caroline is studying history and religion at Sterling University.

[27 : 05] And you'll find that a lot of these testimonies reflect and share and back up the word and the preaching and the reality of our own experiences.

And then Jen Cooper. Jen also grew up in a Christian home but her early trust and security in Jesus was rocked with the death of her father when she was 15. Now such a trauma always has a huge effect on her faith and Jen was no different.

Anger, frustration, turning away, turning back, all molded her Christian character. She experienced a period of anxiety and depression, various career moves and a change in family dynamics but found a Christian community and friends and folk are who really supported and loved her.

Jen works as a speech and language therapist and has been attending since he's for a couple of years. She's a great blessing to us and knows the reality of a Christ in whom she trusts with such a mature faith and peace even in the struggle she along with us all face in life.

Miriam, Miriam Cowey on the left there, just in case you're worried. Jen was brought up in a Christian home, a man's in fact and we all know what a struggle that can be.

[28 : 15] I grew up in a man's just for those of you who don't know and my kids have grown up in a man's. She went to church out of respect for her parents and believed in God but simply didn't love him or live for him in any meaningful way.

But when Miriam moved to Edinburgh three years ago she stopped going to church altogether but never lost her sense of God and her need for him deep down. Now a broken relationship and a chance and I had that in inverted commas, a chance conversation with a Christian on a tram who was an American and who came to St. Columbus but I can't work out who it was.

I don't know who it was. We'll find out one of these days. Prompted Miriam to come to St. Seas and over these last few months God has spoken to her powerfully through the preaching and fellowship and she committed her heart and life to Jesus who she knows died to set her free.

Miriam works as a manager with New Look in the Waverly Market. Sarah Hamilton. Sarah is another child of the man's. All the rebels are coming home.

She came to faith at 14 and is so grateful for the love and example of her Christian parents. As she has grown in her Christian faith she can testify to Christ in the tough times and the assurance of his love even in difficult situations which for us all seems to be a recurring theme doesn't it?

[29 : 33] Sarah attended boot camp last year and it triggered a deeper and fuller understanding for her regarding her Christian walk and witness which is really exciting. Sarah has recently moved to Edinburgh and works at an opticians here helping folks to see better.

It's a great job. Bob and Chris Anna King. Bob is a native of Musselburgh but moved to North Yorkshire as a child where he had what he describes as a nominal church connections and experienced various church traditions.

Over the years whether in Scotland or Australia or New Zealand Bob attended church with Chris Anna, his wife, without fully accepting the gospel for himself struggling with being unable to prove the truth of its claims.

But recently Bob has come to a personal faith and realizes like us all that he will always be learning and growing as he leans on Christ his Savior. He's found the support and help of city group, a real encouragement.

Bob worked as an archery all over the world until he retired in 2006. And Chris Anna is a Highlander, brought up in a Christian home, went to church in Dingwall.

[30 : 40] Her mum was particularly influential to her as her father died when she was young. She has loved the Lord for a long time and has learned in the good times and the struggles that he is faithful and true.

Chris Anna really values the centrality of prayer and fellowship with other Christians. Chris Anna was a nurse, specialized in ophthalmics, which provided an opening to volunteer in Africa.

Chris Anna first worshiped in St. Columbus as a student when another D-alarment was the minister. So she has a long association with this congregation.

And lastly, certainly not least and definitely tallest is Jake Michelle. Jake comes from California and in the States and is studying across the road ETS.

He didn't have a Christian upbringing, but he was challenged when one of his best friends came to faith and also started to read the Bible because he wanted to argue with his girlfriend at the time who was a Jehovah's Witness.

[31 : 37] Noble. After failing to find satisfaction and meaning in sport or relationships, he turned to the Bible again and through its truths met with Christ. At college and beyond, he has valued the importance of being disciplined well and being part of a gospel community.

Jake has made himself very much part of the church community here and wants to return to the States when he's finished to plant a church and provide support and help for those of the deaf community.

Jake's own parents are profoundly deaf, giving him a real and meaningful insight into the needs of that community. So we're really thankful to God for all of you.

We're thankful to God for the ways working in your lives. And for ourselves as a congregation, you know that once a month on a Sunday evening we have a spotlight and on, well, we have every week, but once a month it's just the testimony and story of someone in the congregation.

And that's a great and encouraging thing. And we love to hear God, we need to be reminded of God working in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

[32 : 44] So I'm going to ask those who are professing just to stand up and answer four questions and then I'll pray for you all and remember we'll move into the Lord's Supper.

So if you'll all stand up at this point, those of you who are coming. And you can just all answer together. You don't need to answer separately. Just have a chorus of, I hope, yeses. Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the only Savior of sinners, in whom you put your personal hope and trust as a sinner needing forgiveness, grace and spiritual life?

Do you resolve in prayerful reliance on the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to live as a disciple of Christ? Do you promise to support this church family and its worship and work with your gifts and graces to the best of your ability?

And do you submit yourself to the pastoral care, teaching and discipline of the spiritual leaders of the church and seek its peace and prosperity as we promise to love and care for you? Thank you.

I'll just pray. Lord God, we thank you for this day. We thank you for our friends and we thank you for the encouragement that they are to us and for the joy of hearing practically the great work of Jesus Christ in the lives of our neighbors, our friends, those around us, those whom we love, part of the family.

[34 : 05] And we pray that they would know, as they have known, a welcome here and would continue to know that and serve you and honor you in all that they do. We pray that you would be with Luke and Caroline, with Jen, with Miriam, with Sarah, with Chrysanna and Bob and with Jake.

We rejoice in the diversity of their lives and the diversity of their circumstances, but yet in the unique and individual way you have drawn them to yourself to share that same salvation and that same testimony of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

And as we celebrate the Lord's Supper and give thanks for Jesus Christ, that is the testimony we all share. And there's that great unity and yet that great individuality.

Remind us of that we pray as we celebrate and remember your death on the cross. For Jesus' sake, amen.