

Yateley Baptist Church, Sunday 27 June 2021

Opening Prayer

Hymn: Praise 2! 65

There is a hope that burns within my heart,
that gives me strength for every passing day;
a glimpse of glory now revealed in meagre part,
yet drives all doubt away:

I stand in Christ, with sins forgiven,
and Christ in me, the hope of heaven!
My highest calling and my deepest joy,
to make his will my home.

2 There is a hope that lifts my weary head,
a consolation strong against despair,
that when the world has plunged me in its
 deepest pit,
I find the Saviour there!

Through present sufferings, future's fear,
he whispers 'Courage' in my ear
for I am safe in everlasting arms,
and they will lead me home.

3 There is a hope that stands the test of time,
that lifts my eyes beyond the beckoning grave,
to see the matchless beauty of a day divine
when I behold his face!
When sufferings cease and sorrows die,
and every longing satisfied,
then joy unspeakable will flood my soul,
for I am truly home.

Stuart Townend and Mark Edwards

Reading: Acts 25, ESV

Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. ²And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him, ³asking as a favour against Paul that he summon him to Jerusalem—because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way. ⁴Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to go there shortly. ⁵“So,” said he, “let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them bring charges against him.”

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⁶After he stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. ⁷When he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him that they could not prove. ⁸Paul argued in his defence, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offence." ⁹But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favour, said to Paul, "Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?" ¹⁰But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. ¹¹If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar." ¹²Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go."

¹³Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus. ¹⁴And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man left prisoner by Felix, ¹⁵and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews laid out their case against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. ¹⁶I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused met the accusers face to face and had opportunity to make his defence concerning the charge laid against him. ¹⁷So when they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought. ¹⁸When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed. ¹⁹Rather they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive. ²⁰Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them. ²¹But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar." ²²Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow", said he, "you will hear him."

²³So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. ²⁴And Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. ²⁵But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. And as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to go ahead and send him. ²⁶But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write. ²⁷For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him."

Hymn

When I fear my faith will fail,
Christ will hold me fast;
when the tempter would prevail,
he will hold me fast.
I could never keep my hold
through life's fearful path;
for my love is often cold;
he must hold me fast.

*He will hold me fast,
he will hold me fast;
for my Saviour loves me so,
he will hold me fast.*

2 Those he saves are his delight,
Christ will hold me fast;
precious in his holy sight,
he will hold me fast.
He'll not let my soul be lost;
his promises shall last;
bought by him at such a cost,
he will hold me fast.

3 For my life he bled and died,
Christ will hold me fast;
justice has been satisfied;
he will hold me fast.
Raised with him to endless life,
he will hold me fast
till our faith is turned to sight,
when he comes at last!

Ada Habershon (1861–1918), adap. Matt Merker

Sermon: Acts 25:1-12 – Trusting in the Providence of God

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today.” (Genesis 50:20)

1. We will be falsely accused

2. We must strive for a clear conscience

3. We must use our rights

Hymn: Praise! 754

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on your side;
bear patiently the weight of grief or pain;
leave to your God to order and provide;
through every change he faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: your gracious, heavenly friend
through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

2 Be still, my soul: your God will undertake
to guide the future as he has the past.
Your hope, your confidence let nothing shake;
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: the winds and waves still know
the voice of Christ that ruled them here below.

3 Be still, my soul: the day is hastening on
when we shall be for ever with the Lord,
when disappointment, grief and fear are gone,
sorrow forgotten, love's pure joys restored.
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are
past,
in his safe presence we shall meet at last.

*Catharina Amalia Dorothea von Schlegel,
trans. Jane Laurie Borthwick*

Prayer

Hymn

What gift of grace is Jesus, my redeemer;
there is no more for heaven now to give.
He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom,
my steadfast love, my deep and boundless
peace.
To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus,
for my life is wholly bound to his.
O, how strange and divine, I can sing: all is
mine!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

2 The night is dark but I am not forsaken,
for by my side the Saviour he will stay;
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing,
for in my need his power is displayed.
To this I hold: my Shepherd will defend me;
through the deepest valley he will lead.
O, the night has been won and I shall overcome!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

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3 No fate I dread: I know I am forgiven,
the future sure, the price it has been paid;
for Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
and he was raised to overthrow the grave.
To this I hold: my sin has been defeated!
Jesus now and ever is my plea;
O, the chains are released; I can sing: I am free!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

4 With every breath I long to follow Jesus,
for he has said that he will bring me home;
and day by day I know he will renew me
until I stand with joy before the throne.
To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus,
all the glory evermore to him;
when the race is complete, still my lips shall
repeat:
'Yet not I, but through Christ in me!'

*When the race is complete, still my lips shall
repeat:
'Yet not I, but through Christ in me!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!'*

Michael Farren & Jonny Robinson & Rich Thompson

Closing Prayer