

But God...

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[0:00] Let's for a very short time turn back to the chapter we had, Ephesians chapter 2.

Like we said, we're carrying on here our series through these first few chapters in Ephesians. And in these verses here in chapter 2 verses 1 down to verse 10, this section of his letter we see that Paul is calling the Christians in Ephesus to consider and remind themselves of what they are, to think carefully about what they're once like and then to remind themselves of the wonderful glorious transformation that God caused to take place in their lives.

He's wanting the Ephesians to be encouraged and to remind themselves of just how wonderful their salvation is. He's still really just getting into the letter.

Last two chapters last week we saw he was just introductions and he's telling them of his prayer for them. And now in chapter 2 he's reminding them of who they are and later next week God willing a week after that perhaps we'll see that he reminds them that they are united, that they are one in Jesus.

So for a while until looking at verses 1 down to verse 10 here perhaps we'll see that in a text we can focus on verses 3 and verse 4.

[1:36] Among whom we all once lived in the passage of our flesh carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath and the rest of mankind but God being rich in mercy because of the great love of which he loved us.

Even when we're dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and so on down to the end of verse 10.

As we look at these verses together if you're here today as a Christian I want you to listen to these verses. Listen as Paul wrote these verses to the Christians in Ephesus so the same intention that we have today listen to these verses and just take time to praise God at what he has done for you.

Have a change that's taken place in your life because of him. If you're here today and as of yet you're not a Christian then listen to these verses also and see as Paul reminds these Christians what happened to them you can see what could well be your situation to.

Remember at all times the Christians here today were no different than non-Christians bar one fact that we know Jesus as our saviour. We have all the same issues all the same problems many of them all the same worries in our lives but we know Jesus as our saviour and that is what if nothing else today we want you to take away from these verses.

[3:22] So first of all he reminds them what they once were what they once were we see that roughly in verses 1 down to verse 3 again I ask if you have a Bible please have it open front of you I know we have it on the screen but it's also good to open front of us I'll be jumping around this chapter and indeed the previous chapter verses 1 to 3 what we once were Paul he gets straight to the point he reminds these people instantly what they once were what were they you were dead and you were dead in the trespasses and sins there's no room here to be uncertain no room here to be on the fence Paul makes clear that because we're sons and daughters of Adam because we're born as aware with sin with defying God as our default position then we're born dead dead in our trespasses and sins we're born hating the God who made us I don't hate God I don't hate God I'm not Christian I don't hate God Paul here makes clear that we do we're born we're born hating our Creator rebelling against him every chance we get now some people will argue that original sin the fact we're born with sin from Adam and Eve or parents or first parents that that doesn't exist that original sin doesn't exist and we'd argue against that but supposing they're right supposing there is no such thing as original sin in the end it makes a little difference because the first time we do sin we still heap all the condemnation on ourselves anyway that original sin brings with it either way either way we are born hating God we are born rebelling against him we're born wanting to do what we want to do the reality is we can't escape this curse of sin it leaves us dead and it leaves us in need of someone to revive us it leaves us in great need of a saviour and in verse 2 we see that we're described as sons and literally sons and daughters of disobedience it's part of who we are it's in our genes it's part of our DNA it's part of what makes us us but as fallen men as fallen women we are born with this desire to go against God this desire to do what is wrong and we know that's true I know that in my life and you know in your life after my earliest years we always go against the rules even the kids story I got rouse I got rouse now we five year old Donald at five year old Donald I knew I was wrong in my misbehaving Biden I wanted to do it was fun a silly example but it's a real example we're born wanting to always do the wrong thing to rebel it's always a looting option for us and the grand scheme we're born the belly against God see I get it in verse 3 we're children of wrath by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind we often hear the illustration that before we were saved we're like someone who's who's drowning and who needs to be thrown at a life

jacket or a life ring that's not the image skip through paints not the image Paul paints here before we were saved we're not like someone who's drowning or someone who's stuck in a bog about to wonder we've gone we're gone long gone we're dead it's not a life jacket we need we're at the bottom of the seat long since there long beyond any human intervention Jesus is not offering us a wee hand up Jesus is giving us life again perhaps for some or even one here today you're too far gone for Jesus to save you you're too far gone down the line you're too far removed by God he has no care for me I've gone too far away I've sunk too low in my sin and my rebellion against him wherever I'm doing I'm too bad for God but we see here but not one Christian here not one Christian in Ephesus not one Christian throughout history was saved from anywhere else but too far gone every Christian here today we were all saved from being too far gone but yet here we are then excuse you have to not coming to Jesus it's an excuse that holds no water we aren't just stuck eating help we're dead we're dead we have no real care for God like we said we spend our lives doing everything we can to rebel against God and verses 1 to verse 3 again and again

Paul just compounds us we followed it says here the course of this world we're taken in by the shiny things the world offers us taken in by the promise of find meaning here surely life has importance if we do this or do that get more money bigger car new phone whatever our thing is that's offered to us again and again and again in the world and we see and we find and we know ourselves we end up asking what's the point what's the point up in the morning go to work perhaps work hard come home some food go to bed next day same thing next day same thing a few years 40 years 50 years perhaps we die we're remembered for a few generations if we're lucky enough to that we're no more what's the point of it all pointless surely there's more to life that question isn't all or nothing surely there's more to life in this surely there's some point to this world to my existence more than what I'm having or more what I'm doing just now the question is why why before the

Christian is saved why do we have this idea that surely there's more surely there's more to life in this that very question that we all have reminds us of one thing that we're made for a purpose we're made for a purpose we're made to do what we're made to worship God and until we're doing that we will never be happy where we are until we do that until we worship God and serve God and know God and come to know him and come to see him as our God and as our Savior we will never be happy I'm not saying come to Jesus and never be sad again what I'm saying is come to Jesus and live your life as you're meant to live it come and serve God and serve a God who made you and who made you for himself you try and live a good life you try your best you work hard a lovely family a lovely partner the rest you have it's all good it's all fine but yet you know fine well there's more without

God we live these lives under this rock hurtling through space a few thousand miles an hour in a cold and meaningless universe no reason no point no purpose we live and die and that's it compare that to the gospel reality that we're made with and for a purpose by a close and personal creator the Catechism sums all this up for us first question what is the chief end of man man's chief end is the glorified God and to enjoy him forever why was man created what's our purpose our purpose is to enjoy God to know him to enjoy him to serve him to love him we're made to worship God we're made to find our full and ultimate fulfillment in him until we're doing that we will never be happy until we're doing that will always be as what's been described in here in verses one to three just following the ways of the world because reality is if we're not following God if he is not one leading us the question is who is leading us we see that here in a second half of verse two before they were saved who be following we're following the prince of the power of the air the spirit that is now at work and the son of disobedience if you're not following the course of God you are following as Paul says here the devil himself that's not fun to read that's not fun to say I assure you don't say this just for sake of it there's no pleasure in reading these summaries there's no pleasure in hearing these things especially if right now we find ourselves somewhere in these verses if right now we are without God and we are away from

[14:23] God and we are we don't know him and don't trust in him if Jesus is not our savior if Jesus nothing to us if we don't believe in Jesus if we find ourselves in these verses if any of this is stuck a cord with you at all then don't let this chance pass you by like we said if left her own devices we have no care for God whatsoever if any of this is doing anything in your minds and your souls then don't let this chance pass you by it's not coming from you it can't the fact we're all here today say something you might be here because you always come to church it's something you've always done because of who you are your family is because where we live here for you it's it's routine but there's no coincidences with God and he has brought us here together this morning not to hear some student talking but to hear his word and to read his word together and his word today is telling you where you are and you are lost about him but his word also as we see in a second is giving you hope so in verses 1 to verse 3 we see the state these

Ephesians were once in and the state right now of all those here today and all those in our lives who as of yet are not Christians dead in trespasses dead in sin without God without hope without peace so what took place in the Christians in Ephesus what took place in their lives to take them from this place to where they now where what has taken place in the lives of every Christian here this afternoon well the answer I argue is it's one of the most beautiful phrases sections in the whole of scripture you see that in verse 4 but God these two simple words contain such power contains such wonderful truth all we've just seen all we've just talked about the fact we're dead in our sins before Jesus but if we don't know Jesus we're dead we are hopeless we are long since gone there is nothing we can do for ourselves there is no one who can rescue us not our friends not our family not our parents not our praying neighbors not the minister not the elder there's not a single person who can rescue you you are dead and gone lost confused and darkness needing a savior all this darkness going round and round and round and verses 1 to 3 and then we stop and we have in verse 4 that wonderful phrase but God by all means I could well read but God because he is holy but God because he's perfect decided that Donald should not be allowed to live another second on the earth and wiped him off the face of it but God because he is perfect and so the sin of Donald he decided had no right of life but God because of a hatred that we've showed towards him showed us no love but what does verse 4 actually say but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and so on.

We said a few weeks ago in chapter 1 when we come to look at the love of God we're just skimming the surface and we're just paddling in depths far beyond our comprehension but as we look at this reality in verse 4 that the love of God for us we have to ask when did God first love his people for those who are here a few weeks ago we touched on this in Ephesians chapter 1 we also touched on this in the prayer meeting looking at Romans 8 for a second if you turn back if you're a Bible in front of you to Ephesians chapter 1 Ephesians chapter 1 just for a few seconds I'm looking read from verse 3 Ephesians 1 verse 3 blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in him the places even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him in love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will and so on.

The love here in chapter 2 and verse 4 the love of God being mentioned when did God first love us if you're here today the Christian when did God first love you was it when you were born was it when you came to him and said I need you to save me.

We found out in Ephesians chapter 1 before you came to him before you were born before your parents were born before this building existed before our island had people on it before time and reality itself but in eternity past your God your saviour that he knew you not a general sense but in a real specific sense that he knew you that he set his love on you that one day one day he would make all this one day he would come one day his son would come one day his son would live that perfect life and die of an essay death and then rise again from the grave conquering sin conquering death but one day as you walked on the road as you sat in your car as you're on your bed wherever you were saved that one day as you sat there and realized without him you are hope without him you are dead that one day at that precise second he would make himself known to you and he would in your experience and my experience he would say he has loved you before time and reality itself all that we have as Christians a good gift from our good God none of it from ourselves

[22:16] John Owen who wasn't known for his short phrases thankfully he had a few of them and one short phrase quip he always said was all that we contributed to our salvation was a sin that made it necessary that's good news good news to the Christians here as we read in our forums we see that the love of God that saved us it wasn't conditioned it's not conditional it's not based on our response to him it's not based on our ongoing Christian lives it's not based on how good a Christian I was this week if it was we'd have no hope whatsoever but God's love for us is based on his eternal plan his eternal purposes that I've gone back forever and I go forward forever all a work of grace I'll see that in verse 8 for by grace you have been saved through faith faith is a means but it's graced as the hard work as it were this is not your own doing it's the gift of God the free gift of God it's the power of God that power alone that changes anyone from death to life not our good works not our efforts we don't come to God saying God please save me because I've been to church once a month or twice a month for every Sunday for the last 20 30 40 50 years God please save me because I know my granny prayed for me every day of her life

God please save me because I try really hard say because I've been a good person I've lived a good life I've done good work I've raised a lovely family I've tried my hardest we come to God with none of that except one prayer one plea one cry one request one question whatever word we want to use we come to God and say I can do nothing save me please please save me forgive me so verses one to three we saw what these Ephesians and what all Christians once were and we saw it in verses four down to verse nine just to verse eight I guess the wonderful transformation that takes place in our lives but all that a Christian has all that we are it's all from God and all because of God and all praise goes to God and it's encouraging for any here are not yet Christians but it's nothing to do with your efforts God doesn't require anything from you but to come to him there's no song and dance there's no apron there's no special handshake there's no special ceremony to take place come to him believe in him and that is the gospel believe that the Jesus has done the work for you plenty of questions plenty of issues to be I'm sure to be resolved and talk about afterwards it's not one Christian here this day he doesn't have questions about various things there's times of that in the meantime come and trust in the God who Paul was talking about here the God who saved the folks here today the God who saved the folks in Ephesus and takes us finally and quickly to verses five down to verse ten that section there we see what we are now so what we once were what saved us and now what we are now and a wee bit of what we are to be in the future perhaps quite simply the state of the

Christian can be worded in a very simple way the Christian has been taken from death to our life from darkness to light simple as that we've gone from being the enemy of God of fighting against him in verses one to three when God intervening and then we become friends of God sons and daughters brothers and sisters to our saving that's no small thing it's a massive work of God in our lives of course we're not made perfect the Christian here knows fine well we're not made perfect we all still sin so we're clearly aware of that fact but the slow and steady work of sanctification that work where the spirit in us that he makes us more and more like our savior that slowly he transforms us to be more and more like Jesus a process that won't be complete until we enter eternity where are we now what we see here in verse six that we're saved in verse six and he raised us God raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus in verse six strange phrase perhaps there for us to read about he's he's done what he's raised us up with Jesus and with him and seated us with Jesus in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus God doesn't just save us as a that's some small thing that itself is worthy of praise he saves us for himself he saves us for his son Jesus is our king we follow him Jesus we are now his people that itself is more than enough there was more to the net it's beyond praise and he was saved as a tall but God saved them and we see he then lavishes us with more grace and more mercy and things are some way just beyond our understanding he raises us up with him he seats us with Jesus in the heavenly places in one sense right now we are still here we must have Christians live lives that that our daily lives we go to work and we come home and we do everything has to be done and that's a good thing God's place is here to do that that's why there's no such thing as as a job that's not Christian perhaps you know wherever you do if you're tired or work wherever you work it's a good thing it's fine work for God's glory and do that for God's glory at the same time right now as Christians we know this is not our home we know we're just traveling through in a sense in a real sense some of us are very aware of how quickly we are traveling through recent funerals here and just a foolish reminds us and should remind us of how quickly our lives pass us by even those of us here who perhaps older I'm sure you agree and testify as other older

Christians do that the years are just gone the years are just gone our home is not here and we know that what our place is with Jesus in heaven as his verse reminds us why does it matter what verse seven so that in the coming ages so that in the age to come literally so that in the next eternity so that after we leave this place and go home to eternity what will happen will be shown the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness Jesus has gone to make a place for us and here we see that place being confirmed for us Jesus said he's gone to make a place and he made a place he will come back and take us to be with him and that place is what is for all eternity Christian here today you've been saved taken from that life of rebellion against God transformed changed your whole world your whole life has been renewed by him and saved and yet it isn't end here as if that's not good enough God then gives us more than that he promises us an eternity spent with him he's not just a nice nice words not just not a pep talk to get us through the week this is God's living holy word we take it as truth because it comes from him so that's true the Christians that the question has to be asked question has to be asked how long you sat in these seats in these pews how long have you heard people up here giving the same message to you there's nothing else we can say this is the gospel it won't change it can't change there's nothing else to be given to you this is it there is a way of salvation in Jesus come to him trust in him reality is he is your king whether you worship him or not right now we all stand before Jesus either as rebellious enemies or as beloved sons and daughter either way he is still your king whether you trust them or not whether you believe in them or not doesn't change the reality of the situation the work has been done for you as we said already come to God with nothing else but the cry that he would save you with the feeble feeble words and the feeble reality that Jesus has done the work you can ever do that Jesus has done all the work there is nothing you can do for yourself Jesus done it all for you he's taken on that punishment for you come and believe stop fighting against him it's not a battle you will ever win don't waste this chance don't waste this opportunity this is so real the reality is that you stay in verses 1 to 3 for the rest of your life if you keep following your own ways keep following the ways of the prince of the power of the air the reality is you will one day end up where he is going where is that prince of

the power of the air going where is the final resting place of satan it's hell our friends and barabists of the faith mission their last ceremony of our night was on hell there was over 300 people in the tent that night 300 people from this island heard a clear and plain sermon about hell it's not to glorify it it's not to be graphic about it it's to share what God's word says and if we never escape verses 1 to 3 if we always keep following the prince of the power of the air we will follow him to his final destination and his final destination is hell hell is made for satan and his angels and for all those who follow him the opposite is true if you come to trust in his saviour then we so hear your final destination it's not in hell it's an eternity with him in the heavenly places with eternal love eternal grace eternal peace never ending joy it's not a complicated decision it's not a complicated situation it's not a complicated gospel don't waste any more time let's spare our heads now a word of prayer Lord God we come before you and we we cry out to you and give you praise that you are good Lord if you have made these always things true friends but if we trust in your son Jesus as our saviour then there is hope as eternal sure never ending hope for all who trust in you all who love you Lord give us the sense to acknowledge that our lives are short our time is short we do pray for all the christians here today Lord you'd encourage them as we read these words you'd encourage them as they're reminded of how you have saved them of how you have worked in their lives we pray for all those here today who as of yet don't know you that you would use your words to open their eyes and open their hearts Lord let them know that we love them that we are praying for them that we're so glad we're here we are so glad that we are part of our community here Lord help us and give us the wisdom as christians to share the gospel carefully share the gospel openly to have no fear or no worries and all these things help us as we come to sing our final item of praise just now we do so hearts and minds full of one of them praise of you it's got all these things for Jesus precious namesake amen.