

By Grace You Have Been Saved

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[0:00] Let's turn to God's Word and turn back to the chapter we had in Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2 and for a short time we can look at the first ten or so verses.

We'll look at the whole chapter but for sake of a few verses to look at, and for sake of a text we can look at verse 4. Verse 4 and verse 5.

But God being rich in mercy because of the great love of which He loved us even when we were dead and our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and so on down to the end of the chapter.

So apart from making shortbread last time I was home we went through the loft and we found in the loft probably our first digital camera that we ever had as a family.

So we took the camera out and we plugged in the wee card from the camera into the computer and we saw pictures that we took just about nine years ago and it was so strange seeing people, places, houses, families who had changed so much, our own family had changed so much seeing people who were no longer with us, seeing people who had moved away, seeing the village itself and graver in the area and the village around the back graver seeing how quickly they had changed and how much they had changed in nine years.

[1:31] It's amazing how hard it is to see change taking place until we look back and see, wow, in these few short months, years, decades perhaps for some of us, how much life and our world around us has changed.

So keep that in our minds as we look to this chapter, this chapter of Ephesians, Paul of course was writing to the church in Ephesus, it's a congregation that we see were mostly made up from pagan backgrounds, they weren't from Jewish backgrounds, almost like a pagan background so they would have no real understanding of Scripture.

So they were a young church, a church who had to learn everything, a church in a tough situation, we found it from Acts, this is a city in Ephesus where Paul did much work, he worked lots in Ephesus, he spent much time there doing much good work there but also a place where he had to work hard.

So this church is from a Gentile background we could say, a non-Jewish background. I'm sure we've read Ephesians and as we read Ephesians we see that it's quite a gentile letter in general compared to some of the other letters that Paul writes to the churches where he's a bit more, I could say harsh in his language, a bit more forward, a bit more blunt and clear.

In Ephesians he's a lot more gentile, a lot more careful in his wording. Apart from our chapter today where Paul was quite blunt and quite clear in various ways and for good reason as Ossili's are on.

[3:06] So we join here in chapter 2, the section where Paul was speaking to the church, he ends in chapter 1 and starts chapter 2 and goes on, he's instructing this church, he's reminding them in the midst of problems they're facing, he's reminding them of who they are, of what they are, of what they're called to be, of what God saved them to be, of what transformation took place in their lives, what they were saved from, how they were saved and what now have they been saved for, if you like.

So as we look at these few verses from verses 1 down to verse 10, I want those who are Christians here to read these verses and as we go through these verses to think yourself of a great change in transformation God has done in your life.

Think briefly with me as we look at these verses what God brought you from, what you once were, what I once was, to how God saved you and me, to now what God is calling you and I to do, what he's calling us to look like as a church, as individuals.

For those here who as of yet are not Christians who as of yet don't know Jesus as their Saviour, as we look at these verses, please listen carefully, listen together, evolve us together and we can pick out and see yourself in these verses and see how God can transform your life completely.

Not just nice words from a visiting student, but God's word, God's real word, God's real promise, of how your life can be changed by him.

[4:58] Let's join together and look at these words. First of all looking at verses 1 roughly down to verse 3, if you look with me, verses 1 down to verse 3 where we see Paul describing what these people once were like or who they once were and Paul gets straight to the point.

The first three words, four words of verse 2, of verse 1, sorry, chapter 2, and you were dead, you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once was, you were dead.

He makes it so clear, there's no sitting in the fence here, there's no deciding what we are. Before you knew Jesus, before you served Jesus, before you loved Jesus, before he was your Lord, you were dead.

You were completely helpless, completely dead. He makes clear here that there's no halfway house, you ever know him in a life or you did know him and you were dead.

He makes clear here that's because you were born in sin. Look with me down to the halfway through verse 2 where we're just following the Prince of the world, the power of the air, the spirit that's now working in the sun, the disobedience.

[6:13] We were just children of wrath by nature, carrying out our desires. We were born just not knowing anything better, we were born just dead in sin.

Now there are some who do question the thinking of original sin and that's for another afternoon, not for today, but supposing we assume that there is no original sin, supposing we assume that doesn't exist, it still doesn't matter.

Because the first sin we commit, we're still damning ourselves in God's eyes, we're still left without hope and left without any help in the eyes of a wholly, completely holy God.

It's clear here that we were born in this way, we were born rebelling, we were born as sons and daughters of disobedience. We were born desiring after the passions of our natural flesh.

We're born doing what we want to do the way we want to do it. Verse 2, sons of disobedience. Disobedience in sin, it's just in our genes, it's part of who we are.

[7:23] Again in verse 3 we see this by nature, children of wrath. We often hear the illustration that before we were saved we're like someone stuck in a bog or someone who's just treading water needing help.

And God comes and He throws his rope and helps us out of our situation. Well that's not the image of Paul paints here. Paul's not saying before we were saved we were just needing a wee bit of help from God.

Paul's saying before we were saved we were at the bottom of the sea, at the bottom of the bog. We weren't just needing help, we were needing new life completely. We were dead in our trespasses, dead in our sins, no care for God, no thought for God.

In reality as we all know here before we were saved we did everything we could to fight and rebel against God. Seeking to go against Him in any way we could.

Like a small child playing up against his parents always trying to find some way to go against and to say no and to defy even a simple of commands.

[8 : 26] We followed, it says here, we followed quite simply the course of this world. It says in verse 2, we followed the course of this world.

We believed everything this world told us. We followed after the shiny things that was offered to us. We followed after all the great promises that if we love this and do this and do that then we'll be happy.

If we go for this and get a better job, get a better, nicer car I guess, and new phone, bigger house, nicer extension, better prospects, better pension scheme and so on and filling anything, finding bigger things and better things to fill our minds and yet for world saying do more and do more and get more of this and do more of that and you'll be happy, you'll be happy and of course we're not.

We're not happy. We're not happy because when we get that thing, there's always that next thing to look forward to. I've got a friend, his big thing is the latest iPhone.

When he gets his new phone, he spends the next six, seven months talking about the next one coming out and saving up for the next phone coming out and thinking you're wasting your time, you're wasting your money on something that you're not even going to enjoy enough before you're waiting for the next thing, the next one to come out.

[9 : 51] And for honest today, we all know that feeling. Even the Christians here, we're all still, find ourselves sometimes being caught in that trap, looking for something bigger, something better, seeing what else we can get and realizing at the end, it's all absolutely meaningless for us.

All the time before we're saved, drowning out that niggling thought in the back of our minds, that idea that there's something more to life in this. Surely there's more point to my life in this.

Surely, why, I get up in the morning, go to work, have some food, go to bed. Next day same again, next day same again, all the time the same thing. What's the point in my life? Seriously, why am I here?

We drown that thought out by doing more things, getting involved in more things. But in reality that thought is still there, that sense of missing something is still there.

The question is why? Why before we were saved, why were we not happy with our situation? Why were we always looking for something bigger and something better? Well, the answer is quite simple.

[10 : 59] It's the answer we have here that we were made to worship God. God made us to know Him, to love Him, to serve Him, to worship Him.

Romans 1 verse 18 tells us the idea that the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

We know God exists, we all know God exists. We all sense that, we all know that. God's word tells us we spend our lives suppressing that reality, trying to escape it, trying to hide away from it.

So to do that we keep our minds busy. We do anything we can to avoid the reality, but there's a God out there. There's a God who made us, a God who knows us, a God we are rebelling and running away from.

Like we said, we were made to worship God. And for those here this afternoon who have not yet done that, who as of yet don't know Jesus, don't love Jesus, you know this feeling fine well.

- [12:06] This sense of, still ask yourself, why am I here? Surely there's more to my life than this. Surely there's more to life than just working and sleeping and eating and watching some telly on the same day, same again.
- No real purpose. Living in a world that just doesn't care about you. On a cold rock flying through space. In 50 years, 100 years, when we're dead and gone, we'll be forgotten too.
- What's the point? That is what the world really offers us. Compare that to the wonderful gospel reality we have.
- That we're made with and made for a purpose. By a God who is caring and a God who is personal. We know it so well, but the first question and answer of our Catechism.
- What is the chief end of man? What is the purpose? What's man's greatest purpose when reworded? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.
- [13:14] Until we find ourselves worshiping and loving and knowing God, we will never be truly satisfied. We'll never truly understand the purpose of our lives. We'll never truly know what it is to be loved by our God and our Savior.
- See, people think they are free of it, God. People think they are free without a God over them. The reality is, we see here, we all have our masters, each one of us.
- We see here in verse 2, where I ever following God, or in verse 2, we are following the course of the world, following the Prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that is now at work and the Son of the Disobedience.
- And what is that Prince? Who is that Prince? Who is that Spirit of the power of the air? It's Satan. Of course, there's no pleasure in coming to this building and coming to this lovely part of the island, and coming to this lovely congregation and sharing these messages.
- We don't do this out of sheer enjoyment. We do it because it's real. It's in God's word. We all have to understand this. If we're not serving God, we see here in these verses, if we're not serving God, then verses 1 to verse 3 still apply to you right now.
- [14:32] If you don't love God and serve God and know Jesus and love Jesus, then you're still, my friends, under the power of the Prince mentioned here, under the power of Satan.
- I think, again, these are not easy things to say, but this is the biblical reality we find here. So Paul reminds him, he begins by telling them, this is what you once were.
- You were once lost, you were once trapped, you were once so far away from God. So the question then is, what took place in their lives to transform that, to take them from that to where they were now?
- What's taken place in the lives of all the Christians here this afternoon? The answer, I would argue, is one of the most beautiful phrases in all of Scripture.
- Look with me to verse 4. But, God, two simple words, two simple, simple words, which of course convey so much truth, so much wonder.
- [15:36] All that we've just seen, all that we've just talked about, all the reality that we're dead in our sins, we're leading lives, and living lives that lead to nothing, we're rebelling against God, we're fighting against Him, we're so lost, we're so confused, we're trapped in darkness, trapped in sin, all this going round and round and round, and then in verse 4 Paul stops and says, But, God.
- And if we're honest, these verses from verse 4 onward, it should, it could well read, but God, because He's merciful, because He's great, decided to wipe us off the face of the earth, but God, because He's holy, because He's just, and His great holiness, decided that mankind should no longer exist, because God is holy, He decided that Donald, because of his sin, deserves life no longer.

What's the verse actually saying? But, God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we're dead, and our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace, you have been saved and so on.

Even whilst we were dead, even whilst we were rebelling against Him in so many ways, He entered into our expedience, and He rescued us from ourselves, and rescued us from His wrath.

Of course, when we come to look at the love of God, where we're just skimming the surface of an ocean, we can't even begin to really understand, even begin to paddle into, but we can see here from these verses, a quick thought of these verses, of God's love from verse 4 onwards, that this love of God, it's not some new love God decided to show us one day, but God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, God not just with respect to side one day to start loving His people, but His love, it is going back and going back and going back.

[17:48] It's a love, as we see from chapter 1 in Ephesians, it's not a new thing. If you could turn a little bit please to Ephesians chapter 1. Just for a few minutes, a few seconds even.

Ephesians chapter 1, and look with me to verses 3 onwards. Ephesians 1 verse 3, the love of God and the favour of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ and every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be wholly and blameless before Him.

In love, He predestined us for adoption as sons for Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His love. The love of which God loves His people is not just some new love, He decided one day to show us.

On the day you were saved, the day you came to know Him as your Lord and saviour, that wasn't the day God started loving you, first of all. Before you were born, before your grandparents, before this church was built, before our island had people walking around on it, before the universe itself existed, before reality existed, we found in Ephesians 1, God knew His people.

He knew you, He knew me and He loved us. Now, getting a reminder around that, it's beyond us in many ways.

[19:12] Again, this short time today, we can't go into that too much, but just the reality of that, it should sit with us and hang with us. The God who saw us in a rebellion, the God who saw us fighting and kicking against, and the God who saw us actively at times, hating Him in various ways, that same God from before time and reality itself existed, He knew us, He loved us, and in His purposes, His plans, He was going to save us.

The wonder of our God, the God who rescued us and rescued these Ephesians and rescued every person here today who worships Him, who rescued us out from our sin, out from our rebellion.

It's not our power, not our willpower, not our desire to be saved, but God Himself entering into our life, not our good works, not our efforts, no matter how sincere our efforts are at times.

What saved us is this free grace and free love of God. Taking us from our life of rebellion, our life of death, and giving us, without any reason, of ourselves, without any merit from us, without any deserving from us, giving us new life.

John Owen, of course, not known for writing short sentences or already paragraphs or books. Occasionally, thankfully, he did write some short phrases.

[20:46] So one of his most famous phrases is a short wee gem. He states that all that we contribute to our salvation is the sin that makes it necessary.

All we contribute to our salvation is the sin that makes it necessary. God does the work. We know this off the heart. We've heard this countless times. We should never tire of hearing the wonder of the gospel, the wonder of the message.

It is God who does everything for us. We are so useless in so many ways, but yet God, for His glory, His love for His Son and His love for us, has done this great work.

Now, there's people here today. And this is the great work of God that we are pleading that those here who, as we yet don't know, don't worship Him, the work's been done for you.

The work's been done for you. Just enter in. And you can join with His sons and daughters here, join the servants here, and know what it is to have God as your Lord, as your King, and as your Savior.

[21 : 57] God gives us new life. He makes us into new creatures. He saves us from the eternal death we were heading towards by our own choice, by our own actions. We condemned ourselves even more.

He saves us from that. He makes us new creatures, new beings. He gives us a new life, all for His glory, all for His incredible purposes.

That brings us to our first section and reminds us what we are now. Quite simply, the state of a Christian can be said like this, we've been through it from taking from death and being taken into life.

We are once dead, once lost, once without hope. God intervenes. He gives us life. He saves us. The Christian now has meaning. We have life. We have hope.

We have a sure and certain eternity with our Savior. This is no small change. God takes us from hating Him, from rebelling against Him.

[23 : 03] He then changes our lives so we now love Him and seek to serve Him. No small change.

Of course, as we all know here, the Christian is not made perfect. By no means has the Christian made perfect under our salvation. I remember as a young Christian, when I first was saved, I assumed as if I'm sure my Christians do, that's me sort of now.

But then, ever again, problems solved. A few hours later, I realised how wrong I was in that assumption. God saves us. He gives us new life.

He doesn't perfect us. But slowly and surely, we are of course being sanctified. Slowly and surely, very slowly, there are eyes anyway, we're being made more and more like our Savior.

More and more like Jesus. God perfected one day when we joined with Him in eternity. So what does that mean for us now?

[24 : 04] Where is the Christian now? So we see that dead fighting against God, verse 4 downwards, God intervenes and He, in His mercy and His love, He saves us.

He takes us from death to life. And look at me, down to verse 5, down to verse 10 roughly. Where or what is the Christian now?

Well now we see we've been raised with Him as Jesus and we are seated with Him in the heavenly places.

Here we see God just lavishing His grace on His people. It's amazing enough that He would save us at all. He'd save any of us. He didn't just save us. He then gives us this wonderful promise, this wonderful reality seated with our Lord in the heavenly places.

There's a whole of our 10 sermons there. We have a sure hope that our place is with Him now, that He has gone as we see to prepare a place for us and He will come and take us back to Himself.

[25 : 15] A sure hope right now that just when God saves us, for now it's forever. It's not just for our current earthly life, it's for eternity. The sure hope and promise we have, that right now our place is eternal, our future is eternal.

Again, we're so used to hearing this, we've perhaps lost sight of a wonder of it. As you sit here just now with your fellow Christians, your fellow brothers and sisters, you are sitting beside people you'll be with from now for eternity.

It's no small thing. My question has to be to those, as of yet, our Christians, how long have you sat in these Jews?

How long have you heard people come and go and preach quite simply the gospel message, a simple gospel, that without God there is no hope for you. Without loving and thrusting in Jesus as your saviour, there is no hope for you.

These verses couldn't be more clear in Ephesians chapter 2. And we can become, with respect, so comfortable in our pews, so comfortable in our soot, so comfortable in our routines.

[26 : 26] We forget how real this is. This is life and death, this is real stuff. This is not just a thing we're doing on Sundays, just to take a box for ourselves in a week. We mean this.

If you don't know Jesus, if you don't love Jesus, in the future, it is not with him. How many times have you heard the same message in these pews?

How many excuses do you have left? As we read a simple message like Ephesians chapter 2, we see God transforming a whole people's lives in a wonderful, free and simple way.

God does nowhere say at all these verses to become Christian, you have to do this. There's no secret hand shakes, there's no dances, no songs, no ceremonies to be done. Just come, trust, believe.

The work has been done for you as we tell here. Stop searching for purpose, stop searching for meaning in a world where you will not find it.

[27 : 26] Stop fighting against the God who made you and who knows you. Christians rejoice as you read these verses in Ephesians chapter 2, as you look back over the years and see how good God has been to you.

What changes have taken place in your life? How God has been with you through every stage without failing, without end, without fault. How God has carried you through, taken you through, been with you through these stages of your life.

As you look back to what you were before he saved you, as you look back and think just how much you despised him, of how much you didn't understand who he was, of how much you ran away from him.

As you think back to that wonderful moment where you recognised the first time his work in your life, that first time where you saw and recognised that the God of the universe, the God who made and sustains everything, the planets and the galaxies and reality itself, the God who right now is sustaining all these things, the Lord who is king of the universe, He has saved me.

That moment, think back to that moment. Like we saw in verses 5 down to verse 10, a reminder that right now your place in eternity is secure, your place is with your saviour in heaven.

[28 : 57] God not only saves us, He promises us an incredible, rich, wonderful eternity. As we carry on this day and carry on this week, keep these things in your mind.

These wonderful pieces of hope we have and wonder we have in God's word, we can rest in the fact that God has done the work where it's a free gift of God's grace that saved us.

We can rest in the fact that yes, our sins are great, yes we still sin, yes we still completely disobey God. But because His love and His salvation for us comes from Him in the first place, our continued walk with Him relies not on us.

Our continued place with Him relies not on us. Our continued assurance of our eternity with Him relies not on us but relies on Him, the one who knew us, who saved us, who gave us life, the one who walked alongside us, the one who promised us life eternal with Him.

Let's bear our heads in a word of prayer. Lord God, we come before you just now and we thank you for your word. We thank you for the great gift we have in it, that we can see so clearly how you work in the lives of your people, come before you as those who deserve nothing from you.

[30:19] Lord, you have given us new life, you've given us more than we can ever even begin to imagine our desire. Lord, you are the God who stepped into our lives and shone the gospel light into our darkness.

I would do pray for any here just now who has of yet don't know you. Lord, you draw close to them and we thank you for them. Those here who we love, those here who we care for, those here who we love as our family and our friends.

I would do pray, Lord, you would show them in your love and show them in your grace who you are. The dear of God who has done all the work so He may come to you and be saved.

Lord, humble us, help us the rest of this day to focus on you and focus on your word. We ask we come to sing this final item of praise we would do so with hearts and minds set on you, hearts and minds where, Lord, we lift you up and give you the glory you deserve.

All things are pressured in the namesake. Amen. Let's conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 40. Psalm 40, Medical Psalms and Psalm 40.

[31:32] A Psalm, of course, of great hope, a Psalm that describes both our sinfulness but also God's goodness. Psalm 40 verses 1 and verse 5.

I waited for the Lord, my God, and patiently did bear a length to me He did incline my voice and cry to hear. He took me from a fearful pit and from a myrically and on a rock He set my feet, establishing my ways.

Psalm 40 verses 1 to 5. To God's praise. I waited for the Lord, my Lord and patiently did bear a length to me He did incline my voice and cry to hear.

He took me from a fearful pit and from a myrically and on a rock He set my feet, establishing my ways.

He put anew, stopping my mind, a God who I defied.

[33:14] Many shall see it and shall hear and on the Lord behind.

The best day is the man who trusts upon the Lord realize respecting all the proud nor sad as the earner's high to rise.

O Lord, my Lord, O many are the wonders of the last time.

Like gracious thoughts to us were found, above all thoughts are gone.

In order none can break all men to the effeminate way I speak of men I would aim more than can be numbered higher.

[34:59] Let's close in prayer. O Lord God, we pray once more. The reality of everyone here, all the tests, the one you have taken us out from, the place of destruction, the place of misery, the pit we were stuck and lost for, you have taken us out of that place and put us on a firm rock.

You alone are the firmest foundation we have. If you are on you, Lord, no matter what happens, even if the earth itself gives way beneath us, if our whole world turns upside down, you have a hope that you will never forget or forsake your people.

I wish to hold on to that hope, hold on to the great gospel truth so your reward reveals to us again and again and to lie on you for all these things. In precious name's sake. Amen.