

18. Partners or Passengers?

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[0 : 0 0] The passage we read in Acts chapter 11. And our title this morning is this, Partners or Passengers in Christ's Mission.

Last week we studied in chapter 10 the extraordinary breakthrough for the Gospel as the wall, as the great barrier to the Gentile world hearing the good news of Jesus Christ came down officially and forever in the Gentile Pentecost that happened in the household of Cornelius.

And it was an immense and indeed momentous high point for the life of the early church. The world would truly never be the same again. But very often it is after just such high points in ministry and mission that a great backlash occurs.

I think I've said to some of you already that a couple of months ago after our great day of reopening of the church building here my mother who was with us said to me watch out, after such a great day as that Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite will make an early appearance.

I didn't know my mother was a prophet but so indeed she was proved to be because in a whole variety of ways all kinds of ways I can't go into these last months have certainly proved to be more exhausting and difficult than I can ever remember myself personally.

[1 : 4 1] Well often we've alluded, haven't we, in these studies in Acts to 1 Corinthians 16 verse 9 when Paul says a great and effective door is opened unto me and there are many adversaries.

And so we shouldn't be surprised that immediately in Acts chapter 11 after all that Peter faces a backlash. And this time it's not from outsiders persecuting the church but it's from insiders exhibiting a problem that was to dog the Gentile mission of the church for years and years especially as it grew greatly later on under the Apostle Paul.

And at heart it was all to do with this. Whether people could really come to terms with the salvation from God that was through Christ alone and by grace alone and through faith alone.

Because ultimately you can only really live wholeheartedly for the eternal glory of God if you recognize that the expansive goal of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ is to call people from among all peoples and every kind of person to be part of the true people of God.

And to really recognize that you need to be able to rejoice and to celebrate the equalizing grace of God. The grace that places you in exactly the same place as them.

[3 : 1 6] Helpless beneath the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's a very hard thing for human beings to do. And it's especially hard for proud and religious human beings.

And you know religious pride is something that we've all got to be very careful about, isn't it? All the time. And all the more so, I think, the longer that you have been a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

We're all prone to pride. So let's listen to Luke and learn what he is teaching us here in this passage all about that. First of all, let's think what this passage is telling us about the equalizing grace of God.

I'm thinking here particularly of the first three verses. When we're actually confronted by God's equalizing grace, will we celebrate it with joy? Or will we, in reality, will we, whatever we might say, will we in fact be full of complaints?

Because at heart, we don't like and we reject the grace that levels every human being to the same place before God. Will we celebrate or complain?

[4 : 29] You see, the answer to that question tells us whether we have really grasped at all what our God is really like. Or whether, in fact, we're worshipping a God who is simply an inflated version of our own person, our own image.

Look at verses 1 to 3 again. Now when the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God, when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.

What an extraordinary reaction to this mini-revival that we read about in chapter 10. A glorious repetition of the day of Pentecost in that Roman soldier's household when new birth and new life flooded into the hearts and lives of those people.

And by the way, let's be absolutely clear here what exactly it is that Luke is telling us about the nature of genuine Christian conversion. This is genuine Christian conversion that Luke is telling us about here.

Notice the language he uses in verse 2. The Gentiles received the word of God. That's Luke's common language for conversion to Christ. In chapter 2, verse 41, on the day of Pentecost, he says, those who received the word were baptized and added to the church.

[5 : 54] In Acts 8, verse 14, at the Samaritan Pentecost, they heard that Samaria had received the word of the Lord. In Acts chapter 17, later on, we read of the Bereans that they received the word of God with all eagerness and so on and so on.

So, to receive the word of God is to be converted, to begin to follow Jesus Christ as Lord. But notice how Luke describes that here in terms of experience.

What did it mean that the Gentiles received the word of God? Look at verse 44 of chapter 10. The Holy Spirit, he says, fell on all who heard the word.

And in chapter 11, verse 16, he explains it again and realizes that this was, in fact, a baptism in the Holy Spirit. That's what it was. Just as it had been for us at the very beginning on the day of Pentecost.

So, you see, to receive the word of God is to receive the Spirit of God is to be baptized in the Spirit of God. That's just another way of saying, as he does in chapter 11, verse 18, do you see?

[7 : 00] That God had granted them repentance that leads to life. You see? Receiving the word of the Gospel means being baptized in the Holy Spirit, means receiving repentance unto life.

It's all different ways of saying the same thing. If you read later on in Acts chapter 15 where Peter speaks about this again, he uses very similar language. By my mouth, he says, the Gentiles heard the Gospel and believed.

God gave them his Holy Spirit. God cleansed their hearts through faith. They were genuinely converted. That's what he's saying. So don't let anybody confuse you about those things.

Have you received the Gospel of Christ? Have you obeyed his call to follow him? Well, if the answer is yes, you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Because only his Spirit can regenerate you, can give you new birth, can give you repentance that leads to life. Only his Spirit can do that. Are you unsure about whether you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit?

[8 : 13] Well, the answer is, have you repented and followed the Lord Jesus Christ? If you haven't, repent, receive the Word of the Gospel and he will grant you a new life through a baptism in his Holy Spirit.

Every true believer in Jesus Christ has been baptized in the Holy Spirit because they have received the Word of God and they have been given the gift of repentance that leads to life.

That's the plain truth of Scripture. That's what Luke is telling us here. And that's the wonderful news that verse 1 contained. The Gentiles also had received the Word of God.

They had received the Word of life. They had received the cleansing of God. They had received full acceptance as holy in his sight. His holy people.

But think what that means. It means that real holiness isn't received by things that go into your mouth from the outside by eating kosher food or being a good Jew.

[9 : 18] It means that real holiness is through something that comes into your heart from outside through the Spirit of God who cleanses you and makes you holy. Remember how in Luke's first book in his Gospel he quotes Jesus speaking about just that in Luke 11, 39.

You Pharisees, he says, you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish but inside you're full of wickedness and greed. You see, meticulous outward rituals cannot make you holy in the sight of God.

But now, you see, he's saying the promise of God from times past spoken through the prophets that's coming to pass. as he spoke through Ezekiel in chapter 36, I will vindicate the holiness of my great name says the Lord.

I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put in you. I will declare you to be holy.

And that's what had happened to Peter and all the other apostles and the Jewish Christians at Pentecost. The baptism, the sprinkling, the cleansing of his Holy Spirit had done what the law weakened by the sinful flesh could never do says Paul in Romans 8 verse 1.

[10 : 39] And he did it so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. True holiness at last for God's people through the cleansing presence of the Spirit of God in those who receive the word of the Gospel.

But then the penny begins to drop. If the Gentiles, the pagans, the filthy Gentile dogs can have that, that means we're no better than them.

You see, that's the equalizing grace of God. Yes, the Jews had had the privilege of knowing the law. They knew all about holiness. But they weren't any different from the Gentiles in other things.

They had more knowledge but in the reality of their unholy human hearts they were just the same. And so in the end God had to cleanse their Jewish hearts through the washing of his Holy Spirit in just the same way as he had to cleanse those who didn't have a clue about God's ways and didn't know anything about his laws and his righteousness until the very moment they heard about Jesus.

God's provision of holiness to human beings by his grace alone is a very, very great leveler. It's very easy, isn't it, for human beings to resent that great well, unfairness of God as it seems to us.

[12 : 24] You see, that resentment of God's equalizing grace lies at the heart of every single complaining spirit in the church of God. Always has done and it always will do.

The root of every problem somewhere, somehow is that deep down there is a resentment in the human heart about the reality of God's grace.

Now that was so evident, wasn't it, in our Lord's own ministry. Remember how Luke records that in chapter 6 of his gospel, the story of Levi, the Pharisees and the scribes. They grumbled, why do you eat with tax collectors and sinners, they said to Jesus.

Well, they are the very ones, he said, I've come to call to repentance. Penitent sinners, notice, Jesus ate with. Jesus affirms repentant sinners, not defiant ones, not proud ones.

Penitent sinners, though, are exalted by the sheer grace of God to the table of the Master himself, our Lord Jesus Christ. Sheer grace. Oh, remember the woman in Luke chapter 7 in the house of Simon the Pharisee.

[13 : 35] And Simon said to himself, if this man Jesus was a prophet, he would know what sort of woman this is, for she's a sinner, whatever that means. Probably some kind of notoriously scandalous sinner in the community.

But Jesus tells that Pharisee that she's the one who understands God's grace, not him. Because she's shown her great love.

She knows that she's been forgiven much. And again, she's truly repentant. She's experienced the grace of God. Or again, in Luke chapter 15, do you remember?

When once more they were grumbling that he associated with sinners and people like that. And Jesus told them the parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin. And do you remember the wonderful joy in heaven among the angels for every sinner who repents, says Jesus.

Notice again, repentant sinners. And he goes on, doesn't he, to tell the story of the lost son to show what that true repentance is and what it looks like. It's turning away from the life of sin.

[14 : 41] It's going back to the Father and saying, Father, I've sinned and I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. There's no pride there anymore, is there? But that response is greeted with great and abundant joy.

Kill the fatted calf. Put the best clothes on him. Invite everybody in. We will celebrate like there's no tomorrow. For this, my son was dead and now he's alive.

He was lost and now he's found. The joy of heaven that one sinner who repents. But then remember, the elder brother, he wouldn't go in, would he?

He wouldn't join the joy. Why not? Because he was scandalized at the equalizing grace of God that treated his moral righteousness and uprightness no more highly than his renegade brother who had repented and come home.

And so it seems it is here in verse 2. The circumcision party, those Jews, criticized Peter saying, you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.

[15 : 55] Some of the Jewish believers, maybe all of them perhaps, couldn't get their heads around this equalizing grace of God. Gentiles believe they find new life, eternal life thanks to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But what they say is, hang on a minute Peter, let's focus on the important issues here. Never mind that just now. You broke the rules. Never mind these mission stories, we can hear about that later.

But look, let's focus on what's essential here. Ecclesiastical matters. Proper conduct. See what they're saying? Our Jewish standards of religion and what we consider to be proper holiness, that's what really matters.

Never mind what God himself has declared to be truly holy by his own sovereign power through the gospel. It's what we say that counts.

It's a tragedy, isn't it? You know, it's very often been quite common in the Christian church even today. So you'll find a church where people are being converted and they're being added to the church and there's great joy that somebody's saying to themselves, well look here, I've been a member of this church for years and years and years and I just don't see why all the focus here should be on these new people.

[17 : 17] What about me? They've never done their time serving and all the rotas and making the tea and cleaning the floor and doing all the things that I've done for years. Why should they get all the attention?

And lots of other things like that. We sometimes have those things welling up in our hearts, don't we? Because you see, the equalizing grace of God is a very great threat to me and to my ego because it tells me that I'm no more important and no more deserving than anyone else.

God is interested in that new person whose life's still a bit of a tangled mess in just the same way as he is interested in me.

And my value to God is only through the very same grace and mercy as theirs. Not my merits or my years of service, whatever it might be. See, grace is a great leveler.

And whether we are marked out by being a complainer or a celebrator of God's work in the church, a resenter or a rejoicer in the mission of Jesus will all boil down to what my view is of my own righteousness.

[18 : 35] Because the grace of God levels us, raises up the humble but the proud it brings low. That's why those who rejoice and celebrate the goodness and the grace of God in others tend to be, don't they, humble believers themselves who can rejoice in that same grace to themselves.

They love God's grace because they know that they would be in the dust were it not for the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. Whereas complainers, whatever it is that they may find to complain about, they don't tend to be people who are rejoicing in God's grace to them personally in that way.

And so they resent it when God is showing that grace to others. They're like the elder brother of Luke chapter 15 or maybe like the Jewish believers here in Acts 11 chapter verse 2.

Well, how does Peter deal with this attitude? Well, in verses 4 to 17 you see what he does is he preaches God's grace to them. He relates to them an account that clearly reveals not only the equalizing grace of God but the expansive goal of God.

And that's a good test. When we're actually made to understand the expansive goal of God will we recognize it or will we resist that? You see, that'll tell us if we really have any idea of what God is actually doing, of what his story is actually about, of what the Bible is really all about.

[20 : 13] It's about the worldwide mission of Jesus Christ. And if we don't grasp that, friends, then we really show that we haven't yet understood what the gospel of Jesus Christ is all about at all.

Notice that Peter didn't rant and rave. I guess he knew that he too had needed a clear explanation from God about the implications of his grace. And so, he knew that that's what these people needed too.

That's probably a good thing for us to remember also, isn't it, when other people don't grasp something that we've already grasped ourselves. It's good to remember that perhaps the Lord has had to teach us quite a lot to get us to that point.

And that's what the others need. So, Peter sets about retelling the revealed truth of God about what happened. And he trusts in the power of the truth of God to change hearts and attitudes in genuinely Christian people.

And again, that's what we ought to do, isn't it? In all kinds of situations, publicly and privately, when people don't understand or seem to be resisting, we trust the power of the truth of God explained and applied to change their hearts.

[21 : 26] So, verse 4 says, Peter began and explained to them in order. It's the same phrase, by the way, that Luke uses at the beginning of his gospel when he says, I've written to you, Theophilus, an orderly account.

Of everything that happens. So, that's what Peter does here. He gives an orderly account. Now, we don't need to dwell on the detail because really it's a repetition of what we read last time in chapter 10, but obviously Luke considers it very important because he repeats it all over again here, using up precious papyrus, no doubt, to do so.

It must be important. Notice again the emphasis. All the focus is on God. Do you see that? In verses 5 to 14, it's God, Peter says, who prepares the way.

It tells of God's providential ordering of events, of Peter's vision and of Cornelius' vision. And it's God who leads clearly to the truth, both for Peter and for Cornelius.

So, in verse 12, the Spirit clearly interprets Peter's dream about the food and declares to him very, very plainly the meaning. You're to make no distinction, he says.

[22 : 34] No distinction between you as a Jew and them as Gentiles. You're to go with them. That's what that dream was all about. And in verse 14, the angel is absolutely plain, isn't he, to Cornelius.

It's through Peter's message and hearing it that you're going to be saved. So, God orders the events, he prepares the way, God gives the explanation, he reveals the truth, and God gives the experience.

He imparts new life to these Gentile people. Verse 15, as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them. And Peter recounts how being faced with irrefutable evidence of the truth of God, he grasped at last the full reality of the expansive goal of God.

His equalizing grace came on the Gentiles, he says, verse 15, just as on us at the beginning. That is, not just as on the Jews generally in Jerusalem, but just as on us, the apostles in the upper room at the very beginning of all of this on the day of Pentecost.

It's interesting, isn't it, how in our studies in 2 Peter, in the evenings, we've seen the very beginning of that letter. Do you remember what he says? He speaks to those ordinary Christians all throughout the pagan world and says this, to those who have obtained the faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

[24 : 08] That's what Peter learned that day in Cornelius' house. And he never forgot it, that their faith was of equal standing even with the Jewish apostles of Jesus. It's true, Peter did sometimes, it seems, forget the implication of that fact.

Read Galatians chapter 2. But he saw the implication of it here very clearly indeed. Look at verse 17. God has welcomed these Gentiles into his family.

He's given them the same gift as to us at the beginning, regardless of circumcision or uncircumcision, kosher food laws or no food laws, Jewish parentage or no Jewish parentage.

God has welcomed them in the same way as he welcomed us. So either either we recognize the expansive goal of God come to fruition in the gospel of Jesus Christ and we also welcome them into the visible family of the church as full brothers and sisters of equal status with ours.

Either that or we resist, says Peter, verse 17. We find ourselves standing in God's way.

[25 : 21] God's way. You see, if the chief purpose of God in our age, the age we live in between Christ's resurrection and his second coming, if his number one priority until Jesus returns is to draw into his family, people of every background and tribe and nation, then either we're going to rejoice in that and that will become the absolute number one priority in our life and in our church life, or we're going to be standing in God's way, even by being just half-hearted and our welcome for new Christians, or by putting obstacles in their way to make it hard for them to join in the family of God with us, or by being disinterested, or by just thinking that evangelism isn't such a priority for us compared with our own ideas of church order, or whatever it might be.

That's a real challenge, isn't it, to those in the church today who have a pluralist view, who say that non-Christians, people from a different religious background, for example, should be left alone and don't need evangelism.

No, that would be to stand in God's way, wouldn't it? Cornelius was the very best of the best of men, men. But he needed to be told the truth that was in Jesus.

He needed the life and the spirit that only comes from those who receive the word of God. He needed the gospel to go to him. A real challenge, if that's what you think.

But let me say it's also a very real challenge to reformed evangelical Christians and churches like ours. Sometimes people seem to think, you see, that God will accomplish his work by his sovereign power alone without us needing to have a part in it.

[27 : 22] Or perhaps that all we need to do for our part is to pray to God that he'll bring in his harvest. Sometimes people think that, well, really our main focus is simply to focus on ourselves and to perpetuate the faith in our own families by bringing up our children as Christians, which of course we should and must do.

But we're interested in that, but not especially interested in evangelism, in the outsider. Well, if you think that's so, listen to Charles Spurgeon, the Calvinistic Baptist preacher of the 19th century.

You may have sound doctrine, he says, and yet do nothing unless you have Christ in your spirit. And he goes on to talk about churches that are full of sound doctrines of grace, but have none of the passion, none of the rejoicing in the equalizing, expansive grace of God.

Well, you might hear lots of sermons that he says are full of all that truth, but speak of sinners as people who God might possibly gather if he thinks fit to do so, but we don't really much care whether he does or not.

See, that seems to be, doesn't it, the spirit of Acts 11, verse 2, where God can do this, but we don't much care whether he can or not. What a tragedy.

[28 : 50] Nobody has the right to talk endlessly about the doctrines of the grace of God unless their heart also pulses with the wonderful, expansive goal of God and of his great grace going out to people of every tribe and tongue and nation and every background and every type to draw to himself all who will be saved.

You see, that is what glorifies God above all other things. And that's our last heading, the eternal glory of God.

In the chips are down, will we really be true partners with God's spirit in the eternal glorification of God, in his expansive goal of drawing all peoples and nations to bow before him as the ruler of all?

Will we be real partners in that or, having found that grace ourselves, will we be content just to be passengers? You see, the answer to that will tell us whether we've really grasped what our own purpose is as Christian believers living in this world.

God's goal of God. That we are here above all things to glorify God and to enjoy him forever, as the catechism says, through our part in the expansive goal of his wonderful grace.

[30 : 16] Verse 18, you see, says, when they heard these things, they fell silent. Their complaints stopped. What could they say? Here was irrefutable evidence of God's goal of sheer grace to draw all people to himself.

They had nothing to say. Peter had absolutely put their gas at a peep. And they glorified God, we're told, saying, also the Gentiles, or as the NIV has it, so even to the Gentiles, God has granted repentance that leads to life.

And at least they seemed to finally accept the truth officially that God had set the Gentiles in exactly the same place as them, justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

And it was a critical thing, it was, for the future of the church, even though it would take time and indeed a lot more controversy before that truth really did win out and prevail in practice. But that fact, I think, that it did take so long, I think it means we have to wonder just what tone of voice verse 18 really would have been spoken in.

Did they accept and praise God gladly? Or was it a rather grudging acceptance of the truth? Can't deny it, but can't really delight in it either.

[31 : 44] Howard Marshall has this salutary comment in his commentary. As the next section of Acts will show, the initiative in the Gentile mission passed to Antioch. And it's not clear how far the church at Jerusalem was prepared to follow Peter's lead.

We should not take verse 18 to imply that the church in Jerusalem forthwith entered zealously into a mission to the Gentiles. Indeed, it never seems to have done so. And as a result, it lost its importance in the course of time.

See, it's quite possible to be accepting in theory of all of this. The doctrine of God's equalizing grace, the goal of his grace and glory, that God can and does draw sinners to himself from all backgrounds and all peoples.

It can be possible to accept all of that in theory, but at heart, not really to be all that affected by it. You can be taken up greatly with such doctrines of the grace of God.

In fact, you can be very zealous for it, and zealous for the sovereign grace of God in salvation, and indeed zealous about the uniqueness of Christ as the only Savior.

[32 : 58] And yet, you can still have in your heart no real zeal or love that longs to see the outsider brought into the midst and find that life that's in Jesus.

You can even be a preacher of these things. You can be greatly concerned to be sound and to be right in your truth and in your doctrine. And if God doesn't seem to do anything and nobody much seems to be saved, well, you say, well, it's not up to me.

It's up to God. He's sovereign. All I have to do is be faithful and go home and not really worry about it at all. Listen to Charles Spurgeon again.

When love dies, orthodox doctrine becomes a corpse, a powerless formalism. Adhesion to the truth sours into bigotry when the sweetness and light of love to Jesus departs.

Lose love, lose all. So I've got on my own wall in this study the question, one of the questions I answered at my ordination service into the ministry.

[34 : 06] It says this, I know zeal for the glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire for the salvation of man. As far as you know your own heart, your chief inducements and great motives to enter the office of the holy ministry.

Because I need to remember that all the time. All the time. Because the zeal for God's glory can't be apart from love.

Love to the Lord Jesus Christ, which itself is expressed in a desire for the chief love of the Lord Jesus. The desire for the salvation of men and women and boys and girls.

God's glory. Because that expansive goal is what is going to bring His eternal glory forever and ever. Friends, we as a church, we also need to remember that always.

As do all evangelical and reformed churches. Especially, especially at a time we're engaged in defending the truth against error. The truth of the gospel against falsehood.

[35 : 12] Listen to Spurgeon once again. When Calvinism ceases to be evangelistic. When it becomes more concerned with theory than with the salvation of men and women. When acceptance of doctrines seems to be more important than acceptance of Christ.

Then it is a system going to seed. And it will inevitably lose its attractive power. Lose love.

Lose all. So don't let us as reformed evangelical churches seeking to defend the truth in our denomination. Don't let us ever forget that.

The zeal for the salvation of men and women. Lose love, we lose all. Everything. True, we must cherish the truth and be realistic.

And we must read Revelation 1-3 and take Christ's warning to his churches as absolutely serious. There is a real danger that when a church or a group of churches or a denomination, when it fails to repent, when it fails to return to the truth, when it tolerates gross error and sin, then the Lord of the church will ultimately remove his lampstand from the midst.

[36 : 28] That is true. It's a fact of history. Every one of those churches spoken to in those letters was destroyed. And our nation could so easily go that same way.

In fact, it seems to be increasingly certain that within a generation it will be so. But we also always need to observe the facts that the book of Acts revealed to us too.

That the Jerusalem church, in spite of its acceptance of these true doctrines, also lost its significance in history. All the missionary initiative moved from Jerusalem to the church at Antioch.

It was from there, from Antioch, a Gentile church, that all the mission to the rest of the world began and took place. We can't be dogmatic, but it does seem to have been an Esther 4 verse 14 situation, that God simply brought deliverance to his people from another place, and bypassed the church in Jerusalem, the church with all the history, with all the credentials, because it had none of the zeal, none of the joy and the gladness at the goal of God's great equalizing grace.

And that can still happen today, you know, to churches as well as to individual Christians. And it all comes down in the end to whether at heart we, you and I, really believe that life and time and history and everything is all about Christ, or whether actually at heart it's just all about me.

[38 : 16] We can use the same words, we can do the same things outwardly and say the same things in our creeds, but inwardly it's all the difference in the world. People who are real partners in Christ's mission of glory are those who rejoice in his wonderful expanse of purposes of grace.

They're people who celebrate that grace at work in other people because they have known deep within themselves the abundant grace of God at work in their own lives, despite their own unworthiness, despite their own sin.

And so they're like the woman who anointed Jesus they love his grace. They love his mercy because they've known it great and greatly in their own lives.

Those who are just passengers deep down friends it's because they resent the equalizing grace of God because they've got far too high a view of themselves.

they can't stand the fact that others should be raised up and receive the same honors that they've received. So what about you and me?

[39 : 33] Are we partners in the expansive goal of the eternal glory of God through his wonderful equalizing grace made known in Jesus Christ?

Are we? It'll all come down to how we view God's grace whether we rejoice in it or whether we really resent it.

And the key lies I guess as to how in your own experience in your own life you find yourself saying the equivalent of those words in verse 18 even the Gentiles God has granted repentance to life.

Is it like this? Even him even him a real Christian real forgiveness I can't believe it I won't believe it. Or is it like this?

Even me even me a real Christian really forgiven and accepted by God as holy I can hardly believe it.

[40 : 39] Praise be through his wonderful amazing grace it's true. I hope with you and me it's always that latter way because only if it is can we really join the joy of the angels in heaven over every sinner who repents and be a true partner in the eternal glory of our Lord Jesus Christ through his wonderful amazing equalizing grace.

Well let's pray. Oh to grace how great a debtor daily I am constrained to be.

Lord let us not ever be people with hearts hardened to your grace that we should find ourselves standing in the way of your great and gracious purpose for men and women and boys and girls of every tribe and language and people and nation from every background high and low from every life whether straightforward and easy or desperately broken and complex and marred oh help us we pray to revel in your amazing grace and to live so as to make it abundantly flow to others the glory eternally of your great name Amen

Amen Amen