

The Plight of Man and the Power of God

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[0 : 00] And indeed we're going to turn now to our Bibles and to read together in Ephesians chapter 2. If you need a Bible, there's some I think at the sides, at the front, at the back.

Have a wander around, you'll see one. Pick one up and follow along. And we're reading this evening in Ephesians chapter 2 and the first section of the first 10 verses.

And following on from chapter 1 and Paul's thanksgiving, his prayer, and telling us of God's marvelous purpose fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who's the head over all things for the church.

He goes on to press home what the meaning of that is for those of us who once were dead. And you, he says, were dead.

Dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. Following the course of this world. Following the prince of the power of the air.

[1 : 10] The spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh. Carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind.

And were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. But God being rich in mercy. Because of the great love with which he loved us.

Even when we were dead in our trespasses. He made us alive together with Christ. By grace you've been saved. And raised us up with him.

And seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So that in the coming ages. He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace.

In kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you've been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing.

[2 : 15] It's the gift of God. Not as a result of works. So that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Which God prepared before him. That we should walk in them. Amen. And may God bless to us. This is his marvelous word. Well good evening friends. Let's turn to our passage for this evening. Ephesians chapter 2.

And you'll find this on page 976. If you have the hard. Hardback Bible. The red Bible. Ephesians chapter 2. And verses 1 to 10.

Is our passage for this evening. Now this is. A famous. Bible passage. It has been much studied. Much delighted in.

[3 : 10] Much preached upon. And the reason for its fame. Is that it is both beautiful. And radical. It's lyrically beautiful.

And yet. Devastatingly radical. Because it goes unerringly. To the root. Of mankind's problem. It shows us our problem. And it shows us God's answer.

To the problem. So my title for this evening is. The plight of man. And the power of God. The plight of man. The great difficulty. In which we find ourselves.

That's described by the apostle Paul. In verses 1, 2 and 3. And the power of God. Expressed in grace. And mercy. And love. Is unfolded in verses 4 to 10.

Now we'll understand. These 10 verses. Better. If we can see. How they fit into the development. Of Paul's message. In Ephesians. When you get a transition. From one chapter to another.

[4 : 08] And in this case. You see a big figure 2. In the text. You naturally assume. That there's some kind of gear change. In Paul's thinking. And that he's taking off. In a new direction.

Well that is true sometimes. But it's certainly not true here. This first part of chapter 2. Grows straight out of the last section. Of chapter 1. You'll see it even begins.

With the word and. Which is a clear clue. That Paul has not paused. Even to draw breath. Let alone change tack. Into a new direction. So what is Paul doing.

And how do these two chapters. Fit together. Well glance back. If you will. To chapter 1. Verses 15 to 23. Which we were studying. Last week. In these verses.

Paul is telling the Ephesian Christians. In what terms. He is praying for them. And we noticed. That the heart of his prayer. For them. Is that they should come. To know God better.

[5 : 03] And in particular. That they should come. To understand. Three things. About him. First. Chapter 1. Verse 18. That they should know. The hope. To which God has called them.

Secondly. Still in verse 18. That they should know. The riches of his glorious. Inheritance in the saints. And thirdly. In verse 19. That they should know.

The immeasurable greatness. Of his power. Towards us. Who believe. And then Paul tells us. What this power is like. He says. It's the same power.

Verse 20. The same power. That God worked. In Christ. When he raised him. From the dead. And seated him. At his right hand. In the heavenly places. Demonstrating. Christ's supreme authority. Over the universe. And over the church. So God's power. In his ability. In his ability. To take the corpse. Of Jesus. To raise Jesus.

[5 : 59] To new life. Of a kind. That is no longer. Subject to death. And then to exalt. The risen Jesus. To the place. Of supreme power. And authority. At God's right hand.

In heaven. And that power. Says Paul. To the Ephesians. Is the very power. That is at work. In us. Who believe. It's the power. To take dead. Human beings.

To raise them. To life. Of a kind. That is no longer. Subject to death. And to take them. To heaven. And place them. With Christ. In a position. Of supreme. Authority. Now this is exactly.

The same pattern. That we see. In these early verses. In Ephesians chapter 2. Just look with me. At verse 1. And you. You Ephesians. You were dead. For reasons.

Which we'll come back to. In just a moment. But what has happened. To you. Who were dead. Look at verse 5. God. Even when we were dead.

[6 : 55] In our trespasses. Made us alive. Together with Christ. And verse 6. Raised us up with him. And seated us with him. In the heavenly places. In Christ Jesus.

So do you see. It's exactly the same pattern. Dead. Brought to life. Raised up. And seated in the heavenly places. In Christ Jesus. And just notice.

The connection. Between the Ephesians. And the Lord Jesus. It couldn't be closer. Verse 5. Made us alive. Together with Christ. Verse 6.

Raised us up. With him. And seated us. With him. In the heavenly places. In Christ Jesus. You can't get the width. Of a cigarette paper. Between Jesus.

And those who belong to him. The key thing. To understand here. Is that Christians are in him. Bound to him. Incorporated into his very being. We are part of him.

[7 : 51] We are his body. So what has happened to him. Has also happened to us. Who believe in him. Because we are in him. Up to the neck. Up to the ears.

Up to the very hairs of our head. We are incorporated into him. If we're Christians. Now it's the tenses. Of the verbs. That can make this hard. To understand.

Look at chapter 2. Verse 6. God raised us up. With him. And seated us with him. In the heavenly places. In Christ Jesus. These are past tenses.

And we look at ourselves. And we say. Well this clearly. Hasn't happened to us yet. We have not yet. Been raised up. Or seated in heaven. We're seated.

Yes. But on the good old. Black Tron Church chairs. In Glasgow. Perhaps Paul should have written. We will be raised up. And we will be seated. In the heavenly places. In due course.

[8 : 48] Now Paul does use. Future tenses. About these things. In some places. In his letters. For example. In 1 Corinthians 15. He writes. The trumpet will sound.

And the dead. Will be raised. Imperishable. And we shall be changed. So how can Paul write. In one place. That we will be raised. But in another.

That we have been raised. Well the answer is. That he's looking at these things. In different contexts. In 1 Corinthians 15. He's talking about. The chronological progression.

Of history. This follows this. And then that will happen. We are at present. In our perishable mortal bodies. But we will be raised. Imperishable.

And our mortal bodies. Will put on immortality. That's a matter of. Chronology or history. It's one thing happening. After another. But here in Ephesians 2.

[9 : 43] Paul is not talking. Chronology and history. He's talking about. Our eternal identity. And eternity. Trump's history. And will outlast history.

Ephesians 2 verse 6. Is talking about things. Which from an eternal perspective. Are already true. Are already in place. Christ. So the Christian.

So the Christian. Is able to say. I will be raised. At the end of history. But I've already been raised. In terms of my eternal. Identity. Because Christ.

Has been raised. From the dead. And because I am. In him. With an indissoluble union. I have already. The identity. Of a raised believer. Who is already seated.

In the heavenly places. So. I will be raised. With a bodily resurrection. Which has not yet happened. That's on the level of history. But I have been raised.

[10 : 38] In God's eternal perspective. Because Christ. Has been raised. And I belong to him. And I'm in him. Let me give you. An illustration. Which might be helpful.

Imagine a Scotsman. Who is working abroad. And he gets into trouble. And finds himself captured. And forcibly taken away. To some.

Desolate freezing place. Like the far end of Siberia. Where he's put to forced labor. And escape is simply impossible. Now this Scotsman.

Is as Scottish. As William Wallace. Or Robert the Bruce. If he cuts his finger. His very blood runs tartan. He can trace his ancestry. Back a thousand years.

And there's never a drop. Of English blood. Anywhere. In his family tree. Now where does this man belong. Where is his heart. Well. At one level.

[11 : 33] His heart is in Siberia. Inevitably. So his arms. And his legs. And his liver. And his kidneys. But at another level. His heart is in Glasgow. If he could just get to George Square.

He'd kiss the feet. Of the very statues. And the horses there. He's in one place. As a matter of history. But his real identity. Is in a very different place. He's not in Glasgow.

But his heart. Is in Glasgow. So it is with the Christian. At one level. The Christian is very much. On earth. And has not been raised from the dead.

Because he hasn't even died yet. But at another level. The level of eternity. The Christian is in Christ. In dissolubly. And therefore has died with Christ. Has been raised with Christ.

And is already seated with him. In the heavenly places. So the point I'm trying to make here. Before we really get into the text. Is that the pattern set by Jesus.

[12 : 30] Is what theologians would call. The pattern of his death. His resurrection. His ascension. And his heavenly session. Session simply means being seated. And that pattern is mirrored.

In the experience of all Christians. And incidentally. This shows us what it means. To follow Jesus. We don't follow Jesus. In the way that a football fan.

Follows Manchester United. If you're a Manchester United fan. You follow the club's progress. With great interest. You perhaps even get to see. A few games every year.

But you're not on the pitch. Doing what the players are doing. You're just observing. From a safe distance. You're separate from the action. You're an armchair critic.

But with Jesus. We are not separate. From the action. We're involved in it. Up to the hilt. As he was. So are we. So for example.

[13 : 26] He was hated by the world. So shall we be. He was crucified. And really died a physical death. So shall we. Be. Unless he returns in the near future.

And he was raised from the dead. As we shall be. And he was taken up to heaven. As we shall be. And he was seated there. On a prince's throne. A king's throne.

At the right hand of God. As we shall be too. If we're Christians. We follow him. We follow the very pattern. That he set for us. Well let's turn now to the details.

As I said earlier. The passage falls into two sections. First in verses 1, 2 and 3. The plight of man. Without God. Is described. And then secondly.

In verses 4 to 10. Paul tells us about the power of God. Who brings new life. And salvation. To all who turn to him. And to the Lord Jesus. In trust.

[14 : 24] Christ. So first of all. The plight of man. In verses 1, 2 and 3. Paul is describing. The actual state. Of the human race.

As it has been. Ever since Adam and Eve. Were driven from Eden. It's a description. Which many people. On first reading it. Would find unbelievable. Because it appears to be.

So damning. So bleak. There isn't a ray of light. Or joy. In it. The light and the joy. Come flooding in. From verse 4 onwards. But verses 1 to 3.

Come to us. As a shocking diagnosis. Of the human condition. We look at this. And we say. Is it really. As dreadful as this. Paul's reply.

Would be. Yes it is. And we need to accept. The diagnosis. This truth about ourselves. Before we'll be able. To benefit. From God's loving response. To our problem.

[15:22] Think of it. As you might think of. A diagnosis. Of serious. Life-threatening illness. You're not well. You go to the doctor.

And the doctor. Sends you for tests. To the hospital. And after the tests. Are completed. The consultant. The senior doctor. Sits you down. In his office. And he says to you. The tests show. That you are seriously. Unwell. Your condition. Is life-threatening. And if nothing is done. You won't see Christmas. But you will recover. If you're willing.

To undergo surgery. And a program. Of rehabilitation. And you say to him. Doctor. It can't be as bad. As all that. Look. I'll just take paracetamol.

For a fortnight. And I'll be okay. He says. You will not be okay. Friends. We need to accept. Paul's diagnosis. Of the human condition.

[16:16] Because ultimately. This is God's. Diagnosis. Of reality. Paul's words. Are expressing. His own thought. But much more importantly. They're expressing. God's thinking.

Because Paul. Is Christ's apostle. And he speaks. With all the authority. Of Jesus. So what is. The diagnosis. First. Humanity.

Without Christ. Is dead. Verse one. And you were dead. In the trespasses. And sins. In which you once walked. Paul writes elsewhere.

That the wages of sin. Is death. Which is another way. Of putting the same thing. And notice these two words. Trespasses. And sins. Trespassing.

Involves crossing. A known boundary. Leaving the right path. And going into forbidden territory. And the word sin. Means falling short.

[17:11] Of a true standard. To trespass. Is to transgress. A standard. To sin. Is to fall short. Of it. So these two words.

Cover all the wrong. That we can do. And all the right. That we fail to do. And the result. Is that we are by nature. Dead. In God's sight.

If you were to turn over. To chapter four here. Chapter four. And verse 18. In Ephesians. You'll see a phrase. Which helps us to understand this. A little bit better. In the middle of verse 18.

It's the phrase. Alienated. From the life of God. Our natural condition. Is that we are estranged. From him. The life of God.

Is simply beyond our reach. Now someone who is not a Christian. Might say. I don't feel dead. At all. In fact.

[18:05] I feel pretty full of life. I go running in the park. I read books. I work for my company. I enjoy my food. Well yes. True. But Paul is not talking about human life.

In that way. He's not talking about our powers. Of body and mind. He's talking about the most important thing. He's talking about our soul. And a person who is not a Christian.

Has no life there. And it's obviously so. He doesn't want to know God. He doesn't want to love and serve the Lord Jesus. He has no interest in listening to God.

And therefore no interest in reading the Bible. He and God are strangers. He is alienated. From the life of God. Yes he's alive in this world.

But towards God. And eternity. He is dead. He needs to be brought to life. He needs what only God. Can give him. Humanity without Christ.

[19:03] Is dead. Then second. Paul teaches us. That humanity without Christ. Is enslaved. There's a trio. Of malignant forces.

That work together. To keep the human race. Imprisoned. They are the world. The devil. And the flesh. And Paul mentions all three. In verses two and three.

First of all. The world. In verse two. Following the course. Of this world. Now the word world. In the New Testament.

Means human society. As organized. Without reference to God. Or you might say. Secular society. It's a whole social value system. Which has no place for God at all.

It regards man. As the one who decides the agenda. And decides truth. And man. Who is the one who has the power. To sort out the world's problems. It's rather as Tony Blair's press secretary. [20 : 00] Once famously said. We don't do God here. That's the spirit of the world. But the world. And its values. And its ideologies. Grip and control.

People who are not Christians. The world produces. A kind of cultural bondage. People feel. That they have no option. But to go along with the norms of the day.

People say. This is the way of the world. This is modern life. We need to get in line with it. Or we shan't survive. And Paul says. That those who are dead. In trespasses and sins.

Are following the course. Of this world. It's as though they're trapped. On a course of life. That they cannot depart from. They're rather like a railway engine.

On tracks. And they have no power. To leave the tracks. But secondly. Still in verse 2. They are following. The prince of the power.

[20 : 56] Of the air. Which is Paul's way of talking here. About the devil. Who is operating in unseen realms. The Bible teaches. That the devil is real. And vicious.

And filled with hatred. Towards God. And man. Leading people astray. By the power of deceit. And lies. In fact. Jesus calls him. The father of lies.

In other words. The origin. Of everything. That clouds. And fogs up human thinking. And makes truth. Appear to be untrue. And untruth. Appear to be true. And again.

Like the train. That cannot leave the tracks. Paul is saying. That people. Who are not saved. By Christ. Are inevitably. Drawn to. And wedded to. The mischievous lies. Of the devil.

In verse 2. Paul describes him. As the spirit. That is now at work. In the sons of disobedience. So to disobey God. Is to obey the devil. And then thirdly.

[21 : 54] In verse 3. Paul says. That the unbelieving world. Lives. In the passions. Of our flesh. Now when he says that. He's not only talking about. What people. Describe as.

The sins of the flesh. Gluttony. And drunkenness. And sexual immorality. Verse 3. Tells us. That he means. The desires of the mind. As well as of the body. Selfish ambition.

For example. Hatred of truth. Intellectual. Pride. The desire for vengeance. Even pride of ancestry. Pride of personal uprightness.

Even pride of personal beauty. Though the passing of a decade or two. Usually sorts that one out. But it's a grim picture. Isn't it? Enslaved.

To the thinking of the world. Enslaved. To the lies of the devil. And enslaved. To the passions. The ungovernable longings. Of a body or a mind. That compels us.

[22 : 49] And rules us. Slaves of sin. Slaves of sin. Slaves of sin. Is the way Jesus describes it. In John's gospel. Chapter 8. So humanity without Christ. Is dead.

Humanity without Christ. Is enslaved. And thirdly. Humanity without Christ. Lies under the wrath. Of God. Look at verse 3.

We were. We were by nature. Children of wrath. Like the rest of mankind. Now when he says. Children of wrath. Paul is not talking about.

Young children. Under tens. Or under twelves. He means that. Everyone who is not a Christian. Is under the wrath of God. The phrase. Children of wrath. Is a bit like the phrase.

In verse 2. Sons of disobedience. To be a son of something. Or a child of something. Means that. That thing. Is the defining characteristic. Of a person's life.

[23 : 44] For example. Paul's friend. And colleague. Barnabas. Was described. As a son of encouragement. Meaning that. The big characteristic. Of his behavior. Was to encourage. Other people. So to be a person.

Without Christ. Is to be a child. Of God's. Wrath. Now if you're not a Christian. You must think about this.

My friend. Some churches. Some preachers. Find Paul's teaching. On this subject. Unbearable. And they want to soften it.

Perhaps even to reject it. Altogether. But to do that. Is precisely. To follow the course. Of this world. And to follow the deceptions. Of the devil. God has caused Paul.

To write these things. Down for our benefit. Because he wants us. Not to perish. But to be saved. For eternal life. So we need to understand. These things. And not draw a veil.

[24 : 42] Over them. We need to face. The truth. God's wrath. Is part of God's character. And we should be. Very grateful. That he's like this.

His wrath. Is not like. Human anger. Our human anger. When it flares up. Is nasty. Spiteful. Capricious. Often uncontrolled. It wells up in us.

Like molten lava. In a volcano. And we say things. And do things. Which can be very hurtful. To other people. And then afterwards. We're ashamed of ourselves. And rightly. Because we've behaved.

Very badly. God's anger. Is quite different. It is his constant. Antagonism. Towards human sin. It is settled.

It is controlled. It is the same. Day after day. He is always angry. With murder. With adultery. With stealing. With telling lies.

[25 : 37] And to be under his anger. To be a child of his wrath. Is to risk. At the end. Being sent away. To eternal condemnation. People sometimes say.

But how can a loving God. Be angry. Isn't wrath. Incompatible. With love. We'll just look at verse 3. And verse 4. In our passage.

Two verses together. By nature. Verse 3. Before we turn to Christ. We are children of wrath. But God. Verse 4. Being rich in mercy. Because of the great love.

With which he loved us. So we have wrath. You see in verse 3. And love there in verse 4. There is no sense. In Paul's mind. That God's wrath. And God's love. Are incompatible.

Here is a human illustration. Think of the relationship. Between a human father. And his wayward son. The son.

[26 : 34] Misbehaves badly. Time and again. And the father is angry with him. For causing damage. And distress. But the father loves him. And longs for him to change.

And to come back. To happy normality. In fact. The father is angry with him. Because he loves him. And wants to draw him back into the family. With compassion. And forgiveness.

God is angry. With the men and women. That he has created. Because they are rejecting his loving rule. But he loves them. He loves them. Even while he is angry with them.

And doesn't Jesus. Exemplify this. This combination of anger and love. Perfectly. He was angry. With those Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Because they rejected him.

They refused to see. That he was their Messiah. Their savior. And they vilified him. They vilified the most perfect man ever. To have walked the earth. But he loved them.

[27 : 32] And he went to great lengths. To try to persuade them. To accept him. And to submit to him. We must learn to be grateful to God. For his wrath. He loves what is good and true.

Always. But he hates all that is evil. Everything that rejects him. If he were not like this. The universe would be an immoral place.

Without clear and constant standards. It's good that God is angry with sin. It's good that he delights in righteousness. But if you're not yet a Christian.

You're a child of his wrath. It means you can look up to heaven. And say. There is a God in heaven. Who loves me. But he is angry with me.

And I don't yet belong to him. In these first three verses of chapter 2. Paul is describing. The plight of man without God.

[28 : 30] Dead. In trespasses and sins. Enslaved. By the world. The devil. And the flesh. And subject to God's righteous wrath. So is there an answer.

To our plight. Can mankind. Solve mankind's problem. People will sometimes think so. And they will say things like. Better education is going to be the answer.

Or perhaps. We'll sort things out. By overcoming poverty. Conquering pandemics and illness. And by developing artificial intelligence. But Paul says no.

The only answer lies in God. Not in man. And it is good news. Good news. And this is the message that he now opens up for us. In verses 4 to 10.

4 to 10. Describe the power of God. For eternal salvation. Look how Paul begins verse 4. But God.

[29 : 29] But God. You might almost say. That those are the two loveliest words in the Bible.

Without God. Our position is as bleak and as hopeless as it could be. Look on to verse 12 for a moment.

Chapter 2 verse 12. Having no hope. And without God. In the world. That's what it is to be a human being. Without God. It means to be without hope.

So back to verse 4. But God. This is the great turning point in the passage. Paul is now going to show us. What God has done. For those who are willing to exercise faith in Christ.

So what has he done? Well we touched briefly on this earlier. But I want us to look at it again. We have this phrase. But God. Paul then touches on God's nature and character. Rich in mercy he says. And filled with love for us. And then he tells us what God has done. Verse 5. Even when we were dead in our trespasses.

[30 : 33] He made us alive. Together with Christ. Now dead people simply do not have the power. To bring themselves back to life. I have.

I have taken many funeral services in the past. And I have sat beside the open coffins. Of various people whom I have known and loved. I have witnessed a number of people. Actually exhaling their last breath. You don't forget those moments in a hurry. Dead people do not sit up and say. Here I am.

I am back again. In this world. Death has an awesome finality about it. But when God sent Jesus into the world.

An even more awesome power was unleashed. And that is the power of the resurrection. At the beginning of John's gospel. John writes about Jesus.

[31 : 28] In him was life. Later in John's gospel. Jesus says. Truly truly I say to you. An hour is coming. And is now here. When the dead will hear the voice of the son of God.

And those who hear. Will live. A few chapters later in John's gospel. Jesus goes to the. To the tomb. Of his dear friend Lazarus. Who has died a few days before.

Lazarus is buried there. And he stands at the mouth of the tomb. And he cries. Lazarus. Come out. And out walks Lazarus. Swathed in the bandages. That corpses were buried in.

Take those grave clothes off him. Says Jesus. He no longer needs them. Now back to Ephesians 2 verse 5. God says Paul.

Made us alive. Together with Christ. So when Jesus was raised from the dead. The power of the resurrection was imparted.

[32 : 26] To every person through all the ages. Who trusts him and belongs to him. If we are Christians. We are in him. We are united to him. We are bound to him. And what has happened to him.

Will happen to us. And has happened already. In principle. That's why the Christian. Need not fear the grave. But not only has God. Made us alive with Christ.

He has also. Verse 6. Raised us up with him. Which really means. Resurrection and ascension. In one movement. Raised us up with him. And seated us with him.

In the heavenly places. In Christ Jesus. But what is Jesus. The Lord sitting on. In the heavenly places. Might it be a three-legged stool.

Could it be an old kitchen chair. It's a throne isn't it. It must be. And if we have been seated with him. In the heavenly places. It can only be that we too.

[33 : 21] Are seated on thrones. Sharing the rule of the universe with him. It's a glorious thing. To be a Christian man or woman. And to have a prospect. Like that. So this is what God has done.

For all Christians. Made us alive with Christ. Raised us up with him. And seated us with him. In the heavenly places. But why has God.

Done all this. What has motivated him. Paul tells us in verse 4. God being rich. In mercy. Mercy. Mercy is showing compassion.

And kindness. And help. To those who don't deserve it. For example. Do you remember that grubby tax collector. In Jesus' story. In Luke's gospel. Who comes into the temple.

Very shame faced. Doesn't even dare lift up his eyes to heaven. And he cries out. God have mercy upon me. A sinner. And God immediately forgives him.

[34 : 21] And Paul tells us here. That God is rich in mercy. The bank of heaven. Has inexhaustible resources of mercy. We only have to ask. And it will be ours. But there's another motivation in verse 4.

Because of the great love. With which he loved us. Loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses. Now he didn't love us because we were lovely. Or lovable.

We were dead. Morally putrefied. As unlovely as corpses. He looked out. Upon those boundless wastes. Of decayed humanity.

And he loved us. Because he knew that he could transform us. Into a people who loved him. And honored him. He knew that he was able to bring us. From death to life.

And what is the end result. Of this love and mercy. Poured upon sinners. It is says Paul. Salvation. Just look at the end of verse 5. By grace you have been saved.

[35 : 25] And this idea of saved. Or salvation. Includes all these other things. Salvation means. Being raised from death to life. Being taken up to heaven. Being seated with Christ.

In the heavenly places. It means being rescued for eternity. Later on today. When you get home this evening. You'll probably get yourself some supper.

And then sit down in your kitchen. Just think of your kitchen for a moment. And you'll look around at the familiar things there. The wallpaper. Perhaps a bit grubby in places.

The posters and the pictures that you put up. Which you know so well. A vase of flowers on the table. The cat. That jumps onto your lap and purrs. Everything's so ordinary.

So humdrum. Even perhaps a little bit shabby. But if you are a Christian. You can exalt. You can sing for joy. You can say to the Lord.

[36 : 21] I thank you. That my residence in this old world is short. These four walls of mine. They're not my eternal home. You have rescued me. My final resting place is not the necropolis.

It's the glorious courts of heaven. Where I shall be seated with the Lord Jesus. Who died for me. Was raised for me. Was taken to heaven for me. And who now rules the universe. I'm in him.

I'm part of him. Because you've put me there. You have saved me. By grace. And you've done all this for your people. Have a look at verse 7 now. You've done all this. So that.

In the coming ages. He might show the immeasurable riches. Of his grace in kindness towards us. In Christ Jesus. In the coming ages. Which means throughout all eternity.

The riches of God's grace. Will be displayed for all of heaven's inhabitants. To observe. And to marvel at. All these people rescued by Christ.

[37 : 18] Their sins forgiven. Their utter deadness. Transformed. Into the inextinguishable life of heaven. And we shall see then. As we cannot see now.

How immeasurable. Are the riches of God's grace. In kindness towards us. In Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus. Now just notice these four words. And chew on them.

Because they tell us what God is like. Mercy. Love. Kindness. And grace. Yes his anger remains on those who refuse to come to him.

In trusting submission. But for those who are willing. To surrender. It is mercy. Love. Kindness. And grace. All the way to heaven.

That word grace. Sums up God's attitude to his people. In fact it comes three times in this passage. In the middle of verse seven. But also in verse five.

[38 : 15] And verse eight. Where Paul repeats himself. By grace you've been saved. And the word grace. Implies two things. First.

God is powerful to save. And second. Man is powerless to save himself. Grace is God's undeserved love.

It's love to the loveless shown. It's love to the morally bankrupt. It's love that brings life to the dead. And you see how Paul drives this home.

In verses eight and nine. He says it's not your own doing. Dear Ephesians. You need to understand this. You are impotent. Even to lift a little finger.

To lift yourself into heaven. You can't work your passage into heaven. Verse nine. It's not a result of works. You can't earn your salvation. It's a gift.

[39 : 08] It's a gift from God. God. Now many people think. And this is the basic position of everybody really in the world. Many people think that by mighty moral efforts.

They might just be able to commend themselves to God. Look at me Lord. I'm trying so hard. I'm cleaning up my act. Aren't I? I'm making prodigious efforts to be good.

Surely I could earn just a few gold stars for good behavior. Could you not write in your book for example. Turn to the letter L. Lob. Edward.

Here's an improving picture. Commendable efforts are now being made. Especially in the early mornings. No says Paul. No. No. This is not your own doing.

It cannot be that. It is the gift of God. It can't be the result of works. Because then you'd be boasting. You'd be like little Jack Horner in the nursery rhyme. Who says what a good boy am I.

[40 : 06] There's no room for that. Salvation is a gift. It is unearnable. But when we have been saved. Look at verse 10. We find that we are now a new creation.

We are created in Christ Jesus for good works. Yes that means a transformed lifestyle. Which is the consequence of our salvation. And not the road to it.

Verse 10 shows. That the Christian is being transformed. By God. Who is like a skillful artist. We become his workmanship.

Like a work of art. And the lovely and holy lifestyle. That we grow into. Is the very lifestyle. That God has long ago prepared. For us to walk in. How then.

Do we receive. This salvation. How can we be transformed. Taken from death to life. Transferred. From the wrath of God.

[41 : 05] To his favor and love. What Paul tells us here in verse 8. By grace you have been saved. Through. Faith. Faith.

Is not a good work. In fact. It's the opposite. Of a good work. Because it means trusting in Christ's work. And abandoning trust in my own efforts. So when we come to the Lord.

In faith. We're saying to him. I want to be no more dead. In trespasses and sins. I want to leave the course of this world. And my slavery to the devil's lies. I want to be delivered from your righteous wrath.

I want Lord to receive. Your love. And kindness. And mercy. To be made alive with the Lord Jesus. To be raised to heaven with him. And to be seated with him forever. In the peace and joy.

Of his eternal home. Have mercy. Upon me. And because he's rich in mercy.

[42 : 06] He will never refuse. To save a person who comes to him. Like that. God. Well let's bow our heads. And we'll pray together.

Dear God in heaven. How we thank you for this wonderful gospel. This good news of liberation. For those of us who are already Christians.

Please deepen our joy. Please deepen our joy. And our gratitude. For all that you have done for us. Through our Lord Jesus. And for those who are undecided. Perhaps fearful.

Or wavering. Give them the courage. To abandon trust in themselves. And to put their faith. In the only one. Who can save them.

We ask it. In our Lord Jesus' name. Amen.