

God's Grace For God's Glory - Ephesians 2:1-10

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 October 2018

Preacher: Dan Oosthuizen

[0 : 0 0] Morning everyone. Most people make an absolute hames of it on the first try, so fair play to you. So, not too bad. So some of you know me. My name is Dan O'Staves and I'm from the Middleton Baptist Church. I always love coming to Carragoline. It's always a privilege to come here. The first thing I hear when I come inside the door is the sound of children running around. And any church where you hear the sound of children running around, that's a healthy church. And I think we all pray that the next generation, not just here in Carragoline but in Middleton and all the other churches where the truth is faithfully proclaimed, would rise, that we would see these children grow and embrace the Lord, call out to him just like we did. So that's a fervent prayer for all of us.

I'm especially glad to be here this morning because the first thing that was pointed out to me was I wasn't going to have to get up on that stage and to preach to you this morning. I'm happy standing behind here. And I'm not just happy to be here because it means I have an excuse to stop in Gloria Jeans and Douglas on the way home. But I've probably been thinking about that more than is spiritually acceptable for a man who's been charged with preaching the word to you this morning. But being a parent of a three and a half year old and a 15 month old, I was up at four o'clock this morning, so I will be stopping at Gloria Jeans. So in the words of Luther, here I stand, I can do no other.

So let's pray this morning before we go to the word. Heavenly Father, thank you for this fellowship of believers here in Carragalline who love one another. Thank you for the love and the sharing of your faith that is so evident when I visit this place, Lord. And again, Lord, thank you especially for the children of this church. May this church, just like my own and every church that proclaims your name, Lord. May we never be places where we view children as an inconvenience or as an extra, but may we view them as you view them, as precious and made in your holy image. With them, Lord, with everybody else in this church, may we edify and encourage one another today. And as I dare to teach from your word this morning, Lord, I pray that your spirit would be at work. May not my words be spoken, but may your words be lifted up and imprinted in the minds of your people. So calm our thoughts, still our minds, and blot out any distractions that we bring in this morning, Lord. And help us just to focus on who you are, the God of grace, the God of love, and the God of mercy. In Jesus' name,

Amen. If you'd like to turn with me to Ephesians chapter 2, I'm going to look at a familiar portion of scripture this morning. Ephesians chapter 2, starting at verse 1 and going to verse 10. So Ephesians 2 verses 1 to 10.

The apostle Paul writes to the church in Ephesus, As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world, and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

[3 : 1 4] All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature, and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

But because of his great love for us, God, who was rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by work so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Amen.

One of the greatest advocates for the Christian faith that this island has ever produced is a man by the name of C.S. Lewis. Many of you know that name. Many of you perhaps read some of his books. His series, The Chronicles of Narnia, is still one of the all-time selling series of all time. His

most famous non-fiction book, *Mere Christianity*, remains a must-read book for anybody who wants to be able to answer objections that the world has to Christianity. If you haven't read it, I strongly recommend you go and read it.

C.S. Lewis was a professor in Oxford, and one day he became involved in a discussion about religion. And the discussion turned to what made the Christian faith so unique compared to the religions of the world. Well, the incarnation of Jesus was suggested, but then other religions have different versions of their own gods that have appeared in human form, so that's not it. And likewise, the resurrection of Jesus was put forward. But this too was rejected because other religions have circumstances of resurrection at their heart. So what exactly is it that makes Christianity unique? What is it that you can point to in Christianity that says, that captures Christianity, that's what the basis of it is?

[5 : 23] Finally, C.S. Lewis piped up. Gentlemen, he said, there were no ladies present, sorry ladies, I'm just quoting verbatim. He said, gentlemen, the answer is a simple one. Grace. Grace.

Grace. Undeserved favor. God's merciful love. This, Lewis said, is what makes Christianity so unique. And I think he's right, because you see, every other religion, I use that word just loosely, religion on the planet, requires you to make some kind of an effort to get yourself right with God. You hear things like this. Go to mass every Sunday. Fast during Ramadan. Keep your kitchen kosher. Pray the rosary once a day. If you're my grandfather, it was more like 100 times a day. Go to confession. Don't take communion if you sin that day. And just try harder. And maybe you'll earn your way to heaven. Those are some of the things the religions of the world say you have to do.

In other words, it's all about you. You have to roll up your sleeves, put your shoulder to the wheel, make every effort to get yourself right with God. Because if you work hard enough, then maybe, just maybe, God will accept you. You have the power and the capacity, religion tells you, to please God.

[6 : 45] But what does the Bible say? When the Bible talks about grace, what does it mean? A part of our text today, it's one of the most famous quotations in all of the Bible. It is by grace you have been saved. But saved from what? Saved for what?

Why is it that grace makes us right in God's eyes? Why does it have to be grace? What does grace look like? Well, this morning, we're going to cover some old ground because it's fairly foundational, but we're going to try and find the answers to these questions, and maybe others that we have about our salvation. So I've entitled today's sermon, *God's grace for God's glory*. And the text before us tells us that your salvation and my salvation is entirely independent of any work that we do.

It's entirely separate from your deeds or my deeds. It's entirely a work of God for his purposes and for his glory. If you want to take notes, if you're that kind of person like I am, surprise I'm not taking notes right now as I'm talking, but anyway, if you want to take notes, we'll be having a look at three different things in this text. The first one is the problem, the problem of man's condition. The second one is the prescription, the prescription of Christ's sacrifice. And thirdly, we'll be looking lastly at the purpose, the purpose of God's grace. So the problem, the prescription, and the purpose. I'll explain each of those as we go along, but for now, let's just dive into the text and let's see what the word of God has to teach us. So verses one and two. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. So we know already from chapter one, right, that Paul is writing to the local church in Ephesus, to people who are believers in Jesus Christ. So what does he have to say? What's relevant to them is relevant to us. Well, this is the first point in today's sermon, the problem of man's condition. He starts off with a fairly startling, alarming kind of statement.

You were dead. It's fairly strong stuff, isn't it? You see, growing up, my family business was a funeral home. So I've seen my fair share of death. Death isn't something that you generally think of as something positive. It's not something you, it's not a word you use or an image you invoke to describe anything positive. No matter what culture you're from or what language you speak, I think we all react to death in the same way. Well, that's what Paul says the readers of this letter were like. Dead. He doesn't mean that literally. He's using an image or an analogy because he says they were dead in their transgressions and sins.

Have you ever heard anyone say that people are basically good? I think I hear that all the time. There's this idea that when push comes to shove, humans generally will do the right thing because

humans are programmed to think righteousness is a virtue. And I think I know what people mean when they say that. I think you know what they mean when they say that. Because people are capable of good things. I've seen the kindness of strangers just as you have. I've seen people perform acts of love and charity. But it doesn't seem to gel with what Paul is writing here. What he says here, he's not so much commenting on the actions of a person. He's commenting on the nature of mankind.

[10:09] So when he says you were dead, he's talking to the Christian about his state of being before he became a Christian. You were in the past tense. It sounds a bit harsh, doesn't it? Paul doesn't just say you were sinful. He doesn't just kind of leave it there. It's an interesting word, sin. In both Hebrew and Greek, and I promise this is the only time I'm going to mention Hebrew or Greek today, so we'll just get it out of the way now. But in both Hebrew and Greek, literally sin means to miss the mark, like to aim at something and to miss the target. I looked this up. Apparently there's 1,189 chapters in the Bible. And out of all of those, four of them don't mention sin. Genesis 1 and 2 and Revelation 21 and 22. The very beginning of history and the very end of history. The creation of the universe and the final reign of Jesus Christ over the universe. In other words, the history of man is defined by this thing that we call sin. So when Paul says you were dead in sin, he's saying that before you became a believer, you were in such a condition of missing the mark. I was in such a condition of missing the mark. It was completely impossible for me to hit the target. And the target, as is made clear all throughout the Bible, is being justified before God. Is being viewed in God's eyes as righteous, as worthy to live with him forever. Let me just give you a few other verses. Feel free to jot them down if you want. Kind of proves the same point. Romans 3, 23. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Psalm 14, 3. All have turned aside. They have together become corrupt. There is no one who does good, not even one. Isaiah 53, 6. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. And perhaps most tellingly, the words of Jesus himself, Mark 10, 18. Why do you call me good?

No one is good except God and God alone. Now don't get me wrong and don't get Paul wrong. Humans can do great things. Humans can build hospitals. They can shelter homeless people. They can feed the hungry, cure diseases. But friends, none of that makes us right in God's eyes. Because a holy God sees our condition for what it really is. Sinners. Nothing that we do is good enough to shake off that shackle of sin that chains us forever. Paul continues this argument in verse 2. He says that's how we used to live when we followed, as he says, the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work, and those who are disobedient. So Paul is doing a bit of theological mining here. So he's cracked through the surface at verse 1, and now he's drilling down into the stream. He's identified the reason why the unconverted sinner is, as he says, dead in sin.

The reason is this. Man by nature follows the ways of this world. And if it's ruler, Satan, we know who that is. We already know the world system is satanic, don't we? 1 John 2 says this. Love not the world, neither of the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are not from the Father. They're from the world. Jesus himself called Satan in John 12, 31, the ruler of this world. And he rebuked the religious leaders of the day for serving their father, Satan. And Paul himself, he called Satan the god of this age, or the god of this world. And in 2 Corinthians 4, 4, he went so far as to say this, that Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ. In verse 3, Paul includes himself here. He, a zealously religious Jew, a Hebrew of the Hebrew, Pharisee of the Pharisees, descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised on the eighth day in accordance with the law of Moses, was blind to the glory of God and his salvation because of the cravings of his flesh. He lived to gratify the cravings of his flesh. Even as one of the most religious people described in the Bible, he was dead in sin. And just look at the last words of verse 3.

Like all unbelievers, Paul admits this. He was by nature an object of wrath. You see, that's the problem of man's condition, friends. There's nothing here that says man is basically good. There's nothing here that says, well, man just kind of needs some gentle corrective action and he's kind of capable of getting himself back in the right track. You just need to encourage man to live a life that's holier or more righteous. There's no exhortation to live a better life or maybe to look like you're living a better life. In other words, there's nothing here that suggests you can in any way make yourself acceptable to God. Do you think it? Do you think that there's anything you can do? Or do I think

there's anything I can do to make Dan from Middleton acceptable in God's eyes? Do I think that if I just try harder, if I make that bit of an extra effort every day to stop swearing or to stop losing my temper or stop whatever it is that I'm particularly good at sinning at, do you think if I just work as hard as I can,

I'll get right with God? I've got news for me and I've got news for you. It'll never work. No matter how hard you try, no matter how hard I try to clean up my act, if I, in my state of unconvertedness, that's a word, isn't it Ralph? We'll go with that, unconvertedness. In that state of being an unconverted sinner, I will never measure up to God's standard of righteousness.

[16:16] James 2.10 says, if you break one part of God's law, you're guilty. It's like saying to a cop who pulls you over, look, I know I was speeding officer, but I haven't been drinking. I didn't knock anyone down. And I stopped at every red light on the way here. Well, guess what? You still sped. You still broke the law. You're guilty.

That's us, friend. If we break one part of the law, we're guilty. Paul Washer, who's an American preacher, some of you might be familiar with him, he does walk-up evangelism to people on the street.

And he likes to start off by saying this, do you know what the biggest problem in the Bible is? His answer shocks people. He says, the biggest problem in the Bible is that God is good.

That's the biggest problem in the Bible. Because the second biggest problem in the Bible is that you are not. So how do we reconcile these two things? We have a perfect, holy, good, righteous God with a sinner who is dead in transgression and sin and incapable of measuring up to God's standard.

See, when God's standard, friends, God's standard for righteousness is perfection because he, by definition, is a perfect God. When sin entered the world with the fall of man in Genesis 3, that standard was made impossible to reach by the best efforts of you and me. And not just that, but in verse 3, because of man's innate sinfulness, we deserve punishment. I read an article in the paper this week about a man who received a suspended sentence for molesting two children. He abused two little girls and he'll never see the inside of a prison. Maybe you're as incredulous as me and you think that the man's character or his life, such as it is, or his age, that don't matter and they should just lock him up and punish him, he should be held accountable for his crime. And you know what? That's exactly God's state of mind. If you break the law, no matter the extraneous circumstances of your character, of your deeds, of your seemingly external goodness, God cannot tolerate the breaking of his law because God is holy, perfect, and sinless. And because of mankind's condition, mankind deserves punishment or wrath. I'm not as posh as Alex. I say wrath, not wrath, but that's just me. Not as refined as some people are. We're powerless to do anything, to escape this wrath. We deserve this wrath, this punishment from God. I'll stop saying wrath now, Alex, I promise. So that's the first problem, our first point, the problem of man's condition. Look at verse 4. What's the first word? What is it?

[19:12] First word in verse 4? But, there is, just like we saw in Titus 3 earlier, it's the most joy-inducing, jubilation-causing word in the entire story of God's plan for redeeming men and women. But, you see, dead men cannot bring themselves back to life. Lazarus, dead for four days, didn't just suddenly decide to bring himself back to life and hop wrapped in bandages out of the tomb. Because Jesus did that.

In the same manner, the walking dead of sinful mankind cannot give themselves new life. Something has to do that for them, doesn't it? Someone has to do that for them. Verses 4 and 5. But, I love that word. It sets the tone for everything that comes after. But, because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions.

It is by grace you have been saved. Why do you think Jesus resurrected dead people? Or Paul? Or Peter? Or Elijah?

You see, those miracles, friends, they were never ends and not themselves. They were physical, visible demonstrations of God's resurrecting power. Because God brings the dead back to life. Jesus literally brought Lazarus back to life. I'm not saying it was a metaphor or anything like that. It literally happened. What I'm saying is, that is a stand-in, a symbol, or an explanation, or an illustration of God's power to bring someone back to life who is not capable of doing it themselves.

[20:53] And you see, everyone in the Bible who was ever brought back to life physically, Lazarus, Jairus, daughter, Tabitha, Eutychus, the son of the Shunammite woman, all of those people, they

eventually died again, physically speaking. But when God brings a dead sinner back to life, that person lives forever. They are truly resurrected unto eternal life.

You see, we do deserve punishment. That's inescapable. We deserve wrath. I said it again, Alex, sorry. We deserve death. We deserve hell. But God is a God of love. God is a God of mercy. God is a God of grace.

Friends, even when you were dead in your sin, God loved you enough to make you alive, even when you were dead in your sin. You hadn't even done anything at this point. You were dead. There was nothing you could do.

And God in his grace chose to make you alive. How did he do that? The text tells us, doesn't he? Made us alive with Christ. Christ came. Christ died. And Christ rose again.

So if we're made alive in Christ, then we have died to sin and we have risen again. There's no work on our part, on your part or my part. There's no good deed we do to work our way out of spiritual death.

[22 : 21] Christ did the only good deed that could ever satisfy the, it's written down here, but I'll say anger this time, the anger of God. God demonstrates his own love for us in this, Roman 5a tells us, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. What do you think was in the cup? Do you think Jesus was afraid of what the Romans were going to do to him?

Do you think he was scared of the whips, the beatings, the thorns, the nails and the cross? Do you honestly think that the second member of the Trinity, the one through whom and for whom all things that have ever been made were made, was scared of getting beaten up by a bunch of thugs?

That cup, friends, was full to the brim of the anger of God against sin, of disobedience against his law. And Christ drank that cup in to the fullest on the cross so that you and I don't have to.

The just punishment for sin and disobedience is the full and total extent of God's anger poured out upon you. And it was poured out completely and solely on the holy, perfect, sinless Lamb of God instead of you and me.

[23 : 50] If you want to turn to it, go to Isaiah chapter 53 or just listen if you'd like. Isaiah 53 verse 4. Isaiah says this, speaking the word of the Lord.

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray.

Each of us has turned to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Verse 10, if you're reading along. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer.

And though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days. And the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

[24 : 50] Do you know who that is? Who his offspring are? That's you and me. It's us, friends. Go back to Ephesians and look at verse 6. Do you really get what that means?

Christ hasn't just raised you from the dead. He has raised you and seated you with Christ. Where is Christ seated? Where is he sitting? He sits with the Father in his heavenly kingdom.

The work of your salvation, friends, is not in your hands in the slightest. It was nailed into the hands of Jesus Christ on that hill 2,000 years ago. The fact that he hasn't just brought you back to life, he's seated you in heaven, means it's done.

That's what he meant when he said, It is finished. Once for all. Completed. Are you starting to get a fuller appreciation of God's grace at work here?

He knows you can't save yourself, friend. He knows your natural condition prevents you from making yourself right in his eyes. Just like my son Jack, he's three and a half years old.

[26 : 11] He's not capable of doing everything I want him to do. He's three and a half years old. I should have the grace to realize that. Because I have a Father in heaven who is the perfect model of the perfect Father.

who understands your condition and my condition. We cannot please him by ourselves. So that's why he sent his son. For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son, that whomever believes in him will not die, but will live forever.

He made him, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, so that we would become the righteousness of God in him. That's the prescription of Christ's sacrifice.

Christ died once for all, Peter writes, the just for the unjust, so that he might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

There's nothing you do. There's no work you perform. There's no sacrifice you make except to bow your knee to Christ. Paul writes in Romans 10, verses 9 and 10, if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved.

[27 : 29] For out of the heart, you believe unto righteousness, and from the mouth, you confess unto salvation. Are you struggling with your standing before God this morning?

Are you in fear for your life? Friend, if you're in Christ, you're a new creation. With the blood of his son, God has washed away your sins and made you clean again.

He's taken your sin and he's thrown it as far away as the east is from the west. He's held up his outstretched hands and declared it is finished.

The great healer has filled the prescription of your condition on your behalf. So is that it? Do we just get on with our lives and twiddle our thumbs until Jesus comes back or we go to meet him?

No, not at all. Verse 8. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves. It is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast.

[28 : 35] For we are God's workmanship, some translations say handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

This is our last point. We've had the problem of man's condition, we've had the prescription of Christ's sacrifice, and now we have the purpose of God's grace. The Bible is emphatic in its proclamation that we are not saved, justified, made right in God's eyes because of anything we do. It's completely, across the board, universally emphatic. Paul re-emphasizes the point here in what we just read, but let me give you three other places to say the same thing.

1 Timothy 1.9 God saved us, and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus, before the ages began.

Romans 3.28 For we hold that one is justified by faith, apart, separate, from works of the law.

Galatians 2.16 Yet we know a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

[29 : 47] So we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law, no one will be justified.

I could give you dozens, hundreds more verses that confirm the same thing, but Seneca's expecting me before sundown, so we'll keep moving. I'll just rest my case here. Back here in verses 8 and 9, Paul emphasizes grace is the source of our salvation.

It's not anything we've done, so that no one can boast. Those of us who are from Ireland are well familiar with the term Holy Joe. It's a negative expression, in case you were wondering, if you don't know it.

It's used to refer to people who are outwardly quite religious, maybe even quite sincere with their faith, but they tend to display that in a way that's arrogant or boastful.

They give off the impression of themselves for being a person with whom God is happy because of all the good things they do. I tend towards having a proud personality myself, so I understand that.

[30 : 52] Speaking as a former Holy Joe, this is describing me. But those Holy Joes, those old dens, those dead dens, the holier-than-thou types, they've really got no cause to boast because we know that nothing we do improves our standing in God's eyes.

We know that nothing we attempt will ever give us right standing before him. And so that's why Paul says we can't boast in anything we've done. Paul said if he was going to boast in anything, it would be the things that showed how weak he was, how much he relied on Christ.

The only thing that Paul sought to boast in was the fact that he was a sinner, undeserving of mercy, and that God, in his unimaginable grace, saved him. One of my favourite hymns, Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God.

Paul didn't boast in anything except his death in the death of Christ. But why are we saved? We're not saved for nothing. So look at verse 10. We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Here's a bit of a plot twist for you. We're not saved by good works. We're saved for good works. Works is actually the most important word in this entire section.

[32 : 08] Believe it or not. Because it identifies not only the reason why you can't be saved, but the reason why God saves you. God saves us, makes us a new creation, takes out our heart of stone, gives us a heart of flesh, so that our energies and our efforts are turned away from serving ourselves and turned away from gratifying the desires of our sinful flesh.

We are made into new creatures so that we can love God, we can love one another, and that we can prove it by our deeds. Our good deeds are there to prove we are followers of Jesus Christ, not to earn our way to Jesus Christ.

We can't do that. They're there to demonstrate that we are disciples. Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments. John wrote, the one who loves the brothers loves the Lord and the sisters.

Sorry, ladies. I'm old school. I got the King James stuck in my head. We're not to keep on sinning. We're to offer ourselves to God, as Paul writes in Romans 6, as those who have been brought from death to life.

I think the words of the Lord himself sum it up. I'll just read it to you. John 15. I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, so that it would be even more fruitful.

[33 : 27] You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you, so remain in me. I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself.

It must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. And verse 8 says, this is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

There we have it, friends. Not only are we saved entirely by the efforts of God, but we're saved entirely for the glory of God. Not for us to boast.

Not for us to lord it over somebody else, as if somehow we're better than somebody because we go to church every Sunday, we got baptized, we lead a Bible study, we stack the chairs, serve the tea and coffee, whatever it is.

None of that means anything, because God saved us for good works, to bring glory to himself. He does the work, he gets the credit.

[34 : 27] Does it ever annoy you at work, you do something, you work really hard at something, and then your superior ends up getting the credit for it, their name goes on the report, and they get their increment, they get their bonus, all this kind of thing.

Well, I'm a civil servant, so I don't get bonuses in the first place, but nevertheless, it happens probably worse to me than it does to many of you. That annoys me. I want to be able to boast in what I do.

There's nothing we can boast in, friends, because we haven't done anything. God gets to boast in his glory. Our salvation lies not in our own merit, but in the very heart and mind of God with his plan to redeem his people, his plan to make his glory visible to all who would call on his name.

He laid the foundation for that plan. Think about this. He laid the foundation for that plan before he laid the foundation of the universe. He's been thinking about you for a long time, friends.

This isn't something that just happened when you came in this meeting or when you decided to get baptized. God has been thinking about you since before he laid the cornerstone of the universe.

[35 : 39] There's nothing left for you to do except give him the glory. Give him the praise by serving him. With your whole self. I'm going to finish now, but there's two groups of you I want to address.

If you know the Lord this morning, if you proclaim Jesus is Lord, if you believe God raised him from the dead, honour him with your words.

Honour him with your thoughts. I don't know how you do that in your life because I don't know you. Only you know you. But all I can tell you is this. Take all your gifts. Take all your resources.

Take your time, your energy that I don't have because I was up at four o'clock this morning with a screaming fifteen month old. But take everything he has given to you and just lay it at the feet of Jesus and say, this is yours Lord.

You did the work, not me. It's all for your glory. Do good works and give him glory. And secondly, if you're here and you don't know Jesus, if you've never called in his name, don't worry, I'm not going to ask you to come to the front.

[36 : 47] I'm not going to come down and lay hands on you or anything like that to embarrass you. I just want to say this to you. I don't know who you are or if you're even here or if you're listening online. But if that's you, let me just say this. Jesus told his disciples, no one comes to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

You're here in Carragoline Baptist Church on a Sunday when you could be doing anything else you want. I'm not a soccer fan but I'm sure someone could tell me there's probably a match on. You could be watching, you could be going out to lunch, you could just be getting up out of your own bed. But you're not doing that. You're here listening to some mad fella from Middleton you've never met before talk about a God you've never seen.

Maybe never even heard of. But you're here because God has drawn you here friend so that you can hear the good news that Jesus died and Jesus rose and Jesus paid the penalty for your sin and my sin so that we can stand arm in arm in front of him righteous holy and blameless and live forever.

Jesus has died and risen and paid that penalty so that we can stand before him as a royal priesthood holy and spotless in his sight and live with him forever.

[38 : 12] There's nothing you need to do. all that's left for you to do is to call on his name and say Lord have mercy on me a sinner. So there's another hymn I like it's kind of an old one glory to his name come to the fountain so rich and sweet cast thy poor soul at the saviour's feet plunge in today and be made complete.

Glory to his name. Amen. Let's pray. Gracious heavenly father if anything has been said this morning that's not from you or that causes you offense or doesn't give you glory I pray you blot it out of our minds.

I pray that you imprint and implant on our hearts and our minds the word of God that is living and active the word of God that is sufficient that is all we need to be trained to do every good work. The word of God that Jesus said washes us clean and makes us whole. Father for those who are here this morning and they share my profession of faith in you I pray that you would draw near to us in a very tangible real way.

Maybe we think sometimes that the circumstances of our life demonstrate that we're not doing it right. Maybe we're afflicted with sickness or grief or joblessness or homelessness.

[39 : 49] Lord help us not to listen to the lie of the enemy that any material shortcomings in our part mean that you don't love us mean that you've forgotten us because we know you haven't Lord.

We know that you sent your son so that none of those whom you give him would fall out of his hand. Once you wrap your arms around us Lord we're yours bought and paid for our debt paid in full so Lord draw near to us and give us the comfort of knowing that reality today.

Help us to be real witnesses to the glory of your grace unshamefully and proudly proclaiming that Jesus is Lord.

Use us Lord use us as broken vessels to bring people to you in the name of Jesus Christ by the power of your spirit. When people look at us Lord may they see the life of a Christian.

When they listen to us Lord may they hear the words of a Christian see the deeds of a Christian the actions of a Christian and if they could read our minds Lord may they read the mind of a Christian. Father thank you for ripping out our heart of stone giving us a heart of flesh.

[41 : 04] Thank you for sending your son. Thank you for the wounds that pierced the veil while we were once far away Lord you've drawn us near.

Father thank you for your grace. Father for those who don't know you I pray that even now we would be doing a work of your spirit in their hearts and minds. I pray whether they're in this room or listening or they're not our unbelieving family members our unbelieving friends our work colleagues or everybody we know Lord who doesn't profess you as Lord we pray that you would be doing a mighty work in their hearts that you would be softening their hearts that you would be piercing the veils in front of their eyes that you would be causing them to see the glory of your son Jesus Christ whom you sent to die for them Father we know that you came into the world not to treat the healthy but to treat the sick and Father we were all sick once in fact we were all dead once but you brought us back to life so for those who don't know you Lord call them please like you call Lazarus out of the grave

Lazarus come forth and he came forth Lord we know that it is your call and your call only that will bring us to eternal life so may people answer that call even now Lord this morning as we pray for

this we pray for the life of this church we pray for Johnny as he's not here we thank you for his faithful ministry of the word we thank you for the elders here and the deacons and all who faithfully serve we thank you for every hair and every head in this room this morning Lord we pray that our time after the meeting would be a time of joy and fellowship that we would find ways maybe where we can practically love one another and serve one another this week where there are needs in this church Lord may we seek them out to meet those needs and in my own church as well Lord we pray for all the churches in this land who faithfully proclaim the gospel and we thank you Lord all we can do that's left to do is thank you for sending your son to bring us out of the darkness out of the grave into new life not our will in any of these things we prayed for Lord but your perfect and holy and righteous will be done in Jesus name Amen