

Gospel Wise

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[0 : 00] It's always beneficial during one of these one-off sermons to look at the context. This was a letter written by Paul to the church in Ephesus.

He first visits Ephesus, which is a major trading city in northwest Turkey, in Acts 19. It's quite a revival.

The Holy Spirit is moving in such an obvious way. People are speaking in tongues. People are being healed. There are exorcisms happening.

And those practicing dark magic are even burning their books. A dramatic mission within the city. So much so that there's a riot. Because the craftsmen who make idols to Artemis, their trade is being affected so heavily that they complain about these new Christians.

The church that's established there is predominantly Gentile, with some Jews. And after this, Paul goes on to Macedonia, where he then sets out to return to Jerusalem.

[1 : 11] But what's interesting is it's the Ephesian elders he calls to himself to encourage, reinforce the gospel, inform them that they will not see him again.

They all weep and they send him off. This is a church built in Ephesus, planted by Paul, but with a huge revival on a scale.

It's a mature church though. It has elders and both the planter and the people love each other. Also, before we move on, I would very much encourage you to read the book of Ephesians this week. It's a book that's so rich with gospel truth. I struggled to narrow down where I preach from. Let's pray before we turn to God's word.

Dear God, we come before you because you are God above all gods. King above all kings. We pray because you are worthy of all glory, honor, and power.

[2 : 18] Be with us. Change our hearts. Show us. Point us towards Christ. And we pray that you are glorified. We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. What is the gospel? It might seem like a simple question. But I would not be surprised if many, when asked that very same question of what is the gospel, would have that same drastic panic that I had when I had to answer that question in my ministry application form.

What is the gospel? Would you have that same panic if you were asked unexpectedly? And facing that question on the page, I immediately started doubting everything I had known, with the pressure of making sure I am answering the question, whilst not leaving anything important out.

To my failure as a Christian of my era, my first port of call is YouTube, and a search containing Ligonier's and what is the gospel. If you were all here, and I'm sure all of you are of the right age and attending Bible class, we would be doing a starter task, which would say, answer what is the gospel and how many words?

Feel free, if you are so led, to leave a space in your notes to try it yourself. Something so important, so pivotal to have a handle on, yet can often be too many hard to understand.

[4 : 01] Let us tonight reflect on Paul's teaching from Ephesians regarding this topic. Tonight we'll look at this topic of important aspects of the gospel under four headings.

First, saved from what? Second, saved by who? Third, saved because of what?

And finally, saved to what? Saved from what? Saved by who? Saved because of what? Saved to what? First, saved from what?

Paul does use stark contrast to explain the importance of points. He's not exaggerating, but is saying, this is your true and honest status before you were saved.

And this is now your changed, true and honest status after you've been saved by Christ. What was their first status? What is the problem that the gospel has an answer for?

[5 : 07] Verse 3, children of wrath. He is writing to a predominantly Gentile church. With all these new churches, with a mix of both Gentiles and Jews, there's background tension.

People are asking, what do we do with these Gentiles? Do we follow their laws? Do we follow what they eat? Paul says the problem is universal to both Jew and Gentile.

Verse 1. And you, Gentile believers, were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you, Gentile believers, once walked.

Following the course of this world. Following the prince of the power of the air. The spirit that is now in work of the sons of disobedience, among whom we, Jew and Gentile believers.

All once lived in the passions of our flesh. Carrying out the desires of the body and mind. And were by nature children of wrath.

[6 : 07] Like all mankind. All Jew and Gentile non-believers. Both Jew and Gentile needed saved from their sins. What is this state of being dead?

It's not a choice. We do not choose to be dead in our trespasses and sins. Verse 1. But we are. We are dead because of the fall in Genesis 3.

Adam sinned in our place. He was our representative. As Paul makes it clear in Romans 5.12.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man.

And death through sin. And so death spread to all men because of sin. If we were in Adam's shoes, we would have also sinned. What does this mean for the Ephesians before they were saved?

Let's look at their true and honest status. First, they were following the course of the world. Verse 2. Their world view was what the world tells it to be.

[7 : 13] And they were all traveling mindlessly in the same hell-bound direction. Second, they followed the prince of the air. Verse 2.

Which is Satan. Who has sway over the sons of disobedience. He's a tempter. But also a prowling lion. As Peter warns in 1 Peter 5.8.

Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion. Seeking someone to devour. Third.

They were in bondage to their lusts and desires. Passions of the flesh. Verse 3. This is a bad state to be in. They are dead in their sin.

A state before becoming Christians that they truly need saved from. How does the world see people? David Cameron was an ex-prime minister.

[8 : 14] When he introduced his famous Hug a Hoodie campaign to tackle anti-social behavior. He said, There have been no new schemes. No new projects on the horizon.

That begins to dent our problem of gang culture. Feral youth. The Asbo generation. Whatever you call it. It's also a prevalent idea in our society.

That the poor are poor due to laziness. Both these common ideas. Targets people saying. They're bad because of this. And by extension.

I'm good because I'm not what they are. Whereas in this passage. Paul's saying we are all bad. Bad by sinful nature. We are bad.

Not them. But us. The world categorizes people into groups. Some are bad. Some are good. The Bible is explicit. All by nature are bad.

[9 : 13] Romans 3.23 says. For all have sinned. And fallen short of the glory of God. We were all once dead. We all needed to be saved.

This is a bleak picture that Paul's painting. Is it not? Are we in loads of emotions. Looking at ourselves in the mirror. And seeing all that's bad within us.

Even for us. Who know that the next seven verses. Are not the end. Should these first three verses. Motivate us to spread the good news of Christ. As the world outside is currently living.

And solely. In those first three verses alone. We were dead. And children of wrath. But this brings us to our second point.

Saved by who. We've all seen that we needed to be saved from. A life of godlessness. And sin. And throughout the last section. I made multiple references.

[10 : 12] To being needed to save from that. The next seven verses. Tell us the good news. Of who saves us. In. But god.

And. In Christ. If you forget everything from tonight. Fine. Remember this. But god. And in Christ. Babel class guys. Listen. But god. And in Christ. First. But god. In the greek.

There isn't a main verb. Until the middle of verse five. Made us alive with Christ. However. Even before that. We are in. A spiritual morgue. Not spiritually unwell. But spiritually dead. How can this change? Everything we know. About morality. In this world. As death is final. And the picture is bleak. Then.

[11:09] In this passage. The change factor. But god. Verse four. Being rich in mercy. Because of the great love. Which he loved us.

Even when we are dead. And our trespasses. Made us alive. Together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. Who has power over death? God does.

Who has power over this world? God does. Those of us who drive. Will remember sitting. Our practical driving tests.

Some did one test. I.e. Multiple tests. After finishing the drive. Your assessor. Goes over how you've done. Often highlighting specific errors.

There's a moment in that brief conversation. Where things can go one of two ways. First. First. I'm sorry. You've not passed this time.

[12:07] Or second. But. I'd like to congratulate you. On passing your test. The relief. That second but. Something going from bad.

But there's a change word. That change word. But. That brings hope. The Ephesian Christians.

They're not looking to pass a driving test. To have the ability to drive to McDonald's at 3am.

But they're spiritually dead. And that. But God. Had all the hope. All the relief. And all the adulation. We have talked about tenfold.

They also had the book of Psalms. And knew. The truth. Of God's intervention. For the ones. He loves. Lament that turns into hope.

In Psalm 102. The psalmist is in the pits of depression. But then he sees. A glimpse of the sovereign Lord. And the psalm changes. From verse 12.

[13:09] But you Lord. Sit enthroned forever. Your renown endures. Through all generations. You will arise. And have compassion.

On Zion. Or what about. Psalm 130. Which Luther called. The Paulian Psalm. Which I almost chose. As singing.

As it's so relevant. To tonight's topic. Out of the depths. I cry to you Lord. Lord. Hear my voice. Let your ears.

Be attentive. To my cry for mercy. If you Lord. Kept a record of sins. Lord. Who. Could stand. Change factor. But.

With you. There is forgiveness. So that we can. With reverence. Serve you. I wait for the Lord. My whole being. Waits. And in his word.

[14:03] I put my hope. Who can stand. But. There is. Forgiveness. In this passage. In Ephesians.

God's powerful actions. Are mentioned. Three times. There is. But God. In verse four. It is a gift. Of God. Verse eight. And which God.

Prepared. Beforehand. Verse ten. God saves. God plans. Who will be saved. And he saves. Every one of them. This is the key.

Turn phrase. But God. What about the phrase. In Christ. Within.

These ten verses. Are four mentions. Of being united. To Christ. Verse five. Made us alive.

Together with Christ. Verse six.

[15:00] Seated us. With him. In the heavenly places. In Christ Jesus. Verse seven. Towards us. He might show. The immeasurable riches. Of his grace.

And kindness. Towards us. In Christ Jesus. And verse ten. We are his workmanship. Created. In Christ Jesus. This makes clear.

Our salvation. Is reliant. On the saving work. Of Christ. Being unified. With Christ. Is essential. Romans six.

Five. Makes clear. For if we have been united. With him. In a death like his. We will certainly. Also be united. With him. In a resurrection. Like his. But Paul.

In his. In his letter. To the Colossians. Reinforced this. Three. Three through four. For you have died. And your life is now hidden. With Christ and God.

[15:58] When Christ. Who is your life. Appears. You will also appear. With him. In glory. When you. Are in Christ. You are the safest.

That you could ever. Be. When I was a kid. I used to be scared. Of everything. At bedtime. I would vividly. Imagine things.

Under my bed. That would aim to harm me. But I shared a room. With my big brother. Andrew. When he came to his bed. I was safe. There was security.

Because my big brother. Was present. We are not safe. Because Jesus is in the room. We are safe. Because Jesus is with us. He is in us.

And we are safe. In him. In him. We should also. Remind ourselves. Quickly. Again. To avoid the thinking. Of the love of God. As a byproduct.

[16:54] Of Christ's work. It is an old misconception. That God is all wrath. And Christ is all love. And no wrath. And he almost. Manipulates.

God. Into letting us. Be saved. As a form of blackmail. This is a view. That has been taught. In pulpits. In this country. We must stand against it. Because the Bible.

Clearly does. Stand against it. David proclaims. In Psalm. 145. Verse 8. The Lord is gracious. And merciful. Slow to anger.

And abounding. In steadfast love. All wrath. And no love. Peter. In 2nd Peter 2. 3 and 9. The Lord is.

Not slow. To fulfill. His promise. As some. Count slowness. But is patient. Towards you. Not wishing. That any should perish. But that all.

[17:47] Should reach. Repentance. Again. All wrath. And no love. Of course not. God. The Son. And the Holy Spirit.

Are one. Three persons. And the one God. They are of the same mind. They are all holy. Good. True. And just. They work in harmony.

Not like us. In human selfishness. When we communicate. With one another. They are. Together. Created the world. And they together. Redeemed mankind.

God's love. As steadfast. Which makes it. Beautiful. That as one commentator. Puts it. How wonderful. Then.

That Paul. Combines together. The lavish love. Of Christ. With the ultimate. Purposes. Of God. Purposes. How wonderful. Then. That Paul. Combines together.

[18:42] The lavish love. Displayed in Christ. With the ultimate. Purposes. Purposes. Of God. But God. And in Christ.

This. Is who. We are saved. By. Okay. So we're saved. From death. And the power of sin. By God. In Christ.

But why are we saved? That brings us. To our third point. Saved. Because of what? End of verse 8. It's a gift.

It is the gift. Of God. A gift being free. Undeserved. Yet given. I remember. Watching a TV show. Where there was a character. That hated receiving gifts. So much. Because. By social rules. In their mind. They would be then. In debt. To the person.

[19:37] Giving the gift. Whatever the cost. Of that gift. So this character. Goes about. Buying multiple. Different gifts. At different price points. Then.

He can be assured. He can safely. Give a return present. Which would mean. He's no longer. In debt. What's quite funny. About this TV show.

Is it actually. Turned out. That that gift. That that anxious. Character received. Was so personal. And by that fact. Priceless.

That they go on. To give that. Giver of the gift. Everything they'd bought. All these different gifts. And pure. And sheer. Thankfulness. I also.

Remember. When I was unemployed. An older. Retired man. From my previous. Congregation. Took me out for lunch. It was. Quite out of the blue. He called me one morning.

[20:35] Asked if I was free. Picked me up. Took me out for lunch. And paid for it. I remember that. To this day. That man. When I had little.

Gave me generously. Out of his plenty. Both these analogies. Fall short. Because who can truly. Imagine. The storehouses. Of mercy.

And love. God has for us. This passage. Says in verse four. Being rich in mercy. Because of the great love.

Which he loved us. Verse five. By grace. You have been saved. Verse seven. He might show. The immeasurable riches.

Of his grace. And kindness. Towards us. In Christ Jesus. In verse eight. And for a second time. In three verses alone. For by grace.

[21 : 29] You have been saved. Through faith. By grace. Once again. This passage. Doesn't sit alone. In the chapter before. Paul highlights.

The purpose of salvation. In chapter one. Verses five. Nine and eleven. He explicitly shows. It's the good pleasure. Of God's will. The tailors.

Who we love. Gifted us. A children's catechism book. And if I asked Noah the question. Can God do all things? He would say.

Yes. God can do all his holy will. It was a chance. God willed it. And so it happened. Invoking Calvin's favorite verse.

Deuteronomy 29. 29. The secret things belong to the Lord our God. We do not need to understand why God loves us. He tells us he does.

[22 : 27] He shows us he does. And that's enough. From the immeasurable riches of his grace. It is a gift from God. We are saved from death.

By God. And in Christ. And this happened. Because of his rich mercy. And his holy will. But our fourth point. Importantly.

What are we saved to? Verses six and seven. 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 and kindness. Towards us. In Christ Jesus. Let's look at that text.

And this should blow us away. Raised us up with him. In this specific text. Paul isn't focusing primarily. On Christ's ascension.

[23 : 28] Even though it's present. But about the Ephesians. But about the Ephesians. Being raised up. And seated with Christ. And then. By our shared faith. In that same Jesus Christ.

Us. We. Being raised up. And seated with him. Raised us up. Seated us. And his grace towards us. In Christ Jesus. There are five mentions.

Of the pronoun. Us. In these verses. The Ephesian Christians. Have been previously. Well versed. In the gospel. They know Christ.

Died for their sins. Was resurrected. And ascended. To heaven and glory. Paul. As a pastor. Like a teacher. Once a child. Has grasped an idea.

They don't go on. To repeat the same idea. Over and over. But they add new information. To show a bigger picture. Which still has its roots. In the original idea. But then.

[24 : 25] Further develops. A child's understanding. Beyond what they first knew. This is what Paul is doing. For the Ephesians. It is easier. For us. To have a correct view.

Of Christ. And his glory. And to spend time. Praising and worshipping him. As we should. But is it much harder. For us to accept. Passages like this. That tell us clearly.

In black and white. When we are saved. Our status. As loved. Chosen. And seated with Christ. In heaven. We as Christians.

Are aware. Of our indwelling sin. Our apathy. And our hardness of heart. And as previously said. The devil is a prowling lion. He would love us.

To focus solely. On those things. Try to make that. Our soul view. To be defeated. Into uselessness. But this. Is in our status. As Christians.

[25 : 19] Chosen by God. Colossians 3 again. 2 verse 4. Set your mind on things that are above. Not on things that are on earth. For you have died.

And your life is hidden. With Christ and God. When Christ who is your life. Appears. You will also appear. With him in glory. This is our true reality. This is true.

Let me finish. By picking out. One more point. On what we are saved to. In verse 10. For we are his workmanship.

Created in Christ Jesus. For good works. Which God prepared beforehand. That we should walk in them. Especially the phrase. Which God prepared beforehand. This means God has chosen us.

Setting his love upon us. Paul goes into greater detail. On this point. In Ephesians 1. 4 through 5. Even as he chose us. In him.

[26 : 16] Before the foundation of the world. That we should be holy. And blameless before him. In love. He predestined us. For adoption as sons. Through Jesus Christ.

According to the purpose. Of his good will. I. Have thought a lot. About this last year. With Noah coming to live with us. But before I make this observation.

Let me make two points of clarity. First. First. Hannah would not be of the same opinion as me. And I am speaking from my own perspective. And secondly.

There are small listening ears. And I want him to hear. That we love Noah. We love that he is with us. And we are excited. That he is with us forever.

But in saying both those things. Let me share my observation. From my perspective. When Noah was born. And this is where Hannah would disagree. I saw him as a loved.

[27 : 13] But distant member of my family. He lived in Fort William. We would see him. Two to three times a year. But we would come home. And in my mind. Live our couple life.

And in between times. Didn't spend as much time as I should. Thinking of him on my mind. Yet. As you know. He has come into our immediate family.

And kinship care. We love him. We make decisions based on him. We. He. We worry about how he gets on in school.

And we wonder what he'll be like when he grows up. In my perception. He's gone from being a distant family member. To becoming my son. Whom we love. Our very sole heir.

Entitled to all that we have. From distant. To my son. My heir. This example is limited. As my love has folly.

[28 : 09] But God's love is perfect. He has brought us from further than distant. From enemies. And from dead. To new life. And us being called.

Sons and daughters of God. 2 Corinthians 6.18 And I will be a father to you. And you will be sons and daughters to me.

Says the Lord Almighty. This. Is what we are saved to. Being made sons and daughters of God. If you do not know Christ.

Today. Recall what Peter said. About God. He is patient towards you. Wishing that you should not perish. But that you should reach repentance.

Put your faith in Christ today. And be safe in him. There is nowhere that is truly safe. Than. Being in Christ. We are saved from death.

[29 : 08] And wrath. To the measurable riches of God. We are adopted as sons and daughters. Who were we saved by? But God.

And in Christ. Amen. Bless that word to us. Let's pray. Let's pray. To our God. Dear sovereign Lord. We come before you. As sons and daughters. Because your word tells us it is. We thank you. That you have covenantal love.

Towards people whom you chose. We don't always understand. Why. You would love us. But we. Marvel in the fact that you do.

I pray. That beyond tonight. That we all. Have opportunities. To share. Your gospel truth. With people.

[30 : 05] In our own spheres of influence. Lord. Be glorified tonight. We pray all these things. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.