

Saved By Grace Through Faith

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Date: 24 January 2010

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[0 : 0 0] Ephesians chapter 2, we turn again to the first passage between verses 1 and verses 10. I'm going to read what we read last week also from the beginning.

And you were 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, the spirit that's now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body 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, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

Verse 8. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

[1 : 3 3] What I hope we have been seeing over the past few times we've been looking at this chapter is how completely different the gospel is from what we once thought it was, or from what it's popularly believed to be.

It is not our making our way to God. There's this highly popular notion that the person who is religious is the person who has made his way to God.

Well, maybe that is what religion means. In that case, I'm not religious, and I hope you're not religious either. You might be surprised to hear me as a minister saying that, that I hope you're not religious, and confessing to you that I hope I'm not religious.

But that's what religion teaches. It teaches that it's possible for me to make my way somehow to God, to earn my way into the kingdom of God, and to somehow or other persuade God to look down upon me with some kind of favor or some kind of love.

That is a myth. It doesn't exist. The gospel operates on the opposite principle. It starts not with me.

[2 : 4 9] It starts with God and his love for a lost world. If it wasn't that God took the initiative and reached down into this world to rescue individual people like you and I from sin, then we would have absolutely no hope whatsoever.

That's what the gospel... And it had to be that way. And I tried to explain that last week. It's absolutely essential that we try to understand the nature of humankind according to...

As God sees it, it's radically different. It's completely different from what we imagine it to be. And I tried to use the story of the raising of Lazarus in the 11th chapter of John to show the state that we are in.

That when Paul says in these opening verses, you were dead in the trespasses and sins, that he actually means it. As far as our standing with God is concerned, we are as dead as Lazarus was dead in the grave four days.

And it was then and in that condition that Jesus came to the grave and he raised him from the dead. It's absolutely essential that we understand that.

[4 : 07] And I believe that this is what the Lord Jesus was demonstrating when he raised Lazarus from the dead. He was demonstrating his power to raise people like you and I and to give them new life and to bring them to himself and to transform the people from their sin.

Now, just in case there's anybody here who's listening to what I've just said, thinking to themselves, well, if I'm dead, I'm dead. There's nothing I can do about it. Nothing. And that's it, really. I'll just have to wait.

If God's going to save me, if he's going to raise me from the dead, then let him do that. But meanwhile, I'm going to carry on in my own life. And well, that's the way it is. The minister said it must be right.

If he says it, then that's it. I'll just carry on the way I am, enjoying my life as it is. Well, taking each day as it comes, making the most of it. And if God stops me and God stands in my way, and if he does for me what he did to Lazarus, then fair enough, then I'll change and that'll be it.

But meanwhile, I'm not going to listen to him until he makes me listen to him. Well, I can understand that there is a certain logic in that statement. The problem is you're just not listening to what God is saying to you.

[5 : 23] Because you're trying to understand things by your own logic, instead of listening with an open mind to what God is saying. The Bible teaches, and I said this before, and let's listen to what the Bible says.

Not our own ideas, but the Bible. It says that God saves sinners. That's what we've been trying to say all along. But it is also an open invitation, a free invitation to everyone in the world who hears the gospel, to come to believe in Jesus Christ.

And you will be condemned, again, I'm saying that because the Bible says it, for not listening to what God says to you. If you live and you die in that condition, that is why you will be condemned.

And you won't be able to point the finger at God and say, well, God, you know, I only did what seemed logical to me. I lived my life as you gave me. You didn't stand in my way.

You didn't raise me. Well, that's up to you. It's your fault that I'm in this condition. No, you can't say that. You just can't say it. Because God has sent his son into the world.

[6 : 39] The Bible tells us that God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him, whosoever believes in him, that means tonight, if you believe in Jesus Christ, as your savior, you will not perish, but you will have everlasting life.

And that's the message of God to a lost world. And it's the message of salvation. So on the one hand, the gospel is God bringing people to life, as Jesus brought Lazarus to life.

But on the other hand, the call of the gospel goes out everywhere. And it's your responsibility to listen to the voice of God and to, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you're saying tonight, well, I don't know how to believe. Well, will you do something? Go and tell the Lord that you don't know how to believe. Say that to the Lord. Don't be content with that.

Don't just give up and say, well, that's it. That's the way I am. Come to the Lord and say to him, I don't even know the first step in believing. I want you to show me, because after all, this is a matter between you and the Lord.

[7 : 47] It's a personal matter between you and him. So why don't you go to him tonight in the secret of your bedroom and say, Lord, I'm concerned. I'm really concerned about what the minister was saying, because I know it's the truth.

I've read it in your word. And I'm concerned that I might be amongst the lost. And I really want to know whether this gospel is the truth. And if it is the truth, that's what I want in my life.

I want the Lord to, to transform my life. But I know that only you can. Why don't you tell him that? Why don't you go to him? Nobody else will know. Nobody else will see. Nobody else will hear. Just go to him and say that to him and ask and really mean it.

Really, really ask with the fullness of your heart and ask that he will show you. You know what? I believe he will, because I believe in the power of God and I believe in the mercy of God.

And that's how God draws people to himself. Now, I want us to just stop at this point. And I want us to, to try and look a little bit longer at what this passage tells us about the difference between what we are to what we think we are.

[9 : 01] Now, remember, I said this last time, but I want us to go back to that because this passage seems to dwell in the first part of it on what we, what we might call natural or normal human behavior and the human race as we find it in the world.

That's what we seem to see, isn't it? In the which you once walked, verse one, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air. Now, remember what we said already. We said that our nature is different from what we think it is.

We said that God's nature is different from what you think we think he is. And we said that salvation is different from what we think it is. Now, I want us to just concentrate on the first of these this evening, that we are completely different from what we imagine ourselves to be in three areas, three areas.

First of all, we think we're free. We think that we're free agents and that we have the ability to make whatever choice we want to make, and we are completely and entirely independent to make that choice.

That's the first thing we think. And that's the first area in which we're wrong. The second thing is this. We think we're good. We think that either deep down inside, there's a basic goodness.

[10 : 21] I know that we have faults, and we sometimes do things that we know are wrong, and yet, and yet, there is a basic goodness within us. We think we're good on the inside. After all is said and done, we think we're good.

That's the second thing. And thirdly, we think everything's going to be okay. But this chapter tells us that in all of these three thoughts, we are wrong.

First of all, it tells us that we're not free at all. Look at it with me again. Listen to this chapter. You were dead. A dead person is not free to do what he wants.

You were 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, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

So again, there's a contradiction here, if you like. There's a paradox, a deliberate paradox, because it's the truth. On the one hand, the Bible tells us that we're dead. We're incapable of really coming to know.

[11 : 24] We're incapable of living the way that God requires us to live. But on the other hand, it's a kind of a living death, if you like. It's a kind of, you can see the contradiction. You're dead, and you're walking.

You're dead, and you're following. You're dead, and you're following. And you're dead, and you're doing. And you're dead, and you're, it's a kind of a living death, isn't it, in this chapter? It's a kind of a living death.

We talk about having an open mind. All the time, we think, we imagine, that we have an open mind, and that we do things according to it.

In fact, you probably, you probably think that Christians are the ones who are slaves. Especially, you know, when people who take the Bible seriously, and the more serious you take the Bible, you think that the more fanatic that you are, the more fanatic that they are, and that they're under a kind of a curse, or under a spell, or they're slaves, to, and you think that the best thing that could happen to a Christian is if he was, if his chains were, were loosened, and that if he was set free, so that he could enjoy the world around him, and so that he could let, so that he could live, and let live, and so that he can enjoy a little bit more of this life.

No, no, that's not the way it is at all. It's entirely the opposite. Jesus said, the truth shall make you free, and if the truth shall make you free, you are free indeed.

[12 : 51] The person who's really free, is the person who has been set free, by Jesus Christ. And the person who enjoys, his life in this world, and knows, the joy that the Lord can give him, is the person who has come to know, the maker, the manufacturer, and the person who has come to live, as he has been created to live, by coming to know, Jesus Christ.

It's the person who refuses to do that, who is enslaved. And the best way, to keep a person as a slave, is to keep him happy, as a slave. The big problem here, is not, whether a person is a slave or free, it's a, the big problem is that a person, that he's a slave, and he doesn't know it.

All the while, he's, he's just, living from day to day, trying to make the most, out of this life. And that's exactly, how the apostle, describes it, in which you once walked, following the course of this world.

Now the, the apostle says three things, that there are three, specific, influences, in this world, that impact, our lives, here as we know it.

And these are the following. Number one, the world around us. Look at what he says. You follow the course of this world. But the second one, is what he calls the evil powers, and influences.

[14 : 13] And we'll see in a few moments, it's not just some kind of, impersonal evil power, but it is the power, the prince. That's a being, a personal being. The prince of the power of the air.

The spirit that now is working, in the sons of disobedience. And then, thirdly, he tells us that the third influence, is, in the passions of our flesh.

carrying out the desires of the body, and the mind. And, so there are these three influences, that influence each one of us.

Now you can protest, and you can claim as much as you want, but these three influences have a bearing, a much bigger bearing, than any one of us think, on the way that we live our lives.

First of all, let's just, let's just stop at the first one. The world around us, what the apostle calls, the course, of this world. We've all been born, into a certain time, and culture, and we're all, products of that culture.

[15 : 10] We all speak English, because we've been brought up, in English. Some of us speak Gaelic, because we've been brought up, in a Gaelic home. And, and because it's part of the culture, of this place, we're all the product. But it goes beyond language.

It goes to our habits, it affects our habits, our lifestyles, what you do, and what you don't do. There are certain things you do, in our culture, that you only do, in our culture.

There are certain things, you don't do in our culture, that you would do, in other cultures. It's amazing really. That's what they call, I suppose, anthropology, the study of different people's cultures. Let me just get this straight.

I remember, I knew, I knew, some missionaries, at one time. And they were missionaries, in a certain country. I won't name what the country was, for fear that, that there might be someone here, from that country.

But, one of the things, that they found hard, when they started, getting to know people, they started learning the language, and making friends, and that culture. And they would invite, start to invite people, to dinner, at their home, at their flat.

[16:10] And to their horror, they discovered that, you know, the person would come, and be sitting there, and they would go to the bathroom, right? And he would come back, with a pile of toilet rolls. And, of course, they wouldn't say anything, because of sheer embarrassment, but they would leave, with the toilet rolls.

And it was later on, that they found out, it was part of the culture, that if you went to a person's house, and they had plenty of something, and you didn't have it, that it was quite the dumb thing, to just help yourself.

Now, they thought nothing of that. We think it's appalling. But, they thought nothing of it, because it was part of the culture. You see, we all do, what the culture around us, tells us to do, and we can't help it.

That's the way it goes. Now, let me tell you, now, of course, some of these things are innocent, they're not really important at all. A lot of these things are. But, you think about it. You think of how much you have been affected, in your thinking, by the culture around us, and think, about how that culture, has been affected, by mass media, by movies, by TV, by celebrity culture, by the kind of morality, that is coming to us, all the time, through EastEnders, and through Neighbours, and through Casualty, and all of these things, seeping into people's minds.

And if you don't know any better, then what they do is right, is right, then it's right. And it becomes right, for the culture, in which you live in. That's what Paul means, the course of this world.

[17:40] The world has a bearing, on the way in which you live your life. And the media, of course, reflect, the culture that they see, the standards, and the morality, of that culture.

You see, so we're all products, of that. They were too. You know, in Paul's day, it was quite normal, in the Roman Empire, to have a mistress, for a man, to be seeing, at least, one other woman.

It was expected. Now you might be shocked, at that. But you know, really, when you think about it, we're not that far away, are we? It's not really, we're not really that far away.

I mean, it's considered, in our world, well, it's a bit bad. But you know, it happens. It happens. And that's only one step away, from it happening, to it becoming normal.

So who knows, in 50 years time, that might be the order of the day. You just don't know. You think that's ridiculous. I don't think so. Why is it that, if it existed in, if it existed in the Roman world, why can it not exist again?

[18:56] After all, we're enlightened, and we're free, and we're free to do, who cares about commitment? Who cares about marriage? Who cares about morality? Hey, we only live, we only live once.

That was the way that, that was the way that the Romans operated. I tell you, there was, you know, the Christians, it was through the Christian faith, that that morality was turned around.

And they used to say about the Christians, they used to mock the Christians, by saying to them, that they were people, who shared everything, but their wives. That was the name they got.

They shared everything, but their wives. There was one man, apparently, whose headstone, in his grave, he said, this man was married, to the same woman, for 40 years. And that would make him different, from anyone else, in that culture.

Now that's just a one, that's just one aspect, okay? One aspect, of how, the course of this world, affects the way, in which we live. Paul goes on, and he tells us, not just the course of this world, it's the evil powers, that lie, that stand, behind the way we think.

[20 : 03] The Bible makes, absolutely no mistake, that it's not simply, a matter of evil, but behind, the powers of evil, the influence of evil, stands the being, that you can call the devil, you can call him Satan, you can call him Lucifer, Paul chooses, to call him the prince, of the power of the air, the spirit, that's now at work, in the sons, of disobedience.

The serpent, that spoke to Eve, in the garden, and that tempted her, is the same serpent, that speaks to you and I, and that tempts you and I, you and me, and that, have you ever, have you ever asked yourself, what is it within me, why is the power, within me, to do wrong, so strong, why is it, why is it, that there is a particular, power, a particular influence, to do what I know, is the wrong thing, I don't have any trouble, believing, in the existence, of Satan, because we live, in a personal world, we live in a world, where we believe, that God has created us, as personal beings, to relate to one another, and to relate to him, and we were, distracted, from that, perfect, world, that God created, by a personal being, and when I see, the world around me, and when I see, what my heart, is capable of,

I don't have any, problem at all, believing, I don't have to go, to witch doctors, I've heard stories, and I could tell you, stories of missionaries, that have come across, evident powers of evil, in some of the villages, and the towns, that they've gone to, but you know, I don't need to go, to these places, I see it in the world, around me, and I see it, in my own heart, and he goes on, and he goes, he tells us, that it's not just, the course of the world, it's not just the prince, of the power of the air, but he talks about also, our own inward desires, that's what he calls, the passions of the flesh, carrying out the desires, of the body, desire, you know, when you think about it, desire, our desires, are probably, the strongest motivation, that is in us, to do anything, if you really want something, if it's possible to do it, then you'll do it, that's what advertising, is all about, that's why multi-million dollar, that's why the advertising industry, runs to multi-million dollars, that's what the lottery, is all about, desire, isn't it, it could be you, remember that advert, where they used to try, and get us to, to buy lottery tickets, by saying, it could be you, what a clever advert, isn't it, what a clever expression, you know, it could be you, and if it could be you, that's designed, to make you sit down, and you think, well, you know, all it takes is a pound, and my life, could be transformed, imagine, for a moment, what it would be like, if I got a check, for 10 million pounds, or 5 million pounds, how my life, would turn around, no longer worrying, about how to pay the mortgage, wouldn't worry, about how to pay the car loan,

I could live, as I wanted to, I could live, in a warm country, in winter, and I could live, in a colder country, in summer, I could have three, four houses, all across the world, I could live, on the interest, for so, so many years, in my life, how my life, would be different, and how my life, the stresses, and the strains, the work, the frustrations, and everything, that I, I find so annoying, in my life, just now, could be changed, that's desire, it's desire, isn't it, and then, I came across, I'm sure you've come across, that for example, the BMW advert, that, what a clever way, to sell something, they honed in, on the word joy, remember that, they honed in, on the word joy, and they said, said this, joy, they said, that's who, we answer to, joy, is youthful, joy, has a fan club, and it's contagious, joy, is, unstoppable, and dynamic, we realized, say BMW, a long time ago, that what you make, people feel, is just as important, as what you make, and at BMW, we don't just make, cars, we make joy, isn't that clever, who wouldn't want, a BMW, if you were promised, that kind of, satisfaction, and elation, after you bought one, and if you believe, tonight, that your life, would change, just by the, the buying, or the purchasing, of a single, brand of car, then of course, bring it on, that's what we want, isn't it, and there isn't anybody, that doesn't live, for happiness, for himself, and that's, what Paul means, when he asks, the Ephesians, to look into themselves, and to really be honest, about what they live for, and that's what I'm asking you, to do tonight, to be honest, and ask what you live for, what your real desires are, more than anything else, in the world, these are only examples, of the way we work, the way we operate, the way we tick, that is it, and it's described, for us here, the course, of the world, the prince of the power, of the air, and the passions, of our flesh, you don't need to mock, that passage, lots of people mock it, they say, well that's your typical,

Christian isn't it, you're just down, on everything, that's joyful in the world, it's not, it's honest, it's what you call, honest with ourselves, and honest with God, in the second place, we think we're good, don't we, despite everything, I've said already, we think that we can, whatever good, there is, that outweighs the bad, at least if we turn around, as most people, think they're going to do, and they begin to do good, and then, we will become good, that's what a lot of people think, they live, they admit, that there are faults, in their lives, and that there are many wrong things, about them, but they think that one day, there is that root, that seed within me, that's one day, going to turn around, and then, you think that one day, you're going to wake up, and that's it, your life's going to turn around, you can't make yourself good, even if it was possible, to make ourselves good, what about the bad stuff, that we've done in the past, who's going to pay for that, who's going to, how am I going to pay, for the guilt, that I've incurred, on myself, before God, not everyone, by the way, thinks that they're good, there are people, so disgusted with themselves, that they're close to despair, tonight, and maybe, maybe there's even someone here, tonight, and that's the way, things are with you, you don't recognize, anything of what I've been saying, you're saying, well as far as I'm concerned, you have no idea, the kind of life, that I've lived,

[27:17] I've given up, trying to better my life, a long time ago, and I see absolutely nothing, in me, except rotten, badness, in my life, and I don't know, the answer to that, I don't believe, that God could ever, ever save me, or change me, or turn things around for me, because I've gone too far, away from him, you don't know, the addictions, that I'm a slave to, you don't know, how many times, I've tried to come off, these addictions, you don't know, the habits, that I have, the sexual habits, the lust, the selfishness, the fact that I just, seem to be dragged along, by, by these things, from day to day, and I'm in a rut, I'm in darkness, I'm in a, in a pit, and I can't, get out, well the first thing, I would say to a person, like that is, that you're in the right place, but this is not, that you'll never be helped, just by coming to church, you're in the right place, where you can hear, the gospel, but the message, of the gospel, goes out to people, who are in despair, of themselves, because there are no limits, to the forgiveness, of God, and whatever you think, of yourself tonight,

God, can change you, and bring you from, what he calls, the miry, you know that psalm, that talks about, he took me, from the fearful pit, and from the miry clay, well that's where you are tonight, you're in the fearful pit, and you're in the miry clay, you're in the darkness, and you don't know your way, out of the darkness, and that's because, you can't find your way, out of the darkness, so stop trying, and come to the Lord, and cry to him, and ask him to save you, and to bring his power, into your life, and to transform you, the way he promises, through Jesus Christ, and he will, God says, seek and you shall find, ask and it shall be given to you, knock and the door, shall be opened to you, like the prodigal son, I think we spoke about him, some time ago, the prodigal son, who, if ever there was someone, who was in darkness, it was him, he had done everything, he had spent all, he was at an end of himself, there was no answer, apart from simply to, present himself, to his father, and see what happened, and it was then, that he discovered the grace, and the kindness, and the love, of his father, but you know, most of us,

I guess, we're not like that, we still think that, you know, that whatever bad, there is in us, that we've got a heart of gold, you know, I've spoken to, many as a person, even who, is under the power, of drink and drugs, and they're in all kinds, of trouble, and you know, they'll tell me, you know, despite all that, I've got a heart of gold, well that's a person, who's still trusting, in themselves, bonds, and as long as, you're trusting in yourself, and think that, there's a future, for your own life, and think that, you can climb out of this, and save yourself, you can't, you're wrong, and there's no hope for you, until you come to that point, where you cry to God, and ask him, to change your life, but you know, I guess, in our culture, there are so many people, who, it's a mixture of bad and good, they think of themselves, as a kind of, the way that, my children used to say, when I came at, standard grades, or higher grades, you know, and you would, there would be the prelims, and the marks, would come out, the results would come out, and they would come home, and you would say, well, did you get a result today?

And they would sheepishly say, well, yes, and they would say, well, what was it? And they would say, well, it wasn't as bad, as some other people.

You see, that's the way, we think of ourselves, isn't it? We know, that we're kind of, in the middle, we think we're kind of, in the middle, but there's always, someone you can think about, or point to, that you think, is worse than you.

[31 : 22] So as long as, that's the case, you think you're going to be, able to say to God, well, what about him? What about her? But God is not going to ask you, about him or her.

He's going to ask you, about you. And the fact is, that tonight, this is not an exam. There's no point, in giving us an exam. Because we've all, failed anyway, to keep God's law.

And I'm not just saying, you've failed, I'm saying, I've failed. I know that you've failed, because I've failed. And because the Bible says, that every one of us, all have sinned, and come short.

All of us, every single person, in the world, has sinned, and come short, of the glory of God. That's what God says about us. Whatever we think of ourselves, that's God's verdict.

The fact is, that you're not a good person. That's the stark reality. You are not a good person. I'm not a good person.

[32 : 24] None of us are. And stop thinking it. Because as long as you continue to think, there's hope in yourself, then you'll never look to Jesus.

Thirdly, we think we're going to be okay. That's because you think, because once again, you're comparing your life with others. And because you've built this picture of God, that is completely different, from the way, in which he reveals to us, himself to us in the Bible.

And you've kind of, molded God, into what you would like him to be. And always that God, is in your favor, isn't it? And you would like, you would like God, at the end of the day, no matter what you read about him, or no matter, what he tells us about himself, in the Bible.

You would like him to, just accept you. On account of your own niceness, and your own decency. You know, many people say to me, I know the time is going past, many people say to me, what about, you know, people in this world, who are genuinely nice people?

People who are friendly, and kind, and patient, and compassionate. But they're not Christians, but you know, you've got to be, you've got to be attracted, to these people, because, because you've met, and we've all met them.

[33 : 46] I've met them. There are people I can think of tonight, who, having a word about Jesus, but they're so nice, and so friendly. I've got friends, who are unbelieving people, and they're, they're, they're great, as far as friends are concerned.

They're great, and they're people in this community, people you know, and they're genuinely nice people. Surely, you say to yourself, surely, on the last day, God is not going to reject a person like that, who has been such a genuinely fair, and, and, and, and friendly person.

Well, you know, again, that's a, that's a really interesting question, isn't it? Because it's one that, a lot of people think about. Just let me say one thing. That person you're thinking about, what kind of upbringing has that person had?

Probably a good one. Chances are, that person's been brought up, eh, with a good example, from his parents, or his grandparents, or his family. He's been brought up in a good home, with the qualities of respect, and kindness, and selflessness, have been taught to that person.

Secure home. So it's not really surprising, is it? That that person has adopted these qualities, and has turned out, and to be such a helpful, a person, and a nice person.

[35 : 05] Now let's go to South Yorkshire. You ask about these two boys, who were, convicted, this week.

We still don't even know, what they were convicted of, because what they were convicted of, is so horrendous, that we're not even allowed, to see, or hear, of what they actually did.

Isn't that, absolutely frightening? Ten year olds, just doesn't be thinking about, does it? Let's go into their homes, allegedly, we don't know, for sure.

Allegedly, the most horrendously abusive, violent homes. Is it any surprise? I'm not making an excuse. Don't get me wrong, I'm not making an excuse.

Is it any surprise, though, that these children turn out, to almost take the lives, of other children, even at the age of ten?

[36 : 11] Now let's come back, to your question. What about the nice person? If God was going to accept, the nice person, for being nice, and he was going to reject, these boys, because of what they did, then he is accepting, or rejecting, on the basis, of the way, they were brought up.

Is that fair? Is that fair? I know, that it's not perhaps, as simple as that, but, that's the argument. That's not fair.

Because these boys, were products, of their environment, one in which, was horrendous. In which, they were fed marijuana, and they were, they were allowed, to see horror videos, that adults, wouldn't even watch, at the age of five.

Is it any surprise, that they turn out, to be, grotesquely, dysfunctional people? And of course, we would say, well of course, God's not going to accept, people like that.

I have, news for you. These are, precisely, the kind of people, that God, does save. People, who the world, has given up on.

[37 : 33] And I've heard, so many governments, progressive governments, have said, and the people, I heard it even recently, being asked to us, a senior politician, what about, those who are, at the bottom of the pile?

What about, those who are, the lowest, of the low in society? The society, consider them, to be, outcasts, they've got no hope, for them at all. And politicians, they make all these statements, about how they're going to spend money, and how they're going to improve, social services, and all of these things.

And it doesn't do, the blindest bit of good, does it? Because the only thing, that can save, and transform, communities like that, and people like that, is the gospel. It's happened in the past, and we can only pray, that it will happen again.

We have to pray, for people who have gone into, these places. And some people have, some Christians have gone in. You know what? You can't live five miles away, in a detached home, and expect to reach people, in that condition.

You have to go and live, there. And I say that, hypocritically, as someone who's never done it. And I guess, I'm just part of, a church that has never really, got his hands dirty.

[38 : 54] Now there's a challenge, for somebody isn't it? Maybe someone here, tonight. Because it's by grace, that a person is saved. That's why I'm so, absolutely, absolutely, convinced, of what I'm saying.

The turning point, of this chapter, despite being under, the wrath of God, the world being under, the wrath of God tonight, despite the fact, that these people, to whom Paul is writing, were condemned, yet, but God, verse four, but God, you notice, that's the turning point, beforehand, he couldn't get any lower, and now, once God has rescued, those same people, he's transformed them, and he's brought them, up to be with himself, he's changed their lives, and he's given them, new hope, and a new beginning, and a new, a new, a new life, all together, and that's the way, that God works, he's doing it tonight, he's working in towns, and villages, he's touching people's lives, here's a life, of someone he's touched, somebody who said, I dread to think, where I would be today, if God had not saved me, my drug and alcohol abuse, started when I was 14, first I was experimenting, with tobacco, and marijuana, quickly began using, harder drugs, wasn't long before,

Satan was in full control, and I was heavily involved, in taking and making drugs, this led to extreme violence, and robbery, I had been in and out of jail, since I was 18, I cannot help, but weep, when I think of all the men, and women's lives, I led to destruction, everything we do in life, good or bad, right or wrong, affects everyone around us, then he says, while I was sitting, in a prison cell, lost, hopeless, and without direction, at the age of 34, God began to work in me, upon my release, his divine direction, led me to cross paths, with a backslider, from the Rialto Redeemer Church, who invited me, to one of these services, in 1997, I met my Redeemer, by March 1998, I had been baptized, I carried a lot of baggage, till that day, and after laying it all down, and giving it all over, to him who is altogether lovely, he made all my burdens, roll away,

I cannot begin to express, the love and peace, I felt that day, and still do today, now I'm 40, and I thank God, every day, for his blood, his mercy, his loving kindness, and his church, that's the grace of God, working in a person's life, but you notice, that according to the apostle, it works hand in hand, with faith, faith is not believing, in anything, it is taking hold, of Jesus Christ, specifically, you know people who say, well faith, is what you believe in, it doesn't really matter, what you believe in, as long as it's faith, as long as it's, it's sincere, then, that's what faith is, and we've no right, to judge a person, as to what they believe in, because they're sincere, well what a load of nonsense, that is like, falling off a ship, right, falling off a ship, you're floundering around, in the water, you see a rope, and you grab hold, of the rope, and somebody says to you, but the rope, isn't attached to anything, you say, well it doesn't matter, as long as I'm grabbing hold, of the rope,

I'll be okay, that's what, everybody thinks about faith, it's just such a piece, of nonsense, isn't it, what you need to know, is that the rope, is onto something, that somebody's holding, the other end of the rope, that's what faith is, faith has to be attached, to Jesus, it has to look to Jesus, it has to rest in Jesus, it has to believe, and trust in Jesus, right now, you and I, we were floundering, in the water, and we're going to drown, and most of us, are holding on, to whatever thing we can, and all the time, Jesus is saying to us, take the rope, I've got the other end, and you're not listening to him, because you think, there's another way, please stop, please listen to God, telling you where you are tonight, and telling you how he can transform, your life, and bring you to himself, and give you a new beginning, the new beginning, that we all need tonight, and by his grace, through faith, in the risen, crucified Lord Jesus, he will do that, may we come to him, let's pray, our father in heaven, bless our thoughts, on your word this evening, we thank you, that it gives such clear direction, as to where Jesus is, and where he can be found, we pray that you will find us though, because we need your grace, and your power, to work within us, and to make your word, live within us, in our hearts, forgive our sin, in Jesus name,

[43 : 51] Amen.