

Real Gospel Transformation

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[0 : 00] Turning back for a very short time to the chapter we had in Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2 and taking really in verses 1 down to verse 10.

I guess for the sake of a text we can look at verses 4 and verse 5. But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we're dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved and so on down to verse 10. The last time I was home we found our first digital camera.

This camera was probably 8 or 9 years old. And we took out the wee card of course and plugged it into the computer and we loaded up the photos we had on this camera. As we saw the photos and went through the photos, we saw just how much in a short space of time, how much our family had changed, how much our village had changed.

People of course who were there now no longer with us. House is being built, house is now gone. In a short time so much change had taken place in our wee lives, in our small village.

[1 : 20] But of course looking back over it, the change was indeed big. A lot had happened. Big changes had happened slowly. In this letter, Paul constantly reminds this church in Ephesus about the change that has taken place in their lives.

Again and again, Paul brings their minds back to remember what they once were. To remember and to see what God has done for them to change their lives.

Again and again, we see Paul gently leading them through these thoughts. Now compared to many of Paul's letters, as we know, Ephesians is quite a gentle letter in some ways.

There's other letters where Paul is, with respect, a lot more blunt, a lot more to the point, a lot more harsh, some may say in his language. In Ephesians, in general, we find quite a gentle letter by Paul.

That, of course, is not the case in our verses this evening. In Ephesians 2, in the first few verses of Ephesians 2, as we just read just now, Paul is anything but gentle.

[2 : 37] So, of course, Paul is writing to Ephesus. Ephesus was made up of the church in Ephesus, made up mostly of Christians from a Gentile background, a non-Jewish background.

In many cases, a pagan background. Not familiar, in many ways, with the Old Testament or with Jewish practice. We know from Acts that Paul spent a good amount of time in Ephesus.

He knew the church well. He had worked with them before. And here we join this letter in chapter 2, at the beginning of this section, where we see Paul speaking to this church.

He's speaking to this gathering of saved sinners, and he is asking them to remember. He reminds them what they once were. He reminds them then what happened in their lives, what change took place, and then finally he reminds them of where they now are, and also where their future lies.

And for a very short time this evening, that's the route we'll take also. As we read these verses, please think along and follow along Paul's narrative. For the Christians here this evening, listen as Paul leads you through these verses, and as we go through them, think for yourself where you once were.

[3 : 58] What were you once? Where were you once? And then, think what took place in your life. What took place in your life?

To take you from that place to where you are now. And then lastly, take joy as Paul gives an insight into the future of the Christian, and encouragement as he describes our current position.

For those here this evening who as of yet are not Christians, who as of yet don't know or worship Jesus as your Saviour, or as your Lord, listen to these verses.

Like we said, he's quite harsh. It's not perhaps easy reading. But Paul uses these words out of love.

And please listen to these verses. Listen to how Paul describes where you now are. But then also listen to how Paul describes your only escape route from that place where you now are.

[5 : 04] And listen to where Paul says you can be. If only you would trust and believe. Like we said in verses 1 down to verse 3, Paul gets straight to the point.

He instantly reminds these people that they were once dead. You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

Paul allows no breathing space. He allows no room to come up with another answer. He says before you knew Jesus, before you were saved, you were dead.

There's no place here for sitting on the fence. Because, as he goes on to say, because we're born as sons and daughters of Adam, because we're born in that state, we are born dead.

We are born hating God. We're born with sin, if we like, as our default position. We're born hating our Creator.

[6 : 13] We're born hating God. Now some, perhaps even some here this evening, may doubt the reality, may doubt the evidence for original sin.

Of course, that's a sermon for never a night, but we'll see in a second that Paul leaves no doubt for that. But supposing, supposing there is no evidence, it makes no difference really.

Because the first sin you commit, you're still in the same position anyway. You're still in front of a God who is holy and perfect, with nothing to do, nothing to say. But of course, Paul makes clear, he makes perfectly clear, that we are born in sin.

Look with me please, to verse 2. What does Paul say? Paul says, following the course of this world, following the prince of power of the air, who is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

Sin and disobedience, it's part of who we are, it's in our genes. As fallen men and fallen women, we are by nature, always going to go against our God.

[7 : 32] Again in verse 3, Paul makes a clear, even more clear for us, where he calls children of wrath. You were children by wrath, by nature children of wrath.

Just following the passions of the body and the mind, doing what you wanted. There's nothing else you could do, but you were trapped, you were born doing this, and you carry on doing this.

Very often, we hear the illustration, and a well-meaning illustration, that before we're saved, we're like someone who's drowning, or someone stuck in a bog, and God comes along, and he throws us a lifeline, and he pulls us out.

Well, that is not the gospel image. It's not the image that Paul uses here. The truth is, we're not struggling for help. Before we're saved, we're dead.

Completely helpless. No care for God. In fact, like we said, we did anything and everything we could to rebel against God.

[8 : 40] As Paul says here, we followed the course of this world. We were taken in by all its promises. We were taken in by everything the world offered us.

We are promised such great things. Money, an easy life, a good life, a good job, perfect family. Of course, not bad things, in and of themselves.

But once these things are all we think about, and all that we aim for, then we're so blind to our real situation. All the time, the world offers us bigger, and better, and shinier, nicer things, and we're all so taken in by this.

We're so taken in by it that we're blinded to our reality. If we're honest with ourselves, and if this is you this evening, I don't know many faces at all this evening.

And even if I did, it makes no difference. Only you right now know where you stand before God. If right now, this is you, you're trying to live a good life, you're trying your best, you're doing okay, you're trying your best to keep a family going, to keep yourself going, to keep a job going, okay, not bad things.

[9 : 58] But if that's your whole life, if that's your whole purpose, then you're missing out on something. All the time, surely, there's that thought in your mind, there must be more than this.

I wake up every morning, and get dressed, and go to work, or I go and study, and come home. Every day, same in, same out. what is the point of it all?

What's the point? And the question is, why? Why, before we were saved, were we never really satisfied, never really content, never really happy?

Well, first of all, it's because we had to do something to suppress the reality, the truth, that we knew there was a God. But before we were saved, we knew fine well, that God existed.

We have that in Romans 1, verse 18, where we see, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness, suppress the truth.

[11:03] To suppress the truth, to suppress the reality, we have to do something, anything, to keep our minds busy. The reality, that there is a God, we all must one day answer to, that reality is too big for us.

We can't bear that reality, so we do anything and everything, to keep ourselves, and keep our minds busy. To distract ourselves, in various ways. And the question, my honest question this evening, is, friends, do you know this feeling?

Right now, as you sit here, as you think about these verses, do you know this feeling? the sense, there must be more, than this.

The sense, that your, your life, what's appointed? Why am I here? I live, I work hard, I retire, I pass away.

In 50 years, 100 years, our names are all forgotten. We are forgotten. I'll be forgotten. The world tells us, we're living here, on a planet, hurtling through space, for no reason, no point, no purpose, all meaningless.

[12:25] Compare that, to the gospel reality, the gospel truth, that we're made, with and for, a purpose, by, a caring, creator.

We all perhaps know it so well, our catechism, our first question, and answer. What is the chief end, of man?

Man's chief end, to glorify God, and to enjoy him, forever. We're made, to worship God. We're made, to find our, our joy, and our purpose, and our fulfillment, in worshiping him.

Until we do so, our lives, will never be right. I will continue on, dead, in our sins.

See, people think, they are free, without God. They think they're free, without having a God, over them. The reality is, we all, have our masters, here this evening.

[13:26] Every one of us, we all serve, someone. The Christians here, we know, we serve, our God, who has bought us, with the precious, blood of the sun.

If we're not here, tonight as Christians, then the question is, who are we serving? Who are we following? What Paul tells us, in verse 2, we're following, the prince, of the power of the air.

The spirit, that is now at work, in the sons of disobedience. And who is this prince? Who is this spirit? We know, of course, it is Satan. There's no pleasure, I assure you, there's no pleasure, in reading these things, no pleasure, in proclaiming these things.

The reality is, we have to say it, because it's true. And there's no pleasure, for you just now, if you recognise yourself, in this situation. If any of this, is striking a chord with you, do not, let this chance, pass you by.

Do not let this chance, pass you by. Like we said, by nature, we rebel against God. By nature, we do everything we can, to avoid, and go against him. And if any of this, is striking a chord, in your mind, then that is not coming, from you.

[14:45] Certainly not coming, from me. It's coming, from God's word, speaking to you. God, God, speaking through his, holy, perfect word, his living word, don't let this chance, pass you by.

With respect, we can all become, so comfortable, in our routine, so comfortable, coming to this building, so comfortable, perhaps, in everything we do, on a Sunday. We forget, how real this is. This is not just, something we're doing, to tick off, a box, for the week. This is real, this is serious. This is, really is, life, or death.

Don't ignore, don't forget it. Pray. Pray, that God, will open up, his word, more to you. Pray that God, would help you, to understand his gospel.

Pray that he, would save you. So here we have, in verses one, down to verse three, the state, that these, Ephesians were once in. Paul reminds them, who and, what they once were, who they once served, what they were once like, what their lives, were once like.

[16:05] And the question is, what took place, in their lives, to take them, from that place, to where, they were, now. What has taken place, in the lives, of all the Christians, here, this evening?

Well, the answer, I would say, is, one of the, most beautiful phrases, in scripture. Look with me please, to verse four. Verse four.

But, God, these two, simple words, this one, short phrase, contains, such incredible power, such incredible beauty, and truth.

All that we've just seen, all that reality, that we were so, lost in our sins, dead in our sins, looking, for meaning, living lives, that led to nothing, confused, and lost in darkness, so alone, so far from God, living, looking for something, anything, all this going round, and round, and round, and then, in verse four, it stops.

It just stops, and we have, these two words, but, God. Now, by all means, what comes after, these words, could well read, but God, because he is holy, because he is just, because he is perfect, decided that, Donald McLeod, deserves to be, removed, of the face of the earth, but God, because he is perfect, decided, that humankind, had no more place, in this plan, but God, because he is perfect, decided, to cast, all, into a lost eternity, what, does verse four, actually say, but, God, being, rich, in mercy, because, of the great love, with which, he loved us, even when, we were dead, and our trespasses, made us alive, together, with Christ, by grace, you have been saved, and so on, even, whilst, we were dead, we were there, fighting against him, there, hating him, there, despising him, and there, is exactly, where God, found us, and, intervened, in our existence, where God, saved,

[18:35] Christians here, out from, of course, when we come, to look at the, topic, of the love, of God, it's a, an ocean, we can just, dip our toes in, and even, at that, we are soon, wearing out of words, and descriptions, to use, to describe, the great reality, of it, but let's note, one thing, from verse four, about the love, of God, look again, please, with me, at verse four, but God, being rich, in mercy, because of the great love, with which, he, loved, us, loved, us, the sense, of that term, is something, that goes back, something, that goes back, and goes back, and goes back, and the question, we have to ask, is when, did God, first love, any, of his people, when, did God, first love, you, or me, please, for a second, turn back, to chapter one, the previous page,

Ephesians chapter one, and look with me, at verse three, onwards, Ephesians one, and verse three, as you seek, to answer the question, when did God, first love, his people, Ephesians one, verse three, blessed be the, God and father, of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who has blessed us, in Christ, with every spiritual, blessing, in the heavenly places, even as, he chose us, in him, 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 will, and so on, when did God, first love, his people, before you were born, before your parents, were born, before this church, was built, before our planet, existed, before time, and the universe, and reality, itself existed, our God, our glorious,

Godhead, knew, you, saw, you, knew all about, you, and right now, as you love him, as you watch him, as you serve him, it was part, of God's plan, to save you, to, intervene, in your life, whilst you were still, fighting against him, to intervene, whilst you were still, doing anything, and everything, to hate him, and to show that hate, to him, God, had planned, that the father, would send the son, the son, would come, live, that perfect life, and die, that necessary death, and rise again, God, a plan, the spirit, would come, and he would, he would, open, your eyes, change your heart, of stone, to heart, of flesh, before you, even knew, who God was, before you, even were born,

God, had set, his love, on you, of course, we're just, skimming the surface here, and if you want more, on that study, Ephesians 1, study, the latter half of Romans, study this chapter again, Paul of course, makes much of this, but the reality is, we come to speak about, the love of God, for his people, it's not just some new love, with respect, he just decided, to show us one day, the love of God, for his people, goes back, and it goes back, and it goes back, before time, and reality itself, why does that matter, this is not just, some dry theology, for us to, to understand, and to, to nod along with, this is something, that should mean something, for us, but whilst, we were still, fighting him, that God, he knew, when, and exactly where, in your life, he would intervene, and transform you, it also means, that as we, worship God, and as we, live lives, as Christians, as we find ourselves, failing, time, and time, again, we can have, the solid assurance, the solid assurance, and hope, that because,

God's gift, of salvation, to us, had nothing, to do with us, in the first place, it's a gift, we cannot lose, not one, Christian here, this evening, can lose, his or her salvation, and to think, that we can, is to put, our own, sinful ideas, onto scripture, God is clear, and he is clear, in these verses, he's clear, in Ephesians 1, that his people, are special to him, special, in the greatest, sense of the word, where before, we were born, he knew us, before we were born, he chose us, before we were born, he had factored, and part of his plan, was, that he would, in his own time, save us, of course, John Owen, not known for, for, his short sentences, not knowing, not known for, for being brief, in any way,

thankfully,

[24 : 34] John Owen, did have a few, brief quotes, and this brief, very brief quote, is pretty useful, for us to think about, and have in our minds, John Owen, talking, about, our salvation, he says, quite simply, all that, we contribute, to our salvation, is the sin, that makes it necessary, God gives us life, God makes us, into new creatures, God saves us, from eternal, separation, eternal death, God saves us, from hell, all for his own glory, all the work, of his, undeserved grace, in, our, lives, by grace, you are being saved, and raised, as up, seated with him, in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, that takes us, to this last section, we've just seen, what we once were, Paul reminds, these Ephesians, that once you were lost, once you were, without God, and far from God, once you were dead, then God, and his perfect plan, intervened in your life, and he saved you, he transformed you, he gave you, a new life, and then,

Paul, closes this section, by reminding them, and telling them, what they, now are, and indeed, what their future holds, you know, that roughly, in verses five, down, to verse ten, quite simply, as we said, the state of a Christian, is simple, they were once dead, now alive, taken from death, and brought, to new life, once enemies of God, hating him, fighting against him, and now, by his power, Christians, are, servants of God, but also, as we see in scripture, even called, friends, of God, this of course, is no small change, of course, as any Christian, here, this evening, I would tell you, the Christian, is by no means, made perfect, in that second, at least in a, in an earthly sense, I was saved, around 12, or 13, and I remember, as a young Christian, thinking, right,

I am sorted, now, I will never sin, ever again, I probably got, about two or three hours, and I realized, just how silly, and how wrong, and how much, I misunderstood, what I meant to be a Christian, every Christian, here this evening, we're all, I'm sure, firmly aware, of how often, and to our shame, how quickly, and how easily, and even if we're honest, how willingly, we fall away, from, what we know to be right, what we know to be true, how willingly, we often sin, how easily, we often, fall away, from God, and of course, God's word, tells us, and we must believe it, that the steady work, of sanctification, has taken place, in our lives, taking place, right now, the slow work, where God, the spirit, makes us, more, and more, like our saviour, where slowly, but surely, the spirit, he transforms us, and changes us, to be more, and more, like Jesus, of course, like I said, it's very often, for ourselves, the process, we perhaps, don't see, don't notice, others often, see it in us, but it's something, that we must believe, because scripture, tells us it's true, the process, of course, that won't be complete, until, we enter, into eternity, eternity,

Paul, in verse 6, he, he, perhaps, uses quite a strange, term here, it says, that God has raised us up, with him, and has seated us, as Jesus, with him, in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, perhaps, perhaps, a strange phrase, that Paul, to start using now, what, image is he using, or why, he's saying, what does it mean, that these Ephesians, at this time, they were seated, in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, Jesus, it's beyond, praise, that God, could save, any of us, at all, when we see, that there's more, to it, God, doesn't just save us, and renew us, and give us new life, as if that's not, a good enough thing, he then, gives, his people more, God, shows, more grace, and more love, to his people, and how, does he do that, well he promises us, this, this place, seated, in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, of course, every good thing we have, comes, in and through, and from,

Jesus, he is, the one, who is our goodness, he is the one, who is our grace, Jesus himself, is the one, who is, all that we have, but God promises us, this, seating, in the heavenly places, this place, in eternity, and what, does this remind us of, from the gospels, we should bring our minds, back to the words, of Jesus, to his disciples, as they were confused, as to what was happening, with him, what did Jesus promise, his people, that I am going, to prepare, a place, for you, if I go, I will return, and so on, our hope, it's not based, on the here, and now, God blesses, his people, right now, we're blessed, with the knowledge, of our salvation, we're blessed, with the fellowship, of his people, we're blessed, of worshipping, and praising him, but where, does our ultimate, hope lie, it rests, and lies, in the fact, that we have, the sure hope, and knowledge, that one day, we will join, completely, and totally, with, our saviour, in eternity, these are not just, nice words, to help Christians, get through life, this is not just, something we say, to each other, to help us, in bad times, this is God's truth, this is something, we know, to be factual, we know, to be right, we know, to be solid, and sure, then in verse 10, we also see, that there's also, a present aspect, to the Christian's life, we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, for good works, which God prepared, beforehand, that we should walk, in them, see of course, it's not just the case, that we become Christians, and we just

do our own thing, then, of course we all know that, not to be true, the reality is, that our lives, have purpose, that we are saved, to serve, that God has set us aside, to worship him, to love him, and to serve him, on our time, on earth, a reminder for us, that not every one of us, of course, can serve in the same way, we can't all become, ministers, we can't all, become presenters, but the gospel reality is, we all have, a place, in God's, present kingdom, our place, in God's, coming, future kingdom, we understand, but God's, present kingdom, we see, from the end of the chapter, we had, in verse 19 onwards, words, we are, fellow citizens, we're all together, working together, with one aim, each one of us, we have a place, and a purpose, in the church of God, in general, but also, in a practical sense, in the local church,

[32 : 48] God has placed, you here, for his glory, to serve him, not one person, here, cannot serve, in some way, whether that's, an open, practical service, or perhaps, a service, of constant prayer, for this congregation, and for our island, of our nation, equally useful, equally essential, to God's, kingdom, we're made, and saved, to serve, we're his workmanship, he's crafted us, for good works, that we should, walk, in them, we were once dead, once so far, from God, once, hating, the one, who made us, then God, in his grace, and his glory, in his love, for his people, intervened, God intervened, and he transformed, our lives, he transformed, who we were, he gave us, a new hope, he gave us, a new purpose, a whole new reality, and a whole, new, future, and then we see, that we have a promise, of, eternity, spent with him, and also, the, the clear instruction, of a lifetime, of loving service, and that, of course, is for Christians, here this evening,

I am just, passing, through this pulpit, and, my, honest, genuine question, is how long, have you sat, in these pews, how long, have you heard, the simple gospel, it's the only gospel, that we have, to offer, it's the only gospel, you're ever going, to hear, that is true, how long, have you sat, in these pews, and still, you have done, nothing, you say nothing, how many excuses, do you have left, how many more reasons, do you have, to not believe, what you've heard, again, and again, and again, the work, has all been done, the work, has all been done, where, in verses 1, to verse 3, do we see, Paul saying, in any way, whatsoever, because you Ephesians, were so good, in your faithfulness, because you Ephesians, were so careful, because you Ephesians, were such good people, no, what does he say, but God, there's nothing, you can do, to impress God, nothing you can do, to win his love, for you, verse 4, so simple, the gospel, is so simple, believe, trust, in the only one, who can save you, this is not just, some, vain thing, we're saying, this is our, heartfelt prayer, for you this evening,

I'm sure those here, who are, who are Christians, here this evening, that is our prayer, for you too, we're so thankful, you're here, we're so thankful, you're hearing God's word, so thankful, you're gathering with us, and our prayer is, you would come, to know him, stop fighting, against him, it's a battle, you will never win, as we said, right now, each person, here this evening, we stand, before God, either as those, who we see in these, in these verses, as those, he has cleansed, and those, he has, has made friends, or we stand, before God, this evening, as his enemies, there's no, sitting on the fence, there's no middle ground, here, in these verses, in this chapter for us, there's no middle ground, anywhere in scripture, for us to find, a hiding place in, we know him, and we love him, and we're his, or we're still, fighting against him, we're still, rebelling against him, the gospel is clear, call out for him, call out, and pray to him, that he would save you, before the end, of this hour, of this night, don't waste any more time, cry out, that he would save you, cry out, that he, would reveal, the truth of his word, to you, cry out, that he would, take away, all this, burden, that you have my friend, and that he would, transform your life, for the Christians here, this evening, read this passage again, study these verses, in Ephesians 2, and rejoice, rejoice in the power, and wonder, of what God has done, in your life, and in my life, of how he has transformed you, without anything from you, how he has transformed you, changed you, given you, a brand new life, a brand new eternity, a brand new hope, all, for, his glory, let's bow our heads, now, a word of prayer, our Lord God, we come before you, this evening, and we humble ourselves, before you, we thank you, for the great gospel, we thank you, for how simple, you have made the gospel, how simple it is, that all may hear it, that all can understand it,

Lord, you would forgive me, for, anything I said, that was incorrect, we thank you, that the power, is not in the, the poor men, who stand here Lord, the power, is in your inerrant, holy, word, your perfect word, your living word, help us Lord, to cling on to it, as we go through this life, we pray as we carry on, to worship you, again, just now, you would do so, with hearts and minds, full of praise, we would worship you, singing to you, and knowing you, as our God, and as our saviour, knowing

you as the one, who is walking alongside us, right now, as God we sing, as your precious name is, for the sake, Amen, let's conclude, just now, by singing to his praise, from Psalm 72, excuse me, Psalm 72, from Scottish Psalter, that's on page 313, of course, that's a psalm, we're all so used to singing, a psalm, that, that talks, in some way, about, the future kingdom, and the glory of it, Psalm 72, on page 313, we can sing, verses 15, down, to verse 19, yea, he shall live, and given to him, shall be of Sheba's gold, for him still, shall we pray, and he, shall daily be extolled, of corn, and handful in the earth, on tops of mountain high, with prosperous fruit, shall shake like trees, on Lebanon, that be, yea, he shall live, and given to him, shall be of Sheba's gold, for him still, and given to him, shall be of Sheba's gold, o' friends, anduleen, and■, and monstrous and politicized, eabianesss, so,
[40 : 45] Cheba's gold, and cœ■ being fixed, andADE be of God, of corn and gaan, and covert ah,
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The whole Everett Is Gloriful Amen So let it be If after the prayer I could wait a few seconds to give me a chance to get back to the back let's pray Lord God we thank you again for the chance we had this day to set aside a few hours to listen to your word help us as we carry on and begin this new week to truly do so in your strength understanding that if we go alone we will fail Lord we go along with you if you go before us if you go with us if you protect us behind Lord we can be sure that no matter what we encounter supposing even as the earth gives way beneath our feet that we will remain planted on you our solid rock help us this evening to take joy and take time for the rest of this night to think about you to think about the great change and transformation you have taken place in our lives that you have shown to all your people help us to begin this new week for many here this would be the week where they cry out to you they call out to you to save them they cry out to you to transform them and to give them that new life they desperately desperately seek after ask all these things in Christ's precious name
Amen Amen