

(Ephesians) From the Pit to the Pinnacle

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon explores the concept of human depravity and the implications of being dead in trespasses and sins, highlighting the need for God's salvation and the contrast between our natural condition and our condition in Christ.

Duration: 56:31

Topics: "Human Depravity", "Gods Mercy"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that God does not deal with us based on what we have earned, but rather through His rich mercy. The preacher highlights the contrast between the bleakness of our natural condition and the good news of God's intervention. He explains that the purpose of painting a bleak picture of human depravity is to emphasize the love and mercy of God. The preacher also mentions that understanding the hopelessness of our situation allows us to fully appreciate what God has done for us.

Transcript

As Paul was praying that his readers would know the exceeding greatness of God's resurrecting power, he seems to have been suddenly caught up in a moment of praise and adoration of Christ as he sees Him as the sovereign Lord of the universe and head over the church, which is His body. Having gloried in God's ultimate display of power, which was the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, the apostle now turns to us and he shows that it is through our salvation that God has displayed the immeasurable riches of His grace. You know, at some point in history, back in the 16th century, I think it was, someone got the idea to divide the Bible up into chapter and verse.

And I think generally speaking, it was a good idea for reference purposes. But often when I'm reading through the scriptures, I feel like these guys blew it at certain points. And here's one of those places I think they made a mistake.

I don't think they should have divided the chapter right here, because this is a continuation of Paul's glorying in Christ and what he's done. And he just sort of, you know, goes from from one thing to another. He begins it all back in chapter one.

He begins it all with that prayer that we might know the hope of our calling, the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe

according to the working of his mighty power, which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead? And then he goes on to this, this exaltation of Christ glorying in the majesty of Christ and his power being demonstrated through his resurrection and exaltation. And then he just keeps on flowing.

He's flowing right into now speaking about our salvation and showing as he continues on the immeasurable riches of God's grace by saving us. So I think personally they should have waited until verse 11 of chapter two before breaking the chapter. But they didn't.

So I just wanted you to be able to get the flow of what Paul is saying and to see the continuity as we pick up here in chapter two with what has gone before. So as we come now to verse one of chapter two, Paul says, and you who were dead in trespasses and sins, that's actually what Paul wrote. Those who translated the scriptures at this point took the liberty to insert the words made alive, or as the older version reads, and you have quickened.

And I think the reason they did that right here is they felt that what Paul was about to say was so intense, was so devastating to the human psyche that he had to, first of all, remind us of the goodness of God by inserting the idea that God has made us alive, because what he really does is he goes on and just talks about our depraved situation. And then when we come to verse five, that's where he actually makes reference to the fact that God has made us alive despite our natural condition. So the translators wanted to give us a break.

They wanted to ease the blow for us of what the apostle stated here. But what the apostle does here in these first three verses of chapter two is that he plumbs the depths of human depravity, showing the contrast between what man is by nature and what he can become by the grace of God. So Paul is painting a very bleak picture of human nature, but he's doing it in order to contrast it with the love and the mercy of God.

You see, it's only when I understand. How pitiful my situation really was or how bleak it was, it's only when I understand how hopeless my situation really was that I can come to the fullest appreciation for what God has done for me. If I think that.

I wasn't all that bad. I probably could have pulled it off myself if I would have just worked a bit harder. Then my tendency is going to be.

To be sort of. Unthankful for the gift of God, but if I realize how hopeless my case really was. If I realize that there was no possible way that I could have ever in any way made any sort of contribution to my salvation, if I realized the pit that I was in, oh, it causes me to rejoice that much more when I consider the pinnacle that God has taken me to by his grace.

And so, Paul, and you, he made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins. Now, Paul is not giving us a portrait of some particularly degraded segment of society here. This is the biblical diagnosis of all men at all times under every situation.

Each and every person that's ever been born into this world has come into this world in this condition, dead in trespasses and sins. Dead in trespasses and sins, he uses two words to describe our offenses toward God. First of all, the word trespass, the word trespass speaks of the crossing of a known boundary or a deviation from the right path.

So a trespass would be really an intentional violation of God's revealed will. So he says we were dead in our trespasses, our intentional violations of God's revealed will. And then he also says our sins.

The word sin means. A missing of the mark or a falling short of the standard. So by using these two words, Paul covers the active and the passive aspects of human wrongdoing before God, we are both rebels and failures.

We have failed to live up to the standard because of the weakness of our flesh. But we have also intentionally violated the known will of God. And this has brought about a condition that Paul describes as death.

You were dead in your trespasses and sins. Now, from this particular text right here in Ephesians, chapter two, and from a number of other statements in the scriptures, especially in the first three chapters of Romans, theologians have coined the term the depravity of man. We get that term from these kinds of statements, the depravity of man, or another way to refer to this condition is total depravity.

And we do believe as Christian people that the teaches the total depravity of man. But it's important that we understand what that means. Some people have misinterpreted what we mean when we say man is totally depraved.

They think that we mean that man is not capable of doing any sort of good thing. That is not what we mean. We do not mean that every person is as evil as they could possibly be when we talk about the total depravity of man.

What we mean is that no part of any human person, mind, emotions, conscience or will has remained untainted by the fall. We mean that every person has been affected thoroughly in every aspect of their being by what we call the fall. And the fall, of course, is a reference back to what occurred in the garden.

You remember God created man, he placed him in the garden and he put one restriction on man. God said to him, you can eat of all the trees of the garden, but the tree that is in the midst of the garden, you shall not eat of it. For in the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die.

So God warned Adam that death would be the consequence of his disobedience. And we know the story. Adam did indeed disobey God.

And the moment that he partook of that fruit. As God declared, he died, he did not die at that instant physically, he died spiritually, which set in motion a process that would lead eventually to his physical death. But he died spiritually.

He was separated from God and the spiritual aspect of his being was then affected. So when Adam had children, Adam himself, having been made in the image of God. A pure and holy being, when Adam himself had children after his fall, his children were born with his image and likeness.

They inherited from Adam this fallen, sinful condition. And so when we talk about the depravity of man, we're talking about the fact that each and every one of us are by nature tainted because of what happened back in the garden. That act of Adam has affected each and every one of us.

And we are born into this world, disconnected from God, severed from him because of that sin issue. Now, we do have to just for a moment talk about this whole idea of being dead in trespasses and sins, because

it's important here also that we understand the implication. What does it mean when he says that you who were dead in trespasses and sins, you see, there are two schools of thought on what the apostle actually means here.

And it's important to clarify what it is that he is talking about. Now, there is the view that comes to us through the reformed camp. The reformed view, the Calvinistic view.

That when the apostle here makes reference to us being dead in our sin, that means that we are totally and completely in every way conceivable, dead to God. And in order to even believe the gospel, we have to first of all, be regenerated. Calvinism teaches that a man must be born again before he can believe.

So regeneration, which is another more technical word for the idea of being born again, precedes faith. That's the teaching of Calvinism. Regeneration precedes faith.

Let me quote you from James Montgomery Boyce, a great preacher, good Bible expositor and a devout Calvinist. He said, Like a spiritual corpse, a sinner is unable to make a single move toward God. Think a single thought about God or even correctly respond to God unless God is first present to bring the spiritually dead person to life.

Thus, the Calvinistic doctrine of regeneration before faith. Notice what he says. A person can't even think about God, can't even have a thought about God apart from the regenerating work of the spirit.

Now, the other view held by non reformed people is the view that I think is more accurate biblically, that when Paul said. You who were dead in your trespasses and sins, what he was talking about was not an inability to hear or respond to God, but a complete separation of the whole person from God. The inability to in any way save oneself.

I think that's what Paul was actually referring to when he spoke of us as being dead. Now, you might wonder, well, why am I even addressing this? You don't really care. You're not interested in reformed theology or any other theology for that matter.

But it is important. It's important because right now in. Our time, we're seeing a revival in the reformed group of churches, and we have seen in our own midst, in our own fellowship as Calvary Chapel, we've seen some of our pastors depart from our theological perspective and move over to a reformed position.

And they have argued quite vigorously for the reformed doctrines, and this is part of their whole argument. Now, I'm not saying this to imply that people who hold to reformed theology are not good Christ loving Christians. They are most of them.

But at times they can be contentious and arrogant and they can cause division over these kinds of things. And I think it's important that we be able to give them a response to their statements and show that there is another alternative to some of these views. Now, to say that when a person is dead spiritually means that they cannot in any way think about God or respond to God apart from, first of all, being born again.

I think this really contradicts a clear teaching of Scripture. I think the teaching of Scripture is clearly that faith leads to regeneration. That is what it seems to be saying as we read all through the pages of the New Testament, that because we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are then regenerated.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him would not perish, but have everlasting life. Jesus told Nicodemus that the way to be born again was to believe. He didn't say that.

First of all, you must be born again and then you can believe so you can be saved. But they're mixing things up here. Back when Adam and Eve sinned.

We find that that is where death first occurred in the sense that Paul is speaking of it here. They died spiritually, but we also find, interestingly, that they had ongoing communication with God, even though they were spiritually dead. God appeared to them in the garden.

They knew his voice. They spoke with him. They told him about their shame and their nakedness, and then God went on to promise to bring them deliverance, ultimately through a redeemer.

But if it was true that a person who is dead in sin could have no thought of God, no communication with God, no ability to respond to God, then how do we explain what happened with Adam and Eve? Because they were certainly dead. That's where the whole thing began. In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die.

So we see through the fact that they are having ongoing communication with God, that that's not what's implied, but rather simply that being dead in trespasses and sins means that we cannot save ourselves, that God must save us. And a response to his invitation to salvation is in no way equivalent to saving ourself in any way. You see, the extreme reform view is that if we even take credit for the fact that we responded somehow, that's seen as contributing to our salvation.

And yet I never felt for a moment that I have saved myself at all. I've always been thankful to the grace of God that he saved me. All I did was simply embrace his offer of eternal life.

And I think that's clearly what God requires of each and every person. So having got the theological issues out of the way, let's go on to see what the apostle then has to say. So, and you, he made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.

So you see what Paul is doing. He's describing our former condition. And in doing so, he's seeking ultimately to magnify and glorify the grace of God.

This is where we were. We were walking according to the course of this world. We were following the fashion of the world.

We were caught up in a world that long ago turned its back on God. And we were right there in the flow of that whole mentality, walking according to the course of this world, which is being directed, Paul says, by the prince of the power of the air. Satan is the one who is orchestrating the fads and the fashions, the philosophies and the theories that are going around the world and keeping people in blindness to the reality of God.

And here's the interesting thing, as we're told in the book of Ecclesiastes, there is nothing new under the sun. You know, things that people are embracing today in opposition to the gospel of Christ are just a repackaging of things that people have been believing for centuries. You look at some of the modern cults, the Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, the Jehovah's Witnesses idea that Jesus Christ is less than God,

the son.

He is somehow a created being inferior to the father is a doctrine that can be traced back to the third century, known as Aryanism. Nothing new under the sun. It's the exact same thing that the Aryans believed and taught back at that time.

If you look at the teaching of Mormonism, you find that what they believe and teach is just sort of a modern version of the Gnostic heresy. You find that with the Christian science group. You find that with the cults themselves, with the various religions of the world, which we would understand to be false religions.

You can find that what they believe is not anything new, but it goes back all the way to the beginning in some cases to the very earliest days of human history. And what we see is that Satan has just been orchestrating century after century, the fads, the fashions of philosophies of the world and all he does is basically repackage the same message for each new generation. He just puts it in a little bit of a different package to make it palatable to the current situation that he's the one behind it.

He's the one conducting the course of this world. He's the one that's orchestrating the affairs. He's the one who's influencing things politically.

He's the one who's influencing things socially. He's the one who is influencing things philosophically. And each and every one of us were at one time caught up in that stream of thought that is contrary to God.

We were all part of that system at one time. We were all under the influence of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who even now is working in the sense of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. So notice Paul includes himself there.

The Jews, of course, would have seen themselves as completely outside of that stream. They would have seen themselves as standing alone in all of history as the people of God. But Paul, being the quintessential Jew, he includes himself and therefore he includes all of his people right with him.

This is the condition of the human race, regardless of what your ethnic background is. We all of us conducted ourselves in the same manner in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. What? A clear description of life before Jesus Christ.

Conducting ourselves. In the lust of our flesh, driven by our own personal desires, our own personal desires, basically being the final authority in our lives, conducting ourselves according to the desires of our flesh, the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the body and of the mind. That's how we all live.

That's how everybody else is living. Who's outside the kingdom presently living according to the dictates of the body and the mind, whatever the body desires. That's what drives me.

Whatever I can conceive of in my thinking process. That's what drives me. That's what motivates me.

And that's what we have all around us in the world that we live in. Each and every person. Outside of Christ, apart from those who are submitted to the authority of the Son of God, are conducting themselves, as Paul said here, in the lust of their flesh, the desires of the flesh, whatever the flesh desires.

That's what I pursue, whatever the mind delights in. That's what I meditate on and seek to obtain. This is life apart from God.

And he said, as a result of all of this, we were by nature children of wrath, just as others by nature, the children of wrath, our natural condition. Is that we are under the judgment of God. Now, when you talk about the wrath of God, especially today, people get really uptight about any such thing.

And we heard with the terrorist attacks and all we heard some mentioning of perhaps this whole thing being due to a judgment of God. And I've talked about that in the past already. I'm not comfortable with attributing that those events to the judgment of God.

But that doesn't mean that there isn't a judgment of God that's coming. We know that there is. And this is one thing that people absolutely refuse to believe about God today, that God would actually judge the world.

Some people completely reject the idea of any sort of retribution or punishment after life. The idea of a hell is just appalling to many people today, but they do have a dilemma when they are faced with questions like, well, what about a person like an Adolf Hitler or a Joseph Stalin or now we might say an Osama bin Laden or someone like that? Is it reasonable to think that people like this could conduct themselves the way they have in this life? And cause great destruction and devastation and pain to millions of people and yet just go off into oblivion with no accountability, no time of answering for their deeds. That does pose a problem for the person who completely and outright rejects the idea of any sort of judgment.

That, I think, is the minority of people who go to that extreme. But the vast majority of people, although they can see a place of retribution and judgment for a certain few in history, they would believe that for the most part, the average person has no need to worry about any future judgment of God. But you see, the problem there is simply a failure to realize the true condition of man.

That man's true condition, as we've already seen, is that he is both a rebel and a failure. When it comes to his relationship to the revealed will of God, man is in rebellion against God. And so Paul says here that we were by nature.

The children of wrath, we are born into this world under the judgment of God, not the immediate judgment of God. It's not that when a person comes into the world, God begins a process of judging them. But what it does mean is that we have come into this world under the sentence of death.

And unless we are delivered from that sentence by the grace of God, through the gift of God, which is eternal life, we will ultimately suffer the penalty for our sin. We are children of wrath by nature because of our relationship to Adam. The Bible says that when Adam sinned, he sinned on our behalf.

Aren't you glad that he did that for you? He sinned on our behalf. Some people say, well, I don't like that. Well, I don't either, but we can't do anything about it.

Adam sinned on our behalf. He was the representative of the human race. But the scriptures even go a bit further and imply that it wasn't only Adam who sinned, but we sinned along with him because the scripture says that we were in Adam when he sinned.

In the book of Hebrews, the author talks about Abraham giving tithes to Melchizedek and he talks about the Levitical priesthood in comparison to the priesthood of Melchizedek. And his argument is that the priesthood of Melchizedek is superior to the Levitical priesthood. And it's proven by the fact that Abraham, the father of Levi, gave tithes to Melchizedek.

And that Melchizedek blessed Abraham and without contradiction, the lesser is always blessed by the greater. And then the author says this, it's an interesting thing. He says, but Levi was in the loins of his father Abraham when Melchizedek met him.

So his whole point is to prove the superiority of Melchizedek over Levi. And he does so by saying Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek, the lesser is blessed by the greater. And because Levi was in the loins of Abraham, he was indirectly paying tithes and being blessed by the greater.

And so from that principle there, we get an insight and an understanding into what happened when Adam sinned. Adam sinned as our representative, but we were also in the loins of Adam when he sinned and therefore we sinned with him. And so the penalty that Adam had to pay for his sin was death, and we inherited that from him.

So we also, all of us, are by nature the children of wrath, Paul including himself, all of his readers, his whole race of people. And he bunches us all together and he says, just as others, we're all in the same boat. There's not a man on the face of the earth, no matter how dignified, no matter how cultured, no matter how educated, how wealthy, how prestigious.

There's not a person on the face of the earth who is any better off before God than anyone else. Naturally, we're all in the same exact predicament. We're all sinners.

We're all depraved, totally depraved, meaning that there isn't anything we can do to commend ourselves to God for salvation. We are all shut up to God having mercy on us, and if God doesn't have mercy, then we are all equally as hopeless. And that's the picture that Paul paints of the human condition.

And so, as I said in the beginning, here he is. He's caught up in this moment of praise, in this moment of adoration. He's glorying in the exaltation of Christ and his resurrection, which demonstrates his sovereignty.

And having gloried in the sovereignty of Christ and his great power, he now is going to go on in glory in his grace, his immeasurable grace. But he does so by first painting this picture of us in our true condition as bleak as imaginable. It's as hopeless as it could possibly be.

We are in a pitiful state, lost, dead, separated from God, unable to bring any sort of offering to make amends for our behavior. Nothing we have can appease God. His wrath, his righteous judgment against our sinful state cannot be appeased by any one of us.

So what does God do? Well, what he could have done is simply obliterate the human race. He could have 2,000 years ago said, I am sick and tired of these people that I've made. I'm fed up with their rebellion against me.

I have run out of patience with their taking advantage of my love and mercy and disregarding me. I'm going to give them what they deserve. I'm going to cast them all into hell forever.

God could have done that. He could have done that and been completely righteous in doing so. Sometimes we hear people say things out of emotion that they haven't thought all that well through.

They say, oh, but it wouldn't be fair. Would it be fair for God to put people in hell? We don't want to talk about fair when we start talking about what we deserve. Don't ever bring up the word fair, because if you

do, you're going to be scared to death at what's fair.

What's fair is we go to hell forever. That's fair because that's what we've merited. That's what we've earned.

You see, God doesn't deal with us on that basis at all. And Paul tells us here in verse four, but God who is rich in mercy. You see, it's mercy that God has chosen to deal with us through.

And right here in this fourth verse, I want you to notice here there's this glorious contrast. Paul having painted this very bleak picture. And if I did a better job at painting it, we could all be mourning under our condition.

Here tonight and at a point of despair, that's the point that in a sense, the spirit of God wants to bring us to. He wants to bring us to that place of utter despair, realizing that there's no possible way that I can do anything to remedy my condition. And therefore, my only possible future is judgment and separation from God.

Oh, what a horrific idea. And there we are in despair. There we are despondent.

There we are terror stricken at the possibility, anticipating nothing but the wrath of Almighty God. And suddenly these words come, but God see what Paul's wanting to do there. He's intentionally doing this.

He's intentionally wanting to bring us to that place of seeing how bad our situation really was and then introducing the good news. It's like someone would come and say, all right, well, you know, I've got some I've got some bad news and I've got some good news. And then they proceed to tell you the bad news.

And it is so bad that in the course of them telling you the bad news, you forget that there's even any good news coming. And by the time they finish telling you the bad news, you are so despondent. You're in despair.

You can't even lift your head. But then they suddenly say, but I've got some good news. And at that point, you can't even imagine that there could be any good news.

That's how bad the bad news has been. That's what Paul's doing right here. And so as he paints this bleakest of pictures, then he suddenly turns and he says, and this is the gospel.

But God, the good news. This is the good news, really. The good news is simply this, that although we deserve the judgment of God, although we deserve to experience the wrath of God eternally, the good news is that God has had mercy on us.

He's had mercy on us, and he's actually done the unthinkable. He's punished someone else in our place. And so Paul says, but God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us.

God, rich in mercy and full of love for us. Now, remember the picture that he just painted. Can you imagine anyone loving that group of people? I mean, let's put ourselves for a moment in God's place.

If we could think of the most miserable, wretched, vile, incorrigible, perverse, wicked, hateful group of people or individual. So think of that group of people, whoever it might be, and then imagine yourself having great love for that group of people. Can you even imagine such a thing? We're hearing a lot about terrorism, we're seeing a lot about those nations and groups that are behind the terrorist activity, and we're

seeing a lot of hatred.

We're seeing a lot of vileness and we're seeing some some gruesome and horrible things. And as you think of those groups of people that are militantly committed to the destruction of innocent lives and things, how much love wells up in your heart for those groups of people? I don't have much at all. Or any other group, for that matter, think about those men back in the early part of the last century who led, say, for example, the Bolshevik Revolution, who went in and overthrew the existing government in Russia and set up the Marxist-Leninist system and through a process of years murdered millions and millions of people.

Or think of those that led the Cultural Revolution in China and did the same sort of thing, or those in Cambodia. Think of those groups in Africa today, some of these militant terrorist groups that are not Islamic in nature, but going about just murder and mayhem. And there's one particular group in some of the West African countries that will go into villages and murder every living thing.

And you think of these groups of people, and I quite frankly have no love for them whatsoever. My thoughts toward them are they need to be judged, they need to be dealt with. I think of them in terms of justice.

I don't even for a moment think of them in terms of mercy. But all I can see is a small portion of some of their activity. I don't even see all of what they do, nor do I see into their very hearts.

But think about this, that God sees every person. He sees all of their deeds. He knows everything they say and think.

He knows every wicked deed, every vile word and every sinful thought that has ever been done or uttered or imagined by every person that's ever lived. And he loves us unimaginable, incredible. That's the love of God.

It is truly beyond our ability to comprehend the love of God. We can only understand it in any way because of his revelation to us. But that's what we see here, as Paul makes the contrast clear.

But God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace, you have been saved, even when we were dead in trespasses. Notice that he didn't include sins there.

You remember the distinction between the two sin is a missing of the mark or a falling short of the standard sin implies failure out of weakness. It doesn't necessarily imply intentional deeds of wrongdoing. Paul doesn't use sins here.

He says, even when we were dead in our trespasses, even when we had crossed the known boundary, even when we had intentionally deviated from the right path, it was even then that God loved us and those groups that I just mentioned a moment ago. And we could go on and name thousands of others from history. But those groups and every unnamed group and every person that is trespassed against God, God loves them and it's God's desire that they come to their senses.

It's God's desire that they be delivered from the prince of the power of the air and come into a relationship with himself. And he sent Jesus for that very purpose. And that is the amazing gospel that we have believed.

And that's the gospel that we preach. And that's the gospel that caused John Newton to write that great hymn, Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound That Saved a Wretch Like Me. You've never read the testimony of John Newton.

You can't appreciate the song totally until you understand the background of the man who wrote it. He was the captain of a slave ship and he dealt in human cargo. And he abused and murdered and did all the vile things that anyone else would have done at that time in those circumstances.

And there came a time in his life when Christ met him and offered him forgiveness and he was saved and he became not only a Christian, but he became a minister of the gospel. He became a pastor of a church and he became a hymn writer and he wrote that great hymn that we all love and he wrote it out of a clear understanding of his previous condition and the love of God, the God who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, made us alive together with Christ by grace. You have been saved and raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Remember, in our last study, we were talking about Christ sitting at the right hand of the father and how we talked about that is the highest place of honor in the universe. I taught this. If this was several years ago and, you know, for each of the different segments you teach through, you try to come up with a title and I entitled this particular portion from the pit to the pinnacle, because that's exactly what we have described here.

From the lowest possible position to the highest possible position, he seated us with Christ in heavenly places. He's taken us from the very bottom of the pit and he's elevated us to the highest place of honor in the universe, sharing in the glory of Christ. That is that is unimaginable.

It's just. It's beyond our ability to understand. This is where we need the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him.

This is where we need the eyes of our heart to be enlightened. And it's appropriate, as we did tonight, to seeing open the eyes of my heart, Lord. I want to see you.

I want to see these things to understand that. This is the most incredible stuff in all the universe, and this is the stuff that we as God's people need to know. Sometimes as Christian people, we get a surface reading of the Bible and an elementary understanding of Christianity.

We think, OK, I've got that down now, you know, move on to something else. And pretty soon you feel like, you know, I'm a little bored with things of God nowadays. I've read the Bible once already and now looking to move on to other things.

The more we meditate on the word, the more we realize the greatness of our salvation, that it's great beyond our comprehension and we understand that we don't ever have to worry about getting bored or finding out too much about God. Or his love or grace for us, we could spend a thousand lifetimes and never begin to get to the bottom of this subject of the great love of God for sinners. Now, verse seven, we'll finish it up with verse seven, but listen to what he says here.

I just absolutely love this statement here. That in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus from the pit to the pinnacle. God has saved us and you know what he's going to do for all eternity.

He's going to display the riches of his grace and his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ever wonder what heaven's going to be like? Well, here's a description of it forever. God is going to be lavishing his grace upon you and his kindness.

Aren't those glorious thoughts forever? God is just going to be revealing more and more and more of his grace to us. The exceeding riches of his grace. Notice the words Paul uses exceeding riches.

We're talking about riches beyond riches and for all eternity, God is going to just be unfolding those riches of his grace in his kindness toward us. I love that word kindness. It's such a it's such a pleasant word.

You know, when you come across a person who is unexpectedly kind to you. You know, you walk away just feeling really good. Wow, that person was so nice.

And it just gives you a great feeling when there is this unexpected kindness. And whenever I think of kindness, that's what I think. I think of that feeling I get when that happens to me.

When somebody says something kind or does a kind deed, sometimes I'll get nice letters from people. Sometimes I get mean letters, too, but I really enjoy the nice ones. And I and I always I write them back.

And I I the way I phrase it is I thank you for the kind letter. That's kind. And for me, whenever I think of the word kindness, it just it just brings a good feeling to me.

And then I I read what Paul says here that for eternity, God is going to be showing his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. It's unbelievable stuff. Amazing, amazing stuff.

That song we sing, amazing love, how can it be that you, my king, would die for me? You know, these are things that we just have to ponder. This is where we see the value of biblical meditation. If we just read over these things in a rush to get through our chapter so we can get out the door to go do whatever we've got to do, we're just missing it.

It's good to sit and to just ponder these things. And to follow the continuity of the argument, to follow the thought and to see where it takes us. And it takes us right to the highest place that anyone could ever go.

It takes us seated with Christ in the heavenly places, the place of honor in the universe. What kind of love is this? That God would do such a thing as this for us. All of us really in the same position by nature as, say, an inmate on death row.

We've been tried. We've been found guilty. The sentence of death has been passed and we're just waiting for that day to arrive.

And as we're sitting there awaiting certain death, suddenly word comes to us unexpectedly that we've been pardoned. We've been pardoned and we wonder, how could it be? How could we have been pardoned? We were certain that this sentence would be carried out. We know we're deserving of it, but we get word that we've been pardoned.

And then as we inquire a little further, we find out that someone has actually taken our place, stepped in and offered their life for us. And it was amazingly the judge himself. That's a picture of what we have declared in the Bible.

Now, next week, we'll get into these great verses on salvation by grace through faith. And we'll look further at the great things that God has done for us. Lord, we thank you.

And Lord, we tonight need the spirit of God to reveal these things to us. Lord, we can read about it. We can talk about it.

But Lord, we ask that you would open the eyes of our heart, that we might comprehend it, that we might glory in it, that we might understand, Lord, the incredible grace in taking us from the lowest possible position and exalting us to the highest place, seated with Christ in heavenly places. Oh, Lord, we bless you for that. Lord, may we never grow weary of seeking you, rejoicing in you.

May we never think for a moment that we've exhausted somehow, Lord, the riches of your grace. May we just keep on searching as for treasure, searching the depths of your grace and glorying in it. Thank you so much for your love, Lord.

We are amazed that you, Lord, would do such a thing for us. And tonight, we just say thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We bless you.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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