

Ephesians Chapter 2 v 1 - 10

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[0 : 0 0] Good evening. Welcome. It's good to see you. Good to have some familiar faces back again. And good that we can meet together and have this freedom to meet together to worship the Lord.

I wonder if you'd turn with me please to the book of Psalms and Psalm 126. Sometimes on a Sunday evening as we come to worship we read a psalm together to help us in our worship, help us to focus our minds and hearts on the Lord. Psalm 126.

It's part of what's known as the Song of Ascent. Several of the psalms were songs that the believers would sing as they were on their way to Jerusalem for special feast days and other things like that.

And Psalm 126. Just listen and follow with me. No, let's do something different. No, I'll tell you what. I'll read the odd verses and you all read the even verses.

Is that okay? And then we'll all read verse 6 at the end. There's only six verses. So I'll read verse 1. All of you out loud read verse 2. When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed.

[1 : 2 2] The Lord has done great things for us and we are filled with joy.

Restore our fortunes of the Lord, like streams and negros. Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.

Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them. The song is about how God's people were restored back to Judah after they had been exiled.

And you can tell there was a real sense of absolute joy and delight what God had done for his people. He had restored them and brought them back. And it says, while our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy, the Lord has done great things for us.

And dear friends, if we're Christians this evening, then the Lord has done great things for us that should make our mouths be filled with laughter. And with joy that God should have saved us.

[2 : 4 0] That God should have restored us to himself. That God should have made us his children. And so our first hymn is one of my favourite hymns. 501. Oh how the grace of God amazes me.

It's a long hymn, but a hymn that speaks of the good things that God has done for each of us. 501. Let's praise the Lord in prayer together.

Have an open time of prayer. I'll lead and then if two or three or as many feel able to lead us in prayer. Particularly in praise and thanksgiving in prayer. And rejoicing in what he's done for us.

Let's do that together as we draw near to our God. Oh Lord, we have so much to rejoice about. And all of our joy and all of our delight is centred in you.

And in your son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the gift of your Holy Spirit. Oh Lord, we ask that even now in this time together. That our eyes may be lifted up from the concerns or fears or anxieties of our lives.

[3 : 46] That we may be like your people of old. With our mouths filled with laughter and joy. As we declare and as we think about all that you've done for us.

For we ask this now. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

And we're going to read from Ephesians. And in fact, we're going to be concentrating in chapter 2. But the reading is going to start in chapter 1.

So Ephesians, which is if you've got one of the church Bibles, is page 1173. page 1173 and we're going to read from verse 11 of chapter 1 verse 11 of chapter 1 through to chapter 2 and verse 10. What I hope to do this evening is to in one sense follow on a little bit from our mini-series in Romans 8 that we looked at in the last few mornings and this morning and really cement from God's Word the assurance of our salvation, the confidence of our salvation, the ground and certainty of our salvation from these verses and so in one sense it's not really a part of that series but I hope that it will be to us a means by which we are assured and confident of Christ's goodness to us. So Ephesians chapter 1 beginning at verse 11 reading through to chapter 2 verse 10. In him, that's of course the Lord Jesus Christ, we were also chosen having been predestined according to the plan of him as God who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will in order that we who were the first to put our hope in Christ might be for the praise of his glory and you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory. For this reason ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I've not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do. Wonderful passage of scripture. Let's word in a few moments. We thank you for the example of the apostle Paul in his prayer here for the believers. And Lord, we want to pray the same sort of prayer. We want, O Lord, that you would give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we may know you better. Lord, what we know of you is wonderful. What we know of you is draw-droppingly great. What we know of you makes us want to laugh out loud at the wonder of your love to us. But Lord, we've only scratched the surface of you. We've only begun to find out, Lord, just how great and good and merciful and faithful you are. Lord, please give to us as individuals, not just tonight, but Lord, whenever we come to your word, whenever we seek you in prayer, in every part of our lives, that spirit of wisdom and understanding. We pray too that our eyes of our heart may be enlightened, that we may know the hope to which you've called us. Lord, we live in a hopeless world filled with hate and destruction. And yet, Lord, you've called us to a place of eternal security and peace. O Lord, we ask that that hope, that certain surety, that we are heaven-bound, may comfort, strengthen, encourage us. That, Lord, in this world we may take the message of hope to those who have none. We pray too, O Lord, that you would grant to us afresh that faith in your incomparably great power. Lord, we feel weak as individuals and as a church, not just locally, but nationally and through the world. We feel ourselves to be oppressed and surrounded by enemies to the gospel. But Lord, we thank you that that power, that same power that raised Jesus from the dead, is that same power, we're told here, that works for us, that works in us and through us too. We pray, O Lord, that we may trust and by faith continue to stand firm and faithful to you. We pray too, O Lord, that you would grant that in all of our lives and in the life of this church, that everything may be submitted to your authority, Lord Jesus. We ask for hearts that are submissive to you and obedient to you, knowing that only good is what you will for us. Only blessing is in your heart for those who are yours. Grant us,

[11 : 22] Lord, we pray, as we come to your word, the help of your Holy Spirit and that illuminating work that he alone can do, that we may grasp, comprehend and delight in the truth of our God. For we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, please turn back then with me to Ephesians and particularly chapter 2, though we will be picking up on points from chapter 1 as well. Now, this weekend, as you know, is regatta weekend and fun fair is here with its rides and stalls and other entertainments. I don't know whether you've been down there or not or whether it's one of the places you avoid. And I don't know really what is down there, but I remember years ago going to places like fairs and fun grounds and so on. And one of the things that was a favourite was the Hall of Mirrors. I don't think they've got one here, but it was a place, if you've never been to a Hall of Mirrors, it's like a tent or a building and inside there's sort of a corridor and you had to walk through and along the walls were these mirrors, these distorted mirrors and bent mirrors, not the sort you'd want in your bathroom at all, but mirrors that sort of either enlarged part of your body or shrunk part of your body. So one would make your head massive and another one would make your legs taller, another one would make your tummy skinnier. That was the one I liked the best. And each of them distorted, stretched or widened or so on and so forth. And of course, it was funny to see and would make you laugh and so on. And it would give a false image of the reflection, a false reflection. And of course, as I said, depending on how you looked at the time, it made you look either better or worse, but it wasn't the true reflection. Now, distortions in that sense of ourselves and the mirrors are funny, but to distort truth is never a laughing matter. And Jude, the apostle writes in his letter, a warning against a particular misrepresentation of God's grace. He writes this in his letter, for certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. In other words, they've come into the church with their teaching. They are ungodly people who pervert the grace of our

God into a license for morality and deny the Lord Jesus Christ as our only sovereign and Lord. Grace is the greatest and most wonderful word in Scripture, but I believe that it is the most misunderstood word in the English language and even amongst Christians as well. But under those five simple letters, G-R-A-C-E, are all the blessings that we have from Christ, all the joys, all the delights, all the hopes, all the beliefs of God's goodness to us. When Paul writes his letters to the churches, in 13 of those letters, he includes the word grace in his opening greeting. And in every single one of them, the word grace is included in his closing blessing and benediction. When we think about the very last verse of the Bible in Revelation in chapter 22 and verse 21, we find there the word grace, the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. That's the closing sentence of God's revelation of himself, of God's declaration of himself in Scripture to the world. Grace is the unique element in the Christian faith which no other religion in the world has. There may be other similarities, monotheism, there may be worship and all sorts of things, but only the Christian message and gospel and religion has grace.

And that grace comes from the person and the nature and the character of God. For Peter writes in his letter, 1 Peter chapter 5, the God of all grace. There's no grace to be found anywhere else in the world.

There's no grace to be had. It all comes from God. Now the wonderful thing about grace is that every single person who has ever lived has received something of God's grace. You see, every day that we live, every breath that we take is only because God is gracious with us and does not treat us as we deserve. The psalmist recognizes this in Psalm 145. The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all. He has compassion on all he has made. So even those who do not know God or reject God or live wickedly or evilly, even as it were the creatures of the world, they are all recipients of God's grace. And that grace is often referred to as common grace. In other words, it's grace for everyone. But it's not ordinary grace. This grace is exceptional that God should treat us not as our sins deserve. But for the believer and for those of us who know the living God, this grace of God has much, much more to give. It gives and gives and gives again. Titus, as Paul writes to him in chapter 2, for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. Saving grace. Saving grace goes far and beyond common grace. It truly is, in the words of Newton, amazing grace. And it's that saving grace I want us to think about particularly. It's that saving grace that the writer in Jude is warned against being twisted and misrepresented. Salvation, the forgiveness of our sins, the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, eternal life that fills our souls, peace with God and reconciliation with him. They all come exclusively and only by grace. And that's why we're here in Ephesians and chapter 2. Because we have in verse 5 of chapter 2, that great statement, it is by grace you have been saved.

[18:17] And in fact, because Paul counts this as so important, he reiterates it, he repeats that same phrase in verse 8. For it is by grace you have been saved. And that's the whole, as it were, teaching, not just of Paul, but the whole of the New Testament church. If we go back to Acts in chapter 15, the very first meeting, as it were, of the whole church together, the apostles and all God's people to determine what's to be done about the Gentiles who are being saved. They made this declaration. We believe that it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are saved. There's never been any different. There's never been any other way to be saved apart from grace. And since all of our spiritual blessings, all of our eternal blessings come uniquely and only through God's grace, I believe that we're meant to understand four very clear things from the scriptures. They come out here in this passage and I want us to consider them. They may be to us strange. Some of them we'll agree with maybe immediately. Others we will need to think through.

But it seems to me that we cannot escape understanding grace in this way as we see it laid out before us. The first thing and the first conclusion that we have to come to when we take the word grace concerning our salvation is this. We do not deserve to be saved. We do not deserve to be saved.

Grace in its original form in the Greek, and you know that I'm not a Greek scholar, is the word *charis*, from which we get our word *charity*. And in fact, in some older translations, the word *love* and *charity* are often shared between one another. Now when the word *charis* was used in original writings in the time of Paul and the others, it always was referring to care for one another within a family, to the closest relationships, to an intimate relationship between some people. But when Paul takes the word and the New Testament takes the word, it makes a huge leap, a huge leap because it displays God's grace towards his enemies.

We do not deserve to be saved because we are enemies with God. Here's how Paul puts it in Colossians in chapter 1. Once you, speaking to believers, were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

What is sin? Sin is an act of enmity to God. Sin is an act of opposition to God and his good will and his good purposes and his rule over our lives. So it's an act. It's a treacherous act against a loving ruler in whose world we live, in whose kingdom we dwell. We are his enemies and notice it's because of sin. None of us would deny that.

[21 : 24] Sin is that which has permeated every part of our lives. Physically, yes, we die and we grow old because of sin. Spiritually, we are cut off from God and dead to him, as we're told here, dead in your transgressions and sins.

Psychologically, our minds are twisted and distorted. Our thinking about ourselves and about God, everything is corrupted by sin.

The old reformers would call this total depravity. Sounds awfully terrible. It doesn't mean that we have all sunk to the lowest level of humanity or we have all taken part in the worst and most terrible sins, but it means this.

We are totally corrupt. Every part of our nature, every part of our lives is tainted with sin so that its power is at work within us to draw us, to draw us away from God, to draw us after our own desires, our own pleasures and lusts.

As Paul says here, verse 3, all of us also lived among them, that's the people of the world, at one time gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.

[22 : 42] God rightly deserves obedience, love, worship, but we have given him sin, hate, disobedience, unbelief and so much more besides.

We do not deserve God's grace. We do not deserve to be loved of him. We do not deserve to be forgiven. In fact, as Paul says here in very strong language, like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath, or as the older versions put, we were by nature objects of God's wrath.

When God looks upon the human heart and the human life in each one of us, he sees only that which is deserving of punishment for sin.

We do not deserve to be saved. We live our lives as his enemies. The last thing that we deserve is grace, love, mercy, salvation.

I think many of us would say, certainly, that's true, grace means we did not deserve to be saved. But secondly, I believe that when we understand grace aright, then we understand something even stronger than that.

[24 : 03] We understand that the Bible teaches us that we did not desire to be saved. We did not want God to save us. In our natural state, as we were before we came to Christ, we did not desire to be saved.

Even our very best actions, even the things that we did which were religious, were nothing more than filthy rags in God's sight. That's why the writer Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah, declares and confesses this truth before God.

All of us have become like one who is unclean. Remember in the Old Testament, there was this separation between the clean, which was acceptable and pleasing to God, and the unclean.

And it was animals and offerings and people and actions and everything was separated into those two camps. And Isaiah is saying that every single one of us has become like to God as unclean, sinful, displeasing to him.

And he says this, and all our righteous acts, in other words, all the things that we try to do to please God are like filthy rags. I'm sure this has happened to you at some point of time.

[25 : 19] You've put a load of washing in the washing machine, and you're doing, as that, well, I just call it a white load. So it's all the whites, the shirts and the underwear and all those things that are white. And somehow, when you take it out again, it's all gone pink.

Why? Because somebody had put a new red jumper in, or a pair of underpants or something else, and that dye has run through every single part of the wash.

It's stuck to everything. And so from then on, you will have to wear pink underpants and pink socks, you men. And it can be quite embarrassing at times, though nobody sees the underpants, just the socks.

Everything we touch is infected. Even our religion becomes our seeking after God, not to please him, but for what we can get out of it.

Hoping to buy his favour. Even the very good things that we do, loving things that we do behind them, is a desire that we should look good in the eyes of others, and receive their praise.

[26 : 26] Listen to what Paul writes to the Romans, as he quotes from the Psalms, in Romans chapter 3. As it is written, there is no one righteous, not even one.

There is no one who understands. There is no one who seeks God. All have turned away. They have together become worthless. There is no one who does. God, not even one.

Sin has so infiltrated our very thought processes, our understanding of life and of ourselves, that we do not desire, or think that we need to be saved.

Until God comes and does a work of grace, then we are completely in the dark. And we do not see our need of a saviour. We do not desire to be saved.

That's why when we share the gospel with people, we talk to them about the Lord Jesus, so often, again and again, there's just a blank look. There's just an indifference, because they do not desire to be saved.

[27 : 28] And we were the same as well. And again, perhaps, we may understand and think, yes, that's right. Until somebody came and shared the gospel with me, until somebody came and shared Christ with me, spoke to me of Christ, I didn't know that I needed him.

I didn't desire to be saved. God's grace is such that in spite of our own desires, and wants, God saved us.

The next one is probably one of the most difficult for many of us to accept, but again, I believe that it is the teaching of Scripture, and certainly it is in line with, and completes, and makes sense of grace.

And it's this, we did not decide to be saved. Now, there's a lot of talk, and has been probably in the last century, amongst Christians, about deciding for Christ, making a decision to follow him, choosing Jesus, opening your heart to him.

But you don't find any of that language in the New Testament. You don't find any of that language in the teaching of Paul, or Peter, or any others, about somebody choosing Jesus, or in the preaching that Paul gives, saying, make a decision to follow him.

[28 : 44] And that's because, of course, when we read what Scripture tells us, we recognize that it is impossible for us to choose, and to decide, to follow Christ.

Why? Because on two occasions, Paul tells us, you were dead, in your transgressions and sins. And so, it is as possible, for you and I, by ourselves, to decide to follow Jesus, as it is, as it is possible for a corpse, to decide to get up, and walk out of the room.

It just cannot be done. It's an impossibility. No one has the power to turn to Christ in themselves.

No one has that life within themselves that can make that decision. No one can open their hearts to Jesus. It must be a heart that's opened by God.

If I put it in this way, the heart's handle is on the outside, and not on the inside. Here's what happened. Many of us know it only too well. In Acts chapter 16, as Paul went to Philippi, and he begins to preach.

[29 : 53] One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira, named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

Something supernatural had to happen in the heart of Lydia, as it did in the heart of you and I, for us to decide to follow Christ. For us to hear the message and respond to it, with faith and repentance.

And it's not a joint effort either. Sometimes we get the idea that somehow, well, God does, we do our bit to come to God, and God does the rest. We do our 1% or 2% or 5% of coming to God and trusting in Christ, and then God does the rest.

No, that can't be further from the truth. In John chapter 6, Jesus makes it very clear. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them.

No one can do anything to move themselves one millimeter closer to God unless God draws them, unless God does a work. This is hard for some of us to bear.

[31 : 03] It's hard for our pride as well. And some of us may feel, well, if this is the case, if we do not deserve to be saved, if we don't desire to be saved, if no one decides to be saved, it's hopeless.

No one can possibly be saved, and no one can possibly become a Christian if that's the case. That's something of how the disciples felt when Jesus spoke to them about the rich man going through the eye of the needle.

Jesus told them that, and the disciples, we're told, were even more amazed, Mark and chapter 10, and said to one another, who then can be saved? Jesus looked at it and said, with man this is impossible, but not with God.

All things are possible with God. Why is grace like this? Why is God chosen to save in this way of grace?

Why has he made it, as it were, impossible for us to deserve, desire, or to decide to be saved? Well, ultimately, because God has worked in this way for his glory.

[32 : 14] Did you pick that up when we read through chapter 1 particularly? We read there, on two occasions at least, that God does all things for the praise of his glory.

Verse 12, verse 11 begins, in him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Then verse, and it carries on, you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance unto the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

And notice again, when we looked into chapter 2, and verse 9, verse 8 tells us, for grace you have been saved through faith, this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works.

Why? So that no one can boast. Grace is the only thing that gives God the glory he deserves. You see, if we deserve to be saved, then God's salvation is not a gift, is it?

[33 : 33] If we deserve salvation, if we deserve that God should love us, if we deserve to have our sins forgiven, then it's something we've earned. It's something we've done. We can boast.

We can say, well done me. I'm a better person than that person who's not a Christian because I deserved. Grace wipes us slate and says, every single one of us does not deserve.

It is a gift. Remember Romans in chapter 6, verse 23, the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

For God so loved the world, he gave his one and only son. It's all about giving with God, not about us earning. That's again why grace is the only true religion.

Any religion that says you must do this or do that to earn God's favor is false. Whether it be Catholicism, whether it be Islam, whether it be Hinduism, whether it be Buddhism, whether it be any other deviation of any other religion, if it says you must do this so that God will do that, it denies the truth of grace.

[34 : 48] And if we can desire salvation before God comes and works in our hearts, then of course there must be spiritual life within us to begin with. People think that somehow within the human heart there's a spark of the divine.

There's a, even though the image of God has been crushed by sin, there's just a tiny, as it were, like an ember in there that if it was just fanned into flame, just blown upon, would create new life into the heart.

But that does away with the whole of what the Bible says about being a new creation, about being born anew, about passing from death to life. If there was something within us that of spiritual life, then Paul would not say you are dead in trespasses and sins.

He'd say you're pretty poorly and sick and you're on the edge of the deathbed, but you're not quite there yet. If there was something in us that could make us, as it were, draw near to God and seek after him, then we could, again, gain for ourselves praise.

Well, in me, of course, there's spiritual life, that's why I'm seeking God. And then if we think of the matter of deciding to be saved, again, what do we do?

[36 : 06] If we decide to be saved, then ultimately our salvation is up to us. It's up to you and it's up to me. The reason this person is not a Christian is because they didn't decide, but I chose.

What a clever boy am I. What a clever person am I to choose and decide to be saved. God becomes, as it were, almost at our beck and call. God, I want you to save me now.

And think about it. If we choose to save ourselves, if it's my decision to be a Christian, then I can undecide to be a Christian too.

I can make a choice later down the road and say, well, I decide not to be saved anymore and there's nothing God can do about it because it was my decision and not his. The power is transferred from Christ to me.

He's unable to save me unless I let him save me. He's unable to rescue me until I say, yes, he can do it. Who becomes the most authoritative and powerful?

[37 : 08] I have the power rather than he has the power. No, dear friends, I have to say to you that all those things are false. No one can be saved except by the almighty grace of God.

Nothing we can ever do or did or ever do in the future can contribute to that salvation because ultimately then our salvation in some measure or way rests upon us.

Now this is very humbling to our pride but it's also extremely comforting as well. So comforting to know that our salvation is by God and not by ourselves.

To know that our salvation begins with is carried out by and continues with God. Because ultimately at the end of the day it's not just that we cannot deserve to be saved and do not desire to be saved and do not decide to be saved but we do not continue to be saved by our own determination.

The reason you're a Christian here this evening is not because you have determined to keep on following Jesus and it's by your strength and by your will that you are here. No, what do we read again in Ephesians in chapter 2?

[38 : 23] We are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus. God has done it all. We are still following Jesus because God is continuing to work in us and through us.

He's the one who's continuing to provide for us, continuing to strengthen us, continuing to help us. Even when we feel weak and our faith seems to be crumbling, it is God who has not given up on us.

So we mentioned this verse earlier this morning as well in Philippians in chapter 1. Being confident of this, says Paul, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ.

One of the other teachings of the reformers was not just total depravity but the other end was the perseverance of the saints. In other words, that the godly, those who put their faith in Christ will carry on to the very end.

But it isn't the perseverance of the saints. It's not our perseverance if I put it that way. It's God persevering with us. God continuing to feed, continuing to give help, continuing to save.

[39 : 36] Our salvation from first to last is his. And the life that we live now as Christians is God at work in us and through us.

So we can take no glory and honour for ourselves even now when we are kind or thoughtful, when we are loving, when we are evangelistic. There's nothing for us to say, well look at me, what have I have done?

It's all of what God has done in us and through us. So again, later in Philippians chapter 2, it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.

What amazing grace. Grace alone is our hope. Grace alone is our place of security and refuge and eternal safety.

Why is it that you and I dear friends shall not fall but arrive in heaven safely? It's only, solely, completely, absolutely because of the grace of God.

[40 : 42] You see, once we begin to put confidence in ourselves, that's when we stumble and fall. Once we begin to think, I can manage it, I can do it or I have done it or it's my will or my strength, then we are sure to fall flat on our faces.

In Zechariah chapter 4, we have a fantastic verse and many of you will know it as well. God is promising to do great things for his people and he says, not by might, not by power, in other words, human might, human power, but by my spirit, says the Lord almighty.

Dear friends, this evening, is grace the hope of your heart? Is grace the joy of your life? There's nowhere safer to be and there's no place where we can know such peace that surpasses understanding.

Let's sing together our final hymn. It's a wonderful hymn of Stuart Townend. In Christ alone my hope is found. He is my strength, my song, my light.

647. Let us close by saying the words of the grace.

[42 : 11] May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

Amen.