

Last week we talked about the bad news. Let's look at it. Ephesians 2, starting in verse 1, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath." Now what we said last week very curtly is that everyone's guilty. The problem in the universe, from the economy to disease to murder to strife, the problem is a sin issue. All of us are fractured and alienated from our Creator, and all of us are lawbreakers. Are there any liars in here? Dose anybody in here pursue other things as ultimate besides God? Does anyone rejoice when bad things happen to people we think bad things should happen to? Yes. Does anyone here get upset when good things happen to people we want bad things to happen to? Yes. On and on I could go. You are guilty. I'll say it this way. If the thoughts of your mind and the motives of your heart could be projected on the screen behind me, you would not want to be in this room. I don't care who you are, how much you give, how good you are, how fun you are. If the thoughts on your mind and the motives in your heart could be displayed publicly, you would be embarrassed and ashamed. Everyone's guilty. And I said that the reality is most of us aren't bothered by that. We're not really bothered by that because we believe that we are intrinsically good, because we compare ourselves to the rest of humanity and go, "Ah, we're good. God shouldn't be upset." But I told you last week that goodness is really subjective. The illustration I used was my son. My son is strong for a 3 year old. But let's say that in our house we went all UFC and built the octagon, and it's me vs. my three year old son Reid. That's over in two seconds. He flies eight feet, slams into the fence, falls to the ground...give me the belt. There's not going to be any grappling, I don't need to make him submit. I'll kick him in his face and it's over. But if we get another three year old and put him in the octagon with Reid and we're looking for knocked out or submission, we could be there for weeks. Why? Because against a three year old, he's strong; against me, he's not. Against everybody around you, you're good; against a holy, spotless God who you have attacked, belittled and mocked, the Bible would say "even your righteous acts are as filthy rags to Him." You're not good. Any goodness in you is completely subjective.

And then we said the other reason it doesn't bother us is we just think God should deal with it. We think it's a victimless crime. We think it's like going 35 in a 30. Why should anybody be upset by that? But if you want to grasp how God sees even the smallest of your sins, you need only to look at the sacrificial system in the Old Testament and to the crucifixion of Christ on the cross. Why do you think He had them grab the back of a goat, take a knife and jab it into its throat and rip its throat open and let the blood spill all over the altar? Have you ever smelled blood? It reeks. Do you know how unpleasant that moment must have been? Do you know how that goat must have screamed? Do you know how disgusting that scene is? That's God teaching His people, "That's what your sin is to Me. This is what your lying, this is what your manipulating, this is what your indifference smells like to Me." Have you paid attention to the cross? They grab Him, slap Him, spit on Him, mock Him, rip the beard out of His face, smack Him with sticks, peel the skin off His back, strip Him naked, nail Him to the cross while even more wicked people come out and mock Him and hurl insults on Him even then, His lungs fill up with blood, they run a spear under His ribcage killing Him and they leave Him there to rot. Now what do you think that's all about? That's about you. And don't think "us," think "you." This is your sin. This is how God sees your sin. And the Bible says that in reaction to that God is filled with grief, He is filled with anger, He is filled with wrath and He will justly and rightly damn every one of us for it. I know that's very unpopular to say that. The popular thing is that God should be some impotent, weak fairy in the sky who lets you mock Him, belittle Him, slap Him, spit on Him, make a mockery of all that He is and just deal with it. If there is a God, I guarantee you that is not His

personality trait. And if it is, he's not God. So this is what we said last week. I gave you the bad news and just prayed and dismissed us.

That was the bad news, now we're going to move into the good news. So we read Ephesians 2:1-3, now let's pick it up in verse 4. The first word in verse 4 makes us breath out a little bit. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" I love the way he words it because he says, "When did God show you mercy, and when did God lavish His love upon you? Not when you straightened yourself out, not when you started doing better, not when you stopped doing wrong but while you were dead in your trespasses. That's when He showed you mercy. That's when He loved you." It's the difference between morality driven religion and the gospel. Let's look at what comes next. There's going to be some very interesting things I need to point out. "...even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved" Unmerited favor is what grace means. Which means that you had nothing intrinsically good in you that God deemed savable for His cause. So He doesn't go, "Here's who I'm going to save. I'm going to find the most popular people, the most talented people, the wealthiest people." In fact, He actually goes the other way with it. Paul would tell us later that He's chosen the foolish things of the world to scorn the wise. So if you'll watch who He saves, most of the time He saves imbeciles, He uses murderers. He saves not what is pretty but what is ugly. So congratulations. Here we go. "...by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." When I went to church growing up with my parents, we would sing Amazing Grace. And we would get to the third stanza and it would go like this, "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining like the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun." And I just remember thinking, "I am going to be bored out of my mind. If I get into this deal ten thousand years later and we've no less days, I'm going to be beating my head against the golden bricks of the road." What he's saying here is that the immeasurable riches of Christ are so deep and so vast that they would actually take ages, millennium to even reveal to you how deep and wide they are. So you know how thrills here while we're alive go away pretty quickly. It doesn't matter what they are. Thrills have a tendency to lessen over time. What he's saying is that eternity freed up from this physical body, glorified because of the cross of Christ, it's ever increasing joy. It's a pretty profound verse.

Let's keep reading. Verse 8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith." So what happens is we have faith in grace. By grace, through faith, we become believers in Jesus Christ. Now let's look at where the faith comes from. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." So even the faith to believe in the grace of God was given to you by God. So the grace is His, but so is the faith. Why? The fundamental problem in the universe is that we are idolaters. Which means we will make much of other things besides God, namely ourselves. And so God's solution to this problem is not to make faith ours so we can then boast our faith believed in His grace. But even the faith is His, so you have nothing to boast in when it comes to salvation. You didn't do it, He did. So that's 30,000ft up looking down on salvation. "Oh, it's all Him. Oh, I see."

So what does it look like on the ground? To do that, let's go over to Romans 8. And those of you who know what's there are saying right not, "Surely he's not going to." And yet I am. I love verse 28...unless someone quotes it to me when I'm struggling. Has anyone ever done that to you. When you're just struggling and struggling and they're like, "All things work together for good, brother." The sinful part of me, the part of me that's not sanctified yet wants to just punch him in the throat right at that moment and go, "I guess that was for your good. I guess you needed that for sanctification." I've never done it, but to this day it's my first thought. So let's look at it. Romans 8:28, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." All things, joys, sorrows, successes, failures, health, sickness, money, poverty, all things work together for good for those who love Him.

That is an unreal passage. Now he's going to go into why that's true and unpack that for us exactly how salvation, conversion and belief happen. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." So let's talk about what it means for God to foreknow. You've got to do something with this idea of foreknowledge and predestination because it's all over the Bible. So here's probably the most popular. The idea is that foreknowledge is God knowing who's going to choose Him in the future and predestining those He knows will choose Him in the future. Okay, that's mainstay. If you ask most Christians to decipher this verse for you and that's what they're going to say. "I think what's going on in this verse is that God sees who's going to choose Him and then He predestines those who are going to choose Him." Now, there are two fundamental problems with that interpretation. Problem number 1, it assumes that the faith to believe is ours and that we are the cause of that faith instead of the recipients of it. It assumes that the faith to believe was ours to begin with and God peers into the future to take that faith and give it to them. The problem with that is we just read that even the faith to believe is not ours, but it's given to us. The other thing it does is it puts God inside of time instead of outside of time. So what God has to do then is grab the book of life, get inside the time machine, adjust the flux capacitor, jet into the future and go, "Okay, that guy chooses Me...that guy chooses Me...that girl chose Me...that woman did...he didn't... she did...he is not in anymore..." Then He gets back in the time machine, adjusts the flux capacitor, heads back to before anything was and then go, "I predestine the ones who were going to choose Me." But biblically, God is not inside of time; He's outside of it. Which means that the future is not a place that He knows about; it's a place that He is right now. Past, present, future, He just is. We can't do anything with that with our small little brains. But I can tell you this. That interpretation of foreknowledge is silly, and it's people trying to make God something that He has biblically shown Himself not to be.

Okay, so what do we do with this? What does it mean that He foreknew? To do that, here's what I think you have to do. You have to look at how He uses the word "know." How do the Scriptures use this word "know?" What does it mean when He talks about how He knew them or didn't know them? What's He talking about there? In Genesis 18:19, God says of Abraham, "For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD." Now virtually every translation of the Bible translates that word in Genesis 18 as "chosen." "I have known" and "I have chosen" are synonymous in that. Amos 3:2, "You only have I known among all the families of the earth." Now what's the problem with that? Well God knows every family of the earth. There's not a place that He doesn't know. So let's just say that we just had a great idea and one of you came up to me and said, "Here's the deal. This coming December 25th is Jesus' 2412th birthday. Let's throw Him a surprise party." And we got the white board out and said, "Okay here's what we're going to do. Let's get some gold, some frankincense and some myrrh. Let's go old school with this." So we planned out this huge party. Here was the plan. The plan was for us to all come in here and I was to pray and invite Him in (because I'm the pastor). I was just going to go, "Jesus, would You join us in here?" And when He got here, we were all going to yell, "Surprise!!!" That's really stupid, isn't it? You can't surprise Him, you can't jump out at Him, you can't hide anything from Him. So He's saying here to Israel, "You alone have I known among all of the families of the earth." So there's a type of knowing going on with Israel that is more than just being aware of. We'll see that even more with these next couple of texts. In Matthew 7:23, speaking of the Pharisees, He said, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness." So now we know that God not only knows the way of the righteous, but He also knows the way of the wicked. In fact, He'll say that clearly in Psalm 1:6. "The LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." So He knows the way of the righteous, but He also knows the way of the wicked. But the word "know" for the righteous is a different way of knowing than He knows the wicked. Hosea 13:5, "It was I who knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought" So He took note of their plight, and He cared for them. In Genesis 4:1, He says this, "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain." Now there's knowing, and then there's knowing. Knowing that conceives is a little bit different from knowing, right? Please do not make me put a chart behind me. So when God uses the word "know" in any of its forms, about His people, that word is synonymous for "love." "I loved you." He looks upon those He deems as righteous with a divine, sovereign foreknowledge love. So you can even interpret that

text as "Those whom He foreloved." So those whom He foreloved, He predestined. There's such conflict over this word. Those He foreloved, He predestined. Here's what that means. Those whom He, in His foreknowledge, His foreloving, loved, cared for, deemed righteous, He's decided what their future is, that they would be conformed to the image of His Son.

So foreknowledge, leading into predestination, that leads into those being conformed into the image of His Son, how does that work? How does that look? How does that play itself out? Well he doesn't leave us hanging. He picks it up in verse 30, and he tells us exactly how it works. "And those whom he predestined he also called,..." Okay, how does He call? That's all over the map. He engages some people through the intellect. The Bible tells us in Acts 15 that this woman named Lydia, this successful fashionista, she's basically at this Beth Moore Bible study and Paul shows up and begins to engage her intellect and she becomes a believer. Or have you seen the Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe? That was originally written by a guy named C.S. Lewis. In 1925, C.S. Lewis became a teacher of medieval literature at Oxford. He would later move to Cambridge. He was just a brilliant mind. His mom died when he was 9, he fought in World War I, he was wounded, saw atrocities there and became a staunch, ferocious atheist. As he would teach medieval literature, here's the thing that would infuriate him. All his favorite authors were Christians. It drove him crazy. He also had a dear friend, also a public intellect, named J.R.R. Tolkien. Have you heard of him? Tolkien and Lewis would go to the pub and drink pints and smoke pipes and argue for hours. Tolkien would just argue and argue and argue with Lewis because Lewis was tormented by the Bible. He hated the Bible. Here's why. He wanted to take this book and go, "It's just myth." But his problem was he knew enough about medieval literature to know it's not myth because of the details in the text and the historical assignments given. Like if you read Beowulf, there are no details in Beowulf. There's no, "He was laying in his left side holding a cup in his right." It's more like, "Everybody was sleeping in a room, the monster came in, there was a big fight, everybody died." There are no details. But in the text, in our Scripture, there are things like, "They threw the net off the left side of the boat early in the morning." There are historical data given, leaders who were actually in power when the Bible says they were in power. So he knew it wasn't myth, but he wanted it to be myth and it drove him crazy. So finally after a night of drinking and pubbing it up, they go on this long walk. They walk all night long and Tolkien just goes, "Here is your problem, Lewis. This is a myth that's true." And for whatever reason, that line just blew Lewis up. It just infuriated him. So a couple days later, he gets on his brother's motorcycle and goes to the zoo. And according to him, when he got on that bike, he wasn't a believer, but when he arrived at the zoo in London, he was the most reluctant convert in London. How did God come after him? Through his intellect.

But then there are other times that God doesn't come through the intellect at all, like the apostle Paul. Saul is on his horse, headed to Damascus to kill Christians and Jesus Himself is like, "(Bam!) No, I'm done with this. You're following Me." He even stands over him for a second. "I'll show you how much you must suffer for My name's sake." And then what happens? Paul serves Him faithfully. Jesus didn't show up and go, "Paul, open up your Torah. Let me discuss with you, both in regards to religion and philosophy, why My resurrection (which I'm obviously resurrected, check it) is the most logical course of events to make sense of the mess that you see around you in the world." He doesn't do that, does He? He just shows up. For some people, it's by example. They see an example of strong Christian living and it does something to them. They're drawn to it and want to know more about it. You see, those God foreloved, He predestined them.

He calls, He woos. Can I tell you something that haunted me forever? Why did I care? When Jeff Fairclaw started sharing the gospel with me, why did I care? Do you know how many people don't care? Do you know how many people are just cut off from that? They have no interest whatsoever in hearing any of it. Why, upon hearing it, did I go, "I need to know what's here?" Why did I go to lame Christian thing after lame Christian thing and keep going back? The first time I went to church, teenagers spelled out the word "joy" with their bodies. That's dumb. You shouldn't spell out stuff with your

body. There should be a law. So why did I keep coming back? God woos. Like some of you have said to me, "Man, when I first started going to the Village, I felt like you were talking just to me." I don't know you. This is not a plot. It's not like your friend e- mailed me going, "Hey bro, here's his background, and here's where we'll be sitting." And if you study Christian history, in the Revivalist era they would actually do that. There was this thing called the "guilt seat," and if you were bringing lost people with you, they would sit in the guilt seat to be pointed out later.

Now, He woos, He calls. Think about this. For those of you who aren't believers, why do you keep coming back? Last week I stood up here and told you that you were going to go to hell and that that was just and right, that you were intrinsically and by your essence wicked and worthy of the wrath of God. What in the world would make you leave that and go, "Hmm, I wonder what the good news is. We are going back next week." What would make you do that? Why would you not go, "Oh, that is old school hell fire damnation stupidity, and I am an enlightened man and want nothing to do with that. God would not be like that. God is what I make Him to be." Because that's what everybody else does. Why would you come back? Why are those who are hostile towards the Lord keep coming back? Can I tell you why? Because those whom He foreknew He predestined and those He predestined He is calling, and you won't outrun Him. And listen to peoples' testimonies. Very few people have the same exact testimony. Then there are these crazy things. People just driving in the middle of nowhere turn on the radio station and there's someone preaching the gospel, they pull their car over and weep and become believers. People are saved through tragedy, people are saved through joy. He just calls. We've even met people overseas who are just like, "I had a dream. Jesus came to me in a dream." It makes me go, "What? My story's lame. Don't worry about mine. A guy on the football team shared the gospel with me." Jesus Himself didn't come to me, another guy had to do it. And this is how it works. He calls. Those He foreloved He predestined, those He predestined He calls, those He calls He justifies. Which means, since this took place so long ago in the mind and heart of God, that God, knowing full well every sin, every idle thought, every wicked motivation, everything that's on that film that would be projected, God sees and justifies. Right standing before Him, all of my sin past, present and future poured out on Christ in the cross so that now as messy as I am, I am spotless and perfect in His sight. And it blows my mind that that's true, because I'm still such a mess. That's why I'm always trying to quote to you 2 Corinthians 5, "He made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Don't I try to say that every week? Why? Because in this foreloving, predetermined calling of God, He justifies you. He takes from you all that is wicked that He would need to put His wrath on, and He fills you, saves you to His mission, righteousness, holiness. "Those whom he foreknew he also predestined...and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

Here's how He glorifies. Here's how it looks. What happens in that process is that, as I'm called and justified and He opens up my heart and mind to Him, He becomes the treasure, He becomes the pursuit, He becomes what I want. We were in and out of church like I said earlier, but "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus" was always being sung. It would go, "Turn you eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of this earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." This is glorification. This is "You're what I want." Augustine, who was just another brilliant historic theologian and statesman, said, "How sweet all at once it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose! . . . You drove them from me, You who are the true, the sovereign joy . . . You who are sweeter than all pleasure." Do you see what happened? There's this fundamental shift. He valued these things, he loved these things. And then all of a sudden he loved this thing more, and it made him walk away from these things. That's sanctification and glorification. I'll say it this way. My money doesn't control me. It doesn't. I'm open-handed. I don't need to live in such a way that garners your approval. I don't care what you think about what I drive or where I live or how I dress. None of those external forces that enslave so many of us should enslave the believer in Christ. Glorified, I have one goal, one treasure. Because there's a lot of people who are cool right now who won't be soon. And there are a lot of wealthy people right now who will not be wealthy soon. So I drive an '01 Impala while I let my wife dress me. I don't know if it works; I don't care. Free, glorified, inward holiness, transformation, that I, despite my continued wickedness, have been

empowered and enabled by the cross of Christ in grace and faith to love my wife like Jesus Christ loved the church, to pour the gospel into my children as primary, to live with my money open-handed to show that there is something of greater value than this life. And on and on and on I could go. It's glorification.

It's also why I'm constantly pleading with you who are nominal believers to address your heart and mind. Because if there is none of this in your life, you should fear and doubt. If there's nothing in you that says, "I need to pursue Him, I love Him, I want to grow in Him" and all there is is good people trying to do good things, you should be nervous and afraid. You might not be saved. I'm not saying you're not, but I'm saying you should be nervous. And every time I say something like that, a bunch of you get mad at me. But listen, what would you have me do? Would it not be more cruel of me to preach directly to you what the Scriptures say even though I know it's going to make some of you angry, would it not be cruel of me if your soul was really on the line, if eternity and you being judged either by the cross of Christ or by your wickedness, would it not be the most cruel, wicked act I could do to you as a pastor to not preach to you the full counsel of God and only tickle your ears so we could take up a better offering? Those whom He calls He glorifies.

And then he moves onto this very, very famous part of the Scriptures. Starting in verse 31, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" So all he's saying right now in this moment is, "How secure are we in God? He did this. We didn't do this. He did. He came and got me." It's why Paul was so aggressive and fearless. He's like, "I was just riding my horse. He came and got me. He saved me. He began the good work in me, and He'll be faithful to complete it because He is the Author and Perfecter of this thing. He started it, He did it, He maintains it, He grows it." Let's keep going. "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised— who is at the right hand of God..." All he's saying right there is, "To any accusation that can be made against you, God simply goes, 'That was paid for in the cross of Christ. Jesus Christ died for that.'" So it doesn't matter what sin it is, if that accusation came before the throne room of God, if that film was shown before God, God would look at that and go, "Yeah, I poured out all that wrath on Jesus. Justified, paid in full, he doesn't owe that."

I think one of the reasons that worship and transformed lives are such rare things among Evangelicals is because there's a fundamental misunderstanding about what's happened here. What we want to do is take ownership over certain parts of salvation. We want to go, "I did this...I did this...I did this..." And when you do that, you become instrumental in what God's done and you play this significant role in what God's done. The problem with that is the Bible screams that that is a made-up version of salvation. God gave you faith, God gave you grace according to His foreloving, predetermined calling plan to justify you and glorify you into the image of His Son for the sake of His name. You see, when you know that you didn't do anything, when you know that God just rescued you, when you know that you're not any different from the most wicked pagan, horrible human soul on earth, but God saved you, He loves you, He foreloved you, it's humbling, it can be overwhelming and it will incite the soul to worship. But when you boil this thing down to, "Quit doing this and start doing this," you rob the essence change necessary for you to walk in the freedom of those commands.

And we haven't even gotten to talk about that Jesus got all the disciples together and told them, "Go preach, go herald this good news to the entire earth. Because I'm going to save people all over the earth. I have foreloved, predestined and am going to call men from every tribe, tongue and nation all over the world." Because right now, people get really goofy. Like hyper-Calvinists go, "Don't tell anybody about the Lord. They'll just sit around." Arminians just go, "You won't do missions if you believe in a sovereign God." Which is ridiculous. You have to point to something far beyond reformed theology to kill missions. Jesus says, "Go, tell." So here's what happens. According to Acts 17, the times and places at which you dwell were set by God before history began. He says the times and habitations of your living were planned by God so men may find Him though He is not far from any of them. So here's what happens. There are those in your

neighborhood that God, in His forelove, predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son by calling. So He moves you into the neighborhood and then comes to you and goes, "Um, I'm going to save. Do you want to play? You see, here's the thing. You've still got a lot of wicked things in your heart, and so I'm going to heal you and work in you and show you and chisel some things out in you as you are a part of what I'm doing. And what I'm doing is saving some folks in your neighborhood. So do you want to play?" Because the mission, the great cause, it exposes that we're ashamed. We don't want to be embarrassed. We don't want to be the weird Christian guy. And let me ask you, please don't be the weird Christian guy. Can I beg you for that? Have dinner with your neighbor, but don't bring anointing oil. Can you just not do that please? Now if the Holy Spirit tells you to audibly, then yes. But other than that, keep the oil that you bought on television from Jerusalem at the house. Please don't be the weird Christian guy. But we herald, we herald the gospel. Why? Because He's going to save. So we herald it. How do we know who? We don't. We never will. But I didn't read anything where we're responsible to call. We herald, God calls. So in our neighborhoods, we herald. And God's inviting you into what He's doing. That moment where you're at the bench press, you're at 225lbs on there, you know you can't do it. All of a sudden you look and there's that guy you've already talked to once and you know he's the guy who's done a bunch of flies and curls and has never done anything to his legs...we've all seen him. And if that's you, stop it. You look ridiculous. Do a squat. Anyhow, have you noticed that some people you're really drawn to? Like there's people you have genuine spiritual concern for? What do you think is going on there? You're a self-centered, wicked human being. What in the world in you would lay somebody heavy on your heart? Could it just maybe be the Holy Spirit saying, "Do you want to play?" I contend that the reason why so many of your faith is boring and retarded and goofy as can be is because you've been saved from but you haven't been saved to anything. It's on mission in the great cause that so much of what ails us is chiseled away, so much of what haunts us is chiseled away. And nothing makes the soul explode and worship like knowing who we are and having God use us in profound ways. But we'll start that talk next week. This is how salvation works. Praise His name that, for whatever reason, He has already called to some of us and He's calling to others even now.

Here was my hope coming in, because this sermon is just as much of a space maker as the last one. My hope coming in is for those of you who aren't believers but just keep coming back and you don't quite understand why that is, that maybe now you would understand why that's happening. The God of the universe is wooing you. Maybe today is that day you'll finally surrender to all of that. We prayed this week that it would be. And if you're nominal, maybe God would reveal His grace and mercy in such a way that finally your heart and mind are stirred up to Him in a way that would be called serious and not trite and weak. And then if you're a strong believer, maybe God would repair some really humanistic, man-centered theology that gets espoused all the time but in the end has very little biblical evidence to support it. And even the ones that people try to make support it don't make up for the massive amount of biblical evidence that this is how God saves.

So if the bad news is that we're all damned and we're all sinners, the good news is that God saves. That's what this doctrine is, that God saves. And maybe we might have our hearts stirred up. Maybe we would feel gratitude for the first time. Maybe we never really felt gratitude towards the Lord because we can look at what we have and what we chose and what we did, and in all of that we've lost just how good and how gracious and mighty and beautiful God's been to you. This is our hope, this is our prayer and as I've already read, it's well out of our hands, well out of my hands. I herald, God calls.

Let's pray, "Father, for these men and women being drawn into this place by You and for You, I thank You. I know that some of this is heavy and some of this is confusing and it creates a lot of other questions. But for those of us who know You, I pray that we just rest today in Your foreloving, predestined call on our lives to be conformed to the image of Your Son. And then for those of us who are being called, I pray that You would make us genuinely aware of your intent and pursuit of us. Help us. We want hearts that worship You, minds that love You. We need that transformation. Help us.

Thank You that You who began this good work will complete it and that our confidence that all things work for our good is based completely on the fact that this is Your authoring and Your perfecting going on. So we submit to You, we love You and we chase You. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."

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