

Matthew 24:13-28

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[0:00] Wow, it is so good to see so many folk here. God bless you. Yes, we're in Matthew 24. Father, as I approach this passage of Scripture, I find it daunting.

It's a passage of Scripture about which so many people disagree. And I do pray, Lord, that you'll show us the pathway through it that doesn't stray from your word and that puts honour where honour is due.

Father, I don't want to be somebody who makes it up. I want to extract it from your word. So I ask, Lord, that you keep my thinking clear in Jesus' name. Amen.

So, we read down to verse 12. And if you remember, I left verses 13 and 14 to this week.

And what I would suggest you do if you weren't here last week is to listen to last week's talk because it says a lot about Israel and about the fact that there are two separate pathways through Scripture, one for Israel and one for the church.

[1:16] and that we get those confused and squished together at our peril because it gets very confusing if you try to apply the Scriptures that relate to the rapture to Matthew 24 or Scriptures that apply to Matthew 24 and the Jews and you try to apply them to the rapture of the church and they just don't work.

These two groups are distinct. You cannot be in both groups. You have to be in one group or the other. Or there is a third group which you really don't want to be part of which is the group of unbelievers.

So, you're either in one or the other when it comes to your faith in Christ. And so what we said last week is we would incorporate verses 13 and 14 into this week's study.

And we had a long introduction last week and you're going to have a fairly long one this week as well because dealing with verses 13 and 14 isn't something quick.

And you might ask, Ray, why are you spending so much time getting clarity on this? And the main reason is that Jesus thought it was important for the Jews to understand what was going to happen at the end of their history.

[2:38] And Paul, the Apostle Paul, felt it was important for the church to understand what was going to happen at the end of their history. In fact, he wrote about it in the book of Thessalonians and he was only there for about two to three weeks.

I think it was three Sabbaths, wasn't it? So it could have been two weeks, it could have been three. And I guess if you look at it another way, it might have been four. It wasn't long. And he thought teaching them about how it was all going to end was important.

So it becomes important to distinguish what applies to the church and what applies to the Jews. Otherwise, we chase our tails trying to live up to something that doesn't apply to us and failing to live up to the things that do apply to us.

The other thing is that from the Jews' perspective, they're told to look out for lots of signs. If you don't apply those signs correctly, you will miss them.

And clearly he did not want those signs to be missed. Now you might then say, yeah, but if we're the church and we're going to be raptured, then it doesn't matter because we don't need to pay attention to these signs.

[3:48] I disagree. I disagree because as we get into a time, and I believe we're right in the middle of that time, where signs of the second coming are becoming more and more and more prevalent, it also means the

rapture of the church is closer.

And if you remember, we shared that scripture from 1 Chronicles, I think it was chapter 12, I might have that wrong, where the sons of Issacut were praised because they understood the times. So the takeaway from last week and this week for us is let's understand the times we live in and not just think, oh gosh, it's getting bad, isn't it? But realize that we're in a spiritual battle and these things that are going on are signs to us that the second coming of Christ isn't that far away, obviously more than seven years, but not that far away.

But that means the rapture of the church is even closer and whether you take the pre-trib view as I do or the mid-trib view or the pre-Roth view, it still means the rapture is closer if we see signs of the second coming coming upon us and we're supposed to understand our times.

So verse 13, I'm going to just deal with these two verses separately before I read the next section. Verse 13 says, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

[5:19] Oh my goodness, the things people do with that verse. You've got to endure to the end or you won't be saved. You might lose your salvation. Now, the thing is, there are some very, very big churches that preach that and one of the biggest errors in my view, happy to debate it with anybody that wants to, but one of the biggest errors in my view that is out there in the church today is the error of Calvinism.

And one of the things that the Calvinism teaches is the perseverance of the saints. Now, in one sense, perseverance of the saints is okay in that it suggests that once you're saved, the Lord will cause you to persevere.

I don't have any problem with that. But we have another one. I mean, there was a, I think it was R.C. Sproul who had a colleague and I can't remember the name of the colleague, but he was approaching his death and it seemed likely that he would die later that day.

And he was exhorting hundreds of people in a meeting saying, pray that he dies in the faith. as if he could get to the point of his death and suddenly lose it all because he did something wrong at the point of his death because he failed to persevere.

That is a poisonous doctrine. And this scripture does not mean you've got to doggedly persevere or you'll lose your salvation. So what does it mean?

[6:46] I will venture to suggest what it means. I'm happy to take note of anybody's objections or alternatives. But I think this, if you look at the verse in context, the previous verses, he's been talking about false prophets arising and will mislead many.

He's been talking about lawlessness being increased and people's love growing cold. He's been talking about prior to that, many will fall away and will betray one another.

So what he's saying is you're going to go through really tough times but persevere. And the word salvation there is interesting because there are two ways of expressing salvation or at least two. There's the word soteria which is occupying a state of salvation and then there's the word sozo and sozo is a word that is, it's kind of like being rescued.

And so what this verse is saying in my view is those that persevere to the end are going to be rescued because it's the word sozo that's used, not soteria. So this is talking to a bunch of Jews about their future history, telling them that there's going to be an awful time coming and we'll get more into that as we get further into the chapter.

[8:16] You're going to go through a tough time but persevere and you will be rescued. And of course we know that that rescue can be in this life or in the next. It's not the rescue of Jesus.

If you think of Revelation chapter 5, the saints are under the altar crying out to the Lord saying, how long, O Lord, until you redeem our blood?

So being saved in the sense of rescue doesn't even necessarily have to be confined to this life. But this verse does not mean you've got to persevere or you might lose it.

It has nothing to do with that. I believe it's an instruction to the Jews to say, when you go through this tough time, persevere and you will be rescued.

And then we go on to verse 14 which says, this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to the whole world as a testimony to all the nations and then the end will come.

[9:20] And so once again, it's a verse that many people who haven't thoroughly read and understood their Bibles, they paint it to mean that until the gospel is preached in every nation in the world, the end can't come.

I don't believe that's what it means. First of all, it talks about this gospel of the kingdom. This gospel of the kingdom, Christ came to the Jews.

He said, I come first to the children of the house of Israel. He came to the Jews and in coming to the Jews, he presented them with a kingdom and with himself as king.

And they rejected the king. So the gospel of the kingdom, in my view, and there's a lot of people who would contest this, so feel free to explore it further, but the gospel of the kingdom is the gospel that says that Christ is going to come again and sit on the kingly throne of David.

David, does that apply to us in the church? I would suggest not. Apart from when he comes to claim that throne, we will come with him as we return with him from the rapture.

[10:34] And so, it has to do with us because it's something we will witness, but what this is is a verse to the Jews that's saying this gospel of the kingdom is going to be preached all over the world and then the end will come.

And it's talking of the end times, the last seven years of human history that is prophesied in Daniel chapter 27. Sorry, that's silly. Daniel chapter 9 verse 27.

There are only 12 chapters in Daniel. So, it's prophesied then that there is yet, and I haven't got time to unpack that today, but there is yet seven years to come of Jewish history at the end of which they will know that the king is coming and they'll know the day that he arrives and when he arrives no one's going to miss it and he will take up the throne of David.

And the gospel of the kingdom is the gospel that says Jesus is coming back to take up the throne of David. To us, in one sense, that's immaterial because we will not be here.

But it is of interest in that we will come back with him and probably throw our crowns at his feet when he sits on that throne. I don't know. I made that bit up, but it's just, it gets confusing if you try to apply this to the church and it gets confusing if, what happens is people have no assurance of their salvation if they think I've got to persevere, I've got to persevere.

[12:11] What if I don't persevere enough? And how much is enough? And how perfect do I have to be? And did I actually make it? And you can get to your deathbed and still not know whether you're saved. That was never the intention of the gospel.

The intention of the gospel of Christ, the gospel of grace, was that you would have assurance of your salvation even when you fall.

So, is that clear enough? And I haven't had any tomatoes thrown, so I'm... So, let's then read on. And I'm going to read from 15 to 28 and I don't promise to get all the way, but I'll do my best.

Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, let the reader understand, then those that are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days.

[13:24] But pray that your flight will not be on the Sabbath, sorry, in the winter or on the Sabbath. For there will be a great tribulation such as has never occurred since the beginning of the world until now nor ever will.

Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, behold, here is the Christ or there he is, do not believe him.

For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders so as to mislead if possible even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance.

So if they say to you, behold, he is in the wilderness, do not go out. Or behold, he is in the inner room, do not believe them. For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. Well, that's easy, isn't it? How should we interpret these things?

[14:35] The first thing is, in this chapter, there are, before this, before what we've just read, there are eight, eight or nine, I think, eight signs.

Wars, rumours of wars, pestilence, famine, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. This last sign is the key one. Up to now, what's been described as, these are the birth pangs, right?

The baby's on the way. These are the birth pangs. things. But then there is a change of tone with this. When you see, and this is the ninth sign, when you see the abomination of desolations in the holy place, run.

Right? This is, everything hangs on this event. Now, what is the abomination of desolation, first of all?

The word abomination in English and Hebrew and Greek means something that causes disgust. So, the abomination of desolation is disgusting to the Lord and it's disgusting to the Jews.

[15:53] And there are things that we would say as Christians are an abomination because we know they offend the Holy Spirit that lives in us. And desolation simply means emptiness or barrenness.

So, when you see the abomination, something that is disgusting and that whatever this thing is that's disgusting is a thing of desolation. It renders the temple barren.

So, question for people in the church of what relevance is this to us because it's about the temple.

This is relevant to Jews and what we're going to find going through here is all the time the language is Jewish.

It's relevant to Jews and not really relevant to the church. Doesn't mean we can't learn from it and doesn't mean we shouldn't study it but we should study it in its right context.

So, if you look at other translations, the abomination that causes desolation NIV the sacrilegious object that causes desecration New Living Translation that horrible thing which is the common English version the Amplified Bible writes the abomination of desolation is the appalling sacrilege that astonishes and makes desolate.

[17:20] So, whatever this is their place of worship is desecrated to the extent that it can no longer be used for worship. It's an obscene thing that's happened.

Now, in the time of the Maccabees around about 150 or so BC I'm never quite sure of the exact date but the Seleucids led by Antiochus IV Epiphanes and they renamed him by the way instead of calling him Epiphanes they called him Epiphanes which means madman but they slaughtered a pig on the Jewish altars and many thought that this was the abomination of desolation that Daniel referred to in his prophecy in chapter 9.

Now, because we now have Jesus almost 200 years later telling them to look for this sign clearly what happened in 150 BC was not it but it was an obvious type of it and you will notice that as we go through bits of history God regularly peppers history with types of things to warn us so you could for instance think that Hitler was probably a type of the Antichrist now there were those in his day that said he was the Antichrist no they were wrong but he was a type and there were lots of types so this group of believers are in AD 30 roughly 3033 and are being told to look out for this sign now I just mentioned one other thing in passing because I think it's quite important because you will come across it when you talk with Christians there's a whole group of Christians called preterists preterists are Christians and you can get partial preterists or full preterists so they could be partially wrong or fully wrong but what they believe to one extent or another depending on whether they're partial or full is that all prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70 when the temple was demolished and the Jews were put under siege and there was mass extermination of Jews there is a little problem with it though and well there are lots of big problems with preterism to be honest but it involves them having to do all sorts of manipulations with the scripture what we're going to read in a bit is that one of the scriptures written about desecrating the temple was written by John and John lived in about 96 AD now if you're a preterist you'll say no he didn't he must have been dead by 70

AD because otherwise preterism can't be true but he lived in about 96 AD so the temple had already been destroyed by that time and John was prophesying of a time coming which we'll look at in a moment but if we go to Daniel chapter 9 briefly so if we start reading Daniel 9 and verse 27 this is the prophecy concerned and it reads like this and he will make a firm covenant with the many for

one week and one week means seven years in this context not seven days but seven years but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and gain offering and on the wing of abomination will come one who makes desolate even until a complete destruction one that is decreed is poured out on the one who makes desolate so the abomination of desolation is pinned to a time after

Messiah has been crucified even in the Old Testament because if you go back to verse 26 what you find is I'll just read part of the verse it says after the 62 weeks Messiah will be cut off and have nothing and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city so Christ is killed before all of this so the abomination of desolation follows after the crucifixion which of course AD 70 was after the crucifixion which was a partial fulfillment of this but then what we haven't yet had we've had the temple destroyed what we haven't seen is the erection of some sort of idol or something obscene in the temple and we can't see it right now because there is no temple so what we're learning just by unpacking this prophecy is that there is going to be another temple because otherwise the word of [22:24] God can't be fulfilled so as Christians I mean if you're not a Christian you just think oh well whoever wrote the Bible got it wrong but as Christians we know that the word of God will be fulfilled to the letter and therefore there is a time coming in Jewish history where there will be a Jewish temple in which Jewish sacrifices take place that's the time that these verses speak of turn back to Matthew actually don't turn to Revelation chapter 13 and we'll just read verses 11 to 18 which says this then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon dragon is always the symbolism for Satan by the way he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence and he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast whose fatal wound was healed he performs great signs so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men and he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image of the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life and it was given him to breathe to the image of the beast sorry it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed and he causes all the small and the great the rich and the poor and the free men and the slaves to be given a mark on their right hand and their forehead and he provides that no one will be able to buy or sell except the one who has the mark either the name of the beast or the number of his name now this involves the setting up in the temple which is not yet built and wasn't built when John wrote this but involves the setting up of some sort of idol

I have to think it has to have something to do with AI because how would you produce a talking speaking idol but you know that's me not the Bible the Bible simply says there'll be an idol put up there that'll speak and it'll be anti-Christ and so it'll be an obscene thing it'll be the abomination of desolations and it is yet to come so now we've got round that back to Matthew 24 so where are we the abomination of desolation when this comes when this sign comes to the Jews because it's a meaningless sign to us but when it comes you've got to flee who's got to flee those who are in Judea it's not written to the church it's written to the people in Judea whoever's on the housetop must not go down to get things that are in his house do you have a garden on your housetop are you going to be sitting on your housetop but the Jews do whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak woe to those who are pregnant in those days those who are nursing babies verse 20 but pray that your flight will not be in the winter or on the Sabbath who is bothered about having to travel on the Sabbath the Jews we live we live in God constant Sabbath praise God every day to us is a Sabbath he fulfilled the Sabbath doesn't mean we don't still have a day set aside for the Lord and we don't have corporate worship on one day of the week but what's being said here is effectively let me interpret a la re which is keep in mind folks that if it's on the Sabbath you won't be able to flee because you're only allowed to go

about a kilometre or something I can't remember the distance this is a warning to Jews pray that it's not on the Sabbath and then he goes on to talk about this great tribulation for there will be a great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now or ever will be so I think we can safely say and there are those preterists who believe that all this was fulfilled in AD 70 we have seen far worse things on this earth between then and now and what this is saying is when this happens it's going to be worse than anything that anyone has ever seen or ever will see so we aren't there yet this is future prophecy unless those days had been cut short no life would have been saved but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short now a lot of churches preach that the elect here is the church of believers I disagree happy to have the debate but in most circumstances in scripture the word elect is applied to the Jews now it's not universal there are one or two places because the word elect simply means chosen and so there are scriptures we can go to where it will talk about Christians as God's chosen but when it's talking about elect in this context it's the elect nation no one of us is an elect nation this is talking about the elect nation what's going to happen nationally to the

Jews and so the elect in my view described here are the Jews and it's going to be cut short for the sake of the elect so why would that be when you read revelation you realize that something like two thirds of Jewry Jews is going to be killed but what about the third that is not killed they are going to fulfill!

[28:49] the prophecy that says and all Israel shall be saved so you have the whole of the remnant of Israel saved which they wouldn't be if God hadn't cut short this period of time and I hope that delights you as much as it does me I'm very sad about the two thirds but it brings the scripture together to me in a way that I hadn't always seen before let's read on verse 23 for if anyone says to you behold here is the Christ or there he is do not believe him now this is something that has applied to the church we've done it a lot I was in a church where people hopped on planes and went out to Florida to see Todd Bentley who turned out to be a paedophilic adulterer among other things I was in another church where people hopped on planes to go out and see prophet

T.B. Joshua who was another paedophile and adulterer and sexual abuser who was flaunting himself and basically saying come and see me and you'll find Jesus no you won't all these ministers have one thing in common which is they tell you that you can't possibly get hold of Jesus unless you go to them no Jesus will come to you you don't need to go to Jesus via any other route and any pastor that says that they're the way to Jesus is lying to you you need to find Jesus for yourself we can help you study the Bible but you need to find Jesus for yourself and he loves you and he what does it it says!

I can't remember the verse it says that they sought the Lord with a whole heart and he let them find him when you seek the Lord with a whole heart he will let you find him so Romans 11 verse 26 tells us that all Israel will be saved and it's interesting because it's one of those verses that people who say God's finished with Israel avoid and in fact I read a book by Luther of all people who when commenting on this aspect of Romans went quiet and said nothing Romans chapter 11 Romans 9 10 and 11 tells you what's going to happen to Israel and tells you expressly that God is not finished with Israel and the apostle Paul seems in his writing to get quite angry at even the suggestion in verse 25 he said for

I do not want you brethren to be uninformed of this mystery so that you will not be wise in your own estimation that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in so all Israel will be saved just as this is written!

the deliverer will come from Zion he will remove ungodliness from Jacob Jacob is another name for Israel this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins God has a covenant with Israel it's an eternal covenant and it's not yet been fulfilled and Israel will be restored what we're reading about in Matthew 24 is a history that leaves out the church age it effectively tells them future and one could argue takes them through to AD 70 and then there's a big gap before there is another temple and these other things are fulfilled he then goes on back to Matthew he then goes on and warns about false Christs and he says for false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders so as to mislead if possible even the elect and my heart that the elect there is the

[33:02] Jewish nation so what he's saying is people will come and deceive you and do false stuff false miracles even now this is not only reserved for the Jews because we've seen it in the church we've seen the people that went off to see prophet Joshua apparently saw miracles now they've since discovered that they were almost entirely fake there is also another ingredient that we must always be aware of and that is if you go to some idiot that feeds you with false doctrine but your heart is actively seeking God sometimes he will heal you not because of the minister but despite the minister so it all gets very confused from the outside looking in which is why Jesus gave this delightful simple direct command don't go there if someone says he's here don't go there carries on and says behold I've told you in advance so if they say to you behold he is in the wilderness don't go out behold he is in

Toronto don't go there behold he's in Florida of course the Lord's in Florida he's in his people in Florida he's not in Todd Bentley anyway but these last two verses are I think very very key for us and it says for just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west so will the coming of the son of man be when you are caught out in a thunderstorm lightning the whole sky lights up you don't have to say to anybody well if you go to such and such a place!

you'll see the lightning if you go to this little place or if you go in that room over there you'll see the lightning you can't miss the lightning that's the point and I don't understand how it works geographically but what the Lord is saying here is when I come back you're not going to miss it it's going to be so obvious it'll be more obvious than the nose on!

so there is no way that you need to run after these charlatans having doubts about maybe they really are the Messiah maybe they really are going to show us God maybe they're going to achieve this or that or the other thing Jesus has said to the Jews don't go there that's a piece of advice we should take because there are so many out there who are trying to offer you a false gospel trying to extract money from your pockets trying to commit adultery with your wives trying to sexually abuse your children and they're using the soft I don't mean to be critical of Christians but sometimes like sheep we are a bit dense and instead of saying the Lord tells us not to chase these things what we go away he's a nice man you get

Todd Bentley has been restored to ministry for goodness sake and then went through the same stuff all over again and got kicked out again and he's still doing little bits and pieces of ministry and people are still being conned what part of!

[36:44] he's said to be in the wilderness don't go there do you not get just where you find the truth you come to a church and you find the truth it's obvious and the ministers are not cleaning you out for your money and are not always nagging you to provide money and are not being flirtatious with your wives and your children and so on there's a clean behaviour about it it's one of the reasons why the qualifications for eldership include things like shouldn't be a man of strong drink and should only be a one woman man and so on there are clear qualifications that stand you in good stead that you should always be treated well and in a godly way and we we've we've set our stall out in a particular way we said right from the start we won't I won't minister to women on their own even if they're great friends

I don't go to visit them on my own that's not because I doubt their integrity and not that I think I'm vulnerable but it keeps it transparent and it keeps it clear and that's what you should expect from the body of Christ and then you've got this lovely little phrase which is so easy to interpret wherever the corpse is there the vultures will gather and I'll leave it at that what does this mean oh boy when you when you when you read some of the stuff that people put on about this they get so tangled and I believe they get tangled because they depart from the context the tangle involves some of them say that the corpse here is Israel some say the corpse is the dying church some even say the corpse is

Jesus because he died they get so muddled if you stick with the context what's Jesus saying here when the second coming happens when I actually come back you're not going to miss it now when a carcass drops in the wilderness the vultures gather and they come to feed off the corpse so what

he's saying is these signs that I am going to be coming again that we've gone through the ten of them or nine of them or!

it was all of these signs the vultures the Todd Bentleys of this world and whatever the equivalent will be in the tribulation period where there will be false Jewish leaders who claim to be Messiah or claim to have the pathway to Messiah they will gather and descend because it becomes clear that the second coming is right at the door so just as if there was a corpse in the wilderness these vultures will come and try to feed off the people who Jesus is eventually coming to rescue that's the best I can do with it and I hope that helps but it's a little bit similar to him saying just as the lightning comes you can't miss it look for the circling vultures who were all trying to feed off we talked previously about the

Jesuits who would prey on widows and would extract money from them and property and stuff like that by cosying up to widows when their husbands had died and things like that those are vultures it's a church version of vultures the vultures are about Mr.

[40:43] Bentley was a vulture TB Joshua was a vulture he got very wealthy off an awful lot of false miracles and an appallingly bad gospel these are vultures they're taking advantage of people who are dying and by that I mean they want feeding they're dying of starvation because the word of God isn't being preached in its fullness and the vultures are there to take advantage and feed off them and make themselves wealthy at the expense of them oh Lord Father I thank you for this this chapter and I do pray Lord that you will sharpen us so that we don't miss the signs and that Father as we see signs we will accept that we are in a spiritual battle and these signs mean that the spiritual battle is coming to a conclusion possibly in our lifetime and that

Lord we will always revere you and that we won't run here there and everywhere looking for you when in fact you are here the kingdom of God in this instance is within us and you live in us and we can trust that you can come to any one of us and we don't have to chase these false prophets and false miracle makers father I pray that you would sustain us through coming times which seem to be getting increasingly more and more difficult Lord thank you in Jesus name amen I've got one thing to read before we move on and that is this is courtesy of Linda and you remember a while ago we did a study where we were talking about phylacteries and Jesus was having a go at them for they make their phylacteries big and try and show themselves off to be holy and all that well this comes from a man called Alfred Edersheim and it's called sketches of a Jewish life and it says this! it is now almost generally admitted! these are things that the Jews wore as a kind of a charm and as such rabbinites regularly regarded and treated them however much they might otherwise have disclaimed all connection with heathen views in reference to the phylacteries even the language of Josephus savors of belief in their magical efficacy although in this matter also!

is true to! showing us at the same time that certain proverbial views of gratitude were already in vogue in his time for writing of the phylacteries which he maintained the Jews wore in remembrance of their past deliverances but also by way of invitation invited future favours so it was known that phylacteries were worn as a lucky charm and we I'll leave you with that thought of thing is the way to way to!

the to!!