

# God's Heart To Save Believers

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[0:00] We are surrounded by people who are perishing in their sins. Spiritually dead, blind, deaf, hopeless, under God's just wrath, because they've rejected God.

We too used to be numbered among them. Before God graciously intervened in each of our lives, for those of us who are Christians, we were justly condemned rebels too.

Now if you were like me, you tend to lose sight of the people who are perishing all around us. We tend to forget that we're living among a people who are perishing, who are lost, who are under God's wrath.

They're idolaters. God created them to worship Him, and yet they're worshiping what we'll see in Jonah 2. Meaningless vapor. Meaningless vapor. not only does God want us to make us aware of the people around us who are perishing, God wants to do a deeper work that goes beyond awareness.

God wants to compel us to speak to those who are perishing that salvation belongs to the Lord. There's a gap between our profession and our practice.

[1:49] We all know. We're supposed to have compassionate hearts for those who are dying in their sin. We all know that. But if we're to be honest, if you're like me, there are particular lost people or even groups of people that you would rather have wiped off the face of the earth.

Our hearts are hardened to particular groups of sinners. I mean, I just need the word to say, the word ISIS. God wants to change our heart towards all who are perishing.

Nice people who are perishing and mean people who are perishing. God wants to change our hearts towards them. God does not discriminate when it comes to His salvation.

Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. So whether they're nice people perishing or mean people perishing, whether they're compliant or violent, they're dead, blind, deaf, and without hope in this world, why does God want us to speak of Christ to others?

It's His heart. Our great God wants to save a great number of sinners from a great number of situations and unite them all in Christ as one new people, the church.

[3:26] The redeemed. So here's my observation going into this sermon. Our God is a great God and He wants to save sinners. He's willing and able. And then we're surrounded by people all around us who need to be saved.

And here we are. Christ the King Church. The redeemed. We who personally experience the saving power of God through Jesus Christ.

He lit us up in Jesus. Jesus. And we're living among multitudes of men and women, boys and girls who are presently living in darkness. And these people may not realize it, but God has placed us here smack dab in the middle of this city.

He's placed us here for a purpose. He's got this strategy going on to make known the name of Jesus around the world.

To make known to all peoples that Jesus is their salvation. So this little city of ours is our little slice of the nations.

[4:41] And God has placed us here to make known the life-transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That's why we're doing the outreach this August. Christ. Because here's what we're banking on.

It shows up in Acts 4.12. It goes like this. There is salvation in no one else. For there's no other name given among men under heaven by which we can be saved.

There's no other name. And herein lies the problem. Now you might be sitting in your seats and you're like, yeah, rip it Salvati!

God's awesome! He wants to save! We're surrounded by sinners need saving! Yes! But the problem is we tend not to care about those who are perishing.

And if we don't care about those who are perishing, we're not going to tell them the greatest news that they can ever hear. That God is offering them today salvation in Christ.

[5:51] But there's another thing. If we don't care about those who are perishing, we don't care about what God cares about.

There's a gap between our profession and our practice. But as the Brits would say, mind the gap. God minds that gap.

He's aware of the gap in us and He's more than happy to bridge that gap. He is a way to soften our hearts and make our hearts malleable and conform our hearts to His heart for the lost.

His way of softening our hearts will bring us face to face with our own perishing. That's what we see happening in Jonah 2.

In Jonah 1, God calls Jonah to preach against the Ninevites. And the Ninevites would be to Jonah what ISIS is to us today. An unnerving threat far away but looming.

[7:09] The Ninevites were enemies of Israel and so when Jonah hears God say, hey, go! Go to the Ninevites, that great city. Jonah jumps up and runs the opposite way.

He gets on the first ship to Tarshish. I love saying that. And Tarshish happens to be the town in the opposite direction of Nineveh and it's the farthest town in the opposite direction of Nineveh in the known world of the time.

He was trying to get away. He's unwilling to preach to the Ninevites. And we don't learn why he's unwilling until chapter 4.

But what I want to tell you this morning is this. Jonah didn't want his God to show grace. Jonah didn't want his God to show mercy and steadfast love to the Ninevites.

Do you know why? Jonah didn't think the Ninevites deserved it. Is there anyone in your life that you don't think deserves God's grace?

[8:28] Jonah wanted God to wipe the Ninevites off the face of the earth in a glorious display of his wrath that would have eclipsed Sodom and Gomorrah. Jonah runs but God catches him.

And not only did God catch this disobedient prophet, he catches a crew of sailors in Jonah chapter 1 who boarded that ship worshipping a variety of different gods.

And through that big storm incident in chapter 1, these sailors who worshiped a variety of God, they hear about the one true God, Yahweh, through who? This disobedient prophet who didn't give a rip about him.

They learn about Yahweh and they go from crying out to many gods to calling on the name of the one true God, Yahweh. And by the end of chapter 1, God delivers them.

Those sailors were changed men. By the verse 16 of chapter 1, they're offering sacrifice, they're making vows to Yahweh, they've been changed. They get to port, they go home, and they say to their wives, honey, you would not believe what happened on the Mediterranean.

[9:39] I met the God who created all. He delivered me. But not Jonah.

At the end of chapter 1, Jonah's in the drink and just where God wants him. Jonah has yet to call on the name of the Lord. The sailors did.

Jonah has not. And God is going to graciously bring him down to the point where he must call on the name of the Lord. You see, in Jonah 2, something transformational happens.

Jonah 1, God calls Jonah. Jonah splits in the opposite direction. Jonah 3, God recommissions Jonah. Jonah's willing to go to Nineveh. Something happens in Jonah 2.

God does something in Jonah to make him willing to go. What changed Jonah? What made Jonah willing to go and preach to these Ninevites?

[10:39] And that's the question we're going to answer this morning for ourselves. What is going to make us willing to open our mouths to tell those living in darkness that their only hope is the light of life, Jesus Christ.

salvation belongs to the Lord. Jonah 2 shows us how. Jonah has a personal experience of God's saving, delivering grace.

grace. Jonah is brought down to death and he's brought up to life by God's grace.

grace. This deliverance we'll read about in Jonah 2 not only rescued Jonah, it changed Jonah. It prepared Jonah to go to Nineveh to declare God's Word for them.

The grace that saves us from our perishing is the same grace that burdens us for the perishing. Why is there a gap between our profession and our practice?

[12:07] We tend to forget what God and His grace has done for us. He saved us. And it becomes a spring of joy which we declare to others salvation is yours in Christ.

In Jonah 2 God brings Jonah to an end to Himself in order to change him so that he'd be willing to go to Nineveh. That's the transformation. Why?

Because all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Even Ninevites. Ninevites in the 8th century B.C. Even Kenoschites in the 21st century A.D.

all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. All who call the name of the Lord will be saved and those who've been saved will call all to the name of the Lord.

So, Jonah 2. In the original language it is a masterpiece. It is very carefully constructed. It's like a really good sandwich.

[13:18] Church. Chapter 1, verse 17 and chapter 2, verse 10 are like the two pieces of bread that hold together the contents.

Chapter 2, verses 1-9. Jonah 1, verse 17 and chapter 2, verse 10 they're actually narrative.

Which means they're telling a story. It's describing events. It's like when you pick up the Kenosha News and you're reading and you're describing events. It's written in prose.

And what we read in both those verses is that God sovereignly directs a really big fish to bring about a really big deliverance. Now, in the middle of this sandwich verses 1-9 is a poem.

Verses 1-9 is poetry. It's a psalm. A psalm of thanksgiving. Written by Jonah while in the belly of a whale.

[14:28] And what this psalm records is Jonah coming to the point where he calls on the name of the Lord for deliverance. So here's what I want you to see going into this passage.

This little psalm verses 1-9 is surrounded by God's sovereignty. God bringing about what we're about to read.

He has Jonah right where He wants him to change him. God's sovereignty is causing Jonah's suffering as well as his deliverance and change of heart.

God has a purpose for this prophet to dramatically change him. He's got him right where He wants him. And God has purpose to change us as well.

What kind of sandwich is this? It's not a fish sandwich. This is a sandwich of God's grace. Of His heart for the nations.

[15:36] So let's dive into this text. Chapter 1, verse 17 we read that God appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. Jonah was in that fish for three days and three nights.

And on an aside, Jesus refers back to Jonah 2. And you know what He says about it in Matthew 12? That was pointing to me.

And then He says, someone greater than Jonah is here. Do you know why? Jesus was the greatest prophet who proclaimed the greatest message of the greatest act of deliverance.

Jonah was in the belly of a whale for three days. Jesus was in the grave for three days. And then He was raised from the dead securing our salvation. God is sovereign not over just this fish but over history.

Something you need to know about this big fish. When you read about it, you're like, okay, what's this big fish? Is it a whale? What is it? We don't know. What we do know is big enough to swallow a dude.

[16:53] That's what we know. But don't think about this big fish as punishment. This fish, if it had a name, it would be called deliverance.

Rescue. This fish was the means by which God saved Jonah and made him willing to go to Nineveh. God will use whatever He sees fit to accomplish His purposes.

Furthermore, there's no reason to believe that this event didn't happen. You might be saying, you know, big fish normally don't swallow people. You're totally right.

They don't. This is a supernatural deliverance. If this fish didn't intervene, Jonah would have died by drowning.

God delivered Jonah. What we're going to see here is that this big fish didn't swallow Jonah while he was on the surface.

[18:06] Jonah wasn't flailing around and this big fish came and took him in. Jonah was on the bottom of the sea when this big fish swallowed him.

You'll see it. So, 1.17 it's that first bookend, that first piece of bread that God is sovereign bringing all these events together.

So, now let's look at the contents, this poem itself by getting into chapter 2, verses 1-9. Chapter 2, verse 1. The Jonah prayed to the Lord as God from the belly of the fish.

And notice, again, it's from the belly of the fish. This poetry originated in Jonah who is in the belly of a fish.

But what you need to realize is that he's not reflecting on being in the belly of the fish. He's reflecting on being delivered from the depths.

[19:12] From the gates of Sheol. And so, verse 2 of chapter 2, we get this summary. I called out to the Lord out of my distress and He answered me.

Out of the belly of Sheol, I cried and you heard my voice. This is a prayer of thanksgiving. Jonah is going to give great joy.

He's going to say, God has delivered me. He's saying, this is a prayer in which I called on the name of the Lord and He answered me.

It was about time this disobedient prophet called on the name of the Lord. He called on the name of the Lord out of his distress. Verse 2. When he says out of the belly of Sheol, don't be thinking out of the belly of a whale.

It's a play on words. Jonah knew he was coming down to the very gates of death itself. God delivered him from the depths.

[20:21] And so what we see in these verses here is this weaving of falling down, descending down into the depths of the sea and getting closer and closer to death.

Sheol. The pit. The land who would bar him out. So what we're seeing here is that Jonah is in the water.

He's reminding himself. This psalm is saying, I was in the water. I was falling into the belly of Sheol. I was on my way to Tarshish, but I took a downward turn and I was on my way to Sheol, the realm of the dead.

I want you to notice something very important in verse 2. I called. He answered me. I called. You answered me.

He said, it's very subtle, but it's significant. He moves from talking about God to talking to God.

[21:40] It moves from He to you. It's moved from theory to being very personal. God is minding the gap in Jonah.

Jonah. What we'll see is that God, even though Jonah tried to flee from His presence, God was there all along.

In verses 3 through the beginning of verse 6, we'll look at this descent down. Again, I just want to reiterate, Jonah's not recalling being in the fish.

He's recalling being overwhelmed by the sea into the deep, into the heart of the seas. The flood surrounded me. All your waves and billows passed over me.

This is a description of being overwhelmed by the waters. He was in over His head. Anybody in over your head in the sea, in the lake? You're getting close to not being able to keep your head up anymore?

[22:43] Panic sets in? He says in verse 3, it's very interesting. For you cast me into the deep.

Even though the sailors cast Jonah into the sea, Jonah knows what's really going on. God orchestrated the whole thing. God wanted Jonah in the sea.

God caused Jonah to be in this overwhelming situation. Is that nice of God? Is that unloving of God to do?

To put someone through a hard thing? To overwhelm someone? Oh no, it's not unloving.

In fact, this is one of the most loving things God could do. It's a hard love, but it's a real love. God is bringing Jonah to an end to Himself. He's letting Jonah sink.

[23:46] until Jonah cries out. In chapter 2 verse 4, in the state of being overwhelmed, Jonah thinks that God has lost sight of him.

Then I said, I am driven away from your sight. Jonah is fearing that he's been cast out of God's saving presence. That God had cast him out.

But God hasn't driven Jonah away. He seems to have forgotten. He's the one that bolted. He's the one that sought to flee the presence of the Lord.

Quite the contrary. God has been faithful. God has followed him. God has orchestrated all these things. God is actually wanting to draw Jonah into His presence.

and what God sees in Jonah is a hardened heart unwilling to preach to the Ninevites.

[24:51] A heart that needed to be softened. A prideful heart that needed to be humbled. And God is afflicting Jonah to humble Jonah because God loves Jonah because God wants to make much of His name in Assyria.

Yeah. But that's what it took to get at Jonah's arrogance to soften his heart.

Jonah says, yet I shall look upon your temple in verse four. It's kind of a then and now situation. Beginning of verse four he says, then I said I am driven away from your sight when he was in the waters.

And then he says, yet I shall look upon your holy temple. The best way to explain it is he's in the stomach of the fish. He's been delivered.

I'm going to look on the temple again. I was being cast out, but now I'm on my way. In verses 5 and the beginning of 6, the descent continues.

[26:02] The waters closed in over me. The deep surrounded me. My weeds, seaweed wrapped around my head. At the roots of the mountains.

That's a reference to the bottom of the sea. In 6, the latter half in 6b, he says, I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever.

I went down. Jonah has been descending down ever since Jonah chapter 1. Chapter 1, verse 3. He went down to Joppa. 1, verse 5.

He went down into the inner part of the ship. And here in 2, verse 6, he's gone down as far as he can go to the land whose bars closed upon me forever.

He's talking about Sheol. The pit, verse 6. The place away from the saving presence of the Lord. Where people would be after they died as they awaited judgment.

[27:09] The bars are referenced, is a reference to bars in a city gate of a city in the ancient Near East that would lock people out and lock a people in.

What Jonah is describing is a sense of being barred into Sheol. No escape. Separated without hope. Jonah has reached the end of his rope.

Do you know what it's like to reach the end of your rope? Do you know what it's like to be overwhelmed?

Barred in? Hitting rock bottom? There's no further descent to go. There's nowhere to go. Have you ever experienced this?

Underwater? Do you know what it's like? We're reaching the turning point of the poem.

[28:15] Jonah's reached bottom. This is the darkest time of night for Jonah. Just before the dawn. In the latter half of verse 6, we read this.

I went down to the land yet you brought up my life from the pit. Oh Lord, my God.

When Jonah came to an end to himself, he finally cried out to God. We see that explicitly in verse 7.

When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord and my prayer came to you.

When my life was fainting away. Do you know what he's talking about? Out of oxygen. Underwater. Losing consciousness. My life was fainting away.

I remembered you. His last thought of God at the bottom of the sea was, I remember you. It's the turning point in Jonah chapter 2.

[29:28] You brought up my life from the pit. Did you notice the contrast? I went down and you brought up. Did you notice that?

Jonah has no doubt that it was God who rescued him. God humbling him. God bringing him low in order to raise him up. God bringing him down in order to change him.

Jonah did nothing to merit what happened here. At his lowest point, he called out and there he was swallowed by the fish at the bottom of the sea.

God sent that big fish down. Get him. Deliver him. This was an act of God's grace.

It was a display of his steadfast love. In fact, God sovereignly orchestrated all these events in order that Jonah would call upon the name of the Lord and experience deliverance.

[30:30] God wanted Jonah to be brought face to face with his own perishing. God delivers him.

Jonah seems to have been a pretty prideful bugger. In his arrogance, he held out on calling on the name of the Lord all the way down until he could barely think anymore.

And then he calls on the name of the Lord and God delivers him. He finally humbles himself.

There's this great passage in James 4.6. God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

Jonah humbles himself. God delivers him. It's all by God's grace. God was orchestrating the whole thing. And then look at verse 8. Verse 8. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.

One reads that and you're kind of like, where did that come from? That seems a little out of place.

We're just talking about Jonah being delivered and all of a sudden he's talking about those people who worship vain idols, pay regard.

[31:45] What's all this about? Jonah. In a demonstration of a changed heart, Jonah recognizes not only his state of perishing, but he starts to see the state of those perishing around him.

That they are worshippers of vain idols, meaningless vapor, nothing. They forsake God's steadfast love.

He's coming to terms with those who are perishing in their idolatry all around him. In verse 9, Jonah lifts his voice to the Lord.

I will, but I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you. You know what thanksgiving is?

Thanksgiving, gratitude, is a beautiful, very clear indicator of a changed heart.

Of a chart of heart that's been grace impacted. Jonah went from not giving a rip about anybody to being grateful that God delivered him from the gates of Sheol and now he's aware of people who are perishing.

[33:01] When was the last time you thanked God for saving you? When was the last time you came to your God and said, oh God, thank you for saving a sinner like me.

I didn't deserve anything. I deserved your wrath. Out of his heart of gratitude, Jonah says he will sacrifice and make vows.

It calls to mind at the end of chapter 1, those sailors who after being delivered by God, sacrificed and made vows. Jonah's been changed.

Jonah's been changed by experiencing the saving presence of the Lord. He was running from the One who wanted to save others and now he's experienced being saved by that One.

Being delivered. And now he's willing to go and preach. At the end of this psalm, it closes with that great, great declaration. Salvation belongs to the Lord, Jonah says in the belly of a whale.

[34:12] He's personally and profoundly experienced God's deliverance. He knows firsthand what it means to be delivered. And it closes, salvation belongs to the Lord.

He alone can rescue. He alone can save. He can save anyone. God can save Ninevites in the 8th century B.C. and He can save Kenoshaites in the 21st century A.D.

He saved me. He saved you. Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. In verse 10, we have that final bookend, that last piece of bread on the sandwich.

Having graciously saved Jonah and changed Jonah, God speaks to the fish. The fish vomits Jonah on dry land. He delivered him from the sea and presumably bumped him in the right direction to Nineveh.

This morning I started this sermon with an observation. God's heart is to save. He's willing and able. We live among a people who are perishing and need salvation.

[35:26] People in order to be saved need to call on the name of the Lord. Acts 4.12 There is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which they must be saved.

Who's going to tell them? Who's going to go to them? We are. We are. We are. We are. We are.

We are the ones called by God to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ to the perishing.

But we're slow to it, aren't we? So we need to be changed. And what will motivate us to boldly and winsomely tell those who are perishing is our own salvation.

Recalling our own deliverance. What will compel us to take risks like that? What will get us over our own distractions and quiet bigotries?

What did God do to get Jonah willing to preach to the Ninevites? God delivered Jonah. He brought him face to face with his own perishing and said, look what I can do.

[36:36] I can do that for the Ninevites as well. We are to call to a mind afresh that God has saved us from our perishing for no other reason than His grace.

There's nothing special about me and there's nothing special about you that caused God to rescue you from your sin. He saved you. Here's the logic.

God saves sinners like you and me to show a world that it's perishing that He can save anybody.

Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. God doesn't discriminate according to race, position, bank account, or education.

God will save anyone who calls upon His name. And if God is willing and able to save me, He's willing and able to save anybody. I want to ask four questions to close.

Are people in our city perishing apart from God because of their idolatry? Yes. Does our God want to save people in our city who are perishing in their idolatry?

[38:04] Yes. Is God calling you and me to be willing to open our mouths to tell people who are perishing that their salvation is in Christ alone?

Yes. Yes. Yes. So what will it take to motivate you to tell someone else of this great salvation that is in Christ alone but God offers to all?

What will it take? We're not going to do it out of duty. We do this out of delight. Our witness to those who are perishing is born of thanksgiving.

It springs from joy. It's the joy of salvation. Salvation belongs to the Lord. My salvation belongs to the Lord. Your salvation belongs to the Lord. I was lost, but now I'm found.

I once was blind, but now I see. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. We're all wretches saved by God's amazing grace.

[39:10] And we speak to others as those who were once perishing, but now are saved. We speak as those who once descended down to the gates of Sheol, but were brought up to life by the grace of God.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, do you realize you have something to say? You have something to say. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. And then those who've been saved will call all to the name of the Lord. Let's pray.

God, we do pray that you would remind us afresh of what you saved us from just as you did Jonah. And in so doing, God, you would loosen our jaw, loosen our tongue, that God, you would fill our hearts with gratitude for being saved by you and your grace, and that we would tell others where salvation is found in our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[40:31] In His name we pray. ■■■■