

The Church's Mission

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[0 : 0 0] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

We're concluding this morning our series on the building fun. That wasn't clear already. And so if you're our guest, this Sunday is a bit atypical.

Not so much the order of the service, but we typically just kind of move through books and definitely don't talk about ourselves so much.

So we're all a bit uncomfortable with that. But 1 Peter 2, so we're going to conclude this by looking at the building fun. By way of introduction, pastor and author Douglas O'Donnell describes an experience he had at an electronics store while waiting in line.

He was waiting in line to purchase, as he puts it, a new car radio for my hip Dodge Caravan, as our radio had died a sudden death a few weeks prior.

[1 : 1 0] He said, after I selected my Sony, I followed the young blue-shirted sales associate to the front of the store where he held my, as he held my new radio, I was not allowed to touch it until I bought it.

Then he placed it on checkout number eight, turned to me and said, please go to the back of the line, and off he went to infinity and beyond. As I waited in line, a few critical and condescending thoughts came to my mind.

He said, I looked at the guy who escorted me to the front. There he was, two aisles away, flirting with some co-worker. He was probably 30 years old, had greased-back black hair, and was kind of frumpy looking.

I thought to myself, what is he living for? But he lives at home, takes a class or two at the local community college to appease his worried mother, works part-time at this store, and then spends most of his paycheck on video games.

Then I looked at the people in line with me. We were all roped together like sheep being led to a slaughter. That's kind of a joke, but a woman was doing her best to corral us, prodding us to move along.

[2 : 2 6] Now remember, I had nothing in my hand. My radio, too valuable for me to even touch, was waiting patiently for me, but everyone around me had carts full of expensive electronic stuff.

So I began to think, what's this world coming to? What are these people living for? Do they have enough money to buy all this from the looks of it?

They don't. And if they do, what does it profit a man to gain a big screen and to lose his soul? How long, O Lord, must the righteous wait for your deliverance?

Sadly, I'm all too familiar with critical and condescending thoughts while waiting in line. Nothing I like to do least than waiting.

As theologian Buddy Luster once said, I just don't like sitting still. I'd rather be moving even if it's in the wrong direction. Now, I don't know if I'd go that far, but perhaps you can relate to the thoughts that flow through your mind.

- [3 : 29] You know, far too often, the obstacle to sharing the gospel with those around us is not fear, but criticism. Not the fear of fumbling the gospel, but looking down on those around us who are supposedly unworthy of our time, attention, and even the gospel itself.
- Well, wonderfully, Mr. O'Donnell's trip to the electronic store does not end there. He continues, But then my pseudo-Christian thoughts of disgust turned to compassion.
- I looked at them and thought, Has anyone ever taught them how to handle money? Has anyone ever taught them what you want to live for? Has anyone ever taught them the way of salvation out of compassion?
- I wanted to round them up, bring them to church, and preach to them that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, that Jesus came to seek and save lost sheep. This morning, we're going to continue, we're going to conclude this building fund by taking up 1 Peter 2 and considering the church's mission.
- My prayer is that a similar transition would take place in our hearts and minds as we study the church's mission and purpose, as it did in Mr. O'Donnell's in that electronic store, that those in our lives, our crazy uncles, our co-workers, our classmates, even the people in line with us would be objects, not of our criticism or contempt, but our compassion.
- [5 : 00] That we'd be a people that take the gospel to the end. I'm going to read all of 1 Peter 2, 4 to 10, but we're mainly going to focus on 9 and 10, but let's look at that again together.
- As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God, chosen and precious. We know that is Jesus Christ. You yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- For it stands in Scripture, behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in me will not be put to shame.
- So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who disbelieve, he says, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. And a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, they stumble because they disobey the word as they were destined to do.
- But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.
- [6 : 26] Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
- You know, a word where we're going today is, don't give yourself away for an earthly building, but give your life to join the people of God in proclaiming the gospel of God's grace.
- Give your life to join the people of God in proclaiming the gospel of God's grace. We're going to break this out three points. Don't lose the privilege of your calling. Don't lose the privilege of your calling.
- Now, privilege is a four-letter word in our society right now. It's a divisive word, but I'm not meaning to draw attention to our culture's understanding, or you may say misunderstanding, of privilege in our culture.
- But these verses do unpack the stunning privilege, benefits, and advantages extended only to those who believe in Jesus Christ. These are insider verses, so to speak.
- [7 : 35] If you remember, Peter's teaching us about the church. So it's a text in Scripture. He's teaching about the church. He says the church is a people established by Jesus. That's what we're talking about in verse 4 and 5 several weeks ago.

Jesus is the cornerstone, the living stone in whom and on whom the church is built. And everyone who believes in him, everyone who believes in this Jesus, becomes like a living stone, becomes a stone, and then becomes a part of this spiritual house that Jesus is building with stones from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

But Peter addresses in our text, verses 6 through 8, the obvious that not everyone believes in Jesus Christ. Some reject him, verse 4.

Living stone rejected by men. Some refuse to believe, verse 7. There are those who do not believe. Some stumble in disobedience.

They stumble, verse 8b, they stumble because they disobey the Word. I mean, what Peter is describing is exactly what we saw in it through the Gospel of Mark and every other Gospel, that Jesus is a fork in the road.

[8 : 54] More than that, Jesus is a knife's edge. The same Jesus who is the stone on whom the people of God are built is the same Jesus, or the same Jesus whom many stumble over, the stumbling stone to their everlasting peril.

Now, this is widely known back in the day. Charles Spurgeon says it well, the same sun which melts wax hardens clay. The same Gospel which melts some persons to repentance hardens others in their sin.

Jesus is a knife's edge because of what he says. Soberly, all who reject him and refuse Jesus stumble over him and are put to shame.

But everyone who believes in him receives stunning honors, privileges, and benefits. Look at verse 7a. He says, so the honor, so he's contrasting, whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

So the honor is for you who believe. In verse 9a, he kind of begins telling us what that honor is.

[10 : 14] So the honor is for you who believe in verse 9, but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation of people for his own possession.

Now, there's so much we can say about these verses, so let's just go with it. The first thing I want to say is if you believe in Jesus, you will never be rejected. If you believe in Jesus, you'll never be rejected.

Running through this passage is that pointed contrast between those who believe and those who do not believe. Those who do not believe will be put to shame. Those who believe will not be. Those who believe will be honored.

They will be accepted, welcomed, and received with great esteem. Those who believe will not be put to shame. I know I'm saying the same thing over and over again, but we have to understand this. The reality that our guilt has been atoned by Jesus Christ is a truth we're often familiar, but the reality that our shame will be completely removed through Jesus Christ is a truth we're often unfamiliar.

Guilt and shame are close companions, but different and important ways. Guilt is the awareness that you have sinned against God and need forgiveness from God. Every man stands guilty before God.

[11 : 28] Romans 3.20 says all mouths are shut for the law of God. Shame is the deep sense that even though your guilt has been atoned, you're still unacceptable to God because of something you did or something done to you.

Shame is the deep sense that you're still on the outside looking in. Shame is the uneasy feeling that you will soon be found out.

dragged into, out of the dark that everyone might see what a loser you are. Shame can come from some wrong we have done, but can also come from a number of other things.

A failed business, bankruptcy, something like that. Someone violating you sexually or physically. Obviously, you're not guilty and yet, you have shame and overactive conscience that leaves you constantly thinking you've done something wrong and drives you away from close friendships.

Shame can be the effect of living with an abnormality or living with someone with some abnormality or just having a certain body shape or something else.

[12 : 47] Shame comes from many different things leave you with a sinking, unwanted, waiting on the shoe to drop feeling. These verses tell you if you believe in Jesus, the shoe will never drop. One pastor, Matt Chandler, describes being at a purity gathering.

I don't know what you'd call it. like a commitment to purity so maybe you'd get a ring at the end of it when he was young in high school and he said the speaker got up and he's obviously going to talk about sexuality and talk about purity and he passed out a rose as he began to talk and just said, hey, pass that rose around and look at it and smell it and things like that and he began to talk about purity and how important purity is before God and how important or how dangerous it is to be impure and the results of it and how it wrecks your life in so many ways as he concluded the gathering, the rose was pushed or he asked for the rose again and it was passed up and the rose was mangled and like half broken and some of the petals had begun to fall off and he said, that's what your sexuality's right.

Who would want that rose any longer? Well, shame and what God's saying in these verses it says, Jesus wants the rose. Jesus wants you with all your warts that he might cover you completely.

There's a few sermons right there but I can't do them all. What Jesus says, you are mine, you'll never be rejected, you'll never be put to shame, there's no shoe that's coming to drop. Second, I think these verses are telling us if you believe in Jesus, you are we.

If you believe in Jesus, you are we. There's so much we can say about these titles in verse 9. On the one hand, it's just striking that Peter has no problem applying these Old Testament titles to New Testament Christians, to non-Jewish Christians.

[14 : 39] He has no problem saying, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession and many of these titles come directly from Exodus 19. If you remember, right after he delivered them through the Red Sea, he said, now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples for all the earth is mine and you shall be to me a kingdom, a priest, and a holy nation.

These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel. So you see that right out of there, you are a chosen race. Now that probably comes from Isaiah 43, but not because you're a certain skin color, you have a certain ethnic background, you are a chosen race because you're part of a new spiritual race in Jesus Christ.

You know, they call America the melting pot. The ultimate melting pot is Jesus Christ. He unites people of all different types of race in him, in truth.

You're a royal priesthood. If you remember Moses, he prayed, would that all God's people were prophets. Well, now all God's people are priests. You have direct access to God through Jesus Christ to pray, intercede, and offer your life as a spiritual sacrifice.

You're a holy nation, not because you live in a certain land or a certain country, not because you're an American. You're a holy nation because you're a citizen of the nation that is to come that will soon cover the earth.

[16 : 10] You're a people for his possession, treasured possession among all the peoples of the earth. These titles are breathtaking. What's most striking to me, though, is that each of them are plural.

You, right there, is plural. Really, y'all. If you want to put it that way, you all. Y'all. Y'all are a race, a new people. Y'all are a priesthood, a group of called ministers, a band of priests, a nation, a large, unified, a diverse group of people.

You are a people. Many of us have been led to believe that the most important thing about our, the most important thing about Christianity is our personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and it is important, but these verses push back.

They say, what's most important about you is being numbered with the people of God. underlying these titles is a core truth of the Bible.

Jesus did not come to make you a new and better you. Jesus did not come to help you realize your personal potential and personal peace. Jesus came to call you to lose your life in the plan and people of God.

[17 : 28] Jesus did not come to save isolated sinners for personal relationship with Him. Jesus came to build His church by gathering isolated individuals into the family of God.

John Stott says it well, the church lies at the very center of the eternal purpose of God. Do you believe that? That's quite a statement. The church lies at the very center of the eternal purpose of God.

It's not a divine afterthought. It's not an accident of history. He was creating a few non-profits and decided on this one. On the contrary, the church is God's new community for His purpose, conceived and passed eternity, being worked out in history, and to be perfected in a future eternity is not just to save isolated individuals and so perpetuate our loneliness, but rather to build His church, to call out of the world a people for His own glory.

It gets at the core of who we are. You know, in our home, one of the things we're doing right now is memorizing the Westminster Shorter Catechism. I figure if it's worked for the church for 300 and 400 years, it could work for ours.

And the first question is, now I'm going to mess up, what's chief end of man? I always think that Heidelberg, but what's chief end of man? And I'll go through this different times of the week to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

[18 : 52] forever. My youngest child, Knox, when I always ask him this question, he always says it a little bit different. Not quite the way Dr. Piper says it, but he says it a little bit different.

I said, Knox, what's chief end of man? He goes, to glorify God and enjoy Him together. I'm like, that's right. What God has called you to is so much bigger than your little plans and your little dreams.

God's called you something totally amazing. You know, if you see this, it should change the way we understand who we are and how we live. On the one hand, it should cause us to make church attendance a non-negotiable, to make missing church unthinkable.

Not because we want to, that's what we say around here or something like that, but because it's vital to understanding who we are. What you do right now, your work, your marriage, all these things, it's not who you are.

It's not who you will be forever. That's why Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7, if you're married, live like you're not married.

[19 : 59] Yeah, bring that home to your wife this week, you know? But that's what he's getting at. All these things are going to pass away, but who you are in Christ, who you are among the people of God will never pass away.

And so we live for that. Martin Luther says it so well, captures, I think, my heart in so many ways. At home, in my own house, there is no warmth and vigor in me. Now that's classic Luther overstatement.

But in the church, when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through. I love that because it just, it pushes into me, it breaks in and tells me there is still joy in Jesus Christ.

And it prepares me for life to come. So don't forget, don't lose the privilege of your calling. The church is a chosen race, royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of its own possession, the household of God.

It is the bride of Christ and the body of Christ. If it is Jesus' bride, you can't love Jesus and not it.

[21 : 08] So don't lose the privilege. Don't lose the purpose of your calling. Don't lose the purpose.

Now the next clause in this is very clearly a purpose clause. But you are, all those wonderful titles, and he says, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

It's very clearly underlining purpose. Why are you called? Why are you a chosen race? Why are you all these things? So that you may proclaim. So that you may live on mission.

So that you might be different. And before we rush into considering what we must do informed by these verses, I want us to consider what God has done and what they're underlining here.

You know, verse 9 is loaded with images. Race, priesthood, nation. But Peter, in this clause, introduces another pair of images, darkness and light.

[22 : 15] Called out of darkness into his marvelous light. First, first sympathy says God dwells in unapproachable light. First John says God is light. So, so why, I was asking myself, asking for us, why is it important to remember that God is light when Peter's calling our attention to proclaim?

What does light have to do with proclamation? And I think here's what's going on. On the one hand, saying that God lives in marvelous light, it reminds us that God has no darkness or shadows.

That God has no hiddenness, no secrets, no surprises, no imperfections or blemishes. God has nothing to cover up, nothing to be ashamed of.

There's no truth in the Bible that God wants you to tuck underneath the pillow, so to speak. He's pure, perfect, beautiful, and excellent in every way. But I think also what it's saying is saying that God lives in marvelous light is telling us that God gives light.

Light shines. I'll be Captain Obvious, but light shines. Light doesn't shine for itself. Light shines for others.

[23 : 31] You don't turn on a lamp in the room so it can have some light time. You turn it on so that you can see. Light invades and invites. Light chases away darkness.

You turn on a light in a room and the darkness is chased away. Light provides safety and security and sanity. And that's what's going on. I mean, you just imagine a lighthouse. A couple years ago we went up to Maine and we're traveling the coast of Maine and one of the things we love to do was find these different lighthouses and go up to them and look at them.

Climb one if we could. Kim even did a paint by numbers of one of these lighthouses that just captured its beauty and they're tall and impressive. They're wonderful, but they don't shine to show off how impressive they are.

They shine into the ocean to say there's land here. There's safety here. So too, God dwells in marvelous light.

Not merely to tell us he's pure and perfect, but to tell us and to call into the darkness that many might come to light. Now, God is light and everything outside him is darkness.

[24 : 44] If God doesn't give light, then all of us are stuck in darkness. Now, every morning when I get up, I like to get up before the light. I always have this little game where I'm trying to get out of my bedroom and trying to make it down the hallway without turning on any lights because it's mainly selfish.

I don't want anybody else to wake up so I can have a quiet time. I don't want anybody to know there's something going on. But inevitably, all sorts of crazy things happen.

I always find the one Lego that's random out there and it just goes into my foot and I scream, you know? Or sometimes I've walked into walls, you know, because you just don't see them. I've walked into a wall holding a full cup of coffee before and spilled it all over myself because I can't see in the dark.

Neither can you. God has existed eternally in fellowship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He's always been perfect in wisdom, knowledge, goodness, justice, truth, and joy. There's never been a time when God was not and never been a time when God was not happy.

Yet he gave light. Literally, he created the heavens and filled it with light. With the light of the sun, the moon, and the star.

[25 : 58] More than that, God gave the light of understanding. God created all things with a word. God gave us his law showing his holiness, justice, and beauty. God gave his promises and his prophecies showing his faithfulness, patience, and kindness.

God gave us his Son, the light of the world that we might walk, no longer walk in darkness, but walk in light. And so we proclaim light because God has brought light into the darkness and rescued us.

To what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus as Lord. It's our calling. One of the things going on here is he's underlining our calling.

If you remember, God said to Abraham, he said, in you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. But how could that happen? I mean, we just had page after page of Abraham not being able to have a child.

How's he going to bring blessing to all the nations? Or Isaiah 49, 6 says, it's too light a thing that you should be made my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel.

[27 : 04] So it's too light that you just gather the people that have always been there. He says, I'm going to make you a light to the nations that salvation may reach the end of the earth. And now we see it fully in the calling of God in the church.

Matthew 5, 14, you are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden nor do my people light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a stand it gives light.

What he's saying is the church is the light of the world. It's a called out people who go into the darkness to preach the gospel and plant churches. The church is the mission. We don't need another non-profit.

This is the mission that God has designed to go to the end of the earth. You know, people like to say the church is not a museum for saints it's a hospital for sinners and I agree that's great but perhaps informed by these verses the church is a medic tent sitting in the midst of a dark bloody battle.

Yes, there's time for you to get bandaged up but you need to get bandaged up right now so that you can continue to stand and fight and shine in the darkness. It's the calling of God.

[28 : 14] Last weekend I was struck by this watching one of my new favorite movies The Sound of Music. You may have heard of it.

Maria is studying to be a nun and if I don't get the facts right don't throw anything just watch it Sunday she's hired out to teach the Von Trapp family she's having a blast teaching them music and we're all having a blast singing along but she quits when she begins having feelings for the children's father Captain Von Trapp now Captain Von Trapp as you clearly know is a widower so she's not concerned about that but she's fearful about her feelings and fearful about love and doesn't want to face them so she runs back to the convent she leaves the kids right she quits she runs back to the convent Mother Abbas will have nothing of it now I just love this the nun will have nothing of that she says Maria these walls were not meant to shut out problems you have to face them you have to live the life you were born to live scripture says the same thing to us

Lord willing we'll have a building with walls one day that's kind of cool but that more permanent home must not derail us from our calling to proclaim you know it seems that Christians and churches make one of two mistakes in relation to proclamation and the world we either assimilate or separate we assimilate into the world we lose our if we do we lose our distinction we begin to look like the world talk like the world live like the world value things the same things that the world does and Jesus says you're the salt of the earth salt that loses its saltiness is worthless if you're not distinct then you're no good Flannery O'Connor once said you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you odd and that's the way we should stay as Christians some of us come by that honestly we separate or we separate from the world we withdraw from it we protect ourselves and our children we only do what's safe for the family whatever that means we soon realize that all our non-believing friends are gone

Jesus would say you're the light of the world I'd say the greatest danger for us as a church will be becoming too separated from the world too isolated you know one of the reasons we limit the programming we do as a church and if you've been coming around you're probably like man you don't have anything going is to give you space to cultivate friendships with neighbors co-workers teammates classmates and so on we don't want the programs of the church to limit you from claiming the gospel those in your life you know and so we must not separate you know it's fine to be devoted to our convictions about schooling or homesteading or worldliness but don't let those convictions isolate you from the world you're the light of the world surely that means you have to have non-christian friends so don't lose your purpose let us not I'm speaking to myself preaching to the choir of our calling third don't lose the wonder don't lose the wonder verse 10 concludes our study of the identity and purpose of the people of God with a staggering wonder being found among the people of God and being the object of his love look at verse 10 he says once you were not a people now you are

God's people once you had not received mercy now you have received mercy literally verse 10 I have it for you literally the original text says who then so there's no verbs in there who then not people but now people of God who then not people but now people of God the ones not having mercy but now the ones having received mercy it's meant to just boggle your mind with this contrast and if you're familiar with the Old Testament you know these phrases come straight from the book of Hosea Hosea was a prophet of the Lord was called to marry a whore named Gomer the Lord sent Hosea not just to proclaim a message but to act it out to marry someone who didn't want to be with him because God wanted to say something the people of God had been forsaken the Lord and so the Lord sent

[33 : 33] Hosea and so Hosea went and did what the Lord said he married the whore and she conceived the first child he said to name her Jezreel which means God scatters God judges and she conceived again and he said to name this is the Lord said to name the child Lo Ruhamah which means no mercy then she conceived again and he said to name the child Loami which means not my people in Hosea one he says I will have no more mercy on the people of Israel to forgive them at all for you are not my people and I am not your God and these pictures of marriage and adultery perhaps the most pointed here in Hosea than anywhere else in the Old Testament are arresting because what he's saying is only the jealous love that defines marriage can explain my love for my people and only the brutal betrayal that defines adultery can explain the forsaking of God by his people and so he has this this whole book in our

Bible planted on this theme to to to open our eyes how terrible it is when God's people forsake him but also to his plan to restore Hosea at 110 he even says in this in this place where it has been said you are not my people it shall be said to them children of a living God but how could it be how could it be that this not my people and no mercy group could turn in to the people of God how could this people be forgiven how could this people be chained by their continual straying in so many ways I think the Old Testament was all kind of hoping and longing and what Peter is telling us that all this has come to pass in Jesus Christ summing up this wonderful passage on the identity and purpose of the people of

God is a staggering reminder what God has done in Christ once you were not people but now you're God's people once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy and the idea is this is the type of news that is meant to crack our hearts open now have you ever noticed that you you begin to cry when something's really good like hopefully if you buy your wife something for Christmas and she begins to cry that means you hit the jackpot man have you ever noticed how quickly or maybe it's just me quickly you cry when you see a soldier come home from deployment to surprise his wife and children why why do we cry why don't we just jump up and down because they're so used to bad news they're so used to seeing dad's side of the bed empty so used to not seeing his truck come home but he's home now and the news of seeing him doesn't just cause him to shout with joy it causes him to crumble in tears Eleanor stump says we we discern true goodness sometimes with tears why tears do you suppose a woman in prison for life without parole for killing her husband had her sentence unexpectedly commuted by the governor and she wept when she heard the news why did she cry because the news was good and she had been so used to nearly only bad but why cry at the good news perhaps because if most of your news is bad you need to harden your heart to it so you become accustomed to bad news and to one extent or another you learn to protect yourself against it maybe by not minding it much but then good news it's a good news and it cracks your heart it makes you feel keenly again all the evils to which it had become dull and it opens it up to longing and hope and hope is painful because what is hope for is not yet here and so these verses this verse is folks this is news that is meant to crack your heart wide open because if you know what's true about you because of the way you've strayed from God if you know the wrath that you deserve you know the child of wrath that you're born into in sin did your mother conceive you if you've known the way you've forsaken the Lord this this Lord who formed you who gave you everything who selected where you were born and brought you every food and every meal and watched you age and then you forsake them but this morning if you hear good news that you are with him well this is designed to crack your heart open what Jesus is saying is your name is not no mercy your name is not guilty your name is not condemned your name is not a child of wrath your name is not dead you're not going to hell your name is mercy and if you believe in this Jesus your name is not not my people your name is not separated from God or alienated from God or a stranger to

God your name is no longer far off your name is not no hope or without God your name is my people forever and ever and when to heaven you get you get a new name and this news cracks our heart open not merely because we receive mercy and not merely because we're called to be his people but because behind it all is a God with a heart of love Ray Ortlund says in a way that only Ray can say the gospel reveals that as we look out into the universe ultimate reality is not cold dark blank space ultimate reality is romance there is a God above with love in his eyes for us an infinite joy over us and he has set himself upon winning our hearts to himself alone the gospel tells the story of God's pursuing faithful wounded angry overruling transforming triumphant love so let's go let's build a building let's sacrifice let's throw our hand together to build up a people that will outlive us and thrive long after we're gone so many ways mission of my life my kids this next generation be more passionate about the gospel than I am I'm very passionate about it so let's join together as people of God to proclaim the gospel of

God's grace let's be a church sold out on the mission to which Jesus has given us at the end of World War II or after World War II German students volunteered to help rebuild a cathedral in England one of the many losses to the Luftwaffe bombings as the work continued debate began on how best to restore a statue of Jesus Christ in front of the cathedral bearing the familiar inscription come unto me through careful patching they were able to repair all the damage to the statue except Jesus's hands which had been destroyed by the bomb fragments they began to punish should we carefully attempt to reshape his hands finally the workers reached a decision that still stands today the statue of Jesus has no hands the inscription now reads Christ has no hands but ours we're his body we're his hands and feet and if he tarries we're the ones entrusted with a message the only message under heaven by which we must be saved God help us father in heaven thank you for your word your scriptures thank you for the privilege of partnering with you and your mission thank you God that in your mysterious grace we who are not a people have become your people we who had not received mercy have become have received mercy now Lord we give to you our lives oh Lord may we never lose the wonder that we never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ may we never be more passionate more excited more amazed more taken up with anything than that Jesus Christ has not regarded or has regarded our helpless estate and shed his blood for our soul we praise you and worship you

[44 : 19] Lord Jesus Christ be with us now as a body in Jesus name amen you've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens Tennessee for more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com