

What is Man For?

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[0 : 00] 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.

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no bush of the field was yet in the land, and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.

And a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the earth. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

And the man became a living creature. The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

And out of the ground that the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[1 : 34] A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon.

It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good, and Badylium and Onyx Stone are there.

The name of the second river is Jihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is Tigris, which flows out of Assyria.

And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, May God bless the hearing and preaching of his word.

[2 : 43] There are a few things our culture is more confused about right now than manhood. Is manhood something we can take or leave if we wanted, or is it something more foundational?

Is it a relic of times past where men were macho and ruled the roost, or is it something more permanent? Does it pertain to a few roles at home and a few roles at church, or is it something more fundamental?

Regardless of how you answer those questions, it's no exaggeration to say we're in a crisis of manhood. Some have said that the crisis is about toxic masculinity.

The story goes that for thousands of years, men were in power and made a mess of the world. They made war and made slaves and chased money and chased women and left the world a wreck. As one popular band sings, it's time for the men to get out of the way. They say it used to be a man's world, but we didn't treat it right.

[3 : 50] It used to be a man's world, but all we did was fight. I'm glad it's finally in the hands of the women and the girls. I can't wait to see what they do with what's left with the world.

What's wrong with the world? Men are. Men are toxic, dangerous, and destructive. One author says, talking about healthy masculinity is like talking about healthy cancer.

But I don't think that's the problem at all. The problem is not so much with men, but with the fact that men aren't around. More than one in four children grow up in a home without a father.

That's 19.4 million children. Men without a father, or children without a father, are four times more likely to live in poverty. Two times greater risk of infant mortality.

Seven times more likely of teenage pregnancy. More likely to commit crime. More likely to go to prison. But the question is, where are the men? What are they doing?

[4 : 59] Now, that's a complicated question that I don't have time to answer all of it. But one answer is that men are told it's not okay to be a man. Even more, it's wrong to be a man.

Young boys are told there's no difference between you and the girls. She can do all the things you can do. She can accomplish all the tasks you can accomplish. She can fight all the wars you can. She doesn't need you.

She's completely fine without you. Young boys are told there's nothing unique about you as a boy and about becoming a man. But I want to argue this morning that masculinity is a virtue.

Now, don't get me wrong. There are bad men. Men who treat women like objects. Men who ride around in new trucks but don't pay child support.

Men who leave. Men who live like teenage boys chasing thrills in the woods or on a lake or at a tailgate but dodge the people that need them. There are bad men just as there are bad women.

[5 : 59] But God has made men and women and called them to use their masculinity and femininity in vital, distinct, God-glorifying ways. So for the men in this room, it's not wrong for you to be a man.

It's not okay for you to be a man. It is necessary for you to be a man. It's vitally necessary, I believe, for you to be a man right now. Better yet, to be a good man.

What is a man? In a word, a man gladly takes up sacrificial responsibility to provide for and protect others in appropriate ways for the glory of God.

We're going to break this out in three points. The first one is just the man. The man. Our passage begins a new section in Genesis. If you look down there in verse 4, it talks about these are the generations of the heavens and the earth whom when they were created.

That is a way of breaking out all of Genesis. There's ten different these are the generation type statements. It's unpacking what has become of the universe that God made. We studied that so wonderfully weeks ago.

[7 : 16] All that got unfurled into the sky and throughout the world. And now, Genesis 2 continues and expands that creation story. But this story is not from the perspective of the heavens of God overlooking all of the earth, the heavens of the earth, but from the earth.

Genesis 2 begins with earth's perspective of the creation of man. At first, these verses don't seem to introduce anything new. Look in verse 5.

When there was no bush of the field yet in the land, no small plant. Reminds us of Genesis 1, 2.

When the earth was without form and void, the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land.

There was no man to work the ground. Notice all the negatives. There was no bush, no small plant, no rain, no man. These verses are not describing a prolonged gap between the creation of the world and the creation of man.

No, what they're trying to describe is the context into which and the purpose for which man was made. So when there was no bush and no small plant, no rain and no man, the Lord God formed man of dust.

[8 : 31] Look at verse 7. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. The man became a living creature.

The Lord God forms. The Lord is like a master sculptor, a master craftsman making and molding man from a little piece of dirt and dust.

Man is not a random accident, but an intelligently designed creation and creature of God. The first human being, perhaps obviously, is created immediately as a man.

The first human being is not neuter or androgynous. The first human being is created with a specific sex, male. It is a man.

So the Lord God forms this man from the dust and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. It's a brilliant scene.

[9 : 35] The Lord is more than a craftsman. The Lord is a personal creator. All the creatures of the earth are filled with the breath of life, but man is filled with the breath of God. There's a scandalous warmth and face-to-face closeness to these verses.

How close do you have to be to smell someone's breath or to feel them breathe? What does it mean? Now, obviously, God doesn't have breath. That's another sermon. But the idea immediately is trying to communicate the intentionality, the intimacy with which God creates man.

And so unlike every creature that walks on the earth, it reminds you of Michelangelo's famous painting. I'm forgetting where it is.

Sistine Chapel. Yes, Sistine Chapel. I was thinking cathedral or something. But you know, the finger of the Lord. This brilliant scene. God creates man from the dust.

Once filled with light, the man becomes a living creature. A living soul, an embodied spirit in the image of God.

[10:48] But the creation of man is not all we're meant to see in this scene. Man is created first and given distinct authority and responsibility by God. Man is created first and given distinct authority and responsibility by God.

All of what we've described so far is well and good. Man is created in the image and likeness of God, a living creature. But these verses, this scene, continue to teach us something different. While all of mankind is created in the image and likeness of God, all mankind is created male or female in his image with distinct God-given responsibilities.

Genesis 2 underlines at least five, perhaps nine or ten ways men are given distinct authority and responsibility. First, man is created first.

Now we may think, who cares who is created first? But again and again throughout the Scriptures, the Bible tells us that the order of creation of man and woman, man first, woman second, points to God-given authority and responsibility.

[11:55] Second, man is created outside the garden and placed inside the garden. Woman is created inside the garden. If you look in verse 8, it's demonstrative in this passage.

The Lord God planted a garden in the east and there he put man whom he had formed already. Verse 15, the Lord took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

So man is created and placed in this place unlike woman. The man is then called to work the garden, leading and filling, subduing and stewarding it for the glory of God.

Third, man names all the animals. If we remember in chapter 1, it was the Lord who named the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them. He named them. He called them by name because it's an act of sovereign responsibility and authority.

And so too, man is given the authority and responsibility to name the animals. Fourth, man is given a helper. Man is not called in this chapter to help woman with her mission.

[13:01] Woman is called to help man in his. In a startling verse in 1 Corinthians 11, it could have been written right here in Genesis 2, Apostle Paul says, For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.

Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. Therefore, in marriage, the Apostle Paul says the husband is the head of the wife.

Fifth, after man and woman both eat the apple, God holds man responsible. We'll study this in a couple weeks, but Genesis 3, the Lord said, Adam, where are you?

Eve ate and was deceived and gave it to Adam, but God holds man responsible. Because Adam is our father and our representative. According to Romans 5, we stand guilty before God, inherited sin and corruption from him.

And Adam all die, 1 Corinthians 15 tells us. Therefore, part of what it means to be a man is to possess God-given authority and responsibility. If you're a man, you possess God-given authority and responsibility.

[14:07] Now, you may be thinking, perhaps not willing to say, wait, wait, wait. That's patriarchy. Authority is bad.

Authority will only lead to more domination and oppression, the stuff of which has made a mess of this world. But the Bible would push back at you and say, these verses are meant to teach us that we're born into a world in which authority structures are by virtue of the creation of God.

Authority is not bad. Even though domination, oppression, and passivity are bad. The enemy is not authority. The enemy is domination, oppression, and passivity.

These verses teach us that the difference between man and woman, men and women, don't just speak to a few roles at home or a few roles at church, but they're at the heart of what it means to be created in the image of God.

So if you're a man, you possess God-given authority and responsibility, you're called to lead and stewarding and subduing the earth. You can either be a good leader or a bad leader, but you cannot not be one.

[15:18] As they say in Spider-Man, and with that great power comes great responsibility. Men must express this authority by gladly taking up sacrificial responsibility.

Our problems with authority and misunderstandings of authority come from believing that it's all about calling the shots, about bossing people around, about telling people what to do.

But the Bible is telling us a different story. All of man's authority and responsibility right here are to be taken up for the good of other people. Adam is supposed to be taken up for the good of Eve and for the good of his family and for the good of the community.

But the rest of the Bible tells us this more clearly, none more clearly than the man, Jesus Christ. When Jesus and his disciples were on their way up to Jerusalem, like all boys, the disciples began arguing about who is going to be greatest in the kingdom.

Who's going to sit on your left and right? Who's going to be in top charge in those days? Two of them even had their mother to come and do their bidding. Now, ladies, don't do this.

[16:35] He says, can you make my sons the best? Can you put them in charge when you set up your throne? But Jesus says, that's not the way it's going to be in my kingdom. The Lord says, whoever would be great must be a servant.

Whoever would be first must be a slave. And then when he arrives in Jerusalem, he shows us what it means to be an authority by dying.

And so, we don't just take up our understanding of manhood from Genesis 2 and the creation mandate, which is wonderful and good.

We take it up as transformed by this understanding of Jesus Christ. So, Ephesians 5 said, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

What is authority? Well, Christ gave. Christ gave. Authority, therefore, is not about taking or receiving or gaining, but about giving.

[17:43] It is, as one person said, an inverted pyramid. The one who's in charge is actually the one who's enslaved to the most people. So, he gave. He gave himself.

He didn't send a servant or an angel, an ambassador, an underling. He gave himself. He went in with all his heart and gave away his rights, his freedoms, his options.

He gave himself up, the scripture says. If you read through the gospels, as we did in the gospel of Mark again and again, Jesus promises three times that he's going to go into Jerusalem and the chief priests and scribes are going to deliver him over to be crucified.

But here he says, I gave myself up. I lay down my life. No one takes it from me. John 10 tells us he gave himself up to be crucified.

What? What did he give himself up for to die? So, what does this teach us about authority?

Authority is not about calling the shots, bossing people around, telling people what to do.

[18:41] Authority is not about having your wife cower and wait on your every beck and call. It's not about your home being conformed into your image. That's not what authority is about.

It's about being conformed to the image of God. Authority, therefore, is sacrificial. Authority is about being the first to fight, the first to give, the first to die. Authority is about giving away everything, even your life and responsibility to others.

Authority bleeds. It doesn't sit atop a throne and send out commands. It bleeds. Doing so is at the heart of what it means to be a man.

I love Western movies because you just know who the good guys and bad guys are. I go watch a Marvel movie and I'm confused. Spider-Man and Batman are fighting each other.

I quit. Come on. They're supposed to save the world. In the movie Open Range, the town is taken over by a bunch of bad men. The crooks have put in their own sheriff and have placed their men throughout the town to frighten the townspeople into submission.

[19:49] Two cowboys, played nonetheless by Robert Duvall and Kevin Costner, come into the town for justice for their friend and the boy. They try to wake up the men of the town to stand up for themselves.

In the saloon, one of the men says, it's a shame what this town has come to. To which one of the cowboys, Robert Duvall, responds, well, you could do something about it.

The man says, what? We're freighters. Ralph hears a shopkeeper. The cowboy says, you're men, ain't you?

Give it up. For Hollywood, they get a lot wrong. What's it mean to be a man? To stand up, stop kicking the can. Quit cowering. Take responsibility no matter the cost.

Gladly taking up responsibility is at the heart of what it means to be a man. A man says, give me responsibility. Load me up and load me down.

[20 : 57] A man is like a truck. He drives smoother and straighter with a load in his back. Spins out of control without it. That means a refusal to make excuses is at the heart of what it means to be a man.

Notice how quickly, what begins Adam's fall? It was that woman you gave me, Lord. And sons of Adam have followed him too often.

One of the greatest things we can teach our boys is to stop making excuses. Point two, the mission. The man and the mission.

If a man is someone who gladly takes up sacrificial responsibility, what does he take up responsibility to do? Look. These verses unveil man's mission.

Look at verse 8. The Lord God planted a garden after creating man in the east, and there he put the man in whom he had formed. In the midst of all the creation, the Lord God plants a garden in the east.

[21 : 59] It continues verse 9. And the Lord God planted a garden in the Eden in the east, and there he put man whom he had formed. Inside the garden is every tree that is good, or beautiful to look at, and is good for food.

Inside the garden is the tree of life, able to supply man with all that he needs for everlasting life. Verses 10 through 14 continue, kind of meander around the rivers of the garden.

One river comes down and splits into four. Two of these rivers we know something about. Two we don't know nothing about. We don't know nothing. We don't know anything about. And so, they don't make a lot of sense.

Men have searched high and low for this garden. I think that's just the way God had it, to keep it undisclosed. They've searched to find that fountain of youth. But what are these verses all about? Now, they're underlining the reality that man is created and placed in paradise. That's what Eden is, a lush, exuberant thing.

[23 : 07] He has given all that he needs. And he has given, even more than that, what is beautiful to behold and good to eat. And then man is put in the garden to work it and keep it. Look in verse 15. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

Notice the earlier emphasis on the ground. Look in verse 5. When there was no bush, no small plant in the field, for the Lord God did not cause rain on the land and no man to work the ground. Verse 6. And a mist was going up and watering the whole face of the ground. Then the Lord God formed man of the dust from the ground. There's this underlining emphasis on the ground.

And there's a wordplay, even when they're talking about creating Adam, Adam. As I say, Adam in, or man in Hebrew, Adam was created from the Adamah, from the ground.

It's a man who's supposed to have this close connection with the ground, his cradle, his home, and his grave all the days of the earth. And he's called to work it and keep it.

[24 : 11] Man, in virtue of the way he's made, is fitted for the task. Woman, in her capacity to be a wife and mom, is fitted for filling the earth and subduing all creation, or raising children.

Man, with his greater physical strength, resilience, and willingness to risk, is fitted for working the ground. The scriptures underline this reality that at the, of the very essence of being a man is strength.

From the youngest of ages, boys are trying to show off their strength, whether it's flexing those little muscles, or wrestling, or racing, or tackling, or fighting.

They're wired to push their bodies to the limits of their strength, speed, and skill. As women age, they look less and less like boys and more womanly. Most of the weight they begin to gain is not in muscle, but in fact, to prepare them for the needs of pregnancy and care of children.

As boys age, they look less and less like girls and more manly. They are straight up and down. Their bones thicken. Their shoulders broaden. Their muscles become stronger.

[25 : 18] The Bible refers to a woman as a weaker vessel, not because she has less intelligence or less importance, but because she's typically not as strong. And 1 Peter 3.

That's why scripture says things like this. 1 Kings 2.2, be strong and show yourself a man. Or 1 Corinthians 16.13, act like men, be strong.

Paul does not end 1 Corinthians saying, be strong, be courageous. He ends 1 Corinthians saying, be strong, act like a man. Why? Because of the essence of manhood is strength, boldness, courage, and perseverance.

And the reason man is strong is to work. Man is created with an immense capacity for work. Men are not able to work because they have, they are created with broad shoulders. They have broad shoulders because they were created to work. We could go through human history and unpack the unbelievable feats of male strength. This is not a praise to men or anything like that.

[26 : 25] The Roman aqueducts, the Hoover Dam, the making of land in the American West, and so much more. Man was created with an immense capacity for work. Because of this, men are dangerous.

Because of this inherent capacity to expose their body to so many different things, they will either build things up or tear them down. They will either be dangerous in a useful way or dangerous in a useless way.

I've had since high school, I think five friends killed themselves. The last was Thanksgiving weekend.

A friend of mine, he'll go unnamed. Beautiful wife. Beautiful little 15-month-old child. A dangerous man.

Rips it down. Blows his brains out. Crushes this little household that he was called to rise up and protect.

[27 : 40] A man's goal must not be to be harmless. There's too many harmless, hapless, pathetic men in the world. A man's goal must be to be dangerous in a useful way.

By not losing sight of the mission. Men are called to work hard to provide. In the context, men are called to work the ground. To till it. Plant it. To harvest.

Men have this close relationship with the ground. To bring it forth. Adam was not given the call to work. To make a nice life for himself. Adam was given the call to work.

To provide a place for his family and community. To flourish. God gave man work so that he could provide. If you're a man, work. Get a job.

Make something of your life. Seek to be the best that you can be in whatever you're called to do.

Take responsibility for the world around you. There's nothing more powerful for giving men drive and purpose and direction than work.

[28 : 39] Work. So work to provide. If you're married, God means for you to work to provide for your wife. It's not necessarily wrong for your wife to work, but it is wrong for her to work if you don't work. If you have children, God means for you to work to provide for your children.

If a man doesn't provide for his family, he's useless, what Scripture says. But all men are called to provide. To thrive in meeting the needs of others. Several months ago, I saw an invoice from a plumber.

I think we have it up here. It went viral on social media. This plumber, yes. The invoice summary, he says, Call out to boiler.

High pressure and two leaks. Lady is 91 years of age, acute leukemia, end of life care. No charge for this lady under any circumstances.

We will be available 24 hours to help her and keep her as comfortable as possible. What's that?

That's man. That's a man. Don't wait until your marriage starts providing.

[29 : 50] Men are called to work hard to protect. And the context means to keep the garden. To watch it. Maintain it. To guard it. To build it and protect it. To construct it and to guard it.

But these verses are more than what is physically required of working and keeping. These verses are underlining something spiritual. Work and keep occur throughout the scripture to describe the responsibility of priests.

So protecting and providing is more than physical needs. It's a spiritual service. Men are called to provide spiritually. It's not enough to put food on the table and a roof over their heads.

Be present. Be an example of godliness. Give constant attention. Shower deep affection. Model loving authority and keep doing it. Your most important work at home is spiritual.

Don't check out. Most important work for your children is spiritual. One of the greatest gifts my dad gave me was showing me how to own up to my sin.

[30 : 54] One night, a particularly shameful night for me as a young man, probably 10th grade or something.

11th grade. I got really, really drunk. And I was waked up in a van, in a friend's car in the driveway.

Said, it's time for you to go your curfew. I walked into the house and we had this little, you entered into our kitchen. There was a desk there and a chair at the desk.

And, you know, my parents were waiting up for me to greet me. And they looked me in the eyes.

And, you know, that excitement turned into frustration.

And my dad started kicking the chair right there. Two feet from me, just kicking the chair with all he had. He was so frustrated.

[31 : 54] And in my arrogance, I just rolled my eyes and walked around him. Went to my bedroom. And passed out.

The morning I woke up and all my clothes were not even off. I did not have the ability to take what needed to come off to get into the bed. But I was waked up by my dad. I don't remember all of what he said.

But he said, son, it was wrong what you did. But it was wrong what I did, too. And began to repent. This is like 7 in the morning before he went to work.

Repent of his anger towards me the night before. Nothing like heaping hot coals on your stupid son. But he gave me a gift. Give your kids that gift.

Men are called to provide for others spiritually. Men are called to protect others spiritually. Men are called to protect. The idea is keep the bad stuff out. Everything is permissible in our society.

[33 : 00] But don't let it be permissible in your house. You are the gatekeeper of your life, your marriage, your home. You are the priest of your family.

Don't just keep the bad stuff out. Be devoted to what is good. All this is hard work, as you know. We must watch out for the enemies of hard work.

I think men need to in particular. John Steinbeck once said, A kind of second childhood falls on many men. Men were created to be pushed to exhaustion by the responsibilities God has given. But after receiving those responsibilities, many men turn from them to a second childhood. Many men avoid responsibility by leaving.

Other men avoid responsibility by childishness, by binging on Netflix, alcohol, and pornography.

[34 : 01] Still other men avoid responsibility through a wide array of passions. Too much hunting. I love to hunt. Too much fishing. Too many tough mudders and athletic competitions.

Too much attention on cars, boats, and houses. Too much work. Too much work. Perhaps just an overall uncommitted life. It's not usually the women that get tripped up here.

It's the men who trip up and lead their families away. Third, the mandate. The mandate. Why should man gladly take up sacrificial responsibility to protect and provide?

Well, the whole scripture would tell us for the glory of God. These verses get at the overall purpose and goal of taking up sacrificial responsibility.

Look in verse 16. Much of the scene revolves around two trees, and that's what we see here. The Lord God created the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat.

[35 : 06] From the day that you eat it, you shall surely die. These verses, in some ways, continue to unpack man's mission. But they're to shift into whose man's mission is for.

Who man is called to live for. The Lord God issues a command, a double-edged command. On the one hand, He says, permissively, positively, you may eat of any tree of the garden.

But negatively, He says, You may not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And there's so much going on in just these two commands. But the Lord God is giving man a choice.

The Lord God could have made man like the stars and like the mountains and like the animals who bring him glory by their instinct and obey his command by their inner drive.

But the Lord didn't. The Lord God gave man a certain degree of freedom. Moral independence. The Lord did not want man to be driven by instinct, urge, or drive, but to be motivated by love.

[36 : 14] To obey God, not because there was no other option, but to obey God because God is good and wise and loving. The Lord didn't want man to just obey the law, but to love the law because the law is from the good, wise, loving God.

gives him a choice, and he calls man to live for him. The Lord promises to punish him. The day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die.

We know what that means because we know what the rest of the story goes. The Lord is confronting man's temptation to live for himself. It's staggering to consider this scene.

We cannot relate to Adam at all in this scene because we are not able to not sin. Sin is, as one author said, sin is unchosen as hunger, as comfortable as sleep, as inevitable as gravity. We are sinners. sinners. But Adam was able to not sin. The Lord knew how great the temptation would be.

[37 : 24] This double-edged command was God's way to confront his independence, to remind him that he's a creature, to remind him that he is not his own, to remind him that he belongs to the Lord, to remind him that the Lord is sovereign, majestic, and good.

The Lord is calling man to live for him and for his glory. To choose what is good and right and loving. Wonderfully, even though man, Adam's sin has left all of us to stand guilty before God and in bondage to sin, the Lord continually calls us to turn and live for his glory.

It says, you were bought with a price, doubly so. You were created in my image, therefore you are mine. You were bought with my blood, therefore you're mine. You're, you know, glorified God in your body.

John Calvin. John once said, one of the majestic passages of his, he says, we are not our own. Let not our reason nor our will, therefore sway our plans and deeds.

We are not our own. Let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient or easiest or best for us according to the flesh.

[38 : 35] We are not our own. In so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves. There's a message for our generation. Forget yourself. I need that.

And all that is ours. Conversely, we are God's. Let us therefore live for him and die for him. We are God's.

Let his wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions. We are God's. Let all the parts of our lives accordingly strive toward him as our only lawful goal.

So why should man gladly take up responsibility to protect and provide? For the glory of God. For the praise of God. For the greatness and the display of all that he's done and making us this way and giving us all these things.

How do we bring glory and give glory and live for the glory of God? We don't bring glory to God by merely praying before meals or giving 10% or going to church from time to time.

[39 : 44] We bring glory to God by living a life that doesn't make sense if God doesn't exist. One of the most provoking verses in Scripture to me again and again is 1 Corinthians 15, 19.

It says, If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. What he's saying is if Christ was not raised from the dead, if there's not a heaven after the earth, if all that he believes about Christ is for comfort in this life only, then we are of all people to be pitied.

Why? Because all the sacrifices, all the money he gave, this is about Paul, all the money he gave, all the sleepless nights of anxiety, all the long days of preaching, all the loneliness, all the beatings would be meaningless.

His life would not make sense if God didn't exist and God didn't reign over heaven and hell and death and life. So what about us, men?

What would people say about our lives if God didn't exist? Would they say, What a waste! What a waste!

[41 : 01] What a pathetic life! Or would they say, Hey, he had a boat. He had a family.

He had a night. He had a pretty good life. I don't want that. A man gladly takes up sacrificial responsibility to provide for and protect others in appropriate ways for the glory of God.

If you are a woman, this is what God is calling your husband, father, brother, and neighbor to be. Point at it.

Urge him to it. If you're a boy or a young man, this is what God is calling you to chase, to follow, to imitate. If you're a man, this is what God is calling you to be.

Are you this kind of man? I hope we all would say, I want to be that completely.

[42 : 03] Some of you may say, if this is the type of man I need to be, I need to start over completely.

Wonderfully, today can be the day. The legacy of the thief on the cross was changed in a moment. He went from another thief to a son of the father.

The legacy of your life can change in a moment. Seen it again and again. God turns a lot of things when he turns a man. Turns a mom.

Turns children. Turns generations. And so we offer you the gospel of Jesus Christ. We offer you the hope that does not die. We offer you the father that continually gives and gives and gives.

He who did not spare his own son, how will he not also give you everything you need? And so you can come to him for forgiveness and for life.

[43 : 12] I want to conclude and just pray for the dads in the room. So I'd like to ask you to stand. And if you would, if you're a wife or a child, lay a hand on your father if you're, or lay a hand on the father close to you.

Let me pray. Father in heaven, I pray for these men. I pray for us, God.

I pray for, pray for us, God, more than anything else that we be men of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that we be men of one word, one message, one love. The love of the one who for our sake became sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God, having all our sins canceled through the blood of the cross.

I pray that we be men of the gospel, men of deep conviction as well. Lord, your word says, sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth.

I pray that you'd sanctify us in the truth of the gospel, the truth of your word, and that we would be men of conviction who stand on these things. I pray, God, that we be men of responsibility.

[44 : 38] Unless a grain a week falls in the ground and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit. May the men in this room be like dead men walking. May we be men who die first, who don't point, but run, who take up sacrificial responsibility, committed to continually giving our lives away.

I pray, God, that we be men of provision. Help us to work hard. God, you've given us the gift of work, and we pray that you provide for us so that we can provide for our family, our church, our community, the advance of the gospel.

I pray that you would drive us towards these things to please you, to honor you, render the works of our hands, bless the works of our hands, God. I pray that we be men of protection.

that it would be said of none of our children that they were exposed and left alone, that we covered them with our prayers, our arms, our hearts, our love.

Protect our families, God, from enemies without and within. I pray, Father, more than anything else, I pray that we be men of joy, in your presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore that we would imitate the Savior for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.

[46 : 11] Our desire is to enter into the joy of our master, so let us spread joy, we pray. Lord, come by your mercy, help us and strengthen us. In Christ's 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.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you,