

Gospel to the Pharisee

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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.

Go ahead and turn to Acts 9. So like I said, we are studying this wonderful book of the Bible. It's a narrative, so it's kind of telling us, it's a story, that's a better way of saying it, it's a story that's telling us of how the gospel goes forth and all that happens. And so we're going to continue diving into this wonderful book and study this morning. I'm not going to read the whole part, but we're going to study Romans 9, 1 through 31.

And I'm going to read through 19 and read 31. So Acts 9. Verse 1. This is the Word of God. But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

[1 : 37] And he said, who are you, Lord? He said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

But rise and enter the city and you will be told what you are to do. The men who were traveling with him, Luke tells us, stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one.

Saul rose from the ground and although his eyes were open, he saw nothing. And they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight and neither ate nor drank.

Verse 10. Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, here I am, Lord. You know, it reminds us of Samuel and others who have responded to the Lord like that.

And the Lord said to him, rise and go to the street called Straight. And at the house of Judas, look for a man of Tarsus named, Tarsus actually, named Saul.

[2 : 43] For behold, he is praying. And he has seen a vision. A man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.

Verse 13. And Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has the authority from the chief priest to bind all who call on your name.

He's saying, no way, I'm not doing that. Verse 15. But the Lord said to him, go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him, he said, brother Saul.

The Lord Jesus appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

[3 : 48] And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized. And taking food, he was strengthened. Now flip down to verse 31.

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

It's the word of God. The inerrant, authoritative word of God. Hannah Upt had been missing for nearly two weeks when she was seen at an Apple store in the heart of New York City.

Her friends had posted thousands of flyers or a thousand flyers about her disappearance on signposts, subway stations and bus stops. It was September 2008.

And Hannah, a middle school teacher, had not shown up for the first day of school. Her roommate found her wallet, passport, MetroCard and cell phone in her purse lying on the floor of her apartment.

[4 : 59] The news reported teacher 23 disappears into thin air. A detective asked Hannah's mother, Barbara, to come in to view the Apple store video surveillance footage.

Barbara watched and confirmed that it was her that walked in that afternoon. Her mother watched as she checked her email on one of the many laptops in the store.

Her mother looked on as a man stopped and said, aren't you the teacher who is missing? Her mother also looked on and saw her shrug her shoulders and say, no, I don't know what you're talking about.

Two days later, she was spotted at a Starbucks in Soho. By the time the police arrived, she had walked out the back door. On September 16th, the 20th day she'd been missing, the captain of the Staten Island Ferry saw a woman's body floating near the Statue of Liberty.

She was floating face down. One of the crew members lifted her by her ankles thinking she was dead and she came out of the water. She took a gasp of air and began crying. She was taken to the hospital.

[6 : 09] She couldn't remember anything. She couldn't remember who she was. She couldn't remember what happened. She couldn't remember where she was. The first thing she asked is, why am I wet? She was later diagnosed with dissociative fugue, a rare condition in which people lose access to their memory and personal identity, usually resulting from a trauma of some sort.

Think Jason Bourne. In real life. On the following days and weeks and years, friends and family helped piece together her life and her memory so that she could walk forward confident in who she was, where she was, and what happened to her.

This morning we come to her. This morning we come to the study of the Apostle Paul's former life and conversion to Christianity. This story, this encounter of light on the Damascus Road is familiar to everyone.

It's the most famous conversion in the history of Christianity. It is well known. Even Hank sang about it. And Johnny Cash sang about it. You know Hank's song by heart, I'm sure.

And obviously it's well known because it's the back story of the Apostle Paul. There's no person that's more influential. There's no follower of Jesus Christ that's more influential to the church than the Apostle Paul.

[7 : 34] He planted more churches than any man. And he wrote more books than anybody else in our New Testament. 13 letters. And it's retold in detail three times in the book of Acts.

Once here, chapter 24, I think, and 26. It's retold. But it's retold so the church would never forget who he was. They'd never forget the back story.

They'd never forget that he was this persecutor. And they would never forget how he changed. So that every letter and verse of 1 Timothy and Ephesians and Galatians, all these verses, would take us back.

The book of the Common Prayer, which was written hundreds of years ago, even said his wonderful conversion ought to always be in remembrance. So we've got to remember as we read these books that this is who this man was.

He wasn't a part of the team. But it's also retold so that we would not just know what happened to Paul, but what happened to us. So we would never suffer from what Hannah suffered from.

[8 : 34] So we would never forget who we are and what happened to us. So that we would find assurance in a place more sturdy than our thoughts, feelings, and ever-changing circumstances.

So that we can walk forward confident in who we are, what happened to us, and what God's doing. And the God who sought us and found us when we weren't looking.

In a word, you did not change by deciding to or trying harder, but by sovereign grace. I think that's what this thing's trying to get at us. You didn't change by deciding to or trying harder, but by sovereign grace.

So we're going to unpack this in several points. First one is you change by seeing how lost you are. You change by seeing how lost you are. Now, we know some people are lost when you see them from afar.

You see them walk up, maybe drunkards or child abusers or murderers or hard-hearted dictators. You know, when we think of a lost person, we go to Hitler really quick because he's the baddest

man we can imagine.

[9 : 38] And we just know some people are just so lost. But others, it's not so easy to see. And when we find the Apostle Paul in our text, he is anything but lost.

Now, for the sake of clarity today, I'm just going to use the word Paul. Now, he's called Saul in this chapter. Later in Acts 12, I think he started being referred to as Paul. Paul, he was named both of those things at birth.

Not one came. He didn't want Paul after his conversion or something like that. But I'm going to use Paul so that I don't just mix myself up all day. All right? Can we disagree with that? So when we find Paul in this chapter, he's just humming right along.

He was persecuting the church in Jerusalem back in chapter 7. We saw that. Stephen's clothes were laid at his feet. Remember? And after this update that Luke gives us of the church going forward in Samaria, he returns to Paul right here in verse 9, verse 1 and 2.

He says, but Paul. So remember him back there? He's right here again. But Paul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.

[10 : 46] And he continues. He went to the high priest, asked for letters to the synagogues at Damascus so that if he found anyone belonging in the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. So he's humming right along.

He hasn't slowed down. He's not broken his gate. He's heading off to Damascus some 135 miles from Jerusalem to bring people back, bound and chained.

And these verses make it clear that Paul's not a supporting actor of this drama. He is the main character. He's the main attraction. He's the ring leader.

He's a bounty hunter. He's Reno Raines full on, if anybody remembers that. He goes to the high priest. He gets those letters. He plans to hunt them down.

And you've got to see, in all that he's doing, he's convinced he's doing what's right. He's convinced he's doing what's good. He's not threatening Christians, murdering Christians out of revenge or payback or plain old hatefulness.

[11 : 44] He's threatening and murdering them because he believes they're opposing God. And by golly, if someone needs to stand up, he will. A little backstory.

Paul was born a Jew. Roman father. Raised in the strictest group of Jews of the day, Pharisees. You probably heard about them because Jesus talked so negatively about them.

In fact, in Acts 22, when Paul's describing his conversion, he says, I was a Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia.

I mean, we did do Jonah back in the summer. That's why I'm getting mixed up. But Tarsus of Cilicia. What he's trying to say is, I'm not a lawbreaker.

I was a lawkeeper. He was not anti-religion. He was all about it. He's not a party boy or foul mouth or a little wild on the weekend.

[12 : 54] He's clean. Ruthlessly clean. More than that, he's zealous. That's not a word we use often. But he's enthusiastic. He's passionately enthusiastic about God and doing what pleases him.

That's what drives him down the road to threaten and murder Christians in Damascus. And he believes he's right until he's blinded by the light.

Verse 3, look down there. He says, Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Suddenly this light comes from heaven, and it shone around him. The idea, it's not saying the light came from where the stars are or where the sun is. What that's saying is, the light came from the Lord.

Now we remember in Acts 1, when Jesus was ascended, he was ascended to the right hand of God the Father on high. And in Acts 2, when he sent the Spirit, it came from heaven because it came from Jesus Christ. Because that's where he reigns and works right now.

[14 : 01] So that's what it's saying. That Jesus is sending a light to interrupt this man's pursuit. I love the way it's written too. He sees the light. And then he hears a voice.

So he sees the light, verse 4, and falling to the ground, he heard a voice. The assumption is that after seeing the light, he either closes his eyes or becomes blind.

And we see down there in verse 8, when he rose from the ground, although his eyes were open, he saw nothing because he had become blind.

He was blinded by the light. Maybe we think of that 80s song. There were so many songs came to my head this week as I was preparing this message. Now that one has nothing to do with the Apostle Paul.

But what's going on? Like, why blinded by light? I mean, light's supposed to make you see, right? Light doesn't blind.

[15:03] Why three days? I mean, what is, you know, what's going on? Why the draw out in his conversion? I think it's that the light blinds him so that he might see how spiritually blind and lost he is.

The light blinds him so that he might spiritually see how blind and lost he is. It's not hard to convince a bad person they're bad. Just pull out the failures and the mistakes and the arrest record or whatever you want to.

But it's very hard to convince a good person they're not good. Have you ever attempted to correct a friend who is never wrong? Or to resolve a conflict with someone who does not ask for forgiveness? Or win an argument with an all-knowing spouse or an in-law who has it all figured out? It's useless, but the Lord will not accept that.

I think that's what this is all about. The Lord makes him blind so that he might see how spiritually blind and lost he is. In the darkness, all of Paul's life flashes before him. Can you imagine losing your sight for just a moment?

[16:13] Last night I was walking through our house and, you know, I've often cut through rooms quickly without turning on the lights, thinking I'll be good. I know that whereabouts. I miscalculated the placement.

We have some stuff in our dining room. Miscalculated the placement of the dining room table and slammed into it with my quad. And it soared to the touch right now. I'm just laboring through pain for you today.

You should pray for me. No, and that's just, that's not like a once-a-year occurrence. I mean, that stuff happens all the time, and I'm not blind. But imagine the effect on Paul who's going down to Damascus to take these guys out, and the one they worship is the one who has made him blind. Suddenly he realizes, all that I've lived for is wrong. Now, Acts 9 presents the facts, but Philippians 3 presents the spiritual details.

He says, If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel. That's a big deal. Of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews.

[17:29] Like, top of the heap is what he's saying. As to the law of Pharisee, that means I just kept it blameless, or I kept it perfectly. As to zeal, a persecutor of the church. As to righteousness under the law, blameless.

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss. He realizes all he works for, all his obedience, all his zeal, all his accolades are empty. They're worthless before the Lord.

They may make him look good before others, but they're worthless before God. It's hard to realize. It's not hard to realize we should run from what we don't do for God.

But it's very hard to realize we should run from what we do for him. We know we're lost by what we don't do.

We don't love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We don't love our neighbor as ourselves. But do we know we're lost when we rest in what we do for him? That's what Isaiah is talking about.

[18:28] All your righteous deeds, all your righteous works are filthy rags. Now, he's not saying, you know, anything done for God is just filthy and gross. He's saying they're filthy because they cannot perfect you enough to be acceptable for God.

And so they're filthy. They might as well be. And the word there is very striking. They're completely filled with the filth of a menstrual cycle.

In the dark hours, Paul realizes all he's done for God is empty. If anyone can be confident, that's what he's saying.

If anyone can be confident in what they've done for God is Paul. But he realizes there's no hope for acceptance before God through obedience to God.

And it took God blinding him with light for him to see. Johnny Cash has a song written in there. I wish I could read the whole song. But he just says, you know, he's the man in black, right?

[19 : 31] I'd love to wear a rainbow if the world was okay, right? It's an incredible song. Makes you respect that man. And especially what he became. But he said, I was blinded so that I might see the man in white.

That's what happened to Paul. But the passage warns us. How do you think about your conversion? Do you look back on your prayer, on your separated life, on your desire to change? Do you look back and you think, I pretty much had a good thing going on. Or do you look back and you say, man, I was so lost. When you look back is your confidence in what God did, what you did. And how you prayed or how you read or how you stopped partying or how you turned the corner. And sometimes we realize our confidence in what we're resting in is through other situations. Do we find it hard to relate to sinners?

We find it hard to relate to people that's life that are really messed up. Sometimes do we find it hard to relate to our children? And maybe we've forgotten. Paul's warning us to watch out for legalism in a word.

[20 : 52] Legalism is attempting to attain or maintain acceptance before God through obedience to God. Sinclair Ferguson, who's one of my favorite writers, says, It is a primary, if not the ultimate, pastoral problem.

That's a way of saying it. It's the ultimate Christian problem. Legalism is any thought that God loves you more on Sunday than on a sin-stained Monday. It is any thought that the Lord is holding back good to make you pay or to make you feel desperate.

It is the smug satisfaction that your house and car and steady income are because you are not lazy when it isn't. It is the feeling that your prayers must not be being answered because of your abortion, your divorce, your broken family, or your failure to read your Bible.

Legalism is any moment you connect blessing from God to obedience to God. And it is the main problem.

That's what he's saying. Watch out. It nearly wrecked me. You did not change because you were already awesome. You changed because you realized how lost you were.

[22 : 06] You changed by sovereign grace. Point two, you changed by encountering Jesus. You changed by encountering Jesus. Bob Dylan once said of Billy Graham, he was the greatest preacher and evangelist of our time.

That guy could save souls and bid. You can just see Dylan saying that. I went to two or three rallies in the 50s and 60s, and this guy was all rock and roll. His rock and roll personifies what Dylan says. Volatile. Explosive. He had the hair, the tone, the delivery. When he spoke, he brought the storm down. Clouds parted. Souls got saved. Long before Mick Jagger sang his first note or Bruce strapped on his first guitar.

There's some part of rock and roll that I learned from Billy Graham, and I heard it loud and clear. Now, we can just pray for that seed to go deep and rescue Bob Dylan. Anybody who heard Billy Graham preach, I did as a kid, knows exactly what Dylan's talking about.

But more than Billy Graham, our text is all rock and roll. Things get rocking after he is struck blind.

[23 : 17] The storm comes down, and the greatest preacher of all time takes center stage, Jesus Christ. He seeks the lost and preaches with unmistakable authority in these verses. We said at the beginning of our study of Acts that the man behind the curtain, kind of like the Wizard of Oz, the man behind the curtain is Jesus Christ.

He's the one behind the advance of the gospel and the growth of the church. And he peeks out in these verses. I already told you, from a light coming from heaven, that's Jesus peeking out. He's letting you know, I'm still in charge.

But then he takes over with all the words in red that we haven't seen in a couple chapters. He says, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? He says, I'm Jesus whom you're persecuting.

Go to the city. Do what I tell you. Ananias, rise up and go to this man, Saul. I know who he is. Don't you worry about him. He's a chosen instrument of mine.

Jesus is the Lord. You know, if you highlight that, if you went through this passage ten times, it references he's the Lord. He's the Lord. He's the Lord. He's the Lord. He's speaking. He's seeking the lost. Here's what's going on.

[24 : 18] Jesus is the seeker. And now the hounder is being hounded. The hunter is being hunted. And the tracker is being tracked. And the Lord has spotted him on open ground in between Jerusalem and Damascus.

And he's about to come in. That's what's going on in these passages. He's been seeking Paul for years. Look at the way Paul describes it in Acts 24 when he's retelling this story.

To think we have. Maybe we don't have it. He says, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And then he includes something he doesn't include in Acts 9. It's hard for you to kick against the goads. Now a goat is a stick that serves as a whip to spur and steer a horse or another animal.

The Lord's saying, I've been coming to you. What are we doing out here on Damascus? I've been looking for you, Paul. I'm trying to help you. I'm trying to steer you.

[25 : 16] I'm trying to direct you. How long are you going to resist me, Paul? You must come. How long are you going to kick? C.S. Lewis.

I'm bringing all my friends today. Once a hardened atheist retails his conversion almost playfully in his book, Surprised by Joy. He describes God as a fisherman.

He said, God is the mighty, the master angler who's playing his fish. And I never dreamed that the hook was in my mouth. Then he says, God is like a cat chasing a mouse.

He writes, some people talk of man's search for God. To me, they may as well have talked about a mouse's search for the cat. He compares God to a pack of hounds chasing a fox.

Finally, he compares God to an all-wise chess master, making each move to put him in an impossible position. He writes, all over the board, my pieces were in the most unhelpful positions.

[26 : 26] Soon I can no longer cherish even the illusion that the initiative lay with me. My adversary had begun to make the final moves. Finally, he says, I surrender.

He says, and I quote, You must picture me alone in the room in Magdalene College in England. Night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of him.

In 1929, I gave in, admitted God was God, and knelt and prayed. Regardless of whether you had a Damascus Road experience or whether you got saved and didn't even notice, your conversion is a story of God seeking you.

It's the way it's always been. It's the story of Scripture. It's the meaning of the lost coin. The coin's not searching for anybody. It's the meaning of the lost sheep. The sheep is lost.

It's not looking for anybody. The lost son is completely lost. It is God who leaves the 99 to search after the one. It's God who rejoices more in one sinner who repents than 99 who are too good for it.

[27 : 36] It's God who sends his servants out to the highways and byways that he might bring some in. The point is, it's all grace. It's all sovereign grace.

It's all God. And if you're here this morning, in fact, if you're here this morning, it's because God is seeking you or has sought you or has found you. Maybe he's seeking you and telling you to stop resting in what you're doing for me.

Stop resting in these things. I don't care about these things. Yes, read your Bible with the church this year, but don't rest in reading your Bible. Maybe he's seeking you to tell you your life is not over.

I have purposes for you. What do you think Paul thought when he went blind for three days? My life is over. I wasted. The Lord said, no, you're an instrument of mine. Maybe he's seeking you to bring you into light once for all.

Maybe he's seeking you to bring you to Jesus Christ. Are you kicking against the goads? Are you resisting his pursuit?

[28 : 35] The Damascus experience teaches us that we are all utterly lost unless God intervened. Paul, who was saved in these verses, said, but while I was still a sinner, Christ died for me.

While I was still caught up in sin, while still breathing out threats and murder, Christ died for me. I wasn't looking, wasn't hunting, and he rescued me.

And that's the truth of the gospel for you. If you would come to him and receive it this morning, Christ died, the perfect for the imperfect, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, that he standing on the cross might satisfy the penalty for our sins.

All we like sheep have gone astray. The judgment for our sins is death, that he might receive it fully in his body, so that he might be crushed, so that we'd be set free, and so that he might send forth his righteousness, a new life in Christ.

If you have encountered him, you've realized when he finds us, we freely wonder him. This story is not one in which God's making Paul do something he didn't want to do.

[29 : 49] It's one in which his eyes are suddenly open, and he runs to the Lord. It's incredible. And if you've encountered Christ, encountered it all lost, you've done it too.

Point three, you change by finding brothers and sisters. He changed by finding brothers and sisters now in the part that we didn't read, or not all of it.

We see this. You know, I love the way this conversion takes place. He's blinded by the light. Then he has to wait for someone to come pray for him. Jesus could have called him to faith right then, but he doesn't.

He didn't do this with Ethiopian eunuch, as we saw. He didn't do this with the disciples in Samaria. In addition, all the churches terrified of him. They've heard about him.

135 miles, which, yeah, that's four cars. They've heard about him. They're terrified, and that's why Ananias is like, man, I ain't going to talk to this guy.

[30 : 58] You've got to be kidding me. The Lord, nevertheless, he goes to him, and look what he says. He trusts the Lord, and then he says, brother Saul.

The Lord blinds him. And then he gives him a brother. Verse 19, taking food.

He was strengthened. For some days, he was with the disciples at Damascus. So immediately, he's with these other brothers and sisters. Verse 25, more disciples protect him.

Now, we didn't go through this, but they lower him down out of Damascus, out of the way of harm.

Verse 28, right? 27, yeah, Barnabas becomes his friend, and he takes him to the apostles and declares all that had happened on that Damascus road.

In verse 30, he becomes a part of the brothers. That's the brothers back in Jerusalem. That's a part of the apostles. He becomes a part of those brothers. The Lord wants Paul and wants us to know that coming to Jesus means joining his church.

[32 : 10] Now, I don't mean when you come to Jesus, you join the church, capital C. That's true, wonderfully true. That's not what I think this is talking about. It means when you come to Jesus, you're meant to join in real life a specific local church.

The vast majority of the uses of the word church in the New Testament do not revert to the worldwide church of Jesus Christ, but to real life, flawed but faithful churches.

The Lord teaches Paul this lesson immediately. Remember when he says, Paul, Paul, or Saul, Saul, why have you forsaken, why are you persecuting me? He says, who are you, Lord?

And he says, when did I persecute you? He said, I am Jesus. Jesus is saying, the church and I are one. What you think about the church is what you think of Jesus.

How you treat the church is how you treat Jesus. And then after he's converted, all these people come around him and surround him. I think the idea is that his private conversion may go public. That what God has done for him personally may be upheld and strengthened corporately in the church.

[33 : 11] The same is true for you. Don't go it alone. Don't be comfortable being unknown.

Whoever isolates himself breaks out against all sound judgment. The Christian life is a community project.

When Paul comes to Christ, many hands move in and get to work. It's habitat for humanity in the best possible way. It takes a village to build a house that God's building.

It must be the same in your life. And when Paul is called to Christ, God gives him a greater purpose. We see that in verse 21. Look down there with me. When he goes to Damascus and begins preaching, they say, is this not the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of all those who were called upon this name?

And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priest? So they're scared because he was the one striking down everybody in this name.

And it was him. But now God's called him for a greater purpose. Look in verse 15. He says, I've called him as an instrument of mine to carry my name.

[34 : 21] He must suffer for the sake of my name. Verse 16. Verse 27, 28. He's preaching boldly in the name. The idea he's a chosen instrument for the Lord to carry forward the Lord's purposes to the end of the earth.

The whole scene of Paul's conversion, I mean, this whole scene captures his conversion, but also his commissioning. So he sees Jesus risen. He sees the risen Lord Jesus and then becomes a full-fledged apostle.

So he might write scripture and take the gospel to the nation. But the same is true for us. You were made for a purpose. For the Lord.

You don't hammer nails with an iPhone. You don't unscrew screws with a knife. One of my friends did that and went to the ER. You take note of how something's made.

Every one of you. Every one of us. We're made to live for something bigger than our dreams and marriages and money. We're made to live with a heartbeat to carry this name to every dark corner of McMinn County, East Tennessee, and the rest of the world.

[35 : 30] I'll never forget when I came to Christ. I hated my life. It's no exaggeration. I promise to you. But finally, I had something to live for that was bigger than me.

Wonder of wonder, the purpose of carrying the name of Jesus to all the world is just a temporary assignment. It's just an earthly mission. One day, soon, it'll be over. And the deeper purpose for which we were made will finally be real.

As we kneel before the throne of Jesus Christ, as the joyful sound of His voice drowns out all the accusations of the enemy and chases away forever any thought that you're too dirty, too broken, or too high maintenance, and as we're lost forever in the worship of Jesus Christ.

Don't be like Hannah. Don't forget what happened to you. You weren't awesome. You were lost.

Jesus sought you. Don't forget who you are. Don't forget who you are. My parents are in town this weekend, down here.

[36 : 55] It's a really small room, so you can just peek over and see them right now. But it's a joy to have them here. I'll never forget one visit a couple years ago.

After my dad returned home, I found a little index card on the floor of the room where he was reading his Bible the next morning.

It had fallen out of his Bible and living where he didn't even notice. Look at what it says. Now, his handwriting is horrible, and he knows that, so I'm not exposing him.

But he says, daily questions. What does it mean for me in this circumstance of my life to live for the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me? That's an incredible question.

How should I take up my cross and follow him? In what ways can I lose my life for his sake? I love this one.

[38 : 00] It was four, but then it was X-Tal. I must remember who I am each day by remembering whose I am. That's how you remember.

That's how you never forget. You change because of sovereign grace. the Lord loves you so much. He did not spare his own son, but gave him up on the altar for our sins so that we might have eternity with him.

Praise the Lord. Let us pray. Father in heaven, Father in heaven, we quiet ourselves before you. we far too often forget. But I pray that anything helpful you would cause to be, to sink in deep and to help us, God.

[39 : 12] We stumble in so many ways when we think that you want us to look better or do something better or do this better. Lord, and we often run from you, God, and so we we thank you for this word.

Lord, we thank you that that Jesus is the great seeker who has sought us and he's found us by grace. We give you praise and honor. Lord, we want to sing this story from the top of our at the top of our lungs because you've rescued us and you've changed us and we give you all the glory. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

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