

Man Drowning

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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.

Prophets, and Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and then Jonah.

Jonah. I'm going to start reading from verse 17. I've said this before, but I'm reading from the English Standard Version. If you don't have a copy of the Scriptures, we'd love to give you a copy of that one.

But if you don't have a copy of that version, we'd love to give you that as well. So you can have a copy of what version of the Scriptures we're working through.

So Jonah 1, verse 17. Look what we there. And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah.

[1 : 18] And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Verse 1 to chapter 2. Then Jonah prayed to the Lord, his God, from the belly of the fish, saying, I called out to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me.

Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me.

All your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, I am driven from your sight, yet I shall look upon your holy temple again.

Verse 5. The waters closed in over me to take my life. The deep surrounded me. The deep surrounded me. Weeds were wrapped around my head at the roots of the mountain.

I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever. Yet you brought up my life from the pit.

[2 : 39] Oh, Lord, my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.

Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I, with the voice of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you.

What have I vowed? What I have vowed, I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Verse 10.

And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land. Jonah, this morning we come to the most well-known passage in the book of Jonah, and are introduced to its most well-known character, the fish.

Or the whale, right? Jonah's filled with twists and turns, but this twist is most surprising and fascinating. I think we can all agree. Jonah is swallowed up by a fish.

[3 : 50] And not only is he swallowed up by the fish, but he camps there. He stays there for three nights. And this fish, and obviously the fact that he stays in this fish for three days, three nights, have led many to dismiss the book of Jonah as just a work of fiction, as a fable, as a parable, which we studied recently.

You know, I want us to be careful before we go there, but we have to ask, how do you respond to a story like this? Right? Is the whole bit a miracle? Is it the normal feeding of an extremely large yet unknown great fish in the Mediterranean Sea?

I mean, maybe before we read the rest of Jonah, we got to go to the Mediterranean and hunt down this fish. Maybe like the Loch Ness Monster in Scotland, who some have seen.

But nobody's caught, right? He's some massive catfish, right? You know, there's catfish down off Wat Bar that are big or a whale. Or does the whole incident prove that the book of Jonah is just a work of fiction?

Is it just a wonderful but not historical story? I mean, how many other stories in the Bible are just like that?

[5 : 14] They're wonderful but not historical. Many religions are built on myths, so why can't Christianity be built there as well? Tim Keller wisely warns in his commentary on this book, How you respond to this great fish will depend and will determine how you read the rest of the Bible.

I just want to take a few minutes to tell you and to argue why I think the book of Jonah and this story in particular, or including this story, are historical for several reasons.

One is the Bible is filled with miracles. Many of the miracles in the Bible are more unbelievable than this one. God creating everything by the word of his mouth is a more unbelievable miracle.

The incarnation of Jesus Christ, uniting God in man, in one person, indivisible, and yet united, is a bigger miracle. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a bigger miracle.

But, some have asked, well, what if Jonah exaggerated this story and didn't mean for us to receive it as completely true? Like, it's okay, he's using hyperbole, you know, exaggeration for an effect or for a point.

[6 : 24] It's okay, we could still learn from it, right? Well, the problem is, Jonah presents this swallowing plainly and briefly as a brute fact, as a simple fact, right?

And you probably caught that. In a work of fiction, being swallowed by a great fish would have had quite the buildup, you know? It would be drawn out.

It would be made much of. It would take center stage. Like all fish stories, it would be exaggerated, right? How many fish did you catch the way?

Well, it depends. How many were on the line? How many came to hand? I mean, there's all these little qualifications. But, everything in this story, as one writer put it, is presented, or everything about the fish in this story is very low-key.

And you probably caught that. He was swallowed. He was vomited. And that's it. So, I don't think Jonah is exaggerating either.

[7 : 25] Point three there. The New Testament repeatedly affirms the historical truthfulness of Jonah and this event in particular. And that's part of the way we find the Bible believable is when the Bible affirms different parts of the Bible within itself.

Three times the gospel records Jesus referencing Jonah being three days in the belly of the great fish. Jesus receives and affirms the story of Jonah being swallowed as a fact.

As a simple fact. Moreover, unlike other religions, the truthfulness of Christianity hinges upon the historical accuracy of its scriptures.

The scriptures do not contain a core message or moral that remains vital even if it is historically inaccurate. Does that make sense? Paul says, if Christ was not raised bodily from the dead in the first century, then Christianity is meaningless.

So, Christianity's truthfulness is tied to its historical accuracy. The scriptures unfold and unpack God's acts in history among the people of Israel and most particularly in the person of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 33] And so, the authors of scripture always possess a deep concern for the historical accuracy on every level. Finally, one more reason.

The fact of Jonah being swallowed up by the great fish does not distract from the purpose of the books. I don't think it was added later. It's completely in line with the books.

So, let's not get distracted by the fish. All that to say, let's not get distracted by the fish. Jonah, as I'm sure you remember, is on the run.

And God is on the run after him. You know, he tries to get Jonah's attention through the storm in 1, 4. And he tries to get his attention through the sailors who cry out to God.

Thoroughly pagan, but they cry out to God. And then they cry out to Jonah for help. But now God sends a fish to swallow him. It's all building up to this moment.

[9 : 37] I mean, God's kind of giving him these chances. He gets his fish to swallow him, to get him completely alone with the Lord. You know, sometimes life does that. It strips everything away to where we're completely alone with the Lord.

And have to face up to what's going on and turn to him. So, yes, while our text begins and ends with a reference to the great fish, our attention is not meant to be drawn to this great fish, but to the Lord who appoints this great fish and uses this great fish to teach Jonah and us how far he will go to show the meaning of grace.

That's what it's all about. In a word where we're going, salvation is by God's sovereign grace alone. I think that's what he was trying to teach Jonah. Jonah didn't want to go preach in Nineveh because he had an opinion about what grace was.

Had an opinion about where the gospel should be or the message should be preached. And so, God is pulling Jonah aside and telling him that salvation is by sovereign grace alone. Salvation is my salvation, Jonah. I will extend it where I desire. Point one, Jonah sinks. Jonah sinks. [10:48] Our text in Jonah's prayer retells what happened after they threw him in the water. Right? Chapter 1, verse 16.

It's 15. They picked him up and they threw him in. So, he's kind of retelling in the past tense what happened in the president's tent in that moment. Jonah sinks. You know, there's so much about this prayer that we don't know.

What are the details? You know, how long did he kind of fight against his weight pulling him down? How long did he tread water? What were the sailors doing when they tossed him overboard? Did they watch or did they turn in sorrow? Did they offer him a few final words? Swim art. You know, I don't know. What was going on?

But there's so many details we don't know. But Jonah does tell us several important things that he saw and realized in that water.

[11:44] It's incredible. First thing is Jonah realizes he is guilty. While the sailors did their part, Jonah realizes that ultimately it was the Lord who threw him in.

Look in verse 3. He says, or he prays, For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the sea, and the flood surrounded me. You did it! He continues in verse 4.

Then I said, I'm driven from your sight. Jonah, the Lord's been trying to get Jonah's attention, and the Lord has it now. Jonah realizes that he is experiencing God's judgment, and he is guilty. Jesus says, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever does not obey the Son does not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. God's judgment doesn't wait to the end, and that's what Jonah's realizing right now.

His judgment and wrath bear down now on those who refuse to admit their guilt and follow him. It's hard for Jonah to hear this message, but he finally hears it.

[12:47] He understands God is judging him, and he is guilty. We live in a culture that it's really hard to hear the message of guilt and sin.

We're too sophisticated for that, right? Too educated. We're told the real problem, our real problem is we're too hard on ourselves. Or we just need to be loved, understood, and affirmed, and all those things are not like, that's completely bad, right?

But they're not our core problem. We just need confidence in who we are. That's what will fix you. You know, I'd be a horrible dad if I told him that's what would fix you, son.

We're hardly ever told we're wrong. We're hardly ever told it's you. No one can tell somebody else what's wrong for them, right?

This week I read about a former Christian leader in acquaintance of mine, somewhat a friend in that middle, who is now divorcing his wife and abandoning Christianity.

[14:07] The next day after announcing this, his Instagram feed went on to talk about how some people challenged him, and that's fine for them because they're religiously conservative or something like that.

But that he was thankful for all the people who accepted him for who he has become. And that's just a picture of our culture. And it's so hard to hear what's true in this culture.

It's always hard to hear the message about moral wrong against the holy God in this culture. But that's what we need to hear, and that's what Jonah understands, firstly.

Second, he understands that he's helpless. Jonah understands he's helpless, you know. Jonah may be able to tread water for 10 minutes or 30 minutes. I read this week about a person in India who tread water for 85 hours.

Now, that's incredible. Swim test is 30 seconds, but that is a whole lot more, you know. Either way, Jonah quickly realizes at some point he's going down. His mass is taking him down.

[15:17] He begins to sink, and he can't do anything about it. Look down there in verse 3. He says, Look at verse 5.

He says, So you get all this over me language. He's continuing to go down. Remember, he was going down in chapter 1. He's going down to Joppa. Then he's going down to the bottom of the boat.

Well, now he's going down further and further. Looking by the rest of verse 5 and 6. The deep surrounded me. The weeds were wrapped around my head. At the roots of the mountain, I went

down to the land whose bars were closed upon me forever.

He's sinking to the netherworld. The seaweed wraps around his body. He realizes he's passing into death. Verse 7. He says, When my life was fainting away. Literally, it's getting pushed out as I'm going down.

He's going down to this underwater prison whose bars will close upon him forever. And he cannot stop it. That's the point.

[16 : 23] He can't stop it. He's completely helpless. He's sinking and will be imprisoned in this prison forever.

It's a wonderful picture of our predicament because of the reality and guilt of sin. Sin, guilt, sin, guilt pulls us down.

It's like the pull of weight underwater. Throw a five-pound weight and it sinks down. We can do all the good things we know to do and can tread water for a little while, but we'll only exhaust and then we'll go down.

That's what's going on. Our predicament is not that we are treading water with all our might and we can't do it long enough. Our predicament is that we will soon sink to the bottom and can't do anything about it.

Theologians call this total inability. We're totally unable to save ourselves and contribute to our salvation.

[17 : 41] We're totally unable. Our problem is not that we're treading water on the surface trying to catch a life rope.

Our problem is that we've treaded and sunk to the bottom of the ocean where the life rope won't reach. Jonah realizes he's sinking.

He becomes completely hopeless. Most of our problems in life arise not because we're hopeless, but because we're not hopeless enough. Only when we realize that hope in anything else leaves us sinking will we realize how hopeless we are.

We are hope-shaped creatures. We're always living in light of what we think tomorrow will bring. So we're like, whether you are a glass half empty or glass half full kind of person, you are a relentlessly optimistic person.

I bet my life on it. That's why in this part of the country around August, among ball fans, hashtag feelslike98 starts coming out. It doesn't matter that we were five and seven last year.

[18 : 56] We're going to hit a turn. This is going to be the year. Hope just rises. You don't believe it. Ball fans just tell you. That's why we're always looking to the future and imagining how our life would change if this or that or this thing or that thing worked out.

Bob Coughlin says it well. Article I read by him. He says our problem isn't that we have no hope. We just hope in things that aren't God. Our own abilities.

A preferred outcome. Our reputation. Financial security. You fill in the blank. It can be anything. And the only way we realize our guilt and helplessness before God, the only way we realize how hopeless we will be when we look to everyone and everything that's not God for hope, is for God to show us.

I think that's what's going on in Jonah's life. No human heart can be told its sinfulness. It must be shown. That's what's going on in Jonah's life.

You've got to believe. You've got to understand. Jonah, he undoubtedly knew the scriptures. He undoubtedly knew against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, Psalm 51. He knew that apart from mercy, he was sunk, that the Lord is steadfast in love and mercy.

[20 : 23] He knew those things, but he didn't know it well enough. That's the same thing that happens in the life of Peter. Don't you just love Peter? He's the first to volunteer. He's the first off the boat. And when the Lord says all will deny him, he's the first to announce, no, I will not, Lord.

But he must be shown how guilty and wicked his heart is. And so the Lord does, right? And he comes back and he commits and he builds the church and acts after that encounter.

One theologian I read this week. He says it's the Jonah principle. He says it's the Jonah principle. It's all throughout the Bible that religious people or unreligious people, they have to learn how wicked their hearts are so the Lord might use them by the power of his grace.

And that's what often happens in our life when the trouble comes. When we lose the dream job. When our friend moves away. When another relationship fails. When we sin grievously.

When the trouble comes and keeps coming. It may be that the Lord's nearer than he's ever been. It may just be the most important moment of our life because the Lord is turning our hope to him. [21 : 35] That's what's going on in our past. You know, we can look back in our past and keep digging for all the things we did wrong so that we can keep repenting of him. And digging for all the things we did wrong so that we can try to rectify him.

But the point of all those things that we did wrong was that we'd see how hopeless we are and helpless we are apart from grace. Point two, Jonah cries out. You know, we often assume that God has to love us and help us. Regardless of what we do. You know, one French philosopher said it like this. God must forgive. That's his job. It's what you do up there, Lord. You forgive. But Jonah's prayer continues desperately because he realizes how completely untrue that is. Jonah finally sees clearly that the Lord is the living God.

Freely ruling over everything. These verses are so vivid. You cast me in. Your waves. Your billows. There's not a star or a planet or a cloud or a wave that you don't own.

[22 : 43] They all respond to you at your beck and call. You command them all. The rising and falling of nations. The deliberations and decisions of every man you reign over and you are completely free.

Jonah realizes he has fallen in the hands of the living God. And the living God doesn't owe him anything. That's what's going on is he's sinking in this water. He thought he was an upright man that deserved to be accepted by God.

But he's sinking in this water realizing that God does not have to forgive him. God does not have to save him. God does not have to rescue him. God would be completely just if he perished in that water.

But here's where Jonah's prayer gets completely brilliant. Knowing he has fallen into the hands of the living God. Knowing he is guilty before this living God. Knowing this living God is the only person who could rescue him and intervene.

Jonah doesn't quiet down. He gets loud. He cries out. I love this. Look in verse 1. He says, I called out to the Lord. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried.

[23 : 45] Verse 7. He said, When my life was fainting away I remembered the Lord. Verse 7 again. He says, My prayer came to you. When there was nothing left to hold on to.

Jonah clung to faith in the Lord. I just find this so helpful. Man, when I hit a jam. You know, when trouble, the storm clouds of trouble come in.

I don't stop doing things. I start doing more things. I get frenzied. But Jonah's telling us we got to get low.

That's the whole point of the storm is get low. Get that nose in the carpet. Get that nose in the carpet. Realize we're helpless and need the Lord and cling to faith.

And that's all faith is. Faith's not a notch on our belt. Faith is saying we got no notches. We need you.

[24 : 48] Faith is abandoning hope and anything else and calling on God to do what only God can do. Faith is despairing of all our resources and clinging to the Lord alone for help.

Faith is running from all the good things we do. Running from all the bad things we do to Jesus who can save. Twice he references the temple. Did you see that?

Verse 4 he says, I shall again look upon your temple. Verse 7. My prayer came into your holy temple. Temple in the Old Testament was a place where God dwelt with his people.

I think what he's referencing here, he's not merely talking about looking towards Jerusalem or hoping to visit the temple again or something like that. Jonah is calling God to remember his mercy. Reminds me of Moses in the wilderness. These are your people, Lord. Remember your mercy. In the Old Testament, the temple included the Ark of the Covenant.

[25 : 46] We've talked about this before, a wooden box that had gold over the top. And inside this box were the Ten Commandments. The law of Moses on top was the mercy seat.

And this place, this place where God dwelt with his people in between the angels, two outstretched arms, was a place where God dwelt only in judgment with us for breaking the law of Moses.

But here's where the mercy seat comes in once a year. As we talked about last week, the high priest would slaughter a lamb and he'd sprinkle the blood on that mercy seat. He was saying the lamb was substituted in the place of the people and all their sins were placed on this lamb and it

was sacrificed in their place.

It was a substitutionary sacrifice. And what Jonah is doing, he's turning from everyone and everything else. He's refusing to hope in anyone or anything else. And he's saying, Lord, you must have mercy or I will perish.

When he realizes that God is all he had, he finds that God is all he needs. It's the secret.

Wonderfully, as Jonah repeatedly points out, the Lord answers his prayer.

[26 : 53] Jonah is sinking and the Lord rescues him by the great fish. Jonah's prayer is not a prayer of thanksgiving for being delivered from the fish to dry land. Jonah's prayer is a prayer of thanksgiving for being delivered by the fish from drowning.

You see, Jonah's prayer is not from the dry land. Jonah's prayer is from the belly of this fish. In verse 2, he says, He answered me. Out of the belly of the fish, I cried.

You heard my voice. Verse 6 down there, if you look with me, he says, You brought up my life from the pit. Verse 7, That's what's going on.

And so Jonah rejoices. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Salvation. My salvation belongs to the Lord. He owns it. Reminds me of the hymn, When I was sinking down, sinking down.

When I was sinking down, sinking down, Christ laid aside his crown for my soul.

[28 : 13] And Tim Keller explains these words. He says, It says, Literally, Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation belongs to God alone, to no one else. If someone is saved, it is holy, completely God's doing.

It's not a matter of God saving you partly and you saving yourself partly. The Lord did not throw a rope to Jonah. No, No, God saves us.

We do not and cannot save ourselves. That's the gospel. That is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans 5, 8 says, While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.

The point is, While we were yet running away from God, yet sinking in the guilt and the iniquity of our sins, God sent Christ to die for us.

[29 : 13] God sent him, just like he sacrificed those lambs in the temple, he sent him, and put him forward as his sacrifice, the once for all sacrifice, for sins of everyone who would trust in him, so that he might suffer in our place, bear the wrath for our sins, so that we might receive grace and mercy forever.

Today, Hebrews says, is the day of salvation, if you would come to Jesus. Point three, then Jonah praises.

He gets his praise on. He lifts a hallelujah, or however that song goes.

After being rescued from drowning in the fish, Jonah's mouth is filled with thanksgiving and praise. I just love this. Look down there in verse 8. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope and steadfast love.

He's just saying, they can trust in vain idols, but the idols don't hear them, and they don't respond to them. They don't do anything, and in so doing, they forsake their hope and steadfast love. But I, with the voice of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you what I have vowed I will pay.

[30 : 36] Salvation belongs to the Lord. Jonah can't help himself. He's fired up. You know, he's safe. He's secure. He's overwhelmed with joy. He's thankful.

He can't help expressing it. He can't help letting the word get out. He can't help singing and praying. He can't help celebrating.

You know, have you ever stood back from our Bibles, and even from our assemblies, and thought, how odd it is that we thank and praise so much. Or how odd it is that our Bible is filled with thanking and praising so much.

You know, in fact, if you go through the song book of our Bibles, the book of Psalms, many of the complaints about our modern worship songs are all there. They're too repetitive.

Well, try out that song, With His Love Endures Forever, for about 25 verses. They're too simple or shallow. Well, try out Psalm 38, that talks about the oil going over the sons of Aaron's head and down into their beard, and barely mentions God.

[31 : 44] Now, Lord, what are we supposed to sing from that? They're too focused on instruments. You know, modern worship has too many solos, too many gill moments, to cut a lead line, you know?

But what about Psalm 150, where it just seems like they're just celebrating the loud, clashing cymbals, and celebrating all these things. They're too much on the first person, you know, too much

I, me, my, in our modern songs.

But try out the Psalter, and you'll find the Lord is my salvation. Why are they filled with praise? Does the Lord have a low self-esteem?

He needs us to build Him up. If He's in need of some affirmation, obviously, it's because the Lord deserves to be praised. But I think something else is going on here.

C.S. Lewis says it like this. He says, the most obvious fact about praise, whether of God or of anything, strangely escaped me.

[32 : 43] The world rings with praise. Lovers praising their mistresses. Maybe you think of Romeo and Juliet. They are readers, their favorite poet. Now that does date us, because I doubt any of us read a lot of poetry.

Not judging you if you do. Walkers praising the countryside. Players praising their favorite game. Praise of weather. Wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages.

Just historical people. Children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles. He continues, even sometimes politicians or scholars.

Only sometimes. Except where intolerably adverse circumstances interfere. Praise almost seems to be inner health made audible. The idea is this inner health and rejoicing is suddenly made audible through praise.

He continues, I had not noticed earlier either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it. Isn't she lovely?

[33 : 56] Says everybody. At a wedding. Wasn't it glorious? 1998 when we won the title. Don't you think that magnificent?

The Grand Canyon. I mean, you don't stand at the Grand Canyon and just take it in silently. You know? You say, oh my goodness! What in the world? The psalmist is telling everyone to praise God.

The psalmist, in telling everyone to praise God, are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about. Praise is inner health made audible. We're healthy when we're thankful.

That's what he's trying to get at. We thank someone and rejoice after a great meal. It makes me think about what about Bob? Which I can't even find that movie anymore, but he's just, mmm, oh! You know, he's eating this meal. Is this hand-shocked corn? You know? I love that line. Is this hand-shocked? I'll find that coming out of my mouth when I'm eating corn regardless of whether I know whether it was hand-shocked or not.

[34 : 59] But he's just celebrating, right? You can't eat with him and not be called into his delight. We celebrate after a fun game. That's why we, did you see what happened?

Did you see that last second shot? That's what we celebrated after receiving a gift or another day of sunshine. We celebrate. Look what the Lord did and so to the, with the Lord, praise is the overflow of a rescued heart.

I think that's what's going on here with Jonah. Praise just comes out. Praise cannot overflow from a heart that is, cannot not overflow from a heart that is tasted and seen that the Lord is good in a way that we don't deserve.

That's what's going on with the psalm. God did not put forward this book just as a way, keep praising me, keep praising me. God put it forward to just show you the overflow of a heart that's been rescued by grace.

That's what's going on. It's a picture of what salvation should look like, what it should produce. I remember reading the Babylon Bee not too long ago and if you don't know anything about the Babylon Bee, I guess it's kind of like a Christian sanitized version of the Onion, which is a totally hilarious online newspaper as well, but the Babylon Bee had this column, Psalms Expert, and I can't remember the exact title, but that's part of the, the crucial thing is to remember the exact title, so you have to forgive me, but it's like, Psalm Expert conclude that praising God with lifted hands actually means keeping your hands in the pockets, you know, kind of like, but the point is that they're making fun of is we don't praise like the Psalms do.

[36 : 34] That's what he's saying and the Psalms are there to give us a picture of what it should look like. It does keep overflowing. Praise just keeps overflowing to others. It reaches out. It calls others to see it.

Spontaneously erupts. I have a friend that he is always telling me the new thing he's doing. He cannot not tell me about his new diet or his new way of life, his minimalism one year, his new place to live, you know, it's close to the city and old homes, one seat of light, now it's all new homes, whatever it is, we just naturally praise and invite people into the things that we're doing and the things that we believe are best, but it begs the question, are our mouths filled with praise? Does thanksgiving define our lives? Is corporate worship something we look forward to or something we dread?

Do humility, joy, and gratefulness mark much of our ordinary days? or do complaining, criticism, grumbling, frustration, mark us?

If we could say by application, how do we live like Jonah? Or at least live like God wants Jonah to live? I think a life of praise and thanksgiving is not the result of a gripping encounter with God as much as Jonah has one of those.

[38 : 15] It's not the result of a dramatic conversion. I was dramatically converted and it doesn't mean my life is marked by thanksgiving and praise, whether you're saved at six or whether you're saved at 26.

It's not the product of a love of music and singing. A life of praise and thanksgiving is the overflow of never moving beyond what you deserve. I think that's what's going on here.

A life of praise and thanksgiving is the overflow of never moving on from what you deserve. Josh Howerton says, hell will be populated by people who insist that they were good enough for heaven. Heaven will be populated by people who insist that they were bad enough for hell. are we still insisting? That's often where the trouble comes in.

Charles Spurgeon counsels us, abide hard by the cross and search the mystery of its wounds.

Abide hard. You know, if I could say one thing in application, the only application major for this is preach the gospel to yourself.

[39 : 33] Preach the gospel to yourself. That's what Paul is talking about. Abide hard by the cross. How do you not have a life dominated by complaining and criticism and frustration and grumbling? You live in light of what you deserve and in light of what you've received.

Take verses and preach it to yourself. Psalm 51, you know, against you, you only have I done what is evil in your sight. O Lord, have mercy on me according to your steadfast love.

Proclaim that you are rescued. I have been crucified with Christ. If I've recited that one time, I've recited thousands of times, not to exalt my example at all, but at first, I've been crucified with Christ, therefore I no longer live, but Jesus Christ now lives in me.

The life I live in the flesh, that old life is gone. The life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Today, Lord, I'm purposing to live in light of what I've received.

Proclaim the hope and the truth of the gospel. I am not going to hell by the grace of God, but we can do that. We can preach the gospel to ourselves and live in light of these things, and I think that's how we know and how we live in light of salvation, being by God's sovereign grace alone.

[40 : 51] We need it. And God gives us all we need to live in it. Let's do that.

Father in heaven, we do humble ourselves, God. We can realize the same things Jonah realized, that we are guilty in your sight.

And Lord, far too often, we've placed our hope in so many other things. And we do want to bow down with our nose in the carpet to proclaim that we need you.

We need your salvation. We need it today. Yes, Lord, we were saved when we confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and as our Savior, but this day we confess it because we want to cling to you.

Lord, we don't want to stray. And we want to live in light of this wonderful news. Help us be people who insist.

[42 : 08] No, no, no. I am bad enough for hell. But you have been merciful. merciful. You are a big God of great mercy and you found us.

We praise you. We worship you. We give our lives to you. 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. Amen.