

Prayers God Answers

by Shane Idleman

This sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer as a powerful way to connect with God and align our will with His. It highlights the significance of humility, initiation, targeting prayers, and desperation in seeking God's answers. The message encourages a deep relationship with God, perseverance in prayer, and a focus on God's sovereignty even in desperate situations.

Scripture: Psalm 142:6, James 4:3, Jonah 2:2, Jonah 2:9, Proverbs 3:5, Daniel 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:16

Topics: "The Power of Prayer", "Humility in Seeking God"

Description

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Transcript

The title of the message is Four Prayers That God Answers. Four Prayers That God Answers. Prayer is asking heaven to invade earth.

We all know what prayer is, right? We think it's time to just pray and say a few things to God, but prayer is actually asking heaven to invade earth. You're asking God to come and alter and to change things in a powerful way. You're petitioning.

So I think sometimes we get confused because we think it's on our checklist and that's what Christians do. And I guess I'll pray, right? I have to eat breakfast. I might as well pray.

But it's more than that. It's connecting. It's deep calling deep.

It's a relationship being built. It's a relationship being sustained. It's my spiritual life being sustained.

It's really the gauge. E.M. Bowne said when faith ceases to pray, it ceases to live. When you cease to breathe on this planet, where are you going? Right, in the grave, body, but then to be with the Lord.

When you cease to pray, your faith ceases to pray, it ceases to live. Living, vibrant faith. And what prayer does, it aligns my will with God's will.

The self will is restrained in the prayer closet. You know you have a self will, right? It's the will that doesn't want what God wants. So when we pray, especially when we fast, the self will is restrained.

It's held captive. And you can focus on what God wants. So I'm gonna pull from Jonah four prayers that God answers.

But I read something from John Piper this week I wanted to share with you. He said discipline in prayer is everything. Discipline in prayer is everything.

It's everything. It's your spiritual existence rests on this. He went on to say, it's the only thing that will keep you going when all else fails.

No marriage stays together because of romance, but commitment. The same thing applies to our relationship with God. Isn't that interesting? I thought, does any marriage stay together because of romance? If you've been married over six weeks, come and talk to me.

And tell me if that thing is still going because of romance. Now, romance is good, right? I haven't mastered that area. I should pick up some roses.

Yeah, I'm learning. But nothing stays together that's worth staying together on romance alone, on feelings alone. It takes commitment.

A commitment to do what I committed to do. And through that commitment, sometimes I've realized over the years that my best times of prayer are often when I don't want to do it. I don't feel like doing it.

That's the last thing. I've got things to do, but when you get broken before God in the prayer closet and you begin to pray, God will begin to honor those prayers. So discipline and prayer is everything.

It'll keep you going. So the context, we're in Jonah, as you know. Jonah chapter two.

Jonah chapter two. The context, though, is in chapter one, verse 17. It says, then God assigned a huge fish to swallow Jonah.

And Jonah was in the fish's belly three days and three nights. Chapter two will be up there in a minute, but I'm not quite there yet. So think about this.

Jonah was, just tell you the story real quick, as you know, many of you know, but Jonah was sent by God to go to Nineveh. Instead of going to Nineveh, he went to Tarshish, the complete other direction. God brought a raging storm onto the ocean, onto the sea, and the boat was being tossed, and then they finally sought God.

God answered, exposed Jonah, and instead of Jonah repenting, he said, just throw me into the ocean. The better for me if I just die and you guys live. So they threw him into the ocean, and a big fish swallowed Jonah.

I showed a photo or a video last week. I won't do it again, but you can watch it on the video of actually whales coming up right next to a diver, and they can not only swallow that diver, they can swallow about five divers. So this is very feasible, number one.

Number two is scripture, we take it at face value. But here's the part that I don't know if it concerns me is the right word or the right phrase, but it's interesting. Jonah was in the fish's belly three days and three nights before he repents and prays.

I'm praying in the water. Have you ever watched Shark Week? As soon as I'm hitting that water, I'm praying, God, please, I'm so sorry, I'll go back, I'll go, let alone when the fish is coming up and gets me. I'm not gonna wait three days in the belly of the fish.

So this is perplexing. He's in this fish's belly three days and nights. Now, a Hebrew, this is Old Testament Hebrew, the Jewish calendar, of course, many of you know that a day could have been a partial day, the full day, and then a partial day on the next day, and he could have been, I think, 38 hours, maybe minimum or so, but it took some time to get Jonah to finally pray, finally repent.

Sound familiar in our lives? We can kind of take a little bit of extra time. So I'm gonna not take a lot of your time, but I wanna get to some powerful points on prayer. Four prayers that God answers.

The first prayer that we can learn from Jonah when we get into it is this, the humble prayer. He will hear the humble prayer. Remove the chip on your shoulder, just like Jonah, in order for God to hear the prayer.

And I brought one, just in case you wanna see it. From a real piece of wood. You remember that commercial? Come, you come knock this off my shoulder.

And that's sometimes how we go to God, right? We go to God. I'm just gonna leave it here for my wife's sake. Knock this off.

I'm coming to you, God. I've got a chip on my shoulder. I'll pray because it's right.

I don't deserve this, but whatever. Yeah, it's my fault, but they did this. You don't know what I've been through, or I'll figure something else out, right? Right here, we got two of them.

And we pray. How many of us pray with the chip on the shoulder? We don't humble ourselves. We're a little irritated.

We're a little mad. We're a little upset, and we're just gonna, hopefully, we twist God's arm. Well, the prayer that God answers is when you remove the chip on the shoulder, remove excuses, humble yourself.

Jonah finally had to humble himself. In the belly of the fish, he humbled himself. And why is the humble prayer so effective? Here's why a humble prayer is so effective.

Because you're saying, God, help. I'm not steering this vessel anymore. You are.

Would you help me? I need your help. I have never seen God let anyone down with that prayer. Now, he might not answer according to our will.

He might not answer according to what we want or what we think is best, or my favorite, being a type A personality, not quick enough, right? I mean, when you pray, I want the answer, this right now, God. Give me, and I'll pray this. I'm just being open.

I'm praying, my wife and I are praying, Lord, just open this door today. Just make it clear today. Show me today.

And I know you're gonna show me today, and I don't have to pray for this tomorrow. But there's been things on my prayer list for seven years now. And, Lord, show me.

Show me. But he never, when you say, I'm desperate, I need you, would you show me? And he will answer the prayer of the humble. And here's why.

God's will and our will, God's will and our will cannot fit in the same fish, right? Jonah's will, God's will. My will, what I want, what you want, our self will cannot fit in the same fish. In other words, they can't go together.

God doesn't negotiate. He doesn't say, you know what? All right, you have that half, and I'll have this half. I'll answer part of your prayer, and you get the other part, because you want to win.

God's not negotiating. So with God, my self will and his will can't coexist. So it's when you humble yourself and allow God to direct you during his will that that prayer will be answered.

He will answer the prayer of the humble. And then the second point we can learn from Jonah, and we're gonna turn to chapter two now. It's what I call the initiating prayer.

The initiating prayer. Deliverance came from initiating. Jonah had to initiate.

I think as Christians, we sometimes forget this. Because we just, well, God knows my need, right? I mean, God knows what's going on. God knows.

I mean, I don't have to tell him. But deliverance for Jonah came from initiating. You know what initiate means, right? To cause an action or process to begin.

And the more I study Scripture on this, the more I got a little bit passionate on this topic. Because it's when we initiate that God listens. Often, we want to hear and then we'll move.

But often, God says something like, oh, I don't know, if my people. Wait a minute, God, you'll hear our land, you'll set, but if my people humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked way, then I'll hear. If you seek me, then you'll find me.

King Jehoshaphat had to initiate prayer for God to deliver him from the three armies that were coming against him. Elisha had to initiate. Moses had to initiate.

Hey, I'm standing at a sea here. Here comes the Egyptians. God, I'm initiating.

Because sometimes, and maybe it's we're worried that we don't want to overstep our bounds or we know that God is sovereign and we just kind of rely on that, but God wants to see an initiating heart, initiating believer. Why? Because initiating and boldness go together. You won't find in the Bible a passive Christian.

Now, it's good to be passive on some things, right, and hold our tongue and things like that, but when it comes to prayer and its warfare, we are to initiate. We're to go at the spiritual elements, the demonic realm. See, I don't really view Satan, even though he's coming at, you're right, you're supposed to be in this always backing up, always holding your arms up, always in defense mode, always walking back, he's on me.

You're supposed to be initiating and engaging and bringing him back and pushing him back and walking into the darkness, bringing the light. But sometimes we get this mentality that we're just to, well, woe is me and he's gonna push me around. He's really beat me up this week.

No, you're supposed to go in with spiritual authority in the name of Christ and you take your thoughts captive. You do business with the enemy. You pull out the sword.

You put on the breastplate of righteousness. You initiate, then God responds. But sometimes I think we forget how valuable that is.

Do you ever just, because we read, wait upon the Lord. Just don't do anything. In peace, let that be your strength.

And that's true as well. But there comes a time when you have to initiate the prayer. Verse one, chapter two, then Jonah prayed to the Lord, his God, so he's in the belly of the fish three days and finally gets a wake up here, I guess.

Then Jonah prayed to the Lord, his God, his God, that's key, from the fish's belly. And he said, I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction and he answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried and you heard my voice.

Let's stop there for a minute. On this topic of prayer, God sometimes leaves us in challenging situations until we call out. Jonah said, I prayed to the Lord.

I was in the fish's belly. And God will often leave you in a challenging situation in order to get you to cry out, right? Because without that challenging situation, I often don't cry out. Have you ever heard that song, Amazing Grace? How sweet the sound, right, that saved a wretch like me? Well, John Newton was a converted slaveholder, slave owner.

And it was when he was on a raging sea, the tempest rose that got him to break before God. And we can go throughout our whole life and look at the times where God has used challenging situations to wake us up. So when you're in that challenging situation, initiate the prayer.

Be bold, be authoritative because you're going in Jesus Christ's name. Like we sang, there's no other name. There's no other name.

You can't pray in the name of Buddha or Gandhi or Muhammad or Joseph Smith or Brigham Young or Mary Baker, Etter, or Eddie or whatever. All these different things come up. You can only pray in the name of Christ where there's spiritual authority.

That's why people get so upset. I've talked about this many times. Right, you can go into city council meetings and pray in anybody's name, but when you pray Jesus, now you've got the ACLU, ACLU, yeah, Antichrist Liberation Union or something against you.

Against you because that, okay, number three. The targeted prayer, the targeted prayer. Jonah targeted his prayer.

Prayer must be aimed in the right direction. Jonah said, his God, his God. And I don't know where you're at, and especially on the radio when this goes out later, but is he your God? Is he truly your God? Because I know a lot of people.

Did you know there's millions and millions and millions of prayers going out, but very few are heard? If you're praying to the wrong God. But Shane, I thought God will hear my prayer. He will if you pray to the right God and you acknowledge the right God.

Or if you say, Lord, I don't know you. I want to know you. Would you please show me? I'm reaching out.

God, show me. At least you're aiming in the right direction. But millions, they go through the motions, don't they? Churches all over the world.

Praying, praying, they're praying a certain direction. They're saying certain things, but they go, they fall on deaf ears because they're not praying to the right God. And that God will hear them.

And be specific in your prayer. This is sometimes hard, even for me. Be specific.

Be bold, be audacious in your prayers. God loves a bold prayer warrior. I mean, just think about that.

Well, yeah, he's a passive prayer warrior. He kind of gets around to it. He's real timid in prayer.

That's not, I don't see Jesus doing that. Being specific helps as well. Well, for example, if you're gonna propose to somebody, right, you're gonna marry them.

Would you say, you know what? Where do you see this going? Hmm, okay. I don't know, do you wanna go on a date tomorrow? Yeah, okay, what are you getting at? I don't wanna say, will you marry me, right? I just wanna kind of beat around the bush. But God wants us to be specific in our prayers.

And then by whose authority are you speaking? Of course, we don't need to repeat this, but it does call for repetition in the sense that we have to pray in Jesus' name. Lord, I pray this in Jesus' name. Why is that? Because he is the spiritual authority.

We're going to, I'm not gonna pray, Lord, in my name. Lord, this is what I want. But when you pray for somebody, Lord, I pray that you would heal them in Jesus' name, by his power, by his authority, by his commission.

I've been called as a disciple of Christ to go and pray for the sick, to do certain things, so have you. So we pray in his name, in his strength, and according to his will. And that's interesting on this targeted prayer.

We have to remember this, pray according to God's will. Pray according to God's will. James 4, three is a stark reminder of this.

But when you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives. I wonder how many prayers aren't answered because of that one, right? Wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. But don't we do that, wrong motives? Come on, we've all been guilty.

God, change them. We pray, God, change them, change them. But he's wanting to change you.

How many of us pray, God, oh, please change my kids? Because they're embarrassing me. Oh, right, motives, what's the motive behind things? God, take away this difficulty at work, but he's working in you. God, clean this mess, but he wants to clean you.

God, oh, I love this one. God, open financial doors, but he wants you to close the door of reckless spending. See, our prayers aren't answered sometimes because we ask amiss that we may spend it on,

you think my prayers are perfect, right? Lord, I'm praying, heal my eyesight.

I don't want to have glasses. Right, I look silly in glasses. God, please, I mean, glass people, you know.

I just never saw myself. Okay, there's quite a few out there, so I apologize for that remark. But, you know, the motive is behind what we're doing.

God, I'll pray. I pray for my spouse, why? Because we just want a quiet home and no arguments and motives, what are the motives there? Now, that's not a bad idea, right? But our motives have to be pure before God. And then the final prayer that we see here from Jonah is the desperate prayer.

And I believe this prayer often speaks the loudest. This prayer speaks the loudest. Affliction and pain can be used as high-octane fuel for prayer, can't they? Desperation, that's high-octane fuel.

You know what that high-octane fuel is, right? It's a fuel that makes a car run much better and faster and stronger. Desperation, without desperation, I don't know if we'd really pray like we should. Without that desperation, that's what motivates a prayer life.

In the depths of despair, Jonah was in the depths of despair. The complete absence of hope, absence of hope, he heard Jonah. Desperation leads to focused attention and more earnest seeking.

Psalms 142:6 says this, listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need. Lord, listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need. Rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me.

Right, the desperate need. Have you ever, what about Hannah? Lord, give me a child. Rachel, I think it was.

Lord, give me a child, lest I die. The desperation there. Moses was desperate.

God, You better do something with Your people. Elisha, I'm going to die. I'm going to die because of Jezebel.

Desperation. Jehoshaphat, we talked about him as well. I love all these kings.

They get into a pickle, right? And here's these armies coming against them and they would never pray before. Fast? Why fast? I like my meat and dairy. They would never do any of those things.

But when you have an army pursuing them, they quickly change their tune. They become praying kings. Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, Josiah, they would pray because of desperation.

Here's the key though. When he answers, when God answers, we must be content with the answer. Because Jonah prayed, what did God say? No, go back to Nineveh.

I was trying to get, no, no, no. Go back to Nineveh. Verse three, for You cast me into the deep.

We're going to learn these things I just read or talked about. For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me. All Your billows and all Your waves, these big, huge waves passed over me.

Then I said, I have been cast out of Your sight, yet I will look again towards Your holy temple. The waters surround me even to my soul. The deep close around me.

Weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings, which is the bottom of the mountains. The earth with its bars closed behind me forever.

So Jonah's down in this fish. It feels like the bars have closed in, right? He's going down. This ship is sinking.

I'm done, I'm toast. But he said, yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God. So it reminds us, where do you look? Where do you look? What attitudes are formed? Look at Jonah.

In all of this, he was thankful. He had a thankful attitude that God honored. The blessing of perseverance we see here as well.

Yet I will look again. I will look again towards You. Some of you need to hear that this evening.

You need to persevere. You need to fight because the shackles of oppression don't always just come right off. Sometimes they have to be broken one chain link at a time.

One chain, yeah, chain link at a time. There's a whole bunch of links on the chain, but you've gotta break those things. And it takes perseverance and praying and knocking and asking and fighting and warfare.

And I think God often does this to make us stronger. It's a spiritual muscle. Can you imagine how weak we'd be in prayer if we just said the prayer and it was answered? And then God decided to wait a day or two? We would just fall apart.

We'd be a mess. Because we're so used to that quick, but God says persevere. And I've noticed that perseverance also tests my motives.

How bad do I want it? How bad do I want to seek God? And as I'm praying, as I'm persevering, sometimes my motives change and they get back on course with God's because I had to sift. God sifted me through his word and through his will and looking at what his will says compared to what I want. But perseverance is very important.

When the deep is closed around, he said when the deep is closed around me, when the deep is closing around you, he is there. Maybe somebody needs to hear that tonight as well. When the deep is closing around you, when darkness is closing around you, he is there.

He's not absent, he doesn't take a vacation, he doesn't go live on Saturn. And sometimes we have this view of everything's going good, then God must be there. Then when everything's going bad, he's gone.

No, he's still there. He's the God that carries you, he sustains you, he holds you through any circumstance. And many times, he'll take things from us to get us to look to him.

Oh, you were counting on that? Let me take that from you. Oh, you thought that was going to help you, make you happy? Let me take that from you. So you finally get to the point where complete joy and happiness is found in Christ and Christ alone.

Because when all those things have failed, there's one thing that will never fail, and that's the foundation of Christ. But I don't see him. Right, we say that I'm in this darkness, but I don't see him.

Where is he, I don't see him. Well, guess what, you don't see oxygen. So just try holding your breath for 30 seconds and see how you feel.

Well, I don't feel it, I don't taste it, I don't smell it, I don't see it, but it's there. Same thing with God, and that's why I think faith is so important. Faith causes us to trust in what we don't see.

Because it's easy to trust in a pulpit that I see, but it's not easy to trust in something I don't see here, and put the thing. Same thing when I walk with God. Faith, faith, genuine faith, you're always trusting.

Isn't that better faith? Because if I could see God, okay, I see now your answer, I see now your answer, I see, but if I don't see anything, I'm just walking out into the darkness, trusting God. Through that trust, faith is sustained and built. And then verse seven, when my soul fainted within me, have you ever felt that way? Have you ever gotten bad news? Papers in the mail, right? Divorce, court papers, or the news from the doctor, or things you're expecting, you're counting on, and it just didn't happen? What happened with that? And I wish I had all the answers, but I don't.

And sometimes we get upset and bitter, don't we? We count on things, and we just see that it sometimes doesn't happen like we thought. I'll share something with you. I've been praying for about a month and a half, fasting, praying, feeling, God, the Lord, you could do this.

We're having a conference here in October. It's a two-day, three-day revival conference. Different speakers coming in.

And I reached out to Pastor Jim Cimbala in New York after visiting there, and I just got an email yesterday saying, you know, no, I won't be out in the L.A. area. Thanks so much for my time. I'm like, but I've been praying and fasting.

Well, hello? Well, maybe he has, too, to spend more time with his grandchildren, or to be more, see, I don't know both of those, and I trust in God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer went up to you and to your holy temple. Most don't remember the Lord when difficult things happen.

They turn on Him and become bitter. I've noticed that many people, when things are going good, they've got that sign of the fish bumper sticker, right? When things are going good, they've got their Bible in hand. When things are going great, but when it falls apart, who are they mad at? Who are they, how could you let this happen? Now, let me not, let me encourage you for a minute.

It's okay to feel those feelings. I've felt those feelings. Bitter, a little mad, come on, God, you can control this.

You can change things, but he says, take those fears, take those things to me. Take those emotions to me and let me deal with them. Let me sort them out.

Keep that spirit of thankfulness, because thankfulness and a root of bitterness cannot grow in the same soil. A root of bitterness will destroy everything in your life, because you become critical, you become hard, you become arrogant, you become bitter, you become mad, you become angry when that root of bitterness is growing. So thankfulness is like, what's the famous weed killer? Roundup, right? And those who follow Monsanto and all that are saying, don't use that example, but it's not good stuff, so I wouldn't have it at your house.

I would actually keep it off your grass and don't let your kids play in it. Side note, so that weed killer, right, that's what thankfulness does to bitterness. Being thankful, it doesn't let a root of bitterness grow.

If bitterness is coming in, start to be thankful. Start to be thankful. I wanna do this recently, I'm gonna write down the top five things I'm thankful for and all the staff members and all the volunteers and different things.

We have a lot of volunteers now as well. What are the five things you're thankful for versus the 10 things we're not, right? Because we can all find things in each other. That's why thankfulness will remove that.

That's what Jonah did here, he remained thankful. Verse eight, those who regard worthless idols. Jonah said, I'm trusting in you, God, but those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy.

They trust in the wrong things. But I will sacrifice to you, my God, with the voice of thanksgiving. I will pay what I have vowed.

My offering to you, God, is thankfulness. If you can't, we can't give God anything, can we? We, oh, I got \$100, I got \$1,000, I can give him my car, nothing. He just wants you.

Thankfulness and a fully surrendered life. Let me just throw this out there. This is meant to offend.

Some of you are not being led by God because you're not giving him your life. God's not directing you because you're not allowing him to direct you. You're mad, maybe, you're mad, you're upset, you're bitter.

You're a Christian, you say you love the Lord as you grind your teeth, but he can only direct you when you let your hands off the wheel. Say, God, my finances are yours. My marriage is yours, my health is yours.

My children are yours. My career, whatever you're calling me to do, it's yours. Things aren't working out like I thought, I'm trusting in you.

I'm not letting bitterness come in, I'm gonna remain thankful, I'm trusting. You watch him steer that vessel. He'll steer that vessel right in the right direction.

But sometimes we get stuck like the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years, grumbling and complaining, grumbling and complaining, grumbling and complaining, and we're just, and my passion is to ignite a passion in you. Because once you understand that God is sovereign, whatever situation you're in, it's because he either allowed it or he's working in your life, there's tremendous joy in that. Trusting, Lord, you're sovereign.

Who can't rest in God's sovereignty? If you get your mind position right and you rest in God as sovereign, I might not have work next week, but God is sovereign. I can't make this car payment, but God, you're sovereign, you know. Maybe we need to get down to one vehicle and spend time together.

And you get the attitude of thankfulness again. So that's just for someone out here, I think that God wants to and can direct you if you give up that control. But the enemy will start to plant thoughts, right? Those thoughts of bitterness, anger.

Well, look at my situation, look at this, I can't believe this happened. And I've noticed before that God will often take everything from you until you finally call on him. Like, I don't know what your situation is, but I can guarantee it's not like being in the belly of a fish.

I'm pretty sure, right? No matter what is going on in your life, you're not 5,000 feet, I mean, I don't know what the oxygen level, how far the fish could go, I don't know about that. It's funny, the websites will try to debunk it by, oh, the oxygen level, and this, and well, if God's in it, God's sovereign, right? I'm sure the fish didn't have to go down five miles to stay up at the surface, but now I'm rabbit trolling, so let's get back on track. So verse nine, but I, oh, it's funny.

I noticed this. When Jonah said in verse six, I went down to the moorings, the bottom of the mountains, it just, it struck me as interesting because there are mountains in the ocean. How would Jonah know that? That always goes back to science.

The Bible confirms science. Just, I think it was 150 years ago, they were able to detect with the sound, waves and different things bouncing off the bottom. Oh, there's valleys and mountains.

The deepest, it's like five miles or something, valley deep in the bottom of the ocean. So Jonah's not guessing here. He said there's valleys and there's mountains at the bottom of the ocean in the deep, again, confirming the word of God.

Science, you will never, I've thrown this out there to atheists, and I still haven't got a good response yet on this, but show me one scripture in the Bible where they are wrong from a scientific standpoint. Like, oh, the Bible just totally missed it. You won't find that.

But I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving. That's a sacrifice to God. I will pay what I have vowed.

Salvation is of the Lord. So the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah up on dry land. So see, God gets you in this, I mean, if anything's hopeless, that's hopeless.

Just being in the ocean without the boat around is hopeless, you're done, you're toast, let alone a big fish coming and swallowing you. That's double toast. That's just impossible to get out of that, but God can take any circumstance.

I can say this by the authority of scripture and by my own life, my own testimony, God can take the deepest valleys, the darkest days, he can take all of that and bring the light of the gospel into your life, he can give you hope where there was depression, he can give you peace where there was misery. Only God can orchestrate something like that. And that's what he did with Jonah.

Jonah cried out, his heart was right, he got thankful, he repented, and God released him from that circumstance. That has overreaching principles to us right there. Because we get in this situation and we think not even God himself can do anything, right? Be careful for pride, be careful with pride.

Pride will derail us every chance it gets. I think it's in Sunday sermon as I'm preparing it. I have to prepare it earlier on now, that Wednesday's really kinda put a monkey wrench in my plans, right, my comfort, my convenience.

Sermon preparation, that's all I do all week now. But it's good, that's what I feel called to do. But I was reminded in this area of pride of this man about 100 years ago.

In a prideful rant, he said not even God himself can sink this ship, writing about the Titanic in the newspapers, be careful, be careful. Pride is not a good characteristic. So again, I'll close with this.

Again, a voice of thanksgiving, gratitude, appreciation, and kind. Let's take a test right now. How are we doing in that area? Let me read those three words again.

There's gratitude, there's appreciation, and we're being kind. That's an attitude of thankfulness. If you haven't been going in that direction, welcome to the club.

But use tonight to get back on that direction. It's not about the absence of sin, but grieving over it that makes the difference. It's not about sin being absent, like oh, he just must have no sin.

It's not about the absence of sin on this side of heaven. It's about our grieving over it and how we handle it. Do we repent and get back on track? Or do we continue to wallow in it and enjoy it and never repent and stay stuck? I was gonna say stuck on stupid, but trying to clean up language from the pulpit.

One reason we preach the whole gospel is for people to see how desperate and lost they are. See, I don't know what it took for Jonah, but he had to get him to his lowest point. And that's one reason why we're not afraid to preach the whole gospel.

You have to tell people how desperate and lost they are. Jonah said, you've brought up my life from the pit. Oh, Lord, my God, up out of the pit.

So now it's this idea of we don't wanna paint the gospel in any kind of light that's other than seeker-friendly, user-friendly, but if you show people their desperation, they'll see their need. You guys already know that from Sundays. But that's one reason why we do preach the whole gospel is for people to see how desperate and lost they are.

Isn't it interesting, though, you look at different churches and different movements, people on TV, and it's like they just wanna candy-coat everything. It's like going to Disneyland, right? Everything, I have to bring my own food there, by the way, because everything's just candy-coated, right? It's like, feed me what I want, what I want, what I want. What I want, feed me.

Don't worry, I have splurge, too, now and then. But it's this feed me, feed me, and then when it comes to the gospel, pastors come up and they say, well, that doesn't sound good, and that doesn't sound good, and that doesn't sound good. So let's stick with what sounds good.

The problem, though, is that doesn't help anyone. And that's one reason why God says, tell them what my word says. Teach it to your children.

Because you get to a point where you say, I'm desperate, I'm hopeless, I'm reaching out to the one who has the answer. And there's two voices in Christianity, right? Just got a email from one of the big news organizations. They said, hey, I sent Rob Bell a text message.

Do you wanna try to debate him on my podcast? Like, yeah, I'd love to. Because he believes there's no hell, everybody ends up in heaven, gay marriage is okay, and he's a national voice. Why, because you're telling people what they want to hear.

Now, granted, it will probably never happen because when you go to confront people from the truth, they run from it. Because the truth invites scrutiny. You say, yeah, let's sit down and talk about this.

If you have the truth, you want to dialogue. If you don't, you want to run for cover. You want to post stuff on Facebook and podcasts and things so nobody, and get your word out there, but you don't want to be

challenged with the word of God.

And that's what we're seeing in our culture. It's gonna get worse and worse and worse. So here's the thought, the final thought.

The more desperate the hour, the more heartfelt the plea. The more hopeless we are, the more hopeful we become. Think about that.

The people that love the Lord, that I know, spirit-filled, mature believers, they realize their desperation. They realize their hopelessness. And because they realize how hopeless it could have been, they become very hopeful and very joy-filled.

It's the people who don't understand grace. If you go and you tell, like this person mentioned, Rob Bell, if you go, everybody's gonna end up in heaven anyway. There's no hell.

Why do I need Jesus? Why do I need a cross? Why do I need any of that? And you make, if the person even becomes a Christian, they will be a very weak, unstable Christian. As soon as there's any persecution or any challenge, they will fall apart because they don't understand the necessity of the new birth and what it's done. I remember, again, I've shared this before, but reading about Jonathan Edwards and revival that happened in the East Coast hundreds of years ago when our nation was first formed, I think 1730s, 1740s, that the most popular sermon back then, the title was Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.

And he talked about how by God's good pleasure, he's holding us over the pit of hell like a spider. He could just drop it any second. People, they were said to almost like, they're grabbing onto fictitious trees as not to fall into that abyss because he's painting the picture of what it is.

And see, back then, you read sermons. You'd be amazed at how much they've changed. We've went from the judgment of God to nothing about judgment, but just love and grace and mercy, nothing about judgment or repentance, nothing, it's absent for many sermons.

So people are, it's called candy-coating the gospel. There's no substance to it. So that's why you don't have strong believers persevering is because they're weak in their belief system.

And you show them their desperate need for God. I mean, wouldn't that change the way you view God? If you could view how desperate we are without him and what could have been, that might be a good sermon title, what could have been, right, you see, I could have been lost, he could have took my life at 22, and I could have been, oh my God, my hope, and he reached down, his mercy, his grace, he pulled me up. Then there's a deeper love, a deeper appreciation because of what he did.

So God answered him and delivered him. God answered Jonah and delivered Jonah. But even if he didn't, Jonah was still delivered from a hopeless grave and an eternity absent from the presence of God.

That's what you always have to remember. Even if God doesn't, he's still God. He's still good.

An eternity with God is like this compared to our life. I'm always reminded of those three Hebrew boys when they said, don't bow to the king, or don't bow, bow to the king, not your God. And they said, we will not bow to you ever.

Our God will deliver us from this fiery furnace. But even if he doesn't, even if he doesn't, I will not bow to you, that is really, when you go to prayer, when you go to warfare, when you live your Christian life, live it like that. Even if he doesn't, even if he doesn't answer my prayer the way I want, even if he doesn't remove this tumor, even if, I'll just go see him a lot quicker.

I tell my kids that, and I don't have that right now, as far as I know, but I tell my kids that. Dad, what about the, hey, but you'll see Jesus sooner. You create in them expectancy, not fear.

Because even if he doesn't answer, what's the worst? Oh, eternity with God. And sometimes, wouldn't that be better, actually? I mean, just take me now. Because we wanna come back to the pain, back to the disappointment.

I mean, I told my wife, if it wasn't for her and the kids, I'm ready to go. But there's a church to lead, there's a family, right? But I'm just, I'm ready. Once I'm close to 50, I can't imagine, but everything starts to break down.

No, but right, it breaks down. My elbow hurts, my knees hurt, my eye, it's like, what is going on? This body's decaying. Tony, you don't stay 35.

It's just going. The quicker you can exit that, right, the better. I hope the context made sense there.

And we love people over 50 and 60 and 70. But you know, right, as you're getting older, the older you get, the more you wanna leave. It's the five, six, seven, eight-year-olds that wanna keep going to Disneyland for the rest of their life.

But as you get older, take me away from this corruption. That's what I wanna leave, too, is this corruption of what, look at what the world is coming to. Look at the news.

But God says, no, you stand, you be a beacon, and what you do is you do business until I return. It's interesting, if you look up that passage, it's not just money and doing, but you do business. It means you go to war.

You go against the kingdom of darkness. You do business. It's what I've created you for.

It's what I've hired you for, not monetarily, but spiritually. You're to go and you're to be a spiritual light in this dark and dying and decaying world. While you're there, do business.

Don't get lazy. Don't do your own agenda. Don't worry about building up your own empire.

Do business until I return.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/RM0jjW7e71Y.mp4>

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