

## “Grasping Grace”

*Jonah: Renegade Prophet, Pt 3*

We’re looking at the Old Testament book of Jonah, a well-known story. So far, the plot line has proceeded like this; to start off, God says to Jonah, “Go and preach to Nineveh, the greatest city in the world – which also happens to be the capital city of your own nation’s great enemy.” Jonah, patriot that he is, promptly refuses and catches the first ship headed the other way. So God goes after him, sending a great storm on the ocean to wake Jonah up. After putting the whole crew in grave danger, Jonah volunteers to be thrown overboard, thus calming the sea, but instead of drowning, the first chapter ends by recording that Jonah was swallowed whole by a large fish.

And right away, I’d wager a plurality of this room are thinking, “Do you expect me to swallow *that*? A man swallowed by a fish indeed!” Well, actually I want you to swallow something much more unbelievable than that. If you were with us in the fall, we did a series called *A Tale of Two Testaments?* that was designed to challenge how we view the Old Covenant part of our Bibles in relation to the New Covenant part.

And we said that the Christian approach to reading the Hebrew Bible should always be filtered through the lens of Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection – because that’s what he himself said it’s all about. So the incredible thing I am asking you to believe about the Book of Jonah is not the historicity of the fish, but that this book was written to point to a man who would not even be *born* for another 400 years.

Honestly, whether or not you believe Jonah went down and lived in the belly of a whale for three days does not concern me – fun conversation perhaps – but whether you believe that Jesus Christ went into a tomb and was dead for three days before the Spirit of God raised him back to life...that means *everything* to me. In fact, I have dedicated my life – and would freely give it up – over my belief in just that reality.

With that in mind, let’s read today’s text. The whole chapter is just ten verses long. **Jonah 2:1–10**,  
*1 From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God. 2 He said: “In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry. 3 You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.*

4 I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.' 5 The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. 6 To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you brought my life up from the pit, O LORD my God.

7 "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. 8 "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. 9 "But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.' 10 And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Ok, strange story, of course. But what's the point? The point is spelled out explicitly about two-thirds through the chapter. The point is about God's grace. Grace. And this book says a religious professional, a preacher, and even more than that, a prophet who received direct revelation from God can be deeply and profoundly in the dark about God's grace. Jonah's deepest fears, his racial prejudice, and his lack of endurance are all tied to his blindness to the reality of grace.

But in the fish suddenly Jonah *gets* it. Of course, he didn't have his cell phone, so he had a lot of time to think. But he figures out what grace is about because the climax of this prayer in the belly of the deep is here

at the end in v. 8-9. This, therefore, is the point he is supposed to be getting. He says, "*Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs...Salvation comes from the LORD.*" And at that point the fish releases him, which is to show *all* of this has been sent by God to get him to this spot. To see, "*Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs...Salvation comes from the LORD.*"

And at that point he is free, because at that point now he *can* be free. One commentator makes a staggering claim. He says that this verse – "*Salvation comes from the Lord*" - is *the key* verse in the Bible. This is the summary verse of the Bible - the whole Bible boiled into one verse. This is the theme of the Bible. And the reason he can say that is because this is what Jesus' whole ministry and message was about. The Jesus lens is all to show us this... *Salvation comes from the Lord.*

This is what your life is about. This is what God is trying to show you in every single thing that happens to you in your life: that salvation comes from the Lord. And this is the thing you have to relearn and relearn and relearn because we are a lot more like Jonah than any of us want to admit. Because listen, if it's true of Jonah - a person who talked face to face with God, who got revelation from God, a great prophet of the Old Testament - if Jonah can be blind to grace to the point where it distorts his very life, it's even more likely all of us in this room, to one degree or another, are also blind to it.

Here's the thesis of this sermon, all right? That our most severe problems are caused by an ignorance of the true depths of the meaning of God's grace. That's the thesis. That's the book. That's what I'm trying to get across. Your most severe problems, whatever they are, may have a lot of secondary causes, but a primary cause is our ignorance, our lack of understanding of the true depths of the meaning of God's grace. And until we get it the way Jonah had to get it, we'll be like him, virtually locked up, a shadow of what we *can* be and what we *should* be.

God's grace is the *essence* of the gospel. This is what you need *not only* the first time you meet God – grace is how you *get in* with God, but grace is also how you *grow up* in God. Paul says in **Colossians 1:6**, “*In the same way, the gospel is **bearing fruit** and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and **truly understood God's grace.***” Isn't that an interesting verse? “The gospel is bearing fruit...” That's an organic metaphor. It's the language of spiritual transformation and growth.

You can confess Jesus as Lord – you can “be saved” – and not have a transformational understanding of grace. That's Jonah's life. That's *my* life. I gave my heart to Jesus at the age of seven while kneeling at a red pew on a Sunday night at Bethel Temple church

in Ft. Worth, Texas. I became a part of the family of God. But I had a transformational moment of “truly understudying” grace on an airplane when I was 26 years old. And that understanding grows and bears fruit to this very day.

Martin Luther was a depressed monk until the day in his mid-30s when he came to understand the grace of God. He'd been a professor of the Bible – he knew theology better than any of us. But the day he understood the grace of God he was turned from a meek monk into a powerful prophet who was willing to take on the world single-handedly. He was totally changed. Why? He discovered the truth of the confession, *Salvation comes from the Lord.*

That's what happened to Jonah, that's what happened to Luther. And history is full of people who have been affected in this same way. So the question this morning is...Are you in their number? Let's be humble. If Jonah missed it, it's more than likely that we're missing it, as well. Grace! The deepest secrets you ever need to learn in your life are locked up in that word. One commentator points out the trajectory of Jonah thus far is down – he goes *down* to Joppa, *down* into a ship, *down* into the sea, and inside the fish he does *down* further still to the very depths of the world. And when he gets there – when he hits rock bottom – he finds grace.

Therefore, since this prayer is about grace, since the book is about grace, since the chapter is about grace, let's just look at the chapter this way. Let's ask the chapter three questions. What *is* the grace of God? How do you *receive* the grace of God? What are the proofs, the *marks* of having received the grace of God in your life?

**Number one, What is grace?** Well the word, at least in the Old Testament, that is used for grace, which is *chen*, is a word that means “favor”. Now it goes beyond the way we use that word in English, it goes beyond just “doing a favor”, though that's gracious as well. To *find* favor means to be let in to a place you don't have the right to be.

For example, in Genesis 33 we see the reconciliation of two estranged brothers. Years before, Jacob had done a mean thing to his brother, Esau - we won't go into that - but he had betrayed his family and Esau was angry at him for decades. And so when Jacob finally returns home he says, “Let me find *chen* (grace). Let me find favor in your sight.” And what Jacob is saying is, “Esau, let me back in. Even though I have no *right* to be back in and you have no *obligation* to let me back in, do it anyway.” So you see, favor is the opposite of what is your right, and favor is the opposite of being outside.

So let's give it a definition and let's pull it apart for a moment. Grace is favor granted to an **undeserving** person by an **unobligated** giver. Grace is being let into a place you don't deserve by a person who is not obligated to let you be in there. Grace is a completely undeserved gift from a completely unobligated giver. Now what do I mean by those two components? Let me give you four quick case studies, and then I'll show you how that works.

Case one: You're an employer, and a group of people have worked for you for two weeks. And you pay them their salary. Is that grace? No, because not only do they deserve it, but you're obligated to give it.

Case two: Imagine you're the parent of a disobedient, rebellious, ungrateful, irresponsible teenager – some of you say, “imagine?” – come on now, be gracious! What do you do with that child? You still help them. You still feed and clothe and shelter them. Why? Are they are undeserving? Yeah, they're undeserving, but the fact is you're still obligated. You're a parent.

And to be a parent is both a moral and a legal obligation. You don't get into parenting without that obligation. So, in a sense, when you help a disobedient, wayward child it's not a perfect analogy of what God is talking about in terms of grace, because, though the child might be undeserving, you are still under obligation.

Case three: You're part of a Connect Group - sign ups start today, by the way - and the person who had been hosting your group for the last few years has decided to step down for a season. And as a group, you decide to take up a collection and get them a little gift for their faithful hospitality over the years. Now is that grace? Yes and no. Because on the one hand you are not obligated to do that. When you signed up for the group, that wasn't an understanding. It wasn't a responsibility or a requirement. So it's unobligated on your part, but he or she *is* deserving of it. So it's not pure grace.

Case four: You have a neighbor who is a total louse. When you host a Connect Group he complains to the HOA about all the cars. But every game day he has a party with *twice* as many cars on the street and they leave beer cans strewn in your yard afterwards. And when he gets sick...you run errands for him. You bring meals over to him. He doesn't deserve it. You're under no obligation morally or legally. *That's* grace.

And here is the doctrine of grace: No human being is so good they don't need grace, and no human being is so bad they can't find grace. It's a *leveler*. The doctrine of grace *absolutely* destroys spiritual manic depressiveness because those who feel like, "Look what I've achieved," you need grace. You haven't achieved what you need to. And those who have failed, you've *got* grace. The Westminster Confession of Faith includes a summary of what the Bible teaches.

There is a great line that says, "Just as there is no sin so small but it deserves damnation, so there is no sin so great that it can bring damnation on those who truly repent."

The gospel of grace humbles you to the ground and it lifts you to the heavens at the very same instance. That's what Jonah comes to understand in **v. 4** when he says, "*I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.*" There is an "and yet" in the heart of anybody who understands grace. "I was in this condition, *and yet* you heard me. My life was a wreck, *and yet* you embraced me." The doctrine of grace is God receives you *not* because of what is in your heart, but because of what is in *His* heart.

Grace is favor granted to an *undeserving* person by an *unobligated* giver. And the reason you have to understand both of these two components, is I have found, not only in my own life but in the lives of people I've worked with over the years, usually, one or the other of those components is missing in the brain. For example, there are some people who have a very shallow view of their need. They don't see themselves as really being all that bad off. They don't see themselves as all that needing of forgiveness and pardon and help. So you ask, "Have you ever repented?" And they say, "I don't have anything to repent *of*. I'm doing fine. Better than most." So they have too shallow a grasp of their need.

Other people mine the depths of unworthiness, “Oh, I’m so unworthy after all of the bad things I’ve done,” but they have too shallow a view of God’s love. They don’t understand the depths of God’s commitment. They understand their need, but they’re convinced they’re too bad for God to love and accept.

And what’s ironic is those two kinds of people - people with too shallow a view of their own need or too shallow a view of God’s love and commitment to them - as different as those kinds of people are, here’s how they’re the same. When you say to *either* of those people, “Jesus gave his life for you,” they might even agree, but it doesn’t *change* them. It doesn’t transform them. Internally, it doesn’t reconfigure their self-understanding. Externally, there’s none of that fruitfulness that Paul says should be spreading throughout the world when one has “truly understood God’s grace.”

But then, *because* God loves you...He sends a fish. Something comes into your life and you begin to see, “I’m weaker than I thought. I’m more cowardly than I thought. I’m more superficial than I thought.” You’re humbled by it. There are a hundred ways in which what has happened in our lives has been humbling us. But eventually we reach the depths. And notice, for Jonah, it’s not *just* hitting rock bottom that ends his ordeal. He cries out. He prays. He finally turns to God.

And that brings us to the **second question, How do you receive grace?** Now you see, we’ve just said grace is not something you can earn; it’s something you receive. Well how do you receive it? There *is* something you have to do to *release* God’s grace into your life. See when Jonah says “*Salvation comes from the Lord*”, that literally says “flows from the Lord” – it’s the picture of a river of grace whose headwaters are at the throne of heaven. But, like a busy beaver, we can dam up the flow of grace. Hmm, maybe that’s what “damnation” means!

Look what Jonah did to set himself free. He is very explicit about it, I love the power of **v. 8**, he says, “*Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.*” That is an incredible principle. A foundational principle. If you want to see the depth of your sin, don’t just say, “Oh, I know I’m bad. I mean, the preacher told me I was bad.” That’s too general. Nobody feels sinful *in general*. Instead, when you see specific idols, things that are in your life that are more important than God that are blocking the grace of God in your life, *that’s* when you have an opportunity to smash that idol, because that idol is forfeiting a certain amount of grace. It’s keeping the grace of God from flowing in your life.

Let me give you a couple of examples. The most important idol to smash, the one we have to continually smash because it tends to grow back, is self-righteousness. We said in week one that this is Jonah's chief problem. Do you know what self-righteousness is? It's feeling God is obligated to you. You do not understand the doctrine of grace as long as you think God is obligated to you. That God owes you something.

And there are plenty of subtle ways for us to feel that way. Some of us in very obvious ways say, "My record, my performance, the good deeds I've done, and the fine, upstanding citizen I've been...I *deserve* something from God, at least to hear my prayers and certainly to let me into heaven." That's an idol. *Or* if you believe, "When I look around, most people, if God is like a fair teacher and grades on a curve, hey I'm better than a whole lot of people," that's an idol.

*Or* if you believe you had such a rough life and a far rougher life than a lot of people who are more immoral than you and yet seem to have had a much easier road of it, and underneath that makes you feel like God owes you something, that's an idol. You might think self-righteous people are braggarts and snobs, and of course yeah, that's true. They are. But I'll tell you this, you can be a sad, self-doubting, broken person and be eaten up with self-righteousness. Smash the idol or you'll forfeit the grace that could be yours.

You *cannot* experience the grace of God. It can't thrill you. It can't electrify you. It can't comfort you unless you see He doesn't owe you. And as long as you feel, "God *owes* me!" that's an idol that blocks the grace of God in your life – it dams the river of grace. You know religion can be a big idol. Huge! You can worship Christianity - if you come to church, you're very busy with Christian activities, you're constantly doing all kinds of things, and you hold on to them like life rafts. They make you feel clean. They make you feel like, "God surely has to do something for me. Look at how hard I'm working at all these things." Probably nobody struggles with this one more than *pastors*! That's a big part of Jonah's trouble. Smash the idol, or you'll forfeit the grace that could be yours.

Of course, there's a flip side to the religious/moral idolatry and that's to make an idol out of things that you know aren't moral. You know it's a sin. You *know* it's wrong to cling to money the way you do; you *know* you shouldn't be self-medicating – getting drunk on wine rather than drunk on the Spirit – whatever form "wine" takes for you; you *know* you shouldn't be using sex to feel...alive, powerful, loved, whole, whatever. A thousand different things. You know it's a sin...but it gives you meaning when your life looks dull and gray. It picks you up. It makes you feel better. It's a false god, you see. It's an idol. You know it's wrong, and yet...

My friends, smash it because *every* false god will let you down. And no false god can ever guarantee tomorrow. It can never satisfy. Remember last week? If it's in the boat with you, it's going to sink with you. So though it gives you meaning today, eventually it can't give you what the Heavenly Father can give you, and that is absolute certainty about tomorrow. Listen, smash the idols, or you forfeit the grace that could be yours.

Will you look at your life? Will you see what's there? In **Judges 10:16** it says, "*Then they got rid of the foreign gods among them...*" – they literally smashed their idols "*...and served the Lord. And he could bear Israel's misery no longer.*" Do you see that? When they smashed their idols, God could bear their misery no longer. When you smash your idols – when you break the dam - God's love and the waters of His grace explode with power in your life.

And so the first thing Jonah was doing was he was looking at idolatry. He was thinking about the depth of his sin. And when you look at your idols and you smash them and see the things you use there that are more important than God, that will enable you to experience His grace when you confess that. But there is the other side. Diagnosis is step one, but diagnosis without cure is no help. "Good news, we've discovered what you're going to die of! Great."

It's not enough just to look at the depth of your sin, because if that's *all* you do, that's not going to help you be invigorated by grace.

You also have to see the lengths to which God's grace has gone – you have to see the heights. You've got to go *down*, but you have to look *up*. Look at Jonah's pattern, **v.4**. "*I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'*" Where do you always build a temple? On the high point...up. Or **v.6**, "*To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you brought my life **up** from the pit, O LORD my God.*" This is a perfect picture of true repentance and transformation – I was *down* in the pit, but I looked *up* to the Temple. The Temple is the key.

I want you to listen carefully to this. Jonah knew something: God's grace was not cheap grace. In other words, God's grace doesn't come like this: God does not look down from heaven and say, "Well boys will be boys. Prostitutes will be prostitutes. Prophets will be prophets. I am not rigid about these things. Come on in." If you think that's what grace is, if you think grace is basically tolerance, you will never be transformed by it. It won't thrill you. There's nothing amazing about that grace.



Look, you don't see Jonah saying, "Oopsies! I broke my oath, but could you just let it go?" He doesn't do that. We don't have much hope in the world if God just lets things go; just lets evil go, lets sin go, lets lying go, lets hypocrisy go. On the other hand, he doesn't say, "Therefore, there's *no* hope." He looks to the temple. Why? Because the temple is the place of sacrifice.

Now, before somebody says, "Oh yeah. I always hated that about the temple. Animal sacrifice, slaughtering of animals. How primitive. I'm glad we're beyond that," well let me ask you to consult your own experience on something. When you watch something evil on the news. Or more personally, when someone really, really wrongs you, don't you see yourself caught in a kind of conundrum? Here's what I mean.

On the one hand, if you *don't* forgive, if you just vent your hatred, if you just let it all out, vengeance, hatred, pummel the evildoer, the enemy, the next thing you know, you find you've spread the evil. I mean, do we have a clearer example than the last two weeks? Iranian bad guys kill a couple of our soldiers. We assassinate Iranian leader. They launch rockets at our base. We threaten to bomb their cultural sites. They, mistaking it for promised missile, accidentally shoot down a civilian airline killing 176 souls, devastation we can't even begin to grasp yet.

You might take the evildoer out, but you haven't taken the evil out at all. If you don't forgive, evil wins. Now granted, foreign policy is complicated. But just personally – in your life - it's all over the place. There are all sorts of awful things done to you. It has hurt you. So you hurt the person. Then all of his friends are after you and all of your friends are after all of them, and on it goes.

If you don't forgive, evil wins, *but* if you just let it go, if you just say, "Oh, that's all right. Don't worry about it. We follow the Princess Elsa foreign strategy - Let it go!" evil wins again. I mean if someone wrongs you badly and you say, "Oh, I'm not going to say anything; I'm not going to do anything about it," that person is out there free to live his life in the world. Is that good for the world? Is it good for all of the other people who are ever going to be in his path that you've said nothing, done nothing? Is it good for the perpetrator, even?

Here's the conundrum; If you just forgive, evil seems to win, but if you take vengeance, evil seems to win too. It's an age old tension. And God's solution is sacrifice. And that's why Jonah looks to the temple, because in the temple he realizes, on the one hand - in the temple with all that blood and guts and all the stuff you hate, here's one thing the temple taught him. Sin is taken seriously there.

Brief description of the temple sacrificial system in Judaism. At the center of the Temple was a room called the Holy of Holies and in that room was the Ark of the Covenant. Inside the Ark was the original stone tablets upon which the finger of God had inscribed the Ten Commandments – the Law. The Law that demands a life of compassion, integrity, courage, purity, generosity, and self-sacrifice. And we all know we fall short, but over the law was a flat golden shelf – the lid of the Ark – called the mercy seat. And once a year on Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement – the High Priest would enter and pour out the blood of an animal sacrifice – not any old animal, but a perfect animal – pour it out on the mercy seat above the law.

By the way, do you know what scripture Jews read *to this very day* on the high holy day of Yom Kippur – the day of national and personal repentance? They read the Book of Jonah! Because somehow Jonah knew that the Temple means sin is taken seriously. Blood is shed, but it's *not* the blood of the sinner. Jonah looked up to the Temple because he saw that somehow God is going to deal with this horrible mystery in the midst of injustice. If I just forgive it, evil wins, but if I just make them pay, evil wins.

And yet we *know* what Jonah only *sensed*. Because in the New Testament book of Hebrews, the author says all those Temple sacrifices were just a “shadow and a dim preview” of what was to come. **Hebrews 10:4-5 NLT**, “*For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. That is why, when Christ came into the world, he said to God, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But you have given me a body to offer.”* There’s no way Jonah could have understood it, but he was acting out, for our benefit, the great mystery of the gospel of grace.

Just as Jonah was voluntarily thrown into the stormy sea – we saw last week - to save the sailors, so Jesus Christ, the Son of God, voluntarily had himself thrown into an ocean of eternal justice. He became the substitutionary sacrifice. He paid our sins so that God can be both just and justifier, so God can forgive us and yet not just say, “Well, evil doesn’t matter.” This is the heartbeat of the gospel.

And Jonah gets just a whiff of it as he’s looking to the temple. By the way, he’s not just *thinking* about the temple. He’s not saying, “Ah yes, the sacrificial system depicts the doctrine of propitiation.” That’s not what he’s doing. He’s saying, “I’m *looking* to it. I’m yearning for it. I see some kind of severe costly mercy there.” And how Jonah looks to the Temple is how we must look to the cross.

When you think of the freeness of God's grace to you, you're learning, but when you *sense* – when it goes from you mind to your affections - the costliness of God's grace – it cost Him his beloved Son! – *then* your heart is beginning to be transformed. You're beginning to yearn for him. You're not just knowing about grace; you're loving grace. You're starting to appreciate grace. You're starting to have your hearts drawn out toward it. You're starting to be changed.

Do you know how to receive grace? You have to admit the depths of your sin, and you have to trust the substitute, Jesus Christ. Those two things together. Unless you see the depth of your sin, what Jesus did for you will not thrill you. Unless you *see* what Jesus Christ did for you, you will not have the strength to admit the depths of your sin. When you put the two together, there is a chemical reaction. That's the explosion that blows apart the dam and releases the flow of grace in your life.

**Well lastly, How do you know the grace of God is in your life?** And I only can say a brief word. Just look at this in Jonah. Two things happen to Jonah. When the grace of God is in your life, externally you lose all of your bigotry and your cynicism about messed up people and internally you become a person of joy and freedom. Look, on the one hand, Jonah says in **v. 8**, “*Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the **grace** that could be theirs.*” That word “grace” there is the word Hebrew word *chesdh*,

Now *chesdh* is a word that means “covenant love.” Sometimes it's translated “loving-kindness”. But it means permanent, unconditional love God gives to the people with whom He has a covenant. But see, back then, as far as Jonah knew, the only people with whom God had a covenant were the Hebrews. Therefore, the astounding thing he's really saying in verse 8 is, “I realized those idol-worshippers, those pagans I so despised, those people in the boat who were worshiping their little statues, those people up in Nineveh I so despised...I realized God's covenant love is as much theirs as it is mine. That my self-righteousness was keeping grace from me, just like their idol worship keeps grace from them, but grace is as much theirs as mine. I'm no better than they are.”

And that's the reason he's finally willing to go to the people he despised. So one of the markers of grace in your life – one of the proofs – is you no longer look down on people like you used to. One of the biggest indicators of having **received** grace is being able to **give** grace. Some of you struggle with it. Some of you say, “I can't believe that in God's eyes there is virtually no difference, that I, a respectable person, need God's grace just as much as a vicious criminal or an immoral reprobate.” The just shows that you still haven't gotten a grip on the doctrine of God's grace.

Because if you believe in basically a religion of self-effort, if you believe you pulled yourself up spiritually, then you look at a failure and you say, “Pull yourself up! Get yourself together, man. What’s wrong with you?” But a gracious Christian looks at a wretched person, a distressed person, or a broken person looks and says, “Hey, I must look worse to God than he looks to me. And look what God did in my life. So God can help this person, too.”

Your cynicism is gone. You are *not* cynical about people’s ability to change if you know *anything* about yourself being a sinner saved by grace. Your cynicism is gone. Your superiority is gone. Your attitude toward other people around you is your heart goes out to them in hope. And if it doesn’t, you’re either not a Christian, or like Jonah, you’re a person to whom grace is just an intellectual entity and it’s never captured the depths of your soul.

And secondly, you see now internally, Jonah is a man of tremendous joy and thanksgiving. He says, **v.9**, “*But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good...*” His guilt is gone. Some of you say, “You don’t know how big my sin is.” The Bible says, “God is an infinite God and God’s grace is an infinite grace.”

My friends, don’t you also see there is joy when you understand grace? Because no longer are you worried about your performance. You’re not always looking at yourself. You’re not always feeling self-conscious about where you are. You become a fearless person now because the only thing that matters, the only acceptance you need – God’s acceptance - you have. And every other thing in life becomes negotiable. They’re good, but they’re no longer idols. You can use them, but they no longer use you. You become fearless people without being aloof people. You become the most approachable people of all – not too low and not too high.

Listen, “Salvation comes from the LORD.” It’s not partly from Him and partly from you; it’s *all of Him*. Does somebody here say, “I’m not worthy of him?” You still don’t get it! He *is* your worthiness. Does somebody say here, “I wish God was in my life, but I don’t see Him working in my life?” You still don’t get it, do you? If you want God, He is already working in your life, friends. Don’t give yourselves too much credit. Your desire for him, even your sense of your own sin, is grace! He *is* working in your life. Smash your idols. Trust the substitute. Swim in the river of grace because...“Salvation comes from the LORD.”

Let’s pray...