

Jonah's Prayer

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[0:00] Previously on Jonah, it's not just about the fish. It's about sin. It's about a guy hearing God's voice.

And God telling him, hey, go to the nation that are going to kill you and go and preach the gospel to them so they can be saved. And Jonah's like, what? If I do that, then they're going to kill us.

Then my people, Jonah, being a highly partisan nationalist, that doesn't agree with him. And I ask you the question, do you want to hear God's voice? Like legit, for real.

Do you want to hear God's voice regardless of whatever it might mean? Do you want to? I think on the surface, we say yes until we actually hear him tell us what he wants to tell us.

And we're like, oh, maybe I'll pretend I can hear that. Maybe it'll be selective hearing because what you're calling me to do, I don't really want to do. And then, of course, he runs away. He goes away from the presence of God and he goes down and then he goes down.

[0:57] Then he goes down into the boat and then there's a storm. God uses a storm to wake him up. God uses a storm to show him that actually God does whatever he wants to do.

That first song was one of my favorite songs. Sovereign over us. This idea that actually God is in complete control. He's the one who spoke to Jonah and said, hey, go to that enemy nation and go and save them. He's the one that then was there in the boat.

He was the one that was there that then started the storm. He was the one that then calmed the storm. He was the one that then appointed the big fish. But of course, let's not get distracted by the fish because the book of Jonah is not about a fish.

It's about sin. It's about people not trusting God, which is really what sin is. Sin is going to God and saying, I know what you're saying. I know what you're feeling, but I don't trust you.

I don't trust you. I might say I trust you. I might sing about trusting you. But in reality, I don't know. I think I know what's best. So I'm going to run away. That's really sin. And so now we reach chapter two.

[1:55] And it's a fascinating passage here because, of course, there is the fish that gets appointed. Let's not look over that. But God has the power to whisper to a great fish in the ocean and say, hey, there's a guy who's currently swimming, just floating in the ocean.

And I want you to go pick him up. I want you to go pick him up. And he's going to, it's like an Uber ride. You're going to pick him up. And then you turn into an Airbnb for three days and three nights. And then I'll tell you where to go.

God can tell fish that. Just can we just let's not get distracted by it. But also let's not just get lost on the fact that this is this is God. He's sovereign. He can do whatever he wants. And finally, we get to hear a little bit more from Jonah.

Because right up until now, he doesn't really speak much. God speaks to him and he runs away.

He's trapped in the storm. And then the sailors go, hey, why aren't you crying out to your God? Why isn't your private faith of any public good?

Why aren't you helping us? And what does Jonah do? Nothing. Doesn't speak at all until they cast lots. And then they find out that it's actually him. And then he's like, okay, it's me.

[2:57] Guilty as charged. But I'm not going to die without being defiant. You guys can pick me up and throw me into the sea. Because I would rather die than get to do what God is telling me to do. And so he gets thrown into the sea.

And then the whale or the great fish comes. And finally, he speaks. And finally, there's a prayer.

And finally, we get to see a little bit of his heart. As we're in chapter two, we're actually pivoting into essentially the second half of the book now.

There's only four chapters. But we get to see a little bit more. And this is where it's exciting, where it does unfold like a TV drama. Because finally, the idiot prophet speaks. Finally, the rebellious runaway prophet shares what's on his heart.

Don't we want to find out what it is? And I want to invite you, as you read it, the one thing I'll say is this. Everything's not quite as it seems. Just to kind of heighten the drama here. Everything is not quite as it seems.

So we're going to read chapter two. I'm going to invite you to stand for the word of the Lord. We stand because it's what we're reading is something different.

[4:05] Not just a nice poem written by any person. These are the words of God. And however inconvenient it is, however hard it is to get up from the cushions on the floor, we stand because we are just filled with reverence and respect for what this word actually means.

So Lord, would you soften our hearts? Would you open our ears and our hearts to receive your word today as we hear Jonah's prayer? Jonah chapter two. 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'm driven away from your sight, yet I shall again look upon your holy temple. The waters closed in over me to take my life. The deep surrounded me. Weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains.

I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever. Yet you brought up my life from the pit. Oh Lord, my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.

[5:15] 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 I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land. This is the word of the Lord. Please take a seat. Thank you. As you hear that prayer, I'm just going to move this slightly out of the way, so I can see the rest of you guys.

As you hear that prayer, what does it remind you of? There's another part of the Bible, there's another book in the Bible that it just seems to just reflect. Where is that? What does it remind you of as you hear his prayer?

It reminds you of a psalm. This is a prayer that he finally speaks. After being silent for so long, he finally speaks, and he utters out this psalm.

Of course, he's trapped in the belly of the fish. Now, which is actually quite a terrible thing if you think about it. If you think about this fishy story and being in this very fishy surrounding for three days and three nights, this is not a pleasant experience.

[6:18] And finally, he speaks. And when he speaks, he actually speaks basically the psalms. But what it is is actually not just his own words.

Actually, Jonah here is doing a bit of a mixtape. He knows the scriptures. He knows the psalms.

And he's basically, from his memory, basically quoting different parts.

And he's creating a mixtape of the different psalms that he knows. And basically, compiling them into his own prayer. And just when we think, oh, man, getting swallowed up by a fish is bad. Here's the interesting thing.

The fish is the thing that saves him. Because actually, without the fish, he's gone. He's dead. The fish is the thing that saves him. Which really sums up the whole book of the Bible. Salvation. Salvation through judgment. The judgment that Christ took for us. And so we're going to look at that and see what it actually means. Now, I want to do a little vote, just quickly. Sorry. Jonah's not been great so far. But we're hoping for a redemption story.

[7:17] Just as we're watching any TV series, we're hoping that some bad guy eventually will break bad and turn good. And we hope that the good guys don't turn bad. Right now, this is a pivot moment of the story. As you read the psalm, as you hear about this psalm, who's convinced here that Jonah has actually learned his lesson and he's going to have a change of heart and become a good guy?

Put your hand up if you think he's going to be a good guy. Sounds like a good psalm. So, therefore, he's turning into a good guy. Who thinks he's actually quite skeptical and cynical? And you don't

think he's actually learned his lesson, even though he's in the belly of the fish.

Put your hand up if you think he's a bad guy. That's interesting. And as we look, okay, we take a peek into the story. Then he does go to Nineveh and he does do that. And we'll talk a little bit more about that next week.

But what we see here in his prayer, I think, is really interesting. And I want to focus on one thing today, which is sin. Sin. When you choose to run away from God, what it actually means. The first thing is the life of sin essentially is the life of descent.

You see, the moment he chooses to go away from God, he goes down. He goes down to Joppa. He goes down to the pier. He goes down to the boat. And when he's in the boat, he's in a storm. And then he has to get thrown down into the ocean. Everything is down.

[8:24] What this reminds me is that actually when we choose the life of sin, it is a slippery slope. Have you been there? Have you been there when actually you don't want to end up in that bad place, but you don't end up choosing straight away that thing.

You choose the small thing first that ends up leading there. Sin is a slippery slope like that.

Something that's broken my heart these last few years is we've heard time and time again, every few months, there's a church leader.

There's a church pastor who falls to scandal and has been hiding something for years. And then it only just comes about later in life or even after they pass away.

Actually, I was reflecting on this with Aaron the other time. And I was like, man, how do you end up there? Or rather, how do I not end up there? And then we're reflecting. We're like, you know what? I don't think any of those leaders or any of those pastors set off at the beginning of their careers and say, I'm going to head there.

That's where I'm going to be. I'm going to live a life of deceit and sin and cover up and hypocrisy whilst I try and lead a church and point people to God. No. How's it happen?

[9:29] One small decision at a time. One slippery slope step that you make that ends up in the place. And often the first one is a completely harmless one.

A completely harmless one. You think, oh, it's not really right or wrong. And then you make one move. But then before you know it, that leads to the next thing, leads to the next thing, leads to the next thing. Sin is, the life of sin is a life of descent.

You see this. Verse 2, he says, if you've got your Bibles, please follow. Verse 2, he says, out of the belly of Sheol, which is the very bottom. He can't get anymore. It's the depths of hell there.

So he starts off by going down to Joppa, by going down to the pier. And he ends up in the depths of hell. Sometimes when we're at home and we make the small choices and we think, oh, it's an innocent small decision that I'm making right here.

It doesn't really mean much. When I go reach for my Bible or when I go reach for my remote control, it's really a harmless thing. But you see, all these small decisions actually play a part. And when you choose the life of sin, you end up choosing a life of descent and it heads down and down and down.

[10:32] Maybe just stop here and ask you, just in your mind, are you making any small decisions? Because it's always easier. As I said the other time, the devil provides transportation when you want to run away from God. It's easier.

The remote control is always closer than your Bible. Your phone is always closer than your Bible.

The icon for your app that you want to go on is always more attractive than the YouVersion Holy Bible app. It always looks more interesting to do something else.

What's the small decision you're making? Have a think. And I'm going to put you on the spot here. Have a think. What decision are you making right now on a daily basis that actually seems neutral but it takes you down a certain place?

For people who struggle with lust and temptations, you don't end up there straight away. There's always a pattern. There's always a route. There's always the first video that you watch. There's always something else. You start off with a video about cats and then you end up in a video all the way looking at something else.

What's the small decision that you're making that leads you down that slippery slope? Because I'll tell you this. If you want to get rid of that, then you start with the small thing.

[11:37] You start with the small thing because once you get all the way to the end, that's just the momentum is there and you're just going to keep going down. He goes down to the belly of Sheol. Verse 3. He goes down into the deep, into the heart of the sea.

The flood surrounds him. Why does God hate us choosing sin so much? Because it leads to death. He hates it. He hates sin because he loves us because he knows that every time we choose that road, it's a slippery slope that one, gets us further away from him and two, ends up in death. Romans 8. For to set the mind on the flesh leads to death. Where to set your mind on the spirit leads to life and peace. The life of sin is a life of descent.

What's one small decision that you can make? There is hope here though. As he goes down this slippery slope, actually through this whole book, what it tells me, the one thing it tells me is even if you are at rock bottom, if you have lost everything that you've ever loved, if you've made every single mistake that you know you shouldn't have made, and you are completely rock bottom, there is hope for you because that means the only way is up.

You can't go further down. It means there is only one direction you can go and that is up. And God, even the Assyrians, even the people who were the most evil empire in the whole history of mankind, with the values of ISIS and the power of the US, God still wanted to save.

[12:57] Does that speak to any of you? Have any of you gone to so far away from God that you don't feel as though you deserve any of his attention at all? This is for you then. Because that rock bottom place, God's not even scared of.

Jonah ended up there. He picked one small decision that ended up going all the way down. He's at the rock bottom and yet God still tries to save him. Tim Keller says this, that you don't realize that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have.

You don't realize Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have. For those of us who have been to that rock bottom where you have lost everything and you know that your life is just, has no hope. Often it's at that moment where Jesus comes in. It's often at that moment where you realize that actually Jesus is all you need. But when we haven't hit rock bottom, we're still in that kind of lukewarm complacent stage and that's just as dangerous.

This life of sin leads into the life of dissent. You're just kind of muddling in the middle. You don't even realize where you're at. You don't realize that you're actually drowning. Where are you? Every small decision we make is basically contributing to who we're becoming.

[14:06] So every time you have a decision to make, which way shall I go? What shall I watch? What shall I do? Who shall I hang out with? Who shall I spend more time with? Every single decision that you make contributes to who you are becoming.

Who are you becoming? If we've got a catalog of all your small decisions, which direction is it pointing in? Is it going up or is it going down? Does it have a think about that? Because sin is a slippery slope.

The life of sin is a life of dissent. And then the next point that I have to make, and I've only really got two points here today. The life of sin is a life of delusion. Have you been there where you're sinning?

Again, the sinning word sounds so Christian-y and so cheesy and cringy. When you're just running away from God. When you're just like, God, I know what I should do, but I'm not doing it. And I know what I shouldn't do, but I'm going to do it.

By the way, if you're in that spot, which often we all are, Romans 7 is your comfort. Because even the great apostle Paul, the greatest church pastor in the world, his words were, what I should do, I don't do.

[15:04] And what I shouldn't do, I do do. What a wretched being I am. That's Paul. That's Paul that's saying this. But here's the problem. When you choose sin, often, and I've seen this happen time again, and it breaks my heart.

Especially, let's say, with young people who enter into some kind of relationship with someone who, who know they really shouldn't be spending that much time with, and yet it happens, whether it's friends or girlfriend or boyfriend.

And suddenly, everyone else is wrong. And suddenly, it's them against the world. Have we been there? Have we seen that? The life of sin is a life of delusion.

And I want to show you why through the book of Jonah here. He says, verse 2, if you're following. He finally prays. He's in the belly of the fish, and he prays, and he says, I called out to the Lord out of my distress.

You did? You called out to God. When the sailors were coming to you and saying, what are you doing? Why are you asleep? Why are you here? Well, whose problem is this?

[16:06] You didn't call out. You stayed quiet. When you were exposed through casting lots, and we realized that you were the problem, you didn't say anything. You said, pick me up and hurl me into the sea. You didn't call out to God.

Finally, now you say that you call out to God. Verse 4, then I said, I am driven away. Another version says, I am banished. Wait, you're banished, Jonah? You think you were banished? You were running away. Can you see that? Suddenly, even in his mind, as he's praying to this guy, and as he's quoting this mixtape of Psalms, you can see that actually his story is starting to get a little bit twisted into his own mind.

What he's actually saying here, what he thinks actually happened here. The life of sin is a life of delusion because you start turning your story of events. You start thinking that other people are against you. You start thinking that God is against you.

God did not banish him. God's been pursuing him. He's the one who's been running away. Do you have that? I had that. There was a young guy that I used to walk with and spend so much time with, of course, and then he found someone.

[17:10] And then suddenly, we didn't agree, or the whole community agreed. And then suddenly it becomes, and you can hear this story. This happens time and time again. Later on, they'll leave the church, and then they'll be like, oh, yeah, that church looks so judgmental, so this and so that.

Have we seen that? Have we heard that? Have we said that ourselves? When really, when we choose a life of sin, often, we are on just a path of delusion ourselves, where we're trying to be in denial. Now, I'm not saying that every church is filled with grace and without judgment.

The church needs to do a better job when we meet people, face people, who are making decisions that we don't agree with, where we can still call them out in truth, in love and with grace.

And we shouldn't be judgmental in any way. We're all sinners. We're all blind. We're all lost. We're all cripples. Can you see what happens when you choose a life of sin?

You start getting it twisted in your own mind. You start thinking that it's other people's problems. Are you in any problem right now? Are you treading water in the ocean right now, and you're actually attributing it to everyone else?

[18:14] Are you doing what Jonah's doing here, where he's getting his story twisted? Because if you are, then there's a simple reminder for you. Hey, it's okay. You may be heading to rock bottom.

You may feel like you're drowning. It may even be your fault, but it's okay. Our God is bigger than that. Our God is sovereign, and he loves you, and he's trying to save you. He's trying to save you. Don't fight him. He did not drive you away.

He did not banish you. You see, towards the end, now he does just do this psalm here. He basically has this collection of his own psalm, and psalms usually start off with the problem.

I was in distress, and I called out to you, and finally you saved me. Hooray, hallelujah, praise the Lord. That's usually what happens. Towards the end of his psalm is when you really start to see his heart is actually getting exposed, that actually his heart has not changed one bit.

He says this, verse eight, those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. Another version would be, those who cling on to worthless idols, they lose, they forsake their chance at hope.

[19:14] But I, but I, but I, Jonah, the great Jonah, the Hebrew, the Israelite, with the voice of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you what I have vowed I will pay.

Who's he talking about there? Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. He's not talking about himself. He's talking about the Assyrians. He's talking about the Ninevites.

He's talking about the pagan sailors. He's talking about all the other people who pay regard to all these other vain idols, these other gods that won't be able to save them. He's in the end of his psalm.

He's looking at them going, man, you guys know nothing. I'm the one who worships the God, the true God. I'm going to sacrifice to him. But you guys pay regard to these worthless idols. And because of that, you forsake your chance at hope.

You'll forsake your chance of steadfast love. What is steadfast love? The word there means loving kindness, means faithfulness. You don't get all the goodness that you've got in store for you because you're paying regard to these things.

[20:12] You're clinging onto these idols. And I'll ask the question again. We always need to ask this question. I always need to ask this question. What vain idols do I have? What are the things that I'm holding onto thinking that this is going to be the thing that saves me?

This is going to be the float that I have, my soap hole, this vain idol, this thing that actually ultimately will end up being useless. What are the things are you holding onto? Is it the number in your bank account?

Is it the job title that you have? Is it the relationship that you have? Is it the person that you know? Every day we have to surrender these things and go, God, man, without knowing, I've trusted in that.

How do you know you're trusting in the wrong thing when you see how it affects you when you lose it? How do you know when, actually, you've paid too much attention to this vain idol, which is relationship with people, approval with people, which is the moment someone who you want approval from sends you a message that makes you think that they don't like you, that just gets you all going and you suddenly, lo, lo, lo, lo, you don't know what to do with yourself and you're waiting for them to reply to you, you're waiting for them to come and see you just to make sure that you're okay with them.

Don't you have those moments? Or when you're worried about your job? Or when you're worried about your future? Things that you think that you can do to control when you realize, like, actually, you can't control anything.

[21:32] We're not sovereign. Only God is. So Jonah here looks at those people and says, ha, they're the problem. Interestingly, as you look at this psalm, he mentions the word I 23 times.

He's in the belly of the fish and he's doing basically a mixtape of psalms about himself. He's talking about himself constantly and how good he is.

This delusion that he has, that actually God was the one that took me here, it's not really my fault. I'll tell you one thing that you don't see in all of this. He says, sorry God. What you don't see is confession.

You see him blaming other people. You see him blaming other things. This is what I've often said. You can tell how close someone is to God by the way they talk to him.

You can tell how close two friends are or how close two sisters are by the way they talk to each other. Right? You can tell what's in your heart by the way that you pray.

[22:36] When was the last time you prayed? Growing up, most of us, we pray usually at least one time. If we're growing up in a Christian family, we'll pray one time and that is around the dinner table and it is a customary prayer that we've learned to recite which has no personal meaning whatsoever.

We're just so used to praying it and that's it. What does that tell you about your relationship with God? If I hung out with Aidan and Erica and all they said was the equivalent to that Chinese prayer at the dinner table, and that's all they said to each other, what would that tell me about their marriage?

Because Aidan is not a man of few words. He can speak lyrical for days so that's not going to be the problem. But how we speak to God, how we pray, will indicate to us how close we are to him or what we're actually thinking about.

If I did an audit of your prayer, now please don't feel conscious or insecure when I'm praying with you and you're like, man, James is just judging my prayer and what I'm saying, but I'm not, but maybe a little bit.

But man, I'll tell you what that does for me when I'm praying, even when I'm on my own, even when I'm praying with my kids, I'm like, actually, what picture of God am I painting to my kids when I'm praying with them? You know?

[23:57] And as pastor, I'm guilty. Sometimes when I'm praying for the kids at nighttime when they sleep, and to be honest, the majority of my mind is just going, Lord, please help them sleep. Please help them sleep straight through the night.

Please keep them quiet the rest of the night. Let us all have a good rest and let's all wake up and our snotty nose will be gone and our cough will be gone. Please. And I look back and I go, man, I think I'm painting a picture to them that God is just someone who will help them sleep, that they should sleep, that God wants them to sleep, otherwise they'll be in trouble if they don't sleep, and that actually, that God just is going to help them be healthy.

And that's it. We'll help them pass their exams. We'll help them get the job that they want. We'll help them get the life that they want. What's your prayer like?

Have a think. So I force myself when I'm praying, I'm like, God, I want to pray to you. I want to talk to you from the bottom of my heart. I want to be real to you. Because I want to share with you what's real on my heart.

What's on yours? Let's do a self-audit of our prayers because that is so important. He doesn't confess at all. In fact, when he says, but I, with the voice of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you what I have vowed, I will pay.

[25 : 11] He's saying, God, those people, those pagans, those unholy people, they do this. They have no hope. They're going to die. But I, from the belly of this fish, I will sacrifice to you.

And you know what God's saying? God's saying, man, 1 Samuel 15, he's saying, it's better to obey than to sacrifice. I don't need your sacrifice. I don't need all your things. I don't need your sorry, not sorry.

If you love me, you'll obey me. That's what Jesus said. Why? Because you'll obey me because you trust me. And you trust me because you love me. That's what I'm after. Not just this.

Have you been there when you've had an argument with someone? I have, and I can safely say this because Christina can't hear as she's teaching the kids right now. I've been there as a husband.

Have you prayed? No, not you prayed. I haven't prayed to my wife.

That will be heresy. Have you said sorry to your wife, but you're not actually sorry? Yes. Who just said that? Danny. Every day.

[26 : 13] Whoa. Spicy. I've done it. John, you've done it. And I'll tell you what the sorry is.

Oh, man. I'm sorry you feel that way. I'm sorry that you're so immature that you can't see above my higher reasoning and my higher level of love.

I'm sorry that you're in this emotional mess right now. But honestly, I'm not really sorry. I'm just sorry that we're having this conversation right now when I could be playing 2K.

But instead, I'm sitting here trying to reconcile. I am literally sorry that we're here. But I'm not sorry about you. I'm not sorry about what I did. I think that's what Jonah's doing here.

It's just like, man, it sucks that I'm in the belly of the fish. And that's all I'm sorry for. Have you been there? I think as a church, as Christians, we've lost the art of confession.

[27 : 15] We've lost the art of going, man, when we just own up and just go, man, I am sorry because I did something wrong. And so I repent and I turn around and I change my ways.

That's a different kind of sorry. Jonah does not have that kind of sorry. We don't talk about confession because often we don't like talking about sin. We don't like talking about sin because we don't want to repent because we don't really want to change our ways.

But we have to talk about repentance. We have to talk about sin because there is grace. There's a quote that says this. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says this, cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance.

Baptism without discipline. Communion without confession. Absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship. Grace without the cross. Grace without Jesus Christ.

We must learn to confess. We must learn to repent because sin is serious because sin kills. It leads to death. But God hates sin because of that death. And so he calls us to repentance.

[28 : 13] What is repentance? These Christian-y words, repentance, it just means turn around. Turn around. Where you're going is going downhill and you'll end up in the bottom of the ocean. Turn around.

That's all he's saying. When sometimes we picture that guy, that crazy guy standing on the street with his big wooden board saying repent for the kingdom of God is near. And it just sounds so crazy. It's just a father telling his children, turn around.

If you run out onto that road, that bus will kill you. That's all he's saying. It's about relationship. It's about saying, come back around. But we have to learn to turn around because if we don't turn around, then we will get killed.

Does that make sense? We have to learn confession. We have to learn repentance. And it finishes with this. What I vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

Scholars have said that's the key verse in the whole of this book. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

Why? Because he's the one in complete control. He's the one that firstly spoke to Jonah at the very beginning. He's the one that was with him in the ocean.

[29:19] He's the one that sent the fish. Everything. Jesus saves is what it's saying. Scholars will also say this isn't just the central line for this book. This is the central line of this whole book.

Salvation belongs to God. That we are people who are heading down, who are drowning, and yet God comes to save us. That's it.

That's what that final verse is. Actually, he does get something right in his mixtape here. Verse six, he says this. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever. Yet you, yet you, brought me up.

Yet you came to save me. Years later, the apostle Paul will say this in Ephesians 2. We were dead in our sins. We were dead in the trespasses of our sins. We were following the course of this world. We were carrying out the desires of our flesh, but God, rich in mercy, because of the great love that he had for us, makes us alive again.

That pivot there, where we are, yet you, but God is the thing that turns it. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Jesus is the one who saves.

[30:29] In Acts 4, it says this, there is salvation in no one else. No one else can save but the name of Jesus. Jesus is the only one who dove into that ocean to save us, to bring us out of that storm and sacrificing his life whilst doing so.

The word Jesus himself, the root word, is Yeshua. Which means Jesus saves. Do you recognize that? That Jesus has saved you? Or do you still think that you're trying to save yourself?

In your very admirable, noble pursuits to being a good person, to being a good Christian, are you still trying to save yourself? I know my brother often likes to ask this question to people and he got it from somewhere else because he doesn't come up with these good things himself.

He asks people the question, hey, how do you know you're going to get into heaven? How do you know that you're going to get into heaven? Have a think now, what would your answer be? Just a moment of silence just to keep you on edge in case I might ask you.

Don't worry, I won't ask you. What is, your answer to that question will tell us whether you truly understand that Jesus saves. Because if you say, if I ask Danny, how do you know you're going to get into heaven?

[31:44] Don't worry, I'll answer for you. Yes. This is the only way I keep Danny awake, by the way. Because the alpha videos didn't do it.

KO'd, KO'd in the middle of the third one. He nearly got to the third round. If your answer to that question, how do you know you're going to get into heaven?

If your answer starts with I, you've lost. If it's, well, I think I'm a good person. Or, yeah, I go to church.

Oh yeah, I go and listen to sermons. I listen to worship music sometimes to keep me calm when I'm on the MTR and I'm filled and surrounded with crowds and people. If your answer starts with I, you've missed the point.

You've missed the point of this whole book. Salvation belongs to the Lord. The only way that you can get to heaven if it starts with Jesus. Because Jesus, yet you, but God, Jesus saved me.

[32:55] That's the only way. Do we truly understand that's what he's trying to get at here? See, Jonah, knows all the right words to say. He makes two theological confessions so far in these two chapters.

First of all, in chapter one, when they ask him who the heck he is, he says, I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land. This theological confession, which is like, it's like a creed.

Of course, it's all ironic because you fear the one who is in control of the sea and is currently responsible for this storm, which doesn't make sense at all. So that's his first confession. His second one talks about salvation belongs to the Lord.

It seems like he gets it. It sounds like he gets it, but we actually find out that he doesn't actually get it. Do you know the right words to say, but you don't actually truly understand the gospel? Do you pay lip service to God and you sing those songs, but you don't actually truly believe that you were drowning?

You actually think you're a decent person that actually you can make it to heaven yourself by being a decent person when the reality is no one is good. I'm not good.

[34:00] Definitely not good. Baby Micah, definitely not good. Incredibly sinful being right there. Cries whenever he gets, whenever he doesn't get what he wants.

Needs to sleep, but doesn't want to sleep. Don't you have that? I have that. If your answer starts with I, you've lost. But it starts with Jesus, then he's won.

You've won. That's what it is. Salvation belongs to the Lord. There is only one name. Don't just pay lip service and say that you trust in Jesus, but you actually don't really.

You still think that you can swim your way out of this trouble? That ain't gonna happen. There is no float that will save you from this deep storm in this deep ocean. Apart from Jesus himself.

But it starts with confession. And I want us to do the very thing that Jonah failed to do. To actually say sorry and actually mean it.

[35:00] Can we do that? Can we have a think about what that actually means? And I want to do this in two ways. If you are a visitor here and you're not plugged in and you don't know the people around you, then I want you just to make a confession in your own heart.

Now, at some point, it is of infinite worth and incredibly helpful for you to actually say out what it is that you're confessing. And it's not, look, and it's not a mysterious religious thing.

It's a, God, I'm sorry because I chose this. God, I'm sorry because I don't actually trust you. I've realized that now.

God, I'm sorry because I thought, I think that actually what people think of me is important, more important than what you think of me. God, I'm sorry because I'm holding on to my money too tightly when in reality that money came from you and can vanish in a second.

Whatever it is, I invite you just to confess it in your heart. That's the beginning of you being saved. We talked about this before, right? It's really hard for a lifeguard to save someone who's trying to fight their way to swim out of the ocean themselves.

[36:14] You just got to relax and let the lifeguard do the work, right? I think that's how it's working. If you're fighting, then you got to confess and you just got to let it go and do it in your heart.

We have a space for you to do that. But if you're sitting next to someone who actually you do know and you do trust, and I hope from the bottom of my heart that you have that someone here, otherwise all of this is pointless, honestly, then let's all just go home, stay at home, put on YouTube and watch a John Piper sermon.

If you have someone around you who actually you do trust, then can you share that with that person? And if someone shares something with you, can you actually respect that space, respect that person, don't judge that person because you're drowning too, and actually pray for that person. The book of James says confess your sins and be healed. Don't you want healing? Don't we all want healing? Whether it's on a physical level, on an emotional level, on a spiritual level. We all know deep down in our bodies and in our souls and in our hearts that something's not quite right, that we need the healing of Christ in there.

Confess your sins and be healed. So turn to the person next to you and go, man, I just want to confess this. Actually, even if I don't know you, I just want to, can I just say this out? It might even be better. You don't know my name, but this is my deepest sin.

[37:42] I truly believe that even as I'm speaking right now, I think you know exactly what I'm talking about. There are some here who know exactly what you need to let go and you've just not been letting it go. Repent.

Turn around. Let go. Let the lifeguard save you. Because he saved me. And he'll save you. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

And after that, we're going to have a time of communion. And this ties in with this. And I'm going to ask Johnny to help us do this. Communion for us is a way just to bring whatever it is that has been heavy on us and remind us that actually all of this has been dealt with by Christ.

And as a family, we do this together. So those are a few things that we're going to do and I'm going to invite the worship team. Sam, are you going to play the piano even with the carrier? Is that good? If not, I can... Can I invite you just to close your eyes and bow your heads and... Just ask the Lord what it is that you might need to confess.

[39:00] what it is that you might need to let go. confession sounds serious and Christian-y and...

but if you've got the heart of it that it's just he loves you and wants you to turn back to him. Spend a moment now and just...

bring it to him. And if you're not even quite sure what it might be, ask him. He'll tell you. Now if you have something in your mind and heart already that you know that you should confess...

can I ask you to maybe repeat after me and you can fill in the blanks yourself.

We say, Jesus, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm sorry for this.

[40:41] You can fill in the blanks yourself. I know that really is just because I've forgotten how good you are.

How much you love me. And I repent. And I turn around and run back towards you.

Because you are good. You do love me. And even if I hit rock bottom, your grace catches me.

And your grace is enough. Thank you, Lord, for saving me. It's in your name I pray.

Amen. Amen.