

Jonah #2: Full Surrender

by Ed Miller

The book of Jonah is about God's personal dealings with Jonah, transforming his heart from independent to dependent, and making him a sign of God's presence and purposes.

Duration: 1:08:11

Scripture: Jonah 1:1-10, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 12:39-40, Mark 16:17

Topics: "Full Surrender", "Gods Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker provides an outline for the book of Jonah, which he describes as the story of how God transforms Jonah's heart into a missionary heart. The book is divided into four chapters, each representing a different characteristic needed to be a sign for God. In chapter one, Jonah is brought to a place of full surrender to God. In chapter two, he grasps the pure grace of God. In chapter three, Jonah identifies with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Finally, in chapter four, Jonah is raised up to rest in the satisfaction of God's heart.

Transcript

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, I'll ask you to turn in your Bibles, please, to the book of Jonah, chapter 1. Wasn't that tremendous hearing those young people testify? Bless the Lord for what He does. I look back in my life, and at that age I didn't have a clue about the Lord or the things of the Lord. How precious.

How precious is the Lord. And then who's that other guy come up stealing all my thunder? As we come to the study of God's Word, there is a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable. Many things are helpful as you study the Bible, and I'm sure all of us have tapped into those helpful things--word studies and commentaries and atlases and book sermons and all kinds of helps.

But at the end of the day, and the bottom line is this, after all the academics, you had better get alone with the Lord and just cry out as a child and say, Lord, You teach me. Only God who has given us the revelation can reveal His Word to our hearts. And I'm not suggesting that we forget scholarship and study.

We need that. But if that's as far as we get, it's a waste of time. It leads to pride.

Knowledge puffs up. And so we need to see the Lord, and only God can reveal Himself to us. He's promised, if we would come as little children, that He would reveal these things to us.

He promised, if we came with our mouths open wide, that He would fill us. He promised to rain upon the dry ground and to cause it to spring forth. I'm going to ask you to join with me, please, as we commit this time to Him, and let's trust Him corporately for His mercy, corporately for His mercy, that He might dawn Christ upon us.

Let's pray. Our Father, we thank Thee again that You have not left us on our own as we study this precious book. But the very life of God, the Spirit of God, who searches the depths of God and reveals it unto us, is living in our hearts.

We know it's the Spirit's delight to unveil the Son of God. And so we would ask again, by Your grace, to give us the knowledge of God in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for every part of the Bible, but in a special way this evening, we thank You for Jonah chapter 1. And we'd ask You to dawn upon us the living Word.

And we ask it in the matchless name of our Lord Jesus. Amen. This morning I attempted to introduce to you this wonderful book of Jonah.

I'll not give a lot of review, but let me just mention again, restate the general impression of the book as a whole, just to get it before your heart so that we can go in the same direction. This morning I suggested three general observations about the book as a whole. I tried first of all to show you that the theme of the book revolves around the crisis which is taking place in the heart of the prophet Jonah.

God promised in Amos that He would always address a crisis through a prophet. In this case, the particular crisis is in the prophet's heart. There's no doubt in my mind that God was trying to deal with His own people Israel.

There's no doubt in my mind that God wanted to deal with Nineveh. But in order to do that, He deals with the crisis in the heart of Jonah. There's a good possibility that what was going on at the time of the revelation to Jonah was prophesied by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy.

Listen as I quote to you Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 21. Deuteronomy 32, 21 says, They have made me jealous by what is not God. They have provoked me to anger with their idols.

So I will make them jealous by those who are not a people. And I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. We know from Kings that Jonah lived at the time of Jeroboam II.

That was about 150 years after the split. That is after Israel and Judah split. We know from the Bible record what wicked days those were.

And how terrible Jeroboam II was. And in the days of that king, Israel turned in a wholesale way to idols. God addressed that crisis through Hosea the prophet.

I won't get into that now. But Moses prophesied that this would happen. If Israel ever turned to gods that were not God, then he would turn to a people that are not a people.

And by that means he would create a jealousy in the people of God. And there's no doubt in my mind that God was attempting to minister to his people Israel. They had turned to idolatry and God was making them jealous by reaching out to Nineveh.

That's not to say that God is just using Nineveh as show and tell. He also has a heart for them. And so God is reaching out to them.

But in order to reach his people and in order to reach Nineveh, and here we are thousands of years later and God's ministering to us by the same story. In order for God to reach the world, he had to deal with Jonah. That's the idea of the book.

It's God's personal dealing with the crisis that's going on in Jonah's heart. As I said this morning, I don't think God could have selected a more non-missionary missionary and a more anti-missionary missionary than he selected when he selected Jonah. And God's going to deal with that non-missionary, anti-missionary heart of his by transforming it into the missionary heart of God.

And that, I think, is what this book is all about. God is going to make a sign out of Jonah. The second observation we looked at this morning is connected with the first.

And that is that this book is full of miracle. And we talked about the physical miracles and the great moral miracle after the study in a little conversation Brother Burkhart came up to me. And he said, there's something in your message I disagree with.

And I sort of live a cloistered life. I'm up in Rhode Island and I'm locked in a room and I just live in this little... I don't have a world vision. I don't see what God is doing on the earth.

And our brother was sharing a testimony with me how on at least one occasion more than a million people came to the Lord at one time. Bobby Cannon was standing by and he heard the conversation. He said, that's not a contradiction, that's an update.

Well, exactly right. When I said this is the greatest moral miracle, it's easy to amend my notes. This is one of the greatest moral miracles that the Lord did.

I'm glad to hear He's saving more than that. I wish He'd saved the whole country at one time. But that's a great miracle.

But the great miracle in the book of Jonah, I still believe with all of my heart, is not all the physical miracles and the miracle with the fish, as great as it was. It's not the moral miracle of a half a million people turning to the Lord on one occasion. But it's the miracle that God did when He changed the heart of Jonah.

When He made a sign out of a prophet that was not a sign. That's the great miracle. And then the third observation, and we finished with this this morning.

I called attention to the great mercy of God. And I laid before you the great missionary Psalm 67. God blesses us.

God has mercy on us. God makes His face shine upon us. That His salvation might be known in all the earth.

God blesses Jonah in order to bless Nineveh, in order to bless the world. Now before we move into our new material tonight in chapter 1, let me suggest a little outline for the book. I'll give you a little more than I gave you this morning on that outline.

The entire book, as I understand it, is the story of how a merciful God takes a man like Jonah with a heart like His. And transforms that heart into the missionary heart of God, which we are expressing under the figure, a sign. He turns us into a sign.

And the book shows us how He does that. In each chapter, I don't know what to call it, you know. When you're trying to share the truth simply and in logical connection, you look for these words.

And characteristics gets old after a while. There are four characteristics. There are four ingredients.

There are four things. Four parts. I don't put down whatever you want.

But if you're going to have a sign, if you're going to be a sign, you need that characteristic that's in chapter 1, 2, 3, and 4. Let me just lay them out for you now in principle, and we'll develop them as we go. The great change in chapter 1 is this. God brought Jonah to the place of full surrender.

That's chapter 1. Chapter 2. God brought Jonah to the place where He apprehended, He laid hold of the pure grace of God. Salvation is of the Lord. Chapter 3. Jonah identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Chapter 4. God raised up Jonah to the place where he would rest in the satisfaction of God's heart. Those are the four chapters. And if you're going to be a sign, there's got to be total surrender.

There's got to be the understanding of the pure grace of God. There's got to be the identification of the Lord Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection. And there has to be that miracle that raises us up to sit with Him and to rest in the satisfaction of the heart of God.

In a nutshell, that's what we're going to be looking at. Our Lord Jesus said to the sign seekers of His day, the wicked generation, the adulterous generation, no other sign will be given than the sign of Jonah. That's the only sign.

Someone says, well, how does that tie into Mark chapter 16 and other passages that said, signs will follow. And it's got an S on it. It's plural.

Signs will follow. Here's the difference. Signs confirm God's message to the believing listener.

To the unbelieving, there's only one sign from that day and forever. The only sign God will ever give is the sign of Jonah. And so we're going to look at that wonderful sign of Jonah.

All right, turn in your Bibles, please. Turn them in. No, only kidding.

Turn in your Bibles to chapter 1 of Jonah. I know you're familiar with this, and we need to trust God together to take us over that hump. You know, you can get so familiar, yeah, I know, I've heard that before, and so on.

The truth is wonderful because it's true. It doesn't have to be new. It's just true.

So let's ask God to make it alive again and to thrill our hearts. Now, chapter 1 really breaks itself up into these three wonderful sections. I'm not going to give you verse divisions because they overlap.

But here's the story of chapter 1. The first part of chapter 1 is a man with a non-missionary, anti-missionary heart, Jonah, fleeing from the presence of the Lord. That's how the chapter begins. And

then the chapter continues with a revelation of God and His pursuing heart.

Chapter begins with Jonah running. Chapter continues with God running. And God's running after His running prophet.

God's chasing him down. And God's catching him and tackling him and doing many things in his life. And then the chapter ends with God apprehending Jonah, finally catching him and working that first change in his life.

Let's look at those divisions. Chapter 1, follow along as we read the first three verses. The word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry against it.

For their wickedness has come up before me. But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. And so he went down to Joppa and found the ship which was going to Tarshish.

He paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Notice in verse 3, God tells us, Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord. And then in verse 3 at the end, from the presence of the Lord.

And then if you'll drop down to verse 10, the men knew he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord because he told them. Jonah was fleeing from the presence of the Lord. Now, why do I emphasize that? I emphasize that because a surface reading, and for years this is where I was when I read it.

A surface reading would have you think that Jonah is fleeing from the commission of the Lord. Or that Jonah is fleeing from the will of the Lord. But the Bible doesn't say he's fleeing from the will of God.

It says he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord. It doesn't say he's fleeing from the commission of God. He's fleeing from the presence of the Lord.

When a person flees from God's word, some specific commission that God has given, some direction, he's really fleeing from the Lord Himself. From the presence of the Lord. It's important to stress this because for years I was one of those Christians that got confused with the presence of the Lord and the will of the Lord.

And for years I did not run after the presence of the Lord. I ran after the will of the Lord. I was in bondage to the will of the Lord.

I sought so much to find the will of the Lord, and I never even dreamed about seeking the Lord whose will it was. And Jonah, I want you to see, was fleeing from the presence of the Lord. The presence of the Lord, that's the place of revelation.

That's the place of fellowship with God. And it's the place of dependence upon the Lord. At this point in the story, we're right at the beginning of God making a sign.

And at this point in the story, Jonah is full of Jonah. You're going to see that as we go through chapter 1. He is independent. Jonah wants to do Jonah's thing.

He's blocking his ears to the word of the Lord. Closing the door of his heart. That little chorus we were singing, I just loved all those yeses in that chorus.

Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord. Yes, yes, yes, Lord.

Jonah wasn't saying, Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord. Yes, yes, yes.

He's saying, No, Lord. No, Lord. No, no, no.

God said, Go to Nineveh. No, Lord. No, Lord.

No, no, no. By this commission that God gave him, God was reaching down. Don't forget the crisis.

There's a crisis in his heart, and God is reaching down to that. And He knew that commission, it was designed for this. That commission would bring to the surface the independence that was in Jonah's heart.

God could have left him alone, because he was having a successful ministry up there in the north. Now, his contemporary, Hosea, wasn't doing so well. He was also preaching at the same time.

He was having a hard time. But Jonah, the Bible tells us in Kings, he was given prophecy. You're going to get that land back that Syria took, and they got it back and all.

He was having a great time as a prophet. God said, I see a problem, Jonah. And God began to reach down.

Nineveh was the occasion. Nineveh is not the point. It's bigger than Nineveh.

God's will in this book for Jonah is not, go to Nineveh. God's will in this book for Jonah is that he become a sign. That's God's will for Jonah.

And that's what God was working in his heart. Nineveh is actually an incidental detail. Just one little cog in a great big plan.

One evidence that Nineveh is not the point, I think I mentioned it this morning, I'll underscore it now, is this. Just use your sanctified imagination and pretend that Jonah obeyed God the first time he was called. God said, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city.

Cry against it. What if he said, Yes, Lord, yes, Lord, yes, yes, yes. And he went.

He wasn't a sign yet. Jesus said they repented because of the sign. He's not a sign yet.

God knew he wouldn't go. That's why he gave him that command. He was set up.

He was. God knew he wouldn't go. And if he went, it would have been a colossal failure.

They wouldn't have repented under his preaching. And God knew that. The command to go to Nineveh was simply the occasion that God took to deal with something far deeper than, Are you going to obey what I said to you? It's deeper than that.

There's something down inside that has to do with spirit and that has to do with being and who I am. And God must reach down and change that. And so to do that, he had to reach down and stir up the old independence in his heart.

And Nineveh was a perfect way to do that. A second evidence that Nineveh's not the point is the fact that there's life after Nineveh. Nineveh closes in chapter 3. But the story of Jonah goes on.

The point's not Nineveh at all. The point has to do with God reaching down and changing Jonah. I hope that God works in our hearts that we don't think about God's will in some surface way.

It's bigger than geography. God wants me to go here and go there and live here and have this particular job. It's deeper than all of that.

God wants you to live in his presence in dependence upon him so that he can turn you into a sign through which he can work his everlasting purposes in your life and mine. You know, when I first started reading this book and studying this book, I thought one of the big issues is God wants Jonah in Nineveh and he's going to get him there one way or the other. God doesn't want Jonah in Nineveh.

The point is not go to Nineveh. God wanted to go to Nineveh and he wanted to go in Jonah. That's not the same thing.

It isn't that God wanted Jonah to go to Nineveh. It's that God wanted to go to Nineveh. There's only one missionary.

His name is Jesus. He's the only missionary. We may be missionary channels, but we're not missionaries.

And this independent person did not allow God to go to Nineveh in him. And that's the issue and God's got to deal with that issue. God's going to work in your life and mine to conform us to Christ and to make us into a sign.

I'm sure if you studied this chapter as many of us have, you hit the commentaries in the books and what does this word mean and what does Tarshish mean and where in the world is Tarshish and all that. Did you check the maps for that? Hope you did better than I did. There's as many places Tarshish might be as there are commentators.

It's on the coast of Spain. It's on the rock of Gibraltar. It's in England.

That's the hometown of Paul. I don't know where Tarshish is. Don't spend a lot of time trying to figure out where Tarshish is.

What you need to know is this. It's in the opposite direction of the presence of the Lord. That's where Tarshish is.

Don't spend a lot of time asking why did Jonah flee? That also, you can have as many answers as there are commentators. He fled because he was a good Jew. He fled because he hated Nineveh for their violence.

He fled because he was trying to protect Israel. He knew that one day they would rise up and come up against his people. He fled because he was afraid to go all by himself and stand before such a wicked nation with all of their testimony of violence.

What would they do to him if he went there? He fled because he was afraid God was going to make him look bad. You know, the sign of a prophet is that his word comes to pass. And so he's going to get up there and say in 40 days Nineveh is overthrown and then it doesn't happen.

Make him look bad. Make God look bad. Because God changes and so on.

There's all kinds of reasons that people give. Nothing's gained by trying to figure out why he fled. Whether it's godly zeal or just carnal rebellion.

I'll tell you why he fled. He fled because he was Jonah. He fled because he was independent.

And somehow, if we're going to be made a sign, Jonah has to die. And I'm talking about self. Self has to die.

It doesn't matter what the occasion is that God uses to bring up that independence. This book begins with a man saying, No. The command is not incidental.

It's a relationship. It's a dependent relationship. And that dependence is broken.

And he says, I'll do my own thing. And so the book begins with him running with his independent heart. I've found through the years that there are many roads to Tarshish.

I don't know where it is, but I'll tell you, there's a business route to get there. I don't know where it is, but there's a pleasure route to get there. I don't know where it is, but there's an educational route to get there.

I don't know where it is, but there's a domestic route to get there. I don't know where Tarshish is, but there's a religious route to get there. There are all kinds of ways to show our independence.

The point is, Jonah needs to be dealt with because there's a relationship problem. Notice, please, in verse 3 of chapter 1, Jonah rose up to plead to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found the ship going to Tarshish, and he paid the fare.

He went down to Joppa and found the ship. If you want to run from the presence of the Lord, if I want to run from the presence of the Lord, if you want to act independently of God, if I want to act independently of God, you will always find the ship sailing in that direction. He found the ship going there.

In other words, if you want to run from the Lord, if you want to sin, there'll be plenty of occasion and provision for you to carry that out. There'll always be a ship. There'll always be the means and the help to do that.

There will always be the faculty to sin. Only a miracle God can keep the murder weapon out of the reach of the man that wants to commit murder. Only a miracle God can do that.

If you want to sin, it's at your right hand. If I want to sin, it's right at my right hand. You'll have the money.

You'll have the time. You'll have the occasion. At the push of a button, you can do it, if you want to do it.

There's always a boat that's going there. It's amazing how circumstances will come together for the one that wants to flee from the presence of the Lord. He'll not only find the boat, but everything else will work together.

And this connection, let me just warn you, it's pretty dangerous, I think, as many Christians do, to judge the will of God by favorable circumstances. Be careful about that. Thousands, I think, are led astray because everything seems to work out that way, and that's the will of God.

The open door, God opened the door. Things fell into place. Everything worked out.

I know it's God's will. I was accepted. I know it's God's will.

I was promoted. I was recruited. Every door that opens doesn't have God's fingerprints on it.

And you ought to be real careful about that. Everything was laid out perfectly for Jonah. He could have raised that argument.

This must be God's will. There's a boat. And it hasn't left yet.

And I got just enough money. And they have another cabin. And it's going to Tarsus.

It's perfect. It's God's will. Except we know the reality.

It wasn't God's will. The ready way is not always the right way. In that case, the circumstances lie.

Of course, the other side's true, too, if we really want to honor the Lord. Everything will be at your right hand. That's the other side.

That will also be provided for you. Before we look at the second part of this chapter, let me make a devotional application to verse 3. Jonah paid the fare. Guess where I'm going with that.

I know literally what it meant was, this Mediterranean cruise wasn't free. And you have to buy a ticket. He paid the fare.

But I'll tell you what, beyond that, he paid the fare all right. You're familiar with Proverbs 13, 15? The way of the transgressor finishes. It's hard.

It's very hard. And don't try to make it easy for any transgressor, or you'll find yourself working at cross purposes with the Lord. Any Christian who is independent will find his way very, very hard.

He'll pay the fare. It's interesting to see how many times the word down is used in these first two chapters. He went down to Joppa, down to the ship, down to the hold of the ship.

He lay down to go to sleep. They threw him down into the sea. He went down into the deep, down into the fish, down into shale, down to the roots of the mountains.

Down, down, down, down, down. First time the word up is mentioned in these first two chapters. It says, the fish vomited him up.

Finally, there's an up. Part of the fare we pay for running from the Lord is down, down, down, down. And if you've run from the presence of the Lord, you'll verify this testimony.

And the bottom is different for each of us. And it's amazing sometimes where the bottom is. You think you're at the bottom, and then you go down, down, down some more.

And when we get into chapter 2, we're going to see a tremendous bottom. Jonah's problem was so deep, he had to keep going down, down, before God could get all the way to the bottom. The more we advance away from the presence of the Lord, the deeper down we go.

And may I just say in passing that the Lord will not interfere with your downward path. He'll chase you. He's going to get you.

Jesus said in Luke 14, 28, to follow the Lord, you need to count the cost. That's half the truth. The other half is to not follow the Lord.

You also have to count the cost. And He certainly did pay a fare. Well, I wouldn't trade anything for the second part.

Let's look at it. The mercy of the Lord in chasing Jonah down. The book that begins with Jonah showing his independence and running from the presence of the Lord continues by showing God is running after him.

God has a pursuing heart. Chases him down. The Lord will let you have your own way, but only for a time.

Only for a time. He'll let me have my own way, but only for a time. Some of you, I know you could come up here and give testimonies and how the Lord chased you down.

I think way down deep in Jonah's heart, he knew he wasn't going to get away with this. I think that's why in chapter 4, he says, I did it to forestall your purpose. Notice he didn't say to stop it.

He knew he couldn't stop God. But he did it to stall. He did it to put it off.

Many times when we run from the Lord, we're just putting it off. Not now. Not today.

I'm too young. Tomorrow I'll deal with that. Next week.

Next year. In the future. Down the road.

I'll deal with it someday. But God keeps coming. In order to make this intensely practical, let me give it to you in principle.

Illustrated by how God pursued Jonah. The ways of God. How does God pursue the independent Christian that He wants to make into a sign? It would have been a wonderful thing to read that God, in His mercy, chased down to restore again some blundering Christian.

We all blunder. We all blow it. We all make mistakes.

Jonah is not a blundering Christian. He's a rebellious Christian. It would be wonderful if God just chased those who are blundering.

But God chases those who are rebelling. He's not drifting from God's presence. He's running from God's presence.

It's one thing to believe that God will have mercy on His ignorant children. But can this be true? Will God actually run after, pursue, chase down a true child of God that is saying, No, I don't want it. I'm going the other way.

Bless God, yes. Believe that with all of your heart. The book of Jonah illustrates the wonderful ways of God and how God will chase down the most rebellious child.

Jonah chapter 1 illustrates three principles. The ways of God. What does God use to chase us down? Principle number one.

When God's chasing down His disobedient child, He'll use whatever it takes. That's the first principle. In this wonderful chapter, He used almost every part of creation to bring them back.

In verse 4, The Lord hurled a great wind onto the sea. Jonah might not be obeying God, but the storm is. That's obeying the Lord.

It doesn't say a storm arose. It says God hurled a storm on the sea. And in chapter 4.8, He appoints a scorching east wind.

And the sun. He not only uses the weather, but He uses the animal creation. He speaks to a fish.

He not only does that, but He uses the vegetable creation. And He appoints a plant. He not only does that, but He uses the insect world.

He talks to a worm. Or a family of worms. It might be a family.

The word that's used there. He's going to bring Jonah back. And He's going to use it whenever it takes.

I'll never forget when I went to Moody Bible Institute. Down the hall, there was a young man, a student friend of mine. And I almost had to close my eyes to look at his face.

So ugly. And he wasn't ugly because he was born ugly. He was ugly because he was mauled by a bear.

And he had all the scars on his face. And I got to know this man. And I got close to this man.

You should hear him testify. Oh, he praised God for that bear. What will God use? Whatever it takes.

You've heard testimonies of how God has used fires and floods and hurricanes and tornadoes and accidents and disease and financial loss and adverse circumstances and the violence of wicked men and the strong arm of the law. Whatever it takes. That's what God's going to use to bring back His rebellious child.

In this connection, I love Deuteronomy 33, verse 26. Because it's so graphic. I love these pictures.

And it pictures God throwing a saddle, get this, on the universe. He's going to ride it like a horse. And it says in Deuteronomy 33, verse 26, He rides the heavens to your help.

Isn't that a great verse? God saddles the universe and comes galloping into your life. He's going to get you. He's going to come after you.

There's no doubt about it. Though God uses the weather and the plants and the worms and fish and people to recall His child. The great illustration in chapter 1 is this storm.

Amazing storm. Verse 4, The Lord hurled a storm. I think it's true that every act of independence creates its own tempest.

But on top of that, God hurls a storm in order to bring His child back. And this is a terrible storm. These are experienced Phoenician sailors.

We know they're Phoenician because of the word that's used to describe the captain of the boat. And he was Phoenician and so on. But these mariners were afraid.

And the ship was about to break up. Probably some of you don't believe and go in the movies. But those that do, did you see the perfect storm? The waves and that perfect storm.

My son bought the picture. He's got it on his wall. And it's tremendous waves.

I'll tell you, God knows how to throw a perfect storm at His child. And He did here. Did you notice in chapter 1, verse 4, the storm started off stormy? It's not too deep, but it's a tremendous thing.

The storm started off stormy. It began with violence. Rocking things, shaking things.

And He will rock your boat. And He'll rock my boat. And then look at verse 11.

It became increasingly stormy. And then look at verse 13. Even stormier.

What's worse than a stormy sea? An increasingly stormy sea. What's worse than an increasingly stormy sea? An even stormier stormy sea. I think all of us can identify at one time or another that the Lord hurled a storm into our lives.

It might have been a health storm, or a financial storm, or a social storm, or a mental storm, a depression, anxieties of some kind, some fears, church storms, confusion. Don't run, God runs after them. Behind every wind that blows in the life of an independent Christian, God hurled it.

God hurled it. It's the Lord that has done it. What else will He do to hump us down? And not only use whatever it takes, but notice in this chapter that God used His relationship with the people that were in the boat.

He'll use our relationship, especially with those who have less life than we do. How God uses that when the Lord's pursuing us, He convicts us by the grief that we bring into the lives of other people. And wouldn't you think, like David when he sinned by numbering the people that he would cry out, saying, why won't you just punish me and mine? We did it.

These sheep aren't responsible. But God is wise. And God uses this.

This storm with all of its violence not only affected Jonah, but it affected all those that were around Jonah. Jonah was the cause of the storm and he was causing a lot of problems to a lot of people. In verse 4, it says that the ship was about to break into pieces.

That's not his property. But it is his fault. In verse 5, they started to throw their wares into the sea.

That's not his property. I don't know what that cargo was, the Bible didn't tell us. But they began to dump their cargo overboard.

And it's Jonah's fault. There's no question God was dealing with the Mariners, too. I mean, they deserved the storm.

They're idolaters. That doesn't take Jonah off the hook. It's still his problem.

And it's his fault. He brought grief. He brought pain.

He brought a storm into the lives of others. And God doesn't record everything. He just tells us about that one ship.

I'm sure there were other ships in the sea that were affected by that storm. Who knows how many people were hurt by that. Part of God's pursuing the independent Christians is convicting them of the pain that they bring in the lives of other people.

Remember what a mighty factor that was in restoring the brothers of Joseph. How they remembered how they had hurt their father. There might be somebody here tonight running from the presence of the Lord.

And you've hurt a lot of people. Maybe you hurt your husband or your wife or your parents or your kids. You're running from the Lord and you brought a storm in other people's lives.

Or maybe you're on the other end of that. Maybe somebody's hurting you. Because they're running from the Lord.

You need to trust the Lord on that. And you take that as part of the sufferings of the Lord because God's chasing them down. And all the pain that comes into your life is part of God's weapon to bring them back and bring them to the Lord.

The Mariners undoubtedly were being dealt with too. I think they learned the value of things. Isn't that interesting? They're ready to die and all of a sudden throw your cargo overboard.

You learn what is of value when you're facing death. And these guys learned what was of value. The Lord not only lets us feel the pain of hurting somebody else.

I won't get into the testimony but God brought me back one time by shaming me through someone that I felt had a lot less life than I had. That's an embarrassing thing when God uses someone with less life than you have. These Mariners were heathens.

They weren't Ninevites. But they were Gentile. They weren't Jews.

Jonah was the Jew. He was the proud Jew. And in his mind he's the spiritual man.

When you read this story, did you notice it looked like they're the believers. They're the ones that are praying. He's sleeping.

And they're doing all the praying and they're calling on God. And notice chapter 1, verse 11 and 12 when they found out it was his fault. So they said to him, what should we do to you that the sea may become calm for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy.

And he said, pick me up and throw me into the sea and the sea will become calm for you. I know on account of me this storm has come upon you. What did you expect them to say? Why, you scoundrel.

You ran from the true and living God, the one that made the earth and the sea. You're the cause of it. We almost lost our ship.

We lost all our cargo. You put our lives in danger. I can't believe you did this to us.

We're going to throw you overboard. But look what happened, verse 13. However, the men rode desperately to return to land, but they could not.

The sea was becoming even stormier against them. I wonder what went through Jonah's mind. Don't forget the big occasion of all this.

Jonah is non-missionary, anti-missionary. He does not want God to have mercy on the heathen. And now the heathen are showing mercy to him.

Boy, God turned things around. And all of that is part of God pursuing him. I think it's amazing to read verse 5. Jonah was sound asleep, unlike the Lord Jesus sleeping in the hull of a ship on a stormy sea, in the will of God.

Jonah is not in the will of God. He's fleeing the will of God. And the Hebrew word for sleep there is the word snore.

He was snoring. He's dead asleep. One thing for someone to come to a sluggish Christian, some dear family member, and say, hey, come on now, wake up.

Some brother in Christ put his arm around you and say, come on man, you've been running from the Lord. Some sister in Christ to pray and share a verse with you. For God to use some book or some radio program or some telecast or some tape or something like that.

Some elder who's in the spirit and in the will of God. But it was in chapter 1, verse 6, the ship's captain who rebuked the prophet. Wake up! I think the most embarrassing verse in this chapter is verse 10, when the heathen come to him and say, how could you do this? I've stood in the middle of a storm that was my fault.

And I had to hear the unsaved say to me, how could you do this? You talk about the Lord chasing you down. Like I said, it's one thing for a Christian to do it, but when the heathen have to wake you up and the heathen have to come along and shake you and say, how could you, a Christian, how could you do this? It's all part of God's recovery. God uses everything.

God used the storm. God used the mariner. God used the pain that He brought into their lives.

God used the fact that they had left light and they were shaming Him. And I think it comes to a climax when God used Jonah to bring Jonah back. It's a great missionary book.

Probably the most missionary book in the Old Testament. But mission doesn't begin with Nineveh in this book. Jonah was fleeing from the presence of the Lord with an anti-missionary heart.

He did not want to be God's instrument. And right in the middle of his rebellion, he gives his testimony. Chapter 1, verse 9, he confesses that he's a fugitive of the Lord.

And that he's a servant of the true God who created the sea and the dry land. And they fear the Lord. They turn to the Lord.

They begin to believe in the Lord. They pray to the Lord. They vow to the Lord.

They offer sacrifices to the Lord. I think God was saying, Jonah, this whole issue of missions, I want you to get it straight. I don't need you.

I can use you in fellowship. I can use you out of fellowship. I don't need you.

I don't want to use you. I have a plan, but I don't need to use you. And then, brothers and sisters, finally it works.

God chases him down using every means, using the storm, using people, using what they said, even using him in mercy, turning it around, blessing him even when he's rebellious. And all of that pursuing paid off. One wonders when he reads this record, when did Jonah repent? When did he repent? Did he repent when the captain rebuked him? Did he repent when the lock found him out? Did he repent when he finally confessed his guilt? Did he repent when he went sailing through the air off the ship? When he hit the water? When he started going down? When he got gobbled up by the big sea monster? Is that when he repented? The first day? In the fish's belly? Second day in the fish's belly? Third day in the fish's belly? When did he repent? I have an idea his repentance was not a one-time thing, but I have an idea it was a gradual turning.

And part of that repentance, I'm convinced, took place on the boat. Verse 11 and 12. Verse 12.

Don't read this la la la. He said to them, Pick me up and throw me into the sea, and the sea will become calm for you. I know on account of me, this great storm has come to you.

If you don't understand this, remember what God is doing. Jonah has a non-missionary heart, an anti-missionary heart, doesn't want God to have mercy on the heathen, and now for the first time, he's willing to die for the heathen. It's my fault.

I caused the storm. I'll do it for you. And he volunteers at this point to be a living sacrifice.

He could have chosen to weather the storm. He could have chosen to try to save his life. Now this is a step in Christian circles that we're so familiar with.

Let's have a big invitation, and let's call everybody forward. Give your life to mission. I don't know if you've been through it.

I've been through it many times. This is the idea of the dedication service. Throw your life away.

Throw yourself overboard. Give yourself to the heathen. Some of you attend the Richmond Conference.

I had the privilege of attending this year. And Stephen Kahn gave his testimony how he, as a young man, gave himself, as a missionary, to go to Mongolia. And then with a twinkle in his eye, he said, heroic.

Heroic. Total surrender. I'll go to Mongolia.

Heroic. Can that be total surrender and still be heroic? Even after this great change in Jonah's life. Alright, alright.

You've chased me down. You've used everything. You've used the storm.

Alright. I've hurt people. I've caused the storm.

I've caused... Alright. I surrender. I'll give my life.

Throw me overboard. I'll give my life for them. That was still Jonah doing that.

That was noble. That was brave. That was heroic.

But he gave his life for the heathen. Big change in his life. Don't just read by that.

The heathen don't need his life. They need God's life. At this point in his experience, he doesn't have a clue that he's going to rise again.

He thinks it's over. I've arrived. I've surrendered.

I've given all. Don't ask me anymore. I've given myself to missions.

I've given myself to the world. I've thrown it overboard. I've thrown it away.

No more life for me. Until I'm willing to throw my life away for the heathen, he can't work step two. Is this a contradiction? Surrender.

Surrendering everything. Throwing your life overboard for the sake of others is worthless, but it's necessary. Both of those are true.

They don't need your life. They need His life. But you better come to the place where you have given everything and thrown yourself overboard.

And that's the place God brought him to. Joan is in for a great surprise. All he knows at this point, and I've been through it, and I know others have, all he knows is, alright Lord, take it, take it.

When my wife and I got married, I was so big on this, because I had not faced missions, and God dealt with me facing missions. I almost got kicked out of Moody Bible Institute because I wouldn't go to the missionary conference. But I knew God would call me.

And I didn't want to get called. And I didn't hate the mission people. I didn't even know the people in Africa.

I didn't hate them. I just didn't want to learn the language. And I was so afraid God was going to call me.

But after God dealt with us, and I gave my life to missions, when we got married, I insisted that Lillian always have a suitcase filled with clothes. And we had a sign on it. Any place, any time, whatever you want Lord, call us.

And we kept a suitcase packed at all times, so we could go at a moment's notice. Then we ran out of clothes. Things changed.

At this point, all Jonah knows is I've surrendered. I've thrown my life away. I've given it to missions.

He has not a clue that he's going to rise again. We'll close with this. Verse 15.

They picked up Jonah and they threw him into the sea. The sea stopped its raging. Jonah comes to the place.

Alright, I'll surrender. They pick him up. They throw him through the air.

Splash. He hits the water. Mighty miracle of God.

Instant calm. The storm is over. A new dimension is about to begin in Jonah's life.

This is the kind of a thing an artist would love to paint. Mariners. Venetian mariners on a ship.

On a glassy sea. Worshipping the true God of heaven. Not a ripple.

But all they can see with these eyes. They saw Jonah go down for the third time. Probably they didn't see the fish.

There's no record of that. All they could see with these eyes was the surface. A man surrendered his life for us.

But underneath the surface, a deeper work must go on. That these eyes can't see. God was preparing a strange salvation for this man.

And as the mariners thought it was over, and he's dead. He's gone. He's given his life for a mission.

And Jonah thought it was over. I've surrendered. There's nothing else.

What are the Christians supposed to do? He surrenders. What's after that? God says, You must now learn the next step. And God begins to do a work under the surface.

And tomorrow, the Lord willing, we'll go down under the surface and look at the second thing that God does. The first part of being a sign is throwing your life overboard. I surrender all for the sake of all.

How it brings you to that point, I'm sure it's a different way. But you've got to come to that point. If you don't come to that point, you can't come to point two.

You can't reverse it. You can't start with chapter two. You've got to start with chapter one.

Even though it's worthless, it's necessary. You've got to come to the place where I've given it all. Given it all to the Lord.

I've thrown my life away. And then God begins a deeper work. And then the next chapter.

He raises all. Father, thank You so much for what You've done in Jonah, what You've promised to do in us. Bring us to the place of full surrender.

Bring us to the place where we understand pure grace. Where we can identify with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection. Where we can rise and rest in the satisfaction of Your heart.

Will You work these things in us, we pray. In Jesus' name.

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