

Jonah #3: Work Beneath the Surface

by Ed Miller

The sermon explores Jonah's transformation through God's mercy and the deeper work He does beneath the surface of our lives.

Duration: 1:02:46

Scripture: Jonah 2:1-3, Jonah 2:9, Luke 11:29-30, Luke 11:32

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Gods Deliverance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the idea that every time God delivers, he reenacts his salvation. The sermon begins with the speaker mentioning a burden shared by another believer about the need for deliverance among believers. The speaker then discusses how God brings believers to a place of understanding that all they have is because of God's goodness and mercy. The sermon also highlights the importance of going through the process of death and resurrection in order to have a new perspective and be alive in Christ. The speaker concludes by mentioning the next stage in becoming a sign and asks for God's work of grace in the hearts of the listeners.

Transcript

Thank you. Good morning, brothers and sisters in Christ. Is there a light that I can have here? Well, the Lord is certainly working, isn't he? What a wonderful, wonderful Lord.

As we come to the study of God's Word, there's a principle of Bible study that's absolutely indispensable, and that's total reliance upon the Holy Spirit. I was thinking as we were breaking bread together and talking about food and hungering and thirsting, that wonderful verse from Isaiah chapter 55, Oh, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters. Without money, without price, come, buy and eat.

And in God's kingdom, thirst is the money that purchases from heaven. That's the coin of His kingdom. And if we come thirsty, He's promised to meet with us.

If we come hungry, He's going to feed us. I'd like to suggest a prayer, a verse, that will be added to our application of the indispensable principle. And for this particular study, I'd like this prayer to be in your heart.

It's from Psalm 106, and it's verse 4, the last part. Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that Thou bearest unto Thy people. And then my translation has the prayer worded this way, Oh, visit me with Thy salvation.

Oh, visit me. And don't leave the O out, because that's the cry. Oh, visit me with Thy salvation.

Let's bow together, commit our time to the Lord, and ask Him to visit us. Father, we thank You again that we can trust You to open our eyes to understand Your precious Word. Even as we think about Your dealing with Your servant Jonah, how You chase down those that You want, how we praise Thee that we've seen that already, even this day, Your faithful pursuing, bringing to Yourself Your child.

And we rejoice in that, Lord. And now we would ask Thee in a special way that You would visit us with Your salvation. Jesus deserves it, and in His name we claim it.

I'm going to begin our little review by reading from the New Testament. These verses, they're familiar from Luke chapter 11. Luke chapter 11, verse 29, 30, and then I'm going to jump to verse 32.

As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, This generation is a wicked generation. It seeks for a sign, yet no sign will be given unto it but the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

And then verse 32, The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. Now, Jesus saw the end result of Jonah. In other words, He saw that God had transformed Jonah into a sign.

And they saw the sign, and they heard the word, and they repented at the preaching of Jonah. Jesus saw the end result, but the book of Jonah doesn't give the end result right away. The book of Jonah gives the process.

Jesus saw the end. Jonah had become a sign. But the book of Jonah gives the process on how God turns Jonah into a sign.

At the beginning of the story of Jonah, in the book of Jonah, Jonah was far, far from being a sign. He had a non-missionary heart. He had an anti-missionary heart.

And for reasons deep within his soul, he fled from the presence of the Lord. In his independence, he turned his back. And the story of Jonah is the story of how God, in His mercy, went after His independent child and brought him through stages to the place where he became a sign, a missionary channel of the very life of God.

So that as a risen man, he could carry the life of God to the ends of the earth. Glorious book, this book of Jonah. May God give us eyes to see it.

The great miracle, as I've suggested in the book of Jonah, is not the fish. That's a great miracle, but that's not the miracle. And it's not even the conversion of that wicked city of Nineveh.

The great miracle in the book is God's mercy on His servant Jonah to transform him and give him a heart like the heart of God. Last evening, we discussed a little bit that first change in Jonah's heart. The book begins with an independent prophet running from the presence of the Lord.

He doesn't want to be God's missionary channel. He wants Nineveh judged. He wants God to be severe with that.

But God, in His mercy, pursues His child, chases him down by every means. Hurls a storm into his life. Brings the right people into his life.

Allows him to hurt people. Allows those with less light to shame him. Even uses him in his backslidden condition to bring blessing.

And all of that worked together to bring him to the place in verse 12 of chapter 1 where he said, Pick me up, throw me into the sea, then the sea will become calm for you. I know on economy this great storm has come upon you. And God brought him to the place finally where he was willing for the first time to give his life for the heathen.

From his point of view and with the light he had, it was a total surrender. A complete dedication. An absolute sacrifice.

I will die for you. That's what he said. Throw me overboard for your sakes.

The storm will stop if I die. Of course, we have the rest of the record. And we know that's still Jonah doing it.

It was brave. It was noble. It was daring.

It was heroic. It was a great sacrifice. But it was a first step.

As far as missions is concerned, sort of worthless. But very necessary as far as Jonah was concerned. Jonah says, Take my life.

Jonah, they don't need your life. They need his life. It's important in the making of a sign that we give our life.

That we throw it overboard. That we say, Alright, it's not for me. It's not my thing.

It's for him. Take my life. That's important as a first step.

Now let me read the full development of that in the New Testament. And show you where Jonah was. Remember the Holy Spirit's words through the Apostle Paul in Corinthians.

When he says in chapter 13, If I speak with the tongue of men and angels but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and have all knowledge, If I have all faith so as to remove mountains, and do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, and do not have love, it profits me nothing.

That's where Jonah was at this time. You read that and it's such an amazing thing. A prophet of God.

If he had the tongue of angels, but not love. And he didn't have love yet. Love is the fruit of the Spirit.

It's the life of God. The fruit of that life. And he didn't have that yet.

You see that it's possible to give all your possessions to the poor and your body to be burned. You say, what can God want more than that? I've given everything. I've given my body to be burned.

God said, it profits nothing. Amazing verse that. It profits nothing if it lacks the life of God.

And that's where Jonah was at that point. He had thrown himself or given himself to be thrown overboard. From his point of view, a very daring, heroic step.

But really, as far as the big picture, it profits nothing. Because he still needs the life of God. When I closed last evening, I reminded you that the mariners could only see with these eyes.

And they could only see the surface of things. And from their point of view, they saw their hero die for them. He was thrown overboard for their sake.

They saw the storm stop. They saw God's supernatural calming of the sea. And they saw Jonah go down for the third time.

And from their point of view, he was dead. And from Jonah's point of view, he was dead. But you know that's not the end of the story.

Because underneath the surface, God says, now I will continue my deeper work. There's another work that man can't see with these eyes. And while the mariners only saw the surface, a sea of glass, underneath the sea of glass, God began His strange and unusual work as He began to continue to make this man into a sign.

That brings us to Jonah chapter 2, the deeper work of God. And may God help us as we look at this wonderful chapter. If the revelation of our Lord Jesus in chapter 1 is the God that pursues, and I think certainly at least you must see that in chapter 1. God chasing His child down.

Then in chapter 2, we must have the revelation of God as the One who delivers. What a delivering God we have in Jonah chapter 2. The God of salvation. That's why I wanted us to begin with the prayer from Psalm 106, verse 4. Oh, visit me with Thy salvation.

Jonah's not yet a sign. But God's working. God's not done.

He's going to turn him into a sign. He's going to teach him and work him and change him. So let the deeper work begin.

I want to make one observation that I think will be helpful before we look at chapter 2 in understanding God's heart in this wonderful chapter. And the principle is this, that every time God delivers, He reenacts His salvation. Every time God delivers, He reenacts His salvation.

Now when we arrived at Hoshua, Bill Burkhart stood up and shared a burden that was on his heart. And he felt like even though believers are here, there might be some believers that still need to be delivered. You might have come to Hoshua carrying some baggage that you need to lay down.

And do you realize this? If God delivers a believer, He reenacts His salvation. Now I'm not saying you need to be saved again. But I'm saying if God delivers, He'll restore the joy of your salvation.

It feels like you're saved again. That's the principle that allows us to live in first love. Because every time God delivers, He reenacts His salvation.

He's a delivering God. I was saved, well who knows when, but I think in 1958. That's when I was made aware of it anyway.

That's 43 years ago. You realize if God delivers me today from something, I can have the same joy I had 43 years ago when I first trusted Christ. God is going to bring Jonah to the place where he experiences the same joy a heathen will experience that hears the gospel for the first time.

He's going to deliver him. And every time He delivers him, He reenacts His salvation. Now let me tie this in a little bit closer to the story and then get ready for chapter 2. God's mercy, His delivering mercy, is always undeserved.

You know, we read the record here and we say, God delivered Jonah from the storm. And that's true. And God is about to deliver Jonah from the fish.

And that's also true when it's only one side of the truth. Here's the other side of the truth. God not only delivered Jonah from the storm, He delivered Jonah by the storm.

The storm was His salvation. He not only delivered Jonah from the fish, He delivered Jonah by the fish. You know, when we look with these eyes on the human side, we say God was pursuing Jonah, hurled a storm at him.

That's chastening. Maybe so. But that chastening was also salvation.

That was His salvation. God used the storm to rescue Jonah. Far better to be rescued by a storm than to perish in a car.

God sends the storms as His salvation. Without the storm, Jonah could never have become a sign. That was all part of God's great salvation.

What a mercy in His life. So was the fish. You say, well, that's chastening.

God gobbled him up with a big sea monster. Chastening. Oh, I'll tell you, God didn't send the fish to kill him.

God sent the fish to save him. God sent the fish to deliver him. To set him free.

That was His salvation. Jonah was far better off in the belly of the fish at the root of the mountains than sleeping in the cabin on his Mediterranean cruise. The storm was His salvation.

Now let's go back to our prayer for this chapter. Psalm 106.4 You realize what you're praying when you say, oh, visit me with Thy salvation. Oh, visit me with the storm.

Can you pray that? That's your salvation. Oh, visit me with the fish. That's your salvation.

Don't be bitter when the Lord chastens you. When the Lord disciplines you. That's your salvation.

That's the mercy of God coming to deliver you. And every time God delivers, He reenacts His salvation and restores again the joy of salvation. No wonder David could say in Psalm 118, before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I've kept Thy Word.

It's good for me that I've been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes. Your judgments are righteous. In faithfulness You have afflicted me.

Let me relate all of that to Psalm 23. Brother Jeff has been sharing some things from Psalm 23 and God's using that in his life. I got hold of his tapes and what a blessing it was to my heart to hear some of those things.

Psalm 23 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. You realize this, that every moment of your life, Psalm 23 6 is true. And every moment of my life, Psalm 23 6 is true.

Goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life. You say, well, that's true when I'm walking in unbroken fellowship with Jesus. Yes, but it's also true when in independence you're fleeing from the presence of the Lord.

Oh, bless God for that. If you're a Christian, you'll never get away from this. There's always going to be two footprints behind you wherever you go.

At all times and in all places. One's called goodness and the other's called mercy. And they're going to follow you all the days of your life.

It might take the form of a storm. It might take the form of a fish. But it's the goodness and it's the mercy of the Lord.

We won't get into it now, but read Psalm 107 and relate all of the parts to the last verse of Psalm 107. And I think God will give you light on that. Alright, Jonah 2. Beginning at verse 1, Jonah prayed to the Lord His God from the stomach of the fish.

And he said, I called out of my distress to the Lord and He answered me. I cried for help from the depths of Sheol. You heard my voice.

You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas. The current engulfed me and all Your breakers and billows passed over me. So I said, I've been expelled from Your sight.

Nevertheless, I'll look again toward Your holy temple. Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me.

Weeds were wrapped around my head. I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever.

But You brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord. And my prayer came to You and to Your holy temple.

Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness, but I will sacrifice to You with a voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the Lord.

Then the Lord commanded the fish and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land. Notice verse 1 please. As Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the stomach of the fish.

There are many commentators that believe Jonah didn't get swallowed right away by the fish. In other words, the descriptions in this psalm they believe, with the currents and the billows and the breakers and

so on, waters encamping around him, is Jonah sinking and Jonah almost drowning. And just before Jonah drowned, God sent the fish to rescue him.

In other words, they say Jonah is describing his experience of sinking in the sea. I think it's important to remember that as soon as Jonah's body hit the water, don't read this la la la, verse 15 of chapter 1, they picked up Jonah, threw him in the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. The men feared greatly.

It was an instantaneous and supernatural calm that God brought on that sea. It was no ordinary storm and it was no ordinary calm. What a revelation of the sovereignty of God in this marvelous miracle.

Certainly you see the power of God when He hurls the wind and then increases its intensity. You see His power. But now you see the Lord's power in bringing the storm to an abrupt end.

Wouldn't you expect the Bible to say, And then the wind died down. And then gradually the wind stopped blowing. And then the storm was downgraded from a hurricane to a tropical depression.

That's what you'd expect to read. But what we read instead is that Jonah was thrown out and the sea stopped its raging. Usually there's time after the wind dies down that the water dies down.

You know, water's not stable. And you get waves building 15 feet and 20 feet and 25 feet. It's going to take time for unstable water to finally settle down.

Not here. Don't miss the wonder of this. Soon as Jonah hits the water, there's a supernatural calm.

I call attention to this because when Jonah prays in this chapter, he describes currents and breakers and billows and waves. There were none. There were none.

Now you say, well, that's just poetry. No, what he's describing, I don't believe. He's not describing sinking and going into this tremendous storm with all these breakers breaking over his head.

I think he was in water as still as pond water. What he's describing is being gulped down by a big fish. And this fish comes along.

The currents and the breakers and the waves and the billows and the weeds around the head come from this fish moving at a tremendous speed and opening its mouth and gulping it down and all of that coming in. That's what he's describing. This whole prayer took place inside the fish.

Not when he was drowning, but when he was inside the fish. And you can take chapter 2, verse 1 as the key to the entire chapter. The prayer that he prayed from the belly of the fish.

As I understand this fish experience, God was accomplishing at least two things. Many more. We always know God is doing more than our little outliers.

But at least these two things He was accomplishing. Number one, and of course, Jonah knew nothing about this. He was preparing a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ in His death, in His burial, and in His resurrection.

In the future, God would take literally the poetic expressions of His experience, multiply them by infinity, and apply them to what Jesus experienced on the cross. In another connection, I'll tell you why it's a perfect picture of the cross. But the second thing, let's go back to Jonah.

Jonah didn't know he was going to be a type. That he was going to prefigure the Lord Jesus. He didn't know about that.

What was God doing in Jonah's day, in Jonah's life, that deeper work under the surface as He makes him into a sign? What is God trying to accomplish in his life? And I believe the answer is that He's got to bring Jonah to the place where He understands that mercy is undeserved. Mercy is undeserved. Now remember at this time, even though He was so noble and brave and courageous, surrendered His life for the heathens, He still has a non-missionary, anti-missionary heart.

If you were to reach down in the water and pull him up and said, Jonah, now do you think Nineveh should be spared? He'd say, no, blah, blah, blah. He still has the same heart. Nineveh deserves to be judged.

They're wicked. They're violent. They don't deserve the mercy of God.

Why should God spare them? Sometime you ought to be around our house when on the TV some wicked person does some wicked thing. And Lillian one day said, I wish I was God for a day. You don't want Lillian God for a day.

There'd be no mercy. Oh, what she describes should happen to these terrible people. What God did in the belly of the fish, and you'll not understand this passage if you don't see this.

It was time to put Jonah in the shoes of the heathen. He was going to put Jonah in the place where he would learn that he didn't deserve mercy any more than the Ninevites to which he was sent. That's the great thing that God was accomplishing in the fish.

Missions is far more than a noble surrender of our lives for the sake of others. It's also a spiritual understanding that we are as undeserving and as ill-deserving as anyone we are sent to minister unto. In the fish, Jonah came to see that he did not deserve the mercy of God.

That he deserved to be judged. And all those things he wished on the Ninevites, he himself deserved. And he came to the place that if he was ever going to be delivered, it would be by the undeserved mercy of God.

By the undeserved grace of the Lord. And God taught Jonah about grace in this fish. At the end of the ordeal, Jonah saw that there wasn't one shred of difference between him and the Ninevites.

They deserved to die, and so did he. They deserved not to be delivered, and so did Jonah. Brothers and sisters in Christ, it's a wonderful revelation of the Lord and a miracle when God's people see that the entire world in God's eyes is on level ground.

Not only the church, where we embrace the priesthood of believers, that there's no station, that we're all one. That's true. But it's also true in the entire world.

And part of being a sign is having a missionary be able to look into the eye of a cannibal and know that they're not some hero who's been sent to rescue the cannibal. But they're someone who has received grace. The same grace, the same mercy that that cannibal needs until we fully see that we are undeserving and delivered by undeserved mercy that we're not fully prepared to share the gospel with those that need mercy.

Take that wonderful ministry at the Christian shelter. My, my. God has called together a body of beautiful believers and servants and those that sacrifice and present the grace of God.

And so on the one hand, you've got all these servants of the Lord that come and volunteer to minister. And on the other hand, you've got this stream of people needing mercy. Homeless and jobless and enslaved in so many ways and derelicts and drunkards and drug addicts and perverts.

There's not a shred of difference between the workers and the guests. The guests need mercy and the workers receive it. That's missions.

And when those who have received mercy are able to give mercy and stand on level ground and say we're the same. You need the Lord. I needed the Lord.

He reached me. He can reach you. Jonah was a Karabakh.

Jonah was a proud Jew. They don't deserve to be delivered. God said, Jonah, come with Me.

I've got something to show you. And down in the deep secret place, God begins to put Jonah in the shoes of the heathen so that he might know. See, he had already been in the same boat with them, but he didn't catch on that he was in the same boat.

So now God's going to put him in their shoes. In order to show how God brought Jonah to the place where he stood as a heathen needing mercy, I'd like to isolate from this marvelous prayer six expressions. And I want you to think beyond what I'm talking about.

Think spiritually. And you'll see why Jonah became a wonderful type of our Lord Jesus. Because if it's true that God is putting Jonah in the shoes of the heathen and showing him what they deserve, what do you think happened on the cross when our Lord Jesus was put into the shoes of the heathen and receiving literally what they deserve? This becomes a marvelous picture of the cross.

I'm going to just take six expressions, and there are others, but I've isolated these six to give you a sense of how God is teaching Jonah this great truth. First is in verse 2. I called out of my distress to the Lord, and He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol.

King James says, from the belly of hell. Jonah cries out, from the belly of hell. Sheol, as you know in the Bible, is the place of the departed.

Sometimes it's used to describe only the body. In that case, it's the grave. Sometimes it's used to describe the place of departed spirits.

But it's always the place of the departed. And Jonah pictured himself as a man that's laying in the grave waiting for someone to shovel dirt on his coffin. That's where he was.

In the belly of hell. Describe your experience. I'm in the belly of hell.

I'm in Sheol. I'm in the depths of Sheol. And he felt like he was in a prison from which there was no escape.

Living. Alive like that demoniac in Mark 5. In the place of the dead. Living in a cemetery.

When God prepares a missionary channel, He lets him see that he's in the belly of hell. The second expression is from verse 4. So I said, I have been expelled from thy sight. You see, that's what the ungodly deserve.

And that's what's threatened. That one day they'll be expelled from thy sight out of the presence of the Lord. Isn't this amazing? The book of Jonah begins.

Jonah fleeing from the presence of the Lord. He thought God's presence was a great burden to him. And now all of a sudden, he realizes what it is.

Expelled from thy sight. And now that's the burden. He's describing what it means to be God-forsaken.

That's what the heathen deserve. And God's putting him in the shoes of the heathen. God-forsaken.

To the verdict of sense, God is completely out of sight. I don't know if you have ever met anyone or dealt with anyone who has falsely imagined that God has cast them off. Two times in my life, and unless He gives special grace, I hope it never happens again.

Two times in my life, I've dealt with those who thought they had committed the unpardonable sin. And that God wanted nothing to do with them. The first man ended up in a mental hospital.

And the second woman committed suicide. It was awful. Talking to somebody who honestly believed they were cast off.

Now see, that's poetry for Jonah. But that's not poetry for Jesus on the cross. Expelled from my sight.

God's painting the cross here. He put Jonah in the shoes of the heathen. And Jonah begins to feel his own condition.

And he is in the belly of hell. Just like the Ninevites. And he's been cast off from God's sight just like the Ninevites.

Verse 5, the third expression. Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great gulf encompassed me.

King James says, Water encompassed me to my soul. To my very soul. You see, this is a description.

Not like Ezekiel who went in the water and it was at his ankles, and then it came to his calf, and then to his knees, and to his thighs, and then up to his head, and then waters to swim in. This is not Jonah in the ocean. This is the ocean in Jonah.

And it's not in his stomach and in his lungs. He said this thing is flowing to my soul. It's a spiritual flood.

He's being inundated right into his soul. That's poetry for Jonah. That's not poetry for Jesus.

Marvelous picture this. But he's beginning to feel what it feels like to be a lost heathen. They deserve to be in hell.

And then he cries out, Lord, I'm in the belly of hell. The belly of shale. They deserve to be cast out.

He goes, oh Lord, I'm expelled from Your presence. They deserve to be spiritually drowned. Lord, I feel the water coming in, touching my soul, my spirit.

What a tremendous experience God brought him through. And in chapter 4, or rather the fourth expression in verse 5, weeds were wrapped around my head. Isn't that graphic? I don't know.

They say that the Hebrew word for weed here was very well known and avoided by even the strongest swimmers because it was that entwining weed like rope. And it weighed a ton. And these weeds were wrapped around his head.

I've met some people. It looks like weeds were wrapped around their head. As far as the bondage of the mind is concerned anyway.

Weeds were wrapped around their head. But it's a picture of complete helplessness and hopelessness and entanglement and the weight of that whole thing. And he's crying out from that position.

The more you struggle, the worse it gets. God was putting Jonah in the position of somebody who desperately needed mercy. And Jonah was able to say, after all this, oh man, I'm in the belly of hell.

God is expelled from me. Waters are coming into my soul. Weeds are around my head.

I'm going down. I need mercy. Oh really, Jonah? I thought you were up here someplace.

I thought you were real spiritual. The fifth description is in verse 6. I descended to the roots of the mountains and the earth with its bars closed around me forever. Forever.

And I'm never getting out of here. That's what the heathen deserve. Let them go to hell forever.

And all of a sudden, Jonah is standing there in the same place that the heathen are. Some people think at this point, chapter 2, verse 6, Jonah actually died. And then God raised him from the dead again.

I don't know if that's so. I don't think it's necessary in order to picture the death and resurrection of Christ. Isaac, for example, pictured the death and resurrection of Christ.

He didn't literally die. And so I don't think it's necessary. But no one would doubt for a moment after reading this that in Jonah's mind, he's as good as dead.

Whether he died or not, we don't know for sure. But he's as low as low can be. You talk about going to the bottom, the roots of the mountains.

God brought this man all the way down, down, down as far as you can go. In our culture, in our language, we have words that Jonah could have used, idioms. Like, I'm sunk.

I'm in over my head. I've reached the bottom. Gone down for the third time.

He's got this picture that the bars have closed on him forever. Jonah feels like a lost sinner in hell. And God, on purpose, does that.

Verse 7. Sixth expression. While I was fainting away. This is very interesting.

The scholars tell it. I don't know Hebrew. I study those that know it and put it in English for me.

And they say this is a very interesting expression because it describes the moment before death. The physical exhaustion that comes to a person when a film passes over the eyes. And literally, it would be imploded.

My spirit folded in on itself. That's what he's saying. That everything collapsed.

And it's almost as though I was fainting away and my whole being collapsed upon itself. And those are just some of the agonies. Then add what Carol Moore put in her poem, chapter 2, the describing of... I think Pinocchio's ruined us.

You know, we get this picture of the whale and there's a little lamp and a light. This guy was in darkness. 72 hours.

Smelly. Cramped. In this awful place.

In pitch darkness. And who knows the agonies that went through him. But I know this.

That at the end, God had changed His view on who needs mercy. And He was one that needed mercy. As I suggested, that's why this becomes a picture of our Lord Jesus.

Jonah didn't really go to the belly of hell. But your Savior did. Jonah wasn't really expelled from the sight of God.

But your Savior was. Jonah didn't really feel the... or he actually felt the floods, but it didn't touch his soul. But it did for our Lord Jesus.

Jonah was down for three days. Felt like the bars were around me forever. In a moment of time, our Lord Jesus suffered what every sinner would ever suffer forever.

Being infinite, He could crush eternity into three hours. Which He did. That's your Savior.

That's my Savior. Jonah just felt like everything collapsed. Jesus carried the weight of the world upon Him.

And He did collapse. As Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days, and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the center of the earth. This is all a marvelous, marvelous picture.

At this point, being in the shoes of the heathen, Jonah begins to embrace the grace of God. Remember, Jonah wrote this after the fact. As he looked back and as he remembered, he saw himself as God had taught him that he did not deserve the mercy of God.

So much he didn't deserve mercy, he didn't even ask for it in this prayer. He didn't say, have mercy on me in this prayer. In fact, there's not one petition in this whole prayer.

I read one commentator that said, if there's no petition, it's not prayer. Well, what about Hannah? It said Hannah prayed, and there's not a petition in her prayer. This is a prayer, but he asks for nothing because God has done the deeper work.

He doesn't deserve mercy. He doesn't even deserve to ask for it. God had brought him to the place of absolute helplessness and absolute hopelessness, and nothing but grace could deliver him.

If ever a man needed to cry out, oh, visit me with thy salvation. Here's Jonah in the depths of the sea, at the root of the mountain, in the belly of a fish for 72 hours, in the darkness, in the smell, weeds all around him, being crushed and folded inside. He needs God's salvation.

Nobody needs it more than he does. Notice how he who was so independent at the beginning of the book, who fled from the presence of the Lord, in the belly of this fish, now returns to the presence of the Lord. Verse 4, he changes his focus.

I will look again toward your holy temple. When he turned from the Lord, he turned his eyes away from the Lord and from the holy temple. And now in this deep, dark place where you can't see anything.

He's talking about these eyes. I will look again toward your holy temple. He's coming back into the presence of the Lord.

He was so convinced God would hear. Verse 7, my prayer comes to you in your holy temple. That's faith.

You talk about someone trusting God in the dark. Here's a picture of someone trusting God in the dark. You say, well, Jonah, your prayer's got a long way to go.

It's going to have to go through the fish. And when it gets out of the fish, it's got to go through the water. And when it gets out of the water, it's got to rise all the way to heaven where God is.

Did you ever feel like my prayer doesn't reach the ceiling? It's ok. God's in the room. It doesn't have to reach the ceiling.

God's down there with him in the fish. And He knows it. And even with all of that around Him and on Him and going through Him and His mind, I deserve nothing.

I don't deserve to be delivered. He turns again to the Lord. And I remember the Lord.

And I turn again to His temple and my prayer will reach Him. And then He crowns God Lord of all. Who threw Jonah in the sea? You say, well, chapter 1, verse 15? The mariners threw Jonah in the sea.

Not according to this prayer. According to this prayer, verse 3, You cast me into the sea. He knew who cast Him into the sea.

God and the mariners. It was God. He didn't say, The breakers have come over me.

The billows have rolled over me. He says in verse 3, Your billows have rolled over me. Your breakers have come upon me.

He knows it's the Lord. There's no question that it's the Lord. The marvel of marvels.

This is a prayer of thanksgiving. I will pay my vows with a voice of thanksgiving. What's He thanking God for? Look where He is.

Look what He's experiencing. And the psalm ends with shoutings of grace. Grace.

He quotes Psalm 3. Actually, it depends on which commentator you look at. He learned the value of memorizing Scripture. Because he quoted at least 12 psalms in this prayer.

Some say as many as 20 psalms in this prayer. And the last psalm he quotes was Psalm 3 when David was fleeing from Absalom and fleeing from his past sin. The message of mercy.

There's nothing he can do to help himself. He can't lift a finger to help himself. He doesn't need a counselor.

He doesn't need someone to come and talk to him and encourage him. He doesn't need a Bible verse. He just says, Salvation is from the Lord.

That's grace. And God doesn't wait another moment. As soon as he said, Salvation is from the Lord, God commanded the fish and the fish vomited him up on dry land.

Recently, you remember, because many of you prayed and I appreciate that, the little bout we went through with Lillian having food poisoning. It was just a terrible time from my point of view. I've never seen her that sick.

I didn't arrange this. God arranged it. Easter was coming.

I was studying Jonah and Lillian got sick. Those three things happened at the same time. I didn't arrange that.

I don't want to get gross here. Especially going on a date like this. I had never seen vomiting like I saw Lillian.

It was awful. And there was nothing she could do and there was nothing I could do. And two o'clock in the morning, we're both kneeling at the bathtub and I'm trying to help her and there's nothing left.

And it keeps coming and coming and she vomits. And you can't... Vomit is when you have no control. You've got to let it go.

And I was reading this that the fish vomited Jonah. He couldn't hold it in. And at the same time it was Easter and I was thinking about the resurrection and all of a sudden a verse came to me from Acts.

Death could not hold him. It couldn't hold him. It vomited him because it was involuntary.

It couldn't hold him anymore. And that's what happened when he said salvation is from the Lord. Jonah now is vomited up and he stands a new man and a new creation, a sign.

He's identified, although he doesn't know it yet. He doesn't understand the theology of it. He's identified with Christ in His death and in His resurrection.

He knows nothing of that. He only knows that he never expected to breathe God's air again and he's on the land, a new creation, a new man in a new world and he's alive by a life that is not his own. God, in His marvelous way, is making a sign.

Making a sign. That's only the second step. But what a glorious step it is.

He came to the place, I'll give my life for the heathen. And now he understands for the first time it's all by grace. I don't deserve anything.

I deserve nothing. If I'm in heaven a million years outside of Christ, I still won't deserve anything. All the brothers and sisters in this room with all their experience in Christ, you still don't deserve anything.

We deserve nothing but the mercy that He gives us. It's free. It's abundant.

It's from Him. We're on level ground with Him. When God makes a missionary channel, when God creates a sign, He brings us to the place where we understand that all we have is because God gave it.

It's the goodness of the Lord. It's the mercy of the Lord. And we deserve nothing.

And God brings us then down to death and then up again and now it's a whole new world, a whole new perspective and we're alive. Now we're going to watch the sign as God begins that prayer. And Lord willing, we'll pick that up tonight.

Let's bow. Father, thank You. Thank You so much that death could not pull the Lord Jesus.

Thank You for this shadow of the cross. Thank You for Your patience and turning us into the signs individually and corporately. Lord, give us eyes to see that salvation is from the Lord, that all we have is undeserved and it's by Your grace.

Work that in us, we pray. Prepare our hearts for the next stage in what it means to be a sign. Amen.

We ask in Jesus' name.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11411.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ed-miller/jonah-3-work-beneath-the-surface/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net