

Warfare Is Global Missions

by Russell Moore

Jesus uses the story of Jonah as a sign of his own judgment and experience on the cross, highlighting the importance of understanding the holiness and justice of God.

Duration: 52:40

Scripture: Jonah 1:11

Topics: "Global Missions", "Divine Judgment"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares the story of a new believer named Don who had a powerful conversion experience. Don had joined a local congregation and received evangelism training. However, his first attempt at door-to-door witnessing led him to a dangerous situation with a woman who had a restraining order against her ex-husband. The speaker then discusses the concept of judgment and the importance of understanding the holiness and justice of God. He emphasizes the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection as a sign of judgment and redemption. The sermon concludes with a call to proclaim Christ and the message of judgment and freedom in world missions.

Transcript

Would you please turn your Bibles to Jonah chapter 1. Jonah chapter 1 beginning with verse 11, and we will read through chapter 3 and verse 5. Jonah 1, 11 through 3, 5. And having just been seated, would you please stand out of reverence for the reading of the words of our God. The word of our God says, Then they said to him, What shall we do to you that the sea may quiet down for us? For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, Pick me up and hurl me into the sea, and then the sea will quiet down for you.

For I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you. Therefore the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the Lord, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood.

For you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you. So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. 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 floods surrounded me. All your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, I am driven away from your sight, yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.

The water 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, O Lord my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you into your holy temple.

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. Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you. So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord.

Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey, and he called out, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. And the people of Nineveh believed God.

Let's pray. Holy Father, no condemnation do we dread. Jesus is ours.

And Father, we come to you hearing this word that you have breathed out by your Holy Spirit. And Father, we pray that it would come to us from you with power and authority tonight. And Father, we pray that you would give great glory and majesty in this place tonight to our Lord Jesus, in whose name we pray.

Amen. You may be seated. As the flashing blue lights reflected on the wall behind him, I think all Don wanted to do was to fumble around for a cigarette.

He was a new believer. He had been converted while sitting in his house with a gun to his head, when a door-to-door team of believers had come to his door sharing the gospel. And he believed.

He had been baptized. He had joined a local congregation. And Don had done evangelism training.

He had just learned evangelism explosion. And he was on his way to go door-to-door witnessing himself. Problem was, the first door that he went to, behind it was a lady who had a restraining order against her ex-husband, who had told her that he was going to send somebody to kill her.

So when she opened the door, and Don said in his very first witnessing opportunity, if you were to die tonight, he found himself causing a commotion. 20 years later, he still was able to reflect on that, and to say, it is a wonder I ever witnessed to the gospel of Jesus Christ again, because I was terrified. And the first time I heard Don tell me about this, I sat back and thought, you know, how rare it is that the sharing of the gospel actually causes an Acts 17 type commotion, in which you actually have that kind of foment.

Even among unbelievers, either among unbelievers or within the church. When we think about evangelism, and we think about missions, especially when we think about missions, what we often think of is the dissemination of programs. What we think about is a bureaucracy that we want to extend to the ends of the earth.

And it's something that is so routine, that we have many times in our churches, children and teenagers who reflexively yawn when a missionary comes behind the pulpit, because they often know that what's going to happen is that the missionary will stand up and show pottery shards, and will show quilts of his peoples, and will speak in the tongue of the language of his peoples, welcoming and greeting the congregation. What we often don't sense is the fact that world missions, global missions, this has everything to do with warfare. This has everything to do with a kingdom that is invading this present age.

We've just read the account of Jonah, the prophet. The reason I want us to look at this tonight is because this in the mind of Jesus has everything to do with the war he is coming to start. I want you to turn to another passage of scripture, if you will, in the Gospel of Matthew.

Look in the Gospel of Matthew in chapter 12. Notice what happens in verse 38. You have Jesus, and he is standing and he is speaking to those who are questioning him, to those who are confronting him.

Notice in verse 38, then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, teacher, we wish to see a sign from you. Now, keep in mind what they are saying. They're expecting Jesus to be the first century version of the power team.

He's going to come in and give a visible demonstration of the power of God. They want to see a sign from him. When in reality, they had already seen signs they would not believe.

Look just a little bit earlier from this in verse 28. What does Jesus say when he's being confronted with the idea that he is possessed by demons? But if it is by the spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. They come to Jesus and they say, what we want to do is we want to see a sign.

And what the sign is to demonstrate is that God is with Jesus. They want Jesus, if you're the anointed one, if you're this king that we are to expect, if you're the one that God's going to put all of your enemies under your feet, we want you to show this with some visible demonstration that God is on your side. Then what does Jesus do? Jesus turns around and answers them.

Notice in verse 39. But Jesus answered them, an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. If we're going to understand the kind of world that we're living in, if we're going to understand what it means to advance the kingdom, an idea that we have so robbed of any of its impact and any of its force, by turning the kingdom simply into another slogan. If we're going to understand what Jesus means by invading this present order and displacing the illegitimate rulers of this age, the principalities and powers with the kingdom and the authority of Christ.

If we're going to understand what Jesus means when he says, I want you through the power of the spirit to take this gospel of the kingdom to all nations, to all peoples, to the uttermost ends of the earth, then we need to understand what Jesus means when he points us specifically to the sign of Jonah. He says, I'm going to give you a sign and this is what it is. And this sign, if you'll notice, has two aspects to it.

Notice that Jesus says, first of all, as Jonah is three days in the belly of the great fish, so will the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Jesus says, this is a sign. Now, notice back in Jonah what we see.

We have Jonah who is anointed as a prophet of God. He is set apart. He is called out and what he is called out to do is to represent Israel as the light to the nations.

He is to call the nations to repentance. He is specifically called to go to Nineveh, a great and imposing and terrifying city, the text tells us. He is to go in to proclaim this.

And what does Jonah do? He rebels against the call. He does not follow the directive that God has given to him. And instead, he flees.

Now, notice what happens, though, to Jonah. As Jonah is fleeing from God, you have this sea. You have the waters of the sea.

Waters, as we have seen previously, that often show us the judgment of God. The flood, after all, coming upon the world, coming upon the creation with great condemnation. You have the sea.

Think about the way in which, for instance, Isaiah, in Isaiah 27, speaks against the sea warring against the purposes of God. The way that John in the Revelation will say, in the new heavens and the new earth, and the sea was no more, a place of danger. The sea is out in the sea, and the sea is growing tempestuous.

The sea is growing here stormy. There are waves crashing about. The creation here itself, it seems, is rebelling against Jonah at the direction of God.

He is going away from the direction that God is calling him. And even in this vessel, he is imperiled. And the people who are on the ship with him are also imperiled.

Now, contrast this. Jonah on the boat with waves and winds threatening the seafarers on the boat. Compare this with another prophet of God, who will find himself in exactly the same situation later on.

He's on a boat with winds and waves. The occupants of the boat, just as they do with Jonah, come down and say, why are you sleeping? The seafarers say to Jonah, why don't you call out to your God so that he will save us? Jonah cries out to God, and what is the end result? The end result is a sea that is still tempestuous, a sea that is still stormy, a sea that still threatens the occupants of the boat. Jonah does not have all things under his feet.

The other prophet stands calmly before the storm and speaks. And Mark tells us that instantly there's stillness. So much so that the seafarers with the prophet Jesus are able to stand and say, who is this man who has such authority that even the wind and the waves obey him? That's not the question the seafarers are asking of Jonah.

The question they're asking of Jonah is, who is this man that the winds and the waves are rebelling against him more and more? What has he done to violate his God? What has he done to cause these

things to come upon him? And notice the result. The seafarers, those who are on this ship, in verse 15, they pick up Jonah. This is after with much trembling, it appears.

They call out and they say to the God of Jonah, we don't want to be held guilty of the blood of this man. You are doing this, God. We are not doing this, God.

A very different kind of cry from the one that we're going to hear later on of the greater than Jonah prophet Jesus, where the people stand up and say, we are responsible for this. We will do this. Let his blood be upon us.

The seafarers say, no, no, this is not us. We are not giving up innocent blood. And they throw him into the sea.

Jesus says, there is something here about Jonah in this sign that is going to be seen and fulfilled in Jesus. And he specifically directs them to what happens to Jonah as he is thrown into the sea. He says, as Jonah is in the belly of the fish.

Text tells us that there is a sea creature who comes and swallows Jonah. Says in verse 17, the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And he was in the belly of the creature for three days and for three nights.

Now, we often read this text through the grid of Walt Disney's Pinocchio. We assume that Jonah is sitting on some kind of a raft in the water in this huge cavernous whale's stomach, sitting there with a little lamp, reading his Bible and waiting for deliverance. That is not the experience that we are shown here.

Instead, you have Jonah who is in the belly of this creature. He is entombed in the belly of this creature. Notice the way that he speaks as he is praying to God from the belly of the fish.

He says in verse 3, you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas. The flood surrounded me. Use this language of a flood coming upon him.

The waves and the billows, they passed over me. And then he speaks about being enchained. He speaks about this imprisonment in the very belly of death.

He is driven away, he says, from the presence of God. I am driven from your temple. I cannot see your temple.

Notice what he says in verse 6. Your bars closed in upon me forever. What Jonah is experiencing is a foretaste of death. He is experiencing here Sheol.

He is experiencing here what would seem to be a burial, an entombment. What he is experiencing here is judgment. He is experiencing God delivering him over to the chaotic waves, delivering him over to a nature that is in revolt against human rulership.

And notice what happens to him. He is consumed by a fish. Now, think about how strikingly unnatural this is, given God's creation order.

When God designs and creates the cosmos in Genesis chapter 1 and Genesis chapter 2, and he creates all of the living creatures, he speaks and you have the fish that swarm in the seas. All of the living creatures, including the great sea creatures that exist within the sea, Moses tells us specifically. You have

Adam, the man created with all things put under his feet, including everything that swims in the sea.

Everything that swarms in the sea, you are to have dominion over it. And yet Jonah, what happens to Jonah? Jonah, this one who ought to be a human ruler, who ought to have dominion, is swallowed. He is engulfed by a fish, by a creature that the Lord God has made.

He is experiencing here judgment, the judgment of God turning him over. Jesus says, as he is three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so will the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. He turns around, he speaks to them of judgment, which is exactly what Jesus has been talking about all along in Matthew chapter 12.

He turns around, notice if you will, in Matthew 12, right before he speaks of this issue. In verse 33, he talks about the tree that yields good fruit, or the bad tree that yields bad fruit. Notice what he says in verse 36.

I tell you, on the day of judgment, people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. Jesus is speaking of judgment, and then Jesus turns this image of judgment upon himself. As Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish, the son of man will be three days in the belly of the earth.

We have no understanding often, even within our churches, of judgment, of the holiness of God, of the justice of God, which shows up so often in the way that we preach, in which we can have people who will respond to Christ, but they do not agree that they are rightly judged. They can come to Christ, as it were, while all the while justifying themselves in their rebellion against God. I saw recently, turning on television as I was getting ready, a child-rearing expert was going to be on one of the morning television programs.

He said, I'm going to come on in a few minutes and talk to you about toddlers and fits. And I said, well, this will be interesting to see. So I waited around until he came back on, and the interviewer said, now tell us about fits.

And he said, well, toddlers often will throw fits because they want things. And I said, that's true. He says, you'll be in a store sometimes, or you'll be at home, and they'll start throwing a fit.

He says, and often what we want to do is to discipline them. I said, but you shouldn't discipline them, because when they're throwing fits, they're not doing anything wrong. He said, what the toddler is trying to do is to communicate with you.

He wants you to understand what he's saying. He said, so what you need to do is when a toddler begins to throw a fit, he said, what you need to do is to get down on your hands and knees, and you need to look the toddler in the eye, and whatever he is yelling, you say it back to him. And you say it back louder and louder and louder until he finally understands that you understand what he's saying.

So if he is yelling, I want a cookie. Then you just repeat back, you want a cookie. And you yell that louder and louder and louder, and then finally he'll understand, they know what I'm talking about.

They hear me. And then at that point, you can explain to the toddler why now is not the appropriate time to have the cookie. And the interviewer said, now, what if you're in the middle of a grocery store? And he said, you do it right there in the middle of the grocery store.

Just get down on your knees, and you do it right there. I turned off the television. I turned to my wife, and I said, that's a man that one day is going to have an 18-year-old son to whom he is yelling, you just robbed a liquor store.

You just robbed a liquor store. You just robbed a liquor store. And yet, you think about the logic behind what he is saying.

It is perfectly and completely logical for a utopian world in which there is no sin. It makes absolutely no sense in a world in which what you're trying to communicate is that there are consequences for disobedience, and that if disobedience is allowed to be given the freedom it seeks, it ends in death. Jesus turns, and he speaks, and he says, the natural and right direction in which you are going, even those of you who are scribes and Pharisees, is an end that ends in judgment.

But then Jesus turns immediately around and says, but I have a sign. This is the sign that you say you want. You're not going to get any sign except for the sign of Jonah, who was enclosed in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights.

This is a man who, judged by God, thrown into the seas, enclosed in the stomach of a creature, crying out, I am in the bonds of death. Notice what happens to Jonah. Jonah here is crying.

Notice in chapter 2, in verse 4, he is crying out, I am driven away from your sight, yet I shall again look to your holy temple. This is someone who is driven, he says, away from the very presence of God, who is exiled into the place of death, the very bonds of Sheol. Jonah's prayer, Jonah's cry here is, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He says, I am crying out.

I am away from your temple. And the prayer that he is offering to God is, rescue me from death. Rescue me from judgment.

He says, I have no attention to pay to idols, because I know that idols cannot rescue me. He says, I am appealing only to the steadfast love, verse 8, the steadfast love of God. And God tells us in this text, very matter-of-factly in verse 10, and the Lord spoke to the fish, who is he that even the fish of the sea obey him? The Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

Fish vomit. That's your sign. Jesus says, this is the sign that you have, and it's the only sign that I am going to give you.

And notice what happens to Jesus. This is someone who, unlike Jonah, is not in rebellion against God. This is someone who constantly, the text is showing us, the apostles are showing us that he does everything that his father delights in.

He is growing in wisdom and knowledge and in favor with God and with man. He delights in what delights the father. But someone who comes under a curse, not for his own sin, but for the sins of humanity, he comes under a curse.

He comes under a death sentence. He is specifically handed over to the pagans. Just as Jonah here has pagan seafarers who take him and cast him into judgment, a judgment that they don't really even want to have anything to do with, so does Jesus come before Roman centurions and prelates and governors, who all the while are saying, isn't this really something you all ought to be dealing with? And nonetheless, we wash our hands of this.

Don't let us be accused of innocent blood. He's handed over to the nations. He's handed over to the powers.

And when he is crucified, he is brought under the sentence of death. He is driven away from the presence of God. And yet all the while he is praying to the father.

I know that you always hear me. And he is offering up loud cries and tears to the one who can save him from death. And he was hurt.

As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so will the son of man be three days and three nights in the belly of the earth. He will come under condemnation of death. He will be abandoned to the grave.

It will seem as though he is completely exiled from the presence of God so that the people can stand around and say, where is this God who trust he trusted in? He said that he was the anointed one of God. Why has God not saved him? He is a dead corpse lying in a hole in the ground. And yet three days, three nights, that's it.

Jesus says that is your sign. And that is what we are called upon to proclaim in world missions. When we are going out into the mission field, whether that mission field is North America or Indonesia or the Sudan or Chile, when we are proclaiming Christ, we are proclaiming judgment, curse, freedom.

That the judgment has already fallen, that the one who was condemned is someone else who bore that condemnation, who was vindicated by the power of God. When he prayed and he looked to his God who could remember him, he was hurt. He was not, as Peter says, abandoned to the grave.

It means that the task of missions, we're understanding it as warfare, we're understanding that it has everything to do with the gospel of the one who is both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. That's the sign. There are some who will tell us in contemporary missiology that there are some cultures of the world that cannot understand justification.

They will say there are some cultures that don't have categories of guilt and condemnation. They will say to us, these are Western categories. And so there are some people groups that you need to address in other ways.

And so you address animist cultures, for instance, by saying, you are fearful of the great spirits, and yet Jesus is the one who is able to triumph over the spirits. And indeed, that is true. But if that's all you say, that is not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Every human being, Paul tells us in Romans chapter 2, has an in-built knowledge of guilt, looking forward toward judgment. It is present within the human heart. And the message of global missions, if we are going to free people from the power of the evil one, has to address the issue of guilt and condemnation and judgment.

There are some right now, especially within contemporary evangelicalism, who become enamored of what is called the emerging church. And there are many of them who are saying, we are able to be missional. And the way we are able to be missional is to not stand in such sharp contrast against the ambient culture of the day.

We're able to instead engage at multiple levels. And you will read so much of the literature that's being produced by the emerging church. And you will find that ultimately, it often comes to the issue of the cross, the issue of judgment, the issue of condemnation.

And you have some who are willing to preach the kingdom of God without preaching the crucifixion of Christ. This is nothing but Schleiermacher with a soul patch. This is the same thing that the church always confronts over and over and over and over again.

When you have Jesus speaking of the coming of the kingdom of God, he speaks of it specifically coming through this sign of judgment, condemnation, vindication. So that if we are going to be relevant to a contemporary North American culture, or if we are going to be relevant to a contemporary Sudanese culture, we must address them head on with the problem they all know they have. Problem of guilt.

You do not need to come in and to somehow convince unbelievers that there is judgment. Unbelievers are already scared to death of the sentence of death. That's the reason you can make billions of dollars with Botox and Viagra and just for men hair color.

They're scared of the sentence of death. The sign that Jesus is giving us is a sign that is coming, that is speaking of this kind of freedom that comes specifically through a man who is abandoned to the grave. Fish vomit is the sign, Jesus says.

An empty tomb, that's the sign. An unbeliever buried with Christ in baptism is the sign. Because what we are saying is we are placing you into the waters, the very judgment of God, where as we place you into the water, you have no ability to breathe.

You are submerged beneath the waters. You are trusting in someone to pull you out. And as you're doing so, you're identifying yourself with one who was placed under the very wrath of God, crying out all along, I entrust myself to the one who is faithful to deliver me.

And he was pulled out of the wrath of God. He was vindicated on the third day by the power of God. This is the reason why Jesus identifies himself at the Jordan River with the message of John the Baptist.

He comes to the Jordan River of all rivers. Just as the people of Israel went through the waters of the Jordan to where? Into the land of promise. Jesus identifies himself with what John says is a judgment coming upon the people of Israel.

And John says, I don't want to baptize you. Repentance, you have no need for repentance. Jesus identifies himself with sinful people so that he can lead them into the inheritance.

He says, this is the sign that you are given. You and I have people in our churches right now who are sitting in our churches, some of them faithful believers in Christ, but who are wavering wicks of flame. There's some reports that say that women among women of a certain age, one out of every three or one out of every four will have had an abortion.

Women are in our churches. And so often the message that they receive from us in our preaching is a message that says God will forgive you through Christ. But what they understand is that there is a God standing over them saying to them how I would condemn you to hell.

But you jump through that hoop. Instead of communicating to the woman who has had an abortion, yeah, what you did is worthy of judgment. What you did is worthy of condemnation.

What you did in the shedding of innocent blood is worthy of eternal and everlasting damnation. It is not that God is saying to you that's okay. And it is not that God is saying to you I'm just holding back my judgment.

It is that God has already judged that sin. It is that has already been cursed and damned and crucified and buried. And you in Christ are a new creation.

There is therefore now no condemnation. That's the message that she needs to understand. She needs to understand that message in a way that she is able to walk in the freedom of Christ not as someone who is continuing to self-justify murder in the same way that the repentant idolatrous man in your congregation is someone who is not justifying his addiction to mammon but he is someone who sees it as crucified and judged and over.

Jesus says that's the sign. In the belly of the earth three days three nights that's it. But Jesus says there's a second aspect to this.

Notice what he says. He speaks specifically to the preaching of Jonah. He says I will be the son of man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

And then he speaks again to judgment. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it. Why? For they repented at the preaching of Jonah and behold something greater than Jonah is here.

Now think about in the book of Jonah in the passage that we read at the very end how momentous this verse is and the people of Nineveh believed God. This is not in the history of the nation of Israel. There is no Israelite mission board.

There is no woman's mission society among the people of Israel. People of Israel are to serve as a light to the nations. You have Jonah coming to this one specific nation.

He is speaking here that God is going to judge. God is going to wipe it out. And you have the people of this mighty and evil city believing the word of God coming through the voice of the prophet Jonah.

This is a miraculous and unbelievable thing. Jesus turns around and says, You want to see another sign? You'll see one who will be in the belly of the earth for three days and three nights and then you will see a preaching ministry that if the people of Nineveh were here to see what you see they would condemn you because they believed and you did not. He points him to the power of the authority of Christ.

Notice the condemnation here in Jonah. Jonah doesn't believe the word of God. And the pagan uncircumcised nation does.

People of Israel called consistently to be a light to the nations and they're not. They fail. And this pagan uncircumcised nation does.

Jesus says this message of repentance is going out. You will see the authority present through the preaching itself. You and I are living in a new covenant era in which God is doing something in these last days through the preaching of the gospel that is absolutely astounding and momentous.

He is demonstrating through the great commission task that what he has promised to his anointed one the very ends of the earth he is delivering. And he is demonstrating that when he speaks of Israel he is not speaking simply of some strain of DNA. He is speaking specifically of one Jewish remnant man that he has raised from the dead and he is honoring him by every man and woman and child who believes in him whether that man or woman or child is Sudanese or Chilean or Ethiopian or Finnish.

They're hidden in Christ. They're the offspring of Abraham. They're the chosen one of God.

That preaching of repentance it goes out all over the world and wherever you have accusation wherever you have condemnation you now have freedom. That's why Jesus says to the churches I am with you wherever you go even to the ends of the earth and you have the gospel going forward with the power of the Holy Spirit all over the place all over the world. Jesus says the sign is the preaching itself.

The sign is the message itself. The sign is able to deliver through the power and the authority and the spirit of God. We do not preach this way often in the way Jesus does.

I had a student come to see me one time. He said I need to see you Dr. Moore. I need to see you right now because I think I'm lost.

And I've seen unregenerate students ministry students come to faith in Christ before. I was willing to talk to him. We came in and sat down talked to him about his hope in Christ.

This was someone it seemed who was trusting and hoping in Christ alone. And I said now tell me John why do you think you're lost? He said Dr. Moore you don't understand. He said I am this far away from apostasy and immorality all the time.

I said well good me too. So tell me about it. He said no you don't understand.

I'm literally I'm this far away from just complete immorality and apostasy. I said what do you mean? He said I'm just I'm struggling and I'm fighting with my sinful inclinations all the time. He said it let me tell you something.

He said if you were to prove to me that the bones of Jesus were in a grave in the Middle East if you could prove that to me beyond any shadow of a doubt. So Dr. Moore I'd be out right now taking every kind of drug drunk on every kind of liquor and having sex with every woman that I could find. I said John if you could prove to me that the bones of Jesus were in the grave in the Middle East I'd be drunker than you are and I'd be wilder than you are.

I said the fact is though do you believe that the bones of Jesus are in a hole in the Middle East? And he said not a chance. I said John the Apostle Paul tells us if the bones of Jesus are in a hole in the Middle East you ought to be drunk and intoxicated with drugs and having sex with any woman that you can find. I said but the simple fact of the matter is you and I know that Jesus has been risen from the dead and what that means is yes you know that you're this far away from apostasy and immorality all the time.

And yes you are apart from Christ when you need to be worried and when you need to be in despair is when you no longer know that you're this far away from apostasy and immorality as in what you're living. It sounds to me is the normal Christian life of someone who understands the more that he's a Christian just how sinful left to himself he actually is as if you're not able to sit and trace on some type of a chart that you are holier this year than you were last year. I said you can't come in here and tell me I am twice as humble

this year as I was last year.

Not anymore. I said the hope that you have is something outside of you in Jesus Christ. You are looking to that.

You're trusting in that. That's the gospel. Jesus says when you see this sign that you're warning the sign that you're warning is a dead man who's alive and a gospel that's preached.

He says I know that's not what you're looking for. That's what it is. And if you do not receive it you will be swept away.

That's the message. That's the message of world mission. We spoke about baptism a little bit earlier.

One of the things that I am burdened about in our churches is the way that we trivialize baptism. This may not be the case in your churches but it is in so many where we come out into the baptismal waters and we are so afraid that we're going to communicate something sacramental that we spend the entire time explaining what this is not. This person comes knowing that this water doesn't wash away sin.

This water does absolutely nothing. I don't even know why we're here except Jesus tells us to and so upon profession of faith slosh slosh and we're out. I don't think that's what's happening in the book of Acts.

Instead what do we have? We have a church announcing together that this sinner is confessing that he is united by faith with a Christ who has already been submerged beneath the wrath of God who has already been raised from the dead who has already been seated in the heavenly places that God has already said this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. This person is hidden in that Christ and this person is trusting God to do to him exactly what he does with Christ. Jesus says the message that is going forward.

This is the gospel and the warfare that takes place has to do with principalities and powers that would have us to stand against the wrath of God on our own. Jesus says fish that's the sign when Jonah is regurgitated up onto the seashore. He stands up having escaped death gasping shriveled a repentant rebel when Jesus walks out of the tomb in Jerusalem.

He goes to Galilee and eats fish as a triumphant warrior. The confidence that we have in the gospel and in world missions is not to say we believe we've got a message that can convince you as though we're we're selling a product so we could do demographic research and say people in Burma aren't as likely to believe in Jesus as people in Birmingham and therefore we'll concentrate on Birmingham and leave Burma alone. We're going to Birmingham and we're going to Burma knowing that through the authority of the message preached as the spirit of God goes forward.

We are going to see the nations turning to Christ and we are going to see the nations enraged by Christ. Jesus says this is the sign but the sign is not simply joyous the sign causes the enemies of God to become all the more enraged so much so that they seek to have him crucified and in the same way as the sign is going forward those who war against the people of God will war all the more furiously. If you're preaching a gospel of resurrection a gospel of substitution a gospel of Jesus you will find hostility you will find commotion.

Very early on in my ministry I served in a place in which I found it very difficult because I was I was preaching and ministering to a group of teenagers who had been in church all of their lives and they were in many ways inoculated to the gospel. We've heard it all before. The thing that I found very interesting

was we had a group of unchurched teenagers who started coming and they were people who had never been in the church before.

These teenagers had no dads they're mostly boys they're showing up with pagers on because many of them were drug dealers they're in a cloud of marijuana smoke so much so I think I was high some of the time I was talking to them they would come in and ask for things like prayer requests giving thanks for pornography not knowing that this would be something shocking and offensive and I stood there thinking there is no way that these guys are ever going to get a hearing from me and all the curriculum that would come in from all the evangelical youth ministry publishers would tell you how to connect with young people so that you can be relevant and hip and I knew there was no way I could be relevant or hip and so I simply did what I always did and the thing that I found very interesting was

that what engaged these teenagers was how shocking what I was saying really is that no reasonable and rational person would believe this kind of thing and so they would come up to me after and one of them named Justin I'll never forget walked up and said hey brother can I ask you something do you really think that dead guy came back to life I said yeah Justin I do for real for real some of them were converted many of them weren't but the message that is delivered is not a message that adjusts from age to age it's a message that by its own authority and power is relevant because it addresses exactly what they are all scared of what they're all in fear of what they're all in denial about and some of them will surrender to it through the power of the spirit and some of them will walk away

either way Jesus says the gospel that is being preached is pointing you to the kingdom of Christ when that happens you're going to have a commotion you're going to have upheaval you're going to have those who are going to seek to destroy you and you're going to have those who will cry out for mercy but at the end of the day Jesus says you don't have shock and awe what you have is a nation of people hearing you speak about a man who went under the judgment of God and who came out on the other side as a sinless victor and the question they will ask you is for real for real let's pray it's holy righteous father you've called us to be a missions people father you've called us to be a missions people in the midst of a war father you've caused called us to go into places that are held now by

the ruler of this age by the so-called prince of the power of the air by a being who fancies himself the emperor of this present world father we pray that we would not be afraid of him father we know that left to our left to ourselves he can destroy us left to ourselves he can indict us and left to ourselves he's right and yet father he has nothing on Jesus and father we pray that we would be bold and confident knowing that when you look at us what you see is not someone that you wish you could damn when you look at us in Christ your response is this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased father we pray that this would give us boldness to take on the powers of this age with the sword of the spirit which is the word of God father we pray that even this night you would give us hearts

that are broken for the nations for those who are yet without Christ and father we pray that we would proclaim it and that we would call the nations not to us not to some program not to some bureaucracy but to the son of man and it's in his name that we pray amen take your song

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