

Chastened

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Bible Verse: Jonah 1:4-15
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We're going to return to the book of Jonah for our message this morning and I realize that's not necessarily the easiest book in the Bible to find so I'll give you a moment to turn to the book of Jonah toward the end of your New Testament, just prior to the book of Micah. I want to say this: last Sunday I preached almost twice as long as I normally do and I was stunned to find that there were almost correspondingly twice as many positive reinforcing comments to me in response to that message, so being a preacher, I think, "Okay, let's go with that. What happens today if I preached twice as long as last week?" That would be magnificent. I don't plan to do that but you never know what's going to happen, but it is a blessing to be with a congregation that wants to hear the word of God like that and the constant encouragement I get, to see the way people respond to God's word here, I love you for it and I know that God will bless you for it. So it's a privilege to stand here this morning and opened God's word again.

We're going to look at Jonah 1 and I'm going to read the text to set it in your mind. We're going to consider today what I think is one of the great narrative texts in all of the Old Testament. Jonah 1:4 through 15 is what we're going to consider and I want to, especially for the benefit of those of you maybe that are visiting with us, your mind hasn't been in Jonah like ours has been over the past few weeks, I want to read this to kind of set the stage in our minds and then go through it in an overview fashion here this morning. Jonah 1, beginning in verse 4.

4 The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. 5 Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep. 6 So the captain approached him and said, "How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish." 7 Each man said to his mate, "Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us." So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, "Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" 9 He said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of

heaven who made the sea and the dry land." 10 Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, "How could you do this?" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. 11 So they said to him, "What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?"--for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. 12 He said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you." 13 However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them. 14 Then they called on the LORD and said, "We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased." 15 So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging.

Let's pray together.

God, we have just sung of your holiness and we see your holiness and your sovereign power on display in this passage. We pray that you would open eyes and open hearts and open ears to hear that which you would have for us this morning. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Jonah, the book of Jonah as we have said repeatedly throughout the early messages in this series, is a book about God's sovereign compassion. It says in the very last verse in Jonah 4:11 that God had intention to show compassion on Nineveh, the great city, and we see his compassion on display throughout this book and we see his sovereignty on display throughout this book. Those are the twin rails upon which the narrative, upon which the story of Jonah moves forward and last time we looked at the first three verses of Jonah 1 and just by way of reminder, look at verse 2 with me. The Lord called Jonah his prophet and sent him to Nineveh or commanded him to go to Nineveh and in verse 2 he says,

2 "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." 3 But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

This was an act of sin. It was an act of direct disobedience, of prophetic defiance against the direct command of God, and what we see here in the passage that I just read are the severe consequences that just followed immediately after Jonah's disobedience, and so you see God's sovereignty on great display as he brings this storm upon the sea and increases its intensity until he gets the result that he desires. And beloved, as we go through this, we want to keep that sovereign power in mind. It brings, it strikes fear in the human heart to realize just the great strength of God to accomplish what he desires, but it is also very crucial for us to keep running in the background of our mind, keeping in mind that God has a greater purpose in mind that he is carrying out here. There is a

purpose of compassion that he sovereignly intends to bring to pass upon the people of Nineveh and he is not going to let a man stand in his way. The fact that Jonah did not want that compassion to be displayed to them was no impediment to God accomplishing his will. So we see that God's sovereignty is great, that his omnipotence means this: he is able to accomplish what he wants to accomplish. God has the power to do what he wants to do. He has the power even to bring all of the natural forces of the world to bear on a single man in order that his purposes would not be frustrated. God is sovereign and God is compassionate and this story advances that narrative as we go through it. So we're dealing with Jonah who thought somehow in his twisted sin-distorted mind at that point in his life, he thought he could frustrate the plan of God by simply going the opposite direction to where God would have him to go and now picking it up in verse 4, we see the severe consequences that follow from Jonah's folly.

So look at verse 4 with me again as we pick it up now and go through it in a little more detail.

4 The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up.

God overrode Jonah's attempts by something that Jonah did not anticipate. You know, beloved, sin, your sin always has unintended consequences and Jonah was dealing with unintended consequences here. He had provoked the discipline of the Lord on his life with his sin and so God frustrates Jonah's attempts to frustrate the plans of God for the salvation of the Ninevites and what God did, the verse says here, is that he hurled a great storm, a major storm onto the sea, and as we go through this passage, you'll see that that verb "hurl" is a key verb that really advances the narrative as you go along. It has the idea of throwing something with violent force, with a ferocious intensity, and God sends the force of his omnipotence upon the sea and sovereignly sends a violent wind to hinder the ship which would, therefore, hinder Jonah's plans to run from God's command.

It's difficult for us as we are standing, sitting as it were, on terra firma to fully appreciate the majesty, the frightening intensity of this storm with the sea rising up and casting down, and rising up and casting down, and taking the ship up and down with it. It's enough to make me seasick just describing it but beloved, put yourself in the ship mentally as we consider this. The wind is howling. The ship is so assaulted that it is about to be broken into pieces. What you need to realize is this is no ordinary storm. This is not a casual run-of-the-mill thunderstorm that comes upon this ship, this is one of sovereign might that transcends normal human experience. You know that by the response of the sailors as you look at it in verse 5. Look at it with me.

5 Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god,

Look, these were experienced mariners. These were people who were used to the sea. They were used to storms. They were used to the wind. They were professionals. They knew what to do with the weather on the sea and yet instantly they find themselves in the midst of a catastrophe that is beyond their experience; that is new to them; that is a level

of severity that was outside of their experience and they instinctively knew that they were dealing with something supernatural. So we are in a supernatural realm here. This is a narrative talking about supernatural strength, supernatural power, and we need to understand and process the narrative from that particular perspective.

It frightened these experienced sailors and you see their desperation in verse 5 by the various ways that they used to try to calm the sea. First off, look at it there in verse 5 with me, "every man cried to his god." The ancient world was polytheistic. They had many gods in their religious understanding and so the sailors here were thinking, maybe one of the gods is behind the storm, not yet knowing Yahweh, not yet knowing the God who actually made the sea and the dry land. So they are in darkness. They are in spiritual darkness, literal spiritual darkness in their false religion at the time that they boarded with and they have no idea what's going on. They just think that there's a god that is angry and they are trying to call out to him to stop the storm, or perhaps that god knows another god and he can bring persuasion to stop the god from conducting this storm, but they are calling on their personal gods hoping that one of them will exert influence to bring the storm to a stop. But of course it does no good because false gods are no gods at all. They were crying out to nonexistent beings to help them and so they were quickly met with the futility of that. They needed immediate relief because, remember, their ship is about to break apart and if their ship breaks apart, they will die. They know this. They know what is at stake and so there is a level of human desperation at play in what they are trying to do in their response here.

When their prayers didn't help, look at verse 5 with me, when their prayers didn't help as they cried to their gods,

they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them.

This was an abandonment of the very purpose of their trip. It shows their great desperation. They were throwing away their financial gain as they threw the grain, the wind, the olive oil into the sea. At this point, the only thing that matters is surviving and it's not helping. Notice the word there. In the New American Standard, it says "they threw the cargo." Those of you that follow the English Standard Version will see the better use, actually, the word "hurl." It's the same word. When it says in verse 4 God hurled a great wind on the sea and you have the picture of God throwing this great storm on the sea and stirring everything up, it's the same verb that is used here to describe the sailors taking the cargo and throwing it overboard. They weren't just simply picking it up and plopping it over the side. In their terror, in their panic, in their desperation, they are flinging things with great force overboard in order to try to bring some stability to the ship to lighten it so that it stays above the water rather than sinking down, and even in this use of the verb, you see a contrast between the sovereignty of God and the limitations of human ability. God sovereignly sends a storm and everything is supernatural. He hurls it and things happen. These men hurl in their human weakness and nothing changes. So that's the picture. God hurling a storm, the sailors hurling of the cargo, and the situation doesn't change.

Now at this point in the narrative, look at verse 5, they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. Now you get a little bit of an interlude. You've seen what's happened with the weather. You've seen what's happened with the sailors. You've seen what's happened with their cargo. Well, where is Jonah in the midst of this? Well, Jonah, verse 5, look at it with me,

But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep.

Now I can't explain to you how he slept through that storm but Scripture simply indicates that this was a particularly heavy slumber that he had fallen into. He is so deeply soundly asleep that even a supernatural storm is not waking him up. So picture the sailors, they are desperate, they are trying to save their lives and as we saw last time, this was a ship with a relatively small crew, most likely, maybe a dozen men or so. So every man's contribution to the well-being of the ship, the well-being of everyone on the ship was crucial and here is Jonah laying down and sound asleep. Now this is a picture of what we said a couple of weeks ago of the broader problem that was marking Israel at the time, the nation of Israel. Israel was asleep in the midst of their responsibility to be a witness to the nations and we saw that through things we looked at a couple of weeks ago. Here is Jonah in the midst of pagans, Jonah an Israelite in the midst of pagans, doing the same thing that his people had been doing for centuries, refusing to be a priest of God to the nations, and here is Jonah in the midst of the desperate physical plight of the sailors sleeping on the job, so to speak. A tragic, pathetic picture of what the nation of Israel was like at that time, refusing to be a witness to the nations. In one sense, this was nothing new. This is what you would expect of an Israelite in the presence of pagans who were about to die, asleep on the job. A sad picture of the indifference to them.

Well, the captain of the ship sees this and will have nothing of it. You can almost picture him grabbing Jonah and shaking him. Verse 6,

6 So the captain approached him and said, "How is it that you are sleeping?"

"No one on a ship like ours in a storm like this should be asleep. How can you be asleep when we're all in danger? How can you not be contributing trying to save us?" The convicting word of a pagan captain to a Jew at that moment should have crushed Jonah in his conscience. "How can this be that you are so indifferent to our plight? How can you be seeking your sleep in the midst of this crisis?" A heathen has to call on a prophet to pray. Look at it there in verse 6 with me,

"How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish."

You can kind of picture the violent spray of the water splashing over the ship in the midst of this. This is no casual conversation, this is a time of utmost desperation, and I rather

suspect, thinking of the modern scene here this morning, I rather suspect that if the full situation of the violent tempest of spiritual reality were known amongst the lost to look at the broad evangelical church with its preoccupation with itself, with entertaining itself when it gathers together in so-called worship, gathers together to hear messages of social justice preached while men are dying and going to hell, preoccupied with our own health and prosperity. Again, speaking broadly about the church at large, speaking beyond our own fellowship here. Isn't it obvious what they would say if they knew the reality and they saw what we were doing? "We are perishing here! How can you be asleep and not preaching the Gospel to help us? There is a sovereign storm of wrath against unsaved men, how are you so pathetically sleeping in the midst of your responsibility, you who have the light of the Gospel of Christ, how are you silent in our hour? How are you seeking your own comfort, your own slumber when we are perishing? When every passing several seconds bring another soul plunging down to hell?"

The same rebuke that's brought against Jonah, that was brought against Israel, is a rebuke needed to be heard by the professing church of Christ today and our responsibility is even worse because we have a fuller revelation of which we speak. We are now on the other side of the cross of Christ which reconciles men to God. We have the only message, we have the Gospel message which alone is able to bring salvation to men and the church of Christ is frittering away, thinking that the Gospel exists for us, for our comfort, for what we want, and well might if they understood the consequences, if they understood the reality, well might an angry disbelieving world look at the so-called church of Christ today and say, "Why are you sleeping? Why are you not teaching the word of God like you should? Why the loud guitars and the fog machines and the fairy dust falling out of the ceilings? Why your preoccupation with your own prosperity, I ask you? We're dying here!"

That's the spirit in which the captain approaches. "Get up. Call on your God. Maybe your God will be concerned about us so that we will not perish." So a heathen calls on the prophet of God to pray just as an unsaved world, if they understood, would call upon the church of God to preach the word of God concerning the Gospel of Christ. "Tell us what we must do to be saved. Help us in our time of need."

Well, after that little interlude with Jonah and the captain, the scene goes back to the other sailors on the ship. Verse 7, look at it with me. It says,

7 Each man said to his mate, "Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us."

Lots were a matter of chance. You think about flipping a coin or throwing dice, drawing straws, something that has a measure of objectivity to it; it's not determined by the intent of the one doing it. It was the common opinion in those days among sailors, that the misconduct of one person on the ship might bring disaster to the entire ship, so they are operating from...this text gives you a little bit of insight into their presupposition. They're saying, "This is a supernatural storm. A god of some kind has sent the storm. He must, therefore, be angry and if he's angry, he must be angry with one of us." So they're trying

to diagnose what the problem is, feeling around in the darkness, metaphorically speaking, feeling around in the darkness trying to understand, trying to get to the bottom of what brought this horrible mess onto their hands, and their thought was if the guilty man could be found, maybe he could bear the wrath of the god so that the rest of them could be spared, maybe there could be a substitute one for the others and, you know, when you think about it like that, you see a little principle, you see a bit of the principle of substitution being at play even in what's being said here, that if you could find the guilty one, if the punishment could fall on one guilty one, then maybe the others can go free. Well, that's the principle of substitution at the heart of the Gospel except the wrath of God didn't fall on a guilty one, the wrath of God fell on a righteous one, fell on an innocent victim, fell on a Lamb perfect and spotless, fell on Christ Jesus at the cross. One person substituting to bear the punishment for the sins of many. Here we see the sailors in a principle of substitution looking for one upon whom all of the wrath could fall so that the others could go free, the rest of the crew could be spared.

Now as we're thinking about the sovereignty of God in this narrative, in this story, this true historical storytelling what actually happened in time and space. When I say story, I'm just referring to the historical narrative. I'm not at all suggesting that this is some kind of fable or allegory or anything that didn't happen in space and time, just to clarify my terms. So what we find is we are reading the story in the midst of a powerful macro display of sovereignty, right? Here what we find, what we're going to see is God working out his sovereignty also in detail, in smaller ways, in quiet ways working out the details, directing the storm, directing the lot.

Look at what happens in verse 7,

So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

This was not coincidence. This was not luck. This was not so random after all. Scripture actually addresses this specifically at the end of Proverbs 16:33. You don't need to turn there but I'll read it to you. Proverbs 16:33 says,

33 The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.

What the lot brings up is what God determined for it to bring up, in other words, and so when we let Scripture interpret Scripture, we see what's going on here. These sailors using a method of random chance in their mind, bringing some manner of objectivity, throwing it in the darkness, so to speak, their ignorant means is what God uses in order to bring Jonah to light. They throw a lot. From their perspective, it could have fallen on any of the 15 of them, or however many there were. But there was only one way that lot was coming out when God is sovereignly at work, when God has to sovereignly deal with his prophet, when God has a sovereign intention to bring compassion on a city. His will will be done and so the lot falls on Jonah and Jonah's sin now has been exposed. There is now nowhere else for him to hide. The lot has spoken. The presuppositions of everyone is, "Somehow you're the problem here," and the cross-examination begins. God had

sovereignly used that lot to expose Jonah and his defiance and now the details are going to come out.

Look at verse 8 here and remember, it's just so important, I believe, to understand the force of this story. It's so important to remember that all of this dialogue is taking place in a set of circumstances. They were not having this conversation in a climate controlled environment with stable ground underneath them like you and I are interacting here today around the word of God. This dialogue is taking place while they are being tossed to and fro on the ship by the power of the storm, while the force of water is falling upon them. They don't know, the sailors don't know as they are standing here asking these questions whether the next step, whether their next breath will be their last. They don't know if they're going to get to finish their question before the boat breaks up. That's how desperate it was. Remember, look at verse 4 with me just to keep this in mind. The ship was about to break up and so as they are lurching from side-to-side trying to hold onto something so they don't fall overboard, they are hitting Jonah with a barrage of questions that they are rightfully asking.

To look at verse 8 now. I think the picture here is a crowd of sailors gathered around Jonah and questions coming at him from different angles, from different mouths, as different men ask questions. This is urgent. They've got to get to the bottom of this and get to the bottom of it fast before they all perish in the sea. So they said to him, verse 8,

8 ... "Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"

Remember that they had not met Jonah before he boarded onto the ship. They didn't know him. He was just a passenger who paid a fare in order to go with them on their previously planned journey and it's falling upon their understanding, they are recognizing, "We don't know the full story about you. What's going on here? Tell us now because our lives are in danger. You have no option but to tell us the truth. The lot has identified you, out with it now before this boat sinks and we all drown!" So there's a great urgency here in everything that is being said.

Well, Jonah responds to them with a straightforward answer which is almost surprising in the midst of the deception that he is practicing before God, the defiance that he's practicing before God. He answers them, verse 9, and here getting perhaps a summary statement of everything that he says, but the gist of what he said is this, look at it in verse 9,

9 He said to them, "I am a Hebrew,

Hebrew was a word that designated a Jew among foreigners. He's saying, "I'm a Jew." And he tells them about the nature of his worship. He says,

and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land."

"I fear Yahweh. I fear the God who is in covenant relationship with the nation Israel. He is the God who made the sea. He is the God who made the dry land."

Now do you see? We're not on the ship so we can see a little bit of irony and see a little, I don't know if humor is the right word but there is certainly a great irony in what Jonah says. They're in the midst of this horrifying tempest that they are attributing to a god of some kind, and Jonah says, "Yeah, I'm a Jew and I fear the God who, well, he made the sea." "What? Your God made the sea? Your God is sovereign over the sea?" You see, these men 2,700 years ago were not infected with the spirit of skepticism that marks our day and age. Everyone was religious back then. There were no atheists even in pagan cultures. They believed in gods. Even if they believed in non-gods, they were spiritually minded in that basic fundamental sense.

So they take Jonah at his word and when Jonah says, "My God made the sea," they instantly believe him. They are following through on the presuppositions that guided their thinking. There is a God, there are a lot of gods, this lot identified the man and so their understanding is that they are being led to the truth by the process which they are following and the fact of the matter is, they were being led to the truth but it was by the God that they did not yet know; it was by the God who was directing everything silently, invisibly behind the scenes. The truth was coming out and he was using their faulty means in order to accomplish an infallible result, to accomplish the result that he sovereignly intended to bring to pass.

So they believed Jonah. He says, "I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land." He fears the Lord in the sense that he's a follower of him and that only thickens the plot, as if this plot could get more thick. It's already as thick as molasses and now the molasses is going to congeal and freeze even more in the moment and get even thicker as this story is masterfully told, as it masterfully unfolds. Put yourself in the shoes of the sailors. I'm going to have more to say about the sailors next week. Put yourself in the shoes of the sailors. From a human perspective, these guys are completely innocent. They're just going about the job that they do when the ship sets sail. They have no part in Jonah's conflict, Jonah's defiance with God. They don't even have a part in God's purpose with Nineveh. They're bystanders, so to speak, to this and yet all of a sudden Jonah by his actions has brought them into the middle of a supernatural problem.

So the storm is raging and now they have a spiritual crisis on their hands that they are spiritually unequipped to meet, so no wonder in verse 10 it says the men became extremely frightened. They were already petrified and this just took it to another new higher level of fear.

10 Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, "How could you do this?"

How could you do this? Remember, their presumption is, their presupposition is that one man could bring calamity on an entire ship. Even if the others were not involved in his

misdeeds, his misfortune, his rebellion, the presence of one man could bring them all down.

So they're shocked at what they see and hear. "How could you do this?" And in verse 10, look at the last half of verse 10,

For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD,
because he had told them.

So somehow, we are not given all of the details, somehow after, maybe after the ship sets sail, we have to picture a few of the incidental details here, somehow between the time that Jonah boarded, the sailors are getting to know him and the time of this storm, they talk like men do. "Oh, who are you? What do you do?" Jonah at some point in the past had told them, "I'm fleeing from my God." He didn't tell them the whole story. He just said, "I'm fleeing from my God." "Okay, you're fleeing from your God." Now here at this time, the significance of what that meant explodes on their mind. Now all of a sudden there is an illumination taking place in their thinking and they are quickly rapidly connecting dots between what Jonah had said in the past to what's happening now in the immediate presence, filtering it all – I can't say this often enough – filtering it all through their presupposition that one man can sink an entire ship and now it occurs to them, he got on this ship knowing what would happen. He got on knowing that he was putting our lives in danger. We had not done anything to him but now here we are, we are on the verge of death because of this man and they say, "How can you do this? How could you not give full disclosure? How could you step on board a ship that has nothing to do with you or your God and expose us to this kind of calamity?" They understand that in the midst of this supernatural storm, now they're dealing with the real God, the God who made the sea. He is proving that he's sovereign over the sea by the strength of this storm the likes of which we have never seen before and what do you do? What do you do at a time like that? "How could you do this?" And their understanding is brought to bear and they, at that moment they were spiritually unequipped to deal with it at that very precise moment there in verse 10.

You know, beloved, I can't help but think, I can't help but contemplate that if a supernatural storm on the sea provokes this kind of heart-wrenching terror to experienced sailors in their element, what's it going to be like for sinners when the day of God's wrath comes and they are overcome by a supernatural intervention of God's judgment that they don't understand and they have no resources with which to respond? Revelation speaks of those calling upon the rocks, "Fall on us to hide us! Do something to hide us from this wrath that is to come!" It is a sad picture to realize what it is like when God's wrath is poured out on unsuspecting sinners. They will have no clue what to do. They will have nowhere to turn. That's why it's so urgent for us to be out and about proclaiming the saving Gospel of Christ; to love men enough to rescue them if by the grace of God he would do so, to rescue them from the wrath that is to come. Scripture speaks, "Flee from the wrath that is to come because it's going to be awesome. It is going to be terrifying and when it falls, it will be too late and you're not even going to know what to do." Beloved, this is why it is so imperative for us to teach the word of God, to preach the word of God,

to proclaim Christ every opportunity we get because that is the only protection, that is the only off-ramp from this freeway that is leading people to judgment, including some of you as you sit here today. And the fear of that moment will be profound.

So in verse 11, they don't know what to do so they ask Jonah. Look at verse 11. They have no clue. They are at an utter loss. "We don't know this God. We've never seen a storm like this. We're all going to die and you are here in the midst of us, you're the reason why," and they asked the only person, the only one who might possibly have an answer, they ask the one who brought it on them in the first place. So they ask Jonah in verse 11,

11 So they said to him, "What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?"--for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy.

Somehow this storm is even getting worse and they say, "Well, what do we do, then? We are totally in the dark. We have no idea what to do to satisfy your God." And Jonah says something that would have shocked the sailors. Look at verse 12,

12 He said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea.

What? That's suicide. Incidentally, the word "throw" if you're reading the NASB, the same word as "hurl." The same word about hurling the storm, hurling the cargo. Jonah says, "Hurl me into the sea." They're not going to plop him overboard either. Pick him up by the scruff of the neck and the seat of his pants, so to speak, and hurl him overboard. Jonah says, "That's what you need to do to me. If you do that, the sea will calm down for you." You see, Jonah knew that the storm was a result of his disobedience and as he's speaking here, he is ready to die. He is ready to die so great is the tension of this moment.

What's going on in Jonah's mind at this point? We don't really know. Possibly he altruistically wants to save the sailors. He says, "Yeah, it's my fault, guys. Throw me in and you guys will be safe." It's possible that that's what he wants to do. It's perhaps more likely that what you see here is just how utterly stubborn Jonah is. He's so stubborn, so opposed to the will of God at this moment in his life, that he would prefer to die than to repent. Whatever the motivation was, Jonah says, "Hurl me into the sea because I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you. I am the guy, guys. I'm the one. I'm the cause. Throw me overboard and things will come back to normal for you." I don't know how he knew that, the Spirit of God opening his mind, giving him utterance in the moment? Maybe.

But these sailors. You know, I've studied these sailors over the years. They're men that I have come to love. Look at verse 13. Jonah who did not care about their well-being is now in their hands. He's given permission to throw him overboard to them but they didn't want to do it. They wanted another option. They wanted an alternative to killing a passenger from their perspective and so in verse 13,

13 However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them.

This went from supernatural to supernatural squared to supernatural infinity in the strength of the storm, if I can just be picturesque in the way that I try to describe it. A supernatural storm, how does a supernatural storm get worse and then get worse after that? I don't know but that's what happened and these men were rowing desperately, hoping perhaps that they could avoid having to do that. They would not have Jonah perish unless there was no alternative but they were helpless against a sovereign storm. They recognized the futility. Jonah had to go.

Look at verse 14,

14 Then they called on the LORD

They called on Yahweh, they called on the true God of Israel here. They called on the God which Jonah's words had introduced them to even as Jonah spoke them in a state of disobedience here but unlike Jonah defying this God, they come to God dependently and they pray for mercy and they say there in verse 14,

"We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased."

You see, these sailors knew that what they were about to do was profoundly serious. In any other circumstance, this would be murder for them to throw someone overboard to drown, from their perspective. But the circumstances had forced their hand. The lot had pointed to Jonah. Jonah, a prophet of God himself, told them, "This is what you must do." So they take a step of faith. They exercise faith in the word that they had heard, that this is the true God to whom we are praying. We're about to do what the true God has spoken for us to do through the prophet. "God, we are in a most desperate situation here. We're about to do something that in any other case would bring us guilt. But God, in dependence on you, we appeal to mercy as we do this. Don't judge us for what we're about to do. Have mercy on us. Don't judge us too because of what we're about to do. We know this man is before you. We take him at his word." And in verse 15 after they had prayed thus,

15 So they picked up Jonah, [hurled him, same verb] hurled him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging.

They went in an instant from a supernatural storm to a supernatural still. From a raging tempest to a sea of glass and God who sovereignly brought the storm, sovereignly brought the calm. God hurls a storm and the sea starts to shake. The sailors hurl Jonah into the sea and the storm stops.

Next week we're going to continue the narrative. I'm not done here yet. Remember I said this is like 2, 3 times what I normally do, so we're not done yet but we're stopping the narrative here in order to contemplate what we've just seen and what we've just heard from God's word.

Beloved, this God of the Bible is a God to be feared. He takes holiness seriously. He does not countenance sin in his people. We see this even from a New Testament perspective. Look over at the book of Hebrews with me. You say, "Why is God going to such great lengths? Why this action at the hands of the sailors?" Well do you know what? The message of Jonah is different than the popular conception today. You know, I'm certain that as the sailors were picking up Jonah in response to the word of the Lord and about to hurl him into the sea, I'm confident that their last words to him were not, "Jonah, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." The message of this storm was something else, "I am the LORD God who made the sea. I can bring that sea to bear to accomplish my purposes and when my people sin against me, I can bring whatever is necessary upon them to discipline them, to chasten them, that they would learn not to disobey me."

Hebrews 12, you should be there by now. Hebrews 12:5,

5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My Son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives."

Don't take this thing lightly, the writer of Hebrews says. This is something to be taken with profound seriousness, God chastens his children in order to accomplish his purposes.

Verse 10,

10 ...He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

Beloved, when you read the New Testament, you find God disciplining his people even to the point of death in order to deal with sin. Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5. Peter says, "Why do you lie against the Holy Spirit? You've not lied to men, you've lied to God." He fell over dead and they carried him out and a few hours later they were carrying his wife out the same way. Sin is serious. 1 Corinthians 5, Paul says dealing with a man who was in immorality with his father's wife, he says, "I've delivered that man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh." 1 Corinthians 11 talks about "those who have fallen asleep because they treated the Lord's table lightly." Wow. Wow. Young men, think about that the next time you want to click on the image.

Now I ask you, beloved, as we go through God's word together over the course of time and try to weave what's inside our walls and what's outside our walls here and try to mesh that together to try to come to maturity in our thinking, let's think about outside our walls for a moment and let that inform the way that we think about our own lives. Beloved, I

ask you: what is it in the current pattern of the so-called evangelical church, what is it in the environment in which so-called Christianity is done today, what is it that promotes the fear of God to the point that people would be afraid to sin lest they provoke his wrath? That sin is something serious? That rebellion brings judgment? That to sin and fall short of the glory of God is not an incidental matter lightly brushed off as though you had a crumb of bread on your suit coat? Where does that happen in the conferences that baptize sin as though it's something acceptable, as is being done this weekend in St. Louis in the Revoice Conference, trying to create room for homosexuals to be true Christians?

We can't do anything about that stuff out there, but I can ask you this question inside here today, you watching over the live stream: are you too casual with this holy God, the God of this sovereign might? Perhaps you're not a Christian and you say hell can't be real. It's too awful to think about. I'm not worried about it. I want to live my life now. Do you know what? The violent seas of Jonah warn you against such foolish presumption. The cross of Christ warns you against such presumption. How serious is sin? Measure it by the cross. The Son of God, so serious is sin that he leaves the glories of heaven to come to die for sinners because it's the only way they could be reconciled to God. It took a supernatural, not a supernatural storm on the sea, it took a supernatural rending of the heavens for the Son of God to come down to earth to live a perfect life, to offer that as a sacrifice for sin. The cross of Christ warns you. The seas of Jonah warn you. The fires of hell warn you. Don't be casual. Don't be flippant. This matters and you're accountable for what you've heard, my unsaved friend.

Do you know what else? Don't be casual, don't be flippant, don't be dismissive toward the love, the kindness and grace of God that sent such a Savior as that who offers you mercy now in Christ if you'll come by faith to him. You know, for as bad as Jonah's sin was, Scripture says that the one who treads underfoot the blood of Christ is guilty of an even far greater sin, so much so that there will be a more severe judgment for those who spurn the love of God offered to them in Christ while they had opportunity to hear, there is a more severe judgment for them than for the worst of pagans. Wow. I wouldn't be too casual with that if I were you. I wouldn't flip that off like it's just so much dandruff on your coat. These things matter. These things are true. These things are in God's word where you can read them with your own eye.

My non-Christian friend, I offer you Christ again, to come to him for salvation, to flee from the wrath that is to come. There is nothing in God that keeps you from coming. It is only your own resistance that would seal your fate even more in that direction.

Perhaps you're a Christian here today but you look back at your life and you realize, "I've gotten cold. I've become indifferent." You know, beloved, just wake up, would you? Just wake up. Christ did not go to the cross to produce lukewarm disciples. Christ did not go to the cross because your sin was a trifling matter that God would brush off of his jacket, so to speak. It took the slaying of Christ to deal with your sin. See Jonah in the sea. See sinners in hell. Is it not, my Christian friend, is it not time to genuinely repent of your lukewarm heart and come back to your first love?

For all of us, we can end on a note of wonder, a note of love, a note of grace. You're in Hebrews, turn over just to 1 John here as we close. Look at all this sovereign might, look at all of this pristine holiness, contemplate your own sins of thought, word and deed, and realize that God has been merciful to you and let it bring you to a fresh recognition of love that deserves your worship, not casual but deep and profound. Verse 9 of 1 John 4,

9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

God sent a storm to deal with Jonah's sin, he sent Christ to deal with yours. Why? Because of a sovereign compassion to which the book of Jonah and all of the New Testament points us and now the Holy Spirit affirms to your hearts as you hear.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we pray that you might teach our hearts to fear you and your holiness and then, Father, let amazing grace take us further, that grace teaching our hearts to fear, would then relieve our fears by bringing us to the cross afresh where all our sins were paid, ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven in Christ and in Christ alone, received by faith alone, a testimony to the grace of God alone, to the glory of God alone. God, take your word and apply it as needed by the power of your Holy Spirit to each heart under the sound of my voice we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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