

## I. Introduction to the Book of Jonah

If you have your Bibles this morning, let us turn to the book of Jonah. For those of you that are visiting with us today, we have started a while back going through every book of the Bible, giving our people an understanding of how the whole Bible goes together. One of the things that we are doing here is trying to give a complete overview and picture of the Bible book by book. Then we will go back, and in some kind of order, at some point, we will start attacking the book by book, going through all the material. What we wanted to do is give our people, and really future generations too, people that came into our church that said, "You know what? I would just like to get a complete overview of how the Bible goes together from Genesis to Revelation, and what are the books about?" Because when I read a book of the Bible, I really do not understand what that book is all about, and this will give you a chance to do that.

So, not only did you get a bookmark today, but we are going to give you a free CD of today's message back there. At the end of the service, if you just go back to that handsome-looking guy with a goatee back there, I have a free CD for you. I have been told by some people who do not like my preaching that they make great skeet. If you want to do that with them too, I am a big boy; I can handle it. Anyway, we are in the book of Jonah. We are glad you are here today.

## II. The Doctrine of the Resurrection

The book of Jonah is one of the books written before the captivity or the exile, and it is written to the ten Northern tribes, like many of the prophets have written. In many ways, believe it or not, this little book, Jonah, is one of the most important books in all of the Bible. Last week, we looked at the smallest book in the Old Testament, and that was the book of Obadiah. Obadiah is an incredible book, as you saw last week, that really laid out some great concepts that even as New Testament Christians, we need to see and understand. But the book of Jonah is an incredible book. As I said, in understanding the Bible, understanding God, and what God's plan is and what God is doing, there is no greater book in all the Bible than the book of Jonah. Because what the book of Jonah does, it really lays out the fundamental doctrine by which the Bible exists.

Because of that, the book of Jonah is the most attacked book in all of the history of the Bible. There is no other book that is maligned more than the book of Jonah in all the Bible. It is the single most hated book that I have ever seen among Bible teachers, Bible scholars, and even some pastors. Yet, this book for the Bible believer is one of the most incredible books that really lays out some great truths and concepts and principles that we are going to look at today and try to understand.

I will tell you why the book of Jonah is such a hated book: the devil hates the book of Jonah. The reason why the devil hates the book of Jonah is because the book of Jonah lays out and deals with the greatest doctrine in all the Bible. That great doctrine, the greatest doctrine, is the doctrine of the resurrection. Let me tell you something: we have a Bible that we read and we

believe. We all talk about the Lord Jesus Christ living inside us, and He is our own personal Savior. We talk about Heaven. We talk about New Jerusalem. We talk about the nation of Israel, God's chosen people. Whatever event you can think about in the Bible that is a Christian concept, whatever aspect of Christianity, the Word of God, personally, you can conjure up in your own mind, let me just say this to you: it is absolutely worthless if the resurrection is not true.

Everything that we believe as Christians comes down on one doctrinal teaching. If this one doctrinal teaching is not correct, then nothing about your Bible is, nothing about our salvation is, and nothing about God is. That is the doctrine of the resurrection. If Christ did not die and come from the dead and rise from the dead, then the Bible teaches that everything is worthless because that is what it is built on. So, that is why this great book is so maligned and so hated by the liberal minds and the liberal Christians and the liberal people who really do not like the Bible but want Christianity to be some kind of nice concept that we just have without believing anything that is life-changing. Because the book of Jonah deals with the greatest single doctrine, as I said, in all of the Bible.

Consequently, because of that, the devil hates it too. Because the resurrection, I am going to give you a little history here, the resurrection spelled the doom for the devil. Believe it or not, and I do not know how much you know about the Bible, I do not know how much time you spend studying it, but let me give you just a little background. Up to the resurrection of Christ, the devil, the Bible says in the book of Hebrews, had the keys of death and hell. He was in charge of death. All through the Old Testament, that is why nobody could go to Heaven. That is why when they died, they had to go to Abraham's bosom. That is why there was no place where they could go to be with God, because to do that, they would have to resurrect. Nobody in the Old Testament could go to Heaven or resurrect because no man had ever died and come back from the dead. So, we find that in the Old Testament, even though when they died, they went to Abraham's bosom, this is all in God's plan now.

The Bible says that the devil has the keys of death and hell. When Christ died on the cross, the Bible says that He went down to the center of the earth, Abraham's bosom, for three days and three nights. The Bible says that while He is down there, He preaches a sermon to the Old Testament saints. We are not told the details of that sermon. We are not told the outlines, whether it was two outlines, three outlines, and a poem or whatever. We are not told what the message was, but we know what the concept of the message was: "You know what? I am going to defeat death and the devil, and I am going to lead captivity captive." The Bible says on the third day, on the third day after He died on the cross, He rose from the tomb. At that point, the devil has been defeated. The Bible says when Christ shows up in the book of Revelation, He has the keys of death and hell, because now He has defeated the devil by one concept: the resurrection. That is why the devil hates the resurrection. People who are associated with the devil, that is why they will hate it too.

### III. Jonah vs. Mythology and Liberalism

This is why the unsaved world takes the story of Jonah and throws it in and lumps it in with all the other mythology that is out in the world today. When you go out on a clear night and look at

the stars, those stars are made up into constellations. Those constellations tell a story. Originally, the Bible says the heavens declare the glory of God, and the gospel of the stars or the story of the Bible can be found in those constellations. Now, it is not astrology; it is not even astronomy. It is the Bible teaching of the heavens declaring the glory of God. But through time, all the Gentile pagan nations—the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, all of those groups, the Greeks and the Romans—they took those stars and they made up fabled stories called mythology. You will find much of those mythology stories are actually stories about the Bible or things in the Bible that have been destroyed with all kinds of worldly concepts.

The reason why they did that is because when you come to a story like the book of Jonah, which is the fundamental backbone of the resurrection, they wanted to lump that story in with all the other stories. So, you think that Jonah was a fable just like the story of Andromeda, who if you would go out tonight, you can see the constellation Andromeda as it kind of juts off the northwestern side of the constellation Pegasus, the winged horse. Then right over here from Andromeda, you have Perseus. Perseus was a man, Andromeda was a woman; you know where this story is going. He fell in love with her. Oh, but she was thrown into the sea and a great sea monster called the Kraken. You had Andromeda, and she gets thrown into the sea and she is rescued from the sea monster, the Kraken, by Perseus. You have Orion, another constellation you can see on the eastern horizon about nine o'clock, and you can see his belt and his arms. Orion is thrown into the sea and he is rescued from the monster of the sea by a magic dolphin from Miami. Then you have Hercules. Hercules, he is a great strong man, and he got swallowed up by a great sea monster. Yes, for three days and three nights, he is in this sea monster's belly. You see how it all kind of goes along with the Bible and what the world does. It brings all of those mythology stories, and the world tries to take the story of Jonah and says it is a fable just like all the other stories.

Then you have the liberal theologians. Oh, we do not want to forget them, who spend their whole lives rummaging through the scriptures trying to find the mistakes that God made. Their whole life is dedicated to showing God how stupid He really is, how that He could not write a book without any error in it. So, they go through and they take the story of Jonah and they say it is a fable. Of course, they do not believe that Adam and Eve's story is true. They do not believe that the Red Sea really departed; they call it the Sea of Reeds. They do not believe there is a devil. They do not believe there is a hell. They could never conceive of God coming down and destroying Sodom and Gomorrah like the Bible said that He did. They are all fables that have been passed down over the years from father to son, son to father, mother to, you know, all that system goes, talked around the campfire. Here they wind up in a book called the Bible, but it is no different than the Greek or the Roman stories. It is no different than all of the other myths that are out there. The story of Jonah, like the story of Adam and Eve and the splitting of the Red Sea, are just nice stories that carry principles, but they really did not happen.

Then you have the Baptist preachers. They are busy running around checking the naval archives, trying to prove that the book of Jonah is true. So, they spend all of their times going through the ancient mariner records, trying to find some case where somebody was swallowed by a whale and lived inside that whale's belly for three days and three nights. Lo and behold, in 1884, a

British whaling ship out there hunting whales, a British seaman fell in the ocean, and a gigantic whale actually swallowed him by accident rather than on purpose, because whales are not like great white sharks. Boy, did you see the thing down in Australia this last week about that great white shark eating those surfers? Let me tell you something: if you do not have enough sense to stay out of the water in Australia where there are great white sharks, you need to get eaten. I mean, those suckers are out there, and they are saying, "Hey, it is lunchtime, four stupid people just jumped in the water, man." But that was not what a whale does. A whale does not eat you. He may bump into you, but if he eats you, it is by accident. This British guy fell in and actually got eaten by this whale, and two days later, another whaling ship harpooned the whale, cut him open, and out fell this sailor, still alive. Now, his hair was all gone. His skin had turned white like milk from the acid, and I am sure he had one terrified look on his face. But nevertheless, he was alive, and a little Baptist preacher is running around saying, "See, see, see, here it is. The Bible is true. The book of Jonah is true, and all these things that say there is a man that did live in a whale, so it can happen."

#### IV. Jonah as a Type of Christ and the Tribulation

Truth of the matter is this, I hate to keep bringing the Bible into this, but that is what we are here for. Jonah is one of the twenty-one types of Christ in the Bible. You know that. The book of Jonah is about the resurrection. I have some terrible news for everybody that I have just mentioned, and that simply is that Jonah died in the whale's belly.

*Matthew 12:40*

*For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

Now, here is the case: if Jonah did not die, and he is, by the way, you have to have a death to be resurrected. If Jonah did not die, then Christ did not die. This is not like Isaiah 7:14. In that verse, it says a virgin conceived, a great prophecy: "a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son." Now, all the new Bibles take the word "virgin" out because they hate the virgin birth, and they put in "a young woman." Everybody says, "Well, what kind of sign is that, that a young woman can conceive and have a child? Everybody does that." But a virgin conceiving, that is something else. Well, this is a lot like that. What difference is it if a young woman conceives and has a child if she is not a virgin? What is the big deal if he did not die? Then there can be no resurrection. He died. The bottom line is, if Jonah did not die, and he is a type of the resurrection, and you have to have a death to have a resurrection, then Christ did not die.

*1 Corinthians 15:16-17*

*For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:*

*And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.*

You see how easy it is? It does not take anybody with any imagination to read Jonah 2:1-10, and you find that there is a picture of Jonah dying. In fact, he says, "God had brought me up from corruption." What does that mean? Verse six, it means he is dead and he is beginning to decay,

and God brought him up from corruption. The book of Jonah is the greatest book in your Bible, and the resurrection, that is why it is attacked. That is why you need to understand it. That is why it will work for you and show you how the Bible comes together. Because the book of Jonah is the greatest book in the Old Testament that lays out the greatest doctrine in the Bible, the doctrine that your salvation and my salvation rests on, and that is the resurrection of Christ. That is why it was the only sign given to the nation of Israel, who was told to look for a sign in Exodus 4 and 1 Corinthians 1. That sign is Christ coming out of that tomb. Once He was dead, now He is alive. Jonah coming out of the belly of the whale, he was dead, now he is alive.

Now, doctrinally, that is the story there. Doctrinally, the book of Jonah is very crucial. You know now that we have laid it out enough as we have studied the Bible that every book of the Bible has a doctrinal, historical, and inspirational application. I just gave you the historical one. The story actually happened. It is a true story. Now, doctrinally, doctrinally deals with the prophetic of it. Doctrine deals with the aspect of the second coming of Christ or how it affects the future events. The book of Jonah is a picture of the Tribulation Period. Jonah is a Jew. He is a member of the nation of Israel. He is told to go to Nineveh. Nineveh is a Gentile city. He is told to go to Nineveh and preach during the reign of Jeroboam to the Gentiles. Jeroboam is one of the eighteen types of Antichrist in the Bible. So, what do we have? We have Jonah, who is a Jew, being told to go to Nineveh, who were Gentiles, preaching the message of God during a time of a man who is a type of the Antichrist. Jonah is a type of the 144,000. He is a type in Revelation 14 and Revelation 7 of the 12,000 Jews from each tribe who were called to go during the Tribulation Period under the attack of the Antichrist, typified by Jeroboam, to the Gentile nations and preach the message of God to them. That is how the book of Jonah lays out doctrinally.

## V. God's Mission Statement for Every Believer

Now, from a practical standpoint, and a practical standpoint is what does it mean for you and me in our everyday lives? Historically, it is important because we need to know the framework of history and how the Bible fits in. That is what we are going to do with the Middle East on New Year's Eve. We are going to give you a framework of how everything fits into your Bible. So, from a historical standpoint, it gives us a framework. From a doctrinal standpoint, it shows us how it is going to have a future reference of what Jonah pictures and shows us how God is going to do something in the future. But you know what? From an inspirational, from a practical standpoint, the book of Jonah is one of the greatest books for you and for me. That is why I want to give you the first two, but I want to spend the majority of time today on the one for you and for me, because there are some things here that we need to know.

In the next coming year, we are going to start developing some ministries. We are going to talk about it a little bit on New Year's, but I have also taken the next Sunday after New Year's to really focus in on that so we can really lay some things out so you understand where we have come from and where we are going. We have all the time in the world here to do this over New Year's, so we are just going to kind of spread the thing out so we can do it well so everybody understands where we are at. But in the next year or so, God has been good to us. We have been here almost a year and a half now, and God has been good to us. God has given us a number of

men and women who really, really take the Word of God seriously in a way that I could never ask for. It is just wonderful, and last night was a great testimony of that. But you are going to find that the book of Jonah fits right in with where we are going because the book of Jonah is one of the greatest books in the Bible on ministry. It is one of the greatest books in the Bible from a practical standpoint that shows me and helps me understand as a Christian the mission of God.

Do you ever notice today how companies all have mission statements? You will walk into a company and they will say, "Our mission statement is we are going to provide the best quality service for our customers that we can, caring, helping," all the things, and they come up with a statement. That statement is one little concept that projects to people who read it what this company is all about. Well, they stole that from the Bible, and that is okay, but you know what? The book of Jonah is God's mission statement. The book of Jonah is God's mission statement for you and for me as a child of God.

Maybe I better take just a second explaining missions, because when we talk about missions, the first thing that comes in our mind are missionaries. The first thing we think is, "Oh, this has nothing to do with me. I am not going to China to be a missionary. I am not going to Mexico. I am not going to Acapulco or wherever the head is. I am not going any of those places. I am going to stay right here. I am going to tune him out. I can go ahead and think about the cheat scheme. I can go ahead and think about my Christmas list." No, no, no, no, no. Missions, missions, missions, in the Bible definition, has nothing to do with foreign missions. There is no difference in God's mind between foreign missions and what you need to do as a child of God. The mission defined in the Bible is that God saves you to do a job for Him. That job is your mission. Simple as that. Preachers today, they are so busy looking for that sailor that they have missed the concept of what missions really is. Everybody in here this morning, if you are saved, you are a missionary. You are a missionary. God may leave you in Kansas City the rest of your life. God may send you wherever around the world in time. But the bottom line is this: once you get saved, the Bible says you have a mission for God in your life that you need to fulfill.

You fulfill that by lining up with the three things in your life that you have got to have. One of them, if you are saved, you already have: that is the Holy Spirit of God. The second thing you have got to line yourself up with is the Word of God. The third thing you have got to line yourself up with is God's local church. That is the program of God. God gave you the Holy Spirit of God when He saved you to direct you. He gave you the Bible as the roadmap of the mission for your life. He gave you the local church as the vehicle by which you get to where you need to go with God. It is as simple as that. But we have mystified a lot of things in Christianity today, and because of it, we have lost the concept of missions. So, God's people today do not feel any obligation whatsoever for anything in the real call of God because we are so satisfied where we are. We think that when a preacher begins to talk about missions, he is talking about somebody other than me. Let me just say this to you: the day you got saved, God had a plan for your life. Someday at the judgment seat of Christ, and take warning in this, you will give an account for that. You will give an account for that based on the Holy Spirit of God that God has given you, the Word of God which He has given you, and the vehicle that God provided for you to do it through. Now, you can come up with every cockeyed concept to get around that and rationalize

that that you want. The bottom line is, at the end of the day, the Holy Spirit of God will hold you accountable and hold me accountable at the judgment seat of Christ for the mission. God saves you for a purpose. God saved you and me for a reason.

I have always loved the book of Jonah. It is a book that intrigued me. It is a book that when I saw its application to me, it really intrigued me. All of my life, I have heard Jonah in kind of like a blasé concept. All of my life, Jonah has been a book that has just been a very shallow form. I remember one time years ago, I heard a preacher, and he got up there, and he was going to a Bible conference, and he was going to preach on Jonah. I really did not know a lot about Jonah then. I remember he got up and he said, "Now, folks, I am going to give you an outline of the book of Jonah, and this is going to be spectacular." He said, "Watch this:

1. In Jonah chapter one, Jonah runs from God.
2. In chapter two, Jonah runs to God.
3. In chapter three, Jonah runs with God.
4. In chapter four, Jonah runs ahead of God.

He laid that whole thing out in that little basic form. I guess if you are teaching three or four-year-olds or five-year-olds, that is good. But let me tell you something: if that is all that you can get out of the book of Jonah, you are in serious trouble this morning. Because that is exactly what we like to do. We like to take the book of Jonah and make the book of Jonah focus on what Jonah is doing. When you do that, you miss the whole concept. The book of Jonah has nothing to do with what Jonah is doing. The book of Jonah has to do with what God is doing. God has a mission. God called Jonah just like He called me and just like He called you to accomplish that mission. To me, the book of Jonah is real simple. It is not about what Jonah is doing; it is about what God is doing. Jonah has a mission to accomplish. God saved you and I and called us to that same mission.

### *Philippians 1:6*

*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

The book of Jonah is nothing more than God calling you and calling me to do that mission after we are saved. You know what the book of Jonah really is? It shows the different responses to that call that God's people give. It is one of the most tremendous books that really shows me why Christians do not really care about the things of God today. It is a book that opens up to me and helps me understand why God's people who are saved and on their way to Heaven come up with every idea of what they want to do for God, except what God has called them to do. It answers to me how men rationalize, how women rationalize their lifestyle, how they come to the point of denial in their life that they will not look at what God really wants them to do, that they get their own concept of the way it is. That is just the way it is in spite of what the Word of God says to me. The book of Jonah is the great answer why Christianity is broke and why God's people are broke. I do not mean without money; I mean broken down as in does not work. I am telling you, when I am dealing with God's people, and I have dealt with them for thirty years, I see their lack

of passion for God's mission, and I see it laid out so clearly in the book of Jonah. So, I want to talk to you about it today.

## VI. The Cost of Disobedience: Running From God

First, I want to read. I want to see some things here that you understand. Let us read Jonah 1:1-3.

*Jonah 1:1-3*

*Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,*

*Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.*

*But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.*

Now, Father, we thank You and praise You today. We ask You, Father, to open up our hearts, allow us to see the things that You have for us today. We love You. Help us to bear these great truths out, Lord, in our lives and every one of us to understand that God does have a mission for us, and that mission needs to be accomplished to the best of our ability. We will thank You and praise You now in Jesus' name, for Your sake we ask it. Amen.

Now, I want you to see a couple of things here. God has called Jonah, and here is how the story goes: God has called Jonah to go to that wicked city of Nineveh and preach to that city. The parallel is God has called you and I to take God's message to a lost and dying world. Jonah refuses to go, and many of God's people take the same position, and they refuse to go. What follows in this story is the great teaching on what I call game playing with God. We are the greatest rationalizers, and I have learned something else about my own life and other Christians, that denial is more than a river in Egypt. We rationalize what we want to do. We give God the credit for it. We give God the glory for it. God is a hundred million light years around what we are trying to do. We do it because we want to get out of the conviction we are under because we are not fulfilling the mission. The mission is where God has called you to take His Word to a lost and dying world. That is the mission.

In chapter one, two, and three, God calls, and he says no. If you would go over to chapter three, and you would find verses one, two, and three, you would find that he gets the same calling, and now he says, "Okay, I will go." What you have in between where he says, "I will not go," and where he says, "Okay, I will go," is one of the greatest storms that you have ever seen in life. Running from God only leads to a storm of trouble in your life. Personally, and your family, in your job, in your marriage, running from God will lead to a storm of trouble every time. It abounds through here in Jonah 1:3, where it says that Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. When you decide in your heart you are going to do it your way instead of God's way, you are headed into the storm. It is as simple as that.

He goes down in Jonah 1:3, and the Bible says that he finds a ship. He finds a ship and he plays the part. I mean, when the storm comes and the sailors cast lots, and the lot falls upon him, which is another great principle, you cannot hide from God no matter how hard you hide. No matter how big a smile you paint on your face. No matter how you pretend you are spiritual, or how much you pretend you know about the Bible. Let me tell you something: when God has your number, God has your number, and everybody knew it. When he confronted him with the thing, he plays the part. He says, "Yes, I am a Hebrew, and I fear God." No, he did not. He did not at all. He is running from God.

Boy, what you see down here is he finds a ship, and I bet you in his mind, here is how it went, because I know me, and I know the way I do it, and I know God's people, and all the way they do it. I am telling you something, they come down through there, and God tells them to do something, and the first thing they do is they do not want to do it. So, they find something else to do and say, "God, thank You for that." God said, "Do not thank Me, I had nothing to do with it. I want you to do this." They keep on doing it because they do not want to do that, and they keep saying, "Well, thank You, Lord." Boy, you know what? I bet he did. I bet he did this. I bet when God said, "I want you to go to Nineveh," I bet he said in his mind, "You know what, God? I do not think You really want me to go to Nineveh. I think You want me to go to Tarshish, and I will tell you what I am going to do, Lord. I am going to test You. I am going to go down to the boat dock, and if I find a ship waiting for me down there to Tarshish, I am going to know that is God's will for my life." Boy, have I seen that over and over again. That is like Gideon. Gideon says, "Well, Lord, okay, You are going to deliver me, but I am going to throw out the fleece, and if You will make it get all wet, then I will know." Well, why would you need that? He just told you from His Word what He wanted you to do. Why do we need other confirmation when God tells us clearly in His Word that we have a mission? I do not understand that. I just do not figure it out.

Then he comes down here and he says, "Hey," he says, when he finds a ship, he says, "Such a peace that he has made the right spiritual decision." He goes right down to board that ship and falls asleep. He had rationalized himself that he was right where God wanted him to be. In Jonah 1:3, listen what a great truth. Boy, the Bible does not miss a trick. The Bible says when he went down there and found that ship, he went down there and went to sleep. The Bible gives you one little thing you do not want to miss. It says he paid the fare thereof. Let me tell you something: when you decide to go your way, you always pay the trip ticket. You go God's way, He pays the trip ticket. That is why some of God's people's marriages are in a mess today. That is why some of their personal lives are in a mess today. That is why they have to go through every day in life they have to do. That is why they have all the screwed-up things in their life. You know why? A long time ago, God said, "I want you to do this." You said, "I will not do that." You rationalized and justified it, and you are paying the fare this morning. Simple as that. Hang on, we will be through here in a minute. You can get out of here.

## VII. The Importance of Obedience and Attitude

Now, that is the general story, but boy, it does not stop there. It does not stop there. You know why people do not like the Bible? I will tell you the truth.

*Hebrews 4:12-13*

*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

*Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

That Bible reads your thoughts and intents of your heart before your lie comes out of your mouth. That book will nail me to the wall before my rationalization even gets formed. We think we are so smart that we can get around God, and we can play the games with God, and we can do the things in spite of the fact that God has called us to a mission with a job and everything we have got. Let me tell you something: that book has read my meter before I ever get out of the house in the morning, and that is why we do not like it. That is why we would rather do something else than read it. That is why we have the problem we have got in our lives. That is why the storm is raging in our lives today. That is why we have got the personal problems we have got.

You know, the book of Jonah is a great study on the book of Acts chapter eight. I do not know if you know that study or story or not, but in Acts chapter eight, you have the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. I always looked at that story as a great principle that many other stories in the Bible go to. In Acts chapter eight, you have an old Ethiopian eunuch who is out there on the backside of the desert, who is sitting on his chariot reading the book of Isaiah chapter 53, which by the way, is about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Then you have Philip, who is over here in a great revival going on in Samaria. God picks up Philip out of Samaria, brings him right over to the backside of that desert where there is not anybody around, plops him right down in that guy's chariot, and then says, "Go join yourself to that chariot." In the ensuing conversation that takes place, he opens up the scriptures, he tells him about the death, burial, resurrection of Christ, and he wins that Ethiopian to the Lord.

You know what the great concept is? Two great concepts: God had a prepared sinner, that Ethiopian eunuch. The Bible does not tell you how he got the book of Isaiah, but somebody gave it to him. You know how God got it to him. God did not say how he got there, does not say what made him stop his chariot. I do not think chariots could have flat tires back then, but something happened. Maybe the horse is sick, I do not know. But something, God intervened and stopped that chariot, and that old boy is saying, "Well, AAA will not be here for a while, so I am just going to make it for a while." He is out there. So, he says, "Well, you know what? I have this book here." He is sitting down on the back of that chariot reading Isaiah 53, which talks about Jesus Christ dying on the cross and shedding His blood for his sins. Then he looks over and, "Where did you come from?" Old Philip comes up and he says, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he says, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" Translating that to common everyday language is, "You know what? I am as lost as a goose in a hailstorm, and I need somebody to point me to Christ. Could you do it?" Philip says, "No problem," and the Bible says that he opened to the same scriptures and preached unto him Jesus. That old boy got saved,

that old boy got baptized, what a story. But you know the two concepts: he had a prepared sinner, but you also had a prepared servant. You know what you have got in the book of Jonah? You have got a prepared sinner, the whole nation of Nineveh, but no prepared servant. You know what is wrong today in Christianity? You have got a world that is prepared to get saved with nobody to tell them the story. Too many Jonahs around today. I am telling you, because what follows in chapter three and four is a picture of the inside mindset of the Laodicean church and Laodicean Christians, which we are all a part of. I am telling you, God has a mission for us just like He did for Jonah. As the church, as Christians, we are to carry the message of God to the heathen. You know what? God had it all set up. Look at Jonah 1:10 and 17 sometime. Why? Well, Jonah never preached a message. He just brought a storm, and the sailors on a ship got converted. He never even opened the Bible. God has prepared sinners here. The problem is, He does not have a prepared servant. I am telling you, God had it all set up.

Jonah has two problems, and those two problems are the same two problems that we face, we wrestle against today. When I read through this thing, when I read through this book, something great comes to mind. You know, the concept of obedience for a child of God is unparalleled in the Bible. Along with obedience comes attitude of heart. Those two things are the key to Christian success: your attitude of heart toward your obedience. Because when I come through this thing, here is what I find: I find that the sea, though raging, obeys God. I find the wind, though howling beyond control, obeys God. I find that the unsaved sailors obey God. If that was not enough, a little bit later on, God grows a gourd. The gourd obeys God. If that was not enough, God raises up a little worm, and the worm obeys God. Then God prepared a great fish, and the fish obeyed God. The book of Jonah is about everything obeying God except God's man. You wonder what is wrong with the world today? There it lies. Jonah had his own agenda. I do not know what else to tell you. You know what? Show me, you will be mad at me right now for what I am saying, but the bottom line is, at the judgment seat of Christ, you are going to come up, put your arm around me, and you are going to say, "Man, I wished I listened." And I am going to say to you, "You know what? I wished I listened too, because we are both in the same mess." We better learn it this morning. The concept of obedience. The only thing that will not obey God in this story is God's man. What a picture. What a picture in Jonah 1:1-5 of his selfish attitude of rejecting God's mission. He heads down into the ship, falls fast asleep, tries to get as comfortable as possible while the whole world around him dies and goes to hell. Wow.

## VIII. The Problem of Displeasure and Lack of Vision

I saw in the news this morning as I was getting ready to come to church, Michael Jackson out there in California, his big old property called Neverland. I do not care about Jackson one way or the other. I watched that thing out there and all the rides and all the horses and all the stuff and all the things that big old sign said, "Neverland." Some of the people were criticizing Michael Jackson for the way he is. I could care less how he is. But let me tell you something: I came away this morning as I was putting my tie on, looking in the mirror, and a great thought struck me. Michael Jackson is not the only one who has Neverland he lives in. God's people go there all day long, living in a dream world, putting reality aside of a lost world, dying and going to hell. Put the reality aside of a mission God has called you to do, coming up with every excuse, every

idea, every concept that gets you around it, and then walking out in the morning into Neverland with all of its horse rides, and all of its Ferris wheels, and all of its cotton candy, and all of its splendor, and all of its nice music, and all of the fun things. That is what Jonah did. He went down into that ship and into Neverland, got himself all comfortable as he could, fell fast asleep. The only problem with him is the same problem we have got today: while we are in Neverland, the world dies and goes to hell without Christ. The first problem Jonah has, he simply says, "You know what? I am not going to do it. I am not going to obey You, God. I am going to do what I want to do." Wow, what a picture. So, he goes through a storm in his life. Oh boy. The great wake-up call of God when you are asleep. Just like God has called you and me, brother, and our lack of passion for the things of God and our rationalization for the things we want to do, it only brings a storm in our lives. That is why we are so miserable. Oh, what a great wake-up call comes.

Second problem he has got: chapter three, finally he gives in. Just like a lot of God's people. He says, "Okay, I will go, but I do not like it." Oh yeah. You come down through Jonah 3:5, watch this: a great revival breaks out in Nineveh. Two million people probably get saved. In Jonah 4:1, the Bible says, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." God just won a whole nation to Christ, and Jonah is upset, and Jonah is angry, and Jonah is displeased. He cannot see what God is doing for seeing himself. I will tell you what, Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Boy, that is so true. God's people need a vision. A vision simply defined, my friend, as seeing the world, seeing your family, seeing the things around you, not as you see them, but as God sees them. A vision, my friend, is understanding God saved you, and God gave you a mission. Someday you are going to give an account of that mission. Just as a sailor, when he goes off a ship, he is on liberty. When he goes back to that ship, he has to give an account of that liberty. Paul says in the book of Corinthians that you and I have liberty in Christ. Sure, you can do whatever you want to do, but just as that sailor, when you go home to that mothership, you are going to give an account of your liberty. When you get to the judgment seat of Christ, you will give an account of the liberty that we so liberally use to do whatever we want to do in spite of the mission of God. He just could not see God for seeing himself. Boy, God's people need a vision. My job someday, whether you like it or not, is to hold that vision before you. My job, my friend, is to take the Word of God and not to make you feel good about yourself, but to make you feel good about what God is doing in your life. When you do not do what is right in your life, feel bad about it. That is what the vision is. When you get the vision, then you see the things of God. When you do not get the vision, all you see is yourself. That is Jonah. Jonah sees Nineveh as the enemy of Israel. God sees Nineveh as a nation without God. Jonah only cares about his comfort. God sees the discomfort of a whole lost nation without God. Oh, Jonah, the Bible says, "But it displeased him." It displeased Jonah exceedingly. He is mad. The mission of God interfered with his three-day weekend. He is running around there. "Well, I do not know what God's problem is. We had revival in our church scheduled on May 14th, 15th, and 16th. If God did not bring it then, that is His problem. Here it is November. I have things I want to do. Places I want to go. People I want to do. Now God is going to bring a revival." You see, that is what is wrong with us. That is what churches do today. We will schedule revival on May 15, 16, or 17. Put God on a timetable. God help us if God brings revival in October. But that is the way we are. We schedule ourselves. We rationalize ourselves. We put

God on some timetable like we are. God does not run by any timetable. God runs by a book. Now Jonah, he is mad. The mission of God has interfered with his time. The mission with God has. "How could God do this? Man, I have plans. I wanted to go do this. I want to go do that. How could the mission of God do that to me?"

I am going to tell you something. 2 Corinthians 8:12 lays out one of the greatest concepts of you being an obedient child of God. God tests your Christian character. He really does. All of us. God will put things into your life, bring events into your life, for one reason: to see if you are willing to do whatever God wants you to do. Ninety-nine percent of being a child of God and being a good child of God and being a faithful child of God is just simply being willing. I have known men who had to submit to go into the mission field to some foreign country and be willing. Then God never called them to that place. God called them to something else. But the issue is God just wanted to see if they were willing. Because willingness is your attitude. I do not care what anybody says.

*2 Corinthians 8:12*

*For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

Willing mind. The test of your Christian character or lack of it is your obedience to be willing to do whatever God wants you to do. Things like last night just do not happen by accident. You are going to tell me you were not all busy this year? Somebody else says, "Well, I did not get involved because I was busy." Like the rest of you did not have anything to do. You know what the bottom line is? You were willing. The importance of that last night to me is seeing who is willing to go shopping. Who is willing to do this? Who is willing to do that? Whatever the case may be. Because that is where it starts with God's mission in your heart: to be willing. The storm that comes into our lives simply because we want to do our own thing and justify it. "Oh, look at me. Look at what I am doing." When it has nothing to do with the mission of God, because the mission of God has to do with your willingness to do whatever God wants you to do. It is no wonder Proverbs 25:28 says that he that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls. The instability of God's people today. Allowing the circumstances of life to rule your emotions. Those emotions rule you instead of the promises of the Word of God. That is Jonah.

## IX. The Worm Concept and The Next Generation

Oh yeah. You come to Jonah 4:6. The Bible says God prepared the gourd. He is happy. Oh, he is so happy. Because he gets under that little gourd. That little gourd just shadows him from that old blistering heat. Oh, and he is the prophet of God that is out there. So far, he is the only one in this whole book that disobeyed God. Everything else. But Jonah has this mindset that he thinks he is doing what God wants him to do, when deep down inside he knows he is not. Jonah is a miserable person. Jonah is a lazy, self-centered. I do not know what to tell you about this guy. Yet he pictures so many times my life. Oh, God help me not to be a Jonah.

In Jonah 4:6, the Bible says God prepared a gourd. Now suddenly he is happy. "Oh, a gourd. Oh, shading me. Oh, I am so happy now. The air conditioner is fixed." Then in Jonah 4:7, God prepared a worm. And it smote the gourd, and now he wants to die. Oh, how I have seen that, up one day and down the next. You do not have to go to Arrowhead Stadium during the game to see the wave. Just hang out with some of God's people. Up today. Down tomorrow. "I am fine today. I am bad today. Oh, I am on top of it today." I am seasick talking to you, man. That is Jonah. "Oh, God prepared a gourd. I am so happy. Oh, the worm. The gourd died. Oh, I want to die." Please do.

I want to tell you something. The missing element in God's people today is a hardness. I am not talking about not being compassionate. I am talking about being tough. Now, I understand young Christians that just get plugged into the Bible, and I am not even talking to you about this, because I know it takes just like going to boot camp. Nobody is a soldier when you first get to boot camp, but you are when you get out. So, you are in boot camp. You are doing your push-ups. You are doing your mile run, five-mile run. You are climbing the obstacles. You are doing that. You are learning to be tough. You are learning to get there. I am not talking about that. But I am talking about God's people are just, just whine about everything. I am talking about God's people that are just, I mean, Arnold Schwarzenegger said it better than I could ever say it: "Girly man."

When Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3, he says, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." I do not know if you know it or not, this next week marks the sixtieth anniversary of a place called Bastogne. 1944. 101st Airborne Division surrounded by the 6th Panzer SS Division and all of Sepp Dietrich's. As Hitler tried to make one last final breakout to win World War II, and almost did, surrounded a little crossroads city of Bastogne in Belgium. The 101st Airborne was cut off as the 6th Panzer Army ringed that city and blasted that place. Those guys out there in the coldest winter in the Ardennes Forest in the history of Belgium had no warm clothes. Many of them had only two or three rounds. No food. No ammunition. No medevac. Nobody coming in. When those guys got shot, wounded, they relied on the freezing weather to stop the bleeding by freezing the blood. Those poor boys went out there, boy, and they suffered through that, and they suffered through that, and I mean for ten, fifteen, twenty days, brother, they got pounded. Nothing to eat. Freezing to death. Some of those boys in those foxholes, when it finally broke over, their feet were so black they could not even crawl out from frostbite. There was not one of them who left their position. When they did not have bullets, they threw rocks. When they ran out of rocks, they fixed bayonets, and they held that German. They held that line. The Germans never got through. I have often looked at that and thought to myself, the average Christian, he does not even know where Bastogne is. If you were to put it on a map, you would not know where it was. You would think it was in southern Missouri someplace, down around your favorite fishing spot. Yet that Bible says that we are to endure hardness as Christians, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. I would like to see some of God's people in Bastogne.

Every year this time of year, I think of the Japanese bombing Pearl Harbor on December 7th, and shortly after that, the real story was not Pearl Harbor. The real story was Wake Island. That little

atoll out there between Midway and Hawaii, held out by a couple of Marine companies. The whole Japanese Navy. The whole Japanese Navy was going to wipe out Midway. They thought they would push Midway over, and you know what? Those boys could have surrendered. They did finally surrender to them, but only when they were ordered to because they had nothing else, and the commander said, "I cannot sacrifice any more life," but the Marines were mad about it. They did not want to surrender. Just like the 101st Airborne. Old Patton's Third Army was running to Bastogne, and the news line said that Patton liberated the 101st. To this day, you will never find a 101st Airborne soldier that said they needed relief from anything. That is what they got, man. That is what they got. Those little Marines on Wake Island, boy, they suckered the Japs in. The Japs thought they would wipe them out, and they shot out their air force. I mean, the whole Japanese, three carriers, man, the whole Japanese air force coming down on them. They had six little outdated fighters shot out of the sky the first day, but you know what they did? The Japs bombed them and shot them and shelled them, and they covered up with camouflage, and the Japanese plane flew over, and they thought, "Ah, we destroyed this place." Those ships started coming in, and they held their fire, and when those ships got so close that you could not miss them, they opened up, and they sunk half their fleet. But then the Japanese were really mad, and they pounded them and tried to take them and take them, and they could not. They could not, and those boys knew there was no help coming. They knew nobody was coming. There was not going to be no Arizona come down. She was laying at the bottom of Ford Island. There was not no help coming. America had her throat cut, and she needed time to mend, and those boys were a holding action, and they all knew that they were expendable. Boy, instead of whining and crying about going home for Christmas and doing this and being that, they stayed in those foxholes, and they held the line. Brother, let me tell you something, when finally a message came through, when somebody said, "What can we do? What do we need to give you? How can we help?" That old commander, boy, he caught that phone, he says, "What do you need?" And he says, "Send us some more Japs." You know what? Those boys died on that beach, Wake Island, just like they did in Bastogne, and the average private probably made twenty bucks a month. You get some of God's people get in one bad meeting, or somebody does not say hi to them, they do not get where they go, or they hear one message they do not like, get their nose bent out of joint, never go back to church again. That is what is missing. That is what is missing, boy. Remember Bataan, Corregidor? Boy, I have watched those boys on TV and watched them in newsreels and documentaries where they walked sixty, seventy miles in the blazing sun with the Japanese. Some of those boys with dysentery so bad they were carrying their own intestines in their hands, never quit. I will tell you what, and it is a political argument, I do not care to get into it, but let me just say this to you: there are some good reasons to have a draft in a country. There are some things a young man learns going in there when he gets his bottle taken out of his mouth. I am not saying you cannot learn it without it; some of them do, some of them do not. But God's people lack a hardness today.

I just thought of this story. Remember years ago, you were just a little kid, I do not know how you got from that point as tough as you are now, but I remember I came home one day from work. Mom said, "Barb said Kelly sprained her wrist today." And I says, "Is it bad?" She says, "No, it is okay." And I said, "Okay." So, I put my stuff down, and she is in her bedroom. I said, "Kelly, remember this." I said, "Kelly, are you okay?" "Yeah, Daddy, I am okay." "Well, come

out here and let Daddy see you." Here is what came out of the room: "I have never forgotten this." "Kelly, come on, let Daddy see you." Remember that? I said, "What is she doing?" She said, "She is actuating her ouchie." Boy, I have seen a lot of God's people do that over the years, taking a little nothing, turn it into a Greek tragedy.

Let me tell you something, my verse for ministry, I have never really given this to anybody. I have given the other verses, but I have never given you this. This is my verse for ministry. I have had it for thirty years.

*2 Samuel 10:12*

*Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good.*

What a verse. You know, back in the Dark Ages, two men, one of them named Latimer, the other named Ridley, two Bible believers out of Waldensey in Stock, were taken by the Roman Catholic Church and were treated as heretics and were going to be burned alive. As they put the wood around them and they stand side by side, they tied them to those stakes, and they were getting ready to light that fire. Ridley began to buckle under the strain, and old Latimer says, "Master Ridley, play the man, play the man," quoting out of 2 Samuel 10. You know what? You know what God's people need to do? Need to play the man. Need to play the man. Need to play the man for our people and for the city of our God, and then let God do whatever He wants to do that seems good to Him. Play the man. Play the man.

You know, in 2 Corinthians 1-4, Second Corinthians is a great book on ministry. In those first four chapters, he talks about Christian suffering, and this is one of those seven things that I told you a couple of weeks ago, that seven things in your Bible a child of God is not to be ignorant of, and one of them is 2 Corinthians 1:8: "not to be ignorant of God's suffering." Of course, we are. In that great chapter, he comes down there and he uses words like tribulation, afflicted, anguish, grieved, troubled, distressed, perplexed, forsaken, cast down, beaten, stoned, 139 stripes, shipwrecked, rods on my back, perils unto death. He said there were times that I did not know if I was going to make it through the night. With all the great anguish and the grieving and the troubles and the distress and the perplexing and being forsaken, he says in 2 Corinthians 4:17:

*2 Corinthians 4:17*

*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*

He compared all of those things that would put any of us on the floor as light affliction. You know what? You can tell a lot about a child of God by what gets him mad. Jonah is glad when his comfort level is okay, and he is mad when the mission of God disrupts his lifestyle. He sees what only affects him. He is so soft and wimpy to everything around him. He is run by his emotions. I say all that, and I am just about done, but I say everything I have said so far, I said because I want you to get this point. You need to see this. We are almost done here.

*Jonah 4:6-8*

*And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.*

*But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.*

*And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.*

Wow, wow, wow. I said everything I have said for this next great concept, and you better get it. I call this the great worm concept. God made a gourd, and he is happy. Now God took the gourd, and he is sad. Great lesson you better learn, soldier: God can take it away as fast as He gives it to you. Do not you get hung up on the circumstances of life. Do not you get focused on the ups and downs of the things that go on, good or bad. You learn to take it as it is and realize that you have a mission, and you are a soldier, and part of being a soldier is enduring hardness, the good times and the bad times. Do not be such a wimp. Do not be such a cop-out. Oh, I understand if you are young and you are growing, hey, you have to struggle through it. You are in boot camp. But I am talking about God's people, man, they ought to know better.

While we are at it, let us not miss this.

*Jonah 4:10-11*

*Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:*

*And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?*

While Jonah is so satisfied and so self-centered, he is so settled into his own comfort, even in the midst of this rationalized storm, he thinks that the problems he has got financially, physically, and all that, is just because he is suffering for God, when actually he is not doing anything. Light affliction. He is a wimp, and that is his problem. He is so satisfied and self-centered and settled in his own comfort. We all get there. I am not telling you anything that I have not been through. We all have. We all do. He fails to see the most important thing. You know what it is? It is the next generation of kids. 120,000 kids the Bible says that do not know right from wrong. God said, "Jonah, you are not seeing this thing straight. Sure, it is about the people getting saved, but you know what will change this nation? It will change this nation as the next generation of this nation teaching those kids about Me, teaching those kids." You know where the next generation of this church is? It is not in you and me. It is not in the people we are winning to Christ. It is the kids in that nursery two doors down. That is the next generation. Who would say, "I do not want to be part of this"? Who would say, "I do not want to be part of this church's next generation"? Jonah would. Jonah would. Jonah would. What parent says, "I am so busy being a soul winner, I am so busy being a discipler, I am so busy being a counselor, let me help you with all your problems," to lose their own kid to the world? Jonah would. Jonah would.

## X. The Call to Mission and Willingness

You see, the book of Jonah is not about what Jonah is doing; it is about what God wants to do, and your and my response to it. God had a mission for Jonah. God has a mission for you and for me, and you and I have a response to it. It is all about attitude. It is all about willingness. It is all about your comfort level. It is all about our selfishness. It is all about our self-centered world. It is all about our lack of courage and our lack of discipline and our lack of hardness. It is all about us being a wimp and weak. It is all about us not rising above our circumstances. It is about us blaming our problems on everything else and everybody else instead of taking responsibility for ourselves. It is about the rise and fall of our emotions running our lives, up one day and down the next. "I am happy today. I want to die tomorrow." It is our refusing the call of God's mission in our lives that brings the storms in our lives that we look around and wonder why our lives are in the mess that they are in, why our families are in the mess they are in, why our own personal lives where we cannot get victory, while we struggle with this, we struggle for this, we struggle that. It all comes down to a lack of attitude and our willingness to do whatever God calls us to do. God saves you for one reason: He has given you a mission. You have a response to it, and that response will wind up at the judgment seat of Christ. But on this life, it will be the course of your storm of life.

Now, I am not going to tell you that if you take that mission that you will not have a storm in your life. You will. The devil is going to knock you six ways from Sunday either way you go. But I want to tell you something, I am going to say this is true: whatever storm I go through in life, it always gets better for me personally when I know I am going through it because I am doing something right than it is when I am going through it because there is something I did wrong. That is the book of Jonah, and that is what we are looking at. That is where we are at. We have got the most tremendous group of people that I could ever hope for. I have got men and women who will do whatever. I have got men and women who will do whatever needs to be done. I have got men and women, and I know that God is going to. It is because if this church is going to do something for God in these last days, it is not because of me, not because of anything other than that book and your willingness to let God have you and your willingness to let God mold you and shape you however He chooses to do that. That is something that you never want to lose. That is something that you always want God to cultivate. Do not ever get to the place in your life where you are telling God what you will or what you will not do, because when you do, the storm is coming, and this church is dead. This church is dead and broke, just like all of Christianity for the most part. I know there are good men and women out there, and there are good churches, I am not saying there are not. I am just saying they do not call it the Laodicean church for nothing. We have got a mission next year. We focus that mission. We fine-tune that mission. We start working in small groups, putting things together to make it happen in people's lives that you become what you need to be. The older ones who know what is going on help the younger ones. Everybody gets everybody away, and then God opens a door for our mission, our mission here, our mission around the world. The door came a crack just a little bit last night. We got to see how God will pull something together so quickly. Somebody, I forget, several people have told me, "Bob, I do not know how, I do not know how that thing went so." Pat was one of them. "I do not know how that thing went so quick." We just, you know, we were behind the

eight ball. I was not trying to show it, but I was behind the eight ball. I mean, I did not have a lot of time. I could not get the name from the lady. They did not know us. We did not know them. I am being Mr. Politician here and working everything out and kind of getting all the things and crowding people to get me what I need, and I have got to get you all motivated. We have all these, I have got to call the families one at a time. We have got to tell, you know what a chore that is? We have got to get it all. So many, several people said, "How?" You know, it was not about any of that. The thing that made it work is the thing that will always make it work: your willingness. Your willingness to jump down on that slit trench with your preacher and say, "Bob, let us get it done. I do not care what it is. I do not care about how deep the mud is. I do not care how tough it is. Bob, come on, let us make it happen." Willing. Right attitude will make it work every time, every time. Father.