

Jonah 1:1-4:11

Sunday 11/14/2010

SEC: Introduction to Jonah and the Bible's Authority

Well, let's turn over to the book of Jonah. We've been coming through each book of the Bible, and we kind of just got this thing going. It didn't really have a plan. We started out giving you some specific things that I wanted you to know about the Bible to help you learn the Bible. Then I kind of just got going to the place where I got talking about the books of the Bible, and I told you how that in each book of the Bible, Christ is portrayed in some form or fashion.

And so I taught that before we get into the book of 2 Corinthians, where we just finished Romans a while back, and we want to move into 2 Corinthians, which is the handbook of ministry. I wanted to bring you through the books of the Bible and show you how that in each book, I think that we're coming through on Thursday night, and we're showing you the first 15 or 20 minutes, the outline of every book of the Bible, and I think that's been very valuable. From what I can see in most of your notes, what we're doing on Thursday night with the Kings has been very, very helpful and very valuable from what you've shown me.

But we have been coming through each book, and right now we're in the minor prophets, and we're focusing on how Christ is portrayed in each one of these books. Everything we do around here is based on the Bible, and we believe that the Bible is the absolute infallible Word of God. I don't do it every week because I'm not much of a traditionalist, but from time to time, you see this on the board back here behind us. It's kind of our creed, our motto. I'm not much for Christian creeds or mottos, but in this case, it works for us.

So let's all stand up and read our pledge of allegiance to the Word of God, I guess you could call it, and hold your Bible up and repeat after me.

This is God's holy Word, divinely inspired by God, infallible and inerrant.

It is my sword to fight the devil and his temptations.

It is my comfort in times of trouble.

It is my compass for my life journey.

It is God's love letter to me personally and my companion every day of my life.

Father, we do thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. Be with us now as we come to your word and help us, Father, glean the great truths out of this book. Our only sole purpose today is that the lost might become saved and the saved might become sanctified, that we might be able to fulfill the mission and the mission that you have for us through the ministry in Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen. You may be seated.

SEC: The Story of Jonah and Its Significance

Now, there are certain stories in the Bible that everybody knows. You just grow up in Sunday school. If you only went to Sunday school a short time, there are just stories in the Bible that

everybody knows. Everybody knows the story of David and Goliath. Everybody knows the story of Noah and the flood. If you've ever been to Sunday school at all, ever went to church, just in the realm of the world, you hear about it. They made the song a while back about the unicorns not getting on the ark, you know, the green alligators and long-necked geese, and that brings people's attention to Noah's ark. Who hasn't heard the story of David and Goliath in some form? There's some big guy, a bully, some little guy, and the little guy flattens the big guy. I like things like that. I think that that's good. I think bullies that'll be flattened, I think that's good for them.

And so you know that story, and most people know the story of Jonah. Now, I have to confess to you that most of the stories in the Bible that we know the way we know them, I'm not saying that's not true, and it's a good way to remember them, but there is usually a lot more to those stories than just what appears on the surface. It's certainly that way with the book of Jonah, and I want you to hear today the book of Jonah probably unlike any way you've ever heard it taught. It's because we're going to look at it from a Bible standpoint that really lays it out not only from the historical aspect so you understand where this book fits into your Bible. By the way, right now on Thursday nights, when we're coming through the Kings, this book fits right into that. So this is what I'm talking about, that when you understand that, then you have a better way of hearing the book of Jonah, putting it in a place in your mind within the structure of your Bible.

The name Jonah means "dove," like the bird, and in this particular book, Christ is typified as our risen Lord. Now I want to read Jonah chapter one, and then we'll start coming down through this.

Jonah 1:1-17

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.

But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? and what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was very tempestuous against them.

Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Now most of us know that story, and it's a good story. It's one of my favorite stories in the Bible. As a preacher, you have messages that are hard to preach, you have messages that are just preachable, and then you have messages that are fun to preach. I'm not saying that every message isn't fun to preach, but it may be what may be fun for you may not be fun for you when you're listening to what's coming out of my mouth. Not everything in the Bible is positive, we know that, but Jonah and anything about Jonah is a great book.

SEC: Jonah as a Type of Christ's Resurrection

Now I want you to keep your finger here, but I want you to turn over to Matthew chapter 12. When I told you this morning that Christ is typified as our righteous Lord, here's the New Testament verse that supports that concept and lays it out for you. It's found in Matthew chapter 12, verse 39 and 40. We're going to pick it up in verse 38. Give you a minute to get there.

Matthew 12:38-41

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

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.

The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

Now, Jonah is the only sign that was given to the nation of Israel at the first coming of Christ. The sign of Jonah is a sign of the resurrection. In other words, what he's telling them is this: the only sign you're going to get that I am who I say I am, and what I'm preaching and my apostles are preaching to you is true, is going to be the fact that I'm going to die and I'm going to resurrect three days later. Then he goes back to the prophet Jonah, and he says, "Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so the Son of Man must be in the heart of the earth." That's the only sign they got, and they missed that sign. They missed that sign. Then he says down here at the end of verse 41, "And a greater than Jonas is here." That's talking about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if you don't already know this, and I think probably all of you probably do, maybe you don't, I don't know, but if you don't already know this, the resurrection of Christ, the fact that Christ came up from the dead, is the foundation and the backbone of our salvation. I don't know if you know this, if you don't, you want to mark this in your Bible. Every Bible has definitive passages, places that you go that define things. Now, we're not talking about the gospel. The gospel, the word gospel, means "good news," and the gospel that is preached, that we preach, that I preach, that you should preach every day in your life, is the good news that Jesus Christ came down, He died for your sins on the cross, He was buried, and then rose again the third day. That's the gospel. Without the resurrection of Christ, Him dying on the cross does nothing for you. That definitive passage is found in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and that's where he defines what the gospel is. In short, what I'm saying is this: there is no salvation, there can be no salvation if there is no resurrection of Christ. If Christ didn't come up from the grave and didn't rise up, it says in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, I think down around probably verse 17, "Then your faith is in vain," because the fact that He died means nothing. Everybody dies. We make so much emphasis on the death of Christ, and I'm not taking away from that, but the bottom line is, we're all going to die. The difference between Christ is He died, and He did not stay dead. He rose again.

Now let me tell you why that's important, and I want you to have all this material. Many times people don't understand. My job is to make sure when you go out of here, you learn at least something, hopefully many things, but I can't hold you accountable for that. Everybody's on different learning levels. But the bottom line is this: Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14 says this, and this is why the resurrection is so important.

Hebrews 2:14

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

It says that before the crucifixion of Christ, that the devil had the keys of death and hell, that he was over death. Now this is why nobody in the Old Testament could go to heaven. They had to go down into Abraham's bosom, which is in the center of the earth. The reason why there could be no resurrection before Christ's resurrection is because the devil was over death. He had the keys to death and hell, so nobody could come up from the dead. For Jesus Christ to take you and me to heaven, for Jesus Christ to have the ability to save you and save me, He had to take those keys from the devil. The way that He did that is that He died.

I've heard many, many preachers over the years talk about this in many, many different ways, and it's an important point, but this is the theme of this book and how Christ is typified. When Christ died, the Bible says that He went down into Abraham's bosom, and I promise you, the devil at that point thought he won. I guarantee you, after the agonizing death of Christ on the cross, when He went through all the agony and finally gave up the ghost and said, "It is finished," and died, all of hell went crazy. The devil was happy, the demonic forces were happy, unclean spirits were happy, everybody was happy because now, keep in mind, up to this point, the devil had the keys of death and hell and was over death, and now Christ is in his clutches. As long as he keeps Him dead, he's won.

I heard a preacher preach one time, and he was preaching on Easter Sunday, and he preached on the resurrection. He said, "You know what?" And he was preaching basically what I'm talking about, how the devil had the victory, and when He died, all hell was praising Satan and having a great time because Jesus was dead, and as long as He stayed dead, the devil had won. He told the story that the first day the devil went down there, and he yelled into this big dark abyss called hell, and he said, "Death, do you still have him?" Death yelled back, "I got him! He ain't going nowhere!" He says, "Why, you hang on to him! I got him! Nobody's ever gotten away from the grasp of death!" So they're on with their party. The devil's making plans to rule the world and run the world.

Second day, he goes down, and he says, "Death, do you still have him?" And he says, "I got him! I told you, he ain't going nowhere! I ain't ever lost one of them!" He says, "Why, you make sure he stays down there!" Went on with his party. Third day comes back down, looks in that big abyss, calls down with the echo, "Death! Death! Hey, Death! Do you still got him?" Heard this weak voice coming back and said, "Something really gone bad down here!" Yeah, you know, it went bad. He came out, and when He came out, the Bible says He has the keys of death and hell. Right then, right then, at that moment in time, the devil lost. Now all he's doing right now, he's in one of those pseudo-maniac mindsets that he's trying to think he can still win, but at that point, when Christ came out of that tomb and up from the grave, He arose with a mighty power over His foes. He now has the keys of death and hell, and that's why you and I don't have to ever fear death, and you and I can be resurrected and will be resurrected because my Savior now has got the keys of death and hell. Now, if that doesn't do something for you, you're unhelpable.

SEC: Attacks on the Resurrection and Jonah's Story

Jonah was the only sign given, and this is why the resurrection is so important. Now you need to know what I'm about to say to you and understand this because Jonah and the book of Jonah and

this great story and the resurrection is absolutely vital. It is the backbone of everything we are as Christians. The devil attacks this book up one side and down the other. The liberal scholars attack this book. If you would go to just about any Bible college or seminary in this country and you got into an Old Testament survey class, they would tell you that the book of Jonah is a fable. They would tell you that Adam and Eve is a fable. They would tell you that Noah in the ark is a fable. And they would say things like this, that it's impossible, it's impossible, and it's one of those stories that has a great meaning to it and a great message to it, but it's really just not true. It's one of those stories you're telling the Bible that's allegorical. I don't know what allegorical means, but I heard one time that it means that it's a great story but it doesn't really mean anything. So they attack it.

In church history, we've learned this on Tuesday nights. We know now that there are seven periods of church history. We also know that as the church developed, and those churches are right over there in that big old chart, we also know as those churches developed through those seven periods, and each period running a couple of hundred years, we know that as the church developed, every church had an issue that it had to deal with. The world threw an issue that tried to sidetrack Christianity, tried to derail it, and in every period in church history, they had an issue coming out of Europe that they had to deal with that the devil had hatched through scholarship and the educated world to try to destroy the power of the Word of God.

You know what the first one was? It was the church at Ephesus, and they're around about the time of Christ's death up to about 200 AD. Do you know what their number one issue was? The number one issue that these churches had to face, the first one, was the resurrection. You've got guys who will tell you that He really didn't die. They'll say that He passed out on the cross, and when they put Him in that tomb, have you ever been in a cave? A cave is a good cave, it's a constant 60-some degrees. That's why your great-great-grandparents used to dig fruit cellars. They would store their food down there because it was cooler, it was a constant degree. So they teach that when Christ died, they put Him in there, and He had just passed out, and the coolness of that cave revived Him, and He just kind of got up on His own and walked out. Now they have a little problem with a big stone that was in front of it, but I guess there was an 18-wheeler going down the road with Joe's Acme Towing Service on it, and they probably pulled the rock away because they heard Him crying, "Let me out of here!" Say something like that. No, no, no, He died. He died. There wasn't no swoon theory. He died, and He came back from the dead, and if He did not, our salvation is in vain. I've never understood why people get so excited about disproving this single thing that will take you to heaven. I never understood it, but that's the way human nature is. I guess they're not going themselves, that I don't want you to be happy about going. I don't know.

But the scholars attack Jonah too because they come back and they say, "You know what? He really doesn't resurrect." For the next 2,000 years, Bible scholars, saved and lost, have tried to get rid of the one book, of the one book that is the sign for the coming of Christ, the book of Jonah. For the last 2,000 years, it's always been attacked. The unsaved pagan world has attacked it. You know how they attacked it? They tried to imitate it. Oh yeah, we saw our pictures over there of the heavens declared the glory of God and all of those heavenly things out there. We were at a

hayride a while back, and Bob did a gospel and the star presentation that shows you how all these things work. Most people don't know that. They can't find any constellations, and they don't know how to read the sky, so to speak. I always have fun with people, and I say, "You know where the North Star is at?" I mean, it might as well be a street light down the road. They just don't know where it's at. They can't orient themselves. Of course, constellations, there's 88 of them in our what we call our zodiac, and the zodiac is the belt of constellations that just kind of go around the earth that we can see. They change with the seasons. We talked about this before.

But most people don't know, and then you got the crowd, and I just can't pass this up, you got the crowd who believes in astrology. Astrology means that your life is guided by the stars. You meet some gal at a bar someplace or some guy, and your in-line question is, "Uh, what sign are you?" Because certain signs are compatible, you know. "Well, I'm a Gemini." "Oh, I'm a Sagittarius." "Oh, you're also ugly!" And you're supposed to be able to get along that way. See, that's not true. There's only one thing that needs to guide your life, and it's this book right here. I thought it was funny way back in my day, and some of you guys would know this, remember the song "Age of Aquarius"? Oh, you do. Yeah, yeah, you know, Pat and Sonya, they met at Woodstock many, many years ago, and that's where they met John and Betsy back here at Woodstock. Most of you don't remember the sign of Aquarius, and that really was back, it was a song back in the 60s and the 70s, and it was a song about, you know, the age when the moon is in Jupiter aligned with Mars, you know, all that stuff, and it was the Age of Aquarius, and the Age of Aquarius was supposed to bring in peace. Now that was back in the 60s. We've had about 178 wars and about 58 billion people killed. The bottom line was, and astronomers used to laugh at that because we were not in the Age of Aquarius. The moon and the stars and the sun and the earth was not even in that constellation. But that's the way it is. It's a fallacy. There's only one thing to guide your life, and it isn't the stars, it's the book. It's "Get the new look from the old book." Okay, the inward look, the outward look, the upward look, you know, prove you're a crook. I mean, it's the authorized book. Yeah, that's the only one you need.

And so the pagan world, through the constellations, they imitate all these things. I showed you how Orion is connected in Job with the Antichrist, and yet Orion is portrayed as the mighty hunter. Hercules goes back to Genesis chapter six. He had Hercules as a mighty man of valor. He's, you know, Hercules, only the evil fear him, kind of like Underdog, but he's not up in the sky. I didn't have one or two back then, but these constellations paint a picture. Well, the whole job of the world, and if you haven't figured this out yet, you need to get it this morning, the whole job of the world is to take the truth of the Bible and then amalgamate it into the untruth of the world and then present a different picture that copies it, that in time, over the five or six, seven, eight hundred years, everybody just takes the story of the Bible and puts it in with the phony stories and mythology. Now that's the goal. That's the goal.

So it's no wonder that the unsaved world does it with Jonah. You have Andromeda. Now Andromeda is a woman, and if you go out to the sky tonight, she's still up, and she's taken captive by the Kraken, the big sea monster. And the sea monster devours her, and then right over here, here's Andromeda coming down, right over here is the hero Perseus, and Perseus is the great warrior that comes and defeats the Kraken and gets her out of the belly of the Kraken. And

then you have connected to Andromeda is the big square Pegasus, that's the winged horse. Oh, that's a white horse with wings, Revelation 19, that Perseus rides on to rescue the woman Andromeda. Whoa, that fits into the Bible good if we get it back into the Bible. But no, no, no, no, a big sea monster ate Andromeda, and then of course, Perseus goes and gets her out of the belly of the sea monster, and it's a counterfeit. We have Orion, he's thrown into the sea, rescued from the Kraken, but the Kraken is the big sea monster by dolphins. Oh, Hercules, Hercules got thrown into the sea, and he was in the belly of a sea monster three days and three nights. See, in other words, the world always takes the Bible truth and tries to take the edge off of it by counterfeiting it.

It was just, you can see it all the time. It was what, three or four months ago, and it came with an amazing discovery that the Red Sea really didn't part by any supernatural thing when the Israelites went across. A guy came up who studies science and an archaeologist who studies the wind circuits, and he says at a certain time when the wind blows one way and the wind blows another way at the same time, that portion of sea will actually separate about a half a mile apart, and you can walk across it and get across. And he said, "Everybody, theologians, preachers, pastors were, 'Oh, you answered the question!'" What? You didn't answer nothing! The Bible is still the Bible. It wasn't the wind, it wasn't the rain, it wasn't the little Gershmans running around under the toadstools. It was God Almighty that split that sea, and when they went across, and then when Pharaoh came after him, He covered him back up, and he drowned.

And a guy told me one time, he says, "You know, the Bible says the Red Sea." And I says, "Yes, the Red Sea." And he said, "Well, that's really not what it meant. That is a mistranslation in your Bible." And I said, "Oh, really?" He says, "Yes, it should be the Sea of Reeds." He says, "They really didn't cross the Red Sea, they crossed the Sea of Reeds, which is only about 40 miles to the west, where they had only about four inches depth of water, and the scribal error there is he meant to put in 'reed' and put in 'red' and left the 'e' out." And he says, "So it really wasn't a miracle of God at all." And he smirked when he said it. After I hit him in Jesus' name with all the charity and love I could muster, I said, "Wow, it's still a miracle!" He says, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, you said it was the Sea of Reeds, four inches of water." He says, "That's correct." "How's that a miracle?" I said, "All of Pharaoh's army drowned in four inches of water!" You can't get around God and the Bible. That book stands.

But they'll try to get around it. The liberals today, the liberal preachers, while I'm preaching this message, the liberal churches around this world are telling them that the book of Jonah is a fable. It really didn't happen. It's impossible how that a fish could, a whale could swallow a man and then live for three days and then come out at the end of that time. They say it's just absolutely impossible. Now I got to tell you, the saved fundamental guys, they want to rush to the defense so bad because they want to prove the book of Jonah is right. What do they do? Oh, they go back in the mariner times and all these archives, and they actually try to find places where some seaman was in the belly of a whale and then found some days later. And actually, believe it or not, I even read an article by one pastor that said he did research on it, and he said a sulfur bottom whale. Now I've never seen a sulfur bottom whale. That's not true. I think she came to my church about 10 years ago. But anyway, a sulfur bottom whale, he says it was 90 feet long and

147 tons, and he says within that sulfur bottom whale, there was 686 cubic feet of air space, more than enough for a man to live. Somebody else came up and said, "Well, I'll tell you better than that. In 1927, they caught a gigantic sperm whale out there with these whale guys fishing, and they cut it open, and inside that sperm whale was a sailor that had been still alive that had been in that whale for two days." Somebody else says, "I got a better one than that. In 1881, they opened up another gigantic sperm whale when they were hunting whales for the oil back then, and they cut him open, and there was a man in there that was alive that had been in there for three or four days. He had turned purple, but he was still alive."

And everybody stands up and here's the next thing they'll say this, and boy, have I had them say this. I've had them, and this is people who don't know their Bible. I preached one time on Jonah, and a person came up afterwards and said, "Well, you know, in the book of Jonah, that probably the answer could be that Jonah never calls it a whale. He calls it a great fish." Now I love places in the Bible where he'll say something like that in Jonah, but in Matthew chapter 12, where Jesus Himself is speaking, He'll tell you it was a whale. You know why I like passages like that? I love places in the Bible where God forces you to call Him a liar. You call it a great whale and say, "Well, it says it's a great whale." Jesus Himself in Matthew chapter 12, verse 40, said it was a whale. Now, I mean, all that's very touching, and I'm all for defending of the faith, but can we just stick with the Bible this morning? I mean, can we just please do that?

Now let me just tell you something, and this may be a shock to your system. I don't need to worry, first of all, I never worry about the mythology crowd. I got them figured out when I was 12. Second of all, I don't worry about the fundamental crowd because they don't know anything about the Bible anyhow, and I ain't worried about going to the archives trying to find somebody who lived in a whale for three days. But I don't worry about the way I lived in a whale for three days. May I just give you the shock of the century? Jonah died in that whale. I don't need to find a whale with 886 cubic feet of air. I don't need to find a sulfur bottom whale that's big enough to swallow a man. I don't care that in 1927 some poor unfortunate sailor got eaten up by a big whale when they found him two days later. I mean, that doesn't really bother me. The bottom line, but this is what we do. See, the devil's going to get rid of the miracle of Jonah one way or the other. The unsaved liberal crowd, they say it didn't happen. The saved crowd gets such a dither to try to prove their point, but if they could just stick with the Bible, they lose the whole sight of it. If Jonah didn't die, how is he a picture of any resurrection? I mean, taking out of the, taking this story that Jonah died out of the Bible is like over there in Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14, taking the word "virgin" out and putting the word "woman" in. What sign was it? What sign was it that would it be that in Isaiah 7:14 that a woman, a young woman shall conceive and bring forth a child? Man, they were doing that every month of the year. Now, a virgin conceiving and giving forth a child, that's something else. What good would it do if Jonah was swallowed by a whale, lived down there with a little coffee table and a TV set that somebody had eaten up down there and had it comfortable, and then got vomited back out? How alive? How is that a picture of Christ's resurrection? Was Christ dead those three days? Yes, He was. Then Jonah was dead those three days. They both died. Teaching that Jonah didn't die is just about as bad a fable as denying the book itself. The resurrection is the key. It's the key. And how can a man be a picture of somebody resurrecting from the dead if he didn't die himself?

SEC: Historical Context and Jonah's Disobedience

Now look, there's many great sermons in Jonah, and I'm going to preach you one here in just a second, but I want to give you the storyline. I think with where we're at in our Bible, I want you to first very quickly understand how this fits into your overall Bible. When you leave here today, my goal is basically for you to have this book under your belt and know it. There's many great stories, but here's the storyline.

Now all this takes place historically around 760 to 750 BC. For those of you on Thursday night that have made it your venue to be here to learn of Kings and get it down, we know that we just studied him last Thursday night. This is the reign of Jeroboam the Second. When I came through Jeroboam the Second, I remember making note and told you that the prophet that he had was Jonah. Now this will make more sense to you as you put it all together.

And Jonah the prophet, he's told by God to go to Nineveh. Now let's talk about Nineveh. Nineveh is the capital of Assyria, and Assyria, the country of Assyria, is one of the two major powers that are running the known world. The other one that Assyria is in the north, Babylon will be the other one, is in the south. You and I know from our Thursday night time that the nation of Israel has now been split, the northern tribes and the southern tribes, and the kings that we're going through, detailing them out in every facet. Once you get it done with it, you'll be absolutely good to go on those books. You want to learn your Bible, you learn it in large pieces like we're doing it.

And so what you have now is you have the king of Assyria, whose capital is Nineveh. They're messing with the northern tribes. And then you have Babylon through Nebuchadnezzar, he's messing with the southern tribes. But Jonah is a prophet to Jeroboam the Second, which is the king of Israel, the northern tribes. And here's what's happening: Assyria is getting ready to come down and to wipe out the ten northern tribes, which are known as Israel. And Jonah knows this. God has already told Jonah that if the nation of Israel and Jeroboam get right with God and do what's right and dump the false gods, that God will protect them from Assyria coming down. And Jonah knows that's not going to happen. Jonah knows that that's not going to transpire.

He looks at God telling him to go to Nineveh a lot like you should look at it if God calls you to go to Uzbekistan or Iraq or Iran. All Iran would be good because there's no truth protected there. If God told you today this afternoon, and He's not going to, but if He would, that He calls you to go to Iran, get a plane there, go right down in a public square, and then denounce the Muslims, tell them that Muhammad was a freak, and just preach your guts out about Jesus Christ and Israel going to get the land. How long do you think you'd last? In Vietnam, I think the life expectancy of a first lieutenant was about four minutes. Something else that was live, a machine gun door gunner on a helicopter was about 30 seconds. I think your life expectancy would be less than that if you went there. You know how you would look at that? Would you be just praising the Lord that you're going to Iran and going to stand up and tell the Khomeini, "You go take a flying leap," and that Jesus is the King and the Jews are going to inherit the earth? Oh, you would last 10 seconds. You look at it as a death sentence. That's what Jonah's looking at. Jonah's looking at it as a death sentence. Jonah is thinking, "If I go down here, they are going to kill me."

And so he does what he does. He does what most of God's people do. He sees it as a, he sees that if he goes to Nineveh, he's in trouble. So he runs from God, and he runs from the mission that God has given him. Now hear me, two aspects here: he runs from the mission that God has given him, and he also runs from the message that God has given him to deliver.

SEC: The Christian's Message and Mission

Now allow me, if I could, that I've given you the kind of the historical perspective. Allow me to stop here and bring it home. Now I've learned this week that I think the reason why my ministry is not successful is I don't use the right words. I watched a lot of church billboards this week. I saw one church that said, and I think this is, I think I'm going to change my act a little bit and get down where everybody is at, and I saw today, I want us to, I want to embrace this story. I saw a big sign today, it said, "Come with us Sunday and embrace God." I think that's our problem here. We don't embrace enough things. We don't embrace. So let's just embrace truth today. I mean, I think that'd be a great day. So allow me to stop here for a moment after the historical and let's embrace this book together.

Now God has given Jonah, and He's also given me and you, He's given you and me two things: He's given us a message and He's given us a mission. Now I don't know what your mission is. I do know what your message should be. God has given every man and woman in this building two things if you're saved: He's given you a message and then He's given you a mission. Your whole life after you get saved is building on finding out what God's mission is, understanding the message, and then going delivering it.

But we find now, we find now that just like Jonah, some of God's people don't like it. I believe that Jonah, I believe that Jonah, like so many guys, I mean, he's an older guy. I believe that Jonah is probably in his 60s, maybe he's even in his 70s. I believe that. I believe that he's like most of guys today and women, when they get older in life, we get satisfied. The older we get, the less we like change. We kind of just settle into what we're doing, and you know, I mean, I think that for him, probably life was real good. He was a prophet of God. God took care of his needs, and he's looking at retiring, and he's coming to that age in his life when he's thinking about, you know, you don't have to work anymore, don't have to do all these things anymore, and that's got him focused. I just, now that may be fine if you're in the corporate world and you're an unsaved man or woman, but that will never work for a Christian.

My father, the Lord, when he was almost 60 years old, dropped everything he had with New York City and built a church from nothing, spent the next 20 years of his life building a church. And when somebody asked him one time if he was ever going to retire, he looked at him and blinked, and he said, "I don't retire, I just rehire." There ain't no retirement for you and for me, and that's one of the problems that Jonah had. I think it's a problem that we get into. There never is a time, ladies and gentlemen, if you're saved, that you don't have a mission and a message. And the point I'm trying to say is this: he doesn't want to do it like some of God's people. The message and the mission is most certainly going to disrupt your comfort level. I mean, if you got a nice big house and you're ready to retire and you've worked all your life, and you, let me ask you, do you want to disrupt that? Your answer should be yes if you're a child of God. You ought

to be willing to do whatever God wants you to do, even if it is to go to Nineveh to preach a suicide message, because God is bigger.

So what does Jonah do? He runs. He runs from God. He runs from the message that God wants him to preach, and then he runs from the mission that God has for him, does he not? You ever see people who don't want to do what's right? Jonah's a type of that. When you study this story here in light of where you're at or I'm at and Christ our risen Savior, and you realize that every one of us today that is saved has a message and has a mission, and you realize that we react to it, many of us just like Jonah did, that he didn't want to disrupt his comfort level. He didn't want to disrupt his social standings. He didn't want people to think bad of him. Hey, ever see people who don't want to do what's right? They always blame their lack of spirituality on something else, somebody else, and they're always claiming to be God's champion because they don't want to lose their respectability among their friends. That was Jonah. Jonah didn't want to do what God wanted to do, so Jonah decided he'd go someplace and serve God where he wanted to go. And as Dr. Phil says, "How did that work for you, Jonah?" It didn't.

SEC: The Consequences of Running from God

Now verse 3 says in this chapter, "Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD." Now let me just lay a few things out for you here. Here's the first mistake that he made, and this will be the first mistake you make and I make if we ever get to where Jonah is at, where we forsake the mission and the message that God has for you to deliver. God's got something He wants you to say, and He's got somebody He wants you to say it to. And old Jonah, he doesn't want to get discomfited. Man, he's right close to retirement. He's got his motor home just almost paid for. He's got a boat for the lake. He's got big plans. He's going to kick back. He worked all of his life. He didn't do anything for God, and now it discomferts him that God would send him on such a mission when he's so close to having what he's worked so hard for in life. And I'm telling you now, he makes a couple of fatal mistakes.

First of all, he loses sight of a great principle. Take your Bible and turn over to Psalms 139:7-8. Now this is David talking here, and he, you know, verse 3 says that Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and he loses sight of one great principle as most of God's people do when they get out of fellowship and try to run from God, the message, and the mission. Now the great principle is found in Psalms 139:7-8. This is Jonah's fundamental problem. David speaking here, and he simply says this:

Psalms 139:7-8

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

Now the great truth is this: you can't flee from God's presence. You ain't going anywhere. You know, people get at odds with God, and quit coming to church, and they get mad about over something, and you know what the real issue is? In most cases, the real issue is they get mad because they weren't doing the mission or the message. They got irritated because somebody kept preaching to them about it, so after a while, they just bail out and say, "Well, you know

what? I'll go somewhere else," or "I won't go anywhere at all." And they think by doing that, they get out from under the conviction. Let me tell you something, they're sitting home this morning watching television or watching something on that thing, and the Holy Spirit of God will bring something into view, something will come on, something will happen, some thought will go through their mind, and the Holy Spirit of God will just nail them right there in front of that TV set. You can't get away from the presence of God. Once you're saved, you'll never get away from the presence of God, and your life will be absolutely miserable. You will never accomplish what you want in life. Every street will be a dead-end street, and the longer it goes, God finally pays your way to go to a great university. It's called Whale University.

I've seen young men and young ladies think that their life was their own, and by the time they're 18 or 19 or 20, they do whatever they want to do. They have no need for God, no care for God, and then they wonder why when they're 40 or 50 that their life is upside down. They wonder why when they're 30 that their life is beginning to fall apart. They don't understand that God, you can't get away from God once you get saved. Once you trust Christ as your personal Savior, you have made a commitment that God is going to entrust you a message and a mission. You not fulfilling that is going to put your life into a storm just like Jonah. You'll never get away from it. Hey, kid, you'll get out there partying and drinking and boozing, and you'll think you're so far away from God, God can't ever get to you. And you know what? God will flip you upside down about three or four o'clock in the morning down there in a freeway someplace. You'll be pinned under that car with paramedics trying to get you out. You'll hear the rest of the message. You don't get away from God any way you want. You do not get away from God. You think your life's yourself, and you're doing your own thing. Wait till God takes that little baby and puts him in a hospital and shows him how absolutely helpless you are without Him.

I told you the story many, many times. Most of you, I don't think any have ever heard the sermon that he preached, but my old man used to preach a sermon, "What God Got to Do with Some of You to Make Heaven Real?" And he talked about himself, how that he had life made, and God had called him into the ministry, and he wouldn't go. He didn't want to go. And he looked back on it years and years later, and God gave him the hindsight to look at it, and he said, "You know what?" And I've heard him preach this message at least 20 times, some of it with tears running down his face, how that God, the reason he didn't do what God wanted to do was the same reason that a lot of us don't do what God wants us to do. Heaven just was not real to him. And I've seen him stand there and tell the story how that when you put a little white casket down in the ground, and it's your baby girl, and you know that you're indifferent in your hardness, that God now has suddenly picked a little flower out of your garden and planted in His heaven, heaven becomes real. Heaven becomes real. You don't get away from the presence of God. You can fight God's message and God's missions all you want, but I'm telling you, ladies and gentlemen, what follows in Jonah's life is a picture of your life and my life and the storms we get into when God says one thing and you tell Him something else, when God tells you to do one thing and your friends convince you to do something else, God calls you to do one thing and the world pulls you to do something else, when you go and you run from God, and you may be in church every Sunday, but inside you're running from God because sitting here this morning, you have no message and you have no mission that you're fulfilling, and that's where it's at.

Now look at verse 3. I think this is very interesting.

Jonah 1:3

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 there's a couple of things I want you to see here. I love looking at passages like this and letting the Holy Spirit of God bring out things that makes it into your life and my life. First thing I want you to see is this: there's no question about this, that Jonah is not doing what's right. In one little verse, you're told two times that he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord. This is not a miscommunication. This is not just Jonah having a bad day. No, no, no. This is a picture of your life and my life when God clearly gives you and me a mandate and a message. I don't know what your secular job is. We all got to have them. My situation is the New Testament lays out that my job is to be a pastor. Not everybody can be a paid pastor, obviously. Everybody, you know, you see it all through the Bible where people had their occupation, but yet that does not negate them from being a minister with a message and with a mission. And what happens is, is that I'll tell you, this is where the big problem is, and this is what the book does. It shows you how you and I can get so comfortable with what we have in our lifestyle, and the older we get, the more comfortable it becomes. It tells why, why that, why that you as a child of God have so many issues you have in your life. It makes, it makes sense. It explains some things to you. Maybe you'll go out of here with nothing more than you'll realize why you have went through the downside of things in your life. And the answer is, is because you got saved, and maybe it wasn't your fault. Maybe nobody ever helped you. Maybe nobody ever sat down and told you. Maybe it is the first time you ever heard a clear presentation of it in your life. That's okay. But the bottom line is, you failed to fulfill the mission and preach the message. God wanted you to go one way, and you're like Jonah, we want to go where we want to go. I think this is incredible stuff. I think it's very interesting. Jonah's not doing what's right. We saw a couple of weeks ago, didn't we, Amos 3:3, "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

Now what you got here in Jonah, the second thing, and I love this, and this is something we're all good at, it's the art of rationalization. God wants you and me to do one thing, and we are experts at rationalizing ourselves that that's not what God wants us to do. Oh, we're good at it. We're experts at it. I'm probably better than all of you, but it's absolutely what we do best. I would like to say that the best thing we all do is pray. I would say the best, I would love to say the best thing we do as God's people is study the Bible, but I'd be lying to you. The best thing we all do is find ourselves in situations where God wants us to do something, make the right decision, go the right path, do the right thing, and then we spend all of our energy working our little deal, working a little angle, rationalizing it just like Jonah did. So even though God wants you to go to Nineveh, you got proof positive in your brain you're supposed to go to Tarshish. That's us. Say, "How do you know that?" Because that's Jonah, and that's what we do. That's what human nature does. That's exactly the art of rationalization. That's why I tell you all the time, you ought to have, and I put them to you all the time, you ought to have a Bible principle behind every decision you make, every decision you make. He convinced himself he was right. We convince ourselves that

we're right, and you know, our friends convince us because misery loves company, and hey, they'll take your side over the Bible side.

I had a lady come in one time years ago, and she had an issue, and it was a pretty straightforward issue. It was not a hard issue. It was not a deep issue. It was just an issue that, bless her heart, she didn't want to deal with. And so she was going around coming to everybody asking what their opinion was, and then she was formulating what she wanted to do out of that opinion. Somebody along the chain of food chain said, "You got to go talk to Bob." She did. She came in, and she laid out her circumstance, and then she said, "I need your help, Bob. If you were given my scenario, what would you do?" And I said, "Why do you care what I would do given your scenario? Just ask yourself one simple question: What would Jesus do?" You know what she said? She said, "I knew you were going to say that." "Well, if you knew I was going to say that, why don't you just do it?" "Because you didn't want to do it." That's the way we are. That's the way we are.

Now I want you to look the next day, you know, the next thing is he's in such a hurry to get away from the mission and the message. Let's put it in 20th, 21st century terms. He's in such a hurry to leave this church, any church, he doesn't even notice that he's the only passenger on his ship other than a bunch of pagan unsaved sailors. Two great concepts: when you forsake the message and the mission and you run from God, the first one is, it's a long, lonely trip. You're going to be miserable, and you're only going to be hanging out with people who are just as miserable, and you can't stand to be around anybody that's got the joy, joy, joy down in your heart because every time you do it, it just sticks in your gut like a knife that you're not doing what God wants you to do. You know what it does? It drives you farther to the crowd. You're the only passenger. You're the only companion, the only buddy he had on his ship once he left God's presence. The only buddy he had to hang out with were a bunch of drunken pagan God-forsaking sailors. But as it turned out, they had more insight than God in the Bible than he did. You know, the world can figure us out pretty quick.

I had a buddy of mine, his name was Rex Harrison. I don't know where Rex was at today. Rex had multiple sclerosis, and he was crippled, and Rex was a good preacher, and Rex could play the piano better than anybody I ever heard in my life. I used to, we used to go preach Bible conferences together, and he'd get there about an hour before everybody got there, and he'd go up in the piano, and he'd start playing songs, and he'd run those songs together. I mean, just like we got a tape of him, he would just, he would sing from the heart. My favorite song was, was the song about school days are over and going home to be with the Lord, and he would play those songs, and then he'd migrate into the next song, and he would just put them together, no music, no nothing, and he would sing those things, and boy, I'll tell you what, it was like heaven came down and glory filled your soul. He pulled a story one time in preaching that when he was out and fell out of fellowship, miserable, saying miserable, and the only job he could find, he was a cripple, the only job he could find was playing in a nightclub someplace in a blues place, in a nightclub place. And he's out there, and then he's, he's playing, and everybody's drunk, and he's singing the blues, and he could sing, and boy, he could play that piano. He said, "I was sitting down there," and he said, "I was so miserable." He said, "God was tugging at my heart," and he

said, "I was running from God." And then he'd make a joke, "And that's really tough because I don't have any legs." And he proved the point, you don't have to have legs to run from God. Oh, he'd hit you everywhere he could. And he's up there playing this thing, you know, and he said, "I was so miserable inside," and he said, "I was the right guy to sing the blues because I was about as blue as I could get, and I was down the dumps, and here I am a child of God, and I felt like it was down in a pig's swaddle, and I'm down there, and I know I made my own mess, and I know I'm in it." And he says, "God just beat me up." And he says, "Well, no, I'm playing down there and playing some sad blues song, you know, and some old sister comes up, half sauced, you know, puts her arm around me, and she says, 'You're one of the greatest piano players and the greatest blues singers I ever saw. If I didn't know any better, I think you are a Christian.'" He looked up, and he says, "You're right, I am, and I've had a fellowship with God, and I'm done with this mess." How about that? God took some old drunken whatever and used it to put the nail in his heart. God used a bunch of pagan sailors right here to do it in Jonah's. That's the only friends he had. Misery loves company, doesn't it?

First thing you find is that it's a lonely trip, and then the next thing you find down there in verse 3, it said, "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." Second thing you're going to find out is you take this trip, you're going to pick up the tab for it. You see, if you go do God's mission with God's message, He pays for it. God always pays for what He orders. But you do it your way, go your way, rationalize it to yourself that you're going to do it, forsake the things of God in your life, and convince yourself that you're still going to do what you want to do. Let me tell you something, you may go and do it, but brother, that path can be very costly. I tell people all the time, it takes a lot longer to get out of what you got into than it sure took to get into it. I tell them all the time, "What do you expect?" Somebody comes in and says, "My life is this, and I've had this, and then this and this and this." I said, "What do you expect?" I said, "I love you, and I'm willing to help you, but you better grab one great reality: Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Your problem is, pal, you reap your wild oats. Now you want to pray for crop failure? Ain't going to happen. You dance all night, somebody has to pay the band in the morning. It'll be you. It'll be me. Because the Bible says when Jonah left the presence of the Lord and went to Tarshish, when God told him to go to Nineveh, not only was it a lonely trip, not only did he have to pay the fare himself, but boy, I'll tell you what, it really got into a storm of his life.

Look at verse 4 and 7.

Jonah 1:4

But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

Your life ever been there? Your life ever been thrown upside down, left and right? You ever been on a real typhoon in the ocean? I mean, where the waves are 100 feet high, and that thing just rocks you left and right, and you, I mean, I've seen ships, I've seen ships that the waves were so high, when the waves come down for that thing, the whole stern would come out, and you can

see the props turning on the back, and then slam it back down. You know, on some of those ships, most of the Navy ships, they have little, little inserts they put down there to put your plate on so in rough sea and rough weather your plate doesn't fly over place, it stays there because it's got a little bracket around it. Ever been in a ship like that? I mean, where it's just tossed upside down, inside out, I mean, just rolled and banged. That's the way life will be when you go your way from God. And I want you to know it was God that set the great tempest.

You know what I believe? I believe that if you're here this morning and you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you may be a good person, you may be a wonderful person, or you may be a scoundrel, I don't care. I believe this, I believe that if you're here this morning and you don't know for sure if you die right now you go to heaven, I believe that God has brought every tempestuous sea and every heartache and everything in your life to focus you to the person that can save you and can deliver you from that death and deliver you from this great sea and bring you home in a calm sea. That's what I believe. I believe that God wants you saved so bad that He'll put the things in your life. He did with Jonah. He called for the great sea. He called for the great wind. He brought all these things in Jonah's life. And I believe that if you're a Christian here this morning and you're someone that has forsaken the message and somebody that has forsaken the mission and you're doing your own thing and you're out there running from God your way, trying to maintain your respectability, trying to carry the right Bible, trying to talk the right way, but deep down inside you've done nothing for the Lord and you're running from the message and the mission, God puts a storm in your life just like He did Jonah. How bad the storm gets depends on how quickly you recognize that. So I believe as I'm preaching here this morning, if you're here and you're not sure you're saved and you've got areas and issues here in life that you've struggled with, I look at that as a good thing. I look at that as what God put in your life to have you focused. Maybe the whole thing was to bring you here that you could hear what God wants to do for you, or maybe God's already told you what He wants to do for you.

Now here I look at verse 7, and you might as well get this, folks. You mean, you better get this. I don't know how else I can say it. This book says it all. Jonah's running from God. God told him to go to Nineveh. He's dead sure he's supposed to go to Tarshish. He got onto a ship, paid the unfair, down inside a great storm comes up, and so the sailors, they're panicked, and they do what pagan sailors do. That's, "Call upon our God," and one of our rituals is, "Let's roll the dice and let's, let's take lots and let's see who this thing falls on so we can find out who the real problem is here."

Jonah 1:7

And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

You cannot get away from God's hand. When you and I aren't doing what's right, you can't flee from His presence. You can't shut it off and say, "Well, it doesn't." It'll get you sooner or later. Jonah's a picture of your life and my life.

Then I'll look at verse 5, and here's the attitude of God's people today. Here we are.

Jonah 1:5

Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

There it is. There's us. The world is going to hell. Nineveh is awaiting for a man to show up with God's message on God's mission. Hundreds of thousands of people's souls are hanging in the balance. Jonah, who was God's man to go preach God's message on God's mission, refused to go, ran from God, finds himself in a storm of his life, and now what? People dying and going to hell around him, has the audacity to fall sound asleep in the middle of that storm. There's our attitude. That's why if you've been saved five years or more, you haven't won anybody to Christ. That's why. That's why you're like Jonah. You, you don't want to get discomforted. Your comfort level is set. Now life is good. You're not going to step outside that comfort zone. You're not going to go to Nineveh. You're not going to lay it on the line. God has a message that He wants you and I to preach, and He has a mission that He wants you and I to fulfill.

SEC: Jonah's Revival and God's Patience

Now we know how this thing works out. Chapter 2, the story, it takes a whale of an experience to get Jonah's attention, to get him to go to Nineveh. And you know what happens? Jonah gets thrown into the sea by the sailors. God prepared a great fish, which we know is a whale. It swallows him up. Really what takes place in chapter 2, if you know how to lay it out, is Jonah actually dying, and the whole terminology there tells you he died. But you know what can we do? And then after three days and three nights, the whale vomits him up. Now he must have been a pretty sight. I mean, he had to be just an absolute spectacular sight. And that always brings up another thing. You know what? I'll guarantee you, you and I didn't look too hot the first time God laid eyes on us. But even though he's been in a whale's belly for three days, he's full of vomit, puke all over him, and he smells to the high heavens, and even though he's been a disobedient of God, God still wants to use him. And God doesn't care where you're at this morning. God doesn't care what you've done. If you made it right with God and you want to do what's right, God will use you.

But Jonah's a special case, man. I love him. I love him because I guess I see so much of myself in him. So God gives him a second chance, and in chapter 3, God calls him a second time to go to Nineveh. And this is incredible. Now in chapter 1, he said, "I'm simply not going to go." In chapter 2, or excuse me, chapter 3, after the whale experience of chapter 2, he says, "Okay, I'll go, but I don't like it." And in chapter 3, through verses 3 through 10, he goes to Nineveh. What happens? A great revival breaks out. The whole city comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The whole city believes in God. They repent, and the whole city comes to God. Wow, man, that ought to make your day. That, I'll tell you what, what preacher, what evangelist ever went into any city and preached one message and the whole city, I'm talking about 500, probably 000 people, the whole city came to God? You think you, I would be thrilled. Not Jonah.

Look at Jonah 4:1

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

You see, this is a great lesson here. It's a great lesson for me. It's a great lesson for you all. Jonah can see is himself. He's so spoiled, so rotten, so selfish, so unforgiving, so merciless, he's so uncaring. He comes in chapter 4, verse 3, and after this great revival, his attitude is, "Oh Lord, just take me home and let me die." I agree, God, kill him and get him out of here. Well, it's better to die than to live in the midst of his message and the mission where hundreds of thousands of people came to Christ. All he can see is himself. He can never see what God's doing, and boy, that's our problem today.

Look at 4:1 again. It says, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." I want to tell you something, and you want to mark this down. You want to work with people, you want to understand Christians, you want to see things as they really are. Let me give you a great piece of advice: always watch at what makes a Christian angry. That'll be a great indicator. Here's a guy that in the middle of a great revival, where thousands of people are getting right with God and getting saved, he's angry about it. Watch God's people's lives, what they get angry at. They don't get angry at sin. They don't get angry at the things that are wrong. No, no, no. They'll get angry like Jonah at the things that are right because everything in their life is out of whack. They don't see the mission. They don't have a message. They haven't won anybody to Christ for 10 years, and so they don't get excited when God wants to use them. They see God's hand in their life to use them as an inconvenience. "I got my own agenda, what I want to do, where I want to go." Tells me a lot about a Christian, what makes them mad and what they get angry about. And I understand angry is an emotion. The Bible says anger is good in its right form. Bible says, "He that is angry without a cause is guilty." Anger is an emotion that is a good emotion, but you got to use it within the context of the Bible.

And then after his anger, it happens this way, though, this is what happens in every one of our lives. Once you run from the message of God, once you run from the mission of God, once the storm comes into your life and it's upside down, and you lose this, you lose that, and your world just starts to fall apart, and deep down inside you know what the issue is. You got a mom and dad who's loving God, who's a witness for you. Some of moms and dads got kids that are living for God, and they're not. They see the witness. You can't tell me if you're saved, you walk through this life without God tapping you on his shoulder and saying, "What's your problem?" I know He does. The problem is you're like Jonah.

So now here it comes, you might expect this. We had a half-hearted prophet with a half-hearted message on a half-hearted mission, and a great revival broke out. Now chapter 4, verse 3, depression sets in. Suicidal thoughts come in. Now he's depressed. Let me ask you a question, how in God's name do you get depressed in the middle of God using you and a mission with a message to change the world? How do you get depressed at that? I mean, I want to go home to be with the Lord, but I'm not suicidal. I would be just fine if the Lord came today. I don't want to ruin your lunch because you'll get sick in your stomach, but you'll think that maybe He will, probably He won't. But I'm not on some suicidal mission. I'm not out here hoping somebody puts a bullet in my head. I like life, but I understand that I have a mission and I have a message, and I

understand that my comfort level really doesn't come into it. It really doesn't. When God calls you to do what you got to do, you got to do it.

But you know what? Chapter 4, he's angry, and now depression sets in, and he says, "Take my life." Now, I think that's great. In our hymnal there, I think it's 393, "Take my life and let it be wholly consecrated unto Thee." "Take my life." Okay, that's not what Jonah is singing. He's depressed. "Crows out, get him on, get him on, get him on some stabilizing." He's bipolar. We talked about this last week, didn't we? I told you every Christian's bipolar. He had an old nature and a new nature. I told you every Christian ought to be an addiction, have an addiction. You ought to be addicted to the ministry.

I heard a guy preach one time on Jonah. He was one of those mushy-mouthed, mawkish guys, and he said, "Jonah's going through what all men go through. He's going through midlife crisis." Oh, no, no. See, that's where you don't understand. I think every Christian ought to be bipolar, old nature, new nature. I think every Christian ought to have an addiction, and I think every Christian ought to go through midlife crisis. Yeah, I do. I do. I believe in midlife crisis. Now, not the way the world, you know what my midlife crisis is? Here you are 40 years old, you look back in your life and see you haven't done one thing for Jesus Christ. You haven't done one thing. You haven't won one soul to Christ in the last 30 years of your life, and here you are 40 years old with about 20, 40 years to go to death. If that's not a crisis, I don't know what is. To me, that's the midlife crisis: recognize that I'm halfway through my life, and I've done nothing with the mission. I've done nothing with the message except gather a bunch of things that I want for myself. That's a crisis. You know, the bottom line of midlife crisis for a child of God is simply you've grieved the Holy Spirit of God for the last 35 years of your life, and now it's having an effect on you. You're like Jonah. I'm like Jonah. We're all like Jonah.

You see, Jonah sees Nineveh as his enemy, and he hates them. God sees Nineveh as a nation without God, just waiting for the Word of God. See, that's another problem he's got. It's a problem we have. We don't see things the way God sees them. We see a circumstance, and because of our friends, our family, our worldly influence, or just being out of fellowship with God, we look at him one way. God sees it a completely another way. That's Jonah. That's Jonah. That's us. That's the way we are. He sees his own comfort level and gets angry and upset and depressed of whatever disrupts that comfort zone.

Verse 6 says that God, I love this. I love object lessons in the Bible. I think they're great. Verse 6 says God prepared a gourd. That God grows up. Jonah's sitting out on a hot day. He's miserable. His air conditioning broke. He's grumbling because of what he doesn't have. He goes to a restaurant, they don't have his favorite food, so he's despaired. He goes and he goes home, and his wife says the air condition is broke, and so he's grumbly and he's mad. But he loses sight of the fact that around this world, 98% of the people have no air conditioning. They're lost without Christ, living in mud huts, eating the godless stuff that you could ever eat in your life, and that's how they exist, and they don't have Christ. Can't see that. All he sees is what he has, what he wants, his comfort level. So God prepares a gourd. Now you know what a gourd is. Good, because I don't. It's a ford with a G instead of an F for it. I'm concerned. Gourd's a big thing like this, and they can, and they get really big. He's sitting out in a hot sun, and God takes pity on

him. You know, isn't that a great thing? Because God should have just killed him. I mean, two times he asked God to kill him. If I was God, I'd have killed him the first time. No, if I was God, I'd have killed him without him asking me. But that's me. God took pity on him, and there he is, a mumbling, grumbling child of God, worrying about his comfort in a hot day, and what does God do? God brings up a gourd, and that gourd shades him from the sun. Ah, I love this.

Look at verse, look at that here. Look at verse 6.

Jonah 4:6

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.

God prepared a gourd. The gourd grows up, comes over Jonah to shelter him from the sun. Now Jonah's glad. Oh, oh.

Jonah 4:7

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

God prepared a worm. God prepared a worm to eat the gourd, and now he's back in the sun, and now Jonah is not happy again, and he wants to die. You know what that's a picture of? That's a picture of you and I letting the situation of this life dictate whether we're up or we're down. That's a picture of a child of God who doesn't understand that within the message of God and the mission of God, there's going to be some discomfort. There's going to be some times that it doesn't go your way. There's going to be some times when it's hard work, hot work. There's going to be times when nobody's watching, taking pictures of you doing it. There's going to be, you can never let, you can never let circumstances of this life dictate your relationship with God. Feeling sorry for ourselves in any given situation just shows that we lost our perspective of the message and the mission. It's not about what you're doing. It's not about anything other than God getting the honor and the glory out of everything in your life.

You may be lost here this morning, and you may be on your way to hell, and you may not know for sure if you die today that you're going to heaven. Let me say something to you, God wants to save you this morning, and by saving you, God wants to take the honor and the glory from it for what He did on Calvary's cross, and He wants you to get saved and give Him that honor and glory. You may be saved here this morning, you may be going through a bad situation in life. It may be through no fault of your own. Most likely, if it's like me, it's through our own fault. You may have made some bad choices. You may have ran from God a long time ago. You may have put yourself in bad scenarios that cost you greatly. You may have been the lonely one on this ship for a long time, and the fare that you had to pay probably came in much more expensive than you thought it would. Saying all that is true, but I want you to know today, God wants to take your situation. God wants to take how black it is, how bad it is, how complicated it is, how messy it is, how entangled it is. God wants to take your situation, fix it with the principles of that book, and get the honor and the glory out of you coming back to God and being restored to what God wants you to do, and then pick up your message, get on the mission, and finish the job God's called for

you to do what He wants. I don't care where you're at. This church stands on a policy: I don't care what you've done. I don't care, I don't care who you've done it to. It doesn't matter what you've been into. The moment you want to do what's right and make it right with God, we are going to put you in the position that you can pick up the message, pick up the mission, and carry on with it. And the day we don't do that is the day we just close the doors because that's our job.

Now I want you to see some here, here, and then what's done. You never let the physical things, the gourd and the worm, make or break your day. God can, and a great principle here that you got to learn, and this is what happened, we don't learn this. God made a gourd, it shaded him, he's happy. God took the worm away, he's back in the heat. Now he's not happy. Those situations will happen in your life all the time. You better reassess something very quickly, that God can take it away as fast as He gives it to you, and God will put those things in your life that you need either get you to Christ to get saved or get you back on the track with a mission and a method like He did with Jonah.

SEC: God's Sovereignty and Our Accountability

One last thing about this book, and it just kind of knocks me out in this story, which is a picture of you and me, our message, our mission, built around the resurrection of Christ and His salvation through this church getting involved and getting out the message. The book shows me an incredible thing, and this is why when I deal with people, I never lose my patience. I never get angry with people. I've had people hose me, lie about me, whatever the case, six months later come back and say, "Bob, can you do this for me?" Do it. The heartbeat. You know what? I understand that in the ministry, this is the job you have to do. I don't take it personally. I don't take it personal. I realize that as an Old Testament prophet in the New Testament, you're going to get slung mud at, and that's just the way it goes. You know what? Sling it the best. It's just the way it is. You just got to understand that the bottom line is the book reveals an incredible truth, and this is what I stand on, and this is why I have the patience I have with people. This is why I don't care what you've done. I don't care how many times you fall. I don't care how you stumble. I'll work with you whatever it takes, every day of the week, one day of the week, six days a week, it doesn't matter, 20 days of the week, I don't care.

But here's the bottom line, and it just floors me. If you noticed, and we didn't read the whole book, but if you would read the whole book, you would find that everything in this book that is mentioned obeys God. The wind obeys God. The waves obey God. The sea obeys God. The fish obeys God. The worm obeyed God. The gourd obeyed God. The unsaved sailors obeyed God. The only one in this story that wouldn't obey God was God's man. And I'm telling you something, that's a statement on human nature as a child of God. Why do we have such an affinity, as the Bible says in the book of Luke, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Why do we have such an affinity as God's children to run from God in everything in our life? The answer is the message and the mission.

Then there's one last thing here, and I'll leave you with this. Look at chapter 1, verse 11. And this is an amazing thing to me.

Jonah 1:11

Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

And he said unto them, "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you." Ah, here it comes. "For I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." He knows he's wrong from the very get-go. He knows he's not right with God from the very moment God told him to go to Nineveh and he found his ship going to Tarshish. Even in his rationalization, you cannot escape the presence of God. Even in your denial of calling your friends in and making your decision, you know, all good with everybody who loves me, the bottom line is simply this: you cannot get away from the presence of God. In spite of all that, he knew he was not right with God, and the reason why the storm and the whale had come into his life was because of where he was not at with God. You know what that tells me? It tells me sitting here this morning, you know the same thing. I can't look into your heart. I don't need to look into your heart. I'll tell you for the last hour what God has done is the Holy Spirit of God walked up and down these aisles. He's walked in between the seats, and He's touched every one of you in here exactly where you're at with God this morning. You may, you may sit here with a stone look on your face, and you may, you may blow it off. You may, you may inside tell yourself no. I guarantee you, if that book is true, and I have no doubt in my mind that it's not, Jonah could never get away from the presence of the Lord, and if you're a saved man or woman here this morning, you'll never get away from it either. That mission and that message is something God's called you to do, and it's just that simple. The world's going to hell around us. For the child of God, the issue of life will either get you to run to God, and then as you grow, you run with God, or you'll run from God, but that's all you'll do. Every head bowed and every eye closed.