

# Jonah

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[0:00] Okay. Today, we are in the Minor Prophets again, and we are going to be opening up to the Book of Jonah.

And next week, we will again be in the Book of Jonah. And as I told, I'm not going to be doing a big sermon on the fish today because I could not get that far in the story.

Not today. Well, thanks. Appreciate that. First of all, before we go any further, we have to talk about the word story.

If you've heard me say this before, you'll hear me say it again. Bible stories are not stories as we talk about them today.

In America today, when we say, let's hear a story, we think Little Red Riding Hood or the Three Pigs or some weird ice princess that dances around and freezes everything.

[1:15] Those are stories. They're made up imaginary fictions. When we talk about a Bible story, we're talking about a historically accurate, God-authored remembrance of events that actually happened.

That's a little bit more prolonged than to say, let's open our books and look at the story of Job or Jonah or whatever. But it's true. These are historically accurate accounts.

When the Bible says that there was a man named Jonah, guess what? Do you think there was a guy named Jonah? And do you think that there was the events that happened? They actually happened.

And so when we start off talking about we're going to look at the story of Jonah, the first thing we need to do is understand that we're not talking about some fictitious events, but rather we're talking about historically accurate events that are recorded according to the word and will of God.

So if you have found Jonah, you're way ahead of me because I'm still in Micah. Micah. Wrong. Micah. I'm in the wrong.

[2:29] Where's Jonah? I lost. There's Jonah. Obadiah Jonah. All right. So I got to be honest with you.

I could not get very far in this story, in this book, in this minor prophet before I got ran over. So we're going to take a look at that today. But let's begin like this.

All right. So if you've been here before, you've seen this chart. It's terrible. At the top of it in the year 1051 B.C., King Saul was the first king of Israel. At the bottom 586, that was when the Babylonians took the nation of Judah into captivity.

And this is the story of the Judah, and here's Israel, and these are all of the prophets. And you'll see that Jonah is right down here.

Woo! Woo! So it's getting towards the end of the nation of Israel, but it's about halfway into the lifetime, lifespan of the nation of Judah. Okay?

[3:35] Oh, this is a great picture. This is the basic, this is the setting for the book of Jonah. Here is Jerusalem down here.

That's where the temple is, right? Here is the Mediterranean Sea, where the big fish was. This is Tarshish, which is in the southern part of Spain, which my daughter just returned from visiting for two weeks.

She didn't invite me. Not going to get into that right now. All the way on the other side from Spain, back over into Asia is Nineveh.

That's the capital of the Assyrian country, nation, nation. Empire. Thank you. That was the word I was looking for. And this is the setting for the story that we read of in the book of Jonah.

So let's see how far I got into this biblical story. Jonah, chapter 1, beginning in verse 1.

[4:40] Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amiteah, saying, Arise and go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.

But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish.

Now let's just place ourselves here for a moment. Okay, so Jonah starts off down here in Jerusalem. God says, go to Nineveh.

And Jonah says, goodbye. All right. We're all on the same page, right? Huh? Good? Yeah. So let's see.

Verse 3. Verse 3. But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down to it to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

[5:47] But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.

Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his God, and they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it.

And that's as far as I got. That's as far as I could go. And I want to talk to you about that.

The key thing that we need to remember is that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. God has called us to reach the lost.

That is our job. Our job, given to us by God, is not to sit in a circle of believers and go, yay, Jesus.

[6:48] I mean, that's a good thing for us to do is to spend time together and encourage one another. But our God-given responsibility is to get outside the walls of the church and reach the lost.

Having said that, Jonah got a specific word from God. Understand this. Jonah's walking down the streets of Jerusalem. He is a prophet of the Most High. Everybody knows him. He's well-established.

And God goes, Jonah, go to... And he's like, not doing it, and left. And I want to talk about when believers fail.

See, I'm reading this. He goes down to Tarshish. And he hops on a boat. He goes down to Joppa to hop on a boat to Tarshish.

To go as far away from God's command as possible. And look at what happens in verse 4. God said, that's okay, Jonah.

[7:55] I'll get someone else. Have a nice trip. I'll see you when you get back. Maybe you'll feel better. That's not what your Bible says. God didn't say, here's an extra 20 bucks.

Bring me back a couple souvenirs. That's not at all what God said. But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea.

And there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. I've done some reading. You guys know that being in the North Atlantic in wintertime is a very scary time. Because in the North Atlantic, they have great storms with huge waves. And you can go online and you can see fishing in the Bering Straits in the winter. Big waves.

Huge. I mean, great death toll. Nothing compared to the Mediterranean. See, in the North Atlantic and the North Pacific, you have deep sea.

[8:56] You have big ocean swells. Now, those swells might be 100 feet. Literally 100 feet from top to bottom. And your boat may go way up and go way down.

But they're big water. You've got time to go up. You've got time to go down. Mediterranean is shallow. You get a stiff blow in there.

And you might have only a 50-foot wave. But they're much shorter. They're much choppier. And they're harder. It's much deadlier in severe weather.

Mediterranean is not a nice place to be in bad weather. And God goes, this ought to get somebody's attention. And sends a great wind against them.

To the point that it scared the sailors to death. What did the sailors do? They threw away all of their wealth.

[10:03] All of their possessions. You know, sailing, it wasn't like today where you've got, you know, Lloyd's of London that's underwriting everything. And you've got insurance on everything.

Back then, you lost your ship. You lost everything. Welcome to the, you know, good luck getting a job. Good luck getting fed. Welcome to starvation. These men, they threw it all into the sea in the hope of saving their life.

And how'd that go for them? You guys know the story. It didn't work. Because God wasn't mad at them. God was trying to get at Jonah.

First of all, if we're talking about the failure of Jonah, we need to be careful, especially when we're looking at our own lives. How do we define failure? You cannot define failure as a lack of results. You can serve the Lord mightily. And you can be telling people about Jesus. You can be living for Him. And nobody turned to Christ. And not be a failure.

[11:19] Remember Jesus? That guy who came? He was perfect. How did the world respond to Him? They crucified Him. That was not a failure.

We can't define failure the same way the world does. We have to find failure the way God does. Now, don't get me wrong.

There are a ton of ways that believers can fail God. Jonah just highlights one of them. Running away. Okay, that's one way. Jonah ran away.

Some fail because they give up. They've been serving the Lord. They're not seeing things that are happening.

They're not getting the results they want. And they become discouraged and they quit. They stop. They go get a job in the real world.

[12:19] They go make some money where they can do some good. That's failing. Some people fail because they're overwhelmed.

Maybe the bills. Maybe the pressure. It just becomes too much for them. And they quit. That's a failure.

Some fail to live by faith. They strive to accomplish God's objectives using the world's methods. That's not a success. Some people fail because they're unwilling to pay the price. They're unwilling to make the sacrifice.

Perhaps the biggest failure in the church of America, that means the churches within the United States, is that they're consumers instead of participants.

[13:47] You see, when we look at the church and we just think of, what can it do for me? We're missing the point. God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

We have the responsibility of engaging and participating and going out. But in America today, the church has become a consumer mentality. Like I said, many ways that the church can fail.

And when we fail, the world suffers. That's what gripped me when I began reading in the book of Jonah, was what happened to the poor sailors.

Okay? Could you imagine what would have happened to the boat? Let's call her the good, the minnow. Right? Let's say the minnow was the boat that Jonah got on.

Right? Could you imagine what would have happened to the minnow if he had gone to where he was supposed to go? Would we know anything about it? Except for the sitcom, not sitcom, except for the TV show in the 60s.

[14:56] Yes, Gilligan. Thank you. I'm glad my wife kept up with me. Some of you were looking at me like, I don't get it. Right? We wouldn't know anything about the ship. But because Jonah got on it, we know about what happened to it.

And what happened to it? They lost everything except their lives. They were going to a certain place to do commerce, to make money, so that they could turn around and come back and do commerce and make more money.

That was their job. That was their livelihood. And what does it say? They hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it. Can you imagine what happened after the storm?

Just think about this. They chucked Joe. Anybody here not know the story? Okay. So they chuck him in. What happens to the wind?

Poof. Sea calms right down. First thing they're going to be doing, we're alive. Right? Second thing they're going to be doing, now what do I do?

[16:11] They're carrying huge consequences because of Jonah's failure. The rest of their life may be in ruins. We don't know if this was the beginning of a new enterprise, brand new ship.

Yay! And they're destroyed. We don't know if it was the final voyage before retirement. I've got all I've got to do is finish this one. And I'm... We don't know what, but we do know that whatever their plans were, gone.

Was that their fault? No. Jonah's fault. When the believers of the world, when those of us who honor and love and serve the Lord fail in our mission, the world suffers.

I'll give you some examples. We, the men and women of God, have absolutely failed in our marriages.

The world can no longer look at the church and go, that's right. That's what a marriage is. That's what it means. Look at those people. I know they've been through hard times, but they've leaned into their faith, and they're great examples for us.

[17:50] We've lost that. We've abandoned it. And look at the state of marriage in the world. We as believers have abandoned absolute faith in God's Word.

Do you know how difficult it is to buy a good commentary today? A good study help? Because they're all full of questions. They're all varying opinions.

How does the world treat the Bible today? That is not because of the world. It's because of us. We've abandoned our faith.

We've abandoned our strict adherence to the Word of God. And the world is paying the consequence. I could go on, but I don't want to get into the weeds.

I could go on, but I don't want to get into the weeds. I wrote down a passage.

[19:14] I want to see if it's the right one real quick before I tell you to turn there. I'm not going to say that I rewrote this sermon at the last minute, but there you go. I was going to share Matthew 28 about the idea of not being consumers, but rather being serving.

Do you know when Jesus Christ came, He came, what? Not to be served, but to serve. That's the way we should be. I thought I was looking that up at the wrong time.

All right. When we fail, the world suffers. So how do we avoid failure? Accept no responsibility.

That ain't going to work. Why? Because when we turn to Christ, when we recognize our sin, and we realize that He paid the penalty for our sin on the cross, and when we ask Him to forgive us, not only does He forgive us, but He gives us the ministry of reconciliation.

We don't get to avoid that. It's not like, it's not like, I'll take extra helping of salvation and mercy and forgiveness, and you can hold the side order of responsibility.

[20:34] It's not how it works. You know? It's not like you get to go down the smorgasbord and pick what you want. With salvation comes responsibility. So how do we avoid failure?

Number one. Really, really, really important. Live by faith. Romans 8.28 says that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Right? I got that one correct, didn't I? Victory. What about the hard things? Did you look at the sermon notes?

Because you're absolutely right. All things. The fun things. The good things. The profitable. The costly. The deadly.

The crippling. I made a point about marriage and how we've abandoned the biblical marriage.

[21:43] Because we are consumers and we look at marriage as something where I get my needs, my wants, and my desires filled instead of seeing it as an opportunity to serve someone else to meet all of their needs and desires.

When I get into a relationship like that and I'm looking at it from the wrong perspective and all of a sudden they're not meeting all my needs, well, bugger it.

I'm out of here. But see, when we live by faith, when we're willing to sacrifice, that's how our marriage endures.

Ask my poor suffering wife. In all reality, we each sacrifice. Standing firm for God's Word. That's not popular. Here's a fun one. Treating others with kindness.

[22:48] Being generous. Going out and sharing your faith. Living by faith is not always simple.

But if you trust God, that's how you avoid being a failure. Number two.

Know the Word. Psalms 119.11. Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you. Is that the right one? Pretty certain that's the right verse. Psalms 119.11.

Look. God has given us everything we need so that we can live for Him. So that we can know what He expects of us.

So that we can handle the situations that come up in our daily life. But if we're ignorant of the Word of God, how are we going to know?

[23:53] It's one of those things where, you know, if you've ever been a teacher and you've got students and Johnny's staring out the window, picking his nose and not paying attention to class, and then you pass out the pop quiz and Johnny fails, you didn't teach us.

Yes, I did. It's not my fault you were not here paying attention. You know, we run into situations in our life. Dear God, I don't know how to handle this. He says, I gave you the answer.

Know the Bible. Oh. There are so many of these. I've only picked four.

Practice the one another's. My friends, if we're going to live for God in a world that has gone to hell and is happy to do so and is laying onto the gas, it's going to be a challenge.

And so here are four Bible verses that can help us during this. First of all, we begin with Romans 12, verse 10. Love one another with brotherly affection.

[25:08] Outdo one another in showing honor. The church needs to be a place where we can come in, warts, whiskers and all, and be loved.

What was that gal's name in Michigan? Ha! She can't remember it either. This woman stunk like you wouldn't believe.

She didn't, she never showered or bathed. She'd come in once a week and use the sink in the one stall bathroom in our church to wash herself and put on her church dress.

And it took me years before I could love her without being repelled by the stench. Then one day, she was up there horribly, and I do mean horribly, abusing the piano and singing.

And it hit me. That was the most beautiful thing I'd ever heard. It had no musical.

[26:19] There was no music that she was following. It had no chord. It had no key. It had nothing. It was nothing but her heart being expressed in love and adoration for her Savior.

And it took me years. And when all of a sudden that registered, completely changed my whole experience. I was then able to love her.

I was then able to care for her because I got past me. And then it was a joy to see her come in. Stinky and nasty and all.

Because I'd never seen someone who devoutly loved the Savior more. We need to be a place where we can come in and be loved. Because I'm going to tell you something.

We need it. Except for my wife, because I love her and she's perfect, right? No, everybody needs to be. Needs to have a place where they can come and experience the love of God and the love of believers.

[27:28] Secondly, live in harmony with one another. That's not a lot of fun. That's hard.

We get our feelings bent so easily. This is one that really challenges me personally. Live in harmony with one another.

Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. I don't have any problem with any of that. Never be wise in your own eyes. Don't! Because there are times where I think I'm fairly smart.

And I've got to remember, don't be wise in my own eyes. Two more. Galatians 5, verse 13, For you were called to freedom, brothers.

Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another's. We're back to that idea of serving. The idea of not coming to consume, but coming to find an opportunity to reach out and help others.

[28:37] And finally, Galatians 6, verse 2, bear one another's burdens. I watched a video clip on Navy SEALs this week.

And these guys, they go through so much. But one of the things that every SEAL has to do is work together. Because they carry heavy things.

They carry telephone poles, you know, 60 foot long. And they all carry them on their shoulders. They carry these huge boats. They carry them on their shoulders. And some guys are really tall. And other guys are really short. And they have to work together. The tall guy's got to carry it low. The short guy's got to reach up. But they work together and bear one another's burdens and get the job done.

Wouldn't it be beautiful if that's what we did with the ministry here in the church? All right.

[29:44] So if we're not going to fail, it's because we're going to be living by faith. We're going to immerse ourselves in God's Word. And we are going to practice the one another's.

And this is amazing. If you turn to Matthew 5, it's going to tell you, teach us something. Matthew 5. Jesus is teaching. It's the big sermon on the mount. And he's talking about salt and light and our role in the world. He says in verse 13, you are the salt of the earth.

But if the salt has lost its taste, how is its saltiness to be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

You, that is us, we are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand.

[30:45] And it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and tell you what a great job you're doing.

So that they may see you living for the Lord and think that you're a really good person. No, when we serve in honor, He gets the glory.

And that's our purpose. And it's really important for you to understand that that's our purpose. Because you can lean in the harness and you can serve the Lord with everything you've got. And you can pull and push and strive and work hard and not see one result down here. All it is, is Him getting the glory.

We're not here to achieve anything but that. Yeah, we've got this job. We've got the ministry of reconciliation. We are to be fishers of men. But it's all for His glory and His men.

[31:54] All right. I know it's a little weird, but here's the story of Jonah. And we're all familiar with Jonah.

And I'm reading it. And I couldn't get past the sailors, the mariners, throwing their goods into the water.

And I'm thinking of the suffering. I'm thinking of the fear. I mean, you don't just chuck this into the water because, hey, look, Bob. No, that's not why you do it.

You get rid of that as a last resort to save your life. And I look at the world around us. And they are in desperate straits and they don't even know it.

And I want to encourage you. Live for the Lord. Live for the Lord.

[33:01] Difficult days are coming. You're going to face challenges. Walk by faith. There's nothing that is going to happen to you that God is not aware of and in control of and using to shape you into the person that He's called you to be.

Practice the one another's. Together, we are more effective.

Together, we are stronger. Together is what God has called us to be. Immerse yourself in God's Word. Know that it is His Word given to us that we can be thoroughly equipped for everything that comes our way.

And finally, let us be content with giving glory to God because that's our purpose. Let's pray.

Father, I truly am challenged by the situation that the world finds itself in.