

Punished by God?

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[0 : 00] Most of you, if not all of you, will be aware that we are considering the book of Jonah over six weeks.

! And this is our third installment in this book.! We've considered verses 1 through 6 to this point. And so far we have seen Jonah a prophet of the Lord who was given very clear instructions. Jonah was told by God to deliver a message to the people of Nineveh.

But Jonah decided that he was going to do his own thing. Jonah decided that rather than going to Nineveh that he would take a boat from Joppa.

Now Jonah could have gone to Nineveh, which was 500 miles in an easterly direction, but instead he goes 2,500 miles in a westerly direction.

[1 : 14] At least that was his intention, to go to Tarshish. He decided that he would go in the opposite direction. Jonah decided that he would run away from his assignment and run away from his God.

As Jonah read on this book, the Bible tells us that they encountered bad weather.

They encountered bad weather. Jonah was asleep as the mariners were trying to steady the ship. But there Jonah was. He was in the hole of the ship, fast asleep. Of course, Jonah was awakened by the captain of the ship, who asked him, look man, what are you doing sleeping?

You ought to be praying to your God like the rest of us. Now these men, these sailors, they were not believers in the only God.

[2 : 30] They were praying to unnamed gods. And he suggested to Jonah, he said, listen, you ought to be praying to.

And now we come to verse 7 of chapter 1. Listen to what it says. And they said to one another. This is the sailors. They said to one another, come let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.

So they cast lots. And the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us.

What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you? And he said to them, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

[3 : 45] Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, what is this that you have done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

Then they said to him, what shall we do to you that the sea may quiet down for us? For the sea grew more and more tempestuous.

He said to them, pick me up and hurl me into the sea. Then the sea will quiet down for you. For I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.

Listen to verse 30. Nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land. But they could not, for the sea grew even more and more tempestuous against them.

Therefore, verse 14 says, they called out to the Lord, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood.

[5 : 05] For you, O Lord, have done as you, as it pleased you. So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.

Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. I believe that when we consider these verses together, the point of the passage is this.

When God acts to get our attention, we are to guard against an unrepentant heart. Let me say that again. When God acts to get our attention, we should guard against an unrepentant heart.

And the message today, I want to make two points, two broad points. The first point is, God's actions towards Jonah.

And the second is, Jonah's response to God. Let's consider the first point. Jonah's, God's actions towards Jonah.

[6 : 30] Jonah. Now, how do we know, as we consider these verses, how do we know that God was behind what was happening to Jonah?

How do we know that? How do we know that? Well, we know that for several reasons, really. We know that because the sailors, these heathens, these pagan sailors, recognized that something unusual was happening.

They recognized that something unusual was happening. It was not usual for the wind and the seas to behave in that manner at that time.

It's reasonable to believe that these men had made this journey several times prior, and they knew what to expect. And for them, this was just an unreasonable pattern.

The second reason we know that God was involved is because Jonah said so himself in verse 10 of the passage that we read.

[7 : 38] The men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, What is this that you have done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because Jonah told them.

Another reason we know it is because in the end, we'll see that next, we'll see that towards the end of this message, that Jonah was in fact thrown overboard, as verse 15 tells us.

And when Jonah was thrown overboard, the seas immediately calmed themselves. So we know that only God was able to do that.

But what actions did God take against Jonah? I believe that in order for us to really grasp what the actions that God took against Jonah, we need to create somewhat of a broader context.

We need to consider this a little bit more broadly. Because it's hard, really, to understand these actions, unless we understand who God truly is.

[8 : 57] To understand this, I think it's appropriate for us to consider, to have in view the words of the psalmist, when he says in Psalm 8, verses 3 and 4, when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place.

What is man that you are mindful of him? And the son of man that you care for him? Now you see, we have established that God was acting in the affairs of Jonah.

The affairs of this one man. Because of this nation, this wicked nation, Nineveh. And the question has to be asked, why is it that God, this big God, would be concerned about this one man, Jonah? Why would he take the time? This God, the psalmist says of him, when I look at your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place.

What is man? What is man? Who are we? That this big God ought to have any concern about. And this psalmist, he did not have the appreciation of the universe that we have today.

[10 : 23] Consider that today, we know that the universe is huge. The observable universe is huge. It will take 93 billion light years to go from one end to the next.

93 billion light years. Let me tell you what that means a little bit. Just a little bit. Light travels at about 280,000 miles every second.

Every second. 280,000 miles every second. So that means, if you are traveling at that speed, it's going to take you 93 billion years to get from one end of the observable universe to the next.

That's huge. We can't wrap our heads around that. Let me give you another one to think about.

There are more stars in this universe. more stars in the universe than grand of sand on the earth. You count every grand, every grain of sand, every grain of sand, and it does not amount to the amount of stars in the universe.

[11 : 41] It's huge. It's amazing. And that is the God about whom we sang about this morning. The God who condescends to you and I and the God to whom we prayed this morning.

The kind of condescension that you and I cannot begin to fathom. And he takes time to act in the affairs of this disobedient prophet.

Ultimately, God was seeking to get Jonah's attention. And can I tell you, I just want to punctuate this. just in case it's not clear to you yet.

That just as God gets in the affairs of Jonah, he gets right up into our business as well. Just as he loved Jonah, he loves you and me just the same.

Ultimately, God was seeking to get Jonah's attention. Jonah had given up on God, but God had not given up on him.

[13 : 09] Jonah was going in the opposite direction, running away from God. But what did God do? What did God do?

What did God do in this circumstances? What are God's actions towards Jonah? The first thing that we see, we talked about last week.

We see the tempestuous seas. We see God acting in nature. God demonstrated his authority over the wind and over the seas to get Jonah's attention.

This sudden and this unusual event should have gotten Jonah's attention. attention. But it did not. It did not.

The next thing that we see in verse seven. Verse seven tells us that they, the sailors, came together and they said, come let us cast lots that we may know on whose account this evil has come among us.

[14 : 31] So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. So here it is, these men. All right, imagine, I want you to, I just want you to visualize this for a moment.

These big bad fellows on this ship. And you know, these are probably some of the toughest guys of the day. There they are, afraid of what they are experiencing.

And wondering what caused this event. And they decided that they're going to play a game of chance, use dice to determine who's responsible for this.

And God used that, God used that event, the randomness of even that event to point the fingers at Jonah.

There were many other sailors on board. But out of all of them, God pointed the finger at Jonah and they knew for certain that it was Jonah's responsibility.

[15 : 45] The random event was in the hands of the Lord. God used this event to get Jonah's attention, but he paid no attention.

And then verse 13, what else did God do to get Jonah's attention? in verse 13, verse 13 tells us that the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

Here we see human inadequacy. We see that God made it clear to Jonah that there was no way that his will was going to be thwarted.

The rowing of the men in verse 13 confirmed that no human effort could thwart his plans as hard as these men tried.

God had in mind that Jonah would go to Nineveh. That is what it was going to be. But Jonah ignored clear irrefutable evidence that God was putting in his way each and every time.

[17 : 25] Here's the way Job talks about the plans of the Lord. Job 42 verse 2 Job says I know that you can do all things.

And he says that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. And Isaiah chapter 47 sorry Isaiah chapter 14 verse 27 says for the Lord of hosts has purposed and who will annul it?

His hand is stretched out and who will turn it back? The point is that God had purposed for Jonah to go to Nineveh.

And these men, they could have tried anything they wanted. And perhaps you found yourself in situations where you tried all kinds of different things.

Oh, nothing seemed to work. Nothing seemed to work. work. But what else did God do?

[18 : 35] God used these pagans to show compassion and patience to Jonah. How amazing was that?

They interrogated Jonah in verse 8. They took the time to ask him questions. Who are you? Why is this happening to us?

You know, they didn't just beat him up. You know, perhaps if these guys were Bahamian, they would have beat him right up. They would have said, man, you caused this to happen to us.

But they didn't do that. They didn't respond to Jonah even in the way Jonah requested when Jonah said, listen, if you want this thing to get better, just take me and throw me overboard.

the fellows, rather than doing that, they tried to go back to dry land. Amazing. I got to tell you, I'm not sure I would have been as compassionate as they were.

[19 : 44] These men, the Lord used them to preach a sermon to Jonah of compassion, mercy.

These men feared the Lord. These men cried out to the Lord, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's sake.

But how did Jonah respond? How did Jonah respond to all of this? After all that God had done to get Jonah's attention, how did he respond?

Jonah's response is striking. It's reflected in what he did, what he didn't do, what he said, what he didn't say, his overall attitude and disposition.

Amazing. As we consider Jonah's response, perhaps your and maybe my first inclination is going to be, if that were me, I would do things differently.

[21 : 06] Perhaps that's what we're thinking, that we wouldn't respond the way Jonah did. but may I suggest, I want to suggest to you that you not be overly harsh with Jonah because of the truth be told, you and I have had our Jonah moments.

Jonah moments. We've had our Jonah moments. If you were to be honest with me, you could tell me your Jonah moments and I could tell you mine.

We've had our Jonah moments. perhaps many of them. Perhaps we've had many of them. Maybe, just maybe, you're having a Jonah moment right now.

Maybe in some respects, it's not as overt as Jonah's and yes, there are differences, but the truth is you have had them done. Here is what we see about Jonah's response to God.

How did Jonah respond to God? Jonah responded foolishly. Jonah's response to God was foolish.

[22 : 36] There's no better way of saying it than to say it straight up. It was foolish. verse 3 tells us, but Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

You see that? Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. I'm sorry, but there is no better way to say that that's just foolish from the presence of the Lord.

Surely Jonah knew Psalm 139. Where shall I go from your spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hands shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me.

Surely Jonah knew these words. Jonah just was foolish. Jonah was just not running away from his assignment. Jonah in his mind was running away from God.

[24 : 00] Imagine that. But there is something about sin and you need to hear this. This is a big deal. There is something about sin that when continues without seeking to repent causes a person not only to go from bad to worse but to become hardened in their sin.

Let me say that again. There is something about sin that when we don't repent of our sin causes us to become hardened and to go from bad to worse it starts a vicious cycle sin unrepentance hardened heart more sin unrepentance even more hardened heart.

that's what happens when we neglect sin in our lives but even beyond that there's something that happens even beyond that.

The sin that we once found bitter we delight in it we grow to delight in it more and more and beyond that we encourage others to participate in it.

That's what sin does. Sin blinds our eyes and makes us see things in a foolish in a weird way.

[25 : 46] Yes it messes our minds up. Messes our minds up. You know people who once walked righteous lives and the things that were clear to them things that were bitter to them that they recognized to be sinful and awful not only because of what the Bible says but also because of what your mind tells you and now suddenly well not suddenly but over time because they ignore sin in their lives now you see them today and they are delighting in the thing that they once spoke about that's what sin does what else did Jonah do this hardened heart next thing we see about

Jonah we see his dismissiveness and his lack of concern about his fate and that of others at no time does Jonah ask for forgiveness in this account that we have read no time does Jonah ask for forgiveness for putting the man through what he did he doesn't even ask him to turn back Jonah is how weird is this Jonah could have said to the guys listen why don't we turn back that never came up Jonah could have said you know I'm sorry about putting you through this he didn't say that I'm sorry that you had to throw all your cargo overboard he didn't say that no apology but what we do see from

Jonah what we do see from Jonah is a very hypocritical response he says words that just don't match his actions and you need to look at verse 9 to appreciate this point Jonah said to them I am a Hebrew look at what he says and I fear the Lord the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land you see the point already Jonah says with his lips that I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord who

made the seas and the dry land but guess what Jonah's actions did not line up with his words
Jonah really truly feared the

Lord at that point in time would he be doing what he was doing do you know people like that you know people who have a good talk you know they talk about faring the Lord and they talk about heaven and hell but their actions don't match their words I've I grew up with a young man who's like that and if I call his name many of you would know him and he amazes me and every time I see him he's talking about the Lord but his actions just simply don't line up they just simply don't line up so I want you to see that Jonah said this stuff but it didn't line up and really it wasn't helping him one bit the next thing that we see about

Jonah is that Jonah had this defeatist attitude Jonah had given up he was ready to die rather than to obey the Lord Jonah had given up he thought he was being punished and that he would die take a look at verse 12 Jonah said to them pick me up and hurl me into the sea then the sea will quiet down for you for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you can you imagine that imagine that the men don't say listen should we throw you into the sea and cause this thing to the waters to calm down no they don't say that Jonah volunteers this

[31 : 15] Jonah had given up he didn't say you know let me go down on my knees and pray to the Lord and let me make a commitment that I'm going to go to Nineveh that I'm going to maybe when I get to where you guys are going I'm going to turn right around catch the next boat and go to Nineveh he doesn't say that at all Jonah simply says throw me overboard I've given up I've had enough of this I'm not going to obey God I'd rather die than obey!

God God and my prayer for us today is that none of us find ourselves in that place where Jonah was Jonah had come to a place where he was certain that God would cause his death certain of that but in this regard it's important that this point is made as Hebrews chapter 12 points out that God indeed disciplines his children he does not punish them in anger he disciplines them so that they might endure future hardship but to be certain we live in a fallen world things happen every day that we don't like but we must remember we have to remember that we aren't in heaven yet you know when we get there we won't be having all of this stuff that we experience in this fallen world I don't know how many of you noted the topic of our message in the bulletin but there's a question mark after punished by God there's a question mark that's a question punished by God that's a question that is so because despite what he deserved despite what Jonah deserved and what he clearly believed God was not punishing him but was disciplining him you see rather than running to God Jonah ran away from

God God spoke to Jonah in the storm but Jonah he did not listen God spoke to him using a game of chance still Jonah did not listen God used pagans to speak to Jonah Jonah still did not listen indeed he deployed a veneer of godliness a cover of godliness having an appearance of godliness but denying its power that's what we saw in Jonah Jonah was out of place away from other believers where he could have received counsel and been held accountable he was away from the other prophets is what I mean he was out of place he stopped coming to church is what

I mean he was out of place Jonah was out of position he had abandoned his prophetic ministry Jonah stop singing in the praise team he stopped serving as an usher he was out of position Jonah was ultimately out of his mind he was seeking to run away from God to achieve a feat that is totally impossible out of place out of position and out of his mind yet like my grandmother used to stay still yet still yet God did not give up on Jonah out of place out of position and out of mind God held him fast the words of he will hold us fast set to music by

[36 : 31] Matt Vicker come to mind and Matt Vicker when he put music to these words he was going through a period of doubt and a period when he had witnessed others who were turning their backs on God and this is the song that we know so well when my fear when I fear my faith will fail Christ will hold me fast when the tempter would prevail he will hold me fast I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path for my love is often cold he will hold me fast he recognized that it is the Lord's doing it is the Lord who holds us through difficulties that we encounter even the ones that we bring on ourselves it is he we are precious in his holy sight he will hold me fast he will not let my soul be lost his promises shall last borne by him at such a cost he will hold me fast for my life he bled and died

Christ will hold me fast justice has been satisfied justice has been satisfied he will hold me fast raised with him to endless life he will hold me fast till our faith till our faith is turned to light he will hold me fast church that's what I'm telling you today till our faith is turned to sight when he comes at

last so are you feeling battered bruised by the pressures of life are you going through a journal moment do you think you are a victim of God's judgment because of something that you did or failed to do are you in a period of rebellion whatever it is I'm not here to say what the cause is am I here to judge you I'm just asking what is the circumstance in your life my message to you is this the power of God in Christ in whom there is forgiveness power to overcome the power to give us everlasting life is in Christ and he is the one who will hold us fast in the midst of all of our challenges in the midst of all of our difficulties yes it is true that all of us deserve to be punished that's the truth all of us deserve to be punished all of us but guess what

God didn't punish Jesus on my behalf and on the behalf of the elect God punished Jesus on behalf of the elect he punished the righteous Jesus for the unrighteous his punishment is over and you and I can rest in the truth that while we try to hold on to him his hold on us is firmer than we can imagine this God who created the entire universe condescended to you and to me today let us pray oh

Lord father how wonderful is your name how amazing are your ways how matchless are your kindnesses to us father we come before you again in this moment Lord we thank you for the word that we have heard today we thank you for the assurance that we have in Jesus we know Lord that our hope is in him we know that everything that you have promised is in him Lord you have said in your word that you love us with an everlasting love father we!

[42 : 22] we throw ourselves on you Lord we pray now Lord for those who are going through difficult times those perhaps Lord who believe that they are being punished those who believe oh Lord that the weight of this world is often more than they are able to bear we we lift them up to you especially Lord we pray for our brothers and sisters and father we pray in the name of Jesus that you would lighten every load Lord we pray that you would cause them Lord in the name of Jesus to cast every care on you because you care for us Lord we pray that not one Lord will step out of place not one will become disheartened or broken not one will give up or seek foolishly to run away from you and

Lord we also pray Lord that you would teach us to confess our sins teach us oh Lord to do it regularly Lord cause sin to be bitter to every one of us cause us not to grow in it cause us not to fester in it cause our hearts not to be hardened and father to the one who does not know you we pray oh Lord that you would be pleased to cause the light of the gospel to shine to his heart to her heart in the name of Jesus we pray and all God's people say amen amen