

## Safety in the Storm

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All right, if you've got a Bible, Jonah chapter 1. Jonah chapter 1, continuing our series that we started a couple weeks ago as we're looking at God's grace and His mercy towards runaways.

Week 1, we talked about how Jonah is running from God, and we looked at how rebellion is often portrayed in Scripture as running from God. Sometimes that can be with our feet.

Sometimes that can be with our heart. And then last week, we looked at the grace of God and how the grace of God doesn't always come in pretty pink boxes. Sometimes it comes in storms as God hurls this storm on this ship, on the sea, to be a gracious intervention in Jonah's life.

And so now we're going to pick up the story here in verse 4 and go down through just about the end of the chapter in chapter 1. There's actually an unfortunate chapter verse break.

[1:59] You'll notice in verse 17, which I'll argue next week should actually be in chapter 2. None of that really matters. We're just going through verse 16. That's all I'm saying. So if you're able to stand, please do so as we look at Jonah 1 and looking at verse 4.

It says, It says, And they said to him, And 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. That he said to them, Pick me up, hurl me into the sea, and the sea will quiet down for you.

For I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you. Nevertheless, the men rode harder to get back to the dry land, but they could not. For the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

Therefore they called out to the Lord, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood. For you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.

[ 4 : 04 ] And they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea. And the sea ceased from its raging. And then the men feared the Lord exceedingly. And they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

There is so much in those verses about our hearts. Let's pray. Father, be with us tonight as we look to your word. Lord, help me speak your word and teach your people well.

Lord, may all of us listen to what you would have to say to us tonight as you talk to us through your word. We pray this in Jesus' name. And God's people said, Amen.

Amen. And you can be seated. When you are the king of an entire kingdom, it's very important that you feel safe. That is precisely the case for King Charles III of the United Kingdom.

Now, no one would question King Charles' desire to feel safe. I mean, after all, there's all the demands that he has to deal with regarding being king.

[ 5 : 07 ] You've got the stress of dealing with politicians and world leaders. You've got the weight of the economy and the needs of the people to tend to.

I mean, it's not the desire to feel safe that is strange. What is strange is how King Charles feels safe.

You see, this 76-year-old king finds his security and his safety not just in having Great Britain's national defense at his side, not just the fact that he is the king of a monarchy, which means he can't be voted out of office, not even the fact that he's the supreme governor, that is, he has the Church of England supporting him.

No, it is not those things that make the king feel safe. What makes King Charles feel safe is his teddy bear.

In his memoir entitled Spare, Prince Harry, the king's son, says that his father has kept this teddy bear with him ever since he was a little boy, that he has been obsessed with this teddy bear all of his life.

[ 6 : 27 ] The reason that's the case is because evidently when Charles was in boarding school, he was bullied a lot. He was picked on by a lot of other kids, and that teddy bear is what gave him comfort.

That teddy bear is what made him feel safe and secure when he was afraid. This is what Harry writes in his book, quote, Teddy went everywhere with Pa.

Teddy was a pitiful object with broken arms and dangly threads, holes patched up here and there. It looked, I imagine, like Pa might have looked after the bullies had finished with him.

Close quote. And according to Prince Harry, the king has traveled with his teddy bear all the way through adulthood, even to age 76.

He won't leave home without it. In fact, throughout his life, the only person that was even allowed to repair teddy was his childhood nanny, Mabel Anderson.

[ 7 : 35 ] Now evidently, the comfort of teddy bears runs in the royal family. Because Prince Andrew, who's also up there in age, has a collection of 72 teddy bears that he makes his staff arrange in exact order every single day.

And then we all know about the late queen, Queen Elizabeth, and her close relationship with Paddington. Now, my guess is nobody here tonight above the age of 12 is still carrying your teddy bear around.

Except for Pat. Pat does that. But I don't think anybody else is probably doing that. But yet the reality is, every one of us is just like Charles.

Every one of us is just like that king. Why? Because when we're afraid, when we're in the middle of a storm, you and I look to specific things to feel safe and secure.

Yours may not be a teddy bear. It may be a relationship. There is probably someone in your life that you go to whenever the storm is raging, whenever you're afraid, you go to them because you feel safe when you're around them.

[ 8 : 58 ] Some of you, it's your money. Everything else is falling apart, but you're like, at least I've got money in the bank. And that gives you some sense of security. Others of you, I know this, because if you're like me and can be introverted, this is the case.

It's we isolate and escape. We feel safe and secure when we get away from others. There's something about kind of hunkering down that makes us feel secure.

Others, you're the exact opposite. You don't run and isolate. You get around as many people as you possibly can because there's something about the presence of other people that makes you feel secure.

Some of you call your parents. No matter what your age is, you will call up your parents because there's something about talking to mom or dad that makes you feel safe.

Others of you, you dive into a hobby or your work or whatever to make you feel distracted from the things that are going on in life.

[ 9 : 57 ] Everybody right here, everybody listen. Whether you are willing to admit it or not, everybody in this room has a teddy bear. Everybody does.

Everybody has something you look to in the storm to make you feel safe. Amen? That is exactly what Jonah 1 is all about.

You remember the context. In week 1, God comes to Jonah with a direct word to go to Nineveh. Jonah acts in rebellion and not only rebels against what God has called him to do, Jonah runs in the opposite direction from where God had called him to go.

Jonah wants nothing to do with Ninevites. More than that, he wants nothing to do with a God that would be gracious towards Ninevites. He is out.

He's running. And what does God do? What is God's response to his rebellious prophet? Well, the Bible says in John 3, 16, God so loved his prophet, he sent a storm.

[ 11 : 07 ] He sends this gracious intervention in the life of Jonah. And what happens on that ship in the middle of this storm teaches us something about our own hearts in the storms of life.

Look at verse 5. It says, The mariners were afraid. Each cried out to his God. They hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them.

But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. And so the captain came and said, What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise. Call out to your God.

Perhaps the God will give a thought to us that we may not perish. Here's the first thing to jot down is that in the storm, you and I tend to run to the safety of idols. You notice the storm is raging.

The text tells us that these mariners, these sailors, are terrified. And what is the first thing they do? Are you awake?

[ 12 : 12 ] They pray. That's so interesting that the very first thing these pagan sailors do is they pray. They pray to any and every God that will listen.

I showed you this clip last week, but it's so perfect for this text. This is literally what it looks like on the ship. Help me, Jewish God! Help me, Allah!

Ah! Help me, Tom Cruise! That is the perfect analogy of what's happening on board here. Everybody's running around just panicking. They're terrified, and they're literally calling out to any and every God that will listen.

Listen, nothing gets a prayer chain going faster than a storm. Amen? Nothing gets a prayer chain going faster than a storm.

And what's remarkable is that these are pagan sailors. Now, what does this teach us? It teaches us something that I've taught you before and will continue to teach you because we need to be reminded of it, and that is that every single person deep down worships something.

[ 13 : 21 ] Everybody worships something. Notice it on the screen. Everyone has a God. They just may not call it Jesus. But make no mistake, there is no such thing as an atheist.

An atheist is simply someone who has taken all the evidence that God has revealed, suppresses that in order to convince themselves it's not true, and even people that don't even, that say they don't believe in a God will find one in a storm.

Have you ever noticed? I mean, some of you, you remember back, how many of you remember 9-11? Remember 9-11? And do you remember what happened the Sunday after 9-11? What happened?

Churches were full of people. Why? Because when you go through a storm, when something rattles your world, you don't even necessarily care what God, you just want to find a God to feel safe and secure.

It's why there are people, come on, there are people who will say that they don't even really believe in a God or they don't really know if there's a God, and yet when they're going through a difficult time, do you know what they'll say?

[ 14 : 32 ] Would you pray for me? Or if you say to them, can I pray for you? Very, very few people will say, no, don't pray for me. In other words, they may not even necessarily believe that there's a God, but listen, if there does happen to be one, I would love for him or her or whatever it is to get me out.

Because everybody deep down worships something. When the storm rages strong enough, everybody will try to find some kind of higher power.

It's like the story of a man that called his pastor in a panic. He was in a hospital and received a diagnosis of a terminal disease. When the pastor arrived, the man informed him that the hospital had accidentally mixed him up with another patient and he was actually perfectly fine.

And then the man told the pastor, quote, you don't need to stay because I'm not a very religious man. You were five minutes ago. But when the storm passed, so did your need for God.

Everybody looks to something religiously or divine to feel safe and secure in the storm. We do this all the time. For some people, it's attending church.

[ 15 : 51 ] I'm not picking on anybody. There will be people that will come next week and that will be their one source of security for the year because I went to church. There's some type of religious activity that makes them feel good.

Or maybe it's reading the Bible or offering up prayers or confession to a priest or doing your rain dance or saying the Hail Marys. My son and I watched the new Jason Statham movie.

Don't judge us. All right, we watched the new Jason Statham movie. It's out. And I'm not going to ruin the story because I know all of you will watch the movie. But they kidnapped this girl and when they put the girl in the back seat who's been kidnapped, the whole time they're driving her, she's saying, our Father who art in heaven, our Father who art in heaven, our Father who art in heaven.

All of us do look to some kind of higher power, offer up some kind of prayer in the middle of the storm. And you say, well, what's wrong with that?

Well, there's not necessarily something wrong with that. But one thing you need to be very, very careful of, are you listening, is your motivation. Notice it on the screen.

[ 16 : 57 ] The sailors are not motivated by praise. The sailors are motivated by preservation. In other words, what's wrong with these prayers, I hope you're listening, is that they don't want God.

They just want out of the storm. That's a very, very dangerous thing. That is, my need for God only exists in a storm.

Rather than, I need, as we just sang about, I need God all the time. Whether it's storming or whether it's a sunshiny day, I'm always in need of God.

He is not just my escape hatch. Now, not only is this, happens religiously, but it also happens non-religiously. In other words, for some people, it might not be prayer or going to church.

It might be playing golf or traveling or hanging out with friends or hitting the bottle and drinking alcohol, watching hours of TV. It's whatever you can do to get your mind off the storm.

[ 18 : 05 ] In other words, the point again is, everybody has a teddy bear. Everybody has something that you run to to feel secure and safe in the storm.

But not only that, notice what happens in verse 7. It says that they said to one another, come, let us cast lots that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.

And so they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. They said to him, well, tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What's your occupation? Where did you come from?

What's your country? Of what people are you? Here's the second thing we see is not only do we run to the safety of idols, but we rely on self-effort. It's almost like there's a progression here.

That is, we prayed the prayers. Clearly, God or the gods aren't answering. The line must be busy. So we will turn to our own methods.

[ 19 : 05 ] It's a sense in which they're saying, well, prayer didn't work, so we'll figure our own way out of the storm. I mean, after all, we're experienced. It's not our first rodeo at the sea.

We've been through storms before, and there's a way in which, in both of these, I trust are in the text, there's two ways in which you and I tend to try to get ourselves out of the storm.

The first is this. We tend to want to reason our way out of the storm. That is, we use our minds. You notice here that these sailors interrogate Jonah.

Who are you? Where are you from? How did you get here? What country do you belong? That is, there's in their minds this sense of there must be a reason for the storm, and if we could just figure out the reason why, then we could get out.

This is like the cerebral approach to storms. It is, I'll figure a way out of this. And we are a people that just simply cannot stand to not know.

[ 20 : 10 ] Amen? You know this. If somebody came up to you before church tonight and said, I have something really, really important. It's really serious that I need to talk to you about. I'll talk to you after service.

The whole time during this service while I'm preaching, you'd be thinking, I wonder what it's about. I wonder what they're going to say. I wonder what they have to share with me. Why? Because we can't stand not knowing.

And that's the way it is with the storm, is that we try to figure it out. If I can research enough, if I can take classes, if I can ask enough people, I can figure my own way out.

But some of us, it's not reasoning our way out of the storm. Others of us, it's we row our way out of the storm. That is, rather than using our minds, we use our hands.

Look at verse 5. It says, and they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it.

[ 21 : 12 ] In other words, again, you notice the progression. First, we'll offer up prayers. That didn't work. Then we'll ask our questions. That didn't work. So why don't we just start throwing things overboard?

The answer isn't trusting God. It's roll up our sleeves. We will work our way out of this. And notice that lightning the ship didn't work.

In verse 13, they do this. Nevertheless, say this with me, the men rowed hard. In other words, once they find out that Jonah is the reason for the storm, the literal reading of that is they dug their oars deeper.

In other words, this is the mentality. Notice it on the screen. Who needs a Savior when we can save ourselves. Now let me just pause because I'm going fast here.

Listen. Tell me this is not true for many of us in this room. We simply think I can get myself out of the storm that's going on. I can figure it out on my own.

[ 22 : 17 ] The power rests within me. I've shared this with you before, but it's just perfect for this. It's the whole lesson behind the Wizard of Oz. Did you know that? The whole point of the Wizard of Oz is that the power comes from you.

You remember the story? Dorothy is taken from her black and white home in Kansas to the world of Oz. On the journey to the Emerald City, she meets all these interesting characters along the way, and each of them have something they need the wizard to solve, right?

The scarecrow needs a brain. The tin man needs a heart. The lion needs courage. But what happens when they get to the Emerald City, when they encounter the wizard?

What they see at the beginning is all this lights and smoke and thundering voice. They're in awe. They're in almost terror of the great wizard.

But what do they discover when little Toto pulls back the curtain? It's just an old man pulling a bunch of levers. And then something becomes very, very clear in that moment.

[ 23 : 28 ] And it's the whole point of the Wizard of Oz. And it's namely, along the journey, the scarecrow had the ability to think. The tin man had displayed compassion.

The lion was brave. In other words, listen to me, Faith Family. Everything they thought they needed from the wizard, they already had.

They didn't need a higher power. The answer was inside. That is the American way.

We will do it ourself. We will figure it out on our own. I don't need God. I just need to row harder.

Listen. Do-it-yourself may work for remodeled bathrooms, but it will destroy you spiritually. Because look at what happens in verse 13 after they try to row harder and they dig their oars deeper.

[ 24 : 33 ] The sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. You know this, Faith Family, sometimes when we try to dig ourselves out, we usually dig ourselves deeper.

Can I get an amen? Anybody want to testify tonight and witness to that? Sometimes when I take matters into my own hands, I only make it worse.

In other words, you think you're rowing to freedom, but in reality, you're just becoming deeper a slave. It's kind of like being caught in the undertow when you're at the ocean.

The instinct is swim harder, swim harder, swim harder, but you're actually putting yourself in greater danger. Preacher. Somebody say, Preach Preacher.

Oh, I need it louder than that. Somebody say, Preach Preacher. Do you remember? Oh, that was good. I liked that Saturday night. Last week, I taught you, the whole sermon last week was to teach you that this storm was an act of God's grace.

[ 25 : 35 ] So here it is. Notice that if the point of the storm is grace, then you're never getting out by works. If the point of the storm is to learn God's grace, you won't get out by rowing harder.

So we turn to the safety of idols. We turn to our own self-effort to try to save ourselves. But look at old Jonah in verse 5. It says that Jonah had, say it, gone down.

You remember that from last week that there's multiple verses where Jonah just keeps going down. It's a sign of his spiritual condition. He went down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was what?

Fast asleep. The Hebrew here is really the idea of not being lazy or exhausted. Jonah just simply doesn't care anymore.

He has gone into a place of spiritual despair. In fact, you see this even more vividly in verse 11 where it says, they came to him and said, what shall we do that the sea may quiet down?

[ 26 : 44 ] For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. And he said to them, well, pick me up and hurl me into the sea and the sea will quiet down for you. For I know it's because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.

In other words, Jonah, notice it on the screen, Jonah would rather be dead than see Nineveh receive eternal life. That's how far his despair has gotten.

He doesn't care at all. He doesn't care about others. He doesn't care about himself. He simply wants to be hurled into the sea.

Now let's be honest. There are people in this room, the storm has been going on for so long and it has been so intense that spiritually you just go to sleep. You lose your affections for God.

You're numb to spiritual things. You're still in church. You still consider yourself a Christian but deep down when you hear of the grace of God you just kind of shrug your shoulders.

[ 27 : 46 ] You roll over in bed and you go back to sleep. That's Jonah. Jonah has allowed this storm to sink him into even more and more despair.

And there's three signs of this in the text that I think would do us well for us to consider. And the first is one of the signs we see of Jonah's despair is his no affection for others.

That is the lives of these sailors are on the line and Jonah could not care less. Jonah sleeps. That is you don't care that your drinking problem affects others.

You don't care that your constant negativity is impacting others. You don't care that your attitude at work is constantly harming others. Listen, all that matters to Jonah is Jonah.

The only thing that matters to Jonah is Jonah. And that is a mark of his spiritual condition. Secondly, not only no affection for others but no compassion for the lost.

[ 28 : 51 ] Remember, Jonah is not like some random guy this story is about. Jonah is the prophet of God. His whole very calling in life is to care about the perishing.

And Jonah is on a ship with the spiritually lost. Somebody say preach preacher. Jonah is on a ship with the spiritually lost. They are perishing while he hits the snooze button.

That is, he not only doesn't care from a human perspective what happens to these sailors, he doesn't care from a spiritual perspective what happens to these sailors.

In many ways, Jonah is a word to the church today that has fallen asleep in recognizing the lostness that is around us all the time.

We just, we just, I got two claps. That's fine. I wasn't looking for it but I'll take it, alright? It's like we just, like how many of you go to work, how many of you live in your neighborhood, how many of you go about your day and you're just completely numb to the spiritual condition of the people in whose lives God has placed you.

[ 30 : 04 ] It is one thing for Jonah to have no affection for others. It's another thing for him to have no compassion for the lost. Spurgeon, Charles Spurgeon said this, quote, Satan seeks to lull God's prophets into slumber for he knows that dumb dogs given to sleep will never do any injury to his cause.

That is, your enemy would love for you to go to sleep because it means there's that many more people that will never hear about Jesus. No affection for others, no compassion for the lost, and lastly, no motivation to pray.

The captain here goes to Jonah and tells Jonah, get up, pray. Maybe you're God, whatever God it is that you serve, maybe they'll listen and we won't perish.

And yet, there's no sign anywhere in the text that Jonah prays. There's no evidence anywhere in these verses that Jonah actually prays to Yahweh. Listen, here's why. Because when you're running from God, the last thing you want to do is talk to Him.

Oh, that's good. Are you listening to me? When you're running from God, the last thing you want to do is talk to Him. You don't have any desire or affection to pray.

[ 31 : 25 ] He's the one you're running from. He's the one you're trying to avoid and escape. In other words, faith family, look at that progression. No affection for other people, no compassion for the spiritual condition of the lost, and no motivation to pray.

Jonah has lain down and gone to sleep. He doesn't care. And there's almost like a progression.

That is, you run to the safety of idols, your teddy bears, and they don't save you. You row harder and try to get yourself out on your own, and that doesn't save you.

So you just go down to the bottom of the ship and become hard towards God.

Does what happened on this ship preach to us today? You better believe it does. Because what's the actual point of the storm? What's the actual response to the storm?

[ 32 : 32 ] It isn't running to idols. It isn't trying harder. It isn't going to the bottom of the ship and going to sleep. It's verse 14. Therefore they called out to the Lord, Yahweh, let us not perish for this man's life.

Lay not on us innocent blood. For you, Yahweh, have done as it has pleased you. And they picked up Jonah and they hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.

And then the men feared the Lord exceedingly. And they offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and they made vows.

This is the proper response in the storm. What is it? It's surrender. It's surrender. And you'd think, Jonah finally comes around, doesn't he?

He finally gets it. He finally wakes up. No, that won't happen until chapter 2. Who is it? And what would be a twist of irony in this story, if you're a Hebrew reader reading this story, who gets it?

[ 33 : 44 ] Not the prophet of God, but pagan sailors. The people who surrender here, it's not Jonah, it's the lost.

Remember, the very thing Jonah did not want to happen was for salvation to come to pagans. And that's precisely what happens on board this ship.



It's a lesson to Jonah, you're not going to stop the mission of God. I can do this with you, or I can do this without you. The mission of God will not be stopped.

And these sailors respond accordingly to the storm, and they surrender. You notice that they throw Jonah into the sea. It says that they feared Yahweh, that is not the storm.

Most of your Old Testament commentators will note that this idea of fearing the Lord is a way of describing genuine belief in the Old Testament.

[ 34 : 47 ] That is, this has shifted from we're afraid of the storm, God get us out to actually a fear and reverence to God Himself.

Does everybody see that? Earlier it was, listen, let's call out to God because we fear the storm. Now it's, we're crying out to God because we fear God.

It's a picture of genuine belief. And then it says they continually worship. That is, they made vows. In the Hebrew, this is an ongoing thing.

It's a picture of what the response to the storm is supposed to be, namely, surrender to God. Faith family, this passage teaches us something very important.

Are you still with me? I'm almost done. Here it is. This is big. Here it is. Safety and security in the storm comes through surrender to the Savior.

[ 35 : 45 ] Safety and security in the storm comes through surrender to the Savior. After all, does this story remind you of another story that's awfully similar?

You with me? Have you ever heard a story that's awfully close, almost exact, to Jonah 1 except that in that story it wasn't sailors who were afraid, it was a group of disciples.

It wasn't Jonah that was asleep, it was Jesus that was asleep on the boat. And just like the sailors did to Jonah, the disciples started interrogating Jesus with all these questions.

Teacher, teacher, rabbi, rabbi, do you not care that we are perishing? It's the exact same thing of Jonah 1 except one difference.

one major difference. Even with all the similarities, the major difference is this. In Jonah 1, Jonah is thrown into the storm.

[ 37 : 00 ] In Mark 4, Jesus stands up and calms the storm. What does that teach us? It teaches us that in the storms of life, safety and security cannot be found in teddy bears.

Whatever idol it is that you have, it is not found in rowing harder and getting yourself out on your own. Safety and security is found in the one who went through the greatest storm for you.

Faith family, He is the only one that has the power and authority to say this to your heart. Peace. Be still.

And the wind ceased. And there was a great calm. And He said to you, why are you so afraid?

And all God's people said, Amen. Father, thank you. Thank you for your word to us tonight. I pray that by your spirit we recognize those things that we run to in the storm that make us feel safe, that make us feel secure.

[ 38 : 19 ] But they are fleeting, they are passing, they do not last. Lord, this passage teaches us where safety and security in the storm is found and it is in surrender to you.

the one who can say peace be still, who can cause the winds to cease, if not externally, internally.

So Lord, help us this evening not be afraid, but rest in your promise and rest in the safety and security that is found in you our cornerstone.

And it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. vibration vibration!

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