

When God Hurts to Heal

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Rise. Call out to your God.

Perhaps the God will give a thought to us that we may not perish. This is God's Word. Let's pray together. Father, thank you for this time to hear from you.

[3 : 15] And we do believe that. That regardless of the messenger, Father, when we open up your Word, you speak to your people. And I pray that in this moment together that you would talk to us, that you would teach us, that you would encourage us through your Word.

And I pray it in Jesus' name and God's people said, Amen. Amen. You can be seated. It was the most challenging case I'd ever been a part of.

Those were the words of a man by the name of Mitch Parkinson. Mitch was one of the intensive care paramedics in Tasmania, Australia.

He was one of the rescue workers that was called in to the scene just actually a few months ago at Tasmania's famous Franklin River.

It was there at that river that there was a 65-year-old tourist who was there just to do some kayaking. And he was walking along the rocks when he slipped and he became trapped in a sieve.

[4 : 18] It's one of those narrow rocks where water is continually gushing through. Needless to say, this man was in a very dangerous situation.

Now, when all of the emergency crews got there, they worked tirelessly through the night trying to figure out a way to rescue this man. And they tried everything they could possibly try.

They tried to use a pulley system to see if maybe they could pull him out from between those rocks, but that did not work. Then they tried some hydraulic tools to see if somehow they could lift up the rocks so that he'd become free, and that didn't work.

They tried some inflatable airbags, but that didn't work either. And after exhausting every single option that they could possibly think of over a period of 20 hours, the man remained wedged like an hourglass between the rocks.

And after all their efforts, only one option remained. As the rescue workers got together and began to discuss what they were going to do, one of them said this, quote, In order to save his life, he's going to have to lose his leg.

[5 : 47] And that, Faith Family, is what happened. The rescue workers, as a last resort, would have to amputate that 65-year-old man's leg.

But listen, in doing so, they saved his life. That story illustrates something that you and I know to be true.

Everybody in this room tonight knows this is true in life. Notice it here on the screen. That sometimes you have to be hurt before you can be healed.

Amen? Sometimes you have to be hurt before you can be healed. Sometimes you have to suffer before you can be saved. And that is true in so many areas of life.

For example, many doctors know that the patient is going to have to go through the surgery if they're ever going to experience recovery. Parents, you know this.

[6 : 50] There are times when your children simply have to go through the discipline in order to learn the lesson. Coaches know this. They know that their player is going to have to learn to fail in order to learn to succeed.

Employers know this. Oftentimes you're working with an employee and you know you've got to leave them to figure it out on their own if they're ever going to learn. Every one of us knows this truth in life that sometimes you have to be hurt before you can be healed.

That is exactly what God is doing to Jonah here in Jonah chapter 1. Now you'll remember from last week, Jonah's a man on the run.

He receives in these first few verses a direct message from Yahweh. He is called to go to Nineveh. To preach to Nineveh.

To call out against it. And what does Jonah do? He not only refuses. You remember Jonah runs in the exact opposite direction. He does anything and everything he can to go against the call of God on his life.

[8 : 07] And he doesn't care what the cost. He does not want to do what God has called him to do. Why was that? Is it because Jonah hated Ninevites?

Yes. We talked about that. Jonah absolutely hates Ninevites. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. The very country that had been brutal to the nation of Israel.

To the northern kingdom. That had disrupted Jonah's ministry. So Jonah hates Ninevites. But there's something he hates more than Ninevites.

A God who would show grace to Ninevites. And that's why he wants nothing to do with this mission. Why he rejects the call of God.

And then in verse 4, God responds to Jonah. Look at it again. Verse 4. Everybody say this with me. But the Lord.

[9 : 03] Now notice that there in your text, you're going to notice the shift that's taking place in the Scripture. Look at how verse 3 starts. It starts with, But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish.

Do you see the but Jonah? Say yes. And verse 4 starts how? But the Lord. In other words, the shift is changing from Jonah's response to God, verses 1-3, to God's response to Jonah, verse 4.

Look at the verse again. But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea. There was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.

Now, before we jump into what this storm means, let's make two very obvious, I think obvious observations from the text. The first is this is a massive, massive storm.

In fact, it may very well be like hurricane type storm. And you say, well, how do you know that's the case? Well, there's a few things clear in the passage. First of all, it says the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea.

[10 : 12] We also see in verse 4, this storm is so massive, the ship is about to break up. We also notice that experienced sailors, who trust me, they are not strangers to storms at sea.

They've gone through things like this before, and yet every one of them is so afraid, they think they're going to die. So much so, that everyone on the boat, except for Jonah, is running around the ship doing this.

Help me, Jewish God! Help me, Allah! Help me, Tom Cruise! Everybody, everybody's praying to their own God.

They're just calling out, is anybody up there? Is anybody listening? We are about to die. This is a massive, threatening storm.

That's the first observation. The second observation, that I think is clear from the text, is that this storm is sent by who? God! It's right there in the text.

[11 : 18] The Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea. In other words, the reader must observe that this storm did not just happen. It didn't just happen to be a bad weather day on this particular day.

And here's why I think this is significant, is because, maybe some of you are like this, but I know of many Christians, I've talked to them many times throughout my years in ministry, there are many Christians, that do not like to think of God, as sending storms.

We like to think of God being the one who comforts us in a storm, but not the one who's actually doing it.

Not the one who's actually sending the storm. And that's precisely what the text says. In fact, not only does this text say it, look at some other examples in Scripture.

Isaiah 45 and verse 5. I am the Lord, there is no other. Besides me, there is no God. I equip you, though you do not know me, that the people may know from the rising of the sun and from the west, there is none besides me.

[12 : 29] I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light, and I create darkness. I make well-being and create calamity.

I am the Lord who does say it. All these things. Amos 3, verse 6.

Is a trumpet blown in a city? And the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to the city unless the Lord has done it?

And my good buddy in Ecclesiastes, O'Koeleth, who will say this rather sarcastically, in the day of prosperity, be joyful. It's the best you got. And in the day of adversity, consider this.

God has made the one as well as the other. That is, God has made the prosperous day, and He's made the day of adversity, so that man may not find out anything that will be under the sun.

[13 : 31] Listen to me. Are you ready? If you're taking notes, write it down. God sends storms. God sends storms. And whether we like that or not, it doesn't really matter whether you like it or not.

It's in the text. You have to come to grips with God, not God come to grips with you. Amen? Amen? Whether we like this or not, I would actually submit to you that this is actually good news.

And that you might want to be a Christian that holds tightly to verses like this. And here's why I think this is such an encouragement. Notice it on the screen. Because it means that storms, regardless of the reason, are not random.

Storms, regardless of the reason behind them, are not random. Listen, I would rather know that God is behind the storm than to believe He's just as surprised as I am.

I don't understand the sovereignty of God in the storm, and neither do you. Don't act like you do. We don't. But there's comfort in knowing that He's behind it all.

[14 : 37] William Cooper says this. You'll remember some of these lyrics from the song he wrote. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take. Those clouds you so much dread are big with mercy and shall break in blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace. Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face.

This is a massive, massive storm. And it is a storm sent by God. So what does it mean?

What does this storm mean in the life of Jonah? Three things I want to observe from this. And the first is this. That God chases. I love this. It's why we sing the second song tonight about God chasing after us.

God chases runaways. God chases runaways. Now, what could have God's response been to Jonah when God came to Jonah with a direct message to be on mission for God?

[15 : 49] And Jonah says, No. And not only, no, I'm going to run in the opposite direction. What could God's response have been? My response would have been, Fine. You don't want to be a part of my mission?

I'll find somebody else. You do know, Jonah, I have plenty of prophets. And I can raise another one up. I don't need you. God's response to Jonah could have been rejection.

I'll use somebody else. In the same way, He could have done the same with Moses. When Moses resisted the call of God. But listen, this is what I love about the Lord. Of many things that we love about the Lord is that God shows grace to Jonah even in Jonah's rebellion by showing Jonah what He has often shown you.

Are you listening, Faith Family? Say yes. He's not going to leave you. He's not going to give up on you. What you see in this storm, notice it on the screen, is that God will not forsake His prophet even when they forsake Him and everybody ought to shout, Amen.

Jonah is running the opposite direction and God is running after Jonah. Not like some little high school breakup, like, oh, please come back to me.

[17 : 08] I need you so much. Like, Jonah, what am I going to do without you? This is not that. What this is, is sovereign love.

Love. This is sovereign love. Justice would be, forget you, Jonah. Grace is, I'm coming after you, Jonah.

You think you're going to run for me. Well, I'm going to run after you because I have my will set upon you. I have chosen you and you cannot get away from it.

Some of you may be familiar with a comedian by the name of John Mulaney. John Mulaney actually has been very outspoken over the last several years about his struggles with drug and alcohol addiction.

And evidently, just some time back, some of his comedian friends got together without John knowing it and they staged an intervention.

[18 : 10] In fact, in John Mulaney's Netflix special, this is how he described this intervention. Quote, You know you have a drug problem when you open a door and you see people gathered and your first thought is, this is probably an intervention.

And then he goes on to say, As mad as I was when I walked in the room, listen, as mad as I was when I walked in the room, I'm thankful they cared enough to intervene.

In fact, this hit me at the very end of the special. The special ends with this screen and it shows, it gives a thank you to all 13 names of those individuals.

And I don't know if you can see it, but look at the very, very bottom. Thank you. You saved my life. John realized, as painful as that intervention was, it saved his life.

It was done out of love. But let's be honest, Faith Family, we don't always see it this way in the moment, do we? We're just walking through life and life gets interrupted.

[19 : 27] God intervenes. Notice it here on the screen. You see, sin is when you take the initiative to go your way, but grace is when God takes the initiative to interrupt your way.

Do you see that? God is doing the most loving thing He could do for Jonah by intervening. By interrupting His life. Like the little girl in California, she was waiting at a bus stop with her mom.

Her mom turns away. Some of you have experienced this as a parent. Her mom turns away for just a moment and she takes running off down the street. And notice what happens next.

Look Sharp Barbershop in East Hartford, Connecticut when the girl ran by their window. On the surveillance video, you can see them doing a double take. The barbers instantly realize the danger the child is in and run out the door, leaving customers still sitting in their chairs, wondering what the heck is going on here.

Racing down the steps of the barbershop, off they go. With the little girl just a few feet away from running into traffic, they do it. Lugo scoops her into his arms.

[20 : 33] Here it is again. Look how close that truck and all the other traffic came to hitting her. Now is that hateful? Is that mean? No, everybody in this room is like, that's the most loving thing you could do?

To intervene, to step in front of. Now I imagine that little girl is thinking, what in the world is going on? Who just picked me up? She may even be crying out, why?

Why? Why did someone tackle me? And yet, what she doesn't realize is that that act of intervening saved her life.

You see, we don't understand why God interrupts our life, but He does it because He loves us. Sending this storm is the most loving thing God could do for His runaway.

And you might say, well, if I could ask a question, Pastor, could God do it in a softer way? Anybody with me tonight? Can we do without the storm?

[21 : 37] Does it always have to be a storm? And I would submit to you, it was a softer way. In verse 1, listen, listen in.

What started as a word turned into a wind. Oh, somebody said, that's good. You need to write that down. Preach, preacher.

What started as a word turned into a wind because it revealed the hardness of Jonah's heart.

God did come to Jonah in the softest of ways. Hey, I've got a job for you to do. I want you to go to Nineveh. Jonah ran, and that's how the word ended up becoming a wind because God is chasing after His prophet.

Number two, not only is God chasing after His runaways, we see in this storm that second, that God teaches His children. God teaches His children. Now, most of us, if we're honest, when we're going through suffering or we're going through kind of the metaphorical storm, here's what we think.

[22 : 46] Now, tell me if I'm wrong, that a lot of Christians think God is punishing me. Am I right? Anybody with me? Ever felt that way? You ever thought that? I guess I'm the only one.

But we often do. God, what are you punishing me for? What are you getting back at me? What did I do wrong that you're now taking it out on me? But listen to me. Again, write this down.

Memorize this in your brain, Christian. If you are a child of God, God will never, ever, ever, ever punish you.

Ever. Why? Jesus took all of your punishment at the cross. God will never punish, never punish His children.

What He will do is discipline them. And you say, but what's the difference? Oh, dear friend, there's a big difference between punishment and discipline.

[23 : 44] Anybody want to know what the difference is? Here it is on the screen. The intent of punishment is hurting. The intent of discipline is healing.

God is not punishing Jonah. And if you are a child of God, He is not punishing you. Jesus took all that punishment for you. What He is doing is He is disciplining you.

He's teaching you. The writer of Hebrews speaks to this very well in Hebrews 12, verse 5. My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or be weary when reproved by Him.

For the Lord disciplines the one He loves. He chastens every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you have endured. God is treating you as sons.

For what son is there whom His Father does not discipline? If you're left without discipline, in which we've all participated, well, then you're an illegitimate child. Not sons. For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them.

[24 : 52] But God disciplines us for our, say it, our good that we may share His holiness. Now, of course, in the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant.

And all God's people said, Amen. But you know, later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained, that is, those who have been taught by it.

What's the purpose of discipline? It's to teach, to grow, to heal, to restore, to learn. And God loves Jonah so much, He's going to give him.

This is what's happening. And I'm going to unpack this over the next several verses. What God is doing over these next few verses is He's giving Jonah a lesson in grace.

God is coming to Jonah through this storm and saying, buddy, the whole reason why you're not going to Nineveh, the whole reason that you have rejected this call is because you have forgotten grace.

[26 : 02] You think grace applies to you, but you don't think grace applies to Ninevites. So guess what I'm going to have to teach you? And yes, it's going to be a painful way, but I love you so much, I'm going to discipline you to show you and teach you and grow you in my grace.

And the next several verses, even through chapter 2, is going to be Jonah repeating the class of Grace 101 and learning the lesson of God's mercy.

And he'll do that through a storm. It happened in William Carey's life as well. Many of you know the name William Carey. He was a missionary to India for many years.

March 11, 1812, he woke up to the smell of smoke. Much to his devastation, he learned that his print shop had been burned to the ground.

All the Scriptures that he had given his life's work to, translated in Indian, were lost. Copies of the Old and New Testament were burned. And keep in mind, in those days, there's no digital copies, no drop box, no thumb drive in which he saved his work.

[27 : 16] He literally lost almost everything. But when all the smoke settled, there were a few printing presses that survived. Christians from all over responded in overwhelming donation.

And his printing ministry was back up and running in two months. And listen, because of what happened, Carey's ministry spread to places it had never gone before.

And in reflecting on that storm, that even Carey said he believed God brought in his life. William Carey said this, quote, Perhaps the mission was too much about self.

The Lord laid me low that I would look to Him. Carey learned grace.

He learned God's mercy through the storm. Listen, faith family, God teaches His children. And I know this is a different view for some of you to think about, but if need be, He will use cancer.

[28 : 24] He will use rejection. He will use singleness. He will use injury. He will use unemployment. He will use financial ruin. He'll use a host of storms to teach you what you need to learn in life.

He loves you that much. Amen? This storm is God chasing after His runaway. This storm is God teaching His children, or His child, the lesson of grace.

And then one more. Look at verse 5. It says, 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 for them.

But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. The third thing is that God reveals through storms our hearts.

He reveals our hearts. I'm going to say more on this likely next week. But what was Jonah's response to the storm? Did you notice the difference between Jonah and his response to the storm and everybody else's response that was on the ship?

[29 : 32] The difference is everybody on the ship is praying out to any God that will listen. Even Tom Cruise, right? I mean, they're praying out to anybody. But not Jonah. What is Jonah doing?

He's sleeping. He's sleeping. In fact, the text says he went down. Jonah went down. You say, big deal.

He went down to the lower deck of the ship. No, no, no, no, no, no. No. It's more than that. And the reason why I know it's more than that is because this is actually a phrase that gets repeated consistently about Jonah.

Here's a few examples. Go back to verse 3 earlier on in Jonah 1. Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went to Joppa and found a ship to Tarshish.

He paid the fare and say it, went down into it to go with them to Tarshish. And then look again at verse 5. The mariners are afraid.

[30 : 30] They each cry out to his God. They're hurling the cargo off the ship. But Jonah had gone down. Do you see that emphasis again? And then look at chapter 2 and verse 6.

In fact, you notice the contrast. Say it with me. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever. Yet, speaking about God, yet you brought up.

Do you see? Jonah keeps going down. God lifts up. My dear friend, this is more than directional.

This is spiritual. Jonah's always going down. He's going down to Joppa. He's going down to the bottom of the ship.

He's going down to the bottom of the sea. It is not the writer simply telling you that he just continually goes south or he continually goes further down.

[31 : 28] It's a sign of his spiritual condition that when the storm comes, Jonah doesn't pray. He goes down. It's revealing his heart.

It's showing you where Jonah is spiritually. And would we not all agree tonight? Would we not? Those of us that have walked with the Lord for very long, would we not agree with this?

That storms a lot more than sunshine reveal the condition of our hearts? Sunshine rarely reveals the condition of our hearts.

But storms do. When we're going through the storm, we often see what our issues are. We're often... Like our hearts, even to ourselves, are revealed. It's why the Apostle Peter says this in 1 Peter 1, verse 6.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you've been grieved by various storms. I'm just going to insert that. So that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[32 : 47] Storms often reveal the spiritual condition of our heart. And I'll talk more about this next week in terms of the... Listen, we can rightly critique all the sailors for their prayers to false gods, but at least they're praying.

Jonah went down. Jonah went down. God is sending this storm to reveal to Jonah the condition of his heart.

And this is why, faith family, certainly in my experience, more people turn to God for salvation in pain than they do in prosperity. Do you know why? It's because, unfortunately, most of the time when life has fallen apart and you've got nothing and you feel helpless, you realize your need for a Savior.

You see, in the sunshine, you often feel like, I got this. I can do this. I don't need anybody's help. I figured it out. But when literally everything around you is raging, you realize the only hope you have is God.

Storms have a way of revealing this in ways that sunshine can not. God is going to reveal to Jonah through this storm that Jonah is helpless to save himself.

[34 : 13] And this evening, I pray if you are outside of Jesus Christ, that tonight you would, whatever God is doing in your life to get your attention, that you would not keep going down, but that you would run to the loving and saving arms of a Heavenly Father who is ready this very moment to welcome you in.

Faith family, God's grace, God's grace does not come in pretty pink boxes. Sometimes you learn the grace of God through storms.

Just like the man that was stuck between that rock, we learn that sometimes God has to hurt us in order to heal us.

But what I am trying to put within our hearts tonight is that this, in doing so, this is God showing us His love.

Let me close with this illustration. How many of you recognize this song? What is it?

[35 : 47] Jesus loves me. Absolutely. Jesus loves me. Now compare that version to this version. Did you notice the difference?

The second one, the second one has a more full sound. The second one has more depth to it. Do you know why?

It's because the second version includes the dark keys. You see, Jesus loves you.

We'll never have depth to it unless there's light keys and dark keys. The white keys are just shallow.

When you include the dark keys, there's a depth and a fullness of sound you wouldn't have otherwise.

[37 : 01] And you know what, Faith Family? We ought to know that to be true not because of Jonah, but because of Jesus. For three hours, one Friday, Jesus endured the greatest storm God has ever hurled on anyone.

It was so severe, the earth shook, the rocks split, the tombs were opened. It was so severe, even the curtain in the temple was torn into. And in that moment, Jesus experienced what Jonah experienced, that sometimes God's love is found in the storm.

For God so loved the world, He gave His Son to save you.

And all God's people said, Amen. Let's pray. Father, we thank You so much for this lesson tonight, for teaching us through Your Word. And I realize that oftentimes this is not the view we tend to have of You, that You're a God that sends storms, but it's absolutely black and white in the text.

And yet what we learn is Your grace. We learn how much You love Your children. How You do not give up on us. Even when we run from You, You chase after us with a reckless love to teach us grace, to reveal Your love, and to save us once again.

[38 : 41] And Lord, I pray that this evening, if there is someone here in this very moment going through the storm, Lord, that they would see not You punishing them, but they would see Your grace seeking to restore You.

That You are never forsaking us. that You are always with us. And Lord, we know from the cross itself that even the darkest storm is never without Your love.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. ■ ■ ■