

Man Overboard!

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Jonah chapter 1. So Jonah's kind of right in the middle of the Minor Prophets. He kind of just turned left from the Old Testament. Beginning of him is Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and then Jonah.

So right there, fifth of the Minor Prophets. You can tell your mother you're learning from the Minor Prophets this week. So look with me, if you would, there in verse 7.

It's the Word of God. He says, Jonah writes, And 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?

[1 : 07] Where did you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you? And Jonah, verse 9, said to them, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to them, 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.

And 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.

Nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not. For the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

[2 : 21] 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. So they picked up Jonah, hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased its raging.

Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. That is the Word of God.

You know, a little over a hundred years ago, Francis Thompson was born into a wealthy religious family in England. While it seemed that everything was together for a successful life, he spent his life on the run.

At the young age, he ran from his parents and what they wanted him to do with his life. He ran to the big city of London to chase his dreams of being a writer. When the doors never opened, he ran to opium to cope and became addicted.

[3 : 26] He ran until he found himself alone and homeless. One day, a prostitute found Francis nearly dead on the side of the road.

She had got him help, and after getting him back to help, he stopped running for a bit and began to write. With the help of others, still living in London, some of his writings went on to be published in the papers, in the London papers.

He was a great writer, is what everybody found out very quickly. And yet, no one knew who he was. At the young age of 47, he died because of a hard life on the run.

His most famous poem, though, tells the story of his life. It's entitled, The Hound of Heaven. He writes in there, I fled him, talking about the Lord, down the nights and down the days.

I fled him down the arches of the years. I fled him down the labyrinth of ways in my mind. And in the midst of tears, I hid from him.

[4 : 42] Again, it's so interesting. When Thompson looked back over his life, he realized that his life of running was about fleeing from God. He fled God from his family home. He fled God to London.

He fled God in drugs and hard living. And yet, despite all his running, God kept following and hounding him. He ends that poem saying, I fled him, but everywhere I fled him, he hounded me.

This morning, as we return to Jonah, the hound of heaven is after him. The hound of heaven is still following. Last week, we left Jonah running all the way down into the belly of that ship on the way to Tarshish.

But the Lord would not leave him alone. That's what we see immediately. The Lord sent a big storm. We remember that in verse 4. He sent it on to the sea to rescue him. Things got worse before they got better.

And once the storm hit, everything began to unravel on the ship. You know, just like us in the moment of a crisis or when, you know, something's blowing up on the stove. Everybody's a little antsy, a little frantic, trying to figure out, well, that's what's going on in the ship.

[5 : 50] They're trying to figure out what's going on. And they start throwing cargo overboard. They start crying out to God. They're desperate to find out what has happened. And eventually, all the fingers point to Jonah.

These verses, though, are incredibly wonderful. They're carefully crafted. Perhaps more than any other verses in this book. They're loaded with repeated words.

Hurled and fear and great. Then repeated phrases. The evil has come. Cast out. Quiet down. All these careful crafting is meant to draw our attention to between this contrast between Jonah and the sailors.

Jonah, who's indifferent, asleep at the bottom of this ship, and angry with the Lord. And the sailors, who's driven by love to do whatever it takes to rescue one another and to rescue their ship.

In the end, the Lord continues this story and weaves this contrast to teach us, do not run in fear.

The Lord is coming with mercy. In many ways, this continuation of last week, do not run in fear.

[6 : 56] The Lord is coming with mercy. And I want to pull out just three principles for us from these verses. The first one is, wherever you go and whatever happens, the Lord is powerfully present.

Wherever you go and whatever happens, the Lord is powerfully present. The Lord hounded Jonah. He took off on the run, but the Lord went racing after him.

He wouldn't let him alone. Look in verse 4 again, just to see it. He says, But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea. The Lord is the one behind it all.

Just when Jonah, though, had thought he had gotten away, hidden in the cabin of the ship. Verse 7, They said to one another, Let us cast lots, that we may know how this evil has come upon us.

Now that's the Lord pursuing him as well. But let me explain. What's going on here? We don't, you know, when a storm hits, we don't normally search out the blame for a big storm.

[8 : 00] We don't assume someone's at fault. You know, it's just natural, right? It's a natural event. But when the stomach bug comes home from a play date, the search is on.

And that's kind of what's going on here. Somebody's to blame, and they're trying to find out. In that day, a natural disaster was thought to be the effect of not appeasing certain gods.

You know, the gods of the sky or of the sea or whatever. And so they wanted to find out who's at blame, who worshiped this god and didn't appropriately appease him.

Now we already know from verse 4 that the storm was caused by the Lord, but the sailors are desperate to know what the reader already knows. Like most stories. So they cast lots. Casting lots, just a way of rolling the die, so to speak.

They assumed it would reveal a secret, but Jonah knew its every decision was from the Lord.

Proverbs 16, 33 says, The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.

[9 : 07] The point Jonah's trying to make, or the point the author's trying to make in this passage, is that when they casted lots, it's God pointing his finger again at Jonah.

Jonah can't hide. Martin Luther wonderfully said, Not only the ship, but the whole world becomes too small for Jonah.

He finds no nook or corner in all creation, not even in hell, where he might crawl in. So what's going on? Why this storm?

Why did the Lord cause the lots to single him out? Well, the idea is the providence of God is after him. The Bible makes very clear that God is sovereign over all things.

Nothing happens on the earth that does not happen according to his will. Daniel 4 puts it like this. He does according to his will among the hosts of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say to him, What have you done?

[10:09] That's the truth of Scripture. None can say to him and stay his hand. Say, What have you done? But the providence of God teaches that his sovereignty is not distant and worldwide.

It's not just distant and worldwide. It's not just out there. God is near and purposefully directing the details of our personal life. Everything that comes into our life comes not by chance, but by the hand tailoring of God.

I love the way the psalmist puts it in Psalm 57 too. I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. This is what is happening in Jonah's life. The storm did not just so happen to fall around his ship.

The sailor did not just so happen to cast lots concerning him. And the lots did not just so happen to land on him. The Lord is behind the scenes arranging all this to get Jonah's attention.

Several years ago, I read a biography on missionary Adoniram Judson. I'm sure you probably read it.

[11:20] I can't remember the name. But Judson was a pastor's son and born and raised in Massachusetts at the time, attended college. There he met a man named Jacob Eames.

Eames was a fellow student, became a close friend. Eames studied deism, which was popular at the founding of our country. And founding that day is essentially God creates everything and kind of leaves it alone, lets it kind of do its thing.

God's powerful, but not intimately powerful with the world. And Eames kind of lures Judson away from his beliefs. By graduation, he abandons Christianity completely.

And he conceals this from his parents the whole time. And upon graduation, with great fear, he announces that he will soon leave for New York to learn to write for the theater.

Why? Was he fearful? Because in his mind, like Jonah, he was on the run from the Lord. In New York, he takes to the streets with a group of players, he says.

[12:29] He was reckless with his life. Before long, he's disappointed and disillusioned. New York doesn't deliver like he thought it would. You know, the things we run from the Lord to never deliver like we think they will.

And he leaves New York late one night without notice. He has nowhere to go. If he returns home, he's sure to face his parents' disappointment and frustration and grief.

And so he rides on. He stays a few nights with an uncle. But these questions of meaning and purpose and what's his life all about begin to gnaw at him. Late one night, he stops at an inn.

Gets a room. The innkeeper says, sleep may be tough because there's a critically ill man in the next room. So Adoniram retires in a bed there.

He hears the coughing through the night. He hears the comings and going. His mind begins to race. He's restless. These questions begin to haunt him again. Is this man ready to die?

[13:33] Does he know what will happen? What happens when we die? Am I ready to die? He's getting driven about. And the next morning, he wakes up before rushing out. He asks the innkeeper, did the man die?

The innkeeper says, yes. He says, what was his name? The innkeeper says, Jacob Eames. Jacob Eames, he realizes.

His friend from college, the one who had lured him away from his Christian beliefs, the one he had spent so many of these days with, Judson could hardly move for hours.

He could not stop pondering life and pondering, obviously, death. He began to wonder, what if God, as truly all power of, had arranged all this? What if God had arranged that he'd be disappointed when New York City would find himself in this hotel?

What if God had arranged it all so that he would question his life, that he would find himself sleeping next to his dying friend without knowing it? At first, he didn't want to believe it. But providence was pointing the finger at him.

[14:37] He wrote, this could not, simply could not be pure coincidence. God was at work. And that is what providence means.

It's just a promise that nothing is random or unplanned or accidental. Nothing just so happens. Everything that happens in our life is guided and directed by our Father's hand.

Everything from where we're born, to who our parents were, to teachers we have, friends we meet, to every door that opens, everyone that remains shut, to every opportunity that comes, and those that never come, to the spouse we marry, the life we live, where we choose to inhabit in this world. We don't run free, is what Jonah finds out. God sets us in specific places and determines the boundaries of our lives.

How would it change our life if we viewed our life this way? We say a few things in application. This changes the way we view hard circumstances, doesn't it? Sometimes providence bites.

[15:42] Sometimes storms come. Sometimes pain and sorrow hit hard.

Sometimes the other shoe drops, and we don't want to thank God. We want to scream. But providence tells us that we're not being tossed about by a cruel king.

Everything that's happened is happening according to our Father's hand. That doesn't answer all the questions.

But it does answer a lot of them. You know, this changes the way we view our lives. You know, it changes the way we view the will of God. You know, if you think about this, Jonah in many ways is wrestling with the will of God.

I mean, he thinks he has a desire, an idea of what his life is all about, and it's not in Nineveh. And so he wrestles with it. And so this text helps us to understand how to find the will of God.

[17:02] And obviously we should begin with the Word. You know, sometimes we talk about the will of God. We think what we need is to go into a field and find out what we feel and what we've been called to do, which mainly means looking inside.

But the Bible continues to tell us to start with the Word. That's what Jonah didn't start with, and that's what wrecked his life. The Bible tells us again and again, it's the will of God to grow in grace. It's the will of God to love your wife if you're married. It's the will of God to train up your children if you're a parent. If you're single, it's the will of God to be pure. Treat girls as sisters and boys as brothers.

And so we begin to try to find out what the will of God is for our life by going to what the will of God is clearly revealed in the Scriptures. But with our Bible in hand, we also look to where he's placed us and who he's placed around us.

Why were we born here? Why was I born in South Carolina? Not in Australia. Not in Africa. Zach Eswine, I think, puts it very well.

[18:08] You know, providence determines where we live. He says God will give you a place to inhabit, a place to live, which means that you get to become attentive to what is there where you are.

God will give you a few things that he intends for you to do in your inhabited place and with those people. That's very simple but incredibly powerful.

God didn't place us in McMinn County to pine away and dream about Hawaii. You know, he placed us here to get to know here and to do a few things for his kingdom.

If you do those two things, you can do whatever you want with your life, provided it honors the Lord, his word, and his providence. Point two, your sin will find you out.

Your sin will find you out. Even as the text talks about how God is powerfully present in the midst of Jonah, is running all the details of the back and forth between Jonah and the sailors.

[19:19] Teach another principle. Your sin will always find you out. The men on the ship are looking for who to blame, so they cry to their gods, they cast the dice, they roll the die, and all the answers point to Jonah.

You know, he's on the run. He's trying to hide. And it's a lesson. We may hunker down. We may close the doors. We may turn out the light. But sin will always find us out.

I mean, that could be the slogan of being raised in the family I was raised in. My sin always found me out.

You know, I remember one particular story, and this is not meant to, I mean, laugh at, make light of sin, so I try not to do that. But seventh or eighth grade and messing around with marijuana.

I was also a leader at the YMCA, which doesn't make a lot of sense to me, but I was in this leader's club. And so we went on some leader's retreat, and we borrowed my dad's car.

[20 : 17] My older brother was driving, so I'll throw him under the bus too. And a few of our buddies were with us. We were going to get back like at two in the morning. So we had the bright idea that, you know, when we got back at two, we'd just party until like five and come on.

Our parents wouldn't notice the difference between two and five, and we would be good. And so we left the car loaded with joints, marijuana joints in the car.

And this illustrates how sin always found me out. We stashed some underneath the back seat and some in the glove compartment. This was late on Saturday.

My dad, unbeknownst to us, and very humorously decided he needed to check the tire pressure in his other car.

And the only tire pressure gauge was in the car that was at the YMCA with the joints in the glove box. So he goes, unbeknownst to us, to get the tire pressure gauge right next to it as a salt shaker full of joints.

[21 : 25] Now, of course, we denied everything, said somebody stuck them in there, but that's the way it went. I'm like, Dad, really a tire pressure gauge? That's the story he still sticks with. But that's the way my life was.

Sin found me out again and again and again. And that's the way it is. It will always find you out. We may be able to hide for a week, a month, a few years, a few decades, but eventually others will see who we really are and the Lord will hunt us down.

I mean, that's exactly what happened to David. We love all his psalms. They're wonderful. But David was busted. He didn't come into the light because he suddenly had this revelation that I do love the Lord and I want to walk in the light.

No, Nathan came and busted him. And sometimes the Lord will have to use people to point out our sin so that it finds us out. But the text keeps going, what is this sin? What exactly is sin?

And he continues, and this text helps us see an unseen aspect to sin. Look down with me in verse 8. You know, they cast a lot. It all falls on Jonah. And then they said, tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us.

[22 : 33] What's your occupation? What do you do? Where did you come from? What is your country? What people are you of? You know, I find these questions so surprising. In the midst of being tossed to and fro in the storm, they say, where are you from?

What do you do for work? I'm looking for a plunger to plunge all this water off the ship. What do you do? Who really are you? Why were they so fearful when he said, I'm a Hebrew and I fear the Lord? Tim Keller helps us to see what's going on. Why these questions? What's going on? He says, the sailors are not asking these questions to simply let Jonah express himself.

They're not saying, who are you? You know, I like lasagna. I like to do these different things.

They're not asking those types of questions. Their urgent goal is to understand the God who's been angered so they can determine what they should do.

In ancient times, every racial group, every place and every profession had its own gods or goddesses. To find out which deity, which just means God, Jonah had offended.

[23 : 41] They did not need to ask, what is your God's name? All they had to do was ask, who he was. Who you were and what you worship were just two sides of the same coin. Do you see what's going on?

They're asking where he's from, what's he do to find out who he worships and who he's angered? Jonah's not merely doing something wrong, not merely offending the Lord.

The idea that's getting on here is he's turning his back on God. He's turning his back on what he knows to be true. He's turning his back on what he's been raised on and running from his calling and running from the Lord.

Sin's not merely missing the mark or making a mistake. It's turning our backs on the Lord. And so that's what Jonah's doing. And that's why they ask.

To illustrate this, Jesus is always saying things that make you scratch your head. Have you ever found that to be true? You're reading your Bible and he often answers questions with questions, but he also has these zingers that leave you stunned.

[24 : 46] You remember when the Pharisees come up to him and they say, Jesus, should we pay taxes to Caesar? So they're trying to trick him. Do they think he's raising up people that don't pay taxes, don't follow earthly kings?

And Jesus says, give me that coin. Whose face is on it? And they say Caesar's. Jesus says, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God.

I don't know if that clarifies things for me, but here's what he's saying. He's not saying, give some of your money to Caesar and some to God. He's not saying, give Caesar like whatever he taxes you and maybe give God 10%.

What he's saying is, give your money to Caesar, but give your life to God. Do you see? The point is, each of us, just like every coin is stamped with Caesar's image, all of us are stamped with the image of God.

That's what he's saying. That stamp is very clear. So I don't care what you do with your money, but give your life to God. It's everywhere. We're made in his image.

[25 : 48] Unlike all the other creatures of the earth, we're made like him. We speak and think and feel and love and rejoice like him. We're made like him because we're his. So Jesus is not saying, I don't care, or he's saying, I don't care what you do with your money, but the Lord has claim over your life and it tells us something about sin, that sin is not merely missing the mark or making a mistake.

It's treason against God. There's no crime more wicked in a country than treason, than telling the country's secrets, than killing the country's leaders.

It's a crime against the own country and each of us are creating the image of God to live for him and every sin, no matter how great or how small, is betrayal because he created us.

It's turning our back. It's rebellion. Our creator is the creator of the world and turning our back on him is cosmic treason.

The idea, he's created the cosmos, the whole universe and he's also the creator of us. To turn our back on him is cosmic treason.

[26 : 56] That's exactly what Jonah's doing. That's what incenses the Lord. It's not just that he's not doing what he's supposed to do.

That he's given up. Remember last week, he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord. He's not running, trying to hide from the Lord. He's turning his back on his calling. He's turning his back on who the Lord made him and called him to be and that's exactly what we do when we sin.

It's not a misstep. It's not missing the mark. It's open rebellion against God. Thirdly, grace has supplied all you need.

Grace has supplied all you need. After the sailors confirmed Jonah is to blame, they struggled to decide what to do. You probably saw that when we read it, but look down in verse 11.

They said to him, what shall we do to you that the sea may quiet down? What are we going to do now? You know, we casted lots and it landed on you. What are we to do? Jonah says, throw me into the sea and it'll quiet down.

[28 : 04] It was because of me. You just got to love these sailors. So he says, it's all my fault. And after finding out he's to blame, after the sea continues to storm more and more, after even Jonah himself admits what he's done, look at verse 13.

I love the way it's written, nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land. Those guys are incredible. Unlike Jonah, they just, he just consumed thinking about himself.

They won't back down. It's useless though. The storm only gets worse. They have no other options. They throw him overboard. Look down in verse 15 and 16. They picked up Jonah.

Such vivid language. They picked him up, hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased its raising.

Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. So what are we to make of this ending? Charles Spurgeon, the great preacher, once said, two preachers, preach the text and make a beeline to Christ.

[29 : 21] A B-E-E line to Christ when they're coming to sting you. Well, how do we make a beeline to Christ from here? Matthew 12, 39 and 40 tells us a little bit.

An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

So Jonah points to Christ, which we're going to see very clearly in the three days he spends in the belly of the great fish next week. But here's the point, or here's the catch.

Jonah points to Jesus not merely in how long he stays in the belly of that great fish, but in why he was thrown into the water.

So Jonah points to Christ not merely in how long he stays in the belly of the great fish, but also why he was thrown into the water. Now why does he say, throw me into the water and it'll quiet down? [30:32] So we know Jonah's been incredibly self-absorbed until this time. Now all he cares about is himself. So why does he say that? Is he finally humbling himself and saying, I deserve to die. It was me, just take me out.

Or is he saying, I'd rather die than go to Nineveh. I think he's finally coming around. I think he's finally getting it and caring a bit more about others than himself.

And in so doing, he's showing the most powerful expression of love. Willing substitution. In nominating himself to be thrown off for the others, he is communicating the most powerful expression of love, willing substitution.

He's saying, I'll take the trouble so you can go free. It's the height of true love. It's the heartbeat of every good parent. It's the drive of every honorable military personnel. It's what makes the action of those brave men and women so heroic who lay their body over another in the face of a mass shooter that we read about again and again, sadly, because these shootings keep happening. But it's also what makes the end of the Avengers Endgame so wonderful. Now this is a spoiler alert. But if you haven't seen it by now, it's not my fault.

[31:58] This movie, which is three hours long, it is a little long for me, the Avengers are trying to stop Thanos from getting all the Infinity Stones and wiping out half of the universe's population.

All the Avengers, I mean, all these movies, it feel like they've been going on since before I was born, you know. Maybe before eternity even existed, these movies have been going.

Everybody you can imagine was there and fighting, you know, Black Panther, all his cronies, everybody was there. Thanos is trying to get the Infinity Stones into the gauntlet glove. I had to check all these facts with somebody who knows this stuff.

He's trying to get all the Infinity Stones into his gauntlet glove and if he gets them, as weird as it seems, and he snaps his fingers, he wins. Half of the world's population, the universe's population, is wiped out.

In the end, after this long, epic battle, knowing their chances slipping away as Thanos continues to gather these stones, Iron Man rushes towards him in this incredible moment before he's punched away.

[33:03] Thanos is two times, four times the size of Iron Man. Before he punches him away, he pulls off the glove, puts it on. Iron Man has the glove with all the Infinity Stones.

He knows that if he unleashes the power of these stones, their power will kill him. It will rescue the world, but it will kill him. He snaps his fingers and does it anyway.

He destroys Thanos. They literally disintegrate in all his cronies. He rescues the world. Iron Man stumbles forward and collapses, dying before the Avengers that are gathering around him.

If you're ever going to cry in a Power movie, a Power Ranger movie, whatever these things are, this is the moment. Spider-Man says, Hey, Mr. Stark, can you hear me?

Can you hear me, Mr. Stark? It's Peter. We won, Mr. Stark. We won, and you did it, sir. We won. And his girl, Pepper, which is probably where you start crying, says, Tony, look at me.

[34:07] Look at me. We're going to be okay. You can rest now. That's what every husband wants to hear before he dies. You can rest now as we've given our lives away.

Willing substitution is the most powerful expression of love. Maybe Tony had a heart after all. The sailors clearly understand that Jonah's request is one of substitution.

Look down there in verse 14. They say this curious prayer. They call to the Lord, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life. Lay not your innocent blood on us. For you, O Lord, have done as it pleased him.

What they're saying is, take his life, Lord. We offer him up to you in our place to rescue us from this storm. Take him and rescue us, is what their prayer is saying.

Take his life and rescue us and we will worship you. And we see this again and again throughout our Bibles. In the Passover, the Jews sacrificed the substitute lamb and spread his blood on the doorpost.

[35:10] And the angel of death saw that blood and passed over the house. Once a year, in the day of atonement, the people gathered together a lamb and the priest laid his hands on the lamb as their scapegoat, as their substitute, said, All our sin and wickedness be upon you, lamb, and wander into the wilderness, never having a home.

And even the prophets cry about this substitute. They say, He will be pierced for our transgression. He will be crushed for our iniquities. All we like sheep have gone astray, but the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

We see the substitution nowhere more willing and nowhere more wonderful than the cross of Christ. When we get a closer look at the cross, we realize God did not forgive sin.

He did not sweep it under the rug. On the cross, God put forward his son as the substitutionary sacrifice for sin. And he was put forward, the righteous for the unrighteous, the innocent for the guilty, the spotless for the broken, the king of glory for the one covered in shame, the sinless for the sinner without substitution.

There is no good news in the gospel. There is only a good man dying alone. But with substitution, this is the best news the world has ever heard. Jesus was put forward to suffer in our place and to exhaust forever.

[36 : 28] And the fury of God's wrath, which we deserve for our sins. Jesus' substitutionary sacrifices the greatest expression of the love God could give you and is the heart of the gospel.

And it secures for us eternal forgiveness, perfect righteousness, unshakable joy, and all surpassing peace, and never ending reason to praise. Yes, we will preach this text and make a beeline to Christ.

We'll pray that we have eyes to see, that on the cross of Calvary, Jesus did not die for his sins. He died for my sins. He died for your sins. He died for the sins of all who would find refuge in him, that he might exhaust forever the wrath of God which our sins deserve.

It's true. Jesus is the true and better Jonah who never ran. He never disobeyed the Father's will. Jesus is the true and better Jonah who never said, my will be done. He said, Father, your will be done. Jesus is the true and better Jonah who always loved his neighbor and never put himself first.

[37 : 42] Jesus is the true and better Jonah who did not cause the storm to fall on others but calmly carried the trouble of others to the cross. Jesus is the true and better Jonah who was not hurled into the sea but rather hung on the cross while all the furious wrath for sin was hurled on him.

Jesus is the true and better Jonah who did not merely cause the sea to calm but silence forever the cries of guilt and condemnation for the sins of those who would trust in him.

And it's so fitting to me the scene ends on these sailors. Did you notice fear repeated in this text? They feared when the storm hit. They feared greatly when Jonah said, I fear the Lord but I'm not following him. Verse 16 it says, the men feared the Lord exceedingly and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

Now were these guys Christians? I don't know. That's what people wrestle with. But it points forward to the Christian's fear. Once the fear of judgment transforms into a fear of worship and awe.

[39 : 04] That's what Jesus came to do. Horatio Bonar puts it very well. He spared not his son.

Tis this that bids the hard thought disappear. Tis this that silences each rising fear. He spared not his son.

Don't run in fear. The Lord is coming with mercy. It's the story of Jonah. It's the story of the Bible. Let us pray.

Father in heaven, we bow ourselves before you and confess our need for you. Lord, we're so thankful that you have sought us and found us and had mercy upon us.

In many ways, our life is just like Jonah's. We ran and you ran after. You ran harder. You ran further to rescue us from the wrath we deserve so that we might see the sacrifice you put forward in our place.

[40 : 33] Father, I do pray this morning that you would fill us with the Spirit such that this sacrifice would indeed silence every fear. Perfect love cast out fear that the cries and the gnawing finger points of guilt and condemnation would be silence again to hearing of the gospel.

Lord, that our hearts would be awakened to true joy not located in our circumstance of what's going on but located in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ in our place.

And all that we ultimately need you have supplied by grace. Father, we pray now that you would help us.

In Jesus' name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.

Amen.