

Jonah 2

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[0:00] Anyways, let me pray because I need that. Father, thank you so much for just your faithfulness to us.

It's amazing how you can take a passage of scripture and teach each and every one of us just what it is you have for us.

Give us hearts that are open and receptive and a willingness to hear what you would speak to us. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. It's been a month, month and a half since I was blessed with the opportunity to share.

And I started in the book of Jonah last time. And we're going to continue. You remember that Jonah is one of the minor prophets, referred to as the minor prophets.

And it's not that minor means of lesser importance. It means in the number of written pages, the minor prophets are smaller than the major prophets.

[1:34] Again, not having anything to do with lesser importance, but just a smaller amount of text in our scripture. Remember that God had spoke to Jonah, called him out on mission to go and speak to the Assyrians, particularly the capital city of Nineveh.

Jonah's not thrilled. He doesn't like the Ninevites or the Assyrians. Matter of fact, he hated them desperately. And he's disobedient.

He takes off in the opposite direction, goes down to the coast at Joppa, gets on a ship headed for Tarshish, which is in the complete opposite direction.

And it's interesting. I was thinking about that a little bit this morning. And the scripture gives us many, many examples of what not to do.

I mean, we look at the people that we read about in the scripture, and there's very few, and I can only think of two, in which God does not have something negative to say about them.

[3:07] I mean, again, you think about prophets, you think about the judges, you think about the apostles, and they're human.

Right? Right? Anyways, two that I remember, and there may be more, but Joseph out of the book of Genesis, perfect, wonderful example, I'd say with the exception of when he was a teenager, flaunting his new coat in front of his brothers and sharing a dream with his whole family.

Probably not the wisest thing to do, but as teens, as youth, we're not always the most wise. But God doesn't really correct him on that.

Daniel is the only other one that I remember from the scripture that's not criticized or put in his place by the Lord in some shape, form, or fashion.

All of that to say, it's important for us to remember the context of what we're looking at. This particular chapter has to do with God's discipline in Jonah's life.

[4:25] Now, difficulty comes, but we need to remember it is a disciplinary circumstance because of his disobedience.

So it's important that we keep that in mind because, again, difficulties come in all of our lives. It's not always that we're being disciplined. Sometimes it is the consequence of my choices.

Sometimes it's the consequences in my life of your choices or somebody I don't even know or just things happen kind of thing.

So, again, it's important for us to keep the context of what it is that we're looking at and don't let it bleed over, if I can use that expression, into something that it's not.

Okay? So, again, Jonah in his disobedience is headed off in the opposite direction. He goes down into the belly of the ship. God sends a storm.

[5:35] A storm such that the experienced sailors are freaking out. They're pitching their livelihood, the cargo, overboard in desperation to save their lives.

They're all calling out to their own gods, these myriad of pagan non-entities or demons at best, and it's not helping.

Right? The captain goes down into the hole, finds Jonah sleeping, wakes him up, and says, Dude, you got to pray.

We're all praying. You got to pray. We're going down. We're in a mess. Jonah's like, Yeah. It's me. He's like, What?

It's me. I'm a servant of the Most High God. And he wants me to go one way. I'm in the other way. Yeah, he's trying to get my attention.

[6:37] It's my fault. Right? And he goes up and he tells the sail. He's like, You throw me overboard. Everything's good. Like, we can't do that. It's like, Well, we're all going down.

You throw me over. And what do they do? They turn to the Lord. Said, If your God is doing this, we're going to pray to your God. And we can't throw you overboard, but we're going to pray to your God.

And finally, they're like, Okay, we got to throw you overboard. They're like, Lord, please. We have no choice. Be merciful to us. Out goes Jonah. Right? And that's where we pick up.

Jonah 1, verse 17, the last verse says, Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. I'm thinking, you know, here we are. We read Jonah and we think it's all about Jonah and it's all about the fish, but it's not. The subject is the Lord.

[7:43] This is all about the Lord and what he is doing. Right? It's not about Jonah. It's not about the fish. It's about the Lord.

The point is, God's the one who we will see that provides for Jonah's salvation, if you will, for his correction.

But he's providing for Jonah through all of this. Right? And he's in the midst of rebellion. The same way he's provided for us, for our salvation, for our deliverance from the rebellion that we were in, that we may be in today.

He's provided for our sin in a way that is much greater than a fish. Through the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

Now, Romans tells us that God demonstrates his own love toward us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Right? And again, this foreknowledge of God, that he knew Jonah was going to find himself in this place, and he prepared this fish beforehand.

[9:11] Right? Now, the Lord had, past tense. It's not like out of nowhere comes this fish that snatches up Jonah like he was a worm or a minnow.

God knew, and he set this all in motion before any of it took place. Right?

He had created this fish before Jonah ever hit the water. Okay? And in the same way for you and I, the book of Revelation tells us that Jesus was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

From the very beginning, God knew the cost of each one of our lives. He says that Christ was slain from the very foundation.

Before creation, he knew the cost. Yeah, he did it anyway. And again, those things just amaze me when I think about that.

[10:26] Okay? All along, he's had this plan of reaching out to the lost, of redeeming people. And again, our context is what? God wants Jonah to carry a message to the Assyrian people in the capital city of Nineveh, who were horrible people.

And we talked about this a month or so ago, right? To the extent that they would skin people alive and hang their skins on the walls of the city. But he wants to redeem them.

So that's the context. Okay? And so the Lord has prepared this great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Now, again, there's always skeptics of the scripture. And people are like, there's no way. There's no way that the fish is going to swallow a guy and he's going to live for three days inside.

And you can't do that. It's like, well, yes, you can. And yes, it has happened. And I'm not going through a list. You can look it all up on the wonderful internet and find all kinds of examples.

[11:47] One I did read was that, I forget what kind of a whale it was, a blue whale or something like that, had a 40-foot long, fully intact squid inside.

Okay? That's a whole lot bigger than you or I, 40 feet. None of us are that tall. But the point is, you can read historical documents now on the internet and find out that, yes, that in fact has happened and can happen.

Okay? Skeptics can find whatever they want. Always. But the reality is what it comes down to is not about the fish or the whale or whatever and debating on all of that.

Was it a shark? Was it a whale? Was it some kind of a fish? The question is, how big is your God? Right? It's not about the fish.

It's about God. And that's the important factor. Right? If mankind, man can build a submarine that holds hundreds to thousands of people for months on end under the water, God can certainly create a fish to swallow up Jonah and preserve him for three days if he chooses to.

[13 : 13] Right? Again, if you believe the foundations, Genesis 1.1, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, there's nothing that he can't do.

Right? But if you deny this, how do you hold any of the rest of it? So again, that's the point. That's the foundation. Right? It's not if we can figure out how the fish did this.

But do we believe God? And do we take him at his word? Again, that has to be our foundation. And we will see, we look at, we sang about Jesus, the cross, the sacrifice.

I think about that. We kind of have an understanding. But do we really understand? Right? How does a man hanging on the cross, in the middle of two other men hanging on the cross, how is that different?

Or how is that different than the myriad of people that were crucified in that time in the world? Yet, the scripture tells us that he bore the fullness of the wrath of God because your sin, my sin, was placed on him thousands of years ago.

[14 : 48] And he took that and he paid the price for it. I think it's easier to figure out how a fish could swallow a dude and he stay alive than comprehend the greatness of the sacrifice on our behalf.

But do we believe God at his word? And again, that's what it comes down to. How do we wrap our minds around that?

That's why it's called faith. Taking God at his word. All right? Because he says, if you believe in your heart, if you trust me in my provision, if you take me at my word, you'll be saved.

You will have eternal life. Again, what's that? I don't know what that all means. Again, we get some information that gives us glimpses.

But I don't think the fullness of what that means we can comprehend. Now, Jesus tells us, now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the one and only true God.

[16 : 12] We have eternal life today. We have eternal life today in the ability to have a relationship with the Lord. But that's going to grow and blossom into so much more than we can even begin to get our mind around.

So again, it's all about how big our God is. Don't get hung up on the fish and all of the details and on Jonah. It's all about God. And that's what we need to keep our mind on.

Trusting him, taking him at his word. And so he's in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. And the Lord, or the Lord, and Jonah prayed to the Lord, his God, from the fish's belly.

Then Jonah prayed. Then Jonah prayed. When did Jonah pray?

Three days after being in the belly of the fish. Not day one. Not when he hit the water first, right?

[17 : 28] Not when he sees the fish coming. Because you know, they were playing the Jaws tune and the fish was coming through the water like this. He's going, oh man.

Nope. Three days. And I'm thinking, that is one thick, obstinate, hard-headed, hard-hearted man. Anybody relate besides me? I say often, I'm the candidate for two-by-four therapy. And they're like, what? I said, hmm, it takes the two-by-four back of the head to get my attention sometimes.

That's what the Lord is doing to Jonah. Two-by-four therapy. Big fish. Three days. What's that mean? What's it like to be inside of a fish?

It's dark. It stinks. Probably getting slapped around by fish guts and seaweed.

[18 : 37] Three days. And what's he saying? I am not going to Nineveh. Ain't happening?

No way. Not doing it. The Lord's like, fine. Sit there. Three days.

But how patient, or as the old King James says, long-suffering, is the Lord with the likes of me and the likes of you.

It's like, oh, however long it takes, I can wait. I love you enough to wait. But that's what he's doing. He's got Jonah in place. And it's almost like it's a glimpse of hell, if you will.

[19 : 36] Because, again, the Lord's like, if you're going to run from me, so be it. The consequences are yours.

But the scripture describes hell as a lake which burns with fire and brimstone. A place of outer darkness.

Where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Again, we can't get our minds around what that means. But the scripture gives us some insight.

It's a place of torment. And, again, this inside the fish is not a wonderful place. The descriptions we get from the scripture is what hell is like is not a wonderful place.

Right? Jesus talks in Luke 16 about it's a place where you will long for a drop of water to be placed on your tongue.

[20 : 52] And it never comes. Not a good place. But, again, God, in his grace and his mercy, is looking to give Jonah another chance.

He's looking to give you and I another chance that we would repent. That we would turn. And repent simply means to turn.

Okay? The key is to turn where? Or, better yet, to whom? We can change our direction and go from one bad thing to another bad thing and call that, well, I changed.

I repented. The key is to turn to the Lord. And that's what he's waiting for. He's waiting for Jonah to look to him.

And he's willing to wait however long Jonah determines that is. Okay? So, you know, and I think, again, of myself or for you and I, it's like it doesn't matter where we are, what we're hung up with today, what we've done in the past.

[22 : 15] God simply wants us to turn to him, to look to him. And so, again, finally, after the three days, Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly.

And he said, I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction. And he answered me, out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.

Now, Sheol says out of the belly of Sheol. Sheol is the place of the dead. Okay? We see it referred to in the scripture as, and make the connection in our mind to what we would call hell.

But it's also, back in Luke's gospel, referred to as paradise. Because, again, it's where the dead go prior to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

Because now he tells us, you and I, for us to, quote, unquote, die, is to be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord. Prior to that is Sheol, the place of the dead.

[23 : 39] There's one aspect that is called the place of torment. There's another aspect referred to as paradise or Abraham's bosom.

Okay? But it's the place of the dead. But that's what we're reading what Jonah is saying. This is his prayer that out of the belly of death, I cried out to you.

So it's important for us to grasp that. That's how he's seeing his situation. And we're going to see as we come through, this is his prayer.

Okay? This chapter is primarily Jonah's prayer. And it is full of scripture. Matter of fact, what we have is primarily scripture.

We're going to look at a number of psalms as we come through and see how he matches his prayer is in alignment with the scripture.

[24 : 49] So what's he doing when he prays? He's praying the scripture. Now, where does he get the scripture? Does he have his Bible? I'll say the benefit of the doubt.

Maybe. Not very likely. Maybe. It's dark and it's wet. It don't work. He don't have a cell phone. Doesn't have the internet.

He has God's word. He has God's word in his heart. That only happens when we are children of the word.

Okay? He's praying the truth of God's word back to the Lord because he has hidden God's word in his heart.

That's on Jonah. That's on you and I. We don't want to wait till we find ourselves in a pit. In the place of the dead.

[26 : 05] In a huge problem to all of a sudden go, oh no. What does God say about my situation? What kind of a promise can I hold on to?

That's not the time to try to figure it out. We got to know the Lord. We got to know his word. We have to be able to grasp onto those things.

And turn it right around and take it right back to the Lord. It says, you said. This is your promise. I'm reminding you. And that's what Moses does.

You go back and read through the Exodus. Moses takes God's promises and takes them right back to the Lord. He says, you said. X, Y, Z.

He says, God, you said this. And it gives us assurance. But that's what Jonah does.

[27:11] He's taking these things back to the Lord. And he says, what?

I cried out because of my affliction. Trials, struggles, discipline.

Changes our focus, doesn't it? When we find ourselves in a mess. What's important? Changes.

Comes into focus. One commentator I read some time ago says, God has a nut cracker for every kind of nut. And Jonah was a hard nut.

But his experience in the fish cracked him easily. God knew what it would take. Right? He knows what it's going to take in my life and in your life to get our attention.

[28:18] And he's willing to allow those things or to bring those things to get our attention.

To get our focus where it needs to be. The question is, what kind of hardship do we have to go through before this nut is cracked?

Again, that's on us. And we don't stop to think about that. David said, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.

These, O God, you will not despise. But what's it take to break us? Before I was afflicted, I went astray.

Now I keep your word. Before I was afflicted, I went astray. Then what?

[29:37] Then comes the affliction. Why? So that I'll keep your word. So that I'll look to you.

So that I don't trust in me. Or I don't look to all these other things. But I go to your word. So that I keep it.

Another one. It is good for me that I've been afflicted.

That I might learn your statutes. It was good for me that I was afflicted. Not in the midst of my affliction, it's not good.

But as we grow in our relationship with the Lord and the intimacy that comes out of the affliction, it was a good thing.

[30:39] It wasn't fun. It wasn't easy. But because of where I am today in relationship with the Lord, because of my affliction, it was good.

If the affliction causes us to grow in our relationship with the Lord, then we can see that it's good.

Again, God brings chastisement into our life. And again, context. This is chastisement. Because we need it.

Because he loves us. Because he wants us to look to him. Because he wants us to grow in our relationship with him and learn what it means to have that intimacy with him.

And when we come with a broken heart, he receives us. And he brings the restoration.

[31:48] He hears us. He answers us. And he says, And he says, In my distress, I cried to the Lord, and he heard me. So again, we see the basis through the scripture of Jonah's prayer.

It goes on in verse 3. He says, You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surround me, and all your billows and your waves pass over me.

You laid me in the lowest pit, in the darkness, in the depths. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you have afflicted me with all of your ways.

And I highlight this beautiful little word, Selah. You ever read through the Psalms and see these little spaces, and off to the right-hand column, it says, Selah.

That's actually part of the scripture. What's it there for? Does anybody know? You don't have to raise your hand. You could nod your head. What the word Selah, means?

[33:04] A couple do, because we talk about this on Thursday nights. Selah means, think about it. Ponder that. Okay?

Let's look. You laid me in the lowest pit, in the darkness, in the depths. Your wrath lays heavy upon me.

You have afflicted me with your waves. Now think about that. Who's you? That's God. The psalmist is saying, look, you're in this place because God has placed you there.

He has allowed it. Now, chew on that a while. It's like, whoa. But in reflection to Jonah's prayer, what's Jonah saying?

I'm here, Lord, Psalm 42, 7.

[34:31] Deep, calls unto deep, at the noise of your waterfalls, and all your waves and billows have gone over me.

God's in control. He's in the depths. Maybe. He's inside the fish. He don't know how deep he is or not. But, he's acknowledging God's in control.

Right? So, Jonah understands this, and this is all come at God's hands. It's not the sailor's fault. It's not your fault that I'm in this place. It's not somebody else's fault. And again, we look to point fingers that it's somebody else's fault when it's my stiff-neckedness, my thick-headedness, and God's response that says, ah, we need to get your attention.

And he allows me or places me in the difficulty in order to get my attention.

[35:51] So, the realization and the recognition is setting in for Jonah. Okay? But, what's that mean?

God's in control. And we think, God's in control? This is a horrible situation, yet God's in control? You want to see one much worse? Read the first couple of chapters of Job.

not a good thing, but God's in control. So, again, it's not necessarily that I understand the circumstances of my situation.

Most importantly, it is the realization that God is fully aware and he's in control. Jonah continues. He says, then I said, I have been cast out of your sight, yet I will look again toward your holy temple.

[36:58] The reality is, sin separates us from God. Right? It drives a wedge in the relationship. It doesn't mean he can't see me.

it means he doesn't look upon me. He knows, but the fellowship is broken.

The relationship, the intimacy is no longer there. Not because of God, because of me. And the picture is he can't see me no more.

I can't see you, so if I can't see you, you can't see me. Right? Kind of like a little kid with a blanket over my head. He can't see me. But the Lord knows and he sees.

But Jonah makes this constant conscious decision and he turns and he says, I will look again toward your holy temple.

[38:07] I will. A definite decision. Right? And we're thinking, wait, you're in a fish.

How do you look towards the temple? Where is the temple when you're in a fish? In which way are you going? And you don't know. It's not about the temple. The temple was what?

God's appointed place to worship. the place where he chose to dwell. So, for the Old Testament saints to look to the temple meant they looked to the presence of the Lord.

And that's what Jonah is saying. I'm going to look to you. I will look to you. He's making that decisive decision.

No longer running from God, now looking to God. Right? We talked about repentance. No longer running, now looking.

[39:15] That evidence of repentance. As for me, I will come into your house in the multitude of your mercy. in fear of you, I will worship towards your holy temple.

So, again, we're seeing the foundation of his prayer. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before your eyes. Nevertheless, you heard my voice and my supplications when I cried to you.

So, the assurance that he has in knowing when I cry to you, you hear me. Based on what?

The scripture. He has that assurance. So, he turns to the Lord, he cries out to the Lord, he's looking to God and to his mercy and his grace.

And he continues in verse five, he says, the waters surround me even to my soul. The deep closed around me, weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains, meaning the very depths.

[40:28] The earth with its bars closed behind me forever. Yet you have brought up my life from the pit. Oh Lord, my God.

I think just how wonderful. Right? I'm in the depths. I'm in the pit. Everything is against me. But I look to you.

I call out to you. And in your mercy you rescued me. Again from the Psalms. Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

I sank in deep mire where there is no standing. I have come into the deep waters! Where the floods overflow me. So again, God's the one who lifts us out of the pit.

Again, regardless of what the pit is or the depths that we've gone to, he's able and he will lift us.

[41:35] Right? Isaiah 59 says that God's hand is not shortened that he cannot save. It's not a matter of what we have or haven't done.

It's a matter of who God is. Now there are consequences to decisions we make. But those consequences don't have to be such that it affects our relationship with the Lord. It may well affect relationship with other people. But God can still reach us. We look at, we think about criminals and I'll use that term broadly. But we look at some of the things that people do that are horrendous and they deserve and the consequence is that they spend the rest of their life incarcerated. But God's heart is still toward them that they would not perish! But have life! His arm is not too short that he can't reach out to what we would call the most vile and save them. [43 : 11] We're talking about God trying to reach out to the most vile through Jonah and save them.

Jonah's beginning to get some understanding in this. He's beginning to get some understanding of this. He's got a long ways to go. Right? Me too. But it's starting to sink in. So all of that to say no matter what we have done no matter what we may be entangled with today God's able. If we're willing to look to him to cry out to him he's able. He's the God who restores. he's the one who lifts us from the depths. And when? When my soul fainted within me. [44 : 27] When I come to the end of myself. When I acknowledge I can't do this. I remember the Lord and my prayer went up to you in your holy temple.

When Jonah thinks I'm done. I can't. I can't. I can't. The Lord's like finally. Finally. They're not correct. when he remembered the Lord. And I think what a thing, right? What's it going to take for you, for me, to remember the Lord? To look to him? again, the Lord brings this into Jonah's life to get his attention. Did Jonah have to get thrown out of a ship? Did he have to get swallowed by a fish? No. He just had to look to the Lord. [45 : 56] Trust him. be obedient to what he was called to. Put his attitude aside. It's easy to stand up here and say, you know what?

I can be the most attitude filled kind of person you could ever imagine. No. Yeah. But I hope I don't have to be swallowed by no fish. to get my attention. Right? So, he remembers the Lord. In my distress, I called upon the Lord. I cried out to my God. He heard my voice from his temple and my cry came before him even to his ears. The Lord hears us. He wants to hear us. He longs to hear us. Continues in verse 8. Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy. [47 : 08] But I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving. I will pray what I have vowed salvation is of the Lord. And think idolatry.

Where does idolatry come into all of this? Well, the question is, what's idolatry? We think of, you know, the little icons or the statues and everybody bows before the statue and that's what we think idolatry is. No. yes, but no. It's anything we place or allow or look to in place of the Lord. So, if I look to a relationship with my wife, my friends, whatever the case may be, as opposed to looking to and trusting in the Lord, that's a form of idolatry. If I trust in my bank account, and not trusting in the Lord, that's idolatry. So, whatever we would look to or trust in, instead of turning to the Lord, that's another God. [48 : 32] Because we're not looking to Him. And what's Jonah's idol? Jonah. Right? I'm not going there.

I don't like those people. I hate those people. I, I, I, I. Jonah is acknowledging his elevation of himself over the priorities of God. Sound familiar? I'm not going to even ask the Lord because I don't want Him to send me to China, to India, to wherever that I'm afraid He might, why? Because it might affect me and my comforts and what I want, so I'm not even going to go there. That's a form of idolatry. But that's what He's looking at, that's what He's grasping. Again, what do we look to? What have we allowed to take the place of prominence in our life that should only belong to the Lord? [49 : 52] life. And it can be good things. Relationships can be wonderful things. Right?

Our health, exercise, all can be good things, but we can't let them get or take an inappropriate place of priority in our lives before the things of the Lord.

Again, that's the key. Now, a side note, if you will. Bible study help.

There, I'll put it that way. One way to help understand and gain meaning from the Scriptures is look at various translations. I want to look at a couple of them at verse 8 to help us get a better grasp. Out of the New Living Translation, verse 8 says, those who worship false gods turn their back on all of God's mercies.

[51:07] Okay, so again, we're talking about idolatry and consequences of, this is how the New Living Translation words that. the NIV, those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.

Whoa! The ESV, those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.

So, the consequences, not trusting in the Lord, but trusting in myself, because I can be my own idol. Again, it's not the little statue, but the consequence is what? We miss out on God's love, his grace, his mercy.

disobedience has a cost. And that's what Jonah's getting at. There was a cost for him not following the Lord and putting himself first.

[52:24] There's a cost. And it's a heavy cost. Okay? And it's not that God's grace and his mercy and his love are not there because that's who God is.

It's that I turn my back on all of those things. That's the issue. And, you know, we think about these things and we relate it to salvation salvation.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever would believe in him would not perish but would have everlasting or eternal life.

Again, available to anyone and to everyone. And the Bible lays out how that all came about. Jesus, again, sacrificial death on the cross, taking the fullness of God's wrath that was due to each and every one of us and every human being throughout all of history upon himself and paid that price. and was buried and rose again so that we could have that promise of new life for everyone.

[54:05] I think, but that's pretty narrow. I don't like that choice. I want my own choice. why would this God of love you talk so much about send people to hell?

That don't sound very loving. Well, let me see. His grace, his mercy, his love are all provided for right here.

But I don't like that choice. I want to do things my own way. There ought to be more ways. I don't like that one. I want these ones. God's offer is still here.

But if we're unwilling to turn and to look to him, that's where we're at. They refuse, right?

And again, speaking of Jesus, the scripture tells us what? There is salvation in any other. for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

[55:22] That's it. That's the only choice. It's there. It's available. For salvation is of the Lord.

Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing is upon your people. Think about it. Think about that. Jonah is.

He's coming to that place. Jonah acknowledges this and he offers a sacrifice of praise that says lifting the voice of thanksgiving.

He can't offer burnt offerings. What can he do? lift his voice. Sing praises unto the Lord.

He's acknowledging. He's giving thanks. God's the only solution for his situation. He understands that it's not about his nationality.

[56:30] It's not about his church membership. It's not about baptism. It's not about any of these things. Salvation is of the Lord. Bottom line. And James points that out in saying that true faith is then demonstrated by a changed life.

By a different perspective. Jonah says, I will pay or fulfill what I have vowed.

He's agreeing to follow through. It's not just lip service. It's going to change how he lives his life. Okay?

And so he's coming to this place of repentance and surrender to the Lord and realizing that there's nothing he can do for a situation. I share over and over again.

It's not that I like big problems. But big problems leave me no other choice but to look to the Lord because there is no way I'm going to do anything to get me out of this.

[57:46] So in that sense it's good. He's realizing that. Right? Has his situation changed? No.

His heart has changed. He's still in a fish but his heart has changed. Right?

He's looking to the Lord and he's praising the Lord in spite of his circumstances. In the midst of the circumstances he's praising the Lord. Think how do you do that?

Your heart changes you give thanks and praise to the Lord. You understand he's got it I can't do nothing God I'm looking to you cool let's see what you're going to do. Right?

You and I today the worst thing that could happen to us we go immediately into the presence of the Lord. Why do we worry?

[58:44] Well I worry about the process not the reason not the end result. And that's what Jonah's coming to right?

Verse 10 so the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. God speaks the fish obeys.

Imagine that. How simple. He spoke to the fish the fish that he created to swallow Jonah and he says Ralph go.

See I named Jonah's fish Ralph because he spews Jonah up on the shore. or he hurls him. Take your pick. My mind goes there.

But then you wonder okay where on the shore? Is he all the way to Nineveh or is he back at Joppa? I don't know. I have my thoughts.

[59:49] The scripture doesn't tell us. But what does this look like? The dude's been in a fish in the dark for three days. Not only in a fish but in a fish's stomach.

What's in a stomach? Stomach acid. Okay? You smell the high heaven like rotten fish.

You got no hair left on your body because the acid burned it all off and you're probably a little bit pale. And you're on a beach in a pile of fish vomit.

what a sight. Now, I tend to think he's in Joppa.

And you say, why Joppa? Because where did he leave from? Joppa. Scripture tells us, I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

[60:58] Remember therefore from where you have fallen, repent, and do the first works. Jesus' instruction to the church of Ephesus is what? Remember where you went off course?

Go back there. It's a do-over. Go back there and do it again. This time get it right. God gives us do-overs. And I think, again, this is just me, not thus saith the Lord, because the scripture doesn't tell us.

But I think he went back to Joppa because people there may well have seen him running the other way. But even for Jonah, he's back to where he veered away from the Lord.

Now he's going to be right back in the same place to make the right decision. And sometimes God does that. He brings us right back to where we left and gives us a do-over.

I remember a pastor sharing years ago at a men's conference saying, gentlemen, gentlemen, it's a pass-pass test.

[62:11] You're going to get it. The question is, how many times are you going to take the test? You will get it right.

you get to decide how many times you go through it until you do. Jonah's getting it right. Now he's going to go back and do the right thing.

Right? Psalm 145, the Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The goodness or the kindness of God leads us to repentance. Salvation is of the Lord.

That's his heart. And 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.

[63:18] Right? Again, pointing us to Jesus and what he's done on our behalf. Why?

Because salvation is of the Lord for our salvation. Right? And just as Jonah, we need the power of the Lord working in our lives to deliver me from me, from this flesh, to redeem me, to save me.

Right? And we're seeing Jonah return or turn return to the Lord. It's like wonderful.

wonderful. But if you know the story, you know the account. I don't like story. The account we will see in time, it's got a long ways to go.

Which one of us don't? Right? The promise is, when I see him, I will be like him.

[64:36] I look so forward to that day. Because that means this flesh of unrighteousness is gone.

And I will be robed in the fullness of Jesus and not deal with the things that I deal with. But in the meantime, it's an ongoing process. So Jonah hasn't arrived.

Realize we haven't arrived. But keeping our eyes on Jesus and the scripture says that he will change us, transform us from glory to glory more and more into the image of his son.

But the Lord meets us in the storms, even the ones we bring upon ourselves. And like Jonah, we've been given a task.

The scripture tells us that we have the ministry of reconciliation. What's God's concern?

[65:50] Bringing people unto himself. All of this is going on in Jonah's life. Why? God wants him to go to a lost and dying world.

God's That's what he wants from you and I. He's given us the ministry of reconciliation.

Right? To live before the world in such a way that we look like a crazy white, hairless dude crawling out of a pile of fish vomit.

what? The old King James uses the word peculiar, special, not crazy, not goofy, different.

Our relationship with the Lord should cause us to look different than the world. that's what he's called us to.

[66:58] So that when people come up and say, why are you different? We would then be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks to give a reason for the hope that we have.

Why is it when XYZ happened to you, you didn't react this way? you ask, dude, you sure you want the answer?

He's not calling us to run around and beat people up with our Bibles. Some people come and ask you, you answer because how you live, the choices you make, how you handle difficulties is different.

why? Let me tell you. Jonah is different.

And now he is a visual testimony, a visual witness of God's work in his life and he's going to walk amongst people that are going to look at him and ask questions.

[68:18] that's what the Lord wants of you and I. Because God's concern is for the people of Nineveh.

Jonah is an instrument. The fish is an instrument. God's heart is for the people of Nineveh. Again, what he would desire of us.

He uses the storm. He uses the fish. His will is that none would perish, that all would come to repentance.

Let's pray. Father, thank you that you know us all too well. Thank you that you use imperfect people like Jonah.

and like him, we have a long ways to go. But we're thankful that you're patient. Help us to have hearts that look to you sooner than later.

[69:36] Help us to see people as you see them. And to live honorably and upright before you. To be people of your word, to grasp your promises that when we find ourselves in difficulties, we know that we can trust you.

And we can take you at your word. and again as you would lead us through or deliver us from, our light would so shine before men that they would see the evidence of you in our lives and they would look to you.

Thank you again for your faithfulness to your word. We praise you for the gift of your son. It's in his name we pray.

Amen.