

Chastisement Clears the Vision

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word.

Take your Bibles if you would and open them to the book of Jonah, chapter 2. Somewhere along the way when we start running from God and doing our own thing, we tend to think that everything's okay.

We tend to think that, hey, I'm doing all right and I'm getting away with it and apparently I'm in good shape and God's with me and there's no real problem. That's kind of what it seems to have happened with Jonah.

Jonah ran from the Lord and he went down to the place to buy his chicken. He finally goes down into the ship. But in chapter 2, he's down in the belly of a whale. But I don't know where you are today.

So I titled the message, Chastisement Clears the Vision. You know, you don't see too good when you're doing wrong. You don't see too good when you're not obeying God.

[1 : 00] Once you let sin creep in, it clouds the vision. All of a sudden, serving God's not as important. All of a sudden, whatever God's will is, isn't as important.

All of a sudden, praying and Bible reading and getting a hold of God and doing the right thing with your life's not near as important. You've kind of let that stuff cloud your mind.

But in Jonah chapter 2, God's going to clear up his vision real good. And he is going to be looking right back where he's supposed to look by the end of the chapter.

So I would just like to challenge you today. Maybe you came and you are born again. And you're on your way to heaven. But the truth is, you've been living cold and distant.

You used to be really on fire. You used to really be serving God. And he used to really have a prominent place in your life. But the truth is, you've just been kind of slipping back. You ain't doing anything really bad.

[1 : 54] You just aren't on fire. Kind of like your marriage, you know? You got married and, boy, you were passionately in love. And every time you went by each other, it was a sweet word and a kiss. And you were really happy with each other.

And then time went by and it was like two ships passing in the night. You didn't even necessarily see each other. You were there. You're almost like roommates. And you don't want to be like that. And so something needs to shake you and wake you up.

That's where Jonah is. By the end of this chapter, Jonah's going to be going, man, I'm looking back to the temple. Man, salvation is of the Lord. And he's going to have a hunger to serve God.

Where are you this morning? Where are you? Are you close to the Lord? Are you serving the Lord? Is he working in your life? Do you really know that, hey, man, I am really in tune with the Lord?

If not, maybe today is that day. Some of you came today and you're here. It's a holiday weekend. You're traveling or whatever. You came to church, but you're not saved. You're not going to go to heaven when you die.

[2 : 53] You don't know that your sins have been forgiven, but they can be. He's paid your sin debt and you can accept that gift today. So I'm going to challenge you before the time is up to really look at your life and find out where you are.

Go with me to Jonah chapter 2 and verse 1. Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord. Underline that. Then Jonah prayed. Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord, his God, out of the fish's belly.

Then Jonah prayed out of the fish's belly. That's a good place to pray. I'm not sure when he started praying. I'm not sure if he started praying just as they threw him over the boat and he started heading toward the water.

I would have been praying by the time they grabbed me by the ankles and the arms and started throwing me in the air. I would have started praying. I would have started praying before they actually grabbed me probably. But I definitely would have been praying while I was in the air.

And I would have been praying when I was heading down towards the water. And then when I got into the water and I looked down and saw this big monstrous fish coming my way, I would have been saying, oh, Lord God in heaven.

[3 : 57] I would have gotten myself in a heap of mess. And that's what the Bible said. He prayed. He prayed from the whale's belly. Look at Jonah 2.2. He prayed from the fish's belly.

It seems like he had to get there. It says, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord. He heard me out of the belly of hell, cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

I wonder how long he needed to be in that belly before he prayed. I wonder how long he had to be there. He prayed because of, look at verse 2 and underline it, because of his affliction.

Not his affection for the Lord, but his affliction. Too many of us wait till we're in danger before we pray. We should pray because we delight in God, not because we're in danger.

Well, at least it's good to get to the point we pray. And he felt like he was praying from the belly of hell. Look at that in verse 2. He said the belly of hell. He's like, man, it can't get any worse than it is now.

[5 : 00] I have sunk down. I'm in a whale's belly. And things are really messed up. It seems like we pray out to God to seek his face when we're left without any options.

Most often that's when we really pray, when we're left without options. Corrie Ten Boom, the lady you saw about the drama that we had here at the church, said she asked the question, is the Lord Jesus your spare tire or your steering wheel?

You know, most of us get through life doing just fine, driving a car any way we want. And when we finally get in trouble and we need help, we stop the car and go back to back and say, hey, Jesus, I'm going to need you for a little while until I can get my tire fixed and get myself back on the road.

And that's kind of how we live. That's what old Jonah's doing. Everything was doing fine until he messed up. Is he the one we turn to in tragedy and is that the only time we turn to him? That's what's going on here.

Jonah's praying because he's helpless, hopeless, nowhere to go, not able to do anything but to trust in God.

[6 : 04] Nowhere to go, nowhere to turn. He's in the belly of a fish. Let's just be honest. You can't get more graphic than that. You've seen the artwork they put up before the message starts and they show the whale and they show the big mouth fish and they saw this little guy falling that way.

And so that's where he is. But you know that's where you need to get to get saved? If you're here today, you think, man, my life stinks.

Sin's beat me up. Peace is gone. Hope is gone. I got money. I got stuff.

But I'm like at the end of my world. I don't know where to turn. And I'm hopeless. That might be the best thing in the world for you. Because when you get there and you have nowhere to turn.

Somebody was giving me their testimony this week and they said, it's like I got to the end of myself. And when I got to the end of myself, that's when I needed Christ.

[7 : 14] I have a friend who lives in Ohio. And he was a big time gambler. They used to fly the planes over to get him and take him so he could spend more money, make more money, lose more money.

And he was living the high roller's life. And he said things started crashing all around him. His whole life was falling apart. And he said he was in a parking lot. And he said, you got to understand, I was living the high life, but I was so empty.

That might be where you are. That may be where Jonah was. And he said, I got out of my car and I got down on the hot pavement and I prayed. And I said, God, I ain't got anywhere else to turn.

And that's the day he got saved. And ever since he's been serving the Lord Jesus, a whole life changed because of that happening in his life. That's where you need to get saved. You must realize that you need God.

And you can't save yourself. You'll never be good enough. You can't get baptized enough times. You can't take enough Bible studies. You can't go to church enough.

[8 : 12] You can't give enough money. You can't do anything to make God save you. Nobody has anything in them that makes them worth saving.

The fact is, that's the hardest part about getting saved. When you're so rich like you are living in America in Alpharetta. Because you got to look at him and say, I'm a sinner.

I'm broken. I need help. I'm at the bottom of the barrel. And that's what happens to get saved. You come to a place, you say, I have sinned against the holy God.

I have sinned against the holy God. My life is a mess. I'm destroyed. I need to be saved today. It's a pride-destroying statement.

But it really has to come from your heart if you're really going to get saved. You got to realize you need God. And you can't save yourself. It means coming to the end of you so that you'll trust God to step in and make the difference.

[9 : 10] Here's the beautiful thing in the passage. Even from the whale's belly, God heard his prayer. Go back to Jonah 2.2 and look at your verse right there in front of you.

The verse says, out of the belly of hell cried and you heard my voice. So you're here this morning and your life's a mess. And you're beginning to think it's not worth living.

And you're beginning to think, I don't know what I can do. Life seems to be over. It's like nobody cares and nobody's here. But in the middle of your anxiety, in the middle of your destruction, in the middle of the whale's belly, you cry out and he will hear.

No matter what it took, God stood ready to hear Jonah's prayer. God's ready to hear you no matter how much of a mess you have made of things. God is a God that hears and answers prayer.

What needs to happen to get you back on your knees to God in prayer? You can pray because you love God and not because you're in trouble. You can pray out of affection and not out of affliction.

[10 : 11] You can pray out of delight and not out of danger. Isn't it time we went back to praying? Can I get an amen right there? Isn't it time you start to realize, he's really God. He really hears and answers prayer.

I don't need to be in the belly of a fish. Fact is, I'll be honest with you, I'd rather talk to him now. I do not want to get to the belly of the fish. And I have been in the belly of the fish.

Not literally, but I have been in my life where it was like I didn't know where to turn or what to do. I felt like that seaweed was wrapped around my head. I felt like I was drowning. I felt like I had nowhere to go.

And I cried out, Tim, he's heard me and helped me. But I'd rather pray while I'm enjoying things. I'd rather pray because I'm in love, not because I'm under the law. I'd rather pray because I delight in him and not because of the danger.

Jonah chapter 2 and verse 3. In Jonah chapter 2 and verse 3, Jonah acknowledges, realizes, accepts that it was God that disciplined him. I'd like you to listen to this part.

[11 : 15] You see, you thought it was coincidence. And you thought it was other human beings doing this. And you don't really pay attention that God is at work in your life.

I mean, Jonah's in the middle of a ship. And the ship is about to go down in the ocean. And everybody's trying to figure out what to do. And Jonah realizes this isn't just a storm. This isn't just a meteorological event.

This isn't just a hurricane coming through. God is trying to talk to me. And so he wakes up. That chastisement cleared his vision.

Jonah chapter 2, verse 3. Underline this in your Bible. Thou hast cast me into the deep in the midst of the seas. And the floods come past me. Underline this. You threw me in the deep.

Look at that. Thou, you, threw me in the deep. The sailors weren't the ones that had caused Jonah to be in the sea and in the whale's belly. It was God doing a work in his life.

[12 : 15] Could you stop a second? Listen to me just a second. It's those dumb sailors. And their superstition. That's why they threw me overboard. It's the storm.

That's what happened there. The market took the wrong turn. We've got a recession going in the country. We've got a way of making up an excuse. Instead of saying, are you dealing with me in here?

Are you working in my life? Should I be paying attention to you? We typically don't pray that way. To be honest. I think maybe back in the old days you just didn't have enough TV and news and all that junk to realize God wasn't at work.

Maybe them old timers 100 years ago thought God was really doing something. Maybe it's time we thought God was doing something. Go with me if you would to Hebrews chapter 12. And I know you've been there several times.

But Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 5 is the way you're going to look at how this is happening today in you. You say, Austin, how can you make the comparison about Jonah and discipline?

[13 : 15] Is that biblically true for us? I think I can show you that it is. How are you responding when God's disciplining you? I'm just preaching the Bible here.

I'm just going through the passage. But some of you are sitting there thinking, I don't really like this. I think somebody told him about me. I don't know why. He seems to be honing in on me.

What's he doing? That bony fat finger of his seems like 12 foot long and in my nose. But the truth is, God is at work in your life.

And can I just go ahead and tell you, I don't know if one of you that this is happening. It's just a Bible truth. And so I'm going to say it. And you're going to know if he's talking to you. Oh, me. In Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 5, you can decide how you'll respond to his correction.

Hebrews 12, 5, the Bible says, And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chasing of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.

[14 : 22] Underline this, rebuked of him. There are times when I'm alone studying my Bible and praying, and I just feel like he goes, That verse is for you, buddy.

And I'm like, I'm just studying my Bible. I'm just an innocent guy studying the Bible. And I sometimes think, I wonder if anybody's ever seen this verse. I wonder if they all know it's got my name on it.

You ever had that happen to you? Sometimes I've been known to say ugly things to people, and at the very minute I say, man, my conscience punches me. There have been times when I was doing something I ought not to do, and I'm like, whoa, I shouldn't have done that.

And you say, where'd that come from? We had this lady in Peru. Her name was Elba. Elba. And Elba came to me one Sunday, came to church one Sunday night. She'd gotten saved. I led her to Christ out on her little farm that they lived on, which you wouldn't call a farm, but their little plot of land where they lived.

And I led her to Christ with some other people who were there, and she accepted Christ. And she was a fallen down drunk. I mean, the girls stayed drunk all the time. And Elba got saved. She was, I don't know, 30-ish, 40-ish.

[15 : 28] She got saved, and all of a sudden there was this joy in her face and happiness beyond what you could ever understand her. I mean, she changed. Boy, God did something. How many of y'all been there? Say amen.

And she came to church one Sunday, and she looked like a Mack truck had run her over. She was haggard. She was tired. She was crying. She was upset. And she came up to me and said, can I have a word with you?

And so I always sat on the platform of my little church there, and people could come up and talk to me. So she sat up there in the chairs, and we sat there on the platform, and she said, I lost it. I said, what did you lose?

She said, you know, I got saved, but I ain't saved no more. It's terrible. It's terrible. My whole life's terrible. I said, well, what happened, Elba?

She said, I got drunk. I got drunk again. She said, no, I feel terrible. I don't feel like God's happy with me anymore. I said, Elba, did you ever feel like that before you got saved?

[16 : 25] She said, no, I got drunk all the time, and it was always okay. But it don't feel good this time. I said, that's a really good thing, ain't it? Rebuked of the Lord. Underline that, rebuked of the Lord.

But how do you handle that? Do you fight against it? Do you get mad about it? Look at that underline despise not in verse 5. Do you despise his correction? Do you fight with him? Underline faint.

Nor faint. Underline that in your verse. Nor faint. Do you get discouraged? It's like, it seems like everything's going wrong. I think I'll just go shoot myself. Seems like everything's going wrong.

Everybody hates me. Nobody loves me. I think I'll go eat worms. What happens when things go wrong in your life? How do you deal with God rebuking you? How many of you have been rebuked?

You know, you need to think about it. Have you been rebuked? Not by me, but by the Lord. That's what it says. Look at verse 6, if you would. Because see, God disciplines all of his children. For whom the Lord loves, he chastens, he disciplines, he scourges, he spans every son whom he receives.

[17 : 29] In verse 7, if you endure chastisement, if you take the spanking, if you take the discipline, God deals with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the Father chastens not?

I told Elba, I said, Elba, it's okay. I said, I'm really glad you're feeling miserable. She said, why would you feel like that? I said, because it's pretty obvious God's doing a work in you. She said, well, what am I going to do?

I said, well, just tell him you're sorry. And I said, he loves you. And I showed her these verses. And she looked at me and said, is that why I feel so bad? I don't think she ever went back and did that again.

One good spanking was all she needed to say, man. You said, what happened to her? She just felt terrible. When you mess up and do wrong and don't obey God, he rebukes you. Can I get an amen there?

And by the way, when you get a spanking, it means you belong. You ever been, well, you'd have to be around them old timers. But you know, you know who gets disciplined by the parent?

[18 : 26] The child. Wow. I mean, I hope you don't go around snatching up somebody else's kid and giving them a swat. You don't snatch up. You walk through the mall and here comes a brat running. Sometimes I feel like this is a church, you know.

And I just want to get up and grab a kid and whop him one. But I don't really have a right to do that. But I could mine, but they're all too big. But I could. Back in the day when they were little. Now go with me to chapter 12, verse 8.

Hebrews chapter 12, verse 8. If you're not being disciplined, you're not his. Hebrews 12, verse 8 says, if you be without chastisement, without discipline, whereof all are protectors.

Everybody gets it if they're saved. Then are you bastards, not sons. You're illegitimate. You don't have the father. That's what makes you a bastard. Nobody to sign under daddy's name on the birth certificate.

If you can get away with sin and your name is on the church roll and he never rebukes you, I don't care where your name is, you must not be his.

[19 : 29] Did you hear that? If you can sin and just keep on doing like lost people do and nothing's eating your lunch and no whale belly's waiting on you, you are not saved.

You have joined the church. Your name is on the roll, but you are not born again. God's people know. God deals with them. Hebrews chapter 12, verse 9.

The Bible says, Furthermore, we had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us. Our daddy and mama, they corrected us and we revered them. Man, I got the greatest parents.

They discipline. You don't say that when you're a kid. Whether you're old, I don't know how old you got to get for you to start thinking about your parents, but they're excited about what their parents did. Shall we not much rather live in subjection to the father?

Wouldn't it be better if I said, man, I know God's at work in my life. I'm glad I'm a child of God. Are you glad you're a child of God? You ever wonder if you're a child of God? Let me tell you how to find out. How many times you got a swat on the backside, spiritually speaking, from the Lord?

[20 : 33] Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 10. The Bible says, For verily for a few days after their own pleasure. Underline that. You should already have it. They spanked you for their pleasure. When I was a kid, they used to say, Children are to be seen and not heard.

That meant be quiet and don't embarrass me. Amen? That's how they disciplined them. But here's what it says about him. He for our profit.

Underline that. Boy, God's been building you. He's let you go through hard times. He's let you go through difficulties. He's let things happen in your life. And every time he's done it, so you'd walk with him more.

So you'd be more like God. So you'd grow up and be mature in Christ. Look at the rest of the verse. That we might be partakers of his holiness. Austin, you're the son of God.

Your life every day should reflect Jesus more and more. Because every day you live for Jesus, He's working in you and developing you and making you into the man of God you ought to be. That's what God's doing for our profit to make me look and act like Jesus.

[21 : 36] But nobody likes getting disciplined. So right now, if you're in the middle of getting your whale belly ride, you say, I don't like it. I don't like it a bit. I thought God was love and everything's supposed to be sweet.

Well, nobody likes it. But you won't do right. You need a whale belly ride every now and then. Hebrews chapter 12, verse 11. Now, no chastening, no discipline for the present seems to be joyous.

I don't think anybody likes it. It's actually grievous. It's actually hurt. Nevertheless, afterward, it yields a peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.

So if you had met Elba, you'd say, that is such a sweet, godly lady. And I'd say, well, she used to be a drunk. And you'd say, no way. And I'd say, oh, yeah, way.

She really was. I used to have this. It seemed like every Peruvian had a drinking problem that I worked with. And there was a guy named, now he's still down there.

[22 : 37] His name is Daniel Araujo. He's roughly my age, maybe a year or two older than me. And I said one day, I said, Daniel, you know the sweetest thing about you is you never were a drunk. I said, you know, you're kind of unusual.

Everybody I know in this whole city seems like they've all been drunk. And Daniel said, oh, I was. You just didn't know me then. But he saved me. And there wasn't one sign of it.

See? It yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Jesus, so chastisement clears the vision. Chastisement makes you think, I need to serve God.

And I need to live for God. His discipline is our chance to get exercise. Look, if you would, at that verse 11. If you would, at the last part, it says, to them which are exercised thereby.

It's our chance to get exercise, to train, to develop discipline, to grow in faith, to mature, and to be all that he means for me to be. God's discipline proves you really are his.

[23 : 39] God's discipline is always for our growth. Will you acknowledge that God has been at work in your life disciplining you? I really wish you'd think a second. Don't anybody say amen. Don't raise your hand. Don't do anything. But would you look and say, yes, I can tell you.

It's pretty obvious he's my daddy. If he hasn't disciplined you, then you're not saved. The Bible's actually very rough about that. It uses a word that we would consider a curse word.

If you're not a partaker of discipline, then you are an illegitimate child. You don't have a daddy. You got the church for your mama maybe, but you don't have Jesus for your daddy.

You don't have the father for your daddy because you aren't born again. And religious people go to hell. And Baptist people go to hell. Baptist people go to hell.

So go with me to Jonah 2 and verse 4. This discipline caused him to look at the things of God again. You know, he had said, I'm running away from you and away from your presence.

[24 : 42] But in Jonah 2, 4, the Bible said, then I said. So he didn't pray until he was in the belly of the well, but after he got beat up enough, and after he was in the well, then I said, I was cast out of thy sight.

I know, God, you're not pleased with me, and everything's not good, but I will look again toward your holy temple. I will look at your holy temple. Here's what happened.

Basically, a Jew is supposed to pray looking at the temple, so every day they're supposed to get up and say, that's God's place. That's where God is, and that's where the ark is, and I love God. And so what do you want today, God?

How do you want me to live today? But Jonah had said, I know what you want, so I'm out of here. And Jonah took off running, and he went down, down, down. And Jonah's getting further and further away from God, and further and further away from God he got.

He was finally in the belly of a whale, and all of a sudden he looks back and says, oh, I'm going to look back at the temple. I'm ready to talk about what you want now. There was a massive change in his attitude in this verse.

[25 : 37] I will look to your temple. He realizes he's lost God's blessings in his life. He realizes he's suffered the consequences of his sin and rebellion. So from the whale's belly, he decides to do what he should have been doing all along.

He will look towards the temple. He will find God's will, and he will do that. He will quit thinking of what he wants and consider what God wants. Look at Jonah chapter 2 and verse 5.

The Bible says, The waters compassed me about even to the soul. The depths closed me round about. The weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains. The earth with their bars was about me forever.

I was like in prison, and you have brought my life up from corruption. Oh, Lord, my God. He knows he should be dead. He was thrown out in the middle of the ocean in the middle of a storm.

That's bad enough. You probably won't live through that. Then a fish swallowed him. You probably won't live through that. Then the fish went down, down, down, down, down. You don't get out of that.

[26 : 39] I don't know what he's thinking while he's in the wells, but he's probably thinking as he's going down there, I wonder how long this lasts. I wonder how long before I run out of air. I wonder how long before I die. But then God hears him and works in his life.

He was done for. But he can see that God's not let him die. God will still, must still have something that he can do. He has suffered terribly, but he plans on getting back on target.

Is that you this morning? Passion's gone from your life. The love for Jesus, a tear in the corner of your eye, the getting here early, the being found in ministry, the being said, man, I just got to do something for Jesus.

I love him. You know that used to be in your life, but it's not there anymore. So when he had nowhere else to look, he turned to the Lord.

Jonah 2, 7. Look at your Bible. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord. And my prayer came in unto thee, unto thine holy temple.

[27 : 41] God, it was over. Went to whale's belly. Went to the bottom of the ocean.

Seaweeds are wrapped around my head. I can see the ribs of this fish, this hollowed out fish. I don't know what God's doing here. My life's gone. I'm dying and there's no hope.

And so he started thinking about God. And God heard his prayer. Now listen to me. If you're his, you can't live the way you want.

Let that sink in a second. You're bought with a price. You're not your own. You're to serve God. We don't belong to ourselves anymore.

This cheap Christianity you hear about all over the country is not biblical Christianity. You will be changed.

[28 : 46] Or you will be chastised. Or you ain't his. He saved us.

And he's at work conforming us to the image of his son. And we're not just breezing through life without his intervention. It's not coincidence that's happening in your life.

He loves you and he's at work in you. And he's wanting you to acknowledge him. I think this is hard to accept.

Because we read the story of John and we're like, man, thank God he don't work in my life like that. I think Hebrews 12 says he does work in your life like that. I think 1 Corinthians 11, I don't have time for that one, but it says he works in your life like that.

I think 1 Corinthians 5, when Ananias and Sapphira, or 1 Corinthians 5, the guy who sleeps with his daddy's wife, I think he figured out God works that way. I think Acts chapter 5, you figure out he works that way.

[29 : 45] God won't let you just, listen, born again people live it. You say, I know a lot of born again people don't live it. You know a lot of people say they're born again. That's the culturally correct thing to do in America.

Jonah chapter 2 and verse 8. Wrong goals, desires, wrong loves destroy God's work in our life. You see, whenever you get wrong priorities, you will squish, squish, squash, whatever that word is, the work of God in your life.

Jonah chapter 2 and verse 8. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. See, what happened is he got more worried about his patriotism than his father.

He hated Nineveh. They were his enemy. This is like on 9-12, not 9-11.

On 9-12, if the Lord had said, go tell them they can get saved, you'd have said, nope, kill them all, kill them all. You see, Jonah had his own plans and things that were important to him.

[31 : 06] The things of the Lord took backseat to what Jonah wanted. And here's what you got to learn from that verse. Whatever's not of God is vanity.

Empty vanity. Waste. A big cloud. When we put things before God, we give up what he can do in our lives.

Now listen to me. You can't serve God and mammon or God and money, God and material things. You can't serve God and family. You can't serve God and business.

You just can't serve God and anything else. It's God and God alone. We sing the song, won't you live the song? And so Jonah's all hung up on his stuff, what he wants.

I want Nineveh dead. That's what he said. I want Nineveh dead. I don't care what God wants. I know God enough to know. Jonah 4, 2. Remember, if I go there and preach the gospel, if I go there and tell them they're going to be dead in 40 days, they'll repent and God will forgive them.

[32 : 08] I know that, so I don't want to go. That's the story, remember? Now God, as soon as I get my business under control, as soon as I get all my money, as soon as I get my house built, as soon as I get everything under control for me, I'm going to work on you.

God, give me until I'm 65 and I've got my life squared away, and then I'll put you first. God, you've got to understand priorities, and you ain't one. Vanity.

And Jonah now acknowledges God and thanks Him for what He has done and will do in His life. Let's look at Jonah 2, verse 9. He's in the belly of a whale, down deep in the ocean, and he's remembered God, and he's prayed to God.

He says, God, I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving. Look this way. Look, look, look, look. You see, before it was, I'm not going to Nineveh.

That's not what I want to do. And by the way, you know, even tithing is not what we want to do. Can I get an amen-o-me out of that one? We don't want to tithe.

- [33 : 18] And the more money we make, the less we want to tithe. Anybody can tithe on \$10. But on \$1,000, that's a different story. At \$10,000, we all know that's impossible.
- You could never tithe on \$10,000. That'd be ridiculous. He said, I'll sacrifice with the voice of thanksgiving.
- I'll be happy and thanking you that I'm sacrificing. Look at what he said. I will pay that I have vowed. I told you I'd love you. I told you I'd serve you. You know you have done that, too.
- Come on, tell the truth. You and I both know you've told God all kind of junk. God, I'll be there. God, you answered this prayer. I'll be faithful to you.
- I won't miss church. I'll read my Bible. I'll pray. I'll be the man of God, woman of God. Yes, I will, God. Just save my kid. You know, you've made a whole lot of promises. Well, Jonah said, I'm going to keep them.
- [34 : 15] Salvation is of the Lord. He now says that he wants to thank God and worship him. He wants to sacrifice instead of seeking his own will. He says that he will do what he knows God wants him to do.
- Basically, Jonah is saying, I will do what you want me to do if you'll just give me another chance. Because look what it says. I will pay that I have vowed. I know I said I would, and I'm dying right now.
- So if you'll just get this well to burp me out and vomit me out, I'll do what I'm supposed to do. Then he makes it clear that he's learned the greatest lesson of all.
- Salvation is of the Lord. It was God that caused Jonah to be given another chance. Look at Jonah chapter 2 and verse 10. And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited Jonah upon the dry land.
- That fish, I don't know if that fish had any intention to give him up. He probably made a good meal. I mean, that whale was probably thinking, hey, it's pretty good stuff. I got a good meal in here.
- [35 : 15] A little salt and pepper. A little Worcestershire sauce. And we're going to have us a good one. Amen. And the Lord said, puke him up. The Lord gave him another chance.
- The Lord spoke to the fish. The Lord told him to vomit him out. Sin and rebellion had taken him lower than any man would have ever expected to go. Sin always takes you further than you expect, keeps you longer than you were planning, and does more damage than you would ever expect.
- What's in your life right now that he is removing or working on removing? Would you just be honest? I mean, we're here to talk about, we're just in Jonah. And if you think, man, he sure is after me today. Hey, we were in Hosea, then Joel, then Amos, then Obadiah, then Jonah.
- And we'll be in Micah pretty soon. So we're just going through the Bible. But could it be God's trying to say something to you out of Jonah today? Could it be God brought this message for you? What is it in your life he's trying to say? Get that straight.
- Put me first. Put that aside. Put me first. We set things before us that simply are not his will. We have plans and desires that aren't for his kingdom and his purposes.
- [36 : 22] What will it take to get us to forsake ourselves, our sin, and our own goals to pursue him? Now, before I leave Jonah chapter 2, you know, the story of Jonah is extremely important throughout the whole Bible because it's used as a sign of Jesus' death.
- In Matthew chapter 12 and verse 39, he said, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of the prophet Jonah. So the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Obviously, Jesus and the disciples believe that Jonah really did happen. Because you probably think, well, this is just a story that really happened. Well, Jesus and the disciples seem to think it did, so I'm just going to go with it did.

Say amen. I'm a pretty ignorant guy. I just figure if he said it, he meant it. You know? Whether I believe it or not. The story of Jonah is really the story of resurrection.

It's the story of a guy who messed up, died, and came back. It's not, and then it's the story of Jesus who didn't mess up and who didn't need to die, but who died for you and took your sin debt and was buried and rose again.

[37 : 27] And the most important story in the whole Bible is Jesus arose from the grave, and he is alive. In Acts chapter 2 and verse 22, Jesus died.

He was delivered in verse 23 by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. But God raised him up. In verse 24, God raised him up and took away the pains of death.

It was the message Peter preached. It was the message Paul preached. Death could not hold him. He could be slain and taken down from the tree and laid in a sepulcher. But God raised him from the dead.

Acts chapter 13 and verse 30. Most important truth in the Bible. Here it is. Salvations of the Lord. Salvations of the God of heaven.

Salvation is of Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, who came to earth and died on a cross for us. And Jonah's the story that the apostles will tell.

[38 : 25] Jonah's the story Jesus used to talk about him. And so here's the real key. We jump from Jonah to Jesus. Because like Jonah suffered for his sin, Jesus suffered for your sin.

Like Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, Jesus was in the belly of the earth for three days and three nights. Like Jonah was giving life back, Jesus came back to life because he is the Son of God.

And if you don't believe this, you're not saved. Jesus died for your sin. He was buried and he rose again and he lives forever.

You want to ask me, why are there no crucifixes around this room? Because he's not fixed on a cross. Crucifix, crucifix. He's not fixed on a cross. If there was anything, we put up open tombs.

We just draw some pictures of open tombs because he died and he was buried, but he rose again. He can save you.

[39 : 23] Today you can be saved. But Christian, he's worthy of your obedience. He's worthy of you looking back to the temple. He's worthy of you honoring him because he is God in human flesh.

Christian, he loves you right now. To be honest, you're not going to humble yourself. You won't admit this, but you get your little backside tanned, spiritually speaking.

You know you've been doing wrong. You know you've grown cold. You know that on Sunday you go look for your Bible and you dust it off and you bring it to church. You know you drag in late and leave early and you're not really interested in learning the things.

Come on. You're not where you used to be and you know it. I don't have to tell you. You know it. The Holy Spirit reminds you quite often. I ask you to hear his warning.

You don't need the whale belly ride. Humble yourself now because if you're his, you will be changed or you'll be chastised.

[40 : 33] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. For more information, log on to www.visionbaptist.com where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.

Thanks. Thank you.