



## GOD SENDS A STORM

Week #3; August 3, 2025



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### REVIEW:

- Last week, we studied **vss. 2 and 3 of Jonah Ch. 1**.
- It was our second week in this new study which is yielding some good personal applications.
- At first glance, **vss. 2 and 3** seemed rather ordinary. But a bit of digging showed a backstory that sheds light on Jonah's response to the Lord's command:
  - Jonah feared for his life. Ninevah was well-known as the world's headquarters for extreme brutality and violence. God's command felt like a death sentence to Jonah.
  - But we also learned Jonah didn't want God's grace and mercy to apply to the Ninevites. That was another issue altogether, and we glanced at **Ch. 4** where Jonah later confessed that.
  - I will remind all of us once again - - that's a dangerous spot to come to. It's very bad when we let our personal prejudices, anger, and fears override a Godly perspective.
  - That's where Jonah was - - and if we are honest, it's where we sometimes find ourselves too.
  - And so, Joppa became a launching point for Jonah to *'flee from the Lord,'* and Tarshish was the farthest known point of the civilized world.
  - These three locations: Ninevah, Joppa, and Tarshish help us understand HOW Jonah processed what God told him to do, and WHY Jonah did what he did.
  - And – just as importantly - we learned that each of these locations tell a bigger story within the full counsel of God's Word.
  - We see the sovereign hand of God in this 'tale of three cities,' past and future.
  - Human history, while it's long to us, is short to God. We often fail to see the big picture that God is painting, just as Jonah did. We are so focused on our own point of view.
  - God's plan is for the ages - - not just for Jonah's time, or ours.
  - God has a grand tapestry that He is weaving, and we are just a tiny thread of that. We need to consciously exercise trust in what He is doing.

- Our reactions ‘in the here and now’ are often shortsighted and self-centered. We seldom comprehend what is outside the box of our trials and tests.

**NOTE:** This week, we are going to ‘wade’ into **vss. 4-13**. It’ll probably take this week and next to get through all the points of this passage, but we’ll make a good dent today.

**A. God intervenes in Jonah’s life a second time (Cf. vs. 4)**

NOTE: This is now the second time in just four verses that God interrupts things. He changes the circumstances for Jonah again.

**1. The first time was when God commanded Jonah to DO something different – to GO someplace different – and to SAY and BE something different**

- As we learned, Jonah already had his ministry. He had his routines. He had his plans and his place of comfort.
- He liked ‘where he was at.’ He was well regarded. He was – as we’ve seen – a good prophet during a time of a bad king. He had a key purpose.
- Jonah didn’t want the unfamiliar and personally threatening challenges of going to Ninevah, so he ‘*ran away from the Lord*’ in **vs. 3**.

**2. The second time God intervenes in Jonah’s affairs also includes these sailors on the boat.**

- These sailors had their routines too. They had THEIR comfort zones. They were just doing their job.
- They started a voyage for Tarshish. Chances are, they’d done this before, many times. This was THEIR usual pattern. They knew the Mediterranean route and what to expect.
- This trip was familiar to them. This is what they did. Sailing a wooden ship in those times had its inherent dangers, but they were experienced at it.
- And that’s why ‘*all the sailors were afraid*’ in **vs. 5**. They KNEW something was different this time.
- This storm was not normal – it wasn’t like anything they’d encountered before, and they knew that. We see in **vss. 4, 11, and 13** that it kept worsening.
- This storm did not behave like normal storms. It had been supernaturally sent by God, and He was controlling what was happening with it.
- The sailors perceived there was a divine force at play – a reason for this storm in **vs. 7**.
- And because this storm was sent by God – because God intervened in Jonah’s life a second time, the sailors were afraid of ‘*perishing*’ (**vs. 6**).

**NOTE:** Already – right out of the gates in this lesson - we have an important principle being illustrated here.

- We can run from God, and we can assert our own selfish desires. We can want our ideas over His - - - and truth be told, this is what we do more times that we'd like to admit.
- But when we pursue OUR plans rather than yielding to God's plans - - we are not only inviting distress in our own life, but sometimes we can introduce disruptions in others' lives too.
- Most of us do not live and operate in a silo. We're not hermits. We don't live like monks, keep a vow of silence, and make craft beer.
- We are part of others' lives, and so our choices affect others. Because our lives are closely interconnected with those around us, our right or wrong responses to God can impact people beyond ourselves.
- God had called Jonah to preach to the Ninevites and to urge them to repent. If Jonah had obeyed God, it was a good deal for the Ninevites.
- But Jonah didn't want to do that, and so by fleeing that responsibility, Jonah put the physical and spiritual welfare of the Ninevites on the line.
- And we see the same thing happening here – but now with the sailors. Jonah's rebellion and prejudices – Jonah's choices - became THEIR risk.
- The sailors were afraid of dying! They had stopped worrying about job performance by this point - - they were tossing the ship's cargo overboard in **vs. 5**.
- The ship was about to break apart in **vs. 4**. This wasn't about getting a paycheck anymore; it was about basic survival.
- Jonah, by wanting his way over God's way, endangered the welfare and lives of these seafaring men.
- Now, God remains sovereign over all, and over everybody, but this is a dynamic that I want you to see on the strictly human level.
- When we refuse to follow God, when we pursue our own plans and wishes over His, chances are good we will draw others into the problems that we have created. Chances are good we will cause them distress too.

**B. There is another detail which bears mentioning here, and we need to skip around a bit to see it.**

NOTE: The One True God spares pagans at the beginning of this story and at the end of it.

**1. Most of us know the story of Jonah well enough to already know the Ninevites repent at the end of this story.**

- That's the reason God tells Jonah in **vs. 2** to go to Ninevah in the first place.
- When Jonah later does and says what he is supposed to DO and SAY, the Ninevites are spared. God's message gets through to these pagans and they respond the right way.
- They repented, they changed their actions, they fasted, and they wept over their sin. (It's a fascinating element of this story in Jonah, and we'll study this in greater detail when we come to it).

**2. But here in this passage we just read, it's the sailors – at the beginning of this story - that get into a right relationship with God (read vs. 16).**

- This is OT language that lays out some basic facts. It suggests these sailors came to a juncture where they properly acknowledged God as they most needed to.
- Chances are they 'found saving faith' as we might say. They '*feared the Lord*,' they offered a sacrifice to Him, they made vows to Him, and so on.
- They didn't have a relationship with the One True God before the storm – they didn't even know who He was - but it seems they got things squared away AFTER the storm.
- The story implies things were not the same for these sailors after this point. **They knew the One True God, and they properly '*feared Him*.'**
- It's much the same situation with King Nebuchadnezzar's confessions at the end of ***Daniel Ch. 4***. There is a clear 'before and after' there too.
- I feel King Nebuchadnezzar arrived at a point in his life where he displayed evidence of a heartfelt belief in the One True God.
- There is a direct implication in that ***Daniel*** text that he 'found saving faith' too. The mouth speaks what the heart is full of according to ***Matt. 12:34***, and King Nebuchadnezzar spoke all the right things.
- We cannot be 100% positive about the sailors' or King Nebuchadnezzar's salvation, but I feel the Bible makes this strong case for both situations - - just as it does with the Ninevites later.
- But back to the sailors - - before this point, they each had '*their own god* (*small 'g'*; **vs. 5**); they were trying to 'cover all the bases' when it came to appealing to whatever higher power they could in **vs. 6**.
- They were desperately mitigating their risk. They were doing all they knew how to do to get to the truth (**vs. 7**).
- In their moment of desperation, they were seeking answers, and they were convinced Jonah's God was '*the God of heaven who made the sea and the land*' (**vs. 9**).
- And so, the context states that they properly responded to the One True God: they '*feared the Lord*' (**vs. 16**), and they '*made vows to him*.' Some translations say they vowed to '*serve God*.' That's the point. They changed.

**NOTE: (I need to take an important rabbit trail here...)**

- Perhaps some of you are uncomfortable with me suggesting that these sailors gained a right relationship with God in this passage.
- Maybe you're uncomfortable, too, with my suggestion that King Nebuchadnezzar acquired the same thing in ***Dan. Ch. 4***.
- I've read a few articles by various writers on these sailors and King Nebuchadnezzar. I can see there's some lively debate on this matter.

- If you are distressed with my suggestion that these sailors found a real faith in God, then you're going to be uncomfortable with what I believe happened with the Ninevites in **Jonah Ch. 3**. (We'll be getting to that...)
- Because none of these OT passages puts the faith experience of these different people in the terms and words of the Gospel that you and I have come to know.
- You don't read anything about being 'born again' here. You don't even find the word 'salvation.'
- None of these folks asked Jesus to 'come into their hearts,' they didn't receive the '*baptism of the Holy Spirit*,' they didn't have a 'shiver in their liver,' come down to the front of the church, and so on.
- But the reality is the things we DO read about the sailors here, and about King Nebuchadnezzar and the Ninevites, is very close to what we read in **Rev. 14:6-7**.
- This is a NT passage, not an OT one. It is a time AFTER the cross, and AFTER the point Jesus Christ was crucified and rose again.
- It is a point AFTER Jesus Christ told Nicodemus in **John Ch. 3** that he must be '*born again*.'
- **Rev. 14:6-7** is a proclamation by an angel to all the inhabitants of the earth during that terrible future time known as The Tribulation, and it reads:

*Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the **eternal gospel** to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."*

- It sounds remarkably close to what Jonah told the sailors in **vs. 9**. There is the creation element mentioned. Worshipping God is mentioned. Land, sea, and heaven are all mentioned.
- And the angel in **Revelation** tells all the earth's inhabitants to '*fear God*.' We read in **Jonah 1:16** that the sailors '*greatly feared the Lord*.'
- The angel's message isn't just a reminder to be a better person, to quit the bottle, drop the dirty mag, stop the emotional affair, or clean up your act.
- It is stated to be '*the eternal Gospel*.' It's very clear the angel's message is intended to bring people that hear it – and respond to it - to salvation.
- One of the greatest mistakes of the modern Gospel message is it dilutes the salvation experience down to a series of prescriptive words and actions.
- It's 'popping a spiritual pill,' I might say. "*Take one of these and you'll be all better*."
- That is a catastrophic error - - and it has led many people to believe they are saved when, in fact, they are not.
- It places the responsibility for our salvation on things WE say and on things WE do rather than on WHO Jesus Christ IS and WHAT HE DID FOR US.
- The wonderful, fantastic, and supernatural transaction of coming to true faith BEGINS with a right view of God - - with a right view of Jesus Christ!
- It's what the 'good thief' on the cross showed - - he had a right view of Jesus Christ! He confessed that. And for this, he received salvation. Jesus told him so.

- This is the reason **Romans 1:20** says those who dismiss the evidence of God's creation (there's that 'creation' element again), who reject the evidence of His eternal power and divine nature - - the Bible says that such people '*are without excuse.*'
- It's imperative we get this right! Saving faith MUST include a right view of Jesus Christ. It's not just saying certain words or massaging a string of beads.
- A true saving faith begins with a conviction that God is real, and we all answer to Him. He knows all about you! That results in a proper fear and reverence of Him.
- True salvation wholly, unflinchingly, completely, and – without any hesitation – places ALL trust and faith in Jesus Christ.
- Consider the simple directive of **Romans 10:9**

*If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

**C. (OK – let's get off that rabbit trail). There is a lot of drama going on in this story already.... but I want to return to Jonah now and see what's going on with him (look at vs. 5b).**

1. Jonah's below deck. He's sound asleep. The storm is fiercely raging, the ship is threatening to break up, and the sailors are tossing the cargo. This was not a trip to check your bags.
  - A moth fluttering against our window will wake me up – I'm a very light sleeper. But Jonah here: he breaks all records for sleeping soundly.
  - Why? I think there are a couple reasons for what we see here:
    - **First**, Jonah is exhausted mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. On all fronts, he's absolutely SPENT.
    - Running from the Lord is hard work! It takes a toll on a person to strive against God, and to make choices that go against His will.
    - It wears down the spirit. It plagues the mind. It drains personal energy and physical stamina.
    - Jonah's made multiple decisions to get to this point. He's ignored God's command and he's journeyed to Joppa.
    - He's searched out a ship and he bought a ticket to go 2,500 miles in the opposite direction he was told to go. Jonah was exhausted from his consecutive poor choices.
    - **But second**, I think Jonah's conscience was seared to the point where he didn't really care anymore. He was committed to his plans. He didn't have a U-turn in mind.
    - We don't see a man here who is fretting about his decisions. His eyes are not darting about in anxiety; he's not wringing his hands.
    - Jonah's not lying awake staring into the dim light of the ship's interior below deck.
    - Jonah just doesn't care anymore. He's made up his mind. He's cut God off.

- He's suppressed better judgment. He's suffocated his conscience under layers of selfishness.
  - He justified his choices at each stage of his plan. And his conscience has now been seared.
2. There is another dynamic I see at play here. When we *'flee from the Lord,'* when we willfully and repeatedly go against what is right and proper, and when we choose to exercise our will over God's way, **then....**
- Our senses become dull. We lose our sharpness and our focus. The details around us start fading.
  - We enter a cycle of making bad choices because we are not as aware as we need to be. Our minds and hearts have lost clarity. We're not too smart.
  - We obsess over our personal agendas instead. We think about ourselves and not about God.
  - We justify who we are and what we're doing, and we become increasingly detached from reality.
  - This was Jonah's situation. He had rejected God's command. He had fled from the Lord. He had defended his actions the entire time. He had made multiple wrong choices.
  - Now - - he was quite unaware of the basic facts. He did not comprehend things as he needed to. He was dull to his surroundings.
  - This principle is underscored in every person's life that turns away from God and flees from Him. I've seen it play out many times.
  - This greater truth is affirmed in more alarming detail in **Romans 1:28**.

*"Furthermore, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, He gave them up to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done."*

- This verse is lifted from a riveting passage that reads like today's news.
- The context spells out the processes of those who reject God, who ignore the plain evidence of God in His creation – it details what happens to them as a result.
- If you read this passage carefully, you will see these patterns in our own society: its habits, its choices, its sexual depravities, its responses, and its utter futility.
- It all starts with rejecting God, and **vs. 28 of Rom. Ch. 1** says such people end up with a *'depraved mind.'* In the original Greek language this means a mind that does not work like it's supposed to.
- While the context of **Romans Ch. 1** is about those who are unsaved and have made choices which violate all of God's standards, the principle is still true that when we turn our back on God, our minds become dulled and ineffective.

- We are created to be in a right relationship with God. When we make choices to violate that divine purpose, we harm ourselves.
- This is – partly – what Jonah’s problem was. He had fled God. He had rejected God’s command.
- He went his own way, and he did what his rebellion and prejudices inclined him to do – and so this story shows his senses had become dulled.
- He was no longer as aware of important details as he needed to be. His mind had collapsed, and his senses were blunted.
- Spiritually, he needed a wake-up call to get back on track, and that was about to happen.

3. Here’s another thing worth noting: The men around Jonah had a greater comprehension of Jonah’s error than he did! Let’s look at the story:

- The captain of the ship confronts Jonah in **vs. 6** and tells him to ‘*call on your god.*’ The captain didn’t know Jonah, or Jonah’s God.
- He didn’t know what Jonah had done, but he told Jonah that they were all in a crisis and Jonah needed to do his part. It was ‘all hands on deck.’
- The men of the ship perceived that the storm had a divine cause. They knew storms well, and this one was unnatural. And so, they resorted to casting lots.
- This was a last-ditch effort on their part. They’d tried everything else. They’d done everything capable and experienced sea crews could do, and it wasn’t making any difference. Things were only getting worse.
- In Biblical times, God sometimes worked through casting lots. It was like flipping a coin. It was a way of narrowing down the focus, making important decisions, and – in this case here, identifying culprits.
- Casting lots is mentioned 70 times in the OT and 7 times in the NT. The eleven remaining disciples cast lots in **Acts 1:26** to determine who would replace Judas Iscariot.
- Basically, the sailors had the wherewithal to know somebody on board was responsible for what they were all dealing with, and the short stick fell on Jonah.
- We don’t know the process by which they casted lots, but we can see here that God used whatever ritual they adopted to put the spotlight on the person with the problem – Jonah.
- And when the lot fell on Jonah, the sailors hit him with a whole barrage of personal questions (**Cf. vs. 8 and first part of vs. 10**).
- The sailors, we read, were ‘*terrified*’ (**vs. 10**). Though they were pagans and they did not know the One True God, they perceived the gravity of Jonah’s error.
- Jonah comes clean here. This is a turning point for him. He cannot run anymore, and so he spills the facts. He tells them the truth.

- He told them who he was and who God was. He told them he worshipped the God of heaven who – BTW – was also the Creator of sea and land. He told them in **vs. 10** that he was *‘running away from the Lord.’*
- It all added up for the sailors. The blanks were filled in. It now made sense why they were in the crisis they were in.
- They had a guilty party on their ship, and they were all bearing the consequences of HIS choices.
- We can easily imagine the sailors thought God was angry, and that *‘terrified them.’*

**NOTE: Here’s the sobering truth – the irony - of this whole situation:**

- a. Jonah had run from God, and the sailors were seeking God
- b. Jonah was sleeping, and the sailors were working and panicking
- c. Jonah served the One True God, and the sailors were serving false gods
- d. Jonah’s conscience was seared against God, and the sailors were imploring him to pray to God
- e. Jonah had lost his fear of God, and the sailors were very afraid of God
- f. Jonah had lost his awe of God, but the sailors had gained an awe of God
- g. (I could continue like this – but you get the point): The men around Jonah had a greater comprehension of Jonah’s error than he did!

**LET ME START WRAPPING UP HERE WITH SOME TAKEAWAYS.**

**NOTE:** Again, we see ourselves in Jonah’s story; he’s a lot like we are. Here are a couple things we need to be reminded of:

- 1. First,** God uses our crises to get our attention.
  - A person can always find excuses to do their own thing, to not change their bad habits, and to even ignore God and run away from him.
  - But the thing about God is that He doesn’t take rejection well. God doesn’t just shrug His shoulders and say, “Oh well.”
  - As I said earlier, we were created to be in a right relationship with Jesus Christ. That is our highest purpose. God knows that even if we don’t.
  - When we choose to diminish that reality, or flee from a right relationship with God, He permits crises to reorient us.
  - And just like Jonah experienced, those storms can worsen till we stop the fight – until we stop the struggle, and until we cease wanting our plans over God’s.
  - Not all crises we face are our own doing – sometimes as **James 1:2-4** clarifies, God allows trials in our live to simply test our faith - - to permit us that joy that comes from discovering our faith is ‘the real deal.’
  - But as it was in Jonah’s case – and as it often is in ours - sometimes the storms in our lives are there to show us who is REALLY in charge.
- 2. And second,** there is great danger in regarding God without a proper fear.

- ‘Fear’ in this case should be understood as all-consuming reverence and awe. It’s more than ‘worship.’ It’s a persistent respect for God that acknowledges His infinite nature and divine status.
- **Proverbs 9:10** says, “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*” Giving God the respect and reverence He deserves positions us to be wise, to be more aware, to be discerning, and so on.
- The opposite is – as we’ve learned – to have no fear of God and to reject him. As we saw in **Romans**, that leads to various displays of depravity and foolishness - - it leads to a mind that does not work as it’s supposed to.
- It’s not entirely wrong to have a ‘fear’ of God as in being ‘afraid’ of Him; that principle is supported in Scripture - - it is supported in this story of Jonah.
- God is God and we are not. There’s an infinite difference between Him and us.
- But the larger issue I’m driving at is we pose a danger to ourselves when we get too comfortable with God, when we approach Him with too much familiarity, or a casual posture.
- When God becomes commonplace to us, we run, we yawn, we sleep below deck, and we don’t see what’s really going on around us.
- We are no longer troubled by the pricks of our conscience which has become seared by our consecutive choices. We may even get weary of God, and He means little to us. This is a bad place to be in.
- At such times, God may permit us to experience some danger. That’s on us. We can get to that point when we lose a proper fear or reverence of God.

**NEXT WEEK:** “Man Overboard” (Jonah makes a tough call, and God reveals His power)

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Solid Bread Community was started with a passion to teach the truth of God’s Word – every part of it, as it was divinely inspired to be understood.

The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don’t pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

Second, don’t teach what is NOT there. Don’t force a passage to mean something it really doesn’t.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.

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