



MAN OVERBOARD

Week #4; August 10, 2025



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Review:

- Last week we studied **vss. 4-13 of Jonah Ch. 1**. For Solid Bread Community, that's a big chunk of verses to bite off.
- Sometimes we focus on a few words from one verse for an entire lesson. It depends on what we're studying.
- We got through most of the points of that passage. Our main takeaways were:
 - God intervened in Jonah's life a second time, and this second time involved the ship's crew.
 - We saw that when we pursue OUR plans rather than God's plans - - we not only invite distress in our own life, but sometimes we can introduce disruptions in others' lives too.
 - But God is sovereign, and Jonah's rebellion was used to bring the sailors to a right relationship with God. That was evident in the sailors' response in **vs. 16**.
 - We noted how God uses Jonah's disobedience at the start of the story to bring pagans to a right faith, just like He uses Jonah's obedience at the end of the story to do the same thing.
 - We also learned that when we '*flee from the Lord*,' when we willfully and repeatedly go against Him, and when we choose to exercise our will over God's way, **then....**
 - ✓ Our senses become dull. We lose our sharpness and our focus, and our conscience gets seared.
 - ✓ Details around us start fading, and we enter a cycle of making bad choices.
 - ✓ In that, we justify who we are and what we're doing, and we become increasingly detached from reality.
 - ✓ This was Jonah's situation because he had rejected – in fact, he had fled from - God's command.
- We concluded by noting how God uses crises to get our attention. Jonah's example prompts us to properly 'fear' and 'revere' God.
- This week, I want to pick up at **vs. 8** and I'll read through **vs 16**.

NOTE: I don't want to spend too much more time on the portion that we mostly covered last week, but let's get a running start here into the newer parts:

A. Jonah faces an intense interrogation in vss. 8-11.

NOTE: Seven questions are asked of Jonah, and two things become really clear from this interesting detail:

1. First, the sailors had run out of their expertise.

- What is clear from the larger context is these sailors knew what they were doing.
 - They knew their job and their route and the seas they were on.
 - They knew about sailing a boat, and they knew when that boat was about to come apart.
 - They knew how to take emergency measures, and they knew when those measures were fruitless.
 - They knew what natural storms were and they knew what unnatural storms were - - and they KNEW this was an unnatural storm.
 - The sailors knew if nothing changed here - and changed quickly - they were going to die.

2. And second, Jonah had run out of his act. He'd been exposed.

- Jonah also knew what he was doing. He had been very intentional up to this point.
 - He knew God had commanded him to go and preach to Ninevah.
 - He knew who he was and who he served. He knew who God was and how he, Jonah, fit into God's plan.
 - He knew God was everywhere, that it was impossible to truly '*flee from God*,' and he knew God was the Creator of land and sea.
 - He knew he had fled from the Lord's command, and he knew he had determined to be disobedient.
 - He knew he was at fault: for the storm, for the dangers, and for the sailors' fears and all that was now happening.
 - He knew the remedy - - how to make the seas calm once more.
 - Jonah knew that if nothing changed here, he would be personally responsible for the death of these sailors.

NOTE: Personally, I find this all very convicting. I'm sure you do too. It's like we're all staring into a mirror that reflects our own lives:

- a. **Like the sailors** - we've been in situations where our own expertise has run out - - we've faced times when all our experience and knowledge amounts to nothing.
- b. We've faced crises where the proverbial safety harnesses of our lives won't stay together - - we've felt everything coming apart and the threats and dangers mount.
- c. We've been in circumstances where we sense things are no longer about the natural - - they are about the supernatural. We know God is doing something.

- d. The situation is not about our abilities and expertise anymore. We are no longer in control, and we really don't know what to do.
- e. We just know that if things don't change – and change quickly – we're going to be in a hopeless dilemma. Things have become very bleak.
- f. **And like Jonah** - there have been times when we've deliberately disobeyed too. We've not listened to God like we know we should have.
- g. We know who God is, we KNOW what our responsibilities are, and we know what's right. We know we took some wrong turns, and we can even identify them.
- h. We've been in situations where things are collapsing around us because of our choices. We know we're at fault.
- i. We're responsible for causing our own distress and the distress of others around us.
- j. And we know the remedy, but we're not quite ready to show the humility and the honesty that is needed to get everything back on track.
- k. We're still in 'run mode.' We are still stiff-necked. We're proud. We cannot quite bring ourselves to making the big changes we know we need to make.
- l. Like I said - - it's all very convicting. Jonah's story is OUR story in so many ways.

B. Let's move on, and it's here I think we need to get underneath the facts a bit.

- It's one thing to read this story and the basic who, what, where, how, and so on. That's easy to do. I think we can all grasp those details.
- But it's another thing to understand the behind-the-scenes stuff: maybe some psychology in what's happening, the spiritual ramifications of what is at play, and so on.
- There are a few of these kinds of wrinkles I want to bring to light:

1. The sailors know Jonah is the man with the plan (Cf. end of vs. 11)

- In fact, the sailors know more than this. They know Jonah is directly connected to the One True God who brought this storm on them.
- Therefore, they know Jonah is the only one on that boat who knows what should be done.
- They also understand Jonah is at fault here. They know something needs to happen WITH him and TO him, but they're not sure what that is (see the specifics of their question to him).
- And notice – they believe the sea can be made calmer for them. They've fully comprehended by this point that they are enduring a supernatural event.
- And so, their question to Jonah shows their desire to connect in some way with Jonah's God. They want to appease Jonah's angry God – they 'see it.'
- Their own 'gods' have failed them. All the sailors have tried those options and nothing has worked. Their 'gods' are frauds, and that is now plain.
- They are convinced that Jonah's God is who they need to access, and they're asking Jonah – the man with the connection - what they need to do.

2. (And I'm going to go out on a limb with my next thoughts), but I think Jonah's answer to the sailors in vs. 12 shows his stubbornness is still at play.

- I've read a lot of notes and listened to a lot of sermons on this passage, and I think there are many poor guesses as to what is going on here.
- Some folks think Jonah is being a real hero here – that he's suddenly rediscovered his virtue. This seems to be the prevailing view.
 - They think his halo is glowing once more, and Jonah is willing to pay the price for running from God.
 - The Bible gives no indication that this is what's happening.
- Others think God did another download to Jonah like He did in **vs. 1**, and He told Jonah what he needed to do.
 - They think Jonah is simply relating God's instruction to the sailors.
 - The problem is the Bible doesn't say that either.
- I think we need to stick with what we read – with what we know of Jonah to this point and with what the larger story about Jonah reveals.
- And if we do that, I think what is happening here is Jonah is still running. He's still stubborn. He's still rebellious. He's still not willing to yield to God.
- Let me explain why I feel this way.
 - The sailors are seeking the One True God. They've abandoned their 'fraud gods,' and they're going to Jonah for answers.
 - The sailors know who is to blame, and Jonah has told them he's the one at fault here. Everyone knows this by now. No questions.
 - The sailors believe the sea can become calm once more, and Jonah's also told them it can become calm again.
 - The whole group is convinced that the God who brought the storm is also the God who can stop it.
 - I'm **inclined** to imagine God would have been satisfied if Jonah had fallen to his knees in absolute repentance and promised God – in the witness of all those sailors - to head back to Nineveh.
 - I'm also **inclined** to imagine that Jonah – in exercising his own repentance - could have ALSO directed the sailors to cry out to the One True God in an appeal to be merciful and to stop the storm.
 - I've thought a lot about this. Based on other unlikely cries of repentance and appeals for God's mercy in Scripture (like Ninevah, in fact), I'm **inclined** to imagine that a collective response like this would have stopped the storm.
 - I think the sailors would have turned the boat around and taken Jonah back to Joppa.
- But Jonah, at this point, hasn't gotten to the bottom rung of his ladder. At least not in terms of his attitudes and his heart.
- And so Jonah didn't do anything remotely close to these things. Instead, he stubbornly instructed that the sailors throw him into the sea.

- In effect – and this is IMPORTANT - Jonah said to the sailors that he would rather die than fulfill his mission to the Ninevites.
- Remember Jonah's attitude and his warped logic in **Jonah 4:2-3**.
 - Here we see – AFTER the fact – that Jonah had reluctantly gone to Ninevah and done what God commanded him to do.
 - Even AFTER Ninevah repents, Jonah is still resentful - - and AFTER he is used by God, Jonah shows his 'poor me' attitudes that he'd rather die.
 - We see this same pity party welling up in Jonah once more when he lost his shade in **4:8**.
- So – in the big picture here, we see a pattern in Jonah: he's an emotional guy. He gets angry easily, he's impulsive, he shoots his mouth off, and he quickly feels entitled and sorry for himself.
- He always resorts to a dramatic over-the-top "Woe-is-me" and "I-want-to-die" pattern, and that stems in part from the limited self-control that characterizes us if we 'run from God.'

NOTE: An important point needs to be made here: Jonah is basically an unhappy person, at least in this defiant phase of his life. That's clear.

1. Like anyone who frequently grumbles, who is prone to bitching and feeling self-entitled – Jonah shows he's got a spiritual problem.
 - ✓ Jonah's attitudes show he's not in a right relationship with God. He's a complainer.
 - ✓ A complainer shows they are discontented with their lot in life. They feel 'shafted' in some way.
 - ✓ Complaining is a first cousin of anger and so it too gives the devil an in-road.
 - ✓ Whether we like to admit it or not, complaining and feeling self-entitled is nothing less than discontent with God.
 - ✓ Certainly, this is made clear in Jonah's example.
2. The story of Jonah here shows his unwillingness to let God be the Lord of his life.
 - ✓ He's got a BIG spiritual problem, and it's one many of us struggle with from time to time. Some of us more than others....
 - ✓ Jonah knows God, he's done things for God and God's done things for him. He has faith that has shown up from time to time.
 - ✓ But God is not really LORD of his life - - at least not in this phase of his life. He's in a defiant phase as we've previously noted.
3. Here's an important truth we all need to wrap our heads and hearts around: our grumbling and complaining is actually directed against God.
 - ✓ Moses informed the Israelites in **Ex. 16:8**, when they were complaining in the wilderness, that they were actually murmuring against God.
 - ✓ He said to them, "*You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord.*"
 - ✓ When we fall into the self-entitlement and discontent that Jonah and the Israelites displayed, we are showing we are unhappy with God. That's our REAL problem.

- Back to the boat and the storm – I have no problem seeing that Jonah is resorting to his classic drama pattern here. I think we’re seeing Jonah is still in his ‘run mode.’
- I think Jonah, like many of us, is long on impulsiveness, resentment, and stubbornness - and he’s short on wisdom, patience, and humility.
 - And so, once again, Jonah is still *‘fleeing from the Lord.’* He’s resentful, and this is his undoing.
 - He’s showing he would rather die than fulfill his mission to the Ninevites.

3. Now we need to shift our gaze over to the sailors once more. The sailors show two postures which are better than what Jonah shows.

- First, they show more compassion to Jonah than Jonah has shown to the Ninevites.
 - Jonah tells them to toss him overboard. The sailors don’t immediately say, “Yep, that sounds like a good plan.”
 - Instead, they valiantly try to overcome the storm’s conditions once more. The Bible says, *‘they did their best to row back to land.’*
 - Their motives are kind and compassionate to Jonah. They don’t want to carry out Jonah’s instructions. They don’t feel good about that.
 - But the Bible says their best efforts failed. With no other options and no better ideas, they submitted to Jonah’s request and threw the prophet into the sea.
 - And that brings me to the second posture the sailors show which is better than what Jonah showed...
- It’s at this point that the sailors display more reverence and fear of God than Jonah has shown up to now (**Cf. vs. 14**). Notice the nuances in this verse:
 - Twice, they say, “Lord,” or “Oh Lord.” Some translations say, “Please, Lord.” There is already emerging a proper fear of God.
 - It’s evident by this point that the sailors are starting to understand how great and awesome this strange new God is.
 - By now, the sailors see Jonah’s God as a strong God. Their own ‘gods’ have failed, and these sailors’ minds are already starting to wonder, “Might Jonah’s God not be the One True God?”
 - After all, Jonah has already told them that His God made the sea and the land. They know the storm has been supernaturally sent by *that* God.
 - It should not surprise us therefore that the sailors pause and weigh carefully what they’re about to do.

- They are already terrified (**Cf. vs. 10**). They absolutely don't want the One True God to show anger to them as He – apparently – has shown to Jonah. That's how they see it.
- This is what is going through their minds, and so they call out to the Lord with great earnestness, with great humility, and with great reverence.
- The sailors pray to God, and they have three requests. Two requests are obvious, and the third one is implied.
 - a. Please do not let us die for taking this man's life.
 - b. Please do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man.
 - c. (and essentially, the third request is) please understand that we recognize your sovereignty in this entire matter.

NOTE: Some interesting sidenotes here. Some sobering contrasts.

- ✓ Jonah would rather die than do what God wants him to do
- ✓ The sailors don't want to die for doing what God doesn't want them to do
- ✓ Jonah doesn't feel any accountability for the lives of the Ninevites
- ✓ The sailors plead to not be held accountable for the life of Jonah
- ✓ Jonah hasn't quite grasped the sovereignty of God – that He will have His way and do as He pleases. Jonah's still trying to escape God.
- ✓ But the sailors acknowledge that the Lord '*has done as He pleased.*' They know there is no escaping this God. He will have His way over all things.
- ✓ Lastly, Jonah just doesn't care anymore. He has faith but no prayers of humility.
- ✓ The sailors care a great deal. They don't have faith, but they pray with great humility.

NOTE: As I said, these are some sobering comparisons.

- ✓ As we've seen in each lesson of this application-rich series, the story of Jonah holds a mirror up to our faces.
- ✓ As we look into that mirror, we see ourselves, our own human reactions, and why our choices and attitudes are so many times the wrong ones.
- ✓ Jonah is like us - - we can learn from his failures JUST as we will also learn from his successes.
- ✓ Moving on - - (A pivotal moment in the story is in **vs. 15**. Jonah is tossed overboard.)

NOTE: Here is a big question. I've struggled with this question for several weeks, trying to discern the answer. **Why didn't Jonah just throw himself off the boat? Why did he instruct the sailors to throw him in?**

1. Most commentators and teachers don't deal with this issue at all - - admittedly, it's a tough one, and there are no easy answers.
2. And so, they just gloss over it. I think various presumptions on their part lead them to leapfrog this delicate question.
3. But as I've said, I've thought a lot about this, "Why didn't Jonah jump?" I'm not positive I have the answer, but I think there are several things we need to consider:
 - First, Jonah had no appetite for suicide.

- In traditional Jewish thought, the body belongs to God. As such ending one's life is not within the scope of any person's authority.
- There are exceptions to this - - such as the mass martyrdom at Masada when the Romans besieged a group of Jewish zealots there around 74 AD.
- But Jewish tradition feels suicide is sometimes regarded as stealing from God, and it is therefore a rejection of God's sovereignty.
- While Jonah had shown a pattern of disregarding God's sovereignty in his story to this point, I think we need to consider that these ideas may have played a role in Jonah's mind.
- Second, the sailors had already asked Jonah the leading question in **vs. 11**, *"What should we do to you?"*
 - The sailors gave Jonah an open door. So, he just walked through it. Jonah ran with the issue in a natural response to their question. He put the burden on the sailors rather than on himself.
 - It's also important that we recognize Jonah had established a pattern of taking the easy way out up to this point.
 - All his decisions had avoided personal responsibility. He had consistently sidestepped the harder and higher road every time.
 - It was easier for him to instruct the sailors to toss him into the sea rather than for him to leap over the edge of the boat.
- And lastly, it's not beyond reason to assume Jonah lacked the courage to do what he felt needed to be done.
 - I imagine Jonah was resigned to dying no matter what.
 - As we've learned, I think there were valid reasons for Jonah to assume that preaching to the Ninevites as the Lord had instructed him to do was a death sentence anyways.
 - Maybe Jonah felt trapped - - like there was no way out for him no matter what. Either option had essentially the same outcome.
 - Be that so, it's not unreasonable to assume Jonah lacked courage at this stage. I don't think any of us would feel much different.

C. And now we get to vss. 15 & 16. The sailors throw Jonah overboard, the storm stops, and the sailors come to a right faith.

NOTE: There's a lot that happens in these verses, and we've already looked at some of these things in the past few lessons, but let me hit TWO main points.

1. **First**, there is an abrupt change in their physical world. That's **vs. 15**.
2. **Second**, there is an immediate change in their spiritual condition. That's **vs. 16**.

FIRST, LET'S LOOK AT THE ABRUPT CHANGE IN THEIR PHYSICAL WORLD

NOTE: Try to put yourself in these sailors' position. Try to imagine the circumstances as they took place for these men:

- a. One minute there was this raging, life-threatening, supernatural storm. They're tossing cargo overboard and keeping one eye on the ship that's starting to break apart.

- b. Things seem hopeless. All the skill and experience of the sailors amounts to nothing.
- c. And now their rogue passenger is suddenly gone. The sea has closed over him; and the waves have ceased from their raging.
- d. Suddenly, there is absolute calm. There is no more stress in the weather, no more strain of terror, no more howling wind, and no more mind-bending chaos.
- e. The dark clouds are gone, and the waves are no more. The skies are beautiful and blue, and the sea is like liquid glass. It's a vast flat-water slick.
- f. It all happens instantly, and the abrupt contrast is PROFOUND. Their ship is now sailing on a quiet tack.
- g. This is a true miracle. God supernaturally intervened and He imposed His power on the natural laws of life and physics.
- h. Sometimes we need to be aware that we use the word 'miracle' when it doesn't really mean that. It really cheapens the issue to say these sorts of things....
 - "It was a miracle! I drove all the way down to Denver without a major traffic jam on I25."
 - "I found a parking spot in Old Town. What a miracle!"
- i. The sailors are 100% convinced that a prophet of the Lord HAD been among them. The sailors are '150%' convinced that Jonah's God was indeed the One True God (and that gets to my second point...)

LET'S LOOK AT THE CHANGE IN THEIR SPIRITUAL CONDITION

- j. If the sailors had any shred of doubt - for any reason - that a real and all-powerful God was controlling the storm by His power and purposes, now they don't doubt at all.
- k. They '*exceedingly*' or '*greatly*' fear God in this sudden calm - - even more than in the prior storm. They are even MORE convinced now of the reality of God than they were before.
- l. And so, the astonished sailors responded in reverent awe and repentant faith. It's not hard to understand.
- m. Under no compulsion of dangerous weather, under no strain of panic, they observe the patently obvious and they make a vow to serve God. They offer a sacrifice to him.
- n. The point is their actions show the true condition of their hearts. The text makes it clear that this was a free and voluntary dedication of themselves to the Lord. One could say these men were converted to the One True God. That's my belief.
- o. I think it's safe to say that their lives were never the same from this point forward. I imagine these sailors lived and died in a proper fear and favor of the Lord.
- p. It makes me wonder about the stories of each of these men from here out. We can only imagine what happened from here on - - but it's not beyond reason to think these men positively impacted others with their personal testimonies.

NOTE: I'll wrap up with a couple of closing thoughts for you and me:

- 1. First, God can use our determined disobedience to display His reality to others.**
 - Admittedly, this is not where we want to be. We shouldn't be so stubborn and prone to rebellion that it is said of us we have 'determined disobedience.'

- But that said, this point underscores that there is nothing we can do to stop God being God.
- As **John 3:16** says, “....that whosoever believes in Him should not perish.” I feel we should always do and say what is right to prompt others to believe in Jesus Christ.
- But even if we don’t -- God can even use our disobedience in remarkable ways to cause others to believe in Jesus Christ.
- That doesn’t say much good about us or our choices - but it does say a lot of great things about God.

2. And second, we can keep trying to escape God, but God won’t stop pursuing us.

- Repeatedly, in Jonah’s story we will see that he keeps trying to run from God, and he keeps trying to evade his calling and his responsibilities.
- I’m getting a bit ahead of this lesson with THIS closing point, but I’m sure as Jonah slipped underwater, he thought he’d finally escaped his unwanted mission to Ninevah.
- But God was not done pursuing him. Jonah might have been done with God, but God was not done with him.
- The reality for you and me is God has our best interests in mind as He persistently pursues us. It’s best if we stop running and we start paying attention.

NEXT TIME: “A Really Big Fish Story” (Jonah hits bottom and he starts looking up)



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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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