

Salvation is from the Lord

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[0 : 0 0] Chapter 2, my friends. That's where we'll end up. That's where we'll be in a little while, anyway. So the title of my message for today, Salvation is from the Lord.

I'm quoting Jonah at the end of his prayer in chapter 2. Salvation is from the Lord. Now, I admit, and I told this to the Wednesday night group who gathered for our midweek study, I was a little bit hard on Jonah.

Actually, I was a lot hard on Jonah last week, but he deserved it. All right, he deserved it. I wasn't making it up. The text bears out Jonah's prideful rebellion.

He's being a brat. People's lives are in mortal danger due to his disobedience and his secret sins. You understand that he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord.

He's keeping this all to himself. He's not telling anybody what he's all about. He's trying to hide the reality of what he's doing. But in chapter 2, God's amazing grace sobers Jonah, and he follows the truth of Proverbs 28, 13.

[1 : 2 6] I want to put that up here for you. Proverbs 28, 13. He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.

That is what the book of Jonah really is all about. It is about the great and wonderful grace and compassion of Almighty God, even toward, and thankfully even toward, wicked, wicked sinners.

Now, from my last message, let's briefly review the gracious, what I've been describing as the gracious actions of God and the prideful, very selfish responses of Jonah that we saw in chapter 1.

Now, you'll have to bear with me. If you weren't here last week for chapter 1, I just encourage you to go back and listen to that message. I don't have time to read through all of chapter 1 again, but we're going to just skim real quickly the major points that I brought up from chapter 1 last time, and I'll reemphasize to you that this is all about the interchange, the dynamic of interchange between God acting and moving in these details of Jonah trying to get away, and then Jonah's response to what God is doing.

And I believe that very early on, Jonah recognized that God was acting against him. At least I think that's the way he first thought of it.

[3 : 1 0] We'll talk about that more as we get into chapter 2. But let me review just real quickly with you these major points that we covered from last time. The first one, God's gracious priority.

Now, what I'm speaking about here or spoke about here last time concerns God's priority involving Jonah in serving the Lord by bringing God's message of judgment to the wicked Ninevites.

Now, that message of judgment also includes the offer for them to repent and be spared. That's not included in the text, but that's what we assume since that's what the people actually ended up doing was repenting.

So the priority that God has is that Jonah would be faithful to God and go to Nineveh and preach to these people. Now, in response, we see Jonah's great pride.

We saw that in chapter 1, verse 3. In Jonah's prideful disobedience, he set his heart to, quote-unquote, flee from the presence of the Lord.

[4 : 15] He wanted to put as much distance as he could between what God wanted and what Jonah wanted. So he tried to get away from the Lord.

And we talked all about that as well. Now we have God, once again, acting as Jonah tries to flee from that priority that God's given him. So we see God's gracious control.

In chapter 1, verse 4, God exercised that control in a number of ways throughout chapter 1. But primarily, he did this in the miracle of a sudden, violent storm.

You need to remember, as I spoke about last week, this was not a storm that gradually built in intensity. One minute, the sailors were on a calm sea, and in the next moment, it was boiling and churning and threatening to overwhelm the boat.

I mean, just like that. And it terrified everybody. So God sovereignly controlled the weather, the boat itself. How do you think he controlled that?

[5 : 22] Well, it didn't sink, did it? He controlled the men, that is the sailors that were on the boat, the crew. He controlled the sea. And he did all of that to correct Jonah's course of sinful disobedience.

Thank the Lord. Now, God, in all that control, we see Jonah reacting. What did Jonah do? Well, we saw it in his guilty conscience in verse 5, that during the storm, Jonah goes to sleep.

He's not thankful. He's not grateful. He's not crying out to God. And this is the sleep we pointed out of carnal indifference. We gave you a reference to help measure that from a New Testament perspective in Ephesians 5, 14, if you didn't get that reference.

So Jonah's behavior betrays a hardening heart. It's getting harder by the moment, as it were, and a conscience that's being desensitized to the things of God by prideful disregard and disrespect towards the Lord, towards God's truth, towards others.

We said this is a very dangerous place for a human being to be. Very dangerous for you as someone who knows the truth and knows God to begin to desensitize your conscience to God and His ways and His truth.

[6 : 44] That's very, very dangerous. And so what does God do? Does God leave Jonah in that condition? No, look. God's gracious confrontation, then, we see. The sailors realize that Jonah is to blame for the storm.

So God uses them to confront Jonah. It's really God confronting Jonah through these men. And this is what the narrative has been building up to as the author, whom we believe is Jonah, reveals his main emphasis in chapter 1.

It's all building to this point, and that is through this confession that Jonah makes, it's very glib. It's a very glib confession, a begrudging kind of reality.

And we emphasize that to you in the way of the focus in the text itself. Jonah's confession to the sailors is the focus of this entire incident that contains Jonah's prideful flight from God.

And that focus, I told you last time, is put forward in a Hebrew chiasm. It runs from verse 4 to verse 16, and it looks like this.

[8 : 03] Now, don't let the, that looks complicated, but it's not. As I pointed out last time, it's a literary device that helps, Hebrews weren't the only ones that did this.

It's a literary device that helps the author, help the readers to see the main point. So, you read it and you understand that from the end, the sailor's fear of the Lord at the end of the chapter corresponds with what begins, the sailor's fright, the fear, and so on.

So, we've got these parallels, these literary parallels running through the chapter until finally they converge with no other parallel and so it stands on its own, Jonah's confession in verse 9.

That's the center focus of the chapter. Very helpful, isn't it? You don't have to guess. The author just makes it crystal clear for us and we love that. One of the ways that you would ascertain this, because like me, you're not a Hebrew scholar, you would use different Bible study tools to help you with this.

This actually, there were several commentators that had different forms of this chiasm. I like this one the best and it's by John D. Hanna from the Bible Knowledge Commentary.

[9 : 19] So, I didn't make this up. I'm not a Hebrew guy that could go in and figure that out on my own. I had to study and that's just exactly what you would do. So, in the classes that Marievi's giving in Ephesians, the classes that Melanie gives in her women's Bible study, sometimes we'll do this with the men.

Then, you will see, they will help you see how to use different tools or how to go and observe and dig these kinds of things out. This isn't magic. This is very straightforward study of Scripture that helps us realize this.

Alright, then we move from this chiasm and this confession where Jonah is saying to the Lord or to these sailors, I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord God of heaven and who made the sea and the dry land.

That was a very, very powerful confession from Jonah even though it's hard to take it at face value because, really, Jonah, you fear the Lord and what are you doing and why are you doing it?

It doesn't sound like you reverence the Lord or stand in awe of Him, does it? This was very powerful because of who He was talking to, what He was saying to these men and we'll bring that out again in chapter 2 in a few moments.

[10 : 35] And then finally, here we have God's gracious provision. In light of this confession, what does God do? Well, this is where we left off last time right before verse 17.

Let me say a few things about this to kind of walk us into chapter 2. Recognizing that God was in control of all of this the sailors, the men, picked up Jonah and put him over the side into the boiling sea.

Reluctantly, they didn't want to do that. They tried to row to the shore. They didn't want to see Jonah die. They knew that to throw him into the sea was certain death. And they didn't want that on their hands.

And what happened is the sea, according to Scripture, the sea stopped its raging. So here's another miracle, friends. One minute, there was a calm sea.

The next second, there was a boiling, churning storm that threatened to swamp the boat. One minute, the sea's doing that. And the next minute, they throw Jonah in and boom, dead calm.

[11 : 39] In a second, dead calm. It's a miracle. That would do something to you, don't you think? That would tend to have something of an effect on you, I would think. So God provided.

What do we mean by it? God provided the sailors with grace. How? In the form of stopping the storm. In all of this, not a single man was killed. As far as we know, not a single man was harmed in any of this.

And that's God's grace. So the sailors went, as the chiasm showed, the sailors went from great fear of the storm to great fear of the God of the storm.

They didn't have any understanding of this God of the storm. They had a different understanding I'll bring out in a few moments. And this was all no thanks to Jonah.

Right? He didn't do a thing. They had to confront him to get him to fess up. And then he begrudgingly told them, yeah, I'm a Hebrew. I'm, you know, fear the Lord.

[12 : 44] I don't know how he said it, but it, that's his, you see that bratty attitude coming out? That's what I think the text bears out in it. I'm not just guessing.

I think that's what the text tells us. No thanks to Jonah. Well, what about Jonah? What about Jonah? Well, Jonah thinks this is his end.

He knows he deserves death and now death can have him. And he's fine with that. He can be done with God's will for him to go to Nineveh.

And we said last time, this is where we left off, he has that attitude and that mentality going into all of this. That's his heart. He would rather die than go to Nineveh. Selfish, selfish man, but God.

But God. That's where we left off. But God, this God who made the sea and all that's in it, Psalm 139, provides a great fish to keep Jonah alive.

[13 : 48] Figure that. Now, you please understand, my friends, God could have done this any way he wanted. He could have just spoke and levitated Jonah right out of the water and just levitated him across the water and just dropped him on the land while all the sailors stood there watching them.

He could have. Do you believe your God can do that? Absolutely. He could have done this in a myriad of different ways. But he chose this way. A great fish to keep Jonah alive.

All right, friends, what can we say about this great fish? Was it a whale? Could a man really have survived in its stomach for three days and three nights?

Well, that's where we pick it up in verse 17. And the Lord appointed. Now, I don't know what your Bible says there. The NAS, very important word. And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah.

Not chew him up, swallow him whole. And Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights. Now, clearly, again, this is very important, Jonah would rather die than go to Nineveh.

[15 : 05] When he went overboard, he had every reason to think that this was his end and he welcomed it. That he would die because of his disobedience to God.

So the very first thing that we need to fix in our minds as we come to this part of the narrative is to consider that God is acting to save Jonah from himself.

Aren't you glad you serve that God? That he saves you from yourself. Me from myself. That is what God is doing.

Now, God has been acting all along in this vein. But now we see this declaration of this great fish coming and swallowing this man whole.

So God, folks, here's what we understand. God had Jonah thrown into the sea. And Jonah acknowledges that fact in verse 3 of chapter 2.

[16 : 11] Would you look there? For you had cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas. God, he recognizes now in the belly of the whale or the fish, the great fish, that God was the one that cast him into the sea for this very reason.

He acknowledges that. God put him into the churning sea to save him. So this entire scenario is playing out by God's design and for God's ends.

Now, don't let that detail in the text escape you. God is in control of every minute detail throughout this episode, this ordeal. That becomes very important to us as God's people when we're in the midst of the storm.

Is that not true? So we can be a little bit metaphorical here in the sense that we bring it over and apply it into our lives and say in the great storms and trials of our lives, we can trust that God is in the details.

He is in the minutia. He hasn't moved away or it's like you would say to yourself in the midst of maybe feeling like where is God? You could say with the psalmist, where can I go to flee from your presence?

[17 : 28] Where can I, where could I ever go? Heaven, the deep, anywhere on the earth. You're in the remotest places and that's reassuring. Notice his circumstances really haven't changed a lot.

He went from a ship roiling all over the place to inside an animal. I don't know about you but I'm not thinking that's a great thing.

There's not a lot of improvement there, Arlene. Right? Now you've never been inside of an animal and I haven't either but we can imagine. Well let's keep going and see just how bizarre this is.

The sailors, now think about this with me folks. This is what the text is bearing out. I'm moving my way into chapter 2 so hang with me. The sailors on the boat with Jonah were most likely, this is what most commentators agree on, Phoenicians.

Now why is that important? Phoenicia was what is now Lebanon and the land immediately above what we know to be Lebanon along the Mediterranean coast.

[18 : 42] Now there's some things that you need to know about all of this that brings the story together. Phoenicia is the center of Baal worship.

I'm going to tell you more about that in a second. Phoenicia is the center of Baal worship. So Phoenicians, Philistines and Assyrians.

When Jonah went to Joppa, Joppa is a Philistine city at that time. So he went into Philistine territory. So Phoenicians, Philistines and Assyrians all worship a fish god.

Dogon. Dogon. Now that's D-A-G not D-O-G. It's not dog as in whoop whoop. It's a different kind of dog.

D-A-G. Right? Let me explain what we're doing with this. They worship a fish god Dogon. Now Dogon had the lower body of the fish and the upper body of a man.

[19 : 53] And we've actually been able to see reliefs of this. This is who they worshiped. It's silly. He's a merman. He's not a mermaid.

He's a merman. And that's who they bow down to. And listen to this. Dogon according to ancient myth was the father of Baal.

The Canaanite storm god. So these false gods shared many connections with the sea, the storm, and the great fish.

So the Hebrew word that's used in Jonah 1.17 and 2.1 for the great fish is dog.

Dog. Dog. So in a bit of biblical irony, God protects and preserves Jonah in a great dog.

[21 : 01] And then God uses the dog to get Jonah to go to the dogon worshippers, the fish worshippers, to preach God's coming judgment on them.

That's the interplay of what's going on in this text. And that's one of the reasons the great fish is so important. And I believe that Jonah will use that story when he goes to Nineveh.

Now the text doesn't bear that out in detail, but we understand that Jonah preached more than the message that we get in chapter 3. When we get there, I'll show that to you.

So this is what's going on behind the scenes, as it were. So the Hebrew text, the Hebrew text here, does not use the word whale.

Whales, being the largest animals in the sea, seem to fit the bill from what we understand. We just picked the biggest animal in the sea and said it must have been a whale. But we need to remember that we're dealing with our sovereign creator God, and not put him in a box for our own comfort.

[22 : 14] The God of the universe, friends, who spoke all things into existence from nothing, he can create an animal just for the purpose of consuming Jonah and keeping him alive for three days and three nights.

You understand what I'm saying? If God wanted to, he doesn't have to depend on an existing animal to make this happen. If he wanted to, he could just in the moment speak into an existence an animal in the sea large enough to do his bidding.

You agree? Absolutely. The other alternative is he could have taken an existing animal that was big enough, and that animal could have been on the other side of the world, and he could have just brought it over and put it right there.

I believe that's my God. That's not magic or make-believe. That's not wishful thinking. It's faith. It's faith in the God that I read in Genesis who spoke everything into existence in an instant.

Spoke it. Said it. And it came to being. That's who he is. And we need to let him be that big God. Well, one way or another, the word appointed, the word appointed in verse 17 in the New American Standard reflects the idea of selecting something for a specific purpose.

[23 : 42] So during three days and three nights inside the great fish, God's grace has its effect. Realizing that God has saved him, Jonah uses the time to do business with his God in humble prayer.

So remember as we read through this prayer together and talk about it in the next little while, that Jonah is inside the belly of this great fish and he is reflecting back on the reality that God has spared his life.

So this is a prayer of thanksgiving. It's a declaration of reality and thanksgiving, gratitude from his heart. This is not a prayer, God save me. This is a prayer, God thank you for saving me.

I didn't deserve this. God's grace. In chapter two then, friends, we're going to outline three aspects of God's character and grace reflected in Jonah's prayer.

Now the reason that we're taking this tack and we'll do this throughout the book of Jonah is because Jonah is not the central character or hero of the book of Jonah. God is.

[24 : 57] So we want to take the perspective of God acting, God doing. What's God up to in all of this? What's God up to behind the great fish? Well, you just saw that God is using the whole great fish incident and the storm incident to fly in the face of all these false gods that these groups of people believe in.

Didn't he do the same thing when he put the plagues on Egypt? All those plagues reflected beliefs in different false gods? And God is saying, no, I control all this.

I'm God. I'm God. And that's what's happening here. So let's look at chapter two together. Then Jonah prayed to the Lord, his God from the stomach of the fish.

Again, fish there is dog. It's not whale. Could have been a whale. We don't know. And he said, I called out of my distress to the Lord and he answered me.

I cried for help from the depth of Sheol. You heard my voice for you had cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas and the current engulfed me, surrounded me.

[26 : 14] All your breakers and billows passed over me. So Jonah is sinking and being tumbled and thrown around in the sea. So I said, I have been expelled from your sight.

Nevertheless, I will look again toward your holy temple. Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me. Weeds were wrapped around my head.

I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever. But you have brought me up.

My life from the pit, O Lord, my God. while I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord and my prayer came to you into your holy temple.

Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness, but I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I vowed I will pay.

[27 : 19] Salvation is from the Lord. Does that sound like a different guy? Sounds like a different guy. Now, we're going to have to do chapters 3 and 4 to find out what this is really all about, but right now, we're hearing a different verse in this song, aren't we?

He's singing a different verse, maybe a whole different song from what he's been singing before. And that's important for us to understand. Jonah is looking back on what just happened, and what's amazing to me is, you know, I don't know how big this thing was.

I don't think that God created a fish big enough to where you could build a house in it. So I don't think he's in there sitting down reclining, reflecting on all this, with all this space.

But I also don't think that maybe he's in there all constricted so that he can barely move. Maybe, I don't know. But I tend to believe that there was some room in there for him to kind of, just, he doesn't have to think about all that.

He's zeroed in on God. Now, I don't know about you, but the older I've gotten, the harder it is for me to think about being confined. Like, it wouldn't be funny for you to put me in a sleeping bag and zip it all the way up and not let me out.

[28 : 37] Don't do that to me. Guys, if we go off, that's not funny. I don't want to wake up like that. Tight spaces, you know, going into tight tunnels.

I used to climb all in that stuff. As I've gotten older, Jonah's not having to think about all that. So, I think he's got some room. How gracious of God to give him a little room in the belly of the great fish.

And, apparently, it doesn't smell too bad. Again, he's not having to deal with all that kind of stuff. So, he offers this prayer.

Where does it all begin in his prayer? Well, look at this with me. Jonah declares God's gracious presence. That's what we see. Jonah prayed to the Lord, his God, from the stomach of the fish.

I called out of my distresses. You answered. I cried for help. You heard. It's just a wonderful, wonderful declaration. I know now you're the one that put me in the deep.

[29 : 43] You're the one that put me in the heart of the sea. It was your breakers and billows that were rolling all over me, dragging me down. Now, we don't know at what point Jonah offered his prayer while he was inside the great fish.

Was it day one, day two? I think he probably was praying throughout that time. He had a lot of time to do it. But his circumstances finally bring him to prayer.

You hear me say that? His circumstances finally bring him to prayer. Folks, this is where he should have begun. Just imagine how different the story might read if in chapter one we read the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise and go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before me.

And Jonah, because he loved the Lord and feared the Lord, rose up and went to Nineveh, to preach deliverance to those people. Oh, how different the story might have been.

If he had started with prayer, maybe even if we would have read in the next, but Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord. And then God caught him in that moment, and he stopped and dropped to his knees before he ever got to Joppa.

[31 : 03] And he cried out to God, and he said something like this, Lord, you know who the Assyrians are. You know how wicked and brutal they are. You know how much they hate us and how much we hate them.

You know all of the carnage they have wrought on your people over these years. I don't want to go to these people and tell them this. I don't want to see these people saved.

I want you to destroy them. They're the enemies, but Lord, I don't understand. But if this is what you want me to do, please give me the grace and the strength to do it.

You've got to help me. I'll get up and take the first step toward Nineveh, but Lord, you're going to have to help me take the rest because I don't want to do this. Will you change my heart?

See what I mean? What if he did that? That's not what he did. Oh, he's doing it now. Look what it took. See, the Lord will be faithful to you, friends, but please mark down in scripture that he will do whatever he needs to do and whatever it takes in his love for you to stop your course and change your course and put you on the path that he wants you on.

[32 : 19] That's because he loves you. Only what we need to realize is it doesn't always feel like God's loving me in that moment. So there's a lot of mystery here, and I understand that as well.

So God calls him. Now he's praying. I think there's something very touching and reassuring about the phrase that we find here in verse one.

Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. To the Lord his God. God is still Jonah's God despite Jonah's prideful rebellion and extreme selfishness.

Now the question that we ask is, why is this true? Why is it true that God is still Jonah's God? Well, in verse two, and he said, Jonah said, I called out of my distress to the Lord and he answered me.

I cried for help from the depth of Sheol. You, you heard my voice. Here's what it looks like. I called, he answered.

[33 : 30] I cried, you heard. what is this all about? Jonah begins his prayer, friends, by acknowledging God's faithfulness.

I was unfaithful, rebellious, prideful, selfish. He could have said so many things and he may have at this point. But he starts his prayer with, God, you are faithful.

I cried, you heard me. I reached out to you, you were faithful. See, God was already acting. God already put Jonah in the belly of the great fish to bring all of this about.

And Jonah's beginning to recognize this. So the answer to the question, why is it true that God is Jonah's God? Look at this. He is still his God because God is faithful to his own.

That is a principle that runs throughout scripture. Because God is faithful to his own. It reflects our New Testament standing in Christ in our relationship with God.

[34 : 43] Look at this. If we are faithless, he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself. That's our promise before the Lord.

God is omnipresent. He is omnipresent. The truth of what he's known all along, but it's been suppressing and running from.

You cannot flee from the presence of the Lord. Almighty God is omnipresent. That's a fancy word, omnipresent, that just means present everywhere.

You can't go anywhere in what God has made to get away from God. He is omnipresent. And then quickly in verse 3, we've already mentioned it.

You had cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current engulfed me. And then notice all your, he's recognizing who owns the seas and who's doing all of this.

[35 : 44] Your breakers and billows passed over me. So all this is past tense as he's looking back on what just happened to him. After God saved him, Jonah acknowledges God's mighty hand of putting him where Jonah was helpless, but where God was in complete control of every detail.

Your breakers. So Jonah felt a tremendous helplessness in the midst of all of this wrong and sin that he had done. And listen, friends, God let him feel that and God amplified it.

When he, it was already happening to him on the boat, but he was so calloused and hardening in his heart, he, God tossed him overboard and being put into that boiling sea sobered him up.

But it was more intense than being on the boat. And think about it. He says, I sunk down to the mountains, the foot of the mountain. That's deep, deep, deep, deep in the ocean.

I don't know how far God took him down, but it didn't die. Not only did he keep breathing, but it didn't crush him. You just think about all of this and think, man, the Lord has got his hand on every little detail of what's going on in this man's life.

[37 : 08] And Jonah is feeling the helplessness. God is amplifying that feeling in order to bring Jonah to his feet.

God's feet. The throne of grace. And that's what this prayer, I think, reflects about Jonah. The second thing that we can say about God's character and grace in this situation is this.

Jonah declares God's gracious preservation. Oh, this is all throughout the text. The narrative that we see, chapters one through four. So I said, I have been expelled from your sight.

Nevertheless, I will look again toward your holy temple. Verse four. Water encompassed me to the point of death. Great deep engulfed me. Weeds were wrapped around my head.

Yuck. How scary and terrifying. You know, if I ask, don't do it, but if I ask for hands, how many of you have this kind of phobic reaction to being around or in water where you can't see the bottom?

[38 : 12] If the water's murky or dark or we used to go swimming when I was younger. And, you know, I told you I was raised in the country, so we went to this place called Bankston's.

Bankston's was basically a place where they had taken a pond, a lake, and they had put some bunch of sand in it and divided it off into different depths and all.

So you're just swimming in this murky pond and it's sectioned up and there's fish in there. And people loved it and went to it. And I remember I used to go and I'd go in and I'd look and I'd say, I can't even see the bottom.

And so I always was trepidatious. I was that, that's the kid I am. I wasn't the guy that just bailed off and went for it. You know, I'm testing it out. And then the fish, they would, you know, and I'm like, everybody's, oh, let's go to Bankston's.

And my brother's sisters erupt. And I, really? I'd rather swim in the creek. No, not really. There's lots of snakes and stuff in there.

[39 : 15] But anyway, the deep is a scary place. The ocean is a powerful, powerful place. Jonah declares God's gracious preservation in all of that.

Notice in verse 4, as I mentioned, I have been expelled from your sight. Or he might say it this way, and some of the translations bear this out. I think the ESV does. I have been driven from before your presence.

I have been driven away. Now, this is interesting. Listen to this. God created and controlled a situation in reverse of what Jonah tried to create and control.

How did he do that? Jonah wanted to be away from God's presence. So he fled from God and God's desire for him. Now, listen. But here, in God's design for the great storm to overwhelm Jonah, God creates and controls the circumstances which turn the tables.

How so? So that God is expelling Jonah from his presence. You see? Be careful what you wish for. And that's what's happening to brother Jonah.

[40 : 29] You want to flee? Okay, fine. I'll let you feel what that's like. And boy, it wasn't good. And it really, really affected Jonah and sobered him up really quickly.

You don't want to be without me. That's not what you want. You think you want that. You don't. You don't. While Jonah is describing in clear detail this terrible, terrible ordeal in verse 3, and then the dark reality of the expulsion beginning in verse 4, he says a really surprising thing given his circumstances.

Notice what he says. Nevertheless, nevertheless, I will look again toward your holy temple. That's at the end of verse 4.

I've been expelled from your sight. Nevertheless, I will look again toward your holy temple. Jonah looked away from God to himself.

He put his focus on earthly things and on himself. That was his specific wrong or specific sin. So this is Jonah's way of saying that he now seeks to once again be in the presence of the Lord.

[41 : 52] So we do have a 180 going on here. At least that's what it seems like. And so we would characterize what we're seeing here as faith. This is a faith response to his circumstances.

That's where we want to be. This is where he should have started. But now I think maybe he's there. It might not sound like that to our ears because as we read this, we're not really seeing a specific confession of specific sins like we do with David in Psalm 51 and 32 and different places in scripture.

We've got people pouring their heart out and listing their sins. David said in Psalm 51, forgive me of blood guiltiness, right, for murdering your Uriah, that kind of thing. We're not really seeing that here.

But in a moment, I'm going to tie what we're seeing here about the temple in verse 4 to verse 7. And then I'll show you how I'm understanding this clause about the temple.

But look at verse 5. Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, surrounded me. Weeds were wrapped around my head. So this is just simply describing Jonah's terrifying helplessness.

[43 : 07] And all this helplessness kind of begins to culminate in what he says in verse 6. I descended to the roots of the mountains. See, deep, deep, deep. The earth with its bars was around me forever.

That's what it felt like to him. This is my tomb. But you have brought up my life from the pit. Oh, Lord, my God.

But you, you have brought my life up from the pit. Oh, Lord, my God. Boy, this is such a change. So in an act of great power and compassion, Jonah's God reached into the swirling, churning deep of Jonah's experience, snatching him from a certain and violent death.

That's what Jonah sees from inside this great fish. And that brings us to number three. Jonah declares God's gracious provision.

While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord and my prayer came to you into your holy temple. Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness, but I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving and that which I have vowed.

[44 : 30] Apparently, he made vows from inside the whale, right? Inside the fish. I will pay. Salvation is from the Lord. This is God's wonderful provision that he is finally acknowledging.

In verse seven, literally, it could read, while my soul was fainting away within me. While my soul was fainting away within me.

Jonah felt his life ebbing away. He felt like he was dying. His soul, this is so beautiful, his soul remembered the Lord because his soul belonged to God.

So Jonah did this. Allow me to say it this way, please. Jonah turned to his theology, his understanding of truth, his knowledge of truth, of God that he was raised on.

He turned to the truth of what God had taught him and he stood squarely on that truth. Again, I can only look at this and say, Jonah, because I do this. Jonah, why didn't you start there?

[45 : 39] Isn't that what I do? That's what I do with me? Jeff, why didn't you start there? We learn these lessons from the Lord. Then he says this.

Look at this. And my prayer came to you into your holy temple. So tie this to verse 4 where it said, nevertheless, I will look again toward your holy temple.

This is a way of acknowledging God's goodness, his goodness in forgiving those who trust in him. And he's acknowledging this by praying to God in faith and repentance.

So this faith response of looking to God alone is contrasted then with verse 8. Verse 8.

Look at that with me. Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness. Forsake their faithfulness. Now, I want to help pull all that together with you and give you an example of what Jonah is trying to say here because I think it will show you that he is actually confessing and repenting and trying to turn away from what he was once thinking and doing and turn to God.

[46 : 52] Even though the text isn't bearing out specific sentences of confession, I think that the Hebrews would have understood, the Israelites who read this would have understood what Jonah was doing.

If you'll turn with me then to 1 Kings chapter 8. It's too much to put up on the screen. So I'll just ask you to go there with me.

1 Kings chapter 8. There are examples of this in Chronicles as well, but I chose this passage.

And I think I'll begin reading in verse 22. Verses 22 and 23 just to give you the context of what we're going to read in a moment.

So then Solomon, the time of Solomon, Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven.

[47 : 52] He said, O Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing loving kindness, steadfast love, to your servants who walk before you with all their hearts.

So this is at the dedication of the temple that Solomon has built before the Lord. Remember, David couldn't build the temple. David got a bunch of the supplies ready and resources ready, but God wouldn't let David build the temple because of blood.

He had spilled too much blood in war. So he said, your son will build it. So Solomon's built the temple. This is the prayer of dedication that Solomon is making at the time of the temple being completed for Israel.

And the temple represented the presence of the Lord among his people. So then we pick it up in verse 27 of 1 Kings 8. But will God indeed dwell on the earth?

That's a good question. What could really contain God? We've built this temple for his presence, but what could really contain the God of the universe? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house which I've built.

[49 : 12] See, that's good theology. Yet, verse 28, have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his supplication.

O Lord, my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which your servant prays before you today. that your eyes may be opened toward this house night and day, toward the place of which you have said my name shall be there, and listen to the prayer which your servant shall pray toward this place.

Now catch this. Listen to the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place.

here in heaven, your dwelling place, hear and forgive. Now do you see what's happening? When he appeals to the temple, I will once again look to your temple.

I will once again be in your temple. I will once again cry out to your temple. Folks, that's why he ran. That's why he left. To flee from the presence of the Lord was to get out of Israel, get out of Dodge because that was the place where God had decided to make his presence known among his people.

[50 : 34] So he fled from that. Now what's he saying? I'm coming back. I want to come back. Quick. Right? That's what he's praying.

And in this prayer, he's saying, please forgive me because he recognizes from what he's been taught, he recognizes I can't do that without forgiveness.

I can't stand in the presence of God without forgiveness. That's what's happening in Jonah. That's why I think this is a prayer of repentance.

I think the guys turn into the Lord. Now there are some commentators I read that didn't believe that. Now, what's going to happen later? Not so good. He's going to go bratty again.

But isn't this real life? When you come and you confess to God, do you ever get to a place where you just don't have to do that anymore? No, that's not real life, is it? Don't you?

[51 : 31] Isn't it wonderful the Bible shows us real life? We can relate to Jonah, unfortunately, in many ways. But fortunately, we can also relate to God's grace toward him.

That's what's going on. So again, this is a way of acknowledging God's goodness in forgiving those who trust him as Jonah prays to God in faith and repentance.

So it's a faith response. Now, looking to, trusting in anyone or anything other than God is empty vanity.

That's verse 8. It's foolish pride. That's verse 8. in contrast to verse 7. Anytime our faith and trust are not in God, here's what we do.

We abandon our provision of God's steadfast love to us. We do. Not God. We've already seen God doesn't abandon us. We abandon him.

[52 : 30] What we're grateful for is that in our abandoning God, God holds on because we're told that nothing, not even our sin, can overcome the grace of God.

Were that the case, we'd be in a world of hurt because I would have given up my salvation long ago in foolish pride. But we live in the grace of God and grace overcomes our sin time and time and time again.

Now, it doesn't mean that we won't suffer the consequences of certain actions that we choose as we turn away from God. I just realize every time you turn away from the Lord is the time when you sin.

Whatever your sin is, that's an abandonment. Even for a moment, right? Because in sin, we're not looking to Christ. We're not glorifying the Lord. We're not concerned with what pleases the Lord.

We're being brats. So we turn our back on the Lord. That's why the Bible, when it describes repentant faith, repentance is a 180. It's a 180.

[53 : 32] I turn from sin and I turn back toward the Lord. That's repentance. And our lives should show, it should demonstrate steps of that change, that turn.

So it's not just the mouth. It's a way of changing the direction of our life back toward the Lord. So again, I just remind us as I move toward a close, God doesn't abandon us.

but looking to ourselves, looking to others, or looking to this world, some aspect of this world, to give us what only God can provide is empty vanity.

Those who regard vain idols, empty idols, to include self, forsake their faithfulness. They abandon their opportunity for God to show them grace in those moments.

That's what Jonah did by trying to flee. God had to bring him back. So then we see in verse 9, I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving.

[54 : 34] There you go. Finally, that which I have vowed, I will pay. And this wonderful declaration, salvation is from the Lord. God's grace overcame Jonah's prideful rebellion.

And God's grace restored Jonah to the Lord. Salvation is from the Lord. And then notice, I won't say much about this, I'm going to turn to another passage to close.

Verse 10. Then the Lord commanded the fish, that's good, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

God commanded the fish. What does that mean? He spoke to it. He said, fish, give him up. And so the fish did what God said.

I want you to turn with me to this passage in Matthew, if you would, please, friends. This is how we'll close. It's in Matthew 12. Just as I did with the great fish and dog and doggone and bail, I want to give you a little bit of New Testament insight into this.

[55 : 52] Matthew 12. And we'll begin in verse 38, I think is where I want to start.

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees whom you know are antagonistic to Jesus, they don't like Jesus, they said to Jesus, teacher, we want to see a sign from you.

And Jesus answered and said to them, an evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign. And yet, no sign will be given to it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet.

For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Now as I close, here's how we can couch this in relationship to Jonah. Jonah is the only prophet that Jesus ever used to compare to himself of all the prophets.

[57 : 12] Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elisha, all of them. Now look at this. God spoke to his creature and it gave up Jonah.

God spoke to the grave and it gave up Jesus. Jesus. That's what we're seeing in Matthew. After three days and nights, Jesus rose to go to Galilee where he commissioned his disciples to preach God's salvation.

After three days and nights, Jonah rose to go to Nineveh where he was recommissioned to preach God's salvation.

That is the power and beauty of your God. God. He is a God who saves. He is the Lord of salvation. And this is the God we look to and trust and depend on.

And maybe that will encourage us as we face the trials and the storms of our lives which if you're not in one now will come soon enough to get on our knees and to pray and to ask God to help us weather that storm in a way that honors him and pleases him and reflects his character as a saving God.

[58 : 26] Let's pray. Father, we are astounded, amazed, encouraged, and built up in our faith as we reflect on the marvelous, deep, wonderful truths of your word.

We are grateful for Jesus speaking the truth of his comparison to Jonah. And so it's good enough for us that if Jesus said that Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the great sea monster, that's what happened.

So we take it on faith that this is not an allegory or a metaphorical kind of thing that we're reading. This isn't just some kind of myth story to make a point.

This really happened. And we accept it on faith and we look to you. And now we ask you, Almighty God, as our king, as our wonderful, sovereign creator, help us to weather our storms in life.

There are many folks sitting here now, I realize, are going through storms. They're facing very hard things that they don't understand. I pray that you would minister to their hearts and souls, Almighty God, that you would wrap them up in your arms, as it were, and help them.

[59 : 47] Help them to realize that you may use a myriad of different things to bring their heart closer to you, just as you did with Jonah.

And so I pray that you would grant them the gift of repentant faith and that they would turn to you and trust you and lean on you and cry out to you, even as Jonah did.

He didn't know what that fish was going to do with him, but he cried out to you nonetheless and he trusted you that whatever you were about to do, it would be best for him and most glorifying to you.

Help us to live that kind of life before you. Help us to stand now to sing your praises as we close out this time together and help us to be an encouragement to each other in this season where we are celebrating the wonderful birth of our Savior and Lord.

It's in his name we pray. Amen. Amen, friends. Let's stand together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.