Study of Jonah - Part 2

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth Stewart

[0:00] The Lord's Blessing Verse 15 So they took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging.

Now we began to look at this man and the book which carries his name last Sunday night. And one thing that we noticed was this, that although we often speak of Jonah as a man who went into the belly of the whale, his book tells us that he was actually inside three bellies, one after the other. First of all, he was inside the belly of the ship. Now that comes through in a strange way, but we're told in verse 5 that Jonah had gone down into the sides of the ship.
Now it's an unusual word in the Hebrew, which means flank. And it's translated into the Greek version of scripture as belly, into the interior or innermost parts of the ship, where he could hide and be on his own.
Jonah hid in the belly of the ship. And then again, secondly, when Jonah reflects back on his experience, and when he thinks back of the time when he sank like a stone in the sea to the bottom, before he was swallowed by the great fish, he describes himself then as being in the belly of hell in the midst of the sea.
[2:02] Chapter 2, verse 2. So that is the second belly which Jonah entered. And then after that, there is the third belly which is often spoken of, the belly of the whale, when Jonah was swallowed by the great fish prepared by the Lord.

Now these were three very different experiences, and Jonah's soul was very different within each of these three bellies. And last week we left him inside the first when he was asleep inside the ship. And he was asleep there as a man who was shattered and exhausted, having fled 60 miles to get away from the commandment that the Lord had given him.
We saw that fleeing from God's presence didn't mean that he tried to get to a place where God wasn't. He knew he couldn't do that. He knew that the Lord was everywhere. But he tried to make himself unavailable.
And he tried to put himself beyond the reach of the commandment to take the gospel to Nineveh. Nineveh was a place, for a reason which we'll see later, that he didn't want to go to.
[3:07] And instead of going east, Jonah went west. And he didn't land on a ship going to Tarshish by accident. We noticed from verse 2 that he tried to get to Tarshish, and he found a ship going to Tarshish.

And he paid the fare. And that's on the southwest coast of Spain. It was the westernmost place known to them at that time. In other words, he went as far away as possible.
So that whoever was going to go to Ninalee, it was not going to be himself. So he ran away in disobedience. And, of course, he's alone, and he wants to be alone.
He hid his identity. He didn't tell who he was, what he was doing, that he was on the run, that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, that he was in disobedience, nothing like that.
He just made his own way quietly into the belly of the ship and lay there. And in fear and exhaustion, the kind of nervous exhaustion produced in a man who knows that he's going deliberately against what the Lord wants him to do, he fell into a deep sleep.
[4:15] And again, the word in the Hebrew is very, very strong. It was a deep sleep where he was almost insensible. Now, it's strange that Jonah doesn't even tell who he was.

At least on one level, it's strange. On another level, it's not. Because it's remarkable how your witness dries up when you're out of the way. And I'm sure most of you have noticed that, that whenever something like this comes into your path, and when you cease to live as the Lord would have you live, then it becomes very hard to witness and to tell people who you are.

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Jonah's lost confidence in telling people who he is. He's lost confidence in telling people about his God, because he himself is out of the way. And so Jonah is all quiet.
Notice, by the way, that when the shipmaster goes to wake him up, and Jonah's brought into the company of the rest of the seamen, they have to ask him a whole host of questions.
Tell us, we pray thee, what is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you? That means that he told them absolutely nothing. When he entered into the ship, because he didn't have the heart to, and he didn't have the strength to.
[5:27] And disobedience, as we all know, can close our lips before the Lord. Now it would be terrible, as I mentioned last week, if Jonah had been left like that.

What would happen to us all if God left us in our own path, and in our own devisings, and in our own counsel? But the Lord didn't leave him like that. He sought him out.
And this is a wonderful thing. It's grace. God's grace seeking us out and searching him out. Searching us out. Remember, we drew attention to this in verse 3.
It opens, But Jonah. See, God gave the command, and then you have, But Jonah. And it would be terrible if it ended there, but it doesn't.
Because in verse 4, But the Lord. And the Lord always, with his own people, has the last word. The last but comes from him, because he knows how to maneuver us, how to draw us, how to bring us back, where we should be.
[6:26] And God moves heaven and earth, when it comes to seeking out his own. You know, when God is even, bringing a soul from death to light, he does exactly that. He moves the elements, and everything in the world is working towards that end.

Calling his own people into his kingdom, and making sure that they stay on that path. Whether they digress or not, that they stay on that path, and make it to the end of the road.
So God is going to bring Jonah back. And he does it. By discipline. Now, we all know what discipline of chastisement is.
Discipline is just God's way of correcting us, bringing us back in line, or making us learn a lesson. We all know discipline. We all use discipline.
Everyone begins with gentle discipline, and works up to a more severe discipline. Our own fathers and mothers did that, with every one of ourselves.
[7:27] If we started to go off the road, they would tell us, maybe with a gentle word, or a rebuke. And I suppose we all knew at some point in our lives, what it was to go way off, or to start going way off, and the discipline had to become more severe, and more exact.

Well, God is like that. God doesn't, as it were, jump in like that when a person begins to go off. He comes in with a gentle word, a gentle reminder.
Maybe it's the preaching of the word. Something is said, and it just comes to you, and you brought yourself, and you say, well, this is coming into my life, or this is now true of me. It wasn't before. It's true now. And God comes to you gently like that. But if you persist, then God sometimes has to come with a severe chastisement in our path, in order to bring us back to obedience.
And foolishly, sometimes you can, in a sense, almost play with that, as though, oh well, maybe it won't come today, or it won't come tomorrow. And then suddenly, the catastrophe befalls you, and God's hand lies heavily upon you.
[8:33] And of course, if you go seriously out of the way quickly, then God's hand must be heavy upon us quickly. If we fall fast, then God chastises and disciplines fast.

And this is what happened here to Jonah. He was an ordinary man, walking in the Christian way, a prophet, and a prophet, who saw results from the hand of God.
And then a command comes, and suddenly, off in the opposite direction. And so the Lord has to lay his hand upon him. And there's a verse in Hosea, or a passage in Hosea, that deals with that.
God says there, I will be a moth to Israel. And a few verses later, he says, I will be a lion to Israel. Now you know the difference. A moth nibbles away at a thing.
Whereas a lion just jumps in and tears it apart. And God says that. He says, Israel are going astray, and I'll first be a moth. And that means that God maybe nibbles away at your comforts, or certain things in your life, gentle reminders here and there, that he's not pleased.
[9:37] But then if you persist, he roars as a liar. But I think it's important for us to remember that it's all done in love. And does the apostle not remind us of that in Hebrews?

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Which son is there? Which father among you does not chastise his son? In fact, the discipline of the Lord is a mark that we are in his family. If we are not disciplined, we would be illegitimate children, the scripture says.
But because we're disciplined, it's a sign that we're in his family, and that the love of God is upon us. And that's a good thing to remember, even when you are smarting under God's chastisement, that it is a mark of his love.
Now, God has discipline here. And the discipline he uses is the wind. Now, or at least that's the first discipline. And God can use absolutely anything when he's disciplining his own people.
things in providence, things in grace, many different things God can bring in order to discipline his own people. And here's the wind. We're told that the Lord sent out a great wind, verse 4.
[10:44] Now, the word means literally to hurl. Many of you know the sport of hurling. Well, God hurled the wind. He cast it out like a mighty thunderbolt.

You could almost, I suppose, call it in a way a thunderbolt of merciful wrath, because that's what discipline is. It is a merciful wrath of God. And God hurled it out from himself in order to bring Jonah back to where Jonah ought to be.
Now, many of the time, a kind of wind or trouble of this kind comes into our lives. And after a while, God lets us know exactly why it is. And he lets us know exactly why he's visiting us, each of us, in that way.
And it's good for us, in the midst of any storm, to ask, well, what does this storm mean in my life? I suppose Jonah could have sat there and said, well, I wonder what this storm means for all these mariners.
Whereas the fact of the matter was, it was meant for himself. And you could all sit in the midst of any storm and say, what's God telling all these people? Whereas the storm may be meant for yourself.
[11:54] And sometimes your chastisement can involve a lot of people. Sometimes it can involve your family. It can involve those nearest and dearest to you.

Jonah's discipline involved the whole ship. You know, there's a reason for that. Because the seamen themselves had something to learn. There's no doubt about that.
They had something to learn. But still, it was for Jonah's sake. But it touched the whole ship. And that's a mystery too, because I suppose Jonah, for want of a better expression, was the smallest sinner on the ship.
In the sense that he was the only man there who feared God at all. But yet the wind was on the sea for his sake. Now, isn't that strange? Because if Jonah hadn't been on the ship, they might have gone all the way to Tarshish and there have been no storm at all.
And sometimes you wonder, there is someone who belongs to the Lord. And maybe there's one storm or another in his life. And God's dealing with that person.
[13:02] Now, you have to be careful. Sometimes you think it's a chastisement. And maybe it's not in the way you think it is. But a storm comes into this person's life. And maybe it is a chastisement. And maybe there's one after another.

And here is someone who is perhaps neck deep in a life of sin and carelessness. And God doesn't touch him with a wind at all. Nothing comes to ruffle his feathers or to ruffle his nest.
And he just breezes his way on as though there was no trouble at all. And very often, that makes us think. And it should make us all think. Why are these things like that?
Well, one reason is this. And it's good to think of it this way. It's not a good thing to breeze through life like that.
Because it's a sign that our sins aren't being dealt with at all. It's a sign that we're not under the fatherly discipline of God. If we just breeze on and we go and sin regardless and nothing seems to really befall us, well, it's no reason to take comfort.
[14:06] I mean, it's possible for you to sit back and say, well, God must be more favorable towards me than he is to that person. Because look at what he is going through. And I'm not going through any of these things. Yes, but it's a mercy that that man is going through it.

And it's no mercy that you are not. That could be the point at issue. And it's very solemn and sober when we think of it in just that light. In other words, the wind that was sent to Jonah was a sign of God's love resting upon Jonah.

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He wasn't left in his sin. He wasn't left in his disobedience. But God met him and God met him in the wind. And Christian, you should thank God for your storms.
Even if you sometimes wonder why you have them and others don't, thank God for your storms. Because it is the discipline of your heavenly father. And you who have no storms, well, think again. And whenever a storm comes your way, whoever's fault, whoever's fault you think it might be, you use that storm well and let that storm speak to you even if you think the storm might be on account of someone else.
[15:19] And I think that's important because in a storm, the most important thing you ask is, is this for me? And if it's for me, what's it telling me?

These people on the ship, they all asked for whose cause has this evil come upon us? Now something could come into your own life. Let's say in your life or in your family, there's financial trouble.
And all of a sudden, everything is falling in on your head. You're suddenly in debt. There's so many bills to pay. You can't manage your mortgage. You can't manage anything.
And it's causing strife. It's causing division. It's causing argument. Fallouts, one thing after another. Now you could sit there and say, well, it's the bank's fault. It's the fault of inflation.
It's the government. They shouldn't have been put in in the first place. Or you could say, it's my wife. Or you could say, it's my sons or my daughters. And maybe the last thing you would ask is the very thing you should ask.
[16:18] Have I been giving my money to the Lord in the way that I ought? What about that? There's a law of spiritual economics. And it wouldn't make much sense to any other economist.

But there's a law of spiritual economics. And it's this, that the more you give, the more you have. And you put that to the test and you'll find it to be true. God saves it in Malachi.
God says it in Malachi 3. Prove me now, the more you give, the more you have. It's a fact in the spiritual life that 90% goes further than 100%.
And when we keep back from the Lord, you'll find that the rest goes through a bag with holes in it. God said that to Haggai. Or he said it to the people through Haggai.
He says, you have and you're earning. But he says, it's going through a bag with holes. It's disappearing. Why, he says? Because you're not giving to my house and you're not giving to my cause.
[17:17] Now I know, now that I've mentioned that, I know that there are many people, well there are some anyway, throughout the church who have ceased to give because of a storm upon the church.

I will only tell you very simply not to do that. To give to the Lord is part of your worship as it is part of mine.
And when I bring to the storehouse, and the storehouse in the scripture is where God puts his meat, where he feeds his people, it is the church. When I bring my tithe to the storehouse, that is part of my worship.
Just as much as it is my worship to bring my person here and to put my prayer up and to listen to the preaching and to listen to the psalm. And what value has my prayer got?
What value has my singing God? And what value has my hearing God? If I have said, I shall leave that part of my worship at home. What value does it have?
[18:20] Does God not want that part of your worship, even as he wants the rest? My friends, withholding from the storehouse is no answer to anything.

It very often hurts maybe those you least want to hurt. It is never an answer to anything. And God sometimes brings great trouble and we look elsewhere when really the cause may lie on ourselves.
Now, what effect did this storm have on them all? Well, I want to look with you at the mariners or the seamen first, and then to look at Jonah himself.
Now, first of all, the seamen. Now, they were sailors, but again, like the disciples on Galilee, on the sea at Galilee, they recognized an unusual storm.
In verse 4, we're told that there was a mighty tempest in the sea so that the ship was like to be broken. And in their fear and in anxiety, they called upon their gods.
[19:27] As verse 5 says, they cried, every man, to his own god. They each cried to their god. And Jonah lay fast asleep.

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Now, there's some things to notice even there. You'll notice how little help Jonah is when the trouble came because he was just out of place himself.
he was so little help. Sometimes the world finds itself in trouble. Here's someone living near you and they're in trouble in a storm. And maybe they're looking to you or maybe you're in that situation with them and they're looking to you for an answer.
And you would almost desire to speak or to say something, but you're out of the way and you can't speak. It goes back to what I said at the beginning. Because of your disobedience, your lips are shut. When you should be on the deck saying, this is the answer and this is the one to turn to and this is what to do, you're fast asleep in the boat because you yourself are out of the way.
And very often the world is crying out for an answer to certain things and to certain problems and we're just not there to give an answer because we have slept and fallen asleep because you are out of the way.
[20:43] And so it's sad that these men don't have Jonah in their midst right from the beginning. But there's something else too to notice here. Notice how deep their sense of God is and I think this is very important.

I don't know if these mariners really bothered with their religion most of the time at all. We're told that each of them has a God. Now they were polytheists. They worshipped many gods and really like most people who do that they don't worship any.
To worship many is more or less not to worship any. But they acknowledged their own deity. The Greeks had them a whole host of them the Romans had them. Poseidon was the Greek god of the sea and the god of the earthquakes.
I'm sure many of them would have called upon the god of the sea or the god of the earthquakes. Who knows what they thought was taking place underneath the sea. And they all cried to God. It's amazing how anxieties and extremities suddenly make people become religious.
Like the man said there's no atheist in a foxhole and there's no atheist on his deathbed. Here's these men and suddenly when the waves beat into the ship they are confronted with God.
[21:53] Once confronted with death you find yourself confronted with God. And these men called upon God in their hour of need and in their anxiety. But it's a cry of ignorance isn't it?

Do they know really who they're calling upon or why? Do they have any understanding of the nature and character of God that they're dealing with? No. It's almost like a shot in the dark. It's very much like if you're out there then give me some kind of help.
That's really all it amounts to. And of what avail is that? What can it do for us? The hour of need call upon the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has revealed himself in Christ and shown the way of salvation upon the cross.
Is that not the kind of intelligent prayer that we have to offer up in our hour of need? I was thinking upon this on Sunday night when David called out in his need have mercy upon me O God.
That wasn't a shot in the dark at some kind of nameless deity hoping and groping to find something. He said have mercy upon me according to the multitude of thy loving kindnesses have mercy upon me.
[23:04] He knew with whom he was dealing. and you put off any serious thought of religion and you hope that maybe on your deathbed you'll just call out to God and he'll save you.

And are you then going to have an intelligent understanding of who you're calling on? Do you suppose that it's really going to have meaning? Let me put it another way. Many of you here tonight I suppose have called on him.
Some of you here have been sick really sick. Some of you have been on what you thought was your deathbed and you called you were on your own and you lay there in hospital or at home sometimes awake at night and you felt death near you could almost touch it or it was touching you the cold clammy touch of death its nearness and reality and yes you had thoughts of God and maybe sometimes in a moment of agony very often when people are maybe driving a car and something comes near and there's a scrape you call and people in anxiety and sometimes in great pain will say oh God or oh my God what does it mean?
What did your promises mean? You're here tonight and it's long since you forgot about it because it wasn't a meaningful cry was it? It wasn't an intelligent laying hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ no it was just out of your extremity you just called and once the danger was passed you forgot it well do you suppose it will be any different next time?

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Have you any intelligent reason tonight for believing that when the day comes for you in your hour of need or agony to call upon the name of the Lord have you any solid reason to believe that you're going to mean it then?
[24:47] That it's going to have any more substance then than it had substance last time? You say but I'll mean it when I'm nearly dying yes but you meant it when you nearly died too you meant it as much as you meant it but it didn't mean enough they all turned to cry upon God in their hour of need but it wasn't intelligent and it wasn't meaningful but praise the Lord he didn't leave it like that for them either God was even at work with the mariners and suddenly the master now they're all tossed to and fro there and they're trying to get as much cargo off the ship as possible the waves are coming over and everything that they can throw out Tarsus was a smelting place a colony it was a wealthy place and who knows what kind of trade was on this boat but it didn't matter over it went the whole thing was jettisoned it was put overboard and then the master of the ship suddenly remembers that a stranger came on board and he also remembers that there's no sign of him he hasn't been praying he hasn't been calling upon God he hasn't been trying to get rid of the cargo down he goes into the holes or into the midst of the boat and there right in the belly there's a man alone there's a man on the run a man in fear but a man in deep sleep at the same time the deep sleep of an exhausted man who has gone against the Lord Jesus Christ there he is lying fast asleep and the man shakes him and said what do you mean sleeper awake rise up he says and call upon your God that we might be saved out of this isn't it strange that the world sometimes has to arouse the Christian to pray not strange sometimes I wonder if the world has to arouse ourselves to pray today not just generally but particularly

I mean when I look sometimes at the attendance at the prayer meetings yes we're thankful for those who go but sometimes we feel there could be more does the world see you constantly week in week out doing something other than being at the prayer meeting is the world sometimes tempted to take yourself by the shoulder and say is it not time to pray to be in the means of grace and to gather with God's people in the house of God is it not time I wonder if God sometimes uses the world to shake ourselves to pray just like that the only man not praying on the ship was Jonah that's a mystery there are many mysteries in God's work and dealings the only man not praying on the ship there was Jonah and so the man goes to wake him up and to arouse him now that doesn't work Jonah's still in a daze he wakes up perhaps he appears with the people but he's still a man who's out of it and then the men have an idea that they will cast lots and they do that and when they cast lots well God is supervising that lot and the lot falls upon
Jonah Proverbs 16 33 the lot is cast into the lap but the disposing thereof is of the Lord so they in a kind of random chance although they were looking to some kind of guidance they cast the lot on the lot falls upon Jonah and the questions come thick and fast where do you work where have you come from what's your country and from what people are you and as I mentioned that tells us he hadn't shared any of these things with them no they were amazed at his answers I'm sure none of them expected answers like they got first of all and how it thunders out I'm sure Jonah was a bit ashamed to say it I'm sure he was ashamed of everything he said in a way because of what he had done but I am a Hebrew I am a Hebrew what a name to put fear into the hearts of these men who hadn't heard of the Hebrews who hadn't heard of the Jews had their name not gone right throughout to the ends of the earth had they not heard of the great and mighty deeds that had been done by this people was not their name and their religion all over the world as a people to be feared a people to be respected had their exploits and their attainments by faith not become legendary even when they were back slidden it was terrible to trifle with them because God could reveal himself powerful on their side
I he says I'm a Hebrew and when they heard that they were afraid but not only that he says I fear the Lord and that's Yahweh or Jehovah every time you see Lord in verse 9 every time you see it in capital letters it's the proper name Jehovah that's God's personal name God tells us what he is Jehovah tells us who he is that is his personal name I fear Jehovah the God of heaven which hath made the sea and the dry land I fear Jehovah was that name not significant to them had they not heard of Abraham Isaac and Jacob had they not heard of this religion that was unique in the world a unique religion that dispensed with God's many and had one God one God and father of all one God and creator of all had that faith not shaken the very foundations of the world at many times in history well he says

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I fear that God who made this sea in which we're in a storm and who made the heaven and who made the dry land everything I fear that Lord that God is my God and then as though to add to it he says that he has run from the presence of the Lord at the end of verse 10 the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord because he had told them he's told them that he has left his post and that he has resisted a command that the Lord laid upon him and we're told in verse 10 that the men were exceedingly afraid why?
[31:18] why were they afraid? well it's because this God meant something to them that their own gods didn't you know there's something about the way that we're made and about the way that our soul is constituted that just makes it respond to the true God in spite of yourself you're forced to respond to the true God you can interact with other religions you can read about them and you can scan their holy books or in detail study their holy books but there's something about Christianity that goes to the core of your being and there's something about God as he's revealed in the scriptures that searches right to the marrow of your soul as though there's something in you that says this is the truth this is the truth and this is the God that is and the God that matters and the God who has made the heaven and the earth and the dry land and made myself with my soul and my conscience as an immortal soul destined to stand as a moral being before the judge of all the earth that is the reality and every time a storm comes and a prophet appears in the midst of the storm you know it and it's right there in your gut that it's all true and the men were exceedingly afraid as nothing else could make them exceedingly afraid they knew that God was there and that God was speaking to them how often you have reason to be afraid and we all have reason to be afraid many storms can come in our lives and God speaks in them that's the time to act and to respond and not let the storm pass these mariners lived another day many people don't there was a terrible earthquake in recent days it overtook thousands upon thousands and they were just wiped off the face of the earth do you think these men were worse sinners than the rest of us no Christ says they were not except you all repent we shall all likewise perish it is just a warning to us of what will come upon us all one day there will be one storm and we are not going to survive it and God will speak in that storm as the last judge of your soul and the final judge of it and when he speaks by grace in a storm in this world hear him and respond to him before the final storm comes that takes you out of this world for once and for all what do we do they said to Jonah it is not remarkable here is a prophet facing the wrong way but still they say what shall we do what shall we do and Jonah tells them simply take me up and cast me into the sea and the sea shall be calm for I know that for my sake this great tempest has come upon you and it says a lot for the men that they can't that they won't they row in fact as hard as they can to try and get the ship out of the storm to try and get it out of the deep sea and to bring it to land but the more they row they can't because the sea's heaving working and it's tempestuous against them so they pray in verse 14 and they cry to the

Lord notice capital letters they've left their gods and they've turned to the one living and true God they cried unto the Lord capital letters and said we beseech thee Jehovah we beseech thee let us not perish for this man's life and lay not upon us innocent blood for thou O Lord has done as it pleased thee and then with fear and trembling they took up the holy man of God and they cast him into the raging sea and as Jonah sank to their minds without trace and without sight the sea suddenly ceased its agitation and it came to peace and it came to rest and we're told that the men feared Jehovah verse 16 exceedingly and they offered sacrifices to the Lord and made vows now what a progress in these men's lives from ignorance through to a recognition of Jehovah that fear and conscience being stimulated a knowledge that the prophet of the Lord was amongst them sought guidance from the prophet of the Lord obeyed the voice of the prophet and then offered vows and sacrifices unto Jehovah
I said the storm was for Jonah and so it was but of course God has many ends to accomplish with one thing in a way the storm was for the men too and the men certainly profited by it they were never the same quite sure afterwards they saw great wonders in the deep they saw the Lord at work where he had slain Rahab and the dragon and the Leviathan in the midst of the raging sea with her plowed swelling waves God was at work they saw it I wonder if they're in heaven I wonder if they are many people wonder if these men were converted well it's impossible I suppose to say that they definitely were but so it is impossible to say that they weren't wouldn't it be good to think that this storm had been blessed by the Lord to the very salvation of their souls use your storms well what about Jonah well Jonah had told them nothing his lips were closed but I'm quite sure the minute the lot falls to Jonah

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Jonah knows that God is searching him out in fact he says to the people take me and cast me out for I know that because of me or for my sake this great tempest is come upon you and he confesses it all I'm a Hebrew I fear the Lord and I am in flight from his commandment but there's something more solemn than even that because God tells Jonah there and then and I think we have to understand that that God tells Jonah there and then that if he is to be cast into the sea that will bring the sea to calm and it will save the sailors and God tells him that and now inside with a measure of calm Jonah says quite simply take me and cast me into the sea that the sea may be calm for I know that for my sake this great tempest is come upon you now there's something about this first of all you notice what God is doing to him he's saying to him
Jonah you have disobeyed me now he says I'm laying an even greater command before you it's not just this time go to Nineveh it's cast yourself into the sea show me again that you are willing to put body and soul into my service and to do it unreservedly the sea will be calm Jonah if you go into it I say not whether you live and I don't say whether you die all I say is you cast yourself into the sea and it will be calm and Jonah you'll notice is obedient he does this time what God requires cast me into the sea but I want to notice something with you there's an element of what I could only call despair in what Jonah is doing and the way in which he does it Jonah is being chastised of God but he's almost fainting under it it's as though he's reconciled to the inevitable he's not doing it with a whole heart or with a full heart he's just simply doing it because
[39:19] God asks him to do it I wouldn't be surprised if Jonah thought he was going to his death and if for him it was a release because he felt a failure he felt he had brought shame on the cause of God he felt he had brought his sonner upon it he felt he had sullied the witness of God before these mariners and as far as he was concerned he would probably be as good dead did Elijah not think that Elijah prayed to die I don't know if we ever think seriously about what these things mean Elijah prayed to die to die he ran away 90 miles from his post and lay under a juniper tree and he said to God it's enough he says that's it I'm finished with it take away my life I am no better than my father's he prayed to die I wouldn't be surprised at the same thing and pressed through the mind or lips of John the Baptist when he was in prison too that Elijah of the New

Testament when he was on his own in the dark dreary dungeon I wouldn't be surprised if he had prayed to die it is enough Lord take away my life well Jonah felt like that the world and the Christian church would be better without me just cast me into the sea and the sea shall be calm it's as though God as far as he was concerned would be casting out a reject have you ever felt like that well there's an element I have to be careful in saying that there's an element of good in it in the sense that you realise just how utterly unworthy you are but the whole thought behind it is unhealthy and not right and that's the idea that God just can't use us and can't restore us and can't do something with us Hebrews says take heed that you don't despise the chastening of God or faint when you are rebuked of him this man is fainting he's fainting it's as though he wants away and he's finished and he's done with it he's giving up and as far as this man is concerned when he feels himself swung out of the side of the ship and when he touches the water as far as he's concerned he's gone and he's going into a watery grave he's going into his second belly as he calls it later himself the belly of hell and listen to his thoughts when he's going into it very briefly in chapter 2 and verse 3 now
I'll explain another time the way we have to understand the time sequence here so please just accept it at the moment the way I'm giving it to you I'll explain it on another occasion he's looking back here at his experience from inside the whale he's looking back from inside the whale to when he was in the sea and he says this in verse 3 thou hadst cast me into the deep in the midst of the seas and the floods compassed me about and thy billows and thy waves passed over he knows it's from God and it's what he deserves the billows and the waves are going over him and he's reconciled to it and in verse 4 in verse 5 he says this the waters compassed me about even to the soul the depths closed me round about the weeds were wrapped about my head he went so far down the ocean a man half drowning so that the weeds at the bottom of the sea floor were wrapping themselves about his head and in verse 6 we're told
I went down to the bottoms of the mountains the earth with her bars was about me forever yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption oh lord my god a wonderful thing happened when jonah was sinking in the sea what happened was that he began to pray he began to pray then I cried by reason of my affliction and look at verse 7 of chapter 2 when my soul fainted within me I remembered the lord and my prayer came in unto thee into thy holy temple something happens to the man when he is sinking just when he is about to be absolutely hopeless in the belly of the sea

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god visits him and god puts hope into him and god puts a prayer into him and god makes him look at the situation in an entirely different way he looks at the situation now in this belly as a man who though god is dealing with him is a man that god is dealing with for a purpose and even when everything looks absolutely thin look it was more likely to be saved in the midst of the ship than it was to be saved amongst the weeds at the bottom of the sea but isn't it interesting it's when he's in the weeds in the bottom of the sea that his hope comes back in the ship but he was in despair falling into the belly of the sea but just before he touches the bottom of despair up comes hope and he cleaves to the
Lord and he knows that God's chastisement is for a purpose and he believes that even at the bottom of the sea God is going to do something with him and God is going to bless it now I'm sure Jonah was about to get it from unexpected quarters and I'll tell you something friends that God's or Jonah's adventure at the hand of God was just beginning we all sometimes come to know the God who never gives up and we need that we need to know the God who never gives up because we are so prone to give up God doesn't give up with his own people you sink till you just about touch the bottom despair no hope hope hope in God and he prays in hope he prays in thankfulness he prays for God's mercy he prays for God's forgiveness none of these things we see before it's as though he's sinking in his soul but just when his body is sinking his hope rises his soul rises mercy forgiveness pardon and he puts himself into the hand of the
[46:05] Lord and just when he's about to touch the bottom God comes to lift him up and he's only just going to taste the God who never gives up and he's going to find himself in the third and the most unusual stomach of all and when he does so ah what a type he provides of the Lord Jesus Christ and when I look at it with you I want to look in the whale's belly so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth he found himself squeezed in the intestine of a whale and that taught many things and we'll look at it as God gives us grace let us pray Lord our God give us to acknowledge thee as the one who is able to deliver us from our own failures and even from our despair we thank thee when we feel cast down and when we feel it were better for us to depart than to be present we are thankful that thy word brings hope and that a prayer always rises up in the heart of a

Christian before he touches the bottom we praise thee for thy kindness and thy mercy and Lord help us to yield ourselves we

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