

An Awakening on a Ship

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Bible Text: Jonah 1

Preached on: Sunday, July 22, 2001

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We are going to turn in our Bibles to the book of Jonah chapter one and we are going to read from verse one. Let's hear God's Word.

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. Wherefore

they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.¹

And God will bless the reading of his own truth to our hearts.

We will bow in prayer and let us just take a moment to seek the Lord. Let us all pray.

Our heavenly Father, we pray that thou wilt help us as we now come to the Word that thou hast given for this service. Lord, we know that thou hast directed our minds to the Scriptures here. And we pray that thy presence will be very real as we come to the preaching of the Word. Lord, as we look at this tremendous scene recorded for us of the awakening of that band of ungodly men on the boat in the midst of the sea, oh Lord, we pray that thou wilt remember sinners here who, in their own experience are on a storm tossed sea, who know not whether they are going or what the end of them will be. Oh, Lord, awaken them tonight. Show them Christ as well as showing them their sin. And bring them, oh God, to rest in the Savior, to trust in the one who is even typified by Jonah, of whom we read in this passage of thy Word. We pray this in the Savior's name and for the Savior's sake. Amen.

Jonah one and verse 16 is the text for this evening. "Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows."²

From an historical perspective the experiences of the sailors or the mariners in Jonah chapter one is plainly recorded and is easily understood. Jonah, the prophet of God was commissioned to go to Nineveh. He refused. He ran from God. He sought to get away from the presence of God. But it was absolutely impossible for him to escape. The presence of the Lord from which he was running away, from which he fled followed him and went after him. And the impact of that awful presence and its pursuit of the prophet became more intense and more serious as he continued on his path of disobedience.

But the impact of the Lord's presence, as it pursued Jonah was not only felt by the prophet himself as he ran from God, it was also felt by the sailors on that boat which Jonah took and on which he sought to escape and make his way to the city of Tarshish. Indeed, it can rightly be said that those sailors became the innocent victims of the power of that awful tempest that threatened to send their vessel to destruction and bring it down to the very bottom and depths of the Mediterranean Sea.

¹ Jonah 1:1-17.

² Jonah 1:16.

Therefore, the record would indicate that these mariners found themselves confronting what was for them an unparalleled situation. You see, the greatness of their fear stands out in a number of these verses. And the greatness of that fear would indicate that these men who undoubtedly had faced many a storm on the Mediterranean Sea and had come through such fierce storms before suddenly found themselves helpless in the face of a gale that signaled their immediate doom.

And, you know, as we read this story and as it relates to us all the details of this chapter, we find that these mariners did not perish. We discover that every one of them was delivered from that awful tempest which was just as suddenly removed as it was brought upon them. The cessation of that storm is to be accounted for because Jonah was no longer found in the vessel. Rather, he was found in the belly of a whale where the presence of the Lord still confronted him and God continued to deal with him. But it was Jonah's removal from that sailing vessel that resulted in the sailors being saved and delivered from what, for them, was imminent doom.

And yet may I also say that these men not only were saved physically delivered from the storm and from the watery grave that was awaiting them in the depths of the ocean, but they were also saved from their sins and they were saved from that more terrible destruction of perishing forever under the wrath of an eternal God and a sin hating God.

Now this fact that these men were spiritually delivered and spiritually awakened and brought to a saving knowledge of the true God of heaven is presented in this text. As you read this text carefully you will notice there is veneration. It says that these men feared the Lord exceedingly.

How remarkable that men who just a short time before were engaged in crying to their pagan deities, to their false gods, should now be possessed of a real, true veneration for the living God and the true God. They are crying as they are seeking after. They fear the Lord exceedingly and that fear shows plainly and clearly that there was the beginning of knowledge and there was the beginning of wisdom in the hearts of these men. Therefore, they were regenerate men.

Notice, as well, not only their veneration, but their vision in that it says that they offered a sacrifice unto the Lord. And I say we notice their vision in that they had been given a vision and an understanding, in other words, of the only acceptable way of approaching God and coming to God, that is, through sacrifice, through an acceptable offering and through the shedding of blood that would appease divine wrath. There was in their hearts now a clear vision of how God is appeased, of how wrath is satisfied, of how men can be accepted by him. We see that a well.

And then you will notice also their vows. It said they made vows. What were they doing? Well, I think that that is very obvious, that since they had received the mercy of the Lord not only in saving them from the storm and from their doom in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, but they received mercy from the Lord spiritually and, therefore, they vowed to serve him and they vowed now to remain true to him thereafter. So their vows

are a pointer to the fact that they are turning away from sin and they are saying to one another, "From this day onwards we will serve the living and the true God." And they are vowing to do that out of a sense of mercy and out of an awareness that God has spared them. And, therefore, they are establishing the fact that this is now their God and they will be true to him. They will be faithful to him. They will live for him throughout the rest of their days.

Therefore in this first chapter of the book of Jonah which presents us a tremendous example and illustration and case of spiritual awakening, a spiritual awakening among a heathen as an ungodly group of men on a ship. Oh, how marvelous is our God. He can save sinners anywhere. He can save them in the most terrible situations. He can bring them to a knowledge and a consciousness of their need no matter where they are or what they are doing; saved, awakened, gloriously delivered as they sailed on the Mediterranean Sea in the midst of an awful storm.

From this tremendous picture of spiritual awakening and the transformation that took place in their lives, we have afforded to us a marvelous example of what the Lord is able to do among the most benighted, the most heathen, the most pagan people on the face of the earth. And, of course, of what he is able to do in our own midst right here, because while your circumstances as a sinner before God are entirely different from those of these mariners and while you are living in the 21st century now after Christ and they lived hundreds of years before Christ, yet at the same time you are just as sinful, just as wicked, just as guilty before God as they were. You may not be in the same circumstances, but, my friend, you are in the same need. You are in the same situation spiritually. You must be awakened. You need to be awakened. You must be delivered from your sin.

And thank God there is one who is able to do that and set you gloriously free.

That is what we are going to look at tonight as we come to these verses and consider them together. Some points in this story of these mariners being brought to it through saving knowledge of the Lord as we find it all summed up for us in this text, Jonah one verse 16.

May I point out to you, first of all, that the natural mind possesses various kinds of spiritual knowledge? The natural mind possesses various kinds of spiritual knowledge.

Now, these mariners were obviously adherents of a pagan religion. They are nameless men. Their nationality even is not known. We don't know whether they were Jews or what they were. I don't believe they were. I think they were obviously Gentiles worshipping other gods. They were heathen men. They were men of the world. They were engrossed with their life on the ocean.

And as they faced that awful tempest that is described in this chapter that descended upon them, there was an unveiling in their words and in their actions there was an unveiling of their hearts and their minds with regard to spiritual things. And in the words and the

actions of these mariners there was a revelation. And we have that revelation contained in this chapter. There was a revelation that the natural mind of man has not totally lost spiritual knowledge.

May I remind you tonight that man was originally created with a true and sufficient moral and spiritual knowledge of God? The Bible teaches that clearly. Man was originally created with a sufficient spiritual and moral knowledge of God. We think of many verses that bring that out to us and we think of that great verse, Colossians three verse 10 where it actually is describing the regeneration of the sinner. And it says this that the one who is regenerated is created or “renewed in knowledge after [or according to] the image of him that created him.”³

Now listen to those words. The one who is saved is renewed in knowledge. There is a renewing of knowledge. What is that knowledge? It is the knowledge of God who created man. That is what the verse is saying. And therefore when man was originally created he had a knowledge of God a knowledge of his Creator. Taking Adam, Adam had a perfect knowledge of God with a perfect love for God. There was a sufficiency of knowledge in Adam regarding spiritual and moral matters. That meant that Adam was satisfied with God. He was satisfied with what he knew. He was perfectly content with himself because he had no sin. But Adam had a true knowledge of God and a knowledge of God that left him absolutely content with his soul. That is how man was originally made.

And while man has fallen from that original estate, that knowledge of God, that moral and spiritual knowledge of God has not been completely removed. And we must understand that. I want to see how it comes out in this chapter, but by way of preparatory remarks I want you to understand this carefully. Man was originally made with a perfect knowledge of God and then he has fallen. Yet he retained something of the knowledge of God.

Turn to Romans chapter two and let us see how it is taught there before we come to look at these mariners themselves; Romans chapter two and verse 14 and verse 15. It says in these two verses.

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.⁴

Now the setting of these two verses, Romans 2:14 and 15, is the truth that all men will be judged by the moral law of God. That is the setting of the verses. That is what comes before these two verses that we have just read. All men, Jew and Gentile, all men are going to be judged by God’s perfect law, by God’s moral law. And they are going to be

³ Colossians 3:10.

⁴ Romans 2:14-15.

judged by that law whether they have it in written form or not. That is what Paul is setting forth here in the verses leading up to these two verses, 14 and 15.

Just look at verse 12 for a moment. It says, “As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law.”⁵

What does that mean? It means that those people who never had the Bible will perish just the same as those who have the Bible. That is what it means.

“As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.”⁶

Both are going to be judged by this same law. The man who never heard the Word of God, who never heard the gospel as we know it, who never heard the 10 Commandments set forth in a written form as we have them. He will be judged by that same law as the man who had it all in written form.

Of course, I could digress here and tell you and prove to you that the man who had the written law would have a more terrible hell and a deeper depth of punishment, but both will perish under the law.

Why? Well, that is why I read 14 and 15. The law is written on man’s heart. That is what verse 14 is saying. That the Gentiles, “do by nature the things contained in the law.”⁷ Isn’t that true? You can go to the most heathen tribe on the face of the earth and you will find among such people in their ways of life, even the most primitive, you will find the evidence that written on their heart there is the idea of right and wrong. They have a conscience. They know by that inward monitor that they are guilty or they are not guilty. It is the very proof that man was originally made with God’s law written on his heart as well as God giving it then in the Bible. It was written on his heart, on his conscience.

And this is Paul’s great argument here in Romans 2:14 and 15 in which he shows us that that law written on man’s heart has not been erased by the fall, proved by the operation of conscience.

May I just say this in passing tonight? Total depravity, the total depravity of sin is not the complete erasure of the knowledge of God and his law. The total depravity that comes upon man for his sin is the perversion and pollution into totality of all his faculties in that they are all touched and tainted by sin. But it does not mean the complete erasure of the knowledge of God and the law of God. It means that his understanding is darkened. His will is set against God. It means that his affections are set upon those things that are ungodly and wicked and unclean. Every faculty of his soul is tainted, ruined by sin.

⁵ Romans 2:12.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Romans 2:14.

But he is not absolutely depraved in that sense of that term. The one who is absolutely depraved is the devil. Man is not absolutely depraved. Man is totally depraved in that every faculty of his being is ruined by sin. And yet he still has a knowledge of God. He still has a consciousness of right and wrong. He still has written upon his heart the law of God. And if it were not for that, my friend, there is no way that any preacher could describe what this world would be like if it were not this that I am showing to you tonight.

So coming here to these mariners, turning back to Jonah chapter one, let me just show you from this passage that these men still did retain something of spiritual and moral knowledge. And this is a very important point. They were conscious, you will notice, that there was a divine control in this world.

Look at verse five. Notice what it says. "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god."⁸

Why did each man cry to his god? Here they are. Every man has a god. They are what you call pantheists. They have many gods. It is not just one, a whole array of gods. And every man in that ship is crying to his own personal god, but here is the point. He is crying to that god of his because of the storm. It has suddenly descended on them. I believe it was a most unusual storm. It came without any warning. It hit that boat without any previous knowledge it was coming. These men who could look at the clouds and look at the horizon and see that a storm was on its way had no chance and no opportunity of doing so because it was sent out by God and these men recognized that this storm is different. It is unusual in its appearance, in its vehemence and they begin to cry upon their gods because these men recognize that there is a deity in control of things. That is why they are seen there crying and seeking after their God.

Turn over to Acts 28 because over in Acts 28 we have another illustration of this point that sinners, even the most ungodly can be conscious of divine control, that someone is in charge of man's affairs and is presiding over temporal events. Turn to Acts 28 and look at verse four. Notice what it says there concerning this situation.

It says, "And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves..."⁹ Now listen to this. "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live."¹⁰

Here were other pagan men. They were worshippers of false gods and yet as they watched what took place in Paul's experience, that viper coming out of the heat, fastening on his hand, they conclude, here is a man who is under the wrath of a God. He has escaped from the sea. And now God has caught up with him and he is going to be judged for his sin. This is how they thought. This is how they felt and, therefore, here were men

⁸ Jonah 1:5.

⁹ Acts 28:4.

¹⁰ Ibid.

who also believed that there is a governing power in the world, though they thought it were some other God and not the true God of heaven.

But you see, my dear friend, men do have inherently within them this consciousness of control over life. That is seen in these mariners in Jonah one. It is seen in Acts 28. It is seen also if you go, as I said a while ago, to the most primitive people on the face of the earth. They have this consciousness that someone is presiding over their lives. And that is why because they don't know the true God, they live in such fear. They have no idea of how to appease this God. They use many gods in fact. They have their calamities, their storms appear, their catastrophes come and they are filled with fear and they don't know what to do. But they know this. There is someone who is over them, someone who is in charge, who causes these things to happen. And this is how these mariners felt. And therefore we have the proof that man has still a consciousness there is someone in charge of this life.

And as we look at Romans one and 19 and 20 we find that Paul takes the same argument there and he applies it to all of humanity. Just look at it quickly. Romans chapter one and verses 19 and 20 because there Paul says so clearly, "That which may be known of God is manifest in them."¹¹ There is the inward manifestation. God is known or that there is a God, it is known in man, in his heart, by his conscience. This monitor within him telling him that there is a God, there is someone to whom he must bow.

And then it says at the end of that verse:

For God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.¹²

My dear friend, conscience and creation, if you have nothing else tonight, conscience and creation tell you, both witness to you of divine control, never mind the clear statements of this book.

Where does that leave you, sinner? It leaves you were Paul describes it there, "Without excuse."¹³ You have no excuse. Your conscience tells you you are wrong. Your conscience tells you that you are going down a wicked path. Creation all around you displays the glory and the majesty of God and therefore you are without excuse.

They saw there was someone in charge.

Then going back to Jonah one, notice, as well, that these mariners were conscious of the truth of divine punishment. They saw that as well. Look at verse seven of Jonah one. It

¹¹ Romans 1:19.

¹² Romans 1:19-20.

¹³ Romans 1:20.

says, “The said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that...”¹⁴ Listen to these words now, “...that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us.”¹⁵ And the same in verse eight. “Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us.”¹⁶ And they are talking about the storm.

And this is how they put it. “There is an evil upon us. And we are trying to find out who is the cause of it?”

What are they saying? They are simply saying that someone on this boat has done wrong and now the gods are angry and vengeance is being wrought out upon us all because of someone’s sins, whatever they might have thought of deity.

And may I take you back to that same verse in Acts chapter 28 and the verse four? And just once more listen to it, to those Miletans as they spoke of what was going on in their experience as they watched Paul in this strange situation of a snake holding on to his hand, sinking its fangs into his very flesh and yet he remains there standing. What did they say?

“No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.”¹⁷

The word for “vengeance” there is “justice.” Isn’t this amazing? Here are heathen men who understand justice, vengeance. And they are convinced that Paul is about to collapse and die because the gods have caught up with him. He may have escaped punishment on the ocean in that dreadful storm in chapter 27. But now vengeance has caught up with him and he cannot live.

And the mariners on the ship where Jonah was had partly the same approach. “Evil is upon us. Punishment is upon us. Someone has brought this about. Therefore we are all going to perish.”

You see, my friend, they were aware. They were conscious of the fact that punishment is meted out on criminals, that evil works do bring judgment, that eventually, notice this, eventually the one who does wrong... I don’t know exactly what these mariners thought had been done, but they knew this, that eventually the evil doer will be punished. They understood that. We saw that and that is the basic teaching of the Word of God along with everything else that I have taught.

There is someone who is in control of your life and the affairs of this world, someone who is very much in charge. You may think that you are in charge, but you are not. And there is a day coming when you will realize that. You can’t see it now, you will see it eventually. And furthermore while you will not confess it tonight, perhaps, there is

¹⁴ Jonah 1:7.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Jonah 1:8.

¹⁷ Acts 28:4.

someone who visits evil upon men in the sense that he is a God of vengeance and the evil doer will not escape and eventually God catches up with the sinner. And one day he is going to catch up with you and bring you to justice and mete out his wrath and his punishment.

Notice, my friend, that these mariners in all their darkness, they can see what so many don't see today, that their calamities of this life are divine warnings of a far greater judgment to come. That is how we must always see the calamities that come upon the face of this earth and upon the nations of the world.

Earth quakes, floods, catastrophes of various kinds, what are they? Oh, evil men will cavil against God and they will blaspheme him and they will say, "Is this the God of love?" And they will bring up all these puerile arguments so called. And yet at the same time he is a God of love because if he sweeps multitudes away to their deaths, he is warning those who remain behind of a far greater judgment to come.

Dear sinner, do not harden your heart. Though calamity may have come your way and some catastrophe has hit your scene, don't harden your heart. This is God warning you of something much worse, of judgment that is eternal, of wrath that cannot be quenched. But it is everlasting in its extent, in its scope, its power.

Be warned tonight, dear sinner, that though you may escape for a little while, you will not always escape. And though you may run and flee and shut these things out of your mind and plunge into the ways of the world all you possibly can, there comes a day when God will catch up with you because there is such a thing as divine vengeance.

Could I also show you that the natural mind knows that death is not the end? Here is another evidence that man is not lost or man has not had erased from his mind every form of God's knowledge, because these men knew that death was not the end.

How do we know that? Look at verse five. "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them."¹⁸

They jettisoned their cargo in an attempt to save their lives. They sought to preserve their lives at any cost. And this was a great cost, the cargo thrown overboard. The whole thing jettisoned in an attempt to save their lives.

Why? Because they realized that death was not the end. That is what comes out of that.

You see, my friend, if it were that death is the end and if they believed that death is the end, why then, the urgent attempt to save themselves? There is no explanation for that. They might say it is because out of greed, just to be able to live on a little longer.

¹⁸ Jonah 1:5.

No, that is not the real answer. Have you never seen or heard or read of those events that we have events that we have even witnessed in recent years when something happens in a sports stadium and what happens? There is a mad rush to escape even to the extent where those who are trying to get away will trample others to death that they themselves may save their own lives.

Why does man have an inherent desire to save his life? Because he knows in his conscience and in his heart of hearts that death is not the end, that there is something beyond it and he knows that he is not ready. So he will desperately cling to life for he knows that death is not the end.

And notice, as well, what they began to pray. I don't know how long it was since these men prayed to their gods, but they certainly prayed that day. They cried unto their gods.

Isn't it amazing, my friend, very striking that sinners perhaps who have never prayed before will begin [?] when death is staring them in the face.

We have to think of the thief, in fact, both thieves crucified with Christ because both men prayed. One man's prayer was a prayer of unbelief. He said, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."¹⁹ But he did pray because he realizes he is facing death. And death is not the end. And he knows that the wicked life that he has lived has not merely been paid for by a few nails being thrust through his hands and through his feet, but it is going to be paid for ultimately under God's wrath and ever he wishes to escape death.

Oh, how many men there are who will pray when death faces them or something comes along that they have that tells them that they are about to go into God's eternity. Oh, then they begin to pray. But for most men it is too late.

But it does us of the subconscious awareness that beyond death there is a world to come. There is life. There is an eternal existence. There is that consciousness that this world is but a step that is passed through. It is but a step into the world to come.

You are aware of that. Why do you not repent? Because you know not the day of your death.

And then may I also show you that the natural mind has the ability to weigh up vital issues that do affect the soul. Again, verse five, the cargo being jettisoned in the face of death. Think about that from another angle.

I already said to you, it is true, they threw out the cargo to try to save themselves and save their lives. But there is another way of seeing this. They threw out that cargo because in the face of death material possessions become very unimportant. And how true that is. In the face of death material things become very unimportant.

¹⁹ Luke 23:39.

And, therefore, here is the proof that man is able to weigh up these issues and when facing that which threatens to cut his life short, the man, the woman who is in that situation suddenly becomes very aware that time is a most precious commodity. And men would buy time if they could, even at the expense of everything on which they have set their hearts and they have held dear throughout their lifetime.

One of the greatest examples of that is Queen Elizabeth I. Queen Elizabeth I may have been a protestant in name, but she was an ungodly wretch and when she came to die her last words were these. "All my riches for one more moment of time." What an awful end? But she could weigh it up and she realized when it comes to that, finances, pleasures, material things, they are nothing and they are unimportant.

When you are standing on the threshold of eternity you are not saved and your sin remains, your guilt is upon you and you are about to face a holy God and a Christless eternity. I tell you, my friend, then the things of the world, your pleasures, your entertainment, whatever else it might be, it will suddenly come home to you that it is nothing and means nothing if you face God's eternity without Christ.

And, therefore, may I urge you tonight to see that this is true right now? That is, though you may live for many another year, material things, worldly things are unimportant when you don't have Jesus Christ. And they are causing you to turn a deaf ear to the call of the gospel and to the claims of the Savior and you are living for self and for your own ways. And you are traveling on through life heedlessly carelessly indulging yourself in one thing after another. And though the call of the gospel is come to you time without number, you have not responded. You have remained in rebellion.

Well, let me warn you. There comes a day when you will call and God will not answer.

Proverbs one makes that clear. The Lord speaks of those to whom he has called over and over again. And he tells us there that when that day comes, the day of death and the day of judgment, they will call but I will not answer.²⁰

My friend, these things are real. So while tonight the opportunity is before you, the privilege is yours, hearing the gospel, hearing the way of life and the urgency is upon you to turn and to seek Christ and to seek him at once.

Certainly the natural mind does understand many things. We see it in these matters.

And very quickly, now just bear with me, may I say this? The natural mind left to itself can't discover the true way of salvation. You see, these mariners, with all the knowledge that they had that I have outlined for you, they were still in darkness. They did not come to the stage of understanding and saving trust that is in view in this verse, verse 16, by the knowledge that they naturally possessed.

²⁰ See Proverbs 1:28.

No, what they needed was a special revelation. And, thank God, a special revelation was given. There was a special revelation given of the true God.

You look with me there at verse nine. “And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD.”²¹ And that is Jehovah. “...the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.”²²

Here was a revelation being given to these men of the true God. They had their own gods. But they didn’t know the true God. And they will never be saved until they know him. So Jonah, this backslidden prophet, this man running from God, what an amazing thing this is. Here he is speaking up and at least expressing to these men that there is a God who made heaven and earth, the God of the sea. Notice the language there, “the sea and the dry land.”²³

You see, my friend, as you read those words and as Jonah made that revelation to them of the true God he revealed that he is the God of creation. It says there, “I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.”²⁴ Observe the order there, as I said, the sea and then the dry land. He had made the sea, the very sea in which they were sailing only on the very sea on which they were tossed to and fro right now at that moment and were about to plunge into its depths. Jonah said, “My God made this sea,” from which, for them, there was no apparent means of escape.

And then he said, “And he has made the dry land as well,” the dry land which they wished with all their hearts they were on.

But the order is very significant. He made the sea and the dry land. He is the God of creation.

And, you see, when creation is emphasized as it is right here, it emphasizes that the God who has created is, therefore, the judge. And that comes out by the very order of those words that I have pointed out to you. Jonah, I don’t know exactly what Jonah felt or what he fully understood about his own situation, but certainly he told the truth right here. This God is a God of the sea and you are in his hands right now and he can send you to the depths, because the God who has created is the judge.

My friend, your life is not your own. God has made you. He has given you the health and the strength and the abilities which you are now using to serve the devil. He is your Creator. And ever he is your judge. He is a God of creation.

But then, thank God, he was revealed to these men as the God of the covenant because

²¹ Jonah 1:9.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

Jonah said in that ninth verse, “I fear Jehovah.”²⁵ And Jehovah is the covenant name of God.

Now at least he was telling these men of the fact that there is a God who while he will judge sinners, he has also covenanted to save sinners. That was revealed in his name. And thank God for that tonight. My friend, it is the Word that reveals God. Listen to this. Jonah spoke the Word to these men. With all their searching they could never find the true God. Man in his natural condition may understand many things, but he will never know the true God until the Bible, the Word of God comes to him and shows him that God. That is what is going on here. Jonah speaks the Word and he tells them about that God who will touch them, but is a God of covenant mercy.

And then, very, very clearly here there was a revelation given to these men of the way of salvation in Christ. It was given through Jonah himself.

Now remember this. It is no stretch of things to say that Jonah typified Christ because the Lord tells us that himself in Matthew chapter 12. He speaks of Jonah and he speaks in such a way as to let us know that Jonah in a strange fashion, in these certain events and happenings in his life pointed to Christ and we will get to that in a moment. But notice here that in Jonah one there are certain foreshadowings of Christ. And these men saw it. They actually saw in form or in type Jesus Christ dying for them.

How do we know that?

Look at verse 12. “And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.”²⁶ And when you go down to verse 15 notice what it says. “So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.”²⁷

Jonah revealed to these men that the only way—listen, sinner—the only way for them to be delivered was for him to die. That is what he is saying. And if you are going to be saved, I must die.

And Jonah is cast into the raging billows sent by an angry God and as soon as Jonah is swallowed up by the ocean and by the whale the sea ceased from her raging.

My friend, there is our Savior. There is the Christ of God who must die that you might live. He must come under God’s wrath for sinners like us to be spared. And as soon as the billows of the wrath of God went over the soul of Christ, God’s wrath was appeased.

And for those who rest in Jesus Christ and in his substitutionary work, the storm of the wrath is stayed. There is Christ dying.

²⁵ Jonah 1:9.

²⁶ Jonah 1:12.

²⁷ Jonah 1:15.

And then, of course, there is Christ buried. Verse 17. “The LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”²⁸

And if we had time we could turn to Matthew 12 where the Lord quotes this and applies it to himself, “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”²⁹

Christ dying, Christ buried and then Christ resurrected because Jonah came forth at the end of that period.

This just struck me the other day when I was looking at this passage. It is a truth about the resurrection. No one saw Christ actually experiencing the resurrection. They saw him afterwards. But they did not see him rise. When they got to the grave, the grave was empty.

My friend, no one saw that fish vomit up Jonah on the face of the earth. And, therefore, you have a wonderful pointer here to the resurrection of the Lord.

And where is Jonah found after he is resurrected so to speak? He is found preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. And when Jesus Christ had died and was buried and rose again, what happened? The gospel began to go into all the world, into the Gentile world of that day. And thank God it is still going to the world and it is being declared here tonight again in your ears.

This is what I mean when I say that the natural mind, left to itself, will never find the truth. It must be revealed and Christ must be made known if men are to be saved. And, my dear friend, it is being made known to you right now. The Christ of God who died, who was buried, who rose again, here we have this tremendous portrayal to our hearts of the Lord Jesus and I would urge you tonight to seek him and to come to him and trust him because he alone can save you from the eternal wrath of a sin hating God. And if you will not rest in Christ you will perish.

Will you come to him tonight? It is time. You have waited too long already. This is your opportunity. Why are you waiting? In the light of all that we have seen tonight, why do you linger and delay instead of coming to the Savior as urgently as you can to seek him and to trust him and to receive him as he is offered in the gospel and be saved for time and eternity?

Oh, that tonight they Lord would awaken you and that you would come? Thank God there is a Savior who is able and willing to save. Come.

Let’s bow together as we draw to the end of our meeting.

²⁸ Jonah 1:17.

²⁹ Matthew 12:40.

We will just be quiet and still for a moment or two please. Let's just continue reverently before the Lord.

My dear friend, is it not time for you to come to Christ? It is. I am here to help you, to spend time with you, to talk to you. But I can only help you when you seek that help. When this meeting is over you make your way to me. It would be my joy to show you that you need to get to Christ and to show you how to get there. Come, come tonight. Don't wait any more. May the Lord help you.

Heavenly Father, write thy Word on every soul. Oh, we beseech thee to use it, to apply it. Oh, God, make it a saving Word. Honor and glorify the Lord Jesus. Oh, Lord, do a work of grace tonight. Part us now with thy blessing and watch over us. Keep sinners from hell. Bring them to Christ. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with every child of God tonight and forever. Amen. Amen.