

## Yahweh's Relentless Mercy, Part 2

Jonah 1:7-17

June 18, 2023

For this morning, we are going to be back in the book of Jonah, if you want to make your way there in your copy of the scriptures. We're gonna finish up chapter 1 of Jonah this morning. And so I just want to, at the front of this read chapter 1 again, have the context in our mind, the narrative in, in our minds before we get into the verses we're gonna cover this morning.

So Jonah chapter 1, beginning in verse 1. "Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.' But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD. But the LORD hurled the great wind upon the sea, and there

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Grace

was a mighty Tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.

“Then the Mariners were afraid, and cried out each to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship, and had lain down and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to him, ‘What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.’

“And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.’ So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. And then they said to him, ‘Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And what people are you?’ And he said to them, ‘I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.’

# GRACE CHURCH



Grace

"And then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, 'What is this you have done!' For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. And then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?' For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, 'Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know that it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.' Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

"Therefore they called out to the Lord, 'O LORD, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.' So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

# GRACE CHURCH



---

So the last couple weeks, in the first three verses, we saw Jonah's callous heart. He was unwilling to go and preach to the Ninevites. In fact, he was willing to give up everything and go to the ends of the earth, risking death in order that the Lord's mercy might not reach Nineveh. Because he hated Nineveh. He hated the Assyrians. He was risk, he was willing to risk even his life to make sure that that didn't happen.

Instead of obeying, Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord from the temple in Jerusalem, away from what Yahweh had called him to do and commissioned him to do. And so as a true prophet called by God, as a child of God; God, he's not just going to let Jonah go. Jonah is God's chosen vessel, and the Lord is going to discipline him until he repents of his sin and obeys.

And that's what we started looking at last week in verses 4 to 6. The Lord's discipline of Jonah. This whole section from verses 4 through 17 is on the Lord's discipline of Jonah as he tries to flee his calling. What we saw last week was the great storm that the Lord had hurled upon the sea, created in order to

# GRACE CHURCH



Grace

---

get Jonah's attention, to make him fear a little bit. So far it's only made the sailors afraid, had little effect on Jonah. Toward the end of that section that we looked at last week, the verse 6, the sailors tell Jonah, they tell him to petition his God, that his God might give a thought to them and save them.

However, Jonah does not pray. Jonah knows that there is no point in praying to a God, that he is in direct rebellion against, an active rebellion against, because Jonah knows that Yahweh does not answer the prayers of those who are in active disobedience against him. So Jonah ignores the sailor's call to pray. Jonah refuses to repent and pray, so the discipline must increase for the Lord to break Jonah's hard heart. So we see today a continuation of Yahweh's relentless mercy to pursue his prophet and discipline him accordingly.

And as I mentioned, I mentioned this last time, but I didn't have time then to expose it or explain it all. But it's pretty widely accepted in many commentaries that verses 4 through 16 or 4 through 17 is a large chiastic structure in the Hebrew. Chiastic structures were literary devices used in Hebrew

literature to draw the emphasis onto a certain point in the text. And in the chiastic structure, the emphasis is on what's in the center. That word chiastic, it comes from the Greek word chi, which is the letter X, and as an X starts wide and draws down to a point, that's kind of the, the depiction of what's happening in the text.

What the author's trying to do is draw our attention to the center. He does that by having parallel ideas that start at the beginning and the end, and they walk in and draw closer and closer, kind of like a bookend. You think of a bookend topic and then just bookends that walk in from the outside to the center. So the parallel ideas that bookend this section, we find it in verse 4. The Lord hurled a great wind and then the sailors became afraid and cried out to their gods. This is paralleled with the very end in verse 15 where the sailors pick up Jonah, they hurl him into the sea, and then they become fearful of Yahweh and they sacrifice to him.

So those are parallel thoughts, parallel ideas. As you move in from that, you see Jonah who's asleep while the sailors are

working, but also after Jonah is woken, he is told to cry out to his God that they might be saved. And then that's in verse 5 and in verse 14 the sailors are crying out to Yahweh that they might be saved.

So you move in one step in there in verse 8, the sailors are questioning Jonah, and in verse 11 the sailors are questioning Jonah. When you go in one step further from that, that's the center of this whole structure where Jonah confesses that he fears or worships Yahweh, who is sovereign over all things. And then the sailors fear in that section is heightened in light of Jonah's offense against a sovereign God. So at the center of all of that is the sovereign God Yahweh in the people's fear. But the literary structure highlights this confession of Jonah being a servant of the most high God who made and thus controls all things.

It's more the emphasis here is pointing us on God, the sovereign creator of all, Yahweh is at the center of Jonah's discipline here in this passage. So the outline for this morning, continuation of the outline from last week, but this

# GRACE CHURCH



Greeley

large section, I'll just give you the three points for this morning. But if you are, if you were here last week, you can make this point four, five and six. But just for ease this morning we'll do one, two, three.

Point number one is the revelation of Yahweh's discipline in 7 to 10, the revelation of Yahweh's discipline. Point number two is the solution to Yahweh's discipline in 11 to 16, and then point number three, the salvation of Yahweh's discipline in verse 17. So this first point, the revelation of Yahweh's discipline, look back at verse 7, the sailors, the mariners, "They said to one another, 'Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.'"

Deep within the human heart is the desire to understand the meaning of things. What is the meaning of this? What is the meaning of that? Vern Poythress, he wrote a book entitled *Redeeming Our Thinking on History*, and he talks about how when reading and writing history, if you just write about events and people, you can have a great understanding of those things, but what the human heart really longs for is to know the meaning of



those events. I mean, you take shootings, for example, mass shootings, you hear on the news, they're reporting all the details and the facts of the event. But if they don't have the meaning, they're always wondering, but why did this person do this? They want to understand the meaning behind it. They're never satisfied until they feel that they have understood why such things have happened.

We all understand this longing to know the meaning of events, particularly when bad things happen. It's part of how we've been made in the image of God. God created us to understand the meaning of things, the deepest reasonings, and we're not satisfied without them. So we get the sailors here. They are seeking to further understand why this storm has come upon them and if they know why or for what reason then maybe they'll know what God has been angered and what they can do to appease him. So the sailors cast lots.

When Jonah refused to pray at the end of verse 6, he went silent. He refused to pray. They looked to one another and they decided that it was time to divine why this was happening. So

verse 7, they cast lots, and the lot fell to Jonah. Throughout this chapter, and this section in particular, Jonah is contrasted with the sailors. The sailors are seeking revelation as to why this calamity has come upon them. Jonah knows, but he's withholding the information. He's reluctant to shed any light on the situation.

So the sailors cast lots. And this is a contrast to Jonah because the author of Jonah, possibly Jonah himself, is an Israelite. And the author here paints the sailors in a pious light, even for Israelites, because in Israel the only acceptable form of divination to determine God's will was the practice of casting lots. We see in other parts of scripture there are other practices of divination, summoning the dead, fortune tellers, witchcraft, but all that's condemned by God. The men here, these pagans, they're put in a very good light compared to Jonah. They do the one acceptable practice of divination while Jonah is in direct rebellion against Yahweh, running away from him.

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Greeley

So they look like pious, even in Israel they would look pious while Jonah is running away. The pagan sailors seem to keep doing what's right before even Yahweh, while Jonah is contrasted as a rebel. But the lot falls to Jonah. They probably, to cast lots, they probably had some kind of receptacle that everybody would put some kind of marked stone or trinket into. And then they would shake up this receptacle. And the first one that came out, whatever person that that object belonged to, that was the lot that fell to them. So whatever Jonah put in this receptacle came out. Jonah was the one. So the sailors demand answers. Verse 8, "They said to him, 'Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation and where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?'"

This rapid fire succession of questions just emphasizes the urgency of the situation. And I tend to think that since there was no time for Jonah to answer in between all these, these are all just different questions that could have been shouted by all the different sailors. They're trying to find out where this guy's come from. They were looking for answers. They wanted them now. But that first question, "Tell us on whose account this

evil has come upon us." It makes it sound as though the lot casting had not been, had not designated Jonah as the reason for the calamity, but the one with the information for it.

The Hebrew text, though it doesn't actually have the word account in the text. It's a very difficult Hebrew phrase to translate, but another translation could be tell us whose is this calamity which has come upon us. In other words, the lot fell to Jonah, who was the object of the angry deity. But the sailors wanted to know the identity of the deity who had sent this storm upon them so that they might appease him. And this is in line with the other four questions. The reason they asked him all these series of questions was because they're really trying to get at who the deity was behind it.

One commentator says, "Jonah's occupation, his hometown, country and race would have," been, "all been significant clues as to the particular deity responsible for the storm. In the Mariner's worldview, a person served a variety of deities, each associated with a different aspect of that person's life, occupation, city, nation and family. The barrage of questions

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Greeley

was probably motivated by the supposition that Jonah may not even know which deity he had offended or why. Therefore, the more personal information they knew, the better their chances of identifying the deity and the offense.”

So the men were after which deity Jonah had offended. This is why Jonah doesn't bother to answer all the questions. He just gives them the answer that they really want. Which God is doing this? Which God has sent this storm upon them? So after this barrage of questions, Jonah speaks in verse 9 and I just want to point this out here. This is the first time Jonah speaks in the book and when he speaks, he brings the revelation that all the men in the boat are asking for. Jonah reveals the source and the reason for this storm. Verse 9, he says, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD,” that is the covenant name Yahweh, “and I fear Yahweh, the God of heavens who made the sea and the dry land.”

This is what the men were after. They were looking for the meaning of all of this and it is revealed by the Lord's prophet, as was his job to reveal revelation. But having this information, it didn't make them feel any better. Look at verse

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Grace

10, "Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, 'What is this you have done!' For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Yahweh because he had told them." So Jonah had told them that he was fleeing Yahweh's presence, the God of Israel. But when he told the sailors that, they were probably thinking, well, he's the God of Jerusalem, because of their pagan thinking, there's local gods in every local region, and that God is over that region.

So they weren't attributing the storm to Israel's God, that localized deity over Jerusalem. That was their worldview. Many gods, many different areas. So when Jonah tells them that Yahweh, the God that he's running away from, is the God who made the seas, they couldn't believe their ears. Fear gripped their hearts, but it also made perfect sense. But also, how foolish. You can see their disdain for his foolishness and their moral outrage in the question, what have you done? This question is asked five other times throughout Scripture. They're all found in the first two books of the Bible. And this question, it always expresses moral outrage at what the speaker perceives as foolish behavior, foolish as in morally bad as well.

# GRACE CHURCH



Grace

---

This question in its attending moral outrage is first on the lips of God in Genesis 3. God's questioning Adam and Eve. And he asks Adam, he says, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I told you not to eat?" And Adam points at the woman, and he says, the woman you gave me. And the Lord turns to her and asks this question, "What have you done?" I mean, God knew what she had done, but it's expressing moral outrage.

The second time this question is asked in Scripture is in Genesis 12:18 when Abram goes to Egypt and he lies about Sarai being his sister. She really was his sister, but he lies, deceives everyone around to make him think that she's not his wife because he's fears for his life. They think they're going to kill him for her. And after the Lord afflicted Pharaoh, because Pharaoh took her into his household, not yet to become his wife, but possibly in the future, the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues and reveals to Pharaoh why and Abram, he calls Abram in and says, what is this you have done?

And here there's more continuity with Jonah and that even the pagans are aghast at what this supposed servant of God is doing morally or morally outraged by Abram's foolish behavior. The third instance of this question is in Genesis 26:10 where it's kind of a repeat. Isaac does the same thing, lies about his wife being his sister and the Philistine king takes a liking to her, but he finds out that they're more than brother, sister. And he repeats the same question. What is this you have done? The fourth instance is in Genesis 29:25, when Jacob works seven years for Rebecca's hand in marriage and instead Laban deceives him and gives him Leah instead. And Jacob wakes up the next day shocked, morally outraged, says what is this you have done?

So these sailors, they were as morally outraged as Jacob when he awoke to find that Laban had given him a different daughter than he had worked for. They were as morally outraged as kings who almost lost their lives because Abram and Isaac were scared and lied about their wives. Both these kings told Abram and Isaac you could have gotten someone killed and then the moral outrage of God himself at the fall because Adam and Eve had basically gotten all of humanity plunged into spiritual death. They did kill us all.



These pagan sailors, they couldn't believe the level of foolishness and selfishness of Jonah, that he would put all of them in jeopardy by running away from God, fleeing no less from the God of the sea by getting on a boat. How foolish. More than anything, though, they were afraid because they shared a boat with a man whom they now knew deserved to die at the hand of his God. Thus all the sailors feared a great fear. They were horrified and terrified that they shared a boat with Jonah, who had angered not just any God, but the supreme God, the sovereign God of the universe, who made the land and the sea. The sailors' hearts sank, great dread fell upon them.

But what about Jonah? Was Jonah afraid? Well, Jonah confesses in some of his first words that he fears Yahweh. I fear Yahweh, I am a Hebrew, I fear Yahweh. And we have to stop and ask, in what sense does Jonah fear God? If you truly fear the sovereign God of all the universe, the creator of all things, who can reach you no matter where you go, if you fear him, are you going to try to run away from him? And we have to acknowledge at this point that Jonah's confession doesn't match his actions. In fact, his confession rings quite hollow at this

point. But there at this point, we must also acknowledge, but there are times in our own lives when our actions don't match our confession.

And in particular, we need to ask ourselves if we, like Jonah, claim to worship the God of heaven, we claim to fear him, yet flee our call to evangelism, has a failure to evangelize become an acceptable sin in our hearts where we can easily claim, confess that we fear God? Yeah, we've grown accustomed to not doing it. We've grown accustomed to the spirit of the age which is just live and let live. You be you and I'll be me. And we all live with some level of discontinuity between what we confess and how we live. This is all part of the sanctification process, aligning our actions with what we know to be true in Scripture, what we know God commands us to do.

There's a level of discontinuity in all of us but have we, like Jonah, just resigned to thinking that such a discontinuity is acceptable? Maybe we compare ourselves to other Christians and think we're doing okay. We have to remember other Christians aren't the standard. The standard is Jesus Christ and

perfection, and we should be striving to grow in every respect until the Lord takes us home, never being contented with where we are right here and right now, regardless of the level of actions of other Christians around us. And especially if the pagans around you can see the obvious discontinuity between your confession and how you live, there may be even morally outraged at how blatantly you sin against the gods you claim to fear and worship.

Well, if there are even pagans around that who are morally outraged, you really ought to examine yourself. But this whole scene centers on these verses right here, revealing and emphasizing that Yahweh is the sovereign over all the universe, deserving of all worship, and Jonah is running away from him. We all should be morally outraged like the pagans here, but even more so, we should be morally outraged when we do the same thing, when our confession doesn't line up with our actions.

Yahweh, the sovereign creator of the universe, is worthy of all worship and praise. He demands our loyalties. He demands our obedience, and he deserves all of our obedience. Are we striving

to line up our actions with our confession? It's one thing we can learn as we look at Jonah here, not just have disdain for Jonah, but have a disdain for our own lives where they don't match up with what we confess. Beloved, it doesn't end well for Jonah. It's not going to end well for you. So strive to line up your actions with your confession.

So this is the revelation of Yahweh's discipline. We knew, we already knew, because we have the scriptures in front of us, that this was Yahweh's doing. But the sailors, they didn't know. They were seeking desperately to find the meaning. They've now found it. So what are they going to do with the knowledge that they have? And that brings us to point two, the solution to Yahweh's discipline. The solution to Yahweh's discipline. Look at verse 11. They said, the sailors, the mariners said to Jonah, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" Since the sailors, they don't know Yahweh, which means they don't know how to appease him, they question Jonah again.

We have to remember this isn't a calm and polite discussion on a couch in a house somewhere. This is a dire situation where

these men fear for their lives. The sea is growing more and more tempestuous. The waves are beating harder and harder against the boat. It's an urgent question that they must find the answer to or die. What must we do, Jonah? The sailors, they're ignorant of the ways of Yahweh, thus they assume he's just like any other God, just needs to be placated somehow, with some act. Jonah needs to do some kind of penance. He needs to pay for his sin somehow, and then everything will be OK.

Maybe they're thinking that they need to beat him up a little bit, make him pay for what he did, then Yahweh will be happy. Maybe he needs to say thousand Hail Mary's, but they're thinking he needs to do some kind of penance. They're thinking this is the solution to the Lord's discipline. Jonah just needs to pay for his sin. So that's their solution.

Jonah then tells them the solution they seek to quiet the storm. Look at verse 12. "He said to them, 'Pick me up and hurl me into the sea, and then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know that it's because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.'" Jonah tells them that if they want to get out of

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Greeley

this storm alive, they have to throw him overboard. Jonah tells them, option number one throw me overboard, that will quiet the storm. Option number two is what? Oh, but Jonah doesn't tell them option number two, but we all know what option number two is, option number two is Jonah repents of his rebellion. Option number two is Jonah humbles himself before Yahweh and obeys him.

Turn in your copy of the Scriptures back to, or to Psalm chapter 32. We're going to make a hop, skip, and a jump through several Psalms and end up back in Jonah. But go to Psalm chapter 32. Jonah would have been familiar with this. Jonah knew that there was a second option, but he wasn't telling the sailors that. Option number two as Jonah repent and humble himself before the Lord confesses sin and find forgiveness.

Psalm 32, verses 4 and 6. This is a Psalm of David talking about how blessed it is to be forgiven. But in verses 4 to 6 David says, "For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, 'I will

confess my transgression to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin."

Now go over to Psalm 40. But here in Psalm 32, clearly David outlines the way to forgiveness is confession, where you can be saved from the rush of great waters. He says, but confession. Psalm 40 is another Psalm of David. Look at verses 6 and 8, "In sacrifices and offerings you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

Now flip over a couple more pages to Psalm 51. But here again in Psalm 40, David talks about the fact that God, he doesn't delight in sacrifices and offerings from an unrepentant heart, but he delights in sacrifices and offerings when we delight to do his will, when we want to obey him. Psalm 51:16 to 17. Tell us for you again the same vein of thinking from David. "For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God

are a broken spirit; a broken in contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

God did command the sacrifices. It wasn't that they didn't please him, but they only pleased him when they were done from a position of contrite brokenness before him. What the Lord requires before any offering or sacrifice is the sacrifice and offering of a broken and contrite heart, broken over sin, humility before him, one who is now changed and set on obeying the Lord rather than rebelling against him. On your way back to Jonah, flip over to Jeremiah Chapter 7, Jeremiah Chapter 7 where we see this outlined by the prophet Jeremiah as well.

Jeremiah Chapter 7, verses 21 through 24, again talking about the Lord pouring his wrath and his anger out on people for their sin. Verse 21, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; “Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers, or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them: ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall



be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.'"

You can turn back to Jonah now, but Jeremiah there outlines what the Lord really wants is not animal sacrifices, not outward displays of contrition, but what the Lord wants is a heart set on obeying him. The pagan sailors, they had the misconception that Jonah's God just required some kind of penance, some kind of sacrifice to appease him. Jonas said no, the only thing for you to do is get me away from you, separate me from you, throw me into the ocean, and the sea will go quiet.

But Jonah was a prophet, an Israelite, he would have been familiar with these verses. He would have known the second option was for him to repent and seek to walk in obedience. He could have fallen on his knees, on that boat and confessed his sin before Yahweh and committed to walk in obedience, then the sea would have grown calm. But Jonah hated the wicked Assyrian so much that again he would rather die than see the Assyrians receive mercy from God. Jonah's pride had blinded him, pride that he was no more wicked than the Assyrians. He was happy to

receive the mercy of God, but he was unwilling to see mercy come to the Assyrians.

In fact, Jonah was willing to sacrifice everyone aboard the ship to ensure that the Assyrians received no mercy. Jonah didn't care one iota about the men on that boat whom he had put in direct danger. So Jonah knew that there was an option number two, repent. But he didn't tell the men on the boat that. They're pagans, they don't know, they don't know what Yahweh requires. We see here, in the midst of facing death, Jonah's heart is still hardened. It's still callous. He remains unbroken and proud, willing to die to hold on to his hatred for the Assyrians, willing to die before he is willing to obey God. But even these pagan sailors, they don't like option number one.

Look at verse 13, "Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them." They don't like option number one. They don't like the option of throwing Jonah overboard to a watery grave. So they pick up their oars and they dig in. That's the Hebrew word. They dig their oars in. They're rowing hard.

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Greeley

They're rowing as hard as they can against this storm. Throwing Jonah overboard is the last resort, in their mind. They thought they'd go back to rowing, trying rowing again to get out of this.

So they rode furiously, probably for quite some time. As skilled sailors and seamen, they probably tried for quite some time, but they were no match for Yahweh and his storm as he continued to increase the intensity of the wind and the waves driving them away from the shore. And as the sailors were rowing and rowing and rowing, as their arms grew tired, they began to fatigue and their muscles gave out. They realize there's no striving against Jonah's God. There's no winning against Yahweh, as we sang earlier, the one God who is undefeated.

What do these men do when they realize there's no striving against Yahweh. They do what Jonah should have done, crying out to him for mercy. Look at verse 14, "Therefore they called out to Yahweh, 'Oh Yahweh, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Yahweh, have done as it pleased you.'"

Again, it seems as if these pagan sailors are more righteous than Jonah. They seem to care about human life. They're not willing to throw Jonah overboard where Jonah, he just wants to, he's okay if everybody dies, but in particular, the Assyrians will die if he dies. But these men, they seem to care deeply about human life, even Jonah's life when he blatantly put them in harm's way. He put them all in mortal danger. Yet they still seem to care about his life. Because as image bearers, these men recognize the value of human life, but nonetheless they recognize that this is the last resort. Either they can save each other or they can all perish.

So they cry out to Yahweh and ask that Jonah's blood not be on their heads. They're under the same assumption that Jonah is, that throwing Jonah overboard means certain death. They also recognize that the sin that Jonah has committed, it didn't warrant the death penalty. They call him innocent.

Even pagans know there are certain things deserving of death, but they don't think Jonah's deserving of death.

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Grace

Certainly any civil law that we would assess and have such a sin doesn't warrant the death penalty. God certainly didn't have a death penalty for this in the Old Testament. These men knew that they would feel comfortable putting someone to death who was a murderer, but not this. He's running away from His God. So they asked God not to lay on them his innocent blood. And then these men confess the recognition of the sovereignty of Yahweh.

You, O Yahweh, have done as it pleased you. It had become clear to these sailors that the sovereign God of the universe had directed all of these events leading to this point where the last resort must be taken, throw Jonah overboard. It had become clear to them that this was the Lord's doing and it was the Lord's prophet that gave them their only viable solution. That is, if Jonah wasn't going to repent, the only viable solution was to separate the one being disciplined from everyone else. It was the only option they had, because Jonah refused to repent. They couldn't make him repent, but they could cast him out into utter darkness and save everyone else on board.

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Greeley

So verses 15 and 16, "they picked up Jonah, hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared Yahweh exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows." The apparently immediate cessation of the raging of the sea, the nearly immediate calming of the sea that drew the sailors to worship the Lord. They immediately concurred that Jonah was the cause of the turmoil and the chaos that had availed them. Jonah's God, Yahweh, was truly the sovereign God over all. His almighty power as the supreme God was demonstrably clear to them here.

Thus, their great fear, their fear that has grown throughout this whole scene, their great fear found the right object in Yahweh. They feared Yahweh, again contrasting Jonah's confession of his fear of Yahweh. And the question that arises as you look at these sailors in their response here is, are these sailors converted or are they just adding Yahweh to their pantheon of deities? And commentators are pretty divided on this issue. One commentator says, "Neither the sailors nor the Ninevites are converted to Jewish monotheism. They do not become gentile proselytes to Judaism." He goes on to argue that they're just adding Yahweh to their pantheon of deities.

Another commentator, he's more on the fence about it when he says, "The Midrash," the Midrash is a Jewish commentary on the Old Testament. "The Midrash understands this to mean that they threw their idols into the waves. They returned to Joppa, went up to Jerusalem, and became proselytes." This commentator goes on to say, "This is not impossible, but we must be careful not to go beyond the text. While some would associate these actions on the part of the sailors with true worship of Yahweh, it is not clear whether these mariners had a conversion experience to Israel's God." End quote.

And I agree with this commentator that we need to make sure we don't go beyond the text. We can't say that they went up to Jerusalem and became proselytes, but I would agree with a final commentator who says, "The mariners worship does not necessarily mean that they convert to monotheistic worship of Yahweh, but it certainly points in that direction. The fear that the mariners feel at the end of the episode is qualitatively different than the fear that gripped him at the onset of the storm.

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Greeley

"The storm, it no longer threatens them. Yahweh's wrath no longer hangs over their heads. Their confusion and sense of helplessness that evaporates. What is there left to fear when these men fear? The Mariners are gripped at the end with a profound sense of awe that Yahweh's readiness to reveal himself, his responsiveness to their great need. These men have never encountered a deity before who is willing to deliver those who offer humble petition to him. Their fear of Yahweh, it's no mere religious sentiment. It finds tangible expression in the crew's grateful worship at the end."

The sailors fear at the end of the scene, it's no longer fear of death. They're standing in awe of the all powerful God. It's very similar to the scene in the New Testament where the disciples, they're on the boat with Jesus and the great storm rises. Fear grips the disciples, they went, they woke Jesus up. Jesus rebukes the disciples for their lack of faith, but then he rebukes the wind and the waves. Mark's gospel says a great fear came over the disciples. Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey? Matthew says they marveled.



Same thing here with the sailors. They are marveling at Yahweh, who would show them mercy. The sailors, they have a tangible response to their fear that indicates that they were converted and believed in him. I also think the language of Jonah further indicates the sailor's true conversion. I'm not going to be dogmatic about this. I could, you know, if I get to heaven, find out I'm wrong about this, you know, I'll live with that. But I do think that these men were genuinely converted.

Look down at Jonah, chapter 2, verse 9. This is the end of Jonah's prayer to God. Jonah says, "But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord!" This is Jonah's prayer from within the fish. And notice how his prayer ends, calling out to the Lord for salvation, but offering sacrifices and paying vows. His response after his repentance to the Lord is the same words as the sailor's response to the Lord when they fear him.

The proper and right response, the response of a believer to the true fear of the Lord, is leading to salvation involving sacrifices and paying vows. I don't think it's any coincidence

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Grace

what Jonah promises to do at the end is the same thing the sailors just did. I think the sailors' worship here is genuine from converted hearts, having just witnessed the power of Yahweh as a supreme God. So while we can't make the same leap that the Midrash does, thinking they dropped everything, went to the temple of Jerusalem, I think it does indicate true worship.

And that would be in perfect keeping with the purpose of the book of Jonah, which if you were here a couple weeks ago, reveals Yahweh as the merciful God who relents from disaster and judgement, being merciful on any who would repent and believe in him. These sailors, they are merely a precursor to Yahweh's undeserving mercy going to the Gentile Assyrians. So I think they were truly saved spiritually, not just saved from the storm. I think their worship was from contrite hearts in the fear of the Lord.

This whole scene shows how worthy of worship Yahweh is, how even these pagans, they turn to worship him for the mercy he showed them, all while his prophet continues to rebel. But as we conclude this point, I want to just make some observations and

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Greeley

applications on the solution to Yahweh's discipline. First, we need to make sure that we don't think like the pagan sailors that some form of penance is the solution to the Lord's discipline.

If you want to write headings to hang your thoughts on this first one, you can just put that penance is not a solution to discipline. Penance is not a solution to discipline. Penance is not a solution to any problem we find in the Christian life. We can't do penance in hopes that God answers some prayer in a positive manner either. And if you're in sin, there's nothing you can do, nothing you can pay to remove the stain of sin or get you out of the discipline.

When we are saved, Christ's blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness. He took upon himself all the punishment for all of our sins, past, present, and future. There is nothing we can do to pay for sin. It's actually an offence to the cross of Christ to think that we can do anything to pay for our sin. Because what that really says is what Christ did isn't enough. So if we're believers, we know we can't pay for our sin, the

ultimate penalty, but we can be tempted to think that we can make up for our sin like Jonah, instead of repentance and confession.

We can be tempted to think, well, instead of evangelizing, I'll just do this over here instead. I'll give money to the church. I'll pay for someone else to do it. We can be tempted to make excuses for sin and say, yeah, but I'm serving over here, so it's, it's okay. It makes up for this over here. I'll keep this little sin hidden over here to solve my conscience and I'll do a lot of good works over here to make up for it.

Beloved, this is no different. This is trying to do penance instead of repenting. And penance is not an option for a Christian. It's an offense to the cross of Jesus Christ. If you're a Christian, Jesus has paid for every sin with his blood. So don't spit on the cross of Christ by thinking you can offer anything more. Instead, we should recognize how we owe him our life. We should repent from whatever it is that we're holding more dear than our Lord Jesus Christ; should give up whatever idol it is, whatever sin and thing we're clinging to, that we're

trying to make up for over here, repent of that and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that's the first application. Penance is not a solution to discipline. Second, throwing someone overboard or we might say excommunication is the last resort, not the only option. Now, there's not a direct parallel here between this, what's going on here and church discipline, but we see, we, we see a lot of aspects in the Lord's discipline of Jonah here that we can draw some application from. I think there's some things we can learn and apply to from this. But Jonah told the sailors that this was their only option when he knew good and well that it wasn't.

We know because Jesus is given an outline for church discipline in Matthew 18, that throwing someone overboard is not the only option and it can't be the first response. Jesus tells us in Matthew 18, if your brother sins against you, go to him in private. If he doesn't listen to you, you take two or three others or one or two others. And then if he doesn't listen, you tell to the church they're all supposed to call him to

repentance. And then if he still doesn't listen, then you throw him out, excommunicate him.

And I think we can learn from the sailors here that we should do everything humanly possible before throwing someone overboard. These sailors, they didn't know Jonah from Adam, and we see them here working strenuously and tirelessly to avoid throwing him overboard. Why? Because they knew the seriousness of the situation. They knew the seriousness of, for them, throwing someone to their death.

Likewise, Paul calls the step of excommunication as handing someone over to Satan. 1 Corinthians 5:5, "You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved." What it looks like for us as church members in the midst of discipline to do everything humanly possible is not the strenuous work of rowing a boat, but it is the exhausting work of confronting sin and calling sinners to repentance.

It is uncomfortable, it is wearying, but we should do everything possible to warn the person under the Lord's discipline. So let's follow the example of these sailors doing everything humanly possible to get someone to repent. So penance is never an option. Excommunication is the last resort, not the first option. And third and finally, repentance is the first solution. The pagans had good reason for not knowing this. Jonah ignored repentance as an option. But we should not ignore repentance as the obvious and first response to discipline.

This is option number one, primary option in the first, second, and third steps of church discipline. Repent and obey. Don't be stubborn and hard hearted like Jonah and think you can ignore repentance as an option. Repentance should be the first thing on our minds when we are confronted. It is the first solution to discipline. Don't be foolish like Jonah and ignore the obvious option of repenting. Let us be quick to hear our brothers appeal to us when we're confronted, being willing to forsake anything that we hold on to and humble ourselves before men and God.

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Grace

So those are three things I think we can take away from that chapter. But back to Jonah. The sailors have thrown him overboard. The sea has grown calm. The sailors fear and worship Yahweh. What happens to Jonah? That brings us to our final point this morning. Don't worry, it's much shorter, the salvation of Yahweh's discipline. Look at verse 17, "And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah." And I'm going to stop there. If you are a child of God like Jonah, and you do not repent in the midst of discipline, the Lord will increase the pressure to bring you to repentance.

That happens here. We see the pressure mounting all throughout the scene, the storm growing worse and worse. Jonah refuses to repent. So the Lord appoints a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And just like the Lord had hurled a great storm on the sea, so also he's in control of the creatures, the fish of the sea. He appoints a fish to swallow Jonah at just the right moment. Now, how many of you, when you read this story, Jonah is swallowed by the fish. And you read that, and you stop, and you rejoice that God has saved Jonah, and probably not many of us.



# GRACE CHURCH

---

Grace

I mean, for one, Jonah is supposed to be the hero, but he is painted up to this point like the villain because of how he's acting. He stands in rebellion against God. And so I think in our hearts, we're not prone to sympathize with Jonah. We kind of think the bad guy's gotten what he deserves. But we should also see this as the salvation of Jonah because Jonah's song in chapter 2, which we'll get to and come back in July and teach in July, he describes himself as sinking into the ocean.

I think when I read this, you know, I just imagine Jonah hitting the water and the fish eating him right away. His song indicates that he is sinking down, down, down into the depths of the ocean with the roots of the mountain, water and seaweed around him. So Jonah is slowly sinking after the sailors throw him overboard. He's going to drown. He's on the brink of death when Yahweh saves him by sending a fish to swallow him. The fish was the means of discipline as well as the means of salvation, at least from physical death. And I think what we see here is that discipline and salvation are not mutually exclusive, even in the same act.

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Greeley

The fish saved Jonah's life, who he probably couldn't swim being an Israelite. The fish was the means of salvation for Jonah, though that didn't become apparent until three days later. But what I want to draw out is that sometimes discipline is the means of deliverance. And this is exactly what Paul told the Corinthians in that verse I quoted earlier, First Corinthians 5:5, "You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his spirit may be saved." The discipline is always meant to turn a sinner back, deliver him from further sin. The destruction is meant to lead to salvation.

One act can be both an act of discipline or judgement and salvation. And this is most clearly seen in the cross, the act of God pouring his wrath, wrath out on Jesus Christ. It was an act of judgement against all of our sin. But it became apparent three days later that the same act procured our salvation with his resurrection. Jesus likened himself to Jonah being swallowed by the great fish, being in there for three days.

In Matthew 12:38 to 41,5 he said, "Then some of the scribes and the Pharisees answered him, saying, 'Teacher, we

# GRACE CHURCH

---

*Grace*

wish to see a sign from you.' But he answered them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.' For just as Jonah was in was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."

The sign is his death, burial, and subsequent resurrection. Jesus emerged from the grave after three days, like Jonah emerging from the fish after three days would be their sign. The Pharisees were contented to see Jesus put to death, but they failed to see the same act brought salvation, which was made manifest three days later at his resurrection. The Pharisees ignored it the sign that Jesus told them. And we also tend to lose sight of the fact that our discipline is meant to bring about deliverance.

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Grace

Not our church in particular, but other churches tend to think the process of church discipline laid out by Jesus practiced it's not loving, and nothing could be further from the truth. Such a thing calls Jesus a liar. The pattern in Scripture is clear. Discipline is designed to be the means of deliverance. It is designed to turn back the Sinner. If we fail to practice it, we fail to love God as God loved us and sent his Son to die for us. Discipline and deliverance are two gloves that fit hand in hand.

Likewise, the Lord's positive discipline in our life, right? We know it delivers us. It disciplines us to deliver us from falling into more and more sin. So as we look at this, the merciful discipline of the Lord in Jonah's life, even though it is very severe, we remember as Christians we know the meaning to all of these things that happen in our life. Words of Romans 8:28, "And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose, for those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son in order that he might be the first born among many brothers.

# GRACE CHURCH

---

Greeley

So when we are looking for the meaning in our trials, in our discipline, it's right here, beloved, whether we're in sin or he's just positively disciplining us, the Lord wants to conform us to the image of his son. And that discipline is for our good, to fashion us into Christ like vessels that he has called us to be. Let us not flee from it, but welcome this discipline. As we know, and I mentioned last time, it is the hand of the good physician guiding that scalpel to do just what he needs to do in our lives to remove sin. Let's not rebuff against it, but let's receive it with joy.

Let's pray. Father, our greatest desire is to be like your Son Jesus Christ. We ask that you discipline us to turn us back from sin, to deliver us from those sins. We ask that you bring trials to our lives to conform us to the image of your Son Jesus Christ, that we might be made more like him, particularly in having the compassion that he had, that we look upon others with the same compassion we received from you. And now, having received that compassion, I pray that we would walk in the good works that you have prepared for us, walking in holiness, that we might bring you, the Supreme God, all glory as we live our

# GRACE CHURCH

---

*Greeley*

lives before a lost in pagan world. We pray this in Jesus' name,  
Amen.