

Series: *A Moody Missionary Meets the Merciful Master*

Lesson: *Salvation is of the LORD*

Text: Jonah 1:11-17 (L3)

Date: Sunday, September 18, 2011

Colonial Hills
Baptist Church

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Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

INTRODUCTION



¹In Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, the preacher, Mapple, delivers a sermon about Jonah in a seaman's chapel in New Bedford, MA, one of the nineteenth century's greatest whaling ports. During the time when Herman Melville was writing *Moby Dick* and getting it published, one of the youngsters roaming the streets and docks of New Bedford was a boy named Albert Ryder. Albert would become "one of America's greatest, most enigmatic artists."

Albert's rendition of *Jonah* is depicted above. The scene he paints vividly depicts the dangerous decision to disobey that we considered last week. The *influence* of that decision on others is illustrated by the convulsive waves and cowering sailors on the weirdly bent ship. The *injury* of that decision is pictured by the frail man in the foreground, Jonah. With flailing arms, Jonah is up to his neck in the sea. His mouth is open, perhaps in a shriek; he is surely about to

¹ Introduction adapted from Tchividjian, Tullian. *Surprised by Grace: God's Relentless Pursuit of Rebels*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010. Pp 61-63.

gulp in the waters that will drown him. Behind him, off to one side, a sea creature, as big as the ship, approaches with bulging eyes.

And still further behind Jonah and the sailors, overarching all this scene, is the painting's most startling image. The far horizon, in great contrast to the sea's churning darkness, is spanned by winglike clouds in white and gold. In their center we see someone we know at once is a representation of God. In His right palm rests an orb, while his extended left hand conveys a gesture of blessing. His golden-bearded head bends attentively forward. His face is watchful, but unworried. We sense immediately His calm sovereignty and wisely gracious intention. It's all so starkly counter to what we see and feel happening in the ocean swells around Jonah and the sailors.

We gaze at this picture and ask, "What will the outcome be for those poor sailors and drowning prophet?" Although their doom seems certain, the painting also provides a glimmer of hope as we wonder what God is up to in this painting.

This painting accurately depicts the unseen reality of the narrative: behind the scenes, God is at work to restore fallen mankind to Himself. He is relentless in His pursuit of rebels. In His control, He has not forgotten compassion. No, rather, His heart beats for the salvation of sailors and Jonah alike, and the remainder of chapter 1 through chapter 2 proves that "salvation is of the LORD" (cf. 2:9). Indeed, "The LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save" (Isaiah 59:1).

In Jonah 1:11-17, we will consider the relentless love of God to deliver desperate sailors and drowning servants, alike, and we will do so under five headings. While we will focus predominantly on the sailors in our study today, we'll discover in our last point that this outline also describes Jonah.

THE SEARCH (v. 11).

The sailors had undoubtedly started their journey as they would have any other. For these seasoned men, this was just another trip across the Mediterranean, a voyage they had probably undertaken several times. This trip, however, would prove to be a most unique trip. Everything would change for these men on this journey.

1. *The recognition of need*

While these men had doubtless faced many storms on that great sea before, this storm terrified the men, and they began to fervently seek for release from the severe tempest by crying out to their gods for rescue (v. 5). The sailors feared for their lives, as they fully expected to die (v. 6). In verse 7, they had apparently concluded that their gods would not (or perhaps could not) save them, because the storm was, in fact, divine punishment upon one of them. After casting the lots, which implicated Jonah, they became more afraid when they

understood that Jonah was doing the unthinkable—running in rebellion from his God. They are seemingly at the end of their rope, completely helpless against the onslaught of an angry God punishing His prophet. They just wanted peace—"What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm *unto us*?" They recognized that they had a great need and that they didn't have the answer.

2. *The earnestness of inquiry*

While initially showing shock at Jonah's admission of rebellion and at his foolish thinking that he could somehow get away with it (v. 10), the sailors now turn their attention only to themselves. Rather than focusing on how someone else had wronged them, they were earnest in determining how they might be delivered. And, they were asking the right person. Even though Jonah was directly responsible for their predicament, he was also the prophet of God who had the "word of the LORD."

3. *The providence of restlessness*

What led these men to this desperate and earnest search? It was the storm. Verse 11 states that "the sea wrought and was tempestuous" or "the storm was growing worse and worse" (NET). This compelled them to seek an answer outside of their own sailing skills and experience. It was a God-sent storm (v. 4) that initiated the search.

Application: Likewise, in His infinite grace, God sometimes "rocks our boat" in order to cause us to seriously contemplate the most important things in life. While this passage has to do primarily with a physical deliverance for the sailors, if Jonah had been a faithful missionary, he would have warned them of a far greater predicament than the storm. While the storm threatened physical harm, they faced a spiritual harm of eternal proportions. The storm was just a taste of the wrath of God directed toward their sin. See, the "God of heaven [who]...made the sea and the dry land" (v. 9) had also created them to have a relationship with Him; but because of their sin (demonstrated in this passage by their idolatry, v. 5), they had been separated from God (cf. Isaiah 59:2 contra Isaiah 59:1 quoted in the introduction). This was their greatest need then—to be restored to God through the forgiveness of their sin. Oh that we would be as earnest about our spiritual well-being as we are about our physical prosperity! Matthew 16:26 gives us good reason to be so—"For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Fortunately, our God relentlessly searches out rebels Himself and patiently puts up with their rejection of Him (II Peter 3:9). In His mercy, He even hurls a storm into our lives so that we are compelled to search for peace in Him. Are the storms of life severe for you today, friend? Are you being compelled to search for peace? If so, understand what the sailors would

discover, that such peace is found, not in psychology, nor in advanced education, nor in a religious institution, but in the Word of God alone.

Transition: That truth leads us to the second consideration in this passage...

THE SOLUTION (v. 12).

This verse is a rich one, indeed. Notice, first...

1. *The original setting*

After the sailors acknowledge their need and inquire about the solution, it is provided to them by Jonah in verse 12. He quickly answers, “Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you.” Jonah admits his guilt, while still refusing to repent (see Lesson 1), and proclaims that the only way the sailors can experience peace (“so shall the sea be calm unto you”) is for him to die. “At one level, Jonah’s words in verse 12...is the last cry of a desperate man, weary of life but obstinate to the last in maintaining his stubborn disobedience. But, at an altogether different level, he speaks as the prophet of the Lord. Although he does not realize it, Jonah is playing the lead role in a drama which will serve as a little cameo of Calvary.”²

2. *The implied type*

In Matthew 12:40, we discover that Jonah was a type of Christ. A biblical *type* is “a divinely designated person, thing, or event that prophetically points to a later person, thing, or event that fulfills or completes the type”³ Thus, Adam was a type of Christ (cf. Romans 5:14), as was Melchizedek (cf. Hebrews 5:5-10) and the Sacrificial System (cf. Hebrews 9-10).

Jesus states, “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.” Jonah, then, served as a “sign” or “illustration...that, as Jesus was three days and nights in the belly of the fish before he was expelled, so Jesus would be buried three days and nights in the earth before His resurrection” (Ibid.). Jonah is not a type of Jesus in his *person*, but rather in *what happened* to him. Consider some contrasts of their persons and comparisons of their experiences:

- Contrasts of their persons:
 - Jonah refused to fulfill his name (“Dove,” meaning *peace*) and share the Gospel; Jesus was the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 2:8-14) who came to bring peace (John 14:27)
 - Jonah was a disobedience prophet disciplined by God; Jesus was the obedient Son (Hebrews 2:10; 5:8-9).
 - Jonah was guilty by his own sin; Christ was innocent, having no sin of His own (Hebrews 4:15), but only that which was laid upon Him (II Corinthians 5:21).
 - Jonah’s sin contributed to the peril upon others, like Adam; contrary to Adam, Christ’s righteousness is the foundation for the salvation of mankind (Romans 5:12ff).
 - Jonah did not want to do God’s will; Jesus was committed to God’s will (Matthew 26:39), even unto death (Philippians 2:8).
 - Jonah eventually obeyed, but with continued selfishness and recalcitrance; Jesus “endured the cross,” “for the joy that was set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2), having been “anointed...with the oil of gladness” (Hebrews 1:9).
- Comparisons of their experiences:
 - Both would be a sacrifice—the “one” who would die on behalf of the many (v. 12; cf. Romans 5:12ff; John 11:49-52).
 - Both would experience the wrath of God (Jonah in the sea; Jesus on the cross).
 - Both would spend three days in darkness, only to be delivered from death unto life.

One author helps unveil the illustration of Christ in this section:

*At this point, Jonah takes up the role of scapegoat. And the sacrifice he makes saves [the sailors]...What counts is that this story is in reality the precise intimation of an infinitely vaster story and one which concerns us directly. What Jonah could not do, but his attitude announces [v. 13], is done by Jesus Christ. He it is who accepts total condemnation...It is solely because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that the sacrifice of Jonah avails and saves.*⁴

Application: In Jonah’s sacrifice, the sailors were witnessing the foreshadow of a future and far greater sacrifice that would save them, not just from a physical storm, but from that eternal predicament of separation from God because of sin. Jonah here announces the solution for peace from the storm—“I must die so that you might live.” As we will see, these sailors would enjoy physical

² Mackrell, Paul. *Opening Up Jonah*. Leominster: Day One Publications, 2007. Logos version.

³ Hirt, Herb. “Amazing Grace.” *Israel My Glory*, May/June 2003, p. 16.

⁴ Jacques Ellul quoted in Estelle, Bryan D. *Salvation Through Judgment and Mercy: The Gospel According to Jonah*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2005. Pp. 59-60.

deliverance when they responded to that solution. In Matthew 12:39-41, a similar solution for the problem of sin and separation is offered by Someone “greater than Jonah.” In contrast to the shadowy and incomplete example of Jonah, “this messenger went willingly and joyfully because He knew the heart of God. In fact, He *was* the heart of God. He would be called ‘the Word’ because He Himself was God’s message. He was everything God wanted to say to the world—all wrapped up in a person.”⁵ That message is summarized in I Timothy 1:15; 2:5-6—“This is a faithful saying...that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners....For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.” On the cross of Calvary, Jesus sacrificed Himself as the embodiment of your sin, so that you might live, clothed with His righteousness (II Corinthians 5:21). This sacrifice has eternal and spiritual merit, for “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, *that He might bring us to God*” (I Peter 3:18). In Christ, separation gives way to reunion!

*Jesus Christ, the Son of man, gave His life as a ransom for many. Jonah could not give his life for the sins of the sailors; only the sinless Jesus Christ could fulfill that role in an eternal sense. Here the disparity between Christ and Jonah could not be more apparent. The sacrifice of Christ is clearer and greater than the opaqueness of Jonah’s relatively meager expiation.*⁶

Jesus Christ is *the* solution for the sin-storms of life. When you need peace—when you are searching for a refuge—run to the One who “died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34). No one can separate you from His love (Romans 8:35-39)! This is the Gospel—and whether you are a sailor or Jonah, this alone is your hope! Will you believe it, accept it, and live it?

Transition: As the story unfolds, we discover a pattern similar to that practiced by modern-day “sailors.” For, having been driven to search for a solution by a divinely-sent storm, these sailors struggle to accept that answer. And so, having considered the search and the solution, we now consider...

THE STRUGGLE (v. 13).

The message of deliverance through his own sacrifice was not readily accepted by the sailors. Rather, they struggle to obtain deliverance on their own. The verse begins with “nevertheless” or “instead.” Having clearly understood the simple solution for their deliverance, the men instead determine to attempt their own rescue.

⁵ Tchividjian, pp. 180-181.

⁶ Estelle, p. 60.

1. *Man’s self-reliance*

Mankind’s natural propensity is to try to save himself. In verse 13, the sailors respond to Jonah’s words by “rowing harder [lit. digging in their oars] to bring [the boat] to land.” Such is a common practice—to try “harder” to save oneself. In particular, man seems drawn to three self-reliant means of attempting to save oneself:

- *Reason* – It is possible that the sailors considered Jonah’s solution to be too simple or too scandalous. After all, they would be implicated in the almost certain death of Jonah if they threw him overboard. “Certainly something that extreme couldn’t be the only solution!” they may have reasoned. “There must be a more reasonable solution.”
- *Religion* – Just like the sailors in verse 5, we often don’t “get spiritual or religious” until life is out of our control. At that point, our first response is often to go to church, start a spiritual habit, reform ourselves in some way, or seek religious counsel. Such a response still betrays a heart of self-reliance in rejecting the simple solution of God’s Word.
- *Righteousness Deeds* – Perhaps out of compassion for the miserable prophet of the Lord, these men determine to work harder to make the shoreline, thus saving themselves. They would soon learn that their diligent effort actually worked against them. It was a self-reliant rejection of the biblical solution.

Such attempts may seem commendable, but how does God respond to this self-reliance?

2. *God’s opposition*

As they tried harder to save themselves, verse 13 records a second time that “the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them” or “the storm was growing worse and worse” (NET). “Their actions were actually provocative. They were taking on Jehovah, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land (v. 9) and this could never be an even contest.”⁷ They were discovering the warning of James 4:6—“God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”

Application: Struggling to obtain peace on your own that has already been offered to you through the struggle of another is nothing short of foolishness. Reason will not save you (I Corinthians 1:18-31); religion will not save you (Romans 2:17-29; Philippians 3:4-11); righteousness will not save you (Ephesians 2:8-9). Rather than working harder to obtain peace and security, the message of God’s Word is to accept the work that was already accomplished on your behalf.

⁷ Mackrell.

If you are stubbornly refusing to accept the simple and sacrificial solution of peace through Jesus Christ, listen to the words of Ephesians 2:14-18:

For He is our peace, who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity—even the law of commandments contained in ordinances—for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace, and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And [He] came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh—for through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Today, learn with the sailors that the answer to your search for peace is not found within yourself. “[Not] to him that worketh is the reward...reckoned of grace...but to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, His faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:4-5).

Transition: Fortunately, this is not the final report on the lives of these sailors. Having started out appropriately searching for peace and discovering a solution from the prophet of the Lord, they act foolishly by struggling against that answer in their own self-reliance. As the story continues, however, we discover the next heading, which is...

THE SURRENDER (vv. 14-16).

The sailors finally give in to the Lord and to His solution for their predicament. Their surrender is expressed three ways:

1. **Prayer of humility (v. 14)**

In contrast to their response of pride that was resisted by God, the sailors now respond in humility under the hand of God. They (1) knowingly address this God as Yahweh, the true and living God, (2) appropriately acknowledge His sovereign orchestration of all things, and (3) respectfully entreat Him to be gracious to them. This is the kind of response that evokes grace from the Lord.

2. **Act of faith (v. 15)**

Having only the word of the prophet to go on, these men demonstrate faith when they throw Jonah overboard—faith in the gracious character of God to answer them with deliverance. This may have been the last option for these men, but it was still a proof of their faith in God’s ability to calm the sea and spare them, as the prophet had said.

3. **Demonstration of fear (v. 16)**

Although Jonah had professed to “fear the LORD” (v. 9), his conduct betrayed an insolent rebellion. Opposite him is the attitude of these sailors. The author has used another literary tactic in chapter 1 to show the change of attitude among the sailors. In verse 5, the sailors are afraid because of the storm. In verse 10, the sailors are terrified (lit. “feared a great fear”) because they realize they are facing the wrath of a very real and very powerful God. But, at the end of this section, when that very God answers their prayer with incredible grace, they greatly feared (lit. “feared with a great fear”) Yahweh. That this was more than just a memorable experience that soon faded is made certain by the following demonstration of a life-changing encounter with Yahweh—they “offered a sacrifice unto the LORD and made vows.” As with the phrase “feared with a great fear,” the next two Hebrew verbs are each repeated to emphasize the zeal with which they responded to God. The verse could be translated, “The men feared the Lord greatly and earnestly vowed to offer lavish sacrifices to the Lord” (NET). While some question the occurrence of a spiritual conversion here (e.g., they may have simply added Yahweh to their pantheon), their expressions of surrender in these verses demonstrate a heart that is receptive soil for a saving relationship with God. Their mindset changed, as they acknowledged Yahweh’s real power and grace; their expressions changed, as they sacrificed in praise to God for His salvation (cf. 2:9); and their pursuits changed, as they vowed commitment to God to be His faithful followers.

Application: What a contrast in responses between the professing God-follower and these pagan God-discoverers. Jonah continues to demonstrate rash resistance to God’s authority, character, and purposes and is met with the resistance of God in that powerful storm and sea. The tender sailors, however, consistently reveal sensitivity to God’s authority and, as we will see, are rewarded by the gracious response of God. Humble faith is not only the appropriate response for sailors tossed by a divine storm; it is also the only saving response for sinners separated from God, needing His forgiveness. Does your spirit and demeanor betray a life hardened by calloused resistance to any control but your own? Or have you willingly surrendered to your compassionate, yet sovereign God to have his perfect and good will in your life—starting with faith in the work of His Son on Calvary to save you from your sins and continuing with submission to His Scripturally-revealed will every day? In verse 13, we discovered that God resists the proud; in verse 15, we discover that God gives grace to the humble. And what amazing grace it is!

Transition: That amazing grace becomes the focus of our final point that we will consider from the journal of these sailors is. Having observed the search, the solution, the struggle, and the surrender, we finally witness the salvation.

THE SALVATION (vv. 15, 17).⁸

While we have primarily dealt with the sailors today, our final point also encompasses Jonah. We discover that God's salvation extends to both ruined sailors and runaway servants.

1. *Salvation for ruined sailors (v. 15) – hope for the unbeliever*

The text reveals God's salvation with a simple phrase: "the sea ceased from her raging." The text seems to indicate that this happened as soon as Jonah hit the water. In a striking foreshadow of the power that His Son would exercise on the Sea of Galilee (cf. Mark 4:39), God had spoken to the storm behind the scenes, and it had obeyed Him. While verse 15 simply speaks of the physical deliverance from the physical dangers of the terrible tempest, verse 16 seems to suggest that God changed their hearts on that day, as well. That is the climax of God's saving heart for the world! While He cares for our physical storms in life, He died to save us from our spiritual separation—so that in paying the penalty for our sin Himself, He might restore us to eternal fellowship and peace with God. That is *the* solution for one's search for peace!

2. *Salvation for runaway servants (v. 17) – hope for the believer*

In verse 17, the divine lens moves off the ship and plunges to the depths below where Jonah has begun to sink. While we'll read of his experience next week, we know from 2:7 that Jonah also experienced a moment of surrender. Having taken his chances in the killer sea rather than obeying God, Jonah finally recognizes, as his life begins to ebb away, that he had made a mistake. Finally, at the bottom of the sea, moments away from death, "I remembered the LORD," he reminisces, "And my prayer came in unto Thee" (2:7). And even in that utterly desperate predicament, God heard him (2:2) and saved him from death (2:6). The means whereby God enacted His salvation was most unique, and yet it was very purposeful. Verse 17 says, "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." The Word "prepare" is an important word (cf. 4:6, 7, 8) that speaks of God's careful orchestration for a specific goal. God had planned to save Jonah, and He did indeed, in such a way that Jonah would be forced to meditate on important lessons in the belly of that fish. (NOTE: This will be our focus next week).

⁸ Part 2 of John Piper's 3-part poem about Jonah illuminates God's salvation both to Jonah (describing the escape from the fish) and to the sailors (relating a later encounter between Jonah and a sailor).

⁹ **Application:** God was unrelenting in His pursuit of Jonah, and He miraculously saved him, even when Jonah fought to the last possible moment. God was gracious to the sailors, sparing their lives, too, because of their humility before Him. Our God is a saving God. Jonah admits as much in 2:9—"Salvation is of the LORD." II Peter 3:9, 15 echoes that Old Testament truth—"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward—not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance...the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." God's salvation is free; He asks no payment or qualification. He has already earned the salvation through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross. You can be saved from your storm! You can be saved from your stubbornness! Will you "humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord [that] He [may] lift you up" (James 4:10)? Scripture consistently proclaims this wonderful news to both ruined sinners and runaway servants: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13)!

CONCLUSION

Our God loves to save! In the background of the darkest paintings of life is a God ready to rescue the rebel. The storm proves that, as it coerces the miserable soul into a *search* for relief. The *solution* provides the wonderful promise of peace through the sacrifice of another! And although the rebel may continue to *struggle* in self-reliance, God longs for their humble *surrender* and often directs the events of life to that end. And in that moment, when humble faith is demonstrated, we discover that "salvation is of the LORD"! Whether you are a ruined sinner or a runaway servant, will you not surrender to the relentless love of God?

*Relentless love embraced my soul in ages past—
Love undeserved, unknown, yet deep and vast.
God set His love on me—on me, in spite of me!
Salvation's work is His from first to last.*

*Relentless love pursued my heart, though I would hide—
Was unreturned, yet undeterred by pride.
Till by a grace unsought, my rebel soul was caught—
Redeemed by love that would not be denied.*

REFRAIN

*Unbounded love, unfailing love,
Love raised upon a tree;
Unending love, prevailing love—
My Savior's sovereign love for me.¹⁰*

⁹ For more illustrations of God's relentless pursuit of rebels, consider C. S. Lewis and "The Hound of Heaven" in Tchividjian, Tullian. *Surprised by Grace: God's Relentless Pursuit of Rebels*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010. P. 51.

¹⁰ *Relentless Love*, a hymn by Chris Anderson. © 2011 by www.churchworksmmedia.com.