

## **“God’s Reluctant Missionary”**

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Scriptural Foundation: Jonah (ESV)

### **Jonah 1**

#### **Jonah Flees the Presence of the LORD**

<sup>1</sup>Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” <sup>3</sup>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 on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

### **Jonah 3**

#### **Jonah Goes to Nineveh**

<sup>1</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup>So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. <sup>4</sup>Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup>And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

#### **The People of Nineveh Repent**

<sup>6</sup>The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup>And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, <sup>8</sup>but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. <sup>9</sup>Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”

<sup>10</sup>When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

The story of Jonah fascinates young minds. After telling our son firstborn Alexander the story of Jonah, when he was only two or three years of age, he would have nightmares about a giant fish flopping around in his bed. “Mommy, there’s a giant fish in my bed!” We would go and calm him down, turn on the lights, and show him indeed there was no giant fish, but the story so captured his imagination it moved into his subconscious.

The story of Jonah also perplexes older minds; how can a man remain alive for three days inside the belly of a great fish? Liberals have long used Jonah as proof the Bible is not historical, but rather is a book of myths and legends. Yet Jonah is a story Jesus believed to be genuine history and He referenced it on at least two occasions. Jesus referenced Jonah once to prophecy about his own death, burial and resurrection. In Matthew 12, Jesus says, predicting His burial and resurrection,

<sup>40</sup> *“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*

The second reference Jesus made to Jonah was to warn us against God’s punishment for unbelief in Jesus’ claim to be the “Son of God”. In Luke 11, Jesus announced

<sup>32</sup> *“The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.”*<sup>1</sup>

The story of Jonah is a simple one. It is about a missionary named Jonah who lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. and God calls Jonah to go and preach cross-culturally in Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian empire. The Assyrians were a cruel people who had brutalized the Jewish people and Jonah did not want to go to preach to the Ninevites for fear they might listen to him. That is a fear not many preachers have! He figured if they listened to what he had to say they might call out to God in mercy and if they do God might be merciful to them and he did not want that. Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah buys a ticket to get on a ship traveling in the opposite direction from Nineveh. He decides to go to Tarshish.

God then sends a storm to stop the boat and the mariners, the pagans, on that ship recognize their lives are in danger and they call out to their individual gods. They discover Jonah asleep in the hull of the ship and they say, “You need to wake up and call out to your God. Maybe your God will listen to us.” Jonah admits he is the problem and the reason the storm has come, he permits them, with his blessing, to throw him into the sea. He would rather die than follow God’s will.

When they had thrown him into the sea, a great fish God had prepared and sent swallowed Jonah and God softens Jonah’s heart while in the belly of that fish. Jonah calls out to God, in Chapter 2. God navigates that great fish to the shore, probably near Joppa, where he began his journey and the fish vomits up Jonah on dry land. Jonah goes to Nineveh. He is given a second chance to proclaim the message and he proclaims, “In 40 days, Nineveh will be destroyed!!”<sup>2</sup>

Upon hearing this, the people of Nineveh repent of their sins and God has mercy on them. Chapter 4 tells us Jonah became very angry at the mercy of God for these people and the book ends with Jonah being rebuked for his selfishness and for his lack of mercy. The message is: “Jonah, if you have received my mercy and grace, how can you be angry when I give mercy and grace to others?”

What is the message of the story of Jonah? Professor Howard Hendricks, one of my favorite professors at seminary, would tell us the moral to the story of Jonah is: you can’t keep a good man down. While I find that very funny, I think God had something else in mind. Jonah teaches us God sovereignly calls His people to bring His message of mercy to sinful peoples. God calls His people, people who have already received His mercy, to become messengers of mercy to a sinful people. That is the message of the entire Bible.

Jonah is reluctant to respond to God’s call upon his life. He does not want to be God’s missionary. He does not want to be God’s messenger. While Jonah enjoys being a recipient of God’s mercy, he does not enjoy telling certain people about God’s mercy. He was fine as long as he was in Israel and a prophet of Israel. He was fine obeying God’s command to give messages to his own people; people whom he naturally loved, but when God told him to go to a people he did not have a natural affection for, that is where he put his foot down and he resisted God’s sovereign call upon his life.

During Mission’s Week I encourage you to ask yourself this question: “Does the spirit of Jonah reside in me? Am I content to receive God’s mercy, but unwilling to be a vessel of His mercy?” There may be a number of reasons why we are unwilling to be a vessel of God’s mercy. Perhaps it is out of fear of ridicule. Perhaps it is out of fear of consequence. Perhaps we really do not care that much about the people around us. Regardless of the reason, we have to ask the question: does the spirit of Jonah reside in me, or am I ready to receive God’s call upon my life and be zealous about proclaiming His message to anyone God would send me to?”

I pray Jonah’s story will ignite our hearts to obey God’s call to do whatever He tells us to do to make the Gospel message and He tells every one of us, if we are recipient of His mercy we are to do something with it. He tells us we are to proclaim it to someone. Since we have received God’s mercy in our own lives, we rejoice to communicate it. That is the heart of a healthy believer.

Jonah’s story unveils five actions of God in missions which motivate us to obey God’s call upon our lives. We will first discover God sets His love upon sinful people. Then we will discover God sends messengers to sinful people.

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<sup>1</sup> New International Version (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Jonah 3:4b

Third we will find God communicates His message to sinful people. Fourth, we will find God gives salvation to sinful people. Finally, we will find God responds in mercy to the repentance of sinful people.

The first action of God in missions is God sets His love upon sinful people, as we read in Verses 1 and 2,

<sup>1</sup> Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”

Why did God command Jonah to go to Nineveh He had already decided to destroy? If God was determined to judge the city and destroy the city, He did not need to send a messenger before hand to tell them. Implicite in the message for Jonah to go and warn this city, to give them forty days advance notice, was the mercy of God; God was willing to become merciful to this people if they heeded the message He was going to give them through the prophet Jonah.

God could have destroyed Nineveh like He did with Sodom and Gomorrah – without a message, but God set His love upon the people of Nineveh. There was no reason for God to set His love upon the people of Nineveh; they were a cruel people, and immoral people, and they were a proud people. They were an idolatrous people, and yet, despite all of the wickedness in the city of Nineveh, and despite the fact God would be just in judging that people immediately, God sets His love upon His people.

In 2 Peter 3, Peter tells us

<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise (of judgment) as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. (2Pe 3:9-10 ESV)

God’s desire for all to repent of their sins and receive His mercy causes His delay in judgment. We know now than the people of Jonah’s day did because God not only sent Jonah the Prophet to us to give us a message of warning judgment is soon to come, but He sent His own Son Jesus to give us this very same message and to provide a way for us to be redeemed. John 3:16 is one of the most famous verses in all of Scripture, but I want us to consider Verses 17 and 18 as well, when we read,

<sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome, in Romans 5,

<sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Isn’t that amazing! God sets His love upon us, not because we are spiritually sensitive, not because we are responsive, not because we are good and moral, and not because we are religious, but He sets His love upon us because it is nature to set His love upon sinners. What a great God we have!

The second action of God in missions is: God sends messengers to sinful people. God acts as King and Ruler over His people and He gives His people marching orders. He calls His redeemed to communicate His truth to those who do not know it. That is true of every one in His Kingdom. Notice Jonah did not volunteer for this assignment: “Who wants to go to Nineveh?” God did not ask that question. He said, “Jonah, you are going to Nineveh. I have been listening to you and I am assigning you to Nineveh.”

Jonah did not like this assignment and he ran the other way. It is God’s method to select certain people to go to certain places. That is the way He works. That is the way He has worked from the beginning of time and that is the way He is still working today.

A huge question is often asked when thinking about missions and I want us to consider it in this study: “Can a person receive eternal life without ever having heard the message of God’s salvation? What about those who have never heard. Are they going to be condemned like the rest?” I am puzzled by the number of confessing, evangelical Christians who waver and flinch at this question. While most affirm the necessity of Jesus and the necessity of His death on the cross and His resurrection, they openly question God’s fairness in not saving those who have not heard the message of salvation. I want you to know for your sake and for the zeal in our hearts toward missions the Bible is very clear on this particular question. A person must hear of Jesus before they can believe in Him and a person must believe in Jesus in order to be delivered from God’s judgment.

Consider what the Apostle Paul wrote, in Romans 10,

<sup>13</sup> For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” <sup>14</sup> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

There is no indication anywhere in Scripture where a person who does not call upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved. Only those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. That prompts Paul to ask the rhetorical questions in Verse 14, and the answers are – they cannot! They cannot call upon someone of whom they have never heard and they cannot hear unless someone preaches to them and someone cannot preach unless they are sent. And, as Paul said, in Verse 15,

<sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”<sup>3</sup>

How can God be just and fair if He eternally condemns those who have not heard of Jesus? There are three parts to the answer of this question. First, God justly condemns us because we have sinned against Him. Our sins, and not our ignorance, make us guilty before the righteous judge. It is not our ignorance of the Gospel which makes us guilty, it is our sins. People are not shut out of Heaven because they have not heard the Gospel. They are shut out of Heaven because they have sinned against their Creator. God in His mercy provided a cure for the soul disease which will ruin us now and forever and ever. God sent His Son into the world out of love for us so He might provide a sacrifice which is able to take away our sins. God can be praised when He cures a man, woman, or child of this dread disease of sin, but God can never be blamed for the disease. We brought that disease upon ourselves. Our spiritual death is not His doing, it is our own!

Secondly, consider God is sovereign to bring His message to receptive hearts. I believe if a heart is receptive, God will send a Jonah to that people, even a reluctant person like Jonah, and He will make sure that person and that group of people will hear the message if they have receptive hearts.

I love Ezekiel 34, and we read,

<sup>11</sup> “For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. <sup>12</sup> As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. <sup>13</sup> And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country... <sup>16</sup> I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.”

God makes the promise He will seek out His sheep and He will rescue His sheep and everyone who is a part of His flock will receive the message. God sovereignly and lovingly sends His messengers to His flock to bring them the message of salvation so they can believe.

We see this throughout the Book of Acts, and in Acts 16 we see Paul, in a vision, hearing this messenger give him the “Macedonian Call”,

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<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 52:7

<sup>9</sup> And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” <sup>10</sup> And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Throughout the Scripture we see God sending His people to specific individuals who need to hear the message and that is what we see with Jonah and that is what God does with us. If you are a believer in Jesus, God is sending you to a person. Listen to Paul’s explanation in 2 Corinthians, when he says,

<sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Friend, do you know you are an ambassador of God; God has called you to a work of proclaiming His message to a specific person or people? Jonah responded to God’s call to be an ambassador in this way, as we read in Verse 3,

<sup>3</sup> 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 on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

Jonah knew he was running from the presence of the Lord. Nineveh is about 600 miles east of Israel, in modern day Iraq. Tarshish is believed to be on the coast of Spain. God tells Jonah to go east, so Jonah gets on a boat, pays for his ticket and goes.....west. He is going in the exact opposite direction and he is running away from God. Man can run from God’s plan, but man cannot frustrate God’s plan. That is the message of Jonah.

We can be willful and disobedient and we can suffer for it. Jonah suffered all through this book because he was resistant. It is interesting, “...he paid the fare.” Oh, boy, did he pay the fare! He paid the full price for a ticket and he did not get to the place he paid to get to. He did not get a refund. He paid the fare. Everyone who is reluctant, disobedient, and rejecting of God’s call upon their life will pay the fare and they never will get to where they want to go and where they will find peace, joy, and happiness.

Jonah paid the fare but Jonah did not frustrate God’s plans. God gave Jonah a second chance and God saw the Ninevites heard the message.

Jonah reflects the scandal of God’s people throughout the Scriptures and in our present day. The scandal is this: we enjoy receiving God’s mercy, but we do not enjoy being a messenger of God’s mercy. It is a difficult task and it was difficult for Jonah to go to the Ninevites. After all, he was an Israelite and the Ninevites were a very cruel people. They brutalize his own people and perhaps he had personal experiences with the Ninevites, but that was the task God called him to.

With great mercy comes great responsibility and we have the responsibility to love those whom we would not naturally love. Jonah’s heart was bound up by bitterness, by self-love, by self-will, and by anger. We have to ask ourselves, what is our heart like? Can I be unshackled from self-love? Can I be unshackled from fear and anxiety? Can I be unshackled from selfishness? Yes, we can through the power of the Gospel and through the power of the Holy Spirit. That is what we must do because we are called to be God’s messengers.

The third action of God to motivate us toward missions is: God communicates His message to sinful people, and we read about that in Jonah 3,

<sup>1</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup> So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. <sup>4</sup> Jonah began

to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

God is not telling Jonah the message until he gets to Nineveh. Until we are obedient we will not hear everything we need to hear from God. If we are not going to take Step Number One we will not find out what Steps Three and Four are. Many people use that as an excuse as to why not to pursue Step One, "Because if I travel down this road, and if I take the first step, I do not know what the next steps are so I will wait." God tells us He wants us to step out in faith.

Jonah delivers the message, "Nineveh, you are in big trouble. You have sinned against your Creator and your Creator is Holy and He is just and He is righteous and you have forty days before He judges you with destruction." If you were in Nineveh, hearing Jonah's message, you probably would not want to purchase the CD and say, "That is a really good message! I really enjoyed that." This is not a seeker-sensitive message. It is not a message we would think would be received well. It is a message which strikes at the very core of who they are, their nationality, their gods, their idolatry, their immorality, their trust in their military power, and their national pride. Here is this "foreign guy" preaching this message.

If you read your Bible, you will find God's message is rarely palatable to the general population. Jesus was crucified because His message angered people. There was a reason why they put Him on a cross and it was because He upset them with His message. Paul will say, in 1 Corinthians 1,

<sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

God's message is foolishness to those who do not submit their lives to God, but it is power and wisdom to all who do submit their lives to God. The same message has two totally opposite affects: if our preaching does not, at the same time, cause some to sing and others to turn sour, then we have to ask, "Am I faithfully communicating God's message?" Some say we have to soften the message of the Gospel in order to be effective today and they assert we need positive messages that do not condemn us for our sin, but dismissing or distorting parts of God's message because we consider it insensitive to hearers is a serious transgression against God's glory! God is gracious in revealing Himself and God reveals Himself so we might know who He really is and humble ourselves before Him. We know nothing of God apart from His revelation of Himself through creation, through our conscience, or most specifically through His Word.

The role of the messenger is to deliver God's message with clarity, with authority, boldly, faithfully, and persuasively. Our role is not to manufacture a certain response from people who hear us. We pray they receive God's message, but this is God's work and not ours. We do not try to "sell" the Gospel by hiding the more offensive parts of it. Paul knew the Gospel was offensive and would place him in ridicule. That is why he says, in Romans 1,

<sup>15</sup> So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. <sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

He writes that knowing it is our temptation to be ashamed of the Gospel. Otherwise he would not say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel," if that is not something we are prone to be ashamed of. Have we ever found ourselves to be ashamed of the Gospel, having an opportunity to tell hard things to friends and people who are around us with whom God has placed us within the sphere of their lives, and we know, by His Holy Spirit's leading, He is calling us to deliver a message and we say we do not want to, "If I tell them they won't like me and they will think I am foolish and it will ruin our friendship." Have we ever been tempted to be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus?

God has revealed Himself in His message and it is not ours to change the message and make the message more appealing. It is not ours to sell the message. God alone is the One who converts a person. Not one of us converts anyone else. We are just as responsible to faithfully deliver the message as God has delivered it to us and then let God do the work. God does the work amazingly and wonderfully.

Can't we pray together we would be faithful messengers of the Gospel; that we would pray for courage and boldness for ourselves and for our missionaries? They are people just like us and they also have difficulties with anxiety and fear and have a need for boldness and courage.

God was moving Heaven and earth to bring the message of salvation to the Ninevites and He chose to use this simple servant Jonah, a reluctant missionary. It was through Jonah He brought salvation to this people. Let us pray that we would be faithful messengers of the Gospel. Pray for courage and boldness of our missionaries and for ourselves in the work that God has called us to.

The fourth action God provides is: God gives salvation to sinful people, and the fifth action is: God responds in mercy to the repentance of sinful people. It is our responsibility to talk to our friends about God and it is God's part to change the heart. We are called to talk to God about these people because we know God can change their hearts and God calls us to talk about Himself because that is the method He will use. Isn't it wonderful to know every time a sinner repents God opens His heart of love and mercy to them?

There is no person who says, "God, I am humbling myself before you. I have sinned against you and, God, I need your mercy and grace," where God folds His arms and turns His back upon that person. There not a person in this world who repents of their sin that God does not open up His heart; this is the nature of God.

Let's look at Verse 6 and following,

<sup>6</sup> The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup> And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, <sup>8</sup> but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands."

Friends, do you have a concern for our nation? Some of you may not be American citizens, but I trust you will have a concern for your nation as well. I do and I find myself praying more and more for our country and more and more for a revival. Our country is moving toward destruction. I do not know if it is forty days or forty years, but I know our country is moving toward destruction because it is moving away from God. But, what encourages me is this, because I do not see signs people are becoming spiritually receptive within the church of Jesus, it is what I see in the Bible. I see us moving away from the hard parts of the message of sin, Hell, and righteousness. I do not see encouraging signs in our culture.

It is interesting to me skeptics point to Jonah as the example to prove the Bible is not historic. They mock it and ask how could Jonah, a man, live and stay alive in the belly of a great fish for three days and three nights. I acknowledge that requires the province of God, but the greater miracle in this book of Jonah than that miracle. The greatest miracle I read about in the book of Jonah which causes me to say, "Wow, how did that happen?" It is not the fish. I can see how God can do that. The greatest miracle is this king who is on the top of his game, he is complete with military might and power, and he is enjoying the luxury of this world and all its accolades. A foreigner comes into his city, one man, a Jewish man, and says, "In forty days Nineveh will be overthrown," and he believes him. The whole city believes him and they are all converted. That is a miracle! That is something which I would say, "I do not know how that happened."

God is at work in saving His people. The key verse in the book of Jonah is, "Salvation is from the Lord."<sup>4</sup> That is what encourages me about this country and the people whom I long to see come to salvation. I see no external signs of this happening, but it encourages me to continue to pray, to talk, to witness, and to do God's work because God does that miracle. If He can change the heart of a whole city, as cruel, immoral, willful, and idolatrous, as Nineveh He can do that with anyone and He can do that with a nation, so I pray with hope. Our God is a great and awesome God.

I want to close with three applications. First, God's purpose for us is to fashion us into being messengers of His mercy. Let us not run in reluctance from God's calling to be His messenger. Let us embrace God's calling. Let us not be reluctant like Jonah. It is interesting, as we read the text carefully, in Verses 3 and following, Jonah went "down" into the inner part of the ship, and he went "down" to Joppa, and he laid "down", and he was thrown "down" into the sea, and he went "down" into the belly of the fish. Our reluctance only causes our life to go down, down, down.

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<sup>4</sup> Jonah 2:9b

The second application is: salvation comes from the Lord alone. There is no other path to salvation outside of Jesus. Jonah looked for His salvation in a ship. The pagan sailors looked for salvation in false gods and human wisdom. The Ninevites had been looking for salvation in economic prosperity and military might. Salvation comes from the Lord. Friend, where are you looking for your salvation? Where are you looking for deliverance or rescue on that day when you stand before God? Salvation comes from the Lord. If you believe in your heart God sent His Son Jesus to die upon a cross and you confess with your mouth God raised Him from the dead, the Bible tells us, you will be saved. Call upon the name of the Lord and embrace Jesus Christ by faith.

The last application I would encourage you with is to pray for the people whom God sends to hard places. This is a hard place and people whom God sends to hard places are very much like Jonah. They become discouraged like Jonah. They grow weary like Jonah. They can get their perspectives about life and people twisted like Jonah. They may even disobey like Jonah. We need to pray for them and come along side of them and encourage them. We need to pray for the spiritual battles they face daily and weekly.

There is an encouraging message in Jonah. When we read the last chapter, it ends on a downer. God rebukes Jonah for being reluctant and for not wanting to be a messenger of mercy. The encouragement is: who wrote the book? Jonah did. Jonah came around. He didn't finish with half of the story because he didn't want any of the attention to go to his ultimate response, but he wrote the book. Because of that we know he did come around and he did respond to God because he wanted his own mistakes to be a message for all of us who make mistakes and for all of us who disobey.

God is a God of a second chance.