

At the Mercy of the Sea

Jonah 1: 11-16

As we continue to move through the book of Jonah, I want to remind us of the powerful theme presented – the sovereignty of God in pursuing men unto Himself. Jonah had been called of God to preach a message of repentance to the Ninevites, and he chose to flee from the call instead of responding in obedient submission. Having decided foolishly to flee from the presence of God, Jonah would soon learn such an endeavor was impossible. God had called, and He would relentlessly pursue Jonah in order to pursue the Ninevites.

Jonah would soon learn that decisions bear consequences. He had chosen to flee from God, but would discover that God doesn't give up easily. His decision to flee to Tarshish would result in a harrowing experience. It would have been much easier, and enjoyable, had Jonah submitted to God and went to Nineveh upon hearing the call.

We cannot overlook the significance of God's sovereignty in the affairs of men, and our lives in particular. He has a plan for each of us. While the Lord desires us to be joyful in service to Him, I am concerned with some doctrine that is being taught today. Our pride doesn't like it, but God is much more interested in our holiness and relationship with Him than He is our happiness. When the Lord calls, He expects us to follow in submissive obedience. Failure to do so can lead to dealing with consequences we would rather avoid. It is always easier to follow the Lord than run from His call and desire for our lives.

As we examine the [promptings](#) revealed in the text, let's consider: [At the Mercy of the Sea](#).

I. The Investigation of Jonah (11-12) – Having discovered that Jonah was the reason for their being in the midst of a raging storm, the crew began to question Jonah about a solution to their problem. Consider:

A. The Inquiry (11) – [Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.](#) We find nothing in the text that reveals these men believed in God. However, one must admire their gracious treatment of Jonah, even though they believed he was the reason for their turmoil. Rather than immediately throwing him overboard, they asked Jonah for his input. What would you recommend we do with you so the storm will cease and the sea become calm? Instead of a rush to judgment and an unwarranted callous act, they sought to treat Jonah with care and respect. (We can learn a genuine life lesson from these men. Much too often we rush to judgment and act out of emotion instead of reason. God was gracious with us, and we need to be gracious dealing with others.)

B. The Honesty (12) – *And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.* Although Jonah desired to escape the call to go to Nineveh, he now realized it was impossible to flee from the presence of God. Jonah knew without doubt that the storm had come upon them because of his disobedience. God was not seeking to punish these men; He was dealing with the rebellious prophet. Jonah revealed unto them that the Lord would cause the storm to cease if they threw him over-board. Although he was clearly out of God's will, seeking to run away in disobedience, Jonah admitted that he was the problem. God had brought the storm upon them because of Jonah and his rebellion.

- As you study the book, you discover that Jonah hit highs and lows in regard to his character. He clearly did not want to go to Nineveh, having no compassion for any of the residents within the city. He would continue to argue with God at times; but here we see a man who chose to do the right thing, even at a great cost to him personally.
- Genuine honesty is always right, but it isn't always easy. It is often difficult to admit that we are wrong and have sinned before God. At times we would rather see others have to deal with the ramifications of our sin and error rather than admit we have failed. One thing is certain – if we have sinned, the Spirit will always let us know. When that time comes, we need to be willing to admit our sin, confess it before God, and seek restoration. Jonah proves there is no place to hide from the all-seeing, all-knowing God!

II. The Dedication of the Crew (13) – *Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.* Bear in mind, we have nothing to reveal these men believed in God prior to this account. However, their dedication to Jonah, even though he was responsible for their turmoil, is to be admired. Consider:

A. Their Commitment – Even after hearing Jonah's admission of guilt, and knowing he was the reason for their trouble, the crew remained committed to Jonah. They did everything they could to avoid throwing him over-board. These men were unaware of God's plan for Nineveh, and assumed Jonah would face certain death if he were cast from the boat. They wanted to do everything within their power to keep him from perishing.

- Jonah likely didn't realize it at the time, but God used these men to reveal the heart He desired in Jonah. They did not know him, and were not obligated to Jonah in any way, and yet they were willing to put their lives in danger in order to save him from the raging sea.

- We certainly need that commitment for others around us. As we travel the sea of life, many around us are in danger of slipping into the storm of judgment. Those who fail to abide in the boat of salvation, provided by Christ at the cross, face eternal judgment and death. As these brave and committed mariners, we need to do all we can to reach as many as possible, helping them to see the need of Christ and escape eternal death and judgment.

B. Their Compassion (13) – These men did not know Jonah, and yet they showed great compassion for him in this desperate situation. The storm was intense and the sea was raging. It appeared impossible for anyone to survive outside the fragile safety of the boat. They wanted to do all they could in an effort to save Jonah from the raging sea.

- Do we possess that type of compassion for those we do not know? Are we willing to do whatever we can to reach them before it's eternally too late? Do we love them as the Lord would have us, possessing a genuine desire to share our faith? I will admit my compassion is weak at times. I pray the Lord will allow us to see and love as He does!

III. The Separation from Jonah (14-16) – In these closing verses we discover the crew's reluctant separation from Jonah. Having done all they could, they decided to throw him overboard. Consider:

A. Their Supplication (14) – *Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.* The mariners recognized the power and sovereignty of God, even more so than Jonah. They were well aware that God was in control, and acted according to His divine pleasure. However, they feared being responsible for Jonah's death. They prayed the Lord would not hold them accountable for throwing Jonah into the sea.

- Although they knew God had acted according to His will, they were unaware of the circumstances involved. Their decision to cast Jonah into the sea was in accordance to God's plan. He would ensure Jonah went to Nineveh, by whatever means necessary.
- This thought it comforting, but it is also convicting. We can rest in the sovereign grace and power of God. He has the ability to do what He pleases, and is more than able to meet our needs. However, we also need to understand that God's plans and purpose for our lives will be accomplished as He pleases. We can pray confidently unto the Lord, but we must also realize that our prayers must be in accordance to His will for our lives!

B. Their Decision (15) – [So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.](#) Believing this was their only hope and recourse for the situation, the mariners threw Jonah into the sea. As soon as they did, the sea ceased raging and became calm. As quickly as the storm came, the Lord provided a great calm.

- It is futile to resist the power and desire of the sovereign God. He had the ability to bring the storm, and He had the ability to calm the storm. It was all within His hands, according to His will. Seeking the will of God and submitting to that is the best course of action for anyone. Apart from Him, we will never experience the peace His provides. We can expect to deal with the trials of life when walking contrary to His Word and plan. I do not want to insinuate that being in God's will automatically provides peace and comfort. We know there are times when even the most faithful are tried and face adversity. However, one cannot expect to enjoy the Lord's blessing when walking in willful disobedience to His will for our lives.

C. Their Adoration (16) – [Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.](#) While it is impossible to know where each of these men stood with the Lord following this encounter, we do see their acknowledgment of Him – fearing the Lord, offering sacrifices, and even making vows unto Him. These offered worship unto the Lord, seeing Him as the Sovereign. At this moment, they were more obedient to the Lord than the prophet, Jonah.

- I am thankful for the day the Lord revealed Himself to me. It was not a miraculous event such as this, but I knew I was in the presence of the Lord. This reminded me of the great need for all to see Jesus as He is, the Savior and Lord of all. As we are made aware of our need for Him, through the guidance and conviction of the Spirit, we too are obligated to respond to the Lord in repentance and faith unto salvation. Following conversion in Christ, we must seek Him in every situation in life. He is sovereign, able to provide for our needs and lead us in the right path.

Conclusion: These have been simple verses to consider, but they reveal abundant truth. God is sovereign in our lives. He works all things for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. When life seems out of control, we can rest knowing the Lord is near and working in our lives. Jonah would soon learn that God was committed to him and the people of Nineveh. Submission to His will is always the best course of action.

Are you struggling today? Does it seem as if life is spiraling out of control? It may appear that way, but God is in control. If you are saved, rest in His guidance and provision, while seeking Him for wisdom. If you are unsaved, respond to His gracious offer of salvation!