Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Running Away from God's Will
Scripture: Jonah
Code: 1221

Tonight we're gonna depart from our study of the Book of Hebrews, and if you have your Bibles, I'd like to ask you to turn to the 96th Psalm. Psalm 96...One of the great missionary Psalms in all of the Psaltery is the 96th Psalm, and I only wanna read this to you as an introduction to our study tonight. "O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the peoples; give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before Him, all the earth. Say among the nations that the Lord reigneth; the world also shall be established, that it shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the fields be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the forest rejoice before the Lord. For He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth; He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth." There is a tremendous exhortation to us to carry the message of God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

Now turn in your Bible to the Book of Jonah, and tonight I'm not gonna really preach to you. I'm just gonna kinda wander through Jonah with you and see what it is that we can learn about missionary service from the world's worst missionary, Jonah. You know, as I was just kind of thinking in my mind, "What text could I pick out to speak on a missionary theme, as the Mission Board invited me to do, and I thought about all of the times that I heard a missionary; and usually when you hear a missionary, you can pretty well guess what his text is gonna be before he even begins; because there are some very favorite missionary texts that always seem to be used by missionaries.

One in very common usage is John 4:35, "Say not ye, 'There are yet four months and then cometh harvest'? Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest.'" There are other texts that are used frequently in missionary messages. In Matthew, I'm thinking of chapter 9 verse 37, "Then saith He unto His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.'" Other texts along the same line, Matthew 24:14, "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come," speaking of the Tribulation and the missionary effort there; and then perhaps the classic one that is most

frequently used whenever missionaries speak, Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." We could go from there to Matthew 13:10. We could go to Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth." We could listen to the Apostle Paul, who said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God and the salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

There are many texts that we could consider that are positives, that really positively lay out missionary effort; but we also learn by contrast; and so as we come to the Book of Jonah, first of all we're gonna see, I think, basically, all those things that a missionary shouldn't be and a few good things scattered in. We've been studying in our Sunday night studies through the Book of Hebrews the...the all-star team of faith. We've been studying the great heroes of faith. Well, here's one guy that never made it. He does not appear in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. I doubt whether he was even under consideration when they were narrowing it down.

In Old Testament days, God had designed Israel to be His missionary people. God had designed Israel and had given them their orders, and their orders were simply to communicate the truth of God to all people. In 1 Chronicles 16:23, the Bible says, "Sing unto the Lord, all the earth; show forth from day to day His salvation. Declare His glory among the heathen, His marvelous among all nations." There was no problem discerning what their task was. It was obvious. In Psalm 18:49, and the Psalms were very familiar, and they would have recited them, if not sung them frequently. Psalm 18:49 says, "Therefore I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the heathen and sing praises unto Thy name." The Psalm which we just read, 96 verse 3, gives a direct command, "Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people. Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth," and God Himself said to the Prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 43:21, "This people have I formed for Myself. They will show forth My praise." God all the way along had designed Israel to be a missionary nation.

In Deuteronomy 4:5 and 6, we read this, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land to which ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations who shall hear these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'" And so Israel was to speak and to live so that they, in effect, were a missionary nation. They were God's communicating vehicle to the world.

Now, out of Israel, in addition to the general responsibility of every Jew and Israel collectively, was the specific responsibility of certain individuals. God had called certain individuals to be prophets. They were separated from out of Israel for a very unique and special missionary ministry. And, as in the church today, I think that is very much a parallel. In the church, we are all called upon to be

witnesses; and yet God raises up within the church certain gifted men given back to the body who are responsible for preaching and teaching and so forth; and from them come many of the missionaries.

Now, each of these prophets whom God chose had special directions and special ministries which were given them from on High. Frequently, the prophets were concerned mostly with shaping up Israel; and that was not just an end in itself. That was a means to an end, because a shaped-up Israel would be able to accomplish what they were designed to accomplish, and that was as missionaries to reach the world with the truth of God; and so, ultimately, even the shaping up of Israel had a missionary purpose. So God chose these men, first of all, to warn Israel to bring about righteous revival in Israel that Israel might begin to be what God designed her to be, and therefore people might see the truth in them.

But beyond that, God also called some very specific men in the Bible to be missionaries, to reach out. For example, Abraham may be considered the first missionary in a...in a sense, because Genesis 20 verse 7, and also I think it's Psalm 105 about verse 15, says that Abraham was to be a prophet to his neighbors. So he had a very, very obvious missionary injunction. Moses, for example, was a transmitter of God's truth to a heathen people in Egypt. Elijah was a transmitter of God's truth to Ahab and Jezebel. Elisha was another transmitter of God's truth on a missionary basis when he bore the truth of God to a Syrian leper by the name of Naaman.

Then on top of these, you have the...the literary prophets, those whom we read in the New Test...in the Old Testament; and there were several of them who were commissioned to communicate messages to heathen people. First of all, Isaiah in Isaiah 13 clear through chapter 27, Isaiah is communicating a message to the heathen. Then Jeremiah chapter 46 through 51, Jeremiah does the very same thing. He speaks to Egypt, Philistia, Phoenicia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Syria, Kedar, Hazor, Elam, and I think Babylon; and so he's busy being a missionary. Then comes Ezekiel. Ezekiel spent, well, chapter 25 through about chapter 32, I guess, speaking to foreign nations, Tyre, Sidon, particularly, and then Egypt. Then you have Daniel, and Daniel was God's missionary to Babylon during the captivity. Then you have Obadiah. Obadiah was God's missionary with a message of doom for Edom. Then Nahum came along, and Nahum did what Jonah did. He pronounced judgment on Nineveh. Then you had Zephaniah, and Zephaniah was giving a message to unrepentant Gentiles, as well.

So you have a list of men, literary prophets, another list of men raised up who didn't necessarily write anything, although Moses, of course, did, who were commissioned, not only for the warning of Israel on the purification of the nation, but also for extending the truth of God to other nations. Now, the amazing thing about this is that I doubt whether if we asked you to recite the story of Zephaniah, anybody could stand up and rattle it off; and I doubt whether you'd do very well with the story of Obadiah either, or even Nahum for that matter. In fact, those little books are kinda tough, you know, and we don't really know a whole lot about 'em; but there's one missionary prophet that we know a lot

about; and the strange part of it is he's the one in the whole bunch that was the one who was unfaithful; but it's amazing how he left his imprint on history. His name is Jonah.

Jonah we call the reluctant missionary. He was disobedient, selfish, sinful, had a lousy disposition. He was totally prejudiced; and yet God saw fit to use him. Now that gives great hope to many of us. In fact, Jonah was such a lousy prophet, and, incidentally, he was from Galilee, and it was interesting in John chapter 7 verse 52 that he was such a lousy prophet that when Jesus supposedly presented Himself as a prophet from Galilee, the people said, "Oh, come on, there's never been a prophet out of Galilee. Those are the same people that studied the Old Testament, but Jonah was sorta the forgotten prophet. There was a prophet from Galilee. They just forgot him, because he was such a poor one. They probably didn't care to claim him.

Now, the record of Jonah is not just the biography of a lousy missionary. He does have some redeeming virtues, and God has placed it here for our edification; and the point I think that He wants to make is how God can recover such a person. Not only that, underlying that subject here is the tremendous contrast between Israel, now watch this, Israel's unconcern for the lost and God's total concern for the lost; and I think that makes the message very contemporary, because I think God faces something like that in the church today. He is totally concerned for the lost and, for the most part, the church is very superficially, if at all, concerned.

Now, the story divides very equally. The first two chapters would fit a simple outline: Go, no, woe. The second two chapters: Go, yes, bless; and that's how Jonah works out; but I'm not gonna use that outline. I'm gonna use one that's just a little bit more direct. Let's first of all just divide the book into two parts, and we're just gonna kinda go through it a little bit and see what God will show us; but the first part is the first missionary call. I wanna wrap this up with a personal testimony at the very end. I can identify with Jonah. So as I studied Jonah this week, I...I just couldn't help but think, "That is me. I am Jonah." As you go through this, don't burst out at some point when your mind allows you to make that comparison; but, anyway, this so fits me.

Now, to begin with, we have the first missionary call; and we'll take several points under that. In the first missionary call of chapters 1 and 2, there was, to begin with, a commission. The first missionary call in a general sense included a commission. Verse 1, "Now the Word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying." Now here's Jonah going about his prophetic business, and God breaks into his life. Now, we don't know very much about Jonah. He's only mentioned one other place in the Bible. That's in 2 Kings chapter 14 verse 25, and all it says is that he was a prophet from Gathhepher, which is up in Galilee, and that he was a prophet in the northern kingdom Israel during the time of Jeroboam II, which would put his prophecy about between the years of 800 BC and 750 BC, somewhere around there. That's about all we know about him. But, anyway, he's busy about whatever prophets are busy about, and God invades him with this very, very specific opportunity. His ma...his name means dove, a messenger of peace, Jonah. Jewish tradition is interesting, because

Jewish tradition says that he is the son of the widow of Zeraphath, who was raised from the dead, that that son is Jonah. We don't know whether that's true or not, but it's an interesting possibility.

Now, at the time of Jonah, Israel was in fear of a growing giant to the east. The great Assyrian power was growing. It was on the ascendancy, and it was a fearful thing; and though there was some great progress going on in Israel, and there were some good things happening, there was always this lurking fear of Nineveh and the growing power of the east; and that's exactly where God wants Jonah to go. Verse 2, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." Now Assyria, as I said, was a very great growing power. The city Nineveh was built by Nimrod. It was a city of 600,000. In fact, it was a three-day journey from one end of the city to the other. The inner wall was eight miles in circumference. The outer wall was something like 60 miles, and it took Jonah three days, apparently, to get from one end of it to the other. It was located on the east bank of the Tigris River, there in the Fertile Crescent area that perhaps is familiar to you. It was extremely advanced culturally, one of the greatest cities in the world; but its people were corrupt. It's people were proud, and it was sinking in corruption. Nahum, the prophet, who also spoke against Nineveh, called it a bloody city. Said it was full of fraud, lies, robberies, sensuousness, violence, witchcraft, and idolatry; and their soldiers were famous for their brutality and their cruelty.

Now, God had gotten a whiff of this wickedness, it says in verse 2, and God wanted a prophet to go and preach a message of judgment to Nineveh. Now, the other prophets whom I mentioned to you that were of a missionary character, for the most part never gave their messages on the soil of the country to whom they spoke. They spoke from where they were in Israel against those countries, and the word would have to filter back. Technically, Jonah was the first missionary who was commissioned, not only speak against a foreign nation, but to go to that nation and speak to their face against them; and this was the command. Well, that'd shake anybody up, to go to the enemy like that who was so formidable. One lonely, poor prophet faced that kinda thing; but there was more to it in Jonah's mind than that as we shall see.

Notice the command is very simple. The commission comes in three words - arise, now that does indicate a little bit that Jonah probably wasn't really active at this moment. "Get up Jonah," is the first thing He says. I don't know what Jonah's been doing, but it doesn't sound too good. "Go to Nineveh and cry against it." Three words: arise, go, cry. Now that's a sufficient missionary commission if ever I've heard one. Arise, go, cry, and cry is a common word for preach. In fact, the second time the commission comes around, it's the same thing: arise, go, cry, only it's translated preach in the authorized version.

Now, Jonah is to be sent to Nineveh, and I think God has many purposes in this. First of all, of course, is the...the redemption that comes to the Ninevites who repent and believe; but I think God wanted to do it also to shame Israel; and I think He wanted to shame Israel on two counts. No. 1, Israel had failed to repent. Now watch this, Israel had failed to repent at the multiplied preaching of

many prophets. You hear that? God had sent prophet after prophet to Israel. They had failed to repent. When Jonah finally got to Nineveh, one prophet, and the whole city repented, and that was shaming to Israel.

The second thing that God wanted to use to shame Israel was the fact that Israel had failed to be a missionary to Nineveh. Israel had failed to carry its commission out to reach the nations, and God wanted to show them how right this nation was by having one lonely prophet go in, and the whole city repent; and so He shames them because, No. 1, simply the fact that they failed to repent. No. 2, they failed to evangelize; and by the going of Jonah, he accomplishes the shaming of Israel as well as the redemption of the Ninevites. So Jonah receives the commission, and it's direct.

The second thing we see in the first call is the disobedience. In response to the commission, he disobeys, verse 3. "But Jonah rose up." That's good on one count. He did get up, but he didn't get up to go. He went up to flee. "He got up to flee unto Tarshish"; and we don't know which Tarshish this is. It's likely the one located on the coast of Spain. Now, if you know anything about which direction the coast of Spain is from Nineveh, you get a little idea of how disobedient Jonah was. Draw a straight line, and it's exactly in the opposite direction, and it's at least 2,000 miles away. So Jonah set his journey, but not to Nineveh. He reacted in disobedience, and he...he really fled from the presence of the Lord. "He went down to Joppa...right on the seacoast there...and he found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord."

You say, "Oh, Jonah, come on. You know God's omnipresent," and he would've said, "Of course I do. I know Psalm 139:7, "Whither...you know....whither shall I go from Thy Spirit; whither shall I flee from Thy presence." He knew all that, but what he was doing was running away from the availability. He figured in his own mind, "If I get far enough away, God'll have to get somebody else to go." Have you ever done that in your mind? Um-hum...God's been working on ya to witness to your neighborhood, and you feel a strange compulsion to move...And so Jonah ran from God's will, the opposite direction. You say, "Why did he do that?" Well, he had a most interesting reason. Chapter 4 verse 2 says, this is interesting, "And he prayed unto the Lord and said, 'I pray Thee, O Lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish...why, Jonah?...because I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful and slow to anger and of great kindness and repentest of evil. I knew You'd save those Ninevites if I went over there." Say, brother, what an attitude. Listen, this guy was prejudiced. He didn't want any Gentiles horning in on his religion. There wasn't any question about it. He thought that the way, and he was zealous, I think, in a sincere way. I think he felt that the way the Ninevites had treated God and had treated Israel, they didn't deserve to be saved, and God would sure get a lot more glory out of just wiping 'em out; and so he says in his mind, "I know what'll happen. I'll go to Nineveh, and that whole place will repent. I'm not going."

Now, if that's your attitude toward the mission field, you're hurting. There's no question. So he felt the Ninevites deserved judgment, not salvation, and he had his own little plan for them despite what God wanted; and so he took off in the other direction; and he's not really much different than a lot of Christians or a lot of other people who have been called by God to go to the mission field or called by God to go to the ministry; and instead of going the way God has called 'em, they get very, very involved in something else, so that they become unavailable. They may not find a Tarshish. They may not bail out and...and head for the French Foreign Legion, but, at some point in their life, they begin to get so tangled up into what they are doing to get out of the availability, they all of sudden, they have done, in effect, what Jonah did. Now, he was running from availability; and, oh, you know, this is a sad thing that Christians so many times have been called of God. They felt a strong desire in their heart for preparation for Christian service. They felt an overwhelming hunger in their hearts to move out into ministry, to maybe go to a mission field; and for some strange reason, the love of money or the love of comfort or the love of ease, they're not willing to step out on faith, wanting to be able to count your...your eggs in your basket and make sure you're hanging on to everything, and not willing to step out and believe God. They have pulled back. They have hid from the call of God, convincing themselves that if they get sucked up and very busy in doing something, and even something that's not too bad of itself, and maybe Jonah said to himself, "I'll probably have a wonderful ministry in Tarshish. There's probably a lot of unbelievers there," and they have, in effect, run from God.

But, you see, to run from God is like trying to flee from light. The only thing you wind up with is darkness. It's like turning in your wealth for poverty. It's like making an exchange of wisdom for ignorance. It's like turning in joy for sorrow, peace for chaos, usefulness for uselessness, fruit for leaves, reward for punishment; and so the commission and the disobedience.

Thirdly, look at the consequences. This is un...this is really astounding. The consequence. Verse 4, "But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was in danger of being broken." Now, lemme tell you something. God wasn't through with Jonah, and God was in the business of pursuing. God came after Jonah, and God had infinitely greater resources at His disposal, and so He just blew over the Mediterranean and created a storm. Remind yourself that rebellion never escapes God. Eventually God will appear to say, "Thou art the man."

God may let a man go to a certain point before He steps in, but, believe me, He'll step in; and God moved in the storm. There's an interesting term used there. It says, "The Lord sent out." The Hebrew term means to hurl. It's used of Saul when he hurled his javelin at David. It's a term, as if God just threw a storm right out there by the ship where Jonah was, a furious tempest. Well, verse 5 says, "Then the mariners..." And that's an interesting Hebrew word, because it's the Hebrew word for salt. That's where you get the fact that sailors are called Old Salts. "Then the mariners were afraid,

and they cried every unto his god." Well, they'd been through some storms, I'm sure, but this is one like they've never seen. Came up so fast, they probably didn't know what hit 'em. It was unnatural. Not a cloud in the sky and, bang, a storm. "And they cried every man unto his god." Immediately they got religious. You ever see anybody do that?

My dad used to tell a story about a guy on a ship, and...and he was always cursing God and cursing God, and he was up in the crow's nest one time and a...and a great storm hit, and the boat was rocking, and he fell over, and his foot caught in the loop, and he was swinging out over the sea and over the deck, and some guy came up to him and...and he heard him crying and screaming and screaming, "Oh, God, help me," and the guy walked up and said, "I thought you were an atheist. What are you doing screaming for God?" And he said, "Well, if there isn't a God, there oughta be one for times like this."...

But I don't know how religious they were other than when they got in a storm; but when they got in the storm, they got very religious. You know, that's fairly typical of humanity, isn't it? People wanna cry unto God when they get desperate; and when the fair weather's there, they can't be bothered with Him. "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea to lighten it of them." They started throwing away the cargo, just pitching it overboard. Look at the contrast. "But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship, and he lay and was fast asleep." Now, you say, "That is really sickening that he feels so secure." How he could run from God and be so...so crusty spiritually and insensitive that he could just...just go to sleep through a storm. Didn't even wake him up. Self-security.

Well, they woke him up, verse 6. "So the shipmaster came to him and said unto him, 'What meanest thou, O sleeper?'" What are you doing sleeping? "Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.'" He says, "Look, we're all up here crying to our gods. You cry to your God. Let's get this thing taken care of." So they wake him from his sound sleep; and it's interesting, I think at this point, too, that he is so smug and so self-secure that he probably at first doesn't recognize that he's even the cause of the problems. You know, we often think about the fact that a...that a disobedient Christian is useless to the Lord, useless to the church, useless to himself; but always, invariably, he's a pain in the neck to the world, too, because God's after him, and everything around him is troublesome; and it spins off on the unsaved; and they may offer their pittance of counsel to this disobedient Christian; and it may not suffice whatsoever; and they can't get to the core of the problem.

That's the case with old Jonah. Jonah had created a storm. You know, there's two kinds of trouble that a Christian has according to 1 Peter 4:14. There's the suffering for righteousness' sake, and then there's the suffering for evil doing; and he was suffering for evil doing.

Well, they were praying, and none of their prayers were doing any good, and they figured they oughta get Jonah in on it. Verse 7, "And they said every one to his fellow, 'Come, let us cast lots, throw dice, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us.' So they threw the dice and God controlled the dice, and the lot fell on Jonah," and it was Jonah. Isn't it interesting that sin here cau...causes a nash...a natural disaster? You know, I really believe that, as we look around our world, we see all the earthquakes and so forth and so on that are going on. You know, there's a...a percentage of earthquakes today that's greater than at any other time in history, and I think it follows right along with the mystery of iniquity unfolding toward the coming of Christ, because natural disaster follows in conjunction with sin.

Now, if you go back to 2 Chronicles, for example, chapter 7, I think it is, verse 13. "If I shut up heaven that there is no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among the people, if My people, who are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked way, then will I hear...hear from heaven forgive their sin and will...what?...heal their land."

You see, God responds to sin with very often natural disaster; and so God brought a storm in response to the sin of the prophet Jonah. Well, verse 8, the lot fell on Jonah, and everybody knew, at least from that little method, that he was the guilty party, that he had...he had disobeyed his God, and he was the one causing this mess. "They said unto him, 'Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us.'" Then they start rattling off questions. You know, there's such a heated thing going on, and that boat's shaking. They said, "Well, what is your occupation? Where did you come from? What's your country? Of what people are you?" They're trying to get down to the core of the problem. All kinds of excited questions are firing away trying to figure out just exactly how to get to the heart of the issue.

Verse 9, "He said unto them, 'I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who hath made the sea and the dry land.'" Now, that absolutely flattens, flattened them. In verse 10, "Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, 'Why have you done this? I mean what kind of a man are you who would flee from the God of the land and the sea? Where do you think you're gonna go?" See. That's the problem. There's no way to get away from that God. Now, if you're talking about the God of the mountains, you got a hope, 'cause they were polytheistic. "'Why have you done this?' For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them." Now God got to that prophet. He told him of his disobedience, and they couldn't believe that anybody could be dumb enough to run from the God of the land and the sea, especially on the sea. For that matter, on the land.

Verse 11, "Then said they unto him, 'What shall we do for thee?" Notice that they're very generous guys. They didn't say, "What shall we do to thee." They said, "For thee. How can we help you, Jonah?" "'That the sea may be calm unto us?' For the sea raged and was tempestuous," and the

Hebrew word tempestuous indicates a progressive worsening of the storm. It was just getting worse; and they're saying, "Jonah, what do we do?" You know, Jonah could've fallen his knees right there, and he could've said, "God, I repent. I'm sorry. I acknowledge my disobedience; but he was so hardheaded and so belligerent and so prejudiced and so self-willed that he would rather drown than go to Nineveh. That's right. He would rather be dead than see a bunch of Ninevites get saved in Old Testament terms.

Well, you know, sometimes negative situations soften the heart, but sometimes they only harden a man's resistance; and old Jonah was a tough nut to crack, lemme tell ya. Verse 12, here's his answer. Instead of getting on his knees and repenting, "He said unto them, 'Take me up and cast me forth into the sea. So shall the sea be calm for you, for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.'" He'd rather die than preach. That's right. That's how far away he was in terms of disobedience to God's will. God had given him a call and a commission to go to a people and bear the truth, and he'd rather be dead than do it; and so he says, "Just pitch me in the sea."

Well, these were nice guys. They didn't wanna do that. They had an ulterior motive. They didn't wanna guilty of his blood and have their gods come down with a new storm on 'em. Verse 13, "Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to bring her to the land." They figured, "No, we can't do that. We can't just dump a man over here in the middle of the sea." They started to row. "They tried to row hard to bring her to the land; but they could not, for the sea raged and was tempestuous against them." They rowed hard. It's an interesting term. It's a term that is used to speak of trying to break through a great wall. It's used elsewhere in Scripture for that. They were trying to smash that boat through a wave wall, and they could not do it.

Here is a...a good picture of the Christian who's out of God's will, and the world tries to help him, and they just can't. They just can't. If you're a Christian who's disobedient, you're gonna be a pain in the neck even to the world, believe me. Well, and, incidentally, a Christian who's out of God's will and who's disobedient has got to the world's most miserable creature anyway, 'cause he knows where he oughta be.

Verse 14, "Wherefore they cried unto the Lord and said, 'We beseech Thee, O Lord, we beseech Thee.'" Now, this shows the importunity in their prayer, the...the drive and the strength with which they pray. "Let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood." What they're saying is this, "Now, now, we're gonna throw him over, but we're not doing it. This is not first-degree murder. Don't hold his blood against us. We're only doing this because he said so, for Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased Thee. This deal is between You and Jonah, God. We don't even know anything about it. We don't know him very well. We know less about You. Don't hold this against us." That's what they're saying. "We don't wanna be guilty of this innocent blood, so just don't hold it against us. We're gonna do what this guy tells us to do." So they had to unload Jonah.

Verse 15, "They took up Jonah, cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging." What a fantastic supernatural miracle. They threw him in. He hit the water, and the storm stopped that fast. Sudden ceasing, here is a miracle. Now, I love this. God is really after Jonah, and Jonah was a stinker, even at that point; but God knew he might do that. In fact, God knew he would, so God had a fish ready. Now, Jonah could've repented on the desk; but God knew Jonah; and Jonah says, "I would die before I'll repent and go to Nineveh." And so God says, "Okay, Jonah, go ahead, jump in." And God's got His fish, see.

Verse 15, took up Jonah, cast him into the sea, the sea ceased from its raging. "Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord and made vows." That's...that's really a...that's a typical kind of a situation. Immediately after the storm stopped, "Ohhhhh, thank You, God," and they started promising the rest of their lives to serve Him. I don't know whether they did, but that's usually the time when men make those kind of vows.

Now, verse 17, "The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." This is a marvelous thing, you know, because this is the fourth point in the first commission, deliverance. God was after Jonah, and if He couldn't get him the easy way, He's gonna get him the hard way. I...when I was in seminary for Dr. Feinberg's class in Old Testament Introduction, I wrote a paper on the...the historicity and the authenticity of Jonah, because Jonah has long been the laughingstock of the modernists who have explained away this marvelous miracle of Jonah's living in the belly of this fish. It says at the end of verse 17, "Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights," and they all...the old critics, of course, used to say that it...that it was a whale, and a whole couldn't swallow Jonah, because they have a small opening. Then they discovered 70-foot sharks with a large opening, and it could be shark. The word fish here is a generic term, speaks of fish as species, not as a particular. It's probably some kind of a large shark, but it just could have been a special model God made all Himself and just dropped right in there; but that's...that's not the point.

But it's amazing some of the things that you get at this point. Some...and here's some of the things that I've read. Some writers suggest that Jonah really landed on top of a living fish and just hung on for three days. Some others say he landed on top of a floating corpse of a dead whale. It's amazing that he did that in the storm. Others said he was let off at an inn which bore the sign of a fish...One writer said...one writer said that the ship was named The Fish, that another ship was named The Fish, and Jonah was thrown in the water; and when the storm calmed down, another ship came by called The Fish and picked him up; and, of course, another writer said that the...the Great Fish was the name of a dingy tied onto the back of the other boat; and they just put him in the dingy; and, of course, my question is whoever heard of a dingy that vomited, right?

But, anyway, we'll get into that; but, nevertheless, God had prepared a fish. Now, at this point, God begins to really deal heart to heart with Jonah; and it's no problem for me to see that miracle. I was

thinking the other day, if God can preserve a living embryo in its living tomb, God has no problem preserving a living prophet in a living fish. That's no problem for God. To even explain it away, faith laughs at skepticism that does that.

Well, Jonah gets in this predicament, and this is the time when you really begin to look up, right? I mean you could take a lot, but here you are sinking into the bottom of the sea. The seaweeds are wrapping around you and you tend to look toward God. Now this is the first right thing that he did. The first right thing that a disobedient prophet or believer ever does is pray, and it was a prayer of repentance. In chapter 2 is Jonah's deliverance. It is also his spiritual autobiography or how I spent three days in the belly of the fish and liked it.

You know what he did in that time in that fish? He began to recognize certain things, and the recognition of certain things was the redeeming thing that turned Jonah around. First of all, he recognized God's authority. "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly." Jonah turned, and he recognized the authority of God in his life. Jonah wrote this book. Jonah wrote these words himself; and he says, "I turned to the Lord my God." He knew that God was his Lord. He recognized God's authority.

Remember the prodigal son? Finally came to his senses, and he said, "I will go to my father." Luke chapter 15, and Jonah, like a prodigal, says, "God, I acknowledge your authority," and you know something, Christian? If you in your life have been running from God's will, if God has called you whether its to a mission field or to teach a Bible class or to witness to somebody in the mission field that you live in, whatever it is, if you've been running, the place to stop is at the...really, on your knees at the point of prayer and acknowledge that God is the authority in your life. "God, I stop my running. I admit You have the right to control and to give the orders."

The second thing he recognized, not only God's authority, but he recognized his predicament, and that's always good. Verse 2, "He said: 'I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me. Out of the belly of Sheol cried I.'" He was really the belly of hell or Hades or Sheol. "I was at the lowest possible place," he says, "and Thou heardest my voice." He says, "I was down in the pit of hell itself. I was at the bottom, literally." Now, you see, sometimes we don't respond to God until we get in that bottom kind of situation, do we? It's amazing how Christians can be out of God's will and just keep going and going and going, and finally they hit rock bottom, and they look up, and he recognized his predicament. This is crucial to deliverance. You recognize God's authority in your life and your desperate predicament.

Thirdly, he recognized God's calling. Verse 3, "Hmmmmm, Thou hadst cast me into the deep." He says, "I know who did this, You did it, God. You're after me." He knew that. "In the midst of the sea and the floods compassed me about." You can just see him gurgling as he goes to the bottom. "And the billows and the waves passed over me. Then I said, 'I am cast out of Thy sight...oh, but

watch...yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple.'" He recognizes that God is working. He recognizes that God is working. That's so important. "The waters compassed me about even to the soul; the depth closed me about. The weeds were wrapped around my head." There he goes down. Seaweed all over his head, and he's going. This is his spiritual biography, and through it all he sees God.

Verse 6, "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the mountains start at the...at the bottom of the sea; the earth with its bars was as if the very gates that opened up to the earth was about me forever; yet has Thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." And here he does the fourth thing. He recognizes God's forgiveness. "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came into...Him...in unto Thee, into Thine holy temple." And so he recognizes that forgiveness is available, and he believes in his heart by faith that God hears him. Then he makes a marvelous personal testimony in verse 8. He says, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." Lying in the Hebrew is a word for vapor or breath. It's worthless, empty. He says, "The...the man who thinks he's gonna be happy doing his own will is just fooling around with nothingness," and you know what he does? He forsakes mercy, because only God can give that. He runs right into the justice that's gonna hit him because of his sin, and he has no recourse for mercy.

You disobey God, my friend, you follow your own life, and you forsake the only mercy available. That's right, and even a Christian who forsakes God, goes his own way, is gonna be slamming his whole life up against the justice of God. For if you live in sin, it is a principle of the universe that God's wrath is activated against you, and so he says, "I think I've learned something floating down here, God. I think you're talking to me. I think I'm hearing you, and I've learned that when I run from you, I run from mercy, and I'm gonna slam right into this kind of judgment." So he learns some lessons, but there was one other thing he learned. He learned that God was powerful. He recognized God's power.

Look at verse 9, "But I will sacrifice unto Thee with a voice of thanksgiving." You say, "How can you pray in the belly of a fish?" "I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." You say, "But you're still in the belly of the fish, Jonah, what do you mean salvation is of the Lord? Salvation by what?" By faith. He believed God was gonna deliver him.

Well, there it is. At this particular moment in his life, he begins to recognize certain things. He looks at his own life. He recognizes that God is able to deliver him, because God is in control. Then he recognizes his predicament. Then he recognizes that God is doing this to him, that God is speaking to him. He recognizes that God will forgive. He recognizes that God has the power to get him out. If God could get this fish for him, provide the size gullet it had to have to get him in it, and keep him alive in there while he's untangling the seaweed, God can get him out of that fish and back where He wants him to be, and he does all that in his own mind by faith; and here, again, you see something that recurs in Scripture incessantly that I've told you over and over again, and that is whenever a

person gets into a predicament which he can't handle, he doesn't worry about his predicament. He begins to consider his God.

Remember that principle? And he runs over in his mind the truths that he knows to be so about his God, and Jonah says, "From now on, I'm gonna be obedient, 'cause You're gonna get me out of this." It's kinda like was it Jehoshaphat in 2 Corin...Chronicles 20 who was gonna have the big battle with Moab, and he puts a choir out in front? And you can say to yourself, "Why would he do that? The choir out in front." 'Cause they were singing the victory song on the way to the battle. Say, "Well, they hadn't won yet." No, but they knew they were gonna win by faith, and here's old Jonah singing the victory song in a belly of a fish at the bottom of the ocean, 'cause he knows God's gonna get him out. Now if he'd have sat there and plotted how to get out, it wouldn't have been any way. But he knew God would deliver him, and God did deliver him. That kind of a prophet would make anything sick, and it made that whale sick or that great fish. Verse 11, verse 10 finally says, "And the Lord spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."

Now, I was a little bit hesitant to do a word study on vomit, but I decided to go ahead and just pick out a few thoughts, even though it is a strange thing. That word is used in the Bible in several instances. All of them are evil except for this one. We read, for example, that Jehovah threatened Israel that would be vomited out of their land in Leviticus 18. Laodicea was warned that, because they were a lukewarm church, Christ would spew them. It's...it's the same concept out of His mouth. The wicked man in Job chapter 20, who was rich from unjust gain, would vomit it up again said the Scripture. The hypocrite who turns toward Christ in 2 Peter 2, and then turns back to his sin is like a dog returning to his vomit. And there are other places in the Scripture that associate vomiting with drunkenness, and so vomiting is always kind of a...a bad thing in the Bible; but there was one good, pleasant vomiting in the Bible. At least Jonah was convinced it was a good thing, and so the fish just happened to vomit Jonah on dry land. It's amazing God had control of that fish's brain to get that thing over where dry land was available, and just chuck old Jonah right up there.

So the disobedient mis...the disobedient missionary was, at this point, delivered. God recovered him. You know, it's an exciting that when God sets His mind to recover one of his disobedient children, He's gonna go after 'em, and he's gonna get 'em. He got Jonah. I'll tell ya, beloved, that's great hope for the one who's been living in disobedience. You've been running from God, and you hear God's voice, you need to recognize His authority. Recognize your predicament apart from where you oughta be. Recognize that it's God that's speaking to you, and He wants you to listen. Recognizing that His forgiveness is available. Recognizing that His power can extract you from whatever mess you've gotten into, turned you around, and put you where he wanted you to go in the first place...

So call No. 1. Just briefly, let's look at call No. 2. Now we got a delivered prophet. What are we gonna do with him? Verse 1 of chapter 3, the second call, and it begins with another commission just like the first one. The Lord says, "Well, I'll try again." "And the Lord, the Word of the Lord came unto

Jonah the second time...and the orders don't change...Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and cry or preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Same thing: Arise, go, cry. Arise, go, preach. You know, God is so loving. God is so gracious. You know, God coulda just let that old prophet sink to the bottom of the ocean and forgotten him and raise up another one. You know what I...I love so much about this is the personal care with which God is attached to His own. God loved old Jonah personally, and God wanted to use Jonah, and God chased him until He got him.

Believe me, I like that kind of a personal God who doesn't just write some guy off because he stumbles in his life. Listen, I was disobedient in my life, and God gave me a second shot, and I praise Him for that, and there are a lot of other people. I've been disobedient a few times since then, too, but God recovers me, and I praise Him for it. God is so gracious and so merciful, and if you've been running, and you've been hearing God's call, turn around, and He'll reinstate you, give you a second opportunity.

So the commission. Then this time not disobedience, but obedience. Verse 3, "So Jonah arose...he did that the first time...and he went to Nineveh." Oh, great, Jonah. "According to the Word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city of three days' journey across from one side to the other." Old Jonah went. That's terrific. He was finally obedient. He was prepared by God as a fitting instrument. There's a verse that I want to just share with you quickly. Matthew 21:28 and 29. We'll take two verses here, 21:28-29. "'But what think ye?' he says. A certain man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, "I will not,' but afterward repented and went." That's Jonah.

That's better than the next guy who said, "I will," and didn't go. You know, I think there's some Christians who've said, "God, I'll go," but they didn't go. Better you should say, "I won't," and then do. Jonah said, "I won't," but God moved him, and so Jonah's gonna preach repentance, and Jonah is a good one to preach it, 'cause he's just done it. That makes it very personal. In fact, there's an interesting passage, and I'm not gonna take the time to go into all the comparison between Jonah and Christ and the three-day concept, because that's a message of another subject. But lemme just give you this. Jesus said, in Luke 11:29, "And when the people were gathered thick together, He began to say, 'This is an evil generation. They seek a sign...and listen to this...and there shall be no sign given it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation.'"

Now, what is the sign of Jonah, without going into a lotta detail? The sign of Jonah is this: that God can bring good out of evil. That God can bring righteousness out of sinfulness. That when God comes in judgment, if a man repents, judgment is set aside. That's what Jonah proved, and so Jonah goes to Nineveh and says, "You're wicked. You're gonna be punished unless you repent," and, at the same time, he gave them his personal testimony and said, "Lemme tell you about the time that I had to do that. I was on this boat, and you'll never believe what happened," and he went into the whole

thing, see? And he gave 'em the whole shot, and, you see, the miracle of Jonah had apparently spread, and Jonah was a living proof that God's repent...that God accepts repentance, withholds judgment, and grants forgiveness. Isn't that our message to the world? Isn't our message to announce to men that if they continue to live in sin, they're gonna die without God and go to hell? But if they repent, God will forgive them. That was the sign of Jonah.

Then he went preaching, in verse 4. "Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried and said, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.'" He's talking about... and, of course, that sounds like an unbelievable thing anyway. I mean it's a city of 600,000. Who's gonna come and knock it off? I mean there's nobody around that can handle 'em, but Jonah also threw in his little story and his testimony, and he must have given much more of a message than this, and, you know, the response was unbelievable.

The commission came. He was obedient, and he preached judgment, but he preached mercy, and the consequences are in verse 5. "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth...which is a symbol of their humility...from the greatest of them even to the least of them." Even the king got in it. "For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him and covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes." Again, a sign of humiliation. "He caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying 'Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily unto God. Yea, let them every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?'"

You see, God said, through Jonah, "Judgment, but also mercy," and they said, "Let's repent. Who can tell, but God might withhold His judgment if we repent." And you have, friends, the greatest revival in history right there in that city. That whole place repented. Over in Matthew 12:41, Jesus used that as a great illustration. He said, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation...listen...and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here." Jesus said, "This generation that's alive when I'm here on earth is gonna have to face the fact of condemnation, and their condemnation could well come from the Ninevites who repented when Jonah preached and a greater than Jonah has preached to you, and you have not repented."

That whole city repented. God was merciful, and verse 10 says, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way. And God repented of the evil that He had said He would do unto them, and He did it not." God is in the business of mercy to the repentant heart. I'm so glad for that. He even showed mercy to that prophet, didn't He? Boy, when you become a Christian, mercy doesn't end. It only begins. Well, look at Jonah's reaction. Hmmmmm, we've seen the commission to, the obedience, and the consequence. Now look at Jonah's reaction. This is amazing. Great revival.

The dream of every prophet.

Verse 1, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." The literal Hebrew is he was hot. He was furious. Verse 2, he says, "I knew You'd do this. He prayed unto the Lord and said, "I pray Thee, O Lord, was not just saying when I was yet in my country? Didn't I say You'd do this? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish; for I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of evil." That is the strangest compliment I've ever heard.

"God, I knew You were such a wonderful God who'd do this."...Boy, this is some kinda guy. Now, in verse 3, you'd think he'd say wonderful things. He said, "Therefore now, O Lord, take I beseech Thee, my life from me. It's better for me to die than to live." Now, this guy had a continual death wish. Three times, he's only got four chapters in history, and three chapters he wants to die, or in two chapters in three occasions. I mean he was so strongly bent on his own self-will, that he'd rather die than follow somebody else's words, even God. This goes to show you that even a guy who gets into the mission field doesn't always have all the rough edges knocked off, and God's in the business of refining even after that. Well, you know, he was a zealous guy, and his zeal was for God, and he wanted...he thought the...the Ninevites had dishonored God so much they didn't deserve salvation, and he was kinda of afraid in the back of his mind that the Ninevites, when they repented, you see, would get the favor of God over Israel, because Israel had not repented, do you see?

They'd been preaching to Israel for years and years. They never repented. He said, "Now, look, You're gonna come over here and love these Ninevites all the time," and he felt like the Jews were gonna lose God to the Ninevites, and so God deals with him somewhat gently. Verse 4, "Then said the Lord, 'Do you well to be angry? Do you think it's right to be mad?'" Notice how God puts the burden on him, see. "So Jonah went out of the city." He didn't answer the question. "Went out of the city, stormed outta there, sat on the east side of the city...I think he...he made...made a booth." I think he was gonna hang around for 40 days and see if that city got destroyed or not, and all the time probably hoping it did. "And he sat under it in the shadow till he might what would become of the city."

"I'm just gonna sit here and see." So he just goes right out there, and he sits there. He's just...he's just gonna wait, hoping that something'll happen, and God'll destroy it, as if to say, "God, I'm not sure this revival's genuine. I mean I hope You've checked these things thoroughly, God." Well, apparently his little booth collapsed, and he got a little hot out there. "So the Lord God prepared a gourd," and this particular gourd has reference not to a gourd as we think of it, but a rapid growing plant which had very broad and very large leaves. And so God had this prepared gourd. God was busy making all kinds of things for this guy. "And He made it to come up over Jonah, so that it would shadow his head." Here's a gourd, just grew, whoosh, just like that, and this plant grew right up over his head. "Deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd." It was hot out there. It

was a nice, shady thing. So he felt a little bit better, 'cause he was in the shade, which, you know, some people are easily satisfied. He had other problems, but at least that sufficed for the moment.

Well, God had to make something else. God had now made a great fish and a gourd. Now He's about to make a worm. Verse 7, "God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered." During the night, the worm ate the gourd. So Jonah gets up, and this even makes him all the madder. "And it came to pass, when the sun did rise, that God prepared a vehement east wind." Now God's still busy, and this time He makes what the...what the Orientals called a sirocco. A tremendous east wind. "And the sun beat upon the head of Jonah." God just turned up the volume on the sun a little bit. "And Jonah fainted and wished in himself to die, again. He says 'It's better for me to die than to live.'" Here's the third time he wants to die.

Well, God has been busy preparing all this thing, and here he is. Now the gourd is gone. The worm ate the gourd. He's out there. The city's not gonna be destroyed. Revival's going on in town. The wind is blowing, and the sun's beating on his head, and he's getting weary and faint, and he wants to die. "And God said to Jonah, 'Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?' And he says, 'I do well to be angry, even unto death.'" He says, "That was the only shade I had. You better believe I'm angry...I'm so angry I'll...I...I'm ready to die." This, he's very upset. And then God teaches him the most powerful lesson that any missionary or any Christian will ever learn. Verse 10, "Then said the Lord, 'You have pity on the gourd for which you didn't labor, neither made it grow. It came up in a night, and it perished in a night. Should not I spare Nineveh?...Mmmmmm...In which there are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?'" God says, "You're so mad about a dying gourd. How come you're not so concerned about dying souls, 600,000 of them?" Zap. That is a lesson.

You see, Jonah was so self-centered that he got upset over a lack of shade for his head, but he coulda cared less if 600,000 people had died and gone to hell. That's a lesson he had to learn. That's a great closing for a missionary book, isn't it? And what do we see in this book? We see the great contrast. It hits us between the eyes. The stark contrast between God's concern for the lost and our unconcern. We are very concerned for ourselves, aren't we? Comforts, luxuries, health, happiness. God is concerned with dying lost people all over the world. What are you really concerned about?

Doesn't say what happened after verse 11. I don't know, but I hope something happens in your heart after verse 11. What have we seen in this book? Listen to this. What have we seen? Well, we saw God take a broken vessel, disobedient, self-willed, call him to preach. He ran. God pursued through judgment, chastisement. Jonah saw God, repented, said, "I'll obey." God sent him the second time. God used him, and even when he was angry at what God did, God patiently taught him the greatest missionary lesson you'll ever learn. Care for the lost. Care for the lost and not for yourself...

I said at the very beginning that this is a very, very personal book to me, because I am Jonah. God called me to the ministry, I think when I was fairly young, and I knew it, and I didn't hear a voice out of Heaven saying, "Be a preacher," and I didn't have any specific visions. I just knew in my heart this is what God wanted me to do, and I didn't wanna do it. I wanted to be a professional athlete, and that's what I wanted to do, and so I decided I'd do that. Well, somebody talked me into going to a Christian college where I, incidentally, met Lennie, and I hated the place. I arrived there two weeks, after two weeks, I said, "God, I don't like this place," and I didn't communicate much with God in those days, but I was mad at God, and I decided, I said...I remember praying, and I said, "God, I'm gonna do what I want to do."

And like Jonah, I ran. That's exactly what I did, and I had a miserable year. Oh, I was so miserable. I was miserable from the beginning to the end. It was...they...they tried to help me at the school. They...they tried to help me every way, academically, spiritually, socially. They even assigned a date to me one time. They...they tried to everything to help me. Finally, God had tried to speak to me through the year, and I suppose I had a faÃ§ade of spirituality, but in my heart I knew everything was wrong, not right, and I was running from God. I didn't wanna read my Bible, didn't wanna do anything like that. I just...and, yet, I put on a front. I got in the car, and I was coming home, and I was running. I was coming to California. I was gonna pick up an athletic scholarship. I was ready to play football and all these other things.

The only thing that happened was the car flipped going 75 miles an hour, and just like Jonah got thrown out of the ship, I got thrown outta the car. I flew outta the car, and I hit the highway going 75. I slid down the highway about, oh, I guess a little over a hundred yards on my southern hemisphere, and 64 square inches of my back was just cut out a half-inch deep. I had third-degree burns everywhere from friction and so forth. I was torn up pretty badly. Well, I was conscious through all of this, and I...I can identify with Jonah going down in the water. I was going along the highway, see.

I was...I was even staying in my own lane. I was completely conscious. I knew everything that was going on. I just went down the highway. Totally awake. The car was spinning with five kids in it. You know, they were like the heathen in Jonah's boat. They didn't have a thing to do with what was going on, and God just had to bring 'em along for the ride, you know. And there they were flipping around in that car at 75 miles an hour on its lid, and I was going right down the center of the highway, and, finally, I tried to stop and put my hands down and, of course, tore skin on my hands. Still have some scars, and I rolled and tore skin off everywhere on my body. Finally, I stopped rolling, and I stood right up and walked off the highway. Still totally conscious. I...I had the sense to walk off the highway. I didn't want to get in an accident.

So, you know, so I just walked off the highway, and I stood on the side of the highway, and just like Jonah, I began to focus on God, and I heard in my heart these words. "John MacArthur...I think I was

reciting my name to kind of try to figure out if I was alive or not...John MacArthur, God did this to you. God did this to you." You know, it was at that point in my life, standing on that highway, that I said, "God...I'll never forget what I said, I said...God, I...I can't fight You." I said, "I'll do anything You want me to do." That was the very words. I'll never forget it. I said, "If You've got a little job, give me the grace to do it and be satisfied. If You got a big job, give me the ability to do it and be humble." I said, "Here I am."

Well, that was it for me. God changed my life, and I believed that God would restore me. Well, they came over from the car, and all five of 'em crawled outta that car that was... the roof was smashed against the body and all. They all crawled outta that care, not a scratch on a body. Car went 150 yards, top speed of 75 miles an hour, and it rolled. Only I was injured, and I knew who God was working with. It wasn't any doubt at all. Some people God speaks to. Others He has to hit 'em on the pavement a few times, and they say, "Uh, did You want me?" And that was me, and right there on that highway, I gave my life to Jesus Christ. And you know what? God in His wonderful, wonderful grace said, "All right, MacArthur, I'll try it a second time. I'd like you to go into the ministry."

My whole life is changed, and I praise God that He gave me a second chance, and that's really why I'm here today, because He did give me in His grace, a second chance, and I'll tell you something else. Along the line, you know what He keeps teaching me all over again?...He keeps teaching me that I gotta care more about everybody else than I do about myself, just like Jonah, because I have that same problem, don't you? But I...I can relate to Jonah. I've been there, and I tell you right now, friends, running with God is a whole lot better than running from Him. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for the opportunity that has been ours tonight to focus on this passage. God, there are some people in this place running from you that you've called to service. Maybe it's to...maybe it's just a simple a service as to instruct their children in the Scriptures, to instruct their wives. Maybe it's simple as teaching a class of children or leading a Bible study or witnessing to a friend, or maybe it's going to Bible college or seminary, to the mission field, and, God, if they're running, whatever has to happen in their life, do it, Lord, to turn 'em around. I thank You for Your grace in my life...I count myself not worthy, but thankful. God, I thank You that You've seen fit to use me somehow, even though I was reluctant like Jonah.

Father, I pray that maybe I can be a witness today to what You can do to the one who's been running, how You can turn him around. Lord, I pray that no one would leave this place tonight who hasn't in their own heart said, "Lord, at all costs, I'm gonna stop running. I'm gonna turn to You. I'm gonna hear Your call." May it be so, Father, that missions might not be something we talk about, but something that we're involved in, and it all begins when we'll do what You want us to do. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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