

The Sovereignty of God

Jonah 1:1-17 – Part III

Introduction:

- last week in our study of Jonah 1, the seasoned veterans of the sea, the “mariners” were said to have been “exceedingly afraid” vs.10
- literally; their fear was ‘surpassing extreme’
- you see, the “mighty tempest” they found themselves in was terrifying just by itself, but upon hearing about Jonah’s God in vs.9, these sailors became even more “fearful”
- because Jonah tells these men that he himself “feared the Lord”
- so they became that much more “fearful”
- scripture describes their “fear” as “exceedingly afraid”
- now, allow me to say that not only are these men “fearful” but these men are angry to say the least
- there asking themselves, how can a man who says he “fears the Lord” the very One “who made the sea and the dry land” disobey Him in such a flagrant way
- it made no sense to them
- there is no rational explanation for it
- thus, these men became very willing to do whatever they could to please Jehovah

III. The Sailor's Dismay: vs. 5-16

- vs. 11; "Then they said to Jonah, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us ?" – for the sea was growing more tempestuous"
- I want to remind you one more time that these sailors are dumbfounded, dumbfounded that a man who says he "feared the Lord" would blatantly and flagrantly disobey his God
- and realizing for the first time that this "Hebrew" passenger onboard is the direct reason for this peril they find themselves in, it leaves them in **dismay**
- **dismayed** as to what to do with this "Hebrew" stranger
- now, understand what's happening here – these men were utter heathens in an era when pagan religions were filled with superstitions and shot through with evil practices like human sacrifices
- these men probably weren't strangers to the idea of sacrificing another human being to nullify an angry god
- yet, by the testimony of their own consciences, by the dim light of right and wrong that was in them, they somehow knew it would be evil to kill Jonah
- even to save their own skins
- even to save their own necks
- so they ask Jonah the question in vs. 11; " What shall we do to you"
- "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us ?"
- and mind you, the "sea" and it's condition was worsening
- look at the end of vs. 11; " for the sea was growing more tempestuous"
- meaning; 'the sea was becoming even more violent'
- so the sailors asked; "What shall we do to you"
- I don't for one minute think it was a sympathetic question

- I believe the question was coated with anger
- Jonah was the soul responsible person for the double jeopardy these seasoned seamen were in
- feeling the pressure of hostility Jonah responds, vs. 12; “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me”
- when King David sinned so greatly against the Lord, God sent Nathan to be the instrument to expose David’s sin
- likewise, when Jonah continued in his rebellion against God, God used the “mariners” to expose Jonah’s sin and to rebuke him
- and it’s at this very point that Jonah begins to acknowledge his flagrant sin
- it’s at this point that Jonah begins to recognize the jeopardy he’s put others in, mainly the “mariners”
- and his only response is to the “mariners” was to tell them to “throw” him overboard so that the “sea will become calm”
- Jonah finally realized the terrible peril he put these “mariners” in
- loved ones, the first step towards repentance is a recognition of your disobedience
- followed by taking responsibility to be accountable for your disobedience
- and that’s precisely what Jonah did
- Jonah’s restoration from sin began at the time he acknowledged his disobedience
- look once again at vs. 12 and notice the last phrase; “For I know that this great tempest is because of me”
- Jonah ultimately sinned against the Lord by blatantly disobeying God’s direct command to go to “Ninevah that great city, and cry against it”
- But, as you know “Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish”
- Jonah’s sin brought negative affects upon the innocent “mariners”

- but when Jonah’s sin was exposed and revealed to Jonah, he did precisely what the Lord would have him to do, he confessed his sin to the people he sinned against
- “For I know that this great tempest is because of me”
- friends, the first thing in the process of reconciliation and restoration is to recognize your sin
- take ownership of your sin
- and if you’ve sinned against another, scripture commands you “leave your gift before the altar first be reconcile and then come and offer your gift” Matt 5:23-24
- God doesn’t want your sin infected gift, he wants your “reconciliation”
- “reconciliation” begins by admitting and recognizing your sin
- and that’s exactly what Jonah did – he confessed his sin to the people whom he sinned against
- “For I know that this great tempest is because of me” he said to the sailors
- notice the “mariners” response to Jonah’s confession, vs. 13; “Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to the land”
- these sea worthy sailors made every attempt to save the ship, their lives, and Jonah
- instead of slitting his throat and throwing him overboard, they “rowed” that much “harder” to save all onboard, including Jonah
- here are pagan, heathen sailors exercising compassion on Jonah
- when the storm first hits, Jonah’s downstairs in the bottom of the ship sleeping off his sin
- he could care less as to what was happening on deck
- he could care less if men’s lives were at risk on deck
- but when he was on deck ordering the sailors to “throw” him overboard to “calm” the sea, the sailors had compassion on him, they “rowed” that much “harder” to save the ship, themselves, and Jonah

- well, notice what happens next, vs. 13; “. (but) the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them”
- I ask you, who’s in control of the ship ? ? ?
- who’s in control of the sea ? ? ?
- the sailors knew who was in charge and who was in control
- look at vs. 14; “Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, “We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You”
- that’s a great prayer and testimony – especially coming from heathens
- these sailors have come to the right conclusion – that Jonah’s God is in full control of the entire situation
- and these sailors knew that if they threw Jonah overboard into the sea, his death, his “blood” would be on them
- because these men like all men were created in God’s likeness, and their conscience got the best of them
- they knew better than to kill this man for the jeopardy they were in
- that much they knew
- but the irony in this is, Jonah was willing to see the death of thousands in Ninevah
- yet, these heathen sailors were not willing to see one man’s life taken
- look at vs. 14; “. do not charge us with innocent blood”
- the sailors here are imploring the Lord not to “charge” them for Jonah’s sin and their “innocent blood” be sacrificed on his account
- obviously they gave consideration to “throwing” Jonah overboard as Jonah had suggested
- but their conscience got the best of them, unlike Jonah

- but what I really want you to key in on is this, notice the explicit recognition of divine sovereignty in the sailors prayer
- these men became believers in Jehovah, Jonah's God
- I make that claim because I want you to see who the sailors are praying to, the "Lord"
- look at vs. 14; "We pray, O Lord for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You"
- beloved, that prayer is a clear recognition in the Sovereignty of God
- and a clear recognition of faith in the Sovereignty of God
- ". You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You"
- not as it "pleased" Jonah nor as it "pleased" the sailors but as it "pleased You O Lord"
- this prayer is a clear testimony in the Sovereignty of God
- these sailors have come full circle in understanding who is in control of this storm and the sea
- here is that great theme in the Book of Jonah once again, **The Sovereignty of God**
- and God uses **Jonah's Disobedience, The Sailor's Dismay**, to bring heathen men to faith in Jonah's God, the Lord Jehovah
- how can I make this assertion ???
- look ahead if you will to vs. 16; "Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows"
- now, I'll come back to this verse in a moment
- look at vs. 15; "So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging"
- what patience these seamen exercised
- in vs. 13, the sailors "rowed hard to return to land" scripture records
- and what we have here in vs. 13 are heathens sensitive to the life of one man

- but finally the time had arrived, the sailors could not be patient any longer
- so they did what any man would do to the man responsible for this “mighty tempest that continued to grow more tempestuous against them”
- overboard went Jonah
- the sailors “picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea” just as he requested
- and believe it or not, God honors their decision and actions
- vs. 15; “. the sea ceased its raging”
- the sovereign hand of God calmed the sea
- the sovereign hand of God quieted the storm
- now, let’s return to vs. 16; “Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly”
- do you remember from last week what the word “exceedingly” literally means ? ? ?
- the word “exceedingly” literally means; ‘surpassing extreme’
- scripture is recording that after all the series of events that has transpired with these sailors, that when the storm had subsided, literally “ceased from its raging” vs. 15, these sailors “feared the Lord exceedingly”
- they “feared the Lord” greatly, they were petrified
- in other words, when the storm subsided, their “fear” magnified
- when the seas immediately calmed, their “fears” intensified
- Pro 9:10; “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”
- Pro 14:27; “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life”
- but not only did these men “fear the Lord exceedingly but they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows”

- now, it's significant that these sailors "sacrificed to the Lord and (made) vows" after the storm subsided
- lots of people make promises to the Lord at the height of danger and difficulties
- lots of people make promises to the Lord when the going gets tuff and there's hills and valleys to climb
- lots of people make promises to the Lord in the midst of hard times
- we call these promises foxhole religion
- when the bombs are going off all around them and their surrounded by danger, they hunker down in the foxhole begging and pleading with God to spare them
- begging and pleading with God to save them, while at the same time promising to honor and obey Him
- but as soon as the danger or difficulty has passed, there right back where they started, and so forgetting the promises they made to God
- but that was not the case with these "mariners"
- they "sacrificed to the Lord and (made their) vows" after the storm had subsided, not during, but after
- furthermore, after the storm had subsided, it was then that these men "feared the Lord"
- look at the beginning of vs. 16; "Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly"
- loved ones, the "fear" intensified because, as you see yourself for the sinner you are, and you understand the absolute power and holiness of God, then the "fear of the Lord" is intensified
- it was no longer their earthly lives they were concerned for, it was their souls
- this, is the kind of "fear" that scripture says is the "beginning of wisdom"
- beloved, I'm convinced that these sailors exercised saving faith in Jehovah
- I'm convinced that these sailors were instantly and suddenly converted, and transported into the family of God

- and I'm equally convinced that this was the action and purpose of Almighty God
- the purpose of Almighty God to exercise His divine prerogative to regenerate these sailors by His sovereign will
- in the midst of all the chaos and terror of this storm God had been working His perfect will all along
- you see, from the sailors perspective, this seemed to be the greatest disaster to come upon them
- but God was using it to accomplish His will – to discipline Jonah and to save the sailors
- friends, we have to learn to see past the difficulties and trials we face, and see that God is working in the midst of even the terrible disasters
- we have to trust the divine and inevitable goodness of God in all circumstances
- the very thing that Jonah was refusing to trust
- God was teaching these sailors that He was good and these sailors embraced God's goodness
- vs. 16; “. (they) offered sacrifice to the Lord and (made) vows”
- in all of the **Sailor's Dismay**, God displayed His goodness in saving the sailors
- Rom 8:28; “And we know that all things work together for good, too those who love God, to those who are **the called** according to His purpose”
- friends, the sailors were “. **called** according to (God's good) purpose”
- by the way, there's another irony here – remember how Jonah “fled from the presence of the Lord” because he didn't want to be the instrument that God uses to bring salvation to the pagan people of Ninevah
- remember that ? ? ?
- did Jonah thwart God's will by his disobedient will ? ? ?
- **Absolutely Not !!!**

- right in the middle of Jonah’s disobedience, God uses His disobedient prophet’s flight to reach across the Mediterranean Sea to save an entire ship of pagan sailors
- and in the midst of Jonah’s blatant, willful disobedience and rebellion, God still exercised His sovereign grace and mercy on Jonah also
- and He did the same thing with these sailors when He exercised His divine sovereignty and reached out and saved them
- now, there’s one more proof, one more example of God’s divine providence and goodness found here in our text
- let’s not forget about Jonah, because the sailors threw him overboard
- but as soon as he’s thrown overboard and sinking to the bottom of the sea floor, God rescues him
- vs. 17; “Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights”
- notice the opening sentence of vs. 17; “Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah”
- now, from a human perspective, that is from Jonah’s perspective, this looks like a pretty miserable experience
- and I’m sure it was, for Jonah could not have been comfortable in the “belly of the fish”
- I’m sure it was hot and humid, and don’t forget dark, and the gastric juices must have burnt his skin
- in fact, I believe the “three days and three nights” must have been horrible
- that’s why Jonah described it in Jon 2:2 as the “. belly of hell”
- now, most see this as God’s discipline on Jonah, and no doubt there is an element of that here
- but I don’t think that’s the case completely

- remember that the sailors threw Jonah overboard and Jonah is on his way down to the bottom of the sea
- I see this as the providence of God to save Jonah
- just like the Lord saved the sailors, the Lord's going to save Jonah
- look once again at vs. 17, and notice the phrase; "Now the Lord **had prepared** a great fish"
- do you see the word "had" the ". Lord **had** prepared a great fish"
- the word "had" is past tense, meaning the Lord did not currently "prepare" the fish when He saw Jonah was thrown overboard
- no, the "Lord prepared (the) great fish"
- in other words, 'prior' to the throwing of Jonah overboard
- is this important ? ? ? **extremely**, because it clear speaks of God's omniscience, His all-knowing, and His all-knowing in advance so that He "prepared (the) great fish"
- in other words, before Jonah was thrown overboard
- again the **Sovereignty of God** on display
- the **Sovereignty of God** to do as He pleasing with His creation, both Jonah and the "great fish"
- loved ones, this was God's mercy towards Jonah not God's wrath
- this is how God preserved Jonah's life
- because God's wasn't done with Jonah
- God's got a special assignment for Jonah, the people of Ninevah
- to go to Ninevah and "cry out against it"
- and that fish's slimy "belly" became a cocoon for Jonah, a sanctuary so to speak
- being "swallowed" by a "great fish" was probably the most unpleasant thing that Jonah ever experienced, but it was the very thing which saved his life

- God often preserves His people in unconventional ways
- He puts us through circumstances that are not always pleasant to endure
- but in those circumstances He's preserving us and teaching us patience
- isn't that what James says; "My Brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" Jam 1:2-3
- and scripture also promises that God will preserve all His chosen ones and not one of them will be lost John 6:39
- and Jonah is no different
- but loved ones, the means by which God preserves us may entail some circumstances that may make us uncomfortable
- it may even feel at times that God is chastening us
- it may even feel at times that we are in the "belly of hell"
- but true faith sees beyond the immediate discomfort of the moment
- beyond the darkness and deepness
- true faith trusts God, that whatever He allows us to go through, He will bring us through
- and God's purpose in doing this is always good, loving, and gracious towards us
- Jonah came to understand this in the most unorthodox way
- ". in the belly of the fish three days and three nights"
- and as we shall see next week, Jonah learns this lesson with thanksgiving in his heart
- we shall see this next week as we continue our study of Jonah chapter 2
- shall we pray