



Yahweh's Relentless Mercy, Part 1

Jonah 1:1-6

June 11, 2023

Well, we're going to be back in the book of Jonah if you want to make your way there in your bibles. And if you're visiting today, I would like to welcome you to Grace Church. My name is Brett Hastings. I am one of the associate pastors, one of the elders here at Grace Church. As we get started this morning, I just want to read the first chapter of Jonah as we get started.

So let's begin in Jonah, chapter 1, verse 1. It says, "Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.' But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the

sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.

Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. So the captain came to him and said, 'What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.'

And they said to one another, 'Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.' So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. And then they said to him, 'Tell us, on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?' And he said to them, 'I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea in the dry land.' And then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, 'What is this that you have done!' For the men

knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

Then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?' For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. And he said to them, 'Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; and then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.' Nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the Lord, 'O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us the innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.'

So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

Last week, since there was so much introductory material to cover, we only made it 3 verses into Jonah. And this week, since we don't have so much introductory material to cover, we're going to cover another 3 verses. But look, they're way longer than the other three. Last week we looked at and studied Yahweh's calling and commissioning of his prophet Jonah to go to Nineveh to condemn it. Nineveh was one of the capital cities of the cruelest and most barbaric peoples, the Assyrians. And the Assyrians were Israel's greatest enemy, and they had committed all kinds of atrocities and war crimes against Israel and her neighbors.

So understandably, Jonah did not want to go. In chapter 4, we're told why Jonah didn't want to go, and this is because Jonah knew that the Lord was going to show mercy to them and not destroy them. Jonah's heart was so calloused that he did not want to see mercy come to Nineveh. He wanted them to pay for their sins. So to avoid mercy coming to Nineveh, Jonah flees in the opposite direction, away from the temple and the presence of the Lord and away from Nineveh.

And I didn't make this explicit last time, but wanted to this week. Jonah, at this point, he has been called and commissioned as the Lord's prophet. He is a believer. God has given him the faith necessary to obey. This was the point in looking last time at the fact that Jonah was a true prophet from 1 Kings. We looked at that last time. But like all believers, he struggled to obey God's commands.

And this is where we found ourselves on the pages of scripture, thinking about how we, we aren't called to go away to a far country, to take the message of salvation, the message of God's mercy and yet we are just as reluctant as Jonah. We're reluctant when the distance is just next door or across the street. We are reluctant when it's not even our enemies that we need to take the gospel to, but even our friends and family who maybe we fear will become enemies if we share the gospel.

We realize that we are just as reluctant and rebellious as Jonah. We just aren't quite as overt about it. We might just try to ignore it, and even the inklings of our conscience stuffing

down those feelings, the guilt suppressing it until it goes away. Maybe even now evangelism is an acceptable sin in your mind. Not evangelizing, that is. It was in Jonah's mind at least, not going to the Assyrians. That was an acceptable sin in his mind, and if you were a true child of God, you make a practice of these high handed sins, rebelling against Yahweh's command to evangelize.

Yahweh will discipline you as He disciplines Jonah in our text today, though it probably won't be in the same way. Otherwise, we just all stay off of boats. The last week we saw in, we saw Jonah's callous heart, but this week we are going to see Yahweh's relentless mercy. Yahweh was determined to send Jonah, his chosen vessel, to Nineveh that they might repent, that he might show them mercy and relent from destroying them. Yahweh's vessel for his mercy, Jonah, took a detour, and so the Lord's mercy, we'll have to take a detour and go after his prophet first.

Because Jonah is a child of God, straying like a foolish sheep, as many of us do. We're familiar with that. So Yahweh

will discipline him to turn him around and to turn him around in more ways than one. So here in the verses today, we're going to see really the doctrine of God's jealousy played out. Jealousy, being protective of what is one's own and being intolerant of unfaithfulness. Yes, Jonah fled, but Yahweh will have none of that. Jonah is the man that the Lord chose, and he is intolerant of unfaithfulness and will discipline Jonah until Jonah willfully turns around. And this doctrine is a great comfort to us, a great comfort to believers, because this means if you are being disciplined, that you are a child of God.

Turn in your bibles just briefly to Hebrews chapter 12. While you're going there, I just want to say that what the author of Hebrews here writes is only an elaboration of Old Testament theology. Actually, the author of Hebrews cites Solomon from Proverbs 3:11 and, and 12 that says, "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights."

The Lord disciplines us positively to train us, but also when we stray from the path, he disciplines us to correct us, to turn us around. But Hebrews quotes Solomon in talking about discipline. And Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews asks, have you struggled with sin so severely that you have shed your blood? And I think most of us would say, no, we have never had to shed blood in order to do what's right, to resist temptation. But discipline is a temptation to us because look at Hebrews chapter 12, verse 7, right the quote Solomon that I just read.

The writer of Hebrews tells us, "It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his Father does not discipline?" If you are left without discipline in which you all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

For they disciplined us for a short time, as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share

in his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. And we'll stop there.

The Lord disciplines us positively to train us, just like a coach on a team, but also when we turn from his path of righteousness, he disciplines us to correct us. But the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and he chastises every son. And that's what we see in the verses today, the Lord's relentless mercy in pursuing his prophet. Even though Jonah would flee, Yahweh will bring him back a restored son. It will be quite uncomfortable and painful for what discipline is not. But Jonah, like all of us, he is being sanctified and made more like his God.

God is going to make Jonah compassionate, and that's the point of this discipline and all throughout this book, to make Jonah compassionate as the Lord is compassionate, that he might go and show compassion to Nineveh and then have compassion on others. Jonah will have the theology that he confesses in

chapter 4 worked into his heart if it's the last thing God does. But for now, his heart is still calloused. He is still willfully rebelling against the Lord. So what does the Lord do?

Well, that brings us to our first point in the outline, the substance of Yahweh's discipline in verse 4. Let's look at that again. Go back to Jonah if you're not there. Verse four and Jonah says, but the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Jonah fled on a boat, so the Lord hurled a great wind, which generates a great storm, such a great storm that the boat threatened to break up.

Now, it is unlikely that you are going to flee evangelism by getting on a boat, and it's unlikely that God is going to send a storm to turn you around like this. So we are going to make several observations of the Lord's discipline today, just to draw out of this text some things that we can take away and apply. Overall, we're going to look at eight observations through this as we follow our outline. We're going to find four

here in the first point. The substance of the Lord's discipline, and then two more in each of the subsequent points.

But here the first of the four points in verse 4 is that the Lord's discipline is delayed. The Lord's discipline is delayed. We don't know how delayed this storm was, but we know that it wasn't immediate, because if the Lord's discipline was immediate upon Jonah's life, he would never have made it to the ship. Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord, and the moment his heart turned from obedience, turned from obeying the Lord, before his foot ever moved. When his heart turned, Jonah deserved to die.

And every step that Jonah took down to Joppa was further and further rebellion. And the Lord let him run for a time before the discipline came. And we noted last time that Jonah found or discovered to his surprise, a ship going to Tarshish, and he likely saw this as an indication of a successful escape. Likewise, Jonah might have taken this delayed discipline. As you know what, God must not care that much about this sin. If God

really cared this much about this sin, he would have stopped me a long time ago.

Have you ever used that excuse before? We as believers were great about rationalizing our sin, but don't be deceived. The delayed discipline is not an approval of your sin or an indication that God does not care. Romans 2:4 says, Do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" Now that verse there is talking about salvation, but the same principle applies to us believers. God's patience is to lead us to repentance and greater holiness, not for us to use as an excuse to sin.

Beloved, never take this delay in discipline as a sign that God doesn't care about your sin. Instead, the first breath you take into your lungs after sinning, it ought to be a reminder to you of God's mercy that he has yet disciplined you, that you deserve to die. But he has shown you mercy. And so let your second breath be that of confession and repentance, seeking forgiveness and committing to walk in righteousness. But don't

mistake the patience of God, the delay in discipline. Don't take that for granted. It is meant to remind you of the mercy of God, not to give you license to sin.

So that's the first observation of the Lord's discipline we find in verse 4, that it is delayed. The second observation of discipline here is that it is nonverbal. The discipline here is nonverbal. It's a storm sent to get Jonah's attention to turn him around. And we noted last time that Jonah's protest to his call and his commission, when God said go to Nineveh and condemn it, his response was also nonverbal. He just got up and ran the other direction. No communication with Yahweh regarding his call, no verbal appeal. He just ran. Thus the discipline he receives is nonverbal.

You remember Moses at the burning bush? He protested the Lord's commission verbally, and so the Lord interacted. He did that verbally. Likewise, when we are interacting with the Lord verbally through prayer, even about our sinful desires and rebellion, when we interact with him verbally through prayer and seek an answer from him verbally by looking into the scriptures

to be reprov'd and we repent, he doesn't have to send nonverbal discipline.

But if we refuse like Jonah, to even give God a chance to change our minds by hearing from his word, if we are determined to go our own way and ignore scripture, well then, we might just receive nonverbal discipline as Jonah does. Now there needs to be a word of caution here. The problem with nonverbal disciplines like natural storms, the problem with them is that they're nonverbal, meaning that we cannot discern the meaning apart from God.

The only reason we know the storm here was God's discipline is because God, who has the divine perspective on all things, the perfect perspective on all of life, all of our hearts, all things that happen, God's the only one who knows that. The only reason we know here that this was divine discipline is because God revealed that. So just be very careful that you are not trying to deduce from every bad thing that happens in life what sin caused it.

We know that God is disciplining us all the time to train us in righteousness, positive discipline to train us, and that can take shape in trials that are exactly the same as another discipline upon another believer for sin. We don't have the divine perspective, so we just need to make sure we keep short accounts with God that any willful and rebellious sin we commit, they're confessed and repented of, but not think everything that bad that happens is because of some sin in our life.

But at the same time, it's not bad when trials come when things happen to examine yourself for sin. Just refrain from thinking you have the divine perspective on specific purposes for specific occurrences. But the Lord does discipline his children through nonverbal things like here in this storm, even sickness and even death. Paul told the Corinthians. That some were sick and even died among them because they were taking communion in an unworthy manner.

So let's examine ourselves when trials come, when even brushes with death happen. But be careful that you don't start thinking everything going on in your life is just due to some

sin. That's what Job's friends all concluded, and they were wrong. Be careful you don't do that, but do use those occasions to examine yourself. The Lord does discipline his children for sin in these ways. And if Jonah is any example, this was an obvious sin that needed correction. It was not something that went by without his notice, to his surprise, like the Lord's sending a discipline on his life. And he was thinking, I didn't know I did anything wrong. He knew he did something wrong, it was obvious. But the Lord's discipline can be nonverbal. So it's the Lord's discipline is delayed here, it's nonverbal.

And third, it is severe. One commentator put it as the severe mercy of God, mercy, withholding the wrath that we deserve and getting discipline instead. But here it is severe. The wind that Yahweh hurled upon the earth, it's described as great. And this great wind, it created a great storm on the sea. It's the same word in the, the Hebrew, the ESV translates that as great and mighty, but it's the same word in the Hebrew. And it turned into a great tempest.

Tempest is a word that in and of itself means a heavy gale, a heavy wind. And in other, in Psalm 83:16 in, where there's parallelisms between two things, the word for tempest is it put in parallel to the word hurricane. So this is a great typhoon, a great hurricane like storm, and it was so severe that the ship threatened to break apart. Now this, this wasn't just a puny little ship that Jonah found. This was a ship going for, going to Tarshish, one of the heaviest made ships because it was travelling to the ends of the Mediterranean world.

They don't make light, wimpy ships to go all the way across the Mediterranean. They were crafted by the Phoenicians with hardwood from the Lebanon forest. They were stout, strong ships, but this was no light storm. The phrase translated in the ESV as "threatened to break up." It's an onomatopoeic phrase, which means it sounds like what it's describing. The Hebrew word for the word in our English translation as threatened is *chashab* and the word for breakup is *shaber* and together they make the repetitive noise like waves crashing and banging into a ship. Hishabah hishaber shabba shabba. Thus waves banging against the ship.

One commentator even thinks that it could represent the planks on the ship hissing and breaking and cracking. But the storm was so severe that the ship threatened to break apart. The storm was so great. It was no ordinary storm. It was so severe that the ship was about to break apart, but it didn't. The Lord's discipline here is severe, and it is often severe in our own lives, and it can be a temptation, whether in our own lives or as we see discipline in others lives. It's a temptation to think, Lord, that's too severe, that is too much.

Maybe you've felt this way. I have in the past reading through scripture. First couple times I read through scripture. You get to the part in in 1 Chronicles 13 where Uzzah is accompanying the ark for King David and they put it on a cart. It's supposed to be carried, but they put it on a cart and the oxen stumble and the cart jostles and the ark is about to fall and hit the ground. So Uzzah puts out his hand to steady it, to keep it from falling in the dirt, and God strikes him dead. Even David, David was angry and thought, Lord, that's too severe. Seems a bit extreme.

Remember what we read earlier in Hosea? The Lord takes our sin much more serious than we do. Or in the New Testament, when you get there and you read about Ananias and Sapphira, who lied about the amount of money that they sold a piece of land for and gave to the apostles for the church, they were confronted by Peter and they clung on to this lie. And so the Lord stripped them of the breath of life. They breathed their last, and they fell down dead.

We can often see those things and we can even look at what others are going through and we can be tempted to think, God, that's a bit severe. But when it comes to discipline for sin, the Lord knows what we do not know. And that is what it will take for the believer to be turned back from his sin. How often do you, when you, when it's something that's not severe, maybe you stub your toe and you think, oh man, I better stop. Maybe there's sin in my life.

We don't do that when they're light things like that. But when the severe things happen in our life, we stop and we examine ourselves. And for some, it takes very severe things to

get their attention. I mean, look at Jonah. We read through the whole chapter. This was quite the severe discipline. All the other sailors are terrified, and they're crying out to their gods. They're ready to repent of any sin. But Jonah, did it get his attention yet? At this point, for Jonah, the severity is going to have to be ratcheted up even further.

And so let us trust, beloved, that God knows what he's doing in other people's lives and our own, no matter how severe the discipline is. He is good and he has good intentions and he knows what only he knows what we do not know. And so let's trust the severity of the Lord's disciplines to him and let us stay focused on repenting of known sins in our own life, putting on righteous actions in the fear of the Lord. So discipline is delayed here. We see that it is severe.

And that brings us to the fourth and final observation in this verse. And that is the discipline is controlled. Though it is severe, it is controlled. It's decisive, it's planned, it's measured because Yahweh is sovereign over all things. It wasn't like the Lord looked down and said oh look, a perfectly timed

storm in the forecast. Man, Jonah picked a really bad time to leave. This is going to be really bad for him. No. The things that happen, even the most severe disciplines, they are planned and controlled, governed by the sovereign hand of the Lord.

The Lord hurls the wind down, it's controlled by him. He caused the speed of the wind to be exactly right for the intended purpose that the storm was just right. So the ship didn't break up, it just threatened to break up. The Lord is sovereign over all these things. And even the grammar in the text indicates that the ship is even under the sovereign control of the Lord, that the ship is working against Jonah.

The word for threatened there we talked about the sound of it when it's spoken, but the word for threatened there, is a word that means to compute, to take into account, to plan, to devise. It's almost as if the ship has a mind of its own, but it is a personification of the ship. It's giving a human like attribute to the ship for rhetorical effect.

One commentator says, "The personification of the ship may serve to add the vessel to the list of Yahweh's accomplices in thwarting Jonah's flight. Thus the ship as well as the wind and the sea, they assist Yahweh in sabotaging Jonah's escape. The verb to think and tend in this context occurs in a form that often connotes planning, devising, conspiring, especially when followed by an infinitive, as it does here. Ironically, therefore, the ship, Jonah's very means of transportation and escape, turns against him and conspires with Yahweh to bring his flight to an abrupt end." End Quote.

So the wind and the waves and the sea and the boat, they all do as the Lord wishes. They're all controlled by him, and they all obey the Lord perfectly. The one who's not obeying the Lord perfectly here is Jonah. But the fact of the Lord's control over his disciplines, it ought to be a great comfort to us in the midst of our discipline or someone else's discipline. That's what we need to understand, that the Lord is in control of all those things. The Lord knows what needs to happen to promote our repentance and our sanctification.

All these things that happened, they're not haphazard and happenstance. Our good Lord is in control of all things. He's in control. It's measured. It's exactly what he wants it to be. He isn't a God wielding a sledgehammer that destroys everything in its path. He isn't throwing lightning bolts aimlessly. Rather, he is like a surgeon with a scalpel, cutting exactly what needs to be cut to remove the sin. He does nothing that is unnecessary. The severity of the discipline. It might be overwhelming at times, but even the severity is comforting in light of God's abundant goodness, his care, his thoughtfulness, his precision, his loving kindness, his faithfulness, his immutability. All those things bring us comfort in the midst of our discipline.

So while discipline is no fun in the moment, it is a comfort and a peace to know that it is our immutably good God behind it. And though we don't always understand the severity, it's exactly what the good heavenly Dr. prescribed for our good, that it might bring about the peaceful fruit of righteousness in our lives. And every true Christian, every true believer wants that more than anything, to walk humbly and holy before his God,

willing to accept any discipline regardless of the severity, because we trust that he is good and knows what he's doing.

So that's the substance of the Lord's discipline. He sent a storm that raged the sea. Even the ship worked against Jonah. The ship acted as part of the discipline. That's the substance of the Lord's discipline. Now we see the subject of the Lord's discipline. Look at the beginning of verse 5. "Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them."

The mariners, the sailors, the seamen there struck with fear in the midst of this storm. Now I would argue that the mariners, they weren't struck with fear immediately. These had to have been some of the most experienced sailors. You didn't put the newbies out in the boat to sail across the known world. I'm sure if I was on the boat I would have been shaking in my boots as soon as the wind picked up, soon as the waves started crashing over 'cause I have zero experience, I have no idea what I would do.

But these guys, they're experienced, they've got this. They're used to controlling the ropes, rowing for hours on end, weathering storms. But after the storm gets so bad that the boat threatens to break up, well, they become fearful. They realize that this isn't just any storm, this is a god like storm. And throughout this account, their fear is going to grow and grow and become intensified. Eventually it finds the right object in the Lord of heaven. But for now, they resort to doing what pagans do. They each cry out to their own God. They cried out. It's a word that refers to a cry for help or a battle cry. But obviously it's not a battle cry in this context. But they're crying out for help.

This indicates that though these were seasoned sailors and great at what they did, they had weathered many storms. They somehow knew that this was not a normal storm. Thus, they were crying out to their gods for help, and perhaps one of their gods would hear their cry and help them. I mean, they had a pantheon of deities. They had lots of options. Surely one of them would hear, and this further indicates the severity of the situation there. They knew there was nothing that they could do. It was going to require divine intervention.

But still, in their fear, they found one more thing that they thought that they could practically do to help themselves. So they begin hurling the cargo overboard in order to lighten the ship, but again, just to slow us down. This would not have happened in a matter of minutes. As we read Jonah it might take 30 seconds to get here as we read it, but this was probably an hour, hours long ordeal of fighting the wind and the waves before they resorted to crying out to their gods and throwing all the cargo overboard. That wasn't just something you did right away.

In Acts 27 we get a little bit more detail about a storm like this on the Mediterranean. Luke tells us in 27:18, he says, "Since we were violently storm-tossed," very similar description here, "they began the next day to jettison the cargo. And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. And when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of being saved was at last abandoned."

So Luke gives us a little bit more drama and time references with a supernatural stirring up of the storm. I imagine the time frame in Jonah not quite that long because this is a divinely appointed storm. I doubt that they made it an entire day before they threw the cargo overboard, but it wasn't immediate. It was probably an hours long ordeal of them fighting the wind in the waves because there's no light thing to throw over the cargo. It was a last ditch effort to survive, but that's what it had come to.

The waves had continued to beat against the ship, threatening to break it apart. And they did everything that they knew to do. Cried out to their gods, jettisoned the cargo. The only thing to do after jettisoning the cargo is abandon all hope of being saved. But at this point, as we see these guys fighting for their lives, we should wonder, where is Jonah? Are these guys the subjects of God's discipline? And we know the answer to that is no.

And all that brings us to a fifth observation of the Lord's discipline. And that is that it often affects those around us.

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The discipline that we're receiving from the Lord affects those around us. It affects those around the sinner. God's discipline of his children, often, as it does here, effects those around them. So don't, beloved, buy into the lie that your secret sins don't affect anyone else.

Don't buy into the lie that what you are looking at on that screen when you are all alone, that it's not affecting anyone. Many marriages and families have been destroyed because they believed that lie. The name of the Lord has been profaned among the world because people believed that lie.

If you remember Achan from the Old Testament, when God miraculously destroyed Jericho, he took some of the plunder that was in Jericho that was supposed to be devoted to the Lord. He secretly hid it in his tent, thinking no one will ever know. And then the next battle that Israel fought, the Lord withdrew his blessing and 36 people died. And when they inquired of the Lord, it was revealed that sin, it was the sin of Achan, that it had turned the hand of the Lord against them. Achan, you might think

little sin of keeping a few trinkets was no big deal. He thought it was no big deal. But how many lives were affected by that?

Well, 36 men died, 36 families devastated, wives, children. David is another person in scripture. We see who his discipline affected others when he became prideful and numbered the troops of Israel. The Lord eventually killed 70,000 men in Israel. The point in this and the story of Achan, the story of Jonah. We see, we can make the observation, the sin of one individual can have devastating effects of those around them. God takes sin seriously, so seriously that even others have to lose their lives for it.

And God is even just in doing this because we all deserve to die yesterday for the sins that we've already committed. So God is not unjust when discipline spills unto others. We all deserve to die, but we should trust that God is just and not use it as an opportunity to point the finger at God and question about his justice. But rather we should turn the gaze upon our own heart, as David did in 1 Chronicles 21. Repent and confess and cry out to God for mercy.

You take church discipline, for example. When we have to announce the name of someone who's unrepentant, does it affect others? It should affect us all. But those closer to the subject, they're affected much more acutely. One of the points in church discipline is actually to affect the whole church, to call us all, to examine ourselves, to repent of sin, to purge the evil from among us that we might not fall under the same discipline.

And that's really what the, the cause that it had to the men on the boat. They were all examining themselves, trying to figure out what God they had offended. But their cries fell on the deaf ears of idols. But at least they had the good sense to examine themselves and the try to appease the wrath of a God. So Jonah's sin and the subsequent discipline has put all these sailors in peril. His sin has greatly affected them. But where is he? Well, while they're busy trying to save their own lives, the text contrasts them with Jonah.

Jonah is the real subject of the Lord's discipline. Look at verse 5 again. "But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep." Going down is a recurring word in the book that marks Jonah's steps down into the depths of the heart, away from God. Jonah was up on the mountain of the Lord, in the temple, near the presence of the Lord. But he went down to Joppa, one step down into the depths of the earth. And he found a boat and went down into it. And now we see him here down in the innermost part of the boat, and soon we will see him down in the heart of the sea, where his descent will end, and only Yahweh can bring him back up.

But Jonah had gone down into the heart of the ship prior to the storm and fell asleep. The text says he was fast asleep. It's not the normal word for sleeping. This refers to a deep sleep. This is the same word used in Genesis 2:21 when God put Adam into a deep sleep. This is the same word used in Judges when the commander of the army fleeing from Barack and his army falls into a deep sleep from exhaustion from running away. So it's a deep, deep sleep. This makes sense because only a deep, deep sleep would allow someone to sleep through a boat being violently tossed on the, on the ocean.

But this brings us to our fifth observation of the Lord's discipline. And that is, the Lord's discipline is often ignored by the intended subject. It is often ignored by the intended subject. One commentator says the storm that so alarmed the crew served only to rock Jonah into a deeper slumber, blissfully unaware of all the trouble he is causing. The shock of being called to Nineveh in the journey to the coast have taken toll of his nerves and physique, and he is glad to relax safe on the ship that would carry him far away.

Kids are often blissfully unaware of all the trouble that they're causing. You see this as you raise kids, but many adults, we observe the same thing. They are blissfully unaware of all the destruction that they're causing in the midst of their discipline. Blissfully unaware of the chaos they cause in their family with their sin and their marriage. And this is another lie people believe about their sin, and that is, if I have a personal peace about my sin, then it must be okay. Or if I have a personal peace about doing this, it must be God's will.

I mean, if God was really displeased with Jonah's sin, wouldn't Jonah feel it in his conscience? Wouldn't he be so bothered by it? How could he sleep like this? Well, there are many people who have gone to their pastor to tell them that they feel perfectly at peace about divorcing their spouse when they have no biblical grounds to do so. Just because you are at peace with your sin, that doesn't mean God's not offended by it. That doesn't mean He's okay with it. That doesn't mean you're doing the right thing.

It just means that you have a seared conscience and a calloused heart, like Jonah. You deserve to die for your sin. God abhors every sin. And don't think just because you are at peace and used to your sin that God must be fine with you too. Sudden destruction comes upon those people. That or they are continually lulled into their sleep until judgement day. But Jonah, the subject of the Lord's discipline, the whole reason for this storm, he is peacefully sound asleep. Before he laid his head down, he thought he had successfully escaped his commission. He's totally unaware of the effect of the people, his sin is having on the people around him. But hey, he's at peace, happily sleeping.

And that brings us to our third Point, the supplication of Yahweh's discipline. The supplication of the Lord's discipline. Look at verse 6, "So the captain came and said to him, 'What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.'" Let me just fill in some of the details to make the scene appropriately dramatic. A couple commentators argue that where Jonah is sleeping is actually below deck in the cargo hold. This is where they normally stored the cargo in ancient times. It's not like a cruise ship where you've got a bunch of sleeping quarters. There's just below deck with the massive space to hold the cargo.

Jonah climbed to the extremity of the cargo hold behind all the cargo to sleep. So the men, the storm is threatening to break up the ship. So they're down there starting on one end, throwing out all the cargo, probably a fireman's line, throwing cargo out. And when they get to the very end of the cargo, throwing all of it out, working so hard to keep themselves alive, they find Jonah sleeping soundly, like a baby who cannot be jostled from his sleep.

So what does the sailor do who found him? Well, I mean Jonah, he, we looked at this last week, he hired the whole boat. He's the boss. Maybe we let him sleep. So they go get the captain. The captain comes and I imagine him speaking in not the most calm and collected way. What, you're sleeping? Just those three words in Hebrew. You're sleeping. It's a participle. Jonah had been enduringly sleeping through this storm, unceasingly sleeping. His sleep was unbroken. Those were the first words Jonah heard as the captain woke him. How can you sleep?

Jonah was shocked awake at that point. After being fully awake, the first words he heard were the same, that he was running away from. Arise and call out same words the Lord commanded him that he was running away from. They were haunting him. He could not escape his commission. And here we find the seventh observation about the Lord's discipline, that it is often men who unsettle the person, not their circumstances. It is men who wake up the subject of the Lord's discipline. While Jonah was at peace, those around him didn't let him stay that clueless about his sin. They didn't let him continue in his peaceful bliss. They startled him awake.

So beloved, if you see someone around you at peace in their sin, do you let them stay there in that peaceful bliss? Those people need to be shaken awake. And you may be just that sailor that the Lord puts in someone's life to unsettle their peace. They aren't getting the nonverbal cues. They aren't getting that everything in their life is falling apart around them and the destruction that their sin has on everybody around them. That discipline is designed to wake up the sinner, but you might be there just to shake them awake, to point it out to them.

Look at what you are doing. You might be the form of verbal discipline the Lord is sending into someone's life. So don't ignore the role that you play in the grand scheme of things. These men, they're telling Jonah, they're petitioning Jonah to petition his God, that he might give a thought to them and save them from the divinely awesome storm. These men, in a roundabout way, they're calling Jonah to repent. They're urging him to prayer. The narrative, it's drawn a bead on Jonah.

The sailors have done everything that they know to be saved and they ask the only person who can save them, Jonah, to pray to his God for them. To pray to the God who is the cause of all this storm. They don't know that, but we do. Unbeknownst to the sailors, they have found the right guy. The problem is Jonah is hard-hearted. He doesn't really care about these guys either. Prayer is the obvious answer at this point. That's what we should see. Prayer is the obvious answer. All these pagans know it, but Jonah does not oblige. Jonah remains silent.

While prayer is the obvious answer, it's the ignored decision. The pagans tell Jonah he needs to pray, but he isn't interested. And that's our final observation of discipline as it reveals relational distance. The Lord's discipline reveals relational distance. Jonah had turned his back to run from the Lord. How could he go to him in prayer? Jonah had no desire to go to him in prayer because he knew he was in sin. He knew he was running away from the Lord. To ask for the Lord's help he would first have to repent.

Jonah knows he can't just go to the Lord and say, Hey Lord, just ignore all this. Just ignore what I did and save these sailors. God doesn't sweep our sin under the rug and forget about it when we feign repentance. He knows our hearts. Jonah knew in his own heart that he was still refusing to go to Nineveh, so he knew there was no point in appealing to God until he was ready to repent. He knew praying to Yahweh was a waste of breath.

So one question we should ask ourselves at this point is, are we as honest with ourselves as Jonah was, or do we have the audacity to pray to God and ask him for things while we're in unrepentant sin? Like a petulant child sitting in the lap of a parent, asking them for something while slapping them in the face at the same time. Our sin, God's discipline, reveal that there is a relational distance between us and God. That we cannot approach him and stand in obstinance to him at the same time. He does not hear our prayers when they come from a rebellious heart.

And we would do well to learn from Jonah here that when we sin, there's a relational distance that first must be fixed before we seek to petition him for anything. We should recognize that we deserve to die for our sin. We need to confess, then, the wickedness of our sin. We need to say the same thing that God says about our sin and how wicked it is, and ask him for forgiveness and then walk in righteousness. But we can't come to God standing in obstinance to him, rebelling against him and thinking that we can ask him for what we want.

We first must seek forgiveness for the known sins that we've committed. But there are some of us whose skulls are a bit thick, and it's going to take a little bit harder, thicker bat for us to be hit over the head with. Jonah was one of those men. There are some who do not heed the calls of men to return to their God. There are some who ignore the chaos and the disaster in their life, refusing to accept that it's because of their sin. So the Lord must increase the severity of the discipline. He must make it even more acute and targeted. He must expose the sin for what it is.

So, beloved, let's also learn from Jonah here. Even if discipline is delayed, it's not further an opportunity for more sin. It's an opportunity to repent. Don't take that for granted. And if even the inanimate objects of your world seem to be working against you, maybe you should examine yourself, trusting that no matter how severe the discipline, it is the immutably good God on the other end of the scalpel. It's for your good leading you to repent.

So, dear friend, don't hide your sin anymore. Don't think you can run away from God. Don't ignore someone else telling you to wake up. Prayer and repentance is the obvious answer. Do not harden your heart. Confess your sin and repent. If you're here today and you're not a believer, you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't ignore my call to you today to wake up.

If you think being swallowed by a fish is severe, if you think even death, physical death, is severe, don't fear that. You need to fear the one who can both destroy your soul in hell. You need to fear the One who on judgment day, when you stand before him, if you are not robed in the blood of Christ, if you

have not been forgiven, if you have not cried out to him for mercy and repented of your sins, one day you will be fit with a body to sustain an eternal fire, eternal torment in hell.

Dear friend, wake up. Don't leave here today in the state you walked in here, wake up. And for those of you who are believers, these observations of discipline, we can find them in our own lives. They're meant to turn us back now. Repent quickly. Keep short accounts with the Lord and let us be those sailors in other people's lives as well. Help us help one another. Keep short accounts with the Lord, pointing out our sin as we seek to walk as a church in righteousness so that we might enjoy the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Let's pray. Father, may we take our sin as seriously as you take our sin. Never let us become complacent. Never let us forget the depths of the mercy that you have shown us in your Son Jesus Christ. His love for us to die in our place. Lord, may we be quick to repent of our sins, keeping short accounts with you, that we might not bring discipline on those around us, those in our family, those in our church, but may we walk in



holiness, enjoying the peaceful fruit of righteousness. We beg of you to strengthen us by your Spirit to do this, in Jesus' name, Amen.