



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Even Heathens Don't Want to Shed Innocent Blood!

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David Andersen / PO Box 2020, Chesterfield, VA 23832 / David.Andersen@capitolcom.org

Jonah 1:11-17

“So they said to him, ‘What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?’ –for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. 12) And he said to them, ‘Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.’ 13) However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them. 14) Then they called on the LORD and said, ‘We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life and do not put innocent blood on us; for Thou, O LORD, hast done as Thou hast pleased.’ 15) So the men picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea and the sea stopped its raging. 16) Then the men feared the LORD greatly and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. 17) And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.” (NASB)

“NOW THIS PLACE SHOWS, THAT THERE IS BY NATURE IMPLANTED IN ALL AN ABHORENCE OF CRUELTY . . . THEY CANNOT SHAKE OFF THAT HORROR, NAY, THEY FEEL THAT THEY ARE DETESTED BY GOD AND BY MEN, WHEN THEY THUS SHED INNOCENT BLOOD.”
JOHN CALVIN

Why do the mariners ask Jonah, who is the cause of the storm, for the solution to the storm? Is Jonah actually more willing to die than to preach to people he thinks are undeserving of the truth? Why do the men row when they can just throw Jonah overboard? What is the essence of their prayer? Are all involved taught through the storm to fear the true God?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- > JANUARY 24: JONAH 2:1-7 CONFIDENT PRAYER FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE—HEARD!
- > JANUARY 31: JONAH 2:8-10 SALVATION IS FROM THE LORD!

Jonah had been commissioned by God to preach in the capitol of the most cruel empire of his day. He disobeys God and flees the opposite direction on a ship. He is asleep while the storm sent to arrest him is violently battering the ship and is so intense that the mariners cry out to their gods and dispose of their cargo, destroying any profit from their voyage. The supernatural storm becomes so fierce that the captain abandons his wheel and heads to the lowest part of the ship. There he finds Jonah, wakes him up and commands him to pray. His stubborn refusal invites the frantic crew to cast lots to “*know on whose account this evil has come upon us.*” When the lot falls on Jonah, they barrage him with questions to prove his guilt and discover the reason for the storm. Jonah only answers the last question, “*A Hebrew I am and the LORD God of the heavens I fear, who made the sea and dry land.*” Their panic turned to horror as they “*feared a great fear,*” realizing that Jonah had chartered their ship to try to flee from the God who had made the sea! Fearing the prophet Jonah’s God more than he did, in terror they exclaim, “*What is this you have done?*” But there is no response from Jonah, no explanation, no remorse!

“JONAH, ALTHOUGH ORTHODOX IN CREED, RESPONDED TO GOD IN DISOBEDIENCE. HE CLAIMED TO FEAR GOD, BUT HIS ACTIONS CONTRADICTED HIS CONFESSION!”
ROBERT CHISHOLM

I. REQUIRING A SOLUTION JONAH 1:11-12

Since the tempest is still continuing to intensify around them they must find a solution. They have already been

BIBLE STUDIES

THURSDAY @ 6:30AM –PRAYER MEETING – GAB 3RD FLOOR WEST CONFERENCE ROOM

THURSDAY @ 7:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – GAB 3RD FLOOR WEST CONFERENCE ROOM

Virginia

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able to identify who is causing the storm and why it is upon them, but now they must know how to stop it! It is Jonah's God who has been provoked, so they expect that only Jonah will know what can be done to satisfy His wrath and quiet the storm. Therefore they ask Jonah, "What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?" One would expect at this point that Jonah would pray and repent of his rebellion against God, promise to go to Nineveh and beg God for His mercy. Instead he says, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you." The mariners are astounded at this answer and avoid this death sentence at all costs.

"JONAH WAS WILLING TO PERISH RATHER THAN TO PREACH!" WILLIAM BANKS

II. ROWING TO SHORE JONAH 1:13

Though Jonah was the cause of all their problems and he had cost them all their goods these sailors chose to risk their lives in the midst of this violent storm to try to save his life by rowing "desperately to return to land." The word used here requires strenuous effort and means "to dig through."¹ They then, dug in with their paddles in an all out effort to return to land, "but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them." Though the storm had continued to increase in ferocity, for the first time it was "against them," meaning that the wind and waves had apparently turned to directly oppose and overcome any possible progress with their oars!

"THEY HAD MORE CONCERN FOR ONE LIFE THAN JONAH HAD FOR HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS IN NINEVEH." CHARLES FEINBERG

III. REQUESTING THEIR SAFETY JONAH 1:14

These mariners did not consider what Jonah had done to be worthy of death, so they feared for themselves in having any part in causing his death. God had written even in their heathen hearts the foundation of justice and the reason for establishing government in Genesis 9:6, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God He made man." Their consciences knew Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder." Their minds understood the retributive justice regarding killing the innocent in Proverbs 1:10-19, and they cried out to God for their lives, saying literally, "We beseech You, please, O LORD, please do not let us perish for the life of this man and lay not on us innocent blood, because You, O LORD, because You are doing as it pleases You and it is done!" Just as they feared to take the life of the innocent, is there anyone more innocent than a baby in their mother's womb?

"MAN INSTINCTIVELY ABHORS THE SIN OF MURDER!" HUGH MARTIN

IV. REMOVING THE SINNER JONAH 1:15-17

After doing everything humanly possible to avoid Jonah's solution and after begging for God's mercy in prayer, they do as he has told them and literally "hurled him into the sea and the sea stood still from raging" The sudden calm made them fear God more than in the storm and they worship. Meanwhile Jonah is rescued by "a great fish."

"JONAH REMAINS PRAYERLESS EVEN IN THE FACE OF DEATH, WHILE THE SAILORS, UNINSTRUCTED IN GOD'S WORD, ENGAGE IN ERNEST PRAYER." JOYCE BALDWIN

¹ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1906 reprint, 1996), 369.

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Are you disobedient to God and thus attracting the storms to yourself and others?
- 2) Do you, like Jonah, know the truth and what is right, but fail to do it?
- 3) How are you demonstrating your care for others, particularly the innocent?
- 4) Are your most difficult dilemmas and decisions brought to God in prayer?