

CHAPTER 1

In this chapter we have,

- I.** A command given to Jonah to preach at Nineveh (v. 1, 2).
- II.** Jonah's disobedience to that command (v. 3).
- III.** The pursuit and arrest of him for that disobedience by a storm, in which he was asleep (v. 4-6).
- IV.** The discovery of him, and his disobedience, to be the cause of the storm (v. 7-10).
- V.** The casting of him into the sea, for the stilling of the storm (v. 11-16).
- VI.** The miraculous preservation of his life there in the belly of a fish (v. 17), which was his reservation for further services.

⌘ JONAH 1:1-3

A COMMISSION AGAINST NINEVEH

Observe,

1. The honour God put upon Jonah, in giving him a commission to go and prophesy against Nineveh. *Jonah* signifies *a dove*, a proper name for all God's prophets, all his people, who ought to be *harmless as doves*, and to *mourn as doves* for the sins and calamities of the land. His father's name was *Amittai* — *My truth*; for God's prophets should be sons of truth. To him *the word of the Lord came* — *to him it was* (so the word signifies), for God's word is a real thing; men's words are but wind, but God's words are substance. He has been before acquainted with the *word of the Lord*, and knew his voice from that of a stranger; the orders now given him were, *Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city*, v. 2. Nineveh was at this time the metropolis of the Assyrian monarchy, an eminent city ([⌘]Genesis 10:11), *a great city, that great city*, forty-eight miles in compass (some make it much more), great in the number of the inhabitants, as appears by the multitude of infants in it (ch. 4:11), great in wealth (there was no end of its store, [⌘]Nahum 2:9), great in power and dominion; it was the city that for

some time *ruled over the kings of the earth*. But great cities, as well as great men, are under God's government and judgment. Nineveh was a great city, and yet a heathen city, without the knowledge and worship of the true God. How many great cities and great nations are there that *sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death!* This great city was a wicked city: *Their wickedness has come up before me* (their *malice*, so some read it); *their wickedness was presumptuous*, and they sinned with a *high hand*. It is sad to think what a great deal of sin is committed in great cities, where there are many sinners, who are not only all sinners, but making one another sin. *Their wickedness has come up*, that is, it has come to a high degree, to the highest pitch; the *measure of it is full* to the brim; *their wickedness has come up*, as that of Sodom, ⁽¹⁸⁾Genesis 18:20, 21. It has come up *before me — to my face* (so the word is); it is a bold and open affront to God; it is sinning against him, *in his sight*; therefore Jonah must *cry against it*; he must witness against their great wickedness, and must warn them of the destruction that was coming upon them for it. God is coming forth against it, and he sends Jonah before, to proclaim war, and to sound an alarm. *Cry aloud, spare not*. He must not whisper his message in a corner, but publish it in the streets of Nineveh; *he that hath ears let him hear* what God has to say by his prophet against that wicked city. When the cry of sin comes up to God the cry of vengeance comes out against the sinner. He must *go to Nineveh*, and cry there upon the spot against the wickedness of it. Other prophets were ordered to send messages to the neighbouring nations, and the prophecy of Nahum is particularly *the burden of Nineveh*; but Jonah must go and carry the message himself: “*Arise quickly; apply thyself to the business with speed and courage, and the resolution that becomes a prophet; arise, and go to Nineveh.*” Those that go on God's errands must rise and go, must stir themselves to the work cut out for them. The prophets were sent first to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, yet not to them only; they had the children's bread, but Nineveh eats of the crumbs.

2. The dishonour Jonah did to God in refusing to obey his orders, and to go on the errand on which he was sent (v. 3): *But Jonah*, instead of rising to go to Nineveh, *rose up to flee to Tarshish, to the sea*, not bound for any port, but desirous to get away *from the presence of the Lord*; and, if he might but do that, he cared not whither he went, not as if he thought he could go any where from under the eye of God's inspection, but from his special presence, from the spirit of prophecy, which, when it put him upon

this work, he thought himself haunted with, and coveted to get out of the hearing of. Some think Jonah went upon the opinion of some of the Jews that the spirit of prophecy was confined to the land of Israel (which in Ezekiel and Daniel was effectually proved to be a mistake), and therefore he hoped he should get clear of it if he could but get out of the borders of that land.

(1.) Jonah would not go to Nineveh to cry against it either because it was a long and dangerous journey thither, and in a road he knew not, or because he was afraid it would be as much as his life was worth to deliver such an ungrateful message to that great and potent city. He *consulted with flesh and blood*, and declined the embassy because he could not go with safety, or because he was jealous for the prerogatives of his country, and not willing that any other nation should share in the honour of divine revelation; he feared it would be the beginning of the removal of the kingdom of God from the Jews to another nation, that would bring forth more of the fruits of it. He owns himself (³⁰⁰Jonah 4:2) that the reason of his aversion to this journey was because he foresaw that the Ninevites would repent, and God would forgive them and take them into favour, which would be a slur upon the people of Israel, who had been so long a peculiar people to God.

(2.) He therefore went to Tarshish, to Tarsus in Cilicia (so some), probably because he had friends and relations there, with whom he hoped for some time to sojourn. He went to Joppa, a famous seaport in the land of Israel, in quest of a ship bound for Tarshish, and there he found one. Providence seemed to favour his design, and give him an opportunity to escape. We may be out of the way of duty and yet may meet with a favourable gale. The ready way is not always the right way. He found the ship just ready to weigh anchor perhaps, and to set sail for Tarshish, and so he lost no time. Or, perhaps, he went to Tarshish because he found the ship going thither; otherwise all places were alike to him. He did not think himself out of his way, the way he would go, provided he was not in his way, the way he should go. So he *paid the fare thereof*; for he did not regard the charge, so he could but gain his point, and get to a distance *from the presence of the Lord*. He went *with them*, with the mariners, with the passengers, with the merchants, whoever they were that were going to Tarshish. Jonah, forgetting his dignity as well as his duty, herded with them, and *went down* into the ship to go *with them to Tarshish*. See what the best of men are when God leaves them to themselves, and what need we have, when the

word of the Lord comes to us, to have the Spirit of the Lord come along with the word, to bring every thought within us into obedience to it. The prophet Isaiah owns that *therefore* he was not rebellious, neither turned away back, because God not only spoke to him, but opened his ear, ⁽²⁸¹⁵⁾Isaiah 50:5. Let us learn hence to *cease from man*, and not to be too confident either of ourselves or others in a time of trial; but *let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*.

~~310~~ JONAH 1:4-10

THE PROPHET IN THE STORM

When Jonah was set on ship-board, and under sail for Tarshish, he thought himself safe enough; but here we find him pursued and overtaken, discovered and convicted as a deserter from God, as one that had *run his colours*.

I. God sends a pursuer after him, *a mighty tempest in the sea*, v. 4. God has the *winds in his treasure* (⁽²⁸¹⁵⁾Psalm 135:7), and out of these treasures God *sent forth*, he *cast forth* (so the word is), with force and violence, *a great wind into the sea*; even *stormy winds fulfil his word*, and are often the messengers of his wrath; he *gathers the winds in his fist* (⁽²⁸¹⁵⁾Proverbs 30:4), where he holds them, and whence he squeezes them when he pleases; for though, as to us, the *wind blows where it listeth*, yet not as to God, but where he directs. The effect of this wind as *a mighty tempest*; for when the winds rise the waves rise. Note, Sin brings storms and tempests into the soul, into the family, into churches and nations; it is a disquieting disturbing thing. The tempest prevailed to such a degree that *the ship was likely to be broken*; the mariners expected no other; *that ship* (so some read it), that and no other. Other ships were upon the same sea at the same time, yet, it should seem, that ship in which Jonah was was tossed more than any other and was more in danger. This wind was sent after Jonah, to fetch him back again to God and to his duty; and it is a great mercy to be reclaimed and called home when we go astray, though it be by a tempest.

II. The ship's crew were alarmed by this mighty tempest, but Jonah only, the person concerned, was unconcerned, v. 5. The mariners were affected

with their danger, though it was not with them that God has this controversy.

1. They were *afraid*; though, their business leading them to be very much conversant with dangers of this kind, they used to make light of them, yet now the oldest and stoutest of them began to tremble, being apprehensive that there was something more than ordinary in this tempest, so suddenly did it rise, so strongly did it rage. Note, God can strike a terror upon the most daring, and make even *great men and chief captains* call for shelter from rocks and mountains.

2. They *cried every man unto his god*; this was the effect of their fear. Many will not be brought to prayer till they are frightened to it; he that would learn to pray, let him go to sea. *Lord, in trouble they have visited thee. Every man* of them prayed; they were not some praying and others reviling, but every man engaged; as the danger was general, so was the address to heaven; there was not one praying for them all, but every one for himself. They *cried every man to his god*, the god of his country or city, or his own tutelar deity; it is a testimony against atheism that every man had a god, and had the belief of a God; but it is an instance of the folly of paganism that they had gods many, every man the god he had a fancy for, whereas there can be but one God, there needs to be no more. But, though they had lost that dictate of the light of nature that there is but *one God*, they still were governed by that direction of the law of nature that God is to be prayed to (*Should not a people seek under their God?* ²³⁸⁹ Isaiah 8:19), and that he is especially to be prayed to when we are in distress and danger. *Call upon me in the time of trouble. Is any afflicted? Is any frightened? Let him pray.*

3. Their prayers for deliverance were seconded with endeavours, and, having called upon their gods to help them, they did what they could to help themselves; for that is the rule, *Help thyself and God will help thee.* They *cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them*, as Paul's mariners in a like case cast forth even the *tackling of the ship*, and the *wheat*, ⁴⁰⁷⁸ Acts 27:18, 19, 38. They were making a trading voyage, as it should seem, and were laden with many goods and much merchandise, by which they hoped to get gain; but now they are content to suffer loss by throwing them overboard. to save their lives. See how powerful the natural love of life is. *Skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for it.* And shall we not put a like value upon the spiritual life,

the life of the soul, reckoning that the gain of all the world cannot countervail the loss of the soul? See the vanity of worldly wealth, and the uncertainty of its continuance with us. Riches make themselves wings and fly away; nay, and the case may be such that we may be under a necessity of making wings for them, and driving them away, as here, when they could not be *kept for the owners thereof* but to their hurt, so that they themselves are glad to be rid of them, and sink that which otherwise would sink them, though they have no prospect of ever recovering it. Oh that men would be thus wise for their souls, and would be willing to part with that wealth, pleasure, and honour which they cannot keep without *making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience* and ruining their souls for ever! Those that thus quit their temporal interests for the securing of their spiritual welfare will be unspeakable gainers at last; for what they lose upon those terms they shall find again to life eternal. But where is Jonah all this while? One would have expected gone down into his cabin, nay, into *the hold, between the sides of the ship*, and there he lies, and is *fast asleep*; neither the noise without, for the sense of guilt within, awoke him. Perhaps for some time before he had avoided sleeping, for fear of God's speaking to him again in a dream; and now that he imagined himself out of the reach of that danger, he slept so much the more soundly. Note, Sin is of a stupifying nature, and we are concerned to *take heed lest at any time our hearts be hardened by the deceitfulness of it*. It is the policy of Satan, when by his temptations he has drawn men from God and their duty, to rock them asleep in carnal security, that they may not be sensible of their misery and danger. It concerns us all to *watch therefore*.

III. The master of the ship called Jonah up to his prayers, v. 6. The *ship-master came to him*, and bade him for shame get up, both to *pray for life* and to *prepare for death*; he gave him,

1. A just and necessary chiding: *What meanest thou, O sleeper?* Here we commend the ship-master, who gave him this reproof; for, though he was a stranger to him, he was, for the present, as one of his family; and whoever has a precious soul we must help, as we can, to *save it from death*. We pity Jonah, who needed this reproof; as a prophet of the Lord, if he had been in his place, he might have been reproving the king of Nineveh, but, being out of the way of his duty, he does himself lie open to the reproofs of a sorry ship-master. See how men by their sin and folly diminish themselves and make themselves mean. Yet we must admire God's goodness in sending him this seasonable reproof, for it was the first

step towards his recovery, as the crowing of the cock was to Peter. Note, Those that sleep in a storm may well be asked what they mean.

2. A pertinent word of advice: “*Arise, call upon thy God;* we are here crying every man to his god, why dost not thou get up and cry to thine? Art not thou equally concerned with the rest both in the danger dreaded and in the deliverance desired?” Note, The devotions of others should quicken ours; and those who hope to share in a common mercy ought in all reason to contribute their quota towards the prayers and supplications that are made for it. In times of public distress, if we have any interest at the throne of grace, we ought to improve it for the public good. And the servants of God themselves have sometimes need to be called and stirred up to this part of their duty.

3. A good reason for this advice: *If so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.* It should seem, the many gods they called upon were considered by them only as mediators between them and the supreme God, and intercessors for them with him; for the ship-master speaks of one God still, from whom he expected relief. To engage prayer, he suggested that the danger was very great and imminent: “We are all likely to *perish*; there is but a step between us and death, and that just ready to be stepped.” Yet he suggested that there was some hope remaining that their destruction might be prevented and they might *not perish*. While there is still life there is hope, and while there is hope there is room for prayer. He suggested also that it was God only that could effect their deliverance, and it must come from his power and his pity. “If he *think upon us*, and act for us, we may yet be saved.” And therefore to him we must look, and in him we must put our trust, when the danger is ever so imminent.

IV. Jonah is found out to be the cause of the storm.

1. The mariners observed so much peculiar and uncommon either in the storm itself or in their own distress by it that they concluded it was a messenger of divine justice sent to arrest some one of those that were in that ship, as having been guilty of some enormous crime, judging as the barbarous people (~~Acts~~ Acts 28:4), “*no doubt one of us is a murderer, or guilty of sacrilege, or perjury, or the like, who is thus pursued by the vengeance of the sea, and it is for his sake that we all suffer.*” Even the light of nature teaches that in extraordinary judgments the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against some extraordinary sins and sinners.

Whatever evil is upon us at any time we must conclude *there is a cause* for it; there is evil done by us, or else this evil would not be upon us; there is a ground for God's controversy.

2. They determined to refer it to the lot which of them was the criminal that had occasioned this storm: *Let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause the evil is upon us.* None of them suspected himself, or said, *Is it I, Lord; is it I?* But they suspected one another, and would find out the man. Note, It is a desirable thing, when any evil is upon us, to know for what cause it is upon us, that what is amiss may be amended, and, the grievance being redressed, the grief may be removed. In order to this we must look up to heaven, and pray, Lord, *show me wherefore thou contendest with me; that which I see not teach thou me.* These mariners desired to know the person that was the dead weight in their ship, the accursed thing, that that one man might *die for the people* and that the whole ship *might not be lost*; this was not only expedient, but highly just. In order to this they cast lots, by which they appealed to the judgment of God, to whom *all hearts are open, and from whom no secret is hid*, agreeing to acquiesce in his discovery and determination, and to take that for true which the lot spoke; for they knew by the light of nature, what the scripture tells us, that *the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord.* Even the heathen looked upon the casting of lots to be a sacred thing, to be done with seriousness and solemnity, and not to be made a sport of. It is a shame for Christians if they have not a like reverence for an appeal to Providence.

3. The *lot fell upon Jonah*, who could have saved them this trouble if he would but have told them what his own conscience told him, *Thou are the man*; but as is usual with criminals, he never confesses till he finds he cannot help it, till *the lot falls upon him.* We may suppose there were those in the ship who, upon other accounts, were greater sinners than Jonah, and yet he is the man that the tempest pursues and that the lot pitches upon; for it is his own child, his own servant, that the parent, that the master, corrects, if they do amiss; others that offend he leaves to the law. The storm is sent after Jonah, because God has work for him to do, and it is sent to fetch him back to it. Note, God has many ways of bringing to light concealed sins and sinners, and making manifest that folly which was thought to be hidden from the eyes of all living. God's right hand will find out all his servants that desert him, as well as all his enemies that have

designs against him; yea, though they flee to the uttermost parts of the sea, or go down to the sides of the ship.

4. Jonah is hereupon brought under examination before the master and mariners. He was a stranger; none of them could say that they knew the prisoner, or had any thing to lay to his charge, and therefore they must extort a confession from him and judge him *out of his own mouth*; and for this there needed no rack, the shipwreck they were in danger of was sufficient to frighten him, so as to make him tell the truth. Though it was discovered by the lot that he was the person for whose sake they were thus damaged and exposed, yet they did not fly outrageously upon him, as one would fear they might have done, but calmly and mildly enquired into his case. There is a compassion due to offenders when they are discovered and convicted. They give him no hard words, but, “*Tell us, we pray thee, what is the matter?*” Two things they enquire of him: —

(1.) Whether he would himself own that he was the person for whose sake the storm was sent, as the lot had intimated: “*Tell us for whose cause this evil is upon us; is it indeed for thy cause, and, if so, for what cause? What is this offence for which thou art thus prosecuted?*” Perhaps the gravity and decency of Jonah's aspect and behaviour made them suspect that the lot had missed its man, had missed its mark, and therefore they would not trust it, unless he would himself own his guilt; they therefore begged of him that he would satisfy them in this matter. Note, Those that would find out the cause of their troubles must not only begin, but pursue the enquiry, must descend to particulars and *accomplish a diligent search*.

(2.) What his character was, both as to his calling and as to his country.

[1.] They enquire concerning his calling: *What is thy occupation?* This was a proper question to be put to a vagrant. Perhaps they suspected his calling to be such as might bring this trouble upon them: “*Art thou a diviner, a sorcerer, a student in the black art? Hast thou been conjuring for this wind? Or what business are thou now going on? It is like Balaam's, to curse any of God's people, and is this wind send to stop thee?*”

[2.] They enquire concerning his country. One asked, *Whence comest thou?* Another, not having patience to stay for an answer to that, asked, *What is thy country?* A third to the same purport, “*Of what people art thou? Art thou of the Chaldeans,*” that were noted for divination, “*or of the Arabians,*” that were noted for stealing? They wished to know of what

country he was, that, knowing who was the god of his country, they might guess whether he was one that could do them any kindness in this storm.

5. In answer to these interrogatories Jonah makes a full discovery.

(1.) Did they enquire concerning his country? He tells them he is a *Hebrew* (v. 9), not only of the nation of Israel, but of their religion, which they received from their fathers. He is a Hebrew, and therefore is the more ashamed to own that he is a criminal; for the sins of Hebrews, that make such a profession of religion and enjoy such privileges, are greater than the sins of others, and more exceedingly sinful.

(2.) Did they enquire concerning his calling — *What is thy occupation?* In answer to that he gives an account of his religion, for that was his calling, that was his occupation, that was it that he made a business of: “*I fear the Lord Jehovah; that is the God I worship, the God I pray to, even the God of heaven, the sovereign Lord of all, that has made the sea and the dry land and has command of both.*” Not the god of one particular country, which they enquired after, and such as the gods were that they had been every man calling upon, but *the God of the whole earth*, who, having made both the sea and the dry land, makes what work he pleases in both and makes what use he pleases of both. This he mentions, not only as condemning himself for his folly, in fleeing from the presence of this God, but as designing to bring these mariners from the worship and service of their many gods to the knowledge and obedience of the one only living and true God. When we are among those that are strangers to us we should do what we can to bring them acquainted with God, by being ready upon all occasions to own our relation to him and our reverence for him.

(3.) Did they enquire concerning his crime, for which he is now persecuted? He owns that he *fled from the presence of the Lord*, that he was here running away from his duty, and the storm was sent to fetch him back. We have reason to think that he told them this with sorrow and shame, justifying God and condemning himself and intimating to the mariners what a great God Jehovah is, who could send such a messenger as this tempest was after a runaway servant.

6. We are told what impression this made upon the mariners: *The men were exceedingly afraid*, and justly, for they perceived,

(1.) That God was angry, even that God that made *the sea and the dry land*. This tempest comes from the hand of an offended justice, and therefore they have reason to fear it will go hard with them. Judgments inflicted for some particular sin have a peculiar weight and terror in them.

(2.) That God was angry with one that feared and worshipped him, only for once running from his work in particular instance; this made them afraid for themselves. “If a prophet of the Lord be thus severely punished for one offence, what will become of us that have been guilty of so many, and great, and heinous offences?” If *the righteous be thus scarcely saved*, and for a single act of disobedience thus closely pursued, *where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* ^{<0047>}1 Peter 4:17, 18. They said to him, “*Why hast thou done this?* If thou fearest the God that *made the sea and the dry land*, why wast thou such a fool as to think thou couldst flee from his presence? What an absurd unaccountable thing is it!” *Thus he was reprov’d*, as Abraham by Abimelech (^{<0016>}Genesis 20:16); for if the professors of religion do a wrong thing they must expect to hear of it from those that make no such profession. “*Why hast thou done this to us?*” (so it may be taken) “*Why has thou involved us in the prosecution?*” Note, Those that commit a willful sin know not how far the mischievous consequences of it may reach, nor what mischief may be done by it.

<0011> JONAH 1:11-17

THE PROPHET CAST INTO THE SEA

It is plain that Jonah is the man for whose sake this evil is upon them, but the discovery of him to be so was not sufficient to answer the demands of this tempest; they had found him out, but something more was to be done, for still *the sea wrought and was tempestuous* (v. 11), and again (v. 13), it *grew more and more tempestuous* (so the margin reads it); for if we discover sin to be the cause of our troubles, and do not forsake it, we do but make bad worse. Therefore they went on with the prosecution.

I. They enquired of Jonah himself what he thought they must do with him (v. 11): *What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm to us?* They perceived that Jonah is a prophet of the Lord, and therefore will not do any thing, no, not in his own case, without consulting him. He appears to be a delinquent, but he appears also to be a penitent, and therefore they will not

insult over him, nor offer him any rudeness. Note, We ought to act with great tenderness towards those that are overtaken in a fault and are brought into distress by it. They would not *cast him into the sea* if he could think of any other expedient by which to *save the ship*. Or, perhaps, thus they would show how plain the case was, that there was no remedy but he must be thrown overboard; let him be his own judge as he had been his own accuser, and he himself will say so. Note, When sin has raised a storm, and laid us under the tokens of God's displeasure, we are concerned to enquire what we shall do that the sea may be calm; and what shall we do? We must pray and believe, when we are in a storm, and study to answer the end for which it was sent, and then the storm shall become a calm. But especially we must consider what is to be done to the sin that raised the storm; that must be discovered, and penitently confessed; that must be detested, disclaimed, and utterly forsaken. What have I to do any more with it? Crucify it, crucify it, for this evil it has done.

II. Jonah reads his own doom (v. 12): *Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea*. He would not himself leap into the sea, but he put himself into their hands, to cast him into the sea, and assured them that then the *sea would be calm*, and not otherwise. He proposed this, in tenderness to the mariners, that the might no suffer for his sake. "*Let thy hand be upon me*" (says David, ^{<1917>}1 Chronicles 21:17), "who am guilty; let me die for me own sin, but let not the innocent suffer for it." This is the language of true penitents, who earnestly desire that none but themselves may ever smart, or fare the worse, for their sins and follies. He proposed it likewise in submission to the will of God, who sent this tempest in pursuit of him; and *therefore* judged himself to be cast into the sea, because to that he plainly saw God judging him, that he might not be *judged of the Lord* to eternal misery. Note, Those who are truly humbled for sin will cheerfully submit to the will of God, even in a sentence of death itself. If Jonah sees this to be the punishment of his iniquity, he accepts it, he subjects himself to it, and justifies God in it. No matter though the *flesh be destroyed*, no matter how it is destroyed, so that the *spirit may be but saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*, ^{<415>}1 Corinthians 5:5. The reason he gives is, *For I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you*. See how ready Jonah is to take all the guilt upon himself, and to look upon all the trouble as theirs: "It is purely for my sake, who have sinned, that this tempest is upon you; therefore cast me forth into the sea; for,"

1. "I deserve it. I have wickedly departed from my God, and it is upon my account that he is angry with you. Surely I am unworthy to breathe in that air which for my sake has been hurried with winds, to live in that ship which for my sake has been thus tossed. Cast me into the sea after the wares which for my sake you have thrown into it. Drowning is too good for me; a single death is punishment too little for such a complicated offence."

2. "Therefore there is no way of having the sea calm. If it is I that have raised the storm, it is not casting the wares into the sea that will lay it again; no, you must cast me thither." When conscience is awakened, and a storm raised there, nothing will turn it into a calm but parting with the sin that occasioned the disturbance, and abandoning that. It is not parting with our money that will pacify conscience; no, it is the Jonah that be thrown overboard. Jonah is herein a type of Christ, that he *gives his life a ransom for many*; but with this material difference, that the storm Jonah gave himself up to still was of his own raising, but that storm which Christ gave himself up to still was of our raising. Yet, as Jonah delivered himself up to be cast into a raging sea that it might be calm, so did our Lord Jesus, when he died that we might live.

III. The poor mariners did what they could to save themselves from the necessity of throwing Jonah into the sea, but all in vain (v. 13): *They rowed hard to bring the ship to the land*, that, if they must part with Jonah, they might set him safely on shore; *but they could not*. All their pains were to no purpose; *for the sea wrought harder than they could, and was tempestuous against them*, so that they could by no means *make the land*. If they thought sometimes that they had gained their point, they were quickly thrown off to sea again. Still their ship was overladen; their lightening it of the wares made it never the lighter as long as Jonah was in it. And, besides, they rowed against wind and tide, the wind of God's vengeance, the tide of his counsels; and it is in vain to contend with God, in vain to think of saving ourselves any other way than by destroying our sins. By this it appears that these mariners were very loth to execute Jonah's sentence upon himself, though they knew it was for his sake that this tempest was upon them. They were thus very backward to it partly from a dread of bringing upon themselves the guilt of blood, and partly from a compassion they could not but have for poor Jonah, as a good man, as a man in distress, and as a man of sincerity. Note, The more sinners humble and abase themselves, judge and condemn themselves, the more


likely they are to find pity both with God and man. The more forward Jonah was to say, *Cast me into the sea*, the more backward they were to do it.

IV. When they found it necessary to cast Jonah into the sea they first prayed to God that the guilt of his blood might not lie upon them, nor be laid to their charge, v. 14. When they found it in vain to row hard they quitted their oars and went to their prayers: *Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, unto Jehovah, the true and living God, and no more to the gods many. and lords many, that he had cried to, v. 5. They prayed to the God of Israel, being now convinced, by the providences of God concerning Jonah and the information he had given them, that he is God alone.* Having determined to cast Jonah into the sea, they first enter a protestation in the court of heaven that they do not do it willingly, much less maliciously, or with any design to be revenged upon him because it was for his sake that this tempest was upon them. No; *his god forgive him, as they do!* But they are forced to do it *se defendendo* — *in self-defence*, having no other way to save their own lives; and they do it as ministers of justice, both God and himself having sentenced him to *so great a death*. They *therefore* present a humble petition to the God whom Jonah feared, that they might not *perish for his life*. See,

1. What a fear they had of contracting the guilt of blood, especially the blood of one that feared God, and worshipped him, and had fellowship with him, as they perceived Jonah had, though in a single instance he had been faulty. Natural conscience cannot but have a dread of blood-guiltiness, and make men very earnest in prayer, as David was, to be delivered from it, ^{PS14}Psalm 51:14. So they were here: *We beseech thee, O Lord! we beseech thee, lay not upon us innocent blood.* They are now as earnest in praying to be saved from the peril of sin as they were before in praying to be saved from the peril of the sea, especially because Jonah appeared to them to be no ordinary person, but a very good man, a man of God, a worshipper of the great Creator of heaven and earth, upon which account even these rude mariners conceived a veneration for him, and trembled at the thought of taking away his life. Innocent blood is precious, but saints' blood, prophets' blood, is much more precious, and so those will find to their cost that any way bring themselves under the guilt of it. The mariners saw Jonah pursued by divine vengeance, and yet could not without horror think of being his executioners. Though his God has a controversy with him, yet, think they, *Let not our hand be upon him.* The

Israelites were at this time killing the prophets for doing their duty (witness Jezebel's late persecution), and were prodigal of their lives, which is aggravated by the tenderness these heathens had for one whom they perceived to be a prophet, though he was now out of the way of his duty.

2. What a fear they had of incurring the wrath of God; they were jealous lest he should be angry if they should be the death of Jonah, for he had said, *Touch not my anointed, and do my prophets no harm*; it is at your peril if you do. "Lord," say they, "*let us not perish for this man's life*. Let it not be such a fatal dilemma to us. We see we must perish if we spare his life; Oh let us not perish for taking away his life." And their plea is good: "*For thou, O Lord! hast done as it pleased thee*; thou had laid us under a necessity of doing it; the wind that pursued him, the lot that discovered him, were both under thy direction, which we are herein governed by; we are but the instruments of Providence, and it is sorely against our will that we do it; but we must say, *The will of the Lord be done*." Note, When we are manifestly led by Providence to do things contrary to our own inclinations, and quite beyond our own intentions, it will be some satisfaction to us to be able to say, *Thou, O Lord! hast done as it pleased thee*. And, if God please himself, we ought to be satisfied though he do not please us.

V. Having deprecated the guilt they dreaded, they proceeded to execution (v. 15): *They took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea*. They cast him out of their ship, out of their company, and cast him into the sea, a raging stormy sea, that cried, "Give, give; surrender the traitor, or expect no peace." We may well think what confusion and amazement poor Jonah was in when he saw himself ready to be hurried into the presence of that God as a Judge whose presence as a Master he was now fleeing from. Note, Those know not what ruin they run upon that run away from God. *Woe unto them! for they have fled from me*. When sin is the Jonah that raises the storm, that must thus be cast forth into the sea; we must abandon it, and be the death of it, must drown that which otherwise will *drown us in destruction and perdition*. And if we thus by a thorough repentance and reformation cast our sins forth into the sea, never to recall them or return to them again, God will by pardoning mercy subdue our iniquities, and *cast them into the depths of the sea* too,  Micah 7:19.

VI. The throwing of Jonah into the sea immediately put an end to the storm. The sea has what she came for, and therefore rests contented; she

ceases from her raging. It is an instance of the sovereign power of God that he can soon turn the storm into a calm, and of the equity of his government that when the end of an affliction is answered and attained the affliction shall immediately be removed. He will not contend for ever, will not contend any longer till we submit ourselves and give up the cause. If we turn from our sins, he will soon turn from his anger.

VII. The mariners were hereby more confirmed in their belief that Jonah's God was the only true God (v. 16): *Then the men feared the Lord with a great fear,* were possessed with a deep veneration for the God of Israel, and came to a resolution that they would worship him only for the future; for *there is no other God that can destroy, that can deliver, after this sort.* When they saw the power of God in raising and laying the tempest, when they saw his justice upon Jonah his own servant, and when they saw his goodness to them in saving them from the brink of ruin, *then they feared the Lord,* ^{<462>}Jeremiah 5:22. As an evidence of their fear of him, they *offered sacrifice* to him when they came ashore again in the land of Israel, and for the present made vows that they would do so, in thankfulness for their deliverance, and to make atonement for their souls. Or, perhaps, they had something yet on board which might be for a sacrifice to God immediately. Or it may be meant of the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, with which God is better pleased than with that of an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs. See ^{<470>}Psalms 107:2, etc. We must make vows, not only when we are in the pursuit of mercy, but, which is much more generous, when we have received mercy, as those that are still studying what we shall render.

VIII. Jonah's life, after all, is saved by a miracle, and we shall hear of him again for all this. In the midst of judgment God *remembers mercy.* Jonah shall be worse frightened than hurt, not so much punished for his sin as reduced to his duty. Though he flees from the presence of the Lord, and seems to fall into his avenging hands, yet God has more work for him to do, and therefore has *prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah* (v. 17), a whale our Saviour calls it (^{<420>}Matthew 12:40), one of the largest sorts of whales, that have wider throats than others, in the belly of which has sometimes been found the dead body of a man in armour. Particular notice is taken, in the history of creation, of God's *creating great whales* (^{<002>}Genesis 1:21) and the *leviathan* in the waters *made to play therein,* ^{<440>}Psalms 104:26. But God finds work for this leviathan, has *prepared*

him, has *numbered* him (so the word is), has appointed him to be Jonah's receiver and deliverer. Note, God has command of all the creatures, and can make any of them serve his designs of mercy to his people, even the fishes of the sea, that are most from under man's cognizance, even the great whales, that are altogether from under man's government. This fish was prepared, lay ready under water close by the ship, that he might keep Jonah from sinking to the bottom, and save him alive, though he deserved to die. Let us *stand still and see this salvation of the Lord*, and admire his power, that he could thus save a drowning man, and his pity, that he would thus save one that was running from him and had offended him. It was of the Lord's mercies that Jonah was not now consumed. The fish swallowed up Jonah, not to devour him, but to protect him. *Out of the eater comes forth meat*; for Jonah was alive and well *in the belly of the fish three days and three nights*, not consumed by the heat of the animal, nor suffocated for want of air. It is granted that to nature this was impossible, but not to the God of nature, with whom all things are possible. Jonah by this miraculous preservation was designed to be made,

- 1.** A monument of divine mercy, for the encouragement of those that have sinned, and gone away from God, to return and repent.
- 2.** A successful preacher to Nineveh; and this miracle wrought for his deliverance, if the tidings of it reached Nineveh, would contribute to his success.
- 3.** An illustrious type of Christ, who was buried and rose again according to the scriptures (~~430~~ 1 Corinthians 15:4), according to this scripture, for, *as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so was the Son of man three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*, ~~420~~ Matthew 12:40. Jonah's burial was a figure of Christ's. God prepared Jonah's grave, so he did Christ's, when it was long before ordained that he should *make his grave with the rich*, ~~2510~~ Isaiah 53:9. Was Jonah's grave a strange one, a new one? So was Christ's, one in which never man before was laid. Was Jonah there the best part of three days and three nights? So was Christ; but both in order to their rising again for the bringing of the doctrine of repentance to the Gentile world. *Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*