

The Backsliding Prophet

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

- [0 : 0 0] Good morning. A warm welcome to church this morning. Special welcome to those who are visiting with us. It's good to see you. And there's tea and coffee at the end of the service. All are welcome to join us for that.
- Evening service will be at 6pm and will be conducted by myself, God willing. Ladies Bible study meets at 8pm tomorrow.
- I've got 32 McQueen Street written down here. Is that correct? What's the name? We're going to be at Soft Play tomorrow. Soft Play tomorrow. I heard a whisper of that. So Ladies Bible study tomorrow at 8 at the Soft Play.
- Road to Recovery meeting on Tuesday at 8pm in the community centre. I'm conscious one or two people have asked me about Road to Recovery and they're not sure what it is. Road to Recovery is not our initiative. It was set up by others in the past.
- And it's really a meeting which originally was set up to help people who are struggling with alcohol and drug addiction to find strength and support and to meet with Jesus in the course of the meetings.
- [1 : 0 7] And that's the background of the meeting. It's a meeting where anybody who is struggling with addictions of any kind or just struggling with the weight of sin in general can come and share freely or say nothing.
- And we read a passage, we pray. It's very, very loose and informal. And there's a cup of coffee and some biscuits. So it's an open invitation, 8pm on Tuesday nights here in the community centre.
- Prayer meeting on Wednesday at half past 7 at Kilda Cruises. Discipleship Explored course will commence in the restaurant of the Hotel Hebrides on Thursday at 8. And as I said before, it's really a course that's designed to assist young believers in growing maturity in their faith.
- But it's open to anyone who wants to know more about what it means to be a follower of Christ. The service is next Lord's Day will be at 11 and 6.
- And the morning service will be conducted by myself. But the evening service will be in Gaelic. And it will be conducted by Donald. The service is next Sunday.
- [2 : 2 0] Yeah, we have just gone through that there. There will be an English fellowship at 8pm as usual in the last of the month. And the final thing is, it's hoped to organise a group of volunteers to assist the HMIA with the painting of the hall.
- And as we are the main users these days, there was a request. If any of us are able to help, please to make ourselves known. So if you're able to help with that, please add your name to the list that's at the door.
- These, I think, are not quite all the intonations. There's one more that was given to me. Women across the Highlands. There's a conference entitled Outrageous Grace, Contagious Faith.

And Heidi Johnson will be speaking about knowing Jesus. Saturday, 21st May, Smith and Culloden Church in Bonnes. I know some of the ladies are planning a day trip at the very least.

Probably a weekend trip knowing them. And if you're interested in that, please speak to Mary, Courtney, or one of the other ladies who go to the ladies Bible study. Open to all ladies or women.

[3 : 30] These, I think, are all the intonations. So we'll begin our service by worshipping God and singing to his praise. We sing, first of all, the words on the screen in Mission Praise 296. 296 in Mission Praise and the words which will be on the screen. I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene.

I wonder how he could love me, a sinner condemned unclean. How marvellous, how wonderful, my song shall ever be. How marvellous, how wonderful is my Saviour's love for me.

Fair to God, let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we do thank you at the beginning of this Lord's Day that we are able to sing these words from our hearts.

We thank you that as we come together in the name of Jesus. Immediately our minds are brought to consider the wonder of the love of Jesus.

[4 : 39] We thank you for the deep, deep love of Christ. We thank you for that love that was willing to come to this world and suffer and die in our place.

We thank you for that love of Jesus. We thank you that because Jesus came, we who are sinners, who are in and of ourselves condemned by our sinful state and unclean.

We thank you that we are able to make our approach to the perfectly holy God. The God who cannot look upon sin. And Lord, we acknowledge with thanksgiving that we come into your presence because of Jesus.

We thank you that we can be amazed. That we can be filled with wonder and love and praise. We thank you that we can find peace.

That we can find direction. That we can find reviving power. As we take this time to come into your presence.

[5 : 52] And we thank you that Jesus, through his finished work, has opened up the way. We thank you for these words that we have sung.

That Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane, prayed, not my will, but thine. We thank you that despite the spiritual torment in advance and the torment of the cross as our sin.

He took upon himself. Still, that love for sinners held him there. We thank you that the cross could not hold him.

That death could not contain Christ. We thank you that he laid down his life. His life was not taken from him. We thank you that three days later he took his life back up again.

To show that the price had been paid for sin. To show that death was now defeated and Satan had been overcome. And we thank you that the victory that Jesus won, we share in as we put our faith in him.

[7 : 09] Lord God, we praise you that today we can have confidence and we can have joy in our hearts. Because of all that has already been done for us.

And yes, Lord, we endeavor in your strength to live lives which are increasingly pleasing to you. We endeavor to live lives which are holy.

We fail day by day. But we thank you that our salvation is not dependent upon our lives and what we will do. But our salvation has been secured in what Christ has already done.

And we thank you that whatever we are going through in life just now. Whatever troubles us, whatever anxieties we carry. Whatever weight we may feel upon our shoulders.

We thank you that the salvation which was bought by Jesus. And the joy that comes with that salvation is constant. And is eternal.

[8 : 18] So enable us, we pray today, to lift our eyes from the world. To lift our eyes from ourselves. And to stand amazed in the presence of Jesus.

Draw near to us, Lord, we pray. Minister to us through the word and in the power of the Holy Spirit. And we ask, Lord, that you would bless us.

Be with those who are not here today. Who have that desire to be here. And we ask, Lord, that whatever they are, that you would minister to them. Some who are ill.

Some who are grieving. Some who have responsibilities that take them elsewhere. Some who study in different geographical locations.

Lord, whatever your people are who are part of the congregation. We ask, Lord, that you would bless them. And that they would be found in worship on the Lord's Day.

[9 : 20] And we ask also that those who have opportunity but whose desire has waned. That you would continue to strive with them. That you would not let them go.

And we pray that you would stir their hearts. And draw them back to this place. And draw them into that saving relationship with you through Christ.

We pray for those who have not ever heard the name of Jesus. We thank you for all that we can read today. And all that we can meditate upon. Many in this world have no Bible.

Many in this world have not yet heard the gospel. Many of us people in this world have no opportunity to come together. Those who have heard. Because it is against the law.

And we ask, Lord, for your people. And we pray that you would bless them. Especially the persecuted church. We remember them as brothers and sisters. And we ask that you would minister to them and through them where they are today.

[10 : 24] And for those who have not yet ever heard the name of Jesus. We pray that you would speed your people. Through these places. So that the name and the gospel of Jesus would be preached throughout the whole earth.

Hear our prayers. Cleanse us from sin. Lead us by your spirit, we pray. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come forward, please?

Bear with me one moment, boys and girls. We have a logistical problem here. We're solving it. I hope. I'm not graffitiing the election, by the way.

All will become clear. Short. Are you all well today? Yeah. All feeling good? I've got something to show you this morning.

Something to show you. What's this? It's a balloon. We had birthdays yesterday. Happy birthday, Ruthie. We won't sing it to you.

[11 : 35] I'll embarrass you just now. But we had birthdays yesterday, I believe. Probably more than a combination too, but I'm not sure. And at birthday parties, we see balloons, don't we? What do we do with balloons?

Blow them up. Blow them up. Will I blow this one up? Blow them up? Then what?

Tie it up. Tie it up. Tie it up, yeah. Now. Shh! Shh! Shh! Shh! Shh! Shh! Shh! Shh! Shh!

Shh! Shh! Shh! This is actually a real warning here. Anybody who's on a loop system may want to go off the loop system for a moment, just in case just in case something happens I have a pin here I'm going to bop it tell me what do you think how many times will it take for me to stick a pin on this for it to burst you sure?

just one time? not five? or five hundred? right well we do this step away from the microphone a wee bit ready just one pop one one pop and it popped you come closer now I want you to think back boys and girls to the very beginning of the bible who do we find in the garden of Eden?

[13 : 34] remember their names? Bella Adam and Eve and God said to them there were certain rules that he made for the garden but they lived perfectly close with God tell me how many times did they have to sin and disobey God for that closeness and that friendship with God to change and spoil I saw your lips move there so let me hear what was in that lips one time just one one sin and everything changed is it not right boys and girls that sometimes the way we think in our minds about God and the way he looks at us sometimes the way we think is we think well I'm not too bad you know there's other people that are much worse than me

I haven't robbed any banks I haven't killed anybody I haven't really hurt anyone very very badly with my fist so I'm not too bad and as I think about it in my class there's lots of people who get much angrier and they shout and they scream and they kick things and they they do all kinds of things we might think about there's lots of people who are worse than me so God will probably look at me and he'll say you're okay you can be my friend how many sins do we have to do for our friendship with God that closeness with God to be spoiled how many Adam and Eve are the clue one it's not our sins our sins show us that in our lives we have sinned and even if we only sinned one time it's impossible but that one sin would be enough to cause us to be away from God because God is perfect and he cannot look upon our sin and so just that one sin in the garden of Eden it caused the friendship with God that man and woman had to go pop

I'll show you something else that's the bad news here comes the good news what will I do with this balloon pop it no not going to pop it the question though is where on earth is the pen can anyone see it oh there it is blow this one up tie it John on your cross just hold that please come on Alistair come on then you hold it please what's what I'm going to do now a bit of sellotape we'll get the sellotape and we will put it like that on the balloon ok and then we'll get the balloon and we will put the pin in it and usually it doesn't work but I didn't fasten it properly enough there see what happens there's a trick

I'll take that off you there so you don't get all stuck come on boys and girls that's a trick you can try when you go home get a balloon get a bit of sellotape fasten it on tightly the way I didn't and you can stick a pin doesn't now that speaks to us about Jesus we are all sinners every single one of us but God still loves us and so he sent his son Jesus into the world and Jesus when we trust him it's like it's like he's attached to our lives and he comes in between us and our sin still we sin but Jesus' blood as we sang a week or two ago comes between us and it deals with that sin so that our relationship with God doesn't go pop but our relationship with God can be close again so remember the balloon remember sellotape doesn't usually pop it and remember that

Jesus came so that our relationship with God wouldn't go pop but that we could be close with him again okay let's pray heavenly father we thank you that you loved us so much that you sent Jesus your son to this world and we thank you that he came and he went to the cross to deal with our sin we thank you that he comes in between us and the right anger of God against our sin we thank you that when we trust in Jesus he is the one who takes our sin away and makes it possible for us to know you in this world and then to know you forever so help us we pray to trust Jesus to ask for forgiveness of our sin and to walk close with you from our very early years and all the years that you give us in this world we pray these things in Jesus name amen we're going to sing again and usually we sing a hymn just now but we're going to sing a psalm this morning we're going to sing a Galat psalm at this point it says in Psalm 32 listen to this okay it says in Psalm 32 in verse 1 blessed or happy is the one whose transgressions whose sins are forgiven whose sins are covered and so we're going to sing these verses in Galat we're going to stay sitting to sin and

[20 : 54] I'll read just the first two stanzas of the psalm Psalm 32 and the first two stanzas of the psalm. Blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned all the transgression he hath done whose sin is covered blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not the sin and in whose spirit there is no guile nor fraud is found therein and we get that blessing and we trust in Jesus to whom to plead to beside God let us be therein and to God to Who amen

When you express your ám is Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[24 : 33] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. couldn't get my mind off Jonah and began to study, then the Lord really has laid upon my heart these verses in this book, which we'll be looking at over the next few weeks.

So the nautical theme since New Year, where we've been at sea almost every week, seems to continue. Jonah chapter 1 and at verse 1.

[25 : 56] The word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai. Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.

But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.

Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own God, and they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.

But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went to him and said, how can you sleep? Get up and call on your God.

Maybe he will take notice of us and we will not perish. Then the sailors said to each other, come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.

[27 : 04] They cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. So they asked him, tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us?

What do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you? And watch this.

Notice the question he doesn't answer. He never answers the question, what do you do? He answered, I am a Hebrew, and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.

This terrified them, and they asked, what have you done? They knew he was running away from the Lord because he'd already told them so. The sea was getting rougher and rougher, so they asked him, what should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?

Pick me up and throw me into the sea, he replied, and it will become calm. I know that this is my fault in this great storm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.

[28 : 10] Instead, the men did their best to row back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. Then they cried to the Lord, O Lord, please do not let us die for taking this man's life.

Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, O Lord, have done as you pleased. Then he took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm.

At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and made vows to him. But the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word through a stonum extreme. It's going to lead us 9. Bye. See you there. I will start faithfully.

God bless you. Girl will feel serious. Peace will handle the things he has arrived on Jerusalem. I lived here with you again, and we  ver cape? Why if he czym ?

[29 : 18] You think it's very high is resolved now. It will not matter. Let us see the truth in the past. now and tell someone else, such freedom of teaching.

They need to get things together. a new father's son and that  is left with a treasure saved that's way out of his control and he has chased me, followed by the sting of his ancestors without reference to the ask what Donohan is valat and then bill like Amola She said So ok    acknowledge Like the

Sh nasyon  rem at  n shear  , That people are pretty much like you.

That's why their lives are Duska. I have to burn out my mantis.

specifying sensesViik masave Reza  dan G  ke Hicubar He dsg hiim thiaad yichij  steadia bt foto , nadha acont  iinde HELNER OpoZ tri truth ia lne quieter k holi as the        and ethos albeit a father, not yet just the one but he

[33 : 34] Amen.

Amen. Amen. We sing again to God's praise.

The words on the stream. In social mission praise 1164. It's not long since we sang this one. But I will explain why I was singing it.

In just a few minutes. Come O fount of every blessing. Tune my heart to sing your grace. Let's just pray as we come back to the word. Jonah chapter 1.

Heavenly Father we come again to your word. We thank you that we recognise that this is the word of God. The word of God is not contained within these words.

[34 : 39] But this is your word in wholeness. We thank you that we are not trying to decipher what is of God and what is of man.

But we recognise that every word that we have here is inspired by your spirit. And so Lord we pray that the Holy Spirit himself would be our guide and he would be our teacher.

That he would illumine our minds. That he would guide our thoughts and our words. And we pray that the word of the Lord would come to us.

In clarity and simplicity in the fire of the Holy Spirit. As the word of the Lord came many many years ago to Jonah. The reluctant prophet.

Hear our prayers and help us we pray. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Now Jonah chapter 1 is where we are at.

[35 : 37] And I mentioned that I would say a word just about why we sang that hymn. It's a hymn that we sing quite often. And it's David Robertson, the moderator who chose it, last time we sang it.

But I chose that hymn today because behind that hymn is a story. You'll see if you looked at it in Mission Traze that the hymn was written by a man called Robert Robinson.

1735 to 1790. It's been played around with a wee bit in terms of lyrics to modernise it for this version. I don't like it very much I have to say. But the story and the essence of the hymn is still within it.

But it was written by this man Robert Robinson. And Robert Robinson, he believed and he made a profession of faith in Christ. Age 17. He came under the preaching of George Whitfield.

And he responded in faith to the gospel as he heard it through that famous preacher. And so he came to faith. He confessed his faith in his youth, age 17.

[36 : 47] And there was one day many years later. And Robinson was travelling by carriage. He was in this carriage. And in the carriage there was another young lady.

And she was a stranger to him and he was a stranger to her. And she was gently humming in the carriage. She was gently humming this tune.

And it was the melody from the hymn that he wrote. And then she began gently singing the words to the hymn that he wrote. And then she turned to him out of the blue.

And she asked him, what do you think of the hymn I was singing? And he's reputed to have replied, I would give a thousand worlds to enjoy the feeling I have.

When I wrote these words. See, Robinson was prone to wander. And at the time that he was arrested by this young lady who was, I believe, inspired by God in her conversation.

[37 : 57] Robinson was far from God. Yes, he was still one of God's believing people. He was still a Christian. He was still saved. But he wasn't pressing on with the Lord.

He was sliding back. And as we come to this study in the book of Jonah. We're introduced to Jonah. I'm not going to spend ten minutes doing background or anything like that.

But we're introduced to this reluctant, this petulant prophet, some of the commentators call him. He's a believer. He's a saved man.

He is one whom God had taken hold of and chosen. But when we find Jonah at this point. We find him not as one who's going on with enthusiasm with the Lord.

But he's backsliding. He's not right. In his relationship with God. And so I want you to just begin.

[38 : 59] By asking the question of yourself. As I ask the question of myself. As I study in the course of this week. Where are you in your walk with God today?

Do we know God? It's the first question. Have we come in repentance and faith to Jesus? Are we Christians?

And if we are Christians. How are we walking just now? Are we close with God? Are we enjoying an intimacy and communion with him?

Are we pressing on with him? As he leads us? Or are we falling back? I think the book of Jonah.

Will help us. In being able to answer some of these questions. This is a book that. As the Holy Spirit presses it upon our lives. Will help us to understand.

[40 : 07] Where we are. And diagnose. Our spiritual condition. At present. And I've underlined in my notes. The words. At present. And I'll explain that.

When we. Come to the first point. The first point. In this. Study today. Is Jonah's past blessings. Jonah's past.

Blessings. Now. Who was Jonah? Jonah. I'm not going to spend much time. On who Jonah was. Because we don't actually know a whole lot. About Jonah. There's only one other time.

In the Old Testament. Where Jonah's mentioned. He is called Jonah. Son of Amitai. And so that takes us. Back to one other place. In the Old Testament. Where we read of Jonah.

Son of Amitai. 2 Kings chapter 14. Let's go there. Just for a moment. If you have a Bible. Take a. A wander.

[41 : 02] To 2 Kings chapter 14. If you don't. Just listen. 2 Kings 14. And that verse. 23. Says there. In the 15th year of Amaziah.

Son of Joash. King of Judah. Jeroboam. Son of Jehoash. King of Israel. The king. King in Sumerian. And he reigned for 41 years.

He did evil in the eyes of the Lord. And did not turn away. From any of the sins of Jeroboam. Son of Nebat. Which he had caused Israel to commit. He was the one.

Who restored. The boundaries of Israel. From Lebo Hamon. To the sea of Arabah. In accordance with the word of the Lord. The God of Israel.

Spoken through his servant. Jonah. Son of Amitai. The prophet. From Gath Hefer. Just a wee note.

[42 : 00] Just a wee historical note. But what can we learn from this little historical note. About Jonah and his back. Three things. First of all.

We learned. That Jonah was a prophet. And that meant that Jonah was one. Who knew the presence of God. it meant that Jonah was one of the very few under the old covenant who was given that real insight into God's character and nature and his purposes Jonah because he was a prophet had an intimacy with God that the ordinary believer under the old covenant didn't have so Jonah was blessed in the presence of God the second thing that we note about Jonah from these verses is that Jonah was living at a particular time when God was moving and he was blessing his people Jonah's contemporaries were Elisha and Elijah Jonah comes in at the end of their ministry and when Elisha and Elijah were ministering God was doing an amazing thing in Israel there had been a hard time, there had been a dry time that there was a real sense that God was moving and reviving power when Elisha and Elijah and Jonah were on the scene so Jonah was blessed in his walk with God

Jonah was blessed in terms of the time that he was living it was a revival time and Jonah was also blessed in terms of his service God used Jonah Jonah was known, he had a reputation as being God's servant Jonah was identified as somebody that God spoke his word through and so all these things were part of Jonah's past that's just a wee snapshot of the man that we're dealing with he had a blessed past he had a blessed intimacy with God he lived at a blessed time and he was blessed in that God used him but all these blessings of the past were not enough to sustain him in the present and what was true for Jonah is equally true for me and for you no matter how blessed our past may be no matter how good our spiritual heritage is in terms of our family line or the place that we live or the church that we've been part of or our walk with God no matter how blessed we have had it as we look backwards no matter how close our walk with God once was no matter how powerfully he used us in a given time in a given situation we cannot expect past blessings to be present preservative remember the children of Israel they were journeying from Egypt through the wilderness the promised land and they were struggling they needed to be sustained physically so they cried out to God they cried out to Moses and the Lord sent manna in the quail and how often did he provide it well he provided it every day and they needed it every day they couldn't expect to be able to build up a warehouse of manna and quail live off old supplies every day they had to come and receive from the Lord because past supplies very quickly decay there's another picture for you and I to learn from in our journey through this world in the days that God has allotted for our time in this world

God promises that he will give us what we need each day he promises and he encourages us through the word to be right with him in the present thankful for the past yes but we need to be right with him in the present tense remember what Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6 give us this day our daily bread we can't expect to live off and get strong through yesterday's bread spiritual and physical we need to come to Jesus every day for that grace for that strength that is sufficient we need him every hour if we take one more moment in that location here and we take this from the the personal to the to the corporate

I think as a fellowship I've heard a number of people saying we've known God's blessing over the last year and there have been times that we've been thankful for God's blessing upon us and God's presence with us and even if you go back way beyond this year as a group of people in this place across various fellowships over many years you have known God's blessing there has been rich blessing in these islands over past years some here have even tasted of the Bible some here have been used by God to do mighty things and reach people for Christ and praise the Lord for all of that praise the Lord for every blessing that we can remember in our past but let's remember also we don't depend on that in the present

[48 : 14] Jonah had all these things Jonah had been richly richly blessed but yet Jonah as we find him in Jonah chapter 1 in his autobiographical work is in a poor spiritual state so Jonah's past blessing secondly Jonah's present backsliding now how do we know looking at Jonah here as he introduces himself how do we know that he's backsliding what are the marks of the king we'll look at verses 1 to 3 in chapter 1 it says there the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against him because of its wickedness because his wickedness has come up before me but Jonah went down to Joppa but Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish he went down to Joppa where he found a ship bound for that port after paying the fare he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord

Jonah's present backsliding let's think about that for a moment the word of the Lord came verse 1 to Jonah and the Lord of the Lord also came to Jonah in this encounter he's given a very very clear simple emphatic message and it's a message of get up and go to Nineveh preach to him and there's nothing very hard to understand about that is there and I think if we want to know when God is coming to us when the word of the Lord comes to us we know the word of the Lord is coming to us because of its simplicity and its power there's nothing there's nothing difficult to understand about God's word to Jonah get up go to Nineveh preach but what does Jonah do well he ran away isn't he from the presence of the Lord now this book was written long after the Psalms so I'm quite sure

Jonah would have known Psalm 139 back to front he would have known there is no place he can go to flee from the presence of God and yet that's what he's trying to do he's trying to flee from the presence of God as he disobeyed the word of the Lord and these actually are the two marks of the backslidden Christian we want to know if we are in a state of backsliding these are the things that will be evident in our lives there is a turning away from the word of God and there is a turning away from the presence of God the two go together we cannot turn away from the word of the Lord and retain his presence but as we turn away from the word of the Lord that is also that turning away from the presence of God Jonah understood the word that came to him he just didn't want to obey it was going to be costly to obey and is that not true of us the parts of the Bible that we most struggle with are not these complex parts that are difficult to understand the parts of the Bible that we struggle with the most

I believe are the bits that are crystal clear very easy to understand but they're just costly to obey so Jonah here he's turning away from the word of God and there's a turning away from the presence of God three times that's emphasized the ESV is actually a lot clearer in this than the NIV that I read this I'm going to read these two verses from the ESV verse 3 but Jonah rose to flee from 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 twice in one verse his desire his determination is to flee the presence of God verse 10 again the sailors are there the crew on the ship are saying to Jonah as the waves crashed and what have you done for the men knew verse 10 that he was fleeing from the presence of the

Lord because he told them before I used to go fishing many years ago now I would go looking for worms John will know all about this and looking for worms I would lift over these big huge stones to see if there was any evidence of worms there and when you lift over one of these big huge stones immediately you see a whole world of activity all these wee beasties that love the dark they just scatter looking for a dark corner again you know I'm like beasties who flee from the light when the stone is lifted when we are not right with God when we are out of sync with his word to us we can no longer find any rest in his presence we can no longer bear to have the light of his word penetrate our lives and our hearts and our experience so what do we do we flee from him we wander and that was

[54 : 34] Jonah's condition as we find him here I wonder is it your condition here this morning or mine it's a miserable state to be in Robinson would tell us that he did there's no joy there's no peace there's no life there's no purpose and we're striving back from God the words of the hymn that we'll sing at the end come to mind trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but we trust and obey Jonah was not trusting God Jonah was not trusting God's plan and his purpose and Jonah was not obeying the will of God and the word of God to him Jonah was in denial of his very character and calling no longer could he say to the sailors as they asked the question

I'm a prophet God has called me to speak his word he was not heeding God's call to serve and walk close for them the question I suppose is are we so we see Jonah's past lessons they were rich we see Jonah's present back sliding and then thirdly briefly we see Jonah's plunge into sin notice that the moment the very moment that Jonah turns away from the word of God and the presence of God he's on a downward spiral and that's even evident in the words that are used in the verses here verse 3 Jonah went down to Joppa then he gets onto this ship that's going in the opposite direction to Nineveh three words of caution perhaps that I should take a moment to say not every open door is evidence that

God is leading us not every ship that is ready to sail is evidence that this is God's way for us Jonah goes down to Joppa away from God's calling and as he gets down to Joppa with this determination to go to Tarshish there just so happens to be a boat with the engines ready ready to fly there's no engine I know but you get the point the boat is ready and waiting to take him as far away from God's will as it was possible to go not every let's be careful not to read too much into our circumstances the only thing that is trustworthy is God's word Jonah if he didn't have God's word would have been forgiven for saying well surely the Lord has put this boat on but Jonah knew God's word but as he tried to escape God's word and his presence all this is laid on for him some doors are opened not by

God but by Satan so anyway Jonah he goes down to Joppa boats waiting for him no sooner is Jonah on the ship verse 7 and he goes down below the deck then the wind whips up the storm starts to blow and to cut a longer story short looking at time here Jonah very soon plunges down into the ocean and from the depths of the ocean there is this great fish and for three days he is down in the belly of the great fish and it wasn't until he's all the way down there that he turns in repentance and there's an illustration here of the danger and the speed with which we can slide into sin there's a plunge into sin here at a terrifying speed two weeks ago it was not last week before there was one day and it was incredibly icy looked out the window in the morning saw a wee covering of sleep and thought

I'll just check that street and there's no icing top I stood out and took a step down towards the drive you know the drive at Kylas vertical almost and before I knew it I was 50 yards down the drive I couldn't stand I was just sliding sliding sliding out of control and that's how sin works it's like being on an icy drive we can't remain stationary in our sin it's a downward course when we turn away from God when we turn away from his word we slide we slide we slide and sometimes we have to plunge pretty deep down before we come to our senses remember David and Bathsheba from that look that lustful look on the roof of the house to murder and you know all the loaded details of that story but it was a slide bit by bit by bit by bit terrifying speed remember the prodigal son

[60 : 18] Callum preached on this last Sunday evening prodigal son he turns away from his father and his course is down and down and down and down until he's at rock bottom before he turns away and that's the fact of it isn't it sometimes we have to plunge to terrifying depths sometimes we have to endure terrifying storms for us to turn back on God to repentance but thankfully Jonah's God and our God loves us enough this envy stops final point is Jonah's patient God you see Jonah's plunge into sin thirdly and finally Jonah's patient God do you notice that when

Jonah is not right with the Lord one of things that struck me as I was reading through this is he seems to have no patience for and no love for the lost if we were to flick to chapter 4 we'll get there eventually hopefully we learn at chapter 4 in verse 11 that Nineveh which is the place that God was calling Jonah to go to it was a city that was made up of more than 120 thousand people they didn't know God they didn't know their right hand and their left spiritually speaking we're told they were lost like sheep without a shepherd and yet Jonah he doesn't seem to care less and even when the

Lord brings Nineveh to his attention and arrests him and calls him sends him to go there Jonah's not interested he wondered why he didn't want to go there was various reasons that could be possible it could be that the calling to Nineveh was in Jonah's mind too dangerous and too difficult a calling for him to undertake Nineveh was a wicked city we just go there for one moment actually we're given a window into Nineveh in chapter 3 it's a little bit further on from Jonah a couple of books on but let me just read to you a couple of verses from Nineveh chapter 3 it gives us a window a picture into Nineveh as a city says there woe to that city of blood full of lands full of plunder never the clatter of fields galloping horses and jolting chariots charging cavalry flashing swords and glittering spears many casualties piles of dead bodies without number people stumbling over the corpses all because of the want and lust of a harlot alluring the mistress of sorcery to enslave nations by our prostitution and peoples by our witchcraft

I am against you declares the lord almighty so maybe as Jonah thought about this city he didn't much fancy the idea of a trans in ministry he probably anticipated a far from warm deception so it could be that he was fearful for his own skin I actually think having read the common papers he was actually more fearful that if he went and if he spoke God's word the Ninevites would listen and they would turn and they would be saved I think that's why he didn't want to go see God's people hated the Ninevites they were enemies they were detestable in their eyes and if

God sent Jonah to them and they listened and they were saved through Jonah who brings God's word the reality was Jonah's friends in his own nation would hate him and they would say to him why did you go there to these awful people Jonah was frightened he was going to lose his reputation that's not a mark of spiritual decay we care much more about what other people will think of us we care much more about our own comfort and security than we do about being obedient to God see when we're off the boil spiritually we've all been there matter how bright a Christian you may be sitting here today we can all look back and think about times when we have been off the boil spiritually when we're off the boil spiritually we have no desire to share the gospel because we don't have the heart of

[66 : 10] God for loving the loss see Jonah had lost his love he had lost his patience but Jonah's God and our God who does not change he had and he was and he is Christian he is as it says in chapter 4 verse 2 a gracious and compassionate God who is slow to anger and abiding in love so what did our God do he sent a storm he sent a great fish in order that Jonah would be restored to obedience and in order that through this vote and the people of Nineveh would hear the word of the Lord and repent and be saved that's what happened

Jonah is restored as we'll see and then it becomes the city where we see the biggest revival the biggest awakening in all of scripture and all of that is not testimony to the perfection of Jonah because he was far from all of that is not evidence of the wonderful nature of the Nineveh because they weren't wonderful lovely people all that is testing to the love and the patience of God how lovingly Jonah Jonah's God deals with her and how lovingly Jonah's God who is our God still deals with us because this is a finish our sin comes up against him just as the sin of the

Nineveh came up against him he sees it all and still in his holiness as he sees our sin as it offends him he's against us in our sin for rebellion but he is patient and he is loving and his word still comes to us today to the less than perfect prophet Jonah calling us to repent of our sin and be saved so if you're here this morning and you've never yet repented the message of Jonah calls you to repent for the first time to look to Jesus who died to save you from your sin and be saved and if you are a

Christian and you have repented for of late you have been sliding back and not going on with the Lord or falling away from him the message of Jonah calls you and I to repent afresh today to trust and obey God and his word to our lives and to know the happiness of walking with Jesus and serving him God let's pray we thank you Lord God that you are loving that you are patient that you are merciful that you are slow to anger and that you call us to trust you and we pray that as we continue to hear your word to us through Jonah we pray that we would heed that word we pray

Lord that we would repent and turn away from our sin and that we would put our faith in Jesus and entrust our lives and our course to him and we pray these things in Jesus name Amen we are going to sing now to finish from mission phrase 760 mission phrase 760 when we walk with the Lord in the light of his word with the glory he sheds on our way while we do his good will he abides in us still and with all who will trust and obey and now in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forever more Amen