

Q3 L12 - The Restless Prophet - 2021-09-18

Shawn Brummund: Hello and welcome, friends, to another edition of the "Sabbath School Study Hour." It is always good to be able to come together here in the Granite Bay Hilltop Seventh-day Adventist Church, right in the greater area of the Sacramento, California area of the U.S.

It is always nice to have all of you who are joining us online or in the local broadcast, international broadcasts, and, of course, our local church family here, as well, as we continue to study together and as we continue to look at this very important theme and topic of rest that can really only truly fully be found in Christ. And so, friends, I don't know about you, but I've been blessed as we've been making our way through this third quarter of 2021 as we looked at this theme of rest in Christ, and we're almost wrapping things up.

We are in lesson number 12, "The Restless Prophet," which is the second last study for this particular quarterly. And so, again, I've been blessed. I know that you've been blessed if you've been joining us. If you're joining us for the first time, I know that the time that you will be investing over the next hour with us will be a blessing as we continue to study these great themes of truth in Scripture.

I also want to invite you to take advantage of our free gift offer that we always like to offer that you can continue your study in the Word of God. It is one that is directly relevant to the subject that we're looking at here as we study the prophet Jonah and a very unique experience in ministry that he had during his lifetime. And so the free gift offer is the little booklet written by our senior--or lead pastor, Doug Batchelor, "The Sign of Jonah." And you can receive that simply by dialing in to 1-866-788-3966, and, again, that's 1-866-Study-More, and get your free copy if you are in the U.S., if you're in Canada or some of the different U.S. territories. If you are interested in getting a digital download, you can also get that in the Continental U.S., and you just simply have to text the code "SH147," to the number 40544, and we'd be happy to be able to get that to you. You could also see on the screen a website address in which you can also find it on the Amazing Facts website.

Shall we pray? Father in heaven, as we close our eyes, we want to thank You for the inspiration that we have just received. Thank You for the reminder of the greatest hope that we have as human beings, as a broken and fallen race, that there is a Savior that is as eternal as the Father that willingly came down and took upon human flesh, died on a cross, rose to glory, and now is ministering as our High Priest in a New Testament heavenly sanctuary. Lord, we come to You as the living Christ. We come to You, Jesus, we come to You, Father, Holy Spirit, pray that You will guide us and lead us as we make our way through this study. Want to pray, God, that You will bring to life the experience of this man of ancient times, named Jonah, God in heaven, that it might be able to be applied to our lives, the different spiritual lessons and truths that are found there as well. Build our faith, Lord. Teach us. In Jesus's name we pray, amen.

"Jonah and the Whale." You know, just saying that can elicit some--a number of different images and thoughts in the minds of many different people, not just us as Seventh-day Adventists, not just as Christians, but as general Americans, Canadians, Europeans, those who have a Christian heritage of some sort that are exposed to if they are not even churchgoers. Not even genuine believers have elicited--there's different images that are elicited in concern to that title, "Jonah and the Whale." Not only "Jonah and the Whale," but "Balaam and the Talking Donkey."

Then we also have a man of ancient times, named Noah, where there was a time where not only did they build the biggest boat in all of history by that--at least to that point, but every single species that was existing at that time came and made their way and willfully walked and found themselves--walked up the plank and found themselves in the boat. These are different images. These are different stories

that have probably even been reduced to a storybook status in the minds of most who now live in the U.S. today. This popular view reveals our natural tendency to limit God and to limit His abilities, to limit His power. We have a natural tendency to limit things down to our level, down to our limitations, our limitations both in power, capability, our limitations in intellect.

When we come to these stories, there are--most people on the streets of America today, I would say, would say, "Yes, it's a story I'm familiar with, these three stories, but certainly these are the far-fetched allegorical fable-like myths that you can find in that book that some religious people call the Bible." And so it reveals that we must be very careful on what we do with Bible stories like these, Bible stories that we might be tempted to think are "too far-fetched." "It's beyond our explanation. It's ridiculous. It's something that is way beyond anything that can be explained with a scientific method in any way, shape, or form."

But as the famous American evangelist by the name of Billy Graham, who, during his lifetime, would be sometimes challenged in questions by the media and different journalists, and they'd say, "Now, come on, Reverend Graham, surely you don't believe that the story of Jonah being swallowed by a whale and, three days later, thrown up onto the beach somewhere was a literal reality, was a literal story that took place with a literal historical figure? Surely you understand that this is too far-fetched?" And Billy Graham's answer was classic as he would say, "Listen, if the Bible says it, I believe it. And not only that, but if the Bible told me that it was Jonah who swallowed the whale, I would believe it."

You see, we have to be careful that we don't reduce the truths and the stories and the history that the Bible reveals to us, down to our own limitations. God is way bigger than the whales. God is way bigger than Jonah. He's way bigger than you and I. He's way bigger than the universe. He's the Eternal One. He is the Alpha. He is the Omega. He is the all-knowing one. He is the all-present one. He is the all-powerful one. And God can do things that are unexplainable to you and I. The scientific method and the scientific world will never be able to explain fully how God was able to prepare a fish that was there at the right time and the right place for the right purpose and had the capabilities to be able to preserve the life of a human being in its belly for about three days.

We can't explain it. We very likely will never be able to fully explain it, but that's not the point. The point is that God is bigger than-- "My thoughts are greater than your thoughts," does not the Bible says? Does God got to remind us of that? So we have to be careful when we come to places like the book of Noah and the story of Noah or "Balaam and the Talking Donkey," or Noah and the animals that walk upon his ark. It's vital for us to understand that we cannot limit it. In Mark chapter 10, in verse 27, Jesus said this. He says, "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible." Many of us know that by memory and rightly so. We need fully be able--to be able to write that verse and that statement of Jesus upon our hearts.

Now, Jesus was talking about a different topic, but the principle, it pervades to all things in all ways, and Jesus made that clear in the statement when He said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible." And so the book of Jonah and the story and the experience of this historical figure with God is very much possible. And we may be able to understand that is--being able to understand that is critical. Now, the truth is that the Bible is loaded with all kinds of different times where God is on record of manipulating nature to fulfill His purposes. I started to do a bit of an exercise as I was preparing for our message and study here today.

Now, the Bible refers to them as "signs." We call them more often "miracles." What is a miracle? A miracle is a phenomena that we observe that takes place within our reality, within our observation, that is unexplainable through the scientific method. It is beyond the scientific method. It is beyond the laws of nature as we observe them, but we have to remember that God is the God of the laws of nature. God

created those laws, and He is not subject to those laws in the way that you and I are. God is higher and greater than those laws, and, therefore, again, when we come to these different examples, we find that God is on record of doing this multiple times, not just in the life of Jonah. As a Christian, we can't just throw out the book of Jonah and say, "Well, that's a little bit too far-fetched. God is obviously not-- didn't literally do that. That must be allegorical. That must be something that didn't historically take place."

No, when we look through the Bible, the Bible is riddled with it. Just look at ten examples I'd just like to share with you. I just jotted these down: Jesus curses a fig tree. Many of us are familiar with that. Jesus, in His last days, just before He's arrested, crucified, He's on His way into Jerusalem. He's hungry. He goes up to a fig tree, there's no figs on it, and so He says, "Cursed be you, fig tree."

Now, all through Scripture, through the Old Testament, God had been using a tree, and many times a fig tree, to represent and symbolize Israel. And this fig tree was to represent Israel. It had all kinds of leaves of pretension, religious pretension and religious pretending, but it had no fruit. And so Jesus used that as a symbol of Israel that was rejecting the Son of God, the Messiah, the true Messiah. And so He says, "Cursed be you, fig tree." While the next morning, as the disciples of Jesus are walking by, sure enough, they see the fig tree, and that thing is dried up from the roots down.

Now, friends, I've been blessed over the last few years of having a beautifully landscaped yard. You know, the previous owners, you know, did some wonderful work with it. We enjoy the different trees and bushes, and so on, and I know one thing I've learned about California is that, if your irrigation system starts to go out of whack, things don't live long, you know? They need water. If you don't artificially water our plants and our trees here in California, they don't live long at all and so-- but this was only 12 hours. Twelve hours, the thing was dried up, withered up and dead. Even in California, it takes longer than 24 hours to kill a tree if you don't water it. God was manipulating nature to be able to fulfill His purpose and make a message with His disciples.

Second example, the temple tax found in the mouth of a fish. I don't know about you--you know, I've done some fishing. I used to--you know, I gave up fishing 'cause I got skunked way more often than I caught fish. And, you know, I used to kid with my youngest-- oldest daughter; we'd go out and we'd throw the cast out-- or cast the rod out and the line out, and I'd say, "Well, we never came out to fish, honey. We just came out to cast," you know. But I've caught a few fish over the years, and I've never found a coin in the mouth of any of those fish. Have you? And Peter, the one who caught it, I'm sure never had before and never had ever since that happened. But God had manipulated nature. He had made sure that the right fish was there at the right time with a coin in mouth.

Now, Peter threw out a line. He had some kind of rudimentary hook that they used back in those days, some bait on it. Now, the fish comes and gets the bait. Now, whether he had the coin in his mouth before he took the bait, or not, I don't know because his mouth was already busy with this foreign coin that was in his mouth that fish don't normally deal with. So I'm guessing that maybe God had put that temple tax coin inside the mouth's fish after the fish had grabbed the hook, and Peter was starting to draw it in, and God puts a temple tax coin inside the mouth of that fish.

Why? Because He was making a point to the temple--or the synagogue, the leader of the synagogue in the town of Capernaum-- Capernaum, I should say. And so God manipulated nature and put a coin in there that shouldn't have been there, that normally wouldn't be there, to make a supernatural point that Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the God of the fish. Not only that, but then we find that He's on a sea, that same Sea of Galilee, and the sea is going crazy, one of those crazy storms in which the--even the veterans, the veteran, seasoned fishermen that were on there--Peter, James, and John, and so on--they were scared for their life.

Jesus gets up calmly, and what does He say? "Peace, be still." And the clouds didn't slowly start to dissipate and the winds start to calm down over the next couple of hours. No, it just--boom. The wind had stopped immediately, and it went from life-threatening whitecaps to absolute crystal clear, calm, reflective water. God, Jesus, was making a point to His disciples. He was impacting upon their hearts again that Jesus was not just a human being, as human as He was. Not only that, but Jesus is on record of resurrecting the dead more than once during His ministry, and so God manipulates nature to be able to fulfill His purposes.

Then we come to Mount Carmel, and we have the great prophet Elijah with the great showdown between the false god Baal that most of Israel had given their hearts and their lives and devotion to, their religious worship, and that of Yahweh, the God of Israel, the Great I Am, and so Elijah prays and, sure enough, what happens? Fire comes down inexplicably, unexplainably comes down out of nowhere, and not only does it consume the sacrifice that Elijah had put on the altar, but it consumed the entire rock altar, and it consumed all the water that had soaked that altar and that sacrifice in just a heartbeat. God was unexplainable, supernaturally, miraculously manipulating nature to fulfill His purpose.

The burning bush at Mount Sinai, we found Moses coming up to this burning bush. And the bush has been burning who knows how long, but it's still burning. Bushes burn for a time, but then they burn out pretty fast. Not this one; this one just kept on burning, and then we find there's a voice and an angel inside of that bush. God is manipulating nature. He's living and demonstrating that He lives above nature and the laws of nature.

When the Israelites were called out of Egypt and freed from bondage, they came to a huge obstacle, an obstacle that they could never--it was insurmountable. They had this arm of the Red Sea that was before them. They had no boats. They had no life jackets. They had thousands or hundreds of thousands of livestock, two to three million people. They have the Egyptian army behind him. God manipulates nature, does He not? And He takes that Red Sea, and He brings wind with it, but He brings more than just a wind. The wind came in, but I've never seen a wind, you know, part a lake or a sea before, but God uses that wind, along with His supernatural power, and He separates the waters, and He creates this pathway of dry land with a wall of water on both sides. Science will never explain that. You'll never be able to explain that.

Plagues of Egypt that hit them, that hit the Egyptians before they even let the Israelites get to the Red Sea. Frogs, so many frogs that they were going crazy. There was frogs coming in and out of their houses. There were--it was a plague of frogs. They were inundated with millions upon millions of additional frogs that suddenly came in. Now, the Egyptians worshipped the god of the frogs. God says, "I have come to cast judgment upon your false gods." Said so, right in the writings of Moses. And so God says, "You think that your god is the god of the frogs? He's not. I'm the God of the frogs. Not only am I the God of the frogs," but after the frogs disappeared, after God made the frogs disappear supernaturally, then He brought behind it a whole millions and billions of locusts, and then behind that, He brought a whole batch of millions and billions of lice, and then flies, and each of those times, God is saying, "Your god is a false god. I'm the God of the flies. I'm the God of the lice. I'm the God of the locusts. The locusts answer to Me," God says.

Then we have that intriguing story where the mother bears come out of the woods. You know the story. It's a wild story. We have Elisha. Elisha. And he's just picked up his ministry. Elijah's been carried up into heaven, and we have these young men that they're not just mocking. Yes, they are teasing and mocking, but it's in a vicious, violent, life-threatening situation, and God knows that He has a purpose still for Elisha, and so He manipulates nature. He speaks to these mother bears.

Now, He knew the situation ahead of time and probably made sure that those mother bears were heading that way and that they were just behind the woods there to be able to protect and save the life of Elisha. And so God sends out these mother bears, and they maul these young men to death. God was manipulating the bears in nature to fulfill His purposes. It also tells us that there were hornets. God is the God of the hornets, is He not? He says, "Listen, when you go into the land of Canaan," to these same Israelites that escaped from Egypt through all these different manipulations of nature that God had already achieved, He says, "I'm going to manipulate nature again, and I'm going to send these hornets, millions and billions of hornets that are going to come in, and they're going to overwhelm your enemies in Canaan." God did use that at times, different places when He gave the Promised Land to the Israelites.

And then, finally, when we come to the book of Jonah, not only do you find that God is manipulating a whale, a great fish of some kind, but we also find, later on, that He manipulates a plant. And then after He has this plant that supernaturally unexplainably is growing up overnight, we find that God then sends a worm. And a worm is also found in nature, and so God is manipulating in a worm, and He's using that worm to His purpose is to be able to destroy that plant. For those of you who read and did your homework this week, you know exactly what I'm talking about, don't you? Yeah, and so there's just ten examples.

Now, I'm sure that, if I open the floor, that there's many of you that know the Bible just as well, if not better than me, that can give me at least another ten examples of different ways in which God is on record in the Bible of manipulating nature unexplainably, supernaturally to be able to fulfill His purposes. And so why am I spending this time? I think that God has put it upon my heart and my mind because we live in a culture now, a post-modern culture, a post-Christian culture here in America, where we have reduced--where there have been voices that have been voicing and now are by the thousands across this nation that are telling us the Genesis and the Creation record onward, including, of course, the story of Jonah, is nothing but allegory. "It is nothing that we can take seriously. It's nothing that we can take literally, but it is something that we can perhaps bring some religious and theological or moral lessons that we can draw from it at best."

But that was not the take of the Bible writers. No, not at all. That was not the take of Jesus. Jesus understood that Jonah was a literal, historical figure, did He not? Sure He did; it's interesting that Jesus didn't talk about every biblical figure that's recorded in the Old Testament during His public ministry, but it's interesting that He's on record of more than once referring to the story of the literal historical figure named Jonah. Matthew chapter 12 is the classic one. I want to read it for you here this morning, if I could. In Matthew chapter 12, in verse 39 through 41, it says, "But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it, except the sign of the prophet Jonah.' There he is, friends, okay, "Except for the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Now, friends, as we reflect upon that--and, of course, I don't have any Scripture to verify that one way or the other, so I'm certainly not dogmatic about it, but I wonder if it's--I think it's certainly plausible that, as Jesus is using this literal historical experience that Jonah had experienced so long ago to represent and symbolize as Jesus's death, His burial in the tomb, in the belly of the earth.

And that His Resurrection, when the earth released Him again, and He came back out from the belly of the earth, that, when Jonah was captured by that--when he was swallowed by the whale, makes me wonder if it was on a Friday afternoon. And then, early Sunday morning, even before the sun started to rise, that whale made its way to the Mediterranean shore of what we call Israel, maybe somewhere near Tyre, the city of Tyre, a little bit further north, and vomited him up onto the shore. "And so the Son

of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Verse 41, it says, "And the men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented of the preaching of Jonah, and indeed a greater than Jonah is here."

Jesus, who is a literal historical figure, is referring and referencing Himself to another literal historical figure. He said, "Even as Jonah literally was swallowed by a fish, and then he was literally released three days later, so will the historical Son of Man Himself die on a cross and be buried into the heart of the earth and then be released three days later." And not only that, but then He also confirms, Jesus also confirmed that this historical figure named Jonah went into a historical, literal, ancient city called Nineveh, and the people of Nineveh heard that message, and they repented. They turned from their sins, and they found themselves filled with the Spirit and converted in God. We'll talk about more of that as we continue.

When we come to the very first verse of the book of Jonah--let's open our Bibles. Jonah chapter 1, in verse 1. In the book of Jonah chapter 1, in verse 1, this is how it introduces the actual book. It says, "Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah." And so the book of Jonah is not a fable. It's not a myth. It's introduced by its author as "the word of the Lord." "The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, and he began to say, 'Arise and go to Nineveh,'" and such, and so, when we come to the very first verse, right off the start, we find that the prophets, as they're writing this book, whether it was Jonah or some other prophet during that day or shortly after, that recorded the experience and the words, some of the words that Jonah himself spoke, we find that Jonah is referred to and introduced as the son of Amittai.

Now, friends, I've never opened up a storybook, a children's storybook, adult storybook-- I've never seen a storybook that introduces one of its main characters with its family ties. You know, "This is was Cinderella, the son of Sarah-- or the daughter of Sarah." No, it never starts that way, why? Because this is not a fable. This is an historical record that the prophets are recording, concerning a historical literal experience and person that lived so many years ago, about the early 8th century, 729 B.C. or something to that effect, 750 B.C. And so the very first verse introduces that in such way, in such a manner that, right off the start is introducing a--and wanting us to understand that this is a literal historical figure, that he is a literal prophet that was receiving literal prophetic messages from God and then relaying those, not only to his kingdom, which was the northern kingdom of Israel and to the palace and the king himself of his country, but also, as we know the story, to the Ninevites, a foreign city, in a foreign land, in a foreign empire called Assyria. And so that's the introduction into the book itself.

Now, before we go to verses 2 and 3, I want to invite you to--just keep your thumb in Jonah, and let's back up to 2 Kings chapter 14 now. As we go to 2 Kings chapter 14, we find there that the prophets and the prophetic record here is referring again to Jonah. And so this is no small verse because it gives us more information and, again, it's validating what the 1st verse of the book of Jonah itself is trying to validate is that, indeed, Jonah was a literal historical figure. And so, in verse 25, it says, "He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from a town." He lived in a literal ancient town in his northern kingdom of Israel, called Gath Hopher. And so we find here that, again, Jonah is referred to during the reign of Jeroboam II.

At this time, during the life of Jonah, Israel was split after a previous civil war that kind of split the country in half, and so we have Benjamin and Judah, which represent--and is referred to simply as the kingdom of Judah, the southern kingdom, and then the northern kingdom of Israel, which has the other tribes included. And so, friends, here we find that Jonah is referred to in a literal country with a literal king, and he's a literal prophet that is serving more than just the Ninevites, but he's also receiving messages from God that He's relaying to a literal historical king named Jeroboam.

And so, again, all the evidence is crystal clear if we open our minds and our hearts, and we actually dig into this life, this intriguing figure of history by the name of Jonah. And so we come back to the book of Jonah, and we read verses 2 and 3, in the 1st chapter. It says, "'Arise, and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.' But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. And he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish, and so he paid the fare, went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." And so twice it says that, even though God had called him to go to Nineveh, Jonah says, "You know what? I'm not convinced that I should be in Nineveh. In fact, I'm so convinced that I shouldn't be in Nineveh that I'm going to go down to Joppa," which is one of the Israelite seaports, "and I'm going to buy the most expensive ticket to the furthest location that they sail to," which was Tarshish, "in the opposite direction." Nineveh was northeast from the town of Jonah. And Jonah's town actually was just a little bit just outside a ways inland from the Sea of Galilee near the city of Nazareth. And so he goes the opposite direction.

Nineveh, again, is northeast about 500 to 800 miles, depending on how you travel and what route you take. And Tarshish was 2,500 miles in the opposite direction. And so we find here that Jonah obviously is not in agreement with his Lord at this point, and so he makes the mistake of deciding that his life would be much better off in Tarshish.

Now, I'm guessing that Jonah didn't have any personal business that was pressing in Tarshish. I'm guessing that Jonah didn't say, "Listen, Lord, I'd really like to help you, but, you know, I've got this appointment. You know I had this scheduled for a year now, and if I miss it, I'm going to miss out on important business, and so I've got to go to Tarshish." The evidence just doesn't show that--no. We find that, instead, he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord, twice, it says in those verses that that is the motivation. That is why he's forking out so much money and is willing to risk his life going across the Mediterranean for so many miles that he might be able to escape from the presence of the Lord. He's in rebellion. He's in disagreement with his Lord.

And this whole story tells us a whole lot, but one of the things that we want to be able to draw out and that the quarterly draws out is this is evidence that, prophets themselves, they have shortcomings. They have character flaws. They have times when they're not sure if God is as wise as they claim that He believes He is. And we're all guilty of that at times too, aren't we? Every time that we decide, "Lord, I know that you're telling me that this is the ideal and best way, you know, I'm more convinced that this direction is a little bit better." We do that more often than maybe we're aware of or that we want to confess, but we'd be able to learn from that.

And even as we look at Jonah, thank God that when, you know, when we look at the story of Jonah, it tells us that, when we're--when our hearts are sincere after God, when your faith is real and authentic and you not only believe in the existence of God, but you believe in God, you believe that He loves you, that He cares for you, that He has your best interest in mind, and you want Him to be your Lord, when you're in that space, even when you have these different shortcomings and disagreements with the Lord, God is patient with us, is He not? Thank God for that.

I'm sure Jonah thanked God for that for the rest of his life as he looked back with shame at times and regret during this experience that he had and the bitter experiences that he didn't have to go through but he went through anyway and that God brought into his life to be able to bring him back onto the tracks and help him to be able to continue in that faith walk with Jesus. And so that's an important lesson for us to be able to learn from this as well.

God sometimes asks us to do things that we're not excited about. Sometimes He asks us, and He says, "You know what? I want you to go to an underdeveloped country, and I want you to spend the next 10,

20, 30 years laboring for the people in that foreign land." Now, you don't know their language. You're totally out of context when it comes to their culture. The food, it's going to take you a while to get used to that food because it is not American food. It's foreign. It's foreign to your taste buds. It's foreign to your liking. You know, my hat goes off to missionaries, amen?

You know, I did some short missionary trips. I've been to some countries that aren't nearly as developed and clean and sanitary as we are here in the United States. And, you know, when I came back, I kissed the ground. You know, when you are accustomed to the standard of living here in this part of the world, it's a sacrifice. It's a sacrifice on a personal level, on a comfort level, to be able to live in a lot of these different countries as a missionary. So sometimes God calls us to go to places that we're not all that excited about going to, you know, because we're not going to stay at the resort. You know, we're going there to mingle and live amongst the people and experience their standard of living that we might be able to bring them the good news and the story of Jesus and the hope and the Gospel that comes in Christ. So sometimes God asks us to do that we're not excited about, just like Jonah.

Sometimes God asks us to address sins of those in authority over us. That's not an exciting thing to do. I've never got up in the morning and go "Oh, boy, I'm so excited to get to address the sins of my superiors," the ones that are my bosses or my parents or, you know, whatever authorities are in my life. That's not an easy thing to do, but God sometimes calls us to do things that we're not excited about. God once called myself and my family in the ministry to go to the far north. Now, when I say, "the far north," we're talking Alaska-like-type stuff, and I wasn't excited about it, but as we looked at the circumstances and the providence of God in our lives, we understood that, hey, that's-- God has a work for us up there right now. And so God sometimes calls us to faraway places that we're not all that thrilled about, but God still has a purpose. God still has a work for us in that place, and that's where we find our peace. Taking a pay cut to fulfill a calling in ministry, by some.

You know, I've heard from more than one person over the years, more than one pastor, you know, that during the--you know, they went into dental school. The Lord had told them when they were in college years, "I want you to be a pastor, I want you to be a pastor. I've called you to be a pastor." And they say, "I want to be a dentist, I want to be a dentist, I want to be a dentist." So they go into dentistry or to real estate, and there's all kinds of different examples of different men that I've talked to over the years, you know, and for sometimes 10, 20, 30 years, they've been fighting that peace, that rest that God has been calling to find in ministry and the talents that God had called them to, until finally they gave in, and they said, "Oh, Shawn, I tell you--" or the crowd that they're talking to, the pastors will say, "Once I gave in, I found this peace in my life because, just like Jonah, I was running from the presence of the Lord, the calling that He had given to me."

And so, just like Jonah, we sometimes might, at first, believe that we can enjoy God's rest and peace while fleeing or ignoring His call, but experience and the Scriptures are telling us that we can't. The same could apply to those who are trying to avoid God's call to surrender to Him, to follow him. You know, as an evangelist and as a pastor over the years, I've been in the homes and my office with more than one person that is wrestling inside, and they're wrestling with decisions. They've been coming to an evangelistic series. They've been going through Bible studies in person, in their home, and in my office, and they know what the Lord has called them to do, but they know, if they follow the Lord, if they surrender to Him completely, if they give Him his full obedience, they know that it's going to be-- bring a storm in their life.

They know that, in order to be able to achieve that peace on the inside, they're going to have to give up that peace that's on the outside. You see, the only way that we can find that peace on the inside, that full rest in Christ, is to understand that there's going to be storms that are going to be caused by that on the outside. But some of us make the mistake. Some of us are convinced by the devil that we need to be

able to--that avoiding the peace of God on the inside is worth it in order to keep the peace on the outside. "My children will abandon me. They will disown me if I stand for the Lord and obey Him in all ways." "My parents will never talk to me again." "I'll lose my job. My employer will never look at me the same, and they'll never put up with it." Whatever it is, friends, there are storms that come by accepting the peace on the inside.

You know, there's two statements that seem contradictory that Jesus made. He says, "My peace I give to you. My peace I leave to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you." Jesus offers us peace and rest in the heart, does He not? But that same Savior, that same Christ also said during His same ministry, He said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a mother against her daughter. I have come to set a son against his mother-in-law. I have come to set family members one against another," why? Because He knew that there was a peace that He offered on the inside, but the price of accepting that peace, which is full surrender and obedience to Jesus Christ, would bring a storm on the outside. And so, just like Jonah, we can find ourselves struggling between those two worlds.

God says, "Choose Me." "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through Him." Accept Christ in your heart. Make that decision for Him, and there will be a peace that will flood into your heart that far exceeds the peace that you're trying to maintain on the outside.

So Jesus was not contradicting Himself, but rather, instead, we find that Jesus is telling us that there's two peaces that we have to choose from: the peace that we find in the world in which we compromise our faith and obedience to Christ, or the peace that we find in our heart, which is Jesus in the heart, at the price of a storm on the outside.

Now, fortunately, God rarely has to resort to having us nearly drowned and then be saved by a swallowing whale and then vomited up on the seashore before we can find that peace. Some of us have different versions of that. God certainly had to cut me off at the knees before I'd ever considered accepting Him into my heart. And so, in my own way, in my own experience, I was almost drowned and swallowed by a whale but in different circumstances. Many of us have that story as well.

Well, the rest of chapter 1, goes on, and then we read the last verse. In verse 17, it says, "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." And so, of course, many of us are familiar with the story. We've read the chapter of the quarterly. Jonah finds himself on the ship to Tarshish. God quickly brews up the storm, and the storm is life-threatening, and the crew on board discover that it's Jonah's fault. Jonah confesses it's his fault. He says, "Throw me into the sea." Eventually, they throw him into the sea, and the storm calms. Again, God manipulating nature, so He's not just manipulating nature through the whale in this story. He's manipulating through the storm, through wind, rain, clouds, lightning and, again, plants later on, a worm. Yeah, God is the God of nature. He lives above nature.

Now, Jonah had some pretty good reasons for not wanting to go to preach to the Ninevites and possibly get them off the hook in regards to Judgment Day. He probably knew some Israelites that were perhaps flayed alive, as the Assyrians were famous for doing. You know, they would come in, and they would take some of its different captives of war, and so on, and they would skin you alive. That procedure is extremely cruel and wicked. Makes crucifixion look not too bad. To be flayed alive, just like you fillet a fish. You know, you pull the skin. Just pull the skin back and expose all the muscles. Now, you can't live without your skin. Bacteria move in. Extremely painful. All the nerve endings are exposed. It's hard to think of a different work, more torturous, cruel way to bring somebody to the end of their life. And so

I'm sure that Jonah had a mixture of fear as well as the fact that he was looking forward to them--revenge, you know, when God would finally bring on their heads the things that they deserve, and he knew that, if he went up and preached--and many of us have read the book.

Later, you know, at the end, he got mad at God, and he said, "I knew this was going to happen. I was going to go in there, and this is why I went to Tarshish in the first place is because I know I was going to go in there. I was going to preach repentance, I was going to preach judgment upon them. And if they decide to repent, I knew Your character, that You are gracious and merciful and slow to anger and full of lovingkindness and that You would relent from doing harm and that You wouldn't bring upon their heads the thing that I think that they should get. Therefore, I didn't want to go in the first place."

And sure enough, Jonah goes in there. He's been swallowed by a whale for three days. You can read the prayer, his powerful prayer in chapter 2, and in verse 10, it says, "So the Lord spoke to the fish. It vomited Jonah out onto dry land." Now, it's interesting. You know, you can--and we need to close here now, but a sperm whale has four chambers in it. Now, it doesn't saw whether it's a whale or not, but a sperm whale is probably the most likely fish that exists-- species that can do that. They swallow giant squid that is much larger than man, and the first chamber doesn't have any gastric juices, no digestive enzymes, but it's just there for the muscles to crush its prey, so that's where they kill it and crush it.

Now, the second and the third and the fourth chamber have the gastric juices, and so most likely it was a sperm whale, biologically speaking, because God could've had him in there. There's no gastric juices to be able to threaten his life and start to decompose him or break him down, and then, on top of that, we also find that, you know, God could've obviously held back the muscles from crushing him and made sure that a supply of oxygen was being supplied to him. And now he's back on the shore. He goes in, and he preaches, and he's successful, and there's a conversion that takes place in the Ninevites. They're born again, and God fulfills His purposes.

We don't have time to go into the further lessons that Jonah learned as he was upset with God, as I just mentioned a moment ago, because he needed to grow in his theology, in his love, his compassion, not only for the neighbors that he liked, you know, like Jesus said. It's like, it's easy to invite people over that you love and know and appreciate and enjoy. He says it's when you invite the people that aren't desirable into your home for a meal--that's what makes a Christian, He says. That's the difference between a Christian and an unbeliever. And Nineveh--or not Nineveh, but Jonah needed to learn that and consider the Ninevites.

You know, he didn't like the Ninevites. He probably hated the Ninevites. Couldn't wait till Judgement Day for the Ninevites, but God says, "Listen, I love the Ninevites just as much as I love you, and they're My children too, and, yes, they're misbehaving. They don't know their right hand from their left. They don't have the Scriptures and the oracles and the Ten Commandments like you do, but I want you to bring it to them and give them a chance." And they took advantage of that chance, and it delayed the judgment that God sadly had to eventually bring on the Assyrians just like they did on Jonah's nation and other nations as God sadly continues to have to do.

Well, that's our study for today; thank you for joining us. Please don't forget to take advantage of our free gift offer which is "The Sign of Jonah," written by Pastor Doug Batchelor, and you just have to simply dial in to 1-866-788-3966, and you can receive this if you're in the Continental USA or Canada. And there's also a digital copy that's available for you, and you can text the code "SH1447"-- or 147, I should say, and you want to text that to the number 40544. Again, God bless you. Thank you for joining us. We look forward to seeing you next week.

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the key word on your screen to 40544, or visit the web address shown on your screen, and be sure to select the digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with Amazing Facts, wherever and whenever you want and, most important, to share it with others.

Nick: I was very hyperactive, ADHD. My mom had to medicate me just to get through the day because I was just super-aggressive and just nuts and got into a lot of trouble, was an alcoholic from at least 12 years old on, just a problem child, constantly in trouble in school. I got into high school, I got into a lot of fights, and my parents and I both decided that joining the Air Force would be my best choice to keep me out of trouble. I actually had to go through basic training twice because I was--I needed a attitude adjustment. After I finally got out there in Texas, went to another place in Texas for my training. After there, I got my first duty station which was Germany, and when I got there, I got in with the worst of the worst crowd.

So I thought my high school friends were bad? Well, these guys were really, really bad. Took me under their wing, and I was their protégé, if you could say. We drank, and we partied really hard over there. After about a year and a half of being in Germany and just partying like a rock star, life wasn't really that fulfilling. I mean, I was having a great time on the outside, but inside, I knew something was dying. Something was wrong.

One night, I was flicking through my channels in my dorm, and I got to this channel. I still remember it, it was Channel 82, and it was just crystal clear, and I didn't have any channels that were crystal clear. I'd never seen it before. There was this guy, this preacher, and I was just about to change it because I didn't really want to hear anything about religion, and he said the word "Antichrist." He was taking his Bible, and he was comparing things with history, and I thought that was really interesting, and I never actually studied my Bible before. I was embarrassed of Christianity back then.

So I would sneak back to work after hours. I'd ride my bike back to work where they had a computer, and I would get online, and without anybody being able to see, you know, I would get online and start doing this Bible research on this Amazing Facts site. And I went through their online Bible school, and I learned so much, and I came to a point of a crisis, I guess. I'm learning these awesome biblical truths right now, yet they contradict what I was taught growing up.

And there was one thing that I heard through all these prophecies series that I was watching that just kind of stuck with me, and that was Rome is the city of seven hills, and that's where the beast sits. So I said, "Well, I'm going to go test this one out." So I ditched my drinking buddies for a long weekend. We had a four-day weekend coming up, and I flew down to Rome, and I was specifically looking for the city of seven hills. And I thought there would be seven great big mountains, you know? So I'm coming into Rome, and I'm looking out the window, and, like, Rome is as flat as a pancake. So I'm like, "These guys are liars, dude. I've been duped." And I finally--I get on a double-decker tour bus as soon as I get in there, and I put the headphones in, hit the English button, and it says, oh, "Welcome to Rome, the city of seven hills," and I'm like, "What in the world? Okay, so that's true. Wow, it's awesome." They've never lied to me. Everything they've said was true, straight from the Bible.

So I was like, "Hey, I want to get baptized." So then, July of 2005, right after I turned 21--and I was always excited about turning 21 because I could finally go to the bars, but by that time, I was done with it, you know? I had stopped, and I said, "I'm going to get baptized." So July 2005, I got baptized. My name is Nick. I want to thank you for changing my life.

Raúl: So I was born in a small Christian family, grew up in Puerto Rico, in San Juan, Puerto Rico. My dad was a pastor of our churches there. After I graduated from high school, I was so excited. You know, I just wanted to leave the house and see the world, if you will. Came up to the States. Went to school in Texas and went to a Christian College there. I rebelled against the Christian concept that I became an agnostic, 16, 17 years after I had left the church. I had three roommates, and we were living the life, you know, back then, you know, doing deals with drugs and selling drugs and all that kind of stuff. The police came over, and they raided the apartment. They took my three friends to jail. When I found out, it shook me. I should have been there too.

Raúl: I reached out to God, and I said, "Lord, if You exist, get me out of this situation, and I'll go back to Your ways." Right around that time, I met this awesome young lady. She was a Christian. After dating for about a year and a half, someone came to our church to give a series of prophecy seminars. I decided to re-baptize, make it a fact that I was coming back to church, that I was giving my life back to God. Amazing Facts became an important part of my life: sermons, Sabbath School lessons, DVDs, videos, magazines, and especially after looking and watching Pastor Doug Batchelor, listening to his experience, has really made a difference in my life to the point where I am right now a totally different individual. It's something that I am so grateful to have experienced. I would recommend anyone that wants to give God a chance in their life, you'll never be sorry that you did. He loves you. He understands you. He wants you to be happy. My name is Raúl, and thank you for changing my life.

Announcer: "Amazing Facts Changed Lives."

Male: I'd have to say that I had a wonderful childhood growing up. I went to a private school up until the seventh grade, till junior high. I believe it was at that point in junior high that my life began to change. Going from a Christian education into a public school was a big difference. There was a lot of secular influence, peer pressure. And for me it was the music. I started listening to heavy metal music. Every concert that would come to town, I was there. That had a profound effect on me. I started using marijuana, probably at the age of 14. I started drinking, using a lot of cocaine, and that led to methamphetamine, and that completely changed my life. I dropped out of high school my sophomore year and went to work. I would get off of work, and we'd go into the bar until two o'clock in the morning. I'd get back up at five and I'd go back through it again six, seven days a week.

At the age of 20, I lost my dad to a heart attack. I didn't know how to handle the loss, so I tried to mask my pain with alcohol and drugs. I got three DUI's in one year. I was arrested, and they gave me a year in the county jail. And the moment I got out, I went back to doing the same thing, hanging with the same people, the same crowd. I was involved in a hit-and-run motorcycle accident, and I was charged with a felony DUI. Even though at the time of the accident, I was not under the influence, I still had methamphetamine in my system. At my sentencing date, I left the courtroom, and I didn't come back, and that left me with a felony warrant.

And I'd fallen asleep at a park, and I woke up to a park ranger knocking on my window. I knew I was wanted, and I knew that I was not going to just turn myself in. I turned to him and I'd made the comment, "Not today," and I took off. I led five different agencies on about a 35-minute chase, and I realized at that point that I wasn't going to get away and that this was going to end up either me killing somebody or myself. And so, I made a decision to pull over.

At that point, everything that I had, I lost. I was sentenced to two years in state prison and it was there that God got a hold of me and it was through Amazing Facts Ministries. I remember listening on my radio Pastor Doug Batchelor. I wanted to get to know the Bible. I wanted to know God. And so, my Aunt Marilyn sent me the Amazing Fact study guides, and it was there that my relationship with Christ began.

I had called home and I knew my mother wasn't doing well, but I didn't realize that she had cancer. She had about a 30% chance of making it through her surgery. She had told the doctors that she was not going to have chemo, and she was not going to have radiation, that if her God was going to save her, then He would save her. I remember hanging up the phone to what I thought was my last conversation with my mom. I turned around, I got down on my knees, and I prayed to God. I said, "God, if you're there, please save my mother, and wherever You lead me in life, whatever You want me to do, I am Yours." And I had a feeling of such peace that I knew that my mother was going to be okay and that my life was going to change.

There are no words that I can adequately express to Amazing Facts and to Pastor Doug to say thank you. To all those people who support the ministry, I am a product of your support. My life has changed because of this ministry, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.