

## **Jonah's Rebellion and the Sovereignty of God**

Jonah 1:10-16

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Well, it's always a joy for me to be here with you. I love this church. I love serving in this church. And many of you know that I get to serve on a regular basis with the college ministry and that's always just a joy for me to teach them, week in and week out, and we've been going through the book of Jonah. We just finished it, in fact, and God used that greatly in our lives. And so, it's to the book of Jonah I'd like for us to go tonight, just to give you a glimpse of some of the things that God graciously showed us through this book.

You know, sometimes we wonder how it is that God's sovereignty can mix with man's choices, or even more specifically, man's rebellion. How do the two go together? If God is completely sovereign, and He is, and man rebels against God, how can God be sovereign in the midst of man's rebellion?

In talking with people before about whether or not one can lose their salvation, I've brought up the passage where Jesus said that no one can take you out of my Father's hand, those who are His, no one can take them out of His hand. And the response has been said back to me, yes, but can you jump out? Can you jump out of God's hand? And really, what they're saying is, yes, but what if you personally want to rebel against God, can you do that?

And if we were to ask most Christians today, is God sovereign? Most would say, sure He is, yes, God is sovereign. But when we dug a little bit deeper, there is one key issue where we tend to lose our way, and that is, man's rebellion. Can God's sovereign will really be thwarted by little old me and my rebellion, or little old you and your rebellion? Could that be? No, and in the book of Jonah we find a perfect picture of a prophet of God who is rebelling openly against God and yet God continually, sovereignly, works everything to His plan, nothing is left out. In fact, as we're going to see tonight, that even things that, as Jonah tries to rebel against God, God works in and through his rebellion to accomplish His purposes. God is bigger than we could ever imagine.

And tonight, I hope that the scope of our picture of God's sovereignty is expanded, that we begin to see Him in a better light, a more true light than we have before. If you're in Jonah, look at chapter 1 with me and I want to read, really, the first chapter. We're only going to be in the second half of the first chapter, but as a way of background and context I think it would be good to read the whole thing. So go with me there to Jonah 1, beginning in verse 1.

The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.” But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten *it* for them. But Jonah had gone down below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep. So the captain approached him and said, “How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps *your* god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.”

Each man said to his mate, “Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity *has struck* us.” So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, “Tell us, now! On whose account *has* this calamity *struck* us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?” He said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.”

[*And in verse 10 we begin the text we will study tonight.*]

Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, “How could you do this?” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. So they said to him, “What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?”—for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. And he said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm *has come* upon you.” However, the men rowed *desperately* to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming *even* stormier against them. Then they called on the Lord and said, “We earnestly pray, O Lord, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O Lord, have done as You have pleased.”

So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. Then the men feared the Lord greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

What we learn in this text is that the Lord’s sovereign will, specifically His sovereign will of redemption, is unalterable. And not even man’s rebellion can stand in the way of His plan. The

theme of the book of Jonah is God's mercy towards repentant Gentiles, God's mercy towards repentant Gentiles.

And we're going to see that play out even in our text today, but before we do that it's important to know just a couple things about the book. We don't know exactly who wrote the book, but probably Jonah. Because of the personal details, the personal insight that we gain that was going on in his mind, it was probably Jonah wrote this book, especially in chapter 2 where we see his prayer from the belly of the fish. Jonah was a prophet to the northern 10 tribes of Israel during the time of King Jeroboam II and he is sent to a Gentile nation, the capital of Assyria, a city called Nineveh.

Now, Nineveh was hated by the Jews. First of all, they were Gentiles. For a prophet to leave Israel and go and preach to the Gentiles was unheard of and unacceptable, and certainly in Jonah's mind, disgusting and despicable. But to go to Nineveh was an even greater obstacle. Nineveh was known for their brutality and their cruelty over the victims of the people that they overtook, and the Jewish people hated the Assyrians. At this time Israel is going through a time of prosperity, even though morally they're wicked and bankrupt, they're following after idols, idolatry is growing in practice. God in His grace has allowed them to have some wealth and their land has grown, and yet spiritually they are bankrupt. And God sends this prophet of Israel to a Gentile nation, a city called Nineveh.

Through the book of Jonah we gain an intimate look at our own selves and our sinfulness. It's so easy to put Jonah out there as if he's so evil and so wicked, and it's so easy to cast stones at him. And yet, when we look deeper we see ourselves. We see our own rebellion before a holy God, an unwillingness to do what He asks in His word. But most importantly, we learn about God in the book of Jonah. Anytime you come to a book in the Bible, and especially when you come to a narrative like this, it's so easy just to make some principles about Jonah or David or Daniel, and we read the story of David and Goliath and we come away with five ways to fight the giants in your life; that's not what that story is about.

When you come to a book like Jonah, we need to be asking ourselves the question, and parents teach your kids to ask the question, what do we learn about God? When we read the book of Jonah it's not really about Jonah. Yes, we do learn some things through Jonah, we see our own sinfulness in Jonah, but we learn some very important things about our God. And specifically, two things that we're going to see, that God is sovereign and He's a God of grace. Over and over and over again, that God is sovereign and that He's a God of grace.

That brings us to our text. We're really going to focus in on verses 10 to 16 and there are four major scenes or changes in the story line that we're going to see together. The first one, scene number one, is the truth evokes fear, in verse 10. Look back to verse 10 with me, "Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to Jonah, 'How could you do this?' For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them." These

sailors, these pagan sailors, who Jonah has paid a fare to go to Tarshish, come to him and they ask him, when the lot falls on Jonah that shows that Jonah is the reason that this massive storm has come upon their boat, they say, “What have you done?” “How could you do this?” They’re afraid, because, look back at verse 9, when they ask him who he is and what his occupation is, look at what Jonah says, he says to them, “I’m a Hebrew,” I’m a Jew, “and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.”

The reason that these sailors are so terrified is because they’ve been spending time praying to their false gods. Perhaps they were praying to the wind and, then one was praying to the sea, and another was praying to the god of the air, or whatever it was, but they were praying to these false gods and Jonah says, oh, I’m a servant of the one true God who made all those things that you’ve been praying to. That’s why they’re so afraid. Not only that, but he’s a prophet of that God who’s in open rebellion to Him, who’s running away from Him. That’s why they’re so afraid.

In fact, the Hebrew says that they feared a great fear. Any time that a Hebrew writer wanted to emphasize something he would repeat it like that. They feared a great fear. They were terrified out of their wits, scared to death. You can get the picture in their mind, of these men on a boat, it’s being tossed by the sea and the waves are crashing over, and you can see the overspray and you can see that the boat is about to capsize. It even said that the storm became so heavy “that the boat was about to break up.” The wood was giving way. These men feared for their lives.

And now they find out that the reason for the storm is because this Hebrew has gotten on their boat to make an escape from a holy God. How could you do this? They are speechless. They can’t believe that someone would be so foolish as to try to run from this God, the God of the whole universe. Look at the end of verse 10, we get an interesting side note, “For the men knew that Jonah was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.” At some point, Jonah, we don’t know if it was when he first got on the boat, maybe they were making small talk, maybe it’s after the lot fell on Jonah, we’re not told, but at some point Jonah tells these sailors that he’s on the boat because he’s running away from his God, which tells us something about Jonah. Jonah is in open rebellion. It’s not as if that he has sinned and he’s hiding it, he’s not, he’s unashamedly running from God. And he has no intentions at this point of repenting or changing his course. In fact, he’s so bent on his sin that he would tell these pagan strangers of his plan, he’s running from the one true God.

Even though he’s open and honest about his sin, it becomes clear here in a moment that he is far from repentant for that sin. And in verse 11 we have a scene change and we come to scene number two, Jonah’s solution. Jonah offers a solution to the problem. The men are afraid because of the storm and so Jonah says, I’ve got the solution, here’s what we need to do, verse 11,

So they said to him, “What should we do to you so that the sea may become calm for us?” – for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. And he said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea.”

The men realize that Jonah is a prophet of this God who’s brought the storm and so it’s right for them to ask him, what should we do? What do we do about this? What do we do about this storm? You’re the prophet. And notice that they don’t say, what should we do about this, but ““What should we do to you?”” They recognize that God is wrathfully disciplining His prophet. What do we need to do to you? Do we need to slap you around a little bit? Whatever it is, let’s do that because we’re terrified out of our wits.

And Jonah gives a rather curious solution. I have to admit this is not what I would have come up with, ““Pick me up and throw me into the sea.”” I’m sorry, there’s a lot of other things that I could have thought of for them to do to me than to pick me up and throw me into the sea. If you’re picturing this, if the boat is under such stress it’s about to break up, this is a storm like you and I have never seen before, and they’re right in the middle of it. The last thing that I want to do is go into the water and yet Jonah tells them what you need to do is, ““Pick me up and throw me into the sea and then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.””

You know what Jonah’s saying there? He’s saying, I would rather die than obey God’s command. I would rather die than go and preach to those people. Because in his mind when he hit the water that was sure death. I mean, there was no escaping from these waves, there was no escaping from this water from a human perspective. In his mind, he’s thinking just kill me, just throw me into the sea. Basically, I will go preach to those people over my dead body. He’s far from repenting. And look, he openly admits, ““I know that it’s on account of me that this great storm has come upon you.””

Wouldn’t it have been much better for Jonah just to repent? If he would have just gotten on his face before God right there and say, God, I realize that this is my fault, because of my disobedience, I repent, I’ll go and I’ll preach to these people, only spare the lives of these sailors. And perhaps God would have allowed them to turn the boat back around and go back to land. But no, Jonah refuses. Why is he so bent on refusing to obey the Lord’s command to go preach to the Ninevites?

Turn over to chapter 4. I want to give you a little glimpse into Jonah’s thinking. If you’re a little rusty on the story, Jonah does go to Nineveh and preach, in chapter 3. He preaches a very short message, only a few words; basically he tells them, in only 40 days and God will overturn this city. And the people repent on a whole scale repentance, the whole city turns to God. I mean, it is a revival to the nth degree. I mean, we would pray for a revival like this and Jonah, instead of being ecstatic, is angry. Look at chapter 4 verse 1, after they repent, God does not destroy them

as He says, and look at verse 1, “But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry.” Jonah gets upset because God didn’t punish the Ninevites.

And then he goes on in verse 2 and says, “He prayed to the LORD and said, ‘Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.’” What Jonah is saying is, God, the very reason that I ran from You when You called me back in my home country is because I knew that if I went and preached to them You would forgive them, and I didn’t want that!

Jonah made his choice to run away from God because he knew his God. In a sense, Jonah is accusing God, as if he’s unjust to be compassionate and gracious. It’s like he’s pointing his finger saying, see God, this is why I didn’t want to come in the first place! It’s because I knew I would preach, they would repent, and you would forgive them. And look at what’s happened! That’s exactly what’s happened. I knew this would happen. As if that’s a bad thing. But that’s Jonah’s heart. That’s why he’s so bent back here in chapter 1 on not repenting, because he knows if he goes back and he does what God wants, that He will forgive these people, and he hates these people. He’s unwilling to see them come to repentance and so he says, you know what, just pick me up and throw me into the sea and then the sea will become calm for you, because I know it’s my fault. Truly an astounding display of rebellion.

But what about you and me? It’s pretty clear that Jonah is in sin here. And we could all together lash out against him because of his wicked heart, but what about the sin in our own lives? What are the areas in our lives where we refuse to obey our God? Well, perhaps it’s not Nineveh that God’s called you to, to go preach to, but what about pride, or lust, or discontentment? What about unforgiveness? What about laziness, or selfishness, jealousy, worry? Maybe there is some lingering disagreement between you and another person and you’re unwilling to forgive them because of your own pride. Are you waging war on the sin in your life?

Specifically, if we want to get real specific with the application of Jonah, how are we doing in the area of evangelism? Because God hasn’t sent us to Nineveh, He’s sent us to the world. And that means your neighbors, your family, your coworkers, your children. Are we being faithful to share the message or are we, like Jonah, saying really, over my dead body. Is there anybody that you would be angry at God if you saw them walk into the church and repent of their sins? What if a known homosexual repented of their sins and came to our church, would you just be disgusted by that person, how could they think they could come here?

Is there a certain race that it really bothers you, black, white, or somewhere in the middle, that if they were to come to this church or be saved, that you would really be bothered by that? Because that’s the kind of petty thing that Jonah is upset about here. These Gentiles, it’s not that God would have grace and compassion on Israel, he would love that, but these Gentile Ninevites,

really? It's so easy for us to sit back and judge Jonah for his selfishness and his pride, but when we examine our own hearts, are we really fighting against the sin that remains within us?

That brings us to the third scene, in verse 13 and 14, the sailors' well intentioned plan, the sailors' well intentioned plan. Verse 13, "However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them." Jonah tells them, look, if you want the storm to go away, just pick me up and throw me in the water and I promise it'll go away. But these sailors row with all their might. Literally, the word is to dig. That means they rowed hard, that's why it's translated here, "they rowed desperately," they rowed with all their might, against the storm, to go back to land because they couldn't bear the thought of killing this man.

Because, again, in their mind, in Jonah's mind and in their mind, if he goes into that water that's it, he's going to drown; in this kind of a storm there's no hope of survival. And so, they turn around, these pagan Gentiles mind you, turn around to save this man's life who is the very cause for their predicament. I mean, I don't know about you, but if he would have given me the option of throwing him over the boat, I would have gladly thrown him over the boat. If I knew that it was his fault that the storm was upon me and Jonah gives me the idea of throwing him over the boat and he's okay with that, I'm happy to oblige him and throw him over the boat. But these men turn around and they row back to land.

You know, there's a great bit of irony throughout the book of Jonah because the prophet of God, the one who should be righteous and obedient to God, is the very one who's constantly rebelling against God. And yet we see pagan Gentiles repenting and responding to God. Here's these pagan sailors unwilling to punish the man that they know is the cause for their current predicament.

Notice though, that it says, "when the men rowed desperately to return to the land they could not." And why couldn't they? Because "the sea was becoming even stormier against them." We see God's sovereignty here. Why was the storm growing stronger? Because it was not God's will for them to row back and take Jonah back to the land, that's why. We see God's sovereign control over creation, using it for His purposes.

And so, these men are left with no choice but to carry out the plan that Jonah had suggested, only the irony continues. Look now at verse 14, "Then they," they being the sailors, "called on the LORD and said, 'We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for you, O LORD, have done as You have pleased.'" Who called on the Lord? These pagan sailors. We've yet to see Jonah the prophet of God pray even a single time in this entire book and yet these pagan Gentile sailors or calling out to Jonah's God. Interesting.

And notice their request, ““We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life.”” Again, in their mind, when he goes in the water he’s a goner. In their mind, we are executing this man by throwing him in the water, and they’re asking God not to count his life against them, ““do not put innocent blood on us,”” and notice the reason that they give, ““for you, O LORD, have done as You have pleased.”” These wicked men, Gentiles, recognize the sovereignty of God over creation. They recognize that God Himself has willed that Jonah be thrown into the water, and they submit their selves to His will, the very thing that the prophet of God is unwilling to do. Again, God’s sovereignty is on display, ““for you, O LORD, have done as you have pleased.””

But there’s one final scene, in verses 15 and 16, Jonah’s plan in action, Jonah’s plan in action. Verse 15, “So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped it’s raging.” Can you imagine this in your mind? These sailors who are on a boat that’s being thrown about every which direction, barely able to keep their footing, pick up Jonah together and hoist him up over their heads, and walk to the edge of the boat, and on the count of three or however it was they did it, throw him into the water, which is raging, and immediately he’s gone from sight. In their minds, sure death, they just killed this man. They pick him up and throw him into the sea.

It’s important for us to take this story out of our childhood coloring book images that we have of it from Sunday School, which are fine, and realize this actually happened. There was a man named Jonah who got on a boat and God brought a storm and told these men to throw him in the water and they did it. This actually happened. This prophet of God is thrown into a raging sea. And the men, did they pause in silence as they looked in the water, as he disappeared into the water? We don’t know, but we can be sure that it was a very terrifying situation.

You know, I was reminded as I thought of this, of a vacation that I took with my family when I was in junior high, down to Florida. And if you’ve ever been to Destin, Florida it’s a beautiful place, unless you’re from there and you don’t appreciate it, but if you’ve gone there as a vacationer it’s a very beautiful place. And we, my brother and I, were a little bit more of a daredevil than I am now, I’ve seen Shark Week way too many times to get into the water, but we decided that we would get in the water and walk from sand bar to sand bar, out as far as we could go, and so we did.

We would walk from one to the other and swim from one to the other, kind of talking as we went, until pretty soon we got pretty far out into the ocean, much further than I would dare to go now, and we’re standing there on this sand bar and on either side of it it’s pretty deep, but because we’re on the sand bar we can stand there with just waist deep water and we’re talking and as we’re talking, suddenly I feel the water begin to tug at my feet and the sand move across my feet as if I’m being pulled in one direction, and it gets stronger and stronger. And I turn behind me and a very large wave is headed our way, which we can’t avoid. So we both duck down, it hits us and immediately rolls us up in the water. And if you’ve ever been in the ocean

and caught in a big wave, you know there's nothing that you can do, you just surrender yourself to the wave, it throws you around and finally you pop up somewhere realizing that that was either fun or incredibly stupid. In our case, we decided that was enough and went back to shore.

But that small wave tossing me about was nothing compared to the ocean that Jonah was thrown into. If you've seen on T.V. any of these massive storms and these huge ships just being tossed about, mercilessly, that's the picture that we have of Jonah being thrown into this water, to sure death, unless the Lord would intervene. But notice again God's sovereignty, what happens after they pick Jonah up and throw him into the sea? "And the sea stopped it's raging." You know, storms don't just stop, they taper off. Even in a hurricane, when you enter into the eye of the hurricane, there is, maybe a brief moment of silence, but even in the midst of that, storms just don't stop and go away. Can you imagine these men on the boat, they're thinking one moment they're going to die, the next moment the sea completely goes calm.

There's no explanation for that except that a holy God, this God of Jonah, intervened on their behalf and that He was pleased with what they had done. And they get it. Look at what happened, it stops it's raging at verse 16, "Then the men feared the Lord greatly." That's the same term used earlier, they feared a great fear, only this time they're not afraid of the storm, they're fearing the God who made the storm. "The men feared the Lord greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows." These men left the port as wicked Gentile sailors, pagans worshipping false gods, and will return having encountered the true living God, Yahweh.

"They feared the Lord greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows." They responded, they didn't just become, this is not a fear in the sense of being afraid as much as it is this reverence comes over them, a realization that this God, the God of the man who they just threw in the water, is the one true God, and they respond by offering a sacrifice and making vows. We don't know what the vows were that they made, but we can assume they had to do something with now pledging allegiance to this new one God who had proven Himself to be the one true God.

The big question that commentators wrestle with is, was this a true conversion or were these men simply responding out of fear and I think that we have evidence to say that they came to a true knowledge of God, a true faith in Him. Obviously, they understand that God was in control of the storm, that's why when they pray to Him they say that "You have done as You have pleased." They show concern for Jonah's life by trying to row back to shore to save his life. They pray to God begging Him not to hold them guilty for the blood of Jonah. And they respond in reverent fear, offering sacrifices and vowing vows to Him, after the storm is gone.

But I think the greatest proof that we have of these men's conversion is the fact of the overarching context of the entire book. Remember, we said that the theme of Jonah is God's mercy towards repentant Gentiles. Now this is where we bring everything together. At the beginning we stated that the fact that the Lord's sovereign will is unalterable and that means that

not even by man's rebellion can His plan be changed. There's a few important questions to think about. Of all the boats that Jonah could have gotten on, he got on that boat. Of all the sailors who could've manned that boat, these specific men were on that ship. And of all the prophets that God could have chosen to go to Nineveh, He chose Jonah.

What we need to understand here is that Jonah was rebelling against God. But even in the midst of his rebellion God was accomplishing His purpose of redemption. In fact, not just in the midst, not just in spite of his rebellion, but through his rebellion. If Jonah hadn't have rebelled, he would have never gotten on that ship, and he would have never met those men, and they never would have seen the great display of God's power that they did. But because of his rebellion, in Jonah's pursuit of refusing to preach the gospel to Gentiles, God saved Gentiles. Think about that. Think about the sovereign grace of God. Jonah is doing all that he humanly can to thwart God's plan of saving the wicked Gentiles and in the midst of that God saves these men, the best we can tell from their response. What a mighty God we serve.

I was reminded of 2 Timothy 2 where it says,

It's a trustworthy statement:

For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;

If we endure, we will also reign with Him;

If we deny Him, He also will deny us; but

If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

God is always faithful to His promise. While Jonah may have missed out on the blessing of seeing these men respond to the one true God, God remained faithful. God's plan endured. And not only that, but God sovereignly causes a giant fish to swallow Jonah, bring him back, and he does preach to Nineveh, and God extends grace to them. God's plan is not thwarted, even by man's rebellion.

Now, does that give us license to rebel against God? Hey, let's all just rebel so we can see how cool it is when God uses our rebellion for His good. No, not even close. Paul is clear in Romans, "What, should we sin so that grace should increase? May it never be!" But what we're looking at is a facet of God, His sovereignty, and the fact that we need to understand that He really is God, that He really is in control, and that He will accomplish His purposes. And there's several things that we can take away from this. First of all, there is only one true God, as these men found out when they encountered Him. They were praying, in the beginning, to their false gods and they walked away after the situation occurred saying, there is one God and He is Yahweh, the God of Israel.

And perhaps in your life you've not come to that place, you've not come to the place where you've submitted yourself, as these men did, to the one true God and Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for your sin, and your response tonight is to do exactly that. Recognize, as these men

did, that God is sovereign over all His universe and the only option is to submit yourself to Him. And by His grace, He has reached out to us in His Son and provided a way through the death and resurrection of Christ that we could be made right with Him.

Secondly, in response, we need to take action in a couple different areas. Number one, take action in evangelism. I was talking with our college students this morning about evangelism and the fact that the holidays are upon us. Many of us, in fact, we do this with the college, raise your hand if over the course of the holidays coming up you know you'll be with lost family members? Anybody know you'll be with lost family members? I'd encourage you, be praying for God to open doors for you to speak with them about Christ. It's so easy to let those moments pass us by. Oh, that's just Uncle Joe, you know, he'll never repent, I've tried to do that with him before. Don't do that. We're reminded here to be faithful in evangelism while all the while realizing that God is sovereign over conversion.

Also, take action in fighting against sin. Refuse to be rebellious against God. Weed out those areas in your heart where you're still saying, over my dead body will I give that up. And lastly, take comfort, take comfort in the fact that even when we are faithless and we fail, our God never fails. Take comfort in the fact that while we're commanded to preach the gospel, God is the one who causes conversion and causes growth. And ask yourself genuinely, do I trust God, do I really trust that He'll provide, do I really trust that He's in control, or do I think that by my choices and by my rebellion that I can mess up His whole plan and scheme? As we've learned tonight, not only is God full of grace and mercy, He's also sovereign over everything, even man's rebellion. Let's pray together.

God, I just ask that You would use this Scripture, this story of a man named Jonah who ran from Your will for him, to convict us of the areas where clearly your Word has revealed to us Your will, and yet we often overlook it or refuse to obey because it's more convenient or more fun or whatever, to live our own way. God, forgive us so many times in life when struggles come or when trials come or we think that somehow in our own power we can handle life and we forget that You are sovereign, that we need to trust You. Or perhaps we think somehow some event in our life has happened without You noticing, as if You messed up or made a mistake or fell asleep. God, forgive us for such sinful thoughts and remind us tonight that You are the sovereign God who's in control of all things and let a deep abiding trust grow in our hearts because of that. It is in Your name we pray, amen.