



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Jonah 1:17-2:10

“Salvation: All of God; Damnation: All of Man”

TRANSCRIPT

For the scripture reading today, will you turn with me again to the Book of Jonah, and we're going to read the 17<sup>th</sup> verse of the first chapter, and then the ten verses of the second chapter as our scripture reading.

I think I mentioned last week that the first chapter of the Book of Jonah ends in the Hebrew text with the 16<sup>th</sup> verse, and so we are really the second chapter of the Hebrew text of the Book of Jonah. Verse 17 of chapter 1,

“Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.”

May God bless this reading of his word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we come to Thee, the God of Jonah, the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee for the access that we have into Thy presence by virtue of that which the Son of God did by coming 2,000 years ago to die a shameful death upon a cross for our sins. And we thank Thee Lord that through that work which Thou hast done which has so glorified Thee, that we are able to call Thee, our Father and our God. And we able to speak to Thee in a personal way. We thank Thee for the assurance that Thou art the Lord, that Thou dost not change, and therefore we are not consumed. But Thou art faithful to the promises which Thou hast given to us.

And Father we come to Thee as a needy group of believers in Thee, who so need to experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit to us, day by day, and hour by hour, moment by moment. And we pray Lord, that through the experiences of life, Thy name may be glorified in us and through us. We pray for this church and ask for Thy blessing upon it. Upon its leadership. May the elders shepherd the flock of God willingly, not by constraint, nor out of a sense of necessity or desire for gain. But O God, may we have the heart of the great shepherd of the sheep, the Lord Jesus. We pray for the deacons,

and we pray that they may minister as unto the Lord. And in all of the things that transpire here, may they all sense the presence and the power of our great God.

May O Lord the disposition to worship him pervade this group of people, and we pray particularly for any people who have come into our midst today who do not yet know him who to know is life eternal. May O God by the ministry of the Holy Spirit they be convicted and convinced and converted. We pray that hearts may respond to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and that life may follow. We commit each one to Thee, desire, Lord that they may find Thee and share the wonderful blessings which Thou dost so freely confer upon those who believe. We pray particularly for the young people, and Father we pray that the word may be suitable to their needs, and that they may be responsive. And that the things that are heard from the Scriptures may enlarge their vision and may strengthen their lives that are before them.

We pray that all of the needs that exist that may be unmet. We pray for our country, for our President, for those associated with him in the government. We pray for those who are proclaiming the word of God today in Dallas and to the uttermost parts of the earth. We pray for the whole body of Christ. May we be built up together in our faith, together glorify him who has made us one take glory in his cross. And may we commit this service to Thee. May Thy blessing rest upon us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] This is the third in our series of studies on the Book of Jonah, and the topic is, “Salvation: All of God; Damnation: All of Man.”

Dr. DeHaan, in his little book on Jonah, begins one of his chapters with this statement. “When a dog bites a man, that is not news. But when a man bites a dog, that is news. In the same way, when a man catches a fish, that is not news, but when a fish catches a man, that is news.” Now we arrived at that part of Jonah in which that very piece of news is published, and it is news indeed. But there is another piece of news contained in the second chapter of the Book of Jonah which is far more significant and

[indistinct] even more startling than the news of a fish catching a man. And of course, it is the news that salvation is of the Lord.

Now mind you, he doesn’t say, “salvation is of the church.” He does not say salvation is of the ordinances. He does not say specifically the ordinances of baptism or sitting at the Lord’s table, he does not say salvation is of good works, salvation is of culture. Salvation is of reformation, salvation is of doing the best you can. But he says, “salvation is of the Lord.”

Now the point at which Jonah learns this truth is his restoration to God. He had refused a call to preach to Nineveh. He had replied, Lord, that’s mission impossible. And the path of disobedience took him to the belly of the great fish. And last week, we left him sinking in the stormy sea amidst the solemn thanksgiving of his converts. So we’re going to look today at Jonah’s predicament, Jonah’s prayer, and then in the 10<sup>th</sup> verse, Jonah’s preservation.

First of all, will you notice a couple of facts about the 17<sup>th</sup> verse which describes Jonah’s predicament, which we need to clarify? It’s not very modern, you know, to deride the fact that a fish swallowed a man. It is not just the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that has laughed at the story of Jonah and the great fish. Lucian in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century derided the story of Jonah and the great fish. Augustine in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, in the midst of some of his writing, comments on the fact that his audiences, when he referred to the fact that a great fish had swallowed Jonah, that his audience engaged in a good bit of merriment. So it is not just modern to laugh at the story that is contained in the Book of Jonah.

As a result, however, of the laughter that has resounded down through the centuries, some interesting explanations of what may have happened have come to us. Most of them are unsatisfactory, but nevertheless, they are interesting. One of them is to the effect that Jonah did not really land in a fish’s gullet and was preserved for three days and three nights within it. But rather, he managed as he was thrown into the sea to take

refuge in a dead carcass, and on that dead carcass, he floated to safety. And that’s really the explanation of what happened to Jonah.

Then others have made the explanation that perhaps Jonah, as he was tossed into the sea, was swimming about and a ship came by that was adorned with a fish on its prow, and this is Jonah’s way of saying that he was saved by a ship. It had a fish on the ship. And that’s the explanation.

And then others have said Jonah dreamed it all. It didn’t really happen. It’s just a bad dream that the prophet had. I’ve always said that the explanations that the critics give of the biblical miracles are always harder to believe than the miracle itself [laughter], and this is usually true. I grant you that the statement that Jonah was dreaming does seem to be at least a modern thing with which we can identify. Many of us dream all the time. Perhaps some of you have already launched off into a dream this morning [laughter]. So at least that’s reasonable from the standpoint of human experience, but the others leave me rather cold.

I want to correct one or two impressions. You’ll notice that the 17<sup>th</sup> verse states, “Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.” Now that word “prepared” may mean that he had created a fish especially for this. The word, *manab*, which means, or which is translated “prepared” here, may under certain circumstances connote the idea of creation, but not necessarily. Actually this word, which is found in several different stems, is translated, probably “numbered” more frequently than any other way. “Numbered.” But this is in a stem which really means “to appoint,” and I think this is really the idea of the 17<sup>th</sup> verse: Now the Lord had *appointed* a great fish to swallow up Jonah.

This was a fish that just had an unusual call, and it responded in a much better way than the prophet did. It responded obediently. It was already swimming in the Mediterranean ocean, and if it were thinking about the meaning of life, it may have wondered why it was a fish and why it was there. It must have wondered why.

Now I of course am just kidding you a little bit, you understand [laughter] but I think this really means is that God appointed that fish. In other words, he laid his hand upon creation and he had that fish at the proper spot at the proper time in order that it may receive the Prophet Jonah. So let’s not make too much out of “prepared.”

In the second place, and this is more important, the text at verse 17 states that he was in a great fish. It does not say, whale. It is commonly said that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. And I want to say, right at the beginning, if I should say, the whale swallowed Jonah, please forgive me. I did it again at 8:30, so I was told by some of my friends who after the message said, did you know what you said this morning, and I think I would have known because I say it so many times that its bound to come out sometime that Jonah swallowed the whale. I don’t really believe that. I think it was the whale that swallowed Jonah [laughter], but anyway, let’s think for a moment about this word, whale.

The text really says, “a great fish.” Now, as far as we can tell from the Hebrew text as well as from the Greek text of the New Testament, the terms that are used mean, simply, that which is found here, a great fish. It does not say it is a whale; it does not say it was not a whale. But chances are it was a whale. But still, the text simply says the Lord appointed a great fish. As a matter of fact, there are different types of fish which might well have swallowed Jonah.

Let’s just for a moment, let me consider this scientifically. You didn’t think I could consider anything scientifically, I know. [Laughter] But now there are types of whales that are big enough to swallow a man. It is true that many of the critics of the Bible have said, the Greenland whale is not able to swallow a man because its throat is too small for a man to pass down. Now, for such who say that it only demonstrates the fact that they do not know much about whales or about big fish.

The sperm whale, which often grows over sixty feet in length, has a throat full well able to swallow a man. As a matter of fact, some of the whales feed on octopuses, and since they are bigger than men, to take a bite like Jonah would not be too much at

all. As a matter of fact, these whales can not only swallow little minor prophets, but big major ones like Isaiah, too. [Laughter]

A year ago, I read in our own Dallas paper, in *This Week* magazine, a scientist by the name of Eugene Geiling of Chicago, about twenty-five years ago crawled through the gullet of a whale to prove that Jonah could have done it, too. And when he emerged he said, “It was a pretty slimy trip, but there was plenty of room.” I have in my Bible some notes that were compiled by the Encyclopedia Britannica Research Service, and it was interesting to discover that they have scientific substantiation to the fact that a whale is surely large enough to swallow a man, and furthermore, referred to the well-known illustration of James Bartley as a scientifically authenticated fact.

Now it is not necessary for us to speak about this, and I frankly thinking that a great deal of time is wasted. It is scientifically possible – there is no question of it – but much of the discussion of the size of the whale and of the gullet is really irrelevant, for the text presents this as a miracle. And furthermore, in other parts of the Book of Jonah, there are other miracles besides this one, and one I think that is even greater than this one. There is, of course, the miracle of the storm which God caused to rise at a particular time on the Mediterranean Sea. There is the miracle of the gourd, which we shall read about when we shall come to the fourth chapter. There is the miracle of the east wind which God also caused to be aroused. And then there is the miracle of the worm – all of these miracles are set forth in the fourth chapter.

But the greatest miracle of all is surely the conversion of that great city of Nineveh. And the conversion of a city of the size of Nineveh is surely a much greater miracle than the miracle of a big fish swallowing a man. And when we turn to the New Testament, we have the greatest of all authentication for this miracle, for it is our Lord Jesus himself who refers to it in the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew in these words. In Matthew chapter 12 and verse 38 we read,

“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

So it is our Lord who finally authenticates the historicity of the account of Jonah which has to do with that great big fish and that little, minor prophet.

Let’s look now at the prayer that Jonah uttered when he was in the fish, and it is described for us in the second chapter. Scholars call this prayer “a declarative psalm of praise of the individual.” In other words, it is a type of psalm which arises out of a tremendous experience of deliverance. And throughout it, it maintains the pattern of reference to the deliverance, the setting forth of certain vows that arise out of it. And finally, the expression at the end of praise to God because of the deliverance, with a kind of theme that evolves from it. And of course, the theme that evolves from this experience is: salvation is from the Lord.

Now Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish’s belly, he writes afterwards. Jonah is a man who follows Paul. Paul said in 1 Timothy chapter 8 verse 2 that men pray everywhere, and Jonah is going to pray even in the midst of the belly of the great fish.

Sidlow Baxter in one of his books comments upon the fact that he knew a man who once sang the doxology with his head in an empty flour barrel in order to express his faith in the fact that God was going to supply further flour for him and his family. And then Mr. Baxter comments, “But the novelty of singing the doxology with your head and all of the rest of you inside the great fish in mid-ocean is absolutely without rival.” And with that I agree.

Now Jonah’s trials, we shall see, let him back to the scriptures. Will you notice how he speaks? He prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish’s belly and I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD,” and immediately, if you’re familiar with the Bible you can catch the note of the scriptural content of this prayer, and before we look at it further, I want to say something about this because, I think that we often overlook the importance of hiding away in our hearts the truths of the word of God.

Jonah’s trials led him to the Bible. If you go through this second chapter, which is Jonah’s psalm of praise, you will discover that from seven to ten times – some think more – Jonah refers to specific texts of holy scripture. As a matter of fact, most of the things to which he refers are found in David’s Book of Psalms. Jonah was a man who apparently was well-acquainted with the Psalms, and he not only was well-acquainted with them in the sense that he had read them a few times, but he apparently had hidden a great deal of them away in his heart, because when he was in this difficulty, he expresses himself by these fragments that come from the Psalms of David. In other words, the trials that Jonah found himself in led him back to the truths of scripture which had been his food in years past. And I think this is extremely important.

You know, when everything is going wonderful we can come together as the saints and we can sing about “He Holds my Hand” or “Do Lord” or any of the happy little ditties which the church has manufactured in times of prosperity and happiness, and lightness and frivolity. But when the time comes and we are plunged into deep trials and deep distresses and we are deeply disturbed, it is what we know of God’s word that really sustains us. And that is why it is so important for us to be acquainted with the truths of holy scripture. It’s alright to come together and have a happy little meeting and have a lot of good fun. I’m not against that at all. I think that’s a very good thing.

But if you are not hiding away in your heart the very truths of scripture, and you find yourself faced with life, when in a sense life rises up and slaps you in the face sometimes, then you will discover it is the great truths of the word of God which will

strengthen you in the times of tribulation. When Jonah found himself in the belly of that great fish, he didn’t sing “Do Lord.” He didn’t sing “He Holds my Hand,” but he talked about the great Psalms that he had learned through the study of the holy scriptures from David.

And I notice another thing about him. When he’s in trouble, he doesn’t quote Jean-Paul Sartre. He doesn’t quote Albert Camus. He doesn’t quote Rudolph Bultmann or any of the other men with whom we have dialogue and with whom we converse when we’re not in difficulty.

In seminary, we talk about Bultmann and Pannenberg and Cullmann, and we talk about Camus and Sartre and others, but when we fall into troubles, we forget men and we talk about the Psalms and the great truths that are expressed in these Psalms. And again, I want to urge you, to hide the word of God away in your heart, because when troubles come, it is the truth of the word of God that sustains you.

And I have seen this happen so often. As a matter of fact, this is why God sends us troubles sometimes, because we do not spend enough time in the word of God, making it our food. So, Jonah remembers the Psalms.

He says that he prayed unto the LORD his God. I rather like that way that he refers to God there, right in the first verse. It is his God. There is a man sitting in this audience this morning who about ten to twelve years ago said something to me which he may not remember. But after a message that I had given, he came up to me. He was from another church and another denomination. And he said to me, “You know the difference between the church here and the messages that I hear your preach, and the messages that I hear in my church is simply this. That here, you stress that the relationship to God must be personal.” And I never forgot that; I was not trying to make that point. But I think it does come out as we read the word of God. Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God.

There’s a great deal of difference between believing in God and believing in my God. There’s all the difference in the world between the Lord is *a* shepherd and the Lord is *my* shepherd, I shall not want. And it is Jonah who expresses this here in the first verse by saying, “And Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God.” Mr. Spurgeon used to like to say, “I know there’s a bank, but that doesn’t make me rich. It’s only when I have money in that specific bank that I am well off.”

Well now, this is the introductory summary, and he states in verse 2, “I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD,” – did you notice that? “I cried by reason of mine affliction.” He didn’t cry when he was back in Gath-heifer. So far as we know, the prophet who lived in Gath-heifer was not in a praying mood when the command came from God to go to Nineveh. He didn’t get down on his knees and say, “I think I’ll pray this over.” As a matter of fact, he seems to have avoided prayer. And when he got down to Joppa we do not read, And he prayed. Of course, this is an argument from silence you might say – and I agree with you – but it still does not say that.

Furthermore, when he went down into the ship and into the sides of the ship, you’ll remember the shipmaster came to him and awoke him and asked him to pray, so apparently he wasn’t praying then, either. So here is a man who has not prayed at home. He has not prayed at Joppa. He has not prayed in the belly of the great fish. But now we read, I cried by reason of my great affliction unto the Lord. That’s why the Lord sends us afflictions at times, because we haven’t been praying. And you know, it’s a good way to remind us that we need God. And he sends things into our lives. And he wants us to be exercised by them.

And when these trials come, it is God’s way of getting our attention. And he surely got Jonah’s attention. I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of sheol cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

Then I said – now he’s going after having spoken of the situation. By the way, did you notice that he refers his situation to God. He says in the third verse, “Thou hadst cast me into the deep” – you won’t find that in the Bible. You won’t find it in Jonah. As a matter of fact, when we turn back to the first chapter, it says those sailors cast Jonah out into the deep. But he recognized back of the instrumentality of the sailors is God himself. So he states, “Thou hast cast me into the deep.”

And in the fourth verse he begins to sing his song of deliverance. Then he said, “I am cast out of thy sight” – everything seemed lost as far as Jonah was concerned. But really, when men can look to God, nothing is ever lost.

I don’t guess that any of us will ever be in a situation that can even compare with Jonah’s. But here is a man who has reached the extremity, so to speak. He is running from God. He is actually running from men. He finds himself in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. He is actually running from men, he finds himself in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, in the middle of a great fish. And for some unknown reason to him, he’s still alive. He’s really at the end of himself.

And here he cries, “I am cast out of thy sight.” Everything seems lost. But when a man looks to God, nothing is lost. Even from the belly of the great fish, everything is to be gained when a man turns to God.

May I say to you this? That when you pass through trials and troubles, if you will simply learn this, in the midst of them to cry unto the Lord, though everything may seem to be lost to you, it is not lost. Have you also noticed too that ordinarily when we fall into trials, we first of all fall into unbelief, and then into faith. And so he expresses his unbelief first. It’s not usually that we fall into faith and then into unbelief. It’s the other way around.

And so Jonah here now says, “I am cast out of thy sight.” And you know, if he was every wrong about anything, he was wrong then. If God was anywhere on the face of the earth then, he was surely in the midst of that fish. Jonah was in the presence of

one of the greatest miracles every performed. Men have marveled at it down through the centuries. Here is a man riding along in the Mediterranean Sea – was first class or third class, but he riding – in the midst of the Mediterranean Sea and he was still alive and he’s still thinking. Of all the miracles in the Old Testament, this is one that stands out. It’s the one that to the unbeliever, even if it were true, bears upon it the mark of God. And right in the midst of it here is the prophet saying I am cast out of thy sight, when of all the places God might be, he is surely there at that time. Oh how wrong he was.

Remember the Lord Jesus, hundreds of years later said, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” And that is true.

Now Jonah, having uttered this statement in unbelief says, in faith, “Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.” Unbelief speaks first, but faith speaks next. And it is faith that overcomes the world, that baffles Satan, that conquers sin, that rules our lives and that abolishes death. And he continues his praise by saying, “The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.”

By the way, did Jonah die in the midst of the fish? Some of my good friends maintain that. When we finish the series on Jonah – we have two more messages in the series – I want to take up the question, did Jonah die? in the midst of our study on the typology of Jonah. So we’ll drop that question for three weeks from now. Jonah continues, “When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.”

And Jonah, as he concludes his song of praise gives us, in a sense, the moral of it. Here is an Old Testament prodigal who has come to himself. And he says, “They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.” John Calvin used to say about lying vanities that lying vanities are all inventions with which men deceive themselves. They

that observer lying vanities – all of the things with which they deceive themselves – forsake their own mercy. It’s almost as if “their own mercy” is their term for God. It’s almost a title. Why, his name is mercy. His name is loyal love. His name is lovingkindness, and he is my God, my lovingkindness – my loving mercy. And they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

Now Jonah vows that he is going to praise God because of what has happened. You know, praise is the proper response to deliverance. When a man has experienced something from God, he doesn’t keep quiet about it. It’s like a man who sees a fella out on the golf course shoot a twenty-nine on nine holes. Last year, some of us who were watching the Dallas Open saw Kermit Zarley shoot a twenty-nine on nine holes. Well you don’t go home and say to your wife, “Well, I saw nine holes of golf played when you see a twenty-nine,” do you? You say a few words of praise. It’s the natural response to something great that has happened.

When you see a man who sees something great and he doesn’t say anything about it, he’s sick. He doesn’t understand. It’s like my wife – she’s not here; she was at the first service [laughter] – but it’s like my wife. I took her out to see one of the SMU football games this last fall, and I said, now one of these fellows you’re going to watch is Jerry LeVias – I think I mentioned this to you once before. And so she watched LeVias for about five minutes, and she turned to me and said, “I don’t think he’s so great.” Well, I don’t think Mr. LeVias would be so disturbed by that compliment or lack of compliment. Because as a matter of fact, that compliment revealed not what Jerry LeVias was, but it revealed what my wife knew about football [laughter].

You see, when a man is really healthy, and when he really understands, and when he sees something great, he offers praise and thanksgiving. And so praise is characteristic of Christians. And actually, the joy of the Lord is our strength, and if we’re not praising God, it’s because we’re sick or because we don’t understand. And so Jonah vows to

praise God because he has something to praise God about. “I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed.”

And then he concludes with the theme of it all. Great truths are learned in deep trouble. And Jonah has learned that salvation is of the Lord. Mr. Spurgeon used to say, “Jonah learned this sentence of good theology in a strange college.” Salvation is of the LORD.

If you have a Scofield edition of the King James Version, and you look over to the center column references, you’ll notice that by this statement is the little note, “Theme of the Bible.” And I think that’s true. This is the theme of the Bible. Salvation is of the LORD. That is the theme of the Bible, from beginning to end. It is the praise that is offered up from man to the effect that God is the Savior of men, and it is learned in the midst of troubles. Salvation is of the Lord.

I love something that Mr. Spurgeon said with reference to another part of the Bible, and I often quote it to my students when we come to Romans chapter 8 in the seminary. About Romans chapter 8 and verse 28 through 30, Mr. Spurgeon has this to say, “Sustained by distinguishing grace, a man learns to glory in tribulations also. And strengthened by electing love, he defies the hatred of the world and the trials of life. Suffering is the college of orthodoxy. Many a Jonah who now rejects the doctrine of the grace of God only needs to be put into the whale’s belly and he will cry out with the soundest free grace man, ‘Salvation is of the LORD!’ Prosperous professors, who do no business amidst David’s billows and water spouts, may set small store by the blessed anchorage of eternal purpose and everlasting love, but those who are tossed with tempest and not comforted are of another mind.” Jonah, out of this great and trying experience has come to the settled conviction that it is God who saves.

Now the tenth verse says, “And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.” Did you notice this? Jonah cried unto the Lord, and he was still in the fish. Jonah prayed unto the Lord, he was still in the fish. Jonah made promises

to the Lord and vowed unto the Lord; he was still in the fish. Jonah remembered the Lord, and he was still in the fish. Jonah even moralized, “They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy,” and he is still in the belly of the fish.

But the moment that he says, “Salvation is of the LORD,” he’s on dry land. Did you notice that? Because you see, when a man comes to realize that his blessings come from God, it is then that he experiences them. For then, God gets the glory. And he will not share his glory with another, Isaiah tells us.

On Friday, as I was walking through one of the rooms at the seminary, Bruce Waltke stopped me and Don Glenn, because we were talking about Jonah and I had asked him a question. Did he believe that Jonah died? And in the course of the discussion, he told us a little story. He said he heard Art Linkletter tell a story about a little child with whom he was conversing. And he asked the little child, “What is your favorite story in the Bible?”

And the little child said, “The story of Jonah and the whale, and how Jonah was swallowed by the whale.”

And Mr. Linkletter said, “What do you think is the lesson of that story?”

And the little child said, “People make fish sick.” [Laughter] It vomited out Jonah on the dry land.

Now much as we like that little story, I really must say that is not the lesson of the Book of Jonah. Although, I’m sure there is a great deal of theology contained in that statement. Not only do people make fish sick, but people make almost everybody else sick until they know Jesus Christ as Savior.

But the great lesson of this chapter is, salvation is of the Lord. And in the remaining moments that we have, I want to say just a word or two about it. And the first thing I want to point out is that salvation is of the Lord in its conception. God did not, in the ages of eternity past, after he had created the angels, gather them together and say, I wonder what we ought to do now. He did not hear some angel come forward and say,

“Now Lord, we think it would be mighty nice if you created a group of people who might be called, ‘men.’ And that you might pass them through the experience of being lost and then being saved in order that they might know your grace.” So far as we know, no angel knows the grace of God.

No angels were consulted when God arranged his great plan of salvation. As a matter of fact, this great plan of salvation was originated long before the creation of the angels, for salvation is of the Lord. And it is God who is responsible for this great plan in its conception. It is God who has set forth propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood. It is his work and his work entirely in its conception.

It is also his work in its execution. In the Bible, his work is referred to as a great banquet to which men are invited. But it’s not like a church potluck supper where everyone brings something of his own. It’s a banquet which God has provided himself. He has conceived of salvation, and he is responsible for its execution. It is our Lord Jesus himself who cried out on the cross at Calvary, “It is finished,” and what he meant by that was simply this, that the work of salvation was over, that it was done by him and by him alone.

As Isaiah expresses it, referring to our Lord, “I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the peoples there was none with me.” Salvation is of the Lord in its execution. It is executed by Jesus of Nazareth, and we do not have part in it. It is of the Lord in its application, and it has to be of the Lord in its application. The Bible states that all of us, apart from the saving grace of our Lord, are dead in trespasses and sins. Is it possible for a dead man to receive something? Is it possible for a dead man to believe? Is it possible for a dead man to do anything pleasing to God. Salvation is of the Lord, in its execution and its application.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit, who sets apart men to faith in Jesus Christ. It is the response to his sanctifying ministry of efficacious grace that brings men to the place of salvation, and it is all of God. Salvation is of the Lord by its application. It is he who has

brought us to faith in Christ. It is the Father who has planned it; it is the Son who laid the foundation of it in the blood of his cross. It is the Spirit who moves upon men and touches hearts and brings them to Jesus Christ.

Not only that, it is of the Lord in its preservation. He does not bring us to faith in Christ and giving us salvation also give us a little box that contains grace that we may use whenever we need it. He does not say to us, Now Lewis, I’ve brought you to life, and you’re going to need a few things in the Christian life, and I’m going to put over here in a little box some grace that you can use when you need it.

No, as a matter of fact, he makes me dependent upon him from the moment I am saved throughout all eternity. As in the Old Testament, the manna was given day by day, so the grace of God is bestowed upon the saints of God day by day, as they need it. The text of holy scripture says, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be” – not, as thy months, as thy years, as thy lifetime – as thy days. And so as I have specific need, it is God who gives me, moment by moment the need that I have. And so, salvation is of the Lord, in its preservation, in its supply, in its security.

And it is of course, of the Lord in its completion. When the hairs of a snowy age are crowned with perpetual joy, and the eyes are filled with tears shine bright as the stars in the celestial city, you can be sure that even then we shall sing the praise of the God who has given us this wonderful text of scripture, Salvation is of the Lord. And when I get to heaven and enter the celestial city, that very step I take into that celestial city, if I may for a moment express it in a figure, that very step I take to enter into that city is a step that is given me by God at that time. Salvation is of the Lord in its completion.

There may be Arminians here; there will be no Arminians there. For all then shall speak the language, salvation of the Lord.

Now before I close, I want to say simply this. While salvation is of the Lord, damnation is of man. I want to say all of man in the sense that man shall never be able to blame God that he is lost. You see, suppose you were sitting in the audience right

now, and you don’t like what I’ve been saying about distinguishing grace, eternal love and the doctrine of election. Suppose you’re saying in your heart, I don’t really think it’s just.

Well let me say to you this. This salvation maybe yours right at this moment if you’ll put your trust in him. Amidst your difficulty in comprehending the word of God, if you’ll just come and say, thank you Lord for Jesus Christ, I do receive him as my Savior, you will discover the wonderful grace that comes from the Lord and from the Lord alone.

And if you don’t want to come when this invitation is offered to you, if you don’t want to come, what will you say about your protestations that it is unfair? It would seem to me that the fact that you don’t want to come leaves you without excuse. And so if you have any questions, I ask you at this moment as an ambassador of Jesus Christ to put your faith and trust in the one who died for you. And as you believe in him, you shall come into the family of God. You shall discover what it is to experience distinguishing grace and eternal love, and you shall know what it is to be saved and to shout, salvation is of the Lord! Because you will know that it is not through you that you have been saved, but through God and through him alone.

And so I invite you to put your faith and trust in him who died for you. He does not ask you to do good works. Salvation is not of good works. He does not ask you to join the church. Salvation is not of the church. He does not ask you to trust a preacher; salvation is not of the preacher. He does not ask you to trust in baptism or the Lord’s Supper; salvation is not of the ordinances. He does not ask you to trust in your culture, in your family background, in your religion. Salvation is not of these things. He asks you to trust in the Lord, who loved you and gave himself for you, who so longs that you come to him for salvation is of the Lord.

And so if you are here this morning, and you have not yet put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, I invite you to come and say, “Nothing in my hand I bring/ simply to Thy

cross I cling.” And you will find that God receives you. And that you’re saved. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has executed the plan of salvation, the love of God the Father who has conceived it and in marvelous lovingkindness brought it to us, the communion of the Holy Spirit who administrates the great blessings of the covenant, be and abide with all who know him in sincerity. And O Father, we pray that through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Thou wilt touch the hearts of men and women and children in this auditorium, and if there are those here who do not yet know Thee, who are strangers to this grace, within Thy will, O God, touch their hearts and may they at this moment, out of perhaps an incomplete knowledge but out of sincerity, say, I thank Thee O God for Jesus Christ. I take him as my personal Savior.

O Father, we pray that the Spirit may work to that end, for Thy glory.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.