

**THE
GOSPEL:
ACCORDING
TO JONAH**

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Dec. 31, 2013

Sermon in a sentence: Stop running and let Jesus save your life!

Scriptures: Selected verses: Jonah 1, 2 NASB

Welcome everyone – glad we can all worship together at this “Watchnight” Service.

Something has drawn us to the house of the Lord tonight – His Holy Spirit.

Despite the year we’ve had, despite the life we’ve had, good, bad, successful or failing, The Lord continues to pursue us with His divine love and invite us into His presence.

Despite the number of times we may have turned Him away, He continues to seek after us.

For those of us who have already turned our lives over to His care and are living in covenant with Him, we still recognize and realize that our sinful nature continues to fight against the good of God, being tempted by the world, the flesh and the devil to be much less than we should be in our commitment and relationship with Him.

But we’re here tonight, in this – “Our place to meet with God”!

Tonight I would like to highlight our inherent badness vs. God’s inherent goodness. His constant reaching out to us vs. our unyielding unrepentant hearts. The lengths God will go to save us vs. the lengths we will go to escape Him.

The constant war of wills that takes place between ourselves and God.

Let us take a look at this dilemma from the standpoint of an OT prophet whose story covers all aspects of peoples' relationship to God, whether they are saint or sinner. We will call this "The Gospel: According To Jonah" and I hope you will find yourself somewhere in this story.

Tell story of Jonah:

- **Prophet running from God.**
- **Didn't just stay home and disobey God, but paid good money to leave home and go in the opposite direction to where God wanted him to be. He was ready and willing to greatly inconvenience himself and incur great expense to disobey! (1:3) He didn't want to be at church or anywhere close to church people as he pursued his life of disobedience.**
- **On his way to the wrong place, a great storm arose. (1:4)**
- **He was fast asleep, oblivious to the danger he and his companions were facing. (By the way, our sin does affect others, but we are de-sensitized to it, totally unaware of how close we (and they) are to death and destruction!)**
- **Jonah had previously told them the story of his disobedience and rebellion against God, so now he simply told them to throw him overboard and kill him! (1:12)**
- **He chose to bypass the clear option of repentance and requested death rather than to obey God. What an**

incredible decision! Meanwhile, the heathen sailors were doing everything in their power to save him. (1:13)

- **When all hope was lost, they prayed for God's mercy and threw him overboard. The sea was immediately calm and the sailors forsook their false gods to worship Jehovah. (1:15-16)**
- **Isn't it strange that even in his rebellion, Jonah was still an instrument of salvation to others? God's hand was upon his life.**

- **If you are here tonight and you have seen the hand of God at work in your own life, or in the life of others, please respond positively to Him tonight. Worship Him and make vows to Him as the sailors did. It is totally appropriate to do so now, today, as we are together in His presence.**

- **It 'just so happened' that God sent a 'great fish' Jonah's way that swallowed him whole as he was cast out of the ship.**
 - **Yes, there are "fish" big enough to swallow a man whole: blue whale, sperm whale, whale shark and great white shark to name a few.**
 - **There is a legend dating back to Feb. 1891 regarding James Bartley, a whaler on the ship "Star of the East". He fell overboard, was swallowed by a whale and found unconscious, but alive the next day when his colleagues had caught and rendered it. This was reported in *The Mercury* of Yarmouth, England (08-22-1891), but according to researchers, there is no byline and no indication that the reporter had spoken to either Bartley or the ship's captain. There is no independent verification of the story.**

- **In the fish's belly, surprise, surprise, Jonah started to pray! (2:1) Word to the wise. Don't wait so long.**

- As he later recounted: “While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple” (2:7).
- The mercy of God is so great that even when we clearly choose death over life, He is still there to deliver us from death, if we “remember the Lord” in our distress!

Jonah 2:7-9 NASB

“While I was fainting away,
I remembered the LORD,
And my prayer came to You,
Into Your holy temple.

8 “Those who regard vain idols
Forsake their faithfulness,

9 But I will sacrifice to You
With the voice of thanksgiving.
That which I have vowed I will pay.
Salvation is from the LORD.”