

Jonah: Man on the Run

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[0 : 00] Good morning, Watermark. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Graham, and I used to be a primary school teacher, and now I work for the Hong Kong Education Department.

But I still enjoy a good teaching analogy and a good teaching story, and I'm going to share one with you this morning that came from an all-boys school out of the UK. And one day, a teacher was giving a lesson in religious instruction, and he asked the boys the question. He said, who knocked down the walls of Jericho?

And it was absolute silence. And he said, come on, boys, I want to know who knocked down the walls of Jericho. Again, absolute silence. Boys, I want to know who knocked down the walls of Jericho.

Eventually, Smith puts up his hand. He says, please, sir, I didn't. So the headmaster, the teacher, anyway, he sees this quite amusing, and a little bit later, he's in the staff room, and he sees the headmaster.

He says, oh, headmaster, very interesting thing happened in class today. I asked the boys, who knocked down the walls of Jericho? And Smith put up his hand and said, please, sir, I didn't.

[1 : 14] And the headmaster said, well, I know Smith, and I know his family. And if he said he didn't do it, he didn't do it. So anyway, the teacher explains to the headmaster, and then he gets it, and he sees the funny side of it.

A little bit later, the superintendent is visiting the school, and the headmaster is taking him on a school, a visit of the school premises, walking him around. He says, oh, superintendent, a very interesting thing happened in class today.

One of the teachers asked the boys, who knocked down the walls of Jericho? And Smith put up his hand and said, please, sir, I didn't. The superintendent said, well, it's probably too late to find out now who did.

Best get it repaired and send in the bill. Now, you're probably thinking this morning, what on earth does the story of Jericho and Jonah have to do in common?

And the truth is, both of them are treated as a story, a nice fable, something we teach the kids in Sunday school.

[2 : 16] But actually, outside the book of Genesis, the book of Jonah has been attacked more than any other book. Because we want to look at it as sort of nonfiction, a great little story.

We might learn something from it, but it's really, it's not true. It's just a story, right? But I want to begin this morning by telling you three reasons why the book of Jonah is indeed true.

It's about an historical figure, and it's an historical event that took place. Reason number one is that the book of Jonah is actually presented as history.

It's the same way the book of Kings, Chronicles, Samuel, it's presented in exactly the same way. Reason number two is that Jonah himself actually appears in the book of 2 Kings.

And there he's called the son of Amittai, and in the book of Jonah he's called the son of Amittai. But the third and most important reason is that Jesus himself taught and believed that Jonah was an historical figure and an historical fact.

[3 : 23] He said, as Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish, so I will be three days in the belly of the earth. Now you might think, why is this so important?

Why do we begin this way by, is it fact, is it fiction, you know, we don't need to worry about? If it is indeed fiction, just a story that helps us with some things in life, then we have no choice but to decide that Jonah is the main character in the story and what we can learn from Jonah.

But if it is fact, then God is the main character in the story. And I want to tell you today that the book of Jonah is actually written not to tell you about Jonah, it's written to tell you about God.

What God did, why he did it, how he did it, and it's to teach us about his nature and his character. You see, I think one of the reasons people don't believe in the book of Jonah is that it contains miracles.

You know, the one we think of is Jonah getting eaten by the big fish or the whale, right? Now the problem is if you don't like miracles, then pretty soon you start ripping out all other books in the Bible too.

[4 : 43] And Jonah itself contains eight nature miracles. Okay, most of us just think of Jonah and the whale, right? But there's actually eight nature miracles.

And what that means is that God has the power to intervene in nature and circumstances in our lives. And most people don't really like that idea because we really want to be in control in our life.

We want to be in control of our circumstances. I'm the master of my own fate, the captain of my soul. We don't like the idea that there is a God and that he can be in control. But if there is a God and he is sovereign and he can intervene in our lives, he can intervene in nature, well then that changes everything, right?

It changes how I think about him. There's a God, I probably need to fear him and above all I need to change. So Jonah is a book about greats.

There are four greats in the book of Jonah. The great wind, the great storm, the great fish, and the great city. But actually there's two more greats in the book of Jonah that are not written, but they are like a thread throughout the whole book.

[5 : 59] And the first one is that it's a story of great grace. And the second one, it's a story about a great God.

And if you get nothing else out of today and out of this time, that's really what I want you to take away, is that it's a story about great grace and it's a story about a great God.

Okay, so let's jump into this. Jonah, he's a preacher. More than that, he's a prophet. But he's called by God and God has every right to tell him what to do.

One day God comes to him and he gives him a sentence. This is the sentence he gives him. He says, Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.

Now, the first word in that sentence is the word go. In some versions, it's a rise. But the word go comes from a Hebrew word, halach. Okay, I just like the sound of that word, halach, right?

[7 : 08] And halach is like a, it's a command. It's like a non-negotiable. He didn't come and say, Jonah, you know, I've got this, would you be interested? It was go, all right?

It's the kind of word used by an army captain speaking to his soldiers, right? Halach! And they stand up and yes, and they're gone. You know, every parent wishes they had one word that would get their kids up and moving on a Sunday morning, right?

It's that one word. When you go in there, guys, please, time to get up, and it's slow, processed, and you just want to get them out of the wall. Every parent wishes they had one word that they would just jump out of bed, be ready, waiting at the door in two minutes.

This would be that word. Okay, maybe you guys can try that, right? Halach! And get moving. So that's the first word. He comes to Jonah. And in less than 20 words, he tells Jonah where to go, what to say, and why to say it.

Okay, so first of all, he tells Jonah where to go. And Jonah hears this word, I want you to go to Nineveh. Jonah hears that word, the first thing he's thinking, Nineveh. Whoa!

[8 : 14] Nineveh? God, do you realize Nineveh, that's like the capital of Assyria. It means it's full of Assyrians. Okay, you guys can get that, right?

It's full of Assyrians. Okay. We know from chapter 4 that there were at least 120,000 children in the city of Nineveh who were not old enough to discern their right from their left.

But archaeologists tell us that the city of Nineveh was between 1.5 and 2 million people. It takes you three days to walk through the city of Nineveh.

Now, to put that into perspective, it doesn't take us three days to walk through the whole of Hong Kong. It was a great city. They had 1,500 pillars surrounding the city, each 200 feet high.

And these people were very wealthy. The Assyrians were very wealthy. And they got wealthy by plundering everyone else around them, right?

[9 : 28] They just went and stole, took everything, and then they built up the great city of Nineveh. And hence the reason they had to put pillars all around them, right?

Because they were protecting themselves. They figured if we go out and plunder people, someone might have the idea and come and plunder us. But above all, Jonah would have heard this word and he would have understood, those are the bad guys.

It's kind of like, to put it in perspective, just imagine Jonah's an American and God comes to him and says, Jonah, I want you to go to Pyongyang, North Korea, right?

Wow! Okay, that's what he would have heard and thought when he heard the word Nineveh. Okay, secondly, he tells Jonah what to say.

He says, Jonah, you're going to preach against Nineveh. And we know from later in the book of Jonah that the message he was supposed to preach, which was one against them, is to say to them, you are going to be destroyed in 40 days.

[10 : 35] And you know what, Jonah? The Israeli army is not going to go with you. There's going to be no Facebook event to advertise this. There's going to be no posters. You're not going to have a stadium to preach in.

It's just you, this little Jew, walking through the city, preaching a message. Hey guys, you're going to be destroyed in 40 days. Now, in case you haven't got it, it's not the best way to win friends and influence people, right?

Have you ever tried preaching against someone? Yeah, try doing that with your enemies and see the reaction you get. So Jonah's hearing this, right? But in it is the first glimpse of God's grace.

Because he tells Jonah, tell them in 40 days their city will be destroyed. Now, in biblical terms, the number 40 is a number for testing, right?

The Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness. Jesus spent 40 years in the desert. If God planned to destroy them, just like that, why tell them? Just do it. But he gives them 40 days.

[11 : 44] It's almost like God is giving them a chance to respond. We see the first glimpse of God's grace. And he says, Jonah, this is why I want you to say this.

Okay, so first you're going to go to the bad guys and then you're going to tell them they're going to be destroyed. And this is why I want you to do it. Okay, now we might think God has been a little bit extreme here, right?

Destroying a city of between 1.5 and 2 million people. But I'm going to tell you a little bit more about the Assyrians and then you tell me how you feel about them.

There was another prophet that came after Jonah called Nahum. And this is how Nahum described the city of Nineveh. He said, Many casualties.

You see, the Assyrians were busy people.

[13 : 16] You know, like when you meet someone in Hong Kong and you ask them how they are, nine times out of ten you're going to get the answer, I'm busy. Okay? The Assyrians would have said exactly the same thing, right? But they were busy with violence.

They were busy with deception. They were busy with murder. And these people, they were bullies who used their power to intimidate and steal from everyone else around them.

And for fun, they tortured people. They enjoyed it. They tortured people to death. And more than the fact that these Assyrian leaders were cruel, they actually boasted of their cruelty.

They thought they were really good at being bad and they wanted to tell everyone just how good they were. So they, on those big pillars surrounding the city, they wrote these, like, monuments to themselves.

Now, those monuments exist in museums today. You can go and see them. But I'm going to read you some of the quotes that they had written about themselves. This is the Assyrians boasting about what they do.

[14 : 27] I cut off their heads and formed them into pillars. Okay, just get a picture of that. Three thousand captives I burnt with fire.

Their corpses I formed into pillars. From sun, I cut off their hands and their fingers. From another, I cut off their noses, their ears, and their fingers.

Of many, I put out their eyes. In case you haven't got it, these are not the nicest people. But in God's grace, He cares for them.

He wants to send someone to warn them. He wants them to turn from the evil that they're doing. And He promises them justice if they will not act.

This is God offering them mercy because He cares. And this is God promising them justice because He's holy.

[15 : 34] You see, the Jews knew that God cared about them. God had sent them prophets. He protected them. He rebuked them. God, they knew the little nation of Israel knew they were loved and cared for and protected by God.

But here we see God caring about the Gentiles. And even more than that, the bad Gentiles. You know, I can kind of see Jonah asking God, The Assyrians?

And God's saying, Yes, Jonah. Even the Assyrians. You might be thinking, How can preaching against people be grace?

How can that be grace? You know, sometimes in life, the most gracious thing we can do for someone is to tell them what's wrong, to tell them how it's hurting themselves and how they're hurting others and what the consequences will be.

My four-year-old, a little boy, he loves coming into the kitchen. And I was in the kitchen the other day and I was making myself a sandwich. And my wife makes this really amazing homemade bread.

[16 : 53] So I had the knife and I'm busy cutting the bread and I cut a slice of bread and I put the knife down. And my four-year-old comes in and he picks up the knife. Now, any four-year-old with a knife in his hand is only thinking one thing.

This is a sword and any bad guy is going down. And considering I'm the only other guy in the kitchen, I'm taking the role of the bad guy here, right? So he's got the knife in the hand and the first thing he does is pull it up and he's just about to lick the knife.

Now, if at that point I had done nothing, you would have said, what a terrible, terrible parent I am. You know, just let him. He's enjoying himself.

Let him be. He's okay. But I didn't. I preached against him, okay? Admittedly, I had a little bit of self-preservation in mind because I knew after he had licked the knife, I was next in line.

But I preached against him. I explained to him, you know, you are going to hurt yourself. And when you're finished, you're probably going to hurt me. So how about you put the knife down and I'll make you a sandwich instead?

[18 : 01] But that's just kind of like a silly story. But really, sometimes the gracious thing we can do is to tell people what's wrong, how they could possibly hurt themselves and hurt other people around them.

Here's God reminding Jonah that he is holy and that he sees everything. Nothing is hidden from God.

You see, we might, like he's saying to Jonah, you know, you only hear about their reputation. You know, you only hear the stories.

Maybe you read the newspaper and you hear what the Syrians have done. Or you read one of their little boasts on the thing. Jonah, I see all of that. Did you guys ever think about that?

That God sees everything? You know, he's not just attending nice services like this today. He sees every murder.

[19 : 09] He sees every rape. He sees every act of injustice. He sees every act of cruelty. Every bit of gossip. Every bit of cheating.

Envy, greed, slander, malice. Every cowardly act. Every lie told. He sees it all.

He's seen me do some of those things. And he's seen you do some of those things too. And yet, God cares.

He cares enough to send someone to tell them the truth and offer them grace and redemption. And Jonah's the man.

He's chosen to do that. But Jonah runs away. Now, one of the most important questions we have to ask is, why did Jonah run away?

[20 : 06] It really is like a key that unlocks the book of Jonah. Why did Jonah run away? We're going to get to that a little bit later. But I want to describe it to you in four steps.

Jonah chooses a path. And they're four steps that Jonah takes. Four steps down. The first step down for Jonah is one of disobedience.

Instead of going east, Jonah goes west. He's trying to get away as far as possible. And it's deliberate. It says he found, he bought, he boarded, he sailed, he fled.

Jonah knew what he was doing, right? He was fully aware of what he was doing. He was trying to get away. Now, all Jonah had to do to be disobedient was just stay where he was.

Jonah, I want you to go to Nineveh? No. I'm staying here. But Jonah ran. And the reason he ran is because he wanted to get away from God.

[21 : 11] He wanted to get away from everything that reminded him of God. There's the temple. I don't want to see it. It reminds me of God. They're the people of God. They remind me of God. I just want to get away. And you know, we can be like that too.

When we're in a state of disobedience and we know we're doing something wrong, the last thing we want to do is spend time with God. The last thing we want to do is be with the people of God.

And we can run away too. Jonah found out as he starts this journey that he actually received plenty of help. You know, there were sailors just waiting to take his money.

There was a ship just waiting to sail. You know, the way of sin has help, right? It has companions. And you'll find that out. When you walk along the path of sin, there might be plenty of people cheering you on.

But there's another side to that coin, and it is a beautiful promise for believers. And that is one, is when you choose to walk the journey and walk the path with God, you will not only find companions who want to take your money, but you will find brothers and sisters, family.

[22 : 22] You will find empowering grace. You will find protection. You will find divine providence in your life helping you on the journey with God. That is an amazing thing.

The second step down for Jonah is one of distress. Peace goes. And God lets you go so far and no further.

See, Jonah thinks, I'm going to go on a nice sail on the Mediterranean. You know, I might even order a cocktail, sit on deck, enjoy the sunset. And then you get one of the key words in the book of Jonah, and it's this word, but.

But Jonah, but God, right? And it's kind of like we're looking down on this, and it's this great game of chess. Jonah makes his first move, and now we're going to see God make his first move.

And when God makes a move, it's usually a great move, right? And it is. In this case, it's a great wind. God sends a great wind, which, as we know, becomes a great storm.

[23 : 26] And what I find here is that the first people to suffer from Jonah's disobedience was not Jonah.

It was others, right? The sailors were the first people to suffer from this distress. Their ship was being tossed around, and the storm was raging. And it's often the same with us, right?

We think we can sin secretly or sin safely, and no one else will know. But it doesn't work that way, right? And Jonah needs to learn this lesson.

It's one of distress. Notice, the sailors go down. The captain goes down, and they find Jonah, and he's asleep.

He thinks he's gotten away with it, right? They wake him up, and they said, Jonah, pray. Pray, come on, wake up, pray. We're all praying. You know, we're just hoping we're going to get something.

[24 : 26] We're in trouble. We're in panic. Now we pray. We don't know really who we're praying to. We're just kind of doing a shotgun approach, hope we hit something, and then our prayers will be answered. And isn't it incredibly sad?

The only person who knew the true living God was the only person who wasn't praying. Everyone else was praying, but the man of God wasn't.

Third step down for Jonah is one of disgrace. Be sure your sins will find you out. I went to an all-boys high school in South Africa.

It was a very traditional school, very sporting school. And in my first winter at the school, I signed up to play field hockey.

And I really enjoyed playing field hockey. But there was a lot of pressure to play rugby. It was a big rugby school. And I felt like I was missing out. You know, I wanted to be one of the boys. And so I went home, and I said to my mom, Mom, I'm quitting hockey, and I'm going to play rugby.

[25 : 37] And she said, Oh, no, you are not. You have committed to play for that hockey team, and you will play for that hockey team for the rest of the season.

Make sure when it's a new season, then you can play rugby. I listened to that, and I thought, Hey, that's great advice. So I did exactly the opposite, right? Didn't tell her, but I quit the hockey team, and I played rugby.

Every time it was rugby practice, I'd take my hockey stick, and she would think I was going to go play hockey, and put on my hockey shirt, and then I would change into rugby gear. And for three weeks, it was amazing.

I loved it, right? I was playing rugby. I was enjoying it. I was one of the boys. And then something happens, which often happens if you play rugby. We were having a practice match against another team.

And I got tackled, and I landed awkwardly, and I could feel the bone in my arm go. Didn't feel too good. So I went off the field, and I showed the coach, and he said, Yeah, that doesn't look too good.

[26 : 37] I think you've broken it. Go to the school nurse. So I went to the school nurse, and by this time, it's starting to swell a little bit, and she looks at it, and she says, Yeah, that doesn't look good.

That looks like it's broken. You're going to need to go to hospital. And she starts putting the bandage on, and I say, No, no, wait. I've got to take my rugby shirt off and put on my hockey shirt here, right? And she's like, Why?

And I said, You don't know. I just need to do this, right? So there I am. She's helping me pull off my rugby shirt. My arm's in pain, and I put on my hockey shirt, and it's bandaged up. Then I walk in, and it's after practice, and my mom is now waiting in the car to pick me up.

So I open the door, and I get in, and my mom sees my bandaged up arm, and she says, What happened? And I said, Well, I was playing hockey, and I fell awkwardly, and the nurse thinks I've broken my arm.

My mom is just about to start the car when one of my rugby teammates rushes up, sticks his head in the window, and he says, Buddy, I saw you.

[27 : 40] That tackle just looked horrible, right? And you landed funny, and your arm was all thing. And I'm feeling distress, okay? I'm looking at him going, And my mom looks, and she goes, He did what?

He was playing what? And at that point, disgrace hits me, right? She starts the car.

We're driving out, and Mom, I'm really sorry. I should have told you. And she says, No, no, I think you've shown that you're more than capable of making your own decisions, and therefore I think you should be able to find your own way to hospital.

And we went, and we picked up my sister, and then we drove home, and we lived about 10 kilometers outside of town, so it wasn't like I could just walk to the hospital.

And for the next three hours, I am repenting. I am pleading. I am crying about this broken arm. Eventually, eventually, at about 8.30 that night, my mom relents, and she takes me to the hospital, and my arm was indeed broken and all that kind of stuff.

[28 : 51] But you know what? The pain I felt of a broken arm was not nearly as much as the pain I felt of disgrace after that.

The fourth step down, as I said, that's the third step, right, is one of disgrace. It amazes me that in this scenario, the sailors knew that this was something supernatural, what was going on here.

There has to be a cause for this going on. They didn't just see it as a normal storm. There was something going on here. So they cast lots. Let's throw lots. And it comes up to Jonah, right?

And they get Jonah, and they say, Jonah, listen, and they ask him all these quick questions. What is it done? Who are you? What are you doing? Why is this happening? And then Jonah gives this seemingly great confession.

But actually, when you read between the lines, it's a very vague confession. And he really admits to very little. Jonah stands up and he says, I'm a Hebrew, and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

[30 : 02] Really? Really? I worship the Lord? And you're running away? You see, here's a man who has the right words. He's got the right creed, but his life doesn't match up to it, right?

And Jonah, actually, he really admits to very little. He wants to, you know, not really say what he's done at all. As a teacher, one of my greatest joys and greatest privileges is catching students out, right?

You know, I'm convinced that primary school kids think that their teachers are idiots. And so, you know, when you catch them, they know you know what they've done, right? And still, when you ask them, what did you do?

First thing out of their mouth, well, you know, Jack over there, he did it. He helped me. I had a bad breakfast this morning. I didn't go to sleep last night. They're always looking for an excuse, right?

They're trying to admit to as little as possible to avoid any trouble and any blame. And I just sensed Jonah, the one thing God wants Jonah to do is just own your stuff.

[31 : 14] Just own your stuff. You know, I did it. It was me. I'm a worm. That's it, right? Just own your stuff. And Jonah, he's kind of giving this vague confession.

And it gets down to his fourth step, and that is one of disaster. Jonah says, listen, the only way to solve this problem is you need to kill me.

You need to throw me overboard. And did Jonah do the right thing? Is Jonah doing the right thing when he said, throw me overboard?

See, I have a feeling that the one thing God was looking for was for Jonah to say, God, I will go to Nineveh. I will do this for you. Instead, Jonah, the great escape artist, wants to look for a way out.

And he says, you know, kill me. Just throw me overboard. That's my way out of here. Even death is better than going to Nineveh. Yes, it'll save you sailors, but just being.

[32 : 20] And God has to deal with Jonah. What was Jonah running away from? You see, I believe every Christian has their Nineveh.

A place that is hard. A place that is difficult. A place that you do not want to go to. A place that you certainly do not want to be a Christian in. You do not want to bring the gospel to a place like that.

Maybe it's your work and your colleagues. Maybe it's the business that you run. Maybe it's your family or your university or your school.

Everyone has their Nineveh that they're afraid to go to. But despite everything that was wrong with the people of Nineveh, God wanted to reach out to them.

And he wanted to use Jonah to do it. You see, at the center of the Christian faith is this word grace.

[33 : 29] And it's the one thing that makes us different to any other religion. Because every other religion says something like this. It says, do right.

Be right. Be holy. God will accept you. And then we get grace. And grace says, I accept you as you are.

Now that is great news to sinners. That is great news to sinners. That means my bad deeds, my sin needn't ever keep me away from God.

I don't need to be kept away from the presence of God. I can go to heaven. But there's another side to that too. It means that your good deeds will never be good enough to get you there either.

See, I have a feeling that that's really what Jonah was unhappy about, right? He certainly didn't like this idea that grace could be shown to bad people.

[34 : 36] See, the word grace comes in the Greek. It's this word charis, right? It just sounds like you're sick and you got flu when you say it, right? But it's a great word, charis.

And it literally means unmerited favor. In other words, you don't deserve it, right? It's favor that you don't deserve.

And Jonah's thinking, God, do you know about the Assyrians? They don't deserve your grace. But it's amazing that Jonah thought that he did, right?

And here is God showing Jonah. He says, Jonah, you know what? You need my grace. This prophet of God, this Jew who keeps the law, who knows God.

You need my grace as much as the bad guys do. As much as the murderers, the rapists, the plunderers, the healers, they need my grace.

[35 : 39] You see, throughout everywhere the gospel's being preached, it's always much easier to receive the gospel if you know that you are bad. Right?

It's when you think, well, you know, I'm pretty good. I'm certainly better than the next guy. That's when it becomes tough. And Isaiah tells us, he tells us, he says, my good deeds, the things that I've done right are like filthy rags.

And often when we talk about the Christian faith, we talk about repenting. Right? Repenting of the bad things you've done. But it's also repenting and letting go of the good things you've done.

Because that's often what keeps us away from God far more than the bad things we've done. And Jonah really needed to get this lesson. He needed God.

He needed God's grace as much as the Assyrians needed God's grace. Now listen, before we get too harsh with Jonah, I see myself in Jonah.

[36 : 49] You know, I want to run away from my Nineveh. I have run away from the many things God has asked of me and called me to. But it all comes down to this question today.

And the question is this. What has God asked of you that you are running away from? What has God asked of you that you are running away from?

I want to finish this morning with hope. Because the story ends with hope. It's the most amazing end to what we've read today. And that is, despite Jonah's disobedience, despite his distress, despite his disgrace, despite his disaster, God was still able to use Jonah.

He was still able to take all of that rubbish and turn it into something good. And we know that because the sailors, these were men that would have never come into contact with Jonah if he hadn't have run away.

They finished the story that we read today by making vows to the God of heaven and earth. Making vows mean they were making promises, declaring, giving their lives to the God who only exists, the only God.

[38 : 25] That would have happened if Jonah had gone straight away. And the same is true for me and it's true for you too.

In my disobedience, in my distress, in my disgrace, in my disaster, in all those things that are not good, God is able to take them and turn them for good.

And he's able to use you. You might think, you know what, Jonah was a bad guy and he blew it and he turned away from God. I've done far worse than Jonah. You know what? You can't outrun God.

Jonah tried and he failed. God ran ahead of Jonah and brought him face to face with himself and showed him what he really needed.

Jonah is a story of great grace. But it's an amazing story about a great God.

[39 : 26] I'd like to pray for you all this morning. So if you don't mind standing with me. Thank you. Thank you. Lord Jesus Christ, we come to you this morning with praise and thanksgiving.

We thank you that you are the maker of heaven and earth. We thank you that you are a God of power and a God of grace.

Father, I pray for all of us in this room. I pray that we not only learn from the book of Jonah and many of us will identify with him, Lord.

But Lord, that we will be filled with the same courage and the same boldness as he was to eventually turn to you and say, I will do what you've called me to do. I pray for those of us, me included, who are struggling with what God has called us to do.

I thank you that you are patient and you are kind. And Lord, above all, that you are gracious towards us and that you use us. You use our disasters and you turn them for good.

[40 : 50] I pray that we might be filled with boldness as we walk out of this meeting and we go into the world on a Monday morning. I pray, Lord Jesus, that we will face our Ninevehs knowing it's not anything that we do that's so great, but that we have God behind us, a God who fills us with grace and who wants to impart grace to other people.

Lord, I pray, use us. And I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.