**Jonah 1:10-17 10Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, “Why have you done this?” For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. 11Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?”—for the sea was growing more tempestuous. 12And 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 this great tempest *is* because of me.” 13Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. 14Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, “We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You.” 15So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows.**

We’re back with Jonah tonight. Recall that last week, the captain found Jonah in the belly of the ship sleeping. The sailors cast lots to find out which person the storm had come upon them for – who was the cause of this great tempest. The lot fell to Jonah and we left him in verse 9 - *So he said to them, “I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”*

Our decisions bear consequences. Jonah made a foolish decision to flee from God when God’s will and Jonah’s wishes conflicted. Decisions have consequences. Had Jonah accepted God’s call and gone to Ninevah, he’d have seen the sovereignty of God, seen repentance of the people, and presumably experienced less storms in his life.

Verse 10 says *Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, “Why have you done this?” For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.* We see here that Jonah admitted that he’d fled from God and God is pursuing him. The men were struck with reverential fear, awe. There’s no indication that any of these men worshipped God. In fact from verse 5, it seems that they’re calling on false gods to save them. Now they’re in the presence of the one true God.

Throughout the Bible, when men and women are faced with God or His angels, we see fear. I cannot imagine the sight of seeing an angel or being in God’s presence. It made Moses face glow to be in God’s presence and the people were afraid. When angels appeared throughout the Bible, the believer is told to “Fear not”. The message to believers – fear not. Unbelievers have much to fear and much to dread, but believers have nothing to fear, nothing to dread.

Verse 11 *Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?”—for the sea was growing more tempestuous.*Now remember, in verse 4 the storm was described as a mighty tempest that threatened to break the ship into pieces. Now we read that the sea was growing even more tempestuous. Just when the sailors didn’t think it could get any worse, God moved it up a notch.

Look at the way the men are treating the very one that the lot fell to and who admitted that he was the cause of their trouble - what shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us? They could have just grabbed him and cast him into the sea, but instead they inquired. No rush to judgement, no emotional reaction, but genuine concern. The world could learn a lesson or two from these men. We don’t give up on our brother in a time of storm. We don’t throw our sister away to make our life easier. If the person was worthwhile before the storm, they are worthwhile during the storm. Character is sticking with someone during the storm until we know God’s will.

Verse 12 - *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 this great tempest is because of me.”*Jonah says – sacrifice me. Jonah realizes that God is seeking Jonah and dealing with Jonah for his rebellion. God’s problem is not with these men. Jonah had every reason to believe that he would die if he was cast into the sea, but he was honest – we see the start of a change in Jonah here. He was not willing to sacrifice for the people of Nineveh, but he is willing to die to save these men. Doing the right thing is not always easy, but it is always right. This is true character and a glimpse of the man God saw even while he protested going to Nineveh. God sees character that sometimes even we don’t see in ourselves. He sees love and compassion, even as we shake our head. God looks upon the heart to choose his servants, and we see this here with Jonah.

Verse 13*Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them.* Jonah just said – throw me overboard, save yourselves. Again, we have every reason to believe that all these men were pagans, but look at their commitment, their compassion for Jonah. He was Hebrew, they were not, but they had compassion on him. Do we share that same compassion for those caught in a storm who are not like us? Does our heart break for the unsaved, the lost, the hate-filled? Would God say we are working as hard at giving the unsaved hope as these men worked to bring Jonah safely to shore?

Verse 14 - *Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, “We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You.”*The sea is getting more and more violent. The men see that they can resist God all they want and nothing will come of it. It reminds me of the words of Gamaliel in Acts 5 *And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.”* If we’re rowing and nothing is coming of it, the question becomes – are we working against God’s plan? They pray and ask God – don’t let us die, but please don’t hold us responsible for “innocent” blood. They’re caught in a quandary. What if they’d thrown Jonah in and the sea kept right on rolling? We know how the story turned out, but remember, we’re the ones reading the story, not the ones rowing the boat. Often, we cry out to God, not knowing what to do. Faith is taking that step even when we can’t see. Ultimately, God is Sovereign and His Plan will be accomplished.

Verse 15 *So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.*It was God’s will that Jonah be cast into the sea. God knew that Jonah would flee before Jonah fled. God knew he would be in the belly of a ship before Jonah boarded. God sent the storm, and every stroke of the oar as the men struggled to get Jonah to shore brought Jonah closer to the belly of the great fish. They picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea… and the sea ceased from raging. Life can be like that too. God is waiting for us to finally let go and stop resisting His will. The rain will beat down, the waves will crash, the wind will rage… until we cast away our desires and embrace God’s will. The same God that brings the raging storm can provide the peaceful sea, but it’s in keeping with His will… not ours. The storm was God’s will for Jonah’s life… so was the peaceful sea. God holds us in both places.

Verse 16 *Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows.* We don’t know where these men ended up or how this changed their lives. Was this a momentary thing or life altering? We don’t know. God knows. These men sail on, having to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

Tonight, lets take away these 3 truths from these verses in Jonah – First, God is sovereign in our lives – He doesn’t need our agreement, only our obedience. Second, God works all things for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. Jonah was called according to a purpose – we’ll soon see God work all this for good and, in so doing save an entire city from wrath. Third, when life seems out of control, we can rest knowing the Lord is near and working in our lives… As the ship sails away, the storm is over for the men, but the adventure for Jonah is just beginning. We’ll pick him up again on November 8th, Lord willing.