

# The Drowning Disciple

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well if we could for a short while with the Lord's help and enabling if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the book of the prophet Jonah, the book of Jonah chapter one and we just read again from the beginning.

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amethai, saying, Arise go to Nineveh, that great city and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.

But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Job and found a ship going to Tarshish, so he paid the fare and went on board to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea and there was a mighty tempest on the sea so that the ship threatened to break up.

You know when Jonah reached the pier at Jobah and when he paid the fare and boarded the ship heading for Tarshish, surely Jonah knew that what he was doing was wrong.

[ 1 : 19 ] And even when the ropes were being cast off from the pier, they were being thrown onto the boat and the ship's sails, they were catching the Easterly breeze, surely then Jonah thought to himself, I've made a mistake.

And even as the ship was heading out west towards Tarshish, cutting through the Mediterranean Sea and with Job and the land of Israel in the far distance, surely then Jonah thought to himself, the Lord is not going to be happy with this.

I've made a mistake. I should really go back. But no, we look here and we see that Jonah wasn't for turning back. Jonah was determined in his disobedience to the Lord.

Because as we saw last week when we introduced ourselves to Jonah, we saw that Jonah was a disobedient disciple. Jonah was a disobedient disciple. But if you remember from last week, the name Jonah means dove.

And when the dove is mentioned in the Bible, it's mentioned as a messenger, as the Lord's messenger. And that's what Jonah was meant to be. Jonah was meant to be a dove. Jonah was meant to be the Lord's messenger.

[ 2 : 31 ] But Jonah was a disobedient dove. Because when the word of the Lord came to this dove, this dove refused to listen. And in many ways, as we mentioned last week, he was like his prophetic predecessors, Elijah and Elisha, where the Lord called and he commissioned and he commanded Jonah to bring a message of judgment.

And that message of judgment, it was to provoke repentance. And it was also to proclaim the Lord's grace and mercy. Jonah was like his prophetic predecessors.

But he was also unlike them. He was unlike Elijah and Elisha. Because you remember Elijah and Elisha, they were called to proclaim their message of judgment to the covenant king.

They were to proclaim the message of judgment to the Lord's covenant people. But Jonah, Jonah was called and commanded and commissioned to go 500 miles east and cross the border away from the land of Israel and travel all the way to the ungodly city of Nineveh.

And as we saw before, the city of Nineveh, it was situated in modern day Mosul, which is northern Iraq. And it's said that actually Jonah's tomb is in Mosul.

[ 3 : 51 ] It was destroyed by ISIS, the terrorist group in 2014. But they say that Jonah's tomb is there. But when Jonah went to Nineveh first of all, Nineveh was this large and wealthy city.

Nineveh was a mighty fortress. It was a key city in the ever expanding Assyrian Empire. But Nineveh, it wasn't just renowned for its strength. It was also renowned for its sin.

The people of Nineveh, they hated the Lord. And they hated the Lord's people. And their hatred of the Lord and his people made them exploit people.

And they were merciless when it came to war. They were, they partook in idolatry. They committed prostitution. They proclaimed witchcraft and they were extremely proud in all of their achievements, everything that they did.

And of course, their sin, it angered the Lord, which is why the Lord was calling Jonah to go and preach this message of judgment to them. But as we know Jonah, when he arose, he arose not to follow the Lord's call, but to flee from the Lord's call.

[ 5 : 00 ] And as a disobedient disciple, Jonah would very quickly become a drowning disciple. But you know, having introduced ourselves to Jonah last week, I just want us to consider the rest of this opening chapter by noticing just three things about Jonah.

Three things about Jonah, Jonah's conscience, Jonah's confession and Jonah's Christ. Jonah's conscience, Jonah's confession and Jonah's Christ.

So we see first of all, Jonah's conscience in verse three. But Jonah rose to flee to Tashish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Jobba and found a ship going to Tashish.

So he paid the fare and went on board to go with them to Tashish away from the presence of the Lord. But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea and there was a mighty tempest on the sea so that the ship threatened to break up.

And you know, reading this, you would have thought that Jonah, who had been called and set apart to the office, a high office of being a prophet, you would have thought that Jonah would be a willing and obedient servant.

[ 6 : 10 ] But you know, what Jonah's experience ought to always remind us is what J.C. Ryle said long ago, the best of men are only men at best.

Because when the Lord placed this call upon Jonah's life to go to Nineveh, Jonah fled and he fled to Tashish. The narrative emphasizes the direction that Jonah was traveling in away from the presence of the Lord.

The narrative emphasizes that Jonah was going to Tashish because we're told three times in verse three, Jonah rose to flee to Tashish from the presence of the Lord.

He went down to Jobba and found a ship going to Tashish. So he paid the fare and went on board to go with them to Tashish away from the presence of the Lord.

There's this emphasis upon Jonah going in the opposite direction as to where he was called to go. Jonah was meant to go east, but instead he decided to go west towards Tashish.

[ 7 : 11 ] Now, it's not exactly clear where Tashish was, but we know that Tashish was a place that ships traveled and they traded goods because the ships of Tashish, they're mentioned again and again in the Bible.

They're mentioned in Psalm 48 and they're also mentioned in Psalm 72. But what's interesting is that the name Tashish means refinery.

And if we consider the words of Psalm 72, we're told that the kings of Tashish, they sent ships full of gold and they sent these ships full of gold as gifts to King Solomon.

And from that we could probably conclude that Tashish was known for refining gold. Tashish had built its reputation in the ancient world for being a gold refinery.

And you know, it's interesting that Jonah wanted to travel to Tashish. He wanted to go to the place called refinery. But when Jonah acted as a disobedient disciple, he was actually entering the Lord's refinery.

[ 8 : 17 ] Because as soon as Jonah set sail from Joppa, we see that the Lord began this process, this process of refining Jonah's life and refining his life from all the dross of being a disobedient disciple.

And for Jonah, it was going to be a painful process, especially because refining, as you know, it usually took place in a hot furnace. But Jonah, he was going to be refined in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

And you know, my friend, looking at Jonah's experience and even looking at ourselves, we must never forget that the Lord wants what's best for us because he knows what's best for us.

He knows what's best for us even when we think otherwise. And you know, the Bible reminds us so often, the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and he justifies every son whom he receives.

And that's what the writer to the Hebrews says that what son is there, what son is there whom his father does not discipline. Therefore we should always see the discipline of the Lord.

[ 9 : 30 ] We should see that the discipline of the Lord is for our good. It's for our growth, but ultimately it's for the Lord's glory. The discipline of the Lord is for our good.

It's for our growth, but it's ultimately for the Lord's glory. And needless to say, there are times in our lives when the Lord will discipline us and the Lord will discipline us for maybe different reasons, maybe for our disobedience, maybe for our pride, our worldliness, our apathy, our arrogance.

The Lord will discipline us, but when we're under the discipline of the Lord, we must always understand that it's for our good. It's ultimately for his glory and it's for our growth.

In fact, the word discipline, it's the same root word that the word disciple comes from. And that's why the Lord disciplines us. He loves his disciples.

The Lord disciplines us because he loves his disciples. And for Jonah, Jonah was entering the Lord's refinery as a disobedient disciple.

[ 10 : 34 ] And the Lord begins this refining process by hurling a violent storm upon the sea. That's what we're told in verse four. The Lord hurled a great wind. It wasn't anyone else, but the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea and there was a mighty tempest on the sea so that the ship threatened to break up.

And you know, with the storm raging now in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea and it's threatening to thwart this voyage to Tashish and even destroy the ship that Jonah is on, we're told there in verse five that the mariners are afraid.

They're afraid. Of course, these men, they were hardened sea men. They knew the seas. They faced many storms in their life, but this was different.

This was different. This was a storm that they weren't prepared for, especially because it wouldn't have been the season for sea storms. There was a season to sail through the Mediterranean, but there was also a season you should never sail.

And this wasn't a season for sea storms. And it seems that the sailors, they were afraid because they came to realize that this storm was divine in nature, which is why they all begin to pray to their own God.

[ 11 : 51 ] We're told in verse five, then the mariners were afraid and each cried out to his God. And you know, what's, what's interesting is that most of the sailors here who are crying out to their God, they would have been Canaanites and the Canaanites, they worshiped Baal.

And Baal was known to be the God of the weather. Baal was said to be the God who was in control of all the seasons. You worshiped Baal and you offered sacrifices to Baal if you wanted rain for your crops.

You worshiped Baal and offered him a sacrifice if you wanted calm seas for your voyage. But when these sailors prayed, as you would expect, Baal wasn't listening.

For Baal, as we know, he was just a voiceless dumb idol. Baal wasn't like Jonah's God. And very quickly they realized that their efforts of prayer were of no use.

So the sailors, they give up praying, they give up praying to Baal and they go down into the hold of the ship and they decide, well, we need to start throwing some cargo overboard.

[ 12 : 58 ] And no doubt the ship had left Joppa heavy laden with goods to trade over in Tarshish. But the sailors, they're desperate to lighten the ship so that she wouldn't be swamped by water.

And as they go down into the hold, who do they find asleep? But Jonah, let me see that in verse six. Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and he was asleep.

So the captain came and sent to him, what do you mean you sleeper? Arise, call out to your God. Perhaps the God will give a thought to us that we may not perish.

And you know, as Jonah hears the captain shouting in his ear and he's just coming round, Jonah, he's oblivious to all that's going on around him.

He's oblivious to the storm. He's oblivious to the chaos that the sailors are facing. And even the sailors knew that this was a divine storm. But Jonah seems to be oblivious to it all.

[ 13 : 59 ] In fact, when the captain asks Jonah to pray to his God, Jonah says nothing. He doesn't pray. Jonah does nothing.

He doesn't say anything. He doesn't even do anything about the storm. Jonah only begins to speak about the Lord. We'll see this shortly. He only begins to speak about the Lord when he's prompted to confess that he knows the Lord.

Other than that, Jonah doesn't open his mouth. And you know what we have to draw out from these verses is that Jonah was in a very bad place spiritually because Jonah was not only a disobedient

disciple, but in many ways, Jonah had silenced his conscience.

Because when we read verse three, verse three is a key version of this chapter. When you read verse three, we're told twice that Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord and we're told even three times that he was going to Tarshish, the very opposite direction of where he was commanded to go. But when you're fleeing from the presence of the Lord, that's never a good thing. It's never a good thing to disobey the Lord. It's never a good thing to flee from the presence of the Lord. It's never a good thing to step outside the will of God.

[ 15 : 17 ] And sad to say, this prophet of the Lord was moving further and further and further away from the Lord. And you know, Jonah as a prophet, a servant of the Lord, he should be yet another reminder to us that the Lord's servants, the Lord's servants aren't exempt from sin and they are not exempt from spiritual shipwreck.

Because we're told here in verse three, we're told twice that he fled from the presence of the Lord. We're told three times that he was going to Tarshish away from the direction he was called. But we're also told in verse three that Jonah went down.

He went down to Joppa. And when he boarded the ship, he went down into the hold. And when the sailors came to throw some cargo overboard, we're told that Jonah was down in the inner part of the ship.

And what the narrative is emphasizing to us is that Jonah's movement away from the Lord was down, down, down. And you could say that Jonah was actually sinking, sinking downwards long before he ever hit the water.

Jonah went down, down, down. And it was once said, never think that you're freest from danger when you're furthest from Christ.

[ 16 : 46 ] Never think that you're freest from danger when you're furthest from Christ. And it's a warning to all of us not to disobey God's word or to silence our conscience.

Because we do it so easily and we can enter into that downward spiral away from the presence of the Lord very, very quickly. We can move away from the Lord by crowding other things into our life and crowding out the Lord.

We can move away from the Lord by even very simply by the things we watch, the things we listen to, the things we're taking in, even where we go and what we do. We can silence our conscience and move away from the Lord by being a disobedient disciple.

And the thing is, we know what's right and what's wrong because, well, we have the Bible. We also have the Spirit who has awakened our conscience.

The Lord has given us a conscience. And we know if we're in a good place or a bad place spiritually, because the Lord has given us a conscience.

[ 17 : 58 ] But what's frightening about this prophet of the Lord is that he silenced his conscience to sleep. And my friend never think that you're free is from danger when you're furthest from Christ.

That was Jonah's conscience. That was the mess he was in. But you know, even though Jonah's conscience was sleeping, it was awakened when Jonah had to make a confession.

That's what we see. Secondly, Jonah's confession. So Jonah's conscience and Jonah's confession. Look at verse seven, and they said to one another, Come, let us cast lots that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.

So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where have you come? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you? And 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. You know, Jonah had moved so far away from the presence of the Lord that he didn't even confess to know the Lord, let alone be a prophet of the Lord.

[ 19 : 08 ] When the captain asked him to pray, he kept silent. Jonah's confession had only come when he was prompted. When he was prompted by the sailors, Jonah's confession only came when the lot fell to him.

Now casting lots in the ancient world was very similar to rolling a dice. You had two little stones, just like two dice.

And these stones, they both had one side, there was a light color and the other side was a dark color. And when the stones were thrown, when you were shaking the stones in your hand, you would ask a question and then the lot was cast.

For example, you'd ask the question, is this storm Jonah's fault? If both stones landed on a dark color, the answer was no. If both stones landed on a light color, the answer was yes.

If one stone landed on a light color and the other stone landed on a dark color, no answer was being given. Now casting lots, it wasn't forbidden in the Bible, but it was only ever used in certain circumstances in order to discover the will of God.

[ 20 : 14 ] And that's how it's put in Proverbs 16. The lot is cast into the lap, but it's every decision is from the Lord.

And that's what we see here, because when the sailors cast lots to find out which person on the ship had caused this storm, the lot falls on Jonah.

And with that, the sailors, they're straight into his face and they're asking Jonah, they start firing questions at Jonah straight away. They say, tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where have you come from? What is your country? What people are you? These sailors, they're afraid and they're agitated because of the storm and they want to know why Jonah has brought this chaos into their life.

Because these sailors, you could say that they were put into a life and death situation due to Jonah's disobedience, not theirs. They were put in a life and death situation because of Jonah's disobedience.

[ 21 : 16 ] And you know, even that should remind us that when we act as disobedient disciples, it will also affect the lives of those around us.

Like Jonah, our disobedient actions will have consequences and maybe even casualties for those who are just innocent bystanders.

My friend, our disobedient actions, whether they're public or private, they will always affect the lives of others and even those whom we love.

Therefore, we must remember that if we're going to be a disobedient disciple, if we're going to be disobedient, we must first of all consider the consequences and even the casualties of our actions. Because you know, what we see here is that our character, our conduct and our conversation, it must reflect our confession. Our character, conduct and conversation, it must reflect our confession.

[ 22 : 21 ] And that's one thing that couldn't be said of Jonah. His character, his conduct and even his conversation, it didn't reflect his confession because it was only when Jonah was inundated by the sailors questions that he confessed finally that he's a prophet of the Lord.

He says in verse nine, I am a Hebrew. I fear the Lord, the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land. And you know, when the sailors heard Jonah's confession, the first thing they say is, they say, what have you done?

They're filled with the fear of God. They're asking Jonah, what have you done? What have you done? And with the storm getting stronger, the sailors, they're asking Jonah, well, what shall we do with you in order to make this storm quiet and down?

And Jonah says in verse 12, pick me up, hurl me into the sea, then the sea will quiet down for you. For I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.

Jonah's confession, it actually went further than just knowing the Lord. Jonah confessed there that it's all his fault. It's my fault that all this has happened.

[ 23 : 40 ] Jonah knew that the only way for the storm to calm down was for the sailors to throw him overboard. But notice what the sailors do in verse 13, even though they hear Jonah's command to throw him overboard, they say, we're told, nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

The sailors tried their utmost to preserve Jonah's life, but they couldn't. They knew that this divine storm would only come to an end when Jonah was thrown overboard.

And so what do these ungodly sailors do? These ungodly sailors who had spent their whole life worshipping Baal, the God of the weather whom they thought was the God of the weather.

What do these sailors do? What do they do? We're told in verse 14 onwards, they worship the Lord, the covenant God of his people.

That's what they do. They worship the Lord, the covenant God of his people. That's the title that's used in capital letters, L-O-R-D, the title for the covenant God, the one who keeps covenant.

[ 24 : 49 ] We're told in verse 14, they all called out to the Lord, oh Lord, let us not perish for this man's life and lay not on us innocent blood for you, oh Lord, have done as it pleased you.

So they picked up Jonah, hurled him into the sea and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

They worshiped the Lord, the covenant God of his people. Last Sunday evening, my good friend Donald was in Bonny Barvis and I was down in Sunny Bove.

Down in Bove, we were considering Sam 29. I don't know what he was preaching on in Barvis, but we were considering Sam 29. In Sam 29, David calls everyone everywhere to ascribe glory to the Lord, the Lord, the covenant making and covenant keeping God.

In Sam 29, David said that when we look at the weather and consider the strength of the wind and even the heat of the sun and the noise of the thunder and the flash of lightning and the downpour of the rain and even the whiteness of the snow, David said that when we look at the weather and even when we talk about the weather, which is something we do without even thinking, David says that when we look at the weather, the weather should lead us to worship.

[ 26 : 18 ] The weather should lead us to worship. And that's what we see here with these sailors. The weather led them to worship. They looked at the storm, the storm that was suddenly changed into a calm and the weather led them to worship and they worship not Baal whom they had bowed down to for many years.

They worshiped the Lord, the covenant making and covenant keeping God. They worship the one who makes promises and keeps his promises. He is the Lord, the one who keeps covenant. That's who these sailors turned to in worship and the weather led them to worship. And you know, what's remarkable is that Jonah was meant to confess the name of the Lord, but instead the sailors here, they're confessing the name of the Lord.

Jonah was meant to worship the Lord, but instead the sailors were the ones who were worshipping the Lord. Jonah was meant to proclaim the name of the Lord. That was his calling, but instead it's the sailors who are proclaiming the name of the Lord.

And you know, the irony of all this is that Jonah was running away from Nineveh. He was meant to be going to Nineveh, which was an ungodly city, but Jonah thought that they didn't deserve the Lord's salvation.

[ 27 : 33 ] And yet Jonah, he gets onto a boat full of ungodly sailors and they're all converted. And you know, it should remind us that is anything too hard for the Lord.

Jonah refused to go to Nineveh to preach a message of repentance. And yet he gets onto a boat, doesn't preach a word and everyone on it is converted.

Is anything too hard for the Lord? But you know, I want to say that some people may look at Jonah's disobedience and say that it was okay for Jonah to be disobedient because well, disciples came out of Jonah's disobedience.

Some people might say that in the Lord's providence, these ungodly sailors were converted and they were brought to worship the Lord all because of Jonah's disobedience.

Some might look at the end result, which is a great result, and then conclude, well, it must have been okay for Jonah to be disobedient because good came out of it.

[ 28 : 39 ] But you know, my friend, we must never think that the end justifies the means. We must never ignore the Lord's commands and just flippantly say, well, all things work together for good.

Because even as we said last week, we can often misread and misuse the Lord's providence. We can misread and misuse the Lord's providence, but providence never contradicts the word of God. Providence only ever compliments the word of God. Providence never contradicts the word of God. Providence only ever compliments the word of God. And Jonah's providence, it was contradicting the word of God.

The Lord said, go to Nineveh. But Jonah's providence was that he was being a disobedient disciple. He was on his way to Tarshish. And yet through Jonah's providence, the Lord converted these sailors into dedicated disciples.

So let's never look at this and fall into the trap of thinking that the end justified the means. The end doesn't justify the means.

[ 29 : 53 ] But then they come to this well-known verse that everyone remembers, the last verse. The Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

And I just wanted to see that in this version, in the passage as a whole, we're enabled to see Jonah's Christ. That's what we see lastly. We've considered Jonah's conscience, Jonah's

confession.

And then lastly, Jonah's Christ. Jonah's Christ, the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Now we mentioned last week that when we were introducing ourselves to Jonah, we saw that the story of Jonah is actually about Jesus and the message of the gospel.

Because Jonah, he shouldn't just be seen as this man who ran away from God and was then swallowed by a big fish. Jonah should be seen, not all the time, but he should be seen as a type of Christ.

[ 31 : 01 ] And the book of Jonah as a whole should make us realise the preciousness of the gospel. And in this opening chapter, a wonderful chapter, we can certainly see comparisons and contrasts between Jonah and Jesus.

Because as we're told in the opening verse, Jonah was the son of Amitai. And as a family, the Amitai family, they were from a place called Gath Heifer.

And Jonah's home village of Gath Heifer, it was only a few miles north of Jesus's home village of Nazareth. In fact, both Jonah and Jesus, you could say they were Galileans.

They were both from the region of Galilee. And Jonah was the only Old Testament prophet from Galilee. And Jonah was the only Old Testament prophet that Jesus ever compared himself to.

And we can draw out some comparisons and even contrasts between this chapter and what we read in Mark chapter four. But you know, one glaring contrast between Jonah and Jesus was that Jonah was on a ship because he stepped outside the will of God.

[ 32 : 13 ] Jesus was on a boat because he was always within the will of God. He was always carrying out the will of God. But Jonah and Jesus, they were on a voyage and they were on a voyage in a storm.

They were both sailing with seasoned sailors. They were both there when the wind rose up and the storm broke. Both of them were asleep in their boat.

Both had sailors that were afraid. But you know, when Jonah was asleep in the hold and Jesus was asleep in the stern, we're told that Jonah, he awoke in the sailors, they were looking for answers.

And then Jonah confessed that he was running away from God. But when Jesus awoke in the stern, he commanded the wind to cease and the waves to stop. And then he told them that he is God.

But you know, there's one comparison. I think it's a fascinating comparison between Jonah and Jesus. I just want us to close with us.

[ 33 : 15 ] And it's the direction they both went. We read earlier that Jonah went down. Jonah went down to Joppa. He went down into the ship and then he went down into the hold.

And Jonah's movement, it was down, down, down until he was finally down in the belly of the whale. And remarkably, that was the same movement as Jesus.

Jesus's movement was down, down, down. His movement of humiliation was down, down, down from the crown of glory to the cradle in Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary.

Jesus's movement was down, down, down, cross, crown, cradle, cross. Jesus humbled himself from glory to Golgotha to the grave.

It was an act of humiliation. He went down, down, down. And what's amazing is that Jesus compares his death and burial to that of Jonah.

[ 34 : 16 ] Of all people, Jonah. He says, just as Jonah was in, was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

So Jonah, although he wasn't all the time, he was and he still is a type of Christ. But you know, although Jonah was a disobedient disciple who became a drowning disciple, he should still be viewed as a type of Christ because the story of Jonah, as we'll see in the coming weeks, the story of Jonah is actually about Jesus and the gospel.

And so that's our first chapter of Jonah. Jonah's conscience, Jonah's confession and Jonah's Christ and God willing, next time, we'll see more of Jonah and his Christ.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for the wonder of salvation, that art the God who is able to work in our lives and draw us to thyself.

O Lord, we confess that how often we are like Jonah, we are those who are disobedient, we are not walking as we should, we feel distant from the Lord.

[ 35 : 36 ] O Lord, we pray that thou werest teach us, even discipline us, and remind us, Lord, even in discipline, that it is for our good, it is for our growth, and ultimately for thine own glory.

Lord bless us, we pray, we confess, Lord, that we need thee at every moment in our lives. And Lord help us, even in the storms of life, to know that thou art the God who is still with us, the one who promises never to leave us, never to forsake us, the one who is always there upholding us by his own righteous right hand, and the God who is working all things together for good, to those who love God and those who are called according to his purpose.

O Lord, help us then, we pray, to walk in the ways of righteousness, ever looking to Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. Bless us then, we pray, bless us, we ask, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen.