

Adult SS - Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet-3

Jonah's response to God's command

Introduction:

Last week we were introduced to Jonah the son of Amittai. We learned of the command that God gave to Jonah. We see in this command that God chose to give an explanation to Jonah concerning this command. Surely the Ninevites would have been destroyed in the time frame Jonah prophesied (3:4) had they not repented. In this, we are also to understand **that there is nothing that takes place in God's universe that is hidden from Him or unknown.**

We see also in this command **that we have a role to fulfill in this world.**

The prophets call and purpose was to speak on behalf of God. The prophet was to communicate His message, and the message in this case was to "...cry against..." that great city. Though you and I may not be called to deliver the same message that Jonah was to deliver, we certainly have a message that we have been commissioned to give.

This message was to be _____ and _____.

Ephesians 5:11-13 *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather **reprove them**. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light."*

Joseph Parker (Contemporary with Charles Spurgeon 1830-1902 and was known for extemporaneous oratory) had this to say, "**Do suppose not that Jonah is a lonely creature afar off in the ages somewhere, having an experience unique and incommunicable. The experience of Jonah is the experience of every good man. What is your call in life? To go wherever wickedness is and cry against it.**" [Emphasis Mine]

If Jonah is in his hometown (Gath-hepher is just southwest of the Sea of Galilee situated by Nazareth) then Nineveh would be north east of his location. Jonah would need to travel **500-600 miles** to get to Nineveh. (Depending on available routes). Make note that Jonah designed to travel in the opposite direction; 2000 miles to the west!



NINEVEH VERSUS TARSHISH

Understanding how far Jonah would have to travel shows us that _____ is required in our service to the Lord.

Many who would serve the Lord would like to **skip the preparation or the sacrifice** and serve the Lord when convenient.

Exceptional duty requires exceptional sacrifice.

Think about the statement that Lord made to those wishing to be his disciples:

Luke 14:25-33 “25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, 26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to

finish. 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

If you chose to walk the path God would have you to take, there is a possibility that you may find that road lonely.

Though physically as a Christian following after Christ we may be alone, **spiritually** we enjoy sweet communion with God in the path of service and obedience to Him.

Paul communication this to Timothy to encourage and equip him:

II Timothy 4:16,17 *“At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. **Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me**; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”*

Though Jonah would have had a long way to travel, he would not have been alone.

A. The Word of the LORD Came v1-2

B. The Prophet Rose Up to Flee v3-7

The Bible tells us, (vs 3) *“**But Jonah** rose up to flee....”*

This single word ‘but’ brings Jonah into opposition with the Word of God. What a terrific circumstance Jonah is about to find himself in!

Who is responsible for Jonah’s disobedience to the Lord?

Who is responsible for our disobedience to the Lord?

Was there contemplation in this move? No doubt. For before actions can be taken there must be thought.

*“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.” **Matthew 15:18***

Jonah 4:2 “2 *And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.*”

The simplest thing for Jonah to do **was to quit**. To resign his post as a prophet. He determined to get away from God’s people and His calling.

I do not believe that Jonah thought He could “run” away from God.

The Scriptures clearly speak to the omnipresence of God. **Psalm 139:7-8** for example state, “8 *If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.*”

When we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior we are immediately indwelt by the Holy Spirit; God’s precious presence. (**II Corinthians 1:22,23; Ephesians 1:13, 4:22-23**)

We are immediately born-again (**John 3:1-8; I Peter 1:23; I John 5:1**). We are immediately translated from the kingdom of darkness to God’s kingdom. We are immediately enlisted in the battle that rages as a good Soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. (**II Timothy 2:4**)

Being born-again we cannot give-up our calling. We are sealed until the day of redemption.

Albert Barnes had this to say about this curiosity of Jonah fleeing from God, “**he acted, as people often do, who dislike God’s commands. He set about removing himself as far as possible from being under the influence of God, and from the place where he “could” fulfill them.**”

“**Observe the misconduct of the prophet Jonah. He had a plain command from the Lord, and he knew it to be a command, but he felt that the commission given him would not be pleasant and honoring to himself so he declined to comply with it. We see from his action how some who really know God may act as if they did not know him. What strange inconsistencies there often are even in good men! Here is one who is favored with a divine commission—one who knows God and fears him—yet, for all that, he ventures on the fool’s errand of endeavoring to escape from the omnipresent One.**” - Charles Spurgeon

A spiritual departure will eventually result in an outward manifestation.

He departed at once into disobedience.

This disobedience would bring consequences.

What about the consequence of a broken fellowship with God?

What about a diminished if not blinded ability to see truth?

What about a doubt that is cast upon one's own salvation?

What about the havoc that is wrought upon the conscience of one who has transgressed what he knows to be true?

What about the variance and enmity that experienced towards others that are walking in the light? The friction that exists and the conviction that makes one miserable.

“He lost God’s voice, for now God had to speak to him in a storm. He lost his spiritual energy and went to sleep in the hold of the ship. He lost his power in prayer, and even his desire to pray. The heathen were praying, but Jonah was sleeping. He lost his testimony with the men on the ship, and he lost his influence for good, because he was the cause of the storm. He also almost lost his life. But how patient and long-suffering the Lord was with him.” - Warren Wiersbe

“A man can do nothing right if he is wrong with God.” - Joseph Parker

God gives us in this account the sure record that you and I are not devoid of free will, nor were the prophets of old. **But choices are before us.**