

Jonah Chapter 1

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. ³ But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so, he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Simple points, God wants to use Jonah to warn the city to repent and turn around from their wicked ways. However, Jonah has other ideas and heads in the opposite direction. He certainly must know he can't actually run from the presence of God, but he is running from what God wants him to do. Perhaps his thinking is if he can get as far away as possible logistically and in physical distance from his assignment, that one or more things will happen:

- He won't have to do or obey what God wants him to do.
- Nineveh won't repent or be saved from God's judgement.

David Guzik sites Charles Spurgeon's comments about moving off impulse.

"Now, I very commonly meet with persons who say, 'I felt that I must do so and so. It came upon me that I must do so and so.' I am afraid of these impulses - very greatly afraid of them. People may do right under their power, but they will spoil what they do by doing it out of mere impulse, and not because the action was right in itself." (Spurgeon)

- *An impulse may lay claim to freedom, yet be wrong (wasn't Jonah free to go to Tarshish?)*
- *An impulse can make us do to God or others what we would never want to be done to our self*
- *Many people take their inner impulses and say, "The Lord told me this or that." This is dangerous even when it doesn't seem so immediately. To the law and to the testimony, should be your cry, and you may not appeal to inward movements and impulses." (Spurgeon)*

We really can't escape God's presence, Psalm 139:7-10.

⁴ But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. ⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

Jonah's disobedience and run from God has now placed those around him in danger. Some key observations:

- No matter how hard he tried, he could not hide from the Lord.
- God commands natural events to occur to hinder Jonah's escape and continued disobedience.
- Even though it looks like God is about to destroy, we see his mercy in that the ship was in great danger but not yet broken. Question – why didn't God just go ahead and sink it...what do you

think He is waiting for or trying to achieve? Because He is long suffering....trying to give you time to get yourself together (class input).

- The sailors must be aware that something supernatural is happening and working against them since they are afraid and turn to their gods for help. They know this was no ordinary storm.
- They throw goods and possessions overboard in their own efforts to save themselves to make the weight lighter.
- Jonah is chill while all this is going on. He is totally unaware it seems that he is in danger or that he has caused others to suffer distress and significant loss as a result of his actions.

Application for today:

Our decisions do indeed impact others. When we are disobedient and/or moving outside the will of God, it will often have a negative impact on others around us.

When we become comfortable disobeying the will of God, there is a false sense of security when actually, we are clueless of the danger we are in or the fact that we are causing others to suffer greatly.

When you start to experience supernatural things out of the ordinary happening around you, it may be a good sign to start crying out to God and asking what is the cause for all this.

It is often when you find yourself in life and death decisions, that you realize what you thought was very important and valuable in life, is really something that you can live without and may not be as important as you originally thought.

Sometimes, in fact very often, we find that all our wisdom, experience, skills and efforts, may still not be enough to get us out of tough situations.

⁶So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

Notice the depth of Jonah's rebellion here. When he does wake up and is informed of the dire circumstances, he does nothing to alleviate the problem and tough times for those folks around him.

This is a sad example of a Christian today. It is still possible for anointed and mature believers even today, to be so stuck in their own desires and plans, that they will do nothing to assist those who they can see are struggling around them. Perhaps it is even worse for a believer to know they are the cause for the troubles others are suffering and still be quietly okay with this situation. I believe the condition still happens daily around us.

David Guzik – Sleeping Christians snooze on while the world needs their message and testimony. Sleeping Christians are in danger, but don't know it.

⁷And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. ⁸Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

Rather than confess and repent and come clean by taking responsibility, Jonah appears to wait to be caught. People will still hold out today as things close in around them, and rather than surrender, place their last hope in not getting caught rather than place their hope in the God of mercy and grace.

The crew wants to know the reason for this trouble happening and assume rightly that Jonah knows why. They want to know what his job is and where he came from, and what type of folks he belongs to. I can only imagine that they think the answers will confirm their suspicions. Perhaps they assume Jonah must be involved in some kind criminal activity and just got out of jail, and probably comes from the rough side of town, and from a family of crooks.

⁹ And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. ¹⁰ Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him. Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

Jonah's response is that he is a Hebrew....perhaps they know something about these people and their God. Notice he seems to proclaim boldly that he fears the great God of heaven who controls everything and is even the Master of the situation or storm they are now in. These are powerful words....the problem is Jonah doesn't appear to be living up to them. If he truly feared God like that, why does he show no fear in disobeying this great God?

Notice how the lost in this example have more fear demonstrated than the believer.....they are afraid while Jonah is still talking a good game.

"If you do a wrong thing in the rightest way in which it can be done, it does not make it right. If you go contrary to the Lord's will, even though you do it in the most decent, and, perhaps, in the most devout manner, it is, nevertheless, sinful, and it will bring you under condemnation."
(Spurgeon)

Finally, we have the key question to get to the root cause....why has Jonah done this? Why is he running from what God told him to do (disobedient)?

Commentaries indicate several possible reasons; fear, task too difficult, rejection, possibly didn't want them to be saved since they were evil and pagan, his nationality, etc.

- It is pretty evident when you read Jonah Chapter 4, that Jonah really didn't want the people of this city to be saved. This is probably the main reason for his disobedience. He ran from ministering to people he didn't like and thought deserved judgment.

¹¹ Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. ¹² And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. ¹³ Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

The men ask another good question, what do we need to do to get out of this storm?



The Man of God knew the cause and the answer. Application, often through the word and our relationship with God, we Christians may have the answer to the storms and challenges of life that others who are about to perish may need to hear.

Jonah tells them the answer for peace. It seems a quite noble and heroic gesture. What level of obedience or relationship when referring to the Feast 7 step maturity model do you think Jonah is at this point?

This is not the answer the men want to hear, so they continue to try their best to use their strength and wisdom to make it safely to land and survive this great storm....but they cannot. Too much was working against them. Our efforts working against God on our own to resolve our problems in the end will fail and we will have put forth much wasted effort.

Application for Today:

- Looking at this story, we have probably all been in this same situation.
- We will and may be facing storms and situations in life that we are not able to handle; we see no way out.
- We may humbly seek answers and relief from God and receive an answer from the Bible, the Holy Spirit, a sermon, another saint, etc., but the answer or what we are called to do may not be what we want to do, or it may not make much sense.
 - We should confirm that the answer is really from God.
- The longer we wait to obey, the more wasted effort, the more we tire, the longer we remain in the storm, the longer we can't find peace, the longer our breakthrough is delayed, the longer we remain outside and fighting against the perfect will and plan of God.
- Some things that don't make sense, we may have to let go of and cast overboard. We may not want to do it, but in the end if it was according to God's plan....it will always turn out for our good in the end.

¹⁴ Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. ¹⁵ So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

The men engage God before acting. They want to make sure they will not be at fault and in alignment with God. After calling upon God humbly, they cast Jonah overboard and immediately they experience peace and the storm is over.

When we are okay with God in obedience to Him, we can expect peace. If God caused the storm, then He still had control of the storm. So, if the storm stopped, God must have stopped the storm He created. Now let's see why God would have stopped the storm....because somebody obeyed and fell into alignment with His plan. Obedience and spiritual alignment pleases God and brings about immediate change and His peace.

¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.



After obedience, they see a great move of God. God did something in their lives, saved their lives, brought peace in their lives. This miracle in their lives caused them to fear and reverence God, worship Him only, and commitment themselves to Him. Their obedience prompted both a physical and spiritual salvation.

The soul's sorrow will continue to increase as long as it relies on its own efforts. The way of safety for sinners is to be found in the sacrifice of another on their behalf (Spurgeon).

¹⁷ Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

What God prepared to protect and keep Jonah was not the Ritz. However, it was quite sufficient for several reasons as I see. It worked, it was free, and it created the three steps in three nights that Jonah needed to get back in alignment with God and perform His will ministry. This great fish becomes the place of his baptism.

Matthew 12:40

Jonah Chapter 2

Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, ² And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. ³ For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. ⁴ Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

Then....it is after all this that Jonah begins to pray a powerful prayer. Notice key points here:

- He prayed to God out of the fish's belly – no matter where you are, you can still pray, and God will hear you from that place, situation, and condition.
- Even though his failure and disobedience landed him in a bad place, God was still his God.
- Humility – it is his current condition and affliction that has caused him to recognize he needs God. In the middle of this situation, he knows that if he calls upon God....God will hear him.
 - No matter what our current condition from our failures and bad decisions, when we humbly cry out to God.....He hears us.
 - How do I know Jonah is humble....because he is no longer trying to work this problem out on his own....he goes to his God.
- He knows God hears him before he sees results – when we come correctly, God hears our cries.
- He acknowledges that his problem is too big. The situation is over his head.
- He acknowledges his mistakes have caused him to be cast away from His presence, yet instead of trying to solve this in his own strength or give up....he looks to God.
- Step 1 – completed.

⁵ The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. ⁶ I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

Jonah is buried even to the soul. This reflects that his mind, self, feelings, intellect, all the other functions in the soulish realm are no longer in play. This includes his prejudice against Nineveh, all of this is buried in baptism. He is dead and buried, symbolically just as we are to be dead and buried in Christ (Romans Chapter 6). Yet God will bring him back to from death.

Step 2 – completed.

Note: Several commentaries observe that Jonah's prayer has some of the same language from the Psalms. It is a good thing to have the word hid in your heart so you can pray the word in times of need.

Psalm 18:6, Psalm 42:7, Psalm 31:22, Psalm 69:1,

⁷ When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. ⁸ They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. ⁹ But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.



When all hope was lost and he could no longer rely on physical strength or mental toughness from the soulish realm, then he remembered the promises of God. He repents and changes his mind...he repents from trusting in himself and his feelings and places his hope in God.

Those that obey lies and vain things, impulses, and ideas contrary to the will of God surrender the mercy God has for them. What they are holding onto and observing is vain and worthless in the end, they should rather value the mercy of God higher.

Instead of relying on and placing his hope in vain things, he now turns to sacrifice and worship to God. He will fulfill his earlier promises to serve God; he knows salvation is only through God.

- Regardless of your situation, even if you have nothing in your hand to give....you can still bring a sacrifice to God. Jonah brings a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.
- Notice the powerful position Jonah now finds himself in....he thanks God even though his physical circumstances and condition remains unchanged. He was able to find something to be thankful for even in this situation....wow! Powerful application for today....despite our problems....can we thank God for anything? Yes, even our very salvation!

See 2 Corinthians 4:7-11, we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed but not in despair.....

¹⁰ And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

Jonah goes through the first three steps. He speaks first to God, then God speaks to the fish, then Jonah is saved and safe. Now he is ready for ministry to others.

Sometimes we must go through some things before we are truly ready to do a work for God. Prayer is an important part for our breakthrough.

Jonah Chapter 3

And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, ² Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. ³ So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

Look at how the previous process has prompted a change in Jonah and his attitude toward service and obedience. When God asked him the first time, he ran. Here are some observations:

- Jonah could have avoided all the drama and difficulty he faced and what he caused others to go through if he had only obeyed God the first time.
- God doesn't give him the new assignment until Jonah has gone through what appears to be a 3-4 step process which includes: 1) humility and recognizing the need for God; 2) repenting – changing his mind about the assignment and burying his selfish desires; 3) putting his hope and trust in God to bring him out and restore him; 4) he begins to serve others and bring God glory by obeying the word of God.
- The purpose of Jonah being down and out in the great fish was so God could lift him up so he could arise. Being humbled and down is only part of the plan, arising again is part of the plan as well.
- These same steps and process applies to all believers today. God cannot effectively use us, and we can't effectively deal with others until we have gone through this same process.
- Jonah's first failure and disobedience did not disqualify him from being used later for the Kingdom of God. Let me say that again, especially for those of us who are trapped in our past failures. Your previous failures and mistakes do not disqualify you from being used to do great things.
 - Go through the process. Do not fret if/when others don't want to release you from your past mistakes. What God thinks about you matters more and he can and will restore you when you are properly aligned with Him....just follow the steps in the restoration process.
- God is clear in His directions, Jonah doesn't have to be creative, he is to only speak what God shows him. You don't have to fear what you need to do when God will show you and provide you the power to do so.
- **God loves us so much; He is willing and wants to use us again.**

⁴ And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

40 is the number of probation in the Bible. So, the city is on probation as God warns them and now waits for how they will respond. Notice the message Jonah gives the city, trouble is on the way.

⁵ So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. ⁶ For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷ And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: ⁸ But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. ⁹ Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

Perhaps Jonah was effective in his message because he did what God instructed and he had just gone through this process himself. He was leading them to where he was now in the Lord. Notice the process steps the city takes.

Key point from David Guzik – first step in repentance is to believe in the word of God. Without belief in the word, you can't get started the right way.

- The people understand that they needed God. Putting on sackcloth is a sign that they are humble and not prideful. Even the great ones had to follow the same humble step as poor folks. Step 1 completed.
- By fasting they are denying themselves. Self is put on hold. Additionally, the King instructs them to repent or turn from the way they were thinking and acting before. They cry out to God and turn from their evil ways. Step 2 is completed.
 - Remember Jonah in the previous chapter went through the same process of humility and repentance.
 - We all must go through this process....daily in order to remain in proper alignment with the Father.
- They turn their trust and hope from sin and self and now are trusting in God alone for their salvation. Step 3 is complete.
- There is also application for our country and world today as there is a great need for us to repent and turn from evil and violence. The process is still the same....when will we repent?

¹⁰ And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

How to turn around a hopeless situation....follow the process. Look at how God responds when they follow these steps.

- God considers these steps our good works or the beginning of good work. Humbled obedience is a good work.
- Repentance from doing things our own way is considered a good work.
- God will respond to us differently when we sincerely humble ourselves, repent, and trust in Him.
- When we have done all that we can do and place our hope and trust in Him alone....God will do the rest.

See reference to Jeremiah 18:7-8.

Jonah Chapter 4

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. ²And 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.

Wow. Well now we have a much better idea as to why Jonah ran in the first place. He didn't want the people of the city to be saved. He wanted them to suffer judgement and God's wrath. He disliked them that much that he wanted to not preach the good news of repentance to them.

Regardless of his rationale or logic, his feelings place him in direct opposition to God whose plan is to offer salvation to the people in the city. The very plan God has for the people is the direct opposite of Jonah's plan.

Observation: Jonah was in right standing with God just moments earlier and producing Kingdom fruit where angels are rejoicing because an entire city was saved. Yet right after this great victory, Jonah falls quickly out of right standing and alignment with God.

- All Christians should be careful. Just because you were close to God and doing His will one moment, doesn't mean that you are still in alignment the next minute. Circumstances and desires of this life can move you spiritually out of alignment.

I saw a reference in Matthew Henry's commentary which I think is an important point. "He now begins to justify himself in fleeing *from the presence of the Lord*, when he was first ordered to go to Nineveh.."

- He has moved from the repentance while in the belly of the fish, to justifying why he was disobedient in the first place. This is dangerous!
- When people refuse to take full responsibility for their evil actions by blaming others. For example, I heard a former inmate claim in their former thought life they justified abusing their spouse by saying I never would have hit her if she just kept her mouth shut. This passing the blame on others justifies to some degree the evil committed....this is faulty logic and certainly not spiritual.
- When we try to justify our actions, it takes us in the opposite direction and hinders us getting back in proper alignment with God. We stay lost and outside the will of God in this state of mind.
- The corrective actions would be for Jonah to go through the process and pick up his cross once again. However, unfortunately, God sometimes needs to create another storm in our life or take away a blessing before we see the light.

³Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. ⁴Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?



Jonah is obviously being driven by his emotions which are not spiritual. He claims he would rather die in his anger, than live knowing that his ministry saved an entire city.

God addresses his behavior in the form of a question. Questions help to drive us to look within ourselves in determining if what we are doing makes sense spiritually. The question: How is being angry at this helping and benefitting you right now? We don't see Jonah's response, but we can answer this question for ourselves. Jonah's reasons for being angry are not helpful or good for him at all.

David Guzik states – Jonah is really angry at God. If we are angry at God, the same question applies and the answer must always be no, Lord.....it is not good for us to be angry at you.

⁵ So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

Rather than being hopeful and rejoicing that the city was saved, he instead sits outside the city waiting to see if they screw up. I believe there are some Christians like this today. Rather than helping to mentor and disciple new believers, they wait in expectation that they will screw up and face judgement.

⁶ And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. ⁷ But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. ⁸ And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

God develops a plan to bring Jonah from darkness to light once again. He blesses him with shade and relief from the sun. Jonah is very happy about having the gourd because it provides him relief. But God in his wisdom, takes away the gourd and the next day when that hot sun comes up, the relief Jonah had before is gone. God brings about more trouble in Jonah's life and his soul faints once again.

Once again he is in need, but he is not humble. He would rather die than humble himself and submit to the plan of God. This is not good. This is not a heathen....this is God's prophet acting out of alignment. It happens still today.

⁹ And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

God asks another question designed to convict Jonah. Does it make you feel better to be mad because the gourd is gone? Jonah's response this time is yes, it is a good thing for me to be angry because the gourd is no longer here to provide relief. I can go to my grave angry at the loss of the gourd.

¹⁰ Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:



The Lord points out to Jonah that he is mourning the loss of the gourd and angry that it has perished. He didn't put any work into it, and he didn't even get to enjoy it very long...yet Jonah grieves over the loss of this gourd.

God as we so often see in the Bible and in the teachings and parables of Jesus, is using natural events to help us see a spiritual principle.

¹¹ And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

If Jonah could, he would have saved the gourd and he wished that the gourd could have been saved. He has more concern over this plant than the soul of thousands. God's logic is, if you are mad about the loss of a gourd that you didn't even invest in, and you want it to be saved, how much more so should the Lord desire that a city of more than 120,000 people who He created who don't know right from wrong be saved. Even their cattle are more precious than the gourd you are mourning over.

The lesson helps Jonah and us understand the heart and plan of God. We should learn and grow to love God so much that we love what He loves.

David Guzik has several points that I like. He says Jonah made three errors that angry people sometimes make: Jonah quit; Jonah separated himself from others; Jonah became a spectator.