

JONAH: THE WRONG-WAY PROPHET (Part 2)

“Running from God – God’s Prodigal Prophet” (Jonah 1:1-3)

INTRO: We are examining the story of “Jonah – (short, true, revealing). Last time an overview of the man, the book, and his message. Review our outline...This message is first of two parts on Ch. 1 Running From God. Everyone and everything in the book obeys God but Jonah!

I. (vv. 1-2) THE COMMAND HE RECEIVED

- A. (v.1) The CALL - not told how the Word came (direct voice, dream, etc.), only that it clearly came. Great privilege to hear from God. God speaks today primarily through His completed Word, which contains His directives. Just one 3-word sentence can change your life (ex...). Who wants to hear from God? Who *still* wants to hear if His plans wreck mine?
 - 1. First call is to salvation (conversion).
 - 2. Next call is to obedient service (commitment).
- B. (v.2) The COMMISSION - This call had a specific commission to service.
 - 1. “Go to the great city of Nineveh” - Nineveh, the capital of Assyria (Iraq), was a great city. It was 500 miles NE of Israel, situated on east bank of Tigris River. MAP ...
 - 2. “And preach against it” was his assignment (3:4).
 - 3. “Because its wickedness has come up before me” - It was an evil city, delighting in violent brutality, sexual immorality, & gross idolatry (see 3:8). Sin always comes before God (Num. 32:23).

NOTE, two things about God’s character cause Him to seek the lost. One, His holy wrath hates sin (v.2c). Two, His merciful love for sinners (4:2).

C. Characteristics of God’s call and commission (directives):

- 1. *Personal* - God has a “Nineveh” for each one (Jer. 29:11; Rom. 12:2). To go somewhere or to someone.
- 2. *Powerful* - Whether accepted or not we are never the same once it comes. Hard to silence His Word.
- 3. *Persistent* - God doesn’t give up easily on us. He pursues prodigals!

II. (v.3) THE CHOICE HE MADE

- A. Choice is always required when God speaks. Chose a cruise on the Mediterranean that became a ship of Fools!
- B. Jonah’s DECISION. Unlike Moses, he didn’t argue; Jeremiah didn’t weep; Gideon seek signs. Instead “Jonah ran away”, seeking to escape God, His directives, and resign his prophetic office.
- C. “Why did Jonah run?” The same reasons we do. It was a:
 - 1. *Difficult* task, almost futile to reach such a great & wicked city. Success not the issue, obedience is. Fear of man (Pro. 29:25).

- 2. *Dangerous* task - Assyrians were bitter enemies of Israel. They were cruel & barbaric, esp. in war crimes. In every conquered city, built pyramid of human skulls - a brutal business card. Afraid he’d be harmed. Safety is found in the presence of God not in absence of danger!
- 3. *Distasteful* task (4:2). He loved his country and hated their enemies. Their cup of wickedness was full, days were numbered, and doom certain. Fine with Mr. Jonah. He knew if he obeyed God, they’d repent, God would spare, and someday they might destroy Israel (they did in 722 B.C.). His country was more important than His God. He was judgmental and prejudice.
- D. “Where did he run?” Tarshish (Tartessos of Spain), some 2000 in opposite direction. MAP ... (Orlando to LA) You don’t even have to change locations to run (Lk. 15 elder brother). For every Nineveh, there’s a Tarshish - decide.
- E. “How did he run?” “He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port.” Satan always has a ship ready to sail whenever we want to run from God’s presence and rebel against His directive. When it comes to evangelism, the devil always has a ship waiting. The ship of:
 - 1. Election (hyper-Calvinists)
 - 2. Somebody else’s job, esp. the pastor, missionary
 - 3. If people are interested, they’ll come without our going.
 - 4. Don’t really believe a loving God would let people, esp. sincere, go to hell.
 - 5. Church used as holy huddle to escape. When the river of Cn fellowship stops at the church it slowly becomes a swamp. We must get off our pleasure cruise, man the lifeboats and rescue the perishing.
 - 6. Misc. (Difficult, dangerous, distasteful) -
- F. Could he really run from God’s presence (Job 31:4; 34:21; Psa. 139:7-9; Pro. 15:3)? No, like trying to draw a round square (impossible). I think Jonah knew he couldn’t, but maybe he thought if he changed his circumstances enough, God would have to do something else. Note, God did not stop Jonah immediately. Part of His discipline is not to stop us.

CONC: Ever feel like God’s plans are wrecking yours? Jonah made a deliberate choice to disobey God and run. How did it go? Always “down” (Joppa, ship, sea, fish). Look again at v.3 Smooth sailing for a while, then the storms came (v.4). You can run but if you do, you’ll “pay the fare.” Running from God is always costly. Each must choose between Nineveh or Tarshish. Next, how God deals with prodigals. Who has one or knows someone who does?