

JONAH: THE WRONG-WAY PROPHET (Part 3)

“Still Running – How God Pursues Prodigals”

(Jonah 1:4-17)

INTRO: When we last left our prodigal prophet, he was enjoying his Mediterranean Cruise to Spain. It's about to become a Ship of Fools – always down and no one gets a free ride (All have to “pay the fare” – always a price for our running). God has a way to pursue his prodigals (us or someone we love). What about Pro. 22:6? The way God deals with Jonah is also how He deals with us (His outrageous grace is relentlessly pursuing). Let's see how God brings a prodigal home.

I. HE SENDS/ALLOWS “STORMS” TO GET OUR ATTENTION (v. 4)

- A. “Storms” usually *follow disobedience*. The prodigal son is perfect examples (Lk. 15:11-32).
- B. “Storms” are *intended by God to get our attention* and brings us back to Him. They are vehicles of His mercy and grace not of judgment. He perfectly knows us so He always knows the best way to get our attention.
- C. “Storms” come in *different forms*: Adverse circumstances, financial disaster, relational upheaval, sickness, death, career implosion, etc. How does God best get your attention? Look back . . . Note v. 11 Storms can intensify if we fail to repent and return! Gal. 6:7 . . .

II. GOD SENDS/ALLOWS OTHERS TO SUFFER BECAUSE OF OUR DISOBEDIENCE (v. 5)

- A. Our foolish rebellion *endangers others* often those closest to us. Everyone on board is impacted by Jonah's sin.
- B. Ponder these four words: *We never sin alone!* We may be alone when we sin, but we never sin alone. Our disobedience always injures our spouse, kids, friends, coworkers, etc. Every step we take out of the will of God hurts those around us. Note v. 5b “slept” – So comfortable in his rebellion, he is numb to the pain caused to others. The enemy has his narcotics.

III. HE SENDS SOMEONE TO CHALLENGE US (v. 6)

- A. Who? family, friend, coworkers, pastor, stranger, Christian, pagan
- B. Here? Pagan captain of the ship. He has more faith than Jonah. When trouble comes the world often wants our prayers. Ex: “How can I pray for you?” This is such a rebuke. Sad when an unbeliever confronts a believer. Sailors ask Jonah six questions (Why would you run from such a God?)

IV. GOD EXPOSES OUR DISOBEDIENCE (vv. 7-11)

- A. (vv. 7-8) God controls the “lots” (fell on Jonah). Pro. 16:33 reminds us God is in control. No accidents in life. No random events. No such thing as “luck”. Only divine appointments. God is in charge.
- B. Once exposed, Jonah confesses (vv. 9, 12). He confesses who he is. He says, “I worship the Lord,” I just don't obey Him if I don't like what He wants.

- C. If going to be a Christian, then be one! Live, act, talk, pray like one. Our world is waiting for authentic (not perfect) Christians. Next, things worsen...

V. HE MAKES US FACE THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR OWN SINFUL CHOICES (vv. 11-16)

- A. Jonah offers the only solution that makes sense. . . (v. 12) – Let me die
- B. Instead, they try to save Jonah, the boat, etc. (v. 13). They care more about Jonah than he does about them. They do two things: work harder (v. 13) and pray (v. 14). “LORD” (Yahweh) name for covenant-keeping God, most sacred name for God (3 Xs!). Compare to v. 5. What a change! When Jonah *comes to his senses* (Lk. 15:17) God works in the hearts of others, even unbelievers, who now cry out of the one true God. I love their theology at end of v. 14 “...as you pleased.”
- C. What happens? (vv. 15-16) – Two key points:
 - 1. From Jonah – *Storms continue (intensify?) until we stop running*
 - 2. From sailors (v. 16) – Revival broke out on the ship, while Jonah is bobbing up and down in the sea. Boat still headed to Tarshish but with a boatload of baby missionaries.
 - 3. Jonah is expecting to drown and die. He'd rather drown than run from God any longer.

VI. GOD REVEALS HIS OUTRAGEOUS GRACE IN THE MIDST OF OUR BROKENNESS (v. 17)

God *directs* “a great fish” (sperm whale – PIC). God tells the fish to swallow him up just don't chew him up! The fish obeys God more than Jonah did. Why did God do this? Rescue Jonah to complete assignment. Bring Jonah to repentance. God pursues prodigals. When we try to run from God, we actually run into Him! He is too holy to let us off, too faithful to let us down, and too loving to let us go!

CONC: Closing thoughts - God has a strategy to reach His prodigals who are on the run. It's never too late to stop running from God. No need to wait for the storm or for a fish. When they came home (sadly not all choose to), kill the fatted calf and celebrate. Amen?

PRAYER TIME: Who has a prodigal (or knows of one) that needs to return? Please stand . . . circle around them and pray. I'll close!