

## **Arise, Go to Nineveh—But Jonah Fled: Jonah 1's Call and Rebellion**

### **Scriptures for Today**

#### **""Jonah 1:1-6**

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. 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. 6 So 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.""

### **Introduction – The Runaway Prophet**

The story of Jonah is one of the most famous in the Bible—yet it's not really about a fish. It's about a **fight** between the will of God and the will of man. Sometimes we, as men and women, have very strong wills. We're going to do something no matter what it takes. We see this struggle between the will of God and the will of a man named Jonah.

Before we ever see Jonah sinking in the sea, we see him sinking in **self**. He's going to do what he wants and not what God wants.

This book begins not with rebellion in the streets, but rebellion in the heart – from within. And it shows us a truth every believer must face: *You don't have to leave church to run from God—you just have to stop listening.*

### **Where We Are in Bible History**

Jonah lived during the reign of **Jeroboam II** (around 780–750 B.C.), the same period as **Hosea** and **Amos**. Israel was rich, strong, and proud—but spiritually asleep. They were doing okay.

Jonah was a prophet from **Gath-hepher**, a small town in Galilee—interestingly, near where Jesus Himself would later grow up (2 Kings 14:25).

#### **""2 Kings 14:25**

He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according

to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher.""

At that time, **Assyria** was the rising world power—and its capital, **Nineveh**, was the cruelest city on earth. It was known for **torture, conquest, and idol worship**. They flayed enemies alive, stacked skulls at their gates, and celebrated blood.

Yet that's where God said to go. If God told you to preach in the most violent, God-hating city on earth—would you? Jonah said no. And before we judge him, let's admit it: many of us have our own Nineveh. That person we won't forgive. That place we won't go. That calling we keep running from.

Me, for example, when preaching the Gospel, I don't want to go into rich neighborhoods. They annoy me. But I am supposed to preach the Gospel to every creature. That's God's commandment. And I'll go to the rich areas, but I don't want to go there. I was in a rich neighborhood once, and I was accused of being a thief and that I was only there to get their money. I said, "I don't want your money. I could care less about your money."

So, I'm not a big fan of the rich. Jonah wasn't a big fan of Nineveh.

## **Verse 1 – The Word Comes to the Willful**

### **""Jonah 1:1**

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,""

When the Word of God came—it didn't come to a committee, a king, or a crowd. It came to one man. Straight to Jonah.

That's how a huge revival always begins—with a **single surrendered heart**.

The name *Jonah* means "dove." A dove is supposed to bring peace—but Jonah brought a storm.

He was "the son of Amittai," which means "truth." So the dove of peace came from truth—but truth without obedience is empty. There's only the one other mention of Amittai in the Bible. They were from the area that the tribe of Zebulun owned, but we don't know much else about Jonah and his family.

So, the word of the Lord came unto Jonah. You can quote the Word of God and still disobey it. Hearing isn't the same as heeding. God gave the words to Jonah. But did he heed to His words?

"The Word can come to you—but will it move you?" You can hear me speaking the word of God as we go throughout this sermon, but will you allow His words to change you? That's up to you.

Write this down: "God's Word came to me." Then ask, "Did I go when He said go?" For example, when you see something clearly in the Bible, will you make the change in your life? Or will you fight against God's will for you? When you finally "SEE" His words, will you make the change?

## **Verse 2 – The Command and the City**

### **""Jonah 1:2**

Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.""

God's first word to Jonah was "*Arise.*" Every calling from God begins with movement—get up, step out, obey now.

Nineveh wasn't just big; it was brutal. It stretched over 60 miles with walls 100 feet high. Its cruelty was legendary. They called it "*the blood city.*"

But God didn't tell Jonah to study Nineveh. He told him to **cry against it**—to confront sin, not admire it. He is calling Jonah to preach AGAINST that great city. Why? Do you see that right there? "For their wickedness is come up before me."

God's preachers today are crying *with* the world when they should be crying *against* it. WE MUST PREACH AGAINST THE WICKEDNESS. People won't like it. People might threaten to shoot you. You go ahead and do it then. And you can deal with God Almighty after you've done it.

God doesn't take kindly to people who threaten people who are doing His work. Think about that. I've warned a few people in my life who have threatened me. Called the police on me. All for preaching the Gospel. Not doing anything evil. Doing good. We will keep going. And nothing but God Himself will stop us. Understand that.

If God sent Jonah to Nineveh, who might He be sending you to? Someone you've written off? Someone who needs truth more than comfort? Hey, listen, the Book of Jonah is showing us that people will surprise you. I've been surprised many times by people. Sometimes you might think this person or that person would never listen to the Gospel and change their life.

But, look, you and I don't have a clue the level of PURE POWER that God holds. There is absolutely NOTHING too hard for the Lord.

Our job is to just go do what God said to do, and WATCH WHAT HE CAN DO. Imagine I had a megaphone in my hand – a huge, loud, 100,000 watt mega phone. God told Jonah to CRY AGAINST THAT CITY. And he meant to be loud. God told Jonah to go warn them. Not to whisper but to warn.

## Verse 3 – The Flight from God

### ""Jonah 1:3

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.""

Jonah didn't just run—he **paid to run**. Disobedience always costs more than obedience. He tried to run from the presence of the Lord. Look, that's an impossible goal.

Notice the pattern: *"he went down."* Down to Joppa. Down into the ship. Down into the sea. Down into the fish. That's what happened to Jonah.

Sin always takes you down—never up. And look, it's a great sin to try run from the presence of the Lord. That's a horrible thing to do. Imagine if Jesus showed up, and you just wanted to avoid Him.

Why Tarshish? Why did Jonah choose to flee to Tarshish.

It was the exact opposite direction from Nineveh—most likely the area of Spain instead of Syria. Jonah didn't just want to avoid God's will; he wanted to **erase** it. He didn't want to do what God said to do. He was running a long way away. Not a short distance.

Imagine I was holding a compass. "When you run from God, every direction feels right—until it's not." Imagine trying to run from something that's in every direction you go. Anywhere that compass points, God is there. Up, down, left, right. He's there. Did you know God is in hell too?

### ""Revelation 14:10

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ""

These are the unsaved people who took the mark of the beast who will be tormented in hell. Even in hell, you can't get away from God. God is God. He's everywhere all the time.

When you stop following the Word of the Lord, you'll always find a ship going the wrong way—and the devil will make sure it's convenient. Jonah was going the wrong way.

Ask yourself: "What ship am I paying for right now that's taking me away from obedience?" Jonah was running. What ship are you on? Are you on the marijuana ship, the fornication ship, the adultery ship, the alcohol ship, the drug ship, the wasting your life away ship? Which one? Always trying to run from God's presence. That's not a wise choice.

## Verse 4 – The Storm of Mercy

### ""Jonah 1:4

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.""

This wasn't punishment—it was prevention. The storm wasn't sent to kill Jonah; it was sent to **save him** and many others.

Sometimes the worst thing in your life is the best thing God ever sent. Think about it. Sometimes the worst things help you to find God. And I'll pray for that. If something so bad in a person's life will help them to be saved from hell forever, we pray for whatever it takes to get things right.

God didn't need Jonah's permission to interrupt his plans. Sometimes we think less of God. He won't know this. He won't know that. Hey, He's got it all. He owns it all. He knows it all.

The Lord "sent out a great wind." The Hebrew phrase means He **hurled** it—like a spear. This wasn't a random weather pattern. It was a divine intervention. He sent out that great wind. I can't do that. You can't do that. Kenneth Copeland can't do that. But God can. The Father can. Jesus can. The Holy Spirit can.

There was a MIGHTY tempest in the sea. That's a violent storm with strong winds and waves. Have you ever been in the middle of the ocean in bad weather? The ocean isn't to be taken lightly. It can swallow you up. It's huge. You're so small. Jonah was a small man in a big sea. The ship he was in was like to be broken.

The same God who calms storms can also create them. The same water that you bathe in, play in, swim in, can also crush you and rip you to pieces. God's nature is shown in nature. The same dog that comforts you might eat you one day. That same wind that cools you in the Summer can rip you to pieces in a tornado.

Reframe your storm. Instead of asking "Why me?" ask "What's God stopping before it destroys me?" If you're going through a storm, maybe God's stopping you from doing something that destroys you. You can see that right here. Praise the Lord for His ways!

## Verse 5 – The Sleeping Saint

### ""Jonah 1:5

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.""

The sailors are panicking—Jonah is sleeping. This shows you the man Jonah. He's a prophet of God. He's trying to run from God. He's asleep in the storm.

The world's awake to danger while the church is asleep to destiny. You could say that's the picture we see here. Hey, Jonah knew where he would end up if he died. He would rather die than go to Nineveh.

When the storm comes, the world prays harder than the saints. That's a problem too. Sometimes the saints are fast asleep when they shouldn't be sleeping.

Jonah's sleep wasn't rest—it was rebellion. He wasn't peaceful; he was **numb**. The deeper he ran, the quieter his conscience got.

Think of the sin that people commit throughout the night around here. They stay up all through the night drinking, doing drugs, fornicating, having children outside of marriage. Sin will rock to sleep while your world catches on fire. People then sleep in the day when they should be awake. Why? They stayed all up through the night sinning in the darkness. And the sin puts them to sleep.

You can't wake a church that loves its pillow more than its purpose. Some of us have couches that we love more than people. Some of us have cars that we love more than people. Some of us have homes that we must care for more than the people. Think about it. Jonah was sleeping instead of preaching to save the people. Some of us love to sleep more than preach the Gospel.

Ask God, "Where have I fallen asleep in obedience?" What am I missing? What can I not see that I need to do better? It's time to wake up—because your storm might not be about you; it might be about who you're carrying. That ship was carrying Jonah. What are you carrying that's causing the storm?

## **Verse 6 – The Confrontation**

### **""Jonah 1:6**

So 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.""

I love this verse. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God!" Think about how awesome those words were. That's to all of us too. We sleep through life so often. Hey, sleeper, GET UP and GET TO WORK for God!

God will often use the unbelievers to shake the believers. The pagan captain had to preach what the prophet wouldn't. WAKE UP! GET UP!

When the lost have to tell the saved to pray, something's broken.

The captain's words echo God's: "*Arise, call upon thy God.*" God had told Jonah to "*ARISE, go to Nineveh!*" The very thing Jonah ran from—God brings right back in his face. Sleeper, arise! You better call upon your God.

You can run from the assignment, but you can't outrun the Author of the assignment when God is that author.

"When God wants your attention, He'll send voices you can't ignore."

Today, if God's using someone unexpected to confront you—listen. Don't dismiss the voice just because you don't like the vessel.

For example, I will never forget that woman who wouldn't listen to the Gospel who asked me why I was talking to her. She said, "That man over there needs to hear it." I didn't quite get it at first. And then I went to that man named Diablo, and I understood. Now we'll all see him in heaven. I do believe God used that woman to speak to me that day. She wasn't a believer.

We need to listen to people that God brings in our path.

**""Hebrews 13:2**

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.""

Angels are messengers of God. And you don't know when you're speaking to one of them. Don't be nasty to people. Be kind to people even when they're nasty to you. I have trouble with that. But we have to do better. God might bring someone into your path.

## **Conclusion – The God Who Still Calls Runaways**

Jonah's story proves this: **God doesn't cancel callings—He chases them.**

When Jonah ran, God pursued. When Jonah slept, God stirred. When Jonah sank, God saved.

That's not weakness—that's mercy. You can't out-sin the patience of God, but you can out-wait your usefulness. Don't make God send a storm to remind you who you are. Don't live a life of comfort and never do what God asked you to do.

The real tragedy isn't getting swallowed by a fish—it's never getting back to your purpose. Hey, don't miss out on the greatest life that God will give you IF you simply stay faithful to Him. Do what He asked you to do.

Within 24 hours, talk to the person or face the task you've been avoiding. That's your Nineveh—and obedience starts now.

You might say: "I can't do that." Oh yeah, you can do it. I know you can do it. Just like a man that called me over the phone, named Jesse Everson from Emmanuel Baptist Rescue Mission in Los Angeles, CA said: "Emmanuel. God is with us." Hey, don't forget that God is with you.

You can run all you want, but He's still there. He won't leave you. You need Him. Do what He's asked you to do. It's that simple. And everything will work out for you.

**""Romans 8:28**

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.""

If you're hearing me right now, if you're seeing the word of God right now, if you aren't blinded to the truth... take a close look again. "And we know that ALL THINGS work together for good to them that love God." Love is following the word of God. We love God by following what He asked us to do. That's why this church is here. For you to follow God.

And when you do, ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER for good to them that love God.

**Next Sermon – “The LORD Is Coming Down:  
Micah 1’s Judgment on Samaria”**

You’ve seen Jonah run from God’s voice — but this Thursday, I will show you what happens when **God’s voice shakes the mountains**.

Micah steps onto the scene with fire in his bones. While Jonah fled from judgment, Micah stands in it and declares,

“The LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.”

If Jonah shows us the danger of running, Micah shows us the power of repentance. Don’t miss it—because when the Lord comes down, everything proud gets leveled. I want you to be here for that sermon. Look, the word of God will profit you more than anything else you might have to do. Don't miss out on the life changing word of God being preached.

Let's pray.