

Throw Me Overboard: Jonah 1:7–17

Scriptures for Today:

Jonah 1:7-17 And 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. 8 Then 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? 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. 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. 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. 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. 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.

Introduction

We are back in the book of Jonah. The 32nd book of the Bible. This is among one of the most well-known stories in scripture. Most people, if you asked them, could tell you that Jonah is the one who got swallowed by a whale.

But many people fail to realize the incredible prophecy, the real-life truths, and the life-saving examples that are found in these four short chapters.

One of the main themes we see in this book is **Man's resistance to God's Will.**

God has a Will. Man has a will. Often times our will does not align with what God wants for us. Jonah is a picture of a believer who is resisting what God has clearly told him to do. He's going against the Will of God.

If you're not familiar with the story, God told Jonah to arise and go to Nineveh and cry against it. What does that mean?

Nineveh was the capitol city of Assyria which was one of the greatest world powers at that time. (780 BC) Approximately 2800 years ago

The city of Nineveh was very wicked. They did abominable things. They were very cruel. They were very evil in the sight of the Lord. God was sending Jonah to Nineveh to warn the people of impending judgement if they did not change their ways.

That would be like if God sent one man to go to Washington D.C. (the capitol of this greedy nation that has repeatedly turned its back from God) to go and cry against the corrupt leaders and all the people of the land.

In your mind, imagine yourself walking up to the white house, and crying out against the President and the Senators, and the Representatives of this nation, calling them to repent and turn from their evil ways. In our minds it's laughable to think that any of those leaders would listen to one ordinary person.

That is what God called Jonah to do. But he did not obey God starting out. He resisted God's Will.

Unfortunately, this is a common theme that continues to play out in all of our lives. It's very important to hear God's Word, understand the mistakes that people made in the past, and to take action and not do those same things.

1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Understand that we are living in one of the greatest time periods of human history. We are living in the new covenant of Jesus Christ. All things have been revealed to us through the Word of God. All the things that happened in the past are given to us for our learning. We have no excuses.

So this book of Jonah is recorded for many different reasons. It contains direct prophecy related to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It reminds us of the mercy God has for sinful humanity, and it reminds us not to resist the Will of God in our lives.

Let's do a quick recap of what we learned last time we studied Jonah.

Jonah 1:1–2 — God gave Jonah a clear command

- God told Jonah to arise, go to Nineveh, and cry against it.
- Nineveh's wickedness had come up before the Lord.
- When God speaks, His servants are to obey and speak.

Jonah 1:3 — Jonah ran from God's will and went down

- Jonah did not just hesitate; he went the opposite direction.
- He went down to Joppa and down into the ship.
- A believer can know the Word of God and still resist it.
- Running from God always has a cost.
- Sin always takes you down.

Jonah 1:4 — God sent the storm

- The storm was not an accident.
- God was intervening in Jonah’s rebellion.
- Sometimes God sends trouble not only to punish, but also to correct.

Jonah 1:5 — The mariners cried out while Jonah slept

- The lost men were afraid, but Jonah was fast asleep.
- Jonah’s sleep was not peace, but spiritual dullness.
- A backslidden believer can become numb to serious danger.

Jonah 1:6 — The shipmaster rebuked Jonah

- “Arise, call upon thy God.”
- God used an unbeliever to confront His disobedient prophet.
- You can run from God’s will, but you cannot outrun God.

That brings us to verses 7 – 17. The storm is raging. The sailors are in peril. Let's see what happens next.

Verses 7 - 8

Jonah 1:7 And 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.

This verse shows us that the storm is no longer being treated as random coincidence. These men have already thrown out the furnishings and unnecessary items to lighten the load. They’ve already cried out to their false gods. They’ve already done everything they know to do. And now they come to the conclusion: **somebody on this ship is the reason this is happening.**

Even these pagan mariners (sailors) understood that there are times when trouble is beyond natural.

Notice what they say: **“that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us.”**

They are looking for the cause. They want the source. They want the hidden thing brought into the open.

That's exactly what God is doing here. Jonah got on a ship to get away. He went down to hide from the responsibility that God called him to do. And now God brings him to a place where he can't stay hidden any longer.

Things work the same way in our personal lives.

Sin that we think is hidden will always come to light and be revealed.

We can attend church for many years and hear instructions from God's Word and continue to run away and avoid his commands. For example, Jesus commands us to go forth and preach the gospel. But many Christians will run and try to avoid giving the gospel.

You can hide from people. You can hide your attitude. You can hide your disobedience. But you can't hide from God. Jonah is an example of someone that tried. But it didn't work.

We see here in verse 7 that the men wanted to cast lots to determine who was responsible for the storm. Casting lots was a method that was commonly used to make decisions or identify a person.

A modern example of this would be pulling a marked name out of a hat or drawing straws. In this situation the lot fell on Jonah.

But the important thing to understand is that this was not random chance. God had complete control over the outcome, and this was simply a tool that God used to reveal Jonah.

Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the LORD.

We can do things based on our limited understanding, but God has the final verdict.

Jonah 1:8 Then 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?

The men are now trying to make sense of the judgment that has come upon them. They understand that somehow Jonah is connected to this storm. They want to know what kind of man is he? What has he done for such a horrible storm to be upon them?

The disobedience of Jonah is not affecting him only. It's affecting everyone around him.

When we disobey God in our lives, there is going to come a time when we have to give an account for our actions that are affecting others. Parents that fail their children, children that fail their parents. Husbands that fail their wives, wives that fail their husbands. There is always a day of reckoning when it comes to sin. That is an unpleasant time when we have to take responsibility for things.

And you will have to make a choice. Will you take responsibility, or will you continue to run and to hide?

Verses 9 - 10

Jonah 1:9-10 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.

Notice that Jonah said that he fears the Lord, but his actions leading up to this point were speaking differently. The men were dumbfounded why he would go against the Creator of heaven and earth. The one who made the sea and the dry land. This is a lesson that it's possible to understand the truth of God but still be living in disobedience.

That's a dangerous place to be in your life. When you know God's Word, when you can speak the truth clearly, But you willfully disobey and choose to go against His commands.

In the New Testament we have many commands that have been given to us. We are commanded to be sober, to abstain and flee from fornication, to do good to those who hate us, to not divorce, to forgive one another, to let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouths, to preach the gospel. We have all these different commands that are given to us directly. Once we know these things, and we choose to deliberately go against those commands.

Hey, that is scary! You do not want to do that.

These pagan men were exceedingly afraid. Even they understood how big of a deal this was.

It's almost as if God had Jonah explain this to these men so he can hear it come out of his own mouth. "I fears the Lord, the God of heaven" His own words remind him who he is going up against.

Verses 11 - 12

Jonah 1:11-12 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.

So now the sailors are turning to Jonah for a solution to this problem. This is all happening because of Jonah. Their lives were at risk of being lost. Is Jonah going to take responsibility for his actions, or is he going to continue to go against the living God? What are you going to do? Look at his response...

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.

Jonah had the right response here. This is actually really incredible to think about. Imagine the courage and faith it would take to tell a group of sailors to throw you overboard into a raging sea.

People will often mock Jonah and call him a coward for running away from his responsibility. But I guarantee you that Jonah had more faith and courage than many of us, if not all of us combined.

Often times, when the consequences of sin finally come around, people tend to blame other people.

Jonah didn't lie, he didn't try to shift the blame, he didn't try to save himself at the expense of everyone else on the ship. He told them plainly, **"Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea."**

Humanly speaking, that sounds like death. He is not asking for a lifeboat. He is not asking to be dropped near shore. He is not bargaining for a second option. He is saying, “Put me into the sea.”

If you've spent any time in the ocean, you will know that water is extremely powerful and deadly. It's a small picture of the power of God.

So Jonah took responsibility and had enough faith and courage to essentially be willing to die than to keep letting these men perish because of his disobedience.

Verse 13 - 14

Jonah 1:13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring *it* to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

So instead of quickly following through with what Jonah had suggested, the sailors continued to try to bring the boat to land. These men had integrity and did not act on impulse. They didn't want to throw Jonah overboard. But there was absolutely no way for them to overcome the strength of the sea, and ultimately the power of God.

That shows us that no matter how hard we try to take matters into our own hands, God's plan will always prevail. That's why when you know there is something in your life that is displeasing to God, or you're continuing to disobey His commands—You need to stop fighting against the storm; stop fighting against the Creator; and start seeking His Will. Because you will not win.

Jonah 1:14 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.

So the sailors gave it everything they had. When there was nothing left they could do, they cried unto the Lord. They no longer cried to their false gods. Now they cried unto the one and only true God. The God of heaven and earth. Creator of land and sea.

These men had fear and reverence for life. They did not want to be charged guilty for throwing Jonah overboard, but they realized that was the only thing left to do that would please God.

Verses 15 – 16

Jonah 1:15-16 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. **16** Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

So as soon as Jonah was thrown overboard, the sea ceased from her raging. There was an immediate calm that confirmed that this was not random. Jonah was the cause, God sent the storm, and He was in control the entire time. Imagine complete chaos and then all of a sudden, silence...

That is the power of God.

This reminds me of Mark 4:39

Mark 4:39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

Mark 4:41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Notice the similarities between these two events. In Jonah, the men started out fearing the storm. In the gospel of Mark the disciples also feared the storm.

In Jonah the sea ceased from raging, and in Mark the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

In both situations when man witnessed the power of God they feared the Lord exceedingly.

The same God who ruled the sea in Jonah is the same God who ruled the sea in the Gospels. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Storm. He is the same, yesterday today and forever.

Psalm 107:23-31 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; 24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. 25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. 26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. 28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. 30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. 31 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

That is exactly what we see here in Jonah. God raised the storm. God stopped the storm. God brought these men to the place where they feared Him.

And that is one of the amazing truths of this passage: **even in Jonah's disobedience, God was still getting the glory.**

Jonah was wrong to run. Jonah was wrong to disobey. But Jonah's rebellion did not stop God from revealing His power.

Instead, these pagan sailors came face to face with the true and living God. They feared the Lord exceedingly, offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows.

So even in the middle of Jonah's failure, **God was still making Himself known.**

Verse 17

Jonah 1:17 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.

God was not done with Jonah. Even though he got off course. God brought him right back to where he needed to be. Heading in the right direction. That's both comforting and scary. It's comforting because we know that God loves us and wants good for us but it's scary because He will do anything it takes to get our attention. That's why you want to take initiative and get on the right course before God has to intervene.

In Jonah 1:7–17, Jonah was exposed as the cause of the storm, confessed his guilt, was cast into the sea, the storm ceased immediately, the sailors feared the Lord, and God prepared a great fish to preserve Jonah.

Application

1. God exposes what we try to hide.

Jonah tried to run, sleep, and stay silent, but God brought everything into the open. We may hide sin from people for a time, but we cannot hide from the Lord.

2. You can know truth and still live in disobedience.

Jonah said the right things about God, but his life was not lined up with what he professed. It is possible to have sound doctrine on your lips while resisting God in your heart.

3. Take responsibility for your actions.

When Jonah admitted, *"for my sake this great tempest is upon you,"* He didn't blame. He owned his sin. A mark of spiritual maturity is being willing to admit when you are wrong.

4. God will use man's failure to glorify Himself.

Jonah disobeyed, but God still revealed His power to the sailors and caused them to fear Him. Man's sin is never excused, but God is sovereign and even human failure cannot stop Him from getting glory.

Question. Are you running away from the commands of God today? If you know His commands, it's time to obey before God makes a course correction in your life. Remember this is here for our example. And to point us to Jesus Christ. Let's Pray