

"Jonah: God's Reluctant Prophet" Jonah 1:1-17

Have you ever been told to do an unpleasant task? Our immediate response is often to find a way to avoid the responsibility...even when the assignment has come from God. That's a bad idea. God loves us too much to leave us alone, running from His will.

God asked His prophet Jonah to do a task Jonah found unpleasant. He ran away and tried to hide from God.

What is heroic about Jonah? Even in his disobedience, reluctant obedience, God accomplished great things through him. He just didn't get to enjoy the fruit of his efforts. We have many great lessons to learn from Jonah's life.

Read Jonah 1:1-3

I. You can run from the will of God.

- About 780 B.C. From Gath-Hepher; few miles north of Nazareth. Jonah goes to Joppa; north of modern Tel Aviv
- Paid the fare – took control and went the opposite direction. (see map)
- Nineveh - 550 miles from Samaria; journey of more than a month at 15-20 miles/day
- Tarshish - 2500 miles from Joppa in the opposite direction; on the southern coast of Spain. Exact site uncertain. Represented the furthest known point of land.
- Small boat. Less than a dozen sailors. Don't return for 3-4 years

Why did Jonah flee? Why did he rebel against the will of God?

A. Danger? Evil people - Nahum 3:1-4 (written bet. 663-612)

Ashur-dan III (772-754); King during Jonah's visit to Nineveh; Nineveh destroyed 150 years later

Assyria was powerful, brutal to its foes; known as a "city of blood." Threat to Israel. Most powerful nation to the north. Not at their strongest at this time.

Like going into Afghanistan before fall of Taliban and saying Jesus is God

B. Difficulty? A large city, resistant people

Nineveh - ancient, pagan; Akkadian *nunu* meaning fish, probably worshipped the fish-goddess Nanshe. National god - Assur

C. Reputation? – An unpopular message from a popular prophet

Jereboam II (793-753). North; evil king; 2 Kings 14:23-25

Extended borders; blessing of God; popular guy. Assyria not threatening at that time

Amos and Hosea (11:5) prophesying that Israel will be judged by Assyria

Offer escape to the enemy (Jonah 4:2); Traitor

We don't know exactly what motivated Jonah, but he hated and feared the Assyrians and longed for their destruction.

Jonah willing to serve God, but on his own terms.

God had broader perspective – Asked to represent the God of all peoples

II. You can run from your calling

Jonah was chosen for this task because he was a prophet

Role of prophets (*nabi* = spokesman) - Ezek 3:16-21

Office of prophet invented because the nation had failed. Always a hard job; almost always going against direction of culture.

Prophets' lives were a paradigm for the people – their hardships mirrored hardships people would experience if they did not turn back to God

- Hosea/Gomer

Jewish tradition – representatives from all 70 nations on the ship

Day of Atonement congregation declares, "We are Jonah"

Prophets fulfilled God's calling for Jewish nation - Gen 12:1-3; Ex 19:5,6

You cannot run without consequences. God is stubborn about His purposes for our lives. Running changes us. There is an effect on our minds and hearts.

III. You cannot run from the consequences – 1:4-14

A. Result #1 – Callous toward the value of human life

READ 4-6 For the sailors' lives - sleeping while others perished

READ 10-12 For his own life - throw me over

Irony - sailors try to save him - READ 13-15. Why didn't he jump in?!

If you have no love for people, you have drifted from God

Great command - love God, love neighbor; two inseparably linked

1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Solution:

- 1) Confess; repent; obey; if you reach out you will begin to care
- 2) begin restoring your love God; you will begin to love what He loves

B. Result #2 – Dull to the truth – 1:7-9

"Feared" with no fear. Prophet was a "seer," person with insight

Ran when he knew it was impossible; he knew the word!

1. He is always watching. Never slumbers or sleeps
2. He is everywhere. Ps 139:7-12
3. He knows what is best. Declares end from beginning

Knowledge of theology makes no difference when we're running

Many Bible scholars have run away from God
The goal of our instruction is LOVE. Life change. NOT knowledge

C. Result #3 – Separated by his sin - 1:15-16

down to Joppa, down into the ship, down into the sea

Are you running today?

Thank God that He has chased us down through Jesus