

## *A Study of the Book of Jonah*

### Sermon # 2

#### *"The Cost and Consequences of Disobedience?"*

Jonah 1:4-16

You will remember that last week we dealt with Jonah's decision not to do as God had asked. He decided not to go to Nineveh but rather to flee from God. The last verse we examined (1:3) stated, "But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."

This evening I want to resume our study by examining the cost and consequences of Jonah's disobedience to God; for there will always be consequences for sin! Tonight I want to draw four principles from Jonah's experience.

First, *God Loves You Too Much to Let You Remain Disobedient* (v. 4)

"But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up."

Jonah had chosen the path of disobedience and God would have been within his rights to have said, "*Jonah, you have disobeyed me, and as such you have forfeited the right to be called my child. I am letting go!*" But he did not do so.

I want us to notice the contrast between the first two words of verse three, ("But Jonah") and the first three words of verse four, ("Then the Lord"). Jonah expressed his puny rebellion but God loved him too much to let him go. The Bible says that God sent the storm. This was not just an ordinary storm but a storm so "great" the even veteran sailors were afraid.

We know that the LORD can calm the troubled waters of our lives, but have we ever stopped to think that He is the same LORD who can stir them up into a great frenzy. It all depends on whether he is in the boat with you or not. If he is in the boat then we can call out like the disciples when they found themselves in a storm, "Master save us." But if he is not in the boat and you are running away from Him in disobedience, then what?

I want you to consider that, God took the call upon Jonah's life so seriously that He would actually sink the ship on which the disobedient prophet was sailing, if necessary rather than let him continue on the path of disobedience. God is too merciful and too loving to allow His children to drift into open rebellion without disciplining them. The Psalmist David wrote, (Psalm 119:67) "Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word." (Psalm 119:71) "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.*"

Some believers seem to think that they can go on and on in unrepented sin without the chastisement of God but that is not what God's word teaches. The principle concerning the discipline of

God is found in Hebrews 12:9-11, "Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?"

(10) For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. (11) Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

God cares so much that he disciplines us. This is what happened to Jonah. In fact if I were outside the will of God and felt no chastisement from him, I would begin to examine myself to see if I was indeed a child of God.

In Jonah's life the Lord sent a storm. When storms break out in our lives we may blame God, when in reality it is our own disobedience that has led us into the middle of the storm. The Lord may use a storm to bring these things upon so that we will stop our defiance and run back to Him.

*God Loves You To Much to Let You Alone AND...*

Secondly, *A Believer's Disobedience Always Involves Others.* (v. 5a)

"Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load...."

Because of Jonah's sin, innocent sailors (and I use that term advisedly) are about to die. Of course these men are not innocent in that they are sinners, but it is Jonah's sin not theirs that put them in this situation.

We don't sin in seclusion, like second-hand smoke, our disobedience harms the people around us. The tragedy of backslidden Christians is that they make everybody around them miserable.

But perhaps the greatest damage we do when we disobey God is that we push the lost away from a personal faith in Christ.

It is a sad day when a saint of God has to be exposed before an unbelieving world. Jonah was found out, he had concealed his identity, as child of God but he was discovered. But before point a finger of accusation at Jonah, we need to ask ourselves some questions. Have you worked in the same place for years but no one know you are a Christian?

Third, *Disobedience Leaves Us Powerless Before the Storms.* (vv. 5b- 6)

"... But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep. (6) So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."

Everyone was praying, except Jonah. Jonah, as far as we know is the only believer in the true God on that ship. And yet he was the only one not praying. There is no evidence here that Jonah called on God. Later, he did but not here, why? I believe it was because he could not. When we live with open

and unrepented sin in our lives, we cannot communicate with God. One of the tell-tale signs that we may be running from God is that we don't pray anymore. Maybe it is because you're mad at God. Maybe it is because you don't want to give up your sin. But regardless of the reason, the result is the same.

Disobedience Leaves Us Powerless Before the Storms and...

Fourth, *You Can Not Live A Disobedient Life and It Not Show.* (vv. 7-10)

"And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah."

The sailors have been discussing this storm and they have concluded that it was not at all like other storms they have experienced. They had been able to handle other storms but not this one. They have concluded that someone in their number has done something horrible. So they have decided to cast lots to discover who is at fault. We think that we can sin and no one will know it, but God knows (Numbers 32:33) and God caused Jonah to get the short straw.

"People may think that such things are determined by chance. They speak of "Lady Luck" or work out some mathematical odds.

But God tells us that He controls what happens. A verse in Proverbs says: 'The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD' (Prov. 16:33)..... The dice were cast into the lap, but God determined the outcome. Donald Grey Barnhouse often paraphrased this verse by saying that 'man throws the dice; but it is God who makes the spots come up.' " [James Montgomery Boice. *Minor Prophets. Jonah – Chap 31 - "The God Who Will Not Let Go."* p. 222]

But just because these sailors cast lots to determine the guilty party, does this mean that it is ok for us to gamble today? Nor does this Old Testament practice mean that it is all right to play the lottery?

Once he is identified as the cause of the problems, I believe that the men asked Jonah a series of questions just as fast as they could be fired off (verse 8), "Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" (9) So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." (10) Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them."

In verse ten when the men found out that Jonah worship the God of Israel they were "exceedingly afraid." These veteran sailors were more afraid at this point than they were of the storm itself. The reason had to be that they had heard about Jonah's God. This was the God who had brought the plagues on Egypt. This was the God who had opened the Red Sea. This was the God who had drowned Pharaoh's army. This is the God who had brought down the walls of Jericho. This is the God who had caused the sun to stand still for Joshua. This God who was pursuing Jonah was a great God, a powerful God! No wonder the sailors were terrified!

Perhaps each sailor had a question that he wanted answered. I don't believe that we have all the questions recorded, only a few representative examples. But after they learned he was a Hebrew (v.9), in my mind there are at least three crucial questions that they would have wanted the answers to.

1. If Your Fear God As You Say You Do, Then Why Did You Disobey Him?

As we will soon see the unbelievers feared God more than the man of God.

2. If He Is The God Of Heaven As You Say He Is Then, Why Do You Want To Run From Him?

If we as believers want to spend eternity in his presence why do you not want to be in His presence now?

3. Why did you Drag Us Into This (v. 10)?

What you do has the potential to hurt others- especially those that you love and love you.

Perhaps even more to the point, the sailors ask Jonah what they must do to appease this "great" God. In verse eleven, they ask, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?"-for the sea was growing more tempestuous."

The state of Jonah's heart is revealed by his response to the question, "What should we do to make the sea calm for us?" Jonah could have responded by saying, "*It is obvious what we must do. God wants me to go to Nineveh, and we will not be safe until I go. Turn the ship around. Let's go back. Then the storm will stop!*" Does Jonah call on His God and ask for forgiveness and vow to go back to Nineveh? No way. He is so determined in his rebellion that he says in verse twelve, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me." Just throw me into the sea!

It would seem that Jonah would rather die than do God's will. But the sailors are not willing to help him commit suicide for we read in verse thirteen, "Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them."

This verse literally says in the Hebrew, "nevertheless the men *digged* to bring it to land." They were unwilling to see him die if it can be prevented. But even these men had limits and finally the sailors give up and in verse fourteen we read, "Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, "We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You." (15) So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging." So finally when it became evident that they could not win the battle against the winds and the waves, they asked God not to hold them accountable for Jonah's death and then threw the rebellious prophet overboard. The storm stopped immediately.

In the last verse (verse sixteen) we are going to consider tonight we read, "Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows."

In an ironic twist, we see God's purposes fulfilled in spite of the prophet's stubborn rebellion. Don't be misled God's purpose will be fulfilled with you or without you but God would rather have you

with Him. These sailors did three things that identified them as new believers; they feared the LORD, they offered sacrifice to the LORD and they took vows. If the sailors had made the vows prior to the end of the storm it would not been nearly so impressive, for how many times have we witnessed people make vows when they were in trouble, but when the emergency passed they forgot all about the vows. But this sailors made their vows after the danger had passed.

## Conclusion

The British poet, Francis Thompson, wrote an epic poem known as "The Hound of Heaven." In it he pictures someone fleeing God like a Jonah, only to find that the Lord patiently and triumphantly pursues him until the wayward one rests in the Lord. The central point of this poem is its astonishing assertion that sometimes human beings flee from God and that God actually pursues and follows human beings.

"I fled from God, down the nights and down the days; I fled from God, down the arches of the years; I fled from God, down the labyrinth of my own mind. In the midst of tears, I hid. Under running laughter, I hid from God. Up visted slopes I sped, shot precipitated over chasmed fears. ... But those strong feet of God came after, ..... with unhurrying chase and unpeturbed pace; with constant speed and divine instantcy. ....And a voice, more persistent than the feet, spoke and said: You are my precious one. I will not let you go." Yes, that is the way God is. So persistent, so diligent, so untiring in his pursuit of us when we are lost.

[Francis Thompson. "The Hound of Heaven." Nicholson & Lee, eds. The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse. 1917.]

*The Four Principles Are simple..*

- 1. God Loves You Too Much to Let Remain In Disobedience.*
- 2. A Believer's Disobedience Always Involves Others.*
- 3. Disobedience Leaves Us Powerless Before the Storms.*
- 4. You Can Not Live A Disobedient Life and It Not Show.*