

Jonah chapter 1, m3

1:14-17

This book is written in it in third person by Jonah telling us what he did and what happened to him. He tried to flee from the Lord, but he did not get far. The Lord sent a great storm to force Jonah to do what the Lord had directed him to do.

Despite the great storm and Jonah knowing the cause of the storm, he refused to repent and submit to the Lord's hand. The shipmaster asked Jonah who he was and why he was fleeing from the Almighty God whom he claimed to serve?

Jonah told the man that the storm was upon them because of him, and they must throw him overboard for the sea to be calm.

The men did not want to throw him overboard, and did all they could to preserve his life. But the harder they tried not to throw him over, the more violent the storm became.

The concern for Jonah is shown in their cry to God. The prophet didn't care if these men perished for his life, yet these men care for him. They cry out to God even though Jonah doesn't.

Even in the midst of this storm, and though Jonah knows why it is upon them, we have no record of him crying out to the Lord in repentance at this point. If it had been me, I would have promised God the "moon" if he would only spare me, yet Jonah does not. In fact, everyone I know would have done a very thorough search of his life by now and repented with a promise to turn back or even pleaded with the ship captain to turn back so we could go obey God.

Why did not Jonah cry out to his God nor give any indication of repentance this point?

First, he had a guilty conscience, so how could he sincerely cry out to God.

Second, God's purpose had not yet been fulfilled, so he withheld his spirit of repentance.

Deuteronomy 29:2 *"And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; 3 The great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: 4 Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day."*

Even back in the books of the law, we see that God alone must work in the human heart to give any desire to please Him or to serve Him.

Philippians 2:13 *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."*

Therefore, we see that we must pray for God to work in the hardened and unrepentant heart, and then expect Him to do that.

It is not in man turn his own heart toward God, for God alone can turn the heart to himself. No man can say unto him "what doest thou?" He will turn hearts as it pleases himself and for his own glory.

1 Kings 18:37 *"Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again."*

Psalms 85:4 *"Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease."*

Psalms 80:3 *"Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. 7 Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. 19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved."*

(see also Jeremiah 31:18, 32:39, 40, Ezekiel 11:19-47, &c.)

Lamentations 5:21 *"Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old."*

God alone can turn the heart to himself, and we must pray that he would turn our hearts into the direction that pleases him.

V. 24. ***For thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.***

This certainly is a strange confession from pagan sailors as they believe Jonah's account, and cry out to the God of Jonah. The vast majority of professed Christians will not make this confession.

Did this great tempest and Jonah's testimony lead these men to genuine conversion to the God of Jonah?

Psalms 115:3 *"But our God is in heaven: he doeth what soever he will."*

Psalms 135:6 *"Whatsoever pleased the Lord, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the sea, and in all the depths."*

The testimony of the storm, the casting of lots, Jonah's confession and his declaration that this was God's will forced the issue to cast him into the sea. They did not pretend to understand the workings of God, so they simply said, *"for thou, O Lord, hast done as it please thee"*.

Deuteronomy 29:29 *"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."*

No matter where one reads in Scripture, this fact as stated by these pagans stands out. You would think this was Daniel or one of the prophets speaking, or even Jonah. But no! The pagan sailors speak, and they sum up one of the basic doctrines of Scripture.

The whole Bible revolves around this statement. Whether the book is the book of Jonah or the whole of scriptures, the theme is the same:

The Lord does according to His good pleasure in heaven and in earth.

Though men, saved and unsaved, today are in total opposition to this statement, the fact changes not: God's purpose was established in the beginning and is being accomplished in time. All things are going as planned as He is performing exactly what pleases Him.

Everything was/is for His good pleasure:

Hebrews 2:10 *"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."*

Revelation 4:11 *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."*

Here is a statement of God's providence in Revelation in 17 is beyond human understanding:

Revelation 17:17 *"For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."*

Our finite understanding cannot put together the fact that Satan himself even as the prince of the power the air whose job is to move man to rebel against God, is simply fulfilling the words of God. On the other hand, we are told that God is the one who works in the hearts of the wicked.

Neither men nor devils control history on the individual level, national level, nor on the world level. History belongs to God, and his providence moves it as pleases himself.

The fact that God does that which pleases only Himself is beyond our finite understanding. Man, even "Christians", refuse and even war against any ideal that he does not control his own destiny.

Children and the training of children control the future, a fact that Christians in general cannot comprehend, or refuse to admit.

One of the most effective way that fallen men use to control history against God is through the children. The Muslims believe this, so they have lots of children, and train them up in that pagan faith. The world believes this, because they have taken over the education system, and our training up even the Christian's children to be at war with the God of history.

Fallen man is totally convinced that he can control history against God, but we know that God sits in the heavens and laughs at their foolish efforts.

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

Proverbs 21:31 *"The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD."*

See also Daniel 5:21, 4:17.

"free will" vs. "God's control of history through providence"?

How do they work together?

Jonah was responsible for his disobedience, but his disobedience was in God's plan for history.

Only the Lord knows how it all fits together, and we may never know even when we get in heaven. We cannot question him, but rather we must rest in his loving care for his people and rejoice that we are on the side of victory.

Vv. 15, 16. *"So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging."*

After they prayed, v. 14, they cast Jonah into the sea. The storm stopped immediately which proved that the bad weather was entirely on Jonah's account.

The arm of the Lord was so suddenly revealed that the sailors *"feared the Lord exceedingly"*, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord.

Jonah, even in his disobedience preached a powerful message to these sailors, and they were evidently converted to the Lord God of heaven on earth.

They clearly saw that the whole affair was ordered by the will of God, and they were constrained to bear witness that he was the true God, and that worship belongs only to him.

No doubt it was not a burnt sacrifice because they were in a wooden ship, and everything had been thrown overboard.

Sacrifice?

Romans 12:1 *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*

Hebrews 13:15 *"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."*

They certainly sacrificed praise and thanksgiving for safe deliverance from the storm.

V. 16. *"And made vows"* that their God would now be the true God whom Jonah represented. Their vow was much like Jacob's vow when he fled from his brother, Esau:

Genesis 28:21 *"So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:"*

Observe:

* They tried their best, and their best failed, so now they obey.

Many times, God allows us to try our best and fail so we will cast ourselves upon his mercy.

* They very reluctantly obeyed God, and the promised results came. Nature did not change; the sailors changed, and nature became their friend instead of their enemy. Of course, nature was only obeying its Creator.

* I believe this indicates conversion to Jonah's God on the part of the sailors just as was Nineveh converted. They knew the sea, and no doubt they knew about storms, yet this was beyond anything they knew of. They knew a supernatural power had to be involved, and this only confirmed what they already realized.

* Notice that they had cried to their gods, which, of course, were powerless. Now they see the hand of the Lord God of Jonah, and any person in his right mind would *fear the Lord exceedingly, and offer sacrifice to him*. They forsook their idols, and turned to the true and living God over all creation.

Have we tried and failed? Let's try it God's way for a change.

Actually, the first chapter ends with verse 16 in the Hebrew Bible in the second chapter begins with verse 17.

V. 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."*

Jonah was safely in the fishes belly for 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the fish as a foreshadow of our Lord.

1) Jonah's stay in the fish was a sign to Nineveh, that great heathen city.

From our Lord's use of Jonah's experience, it seems that the Ninevehites knew about the three days and nights in the fish. Our Lord's preaching was/is based upon His death, burial and resurrection after three days and nights in the grave. Was Jonah's message of repentance to Nineveh based on his three days and night in the fish?

Matthew 12:38 *"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."*

The use of Jonah in Matthew 12:38-41 indicates that Jonah's message in Nineveh was based in his experience in the fish.

After the storm ceased, the sailors probably found the closeness port of safety. They had no reason to remain at sea for they had cast their goods out of the ship, which probably included their food. We know that the sailors would have told everyone about their experience. How close were they to Nineveh when they made land?

Up on their safe arrival import, I am quite sure the sailors would tell of:

- a.) Jonah's fleeing from God, so he wouldn't have to preach at Nineveh
- b.) Their attempts for safety in the supernatural storm.
- c.) Their throwing of Jonah overboard.
- d.) The storms behavior when it suddenly stopped.
- e.) They probably watched Jonah to see what would happen and even saw the fish take him whole.

The story of Jonah had three days to reach Nineveh. Christ's use of Jonah's experience implies that Jonah's story reach Nineveh before he did.

Our Lord indicates that Jonah's message was based upon the sign of his three days and nights in the fish, just as His was to be. The three days and nights were the sign of the truth of the message of repentance to both Nineveh to those of Christ's day. The difference being, whereas Jonah's generation (heard) saw and believed, the generation which saw and heard Christ's resurrection refused to believe.

The Jewish national religious leaders persecuted the new church rather than accepting the message. The men of Nineveh will judge them because that great heathen city did repent. Our experience in the "belly of the fish" may be what is needed to prepare us to do a great work for God, and move God to work in the lives of others.

2) God did not give Jonah a spirit of repentance until after the three days and nights, for to do so would have destroyed the picture. This is the only Old Testament illustration of the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. If Jonah had not fled, there would have been no Old Testament illustration. Thus we are again confronted with the sovereignty of God, and His control of all history through His divine providence, which works even unpleasant circumstances to fulfill His purpose and plan here on earth.

3) "God had prepared a great fish..." The fish was a special fish prepared for Jonah. Throughout history, this is the only record of anyone being found alive in a fish. When did God prepare the great fish? I doubt that God prepared the fish as the men threw Jonah overboard. The fish might well have been prepared as far back as at the creation of the world, for it was determined from eternity past that Jonah would be thrown overboard. Regardless, we do know that God prepared this special fish before Jonah was thrown overboard. God prepared the fish in His plan that Jonah would flee from the Lord's presence.

Acts 2:23 *"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:"*

God plans history, and men work His plan. The Lord needed an Old Testament illustration of the Christ's death, burial and resurrection, and Jonah was the only illustration we have mentioned by the Lord.

Yet Jonah was held accountable for his self-willed rebellion and actions.

4) Objection: If Jonah's unrighteous acts only show forth the praises of God, then:

- a.) Why do right, God will get the glory anyway?
- b.) How can God judge those unrighteous acts if they only bring glory to Himself?

Paul addresses this in Rom 3:1-19 & chs 5-8. *"Let's do evil so God will get even more glory."* Of course, God's answer is that judgment is according to the truth not according to the results, Rom. 2:2-11.

If God doesn't judge according to the truth, then He has no grounds to judge the world, 3:6 *"God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?"* The workers of good will receive glory, honour and peace. But those who do not obey the truth will receive indignation, wrath, tribulation and anguish.

5) though things appear difficult at the time, we can rest assured that everything is working for His glory. Whether the devices of wicked men and the disobedience of his people, or the obedience of his people, it is all working His good pleasure.

How much better is it that our obedience work for His glory, so we can get a "share" of the blessings. Obedience for His glory with its attached blessing is far better than disobedience which works for His glory. The disobedience will bring the apposite of blessings.

God is not helplessly sitting by and watching things deteriorate, **Psalms 76:10** *"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."*

No doubt this small book raises some very interesting and searching questions: how do we put together the predetermined plan of God with man's free will? This whole story of Jonah fits Acts 2:32 as God works his determinate counsel and foreknowledge. These questions are ignored today because man wants to believe he can control his own destiny.

Conclusion:

- 1.) Jonah knew better yet he acted upon what he wanted rather than what God wanted.
- 2.) The word of God will cause action, either obedience or rebellion.
- 3.) Jonah couldn't agree with the word of God, so he found others who were going in the same direction, and went with them.

The word of God speaks plainly to us. If we don't like it, then we can find plenty of others to go our way. People will flee from God and search high and low for a group of people going the way they want to go. They will do their best to get others to flee with them also.

Some years ago, one of our men took me to visit one of his co-workers. As we talked, this man told us of his view of tithing. Then he told us how he had searched for a church which agreed with his view and he was now going to it. Not a church that preached the Bible, but a church that he could agree with.

I'll admit the church where he went appeals to the flesh: it presented a feel good salvation with no responsibility to God. These churches which preach God's supposed responsibility to man will draw the crowds.

But the word of God emphasizes man's responsibility, and it promises abundant blessings for those who by God's grace fulfill the responsibilities to the best of their God-given abilities, and promises abundant curses for those who ignore their responsibilities.

Jonah, P 123. Christ was overwhelmed by the consciousness of his estrangement from God before he entered into the grave for three days and nights. "my God why hast thou forsaken me?"

Jonah was overwhelmed by the consciousness of his estrangement from God before he entered into the "grave" for three days and three nights.

Leave out of message from here on

Let me hit something here. I Cor. 4:14-21; 11:1; Ph. 3:17-19; I Thes. 1:6.

With these passages (I Cor. esp.), Paul, is writing back instructions to those who he had led to the Lord, and were now being influenced away from his spiritual leadership. These were his spiritual children.

I believe God gives physical children to certain parents to raise and train up in the way they should go. According to his word. When a child rebels against this God given authority, I believe they have entered into the realm of witchcraft and will pay a terrible price.

Now, a child may not live at home forever but if they move on it must be with the parents permission and blessing or it will be rebellion.

I believe God I Cor. 4 carries the principles over into the spiritual realm. God gives spiritual children to churches and pastors. It is then that pastor's and church's responsibility to train those children up in terms of God's law-word.

If a child leaves without their 'parents' blessing then they are rebelling just as sure as a teen who runs away from home.

Ph. 3:17-19. Let's look at this passage a little. Here is some instruction for us. Let me use some illustrations with which I am familiar.

In LA, we had a lady who worked in the kitchen as a cook for the school, and boy could she cook.

The preacher took some strong stands against dancing, gossip, pants and many other issues. This lady did not agree with the preacher as he preached the scriptures. I never heard her (or others for that matter), say that his preaching was unscriptural, only that they didn't agree with it.

This lady put up with the preaching for probably 4-5 years. (We were there 7 years.) It finally got to be more than she could stand. She wanted some preaching that would make her feel good rather than something that laid out her responsibility before God.

She left the church in rebellion against what was being preached and did her best to take others with her. Really the only ones she could get to follow her was her family, including her dad.

Her dad took up a talking campaign against the church and preacher. Her daughter had married an AF boy and lived in Alaska. Her dad even called the boy in Alaska telling him how bad the pastor was.

Now the results:

1.) The grandfather (the lady's dad) had a stroke which affected his speech. From then on he could not put his thought together with his words. He died soon after we left.

2.) The lady's husband had been a drunk before they started coming to Merrywoods. The last I heard he was out of church completely, drinking very heavy again.

3.) The grand son-in-law listened and became very bitter. When they got back down in the lower 48 they were divorced and he remarried.

4.) If I remember right, the lady had two daughters and the second one also ended up in a divorce.

All of that to say this. Everyone this woman influenced in anyway ended up with their lives ruined. Maybe it was all a quiescence but personally I will have a hard time believing that. I have seen it happen far to many times.

Now, this is what Paul warns us of in Ph. 3:17-19. Paul tells those here who he is spiritually responsible for to follow him as he follows Christ.

He reminds them that there will be those who will depart from him because they just can't agree with him. Because his doctrine does not permit them to fulfill their desires (whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things).

He warns those he is writing to that they had better mark them which walk contrary to him because their end is destruction. And if they walk (go) with them their end will also be destruction.

This lady influenced everyone she could as she went her way and found a preacher who would preach what she wanted to hear. Everyone she influenced shared in the destruction of her and her family.

I mentioned about a young AF man in LA who left his former church over a disagreement with the pastor. I led him to the Lord. When he told me about having to go back and why I gave him my blessing. I did not like to but it was right to do.

If it had not been for that, then his responsibility would have been to stay under my teaching and spiritual authority.

I believe Paul here in I Cor. 4, is clear on applying this principle of authority of the spiritual authority over his children, and when a child rebels against this authority I think Ja. 1:22 also applies to them. They become blinded and deceived. Unable to even see truth.

God did not give me my children for the neighbors to raise. God has not given us spiritual children for Freemont to raise or Pleasant View or Eastside or Faith Baptist Church or even Calvary Chapel, or any other group of people we could name.

"But what if the father (parent) goes bad?"

Paul covered this in 11:1, this authority is not unlimited but only as it conforms to scripture and Christ. If the parent goes bad or get crossways with God then the children had better obey God. Our loyalty belongs to Christ, not man.

One problem here though that people are more loyal to tradition then to God's word. I had someone tell me over three years ago, "What you preach is contrary to what this man we respect highly preached. To believe you is to disbelieve him and he is such a nice man, we don't think he is wrong." The decision was made on the man's personality, not on God's word.

Something which I will never understand. People hear the truth of "You must trust Christ as your substitute and saviour." They get saved then want to go somewhere where they teach the lie of, "You must ask Jesus into your heart." If a preacher or teacher has the wrong plan of salvation then you can rest assured that many other things will be wrong also.

But like Jonah, we can find many good sincere groups who will teach any combination of doctrine which will appease the public. There are boat loads after boat loads going in whatever direction a person might want to go.

Our fleeing from God will cause those around us to perish and us to be insensitive to their needs. Fleeing from God will blind us to the truth. Fleeing from God will harden us.

3.) Do our words make better preaching than living. "I love God," do our actions prove it? "I fear God" do our action prove it? "I love and believe this scriptures," do our actions and use of our time prove it? (Bible study, prayer)

Our actions will prove our words, our faith.

I have met many people who believe the word of God and were willing to obey it until it didn't line up with what they wanted to do or with tradition or with friendships.

One of the most common phrases I hear is, "That just isn't the way I see it."

Another pastor and myself were talking some time ago about an issue he said something which caught my attention. He said, "I guess, let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind about this." Then do it, now that is pagan and heathenism, humanism. Our standard of obedience to God's word is not if we are fully persuaded but what does God's word say about it. It is not how do I feel about it but how does God feel about it.

God's purpose was accomplished here even in Jonah's disobedience. But let us respond to God as is pleasing to him and see his blessings upon us.

Jonah's 3 days and nights in the fish was a sign to Nineveh. That time that we spend in testings and trials can also be used to reach those around us as it did for Jonah if we will only obey God.