

18 February 24

(Week 25)

Jonah

Jonah Rejects God's Call

Focal Verses: Jonah 1:1-4, 11-17; 2:1-10

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will **COMPREHEND** God's sovereignty is irreversible, **FEEL REMORSE** for how our disobedience can impact others, and **COMMIT** to follow God's will even when we may not understand His larger plan.

In Focus

Our math system, like our calendar, is not perfect. Under certain conditions errors show up! This little word puzzle may be one of many such occurrences where errors crop up. Many math teachers enjoy offering this paradox to their students. See if you can solve it.

Three guys are at a hotel and order a pizza. The front desk says it will be \$30, so each guy puts in \$10. When the delivery guy brings the pizza, he says it is only \$25, so he gives each guy back \$1 and keeps \$2 for a tip.

You might be thinking if $\$30 - \$25 = \$5$ and $\$5 - \$3 = \$2$ what's the problem?

The three guys originally gave \$10 each. They each got back \$1 in change. That means they each paid \$9. Three times \$9 is \$27. The delivery guy kept \$2 for a tip. \$27 plus \$2 equals \$29. Where in the world is that other dollar?

Many people put complete faith in imprecise mathematical systems and formulas created by imperfect people. These same people will tell you that there is no way a person could survive in the belly of a fish for three days.

When we put our faith in people and their systems, we will often be disappointed. When we put our faith in God and are obedient to His word, we will never be disappointed.

In today's lesson, we will delve into the story of Jonah's outright disobedience and the consequences of his actions.

Keep In Mind

"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 1:3)

Lesson Text

Jonah 1:1-4, 11-17; 2:1-10

1 Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.”

3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord; and he went down to Joppa and 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 likely to be broken.

11 Then said they unto him, “What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?” For the sea grew more and more 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 was wrought-up and was tempestuous against them.

14 Therefore 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.

Jonah 2:1-10

1 Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish’s belly,

2 and said: “I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me. Out of the belly of hell cried I, and Thou heardest my voice.

3 For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas, and the floods compassed me about; all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me.

4 Then I said, ‘I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple.’

5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me forever; yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.

7 “When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine holy temple.

8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy,

9 but I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.”

10 And the Lord spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

The Lesson The People, Places and Times

Jonah (Dove): This prophet was swallowed by a great fish before he obeyed God’s command to preach repentance to the Assyrian city of Nineveh. Jonah was not always so reluctant to do God’s bidding. He is the same prophet who predicted the remarkable expansion of Israel’s territory during the reign of Jeroboam II (793 753 B.C.); (2 Kings 14:25). The passage in 2nd Kings also indicates that Jonah, the son of Amittai, was from Gath Hopher, a town in Zebulun in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Joppa (Beautiful): An ancient seaport city on the Mediterranean Sea, about 35 miles northwest of Jerusalem. Joppa was on a rocky ledge about 116 feet high overlooking the Mediterranean. It supposedly received its name “beautiful” from the sunlight that its buildings reflected.





The first mention of Joppa in the Bible indicates that it was part of the territory inherited by the tribe of Dan (Joshua 19:46). The city was the seaport for Jerusalem and the site of significant shipping in both Old and New Testament times. Rafts of cedar logs from the forests of Lebanon were floated from Tyre and Sidon to Joppa and then transported overland to Jerusalem to be used in building Solomon’s temple (2nd Chronicles 2:16).

In New Testament times, Joppa was the home of a Christian disciple, Tabitha (or Dorcas), a woman “full of good works and charitable deeds” (Acts 9:36). Joppa was also the home of Simon the Tanner (Acts 10:32). It was on the roof of Simon’s house in Joppa that Peter received his vision of a great sheet descending from heaven (Acts 10:9-16).

Tarshish (Jasper): A city or territory believed by many to be Tartessus, in southern Spain near Gibraltar. When Jonah fled from God’s instruction to go to Nineveh, he boarded a ship bound for Tarshish, in the opposite direction from Nineveh (Jonah 1:3; 4:2). Tarshish was famous for its ships (Psalm 48:7; Isaiah 2:16), which carried gold, silver, iron, tin, lead, ivory, apes, and monkeys (1st Kings 10:22; Jeremiah 10:9).

Because the ships of Tarshish carried such great riches, they became symbols of wealth, power, and pride. When God judged the nations for their sinful ways, He destroyed their ships to humble them and to demonstrate His great power (2nd Chronicles 20:35–37; Isaiah 2:16–17).

Background

The name Jonah means “Dove”: Very little is said of the prophet outside of the book that bears his name. In 2nd Kings 14:5, Jonah is said to have prophesied that the Southern Kingdom of Israel would expand its borders during the reign of Jeroboam (793-753), a wicked king of the southern kingdom. It is safe to conclude that the Jonah of 1st Kings is the same person as the Jonah who is the subject of this book. This is especially true since both are identified as the son of Amittai” (cp 2nd Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1). Jonah’s prophecy to Jeroboam provides some important background material to enhance our understanding of the prophet and this book.

Jonah was a prophet of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. His predecessors were Elijah and Elisha. Hosea and Amos would likely have been Jonah’s contemporaries. Assyria, whose capital city was Nineveh, have already begun to exercise her dominance on the near East; but for a time, her control would wane, allowing Israel, under Jeroboam’s leadership, to expand its borders. Israel’s prosperity during this period was solely due to God’s grace and compassion for his people, who were greatly afflicted. It was certainly not godliness on the part of the nations of its leader that could be viewed as the basis for God’s blessings.

Accordingly, just as Jonah’s ministry in Nineveh would result in an outpouring of God’s grace, so would his ministry in Israel. The difference is that, even though Israel did not repent of her evil deeds, God blessed the nation anyway. The Ninevites, on the other hand, sincerely repented of their sins and God withheld judgement of the nation. In this sense, God’s grace was even greater toward the Israelites than it was toward the Ninevites, for God promised to forgive those who repented (cf. Jeremiah 18:7-8). The book of Jonah is an unusual book. It is the only prophetic book that places more emphasis on the messenger than the message of John. It consists of only seven chapters. Another unusual feature of the book is that it revolves exclusively around a Gentile nation. Jonah was the only Old Testament prophet sent directly to the Gentiles and the only prophet who refused to obey God.

God’s sovereignty is evidenced throughout the book. God “sent a great wind” (Jonah 1:4), prepared “a great fish” (v.17) and “vine” (4:6) and sent a scorching “east wind”. The purpose of the book is to convict God’s people of selfishness and bigotry. The book demonstrates the universal nature of God’s compassion. It points to the future redemption of both Jews and Gentiles through the finished work of Christ.

In Depth

1. Jonah's Disobedience (Jonah 1:1–3) The Book of Jonah begins just like eight of the twelve books of the so-called "minor prophets": "The word of the Lord came to. . ." (Jonah 1:1). The difference between Jonah and the other prophets is that they obeyed God's command, but Jonah made up his mind to disobey God.

God told Jonah to go to the People of Nineveh and announce His judgment against them. Jonah's seven-word prophecy was short but to the point. "In forty days, Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3:4).

Nineveh, a major city of Assyria, was about 500 miles northeast of Israel. The Assyrians, a powerful and wicked people, were old enemies of Israel. Jonah knew that if he preached to the city, there was a chance the people might turn away from their wickedness. He also knew that if they repented, God would show them mercy (4:1-3). Jonah decided he would flee from God's service rather than allow the Assyrians to have an opportunity to receive God's mercy.

The reluctant prophet refused to proclaim God's word to the Ninevites. Instead of following God's command to go to Nineveh, Jonah went down to the port city of Joppa. There he bought passage on a ship headed for a city called Tarshish. Apparently, the foolish prophet thought he could somehow escape God's presence (1:3)

2. Jonah's Devastation (vv. 4, 11-17). Jonah boarded the ship, and the crew set sail across the Mediterranean Sea. The sailing was smooth until God sent a great wind that caused a violent storm to spring up at sea. The storm was so strong the ship was in danger of being torn apart by the raging waters.

The sailors were terrified, and each man began calling out to whatever gods he worshiped for deliverance. Meanwhile, Jonah had gone down inside the ship and fallen fast asleep. The ship's captain found Jonah and demanded he get up and pray to his God. The sailors drew lots to determine who was responsible for their dire plight, and God caused the lot to single out Jonah as the one responsible (vv.5-7).

The men questioned Jonah, and at some point, Jonah told them he was running away from God. The men now had two more questions for him. The first was, "Why have you done this?" (v. 10, NIV). The frightened sailors wanted to know why Jonah found it necessary to attempt to flee from the presence of his God. Jonah ignored this question because answering it honestly would reveal his selfish disobedience.

The second question was, “What should we do with you to make the sea calm down for us?” (v. 11 NIV). Jonah had no problem answering this question: “Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, and then it will become calm” (v. 12 NIV). Jonah could have told the sailors, “God wants me to go to Nineveh. If you turn the boat around and sail back to Joppa, God will calm the sea.” But Jonah was so determined to have his own way he would rather die than obey God.

We would have expected the sailors to immediately grabbed the reluctant prophet and toss him overboard. Instead, the sailors demonstrated compassion for human life that was sorely lacking in Jonah. The men took to the oars and tried their best to bring the boat to land., It soon became obvious that their struggles were in vain. The sailors gave up. They prayed to God for forgiveness, threw Jonah into the roiling waters, The raging sea immediately grew calm (v, 15).

Many times, disobedience to God not only affects the disobedient but those around them. For Achan’s sin all Israel was defeated at Ai, David sinned and 70,000 people [perished, Jonah’s disobedience brought danger to a boatload of sailors, ***Is your disobedience to God causing pain for anyone you love?***

3. Jonah’s deliverance (V2:1-10) Jonah would rather he died than submit to God’s will, yet God still loved Jonah and had a job for him to do. God “prepared: a large fish to swallow w Jonah (v.1:17). The preparation of the fish meant that God arranged for the fish to be at the exact place at the exact time that Jonah needed it. It also meant that God had somehow prepared the fish to support human life.

Jonah was probably drowning by the time the fish swallowed him, so he viewed the fish as an agent of salvation (2:3). Jesus would later compare His own impending death and resurrection to Jonah’s three days and three nights in the fish’s belly (Jonah 1:17; cf Matthew 12:39-40; Luke 11:29-30).

During the three days Jonah spent inside the great fish, he prayed and repented of his disobedience (2:4-9), God heard Jonah’s prayer and commanded the great fish to vomit up Jonah on dry land. Interestingly enough, the great fish obeyed God more readily than Jonah had. God told Jonah to go east, but instead, he went west. He commanded Jonah to go Nineveh, but Jonah fled in the opposite direction to Tarshish, It took miracles of devastation and devastation to get Jonah to obey God’s sovereign will. ***What will it take for you?***

Liberating Lesson

The slogan on our money reads, "In God, We Trust." To trust in God means to seek and obey His wisdom when making decisions. Do you believe that our leaders really seek God's guidance in matters of state? Do you believe that God should be left of Government decisions?

Application for Activation

Is there something that you know God wants you to do and you are not doing? Perhaps you are carrying a grudge, and God wants you to demonstrate real love or submit to your spouse. Whatever the case, submit yourself to God and do whatever He wants you to do without worrying about the outcome. Be prepared to share your experiences with the class next week.

Take Aways

Closing Prayer

Week of 18 February 24

Daily Bible Readings



Monday – Psalm 26-31

Tuesday – Psalm 32-35

Wednesday – Psalm 36-39

Thursday – Psalm 40-45

Friday – Psalm 46-50

Saturday – Psalm 51-57

Sunday – Psalm 58-65