



Jonah 1:1:3 - “1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” 3 But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord (NIV).”

This is the reality that we have to face: When you run from God, you always go down. When you run from God, you always pay a price. This talks about Jonah prophesying for the restoration of the boundaries of Israel during the time of Jeroboam II, King of Israel. He’s a faithful and sought after prophet in Israel in his days. Literally we believe in this story as a fact simply because the God who made the heaven and the earth from nothing can command a big fish to swallow a person alive.

Jonah’s Calling

God called Jonah and he had some reluctance to God’s calling. Jonah ran away from the Lord. You are either running TO the Lord or AWAY FROM the Lord in different areas of your life. You’re either running TO God’s purpose or running AWAY FROM His purpose depending on your attitude. You are either running TO His command or FROM His command based on your actions.

Unlike Jonah, Elijah reacted differently to God’s calling. 1 Kings 18:1-2 - “1 After a long time, in the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah: “Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.” 2 So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab (NIV).” Can you see the difference? Both of them were commanded by God to tell something to wicked people. Elijah obeyed while Jonah disobeyed.

God called Jonah to preach to people of Ninevah. And he’s asked to preach against it. But he ran from his calling. I just find it interesting to see the contrast. God can give the same calling to two different people and they can respond in a different way and have different results. One calls down fire from heaven. One was swallowed up by a big fish. I wonder which one are you going to be? God has a calling for your life and your response is critical.

What is your instinct when you hear a command from God? Do you treat it as interruption or invitation? Because the way you hear from God’s instruction to your life will determine your response to God’s instruction. And the way you respond to God’s instructions will determine the direction of your life. Jonah was a successful prophet. God has been blessing his nation. Now, he’s being asked to minister to bad people and he considers it as an interruption.

Every time God issues an instruction, even if it doesn’t make sense, it is an INVITATION. Nineveh is a great city that God is concerned about. There are around 120,000 people here who don’t know they’re right hand from their left. So God is saying to Jonah, “I’m concerned about them. I’m concerned about them being evil. I’m concerned about their life. And I’m inviting you Jonah to be part of redemption story.” But if you never train yourself to hear God’s instruction as invitation for a greater vision, you’ll treat it as interruption and you’ll miss your calling. God’s calling is simply a calling. Let us not treat it as something that is too mysterious and mystical and say, “I want God to reveal to me His calling.” Actually what I learned on how God works is that He typically placed us in the middle of great calling and He’s waiting for us to respond.

God calls Nineveh as GREAT city. But Jonah calls it as a barbaric place. Here’s the reality: God doesn’t call a place or a person as we see it. We often say, “I just call it as I see it.” We have to call it as God sees it. Because if you will call it as you see it, you will not call it as it is, and you’ll never embrace God’s vision and His calling. God is saying to you right now, “You’re running away from the calling and vision I’m asking you to embrace.”

Jonah’s Second Chance

Jonah 3:1-2 - “1 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: 2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you (NIV).” So God gives you vision and calling, now either you embrace it or reject it. Let me warn you: The enemy will always provide you a ship so that you will run away from your calling and purpose. But God is more powerful to provide you a way to your calling. The book of Jonah is not just about the consequence of disobedience. It is also about the grace of God. Imagine God uses Jonah despite his shortcomings to produce good results. Listen to this: God can do anything, to anyone, anywhere at anytime through anyone He chooses.

Who among you have gone to the left when God said you should have gone to the right? God is the God of second chances. God is the God of third chances. God’s calling for you is waiting. But don’t keep on running away because He’ll let your big fish swallow you up until you say YES.

In chapter 1, Jonah has excuses. In chapter 2, he has regrets. Young people, if you will cheat from now till you get in college, you’ll be stupid by the time you have a job. Today’s excuses cover your face with a mask. That’s why stop making excuses. So you better do what God is telling you to do than giving excuses.

The calling of Jonah is not about the sermon he preached. This is why our life is not about us. Our life is about God’s vision and calling for us.

God can do anything, to anyone, anywhere at anytime through anyone He chooses. For those of us who have wasted our life, for those of us who have blown it, for those of us who have neglected our calling, these verses should be the best reason for us to obey God for His calling. God’s vision is greater. He calls us not for any other reason but for people’s salvation.

Some of you are asked by God to forgive those who hurt you but you can’t release. When we were sinners, we want God to be compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. But when we became a Christian, we don’t want to forgive those who hurt us. There’s a perspective shift. We want God to be good for us. But we want God to be a punisher for others.

Jonah was so consumed of his convenience that God consumed his convenience. Sometimes God will consume your convenience to get you consumed with His calling.

Jonah 4:10-11 - “10 But the Lord said, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. 11 And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals (NIV)?” The book of Jonah ends here.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What has GOD called you to do today?
2. How are things going towards this call?
3. What hindrances do you see that are slowing or stopping you from attaining this call?