

Jonah: a story about a man swallowed by a big fish ...??

We all run from God ... and sometimes we don't even realize it!

- We can believe IN God but still run FROM Him.
- We can be willing to RUN but just lack the OCCASION ...
- We can even use RELIGION to run & hide ...

**Our greatest privilege & highest responsibility → with God (*Coram Deo*)
→ Yet we run!!**

Jonah 1:1-2

The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: ²“Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it because their evil has come up before Me.”

Side Note: Why does God care about Nineveh???

Being “with God”

- Immediacy ~ a “now-ness”
- Purpose ~ a partnership ... a shared destiny

→ **Jonah's response ... → “*spirit of Jonah*” // Jonah-syndrome**

Jonah 1:3

Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from the Lord's presence. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the Lord's presence.

1) We will run when God's presence seems like an interruption, intrusion, or even an invasion.

(all one slide; all together)

Jonah's issue is not lack of clarity.

Jonah's issue is not fear.

Jonah's issue is not uncertainty.

Jonah's issue is not intellectual.

→ **Jonah's issue is control (self-will, self-regard ...)**

We all tend to seek a “place” (*Tarshish*) where we can nurture pride (ego-ism) and exercise control.

→ This place is ESCAPE, not home!

3 Blinders:

- **Past, Money, & Coincidence**

2 Kings 14:25 (NLT)

Jeroboam II recovered the territories of Israel ... just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had promised through **Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet** ...

Past obedience & faithfulness to God can never substitute for **present** obedience and honoring of God's '*right now*' **presence**.

We can never let **spiritual "memory"** blind us to the potential of the present **moment** with God!

Jonah has a problem with the **assignment** = Jonah has a problem with **God**.

Money: powerful element in human control & power

→ Finance our self-will & self-determination

Coincidence ('*found a ship*'): when we have a heart to run and the occasion to run, then there will often be an opportunity to "make it happen"

Jonah 1:4-5

But the Lord threw a great wind onto the sea, and such a great **storm** arose on the sea that the ship threatened to break apart. The sailors were afraid, and each cried out to his god. They threw the ship's cargo into the sea to lighten the load. **Meanwhile, Jonah** had gone down to the lowest part of the vessel and had stretched out and fallen into a **deep sleep**.

The Rule of Storms:

- Every act of **disobedience** has a storm attached to it.
 - NOT every storm is the result of sin but every sin brings a storm.
- Every storm has **grace and mercy** within it because the Lord is over it.
- The storm is not God is being mean or watching for our failure → He is seeking our **attention**!

2) As we run, we become increasingly **desensitized** to God.

God is always one step ahead. The ship--

→ To Jonah a means of escape

→ To God: an instrument of purpose

Jonah 1:6

The captain approached him and said, “What are you doing **sound asleep**? **Get up!** Call to your god. Maybe this god will consider us, and we won’t perish.”

WARNING for Christians:

→ **Jonah’s faith has become so private and personally convenient that it is of no public good.**

Jonah 1:7-8

“Come on!” the sailors said to each other. “Let’s cast lots. Then we’ll know who is to blame for this trouble we’re in.” So they cast lots, and the lot **singled out Jonah**.⁸ Then they said to him, “Tell us who is to blame for this trouble we’re in. What is your business (*occupation*), and where are you from? What is your country, and what people are you from?”

Jonah 1:9-10

He answered them, “I’m a Hebrew. I **worship the Lord**, the God of the heavens, who made the sea and the dry land.” Then the men were seized by a great fear and said to him, “What have you done?” The men knew he was **fleeing** from the Lord’s presence because he had told them.

3) When we run, we have (or develop) a shallow spiritual identity.

a) **Jonah: lost the sense & value of God’s presence**

b) **Jonah: lost his sense of purpose**

Jonah 1:11-13

So they said to him, “What should we do to you so that the sea will calm down for us?” For the sea was getting worse and worse.

¹²He answered them, “Pick me up and **throw me into the sea** so that it will calm down **for you**, for I know that **I’m to blame** for this great storm that is against you.”¹³ Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they couldn’t because the sea was raging against them more and more.

4) Our running slows or stops as we do 3 things:

a) Take **responsibility**

b) Start thinking of **others** (somebody other than ourselves)

Jonah 1:14-15

So they called out to the Lord, “Please, Lord, don’t let us perish because of this man’s life, and don’t charge us with innocent **blood**! For you, Lord, have done just as you **pleased**.”¹⁵ Then they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea **stopped** its raging.

Jonah becomes a substitute ... a scapegoat ... that satisfies the demand of God.

Jonah 1:16-17

The men were **seized** by great fear of the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

¹⁷ **The Lord appointed a great fish** to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Matthew 12:39-41 (NLT)

Jesus replied, “Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign; but the only sign I will give them is the **sign of the prophet Jonah**. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was in the belly of the **great fish** for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

⁴¹ “The people of Nineveh will stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for they repented of their sins at the preaching of Jonah. Now **someone greater than Jonah** is here—but you refuse to repent.

4) Our **running slows or stops as we do 3 things:**

- a) Take **responsibility****
- b) Start thinking of **others** (somebody other than ourselves)**
- c) Embrace the **grace****