

## **“God’s Sovereign Will” Jonah 1, Sermon Notes**

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Major Lesson: God is sovereign and will accomplish His will

Introduction

Many times we argue with authority

- I am sure none of you have that problem
- You likely do what you are told right away...but imagine what it is like for some people
- They have a hard time listening to people in authority

All of us have a hard time listening to what God says. We need His Word to remind us of the truth and how we should walk in His ways.

This is an amazing story of what happens to our hearts when we do not give ourselves over to God and follow Him. We become angry with God.

Spiritual diagnosis of someone who believes he deserves God’s grace, and that others do not

This book fits in the timing of 2Kings 14:23-27

- The Book of Jonah is a historical book
- It is not a story

Illustration why it reads like a story, but is an historical account:

- Some are confused by this reading
- Plus, the details sound too supernatural to be real
- And the solution to problems of storms sound unrealistic
- Therefore the conclusion is that this must be a fanciful story, or fiction, in order to make a bigger point
- They conclude this could not really happen

But we speak like this all the time

- My kids ask me all the time to tell them a story
- They want to know about my childhood
- I tell them a story about when I was a kid
- The story is an historical account of what actually took place

This is exactly what is happening here. This reads like a story. It is a narrative. But it is more than a story, it is an historical account of a prophet of God who was sent to teach God's Word, and that man disobeyed God.

- This is historical narrative. While it reads like a story, it is an account of events which took place by a real man in history
- The details of the story are brought together to make a point about the character of God and His creation
- The setting is the 8th century BC when the Assyrians are increasing in power and dominance throughout the land
- Imagine America, and then imagine around America enemies increasing in number and power
- At this time Nineveh was a great and powerful city

This book was written at some point between the Reign of Jeroboam II and the conquest of Israel by the Assyrians. There is a 53 year window here.

- Likely this was early in Jonah's life
- We do not get the sense that he was terribly old when he was sent
- He could be between 30 and 50 years old
- This is about the average age of our adult men in the Church

Body

1. The Disobedience of Jonah vs. 1-3
2. The Displeasure of God vs. 4-6
3. The Dismay (shock) of the Sailors vs 7-16

1. The Disobedience of Jonah vs. 1-3

"The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." 3 But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."

- Now we start with the disobedience of Jonah
- God gives Jonah a command, and Jonah does the opposite
- It would be like your boss telling you to clean something around the shop, and you turn around and pull everything off the shelves and throw it on the floor
- You know immediately this is not going to go well for you

Why didn't Jonah go? Why does he not obey God?

- By the time we finish this book we will get an answer to this question, but Jonah who likely wrote this book does not tell us at this point
- We discover the answer to this question in the same way the original audience would have discovered the answer: as they worked through this book
- The first initial answer would be because the people of Nineveh are Assyrians and these people are hated...

The city of Nineveh was founded by Nimrod

“Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. 11 From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, 12 and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.” (Genesis 10:8-12 NAU)

Land of the Assyrians the land founded by Nimrod the great hunter (Micah 5:6).

- The Assyrians were warriors
- They intimidated people with their fierce violence
- They ruled with violence
- They were like the schoolyard bullies of their time
- They would capture armies and leave their dead bodies outside the gates of their cities to intimidate people
- They were cruel to their enemies
- The modern practices of certain Islamic groups are tamer versions of the Assyrians
- Similar in brutality
- They were selfish murderers who cared about nothing but their own appetites for power and control
- Because of their ruthlessness in battle and especially in victory, they were hated
- They were also growing in power
- It was the Assyrians who conquered the Northern Tribe of Israel
- God would eventually use Israel to be the instrument of judgment on His rebellious people

We could say this: Jonah could have fled for fear of judgment

He did not want the Assyrians to kill him. Here he was a prophet of an enemy nation and he comes in and declares a message against them. So maybe Jonah feared for his life?

OR

Jonah could have fled because he hated these people and wanted nothing to do with them

- This would have been the popular Jewish mindset
- They were Gentiles

- And they were evil, murderous sinners
- They are enemies

Either of these would be a suitable answer to the question of why Jonah ran

At this point in the story we don't know, so we will assume that Jonah does not like Nineveh and does not want to help them

So what does he do next?

Jonah Ch 1 describes Jonah's trip downward

Sin always takes us downward

- Down to Joppa (vs 3)
- Down in the ship (vs 3)
- Down into the belly of the great fish (1:17, 2:1)
- Down to the depth of the Sea (2:2-3)

Sin takes us away from God

- It leads us away from the truth
- Sin leads us away from God's people
- Sin makes us self-focused

Jonah runs away from God, and when you run away from God you always run down. You slip further down into danger and destruction.

# Ch1 is a classic contest of will

- Will man's will rule over God's will?
- Will the prophet of God get away with ignoring God's commands? Or will God accomplish His perfect will even through the disobedience of His people?

Major Lesson: God is sovereign and will accomplish His will

- Many assume God is at the mercy of human will
- Many think that evil is stronger than God
- God demonstrates here that He is in control
- God will do His will

"Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';" (Isaiah 46:10 NAU)

- Here we see God command Jonah, and then Jonah says no and runs away
- What do you think the response is? God says, "Oh well, maybe next time?"

Jonah flashes his disobedience and God demonstrates the wisdom of His will. God uses the disobedience of Jonah to demonstrate the greatness of His will.

- While Jonah is running God is working.

## 2. The Displeasure of God vs. 4-6

4 “The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. 5 Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep. 6 So the captain approached him and said, ‘How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.’”

What happens when you disobey God? Well, He shows His displeasure.

- He chastens his people
- Why? Because His will is going to be accomplished

Now let me ask you: Can God be angry with His own people? Yes, if they disobey Him.

- Look again at this text. God sends a great storm on Jonah to stop him.
- Some would argue that God will only show displeasure towards the wicked and never towards His children
- Some have argued that God will never punish His people
- “God under the New Covenant never deals His people on the basis of punishment. He is not dealing with us for punishment or judgment.”- Bob George
- God’s discipline of believers does not relate to punishment
- Discipline is like a football coach who trains us
- But punishment is only reserved for those who are wicked
- But we do face God’s punishment when we disobey
- We are told to pray and ask for forgiveness Matt 6

Jonah was a justified man; he was a prophet of God BUT

Vs 4 The Lord sent the wind

- God was displeased with Jonah’s rebellion
- God accomplished His perfect will even in the rebellion of Jonah

“The Lord Hurlled a storm on Jonah” It was a supernatural expression of divine judgment

- This has to be the wrath of God

Vs 5 these sailors knew this was divine activity – they each were calling out to their gods

- The captain asked Jonah to cry out to his God
- This was nothing like they had seen before

Jonah's sin caused him to be unconcerned about the danger he was putting others in

- He did not see that the storm was bringing judgment upon him and the boat he was in
- He was putting the lives of these sailors at risk
- He slept through it all

Sin often dulls our senses

- Sin caused Jonah to sleep through the trials God was bringing
- He was missing the whole point, while everyone else was fearing for their lives
- Sin often leaves us blind to the difficulties around us
- We are often the cause of our own difficulties
- We get into more danger and trouble because the hardness of sin has caused us to ignore the working of God around us
- Our sin will cause us to miss the displeasure of God towards us

Be careful not to allow sin to rule you.

- It will blind you to dangers
- Cause you to not work at doing what is right
- Confuse you about what is good and proper to do
- Lead you to destruction
- Your sin could even hurt those people around you. Here it caused the sailors to fear for their lives
- You should be worried if your own heart does not desire what is right and good. It may already be in the process of being hardened.

If it is, God may have to take drastic measures to get your attention. Maybe even sending a violent storm and large fish.

This whole section is filled with chaos caused by Jonah's sin against the will of God

- The ship is being tossed about
- Was about to break
- The sailors were throwing their cargo overboard to lighten the ship, and to keep it from breaking up
- This was terribly traumatic for the sailors
- For them to throw their cargo overboard was a last-ditch effort to save their lives
- This is how they were making money. They were not making money by taking Jonah to Tarshish. They were making money by delivering goods.

- Now they were jettisoning those goods and they were losing money for every piece of cargo they threw overboard

God was fulfilling His perfect providence to accomplish His will

- This section shows us you can obey God's commands willingly, or the hard way
- When you have to learn the hard way, do not expect it to be pleasant

### 3. The Dismay (shock) of the Sailors vs. 7-16

7 "Each man said to his mate, 'Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us.' So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, 'Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?' 9 He said to them, 'I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.' 10 Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, 'How could you do this?' For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. 11 So they said to him, 'What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?'-- for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. 12 He said to them, 'Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.' 13 However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them. 14 Then they called on the LORD and said, 'We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased.' 15 So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. 16 Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. 17 And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights." (Jonah 1:1-17 NAU)

These sailors become dismayed by the gods

- Which god is doing this to us?
- They could see the storm and this was nothing like anything they had ever seen
- They knew there was a deity involved in this one

These sailors became desperate to stop this storm

- They prayed to their gods and they wanted everyone to be involved
- They found Jonah to get involved in the efforts

God used pagans who were dismayed by Jonah to rebuke him

- Captain's rebuke

"So the captain approached him and said, 'How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.'" (Jonah 1:6 NAU)

- Soldier's rebuke

8 "Then they said to him, 'Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?'"

- Each of these questions were given to provoke Jonah to reveal who he really was
- He was a redeemed child of God
- He knew exactly why these things were happening
- They were saying to him: How could you possibly do this to us?
- How could you not honor your God?

Has this happened to you? Where you acted in a sinful way, then someone says to you, "What church do you go to? Don't you believe in Jesus? Are you not a Christian? So why do you act in this way?"

- God often uses the mouths of unbelievers to call us into account
- This what God does here through the sailors to Jonah
- Brings shame upon Jonah through the mouth of sailors

His disobedience was causing these men great harm and then He had to share his faith with them.

Vs 9 -10

9 "He said to them, 'I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.' 10 Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, 'How could you do this?' For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them."

They knew Jonah was running from God because Jonah confessed

They are confused by Jonah's Response to His God

- How could you run from him
- Are you crazy?
- Vs 12

These men were dismayed by Jonah's solution

- Cast me into the sea then the sea will be calm
- The men did not like this answer so they tried another solution
- Vs 13
- They knew at times gods would want sacrifices, and yet they knew it would be evil to kill Jonah
- Proof that the Law was written on their hearts
- They would not give in

Prayer vs 14



“Then they called on the LORD and said, ‘We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased.’”  
(Jonah 1:14 NAU)

- They knew Jonah’s blood would be on them but they trusted this was of God
- They acknowledged the sovereignty of God
- The ship and the crew were saved from the storm
- Quite possibly, they may even have come to salvation
- They made their commitment after the danger had left
- They saw the power of God and then responded

“Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.”  
(Jonah 1:16 NAU)

- After the storm left then they were greatly afraid
- To see yourself as weak and then to see the power of God led them to entrust themselves to God
- They were instantly converted by seeing the demonstration of God’s perfect will
- We have to be like these men and trust the goodness of God and His divine providence
- God saved these sailors
- Jonah’s rebellion was used by God to save these sailors

Finally, these men were dismayed by God’s retribution

“And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.” (Jonah 1:17 NAU)

- Can you imagine the shock in the hearts of these sailors when God caused the fish to swallow Jonah?
- As soon as Jonah is thrown overboard he is swallowed by the great fish

Two ways to look at this

From man’s perspective, this was the last place you would want to be

- You think the boy next to you stinks? This is far worse!
- It would last for three days
- It would be dark
- It would be wet
- It would likely be cramped
- It would certainly be terrifying
- We will see in tonight’s sermon how horrible the condition is

From God’s perspective this was God’s mercy

- Saved Jonah's life from the waves and sea currents
- Slimy fish became a slimy rescue boat
- Storm's waves could have overtaken him
- He was delivered by this fish
- God's grace can often times be disguised behind an ugly circumstance

How many times have you really wanted something and you went out to get it, only to find that your efforts made it worse? Not knowing that the more difficult situation is God's way of keeping and protecting you.

- I have heard of people who really wanted to go out with their friends but they were kept back by unpleasant circumstances, failed grade, parents wisdom, etc only later to find out that the friends got into an accident which changed their lives together
- Often times this is how God works in His providential dealings with us. He brings great difficulties to reveal to us our sinful hearts and selfish desires, and His grace can easily be hidden behind the stinky, slimy, scaly circumstances of life.

Often we are too caught up in blaming God, being mad at God, running from God, rejecting the ways of God, to see the gracious providence and protection of God

Jonah had no reason to be mad at God because Jonah was the one who was rebelling against God's will

- Often this is where we find ourselves
- Mad with God when in reality we are the one's rebelling against Him

So today, are you more like Jonah or the sailors?

- Are you the person living in the knowledge of God resisting the will of God to seek your own way?
- Or are you the hardened sailor recognizing you have no control and calling out for the mercy of God?
- God led the sailors to repentance as vs 16 showed, and their trial stopped
- Jonah, on the other hand, was not so quick to repent as we will see next time

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