

JONAH: THE OVERWHELMING POWER OF GOD'S LOVE

1. THE OVERWHELMING INTERFERENCE OF GOD'S LOVE

Jonah 1:3, 4

We cannot escape the presence of the Lord. Psalm 139:7-12 shows us that God in His mercy will never allow us to escape His loving presence. If we try to break those immutable bonds, we must pay the price.

God places perimeters about us and, in essence, declares, "this far and no further." Have you learned to be as thankful for failed plans as you are for fulfilled plans? Proverbs 16:9: *"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."* Prov. 16:33: *"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD."*

2. THE OVERWHELMING WAKE-UP CALL

Jonah 1:5-12

The Lord loves us too much to leave us in a state of apathy. The Bible says, *"...But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep"* (Jonah 1:5c). In Eph. 5:14 we read, *"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."* The sailors "cast lots" which was a custom of throwing marked bones, sticks or stones and reading an outcome from them. It fell on Jonah, which was no chance outcome. God was going to get his man. He was willing to use unusual methods to do so if necessary.

In resignation Jonah tells 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"* (Jonah 1:12b,c). Jonah was wide awake now!

3. THE OVERWHELMING PROPHECY OF THE INSIDE STORY

Jonah 1:13-17

“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 1:17). This was quite literally, the “inside story” because God made the whale to swallow Jonah.

For an even deeper prophetic inside story, hear the words of Jesus: *“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 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: 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. 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”* (Matthew 12:38-41). Of all the miracles and signs Jesus could have incorporated to prove His Deity, veracity, and mission on earth, He chooses to use the story of Jonah to illustrate His resurrection from the dead.

4. THE OVERWHELMING PRAYER OF DESPERATION

Jonah 2:1-3

Jonah said, *“...I cried by reason of mine affliction...”* (Jonah 2:2). It is God’s nature to respond to the desperate cries of His people, as illustrated in Exodus 3:7: *“And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.”* As is seen in II Chronicles 6:38, 39, the prayer of desperation involves repenting: *“If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.”*

5. THE OVERWHELMING PRAYER OF ASCENSION

Jonah 2:4-7

No matter how far down a child of God may go, our penitent prayers can ascend and make it even to God’s high and holy heaven. Jonah rejoiced saying,

"...my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple." (Jonah 2:7b). If our prayers can ascend to heaven, God can take us out of the worst possible situations as He promises in Psalm 37:23, 24, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand."

6. THE OVERWHELMING SECOND CHANCE EXEMPLIFIED

Jonah 3:1-4

"And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time..." (Jonah 3:1a). How thankful we all should be that the Lord is a God of a second chance. Jesus told Peter, "...Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Matthew 26:34b). "Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee..." (Matthew 26:35a). After Peter had denied Christ, the angel at the tomb said, "But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter..." (Mark 16:7a). In other words, don't leave out Peter; he needs a special reminder that Christ has not given up on him.

7. THE OVERWHELMING BONAFIDE CONVERSION

Jonah 3:5-10

The people of Nineveh repented from the oldest to the youngest and from every social strata. The king himself repented in sackcloth and ashes. True conversion took place. The Ninevites believed God, acted on what they believed, by faith left their destiny in God's hands and God blessed them. God is in favor of whole cities coming to Him. Jeremiah 29:7 says, *"And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."* The enemies of God and His church said, *"...ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine..." (Acts 5:28).* Although this was not intended as a compliment, it speaks very well of the early evangelistic efforts and discipleship. May God help us to reach our city for Christ!

8. THE OVERWHELMING CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY

Jonah 4:1,2, 11

We are bewildered with the response of this prophet Jonah after Nineveh repents! Jonah was aware of God's merciful nature. Micah 7:8 tells us that God

"...delighteth in mercy." Jonah actually desired God to wipe Nineveh off the map! It is a crime against humanity to deprive our fellow man of an opportunity to repent and believe in Jesus. John 3:16 is our driving force of evangelism. We need to pray for the conversion of the lost and do what we can to reach them for Jesus. Jonah was in a great need to develop the heart of God for a lost world. The Bible informs us in Jonah 4:11, *"And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"* The Lord was referring to those children under the age of accountability. It has been estimate that the population of Nineveh at this time was somewhere between 600,000 and 1,000,000 people.

9. THE OVERWHELMING NEED FOR OUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD

Jonah 4:3-10

In the book of Jonah we see the elements and the sea obeyed God in the storm that gave Jonah the wake-up call. Even the dice-type lots obeyed God. The sailors obeyed God. The whale obeyed God. The gourd obeyed God. The worm obeyed God. The sun obeyed God. The wind obeyed God. The only one in our story who did not obey God was Jonah! God says, *"...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice..."* (I Samuel 15:22). More important than the sacrifice given is the heart of obedience. Jonah was unhappy because God removed his gourd. People are more important than gourds! We need to yield our lives to God in obedience at all times (Romans 6:16).

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in black ink and has a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.