

The Sleeping Prophet (Jonah 1:1-3)

Phyllis Corbin

I. Introduction

A. God commanded Jonah to arise and go to Nineveh but Jonah did a 180 and went in the opposite direction.

1. He arose all right, not to obey the Lord but to follow his own desires and inclinations.
2. Instead of going east - he started directly west. This is certainly the picture of a backslider.

B. Jonah was a servant of God, a prophet with a divine message.

1. Jonah knew the Lord and that God had called him, so it's hard to understand how he would be so foolish as to imagine that by running he could escape the presence of God.
2. Jonah knew better than that but his disobedience twisted his judgment.
3. No wonder G. Campbell Morgan says; "Sin blinds our eyes and twists our reasoning and our judgment."

C. Jonah surely must have been familiar with (Psalms 139:7-12)

II. Jonah's Deviation

A. God's designation to Jonah was to arise and go to Nineveh.

1. Failing to respond he went the opposite direction.
2. Thus we see his deviation from God's plan and purpose for his life.

B. when God called him he undoubtedly pondered on his former experiences with the Ninevites.

1. Having been raised in a town that bordered on their country he knew them well.
2. He had witnessed their savagery and brutality all his childhood years.
3. The Ninevites were brutal and sadistic. They burned children alive and tortured adults by tearing the skin from their bodies and then leaving them to die in the scorching sun.
4. The name of Nineveh stood for every kind of cold blooded barbarity.
5. Naturally Jonah grew up hating and despising such people.

6. He longed for the day of God's judgment to come - with his call came the threat of that judgment.

7. 40 days was all Nineveh had left, Jonah must have felt a real exhilaration at the prospect of their destruction.

C. I had a thought hit me while studying on this - do you think maybe Jonah ran, figuring if he could but escape for 40 days it would all be over.

1. I think there is a basis for this - read Jonah 4:2

2. The one hope that flowered in his heart and comforted his soul was the fact that one day God would judge that city.

3. The thought that God would use him to spare them was repugnant to his soul.

D. Jonah knew the power of God's love. He was afraid if he preached they would repent and the punishment for their great wickedness would be averted.

1. Do you ever glory in thought of the judgment upon your enemies.

2. If so you and Jonah are running in the same direction.

III. God's Determination(1: 4,17)

A. Jonah was determined to flee from God - God was just as determined to follow Jonah.

1. Notice the direction of Jonah's life during the period of his backsliding.

2. He went down to Joppa, he went down into the ship, he went down into the sea, he went down into the fish.

3. The path of disobedience is always down - How well I know.

4. Life never stands still, you are going forward or backward but life is never static.

5. Are you making spiritual progress or are you going backward.

B. But God's eye was on Jonah and He was determined that Jonah complete the job that God called him to do.

1. Notice verse 4, but the Lord!

2. Notice verse 3 also opens with a but, "but Jonah rose up to flee"

3. That was Jonah's but in answer to God's call, however God answers with a but of His own.

4. When God calls His children to do something, there are no "if ands or buts" about it.

C. That brings to mind a classic statement; Man proposes but God disposes.

1. God is going to have His way and we are going to fit into God's plan whatever it takes.
2. There are two ways this can be accomplished
3. One is by willing submission to God, the other is by painful constraint of God.
4. How much easier it would have been for Jonah to have gone willingly rather than God have to persuade him to go.
5. In Jonah's case, that persuasion came through a storm, a tempest and a harrowing experience inside a fish.
6. What trouble Jonah would have spared himself if he had willingly obeyed. In the end he went anyway - the hard way.

D. Are you like that: doing what you know God doesn't want you to do, you are disobeying your conscience and violating the Word of God.

1. Trouble is ahead if you don't get right with God - if you don't get back to the place where you got off the track.
2. If you continue, the love of God will reach you but it may be through a storm and a tempest.

IV. The Sad Results of Backsliding

A. Others who were not partakers of Jonah's sin had to suffer because of his disobedience. (1: 5, 10)

1. It is a solemn truth no man can sin alone and suffer for it alone.
2. Children suffer for the sins of the parents, citizens suffer for the mistakes of their rulers. It is a law of life.
3. Sin is never an individual thing, it has social results.

4. Illustration - Homosexuals argue it is no ones business what they do in the privacy of their bedrooms.

5. Now we know that is an empty argument a whole nation is now living in fear of aids and spending hundreds of millions of the taxpayers money to deal with its problem.

B. The Bible tells us the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation.

- I. I repeat there are no private sins - when you sin, you hurt many people.
2. We sometimes affect others more than ourselves - there is a pop song that says; we

always hurt the one we love, the one we shouldn't hurt at all.

V. Sin is an Anesthetic that clouds reason. (1:5)

A. While the storm was raging, the waves dashing Jonah was asleep.

- 1 What a scene, because of his sin, everyone is imperiled and he is quietly sleeping
2. No Christian living in disobedience to God will admit that fact.
3. He will seek to justify and excuse his condition as long as possible.

B. The moment he awakes to what he is doing and is willing to admit his error and backsliding at that moment he is on the Road to restoration.

1. God will forgive, He will restore you, He will use you for He is the God of grace and forgiveness.
2. Look at His kindness to those brutal and barbaric peoples at Nineveh (4:11)
3. God wants to have compassion upon each of us but we must own up to our waywardness (1:12).
4. Once we take the sinners place, we get the sinners portion.
5. What is that? Peace, cleansing, forgiveness and restoration.

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