

## Why Did Jonah Run?



David Wilkerson (1931-2011) October 16, 2018

“The word of the Lord came to Jonah ... saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.’ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish” (Jonah 1:1-3).

We know the story of Jonah, the man who tried to run away from God when the Lord gave him a mandate to preach judgment to the city of Nineveh. But instead of warning Nineveh, Jonah fled. This story was validated by Christ himself: “As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). In other words, Jonah’s story was as certain as Christ’s own burial and resurrection.

Why did Jonah refuse to obey God’s clearly revealed Word and run? Clearly Jonah was gifted and chosen by God, yet he fled God’s very presence, shutting off communion with him. As Jonah fled, he heard the Holy Spirit’s voice ringing in his ears every step of the way.

Jonah was given a powerful revelation of God’s grace and mercy: “I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness” (4:2). Of course, God is everything Jonah describes but the Bible also speaks of God’s holy, righteous nature. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18).

I believe Jonah disobeyed because he thought, “Lord, every time you pronounce judgment, you are overcome with mercy. I know you’re not going to judge Nineveh because as soon as I prophesy, they’ll repent and you’ll pour out your grace on them.” He had no understanding of the fear of God, his holy, righteous nature.

Every believer must lay hold of a revelation of the fear of God as revealed in his Word: “Fear the Lord and depart from evil” (Proverbs 3:7). Like God’s mercy, the fear of God is life-giving — “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence” (14:26) — and we must learn to balance the two.

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