

The Lord Jesus said . . . My Sheep

Also we want to see the Lord's dealing with a disobedient servant. Here we can see a practical ministry to each of us who may be tempted to disobey the Lord. As 1 Corinthians 10 teaches, we are to learn from the examples of the history of the nation of Israel. Here, we learn from the history of this prophet of God.

Below is an overview of the book of Jonah:

1:1-3	The Disobedient Prophet
1:4-17	The Disciplined Prophet
2:1-6	The Distressed Prophet
2:7-10	The Delivered Prophet
3:1-4	The Destruction Proclaimed
3:5-11	The Decision of a City
3:10	The Deliverance from God
4:1-3	The Displeased Prophet
4:4-11	The Disciplined Prophet

In this Chronicle, 32a, we will primarily consider chapter one, the disobedient and disciplined prophet.

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET 1:1-3

"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish. . ."
(Jonah 1:3).

Jonah lived in the days of Jeroboam II, king of Israel (2 Kings 14:23-27). The king did evil in the sight of God just as his namesake many years earlier had done. But God was gracious to Israel and had used Jonah to bring a message of mercy from God to the king. God restored land to Israel at that time that previously had been lost. Thus Jonah knew that God was a gracious God and that His mercy even extended to a wicked king of Israel.

One of the great lessons of scripture is that God is gracious. He does not want to punish but He would

hear my voice, and

have all to repent and live. It is each believer's personal testimony that he did not deserve the mercy of God. We have received mercy when we repented of our sins and called upon Him. So, in this instance, God spared Israel in mercy even though later He had to bring judgment upon them for His mercy was despised.

Now God calls upon His servant to go to Nineveh with a message of judgment. Jonah knows his God is a gracious God (Jonah 4:2) both by precept and practice. However, Jonah's mind was not God's mind. Jonah knew God was gracious, and because Jonah wasn't, he decided to disobey the Lord. I wonder if there is someone or some people that God would like you to go with His message, but because of some prejudice you are also disobedient? This lesson is then for you.

The Deliberate Choice

Jonah made a deliberate choice to run from God's presence. First of all, that is an impossibility – God is omnipresent. Secondly, to be in a place where God's presence is absent is more than any of us could bear. That is what Cain said when thrust from God's presence: "My punishment is more than I can bear" (Gen. 4:13). But this is just what Jonah desired.

It is instructive to note that a boat was available and it was going to Tarshish (the opposite direction from Nineveh). Jonah had the money for the fare so all the circumstances worked out.

While circumstances can be part of the way in which we determine God's direction, the first and foremost way is to walk in obedience to God's known will.

The word of God is the revelation of the will of God. For the Christian to say, "the circumstances worked out" and follow that way in disobedience to the revealed will of God, is doing just what Jonah did. And that person will discover, as Jonah did, that God will have to discipline him to hopefully bring him back into the way of obedience.

they follow me . . . John 10:27

We are living in an age that doesn't like the word disobedience. We would rather interpret the word of God to our own liking. One of the ways which we do this is to say the New Testament was written for that particular culture and so today its commands must now be suited to our culture. Thus, the way the church functions today will be different from Paul's day. Instructions concerning the distinction between men and women in the church are not seen as relevant for today. Others would add regulations in order to promote sanctification forgetting that Paul tells us in Romans 7 that the law cannot sanctify, just as it cannot justify.

Sanctification comes from having life within us, not rules from without. The word of God is to be obeyed and we will suffer for disobedience just as Jonah did. We are not to add to nor subtract from its content. When we are living in disobedience to God, some things will be true of our lives just as they were for Jonah. Disobedience dulls our senses and we lose our consciousness to the perspective of God.

The Effects of Disobedience

The sea was boisterous and about to overwhelm the ship and all the lives in it. The ship's captain awakened Jonah to the plight of the ship, its contents, and the lives of the mariners. Isn't it strange how Jonah, the prophet of God, needed to be awakened to this desperate situation? But, as believers in Christ, are we awake to the desperate situations around us and the tragedy of so many on their way to a lost sinner's hell?

Are we so caught up in our own pleasure and self interest we "sleep" while the restless sea of the unbeliever causes Him great concern? Gospel meetings are not convened, tracts are not distributed, the open markets of our land are not used as places where we could be reaching out to the lost. Praise God for every gospel effort, whether by an assembly or individual, but there is an overwhelming lack of gospel effort today.

Paul would admonish us as in Ephesians 5:14-15: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." When Christians are sleeping, they appear like those who are not saved. We are to walk in such a way as to reprove the

"My son, despise not thou

wicked and demonstrate by our lives that we walk in the fullness of the Spirit of God.

Jonah, instead of reproving those around him, actually was reproved by them for his lack of interest in their plight. It is a sad state of affairs when a Christian needs to be reproved by the world. What must God do to awaken us from our sleep of personal pleasure and busyness for self?

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE PROPHET 1:4-17

"But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken."
(Jonah 1:4)

Why did the LORD send a great wind into the sea, putting the sailors in grave danger of losing their lives? Why didn't the LORD choose to discipline Jonah in such a way that others would not be effected by that discipline? In Matthew 5:13-14 the Lord tells His Jewish audience they were to be salt and light to the world around them. When His people lose their character as salt and light, the world is effected by that loss.

We live in a world that is suffering many climactic disasters bringing about the destruction of much property and the loss of many lives. Sometimes we think this may be the Lord's way of punishing the wicked. There will come a day in which the Lord will unleash His fury on a Christ rejecting world, but today is still the day of grace. It may be that the Lord is seeking to awaken us to our responsibility to be salt and light.

The world seems to understand this responsibility of God's people. The first directive to Jonah by the ship's captain was for him to call on his God for their gods were not answering (1:5, 6).

In times of tragedy, the leaders of this world will call on the Christian's God even though at other times this same God is mocked in the media and put out of the schools. In good times, the gods of this world – materialism, intellectualism, and hedonism (sensual pleasure) – are the shrines that are sought. But in bad

the chastening of the Lord, ...

times, those gods are powerless and men seek to find a God that may have some answers.

Jonah was confronted by the frightened mariners with a series of questions designed to discover his identity (1:8). He then admitted he was a servant of Jehovah, the Creator of the very sea they were on.

We also need to be confronted with the same questions asked to Jonah concerning who we are. To whom do we belong? In what country is our citizenship? What is our occupation?

A disobedient prophet must first be confronted with his identity. And a disobedient believer needs to be confronted with his identity. Whose are we?

This is a good question for each of us to answer. Note the question is not, did we have an emotional experience at some time in our life? It is not, did we pray the sinner's prayer? It is, *whose are we?* Is the Lord Jesus the commander of our lives? Are we His child? Does the Spirit witness with our spirit that we are His children? Are we born again and have new life – the life of the resurrected Son – evidenced in us?

As the book of First John will tell us so pointedly, the new life will be evidenced by:

- where we walk: *in the light*
- how we walk: *keeping His commandments*
- who we love: *the brethren*
- how that love is manifested: *by deeds*

Whose are we?

Jonah was also confronted with his occupation. He confessed that he was of the people of God and that he was in the process of running from God (1:9, 10). What an admission. He was living in disobedience. Jonah had to be faced with the fact of his disobedience. The God who is in control of the elements is the God he was in disobedience to. Jonah had to understand that he was the reason for the storm. He was accountable.

For whom the Lord loveth

It is so easy to live life and blame others for the difficulties. "The devil made me do it." "You know, we are only human." "Under the circumstances, it seemed to be the only way to go." How many times have we used those kinds of reasonings to excuse ourselves for being disobedient? In order to be used of God, we must face the reality of our sins and take responsibility for them. "I have sinned" seems to be so hard to say and yet we must get to that point.

The effects of the conviction of sin

The next step in this disciplinary process finds Jonah coming to the point of asking to be cast into the sea (1:12). He was willing to take responsibility for his sin and cast himself upon the God who made the sea. This demonstrates the beginning of Jonah's repentance.

True repentance is not just being sorry for my sin. It is not some kind of self effort to do better in the future. It is not tears of remorse because I have been caught. It is the admission that I have sinned and that sin is against God. David, in Psalm 51 says, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." The prodigal son said in Luke 15, "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." Only as we recognize that our sin is against God, and it is God we have offended, and it is God "with whom we have to do" will we be truly repentant.

So Jonah was cast into the sea and the sea was immediately calm (1:15). But God in His grace and mercy had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, saving him from certain drowning (1:17).

God was not interested in destroying his servant, but in correcting him.

That truth is the same today. God is not interested in destroying his disobedient children but in correcting them. That is the wonderful grace of God. There is always a way back to God.

It took the raging waters of nature's storm, the weeds around his head from the deep (chapter 2) and a prepared whale (great fish) to break a human will.

This gracious God whom Jonah knew by precept and experience has not changed. He is still a gracious God.

He chasteneth." Heb.12:5, 6

He never changes. As God declares through Malachi to His disobedient people Israel, "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Because He changes not, His people will not be consumed. And because He changes not, disobedient children of His today will not be consumed, but will be corrected so that it will yield "the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11).

The God who works in the negative

It is worth noting that Jonah's discipline may have been the means of salvation to the mariners. When they saw the results of the discipline of God in the calming of the sea, they sacrificed to the God of Jonah (1:16). These men saw the powerlessness of their own gods and the power of Jehovah in the circumstances of life. They then began to call upon Jehovah.

We are never told if this was merely an emotional turn of events in their lives or if the vows they made were ever performed or if they just felt they needed to turn over a new leaf. But we do know that if they had truly repented of their sin and turned to the God of Jonah believing in Him, God would have saved them. God is in the business of saving souls as well as correcting disobedient servants. (Unfortunately, many times when bad things happen to the men of this world they will make "deals" with God and when God delivers them they promptly forget God.)

If you, dear reader, are running away from God and living in disobedience to Him, it is our prayer that you will search your heart to know *whose you are*. And that you will come to the end of yourself and in true repentance cast yourself on the mercy of God. You will find, as Jonah did, that God is gracious and will deliver you from your sin.

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Chronicle #32b of "The Bible of God" series looks at the teaching and lessons of Jonah chapter 2

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Jonah Water, Weeds, a Whale and a Will

An Overview. Jonah is unique among the prophetic books because it is the recording of an event in the life of this prophet. Thus the event itself becomes the prophecy. That Jonah was a prophet and this event in his life a prophecy rests on the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in Matthew 12:39-40. There the Lord teaches that the prophet Jonah depicted (not preached) the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And this sign depicted by Jonah would be the final proof to the Israelites that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

As we look at this wonderful book we need to see that not only is the Lord's death and resurrection depicted, but also that His mercy extends to the Gentiles. In a picture of resurrection, Jonah went to Gentile Nineveh from the place of death (the belly of the whale). Then the Ninevites received his message, believed God, repented, and were spared from certain judgment.