***“Salvation is of the Lord”* - The Message of Jonah**

***Jonah 1:1-17***

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Introduction: The Book of Jonah is at once a strange and a sobering treatise. Strange, in that it is

found among the Minor Prophets, yet there is only one prophecy recorded (3:4, *“Yet forty days,*

*and Nineveh shall be overthrown”*). Strange, in that it is the story of a missionary, yet tells of one

who did not want to go to his mission field. And strange, in that though it records one of the greatest revivals in all of history, the revivalist is not happy that revival has been sent to penitents. The book is also sobering, for it ends abruptly with a question that remains unanswered in the text. Such an ending calls for reflection and meditation upon the contents of the prophecy. It has been said that in Jewish liturgy, the Book of Jonah is traditionally read by Orthodox Jews on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Such a day originally included blood sacrifice, but today involves primarily fasting, praying, and Bible readings. If Jonah is indeed read on this day, the book’s theme, *“Salvation is of the Lord,”* is unfortunately still veiled to those who refuse to accept their Messiah Who has already come. This short book, consisting of only forty-eight verses in four chapters, reveals the character of God. Three images of the Almighty can be discerned as God is seen as Savior, Sovereign, and Speaker. Consider with me here a book that gives us a glimpse into the heart of God, showing us His mercy, His love, and His grace, extended to all mankind. This theme can be traced throughout the four chapters, as we see Jonah conniving in the ship, confessing in the fish, commanding in the city, and complaining in the sun. Note with me this morning that spiritual disobedience brings severe consequences.

 I. Jonah’s **conniving** in the ship > his **disobedience** - chapter 1

 [*Jonah* means “dove”; *Amittai* means “truth” > Jonah is “a son of truth.” How about us?]

 A. Jonah’s insubordination (1:1-3)

 1. He is insensitive to the will of God (:3).

 a. He sought to flee God’s plan - *“But Jonah rose up to flee”* – He headed to Tarshish?

 Possibly on the coast of Spain? - The exact opposite of the direction he should go.

 “Disobedience is always going opposite from where God wants us to go” (Horn).

 b. He sought to flee God’s presence - *“...from the presence of the Lord”* - Literally,

 “face of the Lord.” Not from God’s presence (since He is Omnipresent), but from standing

 before Him, as His servant & minister; away from God’s influence & plan.

 Note: God’s will is not determined solely by circumstances. Jonah’s “justification”

 for fleeing, *“he found a ship going to Tarshish.”* “Providence seemed to favor his de-

 sign, give him an opportunity to escape. We may be out of the way of duty and yet

 may meet with a favorable gale. The ready way is not always the right way” (Henry) 2. He is insensitive to the welfare of others (:4-5).

 a. His disobedience affected his heart; he is hardened through the deceitfulness of

 sin (Hebrews 3:13). Sin has “lulled” him to sleep (note its stupefying nature).

 b. His disobedience affected the lives of the sailors - they lost their cargo and nearly

 lost their lives. Your disobedience affects others in your life.

 Note: Contrast Paul in a similar circumstance - storm at sea. But Paul is the instrument

 of deliverance rather than destruction. I ask - “Are you a Jonah or a Paul?”

 B. God’s intervention (1:4-17)

 1. The control of His creation:

 a. The sending of a storm > *“The Lord sent out* (literally, “hurled”) *a great wind.”*

 (1) Its suddenness - “Sin brings storms and tempests into the soul, into the family,

 into churches, and nations; it is a disquieting disturbing thing” (Henry).

 (2) Its viciousness - These hardened sailors are alarmed at the violence of the sea.

 *“The ship was like to be broken”* (literally, “thinking to break up”).

 Note: “Though God’s human servant may be in disobedience to Him, God’s servant in nature

 always obeys God’s command. The servant that God calls upon in this instance is the wind”

 (Hindson).

 b. The casting of a lot >

 (1) Compare Proverbs 16:33 with Acts 1:24-26. [Before Pentecost, but not after.]

 (2) Consider God’s sovereign control over the circumstances.

 c. The preparing of a fish >

 (1) Jewish tradition: the fish was specifically created for this task.

 (2) Better interpretation: The fish was specifically commissioned for this task - the

 word *“prepared”* means “to appoint, ordain, or order.”

 2. The conviction of His creatures (sailors):

 a. Their desperation > *“They cried every man to his god”* (:5-6)

 (1) Religious, but lost.

 (2) Prayerful, but hopeless.

 b. Their accusation > *“Why hast thou done this?”* (:7-11).

 (1) The rebuke of Jonah. The sailors marvel at Jonah’s blatant disobedience. “That one who

 worshiped the Almighty Creator should disobey His command seemed to them outrageous & inexcusably criminal” (Spence).

 (2) The reproach of Jonah. The sailors would not dare to disobey their false gods.

 c. Their salvation (:16) >

 (1) Their submission to the Lord - *“feared the Lord exceedingly”* (“feared with a

 great fear”). The sailors show their respect for human life & their recognition of God’s

 sovereignty & submission to His will.

 (2) Their sacrifice to the Lord - outward manifestation of inward conversion?

Conclusion: For now we leave Jonah in the belly of the great fish. We know from previous study the “rest of the story.” Jonah, who initially relents, will fortunately repent in chapter 2. He will be re-commissioned & fulfill his prophetic ministry in chapter 3. Sadly, in chapter 4, he regrets God’s mercy which is shown to a heathen & barbaric people. We will note in subsequent messages that this book contains a two-fold message. There is Jonah’s vocalized message to Nineveh (preached by his lips) as well as Jonah’s visualized message to Israel (portrayed by his life). But what can we learn from this first chapter? Disobedience to God’s Word results in insensitivity to the will of God & to the welfare of others. Our disobedience not only hurts us, but it impacts the lives of those around us. Again I would ask, during the storms of life that assail us all, are you a Jonah or are you a Paul? We are also reminded here of God’s sovereign control & His willingness to intervene in the affairs of men to bring about His purposes. God sent a storm when needed, decided a lot when cast, & prepared a fish for service. Are you resting in the assurance of God’s sovereignty over your life (see Romans 8:28)? A third lesson from this chapter is God’s mercy & grace shown to a group of pagan sailors who turn in faith believing to a powerful & sovereign God. Will you apply these lessons to your life: the consequence of man’s disobedience; the assurance of God’s omniscience; & the reliance upon God’s benevolence? Where do you stand with Lord here this morning? Are you running from His command? Are you resting in His control? Are you rejoicing over His compassion? Might we all learn the needed lessons from the life of Jonah.