

Running From God

Jonah 1:1-3 (ESV)

¹Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil[Ⓜ] has come up before me.” ³ But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

DISCUSS

1. Jonah’s Confession vs. Jonah’s Direction (1:1-3; 1:9)

Read Jonah 1:9

Jonah proudly confesses his faith in verse 9: *“I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land”*. This is perfect doctrine from a prophet of God.

However, just six verses earlier, Jonah flees from his assignment. While God tells him to **“Arise”** (v2), Jonah goes **“down”** and **“down”** (v3). While God tells him to **“go”** (v2), Jonah **“flees”** (v3).

Jonah’s lips declare that he fears the Lord, yet his feet are moving the opposite way.

Is there an area where you know what God says, but you are quietly moving in another direction?

2. Drawing Boundaries of Grace (1:2-3; cf. 2 Kings 14:23-25)

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. They were the most feared empire of the time, known for brutal cruelty. They have been Israel enemies for over a century.

God sees Nineveh’s evil (v2) and chooses to send a warning instead of immediate judgment. As Jonah himself later confesses, the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster (4:2). The Lord is king and it pleased Him to show mercy even to Israel’s enemies.

However, Jonah isn't like God. He draws a line. He was willing to proclaim God's favor to an evil of Israelite King (**Jeroboam II**), yet he was unwilling to extend that same mercy to the Ninevites.

Jonah was comfortable with a God who favored his people, but he drew the line at a God who might also love his enemies.

Is there someone you avoid sharing Christ with because you think they do not deserve God's mercy?

3. The Root Issue: We Think We Know Better (1:3)

Jonah's disobedience is rooted the belief that he thinks he knows better than God.

While God tells him to go and preach to Ninevites. It made little sense to him.

Practically, the Ninevites might torture him. Why would they listen to a lone Hebrew prophet? They have their own gods they serve. Strategically, their repentance might lead to a future invasion of Israel. Theologically, isn't God the God of Israel? Why would God want to save Israel's enemies?

Jonah thinks he knows better than God.

Our disobedience works the same way. We know God's commandments and word well. But knowing is not all there is. We often evaluate, calculate, and try to 'improve' on God's command. We assume our reasoning is wiser than God's command.

Which of God's commands do you find yourself trying to "improve" or negotiate with?

Pray For:

1. Consistency between our confession and our conduct

Pray that by His grace and Spirit, our lives would match our doctrine and that our feet would follow where our lips say we believe.

2. Courage to reach those we naturally avoid

Pray for the grace to move toward people who make us uncomfortable, trusting that God's mercy is wider than our preferences.

3. The humility to surrender our "superior" logic

Pray that we would stop trying to "improve" God's Word with our own calculations and simply trust Him at His Word.