



## Redemption Bible Study #3

### You Can Run But You Can't Hide

The Redemption of Jonah

### THE STORY

Jonah 1:1-3

The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry out against it, because their wickedness has come up before Me.” <sup>3</sup>But Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship that was going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and boarded it to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the LORD.

Like Jonah, I had been running from God. Jonah had just begun to run after God called him to go to Nineveh... I had begun to run right after accepting Christ into my life as a boy. God brought Jonah to his knees when he had a great fish swallow him at sea. God brought me to my knees on a mountain in the Northwest Territories of Canada. I wasn't swallowed up by a great fish, but instead a great bear attempted to swallow me there on the mountain.

Jonah ran from God and God dealt with him in a most severe way. He was all but killed by the fish and then spit up on shore. In the belly of the fish Jonah prayed to God.

“I called out of my distress to the LORD, and He answered me.  
I called for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice.” (Jonah 2:2)

After the bear attacked me on the mountain I was lifted by helicopter to the nearest medical facility. As I flew through the valley I called out in my distress to the Lord and He answered me as He did Jonah.

Jonah's story is much more than what we are taught as young children. Even most adults that attend church, if you asked them about Jonah, they would know the story of Jonah and the big fish, beyond that most wouldn't know the running away and redemption story that plays out over and over again in a short time in Jonah's life. Let's take a look at God's amazing redemption of a rebellious man.



Let's look at what Jonah put himself through to bring him to a place of needed redemption

## WHAT DID IT MEAN TO THEM

### 1) The Runaway Prophet

Jonah was a prophet for God's service. God spoke to Jonah at one time and told him to go to Nineveh to let the people there know what He was going to do to them.

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We often think of the so called “Spiritual Giants” of the Bible as infallible, yet we see here that a man that was a prophet of the Lord not only chooses to go directly against God's command, he is also foolish enough to think that he could get away from God by going somewhere else. “boarded it to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the LORD.” (vs 3)

All too often we think that we can do the same thing. We feel that if we just don't look up, keeping our head down and go our way, God can't see what we are doing or thinking. How foolish. Proverbs 15:3 tells us this, “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good.”

In my life from the time I invited Jesus into my heart/life as a boy until my bear attack I didn't run away from Him on purpose, I just didn't have anything to do with Him. My life was about me and my needs. Since the bear attack and the turnaround of my heart I can confess that there are times that the Holy Spirit has sent me to do a job and I have failed, we all have.

Just a few weeks ago I saw a police officer sitting in his car and felt the Holy Spirit direct me to go to him and pray for him. I followed through, partially. Went up and thanked him for his service for my family and made a little small talk and then I walked away with praying. I used the reasoning that I didn't want to bother him, but I did exactly what Jonah had done. There aren't any of us that aren't a Jonah now and then.



## 2) Out at Sea

Jonah leaves and goes to Joppa, but instead of getting a boat to Nineveh he boards one going to Tarshish. When they got out to sea Jonah went below and went to sleep. Unknown to Jonah a horrendous storm blew up and the sailors were fearful for their lives. The boat was about to break apart and the sailors cried out to each of their gods. When nothing worked the captain goes below deck to wake up Jonah.

Jonah was still sleeping and the captain woke him and brought him up on deck. The sailors made a plan to cast lots to see who the responsibility fell on for the storm. The lot fell on Jonah and when the sailors found out who was and what he was doing they became extremely frightened.

They asked Jonah what they should do with him and when he told them to throw him overboard. They argued but the storm continued to rage stronger and stronger until they picked him up and tossed in into the waves.

God had already had a plan before Jonah was thrown overboard. The fish was waiting for Jonah and as soon as he went into the water he was swallowed by the great fish. Even though Jonah was being disciplined for running away from God, God had prepared a plan long before to restore Jonah.

There are times when you and I mess up and make bad choices and decisions, yet God has a plan to restore us long before we went wrong. He is a loving and gracious God and we are never out of His reach.

## 3) Jonah's prayer

Before he even went overboard Jonah knew that he was found out. Like with overcoming any sinful issue in our life, the first step is acknowledging that you have done wrong. I am sure it wasn't long after being swallowed up Johan began to turn back to God. However, it was three days before Jonah called out to God in repentance. When Jonah finally broke and admitted his fault in his prayer (Jonah 2), God caused the great fish to vomit him up onto the shore.

## 4) Nineveh repents

After Jonah was safe on shore God came to him again, telling him to go to Nineveh. This time Jonah went and did as God had commanded. When Jonah had gone to Nineveh and preached repentance the people turned from their wicked and sinful ways and turned to the Lord.

When Jonah was spit out of the fish and landed on dry land again God redeemed him for His service. When I left the hospital in Canada I traveled back to Houston. I had no intentions of telling my story for God's glory, but God had other plans for me. God and my wife worked together to get me in front of



one group after another to share the miraculous story of my redemption at the paws and teeth of a great bear.

#### 5) Jonah rebels again

Jonah walked through the streets of Nineveh preaching the warning that God had sent. Amazingly, all of the people, from the king down to the lowest of citizens repented and turned from their sin and to worshipping the one true God.

We would think that this would have given Jonah a great sense of accomplishment. Instead, Jonah complained to God that his trip and time was a waste because God was going to do what He said He was going to do. Jonah became so angry that he told God that He wished he was dead.

The book of Jonah ends abruptly. However there is great meaning and symbolism in the lessons from this book. Even Jesus used the story of Jonah to explain His own death and resurrection.

Matthew 12:39-40

39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign; and there shall be no sign be given, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

As we read the story of Jonah we see the obvious plan of God is Jonah's redemption. We see and live out the story of God's beautiful redemption story of our lives every day. We live out many sinful actions and yet God sees something in us that we don't even see in ourselves. God sees something that He can use... and He does. We take no pride in our past, but we should take pride in what God has done and continues to do in our lives moving forward.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO US

There are six very important issues that are used in the book of Jonah that have a lot of relevance to you and I today.

1. As we looked at above this story in the pages in the Book of Jonah foretells the resurrection of Jesus Christ Himself. The future death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is talked about throughout the Old Testament and this one small book is a great example of how God showed the coming of Christ in a very special way.

2. This little Book of Jonah teaches that salvation is not by works, but by faith which leads to repentance. One of the most enlightening statements in the Book of Jonah is in chapter. 2 verse 9, "Salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2:9). Jonah acknowledges that God is the author of salvation; He is the architect.

3. Another amazing thing we see in this book is God's purpose of grace will not be stopped. Yes, Jonah refused to go to Nineveh as God had commanded him, but God wasn't going to stop because of one man, He still going to get the message to Nineveh. God used a selfish man that had not planned to go to Nineveh to carry His message of repentance and salvation to a sinful people.

4. It is amazing that God shows us in the pages of Jonah that He will not throw us away even when we've been unfaithful. God may not use us as He had wanted and we may never be used again (It's really our choice), but "He will not leave you or forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6). When we watch athletics we can see that there are far more players that are on the sidelines than are on the field or floor. Those players are still on the team, they are just not being used all the time. They are called into the game when they are needed. God may bench us when we've failed to follow through with what He's called us to. However we are still on the team and He will call on us again and we have a chance to play when we are ready. God wants us on the court doing His work all the time. The rest is up to us.

5. One of the greatest things we can know about God us found in chapter 4 verse 2 of this Book of Jonah. As children we learn about the great fish and Jonah being swallowed by it. But the most important lease might be found in this one verse.

"Then he prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was this not what I said when I was still in my *own* country? Therefore in anticipation *of this* I fled to Tarshish, since I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in mercy, and One who relents of disaster." Jonah 4:2

Our God is a God of love and compassion. He is longsuffering and gives us more than ample opportunity to repent from sin. Even when Jonah turned his back on God and ran in the opposite direction, God wanted him back. He is a God of Love.

**BEAR  
MAN**



6. Lastly, God is a God of everyone. The people of Nineveh were not part of the family of the Israelites, God's chosen people. Yet He loved them enough to send them a salvation message through Jonah. He knows that we will fail in our lives, the greatest "heroes" of the Bible failed. And yet God loves us enough to want us back in a close personal relationship with Him. He wants us back on the court fulfilling His plans.



## DIGGING DEEPER

1) Have you heard a call from God on your life to do something for Him? What?

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2) Have you run away from His calling? Why?

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3) How did you feel after you ran from Him?

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4) Do you feel like you have been restored and redeemed to where God wants you to be? How?

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5) Is there anything that you have not confessed and gotten redemption for? What?

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6) How do you see God working in your life now?

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## PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I thank You for Your willingness to stop me and discipline me when I am in need of that. I ask you to forgive me for my doubt and fear, when I should be trusting in You. May my life be a life of trusting and obeying and not of running from You. I praise you for the way that you love me unconditionally when I fail you daily. In the name of Jesus, Amen.