

Two announcements. **First**, we are compiling a new a directory. So if you're a member, there is a card in your bulletin, take that, fill it out, and then visit CONNECTIONS for your picture. **Two rules:** Be a member, and smile. You get one shot. Make it count. Now if you're not a member, we love you, keep attending, ask questions, pray, take your time, and join if God is leading you here.

**Second**, during the months of May, June, and July, we have a few Sunday nights planned. We'll gather, pray, share testimonies, sing, and I'll teach a bit. The content will be your questions. You **can ask me anything** about theology, doctrine, a verse or chapter, anything. I want to hear from you. So **go online** to our site, treasuregod.org, click on UASK, and write your question. Two rules: Be concise. Be nice. I'll pick 5 or 6 per meeting and see where it goes.

**Jonah.** Let's dive in.

It is possible to sin without sinning. What does that mean? Well, look at Jonah. There is no adultery here. No murder here. No lying here. No coveting here. In fact, the words sin, disobey, faithless, idolatry, aren't here. But Jonah is sinning, without sinning. God spoke and he ran.

And **you and I** run. I am Jonah. You are Jonah. We ran. We sprinted, from God. But God also runs. And He is faster and more wise and more powerful than us. So **4 questions:** Why, how, what, and how. Why Jonah ran, how Jonah ran, what is cost Jonah, and how God found him.

**First, why Jonah ran.**

Look at **verse 1**. If you're new in church, the Bible has 66 books, we are in Jonah. The big number is the chapter, small number is the verse. So chapter 1, verse 1: ***Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying . . .*** This is prophetic calling language. When God called Jeremiah, Hosea, Obadiah, Zechariah, Jeremiah, Nahum, this language was used. God is calling him to go and preach a message. ***Verse 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out (preach) against it, for their evil (and they were) has come up before me. 3 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.*** So why not go? why did he run? **2 options.** 1) He was scared they wouldn't repent. Nineveh was wicked. They tortured, humiliated, and conquered other nations. They would skin their prisoners and put their skins on their walls. How could Jonah do anything? So he's afraid they won't listen and they'll kill him.

Or, he is scared they will listen, they *will* repent. He is afraid God will be gracious and pore out His love and mercy and grace on them. And in **4:2** he says that. *“I knew you were a God gracious and loving, relenting from disaster. That is why I fled to Tarsish.”* This is why he ran. This angered him. Like Rutgers's coach angry! He hates grace!

**Now lets back up.** Who is Jonah? Glad you asked. In **2 Kings 14** we see him. The king of Israel is Jeroboam II. And God told him to restore Israel's borders. He spoke to him through *“his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher.”* Jonah is the boundary prophet. His message was, *“Seal the borders, mark off Israel, this is God's nation.”* Now God says to him, *“Go outside the borders, to Nineveh.”* This appalls Jonah. He is repulsed by this! He was a racist. A nationalist. An Israelite, God's chosen people. But God is a **global God**. He saved Israel to be a light to the nations. Not a light to Israel. He chose them, He elected them, to bless all the nations.

And this **call is a mirror to His soul**. We see his heart. We see a much deeper view of sin. There are **2 ways to run from God**. One, break all the rules. Lie. Steal. Commit adultery. Kill someone. Second, keep all the rules. Keep all the rules and build your self, your identity, on something besides God. **Soren Kierkegaard**, who I don't trust always said this “Sin is this: before God, to be in despair at not willing to be oneself, or in despair at willing to be oneself.<sup>1</sup> Now that is very psychological and somewhat philosophical. But he means this, sin is arranging your life around something besides God. Its when God and what He says and what He wants and what He offers, isn't **enough** for you. That is sin. And that is Jonah's problem. Something else defines him. His race, his language, his country, his name. His personhood, his identity is wrapped in that, not God.

What is yours wrapped in? You say How do I know? What feels like death to you? See, I **thought Tarshish was just an option**. But **verse 3** says, *he rose to flee to Tarshish*. He wants to go there. He planned it. He knows about Tarshish. Why there? They are wicked pagans too. Well, Tarshish was the ends of the earth for Israel. God wasn't there. He is going to die. This word kills him. It exposes his heart.

**So what makes life unlivable?** If you can't have this, can't do this, lose this, you'll die. Maybe its a boyfriend, a girlfriend, achievement, power. Maybe its forgiving someone. If you let go and forgive, it will kill you, you think. Maybe its a lifestyle.

In *Chariots of Fire*, Harold Abrahams, who is a sprinter says *“I've got 10 seconds to justify my existence.”* What justifies yours? That is your real god and savior.

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<sup>1</sup> Kierkegaard, Soren (2012-08-16). The Sickness Unto Death (Kindle Locations 1048-1049). . Kindle Edition.

Now the **scary** thing is: Jonah is the most moral, upright, guy in the boat! Jonah is good. He was a **prophet**. These men were godly, prayerful, knew the Scriptures, the commandments. He never missed church. He read the bulletin. He always said yes to God. And saying **yes** to God often, makes saying **no** to God feel justified.

See, **Jonah was so good in other ways.** Many of you are to. You are great at teaching and preaching and counseling and praying and you're kind, compassionate, generous. And saying no to God, in one place, feels okay. God says go right but you go left, very well. And it feels right. So God **says** "give this sin up, confess this issue, leave this relationship," and we go "*I'll just pray more.*" We say yes elsewhere to say no here. But God wants all of Jonah, not most of Jonah. God wants all of you, not most of you.

Now if **you're not a Christian**, be careful with your good works. Do good, of course. But your good works are dangerous. They can blind you. You can think God owes you, that he has to love and bless you, that you can earn your salvation. Its blinding for all us. We can keep **all the rules** and still be sinning. Something else can grab our hearts and be our god, Look at **9 I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.**" Jonah has great theology! But he's far from God.

What is God saying right now? What are you delaying? What are you resisting? Will you run to him, not away from Him?

## **Second, how he ran.**

The point here is how convenient it was to run. Look at **3 He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it.** . . .How simple. Jonah had no travel agent. There was no Priceline in those days. No Expedia.com. He wants to go and there is the ship and he has the money. He wants Tarshish; and he finds a ship. **If you want to sin, you will find a ship.** Sin takes little effort. It presents itself. So if you **notice women**, and dart your eyes, one will notice back. If you **crave money** and possessions and power, there will be a gray area deal, will your way.

If you want to sin, it will be there.

And be **careful calling convenience God's will.** When things work out well, fall into place, we assume its God working. The ship was waiting, he had the money, he paid the fair. It looked good. *But God's will was Nineveh.* So be careful using the phrase "***I have peace about this.***" We overuse that probably. We equate peace and convenience and ease and good timing and events unfolding with God's will and God's OK to us. **Now to be**

**clear**, I don't mean to cast doubt on decision making. So when you're buying a house, choosing a college or career, your peace about it is a factor. Paul did this.

I'm talking about clear disobedience. God will let you walk in sin and you'll be peace with it sometimes. Sin can feel peaceful. It is good for a season. So **cutting your giving** for a new lifestyle can feel peaceful. **Dating non-Christians** can feel noble. **Overworking needlessly** can feed our self-worth and entitlement. **Leaving your rocky marriage** can feel right. The ship is waiting.

This is why **having shadows** in your life is so dangerous. By shadows, I mean parts of your life, your schedule, your spending, your traveling, your relationships that no one knows about. They are dangerous. Which is why **membership** is so important. Yes, I found membership in Jonah. Its a miracle. A fish and membership. But **when you join**, you are saying "*I'm not my own authority. I am under, accountable to, the congregation, elders.*" Now I'm **NOT** saying non-members are unaccountable or some third string Christian. I am saying once you join, its **on us** to pursue, shepherd, exhort, and covenant with you.

Regardless, all of us need **light in our life**. We need very few shadows. Ships are waiting!

### **Third, what it cost him.**

**First**, it almost killed the sailors. Look at *4 But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, (I love this) so that the ship threatened to break up.* I like that wording. The ship is going "*I'm gonna break.*" **1:5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god.** So they almost died.

So his running always most killed them. Your sin and my **sin affects** others. We think its private. But there is always collateral damage. The **best thing** you can give your spouse, children, co-workers, is a holy life. So his running affects them, but **notice God's grace** in this. In **verse 14** they call out to the Lord, they hurl Jonah in, and the sea dies down. Then in **verse 16** *Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.* God saved them, despite Jonah. Now the amazing thing is: Jonah was faithless, but fruitful. God used Jonah despite his own sin.

Now notice *7 So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil (storm is divine wrath) has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"* So 3 questions: occupation, country, race. **9 And he said to them, "I am a**

***Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”***

Okay. So what's your occupation? He never says. A few commentators say he had no message left to tell. He had no words from God.

But the **greatest** cost here was his life. Notice the **word play** here. God says "**arise**." Get up. But Jonah arose and went down to Joppa. Look at **5 *But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep.*** The word sleep here is used in **Genesis 2** where Adam sleeps and God removes the rib. This is the sleep of death. Then he says to them in **12 *Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you.*** So they hurl him, which is down. He is saying there, "*Toss me into God's wrath.*" The sea was God's wrath, chaos. He is saying "*Kill me!*"

There is a spiral going on here. It began small and ends in death. Sin is like this.

James **1:15** says this, "***desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.***" This is child birth language. You conceive, deliver, and raise a child. Sin is like childbearing . . . a lot like it. It starts small and grows and grows and grows then kills you. But no one thinks this. No one thinks **flirting** now will be **adultery** later. Or **cutting corners** now will be **embezzlement** later. We don't think like that. New parents don't go "*He's gonna kill us one day.*" But beware of the drift.

Who has been to the **beach**? You walk out, put your stuff down, then go swim, wrestle, boogie board. And you look up and your stuff moved. Right. No you moved. Watch the drift.

## **Four, how God found him.**

God sent 3 things to Jonah. A storm, a sailor, and a savior. First, a storm. God sent the storm, not to kill Jonah, but to save him. Notice verse **4 *But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea . . .*** God was doing this. God was pursuing and chasing and loving Jonah. Storms reveal your heart. If you are running from God, straying, He'll send a storm. He'll frustrate your plans, expose you, let you hurt a bit. But He's not harming you; He's healing you.

So watch for those. If **this week** you get mocked or criticized or slandered, ask yourself "*Do I crave approval too much? Do I fear man too much?*"

Second, he sent a sailor. Look at **6 *So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! What did God first say to him? "Arise, call out against Nineveh."*** God is speaking through this pagan sailor. How ironic! See

God's word is living and active, **Hebrews 4** says. It is alive and powerful. It will come to you. **Martin Luther** "*The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold on me.*" God's word will come to us and expose and convict and correct and call us back to Him.

Third, God sent a savior. Verse 17 *The LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah.* God came and got him! God intervened! God sent the most unlikely, unexpected, unthought of, means to save him. And that is how He saves us. He sends the most unlikely, unexpected, unthought of means to save us. Not a fish, but **His Son**, who never sinned, who had no idols. Yet he took God's wrath for us. He was hurled into God's wrath on Cross. He spent 3 days and 3 nights, like Jonah, in the earth. But God raised Him up. And by **trusting** in Him, clinging to Him, we are rescued.

See, the Cross is God running to us and pursuing us. God will not stop. He is relentless. He is the *Hound of Heaven* one man said.

### **So where are you today?**

If you're Christian, what sins are you harboring? What ship are you boarding? What is God saying? Are you sinning without sinning? What idols are grabbing your heart? If you're not a Christian, or not sure, how does this sound? Because this is grace. Grace is one sided love. And you can't outrun grace. You are here because of grace. Not by accident.

I am Jonah. You are Jonah. We run. But grace catches us.