

## INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **Jonah 1:17-2:10.**

And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights. **2:1** Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, **2** and he said, "I called out of my distress to the LORD, And He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; Thou didst hear my voice. **3** "For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the current engulfed me. All Thy breakers and billows passed over me. **4** "So I said, 'I have been expelled from Thy sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Thy holy temple.' **5** "Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, Weeds were wrapped around my head. **6** "I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars *was* around me forever, But Thou hast brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. **7** "While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer came to Thee, Into Thy holy temple. **8** "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness, **9** But I will sacrifice to Thee With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD." **10** Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

B. There are many fishing jokes, and fishing stories. Some are true and some are just tales to be told.

C. God has a fish story too. It is the biography of Jonah. It is not only true, but needs to be told that we might learn from it.

D. Four main lessons:

1. It is foolish to resist the will of God.
2. Miracles have been used to show God's power.
3. God seeks the salvation of all people.
4. True repentance averts catastrophes.

## I. IT IS FOOLISH TO RESIST THE WILL OF GOD.

A. First of all, we must believe this story, or we make Jesus to be a liar. Christ endorsed the story of Jonah and the great fish (Mt. 12:39-41).

But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and *yet* no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; **40** for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. **41** "The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

B. Jonah was trying to run away from God; he was also running away from his RESPONSIBILITY towards God (Psa. 139:7-12).

Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence? **8** If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there. **9** If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, **10** Even there Thy hand will lead me, And Thy right hand will lay hold of me. **11** If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night," **12** Even the darkness is not dark to Thee, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike *to Thee*.

C. Jonah was a reluctant missionary. He needed to learn that no command of God can be taken lightly. God's will must be done!

D. With salvation comes RESPONSIBILITY, and with RESPONSIBILITY comes ACCOUNTABILITY. Now it is true that God's will, will be done, but everyone belongs to Him is accountable to do that will.

E. Let us not be guilty of, in stead of being fishers of men we are only keepers of the aquarium.

## II. PROVIDENCE IS USED TO SHOW GOD'S POWER.

A. To look in the book of Jonah and only see the one act of God (Jonah in the belly of the fish) is to miss much of the story.

B. Even not in the realm of the miraculous, we see God's great providential power in the life of Jonah.

C. Notice the following events:

1. The great storm--it caused the unbelievers to believe in God (1:4-5,14).

And the LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. **5** Then the sailors became afraid, and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten *it* for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down, and fallen sound asleep... **14** Then they called on the LORD and said, "We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for Thou, O LORD, hast done as Thou hast pleased."

2. The calm after the storm--it caused unbelievers to worship God (1:15-16).  
So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. **16** Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.
  3. The great fish--it caused Jonah to lament over his sin (1:17; 2:1).  
And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights... **2:1** Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish,
  4. The gourd plant--to give comfort to the faithful (4:6).  
So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant.
  5. The worm that ate the plant--spiritual comfort is more important than physical comfort. Others' repentance is more important than personal gain (4:7).  
But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day, and it attacked the plant and it withered.
- D. These happenings (miracles) all took place so that we can see how God does work in the lives of people who do His will.

### III. GOD SEEKS THE SALVATION OF ALL PEOPLE.

- A. God desires the salvation of all people (Ti. 2:11-12; Rom. 1:16; Mk. 16:15).  
(**Mk 16:15**) And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."  
(**Rom 1:16**) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.  
(**Ti 2:11-12**) For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, **12** instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,
- B. But Jonah's problem was that he was a Jew and the Ninevites were Gentiles. God was concerned about people who were not Jews. And we should be concerned about all people regardless of their race, social standing, church affiliation or economic condition.
- C. God's kingdom is made up of people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation (Rev. 5:9).  
And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.
- D. We must be willing to break down the barriers that keep us from reaching out to others.

### IV. TRUE REPENTANCE CAN AVERT A CATASTROPHE.

- A. The people of Nineveh needed guidance in many things. They were wicked (1:2) and ignorant (4:11).  
(**Jon 1:2**) "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me."  
(**Jon 4:11**) "And should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"
- B. It was by the preaching of the word of God that the city was spared. Everyone from the greatest to the least was in sackcloth and ashes, and God did not destroy it (3:5-10).  
Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. **6** When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered *himself* with sackcloth, and sat on the ashes. **7** And he issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. **8** "But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. **9** "Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?" **10** When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do *it*.
- C. People today are just like those of Nineveh some 3,000 years ago; they are wicked and ignorant. But they can be saved through the foolishness of gospel preaching (Lk. 8:11; Isa. 55:11; Ac. 8:12).

(Isa 55:11) So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.

(Lk 8:11) “Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.

(Ac 8:12) But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

- D. Repentance from evil deeds always brings great blessings.

#### **CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.**

- A. What have we discussed and learned from Jonah tonight:
  - 1. It is foolish to resist the will of God (we have a responsibility).
  - 2. God’s providential power works in the lives of people.
  - 3. God seeks the salvation of all people.
  - 4. True repentance will avert a catastrophe.
- B. Do not be a Jonah and run away from God, be one to who runs to God.
- C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.