

To Run From God | Jonah 1:3

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[0 : 00] Let's pray before we dive in and continue into the book of Jonah. So let's pray together. Gracious and Merciful God, we gather here in your presence.

We are ready. We are excited to hear your words. As we are continuing our sermon series on the book of Jonah, today we're going through Jonah chapter 1 verse 3.

We pray for openness and understanding for what you have to say to us. God, you called Jonah. May we know that you call each and every one of us.

Lord, give us the courage to hear your call, even when that leads us to places that we don't want to go. Even when you ask us to do things we do not want to do.

Help us not to run away from you, but teach us to get up and to go where you lead and where you guide us.

[1 : 02] We pray that we may understand the message today. We seek your wisdom. We seek your understanding. And we seek your guidance. Open our ears to hear your word.

Open our minds to understand. And our hearts to love you, Father God, and to love your people. May we know your love, and may we know the grace that you give to us, even when we, like Jonah, fall short.

It is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. Well, good morning, Ontario. My name is Patrick Bailey, and I have the privilege of serving as pastor here at Ontario Community Church.

Today, we are going to continue with our second sermon in our series of Jonah. We're exploring the Book of Jonah. Last week we began on our journey with an in-depth on the first two verses in the Book of Jonah.

So as we prepare, I'd like you guys to grab your vitals, and we're going to go to page 920. And in 920, that is where we will have...

[2 : 20] There you go. Page 920. It's going to be Jonah 1, 3. But before we do that, before we delve into the third verse in the Book of Jonah, I want us to take a moment, and I want us to revisit what we learned from the previous sermon.

So in chapter 1, it says here, The Lord of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amatai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.

God called Jonah to get up and go to Nineveh, and to preach against the city because of the city's sinful practices. God saw what was happening in the city, and he was sending Jonah to speak, to preach.

And through Jonah's words, through God's call, the city would be saved from destruction. But that takes us to verse 3. It's the next verse on here. Let's read this together. It says, But Jonah rose to what? Rose to flee, to wear, to tarshish, from the presence of the Lord.

And I want us to take note of that, that he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord. We're going to delve into that today. He went down to Jobah, and he found his ship going to tarshish.

[3 : 49] He paid the fare, and he went down into it, he went down into the boat, he went down into the ship. To go with them, well, who's he going with? He's going with the sailors. He's going with the sailors to tarshish, and it's repealing it away from the presence of the Lord.

So, does Jonah get up and rise up to God's call? Well, no. He doesn't. In fact, what ends up happening is Jonah ends up going completely the opposite way.

He doesn't arise and go. He does get up, but instead he flees. Jonah decides to run away from God. He chooses to run away.

He chooses to flee instead of going to Nineveh. He is going to tarshish. And one thing I want us to keep in mind when we are studying the Word of God, when we're studying specifically Jonah here, is that there is no talk.

There's no conversation with Jonah and God. There is no dialogue between Jonah and God. Yes, we understand that God called Jonah, but Jonah just runs off.

[4 : 59] He bolts out of there, right? He runs away, he flees. Other prophets, though, Moses and Jeremiah, there was hesitation. There was a doubt. There was a sense of humility. And certainly there was fear.

I know if God called me or if God called any of you, wouldn't you be a little bit afraid? I know that would be there. But what's very interesting when we compare Jonah from Moses and Jeremiah is that God provides answers to the questions.

We can conclude, like I said, no hesitation, no doubt, no questioning, nothing to suggest that Jonah wanted to fulfill God's mission. It's not that Jonah didn't hear God's call. What? What did you say about?

No, it wasn't any of that. But rather, Jonah consciously decides to run from God's call. And this is much like the decisions or the choices that we have to make when it comes to following God.

We all have a decision whether to go towards God or to go away from God. And last week I briefly mentioned comparing what happened between Jonah to the prophet Moses and Jeremiah.

[6 : 15] So what I'd like to do, I'd like us to go to this next passage in Scripture which is going to be H55. Let's turn there real quick. It's going to be in our Q Bible, it's H55.

If you're not using the Q Bible, it's Exodus 4-10. So let's turn there real quick. Very interesting stuff here.

Alright, so Exodus 4-10, page 55 of your Q Bible, it's towards the bottom, the bottom right corner. Moses says to the Lord, my Lord, I am not eloquent either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, I am slow of speech and of time. So there's that doubt, there's that hesitation that's happening.

I'm not a good speaker. I can't talk like you. But what happens? God replies, the Lord said to them, who made man's mouth, who made him mute or deaf or seeing or blind, is it not I the Lord?

Therefore go and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.

So God speaks to Moses saying, look, I will be with you. Does this happen in Jonah? It doesn't.

That's the difference. If you turn to page 755 in your Bible, it's the same thing with the prophet Jeremiah.

[8 : 01] So page 755 is going to be Jeremiah chapter 1 and verse 6.

Page 755. Then I said, Lord God, behold, I do not know how to speak for I am only a youth.

He's saying to God, I'm young. I don't know how to speak like you. What are you doing sending me? But the Lord said to me, do not say I'm only a youth. For to all of whom I send you, you shall go.

And whatever I command you, you shall speak. What does God say after that? Do not be afraid of them. Or I am what? With you to deliver you to the Lord.

So we find I took a slight detour from our German passage, but the point is here. Moses doubted his ability to speak. Moses felt he wasn't eloquent. He expressed doubt and his concerns to God, and God spoke to that.

[9 : 07] This resulted in that discussion with God. The same thing happens with Jeremiah's hesitation. He's saying, I'm young. I don't have the ability to speak, but God speaks to that.

So the question then comes. I want to ask you, do you remain rooted in your faith, or do you flee like Jonah does?

All of us, we should remain rooted in faith and not run. We should. So follow God's plan for your life, even when you don't understand. I know in my own life there have been times where I don't understand what the world God is doing.

I don't see it. I'm the kind of person where I like to have an itinerary. I want to know, hey God, A, B, C, D, 1, 2, 3, and 4.

I want to know exactly what's happening with the Lord, but does that happen? It's often the not. It doesn't happen. God's plan is very much different than mine, very much different than ours.

[10 : 16] When we see in Scripture that God calls people for a purpose and they follow God's path, when they follow God's path, wonderful, great, fruitful things happen.

Let us be on a path of light, life, and truth, because Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. God invites each and every one of us into a relationship with Him. God has a divine plan for each and every one of us.

God calls us to draw near to Him, to dwell in His presence rather than to flee from the presence of the Lord.

The word flee literally means flee to run away or to hurry on off, running away from God. So when you read that, the question may come up, well, wait a minute, why did Jonah flee?

It's such a very valid question to ask. We understand that Jonah just ran off, but why? Well, we don't know exactly why Jonah ran off. Unfortunately, I wish I knew exactly what the reason was, but there are a couple of possibilities.

[11 : 31] There is the fear of the Assyrians. There is resentment towards the city of Nineveh, towards the sin that was happening.

But at the end of the day, we really don't know why. It could be a number of possibilities, it could be all, it could be something that we don't fully understand.

But all we do know is that Jonah did choose to run from God. And like Jonah, what makes us run from God? Well, I would say fear and anger are two very common reasons why we run from God.

So Jonah rose and fled. Well, where did he try to flee to? Well, it says in Scripture that he was trying to flee to Tarshish. This is far away. This is a distant location. And so I hope to see this.

What I'd like to go ahead and do is put on a map here. And I hope, I really hope you guys can all read the words on here, right? I want to keep this map open because I want to look at a few things here. I want to go over the places here.

[12 : 43] So you see that Jopah is where Jonah was going to go on a boat to flee to Tarshish, which is said to be about 2,500 miles away.

So he is going completely away from what God called him to be in Nineveh, 500 miles away. Where is Nineveh? Well, Nineveh is said to be in or near the city of Mosul in Iraq. It is said that Jonah's tomb is in the city of Mosul.

According to an article in The Atlantic, there is a Jonah's tomb that is located there. It was said that it was destroyed in July 24th of 2014.

So that's very interesting. There's that connection to even nowadays. It is also said that there's a statue that commemorates Jonah.

I couldn't find any good pictures of the tomb or of the statue. But the people in Mosul, in Iraq, they know the story of Jonah.

[13 : 55] And it's a part of their culture. We know who Jonah is. And it's just like how sometimes in some towns you remember someone who did something great, maybe a firefighter or someone who served in the military. In this specific town, it's Jonah.

So where is Jobah? Well, that still exists today. It's known as Jaffa in Tel Aviv, Israel. It's still a city there. It still exists. If you look it up, you'll find that it's still running and operating and it's still boom and it's going.

So then finally, the question here is where is Tarshish? Now, what's very interesting in doing research and finding where specifically Tarshish is, the most common conclusion is that Tarshish is around Spain and where that red dies. It has been said that it could be Sicily or it could be the British Isles.

I've read that there are some that say it's in northern France. It just kind of depends. But the most common accepted belief is that it's around the coast of Spain. Tarshish was a city of great wealth and prosperity in 1 Kings Yom Khterni Vitals on this. In 1 Kings 10 verse 22, it says that this is where Solomon had a fleet of ships.

A fleet of them? Man, that's great wealth and prosperity though. It actually says in that verse, the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Huron. Once every three years, the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, apes and peacocks.

[15 : 33] I mean, it goes to show you the amount of wealth. If you look at how Solomon was a very, very wealthy person. When I think of a ship bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks, that's a pretty good image there.

In 1 Kings 22 verse 48, it says that this is where Jehoshaphat also had a fleet of ships in Tarshish. You see, Jehoshaphat was trying to do the same thing that Solomon did, but it says in that verse that Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish.

They didn't go for the ships were wrecks, so they ended up being destroyed. So just a little fun Bible trivia right there. In Jeremiah chapter 10 verse 9, so remember, I'm mentioning verses on Tarshish.

Silver came through Tarshish. In Ezekiel chapter 27 verse 12, there's mention that Tarshish did a lot of business because of those who had things to trade.

Gold and silver, and it could be apes and peacocks, but iron and tin, and it says in the verse that they exchanged for your wares. So anyways, Jonah is running away from God. Jonah is attempting to run from God's call. God's calling him to preach to Nineveh.

[16:48] He's trying to run thousands, literally thousands of miles away from where God's calling him, instead of getting up or arising and going. Nineveh is to the east, towards God's call, and Tarshish is to the west, away from God's call.

God called Jonah to preach against the city of Nineveh to turn from their evil ways, but instead, it's kind of interesting that Jonah is fleeing to a city of great wealth and great prosperity, kind of like that.

Tarshish is more safe, right? He's trying to get to that kind of area. Have you ever felt that God is calling you to do something? Have you ever felt the urge to run away from God?

I'm not perfect, and I can tell you there have been many times that I've attempted to run away from God's call. But time and time again, when we try to run away from God, we find that God's always there, and he wants us to course correct back on the path towards him.

From the presence of the Lord, back in page 920, when we look at Jonah, there's something to note when we read in Scripture, when you find things that are repeated.

[18:14] And we find in here, Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. It mentions that twice in the verse.

From Jonah's story, we can see that there is a pattern of sin. You see, when we sin, there is separation from God.

Sin creates a divide between us and between God, and we see in the Old Testament that there is a pattern that is repeated in Scripture. You see, Jonah's sin was the act of running away from God. I want to make that very clear.

It was the act of him distancing himself from God. It was him making the conscious decision, I am going away from God. That is where Jonah's sin happens.

And there are other verses where we see that there are other characters, there are other people in Scripture that ran from the presence of the Lord.

[19:23] You don't have to turn your vows on this. It's in your midst. In Genesis chapter 3 verse 8, this is the story of Adam and Eve.

You guys remember the story of Adam and Eve? If you don't, it's a very good story. Right? So Adam and Eve are there in the garden? And God tells them, do not eat from this tree.

So what do they do? They don't eat from the tree, God. I'm not going to eat from that. Is that what happens? No. They eat from the tree. So it says in the verse, they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden and in the cool of the day and the man and his wife, Adam and Eve, hid themselves from the presence of the Lord.

There was the sin and then there was the separation. Right? We know that as the first sin that happened in the garden, right? Sin, then separation.

So when God was looking for Adam, was God confused? Where are you, Adam? I legitimately don't know where you are. Now, God knew. He's asking because he already knows.

[20:41] It's kind of like when you ask your kid, hey, did you take, did you eat my cookie? Did you steal a cookie from the cookie jar? You know the answer. You just want them to admit it.

And I see that as no different than how God was doing this with Adam and Eve. In Genesis 4.16, Cain enabled, right? God saying, where is your brother? Does God not know?

No. He knows exactly what happened. We're seeing scripture, the first murder. Cain went away from the presence of the Lord.

Sin and then separation. What I find very interesting is these two verses you'll see on the screen is Job 1 verse 12 and Job 2 verse 7 where Satan is going out from the presence of the Lord.

Job is certainly a very hard book of the Bible. But what's happening here is that it's saying in scripture, God saying, be cool.

[21:51] Only against him do not stretch out your hand. Satan is leaving from the presence of the Lord. And it also says in Job chapter 2 verse 7, Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with the boils and sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

We're not going over Job, but I'm only going to say this just briefly here. That we can see where spiritual warfare actually happens.

That the devil here, that Satan is going to attack Job with diseases in this case. It's very interesting. And again, I don't want to go too much into it, but it goes to show you that we know that Satan was separated from God, but he continues to separate himself from God with the continuation of sin. The more we sin, the further we find ourselves from God. When we sin, we leave the presence of the Lord. So you find that language in the Old Testament. I think it's a very beautiful language to know that when we're sinning, it's like, we're hiding, right?

We're leaving God's presence. Or at least we think we are. When we leave the presence of the Lord, it presents an opportunity for us to confess our sins and to get right with God.

[23 : 08] Sin separates us from God. Maybe you have had that feeling before. Have you ever done the wrong thing? I know everybody should raise their hand here, right?

We've all done the wrong thing. We've all sinned, all for sure, the glory of God, right? We are sinners in need of a Savior Jesus Christ. We all have sin, right?

But perhaps you have this feeling. Or maybe you yourself are struggling with sin in your life. Maybe you feel that there's this void, or there's this distance, that there's something that's missing in your life.

I know when I've sinned, I feel this, and I feel like there's something missing in my life. Perhaps it's time to return to God. Perhaps it's time for you to turn it around.

You know, it's very interesting. In Isaiah, chapter 59, verse 2, this continues with this idea that sin separates us from God.

[24 : 11] Isaiah is saying that your iniquities make a separation between you and God, and your sins have hidden his face so that he is not here.

That's some pretty hard language, right? As I mentioned, you all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That's Romans chapter 3, verse 23. Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1 to 3, these are in your notes.

You were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the Prince of the power of the air, that the Spirit that is now at work, in the sons of disobedience, is talking about the form of life.

So again, sin separates us from God. Jonah attempted to flee from God, and Jonah created this divide, this chasm between him and God.

Jonah's going to need to repent one day or another. Jonah's going to need to turn it around. We're not there yet. By running away from Jonah's calling, he's running from the divine calling from God, and physically distancing himself.

[25 : 22] We will explore next Sunday that such actions have consequences. Nobody likes that word? Consequences? Oh no.

But we'll learn next week about how there's a storm that comes on the waters. When Jonah is attempting to go to Tarshish.

Looks like God's kind of, there's a little bit of divine intervention. It's almost as though God's saying, No, you're not going to Tarshish.

It's almost like that's happening. Wait a minute, it is. It certainly is. So, in Jonah's case, his actions bring forth the great storm.

A consequence that we will delve into next week. All that is evil will be exposed. This is a very hard one. In Luke chapter 8 verse 17, it says that nothing that is hidden, for nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.

[26 : 29] In 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 5, this is all in your notes. Judge nothing before the appointed time, wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and exposed in the motives of the heart.

So basically, you may think you can hide from God. You may think you can get away from your sin. But at the end of the day, eventually it will be exposed.

The truth of the matter is very simple. That is that no one, I repeat no one, can run or hide from God.

That's kind of a scary thing when you first read it. You're like, what do you mean? God's always there for us. It's like when we're talking about Father's Day.

When I think of God the Father, I think of someone who loves me, who's always there for me. Even when I screw up, even when I do the wrong thing, even when I walk away and I do terrible things. [27 : 39] Oh, he's still there. That is the love of God the Father that he has for us. It doesn't mean let's continue in sin and go deeper and deeper. Absolutely not.

It means you have the opportunity to turn things around. Don't continue in your sin. It's just like how Christ said to the women at the well, Go and sin no more.

And certainly we are going to continue sin. It's the reality of us living in a fallen world. Are we perfect? No. I'd like to be, but none of us are perfect.

We all need God. No one can run or hide from God. It's impossible to outrun, to outpace, or even find a secret place that is so far or so remote that we can escape the presence of God.

So when God's asking, where are you Adam? He knows where you are. Or when God's saying, where are you? What are you doing? You may feel that calm.

[28 : 46] God already knows what you're up to. But what he's doing is inviting you to come back. It's just like when you're keeping living with life and my own kids. They go run off and I call them.

I know where they are. I know what they're doing. I want them to come back. That's like how God, now God's love is far greater than mine, I want to make that very clear here.

But he does call us and he invites us to confess our sins. We may feel a sense of distance from God at times, but in reality, remember, sin separates us from God.

When we sin, we get further divided. So let us be encouraged, my friends, to seek a relationship with Christ, for he is the way, the truth, and the life.

Let us come to know who God is. There's freedom in Christ. There is new life in Christ. And my friends, there is hope in Christ.

[29 : 52] Because a life without Christ is no life at all. In Psalm 139, verses 7-10, listen to this.

Where shall I go from your spirit? Where shall I flee from your presence? That's a good question, right? Where can I go away from you, God? If I ascend to heaven, you are there.

If I make my bed and shade all, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there, your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. That's actually a very beautiful verse in Psalm 139. In Jeremiah 23-24, it says, Can a man hide himself in a secret place so that I cannot see him declares before?

Do I not build heaven and earth declares before? Good question to think about. Can a man hide himself in a secret place so God can't see?

[31 : 03] Let me tell you. The example of this given here is going to the highest mountain or digging yourself in a hole. I imagine a guy in a bunker, right? Or in a coal mine or something.

Trying to hide from God. Simply cannot see. Jonah was called by God to get up, to arise, and to go. To preach to Nineveh, to change its evil ways.

And rather than arise and go, he fled. His attempt to reach Tarshish, it represents, like I said, not a physical escape.

But it's also an attempt to spiritually escape from God's calling. The act of disobedience was a sin that resulted in his separation from God.

But the thing is, my friends, I feel like Jonah is like us, or we are like Jonah. Sometimes we want to run away from God and sometimes we don't want to go where God wants us to go.

[32 : 06] Sometimes God wants us to... Have you ever felt the... God's tugging at you, your calling, right?

Tugging at you, they'll talk to that person. I don't know who Jesus is. I remember a time where my wife and I, we went out to dinner.

This was before we had children, when we were first married. We went out to dinner. There was a homeless man. Nice guy.

We had somewhere to go. This guy wanted to talk to us. And my wife told me, I feel like I need to talk to this guy and tell him about Jesus.

And at first I felt, what are you talking about? We have somewhere to be. What ended up happening was my wife, Amber, shared with this homeless man who Jesus Christ is.

[33 : 11] He did not make the decision for Christ, at least in that moment. But it didn't matter. What mattered is that God called my wife to talk to this homeless person.

And in the same way, God calls us to do great things in His name. So Jonah is a lot like how we as people are today.

We are learning about how Jonah ran from God, but despite his running, my friends, we are going to learn how Jonah turns his life around, how he repents, and how eventually Jonah is fully restored to complete his mission, to preach, to minimum.

And this aligns with the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we repent, God forgives us.

And salvation is free for all who believe. It's just like the famous passage, the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

[34 : 30] In 1 John 1, verses 8 through 10, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Well, my friends, we are sinners.

And unfortunately, some people in our modern day culture teach that there's no such thing as truth, and that we are all good.

That is false. We are all sinners in need of a savior. So I just think of that verse, right? If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say we have no sin, we make God to be a liar. That verse always sticks out to me, because I don't want to call God a liar. And of course, John 3.16, this all ties together.

God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. We study this passage because we see that Jonah makes that conscious decision to run from God, and not just run a mile away.

[35 : 44] He's attempting to go five times, about five times the distance of where God wants him to be. And it goes to show that we may think we can run from God, but at the end of the day, we can't.

If you feel that you are running from God, I invite you, I encourage you, get your life right with God. You can turn things around. The whole story of Jonah is not only about, it's the story about a man who sinned. There's consequence, but there's restoration just like the city of Nineveh.

We learn about the man, and we learn about the city. And it makes me think of our own walk with God. Maybe you need to get your life right with God. Maybe you need to change things up a little bit.

And then of course, the bigger picture is, maybe our city needs to turn and repent of the sins that's happening. You think even bigger, maybe our country needs to turn from its people ways.

[36 : 59] We can go on and on about all the crazy things that's going on, but the point is, Jonah is the story about a man who turns it around, and a city that turns it around.

And I pray that in the same way that Jonah turned it around, the city of Nineveh was saved, so too shall we. May we turn it around.

Let's pray. May the God who called Jonah, who calls each of us, be with you now and always.

That we may feel like running away from you. May we instead find the courage to rise up to the call, knowing that your grace is enough, that it is sufficient, and that your power is made perfect in our weakness.

May we follow your call, wherever it leads, knowing that our journey is not alone. But hand in hand with the one you thought you'd call us to love, to serve and to shine, to shine your light to the world.

[38 : 07] May we go forth this week with courage, with love, and with the blessed assurance of God, your constant presence, and your guiding hand.

We say this in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We pray.