

Jonah: Mercy Triumphs Over Judgment

The Choices You Make

Jonah 1:4-6

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I. We can choose our sin, but we cannot choose our storm.

Jonah 1:1-3 “Now 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.”

It’s so important that we own the sin in our lives because if sin is just something that happens to us, or it just shows up out of nowhere, then we have effectively drained the power out of the Gospel of Jesus.

The real hope of the gospel isn’t just that God’s grace will pay for whatever sin is in your life - yes that’s true - but more than that, God’s grace gives you the power to choose not to sin anymore!

Your sin will always bring a storm. Your sin will always have a consequence. Sin is never benign. The sin you choose will take you farther than you wanted to go, keep you longer than you wanted to stay, and cost you more than you wanted to pay.

Jonah 1:4 “But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea...”

The worst possible outcome to unrepented sin in your life is not that God sends a storm upon the sea of your circumstances. The worst possible outcome is that He chooses not to send a storm.

Hebrews 12:5-8 “...My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. · For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.” · It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? · If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.”

1 John 1:5-9 This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

II. We don’t get to choose our storms, but we do get to choose our response.

Jonah 1:4-5 “But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them...”

If our default response to the storms that God has sovereignly chosen to hurl upon our lives is to immediately ask Him to hurry up and get us out, we may have misunderstood the purpose of those storms.

Hebrews 12:11 “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

The “training” the author is referring to is less like studying for a test and more like preparing for the Olympics. It’s the word Greeks would use for athletes working out to get into peak physical shape before competitions.

It is vitally important to our long-term spiritual survival that we connect the dots between the strong winds that God hurls into our lives and His ultimate goal behind our training. The Olympic-sized event that God is conditioning His people for, is eternal worship in His glorious presence. There are facets of His character, and depths to His promises that we would never have the ability to experience without this kind of training.

III. We don’t choose our neighbors, but we can choose to love them.

Jonah 1:6 “So the captain came and said to him, ‘What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.’”

Jonah might have picked his destination, but he didn’t choose what ships would be in Joppa and he certainly didn’t pick who would be on the ship with him. You may have picked your job, your house, your hobbies, and your church, but we do not get to decide who is our neighbor; God does.

IV. We don’t get to choose who God saves or when He saves them, but we can choose to be a part of the process.

God does the saving every time. And He has ordained that the usual way He saves people is through the witness and testimony of the people He has already saved.

We don’t get to choose who God saves. But we can choose to spend our time, energy, and resources to make sure people know who to cry out to for salvation.

Romans 10:11-15 “For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame.’¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him. ¹³ For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ ¹⁴ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’”