

**The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Ninevah and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before Me.” Jonah 1:1-2**

Have you ever heard anyone say, "God will have to send me a postcard if He wants me to do such and such?" There are times when it is difficult to distinguish between God's still voice and our personal desire. In the story about Jonah, there was no question! God gave him a direct order. Over the next thirteen days we're going to learn how Jonah responded to God's call. We might say, *Wow! If God told me something so clear, I'd jump to do it!* Would we really? How about the time God told you to witness to your co-worker and you told God there was no point in it because she wouldn't listen anyway. I am convinced every day God gives us His orders, *The Word of the Lord came to (insert your name), saying, GO!* As we begin the study of Jonah, I encourage you to read the book in its entirety.

*Father God, today I want to hear Your voice and obey. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. Jonah 1:3**

God told Jonah to go to Ninevah but Jonah went directly opposite! The Lord has graciously showed me that our busy-ness can be our Tarshish. Don't misunderstand what's being said here! It takes a lot of time and energy to have a successful marriage and to properly raise a family - women are do-ers. Ladies, don't fall in the trap of being over-doers. Don't go to Tarshish, stay on the road to Ninevah, the place of God's will! Jonah knew Ninevah was a wicked city, but God knew Jonah had a message of deliverance for the Ninevites! Jonah tried to thwart God's sovereign plan by fleeing from the Lord. Are you running today?

*Father God, please show me today any rebellious attitude I may have. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**...After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.**

**Jonah 1:3c**

The ticket cost Jonah far more than the fare he paid, it nearly cost him his life! You've heard the saying, "You can run but you cannot hide." Jonah is an excellent example of how true that is. After the ship set sail God sent a mighty storm on the sea (Jonah 1:4). It was so bad that the boat became battered and the sailors began throwing cargo overboard to lighten the load.

Where was Jonah through this life-threatening commotion? Below deck, fast asleep (Jonah 1:5). Have you ever used sleep as an escape from reality? I've been guilty at times. I believe that's exactly what Jonah was doing. He knew he was being disobedient to God, he was under stress, which makes one tired and he was probably depressed, so, he slept. Jonah brought his depression upon himself by his direct disobedience to Jehovah's will.

*Father God, I want to be an obedient child — reveal any disobedience in me today. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**...After paying the fare he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.**

**Jonah 1:3c**

Most Bible scholars consider Tarshish to be Tartessus on the Southwest coast of Spain. Get out your world atlas and find Nazareth, Israel (Jonah's hometown) and then go west across the Mediterranean Sea to find Spain. It is a very long distance! Jonah must not have known Jehovah God very well to think he could escape His call to Ninevah that easily! In Franklin Graham's book, *Rebel With A Cause*, he tells about the many trips he took during his running years. Like Jonah, Franklin tried to run from God! It does not work for long. Sooner or later, you'll find yourself in the stinky belly of a huge fish (Jonah 1:10-17). In my late 20's, after a crushing divorce from my childhood sweetheart, I walked away from God. I took a five-year trip to Tarshish and one night found myself in a drug-induced, hellish hallucination. I knew God well enough to know He allowed the experience and was throwing out my lifeline! I grabbed it and haven't let go since!

*Father God, set my life on Your course today, keep me from side roads of destruction. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?” Jonah 1:8**

Our disobedience and our rebellion will affect those around us. If you are running from God, rest assured it will cost others - something. Those five years I spent on the run affected my children. They were years I should have been instilling biblical principles into their hearts. Instead of lean years they could have been full years. Years of learning and applying God's truth into their young, moldable minds. Those pagan sailors on the boat cast lots (Jonah 1:7) to find something or someone on their ship causing their bad luck. The ship's captain caught Jonah sleeping below deck! O! I'm so grateful we get caught in our sin! I'm so thankful our forgiving Father God cares enough for us to catch us in the act, then lovingly corrects us, forgiving and forgetting the sin! Amazing, simply amazing!

*Father God, over and over again I want to thank You for Your mercy. I love You so. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and land.” Jonah 1:9**

We're all familiar with the gesture of hitting a fist to the forehead and exclaiming, "Duh!" That's exactly what I want to do to Jonah! He was found out. The ship's crew now knew he was running away from the Lord (Jonah 1:10) and they could not figure out why. Probably wondering why Jonah wanted to hide since he was a worshiper of *The Lord, the God of Heaven, who made the sea and the land?* If your God is all those things, Jonah, why not run TO Him and not away from Him?! What a poor witness Jonah was to those men. Ladies, we must be so careful and so aware of our behavior in front of non-believers. We cannot afford to act in the same fashion as they do! How can we on one day testify of our faith in a loving, peace-giving God and the next day act ugly and all stressed out over something? It just won't balance out. They'll remember the bad behavior and forget the loving, peaceful times.

*Father God, as I live in front of my neighbors, my co-workers, my family, and others today - I desire to be a genuine testimony of You. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to Him. Jonah 1:15-16**

Today's scripture shows the principle, "What Satan meant for harm, God used for good."  
(Read Genesis 50:19-21) God was going to deal personally with Jonah's disobedience, but in the mean time God proves Himself to the idol-worshipping sailors! The men asked Jonah for his advice (Jonah 1:11), and, he point blank told them he was the problem. *Get rid of me and the sea will calm!* The crew showed a kind heart (Jonah 1:13) and tried rowing harder against the waves but to no avail. They had no choice - give up one life to save many. Jonah was thrown overboard! The sea instantly calmed. Wow! Did those pagan sailors take out their wooden statues? Did they start rubbing the crystal around their necks? Did they take the lucky rabbit tail from their pockets? Absolutely not. They offered a sacrifice and made vows to the One, True, Living God — Yahweh! Glory hallelujah! Who do we call when we face trouble?

*Father God, nothing can satisfy, nothing can save — aside from You. I worship and praise You today. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**But the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights. Jonah 1:17**

Enter the whale! God loves His creation and takes opportunity to use them as He righteously deals with His people. God had the Israelites in the desert for forty years. King David became quite familiar with the interiors of caves. Jonah got to see the inside of a fish belly. I don't think it was a pleasant experience; however, a necessary one. Rest assured, if we belong to God and rebel against His will? He WILL take us to a place to get our undivided attention. And, our time there will depend on how long it takes us to pass the test. It didn't take Jonah long — three days and three nights, and then he prayed (read Jonah 2). Understand, Jonah knew why he was swallowed by that big fish, he didn't cry, *Why me, God?* He said, *I will make good my vows to You.* (Jonah 2:9)

*Father God, I am so glad You love me enough to catch me when I'm not walking in YOUR way. Deliver me quickly. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. Jonah 3:1**

A man I work with was recently diagnosed with an aggressive cancer, already in stage four. He expressed anger at God for his own illness and for killing his baby sister forty years ago with leukemia. My reaction to that was, God didn't kill your sister, sin did. We talked about the Garden of Eden when sin and sickness entered the world. I spoke to my friend some time later after he had undergone his first intensive chemotherapy. He shared with me that he had been praying and telling God he was sorry for his anger and thanking Him for his blessed life. He told me he hoped God would give him a second chance. My reply to him was, "As long as you have breath, God will give you a second chance." Today's scripture tells me that God gives second chances. Jonah blew plan A, so God came to him with plan B! Ladies, we don't know our future so it is vital that we live each day as if there was no tomorrow. Be obedient the first time God says, "Go!"

*Father God, I want my life to be God-directed, not self-directed. Help me today. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction He had threatened. Jonah 3:10**

This time Jonah went to Ninevah. He may have gone with a bad attitude, but he did go. Without much compassion he delivered God's message (Jonah 3:4). Yet even in Jonah's rebellion the word of the Lord ministered to the Ninevites, from the least all the way to the king himself. The king was so convicted he proclaimed a kingdom-wide fast of all food and water (Jonah 3:6-7). And, the king's measure of faith (see Romans 12:3), even though he was a pagan, idol-worshiping king, was activated as he instituted and mandated a total fast for his people and even all the animals! This king was taking his authority seriously (Jonah 3:9). He wanted to live! Do you find that as amazing as I do? These godless people had hope and the very God of the universe saw their humility and changed His mind! Oh yes, my Heavenly Father is a God of second chances!

*Father God, thank You for Your unmerited favor and grace through Your Son, Christ Jesus. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live. Jonah 4:3**

I enjoy living in the Land of the Free. I have seen, first-hand, life in a third-world country when I went on a mission trip to Cuba in 1999. Freedom is a precious gift and for believers, freedom in Christ goes a step further — we are free indeed! (John 8:31-36). Today's scripture paints a pretty pathetic picture of Jonah — he certainly didn't appreciate the liberation he had in Jehovah God. Here was a rebellious man, who had been delivered from the belly of a whale, given a second chance to obey God, delivered God's message and saw it come to fruition, and then got ticked off at God for delivering the enemy (Jonah 4:1-2). Shame on Jonah! Shame on me when I carelessly take advantage of or do not fully appreciate the freedom of being a child of the most high God.

*Father God, thank You for Jesus, who through His death and resurrection has set us free. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**But the Lord said, “You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Ninevah has more than one hundred twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city? Jonah 4:10-11**

Have you ever been miffed at God for saving someone you didn't think deserved it? I remember an incident in my own life, years ago during the Gulf War I found myself praying, *Lord, if only You would destroy so and so, this conflict would end.* Holy Spirit immediately quickened in my spirit that God wanted to save so and so just as much as He wanted to save me! Ouch! That sure changed the way I pray! Jonah was having himself one big pity party (Jonah 4:1-11). Jonah was angrier over the sheltering vine being destroyed than the pending doom of the Ninevites if he hadn't gone and delivered the repentance message. God reminded Jonah that He created ALL things but His top priority is the salvation of people.

*Father God, I want to have a healthy love of Your creation, but, Lord, people's souls are FIRST. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**...You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Jonah 4:2b**

We're going to conclude our devotions in the interesting book of Jonah. So much has been learned and hopefully, applied to our lives. Lesson 1: You can run but you cannot hide! When we belong to God, there is no place to go to escape His presence. In rebellion we may leave His path and go out on a path of our own, but sooner or later He will place a stop sign in front of us. Then the choice is ours - turn back to God or keep going at great risk. Lesson 2: Immediately obey! When God impresses us to do something, to say something, to go somewhere, don't hesitate - just do it. God will give you the words, the ability, and the way, as you seek to obey Him. Lesson 3: Our actions affect others. Jonah's disobedience caused the sailors to lose all their cargo and almost their lives. If we have sin in our life it will have an effect on others.

*Father God, I want to learn these lessons and apply them to my life. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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**But the Lord replied, “Have you any right to be angry?” Jonah 4:4**

The God we love and serve is compassionate, merciful, patient, kind and gracious. He wants ALL people to come to repentance and be saved (I Timothy 2:4). It is not our job to pick and choose those people we think are suited for salvation. God, in His sovereignty, does that. Our role is to tell the world about Jesus! And, to go whenever and wherever He says, "GO!" Jonah made a lot of mistakes and the last one he made may have cost him his life. He argued with God and basically told Him how it all should have happened. Jonah was an arrogant man with an attitude. But, the Lord used him to deliver Ninevah. God will get His way and if you won't do what He's told you to do, He will find someone who will. This concludes our devotions in the book of Jonah. I trust you have learned as much as I have. Be blessed today!

*Father God, thank You for the book of Jonah — it has taught me what not to do. In Jesus' Name, amen.*



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