

a. Jonah's Indifference

Jonah 1:4-5 But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

V4 – The Lord sent out a great storm to the ship that Jonah was in. What do you see? Where did this mighty tempest come from? What can we get from this verse? God allows us to have storms in our lives or He actually sends storms to us to get our attention. Not every storm is sent because of our sins and rebellion against God. Some storms are sent by God to develop our characters. The stronger the winds of our lives blow, the deeper the root of our faith in Christ Jesus grows.

What else can we see from the storm that our Lord sends our way? His love for us. He loves us so much that He doesn't want us to be as we were before.

Hebrews 12:6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.

Let's notice something else here in the second half of v4 and the first half of v5:

Jonah 1:4b-5a so that the ship was about to be broken up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load.

What do you see here? When the storm of life comes to us because of our sin and rebellion, are we the only ones who get affected by it? No. Jonah could care less about what was going on the deck. The ship crew threw the cargo to lighten the load. It means that they were going to lose money on this voyage. That is what happens while we are in sin. We become careless about others who are around us. We only think about ourselves and become extremely selfish. Those who are around us also get hurt because of our own sin and rebellion.

In the last part of v5:

Jonah 1:5b But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

How do you interpret this? Jonah was not sleeping because he was at peace with God like Jesus did in the boat with His disciples in the middle of a storm. But Jonah was duped by satan. When we get into sin in the beginning, we get convicted by the Holy Spirit. But the more we get involved with sins, the more we become callous against the conviction of the Holy Spirit. At this point, Jonah was so callous that he could ignore God's knocking with the storm on the door of his heart.

Can you come up with one word that describes the mindset of Jonah? Apathy or indifference. The dictionary defines "indifference" as follows, "lack of interest or concern." That's exactly what Jonah had in mind.

We see parallels between Jonah's sleep and the careless spiritually sleeping Christians:

- Jonah slept in a place where he hoped no one would see him or disturb him.
– "Sleeping Christians" like to "hide out" among the church.
- Jonah slept in a place where he could not help with the work that needed to be done.
– "Sleeping Christians" stay away from the work of the Lord.

- Jonah slept while the people were praying on the deck.
- “Sleeping Christians” don’t like prayer meetings.
- Jonah slept and had no idea of the problems around him.
- “Sleeping Christians” don’t know what is really going on.
- Jonah slept when he was in great danger.
- “Sleeping Christians” are in danger, but don’t know it.
- Jonah slept while the heathen needed him.
- “Sleeping Christians” snooze on while the world needs their message and testimony.

Jonah 1:6-9 So the captain came to him, and said to him, “What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish.” 7 And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, “Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” 9 So 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.”

V6 – What do you see? A heathen ship captain rebuked a prophet of God. Jonah had brought trouble to everybody instead of blessing, nor was he living up to his calling as a prophet. The worst part of the whole situation was that he was rebuked by heathens who didn’t know God and Jonah was representing his God in a wrong way to them.

V7 – The sailors cast lots. What does it mean? The practice of casting lots is mentioned 70 times in the OT and 7 times in the NT. In spite of the many references to casting lots in the OT, nothing is known about the actual lots themselves. They could have been sticks of various lengths, flat stones like coins, or some kind of dice; but their exact nature is unknown. The closest modern practice of casting lots is likely flipping a coin.

The Urim and the Thummim were elements of the breastplate worn by the High Priest attached to the ephod. It first appeared in Exodus 28:30. Most scholars suspect that the phrase refers to a set of two objects used by the high priest to answer a question or reveal the will of God.

Since casting lots was mentioned in the Bible, can we continue its practice? I don’t believe so. They did that to know the heart of God while they did not have any references to know His will. But we now have the complete Word of God. Anything that the Lord wants us to do is written clearly in His Word.

V8-9 – As soon as the sailors thought that Jonah was responsible for the furious storm, they unloaded their mind-boggling questions on him. From these two verses, what is your interpretation?

Jonah thought he got away from God and everything would be fine. Far from the truth. Be sure that our hidden sins will find us out.

Numbers 32:23 But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.

Luke 12:3 Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.

b. Jonah's stubbornness

Jonah 1:11-12 Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?"—for the sea was growing more tempestuous. 12 And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me."

Jonah realized that he was running out of escape options from the Lord. But he was not a kind of guy who would just quit and surrender.

What is your interpretation of these two verses?

How about this? Can someone say, "If a tempestuous storm comes while you are in a ship, make a human sacrifice. Then, the sea will become quiet." What do you think about that?

The Bible makes it quite clear that God hates human sacrifice. The pagan kingdoms in the Promised Land practiced human child sacrifice as part of the worship of false gods. God declared that such "worship" was detestable to Him and that He hates it according to Deuteronomy chapters 12 and 18. Furthermore, human sacrifice is associated in the OT with evil practices such as sorcery and divination, which are also detestable to our Lord.

OK, with that in mind, answer me, please. If God hates human sacrifice, why did He sacrifice Christ on the cross and how could that sacrifice be the payment for our sins? There is no doubt that a sacrifice for sin was necessary if people are to have any hope of eternal life. God established the necessity of the shedding of blood to cover sin in Hebrews 9:22.

In fact, God Himself performed the very first animal sacrifice to cover the sin of Adam and Eve temporarily. After He pronounced curses upon the first couple, He killed an animal, shedding its blood, and made from it a covering for Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.

By doing so, the Lord instituted the principle of animal sacrifice for sin. When God gave the Law to Moses in the wilderness, there were extensive instructions on how, when, and under what circumstances animal sacrifices were to be offered to Him. This was to continue until Christ came to offer the ultimate, perfect sacrifice, which made an animal sacrifice no longer necessary.

There are several reasons why the sacrifice of Christ on the cross does not violate the prohibition against human sacrifice, but we will go over only 2 of them for now:

- Jesus wasn't merely human.

If He were, then His sacrifice would have also been a temporary one because one human life couldn't possibly cover the sins of the entire human race who ever existed. Neither could one finite human life atone for sin against an infinite God. The only viable sacrifice must be an infinite one, which means only God Himself could atone for the sins of mankind. Only God Himself, an infinite Being, could pay the penalty that humankind owed to the Lord. This is why God had to become a Man and dwell among men according to John 1:14. No other sacrifice would suffice.

- God didn't sacrifice Jesus.

Rather, Jesus, as God incarnate, sacrificed Himself. No one forced Him. He laid down His life willingly, as He made clear speaking about His life:

John 10:18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.

God the Son sacrificed Himself to God the Father and thereby fulfilled all the requirements of the Law.

Back to Jonah 1:12. What can you tell me after you read v12? Jonah would rather die than go to Nineveh. This guy had a death wish.

What else can you get from v12? God's amazing and unending mercy toward His people. A man who would rather die than obey God, and yet He used this man to bring about the major revival in a mighty, but evil, city. Another thing we can get out of it is that our God is willing to use broken potteries, like Jonah and us, so that He alone receive glory.

Jonah 1:13-17 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. 14 Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, "We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You." 15 So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows. 17 Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

I heard a funny story about the raging sea. Pastor Gayle Erwin whom some of you know well was leading a Holy Land Tour in the Sea of Galilee in Israel. All of sudden, the sea became wild and shaking their boat side to side as we learned it from the Gospels. One brave soul got on the front of the boat and yelled at the sea as he read in the Bible, "Peace, be still." The moment he commanded, their boat motor stopped, but the storm continued. The rest of the people asked him not to say anymore.

V13 – Why didn't the ship crew throw Jonah overboard right away? They did not want to throw Jonah into the sea, because they believed his God was for real and they feared the consequences of throwing a prophet, even a disobedient prophet into the sea.

The person's sorrow will continue to increase as long as it relies on its own efforts.

V14-16 – What is your interpretation here? The immediate end of the storm proved that Jonah's God was for real, and that Jonah's resistance to that God was the real problem. In a logical response the sailors feared the LORD exceedingly, sacrificed to God and made promises to serve Him.

What else?

The way of safety for sinners is to be found in the sacrifice of another on their behalf.

V17 – What is your interpretation? Is this an allegorical fish? In other words, not really a fish, but another boat? Perhaps, a space aliens' rescue submarine? The biggest miracle in the Book of Jonah is not the great fish, rather the entire people of Nineveh turned their hearts to the Lord.