

3/15/26

“Down Was the Route, But Up Was the Result”

Text: *Jonah Chapters 1–3*

Read Jonah chapters 1-3

There are seasons in the life of every believer where, your faith **is not tested by what you don't know, but by what you do know.**

And by what God is requiring from you in that moment.

Apostle taught us last Sunday that **endurance is the presence of persecution, with the absence of escape... and there is no exit sign.**

You do know that We don't always run with our feet — sometimes we run in our mind, with silence, with delay, with distractions, with detours we dress up as “prayerful consideration.”

I define **prayerful consideration** like this: **a spiritual disguise for procrastination or avoidance.**

Delayed obedience is still disobedience.

The Bible says, *“He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock...”* — **Psalm 40:2**

David wasn't talking about inconvenience.

He was talking about being in a place where he could not fix it himself.

A place where our strength couldn't help...

A place where our experience couldn't help...

A place where the only way out, was for God to reach down and pull us up.

That's the pattern you see all throughout Scripture.

Joseph went down into a pit... before God raised him to a palace.

Israel went down into bondage... before God brought them out with power.

David went down into caves...before he ever sat on a throne.

Because sometimes God will allow the descent... so that when He brings you up, you know it was Him.

God already knows how the story ends.

God specializes in reaching for people at their lowest place.

Even if your route was down... His plan can still bring you up.
God, who is rich in mercy, knows how to reach us where we are...

Down Was the Route... But Up Was the Result

In 780-760 B.C. was not a peaceful moment in history.

We are stepping into a time of tension... a time of violence...
a time when nations were rising and falling... a time when
wickedness was not hidden — it was out in the open.

Nineveh was not just another city... Nineveh was the capital of
the Assyrian empire — a powerful, aggressive nation known for

cruelty, and oppression. An empire that conquered nations,
destroyed cities, mass deportations and ruled with fear.

God saw the wickedness...

God saw the violence...

God saw the corruption...

But instead of destroying the city immediately... He sends a
messenger. Because that's the kind of God we serve...

Before judgment... He sends warning.

Before destruction... He sends a word.

Before the fall... He sends a prophet.

**Point #1 God measures obedience by direction — because
your steps will always reveal what your heart has decided.**

God said, "Arise, Go and Say..."

Step into the assignment.

Go where I sent you.

Say what I tell you to say...

But Jonah got up... and went the other way.

He didn't say no with his mouth — he said it with his direction.

Because sometimes disobedience isn't loud, it's quiet steps going the wrong way.

You can be up on your feet but still down in spirit.

You can be active, and still out of alignment.

You can be moving, but not moving in the direction God said go.

Sometimes it's not open rebellion—it's that silent resistance.

We find alternate routes to avoid the responsibility of obedience....

Question

What has God told *you* to rise and do—but your actions have said otherwise? What Nineveh are you avoiding?

For some of us, it's not that we didn't get a word—it's that we didn't want that word we received.

We say, "Lord, speak", and then get quiet when the instructions didn't match our preference.

The bible says: "*Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I say?*" – **Luke 6:46 (ESV)**

It's not what we say that proves obedience. It's what we do after God speaks.

Obedience is not measured by emotion; it is measured by direction.

God's instructions don't need our edits. They need our surrender.

The Bible shows us a pattern... not just here, but throughout the book of Jonah.

He went down to Joppa. Down into the ship. Down into the inner part of the boat. Because every step away from obedience... takes you lower than you thought you would go.

God said **arise**. Jonah arose. But he went the wrong direction.

And the lesson is simple:

Delayed obedience... Partial obedience... Convenient obedience... is still disobedience.

**Point #2 Compromise doesn't always look Rebellious,
sometimes it looks Rational.**

Jonah made a decision. God said Nineveh. Jonah chose Tarshish. And Joppa became the first step in the wrong direction.

Because most of the time, we don't run from God all at once.

Sometimes God will ask you to forgive somebody you would rather see judged. Sometimes God will tell you to love people you would rather avoid. Sometimes God will call you to speak truth in places that make you uncomfortable.

He went down to Joppa.

That wasn't just a geographic move, it was a spiritual one.

Disobedience doesn't just lead you somewhere else, it leads you lower.

- **Down in your thoughts**—confusion starts clouding what used to be clear.
- **Down in your discernment**—you start making choices that don't even feel wrong anymore.
- **Down in your connection with God**—because you're moving in your own strength.

That's what disobedience does—it drains you while deceiving you.

Because when you're set on going the wrong direction, it won't be hard to find a ship...

The Bible says **he paid the fare** to go to Tarshish.

And you do know... every step away from God will cost you something.

It will cost you peace. It will cost you clarity. It will cost you strength. It will cost you time. It will cost you more than you ever planned to spend.

In Jonah's day, the fare would have been paid in silver... most likely shekels...a weighed piece of money used for trade and travel.

Because when you're out of alignment, the price is never what you thought it would be.

You ever paid for something you shouldn't have paid for... and later realized it cost you more than money?

It Cost you sleep. It Cost you your joy. It Cost you your focus. It Cost you your peace of mind.

But when you're out of the will of God, the cheapest ticket can become the most expensive trip of your life.

He was paying to disconnect from the One who was trying to connect him to purpose.

He was financing his own spiritual descent.

And the verse ends with this chilling truth: *"...away from the presence of the Lord."*

The psalmist said, *"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence?"* — **Psalm 139:7**

Jonah **wasn't** leaving God's existence — he was trying to leave God's assignment. He was running from the place God sent him, from the responsibility God gave him, and from the word God spoke over his life.

And that's the real danger.

It's not just where you're going — it's what you're walking away from.

Because when you step out of alignment, you step away from the **place where** God told you to be.

Where is your Joppa?

But the bible says here in the text that Jonah:

*“had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep.” **Jonah 1:5 (ESV)***

Point #3 You can't help others when you're asleep.

Jonah is running from God... the storm is raging... the ship is about to break apart... men are crying out for their lives... and the prophet is asleep.

Not praying. Not repenting. Not seeking God..... Sleeping.

And what makes this worse is this —

the storm is not only affecting Jonah...it's affecting everybody on the ship. The sailors are scared. The ship is breaking.

The cargo is being thrown overboard.

And the one man on the boat who knows God... the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... is sleep.

And that's dangerous.

Because when the ones who know God... the ones who say they're called... the ones who say they belong to the Lord... goes to sleep on the assignment... it doesn't just affect them — it affects everybody connected to them.

This walk with God carries weight.

It carries responsibility.

It carries accountability.

WAKE UP AND PAY ATTENTION!!!

**But The Bible shows us another man... in another storm...
on another boat....**

“But He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’” – Mark 4:38 (ESV)

**So, in Jesus’s case... sleep was a sign of sovereignty &
security.**

In Jonah’s case... sleep was a symptom of separation.

What assignment/s are you sleeping on because the direction makes you uncomfortable or feels unfamiliar?

Because you can’t help others when you’re asleep. You can’t lead when you’re avoiding. You can’t speak life when you’re hiding from truth.

And sooner or later, God will allow something to shake the boat to wake you up.

Some of us have gotten so good at numbing the call... we've mistaken spiritual silence for peace.

You can't out-sleep a storm God sent to wake you up.

Point #4 – God will shake what's around you, to save what's still alive within you.

Because the storm wasn't meant to drown him — it was meant to turn him.

In Jonah's case, God was involved in this storm. Jonah finally owns his place in the storm.

He didn't blame people. He didn't blame the devil. He didn't blame the situation.

And we need to say at times... **Lord... this one is on me.**

Because God could have let him drown. God could have let the storm finish him. God could have said, You didn't want the assignment, so I'll use somebody else.

God shook the sea around him... to save the call inside him.

And the word later says.

“And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah...”
— **Jonah 1:17**

The Lord appointed it.

The same God who sent the storm... prepared the rescue.

Sometimes the moment that feels like everything is falling apart is the very moment God is keeping you from falling apart.

Jonah 2 says, *“Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish...”* — **Jonah 2:1**

Notice when he prays.

Not when he arose and got up initially. Not on the shore. Not on the ship... Not in the ship... Not in the storm. But In the belly.

Because sometimes God has to let you get to the place where there is nowhere else to turn.

Jonah says, *“I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and He answered me; out of the belly of Sheol (SHE-OL) I cried, and You heard my voice.”*

Sheol, in Hebrew, refers to the realm of the dead, a place of spiritual separation, silence, and shadows.

Jonah even says, *“At the roots of the mountains I went down... to the land whose bars closed upon me forever...” — **Jonah 2:6a***

That’s rock bottom.

*“Yet You brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God.” — **Jonah 2:6b***

He went down... YET... God brought him up.

Point #5 – Rock Bottom Isn’t the End—It’s Where Surrender Finally Speaks Louder Than Pride

Sometimes God will let you feel the weight of where you went or going... so you can remember where you were supposed to be.

Because when you're buried in disobedience, the only way out... is **surrender to the will of the Father.**

And when surrender finally happened...
God spoke again.

*“Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying... **Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.**” Jonah 3:1-2 (ESV)*

Point #6 – The Second Time Wasn’t Plan B—It Was Mercy Giving Him Another Chance at Plan A

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time.

Same voice. Same assignment. Same God. Different Jonah.

God didn’t rewrite the mission— He let the process shape Jonah until Jonah was ready to walk in it. He didn’t change the city— He changed the condition of the messenger.

God wasn't surprised when Jonah ran. And the plan didn't get canceled because Jonah initially failed. And the same is true for us...

Some of us think because we've detoured, delayed, or disobeyed, God must've moved on.

But if God called you in **chapter 1**, He'll still call you in **chapter 3**.

So the question isn't, **"Is the assignment still available?"**

The question is, **"Are you finally ready?"**

And when Jonah was ready... God spoke again.

The bible says: *"...So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city... And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least... When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster*

that He had said He would do to them, and He did not do it.”

Jonah 3:3–10 (ESV)

The assignment he ran from...was the assignment God still used. The city he didn't want to go to... was the city God wanted to save. The message he tried to avoid... was the message that changed everything. Because when God gives you an assignment... it's not just about you.

It's about the people, the places, the Kingdom on the other side of your obedience.

**Point #7 – When One Heart Turns, Revival Can Touch a
Whole City**

*“Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’
journey in breadth.” — Jonah 3:3 (ESV)*

Nineveh was a three-day journey across... and Jonah had spent three days in the fish... not a coincidence, but a reminder that the place that felt like death, became preparation for obedience to his assignment.

Because sometimes God will take you through something so when you come out, you can walk into places you never thought you would survive.

The Bible says, *“And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.”* — **Jonah 3:5 (ESV)**

The whole city humbled itself.

“When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that He had said He would do to them, and He did not do it.” — **Jonah 3:10 (ESV)**

One word from God. One man’s obedience. One city on its knees. And judgment was lifted.

What if your obedience is connected to somebody else’s turnaround?

You don’t have to be perfect. Just obedient.

The Bible says Jonah went outside the city and started complaining to God... this time verbally.

*“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry...
...for I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful...”*

Jonah 4:1–2

He obeyed... but he was still growing. He spoke God’s Word...
but he still had issues. He delivered the word... but God was
still working on his heart.

Because God can use you while He’s still shaping you.

God can work through you while He’s still correcting you.

God can send revival through you even while He’s still dealing
with you.

Because when one heart turns... revival can touch a whole city.

Jonah went down—but God brought him back up.

Nineveh went down—but God raised them too.

Because no matter how deep you’ve gone, His mercy is deeper.

No matter how long you’ve run, His call is longer-reaching.

You can’t fall so low that grace can’t lift you up.

Down was your route... but up—was always the result.
