

## **Jonah Pt 2 A Storm, Sailors, and a Sleeping Prophet**

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Jonah / Jonah 1:4–16

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# Watch for Repeated Words

Before we dig into this passage, I want to teach you how to read Jonah like a detective. This book is short, but it's carefully constructed. The author uses repeated words to guide us toward the main idea.

As you listen today, listen for these words:

- "Great" (great storm, great fish, great city, great anger)
- "Down" (Jonah's movement away from God)
- "Hurl" or "throw" (God's action)
- "Fear" (who truly fears God?)
- "Call" or "cry out" (who calls out to God?)
- "Appoint" (God's control)
- "Vow" (promises made)

These patterns are not accidental. They are the author's way of showing us what's happening spiritually. Pay attention to them, and the message becomes clear.

## **Part 1: God Hurls a Storm at Jonah (1:4)**

Let's read Jonah 1:4:

### **Jonah 1:4 ESV**

<sup>4</sup> 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.

Notice the verb: God **hurled** a great wind.

The Hebrew word here is the same word used for throwing a spear or hurling a weapon. This is not a gentle nudge. This is God taking action. This is God saying, "No, you're not getting away that easily."

### **God is not passive in Jonah's story.**

Think about what has happened so far. Jonah ran away from God. He paid his fare, boarded a ship, and headed in the opposite direction. God could have let him go. God could have said, "Fine. Go your way."

Instead, God sends a storm. A violent, ship-breaking storm.

**This is what we call "loving interruption."**

God loves Jonah too much to let him drift further away. The storm is a judgment but it's also a rescue. It's harsh, but it's merciful. It stops Jonah's flight and gets his attention.

Many of us know this feeling. We're running from God. We think we're getting away. And then something happens. A crisis. A loss. A moment of clarity. And we realize: God is still pursuing us.

**Application question:** What "storms" has God sent into your life to stop you from going further away from Him?

## **Part 2: The Sailors Panic, Jonah Sleeps (1:5-6)**

Now read Jonah 1:5-6:

**Jonah 1:5-6** **ESV**

<sup>5</sup> 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. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep.

<sup>6</sup> 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.”

Picture the scene. The ship is being battered. The sailors are terrified. Water is crashing over the deck. They're screaming prayers to their gods. They're throwing cargo overboard, watching weeks' worth of profit sink into the ocean.

And where is Jonah? He has gone **down** into the inner part of the ship. He has lain down. He is in a deep sleep.

## The Pattern of "Down"

Notice how many times Jonah "goes down":

- Jonah 1:3 – "Jonah rose to go to **Tarshish from the presence of the LORD**. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish."
- Jonah 1:3 – "So he paid the fare and went **down** into it, to go with them to Tarshish."
- Jonah 1:5 – Now he goes **down** into the inner part of the ship and lies down in a deep sleep.
- Jonah 2:6 (coming soon) – He will speak of going **down** to the roots of the mountains.

The author is painting a picture for us. Jonah is not just moving away from God geographically. He is spiritually sinking. He is going down, down, down.

## **Contrast: The Sailors Are Awake, the Prophet Is Asleep**

Here's where the satire gets sharp.

The sailors—these "pagan" outsiders—are awake. They are alert. They are praying. They are taking action. They are calling out to their gods.

The prophet—the man of God—is numb. He is silent. He is sleeping through a crisis.

This is darkly comic. It's absurd. And it's meant to expose us.

Is it possible to know about God and still be spiritually asleep? Yes. Jonah proves it.

**Application reflection:** Where am I "going down" in my life? What am I checking out from instead of facing God?

## **Part 3: God Exposes Jonah**

# Through the Lots (1:7)

Read Jonah 1:7:

## **Jonah 1:7 ESV**

<sup>7</sup> And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

The sailors cast lots. This is a simple act. They're trying to figure out who is responsible for this disaster.

And the lot falls on Jonah.

## **God uses very ordinary means to expose hidden disobedience.**

Sometimes we think spiritual truth is revealed through dramatic visions or thundering voices. But often, it's simpler than that. A conversation. A question. A circumstance. A lot cast on a ship.

When we're running from God, we can only hide for so long. Crisis has a way of bringing truth to the surface.

## **Part 4: Jonah's Confession vs. His Life (1:8-10)**

Read Jonah 1:8-10:

**Jonah 1:8-10 ESV**

<sup>8</sup> Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?”

<sup>9</sup> And 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.”

<sup>10</sup> Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

They asked Jonah 5 questions but he only answers 1 (I am a Hebrew)

He says he fears Yahweh Elohim of heaven (we see the personal name for God as well as the generic title for deity)

The sailors *actually* fear, Jonah *says* he fears. There is a contrast between the gentiles and Jonah.

Thematic repetition!

Fear is used 4 times and they all play off of each other to

create this contrast.

We see obedience from everything else *but* Jonah. Jonah seems to be the antithesis of what he should be as a prophet (We see this even from the start when Jonah refuses to obey).

Actually, Jonah *does* seem to fear the Lord, just not in the way that he is trying to portray. At the end of the story we find that Jonah almost seems afraid of God's character because he knows what the Lord will do to Nineveh if they repent (The Lord will *forgive* them)

The sailors ask Jonah, "Who are you? What's your story?"

And Jonah gives a theological confession. He says:

*"I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." (v. 9, ESV)*

This is good theology. This sounds right. This sounds like something a prophet would say.

But here's the problem: **Jonah is running from the LORD.** While he's saying he fears God, his life is saying the opposite.

Notice how the sailors react. They become "exceedingly afraid." Not just afraid of the storm. Afraid that they have a

rebel on board. They say, "What is this that you have done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD."

## The Irony

The sailors (these foreigners) understand Jonah better than Jonah understands himself. They know something is deeply wrong. They know that a man who claims to fear the LORD should not be running from Him.

**It is possible to say all the right words about God and live in open disobedience.**

This is one of the most convicting lines in the whole book. It describes a lot of us.

We can confess faith. We can quote Scripture. We can talk about God like we know Him. But our lives tell a different story. We're running in the opposite direction.

The pagan, gentile, sailors in this story show more real fear of God than Jonah does. Think about that.

**Application question:** What gap exists between what I say about God and what my life actually reveals about my beliefs?

# Part 5: The Sailors' Mercy and Prayer (1:11-14)

Read Jonah 1:11-14:

## **Jonah 1:11-14** ESV

<sup>11</sup> Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea grew more and more tempestuous.

<sup>12</sup> He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.”

<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

<sup>14</sup> Therefore they called out to the LORD, “O LORD, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.”

Here's what happens. The sailors ask Jonah what they should do. Jonah tells them to throw him overboard.

Now, you might expect them to say, "Perfect. Problem

solved." And they grab him and toss him.

But they don't.

Instead, they **try to row back to land**. They don't want to hurt him. They want to save him. (Which is the opposite of what Jonah wants)

Only when they can't make it back to land do they finally pray to God.

*"O LORD, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you." (ESV)*

They're not angry at Jonah. They're not blaming him. They're asking God to forgive them for what they're about to do. They're showing compassion and humility even in a life-or-death situation.

**The "pagan" sailors are more careful with Jonah's life than Jonah is with his own.**

Think about that contrast. Jonah is willing to die. The sailors are unwilling to kill him, even though his life is endangering theirs. They try everything else first. They exhaust every other option. Only as a last resort do they do what Jonah asks.

# Part 6: Calm Sea and Vows to the LORD (1:15-16)

Read Jonah 1:15-16:

## **Jonah 1:15–16** ESV

<sup>15</sup> So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.

<sup>16</sup> Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

As soon as Jonah hits the water, the sea goes calm. Immediately. The storm stops.

And the sailors' response is fear and worship.

Notice what they do:

- They fear the LORD exceedingly (they have genuine reverence)
- They offer a sacrifice (they take action in worship)
- They make vows (they make commitments to God)

The word "made vows" is a repeated word that matters. In

Hebrew, it's the same root repeated: they "vowed vows." It's emphasis. It's showing that they are serious. They are following through.

**And here's the kicker: they do this before Jonah does.**

We will see later in chapter 2 that Jonah also talks about making vows. He says:

*"But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay." (Jonah 2:9, ESV)*

But by the time Jonah is saying this, the sailors have already done it. The Gentile sailors are ahead of the prophet in obedience. They have already sacrificed and already made their vows to God.

## **The Pattern Becomes Clear**

This is the pattern of the whole book:

- The prophet rebels. The outsiders respond.
- The prophet runs. The outsiders pray.
- The prophet sleeps. The outsiders stay awake.
- The prophet has good theology but a hard heart. The outsiders have soft hearts.

It's satire, yes. But it's also a mirror. It's showing us how easy it is to be on the outside of God's purposes while going through the motions of faith.

# Part 7: Application and Discussion

## Main Takeaways

1. God lovingly interrupts our running. The storm is not just judgment. It's mercy. It's God saying, "I won't let you go."
2. Religious people can be deeply asleep while outsiders are more responsive. Being inside the faith community doesn't guarantee a soft heart.
3. Right words about God are not proof of a soft heart. Jonah said the right things and ran the wrong direction.
4. Many unlikely people around us may be closer to true fear of God than we think. The sailors in this story put the prophet to shame.
5. Hidden disobedience gets exposed. You can only hide

for so long before the truth comes to light.

## Closing Reflection

The sailors' story ends with them fearing God, worshiping, and making vows. They encounter God through a crisis and respond with their whole hearts.

Jonah's story, by contrast, is just beginning. He's about to learn a hard lesson in the belly of a fish.

The question this passage asks us is simple: **When God interrupts your life, how do you respond?** Do you sleep through it like Jonah? Do you resist like Jonah? Or do you wake up, like the sailors, and turn toward God?

The good news is that God is patient. He will keep interrupting. He will keep pursuing. Because He loves us too much to let us drift away.