

04 | Submitting to His Plan

Loving Like God

Welcome back. As we talk about our walk with the Lord, and really submitting ourselves to letting Jesus use us, and availing such, but even hungering for the Lord to use us in our journey and our steps ahead. I want you to, if you have your Bibles, maybe even take a minute, if you don't, go grab one, or you might have an electronic device that has a Bible on it, and open your Bible up to the book of Jonah. The book of Jonah, and I'm going to look for it, it's after Amos and after Obadiah, and then you get to Jonah. And I want to talk to you about Jonah for a little bit, and through that, letting the Lord just do a work in us where we become submitted to the plan of the Lord, where you and I just become not only aware of the plan, and not only are we empowered to fulfill that plan in us, but we're also aware that He's prepared the hearts of other people. But then there comes a submission where you and I just say, "Lord, I submit to Your plan," because sometimes we know His plan and we're not doing His plan. In the Book of Jonah, it's a short book, it's just got four chapters to it. Yet most of us know it pretty well. I want to read just a couple verses, but I want to just highlight the story, and then talk about submitting to the plan to the Lord, as we would just become aware in our own life

that we go through some of the same processes that He does, as we desire to be used to the Lord.

It's interesting that the Bible says that the Word of the Lord came to Jonah, and when the Lord began to speak to Him in verse number two, He really was calling him to go to Nineveh, and he was to go to Nineveh and proclaim to them that judgment was going to come on their land if they did not repent of their sin and give their hearts to God. And what was Jonah's response? It's in verse number three, it says in verse one of Jonah, chapter one, "But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish." Now, by the way, Tarshish is not Nineveh. It is the opposite direction. And it says, "from the presence of the Lord," I want you to hear that, because he was not only fleeing to Tarshish, but he was also fleeing from the presence of the Lord. And some of you know the story. He found a ship down in Joppa that was going to Tarshish, and he paid his fare to get on that ship. He went down into the belly of the ship and he took a nap. Well, the ship set sail. It was heading to Tarshish and a big storm arose. Oh, by the way, God caused that storm. And it rose, and it was scaring the crew and the other people that were aboard and the captain, they knew that they could lose their lives out there. So what did they begin doing? They begin throwing things overboard. And in throwing the things overboard, you know, they were trying to keep the ship upright, and being able to make it to their destination alive, even though they're ruining all the cargo,

and somewhere along the line, the captain became aware that there was a spiritual thing going on. And by the way, some of you've been in tough times and suspected, "I think something spiritual is going on," and it pushed you towards leaning in and listening to the Lord. Well, you know, the captain initially wanted to proclaim to everyone on the ship, "Hey, pray to your own God, whoever it is, and let's see if they'll be help." And, well, there was no help to be found.

So the captain goes down under the into the belly of the of the ship. And he sees that Jonah is sleeping. He wakes him up and tells him what's going on and of course, doesn't understand why Jonah isn't up and praying. And they have this conversation, and Jonas says, I'm the reason for this storm, God is trying to get my attention. And in fact, it's out of my disobedience. And if you throw me overboard, good things will happen, the storm will will go away. Of course, the captain wisely prays to God and says, by the way, we're going to throw him overboard, but forgive us because you must like the guy, and now we're going to throw him overboard. But we certainly don't want your judgment for throwing him into the water. Well, they tossed him into the water. And, you know, the story of big fish comes along. And the reason that commentators would say it was a whale, actually, the Bible doesn't say it was a whale, is that whales are mammals, they're oxygen breathing. And so how else could a person live except that they're having oxygen? I know. Maybe got stuck in the

esophagus. But, you know, it's amazing to me what God did to get Jonah's attention. And then, you know, he's down there with stomach bile and everything else, digestive fluids and seaweed and stuff that would get my attention if I was in the belly of a fish for three days. Would I become a praying, submitted man? Yes. But how many of you would agree? We don't want it to have to take that, for you and I to obey the Lord. And all He was needing to obey the Lord was God was saying, I want to use you to go and touch a city. But Jonah didn't like the city anyway. And yet, five times in the book of Jonah, the Bible actually says it's a great city, but it was a city that was destroying itself through sin and through their following their own ways. Well, you know, God causes that fish to throw Jonah up on the shore. By the way, can you imagine maybe you're one of those families that's out there on the beach. You said to your family, hey, let's go to the beach today and let's have a good time, maybe a little picnic or something. And you see a fish. Maybe it is a whale that you see, some big fish coming over and just throwing some guy up onto the onto the seashore.

I want you to get this picture with me. And that is the Lord has spoken to Jonah, and Jonah is running from it. The Bible actually says running from the presence of the Lord. He's going to Tarshish. He does not want to go to Ninevah. He's in the belly. They throw him overboard. He gets eaten by this fish while he's in the belly of the fish. He now has this epiphany. And that is, I think I

need to obey the Lord. That fish vomits him on the ground over near Nineveh. The Lord then speaks to him a second time and said, Now arise and go to Ninevah, and then he does. Now, it's interesting in the recorded history of the Old Testament, the revival at Ninevah would be seen as the greatest revival of the Old Testament. Well over 200,000 people got saved by his calling them into repentance. And the king got fully behind it. And I mean, people by the masses got saved. When you deal with Ninevah, what I want you to be aware of is he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord and even the men that were on that ship. It says in chapter number one, it would say in verse number ten, "The men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord because he had told them." And they knew this has to do with the Lord. It's a tremendous thing when a man or woman decides, "You know what, I'm going to submit to God's plan." I don't live as well outside of the plan of the Lord. Now, I don't want to become overly technical with you, but was he capable of fleeing from the presence of the Lord? The Bible actually says, he never leaves us and he never forsakes us. It's the promise given. It's both an Old Testament promise and a New Testament promise that we will never be left alone by God. He will not leave you. Yay! It's a time of great celebration, but we sure can diminish our experience in the presence of the Lord. We sure can grieve the Holy Spirit. You know, one of the things I'm aware is that you can actually increase your dimensions of becoming aware of the presence of the Lord. You know, one of the reasons

that I like to get into the word, you know, we get saved, we experience the presence of the Lord, we get filled with the Holy Spirit, we experience a greater dimension of the presence of the Lord. We then gather in a church community, maybe at a home church, or you're gathering with a group of friends and where two or more gathered, He's promised to be in our midst. And if we would agree on any one thing that He would do, it's referring to a greater dimension that happens in the presence of the Lord. Instead of fleeing, I want it to grow. You two? And so then also we find when we worship, God is enthroned in the praises of His people there.

You know, the Bible talks about entering His gates with thanksgiving in our heart. And it's not just a mode. I want you to hear this. The Bible's not referring to just when you come close to the Lord be filled with thanksgiving, it's saying it's the key to getting in through those gates of authority, and that is you enter with thanksgiving in your heart. So you increase the presence of the Lord in your life. And as and lastly, when we obey the Lord, when we submit to what His plan, there's something beautiful that happens of knowing the presence of the Lord. David, and you know the story of him being out on his balcony, supposed to be out to war, and yet he's the king of a great nation, the nation of Israel. And and what's he doing? He's checking out some somebody else's babe over the balcony. Well, he wasn't supposed to be there. It was not God's will. And, I'll say this. One of the greatest

protections we have is when we do God's will for our life. So you want the presence of Lord to do the will of the Lord's. Few more things involved in that. But now in chapter number three, he submits to it. So I'm going to just ask you, as we think about Jonah and think about the application to our life. Who's your Ninevah? Who's the person or the people? That you would run from because you do not want anything to do with them. And yet possibly the Lord is saying, "I'm calling you to be a minister to them." Who would be your Ninevah? What would be your Tarshish? What's your ship? How are you running? What's your mode? You know, I doubt if you're heading down to the local port and getting on a ship going the opposite direction of some place. But you can go the opposite direction and live in the same house as someone. Your life can become contrary. Maybe people don't even see how you would run, but what's your Tarshish that you're running to? That you're allowing to suck up all of your dreams and all of your visions of what God is trying to do in your life? Maybe even muting His voice. That has to do with, "Well, if I obeyed, He might be doing this." And yet it consumes you by you going this other direction.

Pay attention to that, I want to share a story about not so much me wrestling, but it's about submitting to His plan. And so one day, I'm walking down my street early in the morning, going for a walk, and of course, we're talking about walking with the Lord and walking with God and learning to love like Jesus loves. And there's a man down the

street and he is busy with his gardens that are out in front, and he's trimming some things up. Actually, he was trimming a cactus, I stopped and I was walking with someone that was visiting us and we began to talk with him. And to me, I know there's different varieties of cactus, but I'm not real familiar with all of them. And as he was trimming this cactus, I just began talking to him, and again, I kind of needed a friend anyway. And I thought, who knows, maybe he'll become a friend. So as we were talking, he told me that this cactus was called Nopal, and it's good for eating, and I said "Really?" And he said, "yeah" and he cut the era of the cactus off and handed it to me and he took that and he said, "Here, you need to take these thorns off of it." And he said, "Just go home and dice it up and put it in a frying pan, put some other good breakfast ingredients up with it, and it'll be good. You'll enjoy it." I must've looked at him like a deer in the headlights, you know. And he said, "Robert, you don't know what to do with it." "No, I don't." He said, "Come with me." He invited me in his house, fixed me breakfast. We've been friends ever since. Now, he was getting ready and training to be on his 43rd marathon. And you can tell maybe by looking at me that I don't run marathons. This is not the body of a marathoner. But I like walking. I like riding a bike, that kind of thing. So I asked him, I said, "Hey, would you like to go for a walk with me one morning?" And he said, "Sure, I'd enjoy it." He said, "I'm in training for a marathon and

walking isn't part of it." But he said, "Let's add it in." And so we begin to walk.

It's about the fifth walk that we're in and we're walking. We live in downtown L.A. and we are walking the ridges of Elysian Park over towards Chinatown, it's about a seven mile loop. And he said, "Robert, you remind me of my niece and her husband." I said, "Is that right?" And we've been talking about, you know, his family and his kids and grandkids and things. And I could tell he loves his family. And I asked him about what he believed in God. And he said, "Well, you know, there's a lot of ways," he said "to approach whoever God is." I would call that a pluralist, not, you know, whereas Jesus said, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man comes unto the Father but through Me. So Jesus is not a pluralist, all right. We need to know Him personally. And so, anyway, so we were then out on this walk, and he said I reminded him of his niece and the niece's husband. I said, "Well, tell me about him." He said, "Well, they're a part of the church" and told me the church out in San Bernardino, I was aware of it. You know, it's another great church. And he said and they're missionaries, and told me where they're missionaries to. I came home that day and I spoke to my wife Benita. And I said, Benita, I am the answer to prayer of that niece who loves her uncle and has been praying for salvation to come to his land. It probably wasn't a week later, he gave his heart to the Lord. And we've been prayer buddies. And He's got a great gift of encouragement and

prophetic gift that always covers me over in prayer. We become great friends. I just I'm so glad that day I wasn't in such a hurry as to not be submissive to the Lord, but instead became aware. Maybe not immediately, but became aware over the coming days and the connections that we had, became aware that there was a plan that God had in our friendship, and he wasn't a notch in my belt. He was a person that I was reaching out to in friendship. Cared, loved the guy. He was not offended by my praying. Probably a little taken back because I had people when I say goodbye, he's a big ol', retired steelworker. Now he embraces me. And you know the Lord sees when we submit to His plan. I want to know not just that I'm empowered, not just that He's got other people ready, but I want to be aware He has a plan for intersections in their life that I want to submit to that plan to see the fullness of what God wants to do. I encourage the same in you.

Lord, would you go before us and help us see Your plan? And that we aren't like Jonah. We're not going to run from our Ninevahs. But instead, Lord, we've been sent as missionaries into a world. A lot of people that are very different, but they respond to love. And You've primed the pump of their becoming aware of You. Help us as we submit to Your ways and Your plan. In Jesus' name, amen.