

YOU CAN'T RUN; YOU CAN'T HIDE

Jonah 2:9-10 ⁹ *But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.* ¹⁰ *And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.*

Giving Honor to God the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. To All of God's Sons, Daughters, and Children. Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow. Let's turn to the book of Jonah and as we lift up the Name of the Lord. Let me share a well-known Bible story with you.

Jonah was a prophet in Israel, and on a particular day, God called him to preach to the evil and violent people of Nineveh. God said, "Tell my people, that if they don't repent, I'll destroy that city." Jonah really didn't like that idea, so he decided that he wouldn't go. Instead, Johan ran in the opposite direction. Jonah had risen up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish. So Jonah paid the fare, and went down into the ship, to go with them to Tarshish trying to flee from the presence of the LORD. Well, all of a sudden, right in the midst of the sea, a monstrosity of a storm arose and threatened to sink the ship. The scripture said that the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. The mariners were scared. They were so frightened that every man began to cry out to their god. Afterwards, they began to throw many of the weighty items on the ship overboard, in an effort to lighten the load on the ship. Can you imagine the confusion that was going on as they were calling on their gods and throwing things overboard? While all of this was going on, Jonah had gone down in the hull of the ship and was fast asleep. The captain of the ship came over to Jonah, and I can only imagine his discontentment with him. What do you mean sleeper? In other words, "How can you sleep, and we're in a storm?" We are out hear fighting for our lives and calling on our gods. Get up, get yourself together, and call upon your God, perhaps your God will hear us and will save us from this storm." (paraphrasing)

Big Bethel, things got bad y'all. They got so bad that the men said we've got to find out why this disaster is happening to us. What we are going to do is cast lots so that we can find out who the culprit is for this type of evil to fall on us ... They cast lots and yes, you guessed it; the lot fell on Jonah. The men asked Jonah what type of work do you do and where are you from? Who are your people? Jonah said "I am a Hebrew and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. When Jonah said this, everybody was afraid and asked him, "Why have you done this? At this time the lightbulb went off in their minds and they knew that Jonah had fled from the presence of the LORD, because that's what he had told them. They asked Jonah, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may be calm unto us? Because the storm was ragging and battering the ship.

Jonah said, "Well, take me up to the top deck of the ship and throw me overboard. When you do this, the sea shall be calm for you. You see, I know that it's because of me that the storm is here and raging." Even after hearing all of this the men rowed hard to bring the ship to land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. I believe in my spiritual mind that at this time God allowed the Wind to Blow, the Thunder to Roll, the Lightening to Flash, and Tide to Stand Up Real High. Because you can't run; you can't hide. The men cried unto the LORD, and said, We beg of you, O LORD, please don't let us perish for this man's life, please don't lay upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased you. So they took Jonah up, and tossed him overboard into the sea. I want you know that the sea calmed down. Hallelujah, the sea ceased from raging. When this happened, the men feared the LORD exceedingly more than they did before and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. Many feel that making vows is not necessary, however it is scriptural.

Please remember Jonah's prayer, while in the bellow of the great fish. (Jonah 2:1-9) Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. Don't miss this. God prepared a great fish especially for Jonah. In the New Testament, Jesus shares with us that it was a whale, and I want you to know that Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Inside of that great fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God, right there in the midst of the fish's belly, and said "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou (the Lord) heard my voice. Have you ever been there? Right in the midst of affliction, yet you prayed, and the Lord heard you. (Hallelujah to the Lamb of God.) Jonah said "God has cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. But I said something. "I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD. And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

My brother and sisters in Jonah 2:9, Jonah stops running from God. Jonah realized that there were some vows that he made and hadn't paid. Now is where we can stop looking at Jonah for a moment, because there isn't one of us that hadn't told the lord at one time of another. "Lord if you get me out of this situation, you won't have to worry about me anymore." Many have said Lord if you heal my body, then I'll go to church. Many have said, "Lord if you put food on the table, I'll tell others about your love. Many have said, "Lord if you bless me with a husband or wife, then I'll serve you." Many have found themselves during great trouble, they prayed "Lord if you'll just let me get me out of this situation then I'll walk with you and talk with you." Somebody out to say Hallelujah. Well, the Lord delivers

you out of the snare of the fowler. The Lord blesses you in good health and in good strength. The lord attends to the voice of your prayer and blesses you with the desires of your heart. He gets you out of that situation, He heals your body, He puts food on your table, He blesses you with that special person, He gets you out of trouble, He gets you out of that situation... then what happens... many will simply go right back into that same condition. I came to share with you today, that "You Can't Run, You Can't Hide." There's no need to even try. It's time to do what Jonah did. Repent and come back to the Lord. Jonah paid his vows... the vows that you made to the Lord will allow service to take place with a clear conscience. If you mad a vow to come to service; come to service. If you made a vow to encourage; encourage. If you made a vow to practice sound stewardship, practice sound stewardship. Stop running from God and repent. In Matthew 4:17, Jesus said "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

In closing, realizing that the storm was all his fault, Jonah told the sailors to toss him overboard, So, that's exactly what they did. God allowed the Wind to Blow, the Thunder to Roll, the Lightening to Flash, and Tide to Stand Up Real High. As Jonah began to sink, he cried out to God. Out of nowhere, he was swallowed by a great fish and spent the next three days reevaluating his life inside the belly of that fish. Have you ever been there? You can't run; you can't hide. So, Jonah decided to stop running from God. **He repented. When he repented and decided to do what the lord called him to do, the fish spit him out on a beach, and Jonah, with his second chance from God, immediately headed toward Nineveh, where the entire city responded to God's message to repent. Good God Almighty. Everyone was convicted of their sin and begged God for mercy.** My brothers and sisters, God's love and mercy spared the city. Salvation is available to you today in the message of the Cross. Jesus Christ is available to you. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15) No matter how far one runs from God, when they reach a point of humbly confessing our sins and turn towards God, there is always redemption. Jesus said, "I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). Why do they rejoice? Not because they're surprised, but because a great victory has been won. Hallelujah, Amen.