

## JONAH

I went to bed last night watching a vision of the life of Jonah. I have never felt too kindly towards poor old Jonah. I have always considered his choices, well, rather despicable. But last night the Lord asked me if I thought perhaps I should apologize to Jonah for my unkind thoughts and words. Before I could answer, because I might have said “no”, He compared Jonah's life with my own life through the past year. Again (does this ever end?), I was convicted and apologized.

Last month was a wake-up call for me. First the doctor gave me a less than encouraging prognosis...I knew it was God telling me that I needed to change my lifestyle, and quickly. Then two prophets (whom I love and respect) called to say that I was on dangerous ground and that I needed to make some changes in my life immediately. Then, my friend and I went to church to hear a prophet speak. I had never seen or heard of this man before, but interestingly, he expounded on God's mandate for His people – which called for a change in our lifestyle. They were all saying the same thing. Confirmation after confirmation. Just to make sure I really heard it, I received several emails sharing that God had said these very things to several others.

I am getting the hint. Yes, I am one of those who needs a hammer upside the head to get it, but eventually I catch on.

Jonah was a prophet of God who received a visitation calling him out to be a prophet during the reign of King Jeroboam. The next morning he decided to rededicate himself to the Lord, vowing total obedience and willingness to go wherever God asked, do whatever God directed, and say whatever God required. It was a very noble gesture. And he performed admirably, going from place to place and delivering great words of doom and gloom. The people repented. God forgave them. Yet Jonah's prophecies came to nought.

Time and again this happened. Eventually Jonah became discouraged.

He had performed well during his years of service...so well in fact that he was mentioned in the book of Kings as a prophet of God. But when God asked him to go to Nineveh, he ran the other way as fast as he could. It was more than he could bear. Jonah 4 explains his reasoning.

It was not because he didn't want to go into a pagan land, but his expectation had become tainted. He would go, give his message of doom and gloom, the people would repent and God would forgive them. He had been through it before so many times.

I did exactly the same thing last year. The Lord came to me and said, “I want to show you New Jerusalem,” and I knew that it would mean that I would be in vision 24/7. It frightened me because I was fearful of losing the little grasp on “normal” life that I had managed to attain. It was more than I could bear. I ran from the presence of God as fast as I could.

Hearing the news of my health and the words from the prophets was my time in the belly of the fish. I called out to God and rededicated myself to the Lord, fully and completely. I would pay what I owed, just as Jonah decided. I turned off my TV and have not turned it on for a month. I am outside walking now, for the first time in 55 years. I have cut down my intake of food (alright, not my choice, my

stomach was swollen after surgery). I decided to spend more time with God and get into His word. I was a new person – fresh and dedicated. Hallelujah!

It lasted about 2 weeks.

The prophet who spoke at church was very specific on the 5 mandates of God for His people in this hour.

1. Get out of debt.
2. Get rid of busyness.
3. Get rid of everything that does not have kingdom value.
4. Get into the Word.
5. Talk intimately with God.

My sights were clear. I had a determination. I did all the things listed above (still working on getting out of debt). But there were no fireworks. The world didn't shake. The angels didn't come and sing glorious songs over my rededication. In fact, very little changed, if anything, and I found my resolve slipping. I was losing hold of the momentum that had taken off like a race horse out of the gate down the first part of this new course I was on.

What happened?

How did it all slip away leaving me again just as I was? I was hoping to be holier than Jonah, but alas, I found myself surrounded by whale sputum and a ton of fish who were also confused about how they ended up there.

The zealous high of dedication did not prepare me for the onslaught of attack that followed. Life crashed in on me. It began to rain (big surprise in the Pacific Northwest ) which washed away my resolve to walk and listen to the Bible. My cat threw up for 3 days and had to be taken for emergency vet care. No matter what I put in my stomach made me ill – even water. And finally, the visions I had when I was 4 years old returned, planting themselves on me once again for 3 days, 24/7. And these visions were not from God.

It was a difficult time to say the least. However, while under it, I realized (alright, my friend told me this) that I had to make a decision. It was not good enough to make a decision because one simply had to. In the face of death, to make a decision for God is very simple, non-committal. I needed to make my decision from a place of comfort, not panic. Enjoying what I used to enjoy, doing what I used to do, and then make my decision to leave it all behind and walk with God. Herein lies the difference between dedication and easy words.

To choose God not because we have to, but because we want to...it makes all the difference. It takes away the specialness of ourselves and puts it where it belongs...He is special and we love Him because He is special.

I came across a very bad dissertation about Jonah, but in this document was a very clever line. "The primary difficulty with believing yourself to be God's specially chosen people is that everyone else becomes God's specially unchosen."

Mankind is searching for the reason why we were put on this earth. The more we go through, the more trials we survive, seems to equate to the specialness of our calling. We all need to feel special, that our life counts. But in our striving to be special we miss the specialness of our creation. We were not created to do something. This attitude of gaining 1 million souls for the kingdom of God or feeding the poor or being a missionary in some foreign land...all these things miss the mark.

I am no different. I need my strokes just as much as the next person. I miss the mark just as much as anyone. I forget that the reason I was created was to have a relationship with the Lord, to love Him. Nothing I can do means anything except that I love Him...but what is more, that I let Him love me.

This is where I fall down. I can love Him, but I have difficulty letting Him love me. I know He so wants to. But like Jonah, I want God to do it my way. I want Him to go against His nature and come down to my level, to see through my eyes, to do it my way. Like Jonah, who built huts outside the cities to watch them crumble, I too, have built many a hut outside a crumbling life to see if God was going to destroy it or not. But He always forgave when I would not. He always showed mercy when I fell short.

“I am my beloved's and His thoughts are towards me always.”

Oh that I could get the reality of that into my spirit. Oh that my lips would whisper this simple yet awesome truth every minute of every day. Oh that it would sink into my head, into my heart once and for all.

He would heal me...if I knew how to let Him. He would do a deep inner healing...if I knew how to let Him. He would raise me up to be the Bride I was designed to be...if I knew how to let Him.

These things cannot be on my terms. They are gifts from Him and I must receive them from His heart on His terms. How do I do that? I only know the things I have been taught in this life. How do I suddenly step outside of those things to learn heavenly things from the throne of God? It is something we all battle with every day. As soon as we reach a level of knowing how much God loves us, He immediately wants to take it to a new level. It is a constant stretching of our comfort zone. A constant stretching towards the goal.

Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, hear my heart's cry! I am blinded by my past. I am deafened by the cries of my own heart. I stumble and fall trying to find the way out of this box into your kingdom. Where is the door? Who has taken the key, locking me out? Lord, open the doorway to Your throne. Let me crumple on the bottom step of Your throne and weep, for great is the burden of life covering my heart. I have looked for You but I have not found You. You have stayed just out of reach. I cannot see Your face. I cannot hear Your voice. I long to be held in Your arms, but I cannot find them. I have only what I think is Your presence.

How can this be? You stand at the lattice of my soul and stare in on me, hoping I would look Your way...but I am too tired and busied with getting ready for bed...for tomorrow is another day of working in my brothers' vineyards. Oh that I would hear the sweet whispers of Your love song wooing my spirit away from my fruitless labors into Your waiting arms. Shhhh. Be still my mind and listen. Hold the breath, my body, and listen. Can you hear His whispers? It is a soft song of love. It is barely audible yet my spirit jumps with excitement. But where is it coming from?

I will quiet my spirit. Be still my soul. Take heed my body. I command you to be still and listen. We will follow the whispers on the wind. Listen attentively for the wind would hide and mask their words...but they are there like the balm of Gilead to soothe my broken spirit. The words of love are there to free me from the prison of my labors. They call me to run after Him and let Him kiss me and hold me...His embraces are sweeter than anything this life has to offer. Hold me. Comfort me. Soothe me, my Lord.

Give to me a revelation of Your love and Your desire towards me. Let me know, deep within my heart, the earth-shaking, life-altering, throne-room-experience of Your love and Your desire towards me. Let it be real. Reach out and touch me like You have never touched me before. You are special to me...but my love for You is chained and bound by the shackles of my own reality and past. Break off those shackles. Free my spirit and my love for You. Let it soar beyond the heavens. Let it caress Your face and feel Your heartbeat. Let it become more real to me than breath itself. Free me to love You. To fulfill my purpose. Let that be my testimony and my work...unabandoned love for the Creator of all life.

In Jesus' name, amen.

God bless you all and I pray that the Lord anoint you abundantly with the revelation of His love.

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