

The Ill Effects of The Wrong Way

*“Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”
(Jonah 1:3a)*

Tarshish is on the coast of Southwest Spain. Joppa was 35 miles northwest of Jerusalem, a seaport for Israel. Nineveh was 800 miles east of Israel. Deliberately, he went the opposite direction. The people of Nineveh were a sadistic cruel tribe that tortured their foes terribly in skinning the victim alive. But he failed to see the great tender mercies of God. (Ps 51:1)

The fruit of disobedience is costly, described by the phrase “he went down” twice. Your future will always go downhill; nothing seems to prosper. Temporarily, he lost the tangible reality of God’s presence. *“But Jonah had gone down into the lowest points of the ship.” (v5b)*. The ship is symbolic of his life. Indeed, his life goes downhill! He lost the blessings of elevation and honour in life.

The Lord Himself orchestrated the storm. Hence, the storms are sometimes a blessing in disguise to act as a deterrent to block our imperfect advancement. Storm in this context was an indicator that he was in disfavor with Jehovah. Nothing seemed to work for him. In fact, everything turned upside down. The situation only grew much worse (v13). This divine shaking and dealing were to awaken him out of his error and foolishness.

Fortunately, Jonah did not cover up his sin. He did not find a scapegoat to blame for his misfortune. He knew the source of trouble was him (v12). When the root of the problem was eradicated, the problem or stormy sea turned into calm. Repentance qualifies you for mercy (Prov 28:13).

Do you not see that the greater evil was not the devil but Jonah himself? When he acknowledged his fault then he prayed effectively in the next chapter. Without repentance, an effort of prayer will come to naught.

The irony of Jonah 2:10 is that the lower creation, the fish obeyed God without hesitation. But the highest creation, man often disobeyed God thinking they know better than the Lord. The significant fact was not what God did to the inside belly of the fish. But what God did inside the heart of Jonah. He was humbled under the disciplined hand of the Lord.

He did not know that he was in the wrong way. He did not realize he was in danger of hell’s fire (‘sheol’ v2) (Prov 14:12). He tasted the fruit of confusion, fear, and darkness for a season of 3 days. He was barely saved at the nick of time. The death angel could have strike him if he did not repent of his wickedness. In the 1970’s, a prophet’s son sold a property that wholly belong to the Lord out of financial distress. In two days’ time, he died suddenly. The price for disobedience is too costly. (Lev 10:1-2). He forsook the wrong way. His final obedience saved the entire heathen city. Those lost soul turned to the Lord. Jonah had rewards in heaven over the salvation of those souls. Obedience is a rewarding matter.