

February 2025

Dear Friend in Christ,

Blessed Lunar New Year.

For this month of February 2025 let's take a closer look on the story of the prophet Jonah in the Old Testament as we could see in our lives the same potential to be like Jonah to grab our shoes and just start running from God so we can do our own thing. Why Jonah? It is because he is not special in type of person - in many ways, he is just like you and me.

In the book the story begins with an invitation in chpt 1 verses 1-2 *"The word of the Lord came to Jonah - Go to the great city of Nineveh preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."* And that's what we read when Jonah hears the Lord he runs/takes off. Here we take note: we see that Jonah knew God and God knew him. They had a relationship, and they were obviously familiar with each other. God speaks to him. God gives him instructions. God gives him an assignment to be exact. He knows exactly what it is that he supposed to do. But immediately after hearing God's voice, he ran off. Why? Because he had a different expectation. Pause. Are we like him? We spent hours praying and asking God to please speak to us. We want to know what our purpose is, we want to know to know what we were supposed to do, we want to know our destiny etc. And like Jonah we get just like what he gets- God speaks to us, God gives us instructions. God gives us an assignment. We know exactly what it is that we're supposed to do. But immediately after hearing God's voice, we go off a different direction. Like Jonah we are willing to hear God, but like him - Are we willing to do God's will to be used by Him?

Like Jonah probably we had our own idea of where we wanted to go, what we wanted to do, and to whom we wanted to speak. God's plans did not fall in line with Jonah and ours had asked through our prayer requests.

In the story, we see God goes off- script in Jonah's eyes. God has not done what Jonah was expecting and Jonah not happy with what he's facing. Verse 3 says that *Jonah ran away from the Lord headed for Tarshish*. But he is not heading to Tarshish. His ultimate destination is simply away from the Lord simply away from God's presence. But Jonah soon discover that he's running to a place does not exist. Perhaps a lesson to note is if you are running from God's purpose, God's plan, God's view, God's reign, we are running nowhere, to a place that does not exist. It's a futile retreat. There is no place to run where He isn't there. In Ps 139:8, David said *"If I go up to the heavens, you are there, if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.....King David is talking about how we cannot escape God*. Another lesson we can learn is when God so- called goes off script when He doesn't listen to what we wanted, we can give up. We can quit just like Jonah as he tries to end it all as he goes into the sea n in that moment he gives up on God but God doesn't give up on him. The text says the Lord provides a fish to swallow Jonah saved him from a watery grave. He spends three days three nights in the belly of this fish. From the belly of the fish, Jonah begins praying to the Lord to save him from this situation. We cannot outrun the reign of God. So why, try?

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When God was ready to release Jonah, the fish miraculously dropped him off right where he needed to get to board a ship to Nineveh to fulfill the assignment God had given him. He ended up where he needed to be. Now, this really tells us something about God and how He doesn't give up on us. In chpt 3v2 Jonah obeys the word of the Lord. He goes and he preaches this word the Lord has given him.

In conclusion, the takeaway from the story of Jonah shows us that more than anything, even when we run away from God, even when we don't follow Him so we can do our own thing, God will still use us. He doesn't give up on us. He will give us second chances God will still uses runners. So if we try to be a runner, know that God is still after us. Know that no matter how far we go, He is right there, ready to redeem us. Be reminded again of God's goodness, faithfulness and sovereignty.

Concluding prayer: 1 Peter 4:10-11.