

Jonah Running Away From God

Jonah chapter 1

By: Tom Moore

(continued from last week)

The sailors decided to cast lots to determine who was the cause of this great storm, for there was yet no sign of it easing up. The lots fell on upon Jonah. Seeing the lot had fallen on Jonah, the men whose lives were endangered by the storm wanted a confession from Jonah as to why all of this had befallen them. Without hesitation Jonah confesses that he was a Hebrew and that he served God, the creator of all, and it was Jehovah that brought the storm. The sailors were amazed that Jonah would run from such a powerful God as this. Should we not all be amazed at the stupidity of those who try to hide from the Almighty? After many of Jesus' followers had left Him for His "hard sayings," Jesus said unto the twelve, "Would ye also go away?" (Jn. 6:67). Peter responded, as should we, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God" (Jn. 6:68-69). Though one could criticize Jonah for fleeing from a divinely given task, he could not help but admire him for his honesty, the boldness, and the courage of his confession. The greatest step on the journey home is the first step.

It is vitally important for us to realize that when one runs away from God, there will be consequences. For self-preservation the sailors are forced into throwing Jonah overboard (Jonah 1:11-16). The sailors seem to be impressed by Jonah's courageous declaration and were willing to exert any effort at their disposal to save him.

They want to know what they should do. Their own lives were in danger, and the sea grew more and more tempestuous. Here is a valuable lesson to be learned: Truly no man lives unto himself. Our response to God, whatever it is, will affect others. "For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself" (Rom. 14:7). Some will say, I'm hurting no one but myself – but they are wrong.

Again, Jonah's courage is here clearly manifested. Realizing that his conduct was responsible for the endangering of their lives and that only by the sacrifice of himself should they be saved, he urged them to take him up and throw him overboard. Here Jonah begins to see the need for his own repentance, and he is now willing to turn himself over to the Almighty. He was willing to sacrifice himself for the good of others, even pagan sailors. Thus, Jonah stands as a type of Jesus, who was willing, as the one qualified individual, to sacrifice Himself to deliver sinful man from the stormy flood of God's wrath (Rom. 5:8-9), but unlike Jonah, Jesus did not bring the storm.

This courage and willingness on the part of Jonah to be cast overboard encouraged the sailors even more to try to save the prophet by rowing to land. But it was a losing battle; the sea grew more turbulent. It looked as though God was demanding that Jonah be thrown into the sea. Is it not ironic that these Gentiles were trying to save this Hebrew, who had refused to try to save an entire Gentile City? With a cry unto Jehovah that the blood of Jonah be not on their hands, they took him and cast him into the sea and the sea stopped raging.

Awe-stricken by what had just taken place, the sailors offered sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows. We are not told what these vows were, nor are we told if they became worshippers of the one true God. We do, though, see the power of God in action.