

The Relentless God

Jonah, Part II

Jonah 1:4-17

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An Outline of Jonah

1:1-3	<i>Jonah Disobeys God</i>
1:4-17	<i>God Pursues Jonah</i>
2:1-10	<i>Jonah Turns to God</i>
3:1-4	<i>Jonah Obeyes God</i>
3:5-10	<i>God Delivers Nineveh</i>
4:1-11	<i>Jonah Complains Against God</i>

The Hound of Heaven (Opening Stanza) By Francis Thompson (1890)

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.'

I. The Hound of Heaven

II. God Pursues Jonah

God relentlessly pursues those who are His own; He turns all things against those who flee from Him in order to bring them to repentance. So Psalm 119 declares:

⁶⁷*Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word... ⁷¹It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.*

- A. God works through the wind (4)
- B. God works through unbelievers (5-6)
- C. God works through the casting of lots (7-8; Pr 16:33)
- D. God works through disobedient prophets (9-16)
- E. God works through a great fish (17)

III. Our Relentless God

God relentlessly pursues those who are His own. He controls all things and governs them to accomplish His purposes – even using afflictions to awaken His children from their sin.

- A. The Sovereign Lord (cf. Ps 33:10-11; 135:5-6; Dan 4:34-35)

God is the sovereign Lord. He is not wringing His hands in heaven wondering why people won't do what He has commanded. He orders _____ things to accomplish His purposes, even the wicked for the day of judgment (Pr 16:4). Psalm 33 declares:

¹⁰*The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. ¹¹The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations.*

Likewise, Psalm 135 recounts:

⁵*For I know that the LORD is great, And our Lord is above all gods. ⁶Whatever the LORD pleases He does, In heaven and in earth, In the seas and in all deep places.*

God is the Sovereign Lord. As Nebuchadnezzar confessed (Dan 4:34-35):

³⁴*... For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. ³⁵All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"*

B. Yahweh, the God who seeks and saves the lost (Lk 15:1-10)

God relentlessly pursues His people in order to extend His mercy to them. So the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was _____. Unlike Jonah, Jesus had compassion on the multitudes (Mk 6:34). He did not sit aloof but stooped down to save us.

¹Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to [Jesus] to hear Him. ²And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." ³So He spoke this parable to them, saying: ⁴"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' ⁷I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. ⁸"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' ¹⁰Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Lk 15:1-10)

This is the God we serve, the God who delights to show compassion to sinners and who relentlessly pursues His own to bring them to faith. As John Stott once wrote:

"[My faith is] due to Jesus Christ himself, who pursued me relentlessly even when I was running away from him in order to go my own way. And if it were not for the gracious pursuit of the hound of heaven I would today be on the scrap-heap of wasted and discarded lives."

Do you believe that? Then, first, do you regularly give thanks and praise to God for His mercy (Ps 107)? Second, do you have the same heart of compassion as your Lord?

C. The purpose of afflictions for those fleeing from God

God often uses _____ to bring us to the end of our own resources so that we will cry out to God for salvation. The purpose of afflictions for those fleeing from God is very often to draw them to faith. Remember the words of Psalm 119:

⁶⁷Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word... ⁷¹It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

So in Jonah's case, God brings a storm on the sea and brings the ship captain into Jonah's bunk, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on the name of your God!" (6) But Jonah remains hardened in his sin; he refuses to give heed. So God governs the lots to expose Jonah's guilt and shame before these sailors. But Jonah remains hardened in his sin; he suggests the sailors cast him into the sea. The sailors refuse and try to row back to shore, but God causes the storm to rage all the more; so the sailors cast Jonah into the sea where Jonah no doubt thought he would be free from God's presence. Jonah remains hardened in his sin. So God prepares a great fish to swallow Jonah and Jonah was *three days and three nights in the belly of the fish*. And there he finally turned back to God. God sends affliction after affliction until finally Jonah is broken and repents. Why? Because God relentlessly pursues His own. He is a God of mercy and compassion.

IV. Conclusion