



*... So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging...*

#### *Part Four – Man Overboard*

*11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. 12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. 13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. 14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. 15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. 17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. (Jonah 1:11-17)*

Jonah was a man very much like each one of us – he was selfish of the riches of God and did not desire to share them. Knowing God to be a forgiving and merciful God, Jonah knew instinctively that God would show mercy to the Ninevites after they repented. That meant that these ‘foreigners’ would also be admitted to the Kingdom of God. This, Jonah did not want – he wanted that Kingdom reserved for himself and those of like tribe.

We have observed how Jonah intended to flee from the Presence of God by going DOWN to Joppa, and DOWN into the ship, and DOWN into the sides of the ship to sleep. In frustration, the master of the ship asks Jonah to awaken and help the crew to keep the ship afloat. Of course, Jonah could not keep the ship afloat. Jonah was the cause of the great danger that faced the ship and all of its occupants. Having drawn lots, it was determined that Jonah was the culprit. Learning that he was a Hebrew, they asked to him to pray to his God for salvation of all. Unbelievers will not fail to count on the believer when the axe is laid to the root. Now, Jonah, it would seem to me, faces a grave dilemma: 1) to answer deceitfully to momentarily save his own hide; or 2) to confess to these men what must be done. He knows God very well. Now, as a result of

the storm, Jonah knows God even more, and he knows that God will settle for nothing less than Jonah taking a good bath - he needs it for his soul is soiled with a rebellious spirit. At least Jonah has the decency to speak the truth, after all, he is a prophet of God and cannot intentionally lie even if he is prone to avoid the Word of the Lord. Jonah supposes this to be his last act of decency and fidelity, for he is sure that, sooner or later, he is going into the sea.

11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. The seaman inquire of Jonah of what remedy must they take to suffice in satisfaction of Jonah's God. They know not this God, but the tempest has given them a healthy respect for Him. They would like to save ALL aboard, but must do whatever is required to soothe the deep. These men are a better caliber than the normal They could wildly disregard any concern for Jonah and simply dispense with him summarily, but they do not.

12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. The response of Jonah is honorable and commendable. Here, again, is Christ typified by the self-abnegation of Jonah is giving up his own life to save others. Jonah is now more aware of his role as a prophet than ever before. He knows that this storm is of the Lord. He knows that the Lord will not be evaded. The Lord is more powerfully on the Sea than He was on the Land!

Jonah showed no compassion at all on the pagan folk of Nineveh, but see how the pagan sailors employ all of their strength to save Jonah. 13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. These men did not want the blood of another on their hands. They were willing to fight as best they could the boiling tempest and inordinate winds to save all aboard, including Jonah. But there is no strength that can avail against the Hand of the Lord. Our great strength is only childish weakness before God. *There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.* (Prov 21:30) There is no wisdom against the Lord because there is no wisdom that does not come from the Lord. We may be called to teach, to preach, or to visit the sick; but if we do so on our own merits, we are failures. All must be done in the perfect will of God and in following that Light He gives us.

14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. I am made to wonder at Jonah's reticence, in the face of God's wrath, to repent of his actions and to pray. These rough, weather-worn seaman, who are graced with only a glimpse of the greatness of God, are in desperate prayer, but Jonah remains sullied and silent! They know that God's prophet has spoken, and it is the storm sent from God that must be satisfied. They do not desire to be guilty of the blood of the very man responsible for their travail. Nevertheless, they recognize the inevitable. The same was the case of Christ. One must perish for the good of all. *Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.* (John 11:50)

15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Jonah is going to go down once more, but not down to Joppa, but into the Sea. Immediately, the sea was calm once it had its grip on Jonah. The Sea, the waves, the wind, and even the crewman, were all servants of God to accomplish His will in this matter. This is not such a pleasant situation for Jonah. He may have slept on the ship, but it is doubtful that he slept in the sea. Even as he was cast off the ship, he still has uttered not a word of remorse so stubborn and stiff-necked is he. Some in the Church,

and even in the Pulpit, are likewise stubborn and stiff-necked to do all things according to their own way and not the way of the Lord.

So what was the response of the seaman when they witnessed the fulfillment of Jonah's prophecy concerning the calming of the sea? They had, up until now, feared the tempest, but now their fear is directed to the Lord of the Tempest. **16 Then the men feared the LORD.** If you will remember, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. These men have obeyed God far more than has Jonah. So the prophet has achieved a part of his mission in awaken a forlorn bunch of sailors to the reality and power of God. ***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.*** (Psalms 111:10) These men now have a seed of faith, and if watered nearly as well as Jonah has been watered, the seed will surely grow. Jonah, in the peril of the sea, may have uttered the words of the Psalmist: ***Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.*** (Psalms 69:1-2)

**17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.** I do not wonder at the kind of fish, for Christ has told us that it was a whale. In spite of all arguments to the contrary, there are cases in which men have been swallowed by a whale. But even if there were not, this particularly whale was prepared by God for the purpose. Do we truly believe that the maker of the heaven, the earth, the mountains, the sea, and even the whales could not have created a whale that would not typify those that we know today? This verse is one of the most profound of the Old Testament because it is made reference to by Christ on more than one occasion. **And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.** This is so powerfully symbolic of Christ who was in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. You may be one of those charismatic's who look about and believe the heart of man is getting better and better. It is not. Jesus asks, ***When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?*** (see Luke 18:8) Does this sound like the true Church is going to achieve dominance in the world? No, but God shall always preserve a remnant unto Himself. Jesus calls that generation (which is more than a generation in the chronological sense) a wicked and adulterous generation. That generation has grown in size even until this day.

Jesus used the ordeal of Jonah as an example of his own ordeal. Jonah was cast into the sea at his own behest. Jesus was nailed to the cross at his own volition. ***An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*** (Matt 12:39-41) Can you see that the men of Nineveh, even, were not as wicked as those who confronted Christ and whose numbers are increasing in our time. Those numbers are accelerating toward the end just as the Mustard Tree grew beyond its natural size - so much so that the fowl of the air came to roost in its proud branches. Those fowl are reproducing much faster than the fruit of the Mustard Tree. Evil is afoot, not only in society and politics, but in the church as well. Can you imagine the suffering, anxiety, and trauma Jonah experienced in the belly of the whale? Do you not think he now has a coming to terms with his failure to obey God? His experiences are horrific, and we shall address them more fully in next devotion beginning the 2nd chapter.