

Cherished-Chosen-Challenged – March 7, 2010

Runaway!

“But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.” – Jonah 1:3

God placed a challenge in front of His servant Jonah. He was to go to the great city of Ninevah and call the people to repent of their great wickedness before the LORD. It was a great and terrifying task. Jonah was afraid. Jonah ran away! Jonah actually thought that he could hide from God. He thought that he could ignore the Word of the LORD. One might want to ask Jonah, “ So how did that work out for you?”

You are familiar with the rest of the story. Jonah did wind up in Ninevah to preach repentance just as God had commanded, but he had to go through some soul searching first under the disciplining hand of God. He took a ship on his runaway trip...harmless enough...until they were plagued by a great storm. Although they didn't want to do it the hands of the ship did toss Jonah overboard when they found out he was running away from God, for they were convinced, and rightly so, that the great storm was a sign of God's displeasure.

Surely, Jonah would have died in the angry sea if the LORD had not prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. Three days and three nights Jonah had in the belly of that great fish to ponder and pray....to repent of his disobedience and to trust in the mercy of the LORD. The Bible said God spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah onto the shore. What a smelly mess he must have been! Yet the Word of the LORD remained....the challenge before Jonah....go preach to Ninevah the great city and call it to repentance!

Jesus tells us in the Gospel that repentance is to be preached to the whole world in His name. It is a daunting and fearful task for us poor sinful beings. Some who have risen to the call and challenge of the LORD have done so at great cost. Just look at the apostles: beatings, persecution,

imprisonment, even death....all because they dared to preach repentance to the world in the name of Jesus.

Friends...we are called to the same challenge! Preach repentance to a world dead in trespasses and sins. We are to confront the evil which the world, the devil and our sinful flesh so dearly love and call men to throw themselves on the mercy of a loving God. What will be said of us as we confront such a challenge? How often do we pattern our lives after the response of Jonah? More often than not we must confess that we are guilty of being runaways! Does the Word of the LORD weigh heavy on your conscience?

Look what great things God did with Jonah. Through his preaching of repentance many people came to know the love and mercy of God. They turned from their ways and received the grace of God's love won for us by Christ's holy life, innocent suffering and death, and glorious resurrection. After all, isn't that the real aim of preaching repentance?...not that the sinner would be lost, but that he would come to Jesus and live. Will you rise to the challenge? God is calling each of us to stand for the truth and proclaim His love to others .

- ❖ Remember: God works through the power of His Word. Our challenge is to proclaim it.

- ❖ Remember: A continued study of the Word will help us to be prepared for the challenge. Make it a point to come to Church, Sunday School, and Bible Class to grow in your knowledge of God's holy will.

How blessed we are to be the people of God. He has chosen us to be in this place. He has prepared us for this time. **Don't wait for someone else to do it. If you wait on someone else to do it...it will never get done!** God bless you in the growth of your faith and in service to Him and His people, for your labor in the Lord is never in vain.

Pastor Jacobs

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