



On The Run

But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

Jonah 1:3a

I read the first chapter of Jonah this morning and in my meditating and allowing the word to soak through and permeate my thoughts, I thought to myself, "who do you think you are to run from God?" It struck me that God told Jonah to go do this thing, *but* Jonah ran away. God told Jonah to "Arise, go to Ninevah." Jonah arose alright, but headed out for Tarshish, some 2200 to 2500 miles away! He was pretty serious about his "I won't."

I had the thought in my heart that he was pretty foolish to try to run from God. What kind of stubborn, prideful, arrogant man was he that he would think his way was better than God's way? But then, as happens quite often, the Holy Spirit turned the mirror to face me, and I had to admit that I am no better than he. I have run from God. I have run from what I knew to be right, I have closed my ears to the call of God, I have told Him by my actions that what He wants is impossible and unreasonable.

Jonah's disobedience caused great havoc in his life and the lives of others, those fellow shipmates on the boat to Tarshish. God "hurled a great wind on the sea" and caused a massive storm to shake the boat to the point that it threatened to break apart. Jonah could have repented at that moment, and I believe God would have stilled the storm. But instead, he stood firm in his rebellion. Oh, he acknowledged who God is, that he feared "the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land," but admitted that he was running from His presence. He *knew* what he was doing!

But he was still running. He still refused to give in to what God wanted him to do. First he said he'd rather go as far away as he could get than go to Ninevah; then he more or less said he'd rather die than go to Ninevah. It took Jonah marinating for three days in the stomach acid of a great fish before he saw the truth about himself. Before he relented and asked for forgiveness, before he was willing to do what God tasked him with.

It took 11 long years for me to get to that point. And, like Jonah, it was the misery of my circumstances that brought me to my knees. I could have avoided any number of horrors had I obeyed at the beginning. There still would have been hard things, but I would have had the grace and strength of God Almighty to carry me through. I ended up where God wanted me, but how much time and effort and discomfort and trouble I lived through with my running! If you are on the run, my friend, consider this a warning call: Jonah couldn't avoid what God tasked him with, and neither could I. All either of us did was cause ourselves more misery and heartache. Change directions, and run toward God with all you have.

Father, we thank You that You are the God of second, third, and fiftieth chances. We thank You that Your patience is unwavering and Your love unending. Help us to identify where we are running and stop, turn towards You, and sprint with all our strength.