



## Jonah: A Study in Responsibility

*John 15:2 -- Every branch...that does not bear fruit,... He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.*

### Introduction

1. We must encourage our concern to share the truth with others. One of the tests of discipleship is that we bear fruit (John 15:1-8). Jonah is an example and his book is a lesson to teach us responsibility in sharing God's Word. We may be more likely to bear much fruit if we study this prophet and understand just why he was running away from the work God had planned for him to do.
2. To understand Jonah, we must understand that he was a Jew (2 Kings 14:25) of Gath-hepher (Galilee), sent to preach and save from destruction Nineveh, a city of Gentiles. God was sending him to save his enemies.

### A. We Cannot Escape God (Jonah 1-2)

1. In chapter one, verse one, God tells Jonah to go preach to Nineveh.
2. In the next two verses we are told that instead of obeying God, he runs away.
3. Through the rest of the chapter we are privy to God's efforts to bring Jonah back and get him started in the right direction. (1:4 - 2:10).
  - a. God prepared and sent a great storm after Jonah (1:4).
  - b. God prepared and sent a great fish after Jonah (1:17).
  - c. God had the fish vomit up Jonah back on land (2:10).
  - d. God brought Jonah back to where he started (1:4 - 2:10).
4. Through all this, God's lesson for us is:
  - a. God has given us work to do.
  - b. We need to ask ourselves: "Are we running away from God's work, like Jonah did?" Or are we trying our best to please God and do what He asks?
    1. Think of the Christians today who run to the lake, to TV, or to work.
    2. Think of the people today who run to their own problems.
    3. People are not really running to anything; they are really just running away from the responsibility that God has given them.
  - c. We need to remember that no matter how far or fast we try to run away, we are never out of God's reach or knowledge. The Lord sees and knows. Just as He told the seven churches of Asia: "I know your works" (Revelation 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15)

### B. God's Work Must Be Done (Jonah 3:1-4)

1. Jonah repented of his actions (2:7-9).
2. God told Jonah to go preach to Nineveh again (3:1-3). Note that this is the same call as the first one.
3. The lesson to us is:
  - a. When we stop running, we need to start repenting.
  - b. If we ignore our work and then repent, we must go back to the work we have been neglecting or ignoring.
  - c. There are still people to see, the lost to win and weak to encourage.
  - d. We cannot wait for it to go away or others to do it for us. It will not go away and too many others are running away also. Note the gratitude and zeal and acceptance of responsibility of the demon-possessed man who was cured. (Mark 5:18-20)

### C. The Silent Hate Their Neighbors (Jonah 3:5 - 4:4)

1. Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah (3:7-9).
2. And Jonah became angry (4:1-4).
  - a. Jonah revealed his true feelings about the Ninevites.
  - b. Jonah was angry with God: "I knew you would repent" and not destroy these people.
  - c. Jonah did not want to preach to the Gentiles because he hated them.
3. The Lesson for us:
  - a. If we do not tell those around us of the good things of God then we are no better than Jonah, showing our contempt for them, even hatred. To be silent is to not love our neighbors.
  - b. We must show our love by bringing them the message of repentance.

### D. We Must Be Concerned For Souls (Jonah 4:5-11)

1. Jonah waited for Nineveh to be destroyed (4:5-11).
  - a. In his anger, Jonah told God he would rather die than see the people of Nineveh saved.
  - b. He went outside the city, built a booth and sat there waiting for God to destroy the city.
  - c. God had a plant grow and shade Jonah, then sent a worm to destroy the plant.
  - d. Jonah showed more concern for the plant than for Nineveh.
  - e. This is not an incomplete account. It is a complete lesson with an abrupt ending.
2. The Lessons for us:
  - a. Let us understand the emphasis of the book of Jonah. It tells us of our responsibility to the lost.
  - b. It tells us of our responsibility to God's will, of God's love for men and women, even strangers and aliens.
  - c. Jonah ran away from responsibility to people he did not like. When we recognize this, we are more likely to seek the lost.
  - d. We must share God's concern and love for lost souls.

### E. Conclusion

1. God prepared the storm to rock the boat Jonah was in (1:4), also the fish that swallowed Jonah (1:17), and the plant that gave Jonah shade (4:6), along with the worm that ate the plant (4:7), as well as the wind that blew upon Jonah (4:8).
2. Today, God has prepared the way for your salvation in Christ. The same God has prepared a work for Christians throughout life (Ephesians 2:10). Today's Ninevites are called to repentance as well. For the world's end is coming, not just the end of a city.