

JONAH: RUNAWAY PROPHET
ASLEEP IN THE STORM

Thursday, June 25

Reading: Jonah 1:3-6

Jonah 1:6 *The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe He will take notice of us so that we will not perish.*

Having rejected his call to go to Nineveh, attempting to flee from God's presence, Jonah pays for passage on a cargo ship heading for Tarshish. He immediately goes below deck and falls asleep. Could this be a sign that Jonah was so callous about his disobedience that sleep came quickly? Or could it be a result of a guilty conscience that made him sleep? Either way, the prophet does not seem concerned about his disobedience. He thinks he is done with God. But God is not done with Jonah!

Verse 4 literally reads, "The LORD hurled and great wind into the sea..." This was no ordinary storm. These were experienced sailors who had traveled this sea many times. They knew how to handle the storms that often arose. But this storm frightened them! It drove them to turn to their pagan idols for help. Throwing all the cargo overboard would lighten the ship and make it ride higher in the water so it would not break apart in the pounding waves.

In the midst of all this, the captain remembers the passenger they took on in Joppa. Where was he? Why was he not trying to help them survive the storm? The NIV translation reduces the force of the captain's rebuke to the sleepy-eyed prophet, which better reads: "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your God!" (ESV). Praying to the pagan gods did nothing. Yet Jonah knew the true God but does not pray! Compared to these heathen sailors, Jonah really looks bad!

Jonah's disobedience hurt a lot of people. It hurt the sailors who were terrified by this storm sent to get Jonah's attention. It hurt the people who were expecting the cargo the sailors were forced to throw overboard. Perhaps there was food or building material or medicine. Whatever it was, the people would not get it because of Jonah's sin. When we sin, we hurt more than just ourselves! It impacts those around us and often it can ripple out like the rings of a stone thrown into a pond. How has your sin hurt others in the past? What should we do to reconcile with others and with the Lord?

Jonah's disobedience made him out of touch with what was going on around him. While the sailors were frantic in their efforts to save the ship, Jonah was more concerned with sleeping away his troubles. While the sailors pray to their pagan gods, Jonah does not pray to the true God who is the only One who can help! The captain seems more open to asking for God's help than Jonah does. (Notice that Jonah never prays until he is in the fish's belly).

How can sin blind us to the needs and concerns of others?

How does living for yourself and your wants and desires effect the way you see the people around you?