

No Escape
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Jonah 1:15-2:10

"You can run but you can't hide." I was curious to know who first said that. In recent years it was the title of the autobiography of Dog the Bounty Hunter. The criminals could run but "Dog" would find them.

The original saying is attributed to Heavyweight boxing Champion Joe Louis. In 1946 Louis had a rematch with Billy Conn. In their first fight in 1941, Conn was lighter, faster and almost beat the champ because he was able to land punches then move away fast to avoid the heavy blows from Louis. *"Remembering how close Louis had come to losing his Championship to Conn in 1941, boxing writers asked Louis how he would contend with the fast and cunning Conn. The Champion is said to have replied: "He can run, but he can't hide." Joe Louis was correct. The second fight ended in the 8th round when the Champion knocked out Billy Conn for the second time."*ⁱ

Anyone use one of the phone tracking apps like "Find My Friends" or Life 360 with your kids or family? "Life360 Driver Protect is one of today's most popular teen driver tracking apps. In addition to driver reports that detail speeds, risky behavior, hard braking and acceleration, the app also has location sharing and a crash detection feature. With Life360 Driver Protect you'll be the first to know if your teen was involved in a fender bender." The "Mama Bear" App can detect texting and driving as well as speed and location.ⁱⁱ If the kids want the phone, they have to accept the fact that Mom and Dad are able to track their driving. They can run but they can't hide.

What does this have to do with today's study?

Today's text is the familiar story of Jonah and the big fish. We all know the basics of the context. God gave a divine calling to Jonah: ² *"Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are."* ³ *But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord*ⁱⁱⁱ Anyone know why Jonah ran? What was it about Nineveh that caused him to rebel against God's calling? Look at Jonah 4:2.

Jonah thought he had justifiable reasons to run from God's calling. He could run but he couldn't hide.

The point: Followers of Christ cannot escape the discipline of our loving Heavenly Father. When we want to go our own way instead of obeying His will, we can run but we can't hide. That may sound intimidating, but as we see with Jonah, it's for our own good and God's glory.

So, Jonah the rebellious prophet jumped on a ship to Tarshish. You know what happened. ⁴ *But the Lord hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart.* ⁵ *Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors shouted to their gods for help and threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. But all this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold.*^{iv}

The sailors eventually realized this terrible storm was connected to Jonah. Jonah fessed up that he was running from the God who controls heaven, earth, and sea. “How can we make it stop?” they asked. “Throw me overboard,” said Jonah. At first they tried rowing harder but when that failed they did as Jonah directed.

Jonah 1:15–2:10 (NLT) — 15 Then the sailors picked Jonah up and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once! **16** The sailors were awestruck by the Lord’s great power, and they offered him a sacrifice and vowed to serve him. **17** Now the Lord had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

- Verses 15 & 16: Jonah didn’t want to preach but how did what happened with the storm actually speak to the sailors about Jonah’s God?
- We don’t know if the sailors were converted, but God got their attention!
- Jonah on the other hand, still refused to repent.
- He chose drowning over obedience to God.
- Remember the children’s chorus, “*Dare to be a Daniel?*” “*Dare to be a Daniel! Dare to stand alone! Dare to have a purpose firm! Dare to make it known!*” We might say “Dare to be a Daniel, but don’t be a Jonah!”
- Let’s look at these verses and learn to avoid “being a Jonah.”
- Jonah’s rebellion is mentioned in Herman Melville’s classic, “Moby Dick.”
- In a chapter called “The Sermon,” the preacher “*Father Mapple*” calls Jonah’s sin, “*willful disobedience*” and observed, *if people want to obey God, they have to disobey themselves, which is very difficult.*”^{vi}
- That’s a keen observation of humans. We want our own way.
- In what ways are we often more like Jonah than like Daniel? Why would someone try to run from God? What reasons most often keep us from doing what we believe God wants us to do?
- Illustration: Dog hiding after doing something bad. Like Jonah, the dog knows he did wrong and thinks he can hide from his master. In both cases, you can run but you can’t hide.
- So rather than take Jonah to the “woodshed,” God put him inside a fish.
- People want to waste time arguing about whether this could be true.
- I have a very simple view, verse 17 says, “*the Lord had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah.*” If God can create the universe, He could custom design a fish to swallow Jonah. Don’t waste time in the debate!
- While Jonah was inside this fish he prayed to God. Look at his prayer:

2 He said, “I cried out to the Lord in my great trouble, and he answered me. I called to you from the land of the dead, and Lord, you heard me! **3** You threw me into the ocean depths, and I sank down to the heart of the sea. The mighty waters engulfed me; I was buried beneath your wild and stormy waves. **4** Then I said, ‘O Lord, you have driven me from your presence.

- Jonah’s prayer was in the past tense. Clearly he had journalled it later.
- “*You threw me into the ocean depths...*” to his credit Jonah acknowledged it was God’s hand and not the sailors that threw him into the sea.
- The first step to repenting is to acknowledge God’s sovereignty.
- Verse four: “*...you have driven me from your presence.*” Not true!
- Remember the saying, “*If you feel far from God, guess who moved?*”^{vii}

- In Psalm 139:7 David acknowledged, ⁷ *I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence!*^{viii}
- How does it make you feel to know that God is watching everything we do and hearing every thought we think? How does that thought help us?
- Psalm 139 concludes with these words: ²³ *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.* ²⁴ *Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.* ^{ix}
- It IS sobering to know God hears and sees us always in all circumstances but there is a comforting side to His constant presence. Look at verse four:

Yet I will look once more toward your holy Temple.’ **5** “I sank beneath the waves, and the waters closed over me. Seaweed wrapped itself around my head. **6** I sank down to the very roots of the mountains. I was imprisoned in the earth, whose gates lock shut forever. But you, O Lord my God, snatched me from the jaws of death!

- What a comfort to know God is with us in the most terrible circumstances!
- When we are running from God in disobedience, how is it like we have developed spiritual amnesia?
- If a child of God is running in rebellion to Him they try to put Him and His will out of their mind. That’s why our loving Father has to get our attention.
- Jonah had not come to full repentance about Nineveh but his situation caused him to remember and acknowledge God as his only hope.
- As we said last week, our sin problem starts when we get confused about Who God is and who we are. A little time inside a big fish with seaweed wrapped around his head caused Jonah to remember Who is who.

7 As my life was slipping away, I remembered the Lord. And my earnest prayer went out to you in your holy Temple. **8** Those who worship false gods turn their backs on all God’s mercies. **9** But I will offer sacrifices to you with songs of praise, and I will fulfill all my vows. For my salvation comes from the Lord alone.”

- When Jonah’s rebellion got him into trouble he couldn’t fix he remembered the Lord. None of us enjoys discipline from God, but sometimes it is the only way He can get our attention and cause us to turn back to Him.

Proverbs 3:11–12 (NLT) — **11** My child, don’t reject the Lord’s discipline, and don’t be upset when he corrects you. **12** For the Lord corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.

10 Then the Lord ordered the fish to spit Jonah out onto the beach.

- When Jonah acknowledged God, the discipline inside the fish ended.
- The most important thing Jonah remembered are the last words of verse nine: *“...my salvation comes from the Lord alone.”*
- Remembrance that leads to repentance results in rescue and restoration.
- In Jonah’s case, he remembered God but he didn’t really repent. As we’ll learn next week, Jonah got right but not 100% right.
- He remembered God, but he was still reluctant to preach to Nineveh.
- How can we keep from “being a Jonah” and running from God’s will? What are some steps we can take to avoid living in rebellion to God?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- We need to search our own hearts and ask, *“Am I running from God’s direction for my life?” “Have I come up with rationalizations and justifications for why I don’t want to do what He’s shown me to do?”*
- Followers of Christ cannot escape the discipline of our loving Heavenly Father. When we want to go our own way instead of obeying His will, we need to remember we can run but we can’t hide.
- That’s intimidating, but as with Jonah, it’s for our good and God’s glory.
- What a sobering thought that God is watching everything I do and hearing every thought I think.
- What a comfort to know He is with me in the most terrible circumstances.
- What a relief to know He will rescue me one way or another.
- What amazing grace that turns repentance into restoration.
- As Alistair Begg prayed after teaching on this text: *“For those of us who have been going our own way, seeking to run and take our own cruises, ...away from the direction of your appointing, we pray that in your mercy and in your love you will come and throw us overboard. Grant to us such a sense of isolation that we will cry out to you, that we might be known of you afresh, and that you will pick us up and set our feet back on the pathway of your appointing.”^x*
- When we’re tempted to run from God’s direction, let’s remember the lesson from Jonah, we can run but we cannot hide from our loving Heavenly Father.

ⁱ https://www.bookbrowse.com/expressions/detail/index.cfm/expression_number/238/you-can-run-but-you-cant-hide

ⁱⁱ <https://www.aceable.com/blog/the-5-best-systems-for-tracking-teen-drivers/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Jon 1:2–3). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{iv} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Jon 1:4–5). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^v https://hymnary.org/text/standing_by_a_purpose_true

^{vi} Lifeway Explore the Bible Commentary/ Melville, Moby Dick, H. Wolf 1926

^{vii} <https://proverbs31.org/read/devotions/full-post/2019/11/19/when-you-feel-far-from-god>

^{viii} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ps 139:7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{ix} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ps 139:23–24). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^x <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/salvation-comes-from-the-lord/>