



Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus

A Discipleship Journey

The OLD TESTAMENT- Their Story is Our Story

Jonah - The Transformative Power of Suffering

Jonah Chapters 1-4

Have you ever been so angry about something that did not go your way that you were even upset with God over it? We have all been there from time to time in our lives. We may have felt that God did not have our back or that He abandoned us. The anger could be over mistaken loyalties, not getting that job promotion, or the lead part in the play. Maybe you did not get picked for the team, after you thought you were a shoe in. The list can go on and on. Now, none of these disappointments means that God is being disloyal to you. Our Father is the God of everyone, which sometimes means that we will not get what we expect, so that others can receive what they need.

In the Old Testament, Jonah acted in this same way. He got very upset with God, and he was so angry he was willing to let his anger destroy him. He was angered because of mistaken loyalty. Life does not always make sense to us as people in the human condition, and he could not see God's plan. Let us dive into Jonah's story. He also was a reluctant prophet.

Jonah was directed by God to preach repentance to his enemies. Jonah refused to do so out of fear for his life and took the first boat he could find travelling in the opposite direction of Nineveh, which is where God wanted him to preach. God sent a storm because of Jonah's disobedience. His shipmates were fearful that they would die along with Jonah so they threw him overboard, and he was swallowed by a whale. He sat in the belly of that whale for three days until he was spat out onto the shore. During those three days in the belly of whale, Jonah had time to think about his actions, and he prayed to God.

"I called to the Lord out of my distress, and He answered me; out of the belly of She'ol I cried, and You heard my voice. You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all Your waves and Your billows passed over me. Then I said, 'I am driven away from Your sight; how shall I look again upon Your holy temple?' The waters closed in over me; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet You brought up my life from the Pit, O Lord my God. As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple. Those who worship vain idols forsake their true loyalty. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to You; what I have vowed I will pay. Deliverance belongs to the Lord!"

Jonah 2:2-9

Jonah truly had a transformative experience from the suffering that he endured while being in the belly of the whale. He listened and carried out the Lord's command to go to Nineveh and warn the people of the impending destruction of their city unless they changed their ways over the next forty days. Surprisingly, the people took Jonah's warning seriously, and they repented. Consequently, God changed His mind and spared Nineveh. The city and the people were saved.

Are there times in my life when I have been upset with God over something? Why did I choose to be angry with God? Has the power of suffering ever caused a transformation in my life? What was it like?