

Mid-Course Corrections

“Getting Back on Course” Part 2

4-3-11

We have come to the final section of this story we have been following. The Word of the Lord came to Jonah. God said “Go east. Jonah went west” Jonah ends up in the belly of a large fish. Does that sound familiar to anyone or is it just me. The time in the fish produced Obedience in Jonah’s life. Basically his closing statement was “*What I have vowed I will pay.*” In essence, his words and his actions began to match up. I have met a frightening amount of people who say, Yes I am a Christian, but then they completely don’t do what God is calling them to do with their life.

In that fish, Jonah decided, “*if I get another change, I will do what you tell me to do*”. That’s Obedience, and that clears the way for us to be able to hear God’s voice again. When we experience a desire to obey God in our lives, like Jonah we begin to move in new & God purposed directions.

There we go. That should be the end of the story, Chapter 3 ought to have wrapped it up. But there is a 4th chapter to this book of Jonah.

Growing up in Virginia Glover’s house, meant you would eat breakfast and one of the main things that we always had for breakfast was **grapefruit**. Mom would slice that grapefruit right down the middle and then take that knife and cut the fruit away from the membrane that divided each section. Then she would sprinkle sugar over it and set it in front of me. I would spoon up those sections of grapefruit and then she would ask, are you finished? I would say yes, and she would come over and say, ‘No you aren’t and she would pick up that grapefruit and **squeeze that piece of fruit** over my bowl, and all that good grapefruit juice would just pour out into my bowl, then I would take the bowl and up end it, and get all that good stuff.

Finishing at chapter 3 would be like finishing your grapefruit by just eating the cut sections. There is way more juice to be had, so God added for us chapter 4. If obedience was all there was to the Christian life, then Jonah would have accomplished everything, by simply speaking the message.

If just doing the right things, was enough then we would all go to heaven, because we did the right things. But then God adds in Chapter 4.

Living With Renewed Direction

Once we have been delivered from our own wrong directions in life and we have chosen to obey God, **the second and final matter** that God wants to address with us is:

1. The Power of Unforgiveness. And the ability for forgiveness to enter our hearts

Listen to how this is introduced (Reader reads 1st reading here)

“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.” Jonah 4:1

Jonah had a serious problem with holding onto personal grudges and agendas. He may have done what God wanted him to do, but he didn't have to like it. In essence, **he believed God was wrong and he thought he knew better.** They ought to get their's. Now he would never admit that, because cultured people would never say such things, so he just got angry.

But, before we are too hard on Jonah, we need to remember that Nineveh was the capital city of the Assyrians. Now these were some nasty people when it came to war and take over.

Atrocities that they would commit on opposing nations:Including: being **flayed, impaled,** burnt alive, eyes **ripped out,** fingers, noses and ears **cut off.** Some of the locals would be blinded and then **set free to walk though the next city** to set fear in the hearts of the next town or village they were about the plunder. So Jonah had every human right to want to see these people wiped from the face of the earth. He did not want to forgive them, he did not want to see them receive God's mercy. To the end of the book he never really forgives the people of Nineveh.

So maybe Obedience (a matter of your will) has guided your life, but Forgiveness (a matter of your heart) is still in front of you to do. In fact, listen to these bible verses to see just how much stock God puts in forgiveness. This is Jesus speaking:

Forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive those who trespass against us Matt 6:12

Do you recognize that one, it is part of what? Lord's Prayer. Notice the word in there, AS. That makes me think that if I forgive others, it is linked to me being forgiven. The Lord's prayer ends and Jesus drives home the point. Only 2 verses later he says:

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Matt 6:14

But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matt 6:15

The idea of offering forgiveness to those who have wronged you, brings us to the next point in living with new direction.

2. God Wants Us to Get Over Ourselves.

Listen to this dialogue between Jonah and God. (Reader reads 2nd reading here)

"That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." And the Lord said, "Do you do well to be angry?" Jonah 4:2b-4

I want us to take a good look at this conversation Here it is again. **Forgiveness** and therefore Joy, **has not entered Jonah's heart**. Obedience has penetrated his life. He is living an obedient life, but something still cages this man up. Jonah does not want them to experience any of the goodness of God. There is unforgiveness for the atrocities of the past, and God is leaning in on him to test how long he is going to hold onto unforgiveness in his life. God says to him, *Do you do well to be angry?"*

Story: (About the 2 girls at Bobtown UMC)

People carry anger and guardedness for a long time. For some very good reasons and some very stupid reasons.

Some of you today desire a new direction, God's course, **you are all about it**, you are ready to obey the Lord into a new direction, his direction. But one thing you lack from totally freeing yourself to enjoy the journey. **Getting over yourself means releasing** that thing that you have gnawed on like a bone and surrendering it to God. It may be:

1. A past bad relationship
2. A single event where someone said something that just devastated you
3. An overall direction that this church, or the city or your school has taken that just burns you

Let it go! (altar call)

Finally,

3. God Expects Transformation.

Listen to this last part of the book of Jonah... (Reader reads 3rd reading here)

"Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die

than to live." But God said to Jonah "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." And the LORD said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?" Jonah 4:5-11

After Jonah preached in Nineveh and they repented, he went outside the city, sat down to watch and see what God would do. Don't you know he was hoping that he had been wrong. He was just sitting there hoping in his heart, "just nuke-em God". **Then God did the very thing Jonah was not wanting to see happen.** He relented. He did not bring destruction. God forgave them.

In Jonah's life, this shows us how God will continually bring us back to the area he is working on in our life. Obedience was cured in Jonah's life through the fish deal. So we do not hear about it again. But forgiveness is not that easy for him, so he gives Jonah another illustration. (The plant and the worm)

So scan your life right now, what needs to be surrendered:

What episode...what act...what comment....what neglect...has replayed itself like a nightmare in your life that **God keeps bringing to your mind,** that just needs to be let go.

Notice this book ends with a question mark, it is not resolved. How about you? Are you going to let things remain unresolved in your life.

Let's pray

It **wasn't just the act,** (What Christ did on the cross) it was **how he did it** (No resentment, no unforgiveness)