

God's Checking Brings Holy Correction

Sin recovery is not returning to the sins that comforted us during difficult times in the past.

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Wednesday, August 7, 2019

Today's Scripture Focus: Jonah 4:4-8

We are focusing on sin recovery principle number six of 12: "We are now ready for God to give us new characters that reflect that of His Son's."

Under what pretense do you shelter when the going gets tough?

Every one of us has suffered, to a greater or lesser degree, from addictions. Some may be addicted to the usual suspects – alcohol or drugs, while others are addicted to food, swearing, questionable entertainments, gossip, money loving or believing the hype about self. And the catchall category of addictions lest we become proud and say we've never had a problem with anything on my list, is sin. All have had to struggle against sin, even the noblest among us.

When Sin is Your Coping Mechanism

Think about God's prophet, Jonah. The Lord gave him one simple set of instructions, and he lost his mind. God instructed him to go to one place, to teach one message, to one group of people, for one particular purpose. Like the rest of us with a bent towards sinning, Jonah did the exact opposite. Jonah went to another place, did not deliver the message to the people, and ignored God's purpose during the whole ordeal. And when God checked him on it (understatement of the year), Jonah reluctantly obeyed but threw a hissy fit. Do you get upset when God starts tugging at your addictions? When people post messages on social media that challenge your commitment to God, how do you receive it? When trials come that could have been avoided if you simply did what God said, how do you respond? When you realize you have been driving your spiritual bus the wrong direction on the road of life, do you press the brakes or keep barreling down the road? When you face challenges, do you search feverishly for a way to engage in the thing that displeases God, but makes you feel relaxed when you're stressed?

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Jonah demonstrates what not to do in this situation! He hides and bellyaches about how he figured God embarrassed him. He sheltered beneath the pretense of knowing how God would have handled his situation as justification for disobeying God.

I am going to give some free advice today, which I pray I receive too: never allow yourself to fall back on your sinful vice or indict God when the going gets tough. Recognize the situation for what it is—a wake-up call to help you reroute into the right direction. God is too loving and wise to let us go about our business unchecked. If we respond favorably to the momentary crises, God will show mercy and supply the need for which we had aimlessly sought when we rushed back into the arms of sin for comfort.

Taking the Trust Walk

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Monday, March 9, 2015

Based Upon Romans 11

You may recall the story of Jonah, the prophet who refused to prophesy. The Lord told him to go to Nineveh and warn them of impending judgment. Jonah got the not-so-bright idea that he understood all of the designs of God and decided to "preserve" his own reputation by boarding a ship to Tarshish instead. He knew that God was merciful and figured He would spare Nineveh, which in his puny little thought process would mean that the Ninevites would call him a false prophet. The Bible is so true when it says that there is a way that seems right to us, but the ends are deadly.

There was an interesting, yet unexpected twist in the story: As he slept in the belly of the ship as a storm raged, the mariners asked what his deal was. They wanted to know who he was, why he was sleeping, and told him to call upon his God. All of the others were frantic and calling on their gods. To make a long story short, it became clear that the storm was directed at him, and that if they threw him overboard, the seas would become calm again. Fearing their destruction for, in effect, killing a man by throwing him overboard, they called on the God of heaven and offered sacrifice to beg His pardon.

So many who read this story, get the idea that it was good for Jonah to get on the ship to Tarshish in order to give those mariners the opportunity to encounter the true and living God of heaven for themselves. They further surmise, that had Jonah gone directly to Nineveh as God commanded, the men would never have experienced God. This would mean that God has only one way to provide mercy, which we know is not so. It would also mean that we should sin, in order for good to come out of it, which is also not so.

Satan deceived Eve with this same ol' trick in Eden when he said that if she ate the forbidden fruit, she would be like God. He also attempted to get Jesus to prove His heavenly origin by doing evil. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit taught, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2). We should never think that if some good or perceived good comes out of a sinful situation, that the sinful situation was God-designed, and thus it was good. Banish the thought! These situations just magnify the fact that God, in His eternal mercy and foreknowledge, can use the circumstances we create through disobedience to miraculously work out in the end.

How does this all tie in to today's reading? If when the people of God turned their backs on Him created a special invitation for those who did not know Him and provoked His people to jealousy for a glorious outcome, how much more glorious would the outcome have been had God's people (and Jonah) followed the Lord without wavering? In other words, if God can use our trifling behaviour to get glory, how much more could He use our trust? If He can use the negative effects of our drug abuse, incarceration due to crimes committed, and self-inflicted illnesses, as a wake up call for us and those who see our situations unfold, how much more could He use our unwavering trust under fire to draw people to Himself?

It is true that God is able to work through the most complicated sinful circumstances, but it is all-the-more amazing when we stay inside His will to

live honorably and bring Him the most glory. Will you pledge with me to submit to God fully so He can get all the glory He deserves?