

Praise the Lord. This is Dr. Dana Gillon. I give honor to God, to Pastor Renée and to all of you my brothers and sisters in Christ. I thank God for the opportunity to fellowship with you again – what a privilege and an honor. God is so gracious to extend to us opportunity after opportunity. And yet, sometimes it seems He asks of us that which feels more like a challenge or a weight than an opportunity. I want to turn our attention to what happens when what God asks of us pricks our pride and triggers us to be angry with God.

First, I need us to acknowledge that pride has many forms. It is important that we not overlook pride showing up as self-righteousness, arrogance and even a refusal to depend on God. Pride will cause us as Believers to refuse God's authority in our lives.

Psalm 10:4

The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek *God*; *God is* in none of his thoughts.

Pride will hinder us from obeying the will of God for our lives—God is not in our thoughts. We don't honor Him when planning our next steps. Such was the case with Jonah. In the book of Jonah, the word of the Lord came to Jonah—Jonah knew God's voice. God instructed Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn them regarding their sin and the coming destruction because their sin had come up before the sight of God.

Jonah 1:3a

³ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

Jonah determined to flee from the presence of God. How many of you know we can never escape God's presence? We can hide our faces, but we will still be in His presence. When Jonah fled to the sea, God met Jonah there. God sent a storm that got the attention of everyone on the boat, yet Jonah rested, because Jonah was familiar with God's work. Everybody on the boat was terrified because the boat was being torn apart, but Jonah was napping. This is the foolishness of pride. Jonah knew he was walking in disobedience to God and instead of repenting, he was sleeping through a storm that was about to kill everyone around him. When the men woke Jonah and asked him about himself and why he brought that trouble on them, Jonah told them...

Jonah 1:9

So he said to them, “I *am* a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry *land*.”

Jonah acknowledges who he is relation to God. Jonah then tells them how awesome and terrible his God is. Jonah would not go to Nineveh to witness there. But, here is Jonah witnessing to those who worshipped foreign gods about the awesomeness of God. Ultimately, these men sacrificed and took vows to God.

There is always an opportunity to remember who we are in relation to God. There is always an opportunity to turn back from disobedience. But, even in acknowledging God, Jonah’s pride was stronger than his fear or reverence of God.

Jonah 1:12

¹² And he said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest *is* because of me.”

Again, there is a perpetual unwillingness to seek God, to acknowledge His authority and to obey Him. Even in the midst of a storm that can only be by God’s hand, pride persists. I hope as we walk through the testimony of Brother Jonah, we reflect on moments that God may have called us to witness to some because of the recklessness of their sin before they fall into destruction, just as He called Jonah. That call to witness is where Jonah stumbled into pride. And the men threw Jonah into the sea where God had a great fish prepared to swallow Jonah.

I want us to take note that the great fish—some say whale—was already prepared for Jonah. God knows the condition of our hearts, and He has already prepared a plan for us. We love the way God blesses us and keeps us. But God also requires obedience of us and God opposes the proud. James 4 asks where do wars and fights come from among us, Believers. Is it not our own desires that create battles amongst each other?

James 4:6 tells us that God gives more grace and says: “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”

This is an echo of **Proverbs 3:34** : Surely He scorns the scornful, But gives grace to the humble.

We want to experience the God of Grace. We want the God of Peace. We do not want the God who opposes the proud for then we should expect a whale when we are the proud. And

here's the thing about expecting a whale, we cannot determine what *our* whale will be. For Jonah, it was a great fish. For a moment, consider if there is something God has called you to do, to be, to release. If like Jonah, your response is to flee the presence of God—refuse God's authority, expect a whale. But know that you cannot determine what your whale will be. The Word of God is full of whales—instances where the people of God disobeyed and experienced God's anger or simply the removal of His grace.

The entire book of Jonah tells of Jonah's anger and pride. Jonah ultimately cried out to God while in the belly of the fish. In **Jonah 2:2**, Jonah says, "I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, and He answered me." In **Jonah 2:10**, the Bible says,... "the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry *land*." But here's the thing, Jonah's pride was not satisfied. Jonah was discomforted by the storm and by the great fish. But Jonah's heart was not changed.

In the third chapter of Jonah, Jonah went to Nineveh and did what God instructed. The people repented, God noticed and God relented from the disaster He said He would bring on them.

But look at **Jonah 4:1**.

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry.

Jonah tells God that he never wanted these people to receive mercy. Jonah told the people to repent so that God would be merciful to Jonah. But, Jonah did not encourage them or support them in their repentance. This thing that pleased God did not please Jonah. Sometimes we are guilty of thinking more of ourselves than we ought. Jonah had zeal and reverence for God so long as God moved the way Jonah determined God ought to move. Pride. Jonah determined it would be better for him to die than to live with what God purposed for him to do.

Proverbs 16:18

Pride *goes* before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Jonah 4 ends with God still instructing Jonah on the value of showing mercy to those who yet need to hear of God's goodness. Jonah said that it was right for him to be angry even unto death—pride is stubborn. God said that it was right for Him to be merciful even to the saving of souls. I wonder if today we find ourselves to be more like Brother Jonah or Father God. If we be like Brother Jonah, we should expect a whale, for God opposes the proud. Let us therefore repent, work righteousness and extend mercy. In Jesus name, Amen.