

PROVIDENCE & GOD'S WILL *continued*

will disturb. Eg. Christian seeking a life partner outside of the parameters of **2 Corinthians 6:14**.

(c) **THE IMPACT OF THIS PROBLEM**. Jonah's disobedience affected others (potentially Nineveh, directly the sailors). There are homes today in as much danger as that shipload of sailors because a Jonah is in the household.

[3] THE ROUTE IN THIS DISOBEDIENCE.

After Jonah paid the fare, he "*went down*" – which is always the direction, and the price, of disobedience. Throughout this short book, we watch God's prophet going down and down, further and further away from the presence and blessing of his God:

(i) Down to Joppa, **1:3**;

(ii) Down into the ship, **1:3&5**;

(iii) Down to the bottom of the great deep inside the belly of the great fish, **1:15&17; 2:3,5&6**.

The direction of travel when we get away from God's presence and live our lives outside of the will of God is always – and increasingly – downwards.

The best advice is to claim God's best and walk with God.

MEETINGS TODAY



•Morning Worship – 11.30am:

"Jonah #3: God's Will & Providence."

•Afternoon Christmas Service – 3.30pm:

All welcome!

•Evening Service – 7.00pm: *"Faith Works*

At The Cross"

NB. Special Carol Service in the Old Presbyterian Meeting House in Cultra on

Wednesday night @ 7.30pm. Come and bring your friends.

QUOTE TO NOTE

"He wants no company that hath Christ for his companion." (Richard Sibbes)



SPECIAL PARENTS' EVENING FOR LITTLE ONES

Thursday evening, Thursday 5th December was the parents' evening for the Little Ones. A very encouraging number of mums were present in the Jubilee Hall for a Chinese buffet and dessert night. We were delighted that Joanna Tinsley was able to come along to share her testimony, and present a Gospel challenge. This get together was also means of getting to know the families of the "Little Ones" better.

Response to the night has been most uplifting, assuring us that our labour is never in vain in the Lord. One parent sent this comment to Sharon who, due to her father's grave illness, was not able to be present: "Thanks for a great night, good food, lovely talk, craft and gift ... to all who helped make it happen." Please pray for the work of Little Ones – and for the other 'special' evenings that are organised throughout the year.



PROVIDENCE & GOD'S WILL

Jonah 1:3.

Three simple ingredients were included in the Commission the Lord sent to Jonah: “(i) Arise, (ii) go to Nineveh, (iii) cry against it” (1:2). However, the only part of the commission that Jonah obeyed was the first command – “Arise” cf. **Jonah 1:3**: “... *Jonah rose up ...*.” However, the “*but*” that begins **verse 3** alerts us to the fact that Jonah was not going to comply with God’s commands. He travelled 70 miles to Joppa – and boarded a ship for Tarshish.

[1] THE REALITY OF HIS DISOBEDIENCE.

Nineveh was approximately due East of Gath-hepher; Tarshish was due West (probably Tartessus, Spain): he went as far as he could in the opposite direction to God’s call. **Jonah 1:3** notes (twice) that Jonah was attempting to flee “*from the presence of the LORD.*” This phrase cannot mean that Jonah thought there was a parcel of land where God could not find him (cf. **Psalm 139:9-12; Jeremiah 23:24**); rather: it is from that place where God makes special manifestation of Himself (this expression is first used of Cain in **Genesis 4:16**; again in **2 Kings 13:22-23**). Consider our actions when we are about to disobey one of God’s precepts, an item of His revealed will – we run for our Tarshish; away from the place where the presence of the Lord is known!

[2] THE REASON FOR HIS DISOBEDIENCE.

Why disobey? (a) THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM. The answer is *not* found in **Jonah chapter 1**. Or **2**. Or **3**. But in **chapter 4**. It was neither Fear of Repercussions for his own person, or of the Ruination of the prophetic ministry, but – he specifies the reason in **4:2**: “...*Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish ...*.” He fled because of (i) GOD’S GRACIOUS CHARACTER – he understood God’s character!
a. In the original Commission Jonah received, it was all about Judgment, **1:2**. This sat comfortably with Jonah, cf. **3:4**. However ... Jonah knew all about God’s grace b. in His historic

dealings with people and nations (cf. Jonah’s knowledge of His mercy to Jeroboam II). Jonah’s words are almost a direct quote from **Exodus 34:6-7**.

However, because of (ii) MAN’S GROSS CARNALITY – in Jonah’s case his carnal and horrible Hebrew exclusivism (the spirit that they, as the favoured nation, should be the only recipients of God’s favour, existing as ‘God’s pet’ rather than recipients of His undeserved grace), Jonah disobeyed.

Jonah’s carnal spirit is confirmed in **4:1**: he was “*very angry*” when the Lord showed mercy. By contrast, note how God cared for the people, esp. the young (**4:11**), while Jonah only cared for a plant that catered for his needs (**4:10**).

(b) THE INSTRUCTION FROM THIS PROBLEM.

For this incident in Jonah’s experience we note some lessons, re:

(i) Weakness of man: the weakness of the best of men when left to themselves. Jonah was a holy prophet, carried along by God’s Spirit (cf. **2 Peter 1:21**), spoken to directly by God (**2 Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1**); yet, when left to himself, proves no better than his unconverted fellow-countrymen (cf. **1 Cor. 10:11-12**).

(ii) Word of God: The frightening power of uncrucified racial and national Pride when coupled with spiritual privileges and smugness meant that Jonah was not ashamed of his nation (**1:9**), but when ‘the crunch’ came, racial and national pride coupled with spiritual smugness, triumphed over the Word of God! How do we deal with this?

(iii) Will of God: There is a huge danger in determining the will of God by providence (circumstances in our lives); **1:3**: the safe travel from Gath-hepher to Joppa / the provision of favourable weather for the onward journey / the ship at harbour going to Tarshish / space on board for him / ability to pay the fare Jonah may have stood on deck in fair weather, saying, “*On to Tarshish I go, under the kind providence of God!*” – every factor of providence was in his favour – but there was a fundamental problem: he was setting out on a course that was in direct defiance of the revealed will of God! Providence is often a final affirmation of the will of God, or the fine-tuning of some of the details in His will – but when we turn our backs to the Word of God in disobedience and trust to providence instead, we are tempting God – putting ourselves onto an angry sea that the Lord