

Collateral Damage

God we welcome you to this place. You are always with us but we don't always take the time to know that and make sure that you are welcome here. God for all of us we desire to be aware of and to be in your presence. To experience the Shekinah or Glory of God. God would you reveal yourself to us as explore your word today. Help me God to get out of the way so that everyone can clearly see you. We celebrate in advance what you are going to do today. Guard us from the sin of not applying what you teach us from your word. In Jesus Name.

Can you imagine what would happen if the Shekinah of God was manifested on this stage? **IMAGE**

1 Imagine if God revealed Himself to us in this room today. I know that we would fall on our faces in sheer terror. None of us would be able to deny the experience. We would all be changed because of it

John tried to describe what He saw in Jesus....

John 1:14 (ESV) 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Imagine what it must have been like to behold His glory. Those of us who believe have been given the unbelievable gift of the presence of God in us. The Shekinah of God...the manifestation of God...among His people...is now in His people

But for those who lived prior to Jesus The Shekinah or presence of God was revealed to them in supernatural and divine ways. Those who followed the Cloud by Day and the Fire by Night Those who experienced the presence of God in Holy of Holies in the Temple. God manifested in the burning bush Imagine the tangible presence of God in a visible and real way

Imagine what it must have been like for Jonah When the Word of the Lord came to him. We don't know how the Word came to him Perhaps in a dream...Perhaps as a spoken voice ...Maybe God revealed Himself in some way But there was no doubt in Jonah's mind That God had clearly spoken to him He couldn't pass it off as a bad dream or misunderstanding...Jonah knew that God expected immediate action

Jonah was once again in the very real presence of God. I have been thinking a lot about that this week. Imagine if the Shekinah of God was manifested on this stage...The Presence of the Lord....right here and God spoke to us and gave us a direct and clear command...

And then we disobeyed and decided to flee from the presence of the Lord. It is hard for me to imagine experiencing the Glory of God and then choosing to flee from it. But I know that there have been times in my life when God has revealed Himself clearly to me....Gave me directions Wrote them in His book...and I have disobeyed by running to my Tarshish.

Usually when God speaks to us it doesn't seem to make sense. God often asks us to do some hard things. Some risky things. Some things that may seem illogical to us. Think about it this way. God speaks to us in order to grow us....to take us places that we would not take ourselves...to step into a zone of faith we would never take based on logic...Almost every time God tells us to do something, our mind argues with it. In many ways that is how you know it is from God and not from you. The Spirit is constantly taming the mind. We call it Spiritual Growth.

That is what Jonah discovers. Obeying God has its own risks and threats. Obeying God forces you to face and break through your fears. It takes us out of our comfort zone, stretches us in our faith, and transforms us in our obedience.

Jonah had a dilemma. God was telling Him to go to an enemy nation and preach repentance. We compared that last week to one of us going to ISIS with a corrective message from God. Obeying God seems to us at times like a death sentence. Many in the will of God have died. Jonah doesn't know what awaits Him in Nineveh, but he probably knows it is not going to be a warm reception.

But Jonah experienced the Glory of God....think about that for a moment. He experienced God's presence....God's power and majesty....God's direction...God's instructions...and he said NO and ran.

We learned that his flight was fueled by his hatred for the Assyrians. He would rather die than see them saved by God. We learned that we are all Jonah's. We have all experienced running from God and that the entire book can be summed up in one sentence. God loves everyone and we do not.

Today we are going to examine another truth about running from God. We think that our flight from the presence of God is a solo journey. But our disobedience is never ours alone. Every time we reject what God wants there is collateral damage. Our disobedience brings consequences that always go far beyond just us.

But we will see that what we choose to do impacts everyone around us. And particularly those who are closest to us. Our spouse...our kids...our friends...Our family...our coworkers...and our church family. In addition, as we will see in Jonah's story, our running from God hurts people that we haven't even met yet.

There are few decisions that you and I make that don't impact others. We are going to see that Jonah's choice to disobey God had a huge impact on some that we would call innocent bystanders. Just some folks headed on a boat to Tarshish that Day. Today we are going to see the collateral damage of Jonah's flee from God.

But before we jump into that story, let me remind you of the historical context of this book.

North and South Kingdom

Timeline

Let me remind you of our verse from last week

Jonah 1:2–3 (ESV) 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” 3 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. Jonah is making a bee line to go as far away from Nineveh as he could go. He is trying to flee from the places, the people, and the presence of the Lord. He wants to wall himself off from God and anyone or anything that reminds him of his disobedience. He went down to Joppa ...down in the boat...eventually down in the sea....and down in the belly of a fish. So.....

Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale, A tale of a fateful trip...That started from this tropic port
....Aboard this tiny ship.

4 But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. 6 So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish."

7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" 9 And 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." 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

Jonah is on the run...but he is going to take other people down with him. People who don't even really know him. The sailors are about to encounter a storm that is not theirs. Their life is about to almost end because Jonah decided to run. They are truly innocent bystanders.

God brought a storm on the waters They didn't name them back then...but this is Hurricane Jonah. These were seasoned mariners...not from Seattle and it has nothing to do with salt

It is easy to look back and see them as less intelligent than us But they were not stupid In fact they could navigate without GPS and fancy maps And they could read weather patterns They had spent their lives reading the winds, the water, the skies. They knew cloud patterns and they could read the waters. Their lives depended upon it. So it is interesting that they immediately knew this was no "normal storm"....This was a storm of Biblical Proportions.

This storm was evil. This storm was different than the others. The only place a storm like this can come from is from an angry God They were certain of two things: 1)This storm was from God and 2) Someone caused this storm to happen. They are beginning to realize that we are all connected to one another

Jonah is the eye of this storm...The mariners are freaking out...throwing things overboard..Doing every thing they could to save the ship...Crying out to all of their gods....All hands on deck Yet Jonah is sleeping.....He seems indifferent to his life and the lives of those around him...Why? Because he would rather die...and apparently let other people die....than to see one Assyrian saved by God.

But Everyone else up on deck is taking a beating and the Captain is not happy about it. IF you are not going to do anything at least cry out to your God...maybe He is NOT asleep

Notice that the Captain told him to RISE.... It is the same word the Lord used earlier Rise and go to Nineveh Jonah has been heading down...when he should be rising to the occasion.

Jonah has gone from being a prophet in the presence of the Lord. To a man of indifference sleeping in the hull of a sinking ship. Interesting that he thinks he has gone as low as he can go....but like everyone who runs from Godthey can't imagine how low they will eventually go. So many people have told me....I wish I would have stopped earlier....I can't believe I let this get this bad.

So the sailors decided to cast lots. Somebody's God is really angry....we need to appease Him. It seems from the pronouns that Jonah was not there when they cast lots. Which could explain the tone that the Captain took with him. We don't know how they cast lots but they did. Picture them like Jim Cantore...trying to talk over gale force winds/ Every word shouted over pounding waves. Heaving breathing from exhaustive rowing. Water everywhere.

They were desperate..they cast lots and it fell on Jonah. They were being pounded by a storm. That they had almost nothing to do with. This was Hurricane Jonah and everyone knew it.....and everyone cared....except Jonah. That is the problem with the storms that we cause in life. We think life is all about us....and yet we are all interconnected.

Then they went to Jonah.... 8 Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"

This is a softball question. A great opportunity to witness to them about God Jonah at this point is busted...they know it is him. The correct answer, if Jonah had told the whole truth would have gone something like this.....the full truth....is " I am a prophet of the one true God I am from Israel and I am Hebrew. I am rebelling from God because of my prejudice and hatred. God is angry at me for disobeying Him. I am supposed to be on my way to Nineveh. I thought I was running from the presence of the Lord but I guess He found me. I am sorry that my sins have impacted you. I thought I was the only one who would suffer. Please forgive me. Turn the boat around, I need to go to Nineveh and you will be safe. "

Let's look at Jonah's Answer Jonah 1:9 (ESV) 9 And 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...you left out a few details..what you said was true..... but no where near the whole truth. When we are running from God we never tell the whole truth. Not to ourselves and not to anyone else. Because speaking the whole truth means we have to stop running. We know that if we tell people the whole truth they will see the foolishness of our flee.

Jonah says that He fears the Lord but he is not obeying Him. He has yet to discover what fear really is. But something powerful is happening here. God is using Jonah's rebellion and sin to tell some Mariners about Him. What Jonah doesn't realize is that even in his rebellion, he is witnessing.

He is saying to them...I know you have a god of everything . God of wind, rain, stars, planets, trees, seas etc. But I worship the one true God...a single God. Look up, look around, look down....my God created it all.

This is a lesson for us as well. Even though we are disobedient and running from God, God will never waste an opportunity to use our disobedience to bring others to Him. There is collateral damage when we sin, but God can use our demise to reveal Himself to others.

Some of the greatest lessons in life come from watching others fail as they disobey God.

Let's look at their response Jonah 1:9–10 (ESV) 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

Note the response of the Mariners....they are exceedingly afraid.....Yes afraid of the storm....but perhaps more afraid of One God who does it all? They just thought they had reached the peak of fear when they were casting lots....but now they know....There is one true God and they are on the wrong side of His anger. Creator and Sustainer of everything? This is the strongest storm we have ever seen....

We just now first heard of this God. If He is who you say he is...You obviously can't flee from His presence....You idiot....what have you done to make Him so angry! Ok the you idiot part is implied But they were thinking it....What is this that you have done? ARE YOU CRAZY?

Even WE know you can't flee from THIS God...we have just heard about Him...know nothing else....and we are ready to obey Him....have you seen the storm? They also don't say it but part of their question is ...What have you done.....to US? And they were realizing in a very real way...Our rebellion brings collateral damage to a lot of people

Have you been there? Have you ever felt that connection? Someone you know is disobeying God And yet you have the sleepless nights, you are burdened for them and you are physically hurting for them? While they seem to sleep through the storm?

Have you been there? When the storm that their sins created Is pounding those around them? You decided to intervene You see the storm that they have created....You see the damage they are causing.....You cry out to them....What is this that you have done?" Are you crazy???

The Husband and Father who claims to follow Jesus but runs away with his secretary? The person who traded pursuing God for pursuing their next drink or drug. That person who was to steward God's resources but over spends to the point of poverty. The couple who tell you that divorce is best and the kids will be fine. Someone who seemed once so close to God and now moving away...And they seem so passive..so unaware...Almost like they are sleeping through the deception in their life....So you ask them Have you seen the storm?

Everyone who loves you, including me, is up on deck getting pounded by the storm that you caused. Yet you seem calm, indifferent, and unaware. So we ask what they asked....

"What is this that you have done?" Don't you realize that we are all connected? That your flee to Tarshish hurts all of us? I love you...but are you crazy? Do you really want to run from God?

I have seen this play out many times. One of the role of Elders is to confront in love those who are running from the Presence of God. The problem is that even though love is the only reason you would ever confront them...because honestly it is so much easier to just let them go...but they never see that. Your inquiry into their storm is rarely ever received well. It is in this moment that you discover what Category of storm you are dealing with...you find out how strong the rebellion really is.

But so many times they are in such denial that they can't see the storm...Or the impending collateral damage that their storm is going to cause....There is a common blank stare that comes from denial....Pastors all speak of being bewildered by the uncaring and oblivious response that we all receive during these conversations.

Like Jonah they refuse to own or take responsibility for what has happened...They lie to themselves so many times that they actually believe that they are ok...Most of the time they are convinced that the problem is not their disobedience ...But rather a problem with their spouse, their children, their boss, their family, their coworker, the Elders or the church or someone else.

Too many times I have had to tell someone...The path that you are on leads to a destination...The path that you are on leads to a lot of damage...Broken relationships, damaged trust, and lost opportunity. ...Your decisions will impact your spouse and your children for perhaps generations...It will impact the trust they have in you...Their ability to trust their future spouse....The way they parent your grandchildren. Our storms have generational impact

But they look at you with a blank or angry stare and remove you and anyone else who confronts them from their circle of influence. Like Jonah they tell partial truths....even as their rebellion is hurting those around them.

There are a lot of parallels between... The storms that are caused by our sins And the hurricanes that we track in the Gulf

The first hurricane I can remember was Hurricane Camille in 1969..**IMAGE 2** I remember it because my sister is named Camille...And as an 8 year old, I thought I had already experienced Tropical Storm Camille for some time. She is now an amazing woman of God who inspires me, But in 1969 she was my annoying and bossy older sister

Hurricane Camille was a Cat 5 storm at landfall in Mississippi wind speeds were at least 190 mph. The storm immediately wiped out all weather stations...Over 250 people died...9 Billion in Damage

But the Eye of that Storm was 40 miles wide..**IMAGE 3** . I wondered if you could stay in the center of the eye of that storm....Would you even know that a storm surrounds you? You could sleep peacefully in the center of the eye Blue skies, calmer waters, low wind, starry night..... The view from the eye of the storm is all good. ... If you could stay in the center of that eye and move with the storm you could even deny that the storm exists. Your perspective of the storm depends upon your viewpoint... Calm in the eye.....Raging next to the eye wall

Our storms start when we choose to run from God...flee toward our Tarshish. We are all Jonah's....We all run from God...We all create our own storms....We all do our own damage to those around us but we don't care...Tarshish looks so much safer than Nineveh. There is not a single person that you have ever met who hasn't had a storm named after them.

Over the years, there have been several Hurricane Franks. Manifested by gale force arrogance, storm surges of anger, and tornadoes of pride and lightening bolts of a very demeaning tongue....I left people in my wake....damaged emotionally.....and poor Tammy was just to the right of the wall and always seem to have to come in like FEMA and help those I had hurt. We all have been at the eye of the storms that we have created. Peaceful where we are and crazy for everyone else. It seems to always start the same...

The water around us begins to stir. ...And turbulence increases...It is disorganized and fragmented when it starts. The people around us know that something has changed. There is something just not right with us.

Those closest begin to feel it.The disobedience is not enough to clearly identify but the symptoms are starting to show. People closest to us begin to feel the wind....They come to us and share their concern but we are ready for them...."Everything is fine....no problems here....praise God!"

Like Jonah we give them half truths. We think we have convinced them but those who know us well...know better. We see it in their eyes...their eyes tell us to leave them alone... so we begin to withdraw from them...But the turbulence increases and the storm becomes evident to all those around us.

The tropical storm that is our disobedience is now being tracked by others...You can't really hide it anymore...You can't ignore itSo you begin to explain it away....It is escalating and at that point it has become a strong tropical storm

We push away those who challenge us. Those God has placed in our life begin to speak truth to us....We get angry and resentful...we don't want to hear the truth. We build our intensity and create a zone where the things of God no longer matter We wall off anyone who comes in the name of the Lord

Storms start to organize around a central focus- Us..As people start pressing in on us...we begin pushing back on them. The more they challenge us the stronger our wall becomes.

IMAGE 4 We push back and create our own zone of peace....where the topic doesn't come up...We begin to isolate yourself from all things God. ...We deflect attention by sending out relational tornadoes. **IMAGE 5**

Somehow we think that if we can find people to agree with us...That it can help us justify that the storm is everyone else's problem...That they have overreacted...They are the ones with the problem. We have started to encircle ourselves in the eye of the storm....storm? what storm?

Since those closest to us see what is wrong, we begin to seek safer waters. So other churches, new friends, and surprisingly old enemies are usually eager to assist. But we tell them only part of the story and leave out the real reason that we are not in Nineveh. Just like Jonah. Leaving out the most important truth of the story... We gossip, lie and deceive people...It is easy because we have already rationalized and deceived ourselves....Then we send them out into the storm to defend us...Filled with half-truths and part of the story....They spin out of the eye like tornadoes....Doing their own damage within the marriage, the family, their work situation, and the body of Christ...damaging others....on our behalf.

As we push away those closest to us...we eventually create our own safe zone. The Eye of Our Storm.

Those closest to us have been pushed away. We have created a relational space where no one wants to be near us and if they must come near us they have to walk on egg shells. We have actually pushed them into the storm that we created.... We begin to feel the impact of the winds and damage of Hurricane YOU...and you and I hide behind the eye wall of our storm **IMAGE 6**

And yet...once we develop our "eye"...From our perspective all is calm Since God no longer comes up...Since the people of God have learned to avoid the obvious topic...People who know us and challenge us have been pushed away....Ironically we find peace in our storm...It is in the eye of the storm that we deceive ourselves....We can't figure out why everyone else is so upset ...The storm is their problem...we are good. ...We can sleep when all on deck are being pounded. And since the Storm always moves where we move...it stays calm for us.

In fact, if you stay in the eye of the storm and it moves with you...wherever you go.....you may not even know that there is a storm. You become unaware and unaffected by the collateral damage that you are causing. Like Jonah, you become unconcerned about those who sail with you....Those who wouldn't even be in the storm if they didn't know you

So while the storm rages and destroys all those around us...we stay calmly in the eye...Appreciating the calm waters...Gentle winds....Blue Sky....And starry nights Since it is our storm...the storm moves with us....You can easily predict where storms go, they always move away from High Pressure Areas toward low pressure areas

Storms always avoid High Pressure zones....**IMAGE 7** .So we avoid those places where the pressure increases...Our quiet time with God...Our small group...Our church family...Our old friends who know us too well.....any form of accountability....we seek the warm waters of new relationships....people who believe our half truths and don't care that we are running from God....what we must avoid at all costs is the cold waters of those who love us and are trying to speak truth to us

Warm waters feel good... We can relax in the warmth and glow of new friends who no longer hassle us about our sins or try to hold us accountable like we asked them to. We find people who will agree with us...Well at least with the partial truth that we tell them....But here is the problem.... storms always intensify over warm waters.

Once we get away from all things God...Once our eye is well established and our walls are high....The pressure in our life and in the eye of our storm drops....And when the pressure in the eye drops the storm intensifies. But because we are in the eye....we can't see the damage, the storm, the way it is intensifying.....or where we are headed.

It is easy for everyone to track our storm...The path that we are on leads to a destination....Every hurricane is destroyed when it collides with land....Eventually no matter how strong the storm....It crashes and destroys almost everything and everyone in its path....And it destroys the storm itself.

Everyone close to us knows that we are going to crash....You are literally spinning out of control.....That is what storms do....Those who love us try to check on us....They risk the dangerous reconnaissance flights into the eye of our storm.**IMAGE 8** ...These people who love us enough to try to penetrate the massive eye wall that we have put up....They are willing to risk a relationship. Willing to take the verbal assaults and lies....Willing to break through all of our defenses..**IMAGE 9** ..Just to check on us and try to save us

As the storm approaches land....Warnings go out. At this point, even those closest to us and those who truly love us...must evacuate...**IMAGE 10** .At some point we have to protect ourselves and those we love from the impact.... The storm surge increases and intensifies right before impact

Everyone can see that the storm is about to crash. They know the damage that will happen. They hunker down for the impact. Trying to hold on to the things most precious to them. Praying that God will protect them from the damage of your sins.**IMAGE 11**

It is not until the storm crashes into land that the eye of your storm is destroyed. All of the sudden your peaceful calm eye no longer exists and you are instantly in the storm that is you. In that moment, your denial comes face to face with the truth of your situation. You are finally experiencing what everyone around you has been battling for years. They are hunkered down hoping Hurricane You passes.

It amazes me that those who crash seem surprised when it happens. They have been in so much denial. They never saw what everyone knew would happen...But by the time they realize it the damage has been done. **IMAGE 12** Their marriage is in shambles...Their children and friends have been hurt...And they have burned their trust with almost every one...Most have been forced to evacuate. Most have moved to higher ground....Higher spiritual ground

As you survey the damage that your rebellion caused When broken relationships...Damaged trust And painful memoriesAre scattered across the landscape of your life.....Reality drives you to do what Jonah does...To cry out to God to be saved...From the consequences of your disobedience...sadly this kind of damage is often what it takes to finally wake us up from our delusion that we can run from God's truth.

So what do you do? When the storm is raging? When you are on the deck of the ship getting pounded by the storm caused by someone you love....You are holding on to your marriage, your children and the remnants of your friendship Trying not to drown in the storm....And the one who caused the storm is sleeping comfortably, living in denial and telling half truths.... But you know a crash is coming and you love them too much to walk away.

How do you stop a hurricane? Well we already mentioned the most common way- It crashes into land, self destructs and destroys everyone in the process....But there is another way hurricanes are tamed. It is rare but it involves another way to penetrate the wall of the hurricane and destroy the power of the storm. Two things are necessary....The storm must move into cold water...and the eye must experience upper level shear forces. **IMAGE 13**

Let me say this...this is the hard work of sharing our lives together in a spiritual family. The closer we get to the center of the storm...the greatest the resistance and the more painful the damage. They resist our efforts, lash out at our character, misrepresent our motives, and anything else they can think of to keep us from reaching past the walls they have built...But.. Families are being destroyed..relationships broken....tornados of partial truths spinning out of control.....and those who care about them have got to fight to get through to them.Even if it means loving people enough to drive them away.

So how do we love someone through their storm? How do we get through to them? How do we wake them up from the slumber in the eye of their storm before they crash into land?

Relational Hurricane Survival Kit

1) Focus on the Most Important Relationship- Their Relationship with God. Speak only to them God's truth from Scripture.....not your opinion.....God's truth has power....your opinion does not. If the Holy Spirit is going to convict them it will be through God's word. Go to them early with God's Word. Decide to deal with the storm in the Gulf...They are headed for sure destruction if they hit land....They want to seek warm waters of people who agree with them...You must bring the cold reality of God's truth to them while they may still care.

2) Surround that person with believers who are relentless and unwavering with the truth. People fight for them even if they are not fighting for themselves. Refuse to be pushed aside...risk everything to save them. Risk your relationship with them...Weather the storm that is their anger, fury and resistance....Risk lies they spread about you...Be willing to risk your reputation...Stand firm in your love for them...even if they are firm in their hate for you. Remember they are headed to a destination that they cannot see.

God's people need to stay in the storm...bringing high pressure and the cooler waters of truth. We have to be relentless with the truth of God's word even if they hate us for it. Speaking God's truth into their lives is more important than maintaining the relationship. They will likely not receive the Word well. People running from God don't want to hear His truth. But make sure that what you are bringing is Scripture...not your opinion or your advice. In areas where God has spoken in Scripture, opinions no longer have any place in the discussion.

God's Word has power....God's Word cuts like a two edge sword....God's Word has the power to change and penetrate hearts...It is the only weapon you have against their deception from Satan.

3) Rally the troops. Relentlessly pursue those you love in groups. Risk losing them from your church...your life. Because if they hit land...They will ask you why you didn't fight harder ...Every time people crash and see the damage of their storm, they almost always ask why you didn't warn them earlier.....Deal with it in the gulf, the longer their storm spins and builds intensity the harder it will be to reach them. After a while the eye is well establishedand they will no longer even see the storm.

4) Pray that God will penetrate the Eye of the Storm For a storm to dissipate without hitting land...It must be destroyed by God...The eye of the storm must encounter upper level shear forces....The strongest force that can penetrate the eye of the storm is the Holy Spirit.

IMAGE 14 It is the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit alone who brings truth, conviction, and finally can penetrate the heart of a storm....Some storms can only be penetrated by God.

5) Evacuate as the Storm Approaches. As the Storm intensifies you have to evacuate, hunker down, and protect yourself. If they fail to listen while their storm is churning in the gulf, you must leave them to their destruction as they approach land. Don't interfere in what God is doing in their lives. Some people just have to crash before they will stop. However...it is not that you do nothing....getting away and hunkering down....positions you to see the storm from God's perspective and focus on our next step.

6) Pray incessantly ...We must trust God with the outcome. We must pray for the Holy Spirit to exert sheer forces on the walls of resistance that have been built. We need to pray that God will disrupt the eye of denial with a storm...That Jesus will penetrate their rebellious heart with love and conviction. As the storm approaches the impact of land....all of us are driven to our knees.

7) Be ready to become part of their rescue team. All of their warm water friends will abandon them when the impact comes. They will need you...Need you to bring forgiveness...love....mercy and hope. They will be shattered....Pray that God will use you to love and to help restore them. When they drive you away let them know that you will be available when they need you.

Now there is one other thing that we need to remember. Those who know Christ...who have the Holy Spirit in them....know deep down...they can't run forever.

Even though Jonah was running from God in disobedience....He likely knew that eventually he would have to obey and go to Nineveh....Deep down every true believer knows that if the Holy Spirit is truly in them....they will eventually do what God demands....

You may be able to disobey God....but the Holy Spirit in you cannot. You can disobey God but if the Holy Spirit is in you, He cannot. A true believer is led by the Spirit and will eventually do what God demands. Spiritual growth is wrestling with God in our flesh and learning to surrender. Spiritual maturity is knowing and surrendering as soon as God speaks.

In closing.... Who do you know that is in a storm? IMAGE 15 AND LEAVE UP As I have been talking...who is coming to your mind? Maybe it was a hurricane from the storms of your past....Perhaps the storm of your previous marriage.....the storm of your addiction....Perhaps living in the eye wall of someone else's storm....maybe it was a storm of uncontrolled anger from your past.....but for many....hurricane warnings are up right now. You haven't been thinking of something that happened a long time ago....you are living it.

Is it you? Is this sermon what God is going to use to keep you from destroying everything and everyone that you value? Are you in the eyewall of your anger? Your alcoholism? Your extramarital sins?Has He in some way penetrated your denial today? Has God broken through your eye wall and revealed to you the damage swirling around you? Have you finally realized that the scared and concerned look from those around you is love and not judgment? Do you need to stop running from God and move toward Nineveh? Is it time to surrender your arrogance and pride and let the Holy Spirit of God complete in you what He promised? To finally let those upper level shear forces of the Holy Spirit stop the storm that is you?

Maybe storm warnings are up in your life because of someone you love? Maybe someone you have truthfully given up on.... A friend or family memberWhose storm has been smoldering so long that you have almost given up...Damage is being done...God hasn't given up on them....However, you realize that you have. Rededicate yourself to praying for them without ceasing. You should not ever stay in a storm if you are being physically abused or emotionally bullied. Not every storm is yours to face. You may have to evacuate to protect yourself and those you love, but there is power in prayer....Some storms just have to be turned over to God.

Maybe you see the stirrings of a tropical storm in someone's life. The damage is not yet fully developed but it is imminent. They are spinning out in the gulf....each moment building up power....starting to form their eye wall by stiff arming everyone around them....including you. Maybe God is calling you to be a storm chaser. If so, would you commit today to be relentless in your pursuit of them? Maybe you are getting tropical storm force winds right now and the eye of the storm is trying to organize...moment by moment the storm is intensifying....As their eye wall closes so does in many ways the opportunity to reach them...Soon those closest to them will be pounded...While they calmly sleep in the eye of their storm. TAKE DOWN IMAGE 15

We are all Jonah's. We all at times run from God. Our rebellion always produces collateral damage particularly to those closest to our hearts. Sometimes the storm is a Cat 5 and it is not safe at all for you to be in relationship with the person at the center. There are times when you pray and God tells you to evacuate and leave this storm to Him. In those cases, get out. Find a safe port, protect yourself, and pray that God will work at transforming the heart that is the evil power driving that storm.

Jonah ran from God. He thought that his decision would only impact Him. He would rather die than preach to the Assyrians. He chose to rebel against God. But His decisionhad ramifications far beyond him. Hurricane Jonah was spinning out of control and everyone it seems was in the path.

All of us have our own storms. We have slept in the eye of the storm that we caused and in the process hurt those closest to us and even those we did not know. One day...700 years after Jonah's storm....Jesus looked out at the raging seas and said "Quiet....be still" and instantly the storm ceased.

When you and I are stirring up waters with our rebellion....we must as followers of Jesus...allow Him to speak those words into our sins.

Peace...Be Still...Be Still and know that I am God. Let's Pray.