

GOD IN PURSUIT *continued*

chance of being unheeded (cf. Lot – “seemed ... one that mocked” **Genesis 19:14**).

[3] THE DISTINCT IMPLICATIONS THROUGH THIS WORK OF RESTORATION.

Jonah’s action in disobeying God resulted in sad (a) **CONSEQUENCES** for others as well as for himself: the cargo of the ship was lost; the lives of the sailors were endangered. “*God had offered Jonah the privilege of blessing the whole populace of the great city of Nineveh, but he became a curse to a few unsuspecting sailors instead.*” It is vital that we do not become ‘a dog in the manger’ – a curse to people we contact.

Note the (b) **CONTRAST** between Jonah and Jesus: rather than creating trouble for others, Christ bore the judgment of God for sinners. Irony fills this scene, in the (c) **CONUNDRUM** that (i) these heathen men, **1:13**: while Jonah closes his heart to another people, these coarse Phoenician sailors show compassion to him, *doing everything they can* to spare Jonah’s life – even after he has caused the loss of their cargo and his salvation threatens their lives! (ii) A massive conundrum is also seen in that, in spite of the disobedience of His prophet, God turns this tempestuous situation to good in the conversion of those heathen sailors. In **Jonah 1:14** those rough men do something they have never done before: they earnestly call on God, using a name with which their lips had been unfamiliar – a name for God that is different from the term employed by the captain of the ship (**1:6**). these sailors got saved! Such is the depth and breadth of God’s grace that though Jonah had run to the ends of the earth to avoid seeing the conversion of the heathen, he gets heathen converted (**1:16**) – and gives him another little foretaste of God’s mercy that is going to come on Nineveh.



MEETINGS TODAY

- Morning Worship – 11.30am:
“Jonah #4: God in Pursuit.”
- Evening Service – 7.00pm: “Faith Watches At The Cross.”



CAROL SERVICE AT CULTRA

Wednesday evening, 11 December 2019, saw us return to the Folk and Country Park at Cultra for our annual Carol Service. We were pleased to welcome an enthusiastic – and sizeable – crowd on the night; thankfully there was no repeat of last year when a distinct lack of heat put a negative ‘layer’ on proceedings.

On this occasion we delighted in renditions of ‘Christmas in the Country’ and ‘O Holy Night’ by our guest singers Sophie Shiels and Victoria Salt. These were supplemented by our own home grown talent and each item in song was interspersed with a variety of Bible readings on the theme of the Incarnation and Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. The closing message was titled, ‘Ice Splits Starwise,’ featuring illustrations drawn from the Wise Men, the Shepherds and Zacharias – all examples of persons who were not only profoundly impacted but dramatically changed by the arrival of the Eternal Son of God as our Saviour. As usual, we thank Peter for organising the programme – and for all participants, including Nathaniel on the piano and James on the saxophone.



GOD IN PURSUIT **Jonah 1:4-16.**

When Jonah boarded a ship for Tarshish instead of going to Nineveh, this disobedience of God's instruction affected two main areas: (i) *Jonah's own Person*; his apparently comatose state during the storm pictures a child of God under the subtle influence of his own corruption and the cooperation of the devil; (ii) *God's Purpose*, as it impacted on the Divine intention for the heathen city of Nineveh (cf. **1:2**). Therefore God's dealings with the disobedience of the prophet target these two areas of concern: as a loving Father, He brings His erring child back; as the God of mercy He ensures His message reaches Nineveh. This brings us to The Restoration of the Disobedient Prophet.

[1] THE DIVINE INITIATIVE IN THIS WORK OF RESTORATION.

Though **Jonah 1:3** presents us with a real flurry of Jonah's activity, Jonah is *not* going to have the last word with reference to what happens in Jonah's life! God acts in restoration:

- (i) **1:4**: "*the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea*"; the word is "*hurled*" (used of a javelin throw **1 Samuel 18:11; 20:33**);
- (ii) **1:17**: "*Now the LORD had prepared a great fish ...*"; (iii) **2:10**: "*And the LORD spake unto the fish ...*"; (iv) **3:1**: "*And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time.*"

No matter what God's children do in disobedience to His will, He, as their God and Father, is committed to secure their willing obedience to His will – so He pursues (cf. **Psalm 37:23-24; Luke 22:31-32; Hebrews 12:6**). God's grace has a persistence that exceeds all human determination, therefore God pursues Jonah to restore His disobedient prophet to Himself – and to reach out in mercy to Nineveh.

[2] THE DIVERSE IMPLEMENTS IN THIS WORK OF RESTORATION.

In restoring this prophet, God used (a) THE ELEMENTS OF THE PHYSICAL CREATION:

(i) THE AGITATION / STORM; **1:4,11,13**. God not only hurls the storm upon the sea, He keeps the storm upon the sea and He intensifies and further agitates that storm upon the sea.

(ii) THE SELECTION / CASTING OF LOTS; **1:7**: Almighty God was in such control, not only of the violent storm, but of all the little pieces of a broken pot inside an urn, that when they turned it up and spilled it out, Almighty God was guiding which one would be turned up with Jonah's name on it.

(iii) THE DIRECTION / PREPARATION OF THE FISH; **1:17**. The term "prepare" indicates, "*to allot, appoint, ordain.*" That is, God could have taken a fish that existed in those waters and put it, right by the ship, at the right time, with the right measure of hunger that it would not refuse the bait.

Out on that great Mediterranean Sea Jonah would be reminded of the facts that, the Lord is alive; evidences of His loving care are all around him; He leads, even through the stormy blast; He will inevitably appear to him again!

The Lord also used (b) THE ELEMENTS OF THE MORAL CREATION in order to reclaim his rebellious servant.

(i) First of all, in the case of these PAGAN SAILORS, the Lord worked upon their conscience, producing a sense of (a.) *FEAR*, **1:5**; (b.) *FORCE*, **1:5**: they "cried" and "cast off"; (c.) *FOCUS*, **1:5-6**: even the heathen recognise the reality of the Lord when the going gets rough: cf. G. Gordon Liddy, who conquered all fears, including that of rats and prison – but was undone by thoughts of eternity; (d.) *FAIRNESS*, **1:7-8**: even these sailors acknowledged a supreme Being who stands above their lesser gods – the relationship between the physical world and the pleasure/displeasure of this God – that this God was accessible by prayer (**1:14**) – that this God controlled every element in the world; (e.) *FAITH*, **1:14&16**.

God uses the elements of the moral creation (ii) in JONAH himself. Jonah is awakened to realise, "*There's no way for the storm to be stilled than for me to be thrown into the sea*"; **1:9,12**. God's grace ultimately extracts a good testimony from him – but Jonah is ever so slow in getting it out! Pray with Paul that we may be enabled to testify to the grace of God with all boldness – and not be intimidated by men into silence. And make sure you do not wait too late, when our testimony stands a fair