

THE STRANGLEHOLD OF SIN
JONAH 2:1-9

Introduction:

1. Jonah was a Jew who was chosen by God to preach to the Gentiles in Nineveh.
2. He chose to ignore the calling and run from God by hitching a ride on a slow boat to Tarshish.
3. God doesn't appreciate rejection of His will and so He sent a great storm which caused the seamen to realize that all was not right.
4. They cast lots and found that Jonah was the guilty one, so over the side they threw him.
5. Jonah's sins finally caught up with him, as they will eventually catch up with us, and he was caught in the stranglehold of sin. **v. 5** *The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head.; Numbers 32:23* **But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.**

I. JUST AS THE WEEDS WRAPPED AROUND JONAH'S HEAD AND BEGAN TO STRANGLE HIM, UNREPENTANT SIN WILL STRANGLE US.

A. Sin, in the beginning of our Christian life, is easily confessed and forsaken because we have a great desire to please God. **1 Peter 2:1-2** *Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby*

B. Yet, as time goes by and our early strength weakens, we find ourselves more and more susceptible to sinning without the acknowledgement and repentance that used to fill our hearts. **2 Corinthians 12:21** *... lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced.*

C. Guilt overwhelms us, it strangles us, and we come to a point where the guilt is so great that we reject the pleading and grace of God to repent.

D. The danger in this is that an unrepentant heart will lead to a hardened heart. **Proverbs 28:14** *Happy is the man who is always reverent, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.*

E. A hardened heart will turn us from God and what is good and right. **Hebrews 4:7** *...again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "TODAY," after such a long time, as it has been said: Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."*

II. WHEN SIN BEGINS TO STRANGLE US, WE FLEE FROM ALL WHO WOULD HELP US UNTO A WORLD THAT IS LARGELY LETHARGIC TO OUR NEEDS.

A. The world says that there is nothing wrong with sinning. **Luke 12:19** *And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."*

B. In fact, the world condones and encourages sin to the point that even friendships are changed. **James 4:4** *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

C. God is ignored, the church is ignored, and sin continues to strangle the spiritual life out of us.

D. We become prisoners to our lusts and passions. **Jonah 2:6** *I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.; James 1:14-15* *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*

E. We need to understand where our real strength and help lies. **Psalms 46:1** *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.*

III. WHAT IS NEEDED IS A REAL LIFE JONAH EXPERIENCE TO AWAKEN US TO WHAT IS OF REAL IMPORTANCE.

A. Fleshly indulgences can only satisfy for the moment, whereas godly indulgences of the spirit are for eternity. **Ephesians 3:14-19** *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

B. Our soul needs to faint within us as it did in Jonah. **Jonah 2:7** *When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went up to You, Into Your holy temple.*

C. His inward person, that eternal being, was overwhelmed with grief, personal sorrow that led him to repentance. **2 Corinthians 7:10** *For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*

D. Jonah realized that what was of real importance to him was not necessarily of importance to God.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible gives us many examples of God's people who chose to break the stranglehold of sin:
 - A. The Prodigal Son.
 - B. King David.
 - C. King Solomon
2. The Bible also gives us examples of those who chose not to break the stranglehold of sin:
 - A. The Rich Young Ruler.
 - B. King Herod.
 - C. Ananias and Sapphira.
3. I am reminded of Jeremiah's description of Israel when they refused to repent and break the stranglehold of sin. **Jeremiah 5:3** *O LORD, are not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, But they have not grieved; You have consumed them, But they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to return.*
4. It's time to break the stranglehold of sin on your life. It is time to arise to righteousness and trust in God.