

Transforming Daily
“ . . . from the presence of the Lord . . . ”
Jonah 1:3

Twice in this verse it is recorded that Jonah was fleeing from the Lord. Why would anyone flee from the Lord? There are more in flight from God than one might think. In this case Jonah was fleeing from God and knew exactly why he did so. God gave him an assignment that he didn't like, of which he did not want to be a part. Jonah's reaction to flee from God just about cost him his life (some scholars say that it did cost him his life in the belly of the great fish). But also look at the hardship that it caused, and potentially caused, for others along the way. Fleeing from God is never a good idea, and yet all of us from time to time do exactly that, we flee from God.

One might say, "I have never fled from God." I would beg to differ. That would mean that they never disobeyed God's Word, and according to Scripture, no one is perfect except for Jesus Christ. There are more ways to flee from God than getting into a ship and sailing away. A person, even a believer, can flee from God and never leave the farm, as it were. Keep in mind that Jonah was running away from the instruction of God for his life. Jonah knew what God wanted and expected from him, but chose to ignore it and go the other way.

Wayne Watson sings a song called "The Long Arm of The Lord." I think the title says it all. One of the lines says, "There's a million dark allies you can run to" (something like that), and what he is referring to is not a literal ally (although that could be applicable) Watson is referring to hiding places in general, including the mind. Often hiding places especially for the believer are emotional, psychological, and mental which usually have some physical manifestation. One might turn to drugs and alcohol, "hiding in a bottle," "courage from a bottle," etc. I have a pastor friend when asked, "How you doing?" responds, "great since I found drugs!" Obviously he is kidding, but he expresses the sentiment of many that he ministers to who aren't kidding and they use drugs as a means to escape from the presence of the Lord. The work place might be a place someone runs to, or the recreation facility, to flee from God. Anything and any place can be used to flee from God. Watson's conclusion is that you can never out run "the long arm of the Lord."

What most people don't understand is that grace is in God's hand at the end of His long arm. Jonah didn't understand it. Even at the end (read the end of chapter 4) Jonah still didn't get that God was using him as an instrument of grace and mercy. All Jonah could see was hatred and prejudice. Jonah had his mind made up, but so did God! The story of Jonah, as it reflects on Israel (and the church), is a matter of humility.

How far did God chase you before you came to faith in Christ? How many times have you ignored God's instruction through His Word, the Holy Bible? Are you hiding (unsuccessfully I might add) right now? Well, you can hide (from yourself and others) for a while, but when God is ready, you'll find that you can't run from the presence of the Lord.