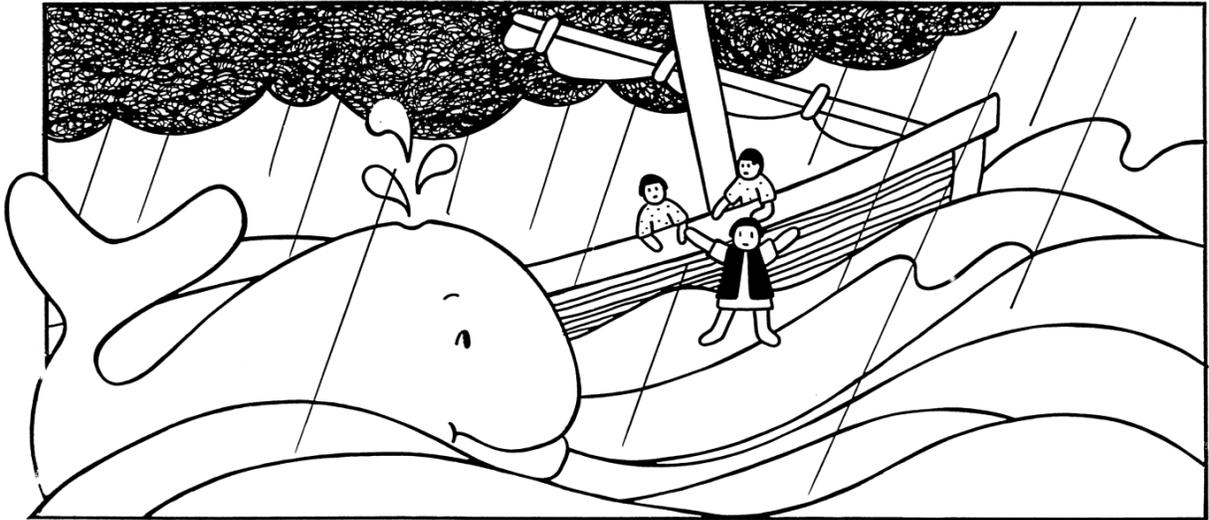


THE MAN WHO TRIED TO RUN FROM GOD

Jonah 1:1-17; 2:1-10; 3:10



A LONG, long time ago there lived a man named Jonah. In the country where Jonah lived, there was a big city where there were lots of people who did not love God. They would pray to things called idols. These idols were made out of wood or stone.

Because these people never prayed to God, or thought about God, they got to be very, very naughty and bad. They had sin in their heart. God saw that, and He did not like it. God would send someone to tell them how to pray and get saved, and how to ask God to make their hearts clean from sin.

It was Jonah whom God told to go to this bad city of Nineveh. Jonah was to teach the people about the real God. God said to tell them that they were to be good or something awful bad would happen, and they would all die.

What do you suppose happened? Do you think Jonah went? No, he did not want to go. He just did not want to mind God at all. He was like some little boys and girls who do not want to mind their mothers and daddies.

Jonah did not want to help the people in Nineveh. He did not like them. He thought God was so good and kind that He would let them pray and be saved. Jonah did not like them, so he did not want God to like them, either.

God loves everybody. If they are bad and do not know how to pray and be good, then God wants someone to teach them about God. God wants to help everybody, but Jonah did not.

No, Jonah did not want to go to the city of Nineveh. He thought he would just go someplace else. He thought he would run away from God, then God could not find him and make him go.

He did run away, too. He went to a place where he saw some boats going out into the ocean. One boat was going far away to another city. Jonah paid his money and got on that boat. He went down near the bottom of the boat and went to sleep.

Pretty soon the wind began to blow real hard. The waves around the boat got higher and higher and bigger and bigger. The boat was tipped this way and that way by the wind and waves. The big waves in the water washed right up where the sailors were working.

OO-OO-OO OO-OO went the wind. The boat went way over on one side then way over on the other side. The storm was so bad now the sailors thought the boat was going to break all to pieces. They were afraid.

Each man called out loud and prayed hard to his own idol god to help them, but of course their gods did not even hear them. Wood and stone-rock cannot hear anything. That did not do any good.

Maybe the boat was too heavy in the water. The men started throwing some things over the edge of the boat into the water. Maybe that would make the boat quit tipping and bouncing on the high rolling waves. No, that did not help either. Oh my, is the boat going to tip over and sink down, down, down into that deep, deep water?

Where was Jonah all this time? He was still asleep way down in the bottom of the boat. He did not know about the storm.

The shipmaster found Jonah asleep down there. He scolded Jonah: "What are you doing sleeping here? Don't you know that we are in trouble? Get up and pray to your God. Maybe your God will hear you and help us." They had prayed to their gods, but they could not help them.

How could Jonah pray to God for help now? He had not minded God. He had hid in the boat so God would not find him. He felt very much ashamed.

No one can hide from God. Jonah knew that now. God can see everywhere and He knew where Jonah was all the time.

Jonah had to tell the sailors why he had run away, and why they were in trouble. It was all because Jonah had been disobedient. What were they to do? "You will just have to throw me into the water and get me out of this boat," said Jonah. "This trouble is all my fault."

The men did not want to do that. They did not want to throw Jonah into that cold, cold, deep water. They tried harder than ever to keep the boat from going down, down, down into the deep water. The waves got bigger and bigger than before. The wind blew harder and harder.

"You will have to throw me off this boat into the water," said Jonah. "God has made this storm to stop me from running away. If you throw me out the wind will stop and the water will not tip your boat over."

The men did not want to do it but they knew what Jonah said must be right. They picked up Jonah and threw him into the water. Splash, splash went poor Jonah into all

those big waves.

The minute Jonah was off the boat the wind did stop. It was so nice and quiet. The big waves quit splashing. The boat did not tip anymore. Everything was as still as it was before the storm.

What happened to Jonah? As he fell into the water, a special big fish made by God, swam right up and swallowed him. It swallowed Jonah! God had made that fish and there it was to catch Jonah as he went into the water.

Jonah began to pray while inside that fish. It swam around with Jonah inside it. Jonah told God how sorry he was for not minding Him. He wished he had gone to Nineveh like God had told him to do.

Jonah was in that fish's dark stomach for three days. Because Jonah was so sorry and had prayed so hard God did not let him get hurt, and kept him alive.

Now Jonah knew that even if people prayed to idols of wood and stone they still might have kind hearts, and God loved them anyway. They just did not know any better, no one had told them. God loved them so much He wanted someone to teach them how to pray to the real God.

God let Jonah get out of the big fish's stomach. One day that fish swam up by some ground and spit Jonah out on the ground. Jonah was safe.

Jonah went to the bad city of Nineveh. He told all the people about God and how to pray. The people listened. They told God about how sorry they were for all the mean things they had done. Oh, but they were glad to know there was a God who could really hear them and make them happy. Everyone in the whole city was saved. All the sin, all bad things, were washed out of their hearts.

What if no one would have told them about God? God needed Jonah to tell them. He needs you, today.

No one can ever hide from God. He is looking right at you all the time. Maybe your mother and daddy cannot see what you do, but God does. God wants you to work for Him and be a good helper.