THE TRAGEDY OF GOING DOWN IN MINISTRY

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Oluwatobi S. Adewuyi
Coordinator

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Topic:
THE TRAGEDY OF GOING DOWN IN MINISTRY
Bible Text: Jonah 1:1-3

Prayer

Eternal Rock of Ages, Almighty Father, we bless You, Lord, for this day that you have given to us, to rejoice and be glad in it, we bless you for helping us through it, we ask that you continue to guide us, speak to us even as we learn together at Your feet right now. We pray that none of these words will fall to the ground but will bear fruits of righteousness in our lives, these words shall not stand against us on the day of Judgment in Jesus Christ's mighty name we pray. Amen.

Bible Text

Jonah 1:1-3

Jonah.1.1 - Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

Jonah.1.2 - Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

Jonah.1.3 - But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Study

The story of Jonah, as contained in the book of Jonah, is a very interesting one that is filled with lessons. In the text above, the word of the Lord came unto Jonah. Jonah, being a true prophet and having worked with God for some time, had become so acquainted with the word of the Lord that he could recognize it without mistaking it for the voice of the devil. He received the word of the Lord, and what was the word about?

Jonah 1:2 KJV Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. From the words the Lord spoke to Jonah, we would see that it is an instruction or command that needed action—arise, go! It required getting up, probably from sitting, or redirecting his focus if he was already standing. The command was clear: go to Nineveh, not Damascus, not Samaria, but specifically to Nineveh, with its

qualification "that great city" in case there was any doubt about which Nineveh. It had been specified as "that great." He was not only asked to arise and go but also to cry against it. He wasn't instructed to go there and live among them or work for a living, but to go and cry against it. The purpose or reason for this cry was that their wickedness had come before God. This was similar to the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah wickedness that went up to the Lord. **Genesis 18:20-21 KJV** And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; [21] I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. The Lord had to come down himself to see if the wicked acts done by these people were actually true. It's not that He didn't see it all along, but He wanted His judgment over them to be justifiable. When a land persists in evil, the sins committed cover the land and move toward God to demand judgment. When the evil ways of Nineveh reported themselves to God, who is just, He wouldn't just destroy them because He doesn't take pleasure in the death of sinners. **Ezekiel 33:11 KJV** Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

He wants all to repent. Therefore, He sent Jonah to Nineveh, this time around; God Himself didn't come down but sent His prophet to serve as His representative before the people of Nineveh. Unfortunately, the one who was to represent God before these people decided to do contrary to what was commanded of him.

Jonah 3:1-3

1. Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying,

2. "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you."

3. So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent.

Jonah's Disobedience

Jonah 1:3 KJV But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Jonah rose up as instructed, but fled to Tarshish. The error committed by Jonah was not that he did not rise up, but he rose up to do something else that did not please God. He left for Tarshish in order to flee from God's presence. From Jonah's actions, it is clear that he knew what he was doing and did it intentionally. He recognized that it was God speaking to him, which led him to plan to flee from Him. Although Nineveh was a great city, it is a city to be pitied because it chose to indulge in wickedness, which would bring about its ruin. No matter how great a community might be, it is not better than a shaft fit for burning when it chooses to live in perpetual wickedness. Today, we can liken the world to Nineveh with its great inventions, cities, wealth, pride, and many innovations. Yet, despite all these, it needs help because their cry of wickedness has reached up to God for judgment. There are many Jonahs who have been sent to cry against the city of the world but have run to Tarshish instead.

Many behave like Jonah today. They were sent by their church to a specific location, but they have decided not to go there. Instead, they choose to live where God did not send them, fleeing from Him to another place. They begin to live in disobedience, not realizing that the moment a person becomes disobedient to the One who calls him into ministry, such a person begins to move out of God's presence. Gradually, disobedience takes a man out of God's presence, leading to a gradual fall in ministry. Looking at Jonah as a case study, the day he began to live in disobedience was when he started leaving God's presence, and his descent in ministry began. The first thing he did was to go down to Joppa. He was supposed to continue his ministry to Nineveh, which would have added dynamics to his ministry and helped it. However, he refused, and as he went down to Joppa, the minus was added to his ministry. That was when he found a ship going to Tarshish. The truth is that in ministry, there are those who are readily available to help in one's going down, either consciously or unconsciously. The surprising thing was that he paid the fare and still went down again. When a man begins to run away from God's commandments, he keeps going down and down. The reason many ministries are going down today is that they have departed from the presence of the Lord. How did they depart? Simply by disobedience.

There is always a way the church and ministries owned by the Lord Jesus Christ are runned, and the moment they are not runned that way, they will not bring the desired results. Many ministers have equated numerical growth in their church and ministry as growth. Without the presence of the

Lord, the church and ministry are not growing because they have departed from the Lord's instructions.

The Fare of Rebellion

Jonah paid the fare to Tarshish; in the same way, there are many ministers who pay to Tarshish today. They do this not knowing that paying for anything in ministry which does not align with the ways of God or His will amounts to paying to Tarshish. There are ministers who have paid money to herbalists for power; these are also like Jonah – they have paid the fare of rebellion. For Jonah to have left for Tarshish instead of Nineveh shows an act of rebellion – opposition to one in authority or dominance. He opposed the Lord's commandment, and he could not have claimed not to know because the instruction was clear. We must look carefully into our lives and ministries to see if we have not been paying the fare of rebellion. There are those whom God has called into one of the five-fold ministries; they knew it was God speaking to them. In fact, several people have confirmed it, but they choose not to listen, whereas they do not know that their disobedience amounts to rebellion. And this rebellious act has added speed, so they are going down in ministry

These are some of the ways many have paid the fare of rebellion like Jonah, which has contributed to their going down in ministry. These things are timeless truths that have made many keep wondering what the issue is in their ministry because they are not seeing results the way they should.

There are two sets of people who can be rebelled against today:

1. To God, who is the supreme authority.

2. To men whom God has placed as authority over us.

1. **In the case of Jonah's rebellion, he rebelled against God by choosing not to obey His instruction.** He recognized Him as an authority but chose to act against His commandments, heading towards a contrary direction. From what Jonah did as a servant of God, we can see that men of God can be rebellious against God, and this happens when they choose to go their own way and not God's way. God's instructions are well-contained and stated in His Word, and it is the duty of every man of God to search it out and carry out whatever instruction is contained therein; failure to do so amounts to disobedience and can then be termed as rebellion. Some of the areas men of God have become disobedient and rebellious today in ministry, which has brought them down, are as follows:

a. **By serving other gods:** This is the greatest form of disobedience and rebellion before the Lord. **Exodus 20:5 KJV** "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." The Lord declared that He is a jealous God and no other god should compete with Him. Many face difficult situations in ministry, and they have decided to seek help from gods that are no gods. The act of rebellion shows their lack of faith and trust in God. They introduce foreign gods on God's altar, and this has made them go down in ministry. But true success in ministry is simply the way one is able to please the Lord and populate His Kingdom. The moment a minister of God departs from the Lord to serve another God, then such has placed his feet on the path of rebellion. There are different ways ministers serve idols today; it may not necessarily mean physical idols. In fact, the most common idols ministers serve today are the unseen ones only found in the heart.

i. **The Lord Jesus Christ equated service in relation to Him and Mammon.** He said, "You cannot serve God and mammon." **Matthew 6:24 KJV** No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. This implies that money can become a god to someone. He says no man can serve two masters; this implies that the moment your heart begins to focus on money more than God in ministry, you are getting to serve another god. Money is needed in ministry, but if care is not taken, one can be so concerned about money that the things which interest the Lord, such as souls, take a back seat.

ii. **Another idol of the heart is fame.** Many ministers are falling because they want fame; they want to be popular and respected by all. Their hearts are inclined toward that direction, so they have taken their eyes away from the Lord Jesus Christ to how they can be well-known. As ministers, we must remove every desire for fame from our hearts. God is the one who sets one on high, and He is the one who brings one down. If it pleases Him, He will give you fame; if it doesn't please Him, He will not do it, perhaps to prevent you from losing your soul. The truth is that most times, God may decide not to give fame to His children because He knows they might not be able to handle it well, and it can make them lose track of Heaven. If many are given fame, they can be destroyed because of it. Many ministers have been in ministry for years, but they have not yet built the capacity to handle fame, yet they keep covering it. But God will not do what would lead to their ruin. Instead, we must focus on the ministry to which we have been called and

anointed and not lose sight of our calling to focus on things that are of lesser or no importance.

The caution is in **Matthew 6:33 KJV**, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Continuous seeking of God's Kingdom is important and must not be joked with to overcome these idols of the heart. The moment we begin to run after fame, we realize that we are already serving another god in our hearts, which amounts to rebellion before the Lord. Moses told the children of Israel this in **Deuteronomy 31:27 KJV**, "For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD, and how much more after my death?" Moses knew that rebellion against God is dangerous, so he dropped a warning for them before he died.

2. **Rebelling against men who God has placed as authority over us:** Not taking instructions and rejecting them, and also seeking to overthrow them. Using the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram as a case study, we see how dangerous it is to rebel against whoever God has placed over us. The main cause of Korah's rebellion was that he wanted the priesthood, although he had the privilege of being from the family of Levi, who are to stand before the congregation of the Lord to serve them. **Numbers 16:9-10 KJV** "Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? **[10]** And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?"

God separated the family of Levi from the congregation of Israel to bring them near to Him, unlike the other tribes of Israel. But the Lord reserved the priesthood for Aaron and his descendants, despite the fact that Korah was a Levite. He still wanted the priesthood, as all priests are Levites, but not all Levites are priests. Now, for him to have challenged the authority of Moses, then he was challenging God who instituted the order. He claimed to be holy, and 250 leaders joined him, as Dathan and Abiram joined, serving as leaders in this rebellion against the Lord's anointed. Moses made it clear to Korah that they have not gathered against him but have gathered against God. **Numbers 16:11 KJV** "For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?" It is a tragedy for men to seek to fight God. Fighting God is engaging in a battle one can never win, no matter how skilled and powerful

one might be. When we declare a fight against God's anointed, we are fighting against God because God Himself is the one keeping His own in such cases. God is the one who supervises the punishment of such people. Just like how these Levites had the opportunity to serve in God's vineyard, and where they were placed did not satisfy them, but they sought a more honorable position, it is the same today. Many have been given the opportunity to serve in God's vineyard under specific men of God, but they are not satisfied with where God placed them. They began to seek to overthrow their leaders because they saw growth in the ministry, they saw that there was much inflow of money, they saw the fame, and they began to lust after it. They permitted the nature of Satan in their lives because of a lack of self-control. Satan was the first rebel; he wanted to overthrow God Almighty, but he was debased. Those who seek to overthrow their leaders are like Satan's twin brothers; they carry his nature, and they will experience the same fate as him. If we see what happened to Lucifer when he rebelled against his boss, we can see that it was the same thing that happened to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

Isaiah 14:12-15 KJV "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! **[13]** For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: **[14]** I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. **[15]** Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

He said that he would ascend above the heights of the clouds and said he would be like the Most High. Imagine that, he wanted a place of authority and power; he wanted to be like his Creator. This is how many want the place of power and authority their leaders occupy; they want to be like their leaders, not positively but to have them above those whom they should be under. Now we can see the judgment given to Lucifer; he was brought down to hell, the lowest depth. God indeed humbles the proud. Looking at the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, we see that a similar thing happened to them because they committed a similar offense. Most times the repercussions of offenses committed by others can be similar to the ones we would face if we are also caught in a web of similar offenses. **Numbers 16:31-33 KJV** "And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: **[32]** And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. **[33]** They, and

all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation."

They went down alive into the pit. They perished from among the people. Those who love rebellion should learn from these men and amend their ways. Some have sent hired killers to their leaders because they feel these leaders have taken too much on themselves. They refuse to acknowledge the place of God in the matters arising, to focus on the physical, and God was watching them as they gathered themselves against His anointed. **Psalm 2:1-2 KJV** "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? **[2]** The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,"

In their plots, the Lord is watching them. They set themselves and take counsel together against His anointed. They cross boundaries by breaking the command that says, "Touch not my anointed and do my prophets no harm." **1 Chronicles 16:22 KJV** "Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." Every gathering against true servants of God, is a gathering against the Lord. The moment we begin to sense the act of rebellion in our lives and even jealousy, we should quickly go to God in prayer to cast out that strange spirit, which is of the devil, so that one would not end up like him. But in Jonah's case, he did not rebel against man but God but he was so fortunate that God had a kind of special love for him, which made him receive an uncommon grace that spared his life. Such instances are not usually popular but he was favored. This is why we cannot compare ourselves with Jonah because one may not receive such grace; therefore, it is expedient that we obey the Lord as He commands us and not play with our souls.

These are some of the things that amount to going down in ministry. Lucifer went down in his music ministry because of rebellion. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram went down in serving ministry in the temple because of rebellion. Jonah too started going down in his prophetic ministry because of rebellion. If not for the grace that found him, he would have gotten lost.

Finally, he found himself down in the belly of the fish, which he himself called a pit when he was praying his prayers of repentance to God. **Jonah 2:1-2,6 KJV** "Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, **[2]** And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. **[6]** I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was

about me forever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God."

If you have also been entangled in any capacity, you can choose to be like Jonah or like Korah and Lucifer. It depends on the choice you make, but God wants you to cease your rebellious acts. Those who are rebellious do not dwell in flourishing lands but in dry lands where they can never be productive. **Psalm 68:6 KJV** "God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

Invitation

If you know that you are still living in sin and you are ready to repent and begin to live your life in strict obedience to God so that you can overcome every sin in your life to make heaven, please place your right hand on your chest and say this prayer with your mouth.

Say,

"Lord Jesus, I accept You as my personal Lord and Savior. I believe that You died for me and took away my sins so that I will not face the penalty of them. I surrender my life to You today, and I make a decision to obey and follow You. Come into my life now and accept me as Your child. Thank You for saving me, in Jesus Christ's name I pray, Amen."

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