

When “I’m Sorry” Isn’t Sufficient

Copyright 2003. Revised 2011. All scripture is Authorized King James Version, 1769 edition. This article may be copied and used without permission of the author, provided it is copied and used in its entirety.

In every person’s life there are things that occur that are the result of the actions, unintentional or otherwise, of those around them. We can even be affected by the decisions and actions of those quite far removed from us. There are numerous instances of this in the Scripture. One such incident we are all familiar with involved Jonah and his disobedience to the Lord.

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. 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.

But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten *it* of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know

for whose cause this evil *is* upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil *is* upon us; What *is* thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what *is* thy country? and of what people *art* thou? And he said unto them, I *am* an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry *land*. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest *is* upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring *it* to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. (*Jonah 1:1-16*)

There are many things we could say about the above passage from the Book of Jonah. We could attempt to justify Jonah's actions by pointing out that it is entirely likely some of the men on the ship were saved as result of what happened, which would not have happened had Jonah simply gone to Nineveh like he was supposed to. We could also say that Jonah's preaching in Nineveh was made more believable by his appearance, having

come from being in the whale's belly for three days.

However, both of these justifications ignore the fact that Jonah directly disobeyed the Lord, and in so doing caused a number of other people to suffer the loss of the fruits of their labor. Not only that, Jonah's disobedience imperiled the lives of the entire crew of the ship. I wonder what transpired when the ship finally returned to port and reported to the owners of the cargo they were carrying as to the events that occurred and why. Perhaps the owners of the goods that were tossed overboard were not so understanding? I also wonder – would they have accepted Jonah's "I'm sorry", or "I apologize"? Would they have ever believed Jonah (or anyone else) if the Gospel were presented to them? After all, it would be real immediate in their minds that a "man of God" caused the loss of their labors.

Upon this, I am reminded of the time I worked as an Avionics Guidance & Control Supervisor on the flightline at Castle AFB. I worked KC-135 aircraft, and was responsible for the Instrument, Inertial Navigation, Autopilot & Flight Stabilization, and Compass systems of the aircraft. One of the most pressing issues emphasized was doing the job right. As a supervisor, it was imperative to impress upon my people the seriousness of the maintenance we performed. After all, when things go wrong at 35,000 ft. there is no place to "pull over" and check it out. More than once, when reading of an incident that resulted in the loss of an aircraft and crew, I would find that the cause was the result of some maintenance technician's failure to correctly perform maintenance on the system that failed – and people died.

One of the things I discovered many years ago, was that there are many times when "I'm sorry" or "I apologize" just doesn't cut it.

"I'm sorry" doesn't cut it when someone dies as a result of something you did and should not have done, or, did not do and

should have done. "I'm sorry" won't bring them back. "I'm sorry" won't fill the empty space in the lives of their family and won't replace the head of the home you just killed through negligence.

"*I'm sorry*" won't cut it when someone is injured as a result of our actions. It also won't restore them to full health either. There are many other things we can think of that "I'm sorry" won't fix once the damage is done.

You know, Jonah's example is only the mildest of examples of what "I'm sorry" wouldn't fix in the Scriptures. If we consider Achan, Absalom, the children of Israel in the Wilderness . . . What is it stated in the Psalm?

He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: And he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat *was* yet in their mouths, The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen *men* of Israel. For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.
(*Psalms 78:27-32*)

I wonder: How many children went to sleep that night in the camp of Israel without one, or both their parents? Even if their parents could say "I'm sorry," it was too late.

Even so, what about us? Do we consider the decisions we make and the resulting effects they will have upon those around us? What about the lost that see us and know we are "Christians"? Will "I'm sorry" cut it when they are in Hell because they saw no difference between us and the world – and thus rejected the Gospel because our message was not believable?

Will "I'm sorry" be sufficient when we aid and abet someone's

rebellion against God, and it results in their destruction?

Will "I'm sorry" be an appropriate answer before the throne of God when we are faced with the indisputable fact that we would not be burdened for the souls of those around us? You know, we can say we're burdened all day long. But, if we never get out and present the Gospel to those around us, what we say is meaningless. What counts is what we do, not what we say.

Will "I'm sorry" work when we are confronted by the Lord at His throne concerning all the times he convicted us and rebuked us about our sin – and we ignored it, brushed it off, or got angry about it?

I am not saying that there is no forgiveness with God. Of a certainty there is. However, there are sure consequences for our decisions and subsequent actions. We are not at liberty to do as we please – that is license. We are surely at liberty to live godly lives and present the truth of the Lord's kingdom in a believable manner. After all, we are reminded that we are not our own, but the Lord's:

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (*I Corinthians 6:19-20*)

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (*Galatians 2:20*)

Which brings to the forefront of my mind why I am continually reminded that while I worked on the flightline it was of the utmost importance to me that I never be responsible for the loss of, or damage to an aircraft or aircrew. How much more so should I be concerned for the eternal destiny of the souls of

those around me? As it is written: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" (*Hebrews 9:27*) Which is more important, how well an airplane flies, or where someone goes when they die?

This also raises another interesting point to consider: Jonah had his reason for refusing to do the Lord's will (granted, it wasn't valid): I wonder; what are our reasons for refusing to do the Lord's will?

And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. (*Jonah 3:10-4:1-2*)

It is obvious, Jonah hated the people of Nineveh and wanted to see them destroyed. Do we hate those around us, or are we just too wrapped up in ourselves to see the lost all about us?

Brethren, what good is "I'm sorry" when someone is in Hell?

Finis