**God Never Fails**

Based on [Jonah 1:1-17](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jon1.1-17) and [Matthew 8:23-27](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt8.23-27)

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Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

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In raising children, I have learned there is a right way and a wrong way to discipline. “Do what I say, or else” is the wrong approach. Even if it works, it is the wrong way to parent. **The right way to say it is, “*You are going to do what I say*; either you can do it willingly, and I will be happy with you, or you can do so unwillingly and I will be disappointed.** *Either way*, you are going to do what I say. // As a parent, it’s easy to panic or get frantic when you’re children don’t listen..to throw up your hands, give into their demands because you feel helpless and without control. But you have control. If you are able to be patient, you know that you have the control, and in the end it will be your way if you don’t concede defeat.

God is our Heavenly Father…and one of the central tenets of the true religion is that God always gets His way. He never concedes. He never fails to accomplish his purposes. He is not slow in achieving his goals. **He is patient, not wanting any to perish but all to come to knowledge of the truth.**

God is never manipulated, he is never outmaneuvered. He is never double-crossed. No matter how things seem to be playing out, He always gets his way, always does what he says and get’s people to do his will in the end, either by the sweet persuasion of the gospel, or by the force of his Law. God’s not going to change his mind to accommodate disobedient and rebellious hearts. His will will be done***. The only issue is, are you going to be a willing and obedient child, trusting that His ways are best, his counsels are wise, his commands are holy,*** or are you going to be a stiff-necked, disobedient child, resenting his will and resisting his ways?

Jonah was a prophet of the true God. A true prophet. God came to Jonah and told him to go and preach against Nineveh,a great and wicked city. But Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. It wasn’t because of the long trip; it wasn’t because he gets seasick. He didn’t want to go because, unlike God, he desired the death of the sinner. He didn’t think Nineveh deserved grace.

Jonah fled to Joppa, and took a ship in the opposite direction. But God caused a storm, Jonah was thrown overboard to stop the storm, swallowed by a big fish, and in three days was delivered to the shore by Ninevah anyway. *Then God repeated himself, saying to Jonah, “****Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.”*** This time Jonah arose and went to Nineveh. That was some amazing parenting on God’s part!

Jonah went, and preached disaster. The city heard and repented…and God, because he is merciful,…relented. After Nineveh repented, Jonah said that is why he didn’t want to go there in the first place. Jonah knew God was gracious and merciful and would spare them, and he didn’t think they deserved a warning to repent and flee from the wrath of God to come.

Jonah, thought they deserved to remain and die in their wickedness, and to bring a message of repentance was to try to save those he didn’t want saved. It didn’t matter. He was not in the place of God to make such decisions. **God wanted them saved, and he called Jonah to do it. It wasn’t an option, God was going to send Jonah to Ninevah.** The question was whether he was going to go willingly, obediently…or whether he would break trust and try to flee.

Two things God wanted accomplished, 1. That Nineveh would be warned of His Wrath and repent, and 2. That Jonah would be his instrument to bring them the message. In the end, God accomplished both of them. Jonah resisted, but after the fish incident, he knew it was no use to resist. Jonah obeyed.

Friends, know this about God’s Word. It never fails, but accomplishes the purpose for which it was sent. **The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.** In a similar scene, Jesus was once in a boat with his disciples. And there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves. But Jesus was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, “**Save us, Lord; we are perishing**.”

When injustice happens in this world to the saints, real injustice, evil people mistreat you or slander you. Or else when you have a sickness or disease that troubles you day and night. Or if there is a terrible storm, or danger. I’ve often said as words of comfort, don’t be afraid, “God is not asleep at the wheel”. In light of this text I don’t know that that is the best expression! Because, Jesus, God in the flesh is asleep at the helm, while the disciples boat is being pounded and flooded by the waves.

Though Jesus is asleep according to his human nature; the point is that God is still upholding the universe by the word of His power. He will never faint or grow weary. Jesus’ sleeping is not negligence; it is faith in the knowledge that His Father governs all things has all things under control.

And it is also a *test* for the disciples, to see if they really know who is with them in the boat. And more than a test, for those who fail the test it is also a lesson to teach them, and to teach us, that God’s Word has authority over all things in heaven on earth. **When Jesus awoke, he rebuked the wind and the sea, and the wind and the sea *obeyed him*.**

Jonah rebuked Nineveh, and they obeyed. And rather then rejoice and the power and mercy of God’s Word, he was resentful and angry. Guard your heart by remembering the one thing that God commands above all else, is that you love one another as He has loved you. Forgive each others trespasses as He has forgiven yours. Because of sin, you are as different from God as darkness differs from light. But God wants to make you like himself, and he desires mercy not sacrifice. There is a place for anger…but be angry and do not sin.

No greater sin then wanting someone to die in theirs. And why would you want that; because someone is a thorn in your flesh? Because you try so hard and they just don’t care? Desire their repentance, not their death. Straight is the path and narrow the way that leads to eternal life. It takes effort, discernment, prayer and a willing spirit to avoid the paths of death. You don’t want your enemies to suffer, but to repent. Do not grudge that you have a harder life and more burdens. Bear them with joy for your salvation, and pray that your neighbor be granted the same repentence you have.

It is not only a bitter life to live in hatred and self pity. It is sin. Choose life from the one who is the life of the world, Jesus Christ. He fulfilled the sign of Jonah, being three days in the belly of the earth and was raised so that, through our baptism into his death, we would walk in the newness of life.

**8**Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. **9**For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” **10**Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.