"Psyche Me Up"

A Monthly Newsletter : Brought to you by: Simpson University Wellness Center

“Naw, I’m Good.”

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Maybe it’s just me, but it seems sometimes like the very thing we need most is that thing that we most avoid. Whether it’s getting lost in facebook or texting for 3 hours instead of writing that paper that’s due tomorrow ... or spending time with people who aren’t good for us versus those whom we know are healthier for us … or staying up all night, for whatever reason, instead of getting the sleep I know I desperately need … you get the picture. We aren’t always the best judge of what’s truly best. And even if we know it, why is it so hard to do it? I submit to you that maybe it’s not just “stress” or that we feel like we “deserve some down-time”, but perhaps something a more dangerous … a hardened heart.

Remember that guy who got swallowed by, and was later vomited from the belly of a “great fish,”? He became the poster-boy for what happens when we do what we think is best and see the Word of the Lord as “optional”. When the Word of God came for him, we find him running, making his own plans instead. Three times as he is running from the presence of the Lord scripture states that Jonah went “down”. Ironically, Jonah didn’t see how his actions were taking him “down.” He seems to have thought that he was getting away with not following God’s plan for him. Maybe he thought God had “bigger fish to fry”, and that He had moved on to someone else to do His bidding. In Divine humor, Jonah just “happened” to find a ship to Tarshish, and “happened” to have enough money to “pay the fare.”

There is great danger in allowing circumstantial providence to replace the truth of what God has spoken. Jonah could not actually escape the presence of God, but because of the hardness of his heart he was getting farther away from God and there was a high price to pay. Jonah “paid the fare,” all right. We always pay a price for our own way. Though the bill may come due in different ways for each of us.

Unfortunately, Jonah was not the only one to pay a high price. The hardness of his heart caused everyone else around him to pay a price as well. The hardness of Jonah’s heart caused him to “sleep”. Despite God hurling a storm to gain his attention, Jonah simply slept. He slept through God’s pleading and caused a heavy price to be paid by everyone on the ship. They threw their future and their livelihood overboard, while Jonah slept on. Ultimately, Jonah’s heart became so hard that he failed to see the need to turn back to God. In order to stop the storm, his companions were forced to do what he should have done himself: He was thrown from the ship instead of taking everyone “down” with him. It was the ultimate selfishness; not taking responsibility for his own actions nor caring about the consequences for others.

Before we throw stones at Jonah, or others like him, it would do us well to examine our own hearts a little deeper. It doesn’t take much self reflection to see that Jonah is me … Jonah is you, and Jonah is me … Jonah is you, and … Jonah is you. What is it that I need to do to wake up from the darkness of what I may have been doing? Maybe it’s just me, but I’m guessing Jonah was eventually “won over” by the truth, for from inside the fish Jonah prayed: “In my distress I called to the Lord and He answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help and you listened to my cry. You hurled me into the deep… all your waves and breakers swept over me… but you brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God … those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs … but I, with a song of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you …”

No matter how far, or how many times, we run … at the end of our days we will find ourselves in the dark, suffocating belly of the fish, or, in repentance and submission we will end up on the beach.