

# THE BOOK OF JONAH

the relentless pursuit of God's mercy

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**TEXT:** Jonah 3 & Pray

**INTRO:** A story that seems a bit too far fetched to be true. A story that has one to many twists & turns to be taken at face value. A story that God placed in His sacred Word because we need it. A story that teaches us in powerful ways about the very nature of our God. A story that we need.

**BIG IDEA:** God's Gospel Knowns No Bounds

## 1. The Gospel Was for Jonah | **Jonah 3:1-2**

- When I say gospel this morning - *I'm referring to the good news that God is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.*
- This gospel is not just something that the world (out there) needs to come to know Jesus, it is the very thing the child of God needs each & every day as we fight to walk the Christian journey.
- Jonah 3 reminds us in a powerful fashion that it is not just the world "out there" that needs the gospel, it is those of us in here! We never move past our need for the unending mercy & kindness of God (which is the gospel)!
- **REVIEW:** Jonah was the prophet for God's people // Jonah was obedient to God in every area but one // Jonah thought he was sold out, all in, 100% committed to his God // God put His finger on the one thing that was at the heart of who Jonah was — the one thing he wouldn't surrender // Jonah was willing to obey God until God required too much.
- **REVIEW:** Is that not how we live today? Willing to walk with God // Willing to obey God // Willing to pray, read the Word, go to church, and live the Christian life (generally speaking) // But when God puts his finger on that ONE thing that you crave — that one thing that you long for — that one thing that you won't give up — you say not this one God — anything but that one // And you run — maybe not as obvious as Jonah, but you run // You refuse to give that ONE thing to God
- **REMEMBER:** You are never farther from God then when you are walking with Him in every area but one // Rebellion is when you are walking with God in every area but one.
- **TRUTH:** This is where Jonah found himself and if we are honest, it is often where we find ourselves today.

- TRUTH: If God gave Jonah what he deserved (even as a prophet), God could have struck him dead. If God were to give us what we deserve, He could strike us dead too.

#### A. The Gospel Was for Jonah When He Sinned — **Jonah 3:1a**

- The gospel declares that God is merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (Exodus 34:6).

QUESTION: Is this not what we see God doing with Jonah? Jonah runs (hard-core) and God doesn't "get him" or "strike him dead." God pursues Jonah to be gracious to him — to win him back — to give him a second chance.

- TRUTH: The Lord met with Jonah — in the storm & in the belly of a giant fish — BECAUSE the Lord was bringing Jonah back (REMEMBER - *the Lord was not getting Jonah back He was bringing Jonah back*).

God's discipline when we run is not judgment but mercy — God is too kind & too gracious to let you go your own way into immediate & eternal destruction! If you belong to the Lord, He will bring you back when you run!

#### B. The Gospel is for You (Christian) When You Sin

- God's gracious and merciful kindness is on display when His children rebel and draws them back to Himself!
- The Bible is full of saints who went their own way & full of saints whom God restored!

ILL: Abraham, Moses, David, Jonah, & Peter

GOSPEL ABUSE: The Bible is not saying that God turns a blind eye to your sin (that would be an abuse of grace). The Bible is saying that God is merciful & gracious AND THAT He is willing to bring you back when you sin (even though you will likely know the pain & consequence of his discipline).

- GOSPEL TRUTH: God's mercy is sufficient for your past, present, and future sins. Jesus didn't just pay the price for your past sins. Jesus paid the price for ALL your sins. And so even when you stray as a child of God, guess what? God is committed to showing you mercy & grace because of Jesus.

This is what God did for Jonah (a rebellious prophet) & it is what God continues to do today — show grace & mercy to His us, his often wayward children.

#### C. The Gospel Screams 2nd Chances — **Jonah 3:1b-2**

- When you run from God & repent — God forgives & relationship is restored
  - God is a Good Father — He doesn't leave you at arms length. He doesn't make you earn your position. He graciously & mercifully forgives you and fellowship/friendship with God is immediately granted.
- When you run from God & repent — God calls you to submit & surrender in that one area that cause you to run from Him
  - TRUTH: God doesn't relax his standards // God doesn't change His commands // God will press you to obey Him in the one area you refused to before!
- The God of the Bible is unquestionably the God of 2nd chances (to the tenth degree) BUT the God of the Bible will call you to submit & surrender over, and over, and over again in that ONE area that you said no!
  - TRUTH: God doesn't go soft when you repent. God doesn't change His tune to keep you. God doesn't adjust His commands to make it easier for you. God puts His heavenly finger on that ONE thing in your life and says — it's mine. REMEMBER: If Jesus is not the Lord of every corner of your heart, He is not Lord at all.
- FOR JONAH: The command came a second time - go to Nineveh and declare exactly what I tell you.
- FOR YOU: What is it that you know God is requiring of you? Did God reveal your heart a few weeks ago in Jonah 1 (You are Jonah)? Has God brought you low yet because He loves you enough to bring you back (Jonah 2)? Are you willing yet to forsake & surrender whatever it is the Lord is asking of you?

## 2. The Gospel Was for Nineveh | **Jonah 3:3-9**

### A. Jonah Obeyed God — **Jonah 3:3-4**

- Obeying God was Costly — roughly 500 miles across the desert // a Jew going to the capital of Assyria (racial & political suicide) // a Jew declaring a less than friendly message to a massive, hostile city (life threatening)

To put it in perspective — Nineveh was huge. Extremely high walls. Extremely thick walls (think impenetrable fortress — Lord of the Rings status). Think hundreds of thousands of people (if not millions if you include the surrounding areas).

DON'T FORGET: The Assyrians were not just the global superpower but they were vile & brutal to all their enemies.

- Jonah declared a message of Judgement — not a message of God’s love & mercy // not a message that God has a good plan for your life // not a feel good message (*More on this in a minute*)

## B. Nineveh Believes — **Jonah 3:5a**

- TRUTH: Everyone who shouldn’t believe in this story believes & everyone who should believes doesn’t!

The Sailers Believed — Jonah 1:16 // Nineveh Believes — Jonah 1:5a

- BIBLICAL THEOLOGY: Nineveh was serving as a sign to demonstrate just how hard-hearted and rebellious the people of Israel had become (in Jonah’s day). The ones who should have been believing were not & the ones who should have NEVER believed are believing!
- FAST FORWARD: Nineveh is a sign to Israel in the days of Jesus (Matthew 12:39-41) // not only is Jonah’s three days/nights in the belly of the whale compared to Jesus’s 3 days/nights in the tomb // but Nineveh’s repentance serves to condemn the Jews who refuse to repent & believe in the Messiah - Jesus Christ!
- TRUTH: Everyone who shouldn’t believe in this story believes & everyone who should believes doesn’t!

SURPRISED: Is this not how God’s mercy & grace work! Those whom we think should never come to Christ, believe!

## C. Nineveh Proved the Genuineness of their Repentance — **Jonah 3:5b-9**

- Saving faith is proven by a humble brokenness - **Jonah 3:5b-8a**

TRUTH: Pride must be broken for their to be saving faith // God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble

REALITY: A mighty nation is immediately brought to their knees and they are okay with it — they are actually demanding it (from the commoners to the King — no one is exempt) // they have become painfully aware of their national sin and they are demanding a national repentance!

- Saving faith is proven by crying out desperately to God - **Jonah 3:8b**

TRUTH: When sinners become aware of the exceeding sinfulness of their sin, there is no attempt to cover it & hide. When sinners become aware of the exceeding sinfulness of their sin, there is no attempt to self-atone (to work their way out of it).

TRUTH: When sinners become aware of the exceeding sinfulness of their sin, they can only do one thing — cry out mighty to God!

CRUCIAL QUESTION: What was it that caused Nineveh to become aware of the exceeding sinfulness of their sin? Was it God's love? Was it God's mercy? NOPE — it was God's holy, righteous justice.

TRUTH: It is the holiness of God that causes sinners to cry out for mercy // for if you only know about God's mercy, you don't need his mercy // it is the just wrath of God that sparks the fire in the sinners heart to call out for mercy!

- Saving faith is proven by forsaking sin (repentance) - **Jonah 3:8c**

Saving faith isn't just mental assent // Saving faith is believing that moves to the forsaking of sin (which is what Jesus will call repentance).

QUESTION: Do you see repentance in the cry of Nineveh as a people — *let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.*

- Saving faith is proven by pleading for God's mercy - **Jonah 3:9**

3 Qualities of Genuine Repentance (both then & now):

#1: Saving faith doesn't presume on God's mercy

#2: Saving faith knows full well what you deserve

#3: Saving faith pleads to not get what you know you deserve (the cry of mercy)

- TRUTH: Is this not the cry of every human being today who becomes aware of their sinful condition in light of the holy character of God? They cry out for mercy!

### 3. The Gospel is for You | Jonah 3:10

#### A. We are Jonah

- If you are a Christian this morning — you need the gospel applied to your life today!
- MAYBE: You have gone your own way like Jonah // you have allowed carnality to creep in due to neglect // you have deliberately said *not this time God*

But this morning you know that you need to return to your God who is slow to anger & abounding in steadfast love & mercy.

- MAYBE: You're love has grown cold because you have forgotten about the mercy & grace of God

- Brothers & sisters - we are so often like Jonah — we need to return to the character of our God — we need to be reminded of the infinite mercy & grace that we have received in Christ!

#### B. We are Nineveh

- **MAYBE:** We have forgotten about God's holy, righteous justice // we have forgotten that God takes sin seriously
- **MAYBE:** You have never actually come to God pleading with Him for mercy // You have thought of God in lesser ways
- **BUT NOW:** You realize who God is // you realize what you deserve // and like Nineveh, you are ready to cry out in desperation for His mercy

#### C. When sinners repent — God is ready & eager to show mercy — Jonah 3:10

- **THE HEART OF GOD:** When we so much as lift a pinky toe towards God's mercy, He is eager & ready to lavish us with insurmountable mercy!
- Jeremiah 18:7-10 — the heart of God is eager to show mercy!

#### THE GOSPEL

- God is eager to hear the repentant cry of any & all sinners because He would not hear the cry of His son on the cross.
- You see - God heard the cry of Nineveh for mercy because God would pour out the wrath that Nineveh deserved on His Son
- Nineveh justly deserved the wrath of God (just like Sodom & Gomorah) // But Nineveh cried out for mercy & God was ready to give it
- And so we today deserve the wrath of God for our great wickedness — if God sent a prophet today, we'd receive the same message of Nineveh
- But praise be to God, He sent His Son — the Messiah — who would take upon Himself the wrath we deserve SO THAT we might know mercy!