**The Book Of Jonah**

**“*On The Wings Of A Dove*”**

**Jonah 1:1-3**

**“The Prodigal Prophet”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 1 The Call of Jonah**

**III.) Vs. 2 The Commissioning of Jonah**

**IV.) Vs. 3 The Cowardice of Jonah**

**I.) Intro**

Now many people are familiar with this book & the first thing they think of is the story of Jonah & the whale! May I just say that the Bible does not say that it was a whale instead it says that it was a ***great fish***. Further more it is mentioned only 4 times. Another thing people will remember is that it is a book about the preaching in a great city, (Nineveh, which was founded by Noah’s great-grandson Nimrod Gen. 10:8-10 ), but it is only mentioned 9 times. Some of you will say it’s about a disobedient prophet, yet he is only mentioned 18 times. You know what? The most important character in this book is not the fish, a wicked city, or even Jonah. ***It is God***! He is mentioned some 38 times in 4 short chapters. **In this book we will look at God working a wonder through us when He would rather work a wonder in us**!

Folks, remember, God is more concerned about His workers than He is about their work, *for if the workers are what they ought to be, the work will be what it ought to be*. Throughout Jonah’s time of rebellion, God was displeased with His servant, but He never once deserted him. We get all caught up in what we do for the Lord. We often use how busy we are & how successful we are as the indication of how spiritually healthy we are. This is one of only 14 books that starts with the word “and”. Which tells us that this is a continuing story of God’s grace & mercy. Further more it is one of only two books in all the Bible that ends in a question, the other also deals with Nineveh, (Nahum). The last paragraph of this book ends with God questioning Jonah’s heart. So the point is that God is not done speaking to us concerning His grace & mercy even if we are sinners or disobedient servants!

Last week we finished the book of Matthew which of coarse concludes with the “great commission”. Jesus gathers His disciples & tells them to go to the world that rejected Him with the message of grace. I can imagine how difficult this would of sounded to those disciples. God’s method of reaching the gentiles was one of **strategic location**. God had so placed Israel geographically at the “**crossroads**” of the world between the continents of Europe, Asia, & Africa. The nations that traveled in that day would sooner or later have to pass through Israel on the way to where they were going. And when they did they would come upon a people who were **monotheistic**. In Israel everything centered around the worship of God in Jerusalem. Simply put there was no Matthew 28:19 “*Go therefore & make disciples of all Nations*...” Instead they were to be a witness as the nations came to them. Can you imagine the puzzled look on the disciples faces as Jesus said these words? “**Go & making disciples**” of the Nations never appeared in the same sentence. You say, “Well how do you know that was the case with the early church?” Well you will remember that the disciples hung around Jerusalem the first few years, & it was not until persecution arouse that they went to Samaria & even still they were half breads!

So what’s the point? Well look here at verse 2 & Gods word to Jonah, “Arise, go to Nineveh,...” Right there I think Jonah would of said, “**What did you say**?” , but that was just the beginning of the struggles Jonah had with his own heart.

**II.) Vs. 1 The Call of Jonah**

Vs. 1 What we have here establishes two facts:

A.) First, we are told that Jonah was a real person.. Jesus considered Jonah & this story a historical fact as He referred to it as a typology of His own death, (Matt. 12:41, Luke 11:32).

B.) Second, we are told that he was a prophet of the Lord. But what do we know about him as a prophet?

1.) Even though we read here that “...*the word of the Lord came to Jonah*”, the book of Jonah is not so much a prophecy as it is Jonah’s story. In fact we are told of only two times that the Lord instructs Jonah to say anything, here in verse 2 & again in chapter 3:1-2. Other then this everything God has to say deals with Jonah himself!

2.) It is in 2 Kings 14:25 where we are given some great insight into this prophet.

a.) First, we are told that his message from the Lord was about restoring, *“...the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah*,..”

b.) Second, in 2 Kings we find out that Jonah was a prophet during the time of the reigns of Jehoash, to Jeroboam II. So what you ask? Well it is important to the degree that it sets the stage as to the make up of the time & the man. You see during the reign of Jeroboam II the nation was in a time of great prosperity & national pride. They had regained the land that they had lost from wars & raids of the Assyerians. In fact they had even expanded their boundaries. Yet with that said it was a time of moral & spiritual decay. So? Well since Jonah was not speaking out against the nation like his contemporaries, Amos & Hosea, I’m sure he was quite popular with the people.

c.) Third, we are also told that Jonah was the son of Amittai, who according to 2 Kings was from Gath Hepher, which was a city about 15 miles west of the sea of Galilee in the territory given to the sons of Zebulun. So? Well, did you catch that I said that Israel, “had regained the land that they had lost from wars & raids of the **Assyerians**?” Guess who’s land was regained from wars & raids? Jonah’s! And guess what the capital city of Assyerians was? You got it Nineveh! You see when they came invading they would come right through Jonah’s backyard first!

d.) Lastly, Jonah’s name means “Dove”. An appropriate name considering what he was asked by God to do. The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit & old Jonah was the instrument chosen of God for the greatest three day crusade the world has ever seen, over 600,000 Ninevehites repent. You would have to full of the Holy Spirit to go to do this!

**III.) Vs. 2 The Commissioning of Jonah**

Vs. 2 Here you have the destination of the call “Nineveh”. This was perhaps the greatest city in antiquity. It had over 1,000 200 foot towers, 100 foot high wall so wide that 3 chariots could ride a top side by side. The city was 60 miles in circumference, a glorious city with temples, palaces & hanging gardens.

Yet with that said it was a wicked city. The Assyrian stood for the essence of human self-exaltation & anti-god power. They were known as the most sadistic people the world has ever seen. Israel hated the Assyrians, in fact some 30 years from this time these 10 tribes that made up the Northern Kingdom would be conquered by these Assyrians & taken away captive. The prophet Nahum would write, (3:19), concerning the downfall of Nineveh, “*O king of Assyria;....All who hear news of you Will clap their hands over you, For upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually*?”

Having Jonah go to Nineveh to preach to these folks would be about like him going as a Jew to Hitler’s Berlin in the 40’s. Perhaps, Jonah had seen his family tortured by these Assyrians. Simply put Jonah hated these Ninevites & perhaps for what we would call good reasons. When they captured a region they would take the women captive & kill the men & the children. They would impale people on polls or bury them alive up to their heads pull their tongues out & stake them to the ground until they died. Then after they died they would take the skulls of their enemies & pile them up into huge pyramids.

1.) Look at the message old Jonah was to give to this city, he was to *“..cry out against it*..” because their wickedness had come before the Lord. Well no wonder he ran away from the call, it was a suicide mission. Now jump ahead with me to the forth chapter & the 2nd verse where we read, “*Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm*.” You see that? Jonah was not afraid of the Ninevehites, no, **he was afraid of God’s mercy towards them**. The last thing Jonah wanted was these guys to repent. Jonah was putting patriotism above obedience. It was not what the world would do to Jonah that caused him to be disobedient, it was what God would do if He was obedient. Hey folks, Jonah needed Nineveh as much as they needed him!

Hey, how about you? Are you not surrendering to God in areas of your life because if you do you know God is going to do a wonder & your not so sure you want that old part of your life changed? The fact is most of us don’t surrender all of our lives to the Lord because of our own personal prejudices! Folk’s right here & now you need to see that God wants to work in some areas of your lives, so don’t try to run away because of your desire for what ever.

You see Jonah thought that he could take or leave the “Word of the Lord” but he could not! Jonah had been a great privilege to preach the word to a needy country, but he did not want to go because of his own predjuce against them. How about you? Is there this neighbor who you hate? Or a co-worker? You see God is interested in you as much as He is in using you!

**IV.) Vs. 3 The Cowardice of Jonah**

Vs. 3 Jonah arose all right but it was in the opposite direction. Tarshish is all the way across the Mediterranean ocean on the eastern side of Spain. There is a interesting reference to Tarshish in the book of Isa. 66:19 where the prophet says “*Tarshish...afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory*.” Is that not interesting? Jonah wants to go as far away from the voice of the Lord as possible so he gets on a boat heading to a place where they have never heard of Him!

Folks, that is what we all do when we choose disobedience we try to get to a place where we don’t have to be reminded of the Word of the Lord” Further more it is always a downward slide.

1.) “**flee...the presence of the Lord**..”: Know matter how you try to cut it when we don’t allow God into areas of our lives, you are fleeing His presence. Folks, it does not matter the circumstances that led Jonah to that boat, I’m sure he could justify every step he took in the wrong direction, but the attitude of his heart was still fleeing the presence of the Lord.

Now the good news is that is fruitless effort for as David would say in Ps. 139: 7-8 “*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there*.”

Jonah is going to find out that God is still going to work with him, in fact Gods going to use his running as a blessing to others. Oh, if we just realize that we are robbing ourselves of the benefits of Gods presence.

2.) **“..down to Joppa**..”: This is the first of Jonah’s many downward steps. It is interesting to note that the city of Joppa was located in the area that was given to the tribe of Dan. Now some of you will remember that it was this tribe that first turned away from God to idolatry. It seems that the first downward step we make away from the Lord is to get to an area that is more sympathetic with rebellion. Folk’s, how about it, are you starting to spend more time with your buddies at work then your brothers at church? Are you fleeing from the Lord by fleeing from the fellowship?

3.) **“...found a ship going to Tarshish**..”: Isn’t it amazing how easy it always is to find a ship going in a direction away from the presence of the Lord? Folk’s if you look on a map of the area you would find that Nineveh is in the north east & Joppa & Tarshish is in the south west. A lot of times we give reasons for the actions we take as, “*Hey man, everything just came together!” “I mean there I was in Joppa, man & bang, a boat was there just at the right time heading to Tarshish*.”

Be careful & ask yourselves is this thing I’m heading towards drawing me closer to the presence of the Lord or towards something else? Folk’s the right direction is always obedience & closeness to God!

4.) “**...he paid the fare**,..” : Make no mistake about it men, Jonah paid for his disobedience. The ship may be there waiting but you still are going to have to pay. Interesting though, old Jonah was not a stow-away, I mean he was honestly disobedient.

5.) **“...went down into it..”** : Not only did he go down to Joppa, but here he goes down even further into the boat. Notice it says “with them”; who is the them? Well it’s a bunch of idolaters.

a.) Mark this, Jonah did not want to obey for fear that the Lord would use him with a bunch of sinners that he hated so where does he go? On a boat with a bunch of sinners that he hates. Isn’t God good? I mean the Lord is already dealing with Jonah & his prejudices.

Now look at verse 5. It says here that Jonah not only went to the boat, but he got a good night sleep as well! Folk’s it is possible to out of the will of God & still get a good nights sleep! It is possible to be out of the will of God & still get the circumstances to line up the way you want them to. As we go through this book it is my prayer that you will realize that God is interested in you, so much that He will never let you get away with disobedience!

**Jonah 1:4-16**

**“The Cursed Cruse”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 4-7 Wake Up Jonah!**

**III.) Vs. 8-10 Who Are You?**

**IV.) Vs. 11-16 This Storm Is For Me!**

**Intro**

As we have started our new study in the book of Jonah I’ve been freshly reminded of Gods patience or “**forbearance**”. Unger’s Bible Dictionary describes forbearance as, “a holding back or delaying.” Furthermore it says that, “*It describes the disposition of God by which He indulgently tolerates sins & delays their punishment*.” I’ve study with interest as this prophet of God willfully disobeys Gods call upon his life. Yet in all of these chapters God deals patiently with old Jonah. Two things have struck me:

1.) This is the way I would want to be treated by the Lord if I was Jonah.

2.) This is not the way I often treat others who are disobedient!

Now I’m not saying that we should wink at another’s sin, but rather when we address it we ought to do so in the most tender of ways. In 1 Peter 4: 8 we read, “*And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins*.” That is what the Lord does here for Jonah He covers Jonah’s nakedness with His love. Yet the same patience that God exhibits towards him, He also exhibits towards Nineveh, whom Jonah hates.

How about it? Do you seek to cover the faults of those in the body with Gods love? Or do you point out the flaws you see? As I read through Jonah I’m reminded of a child’s prayer I read the other day. It seems that little Johnny had been a real stinker so he was sent to his room by his parents. After a long while he emerged from his room to inform his parents that he had thought over his behavior & had prayed about it. Johnny’s mother was quite pleased with the response so to encourage his behavior she replied, “*You know Johnny when you ask the Lord to help you not misbehave, He will be there for you*!” Johnny quickly replied, “*Oh mom, I did not ask God to help me not misbehave. I asked God to help you put up with me*!”

**II.) Vs. 4-7 Wake Up Jonah!**

Vs. 4 Last week we saw Jonah’s response to God’s call, “RUN”. Here we see Gods response to Jonah’s disobedience, “A STORM”. I love this! Now I don’t love going through it, but I sure do love the fact that **God loves us to much to ever let us leave His presence**! Folks, if you think back over your life you will find many times that God has sent a storm upon your life to get you to turn back to Him!

Now you will remember last week that Jonah went down to Joppa to hang around those that would be sympathetic to his rebellion. He boards a ship to go to a place where they had never heard of the name of the Lord. Twice in the first three verses we are told that Jonah was, “**fleeing the presence of the Lord**.” Yet the Lord was not about to leave Jonah! If you stop to think about it why didn’t God just tell Jonah to turn around or not get on the boat; I mean after all he was a prophet of the Lord? Now pay attention here because you will see a digression in the spiritual life of Jonah. When we are disobedient to the Lord there are consequences to our actions:

1.) Vs. 4 **We are no longer able to here the voice of the Lord**: Do you see that here? In verse 1 we read that the “*Word of the Lord came to Jonah*”, but here in the 4th verse we read that, “*the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea...so that the ship was about to be broken up*.” **Simply put fellowship was broken when Jonah had left his first love**.

Now I’m certain that before this ever got this far God was trying to communicate to Jonah, but Jonah was not listening. I’ve found this to be true in my life God will always use the **least** means possible to get my attention. He will start out just whispering, then His tone will grow stronger, then will come situations that He will use to get my attention, lastly a circumstance. God was still trying to speak to the wayward prophet, but he was not listing. Folks, if you have gotten to a place where you will no longer listen to the **Word of God** then God will try talking to you through the **Works of God**! May I just say that I’ve been there & it’s far more pleasant of an experience to have Him speak to you through the “Word of God”!

**Just a side note here**: The very thing that Jonah was using as an instrument for rebellion was quite literally falling apart. Jonah slipped into a ship to flee the presence of the Lord, but now it’s all about to sink! Don’t be surprised if you are running form the presence of the Lord in your work, play or relationships with others that it all starts to sink! Folks, there is only One thing that is designed to sail the waters of life, a relationship totally dependent upon God. You will find security in no other place. I thank God for His wind that has destroyed my foolish boat rides. The storm has not come up to destroy you it has come to blow you back to Him!

2.) Vs. 5a, 6 **Lose of the power which is found in prayer**: The first thing that Jonah lost was the ability to hear from the Lord, & when you no longer can hear from the Lord you will no longer depend upon Him! Folks our power is not from us it comes from the Lord & our communing with Him. Do you see that? These non-believers are afraid & everyone of them have a prayer meeting & the one man on the boat who has the access to the true God is sleeping through the prayer meeting! Folks, **when fellowship is broken then there is always a loss of power because we are not praying to Him**!.

It is interesting to see that these non-believers were tossing over board their treasures. **The ruff seas of life always causes us to reevaluate what we treasure doesn’t it**? What good is the things you treasure when your life is on the line? Here are these Phoenician sailors tough guys & are in real danger so they turn back to trying to find something larger then life to cling to so they call out to “their god’s” Yet according to verse 6 that was not helping, religion never does! Religion is really nothing more then superstition! You can rub the rabbits foot or the rosary all you want it is the same thing. Its only upon totally dependence upon the living God that will calm the seas!

Let me point out two other things:

A.) Do you here that the world is interested in what we have? I mean why the boat starts to sink the world prays to it’s gods toss out it’s treasures & comes to find answers from believers to make since of it all! And what does it find? A church like Jonah “asleep”.

B.) Did you ever wonder why the captain has to go looking for old Jonah & why Jonah could fall asleep in the middle of a storm? It seems to me that Jonah was looking to hide both from people & from the Lord. I think far from being at peace Jonah was depressed. Have you ever been depressed & bummed out to the point that all you want to do is sleep? You are secretly hoping that when you awake every thing will be better when you get up. Instead like Jonah you awake to the same problem then you went to sleep with. Worse yet some one awakes you rebuking you for falling asleep! Folks, you can hide from areas of your life that God is trying to deal with. You will just awake to the same character flaw!

3.) Vs. 5b **Lost his love for others**: Jonah left his first love which caused him to lose his power, which led to a lose of love for others. Do you see that? These sailors were terrified, they had thrown their treasure over, tried worthless religion & now were seeking truth & where is Jonah? “**Asleep**”! Jonah appears to be totally unconcerned for others even though according to verse 12 he admits that he is the source of the trial!

I bet it was a little surprising to Jonah that the captain in verse 6 demands that Jonah call upon the Lord for help when the very reason he was on the boat was to escape the presence of the Lord! May I just say that if you find yourself indifferent towards the souls of others that it is because you have left your first love. John said in 1 John 4:20-21

“*If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also*.”

4.) Vs. 7 **He lost his testimony**: So there you have it! The spiritual digression of a person who leaves their first love. Jonah’s testimony was not a blessing but instead it was a curse! Jonah’s name was Dove a symbol of peace, his fathers name Amittai meant faithful & true, all of which Jonah was not. How about it, is your testimony a blessing or a curse? Jonah was a spokes person for the Lord, yet he has no word for them. Look carefully at verse 7 here. The captain asks Jonah to pray, but instead of being broken by his own rebellion he does not say a word so they cast lots to see why this curse had come upon them & still he says nothing!

Folks, if you want to know why the church has lost it’s witness in America it’s right here. They have lost their love for the lost & they have lost their power in prayer & all of this is because they have left their first love!

**III.) Vs. 8-10 Who Are You?**

Vs. 8 Man Jonah had moved so far away from the Lord here that he is unrecognizable as being a believer. He has become a walking contradiction. All to often, people, we proclaim the truths of God without living them!

Now notice what they ask Jonah:

A.) “*For whose cause is this trouble upon us*.” In verse 10 they ask the same question only more specifically, “*Why have you done this*?” It is the same question. You see Jonah has not told them anything & they want to know what he has done to deserve this.

B.) “*What’s your occupation*”: Jonah was a well know prophet in Israel but he had not told them who he was.

In fact Jonah had not told them anything about himself. Here is a prophet of God & he is going a boat for months with these sailors & not a word of who he is. Why does he not tell them anything? Because in his heart he knows that he is wrong! Have you ever found yourself out of the will of God & you know it so you decide that you just want reveal anything about yourself. Guess what happens? Well the Lord won’t let you off the hook!

Vs. 9-10 Now here we have un-believers rebuking a man of God. That ought not to surprise us because if a child of God won’t listen the “Word of God” then He will bring about the “Works of God” & if he still is asleep then He will use the “World”. Oh how embarrassing this is to be rebuked by those who worship idols, but is it not great to see the lengths that the Lord will go through to bring one of his children back into His presence”?

Often I see un-believers look at us Christians & ask us, “Why have you done this?” If you believe what you say you believe why do you live as if you don’t? Now don’t dismiss this. It’s time to wake up & face the sailors folks! Is your life a contradiction? Do you talk the talk or (like Jonah not talk it) but not walk the walk?

**IV.) Vs. 11-16 This Storm Is For Me!**

Vs. 11 These sailors want answers & so does those who are in the boat of life; are you ready with the answers? All these sailors are looking for is a way to calm the sea around them & they equate that with the way in which they treat Jonah. I believe that the world is looking for the same thing.

Also note that the sea was growing worse, when we are of the will of God “running from His presence” things will always grow worse.

Vs. 12 Look here at Jonah’s response, “Pick me up & throw me in the sea.” Now Jonah probably would rather die then obey the will of God. He would rather give up his life then be used to save others! With that said though it does give us the antidote to a life that is out of fellowship:

A.) **Die to yourself**! Folks that is the key to a spiritual renewal. When Jonah does he will have to be completely dependent again on the Lord. The answer is not more of this & more of this. No! The answer is none of me! When Jonah was cast over board it was a total surrender. Again may I just say this another way**? “If you want to calm the sea of circumstances, die to your self**!” There is never a safer place then when we cast ourselves totally upon God!

Vs. 13-16 Here we see the first souls saved & Jonah has not even preached a word yet. And it happened when Jonah surrendered & died to himself. These non-believers had better theology then did Jonah & did not want to harm Jonah for fear of the God he professed!

The immediate end of the storm when they tossed Jonah in the sea proved that Jonah’s god was the true & living God.

Folks many people don’t believe in our profession not because our God is not real, but rather the way we live in accordance to Him is not real! So what is the result the unbelieving sailors move form fear of the storm to fear of the Lord.

There you have it, both the results of running form the presence of the Lord as well as what to do if you find that you have left your first love, die to yourself! In the Westminister Catechism we read that the, “Chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” How about it is that your chief aim? I love the fact that God will not stop driving me back to Him!

**Jonah 1:17 - 2:10**

**“A Song At Sea”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 1:17- 2:1 Prepared Prayer**

**III.) Vs. 2-4 Dependence In The Deep**

**IV.) Vs. 5-7 A Lifted Life**

**V.) Vs. 8-10 A Prophets Promise**

**Intro**

We have now come to, frankly, the most challenging chapter in the book of Jonah. To read this chapter from the perspective of the previous one is to be certain of Jonah’s repentance seen in this song of transformation. Yet to read this chapter in light of the chapters that follow is to be certain that Jonah did not repent for he was not transformed!

On top of this are we to understand that Jonah died & was brought back to life, or that he was some how preserved alive for three days? Did he pray at first or did he wait three days? And lastly what are we to make of this great fish? To say that I have pondered these question all week is an understatement!

First let me give you the setting of this chapter:

A.) It is composed in side a “great fish’s belly”.

B.) Looking at the structure of the chapter is to see that it is a psalm, which we would know as a song!

**As far as we know this is the one & only song ever composed inside a fish**. With that said it does shed some light on one of the great mysteries of the Bible: “***What kind of Great fish was this***?” I believe this must have been a very large **TUNE-A**! Steve told me that Jonah sang this song while playing the tuna’s **trom-BONE**. Further more in light of the fishes response we know the title of the song was, “**You can’t keep a good man down**!” OK, OK. I’m sorry. Those bad jokes ought to last you for the remainder of 1999!

**II.) Vs. 1:17- 2:1 Prepared Prayer**

Vs. 17a Seriously, I believe that any guess of what type of fish this was, or whether or not it is possible for a “great fish” to swallow a man is cleared up right here. Simply put the text says, “*The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah*...” Therefore the type of fish was a “PREPARED FISH”. The type of fish is irrelevant to the story when you have this phrase. Be that as it may it might interest you to know that there are several published accounts of men being swallowed by “great fish” & living to tell about it.

A.) First, there are several species that are native to the Mediterranean large enough to accommodate this type of account.

1.) Sulfur-bottom whale.

2.) The whale shark.

Both of these fish have no teeth & feed by opening their mouths & rushing through the water at a great speed. They then strain out the water & swallow what ever is left. They grow to a size of 100 feet with mouths as wide as 12 feet easily big enough to swallow a man. Interestingly enough they have six compartments to their stomachs, & inside their nasal passages it is seven feet high, seven feet wide, by fourteen feet in length.

One article in the Cleveland Plain Dealer quoted a Dr. Harvey who said that a dog was lost overboard & was found six days later in the nasal passage of one of these fish alive & barking. It is also said that these great fish have a habit of beaching themselves when they are dying at which time they eject the contents of their stomach’s. The most famous case other then Jonah’s here is recorded by the famous French scientist M. de Parville who writes of the case of James Bartley an unfortunate sailor who was thought to have drowned off the Falkland Islands near South America. Two days later a whaling ship made a catch of a whale & as they cut up the whale discovered James Bartley alive inside the whale. Lastly, there is the 1926 account as told by Dr. Rimmer who was the president & writer for the “Research Science Bureau.” He investigated the account of a man swallowed by a whale shark off the English Channel. Two days later they again encountered the whale shark opened it up & found the sailor alive. Dr. Rimmer met the man & interviewed him & said that he was in good condition except that he was devoid of all body hair & had strange yellowish-brown color all over his skin.

So is this not a miracle? Well, I believe that it is not so much that a “great fish” swallowed Jonah, but rather it is a miracle of God’s grace in sending the fish to save Jonah! It is God’s goodness & timing that blows me away. Jonah is being saved not because he deserves it, but rather because God loves Jonah, a prodigal prophet who would rather die then surrender to the will of God. Hey folks, if God will go to those lengthens for Jonah He will do the same for you!

Further more Gods salvation, or if you will, His turning your life around can be just about anything. Say what? Isn’t it great that though Jonah was fleeing the presence of the Lord, the Lord was ought running Him to be near Jonah. Last week I said that God will first of try talking to you through the Word of God, then he will talk to you through the works of God, but remember He will continue His pursuit, even if it is by sending a great fish.

Jesus tells us in Luke 11:30 that in this whole seen, “*Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation*.” Well, what was that sign that Jesus was as well? The Resurrection! Yes, but more then that; the resurrection reminds us of God’s grace! The fact that God “prepared” a great fish is not as much a miracle as the fact that God was “preparing” a prodigal prophet! So Jonah was a sign of grace to the Ninevites, but the great fish was a sign to Jonah! And the sign? The miracle of grace!

Vs. 1:17b-2:1 This is the first positive response of Jonah recorded in this book. When it comes to acts of obedience we have seen the pagan sailors obedience, & we have seen even the great fishes obedience, but nothing form old Jonah.

Now it appears that three days pass before Jonah prays this song. All though the word “then” does not have to refer to a length of time it can just mean “and”. If it is three days before Jonah seeks God then it just emphasizes the stubbornness of Jonah.

How about it? What’s it going to take for you to stop resisting God’s word, works, or the world’s rebuke**? Folk’s the way we accept God’s working in our lives will be in direct proportion to how much we will benefit from it**.

Well isn’t Jonah’s prayer out of desperation? You bet! I’ve come to the conclusion in my Christian life that most of the time I will not choose to be obedient to the Lord’s will until I have no other choice. The truth of the matter as far as what is best for me there is only one choice I can make, “follow the Lord”. Yet with that said I often resist that until things are so bad that I turn to Him. How about you? Jonah’s crying out to the Lord because of His own rebellion, yet as we shall see the Lord still answers Him. Why do we resist His love? Well I think it is because we are insecure & not fully convinced that what the Lord has for us is the best! I want be on record here & say how thankful I am towards the Lord that He still answers my prayers even though the mess I’m in is because of my own rebellion.

May I make a suggestion to you & I, **why wait**? Why not just turn to Him. That’s what God says to Israel in Ezek 33:11, “*As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel*?”

There are some here who believe that Jonah was actually drowned in the sea,

(verse 5 where Jonah says that the waters *encompassed me even to my soul*) further more in verse 6 Jonah says that God has, “*brought up his life from the pit*.” Now I have to admit that if that is the case the way in which God resuscitated Jonah is interesting to say the least! The salvation of Jonah was fro the Lord by way of a “fish”. Man does God ever use the foolish things to confound the wise. Can you imagine old Jonah telling this story years later? “I was drowning & went un-conscience & when I awoke I was inside this smelly slick & gooey thing, I later realized that it was a great fish!” “You might that the Lord saved me though this fish.” I’ve heard of a COD-FISH but this is the first GOD-FISH. **Often times it is the things that we think are going to destroy us that God uses to bring us back to Life**!

**III.) Vs. 2-4 Dependence In The Deep**

Vs.2 Here we are given Jonah’s prayer from an undersea perspective. This is a typical Hebrew psalm of thanksgiving, in that it has an introductory statement of answered prayer, (vs. 2) the report of personal crises, (3-6) then lastly it has a vow of future praise based upon the answered prayer, (7-9).

As I stated already this brings us to a great dilemma as to whether or not Jonah repented. Was this prayer a sham? It would appear so if you read chapter 4, but secretly we are all hoping that Jonah was a changed man after his fishing experience.

Why bother trying to unravel this? Well because our interpretation & thus our application of this passage has everything to do with the context in which Jonah wrote this. So did Jonah, repent? Yes, I believe that he did. So then what’s up with chapter four? Well I think that Jonah responds like most believers. In Romans 7:15-25 Paul speaking form his own personal testimony explains the battle of our flesh & our spirit. That’s what is going on with Jonah here. A personal crises comes into his life because he was disobedient, he waits until he has no other choice then to admit that he has blown it repents & promises to yield to the will of God in his life only to have to face it again head on.

Folks, a lot of books have been written on spiritual warfare, but the greatest foe you will ever do battle with is the one that awaits to great you in the mirror each morning! And I’m not talking about your spouse! Paul reminded himself often of this foe & his need to *“..reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord*.” (Rom. 6:11) The truth of the matter is that our old fleshly nature will never get better this side of heaven. Did Jonah mean what he prayed here? I’m sure he did, just as much as you did when you promised to the Lord to treat your spouse better, or to read your Bible more often, etc. **What we see herein the book of Jonah ought to give our lives a boost, for we see that God’s faithfulness to make us more like His Son is not based upon our faithfulness or success but rather His**!

Notice that Jonah realizes that his rebellion has brought him down to the “belly of Sheol.” Folks, the pleasure of disobedience is fleeting at best & the end is always “death”, which is the absence of a life joy. Yet with that said isn’t it great that even though it was Jonah’s own rebellion that had led to death, that when he cried out to God, He heard Jonah’s voice! What a great God. Hey, has your rebellion led you to a place of misery? And now you think that God will not have anything to do with you? He will, you know, just lift up your voice to Him right where you are at!

Vs. 3 Notice the many times here that Jonah recognizes that it was God’s hand that cast him into the deep, it was God’s storm that sunk him down. I love the fact that rebellion ultimately was destroying Jonah’ life. Why? Well because it allows us to realize the harm of disobedience! Jonah was getting what he deserved & he can have no complaints about it.

Vs. 4 Jonah’s helplessness turned into hopelessness as he felt that he had been cast out form God’s sight. The worse part of Jonah’s self inflicted trial was the absence of fellowship from God.

Yet he turns to the Holy temple. So what’s that all about? Well, the Jews equated the temple with the presence of God. In fact when King Solomon built the temple upon it’s dedication prayer Solomon asked that, “*whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows the plague of his own heart, and spreads out his hands toward this temple: then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know*..” And God is honoring that here. Interesting that Jonah was fleeing the presence of the Lord & God allows him to experience what he sought for only to use it to draw him back to Himself!

Folks, remember her that the way out of hopelessness & helplessness even if it is self inflicted is to LOOK UP & CRY OUT!

**IV.) Vs. 5-7 A Lifted Life**

Vs. 5-6 These verse tells us what happened as Jonah was drowning there in the ocean. Got prepared a great fish. Jonah is saying that he was a goner here. The water surround his soul & deep closed around him. I’ve come close to drowning a few times & it is one of the most helpless & hopeless feelings I’ve ever experienced, for you are completely conscience of you situation yet there is nothing to hold onto, no way of helping yourself. That’s what Jonah describes here. He says that seed weeds wrapped around his head. I’m sure of the accuracy of this but I’ve been told that this sea weed can grow up 25 miles in length. If you have ever gone to Carmel there is always some up on the beach there & it is really tough stuff. Evidently this sunk Jonah down under the sea to the bottom to where he says, “the earth’s bars closed behind him forever.” Jonah describes the prison that death is to the sinner doesn’t he? When we are in disobedience folks we may get our way but the end is death. Hey. it is when we surrender to the Lord that we win!

Vs. 7 Again notice that Jonah waited until his, “..soul fainted within him.” Man dose that not speak to me about trying to be in charge. Hey, I don’t want to be in charge of my life I want the Lord as my captain. Look carefully at these words for a moment; it does not say that the lord remembered Jonah, but that Jonah remembered the Lord! So? Well God had never forgotten Jonah it was Jonah that had forgotten the Lord. Now finally Jonah realizes that he is helpless & hopeless, so he remembers as psalm 121: 2 says, “My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.”

Folks, look again at the context here! Jonah was willfully disobedient, he was getting what he deserved, yet the moment he remembered the Lord, God was there to save him. Man does that ever give me hope; I don’t have to wait to get my act together all I need to do is remember the Lord. May be it’s time for you today to remember the Lords He is waiting for you to answer the door of your heart for He has been knocking a long time.

**V.) Vs. 8-10 A Prophets Promise**

Vs. 8 I kind of think that Jonah is speaking of his own “worthless idols” of pride**. Folks, there is no greater idol that man has ever worshipped then the idol of pride**! Oh, the amount of marriages I’ve seen destroyed because of this idol! When you worship idols of pride & other right here it says that you, “Forsake your own mercy”. Right now I want everyone of you to underline that verse & make sure it is a word of the Lord to you!

Vs. 9 And what is that sacrifice? Micah 6:8 says, “*He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God*?” Simply put it is the surrender of our lives to Him. Paul says in Rom. 12:1 Paul reminds us that we, *“..that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service*.” Again notice that we ought to do with thanksgiving! Why? Because salvation is only from the Lord!

Vs. 10 Hey, I’m so glad that if the Lord is trying to speak to me & I won’t listen then He will speak to a dumb fish & it will. So what’s your point? Well, God is at work in our lives so that we are being brought closer to Him.

Notice that Jonah’s rebellion caused him to be treat as a foreign substance. Hey, I pray that rebellion & disobedience in our lives will be foreign to us! It all just goes to show us that disobedience in our lives ought to be something that we just can’t swallow! Jonah may have felt as though he was heading no where but the whale was take him right where God wanted him to be. And you know where that was? Right back dealing with his own prejudice. This humbling experience will lead to the greatest revival ever recorded in the history books, that’s what we will look at next week.

**Jonah 3: 1-10**

**“A Change Of Heart”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 1-4 And Now A Word From My Sponsor**

**III.) Vs. 5-9 The Steps Of Change**

**IV.) Vs. 10 The Heart Of God**

**Intro**

As most of you know my first love is evangelism. I love to talk to people about Gods grace. Why? Because I have been one that His grace has been shed upon. Gods, grace is truly amazing. When you think about it God has a plan for you & I.

In chapter one God told Jonah His plan for him, “Go to Nineveh”. Jonah did not like that plan so he decided to go the opposite direction. Now as I see it Jonah took a boat of his choosing in the wrong direction, but God just put an end to that by way of a fish heading in the right direction.

Let me see if I can put this practically: Jonah did not want to follow Gods plan, but all that happened was that he went through a dying to himself & ends up right where Gods plan was all along! So as I see it we can either do this the hard way like Jonah or we can do this the easy way & follow His plan! Now in this chapter we see the fruit of obedience. From a practical stand point we are going to look at the steps of making a change from disobedience to obedience!

**II.) Vs. 1-4 And Now A Word From My Sponsor**

Vs. 1-2 Now in these first four verses we are going to deal with how the Lord treats Jonah after his repentance, but first let me make a simple observation:

**CHANGE IS NOT EASY**! If you are like me & you know God is dealing with you in some area, you probably want to try to avoid what ever you are facing because we don’t like change. That’s what Jonah thought he would do, just run from change. You know the bumper sticker that says, “*Refuse to grow up*!” Growing up means that some areas that you have gotten comfortable with are going to be different. May I just say that growth is never suppose to be comfortable. Jonah’s change here could of been physically easier, but emotionally it still required him to die to himself! So what am I trying to say? Well, since change is in inevitable, why not make the transition as smooth as possible? I mean why get thrown over-board, drown with sea weed wrapped around your head, get swallowed by a fish only to change you heart & repent so that you could allow God to change your heart?

Folks, the story of change in our heart could be just a short story or a novel depending upon our response!

Vs. 1 Read this carefully: “*Now the Word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time,..”*

This sentence gives me great hope because it shows us how God treats His children when they blow it & then come back to Him! God does not refuse to speak to him, the moment Jonah repents the “**Word of the Lord comes**..” Like I said if you won’t listen to the Word of God in your life you will listen to God through the Works of God, but the moment you start listening again He will go back & speak to you through the Word of God.

Hey, Christians know this, even if you have left & deserted God, He has never once left you nor will He ever desert you. In Heb. 13:5 the Lord says*, “I will never leave you nor forsake you*.” Further more in Isa. 43: 2 we have His promise that even, “*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you*.”

You say, “**Even if I stubbornly refuse to obey God’s will in my life**?” Yep! Remember the Lord is more interested in you then He is in using you! Simply put God is a God of many chances. Is it based on your own goodness? NO! It is based upon His character & nature!

The truth of the matter is that God uses us even after our mistakes, in fact it is because we are flawed, & failures that he uses us. That is what Paul says in 2 Cor. 4:7 “*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us*.” Three days earlier old Jonah was sailing in rebellion the opposite direction, he repents & God’s call is right there is service! You say, “What if Jonah after being thrown up upon the shore got on another boat going in the opposite direction?” Well I believe that God would of again given Jonah another chance & another & another. Folk’s eventually we Christians learn that it is better to dwell in His loving arms then to be drown at sea!

Using the story of the prodigal son as an example, as long as you want out of the pigpen you know God is still working with you. See that’s the difference between believers & non-believers, believers may wallow in the pigpen, but they won’t want to make it their home!

Vs. 2 Notice that this is almost the exact commission that the Lord gave Jonah in chapter 1:2, except that this time the Lord only tells him to go. When Jonah was told what he was to say he ran this time God tells him to go then He will give him the message. Folk’s God is willing to work with us for He will only give us what he can handel.

Vs. 3 Here we are told what Jonah does with the Word of God, “***arose & went***”. Don’t go by this to quickly here because you may miss what God wants from those who stumble & fall. “**ARISE & GET GOING**”. Folk’s all to often after we blow it we just sit there. It is a pride thing, we had thought that we were a little more Holy then we really were. Now we got egg all over our faces & we start saying things like, “I’m not worthy!” **Hey, when were you ever worthy**?

I’m reminded of the story of Joshua just after he took over leadership of the nation of Israel to lead them into the promise land. So he has some victories. You remember they go up to Jericho & they are facing overwhelming odds & they trust the Word of the Lord & the walls fall down. So they have some pride issues as they head over to Ai. The soldiers come back to Joshua & say, “We don’t need all of the army to defeat these guy’s, two or three thousand is more then enough! So Joshua lets them go & they all run from the battle & get thoroughly wiped out. Old Joshua, man he is bummed, he was undefeated as a leader & now he gets whipped by a bunch of losers. So he falls down on his face & starts whining about the situation he is in when the Lord interrupts him & says, “**Get up! why do you lie on your face**?”

Perhaps you have blown it & your hear this morning on your face whining about all of your mistakes. Here then is the Word of the Lord for you, **REPENT, GET UP & GET GOING**!

Now we are told three times in this book that Nineveh was a “great city”. According to Gen. 10:11-12 it was actually four cities all of which lay between the Tigris River & the Upper Zab River. One of the ancient writers says that it was 55 miles in circumference. So Jonah walks into the four city region & travels some 15- 20 miles stops & declares the message of the Lord.

Now notice what Jonah says, “***Yet forty days, and Nineveh will be overthrown***.” This word here used for “***overthrown***” is the exact word used to describe the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah. Furthermore 40 is the number of judgment, so these guys could tell that they were about ready to be judged & destroyed. Hey, but you know what? I think that there was another reason for the reaction of repentance in the Ninevehites?

Can you just imagine this guy coming into your city, hairless & bleached white. Perhaps Jonah’s story of rebellion had already reached Nineveh. Some guys were out there fishing from the shore when the fish belched Jonah onto the beach. “*Man what happen to you?”* “*Well you see I was sent to preach against Nineveh & I didn’t want to go so I went the opposite direction, & a storm was going to sink my boat so I went overboard was drown, then this fish swallowed me up & while in the fish I repented*.” “***So all this happened because you were disobedient to Gods plan in your life***?” “Yep!”

Folk’s, last week I said that Jonah was a sign to sign to the Ninevehites. I’m sure that Jonah had not planed it this way but Gods discipline as a result of Jonah’s rebellion was most likely part of the reason for the success of the message. If I could pass one thing one to those who teach the Bible it would be, “***Be Transparent***!” You see when the world sees this hairless bleached white guy it makes his message all the more real. **I believe that Jonah’s message was received not just for the content but because they could see in Jonah the truth of what he taught, simply put that rebellion & sin doesn’t look to good, nor smell good & if you continue down that road it will eventually kill you**! And this coupled with his message of judgment & total destruction had an air of truth to it!

**III.) Vs. 5-9 The Steps Of Change**

Vs. 5 Before I get into the steps of getting right with God, I want to show what it was that the Ninevehites responded to because all to often those who are not Christians fault the messenger for their failure to respond to “the message”

1.) They were given only one warning! Jonah walked for three days but this was their one & only “evangelistic message”.

2.) They only heard one prophet who admittedly could careless about their eternal souls.

3.) They heard only one monotonous message. “Forty days & you die!” I’m sure that Jonah said the word destroyed with a gleam in his eye! Look carefully at that message from a Ninevehites perspective:

A.) It was a message of destruction, not of salvation.

B.) It offered no hope.

C.) Nothing mentioned about repentance.

D.) Nothing mentioned about the love of God.

So? Hey look at the response here of the nation! How much more are those who here the gospel responsible to respond? Allow me to quote Jesus in the book of Matthew 12:41 as He rebuked His generation for their failure to respond to His message, “*The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here*.”

Jonah used no gimmicks, no celebrities, not even a Christian rock band. Jonah did entertain the crowd. When they heard Jonah’s message & saw him they were looking at a man who had been dead & was now alive. And perhaps they thought, “***If God would forgive Jonah when he did not deserve it maybe He will forgive us when we don’t deserve it***!”

So what brought about the greatest response ever recorded to the shortest message ever recorded?

1.) Vs. 5a “**Believed God**”: This is always where change begins in our lives. Notice that it does not say that they “*believed* ***of*** *God*”. 94% of Americans say that they believe of God. Folks, 600,000 Ninevehites believed God when they heard that they were going to be judged. Did you notice here that it does not say that they believed Jonah? It was not about the messenger it was about the truth.

A.) vs. 9 I want you to see that though no hope of salvation was offered they still fled to the Mercy of God. Simply put it was not the fear of the wrath of God that drew them to repentance it was the hope of the mercy of God. Most folks don’t need information about their sin, they know that they are a part from God what they need is the motivation to change. When we see that what we are cheating ourselves out of letting go of some choice sin is a lot easier!

2.) Vs. 5b-8 “**Godly Sorrow**”: It says here in verse 5b that they put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least. Sackcloth was this heavy black goat hair garment that a person wore when a close family member died. Do you get the picture? These Ninevehites were broken hearted over their sin. As a matter of fact their sorrow led them to do several things:

A.) Vs. 8a **Confess their sin**: No one has told them what their sin was & in verse 8 they show that they know exactly what it was that they did wronged. Simply put they agreed with God or **(confessed publicly) their sin**! Hey, isn’t it interesting that there was no debate as to what they were doing was wrong in the eyes of the Lord?

B.) Vs. 7 **Stopped eating**: They had been full of the worlds delights with no intention of stopping until they were convicted. Then all of the sudden the things of the world that they had an appetite for they no longer wanted any thing to do with. They went from full of the worlds ways to wanting to be empty of the world!

C.) Vs. 8a **Changed their clothes**: Clothes are how we show our identity. Clearly they were identified with the world & comfortable in it, but now they changed their attire they no longer wanted to be identified with the world. They went from worldly comfort to unconvertible with their old style!

Folk’s, repentance is not just a mental agreement it requires a complete change:

Of mind, what we think!

Of heart, what we desire!

Of will, what we do!

And that is what you see with the Ninevehites. Some things had to change in their lives! **Folk’s you can come just as you are to Christ but when you meet Him you will not want to stay the way you came**! They cried mightily out to God (verse 8) to the point where they covered all the animals with sorrow, (verse 8a). They made no excuses or reasons for their sins, ( verse 8b)

**IV.) Vs. 10 The Heart Of God**

Vs. 10 A lot of folk’s try to make something weird out of this verse. They say see God is not unchangeable for here He changed His mind. Yet that is not what it says! The N.K.J. puts it correctly when it says that God “relented” not “repented”. Simply put it is Gods response to mans changed heart. When the Bible use human terms to describe Gods characteristics they are called “anthropomorphic”. You see Nineveh had two options, even Jonah knew that, (4:2b) they could reject Gods message or receive it. Like two forks in the same road they chose the right fork & of coarse God knew all along which one they would choose. Num. 23:19 says that, “*God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good*?”

So what’s it going to be for you? Are you going to respond to Gods grace or choose to face destruction?

**Jonah 4: 1-11**

**“Where Is Your Heart?”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 1-3 I Hate Your Grace?**

**III.) Vs. 4-8 Preparing His People**

**IV.) Vs. 9-11 Plants Or People?**

**Intro**

It would of been great if the book of Jonah ended in chapter 3. What a different story we would of had. I think we all like happy endings don’t we? We love success stories, where ordinary people do extraordinary things because of the goodness of their own hearts.

If we stopped in chapter 3 of Jonah & compared his ministry to that of Jeremiah some striking differences appear. On the outside Jonah would appear to have been the far more successful evangelist. One message to one city & over 600,000 get saved. Jeremiah preached thousands of messages for over 40 years & not one changed heart. I’m sure that by today’s standards Jeremiah would be attending Jonah’s church growth seminar. Yet oddly in Matt. 16:14 when Jesus questioned His disciple’s as to whom the people thought He was their reply was, “*Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others* ***Jeremiah*** *or one of the prophets*.” Did you see that? Jeremiah? Jeremiah & not Jonah? Folk’s it is as the Lord said to Samuel in 1 Sam 16:7 *“...the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart*.” You see Jonah had heart problems. And I think I know the reason why.

It’s kind of like one of those 2000 piece jig-saw puzzles. Not that long ago my daughter bought one which was of a Thomas Kincade picture. The first thing she did was get out all the straight edged ones so that she could put together the frame. Now the frame as you know goes up real fast. Then you separate the pieces by colors. Well I hate these puzzles so I just watch, but they are real addictive, so what normally happens is that my daughter starts them then my son finishes them. Sooner or later in putting the puzzle together I know that I’m going to hear two phrase:

1.) We are missing some pieces.

A.) And of coarse our first thought is some sadistic manufacturer on purpose left out the pieces we need to complete the puzzle.

B.) The second thought that comes to mind is that one of the other people near you lost the piece that you needed. In either case we know that it is not our fault!

2.) The second phrase I know that I’m going to hear is that these pieces are cut wrong for they just don’t seem to fit.

But you know as time goes by slowly the picture comes together. And do you know what the key to putting it together is? **Keep your eye on the picture that came on the box!** That’s why they put it there for you so that you can see what it should look like when it is altogether.

You see that’s Jonah’s problem, he just can’t see how the pieces of the puzzle of his life is suppose to fit together. So he blames the manufacture, then he blames the Ninevehites, lastly he just thinks that the pieces are cut wrong. What’s his problem? He fails to see the whole picture instead he focuses upon the pieces! All of this lead to his heart problem. It is my prayer this morning that we can get back to looking at the finished picture & use that to interpret the pieces of our lives!

**II.) Vs. 1-3 I Hate Your Grace?**

Vs. 1 How strange this first verse is in light of the success Jonah’s message had upon the Ninevehites; one would think that he would have been incredibly pumped up after 600,000 people got saved! Yet we read that Jonah was not glad, he was mad!

In fact to say that Jonah was a “little bit” upset would be in correct. He was extremely angry. Why? let me suggest to you two reasons:

1.) You will remember that Jonah hated the Ninevehites, they were the most vicious people in the history of man kind & no doubt Jonah had witnessed their brutality first hand in his life as they came in with their raiding parties to his home town first.

2.) You remember Jonah’s message was more of a prophecy then an opportunity to respond, (Forty days & you die!). So when Jonah saw the reaction of the city he knew that his reputation was going to go down hill.

Folks what do you value more, your reputation or your character? Aren’t they the same thing? No, your reputation is what others think of you your character is what God knows about you! When what others think about you is more important then what God thinks about you then you will end up like Jonah, “defending your prejudices” instead of obeying the word of God. It is interesting to note that the last time we heard Jonah pray he had a broken heart, now when prays he has a angry heart. Jonah’s heart was broken over his situation, but it was angered when those that He hated were receiving the same mercy that he got! But why? I mean who & what is Jonah really mad at?

Vs. 2 Here we are told the answer to the above question. Jonah is mad at God. And what is it about God that makes him so angry? Well we don’t have to guess for he tells us, “***for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm***.” Simply put Jonah hates Gods grace! Now that does not seem to be something that you or I would normally protest about God. “***Lord I’m just so ticked at you & do you know why? Well of coarse you do, Your just to darn good, kind, caring, loving, patient, & forgiving. I want you to cut that out***!” Now this would make no sense to us at all if Jonah was saying that he did not want God to be so ***good, kind, caring, loving, patient, & forgiving*** towards him. In fact that is what Jonah praised about God when he was inside the fish near death, “*salvation is of the Lord*.” So why the anger towards these attributes now? Well because now they are directed towards someone he hates.

Follow me close on this one. Jonah, deep down thought that he & the Israelites were better then everybody else. Just like us Jonah had begun to believe his own press reports & **started to feel as if God was obligated to bless him**. Then when God poured out His grace upon a people that Jonah knew were totally undeserving, it made him realize that Jonah had not earned Gods grace all he had done was receive it!

Do you see how many times I, my, & me appear in this prayer of Jonah? Eight times in this prayer against Gods grace towards those that aren’t on Jonah’s “A” list he uses the first person pronouns. All Jonah can see is how Gods grace towards others effects him.

Is there something wrong with Jonah’s theology? No! Nothing wrong with Jonah’s theology, he is right on the money with the character of God. You see the problem with Jonah is not a head problem it is a heart problem! Old Jonah has a great grasp upon the character of God here, but he had no grasp at all of how that should impact his own life towards others! How about it Christian, are you still harboring bitterness towards someone? Do you not want God to shed His grace upon someone because you think you have earned His grace & they have not?

Vs. 3 Well Jonah’s is so bummed that he prays that God would just take his life. Now this would of been so much better if instead of asking God to take his physical life Jonah would of asked God to take control of his life so that his flesh might die. Instead Jonah says to God, “*Shed Your grace upon those guy’s; over my dead body*!” Oh how great it would of been if Jonah would of prayed***, “Shed Your grace upon those guy’s; over the death to my self***!” Folks, that is our battle! Jonah can’t see how the pieces of the puzzle of his life fit. There are some missing, or perhaps they just don’t fit? Jonah needs to go back & look at the box. Well how does that help me? Well if you look at the box you will realize **that the image that God is trying to make in your life is His**. 2 Cor 3:18 tells us this as we read, “as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more.” Folks, God is interested in making you more like His Son. It’s not about comfort, it’s about His character in you!

**III.) Vs. 4-8 Preparing His People**

Vs. 4-5 I love this questing of the Lord here. God is trying to get Jonah to look at where his heart is at. So what does Jonah do? Well he goes for a walk up a hill that over looks the city. Why? Well verse 5 says that he waits to see what would happen to the city! Jonah is still hopping that Ninevehites might have been faking it. You know. Perhaps you have had that happen some guy at work that you don’t much care for comes in one day 7 says that they have come to Christ. So what do you think to yourself? “We will see, that guy just wanting some firs insurance!”

I’m of the opinion that Jonah waited there 40 days. Why? Well because that is how long he had told them they had until they were destroyed. So Jonah finds a good spot to over look the fireworks!

Vs. 6-8 Now notice that God “prepares” three pieces of the puzzle for Jonah so that he might see the whole picture.

1.) Vs. 6 **A blessing**: As Jonah made that little lean too so that he could watch the fire works in the city below. It got hot, so the Lord prepared a plant to bless Jonah. It says here that God saw that Jonah was in misery. Did Jonah deserve to blessed? No way! His attitude stunk, he had no compassion on those guys, in fact he wanted them to be toast! You might say that he wanted them torched but he did not want to be scorched! So what does the Lord do with Jonah? Well, He blesses him with comfort when Jonah least deserved it. Why? To show Jonah that grace is never shed upon the deserving, only upon the undeserving! You see Jonah had started to think that he was just a little better then the rest, so God is showing Jonah first hand that grace is un-merited, undeserving, unearned favor! So God goes out & blesses Jonah not because he was worthy of it, not because of anything Jonah had done, but rather in spite of everything he had done!

Folks, that piece just does not fit does it? I mean that is not how we would do things is it? We would bless based upon performance, but God blesses based upon the picture of making us more like His Son! Do you realize that this is the first time Old Jonah has been happy in this book, & it’s over a gourd!

2.) Vs. 7 **A Loss**: Here God prepares a worm to destroy what He had provided to bless Jonah. Why? Well to show Jonah that he ought not value the temporal above the eternal. The problem with Jonah was that he like us was far to comfortable with Jonah! He did not want God to change his attitude. But God love Jonah, so He was going to be working on his attitude any way. Jonah was all caught up in earning Gods blessing, but had he done anything to earn the plant that provided him shelter? No, did Jonah plant the vine & water it? No he just enjoyed the benefits of it. Folks, God is going to strip away from you the things that you value above Him.

3.) Vs. 8 **A change**: Now if you are out in the hot sun & a scorching wind kicks up to where you start growing faint what would you do? You would MOVE! That’s what God does here He sends this wind upon Jonah to get him to move. Was it a change of physical location that Jonah needed? No it was a change of heart! Where should Jonah of been? He should of been done in the city ministering to all the new believers, but his heart was not in the right place.

So what does God do here in preparing these things for Jonah? Well He prepares:

1.) A plant to reveal His heart of grace!

2.) A worm to reveal the heart of Jonah!

3.) A east wind to get Jonah to move from his heart to Gods heart!

In all of this we se that God was doing more then preparing things He was preparing Jonah! That’s the missing piece the one that seems not to fit.

Again Jonah wishes for physical death when he should of been doing to himself spiritually! Oh Folks, if we just change a few words around here with Jonah’s statement we would have it: “**It is better for me to die to myself, so that I might live**!”

**IV.) Vs. 9-11 Plants Or People?**

Vs. 9 Now Jonah did not answer Gods first question, so God again asks it only this time He asks it with reference to the plant that Jonah loved. Now if I was God I would of said, “Jonah, your gourd for nothing!” Jonah’s only happiness was in a plant! now that’s sad, but you know what I’ve sure let things rip off my joy, how about you? Poor Old Jonah out of his gourd over a gourd!

Vs. 10-11 Here is where God tells Jonah about grace. Jonah, preached a message that brought a whole city to faith in God, yet he did not love a single one that preached to. Yet he loved a plant that he had nothing to do with. What was the difference? Well, Jonah loved the plant for what it gave to him & he hated he people for what they did to him. Now I hate to admit it but that’s a lot like me. And when we love that way the only person we are truly loving is ourselves!

Folks where would we be today if God loved us that way? Well, I will tell you would be condemned to hell! The reality is that he has called us to love the way that He has loved us & that is based upon grace not merit! May I just ask you the same question that I heard the Lord ask me? “Do I cry more over my things then I do the Lost?” “Do you spend more time in your prayer life crying out to God for your life or for the lives of others?” Do we pray “Bless my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” Or “Make me a blessing?” You see there might be a little more Jonah in us then we would like to admit!

Lastly God reveals to Jonah that there are 120,000 children there that did not no right from wrong. Jonah grieved over a gourd dying, but not about 120,000 children dying! Does this make you uncomfortable, because it sure does me. The truth of the matter is that I grieve more for my car when it does not run then for the unsaved in Merced. So what does God have to say? Where is your heart?

Folks the reality is that we have lost sight of the picture on the box & it is time for us to admit that & see that the God is preparing us into His image! We are recipients of God’s grace & we are unworthy of it. Do you believe that or do you still think that some how you deserve it?