

Jonah Devotionals & Sermon Illustrations

Jonah 1

RESULTS OF A BARNA SURVEY:

Among Christians:

- 61% knew that Jonah is a book of the Bible
- 27% said it is not,
- 12% had no idea.

Among non-Christians in the survey:

- 29% knew that the Book of Jonah could be found in the Bible
- 27% said it could not,
- 34% were not sure.

Too Close to Ignore

God is so close you can't get away from Him. That means He's near you today. I don't know what you are facing, but He's right beside you—and because He's omniscient, He knows what's going on. He's not a "do nothing" God.

A man in Scripture tried to run from God. Jonah was a prophet, a man whose job it was to carry the truth of God to people who needed to hear it. But when God told him to go to the Ninevites, Israel's cruel enemies, Jonah didn't want to do it. So Jonah basically said no to God and bought a ticket to go to Tarshish in the opposite direction (Jonah 1:1–3).

Jonah thought he had run away from God, but he forgot something. You can't run from God without running through Him and winding up running toward Him. Jonah got on that ship, but God took care of the problem by ordering the sea to track Jonah down. A fierce storm erupted on the sea. The waves rose and pointed a finger right at Jonah.

Jonah was trying to go two thousand miles west to Tarshish when he should have gone just five hundred miles east to Nineveh. When you run from God, the trip is always longer and harder than it would be if you stayed with Him.

But that was just the beginning. After the sailors tossed Jonah overboard, God sent him a "whale-o-gram," a fish to pick him up out of the water. God brought Jonah back and finally got him to Nineveh. The people repented, but Jonah wasn't happy about it and took off again, going out east of the city to pout over God's sparing of Israel's enemies (Jonah 4:5).

What a lineup God used to go after Jonah this time: a plant, a worm, and a "scorching east wind" (4:8). It's all at His command, and God can tell the waves or the wind what to do with you when you get to where you think you have moved beyond His presence. (Tony Evans in his discussion of the Omnipresence of God - Theology You Can Count On)

Jonah 1 - JONAH ROSE UP TO FLEE- Now, I very commonly meet with persons who say, 'I felt that I must do so and so. It came upon me that I must do so and so.' I am afraid of these impulses—very greatly afraid of them. People may do right under their power, but they will spoil what they do by doing it out of mere impulse, and not because the action was right in itself. - Spurgeon

Many people take their inner impulses and say, "The LORD told me this or that." This is dangerous even when it doesn't seem so immediately. "What have you to do with the devices and desires of your own hearts? Are these to be a law to you? I pray you, be not among the foolish ones who will be carried about with every wind of fancy and perversity. 'To the law and to the testimony,' should be your cry, and you may not appeal to inward movements and impulses." (Spurgeon)

"All the while the ship sailed smoothly over the sea, Jonah forgot his God. You could not have distinguished him from the veriest heathen on board. He was just as bad as they were." (Spurgeon)

Jonah might have wondered: "I can go to Tarshish if I want to. I paid the fare. I'm not a stowaway." Yet, "Apologies for disobedience are mere refuges of lies. If you do a wrong thing in the rightest way in which it can be done, it does not make it right. If you go contrary to the Lord's will, even though you do it in the most decent, and, perhaps, in the most devout manner, it is, nevertheless, sinful, and it will bring you under condemnation." (Spurgeon)

"Jonah was asleep amid all that confusion and noise; and, O Christian man, for you to be indifferent to all that is going on in such a world as this, for you to be negligent of God's work in such a time as this is just as strange. The devil alone is making noise enough to wake all the Jonahs if they only want to awake ... All around us there is tumult and storm, yet some professing Christians are

able, like Jonah, to go to sleep in the sides of the ship.” (Spurgeon)

Spurgeon preached a sermon with four wonderful points based on the actions of the crew in this chapter.

1. Sinners, when they are tossed upon the sea of conviction, make desperate efforts to save themselves
2. The fleshly efforts of awakened sinners must inevitably fail
3. The soul’s sorrow will continue to increase as long as it relies on its own efforts
4. The way of safety for sinners is to be found in the sacrifice of another on their behalf

Jonah

Start Where You Are: Agreeing That Healing Takes Time

To start fresh, to start over, to start anything, you have to know where you are. To get somewhere else, it’s necessary to know where you’re standing right now.

That’s true in a department store or in a big church, on a freeway or on a college campus . . . or in life, for that matter. Seldom does anybody “just happen” to end up on a right road. The process of redirecting our lives is often painful, slow, and even confusing. Occasionally, it seems unbearable.

Consider Jonah, one of the most prejudiced, bigoted, openly rebellious, and spiritually insensitive prophets in Scripture. Other prophets ran to the Lord; he ran from Him. Others declared the promises of God with fervor and zeal. Not Jonah. He was about as motivated as a six-hundredpound grizzly in mid-January.

Somewhere down the line, the prophet got his inner directions cross-wired. He wound up, of all places, in a ship on the Mediterranean Sea bound for a place named Tarshish. That was due west. God had told him Nineveh. That was due east. (That’s like flying from Los Angeles to Berlin by way of Honolulu.) But Jonah never got to Tarshish, as you may remember. Through a traumatic chain of events, Jonah began to get his head together in the digestive tract of a gigantic fish.

What a place to start! Sloshing around in the seaweed and juices of the monster’s stomach, fishing for a match to find his way out, Jonah took a long, honest look at his short, dishonest life. He yelled for mercy. He recited psalms. He promised the Lord that he would keep his vow and get back on target. Only one creature on earth felt sicker than Jonah—the fish, in whose belly Jonah bellowed. Up came the prophet, who hit the road running—toward Nineveh.

THE BLESSING OF NEW One of the most encouraging things about new years, new weeks, new days, and new opportunities is the word new.

Friend Webster reveals its meaning: “refreshed, different from one of the same that has existed previously; unfamiliar.”

Best of all, it’s a place to start again.

To catch a fresh vision.

To change directions.

To begin a new phase of your life’s journey.

But that requires knowing where you are. It requires taking time to honestly admit your present condition. It means facing the music, standing alone inside the fish and coming to terms with whatever needs attention, nosing around in the seaweed for a match. Before you find your way out, you must determine where you are. Only once that is accomplished are you ready to start (or restart) your journey.

Consider what the prophet Joel writes to all the Jonahs (or Joans) who may have picked up this book. God is speaking: “I will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust” (Joel 2:25).

If God can take a disobedient prophet, turn him around, and set him on fire spiritually, He can do the same with you. He is a Specialist at making something useful and beautiful out of something broken and confused.

Where are you, friend? Start there. Openly and freely declare your need to the One who cares deeply. Don’t hide a thing. Show God all of those locust bites. He’s ready to heal every one . . . if you’re ready to run toward that Nineveh called tomorrow.¹ (Charles Swindoll- Start Where You Are)

MISSIONARY DROPOUTS - How about those notable missionary dropouts, Jonah and John Mark? Jonah never really dropped in, you know; he was a refugee from the will of God from Day One. After he made that curious amphibious landing there on the shores, he hurried to Nineveh and preached in the greatest revival of all time. An entire city—the capital of a mighty empire—repented. Every human being in that vast municipality fasted and prayed. Even the animals were required to fast. Think of it! Every man, woman, and child in that great metropolis donned sackcloth, including the animals. After he had fled from God, rebelling against God’s clearly-stated will, that old prophet had all kinds of broken piñons (and wet ones, too). Yet God said, “Jonah, I still want to use you. Let’s get back on track.” And Jonah went on to lead a spiritual awakening that shook the ancient world. (Charles Swindoll -

QUOTES FROM CHARLES SWINDOLL RELATED TO JONAH

The rebellious prophet **Jonah** must have wondered, Can I find any place that will remove me from God? He found out the hard way that the answer is an emphatic “No!”

In Scripture, such failures happened time and again. When did Bathsheba cross the gaze of David? At a time when he had not known defeat in battle. From the time he took the kingdom until he fell with Bathsheba, David had not known defeat—politically, militarily, or personally. **When did Jonah fall into self-pity?** After the greatest revival that had ever swept over a city. When did Joseph receive that temptation from Mrs. Potiphar? Soon after he had been promoted under Mr. Potiphar's leadership and had been granted free run of the house. Frankly, some of my most discouraging times occur on Mondays. I can't explain why. After a great Sunday, when we've been uplifted in one service after another, when we've heard testimonies and words of encouragement, when we've sung, had fellowship, worshiped and really enjoyed the Lord together, I sink into discouragement come Monday. I've also found when I am approaching a tremendous, mountaintop experience, I tend to slump into a low tide. Maybe you too have found this to be true.

Elijah was an heroic prophet, without question. He was also a man of great humility, as we have seen. But let's not forget that he was just a man—a human being, subject to the human condition, as we all are. He suffered discouragement, despondency, and depression. On one occasion, he couldn't shake it. If you are a student of Scripture, you know that such feelings were not uncommon among many of those we would consider successful men of God. Moses once became so blue and discouraged that he asked God to take his life. **Jonah, after the great revival at Nineveh, did the very same thing.** Paul “despaired even of life” at a certain point in his Asian ministry (2 Corinthians 1:8).

I suppose each one of us would have our favorite biblical film clips. Being a preacher, I can think of several original “preacher scenes” I would find extremely interesting—like when the prophet Jeremiah wept through a few sermons he preached, or when **Jonah made that first amphibious landing and instantly hightailed it to Nineveh.** Think of those men of Scripture who failed the Lord. On the heels of the greatest revival in history, Jonah defected. Elijah begged God to take his life only hours after he had come down from Mount Carmel, where he had reached great popularity and power in the eyes of the people. Our most vulnerable moment is when we are enjoying times of prosperity. God gave the children of Israel the fruit of the land to eat, and they defiled it and made it an abomination. Warning: When you are making top grades in school, you're most vulnerable. When your family seems the closest and the strongest, you're most vulnerable. When your business has reached a level you never dreamed possible, that's a vulnerable state. Fellow pastor, when you are enjoying God's blessings and the church is growing and your fame is spreading, you're vulnerable. Be on guard! That is when things like boredom and complacency set in. If you have served in the military, you know that the most vulnerable time for an attack is right after a battle has been won. The tendency is to sit down to a feast and take it easy. I was taught during my days in the Marine Corps that the correct maneuver immediately following victory is to set up a “hasty defense.” You instantly establish communications with your forces in order to handle that early period of victory. It's tougher to remain victorious than it is to become victorious!

RAW TRUTH FOR REAL LIFE One of the characteristics I find most attractive about the Bible is its raw realism. When God paints portraits of His servants in the Scriptures, He resists airbrushing away all the warts and blemishes. Moses was a murderer. David has adultery and hypocrisy on his record. **Jonah was a proud and stubborn prophet, who nearly missed an opportunity of a lifetime because of his ugly bigotry.** Jacob had deceitful ways. Abraham lied, more than once. Peter waffled when the pressure was on. Even John the Baptizer struggled with doubt. So did Thomas. So we shouldn't be shocked that Paul and Barnabas had their conflict.

You cannot continue life as usual or stay where you are, and go with God at the same time. That is true throughout Scripture. Noah could not continue life as usual and build an ark at the same time. Abram could not stay in Ur or Haran and father a nation in Canaan. Moses could not stay on the back side of the desert herding sheep and stand before Pharaoh at the same time. David had to leave his sheep to become the king. Amos had to leave the sycamore trees in order to preach in Israel. **Jonah had to leave his home and overcome a major prejudice in order to preach in Nineveh.** Peter, Andrew, James, and John had to leave their fishing businesses to follow Jesus. Matthew had to leave his tax collector's booth to follow Jesus. Saul (later Paul) had to completely change directions in life in order to be used of God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

God constantly uses the lives of Bible characters to teach us, to encourage us, to warn us. Who can forget the impact of the truths lived out in the lives of David and Esther, of Moses and **Jonah**, of Peter and Paul? It's impossible to leave truth in the theoretical realm when you see it revealed in the lives of real-life men and women. That is what these divinely inspired biographies do; they distill truth and weave it into the fabric of everyday living. God's training manual is full of lives that inspire and instruct. Romans 15:4 states, “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the

encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (emphasis added). This reference to “earlier times” encompasses all the truths written in the Old Testament. And if I read this verse correctly, there are two basic reasons God has allowed us to have the Old Testament available for study and application: first, for present instruction, and second, for future hope. God has given us this information so that our minds can learn the truth about Him and about life, and so that we will be encouraged to persevere in the future.

Following the Spirit’s leading is reality, not theory. We have discussed some of the prerequisites and requirements for following the Spirit’s lead; now comes the bottom line: we have to do it in the real world. Again, Henry Blackaby gives some good advice about following the Spirit’s lead in his fine book *Experiencing God*. He said it almost always begins with a “crisis of belief.” Following God’s leading will demand a change. You cannot continue life as usual or stay where you are and go with God at the same time. Faith and action are like twins; they go together. Imagine how hard it must have been for Moses to combine faith and action when he took that first step into the Red Sea. And as he did, God opened up a dry path through the sea. Imagine the step of faith Noah took in quitting his job and building an ark. **Jonah had to leave his home and overcome a major prejudice in order to preach in Nineveh** The disciples Peter, Andrew, James, and John had to walk away from their fishing businesses to follow Jesus. The list of examples is long. In every generation, the people who wanted to follow God went through major crises of faith and adjustment. Blackaby wrote:

The kind of assignments God gives in the Bible are always God sized. They are always beyond what people can do because He wants to demonstrate His nature, His strength, His provision, His kindness to His people and to a watching world. That is the only way the world will come to know Him. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” Following Christ means that we must believe God is who He says He is and He will do what He says He will do. That sounds so elementary, but it has profound ramifications.

THE PERIL OF DISCOURAGEMENT AND DEPRESSION Even though you may be a godly person, you can hear that kind of depressing stuff only so long before it begins to demoralize your spirit, dragging you down. You want to walk with God, but you’re with a few people who just won’t. Invariably they’re vocal, petty, and negative. They don’t want to go God’s way, they want to go their way. And they’re always looking back to how great things used to be (before you came along). Dr. Howard Hendricks used to say, “Those good old times are what created these bad new times that we’re having these days.” My faithful mentor is right on target, isn’t he? We like to look back on those “good old times,” and we don’t even want to give the challenging new times a chance. The rabble never realizes that. Moses heard this sad bunch gripe and complain and grumble. He heard it continually. He heard it so much he wanted to gag. “Now Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, each man at the doorway of his tent; and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly, and Moses was displeased” (v. 10). Can’t you see Moses walking up and down those lines of tents, listening to the constant complaining? There’s griping. There’s crying. There are frowns and long faces, wagging heads and grim countenances. And before long it begins to wear the old man down. The text says he was “displeased.” Now, I wish I could say that Moses passed all these perils with flying colors. Three out of four, he did. But here’s the one he just didn’t handle. I can identify with him. I really understand. Moses wanted so much for his people to see the God he had seen in the burning bush, to trust the cloud that moved unerringly toward Canaan, but they didn’t. He wanted them to develop a heavenly appetite that delights in heavenly food, but they wouldn’t. Finally, they wore him down, and he became discouraged. It should be no surprise that we hear him blurt this out to God: Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me? Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth, that You should say to me, “Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant”. . . ? Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me, saying, “Give us meat...!” I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me. So if You are going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once [he’s really low, isn’t he?], if I have found favor in Your sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness. (vv. 11–15, brackets mine) Can you understand how he felt? Have you ever been that low? The deeper you commit yourself, the heavier the burden. The faster the pace, the heavier the anchor. Listen, the greater the dreams God may give you, the more persistent will be the rabble who puts them down. They will complain, and fuss, and fume. And if you listen to ’em long enough, you’ll get downright depressed. I once knew a young man who taught in a West Los Angeles junior high school. He was trying to teach math to a group of kids that included a “rabble” who didn’t want to learn anything. He told me, “Pastor Chuck, what I’m really doing is teaching a class on discipline. And in the meantime I throw in a little math.” He told me he once spent part of a class getting hold of a kid, finally tackling him on a desk. “I wanted to tell him some things,” he said. That actually happened in his classroom. Do you think that teacher ever faced discouragement? He had a Master’s degree in mathematics, was passionate about his subject, and knew how to teach. But he spent most of his time putting out fires unrelated to his calling. Instead of wrestling with formulas and equations, he found himself wrestling with unruly students. May I give you a tip? (No extra charge for this insight.) As soon as a group gets large enough, the rabble will show up. As that Bible class you teach increases in size, sooner or later you’ll get the rabble. You go to a Bible school, a seminary, a Christian college, you’ll find the rabble there. You visit a church of any size, you will find the rabble. You start a church, it’s only a matter of time. It’s true of groups in the church, Sunday school classes, choirs. No matter what, when you get a large enough group together, you will find the rabble. That means that when you want your life to please the Lord, when you want very much to count for Christ, sooner or later you will be rubbing shoulders with the rabble, with those who don’t want to please God at all. And if you don’t watch it, you will let them get the best of you, and you will succumb to

discouragement and depression. One of the greatest battles I faced as a seminary student involved the rabble. I was naive enough to believe that the men who taught us were all men of God. I was strange enough to think that if you really applied yourself in study, it would be worth it all. But a small percentage of my fellow students couldn't have cared less about their studies. I had to battle discouragement around those guys. Now, I wasn't the super saint who never sinned and who came through life untarnished. But my goals clashed with a number of fellow students, and we had some confrontations. It was unpleasant, even depressing. If you focus on those confrontations, however, you will stay discouraged. That's what happened to Moses. He heard weeping behind one too many tent flaps and finally whimpered, "Lord, take my life." That's the ultimate expression of depression. An exhausted Elijah once muttered similar words beneath a scrawny tree in the wilderness. **Jonah said the same thing under a withered vine outside the walls of Nineveh** (Jonah 4:1-3). Both were ready to quit; both asked the Lord for a quick death. But the Lord refused to take the life of Elijah or Jonah, and He wasn't about to take Moses' life, either. But He did take care of the problem. Again Moses had been trying to do too much, so the Lord spread out his work load. You can read it for yourself in Numbers 11:16-25. God took care of his need. But as soon as that peril exited stage right, another one emerged stage left. Right on the heels of the first came the second. That's how it is when we determine to walk with God. The perils can come one after the other. (Great Lives: Moses)

MIRACLES - Gary Richmond said, "If they were happening every day, they wouldn't be called miracles, they'd be called regulars." I think that's a great statement. Miracles aren't regulars. They're every once in a while, maybe once in a lifetime, maybe twice. A parking place at Christmas time in Nordstroms' parking lot isn't a miracle. (I know it seems like a minor miracle, but it isn't a miracle, you know.) The fact that your toothache stops hurting isn't a miracle ... or that your appendectomy scar isn't large. That isn't a miracle; that's a very good surgeon. Jonah swallowed by a fish? I'd believe it if Scripture said Jonah swallowed the fish! It's not difficult to believe if you believe in a God of miracles.—Billy Graham (Quoted in Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes)

THINK IT OVER - God's Word is filled with examples of those who believed God and "commenced prayer." David certainly did. "I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay; And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm" (Ps. 40:1-2).

Paul and Silas experienced the same thing in that ancient Philippian prison when all seemed hopeless (Acts 16:25-26). And it was from the deep that **Jonah** cried for help. Choking on salt water and engulfed by the Mediterranean currents, the prodigal prophet called out his distress: "Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, and he said, 'I called out of my distress to the LORD, and He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; Thou didst hear my voice. . . . All Thy breakers and billows passed over me. . . . But Thou hast brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God'" (Jonah 2:1-6). **Often it is the crucible of crisis that energizes our faith. Think it over.** (Day By Day with Charles Swindoll)

Jonah 1 - When God Cleans House

November 19, 2011

Read: Jonah 1

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. —Ephesians 4:31

God did some fall housecleaning this week. He sent a mighty wind through our neighborhood that made the trees tremble and shake loose their dead branches. When it finished, I had a mess to clean up.

In my own life, God sometimes works in a similar way. He will send or allow stormy circumstances that shake loose the "lifeless branches" I've been refusing to release. Sometimes it's something that once was good, like an area of ministry, but is no longer bearing fruit. More often it's something that's not good, like a bad habit I've slid into or a stubborn attitude that prevents new growth.

The Old Testament prophet Jonah discovered what can happen when one refuses to get rid of a stubborn attitude. His hatred for the Ninevites was stronger than his love for God, so God sent a great storm that landed Jonah in a giant fish (Jonah 1:4,17). God preserved the reluctant prophet in that unlikely place and gave him a second chance to obey (Jonah 2:10; 3:1-3).

The lifeless limbs in my yard caused me to think of attitudes that God expects me to dispose of. Paul's letter to the Ephesians lists some of them: bitterness, anger, and evil speech (Eph 4:31). When God shakes things up, we need to get rid of what He shakes loose.

Lord, give me a listening heart and help me to cooperate with You when You point out changes that need to be made in my life. I want to honor You and please You. Amen.

Christ's cleansing power can remove the most stubborn stain of sin.

By Julie Ackerman Link

Jonah 1:1-10

January 23, 2007

Running From God

READ: Jonah 1:1-10

Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. —Jonah 1:3

Why do people run away from God? Is it because of anger, disappointment, despair, disobedience, or a web of rebellion woven from our own desires?

The book of Jonah looks at a prophet who rejected God's call to deliver His word to the people of Nineveh. In the first chapter (vv.3,10), we read that Jonah deliberately headed for Tarshish to run away from the Lord. He knew exactly where he was going and why. After being given a second chance (3:1-2), Jonah delivered God's message but reacted angrily when the Lord spared the repentant city (3:10–4:2).

The book ends with the Lord speaking to Jonah about His compassion: "Should I not pity Nineveh?" (4:11). But there's no indication that the disgruntled prophet changed his attitude. The people of Nineveh repented; Jonah did not.

The story of Jonah should cause each of us to be honest about our feelings toward the Lord. Do we harbor resentment for His leniency toward people we feel deserve judgment? Have we forgotten that God has forgiven us? Are we ready to obey His call and leave the outcome to Him?

The story of Jonah illuminates our reactions to God and measures our willingness to trust Him when we can't understand His ways. —David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Sometimes it's hard to trust the Lord
When you don't understand;
But fight the urge to run from Him—
Reach out and take His hand. —Sper

He pleases God best who trusts Him most

Jonah 1:1-11 - AN ILLUSTRATION

The second wireless operator of the Titanic said: "In the first place the Californian had called me with an 'ice report' about five o'clock. I was rather busy, and I did not take it. They did not call me again, but transmitted it to the Baltic, I took it down as it was transmitted to the Baltic about half an hour afterward. I was doing some writing at the time, sir, writing some accounts on the table. I continued to work on the accounts for about thirty minutes. Then I took the report she sent to the Baltic. It was an 'ice report,' so I knew it was the same she had for me. I acknowledged it direct to the Californian. It was that the Californian had passed three large icebergs, and gave their latitude and longitude.

"I wrote it on a slip of paper and handed it to the officer on the bridge."

"Did you make a record of it?"

"No, sir. If we made a record of all these messages we could not begin to make up our accounts."

Bride said he did not recall the name of the officer on the bridge to whom he gave the warning.

Christians are too busy with their daily toil to take warnings. Sometimes the warnings are in a sermon, in the Scripture, or they come while we are praying. We soon forget them.

Second Officer Lightoller of the Titanic told the Senate Investigating Committee that Capt. Smith and the other officers expected to encounter ice at 11 o'clock on the Sunday night of the disaster, or forty minutes before the ship struck; that Capt. Smith showed him a message of warning. He himself worked out the probable position of the ice, and he in turn warned Chief Officer Murdock. He also cautioned the lookout men to keep a sharp watch ahead for ice. Publisher Unknown. ([Robert Neighbour](#))

Jonah 1: AN ILLUSTRATION

"The vicarious atonement for sin accomplished by the Cross of Jesus Christ is everywhere taught in the Scriptures by symbol, by

direct teaching, by event and by the expression of believers. The symbols of the Old Testament persistently tell of a Sin-bearer who carries the load of sin for men. Old Testament Poet and Prophet teach the covering up of sin, and in most exalted language tell of Him who was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, upon whom was the chastisement of our peace, and by whose stripes we are healed.

John the Baptist pointed to Christ as the "Lamb * * which taketh away the sin of the world." Our Lord declares He gave His life "a ransom for many," and He teaches unmistakably that His death was not a defeat, but a voluntary sacrifice for the life of His people. "I lay down My life for the sheep." "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10:15-18). * * *

This great truth of Scripture has ever been an offense to sinful men, although for them it is the most precious truth ever given. "Christ crucified, unto the Jews" (the ritualists) "a stumblingblock," and "unto the Greeks" (the rationalises) "foolishness," "but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The Presbyterian. ([Robert Neighbour](#))

THE COST OF HIDING FROM GOD - What is the book of Jonah about? It's not about fish, for the great fish is mentioned only four times. Jonah is named eighteen times, but the Lord God is mentioned thirty-seven times! The book is about God and how he deals with people who want their own way and therefore refuse to obey his will. Surely Jonah knew that he could not run away from God. "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?" (Ps. 139:7). If we ever attempt to hide from God, the consequence will be painful.

The direction of life will be down. Jonah went down to the seaport of Joppa and then went down into the ship (Jonah 1:3), and then went down into the lowest part of the ship where he went to sleep (Jonah 1:5). You would think that the combination of his guilty conscience plus the storm would have kept him awake, but he slept soundly. Often when we disobey God, we enjoy a period of quiet confidence that lulls us into a false peace. This is one of Satan's tricks. But that was not the end. Though the Gentile sailors tried to spare Jonah, he insisted that they throw him into the sea, so he went down into the sea where a great fish was awaiting him. The fish swallowed Jonah, who went down into its stomach. Down, down, down, down! Jonah had a message from God that would save the lives of nearly a million people in Nineveh, but being a patriotic Jew, Jonah wanted the Ninevites to be killed.

The circumstances of life will be stormy. God called the Jewish people to be a blessing to the world (Gen. 12:1-3), but every time they disobeyed God, they brought trouble instead of blessing. The name Jonah means dove, but Jonah brought to the ship anything but peace. One child of God out of the will of God can cause more trouble than a troop of unconverted people. Once Jonah was on his rebellious way, the Lord could no longer speak to him but had to use the storm to get his attention. He also lost his prayer power (Jonah 1:6) and his testimony before the Gentile sailors (vv. 7-9), and by seeking to run away from the Lord, he almost lost his life and endangered the lives of the crew. But once Jonah was off the ship, the storm ceased! I have seen families go from storms to blessed quietness once the sin in the home was confessed and forsaken—and it happens in churches too.

The hope of life will be repentance. Jonah probably hoped for a quick death, but God had other plans. It took Jonah three days to get around to praying and seeking forgiveness, but once he repented, God rescued him and put him back on his feet on dry land. Jonah's prayer is a composite of quotations from the book of Psalms, so the Scriptures he memorized came in handy. When the fish vomited Jonah out on dry land, the people who saw it must have been amazed and alarmed, and the news quickly traveled to Nineveh. When Jonah showed up, they were ready to listen, repented of their sins, and were spared judgment. The Lord gave Jonah another chance, just as he did with Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and Peter.

Only a gracious God such as the One we worship can take a stubborn, disobedient servant and use him to bring spiritual awakening to a great city. Jesus used Jonah's experience to picture his own resurrection and to emphasize the importance of hearing the Word of God and repenting (Matt. 12:38-41; 16:4). I trust you are not running from God. If you are, change directions and run to him and he will give you a new beginning. "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." - Matthew 12:41 (**From recommended resource** - Warren Wiersbe - [Old Testament Words for Today: 100 Devotional Reflections](#))

THREE STORMS From D L Moody's Bible

1. The storm of Jonah 2, which was sent as a punishment against Jonah for his sin, ceasing only when he was cast into the sea. Type of Jesus who could say, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Ps. 42:7.
2. The storm in Acts 27, which did not cease, but a message from the Lord was sent to comfort His people in the midst of it. Picture of believers who in the midst of fierce tossings are encouraged by His word, knowing that they are "drawing near to some country" (Acts 27:27), "that is, an heavenly." Heb. 11:16.
3. The storm in Mark 4, which was stilled at once by the word of Jesus. Picture of the great calm He commands within the believer's

heart.

Jonah 1:3 - It is Impossible to Hide From D L Moody's Bible

God's first question—"Where art thou?" Man asked the first question in the New Testament—"Where is he?" See Matt. 2:2.

God's second question was—"Where is Abel thy brother?" Ch. 4:9.—Human responsibility.

"Where art thou?" Hiding from God. Why? From fear.

Reasons for fear:—

a. God's holiness. Ex. 3:6; Isa. 6; Rev. 1:17.

b. Man's sinfulness. Job. 42:5, 6.

Behind what to hide?

It is impossible—Prov. 28:13; Amos 9:2–4; Ps. 139:7–12; Jonah 1:3.

Only one safe hiding-place—Jesus. Rev. 6:12–17.

Jonah 1:3 - PICKING UP THE TAB

Whenever you run from the will of God, you get to pick up the tab. Whenever you rebel against God and go the other way, you pay the freight.

Jonah, as you'll recall, was the rebellious prophet who took off toward Tarshish when God told him to go to Nineveh, which was in the opposite direction. Jonah "paid the fare" himself to go to Tarshish (Jonah 1:3). But the beautiful thing about going to Nineveh is that God would have paid the fare. The horrible thing about going to Tarshish is, you pick up the tab.

You know what? Many of us are paying a high price for our "Tarshish trip" when, if we had done things God's way, He would have picked up the tab. Many of us are paying high emotional, psychological, and physical tabs because we rebel against the will of God for our lives.

This is the part of church people don't want, but doctors are supposed to help you stay well. You have to follow their advice, however. If there's a problem, hospitals are designed to fix what's wrong. But you have to submit to the treatment.

That's why a part of every church service should be judging your sin. (Tony Evans)

Jonah 1:2-3 Sign-Seekers

June 26, 2004

Read: Luke 11:29-32

This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. —Luke 11:29

A skeptic once said to me, "I'll believe in Jesus if He comes down and appears visibly above my house." Not necessarily!

The Christ-rejecting religious leaders who requested a sign from Jesus had plenty of evidence for believing. They had undoubtedly heard of, if not seen, His miracles of healing, casting out demons, and even raising the dead. What more did they need?

Jesus therefore called them an "evil generation" (Luke 11:29). The only sign they would be given was the sign of Jonah the prophet, who had been thrown into a stormy sea (Jonah 1:2-3). When the Ninevites heard Jonah's message of repentance after he had spent 3 days in the belly of a fish, they believed God had sent him and they repented.

Likewise, the religious leaders who already knew of Jesus' words and works would soon see Him crucified and securely entombed. And in the following weeks they would hear personal testimonies from those who had seen Him alive, and had even touched Him, but they still wouldn't believe.

Today we have in the Gospels a record of what Jesus said and did, written by people who knew Him. If we are open to the truth, we have all the evidence we need to believe. We don't need to be sign-seekers.

If we desire to honor God,
We take Him at His Word
And ask Him not for special signs,
But trust, "Thus saith the Lord." —D. De Haan

The sign of genuine faith is faith that needs no sign.

By Herbert VanderLugt

Christ is our Jonah! ([William Dyer, "Christ's Famous Titles"](#))

"Then they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea--and the sea stopped its raging!" Jonah 1:15

Christ is our Jonah, who threw Himself into the sea of His Father's wrath--to save us from everlasting perdition!

Jonah: Reluctant Obedience

The prophet Jonah provides another good example— or, rather, a counterexample —of what it means to live by faith. When the Lord commands him to go to Nineveh, he immediately begins to question and calculate, worrying about all the possible consequences of his actions and second guessing the Lord in his own mind (Jonah 4:2). He quickly decides not to obey the Lord, attempting instead to flee from His presence by boarding a ship bound for Tarshish:

"He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD" (Jonah 1:3).

You can run, as the saying goes, but you cannot hide. The ship that he is on encounters severe storms and the cargo is jettisoned in an attempt to save the ship and passengers (Jonah 1:4-6). Shipwreck is narrowly avoided, but only after Jonah explains himself to his comrades and persuades them to throw him overboard, as well (Jonah 1:7-16). He is then swallowed by a great fish and, after calling upon the Lord from within its belly, is spit back up onto dry land. (Jonah 1:17 – 2:10).

The moral of this story— quite clearly —is that much of what we experience as external adversity actually reflects our own inner conflicts—often our own stubborn refusal to submit to the will of God for our life. Jonah's decision to go to Tarshish was a desperate attempt to evade both his duty and his destiny; to live in deference to his fears instead of his faith; to substitute his short-sighted preferences for God's perfect will—a desperate attempt to circumvent God's clear leading in his life. Alas, at the end of the story, Jonah remains very troubled, reluctantly obeying God, to be sure, but still not trusting him wholly (Jonah 3:10 – 4:8) ([See this blogsite Yeshua21](#))

Jonah 1:2, 3. Arise, go to Nineveh.... But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish.

Ruminating upon trouble is bitter work. Children fill their mouths with bitterness when they rebelliously chew the pill which they ought obediently to have taken at once. SPURGEON.

Jonah 1:2-3

June 26, 2004

Sign-Seekers

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Today we have in the Gospels a record of what Jesus said and did, written by people who knew Him. If we are open to the truth, we have all the evidence we need to believe. We don't need to be sign-seekers.—Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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And ask Him not for special signs,
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Jonah 1:1-11

Headed The Wrong Way?

Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. --Jonah 1:3

Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. So, instead of obeying God's command to go there and "cry out against it" (Jonah 1:2), he headed for the docks. A ship was about to depart, so he paid the fare and left.

A classmate of mine in seminary had a good mind and was a gifted teacher. When he was finishing seminary, some wonderful opportunities were open to him. But he wasn't sure he wanted what he thought would be "the humdrum" of a pastorate, even though he felt God wanted him to be a pastor. He was looking for something more exciting. About that time he was offered a position in a brokerage firm. There he became a successful investor.

I had coffee with him a while ago, and he expressed regret that he had not followed God's leading into the ministry. "I still think about taking a church someday," he sighed. It seems to me that when he was running from God, the ship of financial opportunity was there. He "went down into it" and, to use his words, "wasted my life."

If you believe that God is calling you to a specific task, answer yes immediately and go as quickly as you can. Don't run from God and board a ship that's going in the wrong direction. —David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Here is my heart, Lord Jesus,
I have but one for Thee;
Oh, let my heart be Thine alone,
Thy will be done in me. --Mick

You can never go wrong when you choose to follow Christ.

Jonah 1:3

December 30, 1999

A Ticket To Tarshish

READ: Jonah 1:1-11

Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. --Jonah 1:3

An elderly follower of Christ was talking to me about her personal journey with the Lord. At one point in her life, after a couple of terms of missionary work, she lost her enthusiasm for serving God. Although she continued to fulfill her responsibilities, she tried to flee from God. She bought a "ticket to Tarshish," to use her own words, by burying herself in reading.

Our loving and persistent God did not let this missionary just sail away from Him. As He did with Jonah, the Lord caught her attention and drew her back to Himself. She now serves Him with a willing, compassionate, and joyful heart.

Any person who serves the Lord--leader or layman--can face the temptation to "walk out" on God. Whether we feel like running away from His will, as Jonah did, or if we slowly and quietly try to escape as this reluctant missionary tried to do, we let our hearts grow cold and we silence our ears to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord will not let you "sail away to Tarshish." Right now He may be calling you back to Himself. If so, fall on your knees and cry out to God. Let Him know that you've torn up your ticket to Tarshish, and that you're returning to Him. —David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I've strayed, O Lord, and turned aside,
I've disobeyed Your voice;

But now contrite of heart I turn
And make Your will my choice. --D J De Haan

It's never too soon to turn back to God.

Jonah 1:1-17

June 27, 1999

He Is In Control

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord. --Proverbs 16:33

Flipping a coin, drawing straws, or taking a number out of a hat have long been ways of resolving disputes. I once read of an election in an Oklahoma town where the two leading candidates each received 140 votes. Rather than go through the expense of another election, city officials used a chance method to decide the winner, and everyone accepted the outcome. What the writer of Proverbs said proved to be true: "Casting lots causes contentions to cease, and keeps the mighty apart" (Pr. 18:18).

Many people view all of this as nothing more than a matter of chance. But the amazing thing about what the Word of God calls "casting lots" is that the Lord is ultimately the One who controls the outcome. This was true in the story of Jonah, where God showed Himself to be Lord even through the actions of superstitious, unbelieving sailors.

So, what does all of this say to us as believers? From the Christian's perspective, there is no such thing as chance. God is either directly or indirectly involved in everything that happens to us. He can therefore be trusted and obeyed in any circumstance, because even the smallest details are under His control. —Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Things don't just happen to those who love God,
They're planned by His own dear hand,
Then molded and shaped, and timed by His clock;
Things don't just happen--they're planned. --Fields

God is behind the scenes and controls the scenes He is behind.

Jonah 1:1-17

June 2, 2001

Swallowed Up

When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord. --Jonah 2:7

You've probably heard the story of Jonah and the great fish. But did you know that the disobedient prophet was "swallowed up" not once but three times? Let me explain.

First, Jonah was swallowed up by prejudice. The Ninevites were a wicked and idolatrous people (Jonah 1:2), and God wanted Jonah to preach repentance to them. But Jonah wanted them to feel God's wrath (4:2), so he boarded a ship and headed in the opposite direction (1:3).

Second, Jonah was swallowed up by the sea. A wild storm was battering the boat, so the superstitious sailors cast lots to find out who was to blame, and "the lot fell on Jonah" (v.7). He said, "Throw me into the sea" (v.12). As the swirling waters engulfed him, he sank toward certain death.

Third, Jonah was swallowed up by a large fish that God had prepared to rescue him (1:17). Inside the fish 3 days, he confessed his sin and promised to obey God (2:1-9). After he was delivered, he followed God's directive and preached judgment to Nineveh, and all the people repented (3:1-5).

God sometimes allows us to face frightening circumstances so that we will learn to trust and obey Him. It's always best to obey the Lord right away—then we won't be "swallowed up." —David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,

What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey. —Sammis

**The way of obedience is the way of blessing.
Obedience is another word for love and loyalty.**

Jonah 1:3

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

“But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa.” — Jonah 1:3

Instead of going to Nineveh to preach the Word, as God bade him, Jonah disliked the work, and went down to Joppa to escape from it. There are occasions when God's servants shrink from duty. But what is the consequence? What did Jonah lose by his conduct? He lost the presence and comfortable enjoyment of God's love. When we serve our Lord Jesus as believers should do, our God is with us; and though we have the whole world against us, if we have God with us, what does it matter? But the moment we start back, and seek our own inventions, we are at sea without a pilot. Then may we bitterly lament and groan out, “O my God, where hast thou gone? How could I have been so foolish as to shun thy service, and in this way to lose all the bright shinings of thy face? This is a price too high. Let me return to my allegiance, that I may rejoice in thy presence.” In the next place, Jonah lost all peace of mind. Sin soon destroys a believer's comfort. It is the poisonous upas tree, from whose leaves distil deadly drops which destroy the life of joy and peace. Jonah lost everything upon which he might have drawn for comfort in any other case. He could not plead the promise of divine protection, for he was not in God's ways; he could not say, “Lord, I meet with these difficulties in the discharge of my duty, therefore help me through them.” He was reaping his own deeds; he was filled with his own ways. Christian, do not play the Jonah, unless you wish to have all the waves and the billows rolling over your head. You will find in the long run that it is far harder to shun the work and will of God than to at once yield yourself to it. Jonah lost his time, for he had to go to Nineveh after all. It is hard to contend with God; let us yield ourselves at once.

DOWN, DOWN, DOWN - [Lessons from Jonah - Ray Pritchard](#)

1. Every step out of the will of God is a downward step.

No one ever disobeyed God and went up. You only go down.

“Down” to Joppa.

“Down” into the ship.

“Down” into the sea.

“Down” in the belly of the great fish.

2. We get away quickly, we recover slowly.

It's easy to go down, easy to get off the right path, easy to fall into sin. But the road back is difficult and often very painful.

3. Satan can work through circumstances just like God can.

Satan has his ships, and he always has room on his ships. His ships always go where we want to go when we're running from God. He can make disobedience look good by means of favorable circumstances.

As he gets ready to take a nap, Jonah may have thought, “Things are going so well for me. This must be God's will.” But if he thought that, he was wrong. The Lord had already made his will clear. No set of favorable circumstances can override what God has clearly said. Down deep he knew God's will. He just didn't want to do it.

No set of favorable circumstances can override what God has clearly said.

I began by saying that I am calling this series on Jonah “Outrageous Grace.” You may wonder, “Where is the grace of God in this story?” The answer is simple. He let Jonah disobey. He didn't kill him on the spot. He gave him the freedom to mess up his own life. That didn't seem like grace at the time, but it was. God works even in the midst of our disobedience to bring us to himself. Sometimes God lets us go way off course so that when we finally see our sin for what it is, we are ready to return to the Lord.

Meanwhile Jonah's disobedience looks pretty good so far. "Happy sailing, Jonah. Watch out for that big fish."

This is how life really works. Sin looks good for awhile. Jonah experienced the "pleasures of sin for a season." If sin always brought immediate misery, it would be a lot less attractive to us. Stolen water may be sweet, but it leads you to the gates of hell.

The bitterness comes later.

The sadness comes later.

Sin is fun for a while. Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Jonah is about to find that out the hard way.

Jonah 1:3

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Jonah 1:3

Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

He went down to Joppa. — Sin is always a going down. Down from the heights of fellowship with God; down from the life of high and noble purpose; down from self-restraint and high endeavor. Yes, and we know we are going down; that our self-discipline is relaxed; that our holy separation from the world is slacker.

He found a ship. — Opportunity does not necessarily indicate either expediency or duty. Because the ship happened at that moment to be weighing anchor and the sails to be filled with a favoring breeze, Jonah might have argued that his resolution was a right one. Whether he did or not, there are many times in our lives when we are disposed to argue that favoring circumstances indicate the right course. But it must be remembered that they never can belie God's summons to the soul to do his will. The court of conscience is the supreme court of appeal; and to run away from known duty cannot be right, though circumstances seem at first to smile.

He paid the fare thereof. — Yea, if we go opposite to God's will, we always have to pay for it. The loss of self-respect, the broken piece of conscience, the deprivation of God's blessed presence, are part of the fare. And even when we have paid and lost it all, we fail to get what we purchased; we are dropped out of our chosen vessel in mid-ocean; and God brings us back to land at his own expense, and in a ship of his own construction. The morning may be fine, but it is soon overcast: the sky may be clear at starting, but God sends a great storm after the runaways to bring them back to Himself: the ship may seem to be opportunely leaving the wharf, but disaster will over-take it.

Jonah 1:1-17

You brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God. - Jonah 2:6

TODAY IN THE WORD

In Francis Thompson's poem, "The Hound of Heaven," the speaker flees from God. He hides, seeks fulfillment in other things, and runs in fear from God's overwhelming love. But as the title implies, God pursues him through the years, relentlessly and patiently.

Why? Not because the speaker in the poem is lovable or worthy or deserves God's favor, but because God knows that he will find fulfillment and joy only in Him:

All which thy child's mistake

Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home

Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Yesterday, we saw that God welcomes back the prodigal. But that's only part of the truth. In fact, God is more aggressive—He's always working to pursue us and woo us and discipline us back to His side. We often call people who are considering the claims of Christ "seekers," but the truth is that God is the great Seeker. Jesus said, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10; cf. Rom. 5:10).

Jonah is a classic case study in regard to this principle. There he was, a man in full-time ministry with clear directions from God about where to go and what to do, rebelliously heading in the exact opposite direction. Why did he disobey? He let his human perspective—the fact that Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, the enemy of Israel—override God's command. Did he really think he could run from God? When we sin, our own stubbornness and rebelliousness blind us to the truth.

How did God pursue Jonah? By means of a storm,

lots (or dice) thrown by pagan sailors, and a great fish. Notice that the prophet had the correct beliefs about God (v. 9), but this was not enough to keep him on the path of obedience. Given a second chance, Jonah took it, but his attitude still wasn't right. At the book's close, God was still working to teach His servant more about His love.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Now is a good time to review the "Today Along the Way" applications from earlier in the month. Is there one you skipped before, but feel like returning to now? There may even be one that you did already but feel led to do again! ([Today in the Word. Moody Bible Institute. Used by Permission. All rights reserved](#))

Jonah 1:17 Jesus and Jonah

"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." (Jonah 1:17)

The Bible's most famous "fish story" has been the target of skeptics for hundreds of years, but it was confirmed by none other than the one who Himself had prepared the great fish: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40).

Jonah may actually have died and gone to "hell." "Out of the belly of hell [Hebrew Sheol] cried I," said Jonah, "and thou heardest my voice" (Jonah 2:2). The testimony of Jesus was similar: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [i.e., Sheol]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10; also Acts 2:27). Jonah also prayed: "Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God" (Jonah 2:6). His prayer ended: "Salvation is of the LORD" (v. 9), and this is the very meaning of the name "Jesus."

Thus, 900 years before Christ died and rose again, Jonah died and rose again, a remarkable prophetic type of the mighty miracle that the Lord would accomplish one day to bring salvation and life to a world dead in sin. Only the power of God could direct a prepared fish to save Jonah, then three days later allow him to preach repentance and salvation to the lost souls in Nineveh. Then, finally God Himself, in Christ, died on a cross for the sins of the world, and this time it took the infinite power that created the very universe itself to bring His own soul back from hell and, three days later, to rise again. This is "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (Ephesians 1:19-20). Truly, "a greater than Jonas is here" (Matthew 12:41). HMM

Jonah 1:17 - Once Upon A Time

May 20, 2014

Read: Matthew 24:32-44

The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. —Jonah 1:17

Some people say that the Bible is just a collection of fairy tales. A boy slaying a giant. A man swallowed by a big fish. Noah's boat-building experience. Even some religious people think that these events are just nice stories with a good moral.

Jesus Himself, however, spoke of Jonah and the giant fish, and Noah and the flood, as actual events: "As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:37-39). His return will happen when we're not expecting it.

Jesus compared Jonah's 3 days inside the big fish to the 3 days He would experience in the grave before His resurrection (Matt. 12:40). And Peter talked about Noah and the flood when he equated it to a future day when Jesus comes back (2 Peter 2:4-9).

God gave us His Word; it's a book that is filled with truth—not fairy tales. And one day, we will live happily ever after with Him when Jesus comes again and receives His children to Himself.

We're waiting for You, Lord, to come
And take us home to be with You;
Your promise to return for us
Gives hope because we know it's true. —Sper

We have reason for optimism if we're looking for Christ's return.

INSIGHT: In His teaching, Christ often used examples from nature, as He did here with the fig tree (Matt. 24:32). He communicated to His listeners with word-pictures that would be familiar to them. They were part of an agricultural society that mostly lived outdoors, so nature became the perfect vehicle for His presentation of spiritual truths.

By Cindy Hess Kasper

J Wilbur Chapman on Warnings from God - Jonah was one. God said to him, "Go to Nineveh," and yet, with the spirit of rebellion, he attempted to sail to Tarshish and we know his miserable failure. Let it never be forgotten that if Nineveh is God's choice for you, you can make no other port in safety. The sea will be against you, the wind against you. It is hard indeed to struggle against God. Jacob was a warning. Deceiving his own father, his sons in turn deceived him. May we never forget the Scripture which declares, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Esau was a warning. Coming in from the hunt one day, weary with his exertions, he detects the savory smell of the mess of pottage, and his crafty brother says, "I will give you this for your birthright," which was his right to be a priest in his household; a moment more and the birthright is gone; and in the New Testament we are told he sought it with tears and could find no place of repentance. But many a man has sold his right to be the priest of his household for less than a mess of pottage, and in a real sense it is true that things done cannot be undone. Saul was a warning. He was commanded to put to death Agag and the flock, and he kept the best of all the flock and then lied to God's messenger when he said that the work had been done as he was commanded. He had no sooner said it than, behold, there was heard the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen. "Be sure your sin will find you out." (Numbers 32:23)

Jonah 1:17; Matt. 12:39-41 THE BIG FISH - THE BIG fish that swallows Jonah is no big deal. In 1891 off of the Falkland Islands, there were two fishing boats that were whale hunting. They came across a huge sperm whale. One fishing group shot harpoons into the whale. The other boat came around and began to do the same thing to get this whale, but the whale's tail hit the second boat and knocked it over. There were two men on the second boat. One of the men drowned. The other man was not found. Two days later, a few other boats got this same whale and killed him. They brought the whale up to the shore, slit it open, and found the second man. The man was unconscious but still alive, and after care, resumed his life. This "Jonah and the whale" story isn't that far-fetched. Similar things have happened before. People read the Bible and say that the story of Jonah and the big fish doesn't make sense, but it does. The miracle is not that a fish swallowed a man, because that has happened before. The miracle is that the fish paid attention to the Lord.

Not All Storms Are Bad Read Psalm 18:7-15

These verses present one of the greatest descriptions of a storm found in the Bible. It is a graphic picture of the way God works when He comes to the aid of His children. David was saying in these verses that God the Creator, God the Deliverer, used everything in nature to come to his aid. The earth shook, down to its foundations. Smoke came up, and fire came out. Coals were kindled. The heavens bowed down. The wind began to blow, for God was coming on the wings of the wind. We see darkness, dark waters, thick clouds, even hailstones and coals of fire. Thunder, lightning--the very breath of God was blowing across the fields.

When the child of God is in His will, all of nature works for him. When the child of God is out of His will, everything works against him. Remember Jonah? He ran away from God in disobedience, and what happened? A storm appeared. The wind and waves were violent. That little boat went up and down on the ocean like a cork. Even the mariners were worried. Jonah disobeyed God, and everything in nature worked against him. David obeyed God, and everything in nature worked for him.

God can use the storms of life to fulfill His will. Is the wind blowing? He is flying on the wings of the wind. Are the clouds thick? He will bring showers of blessing out of them. Don't be afraid of the storm. Storms can come from the hand of God and be the means of blessing. - Warren Wiersbe - Prayer, Praises and Promises.

Other Quotes from Warren Wiersbe related to Jonah -

God has an army. "Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word" (Psalm 103:20). The angels act at His command. If we read and study the Word of God and obey it, everything in the universe will work with us. If we disobey the Word of God, everything will work against us--just as it did against Jonah, who was running in the wrong direction, going on the wrong ship, with the wrong motive, for the wrong purpose. God finally brought him to a place of obedience. Don't be like Jonah. Have faith that God is in control and working on you in every situation. No matter how difficult your day or how discouraging the news might be, lean on the wonderful assurance that God is on His throne. He is ruling, and His servants are at work accomplishing His Word. Obey God's Word today and keep walking by faith.

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Did anybody see Jonah emerge when the great fish disgorged him on the dry land? If so, the story must have spread rapidly and

perhaps even preceded him to Nineveh, and that may help explain the reception the city gave him. Had Jonah been bleached by the fish's gastric juices? Did he look so peculiar that nobody could doubt who he was and what had happened to him? Since Jonah was a "sign" to the Ninevites (Matt. 12:38–41), perhaps this included the way he looked.

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When I was a youngster, my family took an annual vacation in Door County, Wisconsin, where we would spend the week fishing. Since I have never been a good swimmer, I have never felt comfortable in a boat. One evening, we were out on the bay fishing, and we saw a storm coming across the water. My older brother started the motor on the boat, and we raced that storm across the bay! We arrived at the pier just in time to gather our equipment, cover our heads with the boat cushions, and run to the cottage, before the deluge hit.

But we don't always have the luxury of escaping the storm. Sometimes we have to experience it. Then what?

The image of the storm teaches us that God is ultimately in control of circumstances. There are some storms that we bring on ourselves. Jonah is a good example of this truth. "You hurled me into the deep," Jonah said to the Lord, "into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me" (Jonah 2:3). It took a storm to bring Jonah to his senses and back into the place of obedience.

But there are some storms that God sends for our own good. "We went through fire and water," wrote the psalmist, "but you brought us to a place of abundance" (Ps. 66:12). When David looked back on a difficult and stormy period in his own life, he concluded, "I love you, O LORD, my strength.... As for God, his way is perfect.... The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior!" (Ps. 18:1, 30, 46). David was a better man after the storm....God does not promise to keep us out of the storms and floods, but He does promise to sustain us in the storm, and then bring us out in due time for His glory when the storm has done its work.

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LET PEACE RULE - In the Greek games there were judges (we would call them umpires) who rejected contestants who were not qualified, and who disqualified those who broke the rules. The peace of God is the "umpire" in our believing hearts. When we obey the will of God, we have His peace within; but when we step out of His will (even unintentionally), we lose His peace.

If we have peace in our hearts, we will be at peace with others in the church. We are called to one body, and our relationship in that body must be one of harmony and peace. If we are out of the will of God, we are certain to bring discord and disharmony to the church. Jonah thought he was at peace, when actually his sins created a storm!

When a Christian loses the peace of God, he begins to go off in directions that are out of the will of God. He turns to the things of the world and the flesh to compensate for his lack of peace within. He tries to escape, but he cannot escape himself! It is only when he confesses his sins, claims God's forgiveness, and does God's will that he experiences God's peace within.

Applying God's Truth:

1. How do you feel when an umpire makes what you feel is a bad call against your favorite team? How do you feel when God expects something from you that you don't feel is fair?
2. Have you ever experienced a false peace (like Jonah) ? How long did it last? What were the results?
3. What situations are you facing today for which you need to experience God's peace

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Jonah got into trouble because his attitudes were wrong. To begin with, he had a wrong attitude toward the will of God. Obeying the will of God is as important to God's servant as it is to the people His servants minister to. It's in obeying the will of God that we find our spiritual nourishment (John 4:34), enlightenment (7:17), and enablement (Heb. 13:21). To Jesus, the will of God was food that satisfied Him; to Jonah, the will of God was medicine that choked him. Jonah's wrong attitude toward God's will stemmed from a feeling that the Lord was asking him to do an impossible thing. God commanded the prophet to go to Israel's enemy, Assyria, and give the city of Nineveh opportunity to repent, and Jonah would much rather see the city destroyed. The Assyrians were a cruel people who had often abused Israel and Jonah's narrow patriotism took precedence over his theology. Jonah forgot that the will of God is the expression of the love of God (Ps. 33:11), and that God called him to Nineveh because He loved both Jonah and the Ninevites.....Jonah also had a wrong attitude toward the Word of God. When the Word of the Lord came to him, Jonah thought he could "take it or leave it." However, when God's Word commands us, we must listen and obey. Disobedience isn't an option. "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46, (NKJV)).....Jonah had a wrong attitude toward circumstances; he thought they were working for him when they were really working against him....It's possible to be out of the will of God and still have circumstances appear to be working on your behalf. You can be rebelling against God and still have a false sense of security that includes a good night's sleep. God in His providence was preparing Jonah for a great fall. (Be Amazed)

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The book (of Jonah) emphasizes God's grace both to Nineveh and to Jonah. Though Nineveh was a wicked city, God gave the

inhabitants opportunity to be spared. Though Jonah was a rebellious servant, God forgave him, used him, and tenderly sought to help him overcome his anger.

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Storms do come to our lives. What causes them? Sometimes other people cause them. In Acts 27 Paul got into a storm because the people in charge of the ship would not listen to the Word of God. Sometimes God causes the storm to test us and build us. In Matthew 14 Jesus sent His disciples directly into a storm to teach them an important lesson of faith. **Sometimes we cause the storm by disobedience--we are like Jonah running away from God, and the only way He can bring us back is to send a storm.....**Do you find yourself in a storm today? Ask God for the strength and courage to weather it and for the wisdom to understand it, not waste it.

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Matthew 12:38-40. When the religious leaders asked Jesus for a sign from heaven, they were rejecting the miracles they saw Him do on earth. They wanted miracles such as Moses did in Egypt and the wilderness. The only sign He offered Israel was His death, burial, and resurrection. This is what Jonah experienced, and it was powerful enough to impress the people of Nineveh. Earlier in His ministry, Jesus had predicted His death and resurrection (John 2:18-21), and He would mention Jonah again in Matthew 16:1-4. Note that it was the resurrection—the sign of Jonah—that the apostles preached in Acts 2-12.

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THE SECRET OF JOYFUL OBEDIENCE - Everything in creation—except man—obeys the will of God. "Lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds . . . do his bidding" (Ps. 148:8). **In the Book of Jonah, you see the winds and waves, and even the fish, obeying God's commands; but the prophet stubbornly wanted his own way.** Disobedience to God's will is a tragedy—but so is reluctant, grudging obedience. God does not want us to disobey Him, but neither does He want us to obey out of fear or necessity. What Paul wrote about giving also applies to living: "not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). What is the secret of joyful obedience? It is to recognize that obedience is a family matter. We are serving a loving Father and helping our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have been born of God; we love God, and we love God's children. And we demonstrate this love by keeping God's commandments.

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Jonah, who is a type of Christ in death, burial, and resurrection (Matt. 12:38–40), went through the storm of God's wrath because of his disobedience, but Jesus went through the storm in obedience to God's will. Jesus could say, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Ps. 42:7; Jonah 2:3). Our Lord's suffering on the cross was the "baptism" Jesus referred to in Luke 12:50 and that was pictured when John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River.

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The prophet Jonah finally obeyed the Lord but not because he had experienced a change of heart. Even after the people of Nineveh repented, Jonah still despised them and wanted the Lord to destroy them. This reminds us that it isn't enough simply to know God's will or even to do God's will; we must "[do] the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:6 NASB, italics mine). That's why Charles Simeon asked three questions of the sermons he preached: "Did it humble the sinner? Did it exalt the Savior? Did it promote holiness?" Like every faithful preacher of the Word, he longed to see hearts and lives changed by the grace of God.

Jonah 2

Jonah 2:1

April 22, 2006

Strange Places

READ: Psalm 40:1-8

Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly. —Jonah 2:1

Walking past my barn one day, I heard a frantic chirping inside, and upon investigation I found a bluejay beating its wings against the glass pane of the window. Had it not cried and squawked, I would not have heard it. But its plaintive note prompted me to open the door wide and the jay flew out to liberty.

That bluejay was in a strange place for a bird; and Jonah found himself in a strange place for a human being. Because of his disobedience, Jonah was cast into the sea, swallowed by a sea monster and trapped in its belly. Although it was Jonah's own fault that he was there, God was also there to hear his prayer. And when he confessed, God delivered him.

God's children sometimes get themselves into some strange places and unhappy circumstances because of their folly. Are you in a strange place today? Are you out of fellowship with the Lord, defeated, unhappy? Then cry out to God, confess your sin, and be restored by His abundant mercy (1 John 1:9). God is waiting to hear your faintest cry and accept your repentance.

Maybe through your own foolish choices you're in a strange place today—but He is with you and waiting to hear your cry. Don't wait another day. —M. R. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When I ceased my vain endeavor
And to Jesus yielded all,
Then He came, the Overcomer,
Conquering foes both great and small. —Complin

**When you're in the wrong place,
God always has the right answer.**

Jonah 2:1

Unusual Places

READ: Psalm 40:1-8

Walking past my barn one day, I heard a frantic chirping inside. When I investigated, I found a poor blue jay beating its wings against the window. Had it not cried and chirped, I would not have heard, but its cry for help prompted me to come, open the door wide, and allow it to fly out to freedom.

God's children get themselves into some unusual places and unhappy circumstances. Consider the following incidents:

Jonah in a fish's belly, running from God (Jonah 2:1)

David in enemy territory, acting insane (1Sa 21:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15)

Abram in Egypt, lying about his wife (Gen. 12:10, 11, 12, 13)

Lot in Sodom, living with the wicked (Ge 13:12,13)

Elijah in the desert, wallowing in self-pity (1Ki. 19:4)

Peter in a courtyard, denying his Lord (Lk 22:55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62)

God's children should not be found in such circumstances, but all too often they are.

Are you in a place you shouldn't be today? Are you far from God, feeling defeated, trapped, and unhappy? Then cry out to the Lord, confess your sin, and be restored by His abundant mercy (1Jn. 1:9). He is waiting to hear your cry of repentance. — M. R. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

There is only One who knows
All the answers to my woes;
He will all my needs supply
When in faith to Him I cry. --Morgan

No place is beyond the reach of God's grace.

Jonah 2:1-2

In The Belly Of A Fish

Jonah must have been very uncomfortable in the belly of the fish. Yet there are many people in this dark and suffocating world who seem to think that the place they find themselves is a pretty good place to be. They believe that the world needs only a few social

and political improvements. And they also hold that people themselves possess the ability to make all the needed changes.

But this is not the testimony of the Word of God, for it says that "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1Jn. 5:19). It certainly is not the testimony of the Spirit of truth, for He has come to "convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (Jn 16:8). The primary mission of the church is not to introduce social and political changes into the world, but to proclaim salvation as the way out.

Jonah was not so foolish as to suppose that God would make him a little more comfortable in the fish's belly, but he looked for deliverance out of it. He cried to the Lord, and the Lord heard him.

We are not to look for perfection in this world but to look forward to the time when Christ will recreate the world and bring in everlasting righteousness. — M. R. De Haan

I am a stranger here within a foreign land,
My home is far away upon the golden strand;
Ambassador to be of realms beyond the sea;
I'm here on business for my King. --Cassel

Our main business in this world is to lay up treasure in heaven.

Jonah 2:9 - Thankful In All Things

March 11, 2013

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

In everything give thanks. —1 Thessalonians 5:18

My daughter is allergic to peanuts. Her sensitivity is so acute that eating even the tiniest fragment of a peanut threatens her life. As a result, we scrutinize food package labels. We carry a pre-filled syringe of medicine (to treat allergic reactions) wherever we go. And, when we eat out, we call ahead and quiz the wait staff about the restaurant's menu items.

Despite these precautions, I still feel concerned—both for her current safety and for her future safety. This situation is not something I would naturally be thankful about. Yet, God's Word challenges: "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:18). There's no getting around it. God wants us to pray with thanksgiving when the future is uncertain, when heartbreak hits, and when shortfalls come.

It's hard to be grateful in difficulties, but it's not impossible. Daniel "prayed and gave thanks" (Dan. 6:10), knowing that his life was in danger. Jonah called out "with the voice of thanksgiving" (Jonah 2:9) while inside a fish! These examples, coupled with God's promise that He will work all things together for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28), can inspire us to be thankful in all things.

Thanks for roses by the wayside,
Thanks for thorns their stems contain.
Thanks for homes and thanks for fireside
Thanks for hope, that sweet refrain! —Hultman

In all circumstances, we can give thanks that God has not left us on our own.

By Jennifer Benson Schuldt

Jonah 2:3, 5 - The Valley of Vision

September 30, 2015

Read: Jonah 2:1-10 | Bible in a Year: Isaiah 9–10; Ephesians 3

I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you. Jonah 2:7

The Puritan prayer "The Valley of Vision" speaks of the distance between a sinful man and his holy God. The man says to God, "Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision . . . ; hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory." Aware of his wrongs, the man still has hope. He continues, "Stars can be seen from the deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine." Finally, the poem ends with a request: "Let me find Thy light in my darkness, . . . Thy glory in my valley."

Jonah found God's glory during his time in the ocean's depths. He rebelled against God and ended up in a fish's stomach, overcome by his sin. There, Jonah cried to God: "You cast me into the deep . . . The waters surrounded me, even to my soul" (Jonah 2:3,5 nkjv). Despite his situation, Jonah said, "I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you" (Jonah 2:7). God heard his prayer and caused the fish to free him.

Although sin creates distance between God and us, we can look up from the lowest points in our lives and see Him—His holiness, goodness, and grace. If we turn away from our sin and confess it to God, He will forgive us. God answers prayers from the valley.

Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter Your stars shine; let me find Your light in my darkness.

The darkness of sin only makes the light of God's grace shine brighter.

INSIGHT: Jonah initially ministered to the northern kingdom of Israel during the powerful reign of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:23-28). God reassigned him to minister to the Assyrian city of Nineveh and to warn them to repent or face God's judgment (Jonah 1:1). After Jonah refused this new mission and instead fled in the opposite direction (Jonah 1:3), God disciplined him by causing him to be swallowed up by a big fish during a violent storm (Jonah 1:4,17). Jonah 2 records Jonah's prayer of repentance when he was inside the fish. Jesus used this event to foreshadow His own burial and resurrection when He said, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40; Jonah 1:17). Sim Kay Tee

By Jennifer Benson Schuldt

Jonah 2:2 - From Peeker To Seeker

October 17, 2014

Read: Jonah 1:1–2:2

I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, and He answered me. —Jonah 2:2

When our daughter was too young to walk or crawl, she created a way to hide from people when she wanted to be left alone or wanted her own way. She simply closed her eyes. Kathryn reasoned that anyone she couldn't see also couldn't see her. She used this tactic in her car seat when someone new tried to say hello; she used it in her highchair when she didn't like the food; she even used it when we announced it was bedtime.

Jonah had a more grown-up strategy of hiding, but it wasn't any more effective than our daughter's. When God asked him to do something he didn't want to do, he ran in the opposite direction. But he found out pretty quickly there is no place God couldn't find him. In fact, Scripture is full of stories of God finding people when they didn't necessarily want to be found (Ex. 2:11–3:6; 1 Kings 19:1-7; Acts 9:1-19).

Maybe you have tried to hide from God, or maybe you think even God can't see you. Please know this: If God sees and hears the prayer of a rebellious prophet in the belly of a big fish, then He sees and hears you wherever you are, whatever you've done. But that's nothing to be afraid of. It's actually a great comfort. He's always there, and He cares!

Thank You, God, that You are there for us.

We hear Your words: "You will seek Me
and find Me, when you search for Me
with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

We need not fear the troubles around us as long as the eye of the Lord is on us.

By Randy Kilgore

Water and God's Wrath - Warren Wiersbe "Biblical Images"

God's Wrath

Ps. 42:7

Ps. 88:7

Jer. 51:42

Jer. 51:55

Ezek. 26:3

Jonah 2 - AN ILLUSTRATION

An experience never to be forgotten is that of those who have encountered prairie fires on the western plains. In the distance they have seen the clouds of smoke, and have smelled the burning grass. If the winds be blowing from the direction of the fire, their position is one of extreme danger. The swiftest horse can scarcely outrun the flames. On they sweep with the fury of the hurricane, consuming everything in their path. In such circumstances, the only safety is to set fire to the grass at one's feet and when it has burned an open space, stand where the fire had been. The surging waves of flame must cease at the border of the newly-burnt zone.

Now, says a writer, in a very graphic way this illustrates the work of Christ, He interposes Himself between the sinner and the waves of destruction that were bearing down upon Him, In His own body He bore the penalty of sin. Sin, so to speak, burnt over Him; and in the Gospel He is calling men to come to Him for safety. Having spent its fury upon Him, it cannot harm those who stand with Him.

It was on the Cross of Calvary that the fire burnt fiercest. It was the hour of the prince of darkness. The fury of Satan exhausted itself on the "Sinless Sufferer" there. And "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Standing where the flames have been, the sinner need not fear the fires of sin. They have no power over him. He has a life that is hid with Christ in God. No power on earth or in hell can pluck him out of the Father's hands. What an assurance of safety! How gladly ought men to avail themselves of it! Publisher Unknown. ([Robert Neighbour](#))

Jonah 2 - You Can't Do Anything

God sometimes allows us to enter into discouraging situations for the primary purpose of testing our faith. At such times we must refuse to give up in despair. Like Jonah in the belly of the great fish, we must turn to the Lord when our soul is fainting within us, trusting Him completely. James H. McConkey wrote, "What can you do when you are about to faint physically? You can't DO anything! In your weakness you just fall upon the shoulders of some strong loved one, lean hard, and rest until your strength returns. The same is true when you are tempted to faint under adversity. The Lord's message to us is 'Be still, and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10). Hudson Taylor was so feeble in the closing months of his life that he said to a dear friend, 'I'm so weak that I can't work or read my Bible, and I can hardly pray. I can only lie still in God's arms like a little child and trust.' And that is all the Heavenly Father asks of you when you grow weary in the fierce fires of affliction." - Our Daily Bread

Jonah 2:2

Lessons From Jonah

Our Daily Bread

The story of Jonah is one of the most discussed and fascinating accounts in the Bible. But for all the debate, one thing is sure: Jonah did a lot of soul-searching in that smelly underwater hotel.

All of us can identify. Sometimes life just goes badly. When it does, like Jonah we need to ask ourselves some hard questions.

Is there sin in my life? In light of Jonah's blatant disobedience, God had to do something drastic to catch his attention and lead him to repentance.

What can I learn from this situation? The wicked people of Nineveh were enemies of God's people. Jonah thought they should be judged and not given a second chance. He obviously needed a lesson in sharing God's compassion for the lost. "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster" (Jonah 3:10).

Can I display God's glory in this? Often our suffering is not about us but about people seeing the power of God working through our weakness. Jonah found himself in a helpless situation, yet God used him to lead a pagan nation to repentance.

Next time you find yourself in a "belly-of-a-whale" problem, don't forget to ask the hard questions. It could mean the difference between despair and deliverance. — Joe Stowell ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

For Further Study

For an in-depth study of the fascinating account of Jonah, read [The Failure Of Success: The Story Of Jonah](#)

We learn lessons in the school of suffering
that we can learn in no other way.

Tell Me The Story Written by Joe Stowell for Our Daily Bread

"All these things happened to them as examples and . . . for our admonition." 1 Corinthians 10:11

Now that I have grandkids, I'm back into the classic children's Bible stories. Wide-eyed stories like David and Goliath, Noah's ark, and **Jonah and the big fish** quickly capture a child's imagination!

But there's a danger here—not with the stories themselves but rather with our attitude toward them. If we view them simply as kids' stories, kind of like the Grimm's Fairy Tales of the Bible, we miss the point.

The stories of the Bible were never meant to be outgrown. There are profound lessons to be learned from the amazing accounts of those who faced giants, floods, and fish!

Hundreds of years after the fact, the apostle Paul explained that the things that happened to Moses and the Israelites as they wandered through the desert "happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition" (1 Cor. 10:11). These stories are about us. They mirror the tensions we face daily as we too seek to apply God's will and ways to the realities of our lives. They teach us of the treachery of sin, our desperate need to trust God unflinchingly, and the importance of staying faithful and true to Him regardless of what happens.

Don't ignore the old stories. You might be surprised what God wants to teach you through them.

We learn the blessed Word of God
To fix it firmly in our heart,
And when we act upon that Word
Its truth from us will not depart. —D. De Haan

Stories from the past can give us pointers for the present.

Jonah 2:4

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Jonah 2:4 I am cast out from before thine eyes; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. (r.v.)

That is well, O truant soul. Look again from where thou art! Thou art in the heart of the seas; the flood of sorrow enwraps thee; storms of trouble are sweeping over thee—but look again toward his holy temple. All that sorrow has been sent to bring thee back from thy wanderings, and cause thee to look again. Thou couldest not look so long as thy back was towards the will of God, and thy face towards Tarshish; but now thou art turned again, and art on thy way back, thou mayest look again in the direction of the altar and its sacrifice, the High Priest and his mediation. Look again. Look off unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of Faith. Do not wait till thou hast come into a better vantage-point for vision, but look again from thy position in the lowest depths.

Look again! God invites thee, too. Though thou hast turned thy back on Him these many years, He waits to be gracious; his face is wreathed in tenderest, yearning love. One look the least, the most abashed, from the greatest distance, will be eagerly noticed and instantly reciprocated. "They looked unto Him and were lightened" — so wilt thou be. And He will bring up thy life from the pit. Does thy soul faint within thee? — then remember the Lord. Let there be but one yearning desire for Him, and it will come in unto Him as a prayer to his holy temple.

Look again! in spite of as remonstrances of thine heart. "I said." The heart is always saying: I am too vile; I have sinned too deeply; I have gone too far; I have so often fallen and returned, I am ashamed to come again: besides, are there not texts about never forgiveness, and impossible to renew to repentance? I said: Yet, look again!

Jonah 2:9. A strange college! by Spurgeon

"Salvation is of the Lord." - Jonah 2:9.

JONAH learned this sentence of good theology in a strange college.

He learned it in the whale's belly, at the bottom of the mountains,
with the weeds wrapped about his head, when he supposed
that the earth with her bars was about him forever.

Most of the grand truths of God have to be learned by trouble;
they must be burned into us with the hot iron of affliction,
otherwise we shall not truly receive them.

Jonah 2:8

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

"Salvation is of the Lord." — Jonah 2:9

Salvation is the work of God. It is he alone who quickens the soul "dead in trespasses and sins," and it is he also who maintains the soul in its spiritual life. He is both "Alpha and Omega." "Salvation is of the Lord." If I am prayerful, God makes me prayerful; if I have graces, they are God's gifts to me; if I hold on in a consistent life, it is because he upholds me with his hand. I do nothing whatever towards my own preservation, except what God himself first does in me. Whatever I have, all my goodness is of the Lord alone. Wherein I sin, that is my own; but wherein I act rightly, that is of God, wholly and completely. If I have repulsed a spiritual enemy, the Lord's strength nerved my arm. Do I live before men a consecrated life? It is not I, but Christ who liveth in me. Am I sanctified? I did not cleanse myself: God's Holy Spirit sanctifies me. Am I weaned from the world? I am weaned by God's chastisements sanctified to my good. Do I grow in knowledge? The great Instructor teaches me. All my jewels were fashioned by heavenly art. I find in God all that I want; but I find in myself nothing but sin and misery. "He only is my rock and my salvation." Do I feed on the Word? That Word would be no food for me unless the Lord made it food for my soul, and helped me to feed upon it. Do I live on the manna which comes down from heaven? What is that manna but Jesus Christ himself incarnate, whose body and whose blood I eat and drink? Am I continually receiving fresh increase of strength? Where do I gather my might? My help cometh from heaven's hills: without Jesus I can do nothing. As a branch cannot bring forth fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can I, except I abide in him. What Jonah learned in the great deep, let me learn this morning in my closet: "Salvation is of the Lord."

JONAH 3

Jonah 3:1, 2, 3. The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time saying, Arise, go to Nineveh.... So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh.

Come, take that task of yours which you have been hesitating before, and shirking, and walking around, and on this very day lift it up and do it. - PHILLIPS BROOKS.

Jonah 3 A Modern Day Jonah - Wrong Way Riegels

On New Year's Day, 1929, Georgia Tech played University of California in the Rose Bowl. In that game a man named Roy Riegels recovered a fumble for California. Somehow, he became confused and started running 65 yards in the wrong direction. One of his teammates, Benny Lom, outdistanced him and downed him just before he scored for the opposing team. When California attempted to punt, Tech blocked the kick and scored a safety which was the ultimate margin of victory. That strange play came in the first half, and everyone who was watching the game was asking the same question: "What will Coach Nibbs Price do with Roy Riegels in the second half?" The men filed off the field and went into the dressing room. They sat down on the benches and on the floor, all but Riegels. He put his blanket around his shoulders, sat down in a corner, put his face in his hands, and cried like a baby. If you have played football, you know that a coach usually has a great deal to say to his team during half time. That day Coach Price was quiet. No doubt he was trying to decide what to do with Riegels. Then the timekeeper came in and announced that there were three minutes before playing time. Coach Price looked at the team and said simply, "Men the same team that played the first half will start the second." The players got up and started out, all but Riegels. He did not budge. the coach looked back and called to him again; still he didn't move. Coach Price went over to where Riegels sat and said, "Roy, didn't you hear me? The same team that played the first half will start the second." Then Roy Riegels looked up and his cheeks were wet with a strong man's tears. "Coach," he said, "I can't do it to save my life. I've ruined you, I've ruined the University of California, I've ruined myself. I couldn't face that crowd in the stadium to save my life." Then Coach Price reached out and put his hand on Riegel's shoulder and said to him: "Roy, get up and go on back; the game is only half over." And Roy Riegels went back, and those Tech men will tell you that they have never seen a man

Jonah 3:1

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Jonah 3:1 The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time.

We must not presume on this, but we may take it to our hearts for their very great comfort. God's word may come to us "the second time." Jonah evaded it the first time; but he was permitted to have a second opportunity of obeying it. Thus it was with Peter; he failed to realize the Lord's ideal in the first great trial of his apostolic career, but the Lord met him on the shores of the lake, and his word came to him a second time.

God is not waiting to notice our first failure and thrust us from his service. He waits, with eager desire, to give us the joy and honor of being fellow-laborers with Himself. He waits to be gracious. Therefore, when in our madness we refuse to do his bidding, and rush off in another direction, He brings us back, amid bitter experiences, and says, "Go again to Nineveh with the message that I gave thee originally."

How many times He will do this I do not dare to say. He forgives indefinitely, unto seventy times seven; but how often He will re-entrust the sacred message and mission, it is not for me to say. But there is, without doubt, a limit beyond which He cannot go, lest our own character suffer, and the interests of other souls, who may be dissuaded from obedience by our example, should be imperiled.

How wonderful it is that God should employ us at all! Yet it is like his work in nature. He is ever calling men to co-operate with Himself. He lays the coal up in mines, but man must excavate: He puts the flowers in the wilds, but man cultivates them: He gives the water, but man irrigates the fields. So He longs over Nineveh, but summons sinful men to carry his word.

Jonah 3 - AN ILLUSTRATION

It had been a dull year in the church where Moffat was converted. The deacons finally said to the old pastor: "We love you, pastor, but don't you think you had better resign? There hasn't been a convert this year." "Yes," he replied, "it has been a dull year sadly dull to me. Yet I mind me that one did come, wee Bobby Moffat. But he is so wee a bairn that I suppose it is not right to count him." A few years later Bobby came to the pastor and said, "Pastor, do you think that I could ever learn to preach? I feel within here something that tells me that I ought to. If I could just lead souls to Christ, that would be happiness to me." The pastor answered, "Well, Bobby, you might; who knows? At least you can try!" He did try, and years later when Robert Moffat came back from his wonderful work in Africa, the king of England rose and uncovered in his presence, and the British Parliament stood as a mark of respect. The humble old preacher, who had but one convert, and who was so discouraged, is dead and forgotten, and yet that was the greatest year's work he ever did and few have equaled it. Publisher Unknown. ([Robert Neighbour](#))

Jonah 3:1-10

Go to the great city of Nineveh, and preach against it... Should I not be concerned about that great city? - Jonah 1:2; 4:11

TODAY IN THE WORD

In 430, Patrick, a young Roman Briton, was carried off by Irish raiders to be a slave. At the time he was a nominal Christian, but he turned to God in earnest in the midst of his suffering. "I would pray constantly during the daylight hours," he later said. "The love of God and the fear of Him surrounded me more and more." After six years, he escaped.

Years later, Patrick had a dream in which he received a call to evangelize Ireland, the country in which he'd been enslaved. At that time, Ireland was pagan and idolatrous, a difficult place to serve. Patrick faced fierce opposition from druids and wrote, "Daily I expect murder, fraud, or captivity, but I fear none of these things because of the promises of heaven."

Called to witness to his enemies, Patrick obeyed. But when Jonah was called to do the same, he ran.

Where was [Nineveh \(see notes\)](#)? This ancient city, with a population of 120,000 (Jonah 4:11) and an area of about sixty square miles, was the capital of Assyria, a world power and chief enemy of Israel. Jonah ran away not because he was afraid to take a message of judgment there, but because he was afraid the people would repent and God would relent and forgive them (Jonah 4:1, 2, 3). He understood God's character well (Jonah 4:10; cf. Jer 18:7, 8, 9, 10)!

The Ninevites did indeed respond to Jonah's preaching. They fasted and wore sackcloth to demonstrate humility and repentance before God (v. 5). The essence of repentance is a changed heart and life, as the king's proclamation recognizes: "Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence" (v. 8).

God gave both the Ninevites and Jonah a second chance; His love is infinite, reaching out even to those who oppose Him (Matt. 5:44–45; Rom. 5:10). Later, in an example which must have galled the Pharisees, Jesus used the Ninevites as an example of repentance in response to God's love (Matt. 12:41).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Here's a question for reflection: Would you share the gospel with your enemies? You may not think that you have actual "enemies." To identify the people in your life who may be your "Ninevites," think of people whom you dislike or at least those you tend to avoid. Are you willing to share God's love with them? Do you desire to spend eternity with them? Can you think of specific ways, in word or in action, to communicate the love of Christ to them? What you do with your answers to these questions is between you and God. ([Today in the Word. Moody Bible Institute. Used by Permission. All rights reserved](#))

Jonah 3:1-4:11

Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? ... Am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? - Ezekiel 18:23

At the height of the Soviet Union's power, it controlled territory from the Baltics to the Balkans, and controlled a circle of Central Asian republics. Soviet troops often used brutal tactics to suppress challenges to Soviet domination. For residents who lived in Soviet satellite countries, the Soviets were feared and hated. Yet believers from countries such as Romania and Poland risked their lives to bring the gospel into the heart of the Soviet Union.

Although most people only think about Jonah and his encounters with a big fish, this book is a compelling example of God's love for even the most hated of nations. Assyria at that time was known for its gruesome cruelty. Assyrians were so proud of their ability to terrorize that they left numerous monuments boasting of their sadistic practices. To the average Israelite, the most logical object of God's wrath would be Nineveh. It's no wonder, then, that Jonah felt that he had to run from God's call. If he went to Nineveh, he was sure to be killed; and even if he were successful in his mission, no one would rejoice at home that anything good had happened to these hated people.

After much resistance, Jonah went to Nineveh, and the results of his preaching were nothing short of miraculous (Jonah 3:5, 10). The Lord's concern for Nineveh shows that His love was not confined to a particular nation or place. This is the most likely reason why Jonah tried to run away. It was unthinkable to him that God could love even the Assyrians. In Jonah's mind, these people deserved God's wrath because of all they had done. But, apart from God's intervention, all people are deserving of His wrath. God's heart is that all people might repent and turn toward Him.

Jonah was a very human prophet. God's ways were difficult for him to understand—and he was not afraid to let God know that. But God's response to Jonah cut to the core: Jonah cared more about his comfort than the fate of a 120,000 people.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - The book of Jonah forces us to ask some hard questions. Are we like Jonah and become angry if God extends mercy to those who we feel deserve judgment? Perhaps this is how we feel about outreach to hardened criminals or prayer for terrorists. Or are we going to take God's perspective, which asks, "Should I not be concerned about that great city?" Jonah pushes us to see how great God's love is for all nations and peoples, even those whom we consider enemies deserving His wrath. ([Today in the Word. Moody Bible Institute. Used by Permission. All rights reserved](#))

Jonah 3:10-4:11

But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" - Jonah 4:9

In recent years, educational studies have discovered that different people have different styles of learning. Some learn best through verbal interaction—in lectures or books. Others learn visually—seeing images or symbols helps them to remember or communicate information. Still others learn experientially, interacting with physical materials or environments in order to understand them.

Jonah, it would seem, is an experiential learner. This reluctant prophet only learns when God places him in live-action parables. In growing and withering the vine, for example, God leads Jonah in an experience of grace in order to explain His mercy for the Ninevites.

Jonah knows God is gracious. Indeed, it angers Him (Jonah 4:2). He doesn't want God to show grace to the Gentile Ninevites, but only to Israel. God's question to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry?" suggests that Jonah doesn't understand the nature of grace. His response to the gift of the vine confirms this; God graciously shelters Jonah from the desert sun, but when the vine withers, Jonah is angry again.

This time he justifies his anger (Jonah 4:9). He asserts his right to shade in the desert; he asserts his “right” to grace. But God tells Jonah the vine was a gift, just as much as His mercy on the Ninevites is a gift. Neither the sheltering vine (a means of grace in the desert) nor the forgiveness of God can be earned, only received.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Jonah tried to limit God’s mercy to others, but demanded it as a right for himself. His attitude is worth pondering. Are we sometimes the “reluctant prophets”? Do we hoard God’s kindness to ourselves? Or are we willing to testify to His mercy to whomever He sends us? Today, like Samuel, say to the Lord, “Here I am, send me.” Ask for an opportunity this week to speak of God’s kindness to someone you may have previously been reluctant to talk to. Then wait and see whom God will bring your way and follow God’s leading.

Jonah 4

Jonah 3:10-4:11 Anger Or Applause?

How do we react when God shows mercy to people we think deserve punishment? If we are resentful, it may indicate that we have forgotten how much the Lord has forgiven us.

After Jonah followed God's second call to preach His coming judgment on Nineveh (Jonah 3:1, 2, 3, 4), the people of the city turned from their evil lifestyle, so the Lord did not destroy them (Jonah 3:10). God's mercy made Jonah angry. He told God he had been afraid this would happen, and that's why he fled to Tarshish in the first place. "I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, ... One who relents from doing harm" (Jonah 4:2).

But the Lord said to Jonah, "Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons?" (Jonah 4:11).

God's marvelous grace is greater than all our sin. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ep 2:8). Because of His grace to us, we should "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave [us]" (Jonah 4:32).

Instead of being angry when God is merciful, we should applaud. — David C. McCasland [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

What love the Father has bestowed on me!
For this I cannot help but thankful be;
I read His Word, His promises embrace,
And daily praise Him for His matchless grace. —Hess

**We can stop showing mercy to others
when Christ stops showing mercy to us.**

Jonah 4:1-10 Elephants Down

When rainy-season storms caused flooding in a nature preserve in Thailand, seven elephant calves became unlikely victims. As they tried to ford a river at their usual crossing point, dangerous currents swept them over a 250-foot waterfall. Wildlife advocates said the loss could have been prevented. A spokesperson for the Thailand Wildlife Fund complained that the protective barriers, which had been built at the crossing where four other young elephants had died earlier, were useless.

Long before animal rights became a global issue, the story of Jonah shows the attention our Creator gives to all His creatures. As the story ends, the Lord expresses concern not only for the citizens of Nineveh but also for their livestock (Jonah 4:11). And earlier, God gave Moses laws that extended certain protections even to animals (Ex. 23:4, 5,12).

Though humans alone are made in the image of God, the story of Jonah and other Bible texts show a link between caring for people and animals. The Creator gives us reason to provide appropriate, though different, attention to both.

The conclusion seems clear. If God cares even for livestock, how can we ignore the needs of any person for whom His Son died? — Mart De Haan

In trees and flowers of the field,

In creatures large and small,
We trace the watchful care of Him
Who planned and made them all. —King

**God cares for us and
calls us to care for His creation.**

Jonah 4:1-10 The Trouble With Me

Selfishness comes in many forms, and we are all prone to it. I was reminded of this while driving on a toll road. My wife Ginny and I were hoping to get home early that evening, but a traffic jam held us up for almost 2 hours.

Although Ginny mentioned that there may have been a serious accident up ahead, I gave this little thought and kept grumbling about the delay. But when the traffic began to flow again, we saw six mangled cars next to the highway. A wave of conviction swept over me. "Forgive me, Lord," I prayed, "and please help the victims and their families."

The Bible gives many examples of selfish attitudes. Jonah was upset because a worm had destroyed a vine that shaded him from the scorching sun (Jonah 4:9). Yet he didn't care that many men, women, and children in Nineveh might be destroyed.

In Mark 10:37, we read that two disciples selfishly asked for positions of power in Christ's coming kingdom. And in Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church, we see many examples of selfish behavior (Jonah 1:10; 3:3; 5:1; 6:6, 7, 8; 11:21).

God calls us to put the good of others ahead of our selfish desires (1Cor 10:24). Forgive us, Lord, and help us to do just that! —Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O Lord, how often selfishness
Will raise its ugly head,
So help us, Lord, to conquer it
And show Your love instead. —D. De Haan

The heart of our problem is selfishness in our heart.

Jonah 4:1

February 28, 2002

Grieved By Grace

READ: Jonah 3:10-4:11

It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. --Jonah 4:1

In his book *The Divine Intruder*, James Edwards portrays the prophet Jonah as a man who was grieved by the grace of God. Jonah had been told by God to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh, but he believed that the wicked city deserved to be destroyed for its brutality and cruelty, not pardoned.

After a futile attempt to run away from God, Jonah finally obeyed and proclaimed judgment on Nineveh. Then the unthinkable happened—the people repented.

Greatly angered, Jonah poured out his frustration to the Lord: "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" (Jonah 4:2).

Like Jonah, we may feel that certain people deserve God's judgment, not His forgiveness. Because of what they've done to us or those we love, we can't hope anything but the worst for them. James Edwards reminds us, however, that the story of Jonah ultimately points a finger at us. He asks, "Will we bind God by our judgments, or will we free God to transform our enemies—even ourselves—by grace?"

God calls us to reach out to the people in our lives to whom He longs to show His love and mercy. —David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

To pray that God will save our foes
Is difficult to do

Until we recognize that we
Deserve God's judgment too. —Sper

You can stop showing mercy to others
when God stops showing mercy to you.
(cp Mt 6:12-note, Mt 6:14, 15-note)

Saints of the Gourd Vine - Thou hast had pity on the gourd... and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city? Jonah 4:10, 11.
Jonah was worried about a gourd but not concerned about Nineveh. Too many of us are more occupied with the gourd vines of our own comfort than burdened over the need of a world. Then, too, Nineveh's repentance made Jonah appear mistaken in his prophecy of doom. It may be that some prophets today may almost seem disappointed if men repent when they expected ruin instead. A turning to God among sinners today would make some Jonahs peevish, for their programs did not anticipate an upset. Beware of getting wrought up over a gourd, more interested in sitting in the shade than in rejoicing over the salvation of souls. And how a complacent fundamentalism needs to get out from under its arbors and trellises, losing its life to find it in evangelizing a lost world! - Vance Havner

Other quotes by Havner related to Jonah -

Second best - Are you living spiritually on crackers and cheese when you have a standing invitation daily to the banquets of His grace? The devil will lead you to get along with the good when you might have the best.

Second chance - "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time." Jonah missed his first chance, failed the Lord miserably, and suffered aplenty. But God did not disown him, he started him off again with new orders, all the wiser for a sad experience.

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Straying - We take a detour as motorists because we have to. As Christians we take it because we want to. But, thank God, Abraham and Jacob and Jonah and Peter did not die on the detour. And if you are a "detourist" the Lord is looking for you.

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SAINTS IN THE SHADE Consider him... lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Hebrews 12:3.
Elijah under the juniper, the Disobedient Prophet in 1 Kings 13, Jonah under the gourd vine—God's weary prophets did not fare so well in the shade (Jonah 4:1-11). Shady rest is no place for tired preachers! The next day after a great day can be a dangerous day. Satan does some of his worst work on exhausted Christians when nerves are frayed and the mind is faint. We may, like Elijah, fancy we are the survivors among the saints. Like the prophet of Jeroboam's day, we may fall prey to subtle temptation. Like Jonah, we may be irritable and out of sorts. It is better to be a Nathaniel under a fig tree or Zacchaeus up a sycamore. Jesus knows when we pray and when we are "up a tree." Keep your eyes on Him lest ye faint and be weary and collapse in the shade!

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Another Chance

AND the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time." Jonah missed his first chance, failed the Lord miserably, and suffered aplenty. But God did not disown him, He started him off again with new orders, all the wiser for a sad experience.

A little girl carrying a bottle of milk across the street fell down and broke the bottle. A neighbor shouted, "Now your mother will spank you!" "Oh, no," replied the little girl, "my mother gives me another chance."

Sometimes the Lord does spank us. He chastised Jonah. But He does give us another chance, not a chance to be saved after death, but a chance to serve Him afresh after we have failed.

It is a dreadful thing to be a castaway, a vessel the Master cannot use. In a Bible conference in Minnesota some years ago we had a piano that wouldn't stay tuned. We could not use it and finally had to push it over in a corner, where it stood in the dust, disapproved. Then we brought in another piano, which looked no better and sounded no better, except that it would stay in tune and, therefore, was approved.

I have seen ministers, Christian workers, set aside like the piano. They looked all right and were gifted, but they were out of tune. And I have seen others put in their places not half so gifted, by no means as impressive in appearance, but in tune.

And yet there is no reason why any of us should stand in the corner disapproved. We can be tuned again!

"Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by His loving hand, awakened by kindness,
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more."

If you have failed God and He has put you in a corner, He does not expect you to stay there and whimper the rest of your life away. He gets no pleasure out of chastising you. He is ready to offer you another chance when you learn your lesson.

I think of Simon Peter after that fishing trip, which he described by saying, "We have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." Any expedition that starts with a human "we" ends with a humiliating "nothing." Then came the draught of fishes, and Peter fell at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But did the Lord depart and give up Peter as a failure? Rather, He said, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." He offered him a greater chance!

And after a far more dismal failure than this, when Peter denied his Lord, there was another chance awaiting his repentance. Peter preaching with power at Pentecost is a preacher on his second chance! Some of the greatest stories in the annals of preaching are those of Jonahs to whom the word of the Lord came a second time.

You never please the devil more than when you sit around lugubriously because you have failed. Repent and confess you must, but mere regret and remorse never honor God. God wants a broken heart, but a broken heart is more than a miserable heart. Esau repented after a fashion and so did Judas, but it was not the repentance of a second chance. A broken heart is not simply miserable; it is a heart broken to the will of God. There are miserable hearts aplenty still stubbornly set on their own way.

Repent as Jonah did, as Peter did, and the word of the Lord will come to you a second time. There will be another chance

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DON'T MISS YOUR MIRACLE - We often hear it said that the day of miracles is past. But every true Christian is a miracle, born again by the Holy Spirit. Of course I mean real Christians, not just church members. If you are what you have always been you are not a Christian. The Christian life is a miracle, Jesus living within the true believer. He is not just our Saviour and Lord but also our Life.

God has many miraculous things for His people, but so many miss them.

1. I do not know what Jesus had for the rich young ruler, but he missed it.
2. The blind man would have missed receiving his sight if he had not washed in Siloam.
3. Demas missed his miracle when he deserted Paul.

4. Jonah almost missed his life mission.

I have met many who were called to preach or to be missionaries who never answered. My father was called to preach but never did and lived to regret it the rest of his life.... We live doing what comes naturally and miss what comes supernaturally. The church is a miracle. Today too many of its members are not miraculous but make-believe. Gideon asked, "Where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of?" (Judg. 6:13). Have you missed yours?

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The prophet of God may sometimes be discouraged because his preaching seems to do little good, but that is not the test of his work anyway. God told Isaiah that his message would go unheeded. He told Ezekiel that people would hear him but do nothing about it. His one responsibility was to preach so that whatever they did about it, they would know that a prophet had been among them. Jonah was the sorriest preacher in the Old Testament, but his results made Isaiah look like a failure.

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Ministers - A minister should go to every service as though it were the first, as though it could be the best, and as though it might be the last.

A minister may have his study walls lined with diplomas, his ordination papers signed by illustrious men, a sheaf of recommendations from the mighty of the land, but if the stamp of heaven on his commission is faint and fading, he had better close up shop and take time out until he can return to his pulpit with a brand-new autograph from God. When he is thus re-signed, he will be reassigned, like Elijah, **like Jonah**, like Peter. He may be given the same task, for **some churches need not a new preacher, but the same preacher renewed.**

I would venture a word to young Timothy: Do not make cronies of any of your flock for your buddy may turn out to be your biggest problem. Do not talk your views, preach them. Dr. Jowett expressed himself from the pulpit but had little to say in general conversation.

Some old ministers think it is their duty to sit in a corner and let youth have its day. They offer no counsel, utter no warning, and remain silent on burning issues; they consider that a mark of Christian graciousness, but they miss the opportunity to render a great service.

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Jonah, the weakest of Old Testament prophets, had the biggest results statistics-wise, while Isaiah, prince of prophets, had

no converts that anybody knows about. This is not to disparage results or justify no results but heaven has not yet installed our computer system for tabulating prophetic success and failure. Almighty God does not choose His prophets according to recommendations from divinity schools. The God who passed up all the other sons of Jesse to choose the only one who was not even named among the prospects is not dependent on talent scouts. He knows who and where the true prophet is and will find him and a place for him. Whether his listeners will hear or forbear is incidental but they shall know that a prophet hath been among them.

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You know, the prophets never fared very well in the shade. Elijah had trouble under the juniper and Jonah under the gourd vine.

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There is not much information available on why some preachers quit. One could stock a library with reports of miracles that happened "since I came." They sound like Jonah reporting his campaign in Nineveh. But I have never read much on "why I left." Some leave because they are "Cape Kennedy pastors," using their present pulpits as platforms from which to blast satellites into bigger orbits. Others are simply discouraged, like Matthew Henry who thought his ministry was a failure—and yet he lives on in book shelves and in our hearts today. Some sink into self-pity and lament that they are not appreciated. Blessed is the man who learns quite early that the ministry is the poorest business in the world if one is looking merely for appreciation! After all, a preacher is not to be measured by how many bouquets have been given to him. His ministry may be gauged better by how many brickbats have been pitched at him. Prophets of God have usually been on the receiving end of more mud than medals. The most miserable men I have known are ministers who have turned in their commissions. Anybody can quit. The church is plagued with quitters, who say, "I go, sir," and go not; who received the Word with joy but have no root and are soon offended. Many sing in the choir for a few weeks and then their feelings are hurt and the nightingale becomes a raven croaking, "Nevermore!" Others come to church for months, and then golf becomes more important than God. Others are church officers until they find out that they cannot run the place, and then they resign because they would rather be Diotrefes loving the preeminence than Demetrius loving the truth. But saddest of all is the preacher who quits preaching. No reward on earth can compensate for that. To be a faithful preacher is no bed of roses, but for a God-called man to become anything else is to try to rest his soul on a bed of thorns. No, the way out is not by resigning.

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What ails man is that he is away from home. His real home is God, and he is restless until he rests in Him. But he has gotten away from home and, sick with sin, he hides from the only One who can hide him. He is a fugitive and has been since Adam hid in the garden. **Like Jonah, he rises to flee from God's presence and knows not that he can hide from God only in God.** He hides not only himself but what he has. Achan hid the wedge of gold; the one-talent man hid his talent. One hid the bad, the other the good, but both came to judgment. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper." All through the Bible man is hiding, until at last he calls for rocks and mountains to hide him from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. But he hides in vain. "My sins are not hid from thee," said the Psalmist, and God said, "Mine eyes are upon all their ways, they are not hid from my face: neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes" (Jer. 16:17). "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Men make lies their refuge and under falsehood hide themselves but the hail and waters of judgment shall sweep them away (Isa. 28:15-17). The tragedy of it all is, the very One from whom he hides is the only hiding place. "I flee unto thee to hide me"; "Thou art my hiding place"; "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

Rock of Ages, cleft for me;
Let me hide myself in Thee.

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If you are a rebel, you might as well give up fighting the stars. They belong to Him for whom they sing together. You are bucking the universe and its God, and your chariot will never return. **Jonah tried it and bought a ticket but missed his destination.** Only the schedule that God maps out will He allow us to fill. He who hath begun a good work in you will complete it. When He begins He will also make an end. Get into His program and you will arrive.

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No Second Best "What wilt Thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6 God has a place and purpose for you, somewhere for you to be and something for you to do. You never will be happy elsewhere, nor can you please God anywhere but there. You may do lovely things, reach earthly success, but always there will be the haunting sense of having missed the main thing, of having been satisfied with life's second best which isn't best or even good. Woodrow Wilson once spoke of being "defeated by one's secondary successes." How many are defeated by their own success so that they never know God's success!

Lot chose his own success and missed God's better thing. Saul did it from Gilgal to Gilboa. Demas did it. David "served his generation by the will of God" (Acts 13:36). That is success. Our Lord said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). That is success, though it looked like failure. If God has shown you his purpose—he will if you yield to him—don't dodge. **Jonah tried to get away from God's presence and purpose and you know what happened. The only place to hide from his presence is in his presence.** Don't tell God you won't do what he orders and try to compromise on something else just as good. There is nothing else just as good because there are no second bests in the will of God.

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The Lord Jesus Christ is compassionate on us when we are faint (Matt. 9:36). What are we to do when we faint? Like Jonah: "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord" (Jonah 2:7). Like the Israelites: "Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses" (Psa. 107:5, 6). Like the Psalmist: "My soul fainteth for Thy salvation: but I hope in Thy Word" (Psa. 119:81).

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Forty Days - Throughout the Bible some very important things happened within periods of forty days. The Flood began with forty days and nights of rain (Genesis 7:12). Moses was on Mount Sinai forty days and nights (Exodus 24:18). When Israel rebelled, Moses fell down before the Lord forty days and nights (Deuteronomy 9:25). Elijah went in the strength of angel food forty days and nights. (1 Kings 19:8). Ezekiel bore in symbolism the iniquity of Israel forty days (Ezekiel 4:6). Jonah declared that Nineveh would be overthrown in forty days (Jonah 3:4). Jesus fasted forty days and nights before His temptation (Matthew 4:2) and was in the wilderness forty days (Mark 1:13).

But most important of all was the forty-day period between His resurrection and His ascension when our Lord was seen by His disciples in His new body with infallible proofs that He had conquered death. We have heard it so long that familiarity with the account has dulled our senses, and what ought to make us shout for joy in church aisles, puts us to sleep in the pews.

Think of it, the Son of God fresh from the grave appearing here and there to a few followers for forty days! And here is a mystery of all mysteries that boggles the minds of us sophisticates nowadays. Why did He not appear before His enemies? What a dramatic scene, if He had stood again before Herod and Pilate! Why did He stay in an obscure Roman province with a whole world dying for salvation? Why not a showing in Rome, Athens, Alexandria? What sort of program is this, just letting the secret out to a few ordinary run-of-the-mill people? It is enough to give the news media a nervous breakdown! Wouldn't it have proven in days what we have tried for centuries to get across? The facts were all firsthand and visible. Those who crucified Him and those who witnessed Calvary were living, and He could easily have been identified. Today a preacher back from the grave would run every other news item off the front pages. And why not? Millions are dying, and we must get the word around. Think of what television could do with that! But had He chosen to show the whole world, our Lord would not have needed all our gadgets. Here were the most amazing forty days of all the centuries, on which all Christianity hangs and the Gospel depends. And when these witnesses started out to tell it, this was the heart of their message. He came back from the grave!

Somehow we have buried the story in all the pagan trappings of Easter, and we have had no small assist from the world, the flesh, and the devil. We have tried to capture it in art, music, and literature. You will search in vain our history books for much about it. Pages record trifling happenings that made no difference but, somehow, these forty days didn't make it. It is the way of the world and part of "the foolishness of God" whose ways are not our ways. God keeps a different calendar. With Him, in whose sight one day is as a thousand years and one year as a day, these forty days may have passed unnoticed in a world oblivious to what God was about. But to us who claim to know there had better be a reshuffling of our scale of values and a rediscovery of those few weeks that spelled the difference in everything for time and eternity.

But God also prepared a worm! ([John MacDuff, "The Prophet of Fire" 1877](#))

"And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, and soon it spread its broad leaves over Jonah's head, shading him from the sun. This eased some of his discomfort, and Jonah was very grateful for the gourd. But God also prepared a worm! When the morning rose the next day, it smote the gourd so that it soon died and withered away." Jonah 4:6-7

There is surely great comfort in the thought that the bounds of our life are divinely appointed . . .

Our lots in life,
our occupations,
our positions,
our dwellings,
what the fatalist calls 'our destinies',
what heathen mythology attributed to 'the Fates';
all this is marked out by Him who "sees the end from the beginning."

It is He who takes us to a place of solitude.

It is He who takes us from solitude.

It is He who takes us to our sweet shelters of prosperity, with their sparkling brooks of joy.

It is He who, when He sees fit, sends the worm.

Oh, it is our comfort to know, in this mysterious, raveled, varied life of ours, that the Great Craftsman has the threads of our existence in His own hands; weaving the complex pattern, evolving good out of evil, and order out of confusion.

Jonah 4 Tactical Distractions

July 21, 2016

Read: Jonah 4

The Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Jonah 4:4

It became painfully clear the first time my wife and I collaborated on a writing project that procrastination was going to be a major obstacle. Her role was to edit my work and keep me on schedule; my role seemed to be to drive her crazy. Most times, her organization and patience outlasted my resistance to deadlines and direction.

I promised to have a certain amount of writing done by the end of one day. For the first hour, I plugged away diligently. Satisfied with what I'd accomplished so far, I decided to take a break. Before I knew it, my time was up. In trouble for sure, I thought of a way out. I set about doing a couple of chores my wife despised and which always netted me praise when I did them.

Are you dodging duties God makes clear He wants you to tackle?

My plan failed.

I sometimes play the same games with God. He brings specific people into my life He wants me to serve or tasks He wants me to accomplish. Like Jonah, who went another way when God gave Him an assignment (Jonah 4:2), I need to set aside my own feelings. I often try to impress God with good deeds or spiritual activity when what He really wants is obedience to His priorities. Inevitably, my plan fails.

Are you dodging duties God makes clear He wants you to tackle? Trust me: Real contentment comes from doing it in His strength and in His way.

Loving Father, help us to recognize our busyness and distractions for what they so often are—disobedience and inattention to the work You have given us to do.

Obedience pleases God.

INSIGHT: In Exodus 34 God describes Himself as "the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love . . . forgiving wickedness . . . and sin" (vv. 6–7). It is ironic that these divine attributes angered Jonah (Jonah 4:1), who wanted Nineveh destroyed, not forgiven. This was the very reason he initially refused to go to the Ninevites to preach God's message of repentance and forgiveness (v. 2).

By Randy Kilgore

Jonah 4:4 Angry with God! (James Smith)

"The Lord asked: Have you any right to be angry?" Jonah 4:4

Jonah quarreled with his God. And who has not? We may not speak as plainly as he did—but we have been in the same sullen temper, and manifested the same morose spirit.

Very few are well satisfied with the Lord's plans.

Fewer still are always pleased with the Lord's works.

How many quarrel with His sovereignty!
What hard things have been spoken against it!

How many complain of His providence—and think it
unwise, unkind, and almost unjust!

Beloved, we are often angry with God!
This temper shows itself . . .
in fretfulness,
in complaining,
in sullen gloom.

"Have you any right to be angry?"

Angry with your Father . . .
whose wisdom is infinite,
whose love is as constant as the day, and
who constantly showers His blessings upon you!

Angry with your God, who has . . .
pardoned all your heinous sins,
provided for your innumerable needs,
blessed you with countless spiritual blessings!

Surely it is a sin, a grievous sin, not to be pleased . . .
with all that He does,
with all that He has provided,
and with all that He requires.

"Have you any right to be angry?"

Jonah 4:4 Getting It Right On The Inside

June 4, 2012

Read: Jonah 4

Then the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" —Jonah 4:4

I love the story of Jonah! It's full of drama and important life lessons. After stubbornly refusing to do God's will, Jonah finally preached a revival service in Nineveh that would have made him one of the most successful missionaries of his time. When the people repented and turned from their wicked ways—and when God relented and turned from His anger against them—you would have expected Jonah to rejoice. Instead, he was angry that God was merciful. Why? Although he was finally obeying God by doing the right thing in the right place, he was deeply flawed on the inside.

Like Jonah, if we are not careful, we can be spiritually "looking good" on the outside, but far from God in our hearts. He is most interested in what we are like on the inside. His Word is "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit" (Heb. 4:12). With it, He performs divine surgery to remove the greed, dishonesty, hatred, pride, and selfishness that live in the deep shadows of our hearts.

So the next time the Holy Spirit convicts you and asks you about your bad attitude (see Jonah 4:4)—listen carefully. Surrender and let Him change you from the inside out.

I confess, heavenly Father, that I know what it's like
to be more concerned about my outward obedience
than my inner rebellion. I want to look good to others.
Forgive me. Change me and make me pure within.

If God controls you on the inside, you'll be genuine on the outside.

Jonah 4:6-8

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Jonah 4:6-8 The Lord prepared.

This book is full of this word prepared. We are told that the Lord prepared a great fish, a gourd, a worm, and a sultry east wind.

He prepares the fish (Jonah 1:17). — When we are at our wits' end, apparently going to destruction, He interposes and arrests our progress, and brings us back again to Himself.

He prepares the gourd, that it may come up to be a shadow to our heads, and deliver us from our evil case. The gourd of friendship, of property, of some cherished and successful achievement. Ah, how glad we are for these gourds; though not always sufficiently quick to attribute them to the loving providence of our Heavenly Father.

He prepares the worm, and the east wind. — Jonah would have regarded Nineveh's destruction with equanimity, whilst he mourned over his gourd; and there was no way of awakening him to the true state of the case than by letting worm and east wind do their work. He must be taught that what the gourd was to himself, Nineveh was to God. Yea, it was more; because God had labored for it, and made it to grow through long centuries (Jonah 4:11).

How often our gourds are allowed to perish, to teach us these deep lessons. In spite of all we can do to keep them green, their leaves turn more and more sere and yellow, until they droop and die. And when they lie prone in the dust, the east wind is let forth from the Almighty hand—the malign breath from which the gourd would have delivered us. O child of God, fainting in the east wind, do not ask to die; but get thee to the blue misty shadow of the great Rock in a weary land; to the Man who is a shadow from the heat.

Jonah 4:6-7 - The Good And The Bad

December 9, 2013

The Lord God prepared a plant [for] shade . . . [and] a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. —Jonah 4:6-7

The story of the rebellious prophet Jonah shows us how God desires to use both blessings and trials to challenge us and change us for the better. Five times in the book of Jonah it says that the Lord prepared circumstances for him—both good and bad.

In Jonah 1:4 we read that the Lord sent a storm. It says He “sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea.” After the mariners discovered that Jonah was the reason for this storm, they threw him overboard (Jonah 1:15). Then God “prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah” to save him from drowning (Jonah 1:17).

Later in the book we read that “the Lord God prepared a plant” to shade Jonah (Jonah 4:6). Then we see that God prepared a worm to kill the vine as well as a scorching wind and sun to beat down upon him (Jonah 4:7-9). These circumstances were used to reveal Jonah's rebellious attitude. Only after that revelation could God directly confront Jonah's heart problem.

As we face different situations, we should remember that God is sovereign over both the blessings and the troubles that come our way. He desires to use everything to build our character (James 1:1-5). He uses both good and bad to transform us and guide us on our journey.

The Maker of the universe
Knows every need of man,
And made provision for that need
According to His plan. —Crane

The Lord gives and takes away. Blessed be the Lord.

By Dennis Fisher

GOD'S WILL PERFORMED TO PLEASE GOD - Jonah 4 - It isn't enough to simply know God's will and do it; we must also do it to please him. Jonah finally got to Nineveh and delivered God's message, but his attitude was all wrong. He hated the people to whom

he was preaching and finally went outside the city and pouted, hoping God would destroy it (Jonah 4). - Warren Wiersbe

Jonah 4 - SINCE GOD HAS COMPASSION ON LOST PEOPLE, SHOULDN'T WE?

I want to apply this message in two specific ways. The first has to do with the fact that God has brought over 400 students from every continent on the globe to our doorstep. Many are from countries where missionaries are not allowed. Many are lonely and want American friends. If they come and live in our city for four or more years and we never reach out to them in friendship, if we're not burdened about their relationship with God, are we not, like Jonah, sleeping obliviously in the hold of the ship or sitting comfortably under our shade tree, while the world around us is about to perish?

According to International Students, Inc., less than 15 percent of international students in the United States today are touched by any Christian ministry. That means that fully 85 percent are never touched by the gospel in any way. In addition, 70 percent will never see inside an American home, and 80 percent will never have a Christian friend. Those are tragic figures! If you let us know, we will try to link you with an international student so that you can become their friend. I have resources available which will help you know how to befriend an international student. I know we're all busy people. But shouldn't we make time to show God's kindness to these dear people He has brought to us?

The second application has to do with our church adopting an unreached people group. This is a strategy that makes the task of world evangelization more bite-sized. As you may know, there are approximately 11,000 unreached people groups in the world today. A "people group" is defined as the largest number of people among whom the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of culture or language. They are "unreached" if they do not have a viable, indigenous, self-evangelizing church in their midst, open to everyone in that people group.

There are approximately 600 evangelical churches in the world per unreached people group. The adopt-a-people strategy tries to link churches with unreached peoples so that the church focuses on the particular group until it is reached. It involves making a commitment to pray, to give and, where possible, to send personnel to see a particular people group reached. It also involves linking our church with a mission agency that has targeted that people group or even has begun to engage them in ministry.

Flagstaff Christian Fellowship has supported a missionary couple, who came to Christ years ago as students at NAU, and who were sent out from this church. They now work with NGM Indian Tribal Outreach, with their focus on several unreached Indian tribes in Mexico. They have encouraged us to focus on and formally adopt the Durango Aztec Nahuatl people, a tribe of about 800 who live in two remote regions in central Mexico. Two NGM families, the Silks and the Elkins, who live in Durango, about 125 miles away, are seeking to reach this tribe. There is one believing family in the tribe, but no church or pastor. Wycliffe Bible Translators is just beginning the work of translating the Bible into their language. Gary Milton from our church has gone down twice to do dental work for them.

We want this to be a burden that God puts on your heart, not just another program the church comes up with. We believe this is a tangible, practical way that we, as a church, can be a part of the final task of seeing the church planted amongst every people group, the Lord willing by the year 2000. Over the next several weeks we'll be doing more to inform you about what it means to adopt a people group and how you can be involved. If you're not informed about the area of world missions, commit to educating yourself. For now, will you begin to pray regularly for the Durango Aztec Nahuatl people? Pray for your own heart toward the lost, that God will break through any apathy or selfish focus that you may have fallen into and give you His compassion for the lost. Since our God has compassion on lost people, should not we? - from a [sermon by Steven Cole](#)

Oswald Chambers - The judgments of God are for another purpose than the vindictive spirit of man would like to make out. It was this that gave Jonah the sulks with the Almighty, and the same spirit is seen in the elder brother—jealous of God's generosity to others. You never find that spirit in the prophets.

Jonah 4:9

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

"God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry?" — Jonah 4:9

Anger is not always or necessarily sinful, but it has such a tendency to run wild that whenever it displays itself, we should be quick to question its character, with this enquiry, "Doest thou well to be angry?" It may be that we can answer, "YES." Very frequently anger is the madman's firebrand, but sometimes it is Elijah's fire from heaven. We do well when we are angry with sin, because of the wrong which it commits against our good and gracious God; or with ourselves because we remain so foolish after so much divine

instruction; or with others when the sole cause of anger is the evil which they do. He who is not angry at transgression becomes a partaker in it. Sin is a loathsome and hateful thing, and no renewed heart can patiently endure it. God himself is angry with the wicked every day, and it is written in His Word, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." Far more frequently it is to be feared that our anger is not commendable or even justifiable, and then we must answer, "NO." Why should we be fretful with children, passionate with servants, and wrathful with companions? Is such anger honourable to our Christian profession, or glorifying to God? Is it not the old evil heart seeking to gain dominion, and should we not resist it with all the might of our newborn nature? Many professors give way to temper as though it were useless to attempt resistance; but let the believer remember that he must be a conqueror in every point, or else he cannot be crowned. If we cannot control our tempers, what has grace done for us? Some one told Mr. Jay that grace was often grafted on a crab-stump. "Yes," said he, "but the fruit will not be crabs." We must not make natural infirmity an excuse for sin, but we must fly to the cross and pray the Lord to crucify our tempers, and renew us in gentleness and meekness after His own image.

Jonah 1:2

JONAH: THE UNWILLING MISSIONARY

A T ROBERTSON

Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. (Jonah 1:2 ASV)

It was in the eighth century B.C. during the reign of Jeroboam II that Jonah lived and prophesied (2 Ki 14:25). Little is told about his life apart from the book that bears his name. No specific claim is made in the story that Jonah himself wrote it. The prayer in chapter 2 is in the first person. We are not concerned with that point, but only with the life of Jonah as there portrayed. The prophets were used of God to stir the people and to warn them of the impending punishment for their sins. Jonah was one of these messengers of God and a very human one at that.

Jonah's Great Mission

"The word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai" (Jonah 1:1). That is an event in the life of any man, even though a prophet of God. It was an event when "the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness" (Lk 3:2). It demands attention whenever God puts a task upon one's shoulders. The call to you and me may not come by direct inspiration as it did to Jonah and to John, but the path of duty may lie plainly before us, whether the call comes by ordinary or extraordinary means. In Jonah's case, the demand was that he go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it. The wickedness of Nineveh, the greatest city on earth at that time, was rising before the Lord like the smoke belching forth from our modern cities today. There is not a city now that escapes the notice of God, nor a single community for that matter. It is not a pleasant task to cry against a great city to its face. It is much easier to stand off and rail against the vices of the modern Babylons and Ninevehs. Jonah knew that it was a dangerous and an unpopular thing to do that in Nineveh. Nathan did have courage to stand before David and say, "Thou art the man" (2 Sa 12:7). Elijah was bold before Ahab on Mount Carmel, but he ran like a deer from Jezebel and sat under the juniper tree in despair. There were false prophets in plenty with soft voices and smooth sayings to please princes. Jonah did not relish the call that came to him.

Jonah Shirking His Duty

His heart sank within him at the prospect of facing the great city and exposing its sins. Many a preacher since Jonah's day has had a like experience. It is naïvely said that Jonah got into a ship at Joppa to go with the sailors "unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah" (Jonah 1:3). It was as if God did not dwell in Spain. Many a man has gone to the West from his crimes and his loved ones and friends as if God and duty were not to be found out West. But they found out their mistake sooner or later. The eye of God is always upon us even in the dark and even in the haunts of sins. Hugh Redwood has found God in the underworld of London as his wonderful book, *God in the Slums*, shows. Jonah paid his fare like a man because he was doing what he wanted to do. People, even in emergencies and in time of depression, have money for what they want to do—for chewing gum, for cosmetics, for tobacco, for drink—when they have none for God and His kingdom of grace. Besides, it was a long, expensive, and terrible trip to Nineveh along the edge of the desert with many perils. But it was a lovely sea voyage to Tarshish.

But God saw Jonah all the same and all the time and knew of his willful disobedience. God sent a great wind that raised a tempest and soon the boat was tossed like a ball, and the mariners were afraid. That is always a bad sign when the sailors become frightened. They cast overboard many things. Each sailor called upon his god for help. Plenty of people have no use for God until serious trouble comes, and then they cry to him in terror, a poor sort of praying certainly. But Jonah lay fast asleep down in the depths of the ship. He had gone down there trying to smother his conscience for what he was doing. The shipmaster roused him

roughly: "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not" (v. 6). Perhaps they had heard of Jehovah as God of the Jews. The other gods had all failed them. Jonah had not gotten away from the presence of God. They cast lots to see who was the cause of the peril in which they were. The lot fell on Jonah, and finally he confessed that he was guilty of trying to flee from God and His command to go to Nineveh. They did not know what to do until Jonah himself proposed that they throw him overboard lest they all perish. The men did it with much pleading that Jehovah would not punish them for Jonah's death if he were really innocent.

But God had prepared a great fish, not here called a whale (the word in Mt 12:40 means sea monster), that swallowed Jonah. This miracle has created a deal of speculation through the ages. Fish have been found with the bodies of men in them, but the men were dead. Jonah could survive in such a place only by the power of God. We have precisely the same problem in the case of Daniel in the lions' den and the men in the fiery furnace. God can do what He wishes to do. Some take it as pure legend. Others regard it as a parable and not meant to be taken as literal history. Jesus spoke of the sign of Jonah as illustrating His own resurrection from the dead (Mt 12:40.). Jonah now found out to his sorrow what it meant to disobey God's command.

Jonah Brought Back to God

He was down in the deep waters in the belly of the fish three days and then Jonah prayed to God, a thing he refused to do in the ship. "Out of the belly of Sheol cried I" (Jonah 2:2). He seemed to be in hell itself down "in the heart of the seas . . . all thy waves and thy billows passed over me. . . . The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; the deep was round about me; the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains" (Jonah 2:3-6). It took all this to bring Jonah to a realization of his sins. It takes more than this to bring some men and women back to God. They go so far and sink so low that they defy God. They feel at home in the dens and sinks of shame and have renounced home with all its hallowed ties and defame the very name of God. But Jonah now had enough of his willful rebellion. "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered Jehovah; and my prayer came in unto thee into thy holy temple" (Jonah 2:7). At last Jonah is ready to say, "I will pay that which I have vowed" (Jonah 2:9). He is willing to go to Nineveh now. He is humbled at last and had plenty of time to meditate. What did it take to bring you back to God when you wandered away? Many a soul has tried to flee from God. Preachers have sometimes fought a call to preach until middle life. God saw that Jonah's heart was now changed and made the fish give up Jonah on dry land.

Jonah Responding to the Call of God

"And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time" (Jonah 3:1). That does not always happen. It would not have happened now but for the change in Jonah's attitude toward God. "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (Jonah 3:2). The slight change in the language is a direct reference to the first command that Jonah had disregarded and a sharp reminder that he must obey this time. Jonah is willing now and goes "according to the word of Jehovah" (Jonah 3:3). He went a day's journey into Nineveh. This street preacher had a short and strange message that must have jarred upon the ears of the people coming from this man of another race: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overturned" (Jonah 3:4). He kept repeating his weird words until "the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5).

This was a new experience for Jonah. Many of the prophets proclaimed God's will to Israel, and the people neglected all of them. Jeremiah, for instance, delivered his long messages through the years to the same people who turned deaf ears to it all. But here the people of a whole city, a heathen city at that, believed the terrible words of judgment and were prostrate before God. The message of Jonah even reached the king who was likewise deeply moved by it. He proclaimed a fast for man and beast in view of the impending calamity: "And let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" (Jonah 3:8-9).

The conduct of this king is remarkable from every point of view. He knows better than anyone the violence and evil in his own city, but he refuses to cover it up. Here is a case where the ruler of the city refuses to condone evildoers and calls upon all to turn away from their evil ways. The curse of American cities has been precisely this, that the officers of the law are so often in league with the lawbreakers and for bribes refuse to punish them. The helpless people find themselves preyed upon by the very men whom they have chosen to protect them from the underworld.

Surely no missionary in all the ages was ever so successful in bringing a wicked city to its knees before God. And this missionary had been unwilling to go to Nineveh! And now his message of doom was believed by all, including the king! And yet some men wonder if it pays to send missionaries to the heathen. Does it pay to have preachers at home? "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way" (Jonah 3:10). Here was "reform" with a vengeance. There was never such a cleaning of Augean stables as this. "God repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them; and he did it not." And no wonder. Did ever a city before or since turn round like this? Surely Jonah would feel repaid for coming now when he had saved a whole city.

Jonah's Disappointment at God's Mercy

"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry" (Jonah 4:1). Instead of rejoicing at this glorious result, he got angry and flew into a rage with God himself. He dared even to justify his former disobedience: "I pray thee, O Jehovah, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish!" (Jonah 4:2 a). So quickly in his anger has he forgotten the experience in the big fish. "For I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (Jonah 4:2 b). That was the language of impertinence and rebellion against the very character of God. "Therefore now, O Jehovah, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jonah 4:3). That is the climax of bitter resentment against the love and mercy of God who had sent him to Nineveh.

God patiently said to Jonah, "Doest thou well to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4). Jonah refused to answer. What was the matter with him? He cared more for the vindication of his own proclamation of the ruin of the city than for the lives of the people. He sensitively and foolishly imagined that these very people, whose lives had been spared, would call him a false prophet. He had said that yet forty days and Nineveh would be destroyed and now that was not going to happen. Jonah felt himself put in a bad light with the people. He had rather have his way than save souls. He had rather have his way than God's way. He actually felt himself superior to God. If he could not have his own way, he preferred death to life. He thought he knew better how to run the kingdom of God than God Himself. So soon has Jonah forgotten the storm and the fish.

So in a huff he "went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city" (Jonah 4:5). What a picture for us all! There was still a chance that God might destroy the city and vindicate Jonah's preaching. At any rate, he would give God a chance before he finally condemned Him!

God was kind to Jonah as He is to us all. He treated Jonah as a spoiled child as many a preacher has been. He gave him an object lesson. He caused a gourd to grow quickly over the booth to be a shade over his head against the hot rays of the sun. Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd vine over his head. Then a worm in the morning cut the gourd and it withered and "the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live" (Jonah 4:8). Here he is again upset, this time over a mere trifle and ready to fling his life away for a whim. Then God speaks to Jonah: "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" Imagine the reply of Jonah to the Lord: "I do well to be angry, even unto death" (Jonah 4:9).

Some people, like Jonah, become sulky when they cannot have their way in every detail of life. Jonah now, for this second offense, deserved to die, but God was merciful to him as He was to the people of Nineveh. God plainly applies the kindergarten lesson from the gourd to Jonah, who grieved over the loss of the gourd vine. "Should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" (Jonah 4:11). There was no answer from Jonah to this telling and overwhelming question. He was silenced, if not convinced. Please note God's pity for the cattle also as well as for the ignorant people of Nineveh, and for the stubborn and willful prophet. Surely we are all wandering sheep, preachers and all. What a call is the story of Jonah and Nineveh to sinners today to turn to God while His mercy still holds out toward us all.

Jonah 1:1-3; 3:2-5 THE MISSIONARY CALL OF THE OLD TESTAMENT JOHN DANIEL JONES

Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah . . . Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it. . . . But Jonah rose up to flee . . . from the presence of the Lord (Jonah 1:1-3).

Arise, go unto Nineveh . . . and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh. . . . So the people of Nineveh believed God (Jonah 3:2-5).

I do not think I can commence my sermon in a better way than by quoting the sentence that Sir George Adam Smith prefixes as a kind of motto to his commentary on the prophet Jonah. Here it is: "This is the tragedy of the book of Jonah, that a book which is made the means of one of the most sublime revelations of truth in the Old Testament should be known to most only for its connection with a whale." Yes, that is the tragedy. Many a passage, many a book in the Bible, has suffered sorely at the hands of good Christian people. They have been treated as armories of proof-texts without any reference to the main lines of the writers' thought. Books like the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation are persistently abused by a whole school of Christian people. They scan them only to discover in them what they imagine to be "signs of the times" without troubling themselves in the slightest

about the meaning of Jewish apocalyptic, and without worrying about the historic situation out of which, and to which, the authors wrote. Judging from the way in which some people handle these books you might imagine that the authors were not writing for their own age at all, but that all the while they had the twentieth century in mind.

But, while many books in the Bible have been mishandled and abused, no book has suffered such outrage as this book of the prophet Jonah. All the attention has been concentrated on the story of the whale, as if that were the central thing in the book. Nine out of ten Christian people know it only for that, and would be hard put to it to give any account of the book except that it contains that story. It might be a sort of Old Testament Jules Verne story—a Jewish anticipation of the Tarzan series. We don't trouble our heads about the accuracy or veracity of these modern books. They are confessedly books of the imagination, and we accept them as such. But this book that contains the whale story is in the Bible, and that makes a world of difference.

People have debated and discussed, they have wrangled and quarreled, as to the interpretation to be put upon the story. Literalists have contended that it is just sober matter of fact and have devoted much ingenuity to the task of proving its possibility. Frank Bullen wrote a whole chapter in one of his whaling narratives to prove that a whale could really swallow a man. Belief in the story became a test of orthodoxy, a test even of genuine Christianity. And in the dust raised about the story, the real meaning and purpose of the book were entirely overlooked. And the result of all this again has been that to the average man the book has become a joke and a jest.

And this is sheer tragedy. For this book of Jonah is one of the noblest in the whole of the Old Testament. Of all Old Testament books it is the one that comes nearest in spirit to the New Testament. In its wide outlook, in its insight into God's heart, the only things in the Old Testament to be put in the same class with this book are the concluding chapters of Isaiah and the eighty-seventh Psalm. For in this book God appears not simply as the God of the Jews, but as the God of the whole world. Here His universal love is suggested. Here we can see religion bursting through the swaddling clothes of Jewish narrowness and exclusiveness, and claiming the world for its province. Here we get the truth asserted that the Gentiles were susceptible to, and would accept, the word of God. It took the vision of the great sheet and his subsequent experience of the actual descent of the Spirit upon Cornelius and his household to convince Peter that God had granted to the Gentiles also repentance to life.

That great conviction had, however, been born in the heart of the writer of this book at least three centuries before. To him had been given the vision of a whole world sharing in the love and compassion of God and responsive to His call. It would do us all good to read the book over again from this point of view. And if the whale episode troubles you—I don't think it need trouble anyone who is acquainted with Eastern habits of thought and composition—then leave that episode out altogether and read direct from the fifteenth verse of the first chapter to the opening verse of chapter 3, so that the central purpose of the book may be clear.

For the central lesson of the book is not that it is impossible to flee from the presence of the Lord or that disobedience inevitably meets with punishment, though these lessons are contained in it. The purpose of the book, as Sir George Adam Smith says, is to illustrate "God's care for the Gentiles and their susceptibility to His word." In short, Jonah is the great missionary book of the Old Testament, and it is about some of the great and simple truths it emphasizes—true now as then—that I want to speak.

There are three points illustrated in this prophecy upon which I wish to dwell for a few minutes. They are familiar enough to us Christian people, for they are simple and elementary, and yet they stand in need of constant reinforcement. Those three truths are these:

(1) God's love and compassion reach out to all men;

(2) All men are capable of receiving that love and responding to it;

(3) Men who themselves enjoy the knowledge of God are often strangely and amazingly unwilling to share it with others.

God's Universal Love

The first truth emphasized in this book is that God's love and compassion reach out to all men. That is the great revelation of the book. The Jew had been brought up to believe that he had exclusive rights in God. He had been brought up to believe that he was heaven's prime favorite and that his people were God's peculiar people. The people outside the limits of Judaism—the people of Egypt and Assyria and Babylon, people who had often oppressed the people of Israel—were not only the enemies of the Jews. They were also the enemies of God, and their end was destruction and perdition. The discovery the prophet made under the guidance of God's Spirit was that these heathen nations were the objects of God's love, and that the knowledge of God had been committed to Israel, not as a selfish possession, but that Israel might proclaim this truth to an ignorant and perishing world.

All this is implied in the opening sentences of this prophecy: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me" (Jonah 1:2). Nineveh was the center of that brutal kingdom of Assyria that had broken Jewish independence and deported and outraged its people. Its wickedness was great. There was no doubt about that; it had come up

before God. But God had pity and compassion on Nineveh. The Ninevites were dear to Him, and He would rather save them from their impending doom. "Go to Nineveh," God said, "that great city, and cry against it." All the yearning compassions of the Lord are in that verse. I sometimes think that Nineveh is taken as the scene of the prophet's ministry just because it is an extreme illustration. Its wickedness was great. If ever a people deserved punishment, the Ninevites did. But God has pity and compassion even for them. The pity that yearns over Nineveh is a pity from which none are excluded. The love that pours itself on Nineveh is a love that extends to the lost and the last and the very least.

That is the first fact we must start with: God's love is a universal love; His redemption is a universal redemption. He sent His Son to die for all, and His mercy and compassion run out to all. This is so easily said and yet so hard to realize. It is one of those great commonplaces of religion that, just because it is a commonplace, is desperately difficult really to get into our consciousness. If something could only "stab our spirits wide awake" to a realization of this truth, the missionary problem would be solved. Let me say it quite simply and boldly: God loves everybody. He gave His Son to die for everybody. He wants to save everybody. The people of India and China, the half-developed savage folk of Africa, the child races of New Guinea and the islands, they are all God's children. They are all in His heart and His compassions run out to them.

This is the supreme motive for the great missionary enterprise. There are other subsidiary motives, no doubt. I once heard a man appeal for support for missions on the ground that missionary work was good for trade. Trade followed the flag; the flag followed the missionary. There was truth in the argument, but it was a poor, base, and ignoble plea. A great spiritual enterprise cannot in the long run be carried on for materialistic reasons.

The necessity of missionary work has been urged on humanitarian grounds. It is a nobler appeal, and it tells with curious force upon a present-day congregation, more sensitive as people are to physical distress than to spiritual need. And, let it be said, there is ample ground for this appeal. The dark places of the earth are full of cruelty, and the coming of Christianity emancipates people from the bondage of superstition and fear, from ignorance and disease and death. Life, for instance, has become another thing for the natives of the New Hebrides since J. G. Paton first went there, and for the natives of Calabar since Mary Slessor settled in their midst. Missionary work appeals to anyone and everyone who wishes to heal the open sores of humankind.

The necessity of missionary work in these days is being urged in the interests of world peace. The condition of the world is a call to more intense missionary effort. There are great Eastern nations like China and Japan that are going to count, and count for much, in the future development of the world. Unless these nations are Christianized, the "yellow peril" may become a deadly menace. The walls of Leeds a little time since were placard with these words: "Christ or Chaos." Is there any other alternative? Chaos will be the inevitable issue unless the world gets our Christ. The world situation is a call to a new missionary crusade. These are all motives to missions. But they are not the supreme motive. It is back to the supreme motive we must get if missionary work is ever to become a passion with us. The other motives are prudential, humanitarian, but the real religious motive is this—that God loves these heathen people, these ignorant and sunken people. God loves them. God gave His Son to die for them. He will not be happy until He gets these lost children back to His heart and His home.

"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

There you get the Father's love for His lost children, and His yearning desire to save His perishing children! And India is our Nineveh, and China is our Nineveh, and Africa is our Nineveh. God bids us, too, go to Nineveh and preach the preaching He has committed to us. He bids us go and proclaim this message: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn 3:16).

The Father wants His children. He will not be happy in His heaven until He gathers them in! That is the great compelling motive for missionary work. "The love of Christ constraineth me," said the greatest missionary of them all—not the challenge of the world, not the miseries of men (though he was not indifferent to them), but the love of Christ. That is the supreme motive. For I can conceive of no man really loving the Father without at the same time loving His children, and I can conceive of no man really loving Christ without desiring to help Him to gather in those for whom He gave His life.

The Capacity for Repentance

The second great truth this book illustrates and emphasizes is this, that all men are capable of receiving God's love and responding to it. "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it," said God to the prophet. But Jonah did not want to go. Not because he thought his message beyond the comprehension of the Ninevites, not because he thought they would reject it, but because he had an uneasy feeling that on hearing it they might repent. And Jonah, hard and bitter Jew as he was, did not want them to repent. He would have preferred to see them the objects of God's wrath rather than the recipients of His grace. And what he feared came to pass. When, for the second time, the imperious summons came to him, "Arise, go unto Nineveh . . . and preach" (Jonah 3:2), and he went, however unwillingly, and preached to the dim multitudes of the city, "the people of Nineveh believed God" (Jonah 3:5) They repented, and God forgave them their sin. Nineveh, wicked Nineveh, repented!

Nineveh responded to God's call! And the great and blessed truth all this symbolizes and teaches is this, that none are to be shut out of the range of the gospel message. There are no unreachables or impossibles. The Word, when preached and wherever preached, meets with its response. As Sir George Adam Smith expresses it, "Under every form and character of human life, beneath all needs and habits, deeper than despair and more native to man than sin itself, lies the power of the heart to turn. It was this, and not Hope, that remained at the bottom of Pandora's box when every other gift had fled. For this is the indispensable secret of Hope. It lies in every heart, waiting for some dream of divine mercy to rouse it; but, when roused, neither ignorance of God, nor pride, nor long obduracy of evil, may withstand it."

"The power of the heart to turn"—that is what this book asserts. The power of every human heart to turn and respond to the appeal of the divine mercy—that is the truth it proclaims. It was a noble and splendid bit of theorizing when the author wrote this book. He was arguing from the nature of God and the nature of man. But it is a fact of experience for us. For men have traveled to every Nineveh beneath the sun since the days of Jonah and have preached the preaching committed to them—the preaching of the grace of God in Christ, the preaching of the redeeming passion of God revealed in the Cross. Everywhere the miracle of Nineveh has been repeated, everywhere men have believed in God, everywhere there has been demonstrated the capacity of the heart to turn!

I do not know that Christian folk have ever been reluctant to carry the gospel into any particular land for fear the people should repent. From that harsh and narrow exclusiveness, which found satisfaction in the thought that other people were shut out from the mercies of God, we have been delivered. But I am not at all sure that Christian people have not been slow in sending the gospel to this land and that because they felt the people could not repent. Either they said the people were so devoted to their ancestral religions that it seemed hopeless to attempt to change them, or they were so sunk in savagery and sin as to be insensible to any and every high appeal. But the experience of the century and half of the modern missionary enterprise has banished that doubt. Nothing has been more moving and subduing than the response the human heart everywhere makes to the preaching of the gospel. Every Nineveh can repent! They have come from the north and the south and the east and the west and sat down in the kingdom of God. The people who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb are of every nation, tribe, tongue, and condition. Everywhere, under the preaching of the gospel, there has been revealed the power of the heart to turn!

"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city."

The call came to the ears of William Carey. Nineveh to him was India, that land with an ancient religion and a hoary civilization. To many it seemed a hopeless enterprise, so terrific was the hold their ancient religion had upon the people, so intimately had it intertwined itself with the fabric of their lives. But Indian hearts responded to the preaching of William Carey and his successors. From the devotees of Hinduism Christ gathered His converts. In that unchanging East there has been demonstrated the heart's power to turn.

"Go to Nineveh, that great city."

The cry came into the ears of Robert Morrison, and, as interpreted by him, Nineveh was China. It seemed a foolish adventure, for China had a civilization older than the Christian. But Chinese hearts in turn responded to the preaching of the gospel. In China, Christ gathered His confessors and martyrs. In China there has been demonstrated the heart's power to turn.

Go to Nineveh, that great city."

The call came to Robert Moffat, and, as interpreted by him, Nineveh was Africa—dark, benighted, degraded Africa. It seemed a desperate undertaking to go out and seek to evangelize Africa, not so much because there the missionary would find himself confronted by an old civilization, but because there the people were so sunken and degraded and vile. But Moffat went. He went and preached in Nineveh, and the heart of the African responded. Nineveh repented; in Africa Christ gathered His church.

Do you remember the story of Africaner? It was a story so with which Moffat used to thrill his audiences. It was a great story in the days of my youth. Africaner was a sort of robber chief in South Africa. He was the plague and peril of the white settlers in that land. He was the type of the untamable and brutal savage. Scoffers used to tell Moffat to convert Africaner, and then they would begin to believe in missions! Moffat went and preached his gospel to the robber chief. His coarse and brutal heart was touched. He laid aside his savagery, and before long he was accompanying Moffat to the Cape clothed and in his right mind. Nineveh had repented! Nineveh believed God! In that brutal savage converted into a meek follower of Jesus there was demonstrated the power of the heart—the vilest and most degraded and brutalized heart to turn!

And that is why we omit no class, no tribe, from our missionary enterprise. There are no impossibles and unreachables. "The people of Nineveh believed God!" We undertake the enterprise because the love of Christ sustains us. But we undertake it with this faith to sustain us: That there is something in every soul that cries out for Christ and responds to Him when He calls. There are no people so obdurate and sunken that this faculty is destroyed in them. Nineveh—every Nineveh—can repent and believe. In every human heart

there lies the power to turn.

The Reluctant Preacher

The third truth I find in the book is that men who know the truth are often amazingly slow to impart it and to share it. Jonah was a reluctant preacher. When the call first came to him he rose up to flee to Tarshish. He did not want to preach in Nineveh. He did not want to give it the chance of repenting. He would rather see Nineveh—the capital of that brutal state that had so ruthlessly oppressed his people—destroyed than saved. So he tried to put all the leagues of land and sea that he could between himself and the great city in which God bade him preach. The religion Jonah believed in was an exclusive, not a universal one. He rebelled against the very thought of Israel's enemies being treated as sons.

Is this without its parallel in the life and experience of the church today? Are we not reluctant preachers still? Is it not a fact that many among us still turn a deaf ear to God's command, "Arise, go unto Nineveh . . . and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee?" We neither go ourselves, nor help to send others instead of us. Nineveh, that great city, may perish for all we do to help the saving of it.

Our modern heedlessness does not arise from unwillingness, as did Jonah's—though there are those among us who affect to believe that the Christian religion is a religion for the West and not for the East. Our heedlessness at bottom springs from indifference. We have no concern at all for the condition of Nineveh. We are not troubled that vast sections of our world's populations live without any knowledge of Christ. We are interested in the political situation in India. We are concerned about the maintenance of the "open door" for trade in China. We can get quite excited in the discussion of the pros and cons of an alliance with Japan. But the fact that the people of India, China, and Japan are ignorant of God's grace to us and all humankind in Christ has never cost us a night's sleep or given us an hour's concern. And this indifference again springs from a lack of religious experience—a failure to realize what the Christian redemption means for ourselves. We are not filled, as the apostle Paul was, with a sense of adoring wonder and gratitude at the grace of God in saving us. We scarcely know what it is to say in a kind of rapture of adoring awe, "The Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20-[note](#)). A church that has lost its sense of wonder at God's amazing love in Christ is bound to be a cold, lethargic, indifferent church.

And that is our deepest want today—to catch again the wonder of God's redeeming love, to realize afresh what it was God did for us when He gave His Son to die on Calvary's hill. The Christian faith is not a morality, it is a redemption. It is not a philosophy, it is a salvation. It is the man who knows what redemption and salvation mean—who knows himself to be redeemed and saved by the grace of God and who will be eager to spread the gospel. It is a deepened and enriched redemptive experience that is our bitter need. That is the secret of the warmed heart and the loosened tongue. And when the church gets the warmed heart and the loosened tongue there will soon be no rebellious and wicked Nineveh left. Every Nineveh will repent and believe, and Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and be abundantly satisfied.

Lord, There's A Little Bit Of Jonah In Me

Robert Morgan

It is an honor to be invited to speak at the Wednesday night service of the National Association of Free Will Baptists; and I want to begin by telling you something I've never shared before with an audience; and I'm not even sure I've every told this to my family or friends.

But it was on just such a Wednesday night as this, at a National Associational service many years ago, that the Lord began dealing with my heart about Christian service. I wasn't very committed to Christ at the time -- just a confused teenager -- and I recall sitting in the high galleries as far away as possible, with Jon Wilson, son of Foreign Missions Director J. Reford Wilson. It was a long, hot service, and I was glad when the preacher finally rambled to an end.

But to my surprise, there was response to the invitation. The Holy Spirit seemed to descend upon the crowd, and from my perch looking down on the hall, I saw scores of people leave their seats and clog the aisles. Without saying a word to me, my companion slipped from his seat and went forward. Suddenly I felt the Lord knocking at my door that night, saying, "Shouldn't you be up there, too? What are you waiting for? Why not give yourself fully to Christ tonight?"

But there was a little bit of Jonah in me, and I just stood there; and it wasn't until later that the Lord got hold of me. But it was that service that first pricked my conscience about surrendering my life to Christ for fulltime Christian service.

And perhaps tonight you're in the same boat.

It's no accident we've gathered together here on this summer's evening at the end of the 20th century. It is a poignant time in history, and we are here by divine appointment. You are present by divine providence. You may be a young person, but perhaps you are like I was -- you haven't yet fully committed your life to Christ and to his kingdom.

Maybe there's a little bit of Jonah in you, too. Tonight I'd like to speak on the subject, "Lord, there's a little bit of Jonah in me!" and I'd like to ask you to turn to that book of the Bible, Jonah -- chapter one, verse one:

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, "Arise, go to Ninevah, that great city, and cry...."

A Story of Weeping

I'd like to say three things tonight about this book in the Bible, and the first thing is this: The story of Jonah is a story of weeping, for Jonah was told to go to Ninevah and to cry... to cry out... to proclaim a message that reflected the weeping heart of God. It is the story of the heart of God weeping for a lost city and for a confused world. We, too, are living in times that make us cry.

We live among people who are hurting very badly. I know of a family who was raising a teenage daughter, and one night there was an argument in the home. The teenager stormed up to her room and locked the door, and the anxious parents went to bed disheartened. The next morning when the girl didn't get up for school, they knocked on the door. There was no answer. Breaking down the door, they saw the trap door into the attic opened, and going up there they found her hanging by her neck. In an instant, the lives of every member of that family were ravaged forever. We are living in times that make us cry.

I've been following news from Zambia. 90,000 children live on the streets of Zambia, most of them orphaned by the AIDS epidemic. More than half the 600,000 children of Zambia have lost at least one parent. Death is so common that coffins are sold out of brightly colored vans parked alongside the roads. The younger children living on the street find abandoned petrol or aerosol cans to sniff, trying to remain numb. Teenagers live in a state of constant drunkenness from a homemade beer and from smoking something called jekem, which is fermented human feces scraped from sewer pipes. They are an abandoned, lost generation, living dazed on the streets and dying in the sewers. We are living in times that make us cry.

The other night on the television news, there was a story about a man on the New York subway -- 37 years old, 5 foot 6, 170 pounds. He had on jeans, a gold polo shirt, and black boots. He was sitting there on the subway as people got on and got off, coming and going, bustling movement all around him. But he was dead. He had sat down and died and nobody had noticed.

Here we are, Christians, living in a world full of dead people -- we come and go and ride around in circles, and sometimes we lose our burden. We forget that we're surrounded by people who are dead to Christ and dead to hope. We forget that we are serving a Savior who wept over the city of Jerusalem and by the tomb of Lazarus. He weeps tonight over this city of Atlanta, over this state, over this backslidden country, over the 259 nations of the world, and over the 10,000 tribes that remain unreached with the Gospel.

A Time of Sleeping

So the Lord told Jonah, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry... Care about them! Do something for them! Evangelize them. Save them." But what happened to Jonah? That's the second thing to notice -- the story of Jonah is also a story of sleeping.

But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

The book of Proverbs says, He who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame.

And I wonder if it isn't likewise with us. Here we are at the end of the second millenium, in the middle of the greatest harvest season the church of Jesus Christ has ever known in its entire history, but most of us, to be honest about it, are relatively unaware and uninvolved.

A couple of years ago Don Robirds asked me to write an article for Heartbeat Magazine on whether or not our denomination could afford to substantially increase the number of missionaries we were sending out. I was shocked to discover that our entire international missions budget could be met if the average Free Will Baptist church member gave just 7.5 cents a day to the cause.

To put it differently, if each one of us gave to the 50 cents we spend on our morning newspaper, we would increase our denominational missions budget seven-fold, and instead of 100 missionaries, we could support 700.

Somebody's asleep.

And what about our prayer support. J. O. Fraser was a missionary to China in the early 1900s. He credited the conversion of hundreds of Lisu families to the prayers of his very earnest little prayer group back in England. He said, Christians at home can do as much for foreign missions as those actually on the field. It will only be known on the Last Day how much has been accomplished in missionary work by the prayers of earnest believers at home.

But most of us don't take those prayer letters very seriously. We're more likely to scan them and toss them in the trash than we are to spread them out before the throne in earnest prayer like Hezekiah during the Assyrian crisis.

Somebody's asleep.

And what about the internationals flooding into our country? There are approximately 800,000 international students in the U. S. right now for training. Some of them will go back to be the political and military and educational leaders in their countries. We can reach some of them. But not if we're asleep.

Recently a missiologist friend of mine related to me what she called "the biggest lost opportunity in missionary history." There was a 13-year-old in Mongolia who inherited a bit of land from his father. This boy was a precocious warrior with instinctive brilliance as a military strategist; he was also ruthless, and he formed fighting bands that went from village to village until he was ruling over two million people in a Mongolian Empire that stretched from China to India, and from Siberia to edges of Western Europe. They gave this young man the title of Genghis Khan and he ruled over more of territory than any man has ever ruled.

Meanwhile at the same time in Western Europe a great revival was occurring under the preaching of men like St. Francis of Assisi, and thousands were becoming Christians.

Following Khan's death, the bulk of his empire eventually went to his grandson, Kublai Khan, who established his capital city in Beijing. He had two Italians in his court named Polo, the father and the uncle of famed explorer Marco Polo. They began to tell Kublai Khan about Christianity, and the great ruler became very interested. He sent the Polo brothers back to with a request for 100 missionaries to tell the Mongolians and the Chinese about Christianity. "When we learn about Christianity, there will be more Christians in my empire than in all Europe," he said.

The Polos returned with the message, but no one was interested in going. Finally two friars agreed to go with the Polos (and Marco Polo accompanied them) but along the way the friars got fainthearted and turned around and went home.

When they got back to Kublai Khan, he said, "Where are the missionaries?" No one came. Eventually the church did send a small handful of missionaries, but by that time the opportunity had passed.

Perhaps tonight the Lord is speaking to you about being willing to travel overseas for his cause.

Well, the story of Jonah ends better than the one about the Polo brothers. You're aware of the story of the whale, how God eventually got Jonah headed in the right direction. And thus we discover that the story of Jonah is not only one of weeping and sleeping; it is one of reaping.

A Time of Reaping

Jonah went to Nineveh, went around the city preaching a sermon of one sentence, and the entire city was converted. Jonah 3:5 says, So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

And I want to suggest that just as the book of Jonah brings us to the greatest single ingathering of souls in the Bible, so you and I are privileged to live during the greatest single harvest season ever witnessed by the church of Jesus Christ.

According to Bob Sjogren, it took from the beginning of church history until the year 1900 for committed believers to become 2.5% of the world population. It took only 70 more years for that percentage to double. By 1970, committed believers were 5% of a much larger world population.

Then it took just 22 years to double again. In 1992, committed believers grew to become 10% of a still larger world population.

According to George Otis of the Sentinel Group, about 70% of all the church's outreach since its beginning until today has been accomplished in this century alone, and about 70% of what has been accomplished in this century has taken place since 1945. And 70% of what has happened since 1945 has happened in this decade of the 1990s.

According to missionary statistics, over 260,000 people every day are now being presented the plan of salvation, and there is a growing sense of excitement among missiologists that we could actually be within striking distance of seeing the Gospel presented to every known people group within the lifetime of some who are in his great hall tonight.

But the greatest areas of harvest are overseas. Only about 15% of the worldwide body of Christ live in North America, and we aren't doing so well. 85% of our churches are plateaued or declining. American society is entering a post-Christian era. Our culture is becoming so secularized and cynical that only a revival of biblical proportions will save the church in the United States.

North American missionaries are, overall, becoming fewer and older while missionaries from new, emerging overseas fields are increasing and youthful.

That means this: If you and your church are not heavily invested in our overseas subsidiaries, you're going to miss out on 85% of what God is doing in this world.

- I want to know when I lay my head down on my pillow at night that someone somewhere in the world is getting up to continue the work, sent out by our church, supported by our dollars and sustained by our prayers.
- I want to have part in a ministry on which the sun never sets.
- I want to be a part of something bigger than I am, something wider than the brick walls of my church.
- I want to be involved in a global harvest of global proportions at the very twilight of history.

I'd like to close tonight by telling you of two hallmates of mine in Bible College. Bill Harding and I graduated together in 1974, but after graduation we both got married and we went our separate ways.

Bill had gone on to seminary, and had gone to Ethiopia with Sudan Interior Mission. Ethiopia at the time was under an oppressive Marxist government that did not welcome missionaries, and Bill had to find some reason to justify his stay in the country. In earlier days, Bill had worked on golf courses, installing irrigation equipment. So he told the government he knew something about water resource management, and they put him in charge of drilling wells for the populace. He learned quickly on the job, and for several years successfully oversaw the drilling of wells, helping provide Ethiopians with fresh water. All the same time, he and his wife Grace were looking for opportunities to quietly witness and share their faith. He especially poured himself into three Ethiopian Christians whom he was able to teach and train.

At length, the Marxists fell from power, and Bill suddenly found new freedom in preaching. These men asked Bill if they could invite some people over to the Harding house to hear more about the Gospel, and Bill excitedly said yes. The day came, and imagine how stunned Bill and Grace were when ten thousand people showed up. There was a large field in front of their house, and for four days, sometimes in the driving rain, the people stayed. Bill preached without microphone and amplification, but multitudes were converted. The crowds would sometimes stand in the driving rain for four hours, listening to the Word of God being shouted to them over the sound of the downpour.

Bill is now stationed in Addis Ababa, with a circuit of preaching points in which thousands show up. He told me that whenever he preaches, he can see nothing but "boom boxes" being held aloft in the first several rows, as people record his sermon. When he later returns to the same spot, he finds many people who can preach his sermon word-for-word, having listened to the tapes over and over. Thousands have come to Jesus Christ, and it is a time of harvest, a time of reaping, a time of revival.

I had another hallmate named Chet Bitterman. I'll never forget Chet. The thing that impressed me about him was his cocky self-possession, exhibited chiefly in a smile that always bordered on a smirk. He would stick his head through the door of my room, flash his devil-may-care grin, ask how things were going, then disappear as quickly as he had come. He always left too soon, and he seldom looked back.

Chet walked across that stage as we got our diplomas, and that's the last time I ever saw him. He married and had three daughters just like I did. He ended up with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Columbia, South America. On January 19, 1981, terrorists burst into his apartment, tore him away from his family, and a few weeks later his body was found stuffed in a truck, a single bullet in his chest.

When he had realized that God was calling him to be a missionary in Latin America, Chet penned something strangely prophetic in his journal: Maybe this is just some kind of self-inflicted martyr complex, but I find this recurring thought that perhaps God will call me to be martyred for Him in his service in Columbia. I am willing.

I believe there are some people here with some Jonah in them who need to say, "I am willing."

- Some young people who need to give their lives to Jesus Christ tonight without hesitation or reservation. I have decided to follow Jesus.
- Some pastors who need to get serious about leading their churches into earnest missionary involvement. I have decided to follow Jesus.
- Some here who feel God may be summoning you to fulltime Christian service, and he's just waiting for you to say "Yes." I have decided to follow Jesus.
- Perhaps tonight you feel that God would have you seriously dedicate yourself to a ministry of prayer for

global outreach.

- Perhaps tonight you feel that God would have you dedicate your goods to extend the global harvest.
- Perhaps you've been resisting the Lord, like Jonah.
- Perhaps he's calling you to go, and you're ready to say, "I have decided now, to follow Jesus."

Why not say: "Where he leads me I will follow"?

What not say, "Here am I, send me"?

Why not be a reaper?