

## **“The Repentant Prophet” Jonah 3, Sermon Notes**

**Pastor Marc Wragg**

**Saving Grace Bible Church**

**September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**Morning Worship Service**

Major Lesson: God is the one who grants repentance and forgiveness, and He will willingly pour it out on those who do not deserve it.

“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk. 4 Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." 5 Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. 6 When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. 7 He issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. 8 "But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. 9 "Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish." 10 When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it." (Jonah 3:1-10 NAU)

### Introduction

We are taking the time to work through the book of Jonah

- First, we have seen it is important to recognize that God is in control. This is God's world and God's universe, and we live in it.
- Second, when we find ourselves in difficulty, we turn to God in prayer. A faithful prayer will be passionate, plain, praising, and penitent.

We now come to the third chapter, and the third main idea we want to leave with is this: God is looking for true repentance.

Jonah 3 and 4 are probably the greatest parts of this story

- The fish is interesting, but is not the main part of the story
- In this part of the story Jonah comes to his senses and obeys God, and God demonstrates His great compassion on an evil nation
- Man wants a sign

“But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;’” (Matthew 12:39 NAU)

“Jonah himself becomes a ‘sign’ to the city of Nineveh that confirms the message he brings. As the Lord determined to be merciful to Jonah his disobedient servant and give him a second chance, so he may also choose to be merciful to a brutal city such as Nineveh if its people should repent.”

- How do you know that God is gracious and merciful? Look at Jonah and see how God spared His servant who disobeyed Him

1. Repentant Prophet vs 1-3
2. Repentant City vs 4 - 9
3. Repentant God vs 10

1. The Repentant Prophet vs 1-3

“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 ‘Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.’ 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk.”  
(Jonah 3:1-3 NAU)

Ch 2 Demonstrates Jonah’s repentance

- Vs 9

Now it is time for Part Two of God’s work with Jonah

“The Word of the Lord came to Jonah” “a second time”

As one preacher said, “Jonah was still wiping the fish vomit out of his eyes when the Word of the Lord came to him”

Here we see Jonah responds to the Word of the Lord- vs 3

- He obeyed without delay or protest
- He was a long way away and he got to the task of preaching this message

Jonah learned his lesson. He may not have liked the idea of having to go to these people, but yet he went and obeyed.

- Some think we should obey only when we want to
- No real victory unless you enjoy doing it
- Does that mean when we do not feel like obeying, then we shouldn’t?
- There are times when we do not feel like obeying, but we must obey. That is faith.
- Sometimes the love of obedience comes after the fact

- The victory is God's victory

Often times our repentance is imperfect

- It is true of Jonah here, and we will see this clearly in ch 4
- We know what it is like to repent, and then later to fall away from it
- We can even beat ourselves up over our imperfect repentance. Especially if we have repented once and returned back to our sin.

Clearly there was enough true repentance for God to restore Jonah and use him to proclaim the gospel to the Ninevites.

He sent Jonah and Notice Jonah's response in verse 3

- He arose and went
- Different than ch 1

Look at verse 3

- Jonah was 3 days Journey not from Nineveh, but three days to where the leaders of Nineveh were in the city
- This reference of time refers to how large the city was
- 3 days to walk around the city
- The city was 60 to 90 miles around
- Found by the eastern side of the Tigris River
- Made the capital of Assyria by Sennacherib
- Was eventually destroyed by the Medes and Persians in 612 BC
- Shape of a trapezium (four sided figure where no side is equal)

What Jonah saying here in verse 3 – this is a very large city

- Lot of people
- Lot of souls

## 2. A Repentant City vs 4-9

"Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.' 5 Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. 6 When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. 7 He issued a proclamation and it said, 'In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. 8 'But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. 9 'Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.'" (Jonah 3:4-9 NAU)

Assyria was the rising world power

- Dreaded enemy of Israel
- Ruthless killers
- Wage brutal military campaigns
- Leave piles of dead bodies to show their victory
- They did it because they loved the gore
- And they provoked fear

The Assyrians believed that they could avoid leaving behind parts of their military by being especially vicious in their torture and attacks

- You can go to the British museum and see pictures of Assyrian artifacts
- Pull out people's tongues
- People would be skinned alive
- People would be stabbed with poles and then left on the poles high up in the air until they died

Imagine the shock of Nineveh when a prophet of their enemies comes to them

- Simple warning given by Jonah

4 "Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.'"

- This was a conditional threat, though it was not stated
- Again, the author Jonah is hiding a detail from us

He is keeping in front of us the ugliness of the Assyrians and the unwillingness of the prophet to preach the message of repentance to these people

Why? We are not going to find out until next week

- But what you should recognize here is that the author does not record the condition to Nineveh
- The Ninevites worshipped a fish God – "Dagon" which was half-fish and half-man
- Little did Jonah know that his rebellion was preparing him to be a unique minister to the Ninevites
- God can use our sin for His glory
- He can and often will use your sin to get your attention and to accomplish His perfect will
- No matter what, God will accomplish His will, it will either be the hard way or the easy way and that is up to how you respond to Him.
- Charles Feinberg points out "Interestingly enough, 'Oannes' (with "I" before the name spells Jonah in the New Testament) was the name of one of the incarnations of Dagon. Pg 144 The Minor Prophets
- Also found in the ruins of Nineveh there is a mound to "Nebi Yunas" (The Prophet Jonah)

The point is that Jonah was uniquely prepared by God even in his rebellion, and Nineveh highly respected Jonah as ancient ruins demonstrate

Response of Nineveh's King

5 "Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. 6 When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. 7 He issued a proclamation and it said, 'In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. 8 'But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands.'"

- This is the king himself repenting
- This was on the first day of Jonah's work
- We are not sure what message this king heard
- Maybe he heard about God's dealing with Jonah
- Maybe he heard that this guy who reeks of fish slime is out preaching a message
- Maybe he heard that Jonah was swallowed by a fish and brought to them

Clearly this was the greatest miracle ever

- Provoked Israel to jealousy
- God, who was at work to bring about this revival
- Population was about 600,000 people based on 4:11 telling us the number of kids
- Larger than Sarasota County- 400k

Clearly this was a large scale repentance

But this was short lived repentance

- Only lasted about one generation
- They then went back to their own ways
- Less than 100 years after this event there was a king who had not remembered God
- Sennacherib hated God. He came and took the gold off the city gates.

No revival in the world lasts beyond 1 generation

- You cannot live off of your parent's faith
- That is their faith. You need to make your own calling and election sure as Peter says in 2 Pet 1
- Parents cannot believe for you and their faith does not cover your actions

You need to repent and believe

- You need to see the power of God

- The greatness of God
- The grace and mercy of God
- Your own weakness and sinfulness and guiltiness
- Then you need to turn to God in humble brokenness Just as these people did

At some point your parents did that. At some point your spiritual leaders in your church did that. At some point every Christian in your life has had to come to the place where they saw their total emptiness and they trusted in God.

- We all need to see our personal need for God's grace and mercy

### 3. The Repentance of God vs 10

"When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it." (Jonah 3:10 NAU)

RSV and KJV says God repented

NAS, NIV, NET, ESV say God relented – held back

Does this mean that God changed?

- Did God repent?

"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19 NAU)

Is this a contradiction?

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." (2 Timothy 2:13 NAU)

Why would God deny himself? Is He contradicting here?

- No

Jonah wanted to see the destruction of Nineveh but He also knew God would offer salvation to Nineveh. Jonah does not record everything he told the Ninevites.

Again, there is something missing in Jonah's message:

Again look at verses 4-9

- Call to repentance because God's judgment is coming
- But there is no promise of mercy
- There is no offer of hope of restoration
- Does this mean there is a mistake here?
- No, again we are seeing something significant the author wants us to know

Jonah is recording for us something significant by hiding from us the conditions of God's mercy

- Obviously, the conditions of God's mercy were made known to the Ninevites because they responded from the king, to the people, to their very animals
- Everyone turned and repented
- I would like to see some cows walking around with dust on their heads
- Imagine the chickens covered
- in ash. We did a bad, bad thing!
- The Ninevites were concerned that God would destroy them, so they repented

God's mercy is conditional up until the end

- They could come and receive mercy if they would take of it
- God is always willing to demonstrate mercy to sinners

Eze 33:11

"Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he has committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will save his life." (Ezekiel 18:27 NAU)

"Because he considered and turned away from all his transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die." (Ezekiel 18:28 NAU)

"Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'" (Ezekiel 33:11 NAU)

- God says to the wicked, "you shall surely die", BUT if man turns then he will not die

This is true for everyone

"If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, 14 BUT if My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:13-14 NAU)

"if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it." (Jeremiah 18:8 NAU)

- God's way is to graciously and freely restore those who turn from their sin

There is a difficulty here

- God repented
- God changed His mind
- 1 Sam 15:29

"Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind." (1 Samuel 15:29 NAU)

When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it." (Jonah 3:10 NAU)

Scriptures say over and over that God does not repent nor change his mind

- It says that God is not like man that he should lie or change his mind

So how do we understand these passages which say God changes his mind?

"For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." (Malachi 3:6 NAU)

- God is giving a figure of speech here
- It is called an anthropopathism – ascribe to God to give Him human emotions, actions, or thoughts
- Hard to describe God in human language

Illustrate God for you:

How many of you like sports? I love sports. I love big victories in games. I love especially when my team wins and I am disappointed when they lose.

- Imagine the biggest game, Super Bowl or World Series
- Imagine watching the game down to the end and your team winning on the last play of the game
- You would get excited and cheer
- Why? You could say because my team won
- But think deeper than that. You cheered because your team won and because you were not aware they were going to win, therefore when you found out they won you cheered.
- You may say, "yes I cheered because my team won", but let me ask you, when you watched that game a second time did you cheer at your team winning? No, you remembered your cheering.
- The longer time goes the less cheering you have
- My kids are watching old Super Bowl games when our favorite team one. I do not see them sitting at the edge of their seat hoping their team would win. They know the outcome already.

Friend, the same is true for God. He knows everything already. All things happen according to his eternal design. Nothing happens which is outside of His knowing and decree.

- Does this make God indifferent? Nope
- That is why Scripture tells us God repents or God changes His mind because the Scripture is telling us that God is not indifferent to us
- Yet it is also true that God is not like us that He should be controlled by His passions



- God knows the outcome of everything. He knew how the Ninevites would respond. The result is that He withheld His judgment upon them. He relented from pouring out His wrath.
- This verse shows us that God cares for His creation
- God cares even for the wicked sinner who will turn from the evil of his ways
- He will withhold punishment from those who deserve it if only they will leave behind their evil and turn to him and walk in righteousness
- If they will turn and love Him, they will find forgiveness and hope

## Conclusion

This chapter started with Jonah repenting even if it turns out to be imperfect in chapter 4

It continues with Nineveh repenting of their evil and following after the message of Jonah

It even shows us God holding back His wrath from those who repent

The question then for you is: have you repented? Have you turned from the evil of your ways and turned to God and entrusted yourself to Him?

Maybe you are like Jonah. You are already a child of God who is engaged in evil and selfishness and you have a pattern of sin ruling in your life

- Lies
- Lust
- Greed
- Pride
- Selfishness

Don't ever think your one act of repentance was sufficient for you. It may be sufficient for your justification, but you need to continually repent for continued sanctification.

- You need to repent and receive the mercy of God 1 John 1:8-9

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8-9 NAU)

Maybe you are like the Ninevites and your life has been filled with evil to this point and you have never honored Him. Some day you will be called into account. This is the day of your warning. Will you hear His message and turn?

I trust you will

Only when you turn will you find the grace and mercy of God

Major Lesson: God is the one who grants repentance and forgiveness and He will willingly pour it out on those who do not deserve it.

- Today He has given you His message now it is up to you to respond

**Saving Grace Bible Church ©2015. All rights reserved.**  
**[www.SavingGraceBibleChurch.org](http://www.SavingGraceBibleChurch.org)**