

**Jonah: The Depths of God's Grace**  
 Fall Bible Study 2025  
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**Jonah 1:1-3**  
 Session One

"The marvel of God's grace is that he will not take 'No' for an answer from some men."

– Walter J. Chantry

## The Depths of God's Grace

1. **Grace:** In Scripture, there are two words translated as "grace."
  - a. **Old Testament:** the Hebrew word "*hēn*" (חֵן) refers to God's favor, kindness, and compassion. It was used in Genesis 6:8, "*But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.*" Therefore, "grace" is God's choice to bless and rescue, not because of human perfection, but because of his own goodness.
  - b. **New Testament:** the Greek word "*charis*" (χάρις) refers to God's unmerited favor, kindness, gifts, or blessings freely given toward the undeserving. For example, in Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul writes, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not of your own doing; it is the gift of God.*"
  - c. **Summary:** Grace is God giving sinners what is good when they deserve what is bad. In other words, God's grace is his blessings in all areas and phases of life. Grace is not limited to salvation and spiritual gifts, but to every practical blessing sinners receive.
  
2. **Jonah**
  - a. **Popularity:** Jonah is one of the most popular books in the Bible. Most everyone, especially those involved in church ministries have heard the story about a man who spent three days and nights in the belly of a large fish.
  - b. **Skepticism and Criticism:** However, since the 1800s, there has been great amount of skepticism and criticism regarding the nature of this book. Is this account really true? Is this book supposed to be interpreted historically or allegorically?
  - c. **Reliability:** There is no reason to believe that the story of Jonah isn't a real, historical account.

- **2 Kings 14:25** – “[God] restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher.”
  - **Inspiration:** The inclusion of Jonah in the Old Testament canon indicates that the book was considered divinely inspired and authoritative, completely trustworthy and true. The Jewish people didn’t view Jonah as a myth or legend, but as a historical prophet on a real mission.
  - **Matthew 12:39–41** – “But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”
  - **Quote:** “The trusting child of God is not afraid of the miraculous, for his God is the God of the miraculous.” – Charles Feinberg
- d. **Purpose:** Jonah is about much more than a man surviving being swallowed by a large fish. It’s about the amazing grace of God displayed in the life of a rebellious man, the lives of pagan sailors, and in the hearts of a wicked nation – and in our own sinful lives as well.
- **Quote:** “Men have been looking so hard at the great fish that they had failed to see the great God.” – G. Campbell Morgan

### 3. Our Need for God’s Grace

*“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me” (1:1-2)*

- a. **Go:** God calls Jonah to “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” The phrase, “Arise, go” is an immediate command of the Lord (“go at once, do not delay”). It’s similar to the language Jesus uses in the Great Commission, where he calls all believers to “Go, and make disciples of all nations...” Jonah might have been the world’s first foreign missionary.
- b. **Great City:** Nineveh was a major city in the ancient world, located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, some 600 miles NE of Israel. Nineveh was most known for its wickedness and evil. God said, “For their evil has come up before me.” History and archaeology testify to the wickedness of this city.

- **Nahum 3:1-4** – *“Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder— no end to the prey! The crack of the whip, and rumble of the wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot! Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end—they stumble over the bodies! And all for the countless whorings of the prostitute, graceful and of deadly charms, who betrays nations with her whorings, and peoples with her charms.”*

*“But Jonah rose 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, away from the presence of the LORD.” (1:3)*

- a. **Tarshish:** Rather than traveling in the direction Nineveh, Jonah quickly went to the Mediterranean seaport in Joppa. He boarded a ship there headed for Tarshish, which was a Phoenician seaport, 2000 miles away, on the southwest side of Spain. Jonah had no intentions of obeying God’s word. He was literally traveling in the opposite direction of God’s will.
  - b. **Grace:** Rather than allowing Jonah to run away and suffering terrible consequences, God graciously devised a plan to rescue Jonah and fulfill his will in Nineveh. God loved Jonah and the people of Nineveh, and the only way that Jonah would ever turn around and come back to God was if God intervened and brought him back. That’s the only way that Jonah would obey. He needed God’s grace.
- **Ephesians 2:4-5** – *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved.”*