

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

JONAH

[Jonah 1](#)[Jonah3](#)[Jonah 4](#)

JONAH 1:1-17

[NEXT 3:1-10](#)

HISTORY:

¹We now come to the most well known of "The Minor Prophets": Jonah, whose name means "Dove." His book does not contain prophecy per se, rather it contains the history of a prophet...; A prophet reluctant to fulfill the mission God assigned him; a prophet who complained when his mission proved successful. This short book of "Jonah" easily falls into four sections...

- a. "Running Away From God" (chapter one) – Jonah flees.
- b. "Running To God" (chapter two) – Jonah prays.
- c. "Running With God" (chapter three) – Jonah preaches.
- d. "Running Ahead of God" (chapter four) – Jonah pouts.

The Book of Jonah is an unusual book. It is the only prophetic book that places more emphasis on the messenger than the message. The prophetic message of Jonah consists of only seven words. The book revolves exclusively around a Gentile nation. Jonah was the only Old Testament prophet sent directly to them, and the only prophet who refused to obey God. One purpose of the book is to convict God's people of selfishness and bigotry. The book demonstrates the universal nature of God's compassion. It points to the future redemption of both Jews and Gentiles through the finished work of Christ.

1:1 Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,— ²The Book of Jonah begins just like eight of the twelve books of the so-called "**Minor Prophets**": "**The word of the Lord came to...**" (Jonah 1:1). "**Amittai**" is only mentioned twice in the Bible in 2 Kings 14:25 and Jonah 1:1. His name means faithful; truthful, but that's all that is known about him, other than he was Jonah's father. In this section we are introduced to the prophecy, the prophet, and the problem.

- **The prophecy** is characterized as being "the word of the Lord." The prophecy that comes from Jehovah God, thus the source and authority of the message which makes it important.
- **The prophet** is introduced simply as Jonah (dove) "*the son of Amittai*" (truth).

1:2 Arise and go to Nineveh, to that great city, and cry against it;— We see two things in this verse: (1) God commissions Jonah to preach; cry out in Nineveh; telling Jonah to "arise and go to the people of Nineveh and announce His judgment against them." Oh yes, their city was called "**great**", but that didn't mean anything to God. Nineveh is first mentioned in Genesis 10:11. It was the ancient capital of the Assyrian Empire located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River. It was the largest city in the world in that day and was a formidable threat to the existence of Israel. She reveled in her immorality. No one could conquer this center of the Assyrian empire. Like the Laodiceans, she thought that she was rich; increased with goods, and had need of

¹ http://executableoutlines.com/mp/mp_05.htm

² http://www.lightstreamers.com/sunday_school/sunday_school_02-17-02.htm

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nothing (Rev.3:17). The prophet would have loved to go to Nineveh and declare God's judgment, but not God's grace. Jonah's situation is unique in two aspects:

1. It is the only instance of a prophet being sent to a heathen nation.
2. It is the only instance in which a prophet refuses to carry out his commission.

- **The problem1** is that Jehovah said that their wickedness has come up before Him.

1:2b ... for their wickedness to come up before me.

(2) God's Word conveyed to Jonah that "Nineveh's wickedness has come up before Him." The omniscient God knows the depth of our sin. But when a people's wickedness "*has come up before God*," then you know that He has uncovered it so that a people might understand their wretchedness before God. Is that not what happened to David when he sinned with Bathsheba? His sin was uncovered. Even when the voice of Jesus Christ called out to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road, his sin was uncovered before him and he cried out, "*Who art Thou, Lord?*" Even, Isaiah, the prophet who had been used mightily of God in delivering one oracle after another, but when he had the throne-room vision of Isaiah chapter 6, his sin was uncovered so that Isaiah cried, "**Woe is me for I am ruined!**" In each case, the discovery of sin came with the greatness of divine mercy.

- This shows that for all time, the wickedness of heathen nations does not escape the notice of God.
- It further shows that God is concerned about the wickedness of heathen nations, even though His own prophet is calloused against them.
- It further introduces the extremes to which God will go in order to get His message to those nations for the accomplishment of His purpose.

We do not see a people who sought God or desired Him. There were no prayers for revival within her walls. Instead, we find a God who takes action to call out a people for Himself; even a people who had no interest in Him.

1:3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tashish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

- **The problem 2** is that Jehovah has given a specific command but the prophet chose not only to ignore the commission, but to do the exact opposite. Jonah rebels against God's plan.

The difference between Jonah and the other prophets is that they obeyed God's command, but Jonah made up his mind to disobey God. Jonah decides to go another direction. He rose up to go to Tarshish, but, Nineveh was east of Palestine, while Tarshish was at the **extreme western end** of the then-known as "**the end of the world.**" But in order to get to Tarshish, he goes to Joppa, the city of Jaffa, the **Mediterranean city** used today as a seaport by Israel that was headed to Tarshish. Instead of following faithfully after the Word of the Lord, Jonah had his own mind made up of just what he would do, and just how far he would go in faithfulness to the Lord.

The phrase "**from the presence of the Lord**" does not indicate that Jonah thought he could escape the Omnipresence of God. Rather the phrase is used to indicate the land of Israel where the Lord dwelt in His Temple.

1:4 But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Because of Jonah's disobedience, the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea. If God's words couldn't get through to him, then this would certainly get his attention. A tempest <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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meant a violent storm. This type of storm would ultimately take out any ship in the sea. And because of Jonah being on the ship, this storm would not subside and it would surely break as it kept up this pace.

1:5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. When God's prophets are out of fellowship with Him, it also causes problems for them and for those around them. In this case, it was the "*mariners*", the heathen sailors. This storm came up all of a sudden and struck the sea with such a violent force, causing even the mariners; the ship's crew to really be afraid. It was like no other storm they had seen or even been through. They knew that if this storm kept up this pace, they would not be alive. They decided to solve this crisis in two ways.

1. They began to cry out to their heathen gods. Each nation had its own god, and the sailors were a multi-national group calling upon its individual god for assistance.
2. Whatever merchandise that was on the ship, they began to throw it overboard into the sea to lighten the ship so it would ride out the storm better. They knew the peril of the situation that if they arrived into port without their cargo, there would be no profit, but it was far better to save the ship and the crew for future profits.

Jonah must have been extremely weary and tired from trying to run away from God, that after getting on the ship, he goes down into the sides of the ship and goes fast asleep. He didn't know it was a storm going on. The "**sides**"³ is probably used to denote that it was a decked vessel in which Jonah sailed, and that he had, as we should say, gone down below. The "**sides of the ship**" are what we should call the bottom of the ship, the part in which the two sides meet.

1:6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. The shipmaster was searching for others to lend a hand, and other cargo to throw overboard and came upon Jonah and woke him up. He tells Jonah to rise up; come out of that sleep and call on his God in hope that his God could do something that the other gods apparently was not able to do and not allow them to perish.

1:7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

- **The problem 3** is that their efforts to lighten the ship and the efforts of prayer failed. So they speculated that someone was guilty of personally offending the gods.

The crew said to each other "**Come, and let us cast lots.**" The only way to find out the culprit was to cast lots. And what do you know; through God's sovereign intervention in the casting of lots the culprit was revealed, the lot fell upon Jonah.

1:8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?— They were so sure that they hadn't caused this. They probably had gone to each person on the ship, but the lot fell upon Jonah. So, they confronted him asking what he had done to cause this evil that was upon them. They inquired of his occupation and where he came from; what was his country, and who were his people? They put Jonah

³ <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/jonah/1-5.htm>
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through this interrogation to learn the nature; the reason of his offense.

1:9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. Jonah confessed that he was a Hebrew—a name used of Israelites to distinguish them from non-Israelites. He also identifies himself as one who fears the Lord (Yahweh, Jehovah); the God (Elohim) of heaven, hence the One whom the wind and the storm have come. He is the One who has made the sea in which they are presently in peril. And He is the One who made the dry land for which they seek. That would be certainly included as a huge **problem (4)**—offending the One True God!

1:10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him. Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. They recognized who Jonah's God was and began to be exceedingly afraid themselves. They showed a fear and sensitivity to Jonah's God that Jonah had not shown, and asking why he has done this. Jonah told them that he had fled from the presence of the Lord. The men would not dare to flaunt their disobedience in the faces of their false gods. But Jonah had dared to disobey the God of heaven whose sovereign omnipotence is being abundantly documented by the intensity of the storm.

1:11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. The crew leaves Jonah's fate in his hands by asking him "**What shall we do unto thee**" to make the sea calm; at peace for us? They knew of Jonah's God, and didn't want to offend Him any longer, but they wanted to appease Him, so maybe Jonah might know what His God would want them to do. He did say that he feared the Lord (1:10). The sea was increasingly violent.

1:12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. I don't think Jonah had to think about this too long. He already knew whose fault it was. He knew he was disobedient and couldn't run from the Almighty God. He knew when the casting of lots fell upon him, it was over. All he could say was "**Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea, then the sea would become calm**" and at peace again. He confessed to them meaning that he recognized that he was the reason the tempest was upon them.

1:13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

- **The problem 5** is that after hearing the resolution, they continue as if they didn't hear it.

In spite of what Jonah had just said to the men, the men continued even harder rowing to bring the ship to land, but they could not. The Lord didn't allow them to. He did not permit them to come near the shore until this matter was settled with Jonah. Regardless of their thinking or their motives, their efforts failed, for the sea continued to be increasingly violent (1:11).

1:14 Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us

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not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee. Now, instead of asking Jonah what to do, they cried out to the Lord praying, *We beg you, O Lord, we beg you, let us not perish for this man's life, neither lay upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, for you have done as you saw fit.* They didn't want to die because of Jonah's sin, and they begged God to not let them be held responsible for taking a man's life, though God has seen fit to do this. Two points:

1. They respected human life (Jonah's).
2. They recognized God's sovereignty and submission to His Will.

1:15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

Finally, the crew complied with Jonah's shocking resolution and threw him overboard into the sea. So, as it pleased the Lord, the sea ceased from her raging, for they cast him into the sea, and their deliverance from the peril of the sea ceased.

1:16 Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows. The crew, seeing what had happened were in great awe of the Lord revering Him greatly, and began to offer a sacrifice and made vows unto Him. The whole episode illustrates the truth of the fact that God indeed works all things together for good (Rom.8:28): In direct disobedience, Jonah went in the opposite direction from God's commission—Jonah sought to keep from witnessing to the Gentiles—In the process, he ends up witnessing on an even broader scope than the original commission entailed, not only to Nineveh (later to come), but to the crew on the ship who were brought to a knowledge of the true God!

1:17 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. The Lord was going to get His point over for sure. He had used the wind and water. Now He uses a great fish to swallow up Jonah. He had prepared a special fish for His Will to be done! This meant that God had created this particular fish at Creation and kept it in reserve until the day needed; meaning it was already in existence and commissioned for Jonah to fulfill its particular mission as it preserved God's prophet. It didn't eat Jonah per-say, but swallowed Jonah, causing him to go down into the belly of the fish without dying, but able to breathe for three days and three nights as God worked on him and prepared him for the mission.

SUMMARY:

Jonah, as one of God's prophets is commissioned by God to go to Nineveh, but he instead flees to Tarshish by way of Joppa on a ship, and the Lord causes a great storm upon the sea. For the crew to understand why this violent storm came upon them, the last thing they do is cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. The men of the crew began to inquire of Jonah—what was his business, his nationality, his country as to why this evil had come upon them? Jonah began to tell them that he was a Hebrew and he feared the God of heaven who made the sea and earth (**1:7-9**).

The men were greatly afraid for they knew Jonah had fled from the presence of the Lord, and asked why? The frightening aspect was learning that someone on board the ship was the cause of a violent storm. They then

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inquired of him as to what they should do to him to make the sea that was increasingly violent calm for them. Jonah had an answer for them. He wanted them to throw him overboard into the sea to make it calm for them. He confessed; he recognized that it was because of him that this great tempest came (**1:10-12**).

In spite of what Jonah had just said, the men continued to row even harder to bring the ship to land, but they could not because the sea continued to be increasingly violent. The men cried unto the Lord begging Him to not let them perish for this man's life or even be responsible for innocent blood, though the storm was done to please the Lord. So, at that time, the men cast Jonah into the sea, and the sea ceased raging. Seeing the result of the sea being calm, they feared the Lord and offered a sacrifice and made vows. At this time the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah stayed in the belly of the fish three days and three nights (**1:13-17**).

SUMMARY:

Jonah was a prophet of God. His name meant "dove". He was told by God to go to a town called Nineveh, foreign soil and preach to foreign people. He was supposed to warn the people there to turn from their wickedness or face the wrath of God. Nineveh was a place of violence and bloodshed. The people there worshipped false gods, did immoral sex acts, burned and sacrificed babies to idols. However, Jonah is a story of God's action to save unworthy and uninterested sinners. God is forgiving and longsuffering and there came a time when He said enough is enough. In His divineness the Lord sent forth His prophet Jonah to declare the solitary message of hope. And Jonah's response to God's command was entirely different from what the prophets of God are known to do. He was trying to go as far in the opposite direction as possible. Nineveh was out of the question. He headed to Tarshish on a boat that had room for him, bound for Joppa, fleeing from God's presence. He thought he could get away from God. Disobedience results in broken fellowship! Even with the prophet's disobedience/rebellion, God still worked to use His designated prophet and to turn the hearts of the Ninevites to Himself.

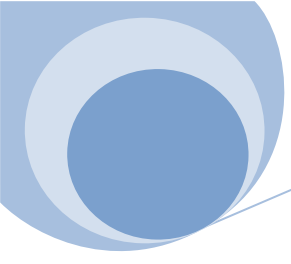
APPLICATION:

Think about this the next time you decide to choose your own will over God's.

- Think about Jonah when God calls you to give and you decide to keep.
- Remember Jonah when God sends you to minister to the sick or the imprisoned and you sit on your couch and read a book.
- Don't forget Jonah when God calls you to teach or to work in the nursery or to scrub toilets and you decide that's not what you really want to do.

It's not worth running from God. It's not worth demanding our own will when we know God has shown us His "WILL". God will indeed have His way and His sovereign "WILL", will be done! We can choose to do it His way the first time and be blessed or do it our way and share in Jonah's experience. Remember, delay in responding to God's "WILL" is no different than disobedience.

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INTRODUCTION:

God had dealt with Jonah on the ship. He had to be thrown overboard by the men to only whine up in the belly of a fish. Jonah is then moved to pray. God knows how to get our attention well. He was so gracious that God spared him that his response to God's discipline was gratefulness and thankfulness. Being in the belly of the fish three days and three nights causes him not to bargain his way out, but he chooses to fulfill God's promise; he yielded to God's Will. He admits that Salvation is of the Lord! The Lord orders the fish to spit Jonah out on dry land.

3:1 And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time saying, — In chapter 1 the Word of the Lord had come to Jonah, but he was disobedient to God's Word. So, the Lord has to come to Jonah a second time about the same thing. Just as God give sinners chance after chance, He also give saints chance after chance. The book of Jonah teaches us that God's commands don't change because we try to run from Him. Jonah is told a second time to preach repentance to the Nivevites by God. He gives the same command again because it had not gotten done. This time there is something different about the prophet. Jonah had learned that he couldn't run from the presence of God. He had learned that there were consequences when being on a ship God did not tell him to get on. He endangered his life and many others by being out of position, like Adam. Jonah had learned the discipline of God, and now, he learns that obedience is the secret to intimate fellowship with the Lord. He couldn't spare anymore time.

3:2 Arise, go unto Nineveh that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. This time Jonah arises and goes to Nineveh. He obeys the command to proclaim God's message. These were pagan, unbelieving people known as the city of blood (Nahum 3:1) who preyed upon one another and upon other nations. The Assyrians flaunted their power, greed, and violence before God and the world through numerous acts. If they knew about God, they did not obey Him; no Scripture to read; no previous ministry of divine revelation as far as we know. So, this is Jonah's opportunity to preach as God had bided him to.

3:3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey. The Lord again a second time commissions Jonah to preach in Nineveh. How many times does the Lord have to say something to us to get our attention? Well, the challenges Jonah had gone through, made him think long and hard about the goodness of God. As he prayed in the belly of the fish, change came and when change starts in a person, then they can influence a community. Jonah does not hesitate at all. Jonah gets up and goes to Nineveh instantly with the right attitude with the Word of the Lord that was spoken to him. Jonah had limited time to get to that great city of Nineveh which was a three days journey. There are some pertinent and simple lessons which we can draw our focus to — on the gracious work of God in coming to Jonah "the second time."

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- There is a new level of attentiveness. Humbled by the disciplining hand of the Lord, brought a new capacity of hearing the Word of God.
- Obedience to the will of the Lord became more important than his personal feelings or desires. He being motivated by the Lord for what He had done after praying!
- He got the message. God used even the result of Jonah's disobedience to equip him for service. The message was simple, yet profound!

This time Jonah obeys and proclaims God's message. These were pagan, unbelieving people who had no knowledge of God before them. They had no Scripture to read. They had received no previous ministry of divine revelation as far as we know. They heard the preaching of one man declaring the law and judgment of God against sinners; and they responded in faith in that revelation proclaimed. The people of Nineveh are moved to repent, including the king.

3:4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. However, knowing he had limited time, it only took Jonah one day instead of the 3 days to get into that great city! With God's help all things are possible! Jonah's seven-word cry of prophecy was short but to the point: *"In forty days Nineveh shall be overthrown."* The mission was to a people Jonah didn't like and didn't care for, but God cared for them. God may send us to people we don't like or care for to declare a message, but only God knows the reason and commands He gives. Only God knows why we shun some and flock to others. Only God knows the purpose at that particular time in our lives and in their lives. Influencing others means getting our lives right with God first before we can influence others' thinking.

I. OBSERVATIONS:

- a. JONAH'S MESSAGE WAS BRIEF, YET CLEAR - Jonah did not preach, *"God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life."* He preached with *"burning anger"* toward them, and the certainty of God's judgment— *"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."*
 - i. *40 days of rain for Noah's ark was a time of washing away the moral pollution of generations.*
 - ii. *40 years wandering in the wilderness where Israel was being trained to live by the promises and guidance of God.*
 - iii. *Elijah's 40 days on the run from Jezebel prepared him for God's reassurance;*
 - iv. *Jesus' 40 days of temptation and 40 days of resurrection appearances verified both the Messenger and His message.*

3:5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. They heard the preaching of one man declaring the law and judgment of God against sinners; and they responded in faith to the proclaimed Word by repenting.

- b. NINEVEH'S EXAMPLE OF REPENTANCE IS A DISCREDIT OF ISRAEL AND EVEN JONAH – It was not that some believed, but all of Nineveh believed; unlike Israel and Judah.
 - Israel in Jonah's own day - 2Ki 17:13-14, 18; 2Ch 36:15-16.
 - Israel in the days of Jesus - Mt 12:41.
- c. THE NINEVITES SAW THAT THEIR SIN WAS AGAINST GOD- Who wants to come up against God after hearing in 40 days you will be overthrown? There was a genuine response of shame and repentance over their sin, when the recognition of their sin confronted them.
- d. AN UNUSUAL FAST IS PROCLAIMED – This fast was from the greatest to the least of them in sackcloth.
 - It does not say how long the fast was, but it might have been three days without food and water.

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3:6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

- e. THE RULER REPENTS – Instantly, as the Word of the Lord came to the king of Nineveh, he showed his people that he's a participant in this fast. He disrobes his royal robe and covers himself in sackcloth and sit in ashes. This is what a leader does. He does not only proclaim the Word to the people, but he demonstrates how important this is for their city, for he will be judged also.

3:7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:—

- f. THE DECREE WAS PROCLAIMED TO ALL –The king and his nobles suffered; man and beast suffered; herd and flock suffered, and they were to taste nothing nor be fed anything or drink any water. Can you imagine America as a country just repenting of our sins to get back to In God We Trust? Because judgment is surly coming! Nineveh's desire and actions should be a testimony to us for generations to come! From the greatest to the least; mankind to the animals obeyed the decree.

3:8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. With sackcloth for both man and beast, the king calls for a true change of behavior - This was an immediate response of turning from sin to God.

- g. SACKCLOTH WAS FOR BOTH MAN AND BEAST TO CRY MIGHTILY UNTO GOD. We see that the king had an immediate response of turning from sin to God which called for a true change of behavior. Man and beast were to be covered with sackcloth. "Sackcloth" was made of goat or camel hair; the garment of repentance, a sign of grief for the dead, or sorrow over disaster. Man and beast were to cry out with all their might to God. They were to turn away from their evil way and withdraw from the violence of their hands.

3:9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?—

- h. The king of Assyria reasons like the prophet Joel - Joel 2:12-14 says "*Who knoweth if He will return and repent...*" They saw this window of mercy open and presumed that God might deliver them. They gave themselves to seeking mercy from the God whom they had angered.

God was not obligated to awaken Nineveh. Jonah came with no promises, but only with the hope that a God who would warn sinners of His impending wrath "*might also show mercy toward them if they turned to him.*" The Ninevites discovered that God was more merciful than they imagined.

- The Ninevites discovered that God was more merciful than they imagined.
- The king of Assyria reasons like the prophet Joel - [with Joel 2:12-14]. They saw this window of mercy but did not presume that God would deliver them. They gave themselves to seeking mercy from the God whom they had angered.
- Nineveh's example of repentance is a discredit of Israel. It was not that some believed, but all of Nineveh believed; unlike Israel and Judah.
 - a. Israel in Jonah's own day - 2Ki 17:13-14,18; 2Ch 36:15-16.
 - b. Israel in the days of Jesus - Mt 12:41.

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II. MORE OBSERVATIONS:

1. Such preaching of condemnation is often conditional – Jer. 18:7-10.
2. The least likely prospects might be the ones who will convert- e.g., 1Cor. 6:9-11.
3. We see the result of fasting and prayer, as one seeks to petition God - e.g., Ezr. 8:21-23.

Jonah's mission was a success! Souls headed for destruction were saved! It is not the level of experience which qualifies a person to be a Christian; it is the reality of their faith set upon Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. The thing which produced faith in the Ninevites was their fear of God's wrath. You would think that Jonah would have been elated. But read the final chapter.

3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not. It said that God looked upon their works. What works?—not just the outward appearance [sackcloth, ashes, fasting], but God also had respect for their actions that reflected their inward works that truly turned the situation around. Their works: they turned from their evil way. There were no mere words of regret, no mere words of "I'm sorry," but a change of conduct signaling a genuine change of heart; their deeds had changed! God viewed their actions. God viewed their efforts to renounce their evil. God saw them amending their lives for good, and that was the thing He looked for and required. Numbers 23:19 says *"God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should repent..."* We hence see that God was not only turned by outward rites, and the external profession of repentance, but He rather looked on the true and important change which had taken place in the Ninevites hearts because of their immediate obedient response. Here was genuine repentance, and God therefore repented of the calamity which He had threatened upon them. Mind you, God is never mistaken about what He will do, but He is about second chances, and as a result, God chose to spare them from divine punishment. Even though people will still choose to call what God did as *"repenting."* Of course, God already knew what would happen before Jonah ever arrived! He's God!

God may persist in warning us and confronting us until we turn away from sin and accept His forgiveness. He did that to Jonah through circumstances that got his attention. And He did it to the city of Nineveh through the preaching of judgment by Jonah. But what is even more awesome is that God is the one who instigates our ability to repent and turn back to Him. And through God's compassion...

- God first sovereignly chose the city of Nineveh on which to focus His love; out of grace He elects these people to salvation.
- Secondly, the people respond to God's Word through Jonah and repent of their sin.
- And then thirdly, God mercifully relented in granting forgiveness for sin and withholding judgment, but in fact that was His purpose all along.

Of course, God knew what would happen before Jonah ever arrived! Thus God spared Nineveh, and did not the evil which He said He would do against them. God has unconditional love, however, His promises and some of His threatenings are conditional. What would have been the use of proclaiming the decree, if it had been irreversible (permanent)? Therefore, He changes His dealings with us according to our relation to Him, and because He cannot repent, or be other than who He was and is.

EXAMPLES

"GOD IS NOT A MAN, THAT HE SHOULD LIE, NOR A SON OF MAN, THAT HE SHOULD REPENT..." NUM.23:19--INTERPRETED TO MEAN THAT "THE LORD INFORMED BALAK THAT HE, THE TRUE GOD, IS NOT LIKE A HUMAN BEING WHO CAN LIE WHEN IT'S

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PROFITABLE OR A MORTAL WHO WILL CHANGE HIS MIND FOR THE SAKE OF CONVENIENCE.") BALAAM WAS HIRED BY KING BALAK OF MOAB TO COME AND CURSE ISRAEL. BUT FOR ALL HIS EAGERNESS TO DO SO, BALAAM COULDN'T CURSE THE CHOSEN PEOPLE OF GOD. WHEN BALAAM DISCOVERED THAT HE WAS UNABLE TO CURSE ISRAEL, HE REVEALED WHAT JEHOVAH HAD TO SAY TO KING BALAK: "GOD IS NOT A MAN, THAT HE SHOULD LIE; NEITHER THE SON OF MAN, THAT HE SHOULD REPENT: HATH HE SAID, AND SHALL HE NOT DO IT? OR HATH HE SPOKEN, AND SHALL HE NOT MAKE IT GOOD? BEHOLD, I HAVE RECEIVED COMMANDMENT TO BLESS: AND HE HATH BLESSED; AND I CANNOT REVERSE IT" NUM. 23:19-20.

IN ANOTHER INSTANCE, GOD THREATENED TO OVERTHROW SODOM BECAUSE OF THEIR GRIEVOUS SIN. "I WILL GO DOWN NOW, AND SEE WHETHER THEY HAVE DONE ALTOGETHER ACCORDING TO THE CRY OF IT, WHICH IS COME UNTO ME; AND IF NOT, I WILL KNOW." GEN. 18:21. GOD'S USE OF THE LANGUAGE OF "IF NOT" SUGGESTS THAT THE FUTURE OF SODOM REMAINS SOMEWHAT OPEN, EVEN IF GOD HAS PRIMARILY DECIDED WHAT TO DO. ALSO, GOD IS OMNISCIENT—ALL KNOWING! HE REVEALS HIS INTENTIONS TO ABRAHAM WHO, INDEED, PLEADED FOR THE SODOMITES. BUT ABRAHAM WAS NEVER ASKED TO GO AND PREACH REPENTANCE TO SAVE THE CITY FROM DESTRUCTION. HOWEVER, HE TRIED TO INTERCEDE FOR SODOM, DEMONSTRATING TRUE COMPASSION FOR OTHERS. GOD IS SHOWING HIS COMPASSION IN TALKING TO ABRAHAM AS ABRAHAM ASKS, IF THERE WERE 50; 45; 40; FINALLY AS FEW AS 10 RIGHTEOUS, WOULD YOU DESTROY THE CITY. GOD SAYS, HE WOULD NOT DESTROY THE CITY. AND WE KNOW THAT THERE WERE FEWER THAN 10 RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE THAT WERE NOT DESTROYED IN THAT CITY (LOT AND HIS TWO DAUGHTERS ESCAPED THE CITY'S DESTRUCTION; HIS WIFE BEING DISOBEDIENT TURN INTO A PILLAR OF SALT).

When sinners repent of the evil that they have done against God, inasmuch as, He leaves His threatening unfulfilled, and "does it not." That's where His compassion is still available. Their conversion was part of His perfect plan! When we change our wills, God wills a change. When we choose to repent, God may choose to relent. God did judge Nineveh (as recorded in the book of Nahum). Nevertheless, in light of their repentance He delayed it another 150 years.

(Note: Salvation always works this way! God loves the sinner, has a plan to save his soul, and He sends the Word so that the sinner might be convicted and see his condition. When that sinner repents of his sins, God saves him by grace through faith, Eph. 2:8-9. Of course, it's all part of His plan!).

SUMMARY:

As the Lord had commissioned Jonah, the Word of the Lord comes to him a second time to go to the city of Nineveh and preach. This time Jonah rose up and went according to the Lord. Since it was a great city it would take three days to journey there. However, Jonah got there in one day and cried unto them "*In forty days Nineveh shall be overthrown*" (3:1-4).

Everyone in the city believed and put on mourning clothes and went on a fast from the greatest to the least. The king heard the Word of the Lord, got up from his throne, taking off his robe, covering himself with sackcloth, and then sat in ashes. He caused the Word of the Lord to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh as a decree of the king and his nobles saying man, beast, herd, and flock were to taste nothing, neither to be fed anything or drink water. They covered themselves with sackcloth, crying with all their might unto God, turning from their evil way and withdrawing from the violence of their hands. While they cried out to God, there was a window of mercy open to see if God would turn and repent, turn away from His fierce

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anger and not allow them to perish (**3:5-9**).

God cannot repent, but He can only be who He is. But, God saw Nineveh's works: that they had turned from their evil way. And God repented of the evil that He said He would do. He gave them a second chance. God chose to spare them from divine punishment. Of course, God knew what would happen before Jonah ever arrived. He's God! (**3:10**).

APPLICATION:

The mission was to a people Jonah didn't like, didn't care for, but God cared for. God may send us to people we don't like or care for to declare a message they might not want and it seems like a warning for some and just planting seeds for others. Only God knows the reason and commands He gives. Only God knows our heart of disobedience of why we shun some and flock to others. Only God knows our purpose at that particular time in our life and their lives. Influencing others means getting our lives right with God first. Before we can influence others' thinking, do they see Jesus or have seen a spirit of disobedience in our lives. Jonah's mission did not take many days, but only one day. When Jonah prayed in the belly of the fish, change came and when change starts in a person, then they can influence a community.

When God calls, go, do, and enjoy His incredible blessings! When our will conflicts with God's "*WILL*", it is not a question of who will win. It's just a question of how long we're going to fight the outcome. May our repentance demonstrate that our faith is real! It's His community we are to influence and it's His to change! Be the best messenger ever!

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INTRODUCTION:

Everyone in the city of Nineveh believed and put on mourning clothes and went on a fast from the greatest to the least. The king heard the Word of the Lord, got up from his throne, taking off his robe, and also covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. He caused the Word of the Lord to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh as a decree of the king and his nobles saying man, beast, herd, and flock were to taste nothing, neither be fed anything or drink water. They covered themselves with sackcloth, crying with all their might unto God, turning from their evil way and withdrawing from the violence of their hands. While they cried out to God, they saw this window of mercy open and presumed that God would turn and repent, turn away from His fierce anger, and not allow them to perish. God cannot repent, but He can only be who He is. God saw Nineveh's inward works: that they had turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that He said He would do, that is, He gave them a second chance. God chose to spare them from divine punishment. Of course, God knew what would happen before Jonah ever arrived. He's God!

In chapter one Jonah acted like the prodigal son but here in the fourth chapter he is acting more like the pouting of the elder brother.

4:1 But It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. The phrase "*very angry*" means that Jonah "*burned with anger.*" He was burning mad at the holy, righteous, and perfect God because God did not kill the people of Nineveh! ⁴Jonah was steamed...not at his enemies, the Ninevites, but at God Himself. Jonah had a problem. He was not completely yielded to God. His mind knew God's truth – His will obeyed Gods orders – but his heart did not respond as being pleased. When the Lord takes the message of Jonah and saves a city, Jonah reacts in a very bad way. As God's displeasure and anger subsided, Jonah's displeasure and anger rose. There are other reasons. Here are a few:

1. One of the marks of a true prophet was that his prophecies always came true, (Deut.18:20-22). Jonah had said that the Ninevites would be overthrown, Jonah 3:4. If this did not happen, then Jonah would be looked upon as a false prophet.
2. His fellow Jews would be angry with him for preaching a message that brought salvation to their enemies. They might see him as a traitor.
3. Jonah hated the people of Nineveh! Nothing would have pleased him more than seeing them all destroyed by God!

(Note: Before we get too hard on Jonah, maybe we need to look at our own lives and examine how we have responded to the Lord working out His Will in our lives! How many times have we reacted with anger when God did something that went against our plans? Perhaps we need to remember the counsel of the Bible, (Prov. 16:9; Ps. 37:23)

4:2 And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Jonah prays, "*O Lord was this not what I said when I was still at home?*" Well, this is what he knew and expected would happen because God acted consistently with His character. He said, "*...for I knew the Lord art the compassionate and gracious God, is*

⁴ http://www.sermonnotebook.org/old%20testament/Jonah%203_10-4_11.htm
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slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. "Jonah is angry and tells God that this is why he fled in the opposite direction from Nineveh in the first place—because he knew that God was a gracious God and merciful.

Despite having just personally experienced the mercy of God in his own desperate situation, Jonah begrudges that same mercy to the city of Nineveh. He doesn't want God to show grace to the Gentile Ninevites, but only to Israel. This is one of the reasons why Jonah ran away in the first place. Jonah represents Israel in the book.

- If we understand Jonah as a type for Israel we now see the jealousy of the Jews towards the Gentiles, due to the Gentiles having been brought into God's family apart from Israel.
- Also, Jonah, as a type of Israel, conforms to the attitude of the older brother who was jealous and angry over the fuss his father made over his reprobate brother (Luke 15).

4:3 Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. To put it bluntly, Jonah wanted God to kill him! He wasn't the first. Moses and Elijah both prayed for the same thing, (Num. 11:15; 1 Kings 19:4). Jonah did not want to commit suicide; he wanted God to take his life. Because he didn't get his way and because he had to endure embarrassment, he wanted to give up on life itself. What needed to be changed in Jonah was that he needed to be taught the value of a human soul. As a prophet, Jonah should have been God's servant fulfilling God's command. However, Jonah did everything he could to avoid fulfilling the divine command. Jonah finally sank into a deep depression and grew angry toward God because of the compassion God had on the Ninevites. In chapter 2, Jonah prayed that God would save his life, but in chapter 4, Jonah prayed that God would take his life. Jonah wanted to die. And as God did not abandon Jonah, but still dealt with him, so does God not abandon the Jews, but still deals with them.

(Note: How many people have put their testimony to death and given up on serving God because He didn't give them what they wanted? I will just remind you again that obedience to what the Lord brings our way is better than anything else you can give Him (1 Sam. 15:22; Rom 12:1-2). Nobody likes life and what it brings all the time, but those who love the Lord are those who remember that God always knows best, and He always does what is best for His children, (Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 4:17). The safest and sanest course of action is one of humble obedience and submission to what life brings our way (e.g. Job - Job 1:20-22).

4:4 Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?— A Fundamental Question: God's question to Jonah, *"Do you have a right to be angry?"*(v.4, 9) suggests that Jonah doesn't understand the nature of grace. *"Is that your right?"* Divine logic drives us to only one answer: *"No, Lord, it is your right, not mine."* Rather than answering the question, Jonah just ignored it. What you see here is a man throwing a first-class pity party! Jonah didn't get his way and he wants God to know that he's upset. His hurt and anger is so deep that he even attempts to take it out on the Lord!

(Note: Just in case you didn't know it, *your arms are too short to box with God!* Just because He doesn't order life like we think it should be ordered, we had better be careful when we decide to line up against God!

4:5 So Jonah 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 shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. — A Safe Vantage Place: After Jonah is confronted about his anger, he does not change his mind. Instead, he climbs all the way up a hill <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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outside the city, folds his arms, and sits down to wait. He is probably hoping the Lord will change His mind! When he reached an elevation where he was high enough to see all of Nineveh, he built himself a shelter, sat in its shade—something to shield himself from the severe desert heat, which was pretty much a necessity because the average temperature in that region was between 110 and 120 degrees Fahrenheit. In other words, it was not a good place to allow yourself to get hot under the collar! After putting up his little shelter, he sat in the shade awaiting judgment to fall on Nineveh. What a contrast to the king of Nineveh, sitting in ashes and sackcloth! God tested Abraham to reveal whether he had the heart of God in him or not, and Abraham passed the test. Jonah failed the same test. Jonah doesn't get his way about Nineveh, and he doesn't get his way about dying, so he just starts to pout!

(**Note:** There are lots of people just like Jonah in the church! For some reason life has not gone as they had it planned. Their response is not humble submission to the will of the Lord. No! They just quit on Him! It does not say much for their love for Him or for their devotion to His will when their disappointments translate into disobedience and desertion on their part. There is no place in spirituality to carry a wounded attitude. I promise you that if you decide to go to war with God over His will, He is going to win that battle every time!

4:6 And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. Even though Jonah is angry at God, God still cares for him and demonstrates this by preparing a gourd (a plant) to grow up and provide shade for Jonah's head. The plant grew up rapidly and once again nature served its Creator's purpose. But Jonah was happy for the provision of the plant, though he apparently does not recognize it as having come from the hand of God.

4:7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. Once again nature served its Creator's purpose. This time God prepares a worm. The plant was designated to serve God's purpose, not for Jonah's continued comfort. So, the morning rises the next day and the worm's mission is simply to attack the fast growing plant so that it withers and Jonah is deprived of its shade.

4:8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. As the morning rises and the sun comes out, God now prepares a vehement (violent) east wind, while the sun bears heavy on Jonah's head causing him to faint and wishing to die. His desire is that *"it is better for him to die than to live."* The wind comes not for the purpose of drying up the plant, or of tearing down the shelter, but simply to intensify the physical distress of the prophet. It is effective, there he sits, neither praying for Nineveh or himself, nor resting to gather strength to continue his spiritual ministry, but in complete dejection and self-pity.

4:9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. God in His faithfulness comes to the prophet with a gently rebuke in the form of a question. He asks whether or not the prophet's anger over the plant's destruction is ethically justifiable. Jonah, in complete self-pity and total disregard of the Ninevites, declares that he is justly angry. The phrase **even unto death** indicates that Jonah's anger had reached even to the very bottom of his soul, so that he despaired even of his life.

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4:10 Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:— God tells Jonah that Jonah has pity on the gourd in which he did not labor to grow. Its growth came up at night without him knowing it and it perished at night as he slept. Jonah was concerned over a temporary, soul-less plant, but had no concern over the great city of Nineveh.

4:11 And should not I spare 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?—God asks Jonah should He not have spared the great city of Nineveh in which there are more than 120,000 persons which cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and let alone their livestock? Jonah must have forgotten that God spared the men on the ship when they pleaded for mercy and threw him overboard. Jonah must have also forgotten that he was saved after he prayed from the belly of the fish and God spoke to the fish to vomit him out. And now Jonah sees with his own eyes that God spared the people of Nineveh because he saw their works; they turned from their evil way. Perhaps Jonah will quit thinking of himself and see God's point of view.

SUMMARY:

Jonah was distraught that God had spared Nineveh. He expected the ashes of destruction, not the ashes of repentance. Jonah didn't want them forgiven. He didn't want God to relent of His intention to destroy them. Jonah was angry because God granted mercy instead of judgment to the Ninevites. Jonah was disobedient because of his own prejudice and hatred and his life was a paradox:

- A prophet of God, yet a runaway from God
- A man drowned, and yet alive.
- A preacher of repentance, yet one that repines at repentance.

He fled to Tarshish for he knew that God was a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repents of the evil, but Jonah's prays to die, than to live (**4:1-3**).

God's question to Jonah, "*Do you have a right to be angry?*" suggests that Jonah didn't understand the nature of grace. After Jonah is confronted about his anger, he does not change his mind. Instead, he climbs up a hill outside the city, folds his arms, after putting up his little shelter, and sits down in the shade, hoping the Lord would change His mind; awaiting the judgment to fall on the city of Nineveh. Even though Jonah is angry at God, God still cares for him and demonstrates this by preparing a gourd (a plant) to grow up and provide shade for Jonah's head. Jonah was happy for the provision of the plant, but then God prepares a worm, and in the morning the worm attacks the fast growing plant so that it withers, and Jonah is deprived of its shade. By the time the sun comes up, a strong violent east wind also comes. While the sun beats upon Jonah's head causing him to faint and wishing to die, God asks "*Do you have good reason to be angry about the gourd?*" And Jonah answers, that he does have reason to be angry enough to die (**4:4-9**).

Jonah was more concerned over the gourd that he didn't labor over or make grow, which came up in the night and perished in the night, than the 120,000 persons of the city of Ninveh that can't discern between their right hand and their left hand, let alone their livestock. Jonah must have forgotten God's mercy! (**4:10-11**).

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Observations from Jonah:

1. God desires for us to see the whole world as He sees it; to see that the people who don't know the difference between their right and left hand are the victims of the enemy, not the enemy.
2. God's desire is for us to be available so He can express His compassion toward those people through us.
3. God desires for us to be a sign in our generation. We're to be men and women who have the resurrected Jesus Christ living within us, and the resurrected Jesus Christ is the One who brings life out of death, and He is willing to bring life out of death to everyone around us if we are available and know the real enemy.

APPLICATION:

Where are we right now---in a Tarshish of escape or in a Nineveh of obedience? Are there people we resist loving and caring for because their values, beliefs, or lifestyle contradict ours? Be willing to act on God's passion. Jonah had a hard heart toward the lost. The sad thing is at times our hearts are just as hard as his. We do not want to be disturbed in our lives of comfort. Are you extending compassion to anyone now? Let God move you toward the unbeliever, and as He does, tell the Good News of God's passion for them.

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