

Jonah's Call To Preach

Intro: The historical account (though often disputed and thought to be an allegory or parable) of Jonah and the great fish is one known by all lovers of Truth. Nineveh was a city identified with wickedness, cruelty, and brutality to others. They were the hated enemies of Israel. Jonah was called to go there and preach.

I. JONAH'S CALL

A. God's Call.

1. Jon. 1:2 ^{“2} Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.”
2. God detailed Jonah's mission.
 - a. He made it understandable.
 - (1) God' Word is understandable.
 - (2) John 8:32 ^{“32} And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 - (3) Eph. 5:17 ^{“17} Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”
3. God sent Jonah to fulfill it.
 - a. God leaves His message in the hands of man to deliver.
 - b. 2 Cor. 4:7 ^{“7} But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”
 - c. If we do not deliver God's message, it will not get delivered.
4. There was an urgency associated with it.
 - a. We should feel a sense of urgency in preaching the gospel today.
 - b. Souls are lost and dying in sin and unless we preach to them they will spend an eternity separated from God.
5. He was to cry against Nineveh's wickedness.
 - a. Their sin was so great God would no longer tolerate it.
 - b. Much like the days of Noah, when God determined to destroy the world.
 - c. Pro. 14:34 ^{“34} Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”
 - d. Far too many preachers today no longer wish to cry out against sin and wickedness.

B. Jonah's Response.

1. He goes the other way and flees to Tarshish.
 - a. Jonah might have thought:
 - (1) He might have been concerned for his life; they might kill him for prophesying what God said.
 - (2) I can preach God's Word in another place.
 - (3) Why trouble the waters at Nineveh?
 - (4) Why get myself involved?
 - b. Jonah did not want God to spare Nineveh.
2. He attempted to run from God, more specifically his obligation to God.
 - a. We cannot run from God.
 - b. God is omnipresent, omniscience, and omnipotent; running away from Him is impossible.
 - c. If we avoid our obligations, God will punish us.

3. Jonah found a ship and paid the fare.
 - a. Jon. 1:3 ⁴³ 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 Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.”
 - b. When you run with the devil, you will pay the fiddler.
 - (1) Gal. 6:7-8 ⁴⁷ Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸ For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”
 - (2) Rom. 6:23 ⁴²³ For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
 - c. You cannot play with fire and not get burned.
 - d. When you associate with evil men, it will corrupt us; 1 Cor. 15:33 (ASV) ⁴³³ Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals.”

C. God sends a storm.

1. Num. 32:23 ⁴²³ But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.”
2. Even though Jonah was asleep in the lower part of the ship, he could not escape God and his responsibility to Him.
3. How embarrassing for pagan sailors having to urge Jonah to call upon Yahweh for deliverance.

D. God prepares a great fish for Jonah.

1. God was both correcting Jonah and transporting him safely to shore where he could carry out his mission.
2. Heb. 12:6 ⁴⁶ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

II. JONAH'S REPENTANCE

A. Jonah was in the fish for 3 days and 3 nights.

1. This symbolized Jesus being in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights.
2. Mat. 12:40 ⁴⁴⁰ For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”
3. There is disagreement as to the day Jesus died.
 - a. Jewish method of counting time is a part of a day is considered the whole day, thus a Friday crucifixion.
 - b. Others believe that this shows basic 72 hours of Jesus being in the grave.
 - (1) Some holding a Wednesday crucifixion.
 - (2) Some holding a Thursday crucifixion.
4. We know Jesus rose on the first day of the week.

B. Jonah prays to God.

1. In the midst of affliction many will call upon God when otherwise they will not.
2. We observe the effectual prayer of a penitent heart; cf. Jam. 5:16 ⁴¹⁶ Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”
3. His heart was thankful for God sparing his life.
 - a. Eph. 5:20 ⁴²⁰ Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;”
 - b. 1 The. 5:18 ⁴¹⁸ In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”
4. He realized salvation was from Yahweh; Jon. 2:9 ⁴⁹ But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay *that* that I have vowed. Salvation *is* of the LORD.”

C. Genuine Repentance.

1. There is a sorrow of this world.
 - a. This is a sorrow of simply getting caught.
 - b. This is not Biblical repentance.
2. 2 Cor. 7:10 ¹⁰ For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."
 - a. It is a sorrow which is sorrow for offending God and His nature.
 - b. This sorrow causes one to change to do what God desires in his life.
3. Jonah experienced genuine repentance in the belly of the fish.

D. God heard the cries of Jonah.

1. God hears and answers prayers.
2. Pro. 15:29 ²⁹ The LORD *is* far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous."
3. 1 John 5:14-15 ¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: ¹⁵ And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."
4. God had the fish spit Jonah out on dry land.

III. GOD'S SECOND CALL AND JONAH'S MESSAGE.**A. Jonah's second call.**

1. Jon. 3:1-2 ¹ And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, ² Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."
2. God forgave Jonah.
 - a. Heb. 8:12 ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."
 - b. God did not bring up any of the previous mistakes of Jonah.
3. God gives Jonah the same call as before.
 - a. Jonah was to preach what God bid him.
 - (1) He was to deliver God's message.
 - (a) 2 Tim. 4:2 ² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
 - (b) 1 Pet. 4:11 ¹¹ If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."
 - (c) He was not to deliver the platitudes of man or man's philosophies.
 - (d) Far too often today we have sermons devoid of Bible and Bible preaching ridiculed.
 - (2) God restricts us to His message only.
 - (a) Gal. 1:6-9 ⁶ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."
 - (b) Rev. 22:18-19 ¹⁸ For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: ¹⁹ And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book."
 - b. God's Word does not change.

- c. God's Word is the only thing which will accomplish God's Will.
 - (1) Isa. 55:11 ¹¹ "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it."
 - (2) When we substitute things for God's Word, it will save no one.

B. Jonah's Message.

- 1. Jon. 3:4b 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."
- 2. The message was simple and understandable.
 - a. Everyone understood it, whether or not they liked it.
 - b. It was bold and plain.
 - c. It was not designed to make people feel good about themselves.
 - d. They knew they must repent or perish.
- 3. It was effective.
 - a. Some claim that we should not preach hell, fire, and damnation sermons today.
 - b. Some have claimed that Jonah's message was wrong.
 - (1) Roy Osborne said, "The sermon was effective **temporarily**.... One might wonder if the story would have been different if Jonah had taken to them a tearful plea based upon the love of God, instead of a bitter denunciation based upon the wrath of God" (*Great Spiritual Power*, Biblical Research Press, pp. 74, 75.)
 - (2) Mat. 12:41 ⁴¹ "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."

C. The Ninevehites response.

- 1. They repented.
 - a. Notice what they did:
 - (1) They believed God.
 - (2) They proclaimed a fast.
 - (3) They put on sackcloth and sat in ashes which is a sign of humility and deepest sorrow.
 - (4) They cried unto God.
 - (5) They turned from their violence and evil.
 - b. Jon. 3:10 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."
 - c. The reason they repented was because they understood what Jonah preached.
- 2. They did not care about how much he cared for them.
 - a. We often hear that people do not care about how much we know until they know how much we care.
 - b. The people of Nineveh did not care what Jonah's feelings for them were, they wanted to be delivered from destruction.
 - c. We should be like the Ninevites; concerned with Truth, not who brings it.

IV. GOD'S MERCY

A. We first observe God's mercy with Jonah.

- 1. God had every right to destroy Jonah for failing to obey His will.
- 2. God gave time for Jonah to come to his senses in the belly of affliction.
- 3. God granted Jonah the opportunity to repent and obey Him.

B. God showed His mercy with Nineveh.

1. He allowed them 40 days to repent.
 - a. God allows us time to repent.
 - (1) 2 Pet. 3:9 ⁴⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”
 - (2) To the church at Thyatira; Rev. 2:21 ²¹ And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.”
 - b. No one knows how much time we possess; 2 Cor. 6:2 ² (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)”
2. When they repented, God spared the city; Jer. 18:7-10 ⁷ *At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it*; ⁸ If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. ⁹ And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*; ¹⁰ If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.”

V. DISGRUNTLED PREACHER.**A. Jonah was full of hate.**

1. Jonah had great success as a preacher and threw a fit.
2. He wanted Nineveh to be destroyed immediately.

B. Jonah took a wait and see attitude.

1. Jonah built himself a booth.
 - a. The material value of the booth was important to Jonah.
 - b. It was of more concern to him than the lives of the Ninevites.
2. God prepared a gourd (a vine or plant).
 - a. This again became important to Jonah; it brought him great joy.
 - b. Sadly it was of more concern that the Ninevites.
 - c. It was of more value than his own life.
3. Often today people place more value on things of this life than on their souls or their lives.
 - a. Mat. 16:26 ²⁶ For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”
 - b. We so often exchange a few years of pleasure for an eternity of separation from God.

Conclusion: If we had been in Jonah's place what would we have done! We are in his place in that God has called us to go into the world with His Word: what have we done?