

JONAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Jonah chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we finish up the book of Jonah this evening. As we have seen in our last study of Jonah, God called him to go to Nineveh and let them know that their wickedness has been seen by God and it is going to be judged! And yes, the Assyrians were brutal people. They would take their captives back to Nineveh by putting hooks in their jaws and leading them, one after another.

So God calls Jonah to this work and Jonah moved away from the presence of God. In other words, Jonah exits stage left, he went in the opposite direction from where God told him to go!

Jonah is so determined not to do what God wants and not even be close to Nineveh that he gets on a boat and he heads to Tarshish, about as far away as he could run from God or so he thought!

And as you read this story you see that anytime a person is moving away from God they are going down, and that is what we see with Jonah. He went down to Joppa. He went down into the boat. He went into the lowest parts of the boat, as far down as he could go in this boat and even then he did not reach the lowest point, at least not yet. He was going down in a great fish!

God called Jonah to do a work and Jonah rebelled and God was not going to let him get away with that. He was going to give him an incentive to go back to the place he began and travel to Nineveh. So the Lord brings about this ferocious storm, tossing the ship and these trained sailors were in fear for their lives. They thought the boat was going down!

While all this is going on Jonah is fast asleep in the lowest part of the boat and the captain finds him and calls him out on it, why he was not helping save the ship. And then the crew realizes that this storm is not normal and that someone on that ship has angered the gods, or so they thought, so they draw straws or cast lots to see who it was!

And Jonah picked the shortest straw, he was the one who brought this upon them. So they inquire who he is and what he has done and Jonah explains to them that he is a Hebrew and he fears the Lord. And as I said last time, he may have feared the Lord but not enough to obey the Lord!

Now the crew wants to know what they should do and Jonah tells them that they need to throw him overboard. I don't think they wanted to do this but they had no choice and they threw Jonah overboard.

And maybe at this point Jonah thought he was safe from this task that God had for him. He was going to drown in the sea and that would be the end of it. Now as soon as Jonah hits the water the seas were calm and the men in the boat began to worship the Lord instead of the many god's they had worshiped before.

As Jonah waited there in the water God prepared a great fish that came by and swallowed him up. But Jonah was not broken yet. It took three days and nights in the belly of this great fish before he surrendered to God, before he even began to pray!

Once Jonah repented of his sin we are told in Jonah 2:10, "**So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.**"

More than likely this great fish vomited Jonah on the shores of Joppa, where he started from. Nineveh is some 550 miles inland, some 550 miles from the Mediterranean Sea! And like I said last time, that would be some projectile vomiting!

I think Jonah is in Joppa, like I have said, and we will see that this evening as we go through Jonah. And keep in mind that Jonah finds himself right back where he started from when he ran from God. And that is where we will pick-up our study this evening as God has Jonah's attention and he is going to instruct Jonah in what he is supposed to do. The same thing God said in the very beginning, go to Nineveh! So with that said, let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we begin our study in Jonah chapter 3 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JONAH 3

VERSES 1-2

1. Once again we see that Jonah tried to run from the will of God and in the end he found out that he couldn't. God is once again telling Jonah to make that 550 mile journey to Nineveh and give the people the message.

Keep in mind that Jonah repented of his sin and I believe many miss what is going on here after that. God forgave Jonah! Our God is the God of second chances. Remember the story of David and his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah! For almost a whole year, some 9 months David tried to cover his sin but God will not allow His children to continue on that path. He will do everything to draw them back.

In Psalm 32 we see David speak about where he was at and then the blessedness of God's forgiveness. Beginning in verse 1 we read, "**Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**" Psalm 32:1-5.

Notice that David tried to hide his sin for some 9 months but it affected him physically, emotionally, spiritually. He was a mess until he confessed his sin before God and the Lord was there with forgiveness and I think that is what we see here with Jonah.

And I want you to understand that as soon as David confessed his sin the Lord forgave him. It wasn't that the Lord said to David, "Let me think this over and I will get back to you!" In fact, in the Hebrew it implies that even before David spoke these words, as he confessed them in his heart, God was standing with forgiveness - ***TOTAL FORGIVENESS!***

In Isaiah 1:18-19 we read, "**'Come now, and let us reason together,' Says the LORD, 'Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land.'**" God wants us to think about where we stand in our sins and as we realize that we are in trouble apart from Him, that we would turn to Him and ask forgiveness as David did!

Now here is a problem for many of us today. Many allow Satan to mess us up in this area. They allow him to mess with our minds telling us that God won't or can't forgive us. They let Satan tell us that our sin is beyond the forgiveness of God. They allow Satan to tell us that we blew it so bad this time that God has given up on us.

But that is not what the Bible tells us. That is not what God says. In I John 1:9 we read, **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** Complete forgiveness is found in Christ. Yes there may be consequences to our sin but God is there with His forgiveness. And remember, the only sin that will keep you out of heaven is your rejection of the free gift of God, that is Jesus Christ, for in Him is found the forgiveness of sins – ***TOTAL FORGIVENESS!***

J. Vernon McGee tells a story about the God of second and really third, fourth and-so-on chances. He tells us,

Jonah now gets the call from God a second time. I do not believe that the great corporations of our day would give a man a second chance. General Motors or Standard Oil or General Foods - I have a notion that they would not give a man a second chance.

Years ago here in California I became acquainted with a man who was the first vice-president of the Bank of America, which is a tremendous banking corporation. He is a very wonderful Christian and a personal friend of mine. I asked him one time, “Suppose that in one of the branches of your bank the manager absconded with all the funds, disappeared down to South America somewhere, and then, after a few years, came back and asked to be forgiven and given another chance. Would you give him a job?” He replied, “No. He's through.” Such a man would not be given another chance. Isn't it wonderful that God gives us a second chance?

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. III, p. 756

It is a fresh start for Jonah and God gives us a fresh start every morning with Him and I am so thankful for that and I bet you are as well! It is as Lamentations 3:21-24 tells us, **“This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I hope in Him!’”** Amen to that!

VERSES 3-4

1. I want you to notice the difference in the attitude of Jonah now. God called Jonah to go to Nineveh and God did not force Jonah to go, he went on his own accord. Yes He may have given Jonah great encouragement to go but He did not force Jonah to go to Nineveh!

Now in saying that, yes Jonah was broken and had surrendered to the will of God but I don’t think his heart was really in this work and we will see that more as we go on.

2. Now it took three days to travel through this city, not the surrounding areas but the city of Nineveh itself and as we see what Jonah is saying there is not a lot of God’s grace being shown, not a lot of compassion and love for the people. Yes he spoke the truth but with a wrong heart attitude!

Listen again to Jonah’s message to the people of Nineveh. It was not a long message, only some eight words as he told them, **“... ‘Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!’”**

Again, there was no love, no compassion, he doesn't want them saved. In fact, he wants them destroyed! And notice that he speaks nothing of repentance, only destruction. It reminds me of those Christian shirts that were out several years ago that said, "***Turn or Burn!***" Or in speaking of the afterlife and showing a picture of one brain and another in a frying pan with the saying, "***This is your brain, and this is your brain in Hell!***" Or the one that once again speaks of the afterlife, "***Smoking or non-smoking!***" Not much love there, even though it is the truth.

Yes Jude 22-23 says, "**And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.**" For the most part people need to hear of the love of God but there are those who need to hear of His judgment. I tend to think most want to hear of His love like I have said and yes, they need to understand that they are sinners separated from God but can we do it in love? I hope so. Jonah was not doing it that way!

Now Clarke doesn't see it that way, he thinks Jonah preached a great message. He wrote, "We see that Jonah preached this message with earnestness. And such earnestness becomes a ministry that has to do with immortal souls, asleep and dead in sin, hanging on the brink of perdition, and insensible of their state. The soft-speaking, gentle-intoned, unmoved preacher, is never likely to awaken souls . . . But this earnestness is widely different from that noisy, blustering, screaming rant, that manifests more of a turbulence of disorderly passions, than of the real inspired influence of the Spirit of God." (Clarke)

Yes, the message that Jonah gave was right but his motivation, his heart was wrong. Look at the heart of Jesus in Matthew 9:36, where we are told, "**But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.**"

As Jesus looked at the multitudes that were lost in their sins, and understand that Jesus could have destroyed them or pronounced judgment upon them, but He didn't, He had compassion upon them. And that compassion caused Him to say to His disciples, "... 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" Matthew 9:37-38.

God desires people to be saved, not destroyed. So He will use people to do the work, to go into the fields. Thus, as we share the Gospel message may we do it in love, with the right heart, speaking the truth and having compassion!

3. One more point before we move on. Why these 40 days and then comes the judgment? In the Scripture we see 40 being the number of judgment - it rained for 40 days and 40 nights, and also we see 40 used for a trial as Jesus fasted and prayed for 40 days and 40 nights. But here, the people of Nineveh were going to be judged by God. Did they respond to the warning? Let's read on and see!

VERSES 5-9

1. Now this is an amazing story. We read it and we may not think much about it but understand the wickedness of the Ninevites! They were very wicked, they worshiped many false gods and that is why God was going to judge them.

Let me put this into perspective for you. It would be like Iran repenting of their sin and turning to the Lord! “That could never happen!” I think it could as we see here with the people of Nineveh. They believed the Lord and they repented of their sin before the Lord. And it is not just a person here and a person there. The whole city of Nineveh repented before God from the common person on the street to the King in his palace - they repented!

Obviously it was not Jonah’s marvelous preaching or love but the power of God’s Spirit upon the lives of these people. All of Nineveh was affected by what they heard and it caused them to humble themselves before the true and living God.

And think about what they were told and then what they did. Jonah gave them no promise of God sparing His judgment upon them. The only thing he told them was that in 40 days Nineveh would be destroyed because of their wickedness! Not much hope in that. So why did they repent before God? Why did they fast and pray and turn from their wickedness if they were going to be destroyed?

I think Jonah 3:9 tells us, “**Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?**” This is an amazing statement by this pagan people. They were going to fall upon the love of God, the mercy of God, that He may relent from sending this judgment upon them!

2. Now let me say this regarding repentance because I think we have a wrong concept about what this word means, how it affects our lives. First of all repentance speaks of turning away from sin and turning to the Lord. It is an action word and if there is no action on our part then there truly is no repentance!

One writer had this to say regarding what he sees going on in the church and the world.

He wrote,

There's little difference in ethical behavior between the church and the unchurched. There's as much pilferage and dishonesty among the church as the unchurched. And I'm afraid that applies pretty much across the board: religion, per se, is not really life changing. People cite it as important, for instance, in overcoming depression – but it doesn't have primacy in determining behavior.

- George H. Gallup, *Vital Signs, Leadership*, Fall 1987, p. 17

Let me give you an example to show you what I mean in regards to empty repentance. For instance, you can say that you are sorry for hitting your spouse and you have changed. But if you continue to hit your spouse those words are empty, they are meaningless because you are not doing what you said you would do!

And today, in the church we see modern repentance as being nothing more than reasons why we sinned! We tend to justify our sin and that is not repentance. And we can come up with all kinds of excuses why we did what we did but if you sinned you need to repent and get right with God, to turn from that sin and turn to God. True repentance leads to a change in our behavior. False repentance just makes excuses for why we did what we did!

Paul tells us in II Corinthians 7:10, “**For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.**” And think about this for a minute. There are many people who are sorry, prisons are full of them, sorry for getting caught. That is worldly sorrow and it does not led to life, but to death. It does not cause a person to change but they continue to move in the same direction away from God. That kind of sorrow produces death, spiritual death in a person!

It is as Redpath tells us, “How sorry do you thank you have to be? What is the purpose of your sorrow for sin? It is to bring you to trust in the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not your sorrow that cleanses you from sin, but His blood. It is the goodness of God that leads a man to repentance. Has your sorrow for sin led you at one time or another fling all the burden of it at the feet of a crucified, risen Savior? If it hasn’t, anything short of that is what Paul here calls sorrow that leads to death.”

And like I have said, Christians struggle with this as well. And it is a heart issue as well. You are right, they are wrong and you are not going to change until they do or whatever. That is not repentance but again, justifying your sinful behavior.

Let me share one more thing with you from Our Daily Bread as it looks at these two kinds of sorrow. We are told,

Two kinds of repentance are possible in human experience. One is “the sorrow of the world,” a feeling induced by the fear of getting caught. Many people recognize the unpleasant consequences of their sin and are persuaded that they are guilty. This results in a superficial sorrow that may lead to a temporary reformation but not to a genuine turning to Christ for forgiveness. Godly sorrow, on the other hand, is accompanied by conviction of sin, the work of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:37). This stems from the realization of offending a holy God. It leads to genuine repentance.

An unknown author wrote, “There is a radical distinction between natural regret and God-given repentance. The flesh can feel remorse, acknowledge its evil deeds, and be ashamed of itself. However, this sort of disgust with past actions can be quickly shrugged off, and the individual can soon go back to his old wicked ways. . . . Out of a list of 10 men in the Bible who said, ‘I have sinned,’ we believe only five actually repented. They were David (2 Sam. 12:13), Nehemiah (Neh. 1:6), Job (Job 42:5, 6), Micah (Micah 7:9), and the prodigal son (Luke 15:18).”

- H. G. B.

- Our Daily Bread, Monday, July 16

3. Keep in mind that God is watching and He knows all. Listen to how He responds to their repentance, their turning from their evil ways!

VERSE 10

1. God brought about a great salvation in Nineveh. He relented from destroying the people because they had turned to Him. And once their relationship with God was in place, the way they treated their fellow man would also be changed.

Now as you read this don't think that God changed His mind or didn't know what was going to happen. He knows all things and He gave a choice to the people of Nineveh and they repented and the Lord relented!

I like the way J. Vernon McGee put it. He wrote,

But does God repent like that? Does He change His mind? Does He say, "My, I made a mistake there; I shouldn't destroy Nineveh"? No. We need to see that the city of Nineveh had two options when this man Jonah entered it with his message of judgment. They could reject God's message, they could ignore it, they could pay no attention to it, and if they did, they would be destroyed - God's never changed that. Or they could accept God's message, they could turn to Him, and God would deliver and save them. God is immutable - He never changes. When His Word is rejected, when people turn from Him, they are lost. But when they turn to Him, He will always save them, regardless of who they are.

Therefore, *who* changed? Did God change? No, but it looked as if He did. Jonah had said, “Yet forty days, and this city is going to be destroyed. God is going to destroy it.” But God did not destroy Nineveh. Did God break His Word? No. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The city had two options. If they had not accepted His Word, they would have been destroyed. But they *did* accept God’s message, they believed God, and they turned from their wickedness. God didn’t change; He will always save people when they turn to Him. Although it looked as if God changed, it was really the city of Nineveh that changed, and that makes all the difference in the world.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. III, p. 756

2. As you look at God’s love and how rich, how deep it is and then we look at who we are, we are amazed that God still loves us. In Romans 5:8 Paul points this out for us when he says, “**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**”

3. This should not be a foreign concept to us regarding God sparing nations or people. In Jeremiah chapter 18 we see God speak of sparing a nation who turns from their wicked ways. He also says that a nation that turns from Him will also be destroyed.

Listen to what the Lord says beginning in verse 7 of Jeremiah chapter 18. We read, **“The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.”** Jeremiah 18:7-10. And here we see God relent, but the story is not over yet! Let’s read on because there are some powerful lessons for us as we look at this prophet of God named Jonah!

JONAH 4

VERSE 1

1. As you read this don’t get the idea that Jonah was just a little angry that God relented of destroying the Ninevites. No, Jonah was **“exceedingly”** angry at what God had done, he was very upset that they were spared!

And as you read that you may be wondering why in the world was he so angry. All these people got saved as they turned to God! Because these people were so wicked and Jonah did not want them saved. He wanted every man, woman and child to be destroyed and now God relented and spared them!

Now let me say this. As hard as it was for Jonah to let those feelings go he needed to. You see, he was a representative of God! What about you, are there people you would rather see destroyed than saved? God loves the world, all people and died for them and yet we have a hard time living with these people. May the love of God fill us so much that it touches the lives of others who don't know Jesus!

A great example of what he needed to do was given by Abraham Lincoln. You see, Massachusetts congressman, Thaddeus Stevens, wanted to completely crush the south after the Civil War. But Abraham Lincoln wanted to make peace, to heal the wounds and forgive.

But Thaddeus Stevens slammed his fist down on the table and said, "Mr. Lincoln, I think enemies out to be destroyed!"

Abraham Lincoln very quietly responded and said, "Mr. Stevens, don't I destroy my enemy when I have made him my friend?" You see, destroy the enemy with the love of God, point them to Jesus and make them your friend, a child of God. May we learn from Lincoln's example!

VERSES 2-3

1. I don't know if you find this strange but I do. He is praying to the Lord and explaining why he is angry, why he was running from God in the first place and it wasn't that the mission was too difficult but the fact that God is too merciful and gracious.

He understood that God is loving and gracious God and gets not pleasure in the death of the wicked. But Jonah didn't want these people to get saved. He wanted them to be destroyed!

But that is not the heart of God as I have said. We are told in Exodus 34:6-7, “**And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.’**” And He hasn't changed!

2. What is even more amazing to me is that Jonah would rather be killed than to witness this revival that has broken out in Nineveh. Christians today exhibit that same attitude when there is a great move of God that is happening and because it does not fit what they believe, like music styles and-so-on, they are upset, they say it is not of God.

That is a sad statement, angry that the Holy Spirit is moving and touching people in a way that they don't feel is right! May that not be the case in our own hearts! May we be ready to receive what the Holy Spirit has for this community! May we be new wineskins in which God can pour new wine into, or, in other words, may we be open to what the Lord is doing and not place in Him a box, limiting what He can do!

Now please understand that I am not saying we need to compromise what we believe, not at all. But we do need to be open and never negate this group of people or that group as not wanting them to be saved or God can't use them because they don't do it the same way we do!

Like I have said, Jesus came to save the world, the people of this world and all they need to do is repent of their sin and receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior! That was just too much for Jonah, may that not be the case with us!

3. Now listen to what God has to say regarding this prayer of Jonah or this complaint I should say of Jonah regarding the graciousness of God.

VERSE 4

1. When the Lord asks us questions it is not that He does not know the answer. He wants us to take a look at our own heart regarding the situation we are in. Yes Jonah had the right to be angry but God wants him to see his error so that he would repent and return to the Lord, have the heart of God towards these people. It is not that Jonah was right but he could be angry with God if he wanted to and so can we. But God will correct the error!

2. Now look at how Jonah responded to this question, I think many times we respond the same way.

VERSES 5-8

1. Jonah ignores God and he goes and finds a place to sit. What is he doing on this hill overlooking the city? He was sitting there hoping that God would destroy the city of Nineveh. There was still a chance. That is what he is thinking.

Even though Jonah did not answer the question that God presented to him, God is not done. He will get Jonah to look at this question once again and he will do it by using an object lesson that Jonah will be involved in and that object lesson is this plant to give shade to Jonah that God prepared.

You see, as Jonah sat there and waited, God provided a plant that sprang up to provide shade for him during the heat of the day. What plant was it? We are not sure, some say a bean plant that can grow some 12 feet high very quickly and has large leaves for shade. But understand this was not something that was natural, it was supernatural. It grew very quickly and provided comfort for Jonah, and he was glad! Like God provided the great fish for Jonah He also provided this plant.

And now Jonah is happy. Listen to how Boice puts this into perspective for us. He wrote, “This is the first time we find Jonah happy. Jonah was pleased because at last, after all the compassion of God for other people, God was finally doing something for Jonah. Selfish? Of course, it was. And petty too!” How true that is!

So everything is right for Jonah as he sat there waiting for the destruction of Nineveh, at least that is what he hoped for. Now the next day Jonah is back, watching over Nineveh to see if it would be destroyed, but there was a problem.

That shade plant that protected him the day before was now damaged, destroyed, it could no longer provide shade for Jonah. Not only that, but God turned up the heat on Jonah and as the sun beat down upon him Jonah wanted to die.

It seems like a recurring theme for Jonah when things don't go his way, he just wants to die! Not only was Nineveh still standing but now he had this blistering heat that was beating down upon him. Jonah was self-consumed at this point, living in self-pity and it lead him down the path where he just wanted to give up and die, like I have said!

Listen to what Meyer wrote regarding this plant and how it applies to our own lives. He wrote, "Jonah allowed even a silly thing like a plant to become an idol. How often our gourds are allowed to perish, to teach us these deep lessons. In spite of all we can do to keep them green, their leaves turn more and more sere and yellow, until they droop and die."

How true that is with the things we worship. We wash them, polish them, keep them shinny and then a rock hits our idol and there is a big chunk of paint that is gone from this idol or car. And whatever that is in our own lives, God will bring down so that you don't worship the idol but the true and living God!

2. Let me also say this. Life is not easy and if it was easy we would not need the Lord. But how often do we get discouraged, drop out, disappear when things heat up in our lives? Even men of God who have walked with the Lord many years can experience this.

Remember the story of Elijah, a mighty prophet of God. He challenged the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah on Mount Carmel and he defeated them in the power of God.

But then a woman by the name of Jezebel, King Ahab's wife, threatened him and he fled to the wilderness to die. Elijah went into a state of depression where he didn't eat, he just slept. And an angel of the Lord told him to eat and he fed him for forty days.

Then Elijah went into a cave, the cave of self-pity. And God asked him, “**What are you doing here Elijah?**” And Elijah tells the Lord why he is there, “. . . **I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.**” I Kings 19:10. God did not want to know why he was there, but what in the world was he doing being isolated in this cave, doing nothing for the Lord.

And the Lord showed Elijah that He was not in the wind, nor the earthquake or even in the fire, but in a still small voice the Lord spoke. And again the Lord asked Elijah, “**What are you doing here, Elijah?**” And Elijah once again explained why he was there, but that is not what the Lord was asking. And He tells the Lord that he alone loved the Lord, no one else did. You see, self-pity!

So the Lord told Elijah to go, leave this cave ministry he thought he had and go and do the work he has been called to do. He is not alone, God has His faithful remnant. The point being, as we get wrapped up with ourselves, dwelling in self-pity, we tend to give up and just want to die. We isolate ourselves and God wants to know what in the world are we doing there? God has given us life, why do we seek death then? Do the work that God has called us to do, do it faithfully, until we go to be with Him!

Paul tells us in Galatians 6:9-10, “**And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**” And in II Thessalonians 3:13 he wrote, “**But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.**”

The key is don't grow weary, keep moving forward in the Lord and don't give up! God will bring forth fruit but it does take time and we must be patient, we must wait upon Him and serve Him until we go to be with Him!

3. Now let's read on and see this conversation that the Lord has with Jonah and Jonah has with the Lord, it is interesting.

VERSE 9

1. God wants Jonah to think about his actions, why he is so angry. And Jonah feels he is justified in feeling this way. That he has every right to be angry about that shade plant being destroyed. In fact, if he wants to die, he feels it is his right.

How foolish he is and yet, when we argue with God we sound no better. Look at the emotion Jonah had for this plant and now God is going to open his eyes to the reality of his feelings. He is going to ask him once again, using this object lesson, "**Is it right for you to be angry?**"

VERSES 10-11

1. Jonah had great pity for this plant that was here one day and gone the next. But for the people of Nineveh he had no concern, no compassion. He grieved over this shade plant but what about these 120,000 young children? He showed no concern for them. And if you can't have pity for them, what about all the livestock, couldn't he even have pity on the livestock?

And the book of Jonah ends there and we don't know what Jonah did next, how he responded to what God said. But I guess that is true for each of us. We have choices to make, to either listen and do the things of God or be angry at what God is doing and try to get away so you don't have to be part of the work that God wants you to do!

What things are you holding onto? What things are you treasuring in your life? What things do you have pity for? What things do you have a passion for? Jonah focused on the plant over the people. The shade over salvation. He wanted comfort instead of showing compassion. May we be more concerned for people than for possessions! May we be more concerned for the salvation of others than our shading or blending in with others! May we have compassion, the compassion of God at any cost instead of seeking after comfort in this life!

2. As we study the book of Jonah, as we read the book of Jonah the thing we tend to remember is that Jonah was swallowed by the great fish. But the book is much more than that. The Lord was showing Jonah some valuable life lessons, things about himself that Jonah didn't know was inside of him until the pressure was on and it rose to the surface of his life and was manifested in his actions.

Jonah learned that you can't run from God for He is patient and will wait for you to return, sometimes even providing the transportation for you. Jonah knew God's will but he refused to obey it, at least at first.

Jonah also learned that God wants to forgive us, all we must do is ask. He desires to restore us. Remember what we read in Psalm 32, a Psalm written by David after his sin with Bathsheba, **“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”** Psalm 32:5.

As soon as David confessed his sin the Lord was there with forgiveness. And for Jonah, as he cried out to the Lord the Lord rescued him, even though it took three days being in the belly of the great fish before he began to pray.

Jonah also saw the love of God, he saw a pagan nation saved by the power of God. But in that Jonah saw his own heart, a heart that was cold, unforgiving, uncaring, uncompassionate towards people. His heart was self-seeking instead of others seeking or caring. Jonah was more concerned for a plant than the people! And God brought this point home in a very dramatic way, and we are not told what Jonah did with the information, but hopefully he listened and obeyed.

It is as Paul said in Philippians 2:1-4, **“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”**

3. Now let me also say this. God did judge Nineveh as recorded in the book of Nahum. But because of their repentance He delayed it another 150 years!

4. Let me share this true story with you as I close this evening. We are told,

After a few of the usual Sunday evening hymns, the church's pastor slowly stood up, walked over to the pulpit and, before he gave his sermon for the evening, briefly introduced a guest minister who was in the service that evening.

In the introduction, the pastor told the congregation that the guest minister was one of his dearest childhood friends and that he wanted him to have a few moments to greet the church and share whatever he felt would be appropriate for the service. With that, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit and began to speak.

"A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific coast," he began, "When a fast approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to the shore. The waves were so high, that even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized."

The old man hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two teenagers who were, for the first time since the service began, looking somewhat interested in his story.

The aged minister continued with his story,

"Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life: to which boy he would throw the other end of the life line. He only had seconds to make the decision. The father knew that his son was a Christian and he also knew that his son's friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of waves."

"As the father yelled out, 'I love you, son!' he threw out the life line to his son's friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells into the black of night. His body was never recovered."

By this time, the two teenagers were sitting up straight in the pew, anxiously waiting for the next words to come out of the old minister's mouth.

"The father," he continued, "knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus and he could not bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into an eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son to save the son's friend. How great is the love of God that He should do the same for us. Our heavenly Father sacrificed His only begotten Son that we could be saved. I urge you to accept His offer to rescue you and take a hold of the life line He is throwing out to you in this service."

With that, the old man turned and sat back down in his chair as silence filled the room.

The pastor again walked slowly to the pulpit and delivered a brief sermon with an invitation at the end. However, no one responded to the appeal.

Within minutes after the service ended, the two teenagers were at the old man's side. "That was a nice story," politely stated one of the boys, "But I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son's life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian."

"Well, you've got a point there," the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. A big smile broadened his narrow face, he once again looked up at the boys and said, "It sure isn't very realistic, is it? But I'm standing here today to tell you that story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up His Son for me. You see - - - **I was that father and your pastor is my son's friend.**"

Perspective is everything. This man realized his son was saved and he rescued the boy who was on his way to Hell. God has done no less for us, He sent His Son to die for us so that we may live. God is so good, if we would only keep that before us and not lose that perspective.

For the prophet Jonah, he knew that God was good, he had the correct perspective of things. His problem was his heart. You see, because he knew of the goodness of God, he also knew that if he went to Nineveh to warn them of God's coming judgment they might repent and God might relent from sending His judgment upon them. And so Jonah's message to the people of Nineveh was "**Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!**" Jonah 3:4.

No love was shown in these words. No promise of God relenting of His judgment if they do a certain thing. All Jonah tells them is in forty days you guys are toast! And talk about a work of God in the hearts of the people. The whole city repents from the King down to the common person and in Jonah 3:10 we read "**Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.**"

May our hearts not become cold and hard towards others no matter how they treat us, what they say or do. May we have the love of Christ not only flow into our lives but out of our lives to touch those around us!