

Way Down in the Middle of the Ocean
Jonah as a Preacher

Introduction:

- A. Jonah on the Run (Chapter 1)
- B. Jonah in Crisis (Chapter 2)

So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. 3 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you." 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. 4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" 5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 6 Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. 7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? 10 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. Jonah 2:10-3:10 NKJV

- 1. So grateful for second chances

"The word of the Lord came to him a second time."

- 2. But God will take us back to when we said, "no."

(ILL) Kyle apologizing to Kayla—once all is better, want to go on—still have to apologize.

NOTE: Some want to just go on—irreconcilable differences. No arguing with God. He is right.

- 3. The message of Jonah

So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. 4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" Jonah 3:3-4 NKJV

- a. Belly of the fish 3 days, gastric juices bleached him.
- b. 8 word message—“yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”
- c. 5 in Hebrew—“yode arba-eem venineveh yome nepha-ket.”

4. Repentance of Nineveh

So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 6 Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. Jonah 3:5-6 NKJV

- a. Not sure what made them believe
- b. God sovereignly appointed
- c. We know they believed

5. King's decree

And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? Jonah 3:7-9 NKJV

NOTE: What do hungry cows do? Moo. A bunch added to atmosphere of mourning

6. Abundant mercy of God—he relented

TRUTH: God uses Jonah and his message to turn the people of Nineveh around. This chapter reveals how WE can engage the mission and be used of God.

Evangelism—God using us to bring people to Himself

1. Don't know where to start.
2. I don't know what to say.
3. Many of us struggle and are paralyzed in the area of personal evangelism.

I. Becoming an effective witness requires believing two things.

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A. Salvation belongs to the Lord

But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." Jonah 2:9 NKJV

NOTE: 8-word sermon. His heart wasn't even in it and people turned. God was at work!

1. God works in people's hearts to bring repentance. It is something we cannot do. He creates hunger and gives faith.

Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:3 NKJV

Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:13 NKJV

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. John 6:37 NKJV

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:44 NKJV

2. We can relax—world is off of our shoulders—we don't have to convince them.
 - a. Can give greatest presentation
 - b. Can give the loudest presentation
 - c. Is God at work?

3. It's not our eloquence or persuasive words

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 NKJV

TRUTH: We are not preaching to skeptics who need to be persuaded or bad people who need to do good. We are preaching to dead people who need to be raised to life!

Salvation belongs to the Lord!

B. Faith comes only by hearing

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For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:13-17 NKJV

TRUTH: The WORD is God's instrument of life!—it has a power resident in it!

For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 2 Corinthians 4:5-7 NKJV

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV

Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever. 1 Peter 1:23 NKJV

"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, 11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10-11 NKJV

1. The Word is powerful but cannot do its work when people have not heard it.

(ILL) It is the key to church growth and true discipleship

2. Our responsibility is not their salvation—only God can do that—it is to put people in a place where they hear the Word.
3. God is at work all around—was in Nineveh but one thing He will not do—speak the Word. That is up to us.
4. Example of Acts (Many miracles, spirit-filling, but the Word has to be spoken by humans).
 - a. Acts 8—Ethiopian Eunuch—Isaiah 53
 - b. Acts 10 Cornelius—angel dream, Joppa but Peter had to speak
 - c. Acts 9—Light, blindness, Ananias preaching

So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Acts 9:6 NKJV

5. Salvation comes from the Lord/Faith by hearing the Word/we must speak the Word

II. Becoming an effective witness requires we do two things.

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A. Get the Word to people

1. Talk about it
2. Quote it
3. Share it (Twitter, FB)
4. Small Groups
5. Bring them to church

B. Pray intensely

1. If salvation belongs to God then asking God to do what only He can do should be our greatest effort.
2. Sadly—Jonah wasn't praying—still God was at work—Chapter 4 was preaching probably they would ignore.
3. Jesus is continuing prayers for lost people—we join His progress.

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you. 2 Thessalonians 3:1 NKJV

QUESTION: How many people are you praying for right now to be brought into the Kingdom?

- a. If God answered your prayer today—how many would be saved?
- b. Do you understand the Gospel at all?
- c. Must pray intensely

III. Becoming an effective witness requires removing oneself as an obstacle.

A. God was at work in Nineveh and wanted to save them. Jonah was the obstacle.

B. Who has God put in your life that you have influence with? How are you an obstacle?

1. Getting the Word to them?
2. Praying intentionally?

C. **What about times of fruitlessness?** (I am getting the Word to them and I am praying, but no one listens).

Three Responses

1. **Self-Doubt:** (It's me, I'm not effective—I'm spiritually sterile.)—We all are—we have to have God.
2. **Makes greater demand on God's grace:**
 - a. Jacob—I won't let go
 - b. Moses—won't go without You
 - c. Hem of his garment
 - d. Even the dogs
 - e. Persistent widow—Luke 18

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TRUTH: Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of His willingness.

3. Wait on God

(ILL) Mueller on Prayer

GEORGE MUELLER, *the great Victorian Christian and social reformer, tells a story of persistent prayer in his diary:*

In November 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without a single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land, on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day, I continued to pray for them, and six years passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three, and went on praying for the other two. These two remained unconverted.

Thirty-six years later he wrote that the other two, sons of one of Mueller's friends, were still not converted. He wrote, "But I hope in God, I pray on, and look for the answer. They are not converted yet, but they will be." In 1897, fifty-two years after he began to pray daily, without interruption, for these two men, they were finally converted—but after he died! Mueller understood what Luke meant when he introduced a parable Jesus told about prayer, saying, "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up"

Conclusion:

1. Jonah stood in the way of Nineveh
2. Key Verse

"Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy. Jonah 2:8 NKJV

3. What idol are you holding onto (pride, fear) that keeps God's grace from others.
4. Are you keeping people from grace for lack of prayer?