

Feb 8, 2015

JONAH

Introduction: I find Jonah an amazing little book.

Genesis 10:1-11

Genesis 10:11 *"Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, 12 And Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city."*

Japheth's sons are today the "white, Germanic" people.

Ham's sons were the founders of Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria and Nineveh the great cities-kingsdoms from after the flood to the time Greece came on the scene.

Nahum records the destruction of Ninevah, which took place in about 600 BC.

There is a far greater purpose in the preaching of Jonah to Nineveh than meets a casual glance. The Lord had sent many prophets to His people Israel over the period of hundreds of years. The prophets had warned and pleaded in the name of the Lord for Israel to repent and return to the Lord. The prophets had warned of coming judgment upon the nation if they did not repent of their evil deeds. God's chosen people, Israel, ignored the preaching and warnings from God and continued on in their evil ways.

Jonah, a prophet of God, had been crying against Israel's sin with no success.

God now sends him to a great pagan city: a city totally given over to wickedness and evil of all kinds, the great city of Nineveh, the chief city of Assyria. The prophet will take to this great pagan city a very short message which he preaches for a very short time: repent or perish. The great pagan city will hear, believe and repent of their sins and turn to the God of Israel.

Nowhere else in the Old Testament is the gospel to the Gentiles so well illustrated:

Acts 11:18 *"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted **repentance unto life**."*

With Nineveh, God will speak to unrepentant and hardened Israel. He will show how deserving Israel is of God's coming judgment against them because of their hardness.

Matthew 11:16 *"But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, 17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. 19* The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and*

sinner. But wisdom is justified of her children. 20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: 21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. 23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

This book shows God's care for the Gentiles, and their readiness to receive the gospel. In both the Old and New Testaments, the receptiveness of the Gentiles is a clear rebuke to the hardened Jews. But we know that according to God's predetermined counsel, the Jews had to be heartened so the gospel could come to the Gentiles.

Christ strongly rebuked the cities of Israel for rejecting Him and His message. He said that the most wicked Canaanite cities were better than the cities of Israel because Israel rejected Christ. His words of Matthew 11 were to show how deserving Israel is of her judgment.

The Lord, through the preaching of Jonah and the repentance of Nineveh, shows how deserving Israel is of the coming harsh judgment against her because she refused to hear and believe the prophets He sent unto them.

Matthew 23:34 "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. 37* O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. 39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."*

How many prophets had been sent, how many miracles had been performed how many times had captivity been threatened, but never did they depart from the sins of Jeroboam.

1 Kings 12:1-33

First: It was under Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, that the 12 tribes of Israel split. One tribe, Judah, stayed with the line of David, while the 10 tribes went with the servant, Jeroboam. The 10 tribes were identified as Israel, and Israel is the nation that fell to Assyria. Israel went into apostasy first as we see in 1 Kings 12:28-33.

Second: Jeroboam's offer was not to deny the Lord God who brought them out of Egypt. Rather, it was the sin that Aaron committed at the foot of the mountain while Moses was on the Mount. It was another way, and unauthorized way, to worship the Redeeming Lord God of heaven.

Third: V. 29, 30. Bethel and Dan, one on each in of Israel so the people would not have to go to Jerusalem to offer the proper sacrifice. He made religion convenient, which appealed too even those who claimrd to serve the one true God.

This compromise offer has been common throughout the history of the church from its very beginning at the promise in the Garden. This offers very common around us today among those who profess to be God's people.

"There is one God, and many ways to that one God", and many similar offers. God the Father does not really require the blood sacrifice of his Son in order to approach him. However, any "depiction" of God the Father and his Son that does not conform to the entire scripture follows Jeroboam's son.

Among others, prophets like Elijah and Elisha, were sent to the 10 tribes, Israel. Christ tells us in Matthew 23 that Israel stoned those godly men.

Fourth,

2 Kings 14:25 "He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher."

Jonah is mentioned as a prophet of God. He was God's messenger of comfort to Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II.

Fifth, from the time of Abraham, there had been a strong separation between the seed of Abraham through Jacob and the rest of the world, the Gentiles. Jonah objected so much to obeying the Lord and go to a great Gentile city that he fled in the other direction.

Being a prophet, he no doubt knew the prophecies concerning Assyria of which Nineveh was the capital. So he wanted nothing to do with God sparing Nineveh, so she could fulfill those prophecies.

Though the following four points are more like the conclusion of this book, I will give them as an introduction:

1) Jonah didn't obey God because he wanted to obey God. His heart was not in this mission at

all. Rather, he went because he had no choice but to go. In fact, he went over his very strenuous objection.

Jonah had been a prophet for many years to Israel. He knew very well that Assyria was the nation God was going to send against His people, Israel. Therefore, he had no intention of going to them with the message of repentance. He knew that God was gracious and merciful and they would repent, and he wanted nothing to do with that. If they were not destroyed, they would be the ones to move against Israel.

2) God moved in the hearts of the heathens because of His word, grace, mercy and glory. He did not move because of anything special in Jonah. Jonah hated them, and he had already condemned them to eternal torment in his mind.

3) It is best to obey God willingly with the right spirit, but we had better obey him regardless of our attitude or spirit. God is not restricted by man's willingness or spirit about a matter. God works in spite of man as we can see here.

4) God could have sent an angel to preach to this great pagan, Gentile city, but He uses people to preach His word which brings repentance. God uses people to reach people. He will use us reach those around us. who work around you

Jonah's message was extremely short, yet God used it to bring conviction. God is neither bound by our willingness nor by the amount of words used.

Of course, here is a clear picture of God's mercy and grace to the Gentiles in the Old Testament. His grace to the Gentiles in the New Testament under Christ is not new, of which the Lord reminds Israel.

The best message here in Jonah is that God's mercy and grace is everlasting and reaches into the heart of the very hardest sinner.

We serve the God of the second, third, fourth, fifth, &c. chance.

V. 1. God had been speaking to Israel through Jonah, but they wouldn't listen. Now he is going to soundly rebuke the Israelites with the heathens. Israel won't listen, but the Gentiles will. The Assyrian city repents, leaving Israel without excuse.

Our Lord was sent to the physical house of Israel, and they would not listen. So He sent the message of God to the Gentiles who did listen. The Lord sent Jonah to Nineveh.

V. 2, gives the instruction to Jonah. Go to Nineveh and preach to them. Warn them of their wickedness.

Nineveh, a great city. It is reported to have been probably 60 miles or so around its outside wall, fortified with 1500 towers. Its population was large enough to have 120,000 small children. I-465 around Indianapolis is about 58 miles long.

From the time of Genesis 10 and the sons of Ham, fallen men have enjoyed building cities. In these cities become cesspools of wickedness and corruption. Those of us who enjoy living outside of the cities, when we go in to a large city are "overwhelmed" with the wickedness and evil that is so prevalent.

These big cities of our day are overrun with evil and wickedness. We need to pray that God would send many "Jonahs" into those cities to call them to repentance. Generally, rather than good man going into the city, good men are fleeing out of the city into the suburbs, and turning the cities over to the powers of darkness.

Nineveh was an extremely wicked city, and it was about to inherit the wrath and judgment of God. God knew about its wickedness, and He sends a warning of judgment. God sent a simple message: **repent or perish**. John the Baptist came preaching the same message in the wilderness.

In Genesis 13:9-13, Abraham separated from his nephew Lot, giving his nephew the choice of land. Though the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly, Lot chose to settle in that area.

Then in Genesis 18, the Lord went down to verify the great wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. Binding the wickedness as reported, he chose to destroy the cities of the plain. Though I certainly cannot say to God "what do thou and why", I wonder why God gave Nineveh a chance to repent and he did not Sodom?

Genesis 18:16 *"And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. 17* And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; 18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19* For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. 20 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; 21* 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. 22 And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD."*

God had a man set aside to deliver His message: a man named Jonah. It was a big, humanly impossible job which called for courage and supernatural power. Jonah had courage when speaking among his people, Israel. But Nineveh! That was not part of the deal.

One man, a prophet of God, called to go into a great wicked city to preach. Jonah probably thought they would stone him or mock him, or maybe even imprison him or place him in slavery or even death. This was a wicked city, and I'm sure I would have expected the worse.

But Jonah does say at the end of this book that he expected the best. He expected them to repent and God to spare them, and that was not what Jonah wanted. He wanted God to judge them.

Jonah knew better what God *should* do, and he acted upon his knowledge of what was best, not upon God's word. I'm afraid we do the same. We feel we know best in a given situation, and we set about doing it our way instead of obeying God, and leaving it in his hands.

V. 3. *But Jonah arose...* The word of the Lord caused action, yet this action was rebellion. He went the other way. Jonah knew he could not escape from the Lord's presence, but he was fleeing from His will.

Psalms 139:7 "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. 11* If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. 13* For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. 14* I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. 15* My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16* Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."*

How many people, us included, have tried to flee from God and then only find themselves in a terrible storm of life?

Craig sent this to me the other day by email:

Precious in His Sight

My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Psalm 139:15

Monozygotic (identical) twins result when one fertilized egg divides to form two separate but "identical" embryos. Fraternal (dizygotic) twins are as different as any two siblings. But even in the case of identical twins, they are not totally identical—different fingerprints being an

example. Several hundred genetic differences can occur in identical twins that may eventually manifest themselves in slight, but noticeable, ways.

In short, every human being is unique—including you! You are the only version of you God has ever made. The biblical writers understood and expressed this using pre-scientific language. David knew that he was “fearfully and wonderfully made” in his mother’s womb (Psalm 139:13-14). Job knew that God had “shaped [him] and made [him],” and “molded [him] like clay” (Job 10:8-9, NIV). That “hands-on” image evokes the idea conveyed in the children’s song: “Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. . . .”

Never doubt that you are unique and precious in God’s sight. His eye is always on what He has made.

Man is a creature, because he is made by God. But he is a unique creature, because he is made like God.

Edmund P. Clowney

Jonah is fleeing from being God's obedient servant:

Jonah knew what the results of obeying God would be and he did not like them, 4:2.

Jonah disliked God's commands, so he busied himself elsewhere.

Jonah did not like the word of God, so he removed himself from where God was speaking to him.

The word of God didn't say what he wanted to hear, so he went the other way to where he wanted to go.

I know people like this. The word of God speaks to them, and rather than have to face up to it and take action in obedience, they take action in fleeing from it, hoping they will not have to obey.

I remember a young man in LA. He visited church and I went by to see him on the AF base. WE talked and I led him to the Lord. He started coming regularly and then the Lord dealt with him. It seems he had left a church because he was resisting the Lord's speaking to him. Now he had to go back and make it right, which he did. As far as I know, he stayed there. There was another man who repaired copiers. He had a falling out with his pastor and started coming to Merrywoods. He was only able to stay about four months, and he had to get right with God and go back. In the time I have been in the ministry, I have yet to see families safely leave a church over disagreements with the pastor. Usually it shows up in them or their kids.

We might be able to flee from doing what we know we ought to do as Jonah did here, but we will not escape God. Jonah did not want to do what God's word told him to do, so he went the other direction. Human nature has not changed to this day.

He found a ship going in the direction he wanted to go (down), and joined with them. Observe

that when men want to flee from God's word and obedience they will find plenty of people going in their desired direction.

These were heathens. If we don't like what God says in one place, there will be plenty of others who will agree with us.

Also, what is fleeing from God as Jonah did here, may not be fleeing from God for the others: God may send His prophets to Tarshish. God's will is different for each man. We cannot judge another by our standards and callings.

V. 4. The Lord knew where Jonah was and what he was trying to do. The Lord also knew just what it would take to get his attention. God allowed his disobedient servant to make his best plans then God stepped in. Our best plans to get around the word of God are just as futile, useless and vain as was Jonah's. Man's plans to hinder God's working are also just as vain. Disobedience brings storms.

V. 5. The fear of the storm caused them to try to lighten the ship, but that was not what was weighing down the ship: it was a disobedient prophet.

Jonah's trip to Joppa must have been fast and hard to cause him to be this tired and able to sleep in this storm. But how like so many professed Christians? They are able to cast off all concern about serving God and quietly sleep in the midst of all the turmoil.

V. 6. The shipmaster wakes Jonah. "What is wrong with you, Sleeping Beauty? How can you sleep at a time like this? Get up! Cry to your God."

This reminds us of the ship master's call to the Christian, **I Cor. 15:34**. There are people perishing in the storms of life around us. Live like a child of God, call upon Him (the two go together), it may be that He will see fit to save some of those around us. See 15:7.

Notice Jonah's rebellion against God's word enable (caused?) him to sleep in the worse of storms as well as to be unconcerned of the welfare of others around him. Our rebellion against God's word always affects more than just ourselves. Among others, it will cost the heathens their lives. The worse will be our children. Our rebellion will show up in them.

V. 7. This storm was no ordinary storm. These experienced sailors knew it, so now they seek its cause. **Cast lots...** I don't know how you would do this, but Prov. 16:33 says that God determines how the lot lands. God determined here that Jonah would be chosen. Again, providence is God's way of leading those who will not be led.

V. 8. They question Jonah further, not wanting to make an error. "What is thine occupation?"

This is a valid question for any child of God. Our occupation is to direct others closer to Christ.

Are we? Do you direct that co-worker closer to God? That friend... loved one?

Or do we do, like Jonah, cause them to go father away and face storms. We have been intrusted with the answers to the storms of life. Do we pray for the opportunity to share these answers with others? Do we ask for wisdom to know how to apply the word of God?

V. 9. Jonah answers who he is. They have pinned him down and he tells them the truth. Notice though if Jonah really feared God and knew him, he would not have fled. Godly fear brings with it obedience.

Jonah had been a great prophet (still was), yet as with us all, he didn't believe his own preaching enough to stand on it. Our preaching makes good living as long as it lines up with what we want to do. But what happens if what we say we believe goes contrary to what we want or the way we think it ought to be?

This is something which has caught me quite by surprise. There are those who will stand hard against being a state church, incorporated. They will preach against it and do all they can to influence others to come out. They loved the book "Church Inc." because it showed the necessity of getting out of the corporation.

But, they do not like (I knew they wouldn't) "Jeroboam" because it shows the necessity of stopping support of corporations, mission board, missionaries and schools in order to be consistent. I talked to Brother Parks. This was one of the things which aggravated him so much. This crowd talks loud about getting out of or braking the church, state bond, yet they will not drop their support of these state-owned ministries. This is an inconsistent as it can be.

Jonah was a prophet to Israel. He preached faithfully the word of the Lord until the word of the Lord went contrary to what he wanted to do. Then he had a problem. He feared the Lord but only as the Lord fit into his plan of things.

I'm afraid that Jonah's testimony of his fear of the Lord (resulting in obedience) was left behind as he fled to Joppa. I would imagine that Jonah would have been willing to die for his message to Israel because it fit in well with what he wanted to do and believe. Here he would rather die than obey the word of the Lord.

Really strange as I think about it. Why was Jonah caught in this? Why are others caught in this? I think maybe the reason is because we allow personal feelings or involvement to enter in, even traditions.

Jonah did not want to obey God because he hated the Assyrians. He knew prophecy and that Assyria would destroy Israel; therefore, he wanted God to destroy them.

I believe the reason these groups will not stop supporting non-Christians and church-state

ministries is out of personal feelings. They are so attached to these people personally that they are unable to obey God in their relationship with them.

Our Lord answered this very thing, Lk. 14:26-33, pointing out that any personal relationship which overrides our commitment to obey God's word must be laid aside if we are going to be his disciple. Any relationship which hinders our walk with God must be laid aside. To keep it is to have another god before him.

No doubt this is difficult, but who do we want to be friends with: the Lord or man? It seems to me like those who desire to remain friends with the ungodly and the state organizations are not in much better shape than the state organizations even though they may be, "unregistered."

Jonah knew who the Lord was, but he sure wasn't much of a testimony for the Lord here to these heathens as he refused to obey the word of the Lord in this area he didn't agree with.

V. 10. Isn't this something. These men are more afraid of Jonah's 'Lord' than is Jonah. They pin his ears with, "Why have you done this?" "If He is so great and you fear him so much, then why are you running from him. Why aren't you obeying him?"

This is a perfect question for our day. If we say we are His, and we say He made heaven and earth, and we say we fear Him and we say we believe His word as it tells us what to do, then why don't we do it? Why don't we show our commitment to Him (we do, either our commitment to him or our lack of...)?

The heathen expect us to obey Him if we claim to be His. They expect us to live what we say we believe. They live what they say they believe. Even as they believe in their false god, they do what they feel pleases those god. Why won't we? The heathens are consistent to their beliefs about their gods, why aren't we? They worship self. They set about to please self. We say we worship the Lord God of heaven, then why don't we set about to please him in all things?

Jonah had told them that he was running from God. Yet it meant nothing to them at that time. "So what, if he is like our gods he doesn't really care what you do. We obey our gods at our convenience."

But Jonah's God isn't like that. We obey him at His convenience, not ours. We are here for His glory and convenience, not him for ours. Our God is a God who does care what we do. I, as an individual, am very important to him. What I do does matter to Him. Thank goodness! He goes care about me. Here, just one wayward man was important enough for God to send a storm and prepare a fish for. Thank the Lord for this.

Before I get to far away, back at vv. 5, 6. God sent a storm to wake up Jonah. What kind of a storm will God have to send against his people to get their attention, to wake them up, to get them to do what he wants them to do? I'm afraid the storm will be however strong that will be

needed to wake them (us) up. It may make this one here with Jonah look very tame.

Another thing on v. 10. "Why haste thou done this?" These seaman were amazed that Jonah would attempt to flee from the God of heaven and earth. They were amazed that he would not obey this God if he was all Jonah said he was. I guess the same amazement would be expressed today by both the young Christian and the heathen. How can an older Christian, knowing and believing all he does concerning God, behave in such an inconsistent manner? How can we ignore such a great and wonderful God? Yet we do. I have young Christians ask me about older ones. They will say, "Why don't they do this or that?" I have to tell them, "You will have to check with them."

V. 11.

Knowing and believing Jonah was a prophet of the true God, they asked him what they are to do with him that the sea would clam down. The sea was growing more and more unsettled in obedience to its Master.

V. 12.

Jonah tells them – God had this all planned out and the sailors, the sea and Jonah are only obeying that plan as we shall see in v. 17. Jonah knew the cause, and he knew the answer.

V. 13.

Notice here the efforts of men to try to keep from obeying God.

1) They knew the reason and the answer, yet they had to try it their way.

I believe it is because they are concerned for Jonah they really did not want to throw him overboard. "*There is a way that seemeth right unto men but the end thereof is death.*" And v. 13 is a good example. It didn't seem right to obey God, yet the end was going to be death at the hand of the sea even though their personal concern for Jonah prevented obedience. It just didn't seem right to throw Jonah out, but that was the way of life. Maybe it just doesn't seem right to break those ties which are contrary to God's word, but that is the way of life.

2) When men, heathen or his people, disobey God, they have all of nature against them. No matter how sincere the motives or hard the effort, they are going against nature and nature will only become stronger against them. Men will not go their own way without this storm becoming more severe.

3) these heathens had more of a concern for Jonah's well-being than he did for their's, and he was suppose to be a Christian.

Note that the heathen show a far greater concern for the bodies of men than Christians do the souls of men. I suppose the hospitals are a good example. The "pink ladies" are a good example: the people who volunteer their services many hours a week to help take care of the bodies of men. Simply look around at all of the agencies. The **Masons** are another good example with their Children Hospital in Indianapolis. These men spend hundreds of hours advancing the care of the body, yet Christians cannot spend a couple hours a week for the souls of men. SS teachers won't visit their classes or try to build them. We have visitation and only a few come. God gives an opportunity to talk to someone and we won't take the time. (Then complain because the attendance is down.)

4) V. 5. Another thing in this verse: man's self-effort. Rather than obey God, men would much rather do all they can to reach safety. This would include salvation. The rougher the storm the harder man work to reach heaven by any means except simple obedience to the word of the Lord. It is so much easier to trust in our effort than to trust in what He has already done for us. No matter how much self-effort, man will not bring himself safely to land.

5) Men will row hard when they are depending on themselves, yet for some reason, once they step out by faith, all work seems to stop.

A good example would be the unsaved man will many times be very activity engaged in his self-effort. I have seen people who, thinking they were saved, worked themselves to death, yet when they finally were converted, it seems all work stop.

Also the unsaved will serve self day and night, seven days a week, yet when he gets saved, he doesn't have time to serve God. Sundays are now his only time to sleep in. The unsaved will party all night, yet will get up and go to work. The saved has to get to bed early on Sunday Night, so he can get up and go to work on Monday morning.

V. 14.

The concern for Jonah is shown again in their cry to God. The prophet didn't care if these men perished for his life, yet they care for him. They cry out to God even though Jonah doesn't.

This is surprising: in the midst of the storm, and Jonah knows why it is upon them, we have no record of him crying out to the Lord in repentance. If it had been me, I would have promised God the "moon" if he would only spare me, yet Jonah does not. In fact, everyone I know of would have done a very thorough search of their life by now and repented with a promise to turn back or even pleaded with the ship captain to turn back so we could go obey God.

Yet Jonah did not. Why? **Deut. 29:4.**

Even back in the books of the law we see that God alone can work in the human heart to give any desire to please Him or to serve Him. Therefore, we see that we must pray for God to work

in the hardest of hearts and expect Him to do that.

V. 14.

For thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee. No matter where I read in Scripture, this fact stands out. You would think this was Daniel or one of the prophets speaking, or even Jonah. But no! The pagan sailors speak, and they hit the nail right on the head.

The whole Bible revolves around this statement. Whether the book is the book of Jonah or the whole of scriptures, the theme is the same: the Lord does according to His good pleasure in the earth.

Though men, saved and unsaved, today are in total opposition to this statement, the fact changes not: God's purpose is being accomplished. He is performing just exactly what pleases Him.

Everything was/is for His good pleasure, **Heb. 2:10; Rev. 4:11.**

God has put it in their heart to obey Him, **Rev. 17:17.** If there is an almighty God in heaven, then man is not in control of history nor his destiny.

The providence of God controls all things. He is not an absentee landlord.

The fact that God does that which pleases Him is one of the hardest things for the human understanding to grasp. Man does not want to admit that he is not in control of his own destiny, history. Man does not want to admit that the decisions are not his, yet scripture is very clear on this, **Prov. 16:33; 21:31.**

Daniel makes the same clear statement: God does what He will in the kingdom of men, Dan. 5:21; 4:17. How are we going to put this together with the free will of men? Man is still responsible to God. Jonah was responsible for his disobedience even though it was for God's glory.

Only the Lord knows how it all fits together. I am not going to question Him on it but, rather, I am going to rest and rejoice in it. I know that the Lord is in complete charge, and that if I will obey Him the very best I can, I can rely in his provision and protection.

V. 15.

They tried their best, and their best failed, so now they obey.

Many times God will allow us to try our best and fail.

Many times we have to try out best and fail before we will cast ourselves upon his mercy.

They very reluctantly obeyed God, and the promised results came. Nature did not change; the

sailors changed, and nature became their friend instead of their enemy. Of course, nature was only obeying her Creator. The sea calmed down immediately because they obeyed God.

V. 16.

I believe this indicates conversion to Jonah's God on the part of the sailors just as was Nineveh converted. They knew the sea. I'm sure they knew about storms, yet this was beyond anything they knew of. They knew a supernatural power had to be involved, and this only confirmed what they already realized.

Notice that they had cried to their gods, which, of course, were powerless. Now they see the hand of the Lord God of Jonah and any person in their right mind would *fear the Lord exceedingly, and offer sacrifice to him.* They forsook their idols, and turned to the true and living God over all creation.

Have we tried and failed? Let's try it God's way for a change.

But this could be no more than Nebuchadnezzar with Daniel: he was brought to the place where he recognized the Lord God of heaven and earth. but was he saved, Dan 4:37?

V. 17

Here is another very key verse as it gives the reason for the whole the book, **Mat 12:40.** Jonah's 3 days and nights stay in the belly of the fish was a foreshadow of our Lord.

Let me give some points from this verse, not necessarily in order of importance or happening.

1) Jonah's stay in the fish was a sign to Nineveh, that great heathen city.

From our Lord's use of Jonah's experience, it seems that the Ninevehites knew about the three days and nights in the fish. Our Lord's preaching was/is based upon His death, burial and resurrection after three days and nights in the grave. Was Jonah's message to repent based on his three days and night in the fish? The use of Jonah in **Matt. 12:38-41** indicates that Jonah's message was based in his experience in the fish.

Speculation:

Did the seamen turn back and tell others? We don't know exactly where exactly the storm took place and they case Jonah out of the ship. But we do know that it took place soon after they left **Joppa** because Jonah was still very soundly sleeping. The ship could have returned to **Joppa** the very day they threw Jonah overboard. They were close enough to land to try to row back.

Another reason the ship probably returned to **Joppa** was because they had thrown everything overboard. What would be the need to continue on with an empty ship?

Thus they probably returned to *Joppa* the same day they set sail. Upon arrival back at *Joppa*, I am quite sure the sailors would tell of:

- a.) Jonah's fleeing from God, so he wouldn't have to preach at Nineveh
- b.) Their attempts for safety in the supernatural storm.
- c.) Their throwing of Jonah overboard.
- d.) The storm's behavior when it suddenly stopped.
- e.) They probably watched Jonah to see what would happen and even saw the fish take him whole.

Joppa was about due west of Jerusalem, and probably about 400 miles from Nineveh, which was NE of Jerusalem. Did the story of Jonah reach Nineveh before he did; therefore, preparing the city?

Our Lord indicate that Jonah's message was based upon the sign of his three days and nights in the fish, just as His was to be. The three days and nights were the sign to Nineveh, as well as those of Christ's day, of truth of the message of repentance. The difference being, whereas Jonah's generation (heard) saw and believed, the generation which saw and heard Christ's resurrection refused to believe.

The Jewish national religious leaders persecuted the new church rather than accepting the message. The men of Nineveh will judge them because that great heathen city did repent. Our trail in the fish may be what is needed to do a great work for God: to prepare us, and to deal with others.

2) God did not give Jonah a spirit of repentance, for to do so would have destroyed the picture. This is the only OT illustration of the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. If Jonah had not fled, where would be the OT illustration? Thus we are again confronted with the sovereignty of God, and His control of all history through His divine providence which works circumstances to fulfill His purpose and plan here on earth.

3) *God had prepared a great fish...* When did God prepare the great fish? I doubt that God prepared the fish as the men threw Jonah overboard. The fish might well have been prepared as far back as at the creation of the world. Regardless, we do know that God prepared the fish before Jonah was thrown overboard. And God prepared the fish in His plan that Jonah would flee from the Lord's presence.

Acts 2:23, God planed it all out, and men work His plan. The Lord needed an OT illustration of the Christ's death, burial and resurrection, and Jonah was the only illustration we have mentioned by the Lord.

Yet Jonah was held accountable for his self-willed rebellion and actions.

4) Objection: If Jonah's unrighteous acts only show forth the praises of God, then:

- a.) Why do right, God will get the glory anyway?
- b.) How can God judge those unrighteous acts if they only bring glory to Himself?

Paul addresses this in Rom **3:1-19 & chs 5-8**. "Let's do evil so God will get even more glory." Of course, the answer is God's that judgment is according to the truth not according to the results, **Rom. 2:2-11**. If God doesn't judge according to the truth, then He has no grounds to judge the world, **3:6**. The workers of good will receive glory, honour and peace. But those who do not obey the truth, indignation, wrath, tribulation and anguish.

5) though things appear difficult at the time, we can rest in the assurance that everything is working for His glory. Whether the devices of wicked men and the disobedience of his people, or the obedience of his people, it is all working His good pleasure.

How much better is it that our obedience work for His glory, so we can get a "share" of the blessings. Obedience for His glory with its attached blessing is far better than disobedience which works for His glory. The disobedience will bring the apposite of blessings.

God is not helplessly sitting by and watching things deteriorate, **Ps 76:10**.

No doubt this small book raises some very interesting and searching questions: how do we put together the thought-out plan of God with man's free will? This whole story of Jonah fits Acts 2:32. God is working his determinate counsel and foreknowledge. These questions are ignored today because man wants to believe he can control his own destiny.

Conclusion:

1.) Jonah knew better yet he acted upon what he wanted rather than what God wanted.

a.) The word of God will cause action, either obedience or rebellion.

2.) Jonah couldn't agree with the word of God so he found others who were going in the same direction and went with them.

The word of God speaks plainly to us. If we don't like it then we can find plenty of others to go our way. People will flee from God and search high and low for a group of people going the way they want to go. They will do their best to get others to flee with them also.

One of our men took me to visit one of his co-workers a couple of years ago. As we talked this man told us of his view of tithing. Then he told us how he had searched for a church which agreed with his view and he was then going to it. Not a church which preached the Bible, but a church that he could agree with.

I'll admit the church where he went appeals to the flesh: it presents a feel good salvation with no responsibility to God. These churches which preach God's responsibility to man will draw the crowds.

Let me hit something here. I Cor. 4:14-21; 11:1; Ph. 3:17-19; I Thes. 1:6.

With these passages (I Cor. esp.), Paul, is writing back instructions to those who he had led to the Lord, and were now being influenced away from his spiritual leadership. These were his spiritual children.

I believe God gives physical children to certain parents to raise and train up in the way they should go. According to his word. When a child rebels against this God given authority, I believe they have entered into the realm of witchcraft and will pay a terrible price.

Now, a child may not live at home forever but if they move on it must be with the parents permission and blessing or it will be rebellion.

I believe God I Cor. 4 carries the principles over into the spiritual realm. God gives spiritual children to churches and pastors. It is then that pastor's and church's responsibility to train those children up in terms of God's law-word.

If a child leaves without their 'parents' blessing then they are rebelling just as sure as a teen who runs away from home.

Ph. 3:17-19. Let's look at this passage a little. Here is some instruction for us. Let me use some illustrations with which I am familiar.

In LA, we had a lady who worked in the kitchen as a cook for the school, and boy could she cook.

The preacher took some strong stands against dancing, gossip, pants and many other issues. This lady did not agree with the preacher as he preached the scriptures. I never heard her (or others for that matter), say that his preaching was unscriptural, only that they didn't agree with it.

This lady put up with the preaching for probably 4-5 years. (We were there 7 years.) It finally got to be more than she could stand. She wanted some preaching that would make her feel good rather than something that laid out her responsibility before God.

She left the church in rebellion against what was being preached and did her best to take others with her. Really the only ones she could get to follow her was her family, including her dad.

Her dad took up a talking campaign against the church and preacher. Her daughter had married

an AF boy and lived in Alaska. Her dad even called the boy in Alaska telling him how bad the pastor was.

Now the results:

- 1.) The grandfather (the lady's dad) had a stroke which affected his speech. From then on he could not put his thought together with his words. He died soon after we left.
- 2.) The lady's husband had been a drunk before they started coming to Merrywoods. The last I heard he was out of church completely, drinking very heavy again.
- 3.) The grand son-in-law listened and became very bitter. When they got back down in the lower 48 they were divorced and he remarried.
- 4.) If I remember right, the lady had two daughters and the second one also ended up in a divorce.

All of that to say this. Everyone this woman influenced in anyway ended up with their lives ruined. Maybe it was all a quiescence but personally I will have a hard time believing that. I have seen it happen far to many times.

Now, this is what Paul warns us of in Ph. 3:17-19. Paul tells those here who he is spiritually responsible for to follow him as he follows Christ.

He reminds them that there will be those who will depart from him because they just can't agree with him. Because his doctrine does not permit them to fulfill their desires (whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things).

He warns those he is writing to that they had better mark them which walk contrary to him because their end is destruction. And if they walk (go) with them their end will also be destruction.

This lady influenced everyone she could as she went her way and found a preacher who would preach what she wanted to hear. Everyone she influenced shared in the destruction of her and her family.

I mentioned about a young AF man in LA who left his former church over a disagreement with the pastor. I led him to the Lord. When he told me about having to go back and why I gave him my blessing. I did not like to but it was right to do.

If it had not been for that, then his responsibility would have been to stay under my teaching and spiritual authority.

I believe Paul here in I Cor. 4, is clear on applying this principle of authority of the spiritual

authority over his children, and when a child rebels against this authority I think Ja. 1:22 also applies to them. They become blinded and deceived. Unable to even see truth.

God did not give me my children for the neighbors to raise. God has not given us spiritual children for Freemont to raise or Pleasant View or Eastside or Faith Baptist Church or even Calvary Chapel, or any other group of people we could name.

"But what if the father (parent) goes bad?"

Paul covered this in 11:1, this authority is not unlimited but only as it conforms to scripture and Christ. If the parent goes bad or get crossways with God then the children had better obey God. Our loyalty belongs to Christ, not man.

One problem here though that people are more loyal to tradition then to God's word. I had someone tell me over three years ago, "What you preach is contrary to what this man we respect highly preached. To believe you is to disbelieve him and he is such a nice man, we don't think he is wrong." The decision was made on the man's personality, not on God's word.

Something which I will never understand. People hear the truth of "You must trust Christ as your substitute and saviour." They get saved then want to go somewhere where they teach the lie of, "You must ask Jesus into your heart." If a preacher or teacher has the wrong plan of salvation then you can rest assured that many other things will be wrong also.

But like Jonah, we can find many good sincere groups who will teach any combination of doctrine which will appease the public. There are boat loads after boat loads going in whatever direction a person might want to go.

Our fleeing from God will cause those around us to perish and us to be insensitive to their needs. Fleeing from God will blind us to the truth. Fleeing from God will harden us.

3.) Do our words make better preaching than living. "I love God," do our actions prove it? "I fear God" do our action prove it? "I love and believe this scriptures," do our actions and use of our time prove it? (Bible study, prayer)

Our actions will prove our words, our faith.

I have met many people who believe the word of God and were willing to obey it until it didn't line up with what they wanted to do or with tradition or with friendships.

One of the most common phrases I hear is, "That just isn't the way I see it."

Another pastor and myself were talking some time ago about an issue he said something which caught my attention. He said, "I guess, let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind about

this." Then do it, now that is pagan and heathenism, humanism. Our standard of obedience to God's word is not if we are fully persuaded but what does God's word say about it. It is not how do I feel about it but how does God feel about it.

God's purpose was accomplished here even in Jonah's disobedience. But let us respond to God as is pleasing to him and see his blessings upon us.

Jonah's 3 days and nights in the fish was a sign to Nineveh. That time that we spend in testings and trials can also be used to reach those around us as it did for Jonah if we will only obey God.