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JONAH 3:10-4:11

In the past several weeks we've read and studied the story of Jonah.

We've seen how Jonah **was commissioned by God** to go to the great city of Nineveh and preach judgment to them.

We've seen how Jonah **ran away from God**.

We've seen how God **pursued Jonah** until finally Jonah indeed did go to Nineveh and preach judgment to those people.

This book is full of the teaching of God's mercy.

First, we saw the mercy of God extended to Jonah.

Then, we saw the mercy of God extended to the sailors on board the ship in the storm.

Then, we saw the mercy of God extended to the people of Nineveh.

Two weeks ago we saw how the people of Nineveh repented of their wickedness and violence and we saw how God relented concerning the judgment He had planned for these folks.

Apparently, the climax of the story of Jonah has been reached...

Jonah's obedience has been successful...

God's mercy has been displayed for us...

Nineveh has repented...

God has relented...

And if Jonah had been writing this book for us without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, you and I more than likely wouldn't have this fourth chapter of the book of **Jonah** to study today. **I mean, when we look at this chapter, it surely isn't a very flattering picture of Jonah, is it?**

God gives us the truth about His people. Remember Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes and it revealed to us a man who tried everything life had to offer and in the end, had to say, "All is vanity."

Why do you believe the record of Jonah doesn't just end with chapter 3?

Well, I believe it's because there is another lesson God wants to teach Jonah and us than we've already seen.

I believe God wants to teach that even His own children can be prejudiced and bigoted and narrow when it comes to sharing God's love and mercy.

And I believe God also wants to teach us that even though we may be, He is not a respecter of persons...He loves all people with the same kind of love.

So, with all this in mind, let's look at our lesson for today...

Jonah 3:10-4:4...

At the beginning of the book of **Jonah** the story involved just Jonah and God. Then, it involved the sailors and then the people of Nineveh...but now we see it back to **just Jonah and God again**.

This is always the way it is. God gives you and me work to do for Him. The work He gives us to do usually involves

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other people. But, in the end, it gets back to the individual and God.

In the end, it is a question of whether or not we have been obedient to Him.

Well, had Jonah been obedient to God? Yes, Jonah had gone to Nineveh and preached judgment just like God had asked him. But, he hadn't done **anything else**, had he? **Think about it...**

"Yet 40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown..." This was the message Jonah gave the Ninevites.

Jonah gave them nothing about the grace and mercy of Almighty God. Jonah gave them no personal testimony of what God had done in his own life...how God had spared him and used him in spite of his rebellion. WHY? Why didn't Jonah go the second mile and share God's love and mercy and grace and goodness with the Ninevites?

The answer is right here in **verse 2**. Jonah didn't **want** the Ninevites to know his God. Jonah didn't **want** them to experience the goodness and grace and the mercy of God!

Some people have said that Jonah was angry because when God relented and didn't do what Jonah had preached that Jonah was afraid he would be a laughingstock back in Israel...that folks would mock him and that his reputation as a prophet of God would be ruined...

And this might have played a part in Jonah's anger...but the **real reason** is that **he simply didn't want the Ninevites to know his God**.

Jonah was saying, "I **knew** it! I **knew** it all the time! That's exactly why I ran away. I told You so right from the start.

I **knew** You were gracious and compassionate, not easily angered and abundant in lovingkindness...I **knew** You would relent concerning the calamity You had planned against those Ninevites!"

Think about what Jonah said! No heathen nation had a god like Jehovah! The heathen nations had gods that had to be appeased...some demanded human sacrifices. But, Jonah's God was a God of graciousness and compassion and patience and love. Yet, Jonah didn't share **this** with the Ninevites.

Jonah didn't reveal **this** side of God's character to them. They would have to discover this on their own.

What a terrible indictment against the spiritual condition of Jonah. He had just witnessed **one** of the greatest if not **the** greatest mass conversions in history...yet he didn't stay around and teach these new believers about God. He didn't stay around and disciple them.

How terrible to know the truth about God and not share it!
How terrible to be so filled with anger when God's blessings come upon someone else!

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How terrible to be so filled with hatred and prejudice that we
resent it when someone with whom we don't agree
or don't understand or whom we dislike comes to know
Jesus Christ.

Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever looked at a person and wondered how in the world
God could save him? Maybe you knew his past. You knew the depths of sin he had been in.
You knew the evil deeds he had done.

I believe God included this in the book of **Jonah** so that you and I could learn a very
important lesson. God loves everybody! God didn't send His Son to call the righteous but the
sinners to repentance! God's Word tells us to pray for our enemies. God's Word tells us to pray
for those who have despitely used us.

So, I want to ask you... If you and I were to hear of the conversion
of **Saddam Hussein** today, what would be our response?

If, there should be a mass conversion among the **Iranians** or the **Chinese** or the **North
Koreans** or the **Syrians** or the **Al Quaida** or **Osama bin Laden**...what would be our response?
Would our response be suspicion? Would it be resentment?

EXAMPLE: The black churches who participated in our Missions' emphasis several
years ago.

I believe we see in Jonah the same thing that was in the older brother of the prodigal son
story. The older brother resented it when his younger brother came back home, didn't he? He
wanted his younger brother to suffer. He didn't want him to be welcomed back into the fold. He
didn't want him to have a ring on his finger and a robe and a party!

My prayer is that you and I would learn a very important lesson today. I pray that we will never
get over the wonder that the grace of God has been poured out on **us**...and I pray we will desire
to see that grace poured out on **all** who will repent and believe.

Back to Jonah...

Jonah said, ***"Lord, please take my life from me...for I'd rather
die than go on living..."***

What was Jonah saying?

He was saying he would have been much happier if his sermon had not been heeded.

He was saying that **life would have been far more worth living had the Ninevites been
left in their sinful condition.**

He was saying **he wished the Ninevites had gone to hell!**

There is such a difference in Jonah and Elijah. Remember there was a time when Elijah came to
God and asked Him to take his life...because his people **had not repented**...and here is Jonah
asking God to take his life because the people of Nineveh **had repented!**

And what was God's response to Jonah ? ***"Do you have good reason to be angry?"***

See, God never tells His children not to be angry...but He expects His children to be angry for a
good reason! And He asked Jonah, ***"Do you have a good reason to be angry?"***

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You know, I don't think it would be a bad idea if you and I would ask ourselves that question when anger comes knocking on our door.

Have you been angry this week? Did you have good reason?

If **you didn't, then your anger was not righteous anger...it was** self-righteous anger...and God was not pleased with it!

Verses 5-6...

Did you notice that Jonah was extremely happy about the plant in **verse 6**? Did you notice that this is the only time in this book that Jonah has expressed any emotion that even comes close to joy or gladness? Jonah was a very unhappy person, wasn't he?

Was he happy when he finally decided to be obedient to God's command? **No!**

Was he happy when he finally reached the great city of Nineveh and presented God's message? **No!**

Was he happy when he saw the mass conversion of the people of Nineveh...when he saw the course of an entire city's population turn from hell to heaven? **No!**

When was he happy? When **his** needs are being met! When he isn't sitting under the hot desert sun! **Then, Jonah was extremely happy!**

Well, that happiness shortly came to an end, didn't it?

Before we get to that, let's think about the things Jonah did in his unhappiness.

First, he quit.

He should have been in Nineveh, teaching and discipling his converts. Instead, he just left the city!

The second thing Jonah did was **he built a little shelter for himself**...a private retreat. Were there no places in Nineveh where he might stay? No places that would welcome the prophet who had brought the life-changing message to the city of Nineveh?

Of course there were...but Jonah still hated and resented these people and wasn't about to live with any of them, even for a short period of time.

That's one thing I've always admired about our missionary friends and their precious children. When they were students at Mid-America, they lived in a black housing project. They didn't just **minister** to these people during the day...they **lived with them**, day in and day out.

Another thing Jonah did was he became a spectator. He wanted to see what would happen to the city, but he didn't want to be a part of it! Really, I believe he watched the city in hopes that **no sign of repentance** would come.

What a difference Jonah could have made in the lives of so many people! Yes, his message brought them repentance and salvation...but Jonah was the only one there who could have taught these people about the God of Israel!

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He just went and built himself and shelter...and waited to see what would happen!

By the way, the verb “appointed” (NAS); “prepared” (KJV); “provided” (NIV) is the same verb used in **1:17** of the great fish. It is used of the plant and the worm and the east wind.

What I’m saying is this...this is a reference to the sovereignty of Almighty God. Jonah built himself a shelter but God provided Jonah a leafy green plant for shade and comfort. **How good and gracious God continued to be to Jonah.**

Isn’t it interesting that the very fact that God would reach down to an undeserving prophet, Jonah, is the same message God wanted Jonah to grasp as God reached down to the undeserving people of Nineveh!

How much plainer could God the truth of this message?

Verses 7-8...

Uh-oh! His plant withered! Think about it...God placed that worm in that plant to serve as His agent in Jonah’s life!

Let me ask you...Has that ever happened to you? Have you ever had a worm in your beautiful shady plant? It may have been sent from God! If you’ve ever had a God-appointed worm come to you, how did you respond?

And what was **Jonah’s** response? **“Death is better to me than life!”** Jonah said, **“I’d rather die than live!”**

Now this is actually **the third time** he’s expressed this wish. The **first time** Jonah said this was back in **chapter 1**...when he told the sailors to pick him up and throw him into the sea.

He was saying then that he would rather die in the depths of the sea than ask the sailors to take him back to Joppa so that he would make his way to Nineveh.

The **second time** Jonah said he’d rather die is in **verse 3** of the lesson today. And here we see Jonah say he’d rather die than live. You know, if I were God I’d probably have accommodated him! Aren’t you glad God is a God of much longsuffering?

How many times have we said something equally as disappointing to God? We may not have wished to be dead...but we’ve all said something that showed our rebellion against God’s will for our lives, haven’t we?

Jonah met a God-appointed worm, with a God-appointed task, at a God-appointed time, to yield God-appointed results!

Verse 9...

At this point God asked His second question. His first was “Do you have good reason to be angry?” This was a question as to who was right, Jonah or God...

Here He asked, **“Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?”**

I believe God is showing Jonah the progression of anger. The first time he was angry, he was angry at **God**. Now, he’s angry at a **vine**. At least God was a worthy opponent! **But, what could the vine do?**

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This is what anger does. We begin by being angry at **big** things. But then we become angry at **little** things. Something big happens one day that makes us very upset. And we allow ourselves to wallow in that “upsetness.”

We don't give it to God. We don't ask God's help. We don't say, “**Lord, if You've allowed this in my life, it must be for a reason.**”

Then, something little happens...we back our car into the car across the street, or our shoelace breaks...or someone forgets our birthday...and we get angry about that! See how anger works?

And I believe God is saying to Jonah... “**Look where your anger is taking you, Jonah. Is this the way you want to live? Do you want to be an angry man forever?**”

You know, you and I have lived a long time. I recently listened to a tape by Charles Stanley on this subject. Patricia Butler was kind enough to let me have one of her tapes. Dr. Stanley preached a seven-point sermon on how not to grow old. **The entire point of his sermon is that we can live longer without getting old.**

One of his points is that we must keep on **loving**. Another of his points is that we must keep on **laughing**.

Well, it's very hard to be angry when we are loving and laughing!

Had Jonah loved the Ninevites and expressed joy at their salvation, he wouldn't have been angry, would he?

Verses 10-11...

Let me read to you from one of my commentaries on the book of Jonah written by a converted Jewish man by the name of Charles Feinberg:

“God was saying to Jonah: ‘If you became so attached to the gourd, because it served you and gratified your desires...a gourd upon which you expended no thought, no labor, no toil, no sacrifice, no care, no planting, no watering, no tending, no pruning, a gourd of short duration which grows quickly and as hastily passes away – shall I not permit My love and pity to flow forth unstintingly to multitudes of My creatures, the work of My hands, the crown of all My creative acts, nurtured, fed provided for by Me, those who will never go out of existence?’

And Dr. Feinberg goes on to say, “Was there ever such irresistible logic? And was there ever such boundless love and pity? We know not any.”

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Notice how God describes the city of Nineveh... ***"...the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand..."***

Who are these who don't know their right hand from their left? They are the children! Some theologians say these are children under the age of three...other men say these are children under the age of seven!

Then, God even mentions the **animals!**

What is God saying? He's trying to get Jonah to see that he had compassion and sorrow for a dead vine, but didn't have compassion for the Ninevites. He's trying to get Jonah to see that even if he couldn't muster up compassion for the adults, surely he could muster up compassion for the children and innocent animals.

Remember when David said he would rather fall into the hands of God for discipline than into the hands of man? Why? Because God always does everything well...He is a God of justice! **And His thoughts and His ways are infinitely higher than ours!**

And this book ends with this question... ***"Shall I not have compassion on Nineveh..."***

Praise God for His compassion!

What are the lessons we learned from the book of **Jonah**?

I believe first we learn that God is **sovereign over men and over nature.**

I also believe we learn that God is **a God of second chances.**

We learn that God is no respecter of persons...that **He is not willing that any be lost, but that all come to repentance.**

We learn that God's method of bringing His message to people **is other people.** Jonah was a missionary...a reluctant missionary... but a missionary, nonetheless.

Dr. Feinberg, from whom I just quoted a few minutes ago, was a converted Jew, and he brought out the fact that as Jonah was a Jew sent to the Gentiles with the message of salvation...we Gentiles should not neglect going to the Jews with the message of salvation.

But, I want to read to you what Dr. James Montgomery Boice said was the greatest message of the book of **Jonah**...

"...greater than all lessons is the lesson of the greatness of the mercy of God. How great is God's mercy? We have a hymn that says,
***'There's a wideness in God's mercy,
like the wideness of the sea...'***

But even that is not wide enough. The real measure of the wideness of the mercy of God is that of the outstretched arms of the Lord Jesus Christ as He hung on the cross to die for our salvation. That is the wideness of God's mercy. That is the measure of the length to which the love of God will go."

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And Dr. Boice closes with,

“How can we, who have known that mercy and benefited from it, be less than merciful to others? How can we do less than love them and carry the gospel to them with all the strength at our disposal?”

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

I pray the lessons we’ve learned from this old book will make a difference in the way we look at the lost folks around us day after day!

Next week, we’ll start a short study in the book of **Proverbs**. Please study!

JONAH 2:10-3:10

Last week we saw how Jonah was called by God to go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it. And we saw the familiar story of how Jonah went the **opposite** direction. Assyria was to the **north**, but Jonah didn’t go north. Jonah went **south** to Joppa, and he found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid his fare and got on board that ship.

And we saw last week that twice the Bible tells us that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord.

But, Jonah wasn’t very successful in hiding himself from God. God sent a violent storm and as a result of the sailors of the ship questioning Jonah to see if it was his fault that this violent storm had come upon them...Jonah told them to pick him up and toss him into the sea and the storm would subside. **And indeed it did!**

Jonah 1:17...

“And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.”

We didn’t get to discuss this last week, but there has been a lot of debate about what kind of fish this was. As children we heard it taught that this great fish was a whale...and it may have been.

But, when things happen in Scripture that man does not really know, man always tries to figure it out. And he will go to great lengths to try to prove his interpretation.

Why didn’t God tell us in His word what kind of a fish this was? I mean, don’t you and I have a right to know? Well, if God had wanted you and me to know exactly what kind of fish this was, He would have told us.

Notice in **verse 17...** ***“And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah...”***

It was a fish of God’s own choosing. It was a fish of God’s own creation. It was a fish that was divinely appointed by God! And it may have been a fish especially created by God for that specific purpose!

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The important thing is not what kind of fish this was, but what happened inside that fish. And Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

When the scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus and asked for a sign that He was the Messiah, Jesus said the only sign they would get would be the sign of Jonah...that just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights so must He be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

You know, there is documentation of an occasion when a whaling ship went after a great sperm whale. In the effort to get this whale, one of the whalers was thrown overboard. Well, when the whale was caught and killed by the whalers and its stomach opened, there they found the sailor from their ship who had been thrown overboard...and he was alive.

Having said all that, I hope that all of us are mature enough in our faith that we just take God at His word...and when His word tells us something that is hard to believe, we just choose to believe it by faith!

We see that Jonah prayed a beautiful prayer while he was in the stomach of that fish. And we hurriedly read that prayer last week and touched on it as best we could.

We're not going to go over the prayer again, but I do want us to see a couple of things that we didn't have time to see last week.

Jonah 2:2...

Jonah said he cried from the depth of Sheol. Sheol is a name sometimes given to the "grave" or "the unseen world" where the dead go.

So, this has been interpreted by some well-known Bible scholars to mean that **Jonah was not alive in the belly of the great fish, but was dead in the belly of the great fish.**

And they point to this and say,

"See, this is what Jesus meant...because we know that Jesus was dead in the grave, so Jonah must have been dead as well."

And this makes for a very good argument. I mean, pardon the pun, but this really makes the picture of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ come alive, doesn't it?

Whether Jonah was **alive** in the belly of the great fish, or whether Jonah was **dead**, the fact remains that while he was there, he came to his senses, he called on the Lord, and the Lord commanded the fish, and it spewed Jonah up onto the dry land.

One more thing about Sheol. You and I don't use that word today. But, it was a common Hebrew word back then. And Jonah learned the same thing David tells us in **Psalm 139...**

**"Where can I go from Thy Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Thy presence?
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there.
If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
Even there Thy hand will lead me,
And Thy right hand will take hold of me."**

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I love **Psalm 139**, because it lets us know what David and Jonah found out and what you and I have found out. And that is that if we belong to Jesus, if we are God's children, and He is our Father, no matter how far we run or try to hide... God is right there with us!

So, with all that in mind, let's look at the **Jonah 2...**and let's see what happened when Jonah finally got to Nineveh.

Verses 1-4...

I don't want us to miss the **mercy of God** in all this. We said last week that God could have just gone on and gotten another prophet to go to Nineveh. God could have looked around a little bit and found a prophet who was more obedient than Jonah, couldn't He?

But, God is such a merciful God. God is such a God of grace.

Every time we look at the **mercy of God** and the **grace of God**, I'm reminded of the little story I heard many years ago that a father tells of his little boy. The father said he had told his little boy to do something and he hadn't done it.

The father asked his son what punishment he thought his disobedience warranted...what should the father do to discipline the son?

And the son told his father that **he** thought he should get **ten licks**. Well, the father gave his son **nine licks** and sent him to his room.

Later, the father went to the little boy's room and said "Come on, Son, let's go get an ice cream cone."

And the little boy looked at his father and said, "I don't understand! You asked me what I should get as punishment and I said **ten licks** and you gave me only **nine licks**...and now you're saying, 'Let's go out for some ice cream'...what's going on?"

The father was a pastor and he thought this was a perfect opportunity to teach his son a great lesson in theology. And he said,

"The ten licks would have been the justice you deserved.
The nine licks were mercy...withholding from you
the justice you deserved.
The ice cream is grace...giving you what you don't
deserve."

Now, I've used this illustration before, but it gives me a picture of justice, mercy and grace like no other illustration I've ever heard.

Jonah deserved to left in the whale...that would have been God's **justice**.
But, God in His **mercy** allowed the whale to spew him out.
And God in His **grace** gave Jonah another chance to be obedient to His will.

God didn't come to Jonah and say, "Go back home, Jonah. You had your chance to do what I called you to do and you refused. I can never use you again."

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This isn't how God works... I mean, just think back...and I don't believe you'll find that God calls a man or a woman to be obedient to Him and when that man or woman is not that God doesn't give him or her another chance.

Think about **Abraham**. God called Abraham out of the Ur of the Chaldees...and He called Abraham for a specific purpose. Abraham was to go to the land of Canaan and become the father of the Jewish nation.

Well, Abraham left Ur, but he didn't go straight to the land of Canaan...he stopped at Haran which was still hundreds of miles from where God wanted him to go...and he would have probably **stayed** in Haran if God hadn't come to him a second time...

Think about **Moses**. God wanted Moses to deliver His people and Moses thought he would do this by killing an Egyptian who had attacked a Jewish man. This was **Moses'** way to bring about deliverance, but it wasn't **God's** way for him to bring about deliverance. And God had to put Moses on the backside of the Midian desert for the next forty years before Moses was ready to meet God in the burning bush.

Think about **Peter**. Peter had boasted that no matter what should happen he would not desert the Lord. He said, "Lord, I'm ready even to die with you..." yet he denied the Lord Jesus on three separate occasions. But, the Lord wasn't through with Peter. He knew what Peter was capable of doing for the cause of Christ and He used Peter in a mighty way!

Think about **yourself**. And think about **me**. How many times has God called you and me to do something and we took off for Tarshish?

And how many times has He said, "I still have something for you to do, My child. You can run from Me...but you will never truly be away from My presence."

I'm telling you...if you don't see yourself in this book, you're just not looking!

Well, when Jonah allowed God to give him another chance and finally went to Nineveh...he preached a two point sermon. He said, "God is going to overturn Nineveh, and He's going to do it in 40 days." "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overturned."

Well, what would you expect the results would be of a sermon like that?

I mean, suppose our pastor held a revival and the evangelist stood up in the pulpit and said, "**Yet forty days and Memphis will be overturned**" and that was his topic on **Sunday morning and Sunday night**

**and Monday at noon and Monday night
and Tuesday at noon and Tuesday night
and Wednesday at noon and Wednesday night.**

I believe by Monday at noon, he wouldn't have a handful of folks here...

When our pastor preached Jonah, he called this "**the pitiful preaching of the pouting preacher.**"

But, somehow the Holy Spirit of God used this sermon to bring salvation to a city...

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Verses 5-9...

Think about it! This could very well be **the biggest mass conversion** of all time!

If we had to say which chapter of the book of Jonah contained the greater miracle, we would have to say **chapter 3** far surpasses **chapter 2**. I mean, God appointed the fish to swallow Jonah, and then He also appointed the fish to spew Jonah out. The fish was merely doing what he was appointed to do by its Creator.

But, here we see the people of Nineveh, people who had a **far stronger** will than the great fish...people who had a **background** and **history** and **culture** of **violence** and **war** and **cruelty** against others...here we see the people of Nineveh bending **their** will to the **will** of the Lord of heaven!

What was so **powerful** about this sermon? What would make the hearts and the wills of the Ninevites respond to it? I truly believe it was because it was **God's** message to the people. And I believe when **God's** man presents **God's** message to the people the hearts and the wills and the lives of folks are changed.

Think about Billy Graham. He isn't an expository preacher like our pastor. In fact, a person who is **already** knowledgeable about the Word of God isn't going to learn a lot from one of Billy Graham's sermons, is he?

But, Billy Graham presents the simple Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ...**no fanfare...no long theological teachings**...just simply the fact that God loved the world and sent His Son to die for the world and that if folks would just believe in Him, they can have everlasting life.

And people come! And people have their hearts and their wills changed forever! And that's a wonderful miracle!!!

See, we're not told the Ninevites were saved because of the miracle of Jonah and the great fish even though they must have heard of it...

Jesus said **Jonah was a sign to the people**...but they weren't saved because of the miracle of the messenger...they are saved because of the miracle of the message!

Jesus said in **Matthew** and **Luke** that the Ninevites repented because of the preaching of Jonah!

We're simply told that the people believed in God! Faith should never rest in the messenger...but in the One who sends the messenger to deliver the message!

And we're not told that the people said , **"Well, we believe in God"** and that's all there is to that story.

No! We're told these blood-thirsty, violent, cruel people called a fast and put on sackcloth...

When the king of Nineveh heard God's message, he **arose from his throne, laid aside his robe** from him, **covered himself with sackcloth** and **sat on the ashes!** I believe the Ninevites were leaving no stone unturned.

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These were outward signs of repentance. **From the king to the lowliest livestock, the Ninevites showed God they meant business.**

“Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?”

Verse 10...

God saw their deeds. Does this mean they were saved by their **works...their deeds?** No. But, Paul told us that we are saved unto good works that God has already foreordained that we should walk in.

And that was simply what these folks were doing. Don't you wish revival like that would come to **America? To Tennessee? To Memphis?**

I have to confess to you that when I look at our country and our state and our city it seems that we are too far gone to have real revival...a time when people in mass would turn to the Lord God. But, nothing is impossible with Him...So...

Let's think about some steps to revival.

The first step to revival: There must be a faithful preaching and a faithful hearing of the Word of God!

We've already touched on this. Jonah's message wasn't a **theological** message. Jonah's message wasn't an **intellectual** message. It certainly wasn't a **long** message nor even an **eloquent** message...**but it was God's message!**

The story is told of the conversion of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. I read this many years ago...and it still touches my heart. I want to share it with you today the way Charles Haddon Spurgeon shared it in his autobiography.

When Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a just a boy he went to a Primitive Methodist Chapel whose pulpit was filled on a particular morning by a man who had no education and could barely read or write.

He preached on the text, **“Look unto Me, and be ye saved.”**

Dr. Spurgeon said the preacher stuck to this simple message, because he had little else to say.

“My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, ‘Look.’ Now lookin' don't take a deal of pain. It ain't liftin' your foot or your finger; it is just, ‘Look.’

Well, a man don't need to go to college to learn to look. You can be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. Anyone can look. Even a child can look. But then the text says, ‘Look unto Me.’

Ay, many of ye are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves...Look to Christ. The text says, ‘Look to Christ.’”

After about ten minutes of such preaching the speaker had quite exhausted what he had to say. But he noticed the young Spurgeon sitting under the balcony and he fixed his eyes on and said,

“Young man, you look very miserable. And you always will be miserable...miserable in life, and miserable in death...if you don't obey this text; but if you

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obey now, this moment, you will be saved. Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look!"

It wasn't a **polished sermon**. But it was a **true sermon** based on God's Word, and God blessed it because Spurgeon did look and was converted and became one of the greatest preachers of his time!

Not only must there be faithful preaching and a faithful hearing...

The second step to revival: There must also be belief in God.

As soon as the Ninevites faithfully heard the faithful preaching, they **believed** in God. They didn't need to know all that had happened to Jonah. They didn't need for Jonah to heal people and slay them in the Spirit. They simply needed to **believe the Word of God**.

The third step to revival: There must be some action taken.

There is no true belief without some corresponding action. Dr. James Montgomery Boice tells the story of a 19th century acrobat who was known by the stage name Blondin. Blondin gained a reputation for himself in Europe before coming to America.

In America, he became famous by walking across Niagara Falls on a tightrope. The crowd coming to see him never became bored with this, because he always did something new and different.

On one occasion he **pushed a wheelbarrow across**.
On another he **paused to eat an omelet**.

Once or twice he carried his manager on his back. And one day after he had done this, he is said to have turned to a man in the crowd and asked him, **"Do you believe I could do that with you?"**

"Of course," answered the man. "I've just seen you do it." "Well, then, hop on," invited the acrobat. "I'll carry you across."

"Not on your life!" replied the fellow.

See, there was clearly a **form of belief** in the man's first response, but it **didn't result in action**.

Real belief in God always results in action!

The fourth step to revival: There must be a turning from specific sin.

Look at **verse 8**...

"...and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from **the violence** which is in his hands." The sin of these people was violence!

God doesn't want to hear you and me say, **"If we've sinned, please forgive us."**

God wants to hear us say, **"Lord, you know I had an immoral thought today..."** or **"Lord, I spoke unkindly to someone today..."** or **"Lord, I was very prideful and selfish today..."**

If we don't want vague and cavalier forgiveness, we must not pray vague and cavalier prayers of repentance.

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Well, let's look at God's response to these Ninevites...

Verse 10...God honors the repentance of a sinful people.

I believe when we look at our nation we are tempted to say that things have gone too far for our country to experience real revival. And perhaps they have. But, I truly believe if America would do the things that the Ninevites did...**we just might have it!**

Aren't you glad God is the God of **mercy and grace and forgiveness?**

Aren't you glad God is the God of **the Gentiles as well as the Jews?**

Aren't you glad God is the God of **second chances?**

Aren't you glad God is the God of **the impossible?**

Well, He is all that and more!!!