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C0824 – July 23, 2008 – Jonah 4:1-5 – Jonah's Anger

Open your Bible to Jonah chapter 3. We want to move into the last chapter tonight and conclude with some principles of God's grace and the image of God. Now, last week we saw the results of Jonah's proclamation to the Ninevites. The content of which is given in verse 4. "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." Remember, this was the greatest city of the ancient world, a great metropolis of about 1 million people and the Assyrian culture as a whole had been rapidly deteriorated. We said this is a characteristic of the large urban metropolis, to rapidly metastasize evil. From the tower of Babel onward the tendency of man to promote his program is to do it around the metropolis. So we want to look at why this happens, it will give us insight into our own civilization, and if we don't understand the principles that caused Nineveh to reach such a state of corruption then we can't understand what's happening to our own country because the principles are the same. They've always been the same in the rise and fall of nations.

What we're talking about is the world system. We're not knocking building cities, we're not knocking engineering projects, we're not knocking music or art or technology. There's nothing wrong with those things, those are a part of dominion man, a part of man's genius. What we're knocking is the strategy or agenda of the pagan heart that organizes all of these components toward selfish goals. It's that underlying agenda that we're knocking. It's not technology that's bad, it's how the technology is being used. John the apostle refers to this strategy as "the world," the *kosmos*, and he insists that this is a highly organized system of thought that revolves around three lusts; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. Lust in the Bible is not always sexual, sometimes it is, but it's primary meaning is just "desire," it's a strong inclination toward self and organizing things around self, it's the sinful impulse. So you put man together in a corporate city and

it's just desire magnified, businesses shoot up to satisfy this desire and that desire, everybody's got their particular lust pattern and every street corner you can satisfy your lust, mines coffee, yours is sex, his is exercise, hers is power, so man constructs a system that serves these lusts.

So let's review these three things. Starting with the lust of the eyes. Don't think too physical here. That's where it starts, it does start with what we see and we take that into the mind and now we have an image base. The problem here is what is taken in starts to get distorted in the imagination, just toyed with here and there, the imagination is a playground for sin and it can be a very powerful playground because before long you are playing whatever it is out in reality. Obviously the imagination was made to be a playground of the Holy Spirit to produce godliness but it gets used all the time by Satan to distort reality. If you get this going in a large city with a large number of people all imagining the same kinds of things, it's going to escalate in intensity till an outsider looking in starts to wonder, because you can't see this if your stuck in the system, it takes someone outside the system looking in to say, "How long can this thing hold together, I mean you're tearing the moral fiber of society into shreds." So that's the lust of the eyes.

Second you have the lust of the flesh, this is the actualization of the imagination, this is where you cave into your lusts, you murder, you lie, you deceive, you hate, you act on the imagination to secure some selfish end.

Last you have the boastful pride of life and this is the penultimate because by this point you're defining reality, you think the universe is what your mind is constructing, you're the inventor of truth, you've taken the place of God, you are god, you create your own reality by the use of legislative logic. All that's left now is a power struggle between you and everybody else who is their own god. It's just a contest to see who is the best manipulator, who can get the most assets and so forth to try to satisfy that hole in the human heart. And it never works you can never fill an infinite gap in your life with finite things. C'mon, Solomon tried it all and he still wasn't satisfied, it's just vanity. Learn the lesson from Solomon don't go through it all again. He's already experimented, the guy had all the wealth, he could fund whatever expeditions or experiments he wanted to try, he had power, he had a keen intellect, he had wisdom and keep in mind that once you have divine wisdom it can be misused, it can be used to skillfully deceive, he had a thousand sex partners,

so this guy already tried it all, if you don't believe me just read Ecclesiastes, by the end of the whole thing it's just vanity, it never satisfies. What the Book of Ecclesiastes would do for our young people, why it would save them from all the turmoil, if they'd take it to heart. But here's a civilization in Jonah that hasn't taken it to heart. This is the Assyrian culture, a culture that has bought into the agenda of the world system and they've marched right down this line, they had those who lusted for power, they were malicious killers, just think of all the sick ideas they came up with in their imaginations, how we can kill people, what we can do with their flesh, and then they go out and do it, and get a kick out of it and after they do it yeah that was great, let's do it some more but let's make it more interesting so they come up with some more ideas. Then you had your religious mystical types and they had their pagan temples, and we know what went on their, it was an outlet for all sorts of corrupt sexual practices, orgies, drunkenness, homosexuality, these were ways ancient man thought they could interact with the divine, it was how they got closer to God, why did they think that? Why did they think sex got them closer to the divine? Because the universe originated from sexual activity between the gods and goddesses, it's all linked together in the Continuity of Being, so obviously when we have sex we're intermingling with the divine. We know this was the primary belief system in Nineveh because we found an ancient library there of Ashurbanipal with 22,000 clay inscribed tablets and eight of those were of *Enuma elish*, the ancient Babylonian creation myth where you had the gods fighting with one another and procreating to generate the universe out of themselves. So those who were created wanting to participate in the divine did so through sex. Sex is always a central theme in pagan thought, it's somehow very powerful and that goes back to the Continuity of Being idea. They had re-engineered reality and that's the third idea of the boastful pride of life. So this was a corrupt society and this is why God says in chapter 1:2 "their evil has come up before Me." "You know, I've put up with this and put up with this and it's gone on and on and on and that's it, I'm not going to let this continue." "So I give them forty days, forty days, the period of testing." Obviously by putting a time period on it God reveals that He doesn't want to judge. But obviously the world system they imagined can't stop Him from judging. God can interfere and will interfere unless the people change. So this is a conditional prophecy in 3:4 and in 3:5 they meet the condition. On one hand they believed in God. Apparently they had enough information to believe in almighty God such that they will be in heaven. Jesus picks this up and contrasts this generation

with His generation of Israelites. And it must have been a real slap in the face to the Israelites in his day. The Ninevites were more responsive than we were? Yes, they were. Sometimes we see this when a person is just sick, “Into drugs and who knows what else and they respond to the grace of God.” Then you have your moral friend over there and he never responds. Well obviously he doesn’t see the need while the nasty guy sees quite clearly he’s got a problem. So the Ninevites knew they were in trouble and they responded by trusting in God. Now what does this say about God’s grace? That it extends to even the nastiest most depraved people on planet earth, that’s what it says. We may not like that, Jonah didn’t like that, but that’s the heart of our God, that’s the essence of grace. We all need it. The second thing they did was repent and that means they had a change of mind about their strategy, how they were suppressing the truth in unrighteousness and how they were behaving. These people had a genuine change of mind and they quit their practices, they quit flaying people’s flesh, they quit worshipping idols and so forth, at least at that time. And verse 10, “When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do *it*.” It didn’t take much, any kind of positive response and the Lord relented.

Now verse 1, **But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry.** Now he’s not angry with the Ninevites, he’s angry with God. Apparently the 40 days had passed by this time and when the 41st day arrived and God had not overthrown Nineveh Jonah got mad at God. He wanted God to wipe Nineveh off the map. Was he aware of the prophecies of Amos and Hosea who revealed that Assyria would defeat Israel (Amos 5:27; Hos 11:5). We can’t say for sure but we do know he was angry with God for sparing Nineveh. You may find it strange at first glance that Jonah would respond to such success with anger. But this is the heart of the book and if you miss this you miss the whole point. This is God vs Jonah but it’s not only that it’s God vs you and I. You really haven’t understood the Book of Jonah until you’ve realized yourself as a modern day Jonah. Yes the Ninevites were nasty, yes the modern day extremist Muslims are nasty but do you deserve the grace of God any more than they? When you’re willing to go proclaim God’s word to whatever people in whatever land of whatever language and customs then you’ve passed the Jonah test. It doesn’t matter who they are. So many of us sit in our comfy Christian homes on our comfy Christian couches sipping our

comfy Christian cappuccinos. As is so often the case the OT warms us up to the NT proclamation, "For God so loved the world." Now until you've really figured that out, until you've let that soak in real deep you have not understood the depths of the grace of God. It's like so many truths in the word of God, you think you really get it but then you realize you don't get it. Here's a prophet of God for goodness sake, you'd think, "This guys got it," he's a prophet of God, the chosen mouthpiece of God almighty," obviously he's got it together. We know he understands who God is, v 2. **"Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my *own* country? Therefore in order to forestall this** and that's a poor translation, it just reads **Therefore I made haste to flee to Tarshish,** Jonah's not going to forestall anything, **for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.** The very reason he ran the other way was because he *did* understand who God is. He didn't fail to know God correctly. Where's the failure? The failure was in the will of man. The failure was not submitting to the will of God. God had revealed His will to Jonah and God has revealed his will for our lives in the NT epistles. When we rebel against that it distorts our thinking. Turn back to chapter 1 because I want you to see this. Here he's out of it, right? He's sinned against God. Now they've cast lots and found out it was Jonah so in v 8 they're interrogating him, and in v 9 Jonah answers, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land." ¹⁰Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, "How could you do this?" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them."

Now, you're going to have to stay with me on this. I want you to pay close attention. At this point Jonah is in rebellion, he's operating according to the carnal nature, the pagan man. Now watch, v 9 "I fear the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land." Now is that a rational or irrational statement? Rational. Highly rational, God is creator. Now v 10, he told them he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord. Rational or irrational statement? Irrational. In one breath He's Creator of all and in the next you're trying to run away from him? This is how sin affects the mind. Jonah doesn't see it but look at the response of the sailors. "How could you do this?" What are you thinking Jonah? What I want you to see is how the carnal heart thinks, it's not purely irrational, it's rational and irrational at the same time. So here's your natural man, the unbeliever, the man who is at enmity with God and he goes about life and he says very rational things, take for example

the evolutionary scientist and he looks out at nature, the world around him and he sees order, stability and he says "Oh, there's natural law, there's a stability in nature, there's order, the universe is a rational place." Then he turns around and in the same breath he talks about chance, random mutations, disorder and chaos. Now I ask you how in the world do you get together law and order with chance and disorder? Those are contradictory principles.¹ One is rational the other is irrational. And that's what I mean when I say the natural man is not purely irrational; his mind is both rational and irrational. Now, as believers we can't get too proud here because we still have the carnal nature, the flesh and when we're in the flesh we think the same way. We're looking at a prime example right here, Jonah. Oh yes, God is the Creator of the sea so to get away from Him I run out to sea. What do you mean you're running away from him, are you stupid? No, he's not stupid, he's carnal, he's sinful, he's got a mind, a brilliant mind but that mind the reasoning process that go on in the mind become distorted when we sin. There are consequences to sin, nothing new there it's just that most people don't think they're mind gets sloshed around by sin. You're free to make your choices but you're not free from the consequences of your choices. You can talk about free will till your blue in the face but show me one place where a person is free from the consequences of his choices. You can't escape them. We'd love to have total free will, no consequences, it would be great, I can do whatever I want. But that's not reality and the most immediate consequence of sin is in the mind, all of a sudden your into this dialectic mode of thinking and you sort of bounce around between rationality and irrationality. A couple of years ago Lubbock Christian University was having a guest speaker, Dr Leonard Sweet, I don't remember the topic but he was well known, he's written lots of books, so my father-in-law, my wife and I went to hear him, and in the course of his speech he says, ya know, we Christians have got to stop thinking in terms of either-or and think in terms of both-and, and my father-in-law stands up and says, "That's Hinduism" and Sweet snaps back, "No it's not," and that was a very interesting interaction, and as is so often the case you can't think of what to say till two hours later, but in the course of thinking about his response it became apparent that what we should have said back was, "Well either you're right and I'm wrong or I'm right and you're wrong, but we can't both be right." See, and that illustrates the point. Dr Sweet is into postmodernism where all truth is relative, there are no absolutes so why can't it be *both* Hinduism *and* not Hinduism, Dr Sweet, I thought it was both-and? But he can't operate that way, he automatically

slips back into absolute statements, and that's what we mean by irrational and rational always going together and that's where the majority of Christianity is headed, that's the Emergent or Emerging Church, the substance of it is there is no absolute truth and language is not an adequate vehicle for truth. So obviously what we're doing here is phasing out, my generation, friends, you may have a hard time believing this but my generation, it's not doctrine it's a discussion, it's not truth it's your opinion, it's not history it's parable. The ridiculousness of those statements should be apparent on the face of it because if you say there is no absolute truth, your making an absolute statement, if you say language is not an adequate vehicle for truth you've used language to say it. So either these people are unbelievers, just pagans who call themselves Christians, or they are carnal Christians, permanently carnal, I'm not here to decide I'm just giving you the options. Sin damages the mind. Sin damaged the prophet Jonah's mind so let's turn back to chapter 4 because I want you to see again, the same principle at work and I want you to see how God deals with it. Middle of v 2, **for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.** Rational or irrational statement? Rational. Now verse 3, notice the therefore, this is Jonah's logic machine at work, **"Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life."** Now is that a coherent conclusion to draw, "kill me God." No, that's completely irrational. How could we revise v 3 so it would be rational? If God is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abundant in lovingkindness, relenting, then logically we should do what? Praise God, not want to die, we just had tremendous success here, a million people responded to God's grace before judgment and the messenger wants to die? So Jonah is at it again. When did he get out of it? When he sinned. V 1. Jonah got angry. So here we go again, you sin and it immediately affects your mental faculties, you go into this pagan rationality-irrationality paradigm. There are always consequences of sin. And it's observations like these that just blow away Thomistic thinking, you know the idea that when man fell he fell from the neck down, that sin didn't affect our reasoning capacities, those were left intact so we can construct logical arguments and reason our way to God. That's what Thomas Aquinas said, that's not what the Bible says. The problem is that even if we could reason to God we wouldn't reason to God because we're at enmity with God. We are against Him and as long as we're at war with Him our mind doesn't function properly, to get it back in gear we

have to submit to Him. Oh, we still have the tool of reason but reason is just a tool and a tool can be used in a godly way or a satanic way. Either God tells us how to think and we submit to that or Satan tells us how to think and we submit to that. It's one or the other but we're never neutral.

Now let's see how God deals with us when we're into this rational-irrational stuff like Jonah. What strikes you as odd in v 4? There's no mention of now Jonah why do you want to die is there. In fact, does God mention anything in Jonah's prayer? No, not a thing. God's not going to deal with us on the basis of our own irrationality. This is a carnal prayer, wrong motive. What does God respond to? God, just like He always does, He's able to cut through all the flack and get right to the root of the problem. What's the problem? Jonah's sin. You have a sin problem Jonah and we're not going anywhere in this discussion until you deal with your sin problem. "Why are you angry?" **"Do you have a good reason to be angry?"** In other words the very act of Jonah being angry in this situation is unreasonable, it's irrational, sin is irrational. And boy that shut Jonah up. In v 5 he just goes and sits outside the city. Before we look at that let's sum up what we're saying.

We're saying that only biblical thinking is rational, if you depart from the Scriptures, say you've got your theory about capital punishment and you think it's perfectly rational but it contradicts the Scripture, sorry, it's not rational, it doesn't matter how much you've thought about it, you still don't have godlike omniscience. You've got your theories about politics or economics, you've got your theories on whatever, if they contradict the Scriptures they're essentially irrational because all thinking that is not biblical thinking is irrational by definition. The irony of this in our culture is that we always here "You Christians and your faith, why don't you think for once and get off this faith bit, faith is irrational," yet that statement is sheer irrationalism. Don't let them paint you in a corner like this, faith is thinking, faith is rational, believing God is the most logical and coherent thing a person can do. It's what we were designed for and when we don't live according to our design there are consequences. Take the example of a knife, guys like to carry pocket knives and what happens but we get to a screw and we don't have a screwdriver so we try to use our knife and that's why we have thousands of pocket knives with a broken tip, you tried to use a tool for something it wasn't designed for, obviously it breaks. Now transfer that idea over to man, when man doesn't do what he's designed to do (which is believe

God) then man malfunctions. And we wonder why the world is messed up...We have a bunch of malfunctioning people running around, that's why, "Oh I can't believe in God." "Okay, fine, that's your choice but don't try to make me out as the one not thinking, its pagan thought that doesn't have any answers." Just paint him a nice contradiction in his own system, say "Oh you like having the order in the universe so you can do all your fancy experiments. Well explain to me how the system can maintain order when you bring random chance in the same system to explain certain phenomena?" Your not on trial, he is. This is what Jesus did, he'd always leave them with a real humdinger of a question, "You say there's no resurrection well how do you explain that on the basis of your belief in the Torah?" And they'd just kind of fumble around. I don't have a problem with the Scriptures, you got the problem, get with the program. Why did Jesus never lose an argument? Because He never sinned, that's why and it's interesting you can make a line of argument for Jesus being sinless just from His arguments, not a single piece of bad logic. And finally these people said, the heck with this guy, we're not asking Him anymore questions. So that's the point, sin leads to irrational thinking. That's Jonah, here He is in an argument with God now. Ooops, wrong opponent.

So in v 5, **Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it.** He's up in the foothills, there are hills over to the east side, so obviously what he's doing is he's getting up high so he can see the whole city. And **There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city.** What's he doing up there? Well he wants to see what will happen *in the city*. You know, will the repentance last, will it stick and then of course if it doesn't, which is his hope, then maybe God will cream them. So I get up here on this hill. Maybe we're going to have some fireworks here like at Sodom and Gomorrah and you'll have the few people who really repented running out of the city to escape the judgment and God and then we'll get the fire and brimstone. We don't know exactly but Jonah may have thought that.

So, next week we want to get into the next few verses, maybe finish up the book, and, of course, in the next few verses, because God is who He is, because He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and so forth Jonah is going to get more grace. Incidentally that description of God in v 2 comes from Exod 34:6-7, those aspects are

components of the name YHWH. See people think YHWH just means “Oh God is eternal and immanent.” It started out that way in Exod 3 but over time God amplified the meaning of that name so it incorporates all these things. When you say the name YHWH you’re talking about the “eternal, immanent, gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abundant in lovingkindness, relenting” God, that’s what Exod 34 is saying and that’s why Jonah is quoting that, it applies to the situation. “Oh yes God, you’ve gone and done it again, you’ve gone and been yourself, why do you have to do that, I hate these people.” That’s Jonah and not a one of us has come to understand this book until we realize “It is not only the unbelievers in the Ninevehs of today who need to repent; it is also we who are modern Jonahs...no one begins to understand this profound and searching little book unless he discovers the Jonah in himself and then repentantly lays hold upon the boundless grace of God.”ⁱⁱ When are we going to get over ourselves and start to realize the majesty of His words, “Let Us make man in Our own image, according to Our likeness”? Do we not deprecate these words when we selectively apply the grace of God; oh, they look funny, they smell funny, they have funny hair, they are Muslim, they speak a different language, some of us have a problem with the other sex. Look it doesn’t matter. Do we not draw nearer to the heart of our God the more we emphasize the splendor of His statement, “Let us make man in Our image.” That means the Ninevites, the Chinese, the French, the Russians and so forth. Every man and woman is made in the image of God, all can receive the grace of God. Yet in our practice are we not more like the evolutionists who think that certain people groups are inferior or sub-optimal, always ourselves being the standard for such measurements. If we were true creationists and took the doctrine of the image of God to its logical conclusion we would be full of the compassion of God. Why are we having a problem going out to these people? God sent His Son to die for these people. Do we deserve grace and they don’t? That’s most of our problem. In the final analysis we do think we deserve grace and they do not. In which case we have to wonder, did we really understand grace to begin with? And am I ever going to understand the depth of His grace? When I started this book I did not know what I would find, but what I have found is a Jonah in me. What I have found is that the heart of God is so much different than mine. So let me close with a testimony of a guy who did figure it out, here’s a guy who took seriously the image of God in man.

“In April 1942, Jacob DeShazer was a bombardier in the

Doolittle raid over Japan. With four other crewmen, he bailed out. Two of them were executed. The others spent the rest of the war—three years and four months—in prison camps. They were beaten, tortured, and starved. At some point, DeShazer asked for a Bible. They brought him one, allowing him to keep it for three weeks. ‘I eagerly began to read its pages,’ he later wrote. ‘I discovered that God had given me new spiritual eyes and that when I looked at the enemy officers and guards who had starved and beaten my companions and me so cruelly, I found my bitter hatred for them changed to loving pity.’ He survived, and dedicated his life to missionary work in Japan. One of his converts was Mitsuo Fuchida—the lead pilot in the Pearl Harbor attack. Fuchida became an evangelist. Jacob DeShazer died in Salem, Oregon, age 95. R.I.P.”

—*National Review*, April 21, 2008

What are you going to say when you see Fuchida in heaven? “Oh, you can’t be here you killed our men at Pearl.” Or are you going to say, “You know, the grace of God really is something else.”

ⁱ These have become the two explanatory filters through which evolutionists interpret data. That which cannot be explained by natural law is explained by chance. Proponents of design argue that these two are inadequate to account for all the data and thus a third filter of Design must be added (William Dembski, *The Design Inference*)

ⁱⁱ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003), Jon 4:10.

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