

## Jonah 1:1-3

## NINEVEH SAVED

PRELIMS. One of the **reasons God** has included the Book of Jonah in the canon is to reveal to us His **sovereign grace** and **power** in blessing wicked nations and disobedient believers! Nineveh was one of the most evil cities in the world. If it was not for this book many of us would have **no hope** for the conversions of large wicked cities! This book is about the salvation of a **city** and about a backsliding servant of God. (1) Nineveh was about the **same size** as Dundee but even more **wicked!!** (2) Abram **prayed** to God to save Sodom if there were more than 10 righteous souls in it! God said ‘Yes’! There are **more** than 10 righteous souls in Dundee! That itself should encourage us regarding God’s willingness to bless us. (3) A city needs **preachers** – or does it? This book shows how much God is in salvation and how little the preacher is! It was **not** Jonah’s idea that Nineveh should be evangelised – it was **God’s idea!** No prophet really thought of evangelising ‘outsiders’! But God did! God seeks the lost – remember Zacchaeus!

## JONAH’S FAILURES

When he was **called** by God to minister there – he **deliberately ran away!** *“But Jonah rose to flee...from the presence of the Lord”*[3] J did not **want** to go to these people. I have a ‘hunch’ it was because God told Jonah what type of sermon to preach! He was to preach **against** their **sinful** lifestyle! Jonah was used to a **consoling** ministry *“restoring the borders of Israel”*[2 Kin 14:25] No one really **wants** to tell people their sins – not to their face anyway! **APP** But maybe that is what is **lacking** in our generation! \*‘Christ is irrelevant if we have not sinned’!

Jonah wanted to be **popular** with the Ninevites - a nice text about God’s love to them. That will go down well **anywhere!** But God said to *“call out against it the message that I tell you”*[3:2] Preachers have to give the people God’s message, not their own message. You see, I think Jonah **knew** God was

ultimately going to be gracious to them *“I knew that You are a **gracious God and merciful**”*[4:2] - so he **‘reasoned’** why put the fear of Hell in them with the ‘40 days’ **threat!!** But that is **human reasoning!** God’s ways are **not** our ways!

But if you are one of God’s children *“Be sure your sin will find you out”*[Num 32:23]. If you are not one of God’s children, then God may leave you until eternity before He reveals to you your sins! Jonah’s sin of running from God, was exposed by pagans through a lot! *“the **lot** is cast into the lap, but its **every decision** is from the LORD”*[Pro 16:33] to **convict** Jonah!

Jonah’s sin resulted in an example of the **‘world rebuking the Church’** *“What is this that you have done”*[1:10] after telling the mariners *“I fear the Lord, the God of heaven”* Like Pharaoh rebuked Abram for lying and sent him packing from Egypt, so with Jonah! **APP** Ever been shown an **example of honesty or humility** by an **unbeliever?**

J went in the **huff** with God – when He **forgave** the Ninevites!! *“But it **displeased** Jonah exceedingly, and he was **angry**...is not this what I said when I was yet in my country?”*[4:1] He was made to **look foolish** in front of them in pronouncing ‘40 days and you are zapped’! It was his **pride!** **APP** We must be prepared to be **fools** for **Christ’s sake!** Paul was made a **spectacle** before the wisest men in Athens - **laughed** at him!

J chose **creature comforts** above the salvation of sinners! *“sat to the east of the city and **made a booth** for himself”*[4:5]! **APP** What **should** he have been doing? **Praying** for the city! No mention of God’s name being glorified among the heathen! Or His Word not to return to Him **void!** Or sinners saved from their sins! Nothing. Just **sulking!**

### **The GRACE of GOD to JONAH**

The sailors’ **kindness** - even after hearing of his disobedience and causing them so much loss! They were so reasonable

(many would have **killed** him!) **APP** The wonderful mercy of **restraining grace** upon unbelievers. “*the men rowed hard to get back to land*”[1:13]! They did not want to **ditch** him! God’s sovereign control over the hearts of men “*The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will*”[Pro 21:1]. God is the God of amazing **exceptions** and of the **unexpected!**

God’s **preservation** of J in the **whales’s** belly! “*And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah.*”[1:17] The word ‘appointed’ can mean ‘prepared’ a fish (not necessary a whale!) It **was** indeed judgment – but there was **mercy mixed** with it! **APP** God always provides grace for His people – “*in wrath remember mercy*” [Hab 3:2]. The ‘world’ have their proverbial version of it: ‘Every cloud has a silver lining’!

The J was **restored** to office the **second time** [3:1]. After his chastisement, J was given a second chance – but **only because** he **repented** and responded biblically to discipline! It is to those who ‘are properly exercised’ by God’s dealings with them that **benefit** afterwards “*all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but **later** it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been **trained** by it*”[Heb12:11]

Then God **provided a plant** “*that it might be a **shade** over his head*”[4:6] How lovely of God to give Jonah this comfort when he was so rebellious! **APP** How often God **continues** to give you/I our **daily comforts** (most taken for granted) even in the midst of our disobedience! As Psalmist said “*With us He dealt not as we sinned*” or as NIV “*He does **not** treat us as our sins **deserve** or **repay** us according to our iniquities*”[Psa 103:10]! We get far more than we are deserve!

God **educated** and **instructed** Jonah in **evangelistic zeal!** God told Him of His **passion** for sinners and His **purpose** of mercy to the Ninevites (which thought was a 1,000 miles away from where Jonah was **spiritually!**) “*You **pity** the **plant***” that has

perished and no longer protects your head – “*should not I pity Nineveh that great city*” of more than a 120,000 precious souls going to eternity! [4:10,11]! God’s **priorities!**

### **LESSONS/APPLICATION**

When God’s people sin, other people suffer [1:5] The **mariners** had a very bad day’s business! They lost all their gear! David’s **son** died as a result of David’s sin! David suffered famine because of **Saul’s** attack on the Gibeonites [2Sam 21:2].

**Success** must be determined in the **long term**. Just because things ‘go well’ in the immediate future, the long term may bring disaster! I found a ship going to Tarshish and might have reasoned ‘God is leading me, I am being blessed’ – but He wasn’t – it was disaster! Saul’s 1<sup>st</sup> battle was a great victory but in the end Saul was a bad ruler of his people!

It is our **conduct**, our **moral behaviour**, that brings God’s judgment on a person or community. Jonah’s **disobedience** caused the problems. People in **high office**, particularly in the **Church**, are **especially responsible** for what happens regarding God’s judgment in a community!

We must never say about a nation or an individual, ‘There is no hope’! Remember **Romania** in 1989! Never say about an individual ‘There is no hope for him/her’!

Take **encouragement**, salvation is in the hands of a **gracious God** who **delights** in mercy! Salvation ultimately is not in the hands of **lazy pastors** and **ministers** who have no love for the lost! **If Ninevites** found **mercy** then there is hope for all!

People need to be urged to do what the Ninevites did: **Believe** the message of the gospel *Who has believed our report?*”; **call** urgently on God; **turn from** your evil ways!! [3:5, 8, 10]!!