

Jonah, the Obedient, Preaching Prophet

Jonah 3:1-10

Having prayed in the whale's belly, calling upon the God of his salvation, Jonah now obeys the Lord's call as he should have done originally.

Vs. 1,2 – How gracious a God and Savior is the Lord, that His word comes to men not once, but again, and often again and again and again, many times over!

Here is the scope and sum of every true, God-called, God-enabled ministry: ***“Arise, go unto ... that ... city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.”*** Jer. 1:7-9 Mark 16:14-16 The man, the mission, and the message, are all of God's determination and will. **I Cor. 3:5-7** The purpose of the ministry is not determined by man, but by God, who calls men into the ministry. The purpose of the ministry is to proclaim God's message, the message of salvation through Jesus Christ by faith unto all and upon all them that believe; and to declare His words to the ends of the earth.

We live in an hour when everyone can arise to do just about anything and everything other than the work of the Lord.

Vs. 3,4 – Jonah was now obedient to the voice of God. Here is the ruling principle and imperative, as well as the extent of our prerogative in the Lord's work: ***“according to the word of the LORD.”*** If we have not obeyed that which is revealed in ***“to the word of the LORD,”*** then there is no need of being concerned with anything else, no matter how seemingly important it may be to the feelings and thoughts of people.

Nineveh was a large and populous city, perhaps the largest and most populous in the world at that time, by some estimates. Nevertheless, Jonah was to go and preach unto it, meaning to the people in the city. Beloved, we need not concern ourselves with the outward size of any task, if the task is God's will for us to do. One prophet was all that God sent to this wicked city.

Jonah was obedient to preach the preaching that God had bid him preach. ***“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”*** Jonah was to preach a message of coming judgment upon the wicked inhabitants of that city. Contained in the gospel which we preach is a warning to those who would make light of

sin and continue in the way that is contrary to and displeasing to the living God. *“Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,”* (Acts 20:21), is the soul-and-life-saving message that we are bid to preach unto those to whom the Lord sends us.

Vs. 5-9 – The people of Nineveh *“repented at the preaching of Jonah,”* (Luke 11:32). Notice that repentance and faith go hand-in-hand as inseparable graces. ***“So the people of Nineveh believed God.”*** Many today will say that they believe God, or believe in God, but they do not cease from their sins and their living contrary to the plain revealed will of God in the scriptures. They do not have godly sorrow for sin that leads to repentance unto salvation. They do not leave off their fornication and adultery, their lying, their backbiting, their railing, their lying, their hypocrisy, their cursing and swearing, their taking of God’s name in vain, their ungratefulness toward God, their idolatry, their robbing God, their living in pleasure and carnal lusts, and their ignoring of God and God’s Word.

The king of Nineveh proclaimed a fast and a time of crying mightily unto God, that the inhabitants of Nineveh may perhaps find mercy. Is this not all that sinners can do, fall upon God’s mercy?

“Note that the only message they had heard was a prophecy of impending judgment. God had sent his servant to warn them of the coming destruction; and, since he had warned them that he meant to destroy them, they could infer that he might possibly intend pity towards them should they repent, but there was as yet no verbal declaration of mercy or hope. These people went to God with nothing better to sustain them than this, “Who can tell?” How much more guilty than these Ninevites are those who refuse to humble themselves before God, even when they have distinct injunctions from God, and explicit promises that whoever shall confess and forsake his sins shall find mercy! These men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against the men of London, and the men of this generation, and condemn them, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now men do not repent even at the testimony of Jesus Christ the Son of God, to despise the prophet Jonah, would have involved these people in certain destruction; of how much more severe punishment shall they be thought worthy of who despise the Christ of God, and do despite to the Spirit of grace.” (Spurgeon, C. H.)

“Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?” Here was the king of Nineveh’s looking to God for mercy, along with all the

inhabitants, who, at his command, did cease their wickedness, put on sackcloth, fast, and pray to God. This was their smiting upon their breast and saying, “*God be merciful to me a sinner,*” (*Luke 18:13*). Is this not like what the sailors did when they cast Jonah into the sea? Did not Jonah, in a figure, have to die, in order for them to live, much as Christ had to die in order for us to live unto God? Did not they have to cast themselves entirely upon God to avoid destruction? So, too, the Ninevites. They must cast themselves entirely upon God and His mercy. What did they know of His mercy? That’s what makes their repentance and their faith all the more condemning to those today who will not heed the plain gospel message that lays bare the saving mercy and grace of God in His Son Jesus Christ.

It has been said that Jonah had a simple message. Oftentimes, we do not give out the simple message of the gospel because we want to please people. We do not want to offend them. Often, it is better to get to the point and avoid distracting issues, and give out the urgent message of, “*Repent ye, and believe the gospel,*” (*Mark 1:15*); and, “*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,*” (*Luke 13:3*).

The Ninevites abandoned all concerns for their earthly lives. They were consumed with one and only one concern, avoiding the threatened destruction. We are too much taken up with the things that we say we must do, and we avoid the one overriding concern, that all men are lost outside of Jesus Christ and will perish apart from Him and His saving grace and truth. We say, “Well, I need to see to this or that.” They stopped eating, they stopped drinking water, they stopped tending their livestock, and they did nothing else but humble themselves in mourning for sin and crying mightily to God for mercy. When’s the last time you stopped eating or drinking to repent of your sins toward God, or to pray for someone who you know that is lost and on the road to hell?

Vs. 10 – God’s warnings and threatenings are to this end, that sinners may repent. He gives the warning, and He gives space to repent. Now He may not give much space. He gave Nineveh forty days. Yet He is a merciful and a gracious God, and of great kindness. **Jonah 4:2 Jer. 18:1-7 Ezek. 33:11 Acts 17:30,31**

Are we obedient to the calling and commission that God has given us? Ours is merely to preach; God’s is to grant repentance, life, and light to blind, ignorant, wicked sinners who

are straying far off from Him and the way of life and blessedness that is only in Christ Jesus by faith.