

Gleanings from Jonah

Introduction:

1. The things written before Paul's time, including Jonah, were written for our learning (Romans 15:4).
2. Jonah, an early writing prophet, by scripture lived no later than the reign of Jeroboam II (II Kings 14:25).
3. God uses the rebellious in His service (Ps 68:18), as Moses, Jeremiah, and Paul confirm Jonah here.
4. Nineveh was the capital city of the Assyrian Empire built by the cohorts of Nimrod (Genesis 10:8-12).
5. Its perimeter was about 60 miles by historical evidence, and it was about three days by scripture (3:3).
6. It had a population extrapolated from current U.S. age distribution of approximately 1.6 million (4:11).
7. Nineveh was the residence of Sennacherib (II Kings 19:36), a wicked enemy king of Israel (II Kgs 18-19).
8. God later destroyed it in great fury for their great wickedness (Nahum 1:1; 2:8ff; Zephaniah 2:12-15).
9. Tarshish was a distant Gentile place known for its silver (Isaiah 66:19; Genesis 10:4; Jeremiah 10:9).

1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

- A. God called Jonah to his duty by His word, and the book of Jonah is about Jonah's disobedience.
- B. God calls you and all other believers to duty by His word, and how well do you obey your call?

1:2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

- A. God sees all wickedness in every place; eventually it exceeds His longsuffering and troubles Him.
- B. Do not think the eyes of LORD (Pr 15:3) and the Word of God (Heb 4:12-14) will miss your sins.
- C. The work of the ministry is to cry against it – a ministerial role hardly found today (II Tim 4:1-4).
- D. True ministers make war against their congregations and their foolish imaginations (II Cor 10:4-6).
- E. If Nineveh's wickedness came up before God, what about America, which is responsible for more?

1:3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

- A. This prophet of God and one of the most successful evangelists ever shows he was at still a man.
- B. Before criticizing him or despising him, how many times have you known God's will but disobeyed?
- C. Our God fills heaven and earth: you cannot hide in heaven or hell (Jer 23:23-24; Psalm 139:7-13).
- D. Do not measure God's will by circumstances (found a ship), unless you like seaweed a whole lot.
- E. Jonah foolishly thought he could get away from the LORD by leaving the place of His worship.
- F. David knew you could not flee from God's presence, but Adam and Eve gave it a shot (Gen 3:8).

1:4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

- A. Of course, the flesh said that this storm, or other troubles in the lives of rebels, is chance or nature.
- B. But there is no such thing as chance or nature, for the LORD Jehovah is Lord of all such things.
- C. God did not have to give this chance to Jonah or the mariners, but He is longsuffering and merciful.
- D. Jonah had another opportunity to repent and obey God, for the storm should have got his attention.

1:5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

- A. Jonah went down into the ship to find a bed and take a nap due to his peace with his decision (1:3).

- B. It is so amusing ... and stupid ... to hear rebels describe their new peace upon rebelling against God.
- C. We never measure God's will by such deceitful lies: of course the flesh is happy to live for pleasure.

1:7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

- A. God is sovereign over the events of nature like the storm that blew up and the tempestuous sea (1:4).
- B. But God is also sovereign over all chance events, including the casting of lots by pagan mariners.
- C. The lesson here is to remember the certain rule of Numbers 32:23, *Be sure you sin will find you out.*

1:9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

- A. How can you identify your God to distinguish Him from other gods? He is the Creator of all things.
- B. How could Jonah admit such about his God and yet remain resolute in his purpose to disobey Him?
- B. Your God is not at all like the gods of those around you, even those calling themselves Christians.
- C. How can you avoid or escape the Creator of the heavens, the earth, and the sea. Where will you go?

1:10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

- A. Worldlings have heard or God has testified to them of His eternal power and godhead (Rom 1:20).
- B. Do you know what this means? They see through your profession if you live contrary to the Bible.
- C. Pagans do not treat their religion as lightly and rebelliously as God's people have (Jeremiah 2:9-13).

1:12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

- A. Jonah knew exactly what was wrong, for he had sinned presumptuously against the LORD his God.
- B. When God leads you to know that you are sinning, which we call conviction, repent and run to Him.
- C. Jonah showed his foolish, stubborn, and vengeful desire to die rather than see Nineveh saved (4:1-3).

1:13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

- A. If God has purposed to chasten you by whatever means, no human effort will protect you from Him.
- B. He mocks those that join together by confederation to fight against Him (Ps 2:1-6; Pr 11:21; 16:5).
- C. The warning from Solomon is clear enough, *He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy (Pr 29:1).*

1:16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

- A. Do not get too excited though, for the devils believe there is one God and tremble (James 2:19).
- B. In evangelistic terms, this is called fire insurance, as those in danger or prison often find Jesus.

1:17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

- A. Reader, God has your fish prepared, and you will soon be swallowed down alive, unless you repent.
- B. Jesus said it was a whale (Matt 12:40); if you think they never enter the Mediterranean, guess again.

2:1 Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

- A. Why must you be cast into the sea and swallowed by a fish before you are willing to seek His face?
- B. God can get you to pray, but it can be a painful education; if He does not get you to pray, enjoy hell.

2:2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

- A. God heard Jonah's prayer, and He will hear the prayers of the truly repentant and broken (2:7).
- B. Should He hear such prayers? After ordaining Jonah and having him disobey for a profane reason?

2:4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

- A. Things can get so bad you will think you are too far from God for help, but you should pray anyway.
- B. Solomon likely did not have this scenario in mind, but he begged God for prayers toward the temple.

2:7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

- B. Again we are given comfort from Jonah that God hears the prayers of even the profanely foolish.
- A. Why wait till you faint? Why must God deal with you harshly to get your attention for the obvious?
- C. Soon He will laugh at your calamity, when your fear comes to overwhelm you (Prov 1:24-32; 29:1).
- D. Do not go by feelings to judge whether you should seek the Lord or not. Do it now without feelings!

2:8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

- A. Lying vanities are idols of the heathen or any false assumption of the world or flesh to justify sin.
- B. If you believe a lying vanity, take comfort in a lie of sin, then you are condemning yourself to pain.
- C. Lady Wisdom said that to hate her is to love death, for that is the result of neglecting her (Prov 8:36).
- D. For this reason ministers must war against the evil imaginations in your heart or head (II Co 10:4-6).

2:9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

- A. Even in the Old Testament, there was a better sacrifice than animal blood and smoke (Ps 69:30-31).
- B. The poor may whine that they cannot give like Solomon (no one can), but what of thanksgiving!
- C. Note what it says here and of the one thankful leper, they used their voice for God – speak thanks!
- D. No matter when you vow, when joyful in His service or fearful under His chastening, pay them all.
- E. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay, as we can read about this act of worship (Ec 5:4-5).
- F. The expression, *Salvation is of the Lord*, is glorious, but always remember its primary context here.
- G. There is no situation you can get into by any means that He cannot easily deliver you from. Glory!
- H. These deliverances cannot be forgotten; compare Hezekiah to Manasseh (II Chron 32:35; 33:12-18).

2:10 And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

- A. No matter the difficulty of the predicament you get yourself into by sin, God is able to deliver you.
- B. As surely as God prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, He just as easily spoke to its digestion!

3:1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

- A. What a blessing! The dreadful God of heaven gave Jonah another opportunity to obey His word.
- B. He is the God of second chances – give Him glory for His longsuffering, mercy, and patience.
- C. Reader, you are not getting a second chance today – you are getting your millionth chance to repent.
- D. God uses the rebellious in His service (Ps 68:18), as Moses, Jeremiah, and Paul confirm Jonah here.

3:2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

- A. No pastor, and no man, has the right to preach or say anything other than what God told him to say.
- B. The crying need of the perilous times is for men to *Preach the Word*, as commanded (II Tim 4:1-2)!

3:3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

- A. God is able to get you to do His will just as specified, but the education process can be quite painful!
- B. Here Jonah fully obeyed the word of the LORD rather than run in the opposite direction to Joppa.

3:4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

- A. Ministers must declare the whole counsel of God no matter how unpleasant and unpopular it will be.
- B. This kind of preaching, what was once termed hellfire and brimstone, is nearly extinct in all pulpits.
- C. His message of destruction was obviously conditional, or God lied by him. Compare Isaiah 38:1-5).
- D. God in His foreknowledge knew that the city would repent, thus avoiding His destructive judgment.
- E. His threat was conditional, and He withheld judgment for their repentance (Jeremiah 18:1-10).

3:5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

- A. The people of Nineveh? The pagan Assyrians that were the blasphemous enemies of Jehovah? Yes!
- B. There is nothing too hard for the LORD: He can turn the heart of a man or group of people to repent.
- C. God created this glorious example of repentance to the preaching of an angry man for Jesus to use.
- D. Do not assume they were regenerated or converted, for there was no lasting fruit of holiness at all.

3:7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

- A. This is the ultimate national revival, when it comes from the top down and is extreme and universal.
- B. Compare this revival by pagan Assyrians to America's foolish arrogance in the face of 9/11/2001!

3:8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

- A. Measure the repentance in this passage: believed, fasted, mourned, prayed, and turned from all sin.
- B. This is the kind of repentance that works with God, as Paul described to Corinth (II Cor 7:10-11).
- C. There is a time to drop everything fun and pleasant and turn your joy into mourning (James 4:8-10).

3:9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

- A. From our view, it is never too late, no sin too great, and no chastening too bad to give up and not seek God's face and mercy. Think Hezekiah and David! Pray till the baby dies and then some more!
- B. God has longsuffering, mercy, and forgiveness beyond belief, especially for His redeemed children.
- C. His thoughts and ways are higher than our thoughts and ways – in merciful forgiveness (Is 55:6-9)!

3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

- A. As surely as God saw their wickedness (1:2), He also saw their repentance and responded as well!
- B. Notice something and never forget it. He did not hear them! He saw their works of reformation!
- C. The greatest sacrifice you can give and the most certain way to Him is a broken spirit (Ps 51:17)!

4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

- A. It has been rightly said, the best of men are but men, and being a man makes us very, very weak.
- B. Recall the definition of charity, It rejoices in the truth; it does not rejoice in iniquity. Lord, help us!
- C. Jonah got completely bent out of shape over the fact God mercifully repented of destroying Nineveh.
- D. Jonah is not the only minister with such a spirit – consider the sons of thunder (Luke 9:51-56).

4:2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

- A. Here is the explanation for Jonah's rebellion against going to Nineveh – He wanted them torched!
- B. They were great enemies of Israel and pagan blasphemers, as Sennacherib and others plainly show.
- C. Remember the older brother's anger that his father celebrated the prodigal's return (Luke 15:25-32).
- D. Do you have the same foolish and sinful spirit of Jonah by resenting the forgiveness of sinners?
- E. God's mercy should not frustrate or anger you – it should cause thanksgiving and your repentance!
- F. We must put enemies in God's hands, for He is the Lord, and He will repay. We can leave it to Him.

4:3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

- A. You are like Jonah when you foolishly say, "I might as well be dead," or, "I'll just go kill myself."
- B. Never should God's mercy toward any object cause you such anger and bitterness to desire death.
- C. Consider how the apostle Paul was the opposite of the prophet as he described in Romans 9:1-3).

4:4 Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

- A. Here is the first occurrence of this question from the Lord – a perfect question to condemn folly.
- B. Will you allow your spouse, friend, or others to write or whisper this question to you at times?

4:5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

- A. Do not desire, expect, wait, or pray for something you know is contrary to the revealed will of God.
- B. This evangelist did not have his heart in his work! He truly hoped God would destroy Nineveh.

4:4 Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

- A. This is a great question for all time. Every time you are angry, remember these words (Eph 4:26).
- B. You have enemies, but you should bless them, pray for them, and do good to them to be like God.

4:6 *And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.*

- A. Do not measure God by your comfort and pleasure in life (Ps 50:21-22). Measure only by scripture.
- B. Do you know why God is good even to sinners and the whole world? For repentance (Romans 2:4)!
- C. It is a disgusting and devilish lie to hear rebels leave and belch about their happiness or prosperity.

4:7 *But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.*

- A. There are no chance events in life, for God is sovereign over all aspects of life by His providence.
- B. Even when you might see one or more reasons for an event, never discount God's message to you.
- C. God's will is so pervasive that you are to submit your life and any activity to it (James 4:13-16).

4:8 *And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.*

- A. In the day of adversity consider your ways rather than complain and get angry about it (Eccl 7:14).
- B. No, it is not better to die; it is better to repent and live for Him Who died for you (II Cor 5:14-15).
- C. The best of men are but men, for we have a similar request by Elijah the prophet (I Kings 19:1-4).

4:9 *And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.*

- A. Here is that question again we should ask when angry. Do you get angry over the smallest things?
- B. Are you willing to give your spouse and others the liberty to write or whisper this question to you?
- C. God sought gently to get Jonah's attention and conviction by the gourd to no avail by this account.
- D. Was Jonah brave or strong for not fearing death? No! He was one of the weakest men (Pr 16:32).

4:10 *Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:*

- A. Jonah got all worked up over the death of the gourd, but he had no feelings for Nineveh's citizens.
- B. God sought gently to get Jonah's attention and conviction by the gourd to no avail by this account.
- C. Jonah had done nothing for the gourd, so that he had no investment of labor or concern in its life.
- D. Jonah had only had the gourd for a single day, so that his investment of any kind was quite nothing.
- E. However, the 1.5 million Ninevites were by God's creation and providence for several millennia.

4:11 *And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?*

- A. God sought gently to get Jonah's attention and conviction by the gourd to no avail by this account.
- B. God's nature should and will spare when even very wicked men will repent and reform their lives.
- C. We need a love for souls, when the Lord leads us to them, for God had chosen mercy for Nineveh, though Israel was ordinarily bound to despise and destroy their enemies other than God's exceptions.
- D. We should pray for repentance of many, even personal enemies, to be God's children, rather than harbor the wicked sins of hatred and vengeance (Matt 5:43-48; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60).

E. Did God value Nineveh because it had 120,000 little children, or because it had a large population of repenting souls, including many children? He corrected any obsession for children with *cattle!*

Conclusion:

1. What is your Nineveh? What command of God's word do you personally continue to resist? Go, do it now!
2. God sees your wickedness. All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Whom you must obey. Repent!
3. A whale is prepared for you. God's longsuffering and mercy last only so long. Drop to the deck and pray!
4. Doest thou well to be angry? You can be angry and sin not (Eph 4:26), but you know your outbursts are sin!
5. Do gourds get you worked up? Why allow the smallest events to twist you out of shape, but ignore souls?
6. No matter the seriousness of your sin, a merciful God will forgive His children when they truly repent.
7. True repentance is a great deal more than confessing sins in general at mealtime – it is reformation of life.
8. Ministers must preach the word, no matter how unpleasant. If Jonah had told platitudes, Nineveh had burned!
9. Is your love for others – the conversion of souls – more like Jonah or Paul? Repent and love even enemies.

For Further Study:

1. The sermon outline, "Nahum," about the destruction of Nineveh, ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/nahum.pdf>.
2. The sermon, "Be Sure Your Sin Will Find You Out," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/be-sure-your-sin2.pdf>.
3. The sermon outline, "Consequences of Sin," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/consequences-of-sin.pdf>.
4. The sermon outline, "Playing with Sin," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/playing-with-sin.pdf>.
5. The sermon outline, "Hating Sin," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/hating-sin.pdf>.
6. The sermon outline, "Sacrificing the Future," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/sacrificing-the-future.pdf>.