

Remarkable Grace

An Exposition of the Book of Jonah

Sermon Three: God May Turn and Relent! (Jonah 3)

January 24, 2021

Opening ILL: We can never appreciate the solution if we don't really understand the problem. Computer updates. Sometimes, we get these software updates, but we really don't know what they are improving, if anything. So, when was the last time you really got excited about a software update?

Similarly, one of the reasons we are not absolutely blessed out of our mind over the remarkable grace of God because we may not have a clear concept in our mind as to how remarkable this grace is. We may have lost a sense of the justice, holiness and wrath of God. After all, what does God save us from? Himself. We may have no idea how magnificent it is for God to relent, because we never really saw any danger in Him in the first place. We may have heard a faulty gospel...or simply an incomplete gospel that failed to emphasize God's holy wrath and the need to repent in order to escape that wrath.

Related to this, repentance is something that can be strangely absent in the modern church. After all, if God's wrath is ignored, then repentance immediately shrinks in its significance. Why would we bother to change if we thought God would never be mad at us? (See Ephesians 2:3-4)

I. Introduction/Review

- A. What happened in chapter 1 and 2?
- B. What is the main idea of the book of Jonah?
- C. Why did Jonah hate Nineveh so much?
- D. One REALLY important point:
 1. Jonah did not refuse to preach to Nineveh because he was afraid of what they would do to him.
 2. Jonah refused to preach to Nineveh because he knew about God's remarkable grace!

II. Jonah Finally Gives in! vv. 1-4

- A. Notice that God's message did not change!
 1. The command won't change just because people refuse to share it.
 2. The command won't change just because people refuse to obey it.
- B. Notice what DIDN'T happen to Jonah!
 1. He was not brutally murdered by the Ninevites. How on Earth could this be?

III. The Suspected Response vv. 5-9

- A. When they hear the message, they believe.
 1. They were justifiably (and honorably) afraid of the wrath of God!
 2. Instead of collapsing under the pressure of the wrath of God, they repented!
- B. When they hear the message, they humbled themselves.
 1. Notice that people from every social standing responded in this way.
 2. Notice that even the king himself responded this way (vv. 6-9)
 - a) He responded with action
 - b) He responded with authority
 - c) He responded with hope.

IV. God relents! v. 10.

- A. What did God do?
 1. He saw their deeds...that they repented.
 2. God, then, relented from His wrath.
 - a) Notice that there are two different words used, one for the Ninevites and one for God.

V. What does the rest of the Bible say about repentance?

- A. It is to be our immediate and primary response to God's wrath.
1. **Matthew 3:2** "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 2. **Matthew 4:17** From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
- B. It is something God allows and grants
1. **Acts 11:18** When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance *that leads to life*."
 2. **2 Timothy 2:25-26** with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,²⁶ and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.
- C. It is something to which God responds.
1. **1 Kings 8:35-36** When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name and turn from their sin when You afflict them,³⁶ then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants and of Your people Israel, indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk. And send rain on Your land, which You have given Your people for an inheritance.
 2. **2 Corinthians 7:9-10** I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of repentance*; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of God*, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.¹⁰ For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading to salvation*, but the sorrow of the world produces death.
- D. It is a limited time offer.
1. **Hebrews 12:16-17** that *there be* no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single meal*.¹⁷ For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.
- E. It affects how we live our lives.
1. **Matthew 3:8** Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;
 2. **Acts 26:20** but *kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first, and *also* at Jerusalem and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.
- F. It is not automatic, even in people who have seen great miracles.
1. **Matthew 11:20-21** Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.²¹ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

VI. A Renewed Perspective—Conclusions

- A. Fear the wrath of God!
1. Oh, my dear friends, God is not a toothless lion! God is not safe! His displeasure is dangerous, and His wrath will be poured out upon those who do not heed the message of His wrath!
 2. Don't kid yourselves, thinking you are somehow better than anyone else.
 - a) **Luke 13:1-5** Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.² And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?³ I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.⁴" Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all

the men who live in Jerusalem? ⁵"I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

B. Flee the wrath of God!

1. Although God is a God of wrath, He is also (and now the beauty of this shines through) a God of remarkable grace!
2. He will receive you, despite your great sinfulness!
 - a) **Romans 10:13** for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."

C. Fall on the remarkable grace of God!

1. If you repent, He will relent! If you come to Him, He will receive you!