

## God's Righteous Judgment

Jonah 3:1-5

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*<sup>17</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." <sup>3</sup> So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. <sup>4</sup> Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" <sup>5</sup> And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.*

What does it take a man or woman to be used by God for the expansion of the kingdom of God for the glory of God and for the benefit of others?

If you have an opportunity to speak into someone's life and give them a message about God and His Son Jesus Christ and his character, what would you say? Where would you begin?

Well, you could say, it depends on the context.

And what if those who you are called to speak to have no idea about the God of the Bible and also live in utter depravity and sin? Jonah was called to such a city.

And more than the message itself, what needs to be to your heart condition, your attitude, your conduct.

Would you show an attitude of sense of entitlement, a sense of privilege or embody a sense of great fear and compassion because you are delivering God's message?

Let me give an illustration. People who are paid to play their part in movies are professional actors.

Their lives almost never match up to the roles they play in movies. They are actors living in a make-believe world. Growing up, I remember a movie actor who played the role of a very honest and pious character in a movie. His role had such an impact on so many that it was the talk of the town. However, one day as I was boarding a train, in the train station, I saw this movie star in person. And this man was not in his best behavior. He had a cigarette in his hand and was indifferent to anyone around him. So, the conversation that I had seen this man come up with a friend. And I told him that his famous movie star and he was smoking. And my friend heard me say this, he just wouldn't believe me that his movie star would be a smoker. But you see he was only acting in a movie.

Jonah truly needed to understand the fear of God before he preaches the salvation of God.

The apostle Paul tells us that the reason we want to tell others the Gospel is because you have experienced the conviction of sin and the favor of God. *"Therefore, knowing the fear of the lord, we persuade others"*. 2 Corinthians 5:11

As followers of Jesus, there are implications when we say we follow Jesus Christ.

First implication: *Seek the Righteousness of God.*

Let's look at verses one through three.

*Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." <sup>3</sup> So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth.*

Notice God's word came to Jonah the *second* time. Same command. Same city. Same message. God has not changed. The message has not changed. The messenger was disobedient. The messenger followed his own counsel than God's counsel. God had to work on the messenger before his message went out. Today, if you scan the landscape of Gospel preaching, there are many who change the message. God did not tell them to. That is very sad.

From what we have seen so far in Jonah's life, we know that Jonah was called to be a prophet of God. Jonah knew what God told him to do. To call out against Nineveh. To pronounce God's righteous judgment against Nineveh. To tell the people of Nineveh that God's wrath is real.

You see Jonah knew his task was easy if it was *just* pronouncing disaster against Nineveh and walk away. However, Jonah knew more. He knew the answer to the "what if". What if the people of Nineveh believed his message and they repent? What if they see him as serious, sincere and trustworthy prophet of God and yet they make amends in their lives? What if the people of Nineveh respond to Jonah's message and see that the God of Jonah is Sovereign and Righteous and yet might be compassionate and merciful as well?

You see Jonah *knew* God and his character. His righteousness, his justice but also his steadfast love and his compassion.

I believe this is what Jonah struggled with. Perhaps Jonah thought that those who sin must receive judgment without any chance for recourse.

However, the God of Jonah is bigger than Jonah himself. Yes, God is *severe* to those continue in unrepentant evil deeds. But God is also *kind* to those who repent.

And that is why God had to teach Jonah what his severity and his kindness looked like before he went to give the message. God wanted Jonah to see for himself and experience God's righteousness and then his salvation. Yes, Jonah has disobeyed. But God has used Jonah's disobedience to mature him and grow him. Jonah himself had to experience repentance before he preaches the message of God.

By the time we come to verse nine in chapter two, Jonah is ready to preach God's message with full conviction.

And that is what God wants you to do to you as well. And the way he wants to use us is that we understand his righteousness and experience his mercy.

So, God tells Jonah to go to Nineveh again. And this time Jonah gladly complies. Jonah does exactly

what God tells him to do. He rose up and went to Nineveh. This was a large town three days to travel across its breath.

*And what message does Jonah preach in Nineveh?*

Look at verse *four*:

*<sup>4</sup>Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"*

Here is God's message to the city of Nineveh. In forty days, Nineveh will be destroyed. The word overthrown is the same used many times for destruction.

Now, why does God intend to destroy Nineveh? We saw the reason in chapter one verse two – *"for their evil has come up before me."* God is perfectly Righteous and Just in giving notice to entire cities and nations that their sin and evil is abhorrent before God. God hates sin. God is offended by how He is treated every day. Psalm 7: 11 *"God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day"*. You think God is turning a blind eye to all blasphemies, all the lies, all the wicked and evil deeds that people promote? Think again. Look at the devastation that he able to cause so that people will turn and repent. Psalm 46:6 *"The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts."*

Listen what God did with other cities in the past.

Genesis 19:25 *"Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. <sup>25</sup> And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground."*

Deuteronomy 29:23 *"the whole land burned out with brimstone and salt, nothing sown and nothing growing, where no plant can sprout, an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger and wrath"*

Now God is not impulsive in this anger like some of us humans. God is *slow* to anger. God is *perfect* in patience. God is perfectly measured in issuing his judgments. God is *grieved* when people turn against him and not obey him. However, God is in no way obligated to bend to anyone as all that they have done is rebel and turn their backs toward Him.

Jonathan Edwards, supposedly the greatest theologian in America, helps us with understanding the just nature of God.

In *"the consideration of man's sinfulness. And that whether we consider the infinitely evil nature of all sin, or how much sin men are guilty of. If we consider the infinite evil and heinousness of sin in general, it is not unjust in God to inflict what punishment is deserved; because the very notion of deserving any punishment is, that it may be justly inflicted. A deserved punishment and a just punishment are the same*

*thing. To say that one deserves such a punishment, and yet to say that he does not justly deserve it, is a contradiction; and if he justly deserves it, then it may be justly inflicted.*

*Every crime or fault deserves a greater or less punishment, in proportion as the crime itself is greater or less. If any fault deserves punishment, then so much the greater the fault, so much the greater is the punishment deserved... He (God) is a being of infinite greatness, majesty, and glory; and therefore he is infinitely honorable. He is infinitely exalted above the greatest potentates of the earth, and highest angels in heaven; and therefore he is infinitely more honorable than they. His authority over us is infinite; and the ground of his right to our obedience is infinitely strong; for he is infinitely worthy to be obeyed himself, and we have an absolute, universal, and infinite dependence upon him.*

*So that sin against God, being a violation of infinite obligations, must be a crime infinitely heinous and so deserving of infinite punishment.”* The punishment is not of the same degree equally for all sins but sin is heinous and punishable.

Job 9:2-5 *“Truly I know that it is so: But how can a man be in the right before God? <sup>3</sup> If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times. <sup>4</sup> He is wise in heart and mighty in strength—who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?—<sup>5</sup> he who removes mountains, and they know it not, when he overturns them in his anger”.*

I have some good news. You have been made right with God because of Jesus. God’s righteous judgment and wrath you and I deserve was poured on His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus received all the wrath and judgment of God. And for those who are in Christ there is now no condemnation!

Second implication: Consider God’s Great Mercy in light of His Wrath

So Jonah obeys, preaches God’s message that disaster is coming in forty days. And what happens as a result.

Verse five:

*<sup>5</sup> And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.*

They believed Jonah and his message. The people of Nineveh took Jonah seriously. And they called for a fast. And they called out to God. (Verse nine). We’ll cover verse nine next Sunday Lord willing but what a response!

You know what this means. It means they accepted their sinful condition. They confessed their sin. You see how much Jonah’s obedience has had an impact?

Now, we don't even see that Jonah called for repentance. All he did was give a forty-day notice. God's judgment is coming. God's wrath is imminent. Their sin was going to get them destroyed. They took notice. They softened their hearts. They pay attention to the condition of their souls.

They respond with repentance. The greatest to the least. The rich and the poor. The mighty and the weak. The haves and the have nots. All need the same Gospel. All need the same repentance.

This is the Gospel right here. God requires that his law be obeyed perfectly.

*"Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them"*

Galatians 3:10.

The first step to undoing the curse is to acknowledge your shortcoming with obedience to the Law of God. And then you repent of that sin. But who pays for the penalty of that sin? The Law required sacrifices.

*"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us"* Galatians 3:13.

The Gospel message is not complete without understanding that Jesus Christ paid for all your sin. Once and for all.

Third implication: Believe and Repent.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: God's Righteous Judgment. Jonah 3:1-5

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. How are we to understand the righteous anger of God? Exodus 34:6, Lamentations 3:31-33, Ezekiel 33:11, Romans 1:18, John 3:36, 2 Peter 3:9

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. Why is repentance always the right response when we sin? What are its implications? 1 Corinthians 7:9-10, Romans 2:4
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: What can we learn from Jonah's repentance and obedience so far?