

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

The God of 2nd Chances

Jonah 1:1-17

Introduction

Before we look at today's text, I need to correct something from our study in chapter 2 when I was discussing the role of animal life in God's divine purposes. In the process of highlighting the contrast between the disobedience of Jonah and obedience of the Fish and other animals and insects throughout scripture, I unfortunately gave the impression that animals and humans had the same prerogative of obedience or disobedience. The reality is that only mankind has the three-fold nature of body, soul and spirit which give us the capacity to make moral and ethical choices. As much as some want to ascribe human emotions and moral and ethical characteristics to animals, animals are instinctual. Thus, to state that the fish was obedient to the command of the Lord is technically incorrect -- the fish had no free moral choice. Man does!

I God Recommissioned Jonah To Preach

A. God's Word came to Jonah a second time

Jonah 1:1 "The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai ..."

Illustration:

My own call from God to write my high school class in 1983.

I failed to complete the letter - procrastination and fear.

15 years later God at my 20th class reunion God gave me a 2nd chance!

1. Go to the great city of Nineveh -- WHY?

Because God was concerned about the eternal destiny of the Ninevites!

2 Pet 3:9 "He doesn't want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

Application:

God's heart hasn't changed. He still cares about unbelievers.

Jn 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only

Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Do you have God's heart for the lost? If not, ask and you will receive.

2. Proclaim God's message

Jonah was not called to save anyone. His responsibility was simply to communicate God's message. The Ninevites response was their responsibility! I find that truth extremely liberating!

Jer 26:2-3 "This is what the LORD says: Stand in the courtyard of the LORD's house and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the house of the LORD. Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word. Perhaps they will

listen and each will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done."

B. Jonah obeyed the God's Word

In contrast with initial refusal to obey God, Jonah obeyed God's second command to preach which the Bible says is the mark of a true disciple. John 14:21 "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me."

But, as we'll discover, Jonah did not obey God joyfully or with a glad heart, but at least he went.

Ps 112:1 "Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands."

Application:

It's very possible to do the right things with the wrong attitudes.

Example: The Pharisees

1. He went to Nineveh

a. An important city

b. Required a 3 day visit

Excavations reveal that the wall of Nineveh was 8 miles in circumference and there was a suburban area outside the walls. It wouldn't have taken more than about one day to walk around the circumference of the wall. But it would have taken three days to stop at all its significant squares and the major outlying areas to proclaim the judgment of God.

2. He proclaimed God's word

a. "40 days and Nineveh will be overturned"

I'm struck by three aspects of this cryptic message:

1. It was direct

I get the feeling that Jonah derived a great deal of pleasure in delivering this message.

Contrast it to Jesus' heart in Matt 23:37 when He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

2. It was simple

1 Cor 15:3-4 "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

3. It was effective

Rom 1:16 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

Heb 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

Isa 55:10-11 "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

II Nineveh's Response to God's Word

A. The response of Nineveh's people

1. They believed God

Just like the seamen of chapter 1, the people of Nineveh took these words of imminent divine judgment seriously. And revival broke out! The response was unanimous, from the lower to the upper classes.

John 1:11-12 "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

2. They declared a fast

Fast = "To abstain from something -- usually from food or drink."

"Purposes for Fasting" (Packer, James. *Your Father Loves You*)

In Scripture we see several purposes for fasting. It's part of the discipline of self-control; it's a way of sharing that we depend on God alone and draw all our strength and resources from him; it's a way of focusing totally on him when seeking his guidance and help, and of showing that you really are in earnest in your quest; it's also, at times, an expression of sorrow and deep repentance, something that a person or community will do in order to acknowledge failure before God and seek his mercy. We tend to think of fasting as going without food. But we can fast from anything. If we love music and decide to miss a concert in order to spend time with God, that is fasting. It is helpful to think of the parallel of human friendship. When friends need to be

together, they will cancel all other activities in order to make that possible. There's nothing magical about fasting. It's just one way of telling God that your priority at that moment is to be alone with him, sorting out whatever is necessary, and you have canceled the meal, party, concert, or whatever else you had planned to do in order to fulfill that priority."

a. Fasting in the Old Testament:

1. In times of war or at the threat of it (Israel)
2. In times of national crisis (Esther 4:16)
3. When loved ones were sick (David - 2 Sam 12:16)
4. When seeking God's forgiveness (Ahab 1 Kings 21:27, Daniel)
5. When seeking God's protection (Ezra)

b. Fasting in the New Testament:

1. When dealing with temptations (Jesus - Matt 4:1-2)
2. When serving the Lord (Antioch)
3. When beginning a work for the Lord (Antioch - Acts 13:3)
4. When selecting and appointing elders (Galatia - Acts 14:23)

c. Fasting is always done in conjunction with prayer

1. Fasting is an act of humbling one's self before God - Ps 35:13
2. And the prayers of a humble person are more likely to be heard! - Ezra 8:21-23

Application: We don't fast much anymore!!

We tend to rely on ourselves, or counselors, or methods
Fast for your marriage, children, finances, ministry
Fast for the island, reaching the 60,000 here on Kauai
Fast for the ministry here at church: radio stations, property

3. They put on sackcloth

Sackcloth = A rough, coarse cloth, or a baglike garment made of goats hair and worn as a symbol of mourning or repentance."

Kind of like making a shirt out of a Kauai Coffee sack.

a. From the great to the least

Esth 4:1-3 "When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes."

B. The response of Nineveh's king

By the time word reached the king, the city's repentance was already well under way, but because the king also believed Jonah's warning, he

made every effort to assure total compliance to the city-wide repentance. He began by personally repenting.

1. His personal response:
 - a. He rose from his throne
 - b. He took off his royal robe
 - c. He covered himself in sackcloth
 - d. He sat down in the dust

Application: The choice of humility

Humility = Shows a consciousness of one's defects or shortcomings; to hurt the pride or dignity by causing to be or seem foolish or contemptible."

1 Pet 5:6 "Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

2. His royal response
 - a. He proclaimed a total fast
 - 2 Chr 20:3-4 "Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him."
 1. Food and water for three days
 2. Including all domesticated animals
 - b. He encouraged the wearing of sackcloth
 - c. He exhorted the people to call on God

Jonah 1:6 "The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish."
 - d. He exhorted the renouncing of evil ways

It is particularly interesting to note that there was apparently no need for the people to be told what their wicked ways were. It seems as though no one needed any such clarification. The issue, then, was not a lack of **information**, but a lack of **motivation**. I have the distinct impression that if our nation received word of God's impending judgment, we would have little difficulty determining what it is we are doing which is offensive to God.

Abortion, same sex marriage, sexual immorality, rampant divorce, eliminating God from our culture, denying absolute truth, rebellion against God's revealed will, etc.

Isa 55:6-7 "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil

man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon."

Joel 2:12-14 "'Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing-- grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God."

James 4:6-10 "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

III God's Merciful Response

A. The actions that changed God's heart:

1. They responded to God's Word

Luke 11:28 "He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

John 8:47 "He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

2. They turned from their evil ways

Repentance = "A turning from sin and a turning to God."

2 Cor 7:10 "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."

Worldly sorrow = A regret over being caught or suffering the consequences of sin -- but not accompanied by change.

Godly sorrow = A genuine grieving over sin accompanied by a change of heart, and a change of behavior.

Verse 10 doesn't tell us that God heeded the **words** of the Ninevites, or even that He regarded their sackcloth and ashes, but that He took note that their behavior had changed, that they had "turned from their evil ways." Here is genuine repentance. Not merely words of regret, no trite, "I'm sorry," but a change of conduct signaling a genuine change of heart. Nineveh had truly repented of her evil

ways, and God therefore relented of the calamity which He had threatened.

Matt 12:41 "The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here."

B. The actions of God's changed heart

1. He had compassion on them

Isa 30:18 "Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion."

Luke 15:18-20 "I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

2. He relented from bringing judgment

Jer 18:7-8 "If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned."

Jer 26:13 "Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you."

Isa 55:7 "Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon."

Conclusion: God is a God of second chances!

Read Ps 103:8-22 "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so great ...

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