

## **God is Relentless in His Grace – Jonah 3**

### Recap of Jonah 1 and 2

Chapter 1 – Jonah is an angry and prejudiced spokesman of God who is filled with so much anger and hatred for the Assyrians that he decides to run away from God instead of trusting Him and following His plans. He was fine delivering God’s message to his own people, but he wanted the cruel Assyrians destroyed instead of allowing them to receive a word from God. So, he ran.

Chapter 2 – Jonah is finally ready to submit to God, but it’s not until after God used a series of supernatural events to get his attention. Including being swallowed up by a “great fish.” Jonah’s prayer in chapter 2 is one of thanksgiving and an acknowledgement of God’s Sovereign control over his life. Jonah, still rebellious and from the depths of a watery grave and from the belly of a “great fish” somehow managed to praise God. So, God was merciful with him and rescued Jonah. Remember this verse?

**Read Jonah 2:10** - *And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.*

At this point in the story of this reluctant prophet he finds himself in a mess. Perhaps, Jonah looked like this?

**\*\*\*Show Jonah Image on Screen\*\*\***

Well, Jonah certainly looks pretty worn down and beat up in this picture, but I believe after 3 days and nights in the belly of the “great fish,” he would have had a bit more fish slime than depicted here. Maybe he would have felt and looked more like this instead?

**\*\*\*Show Ghostbusters Image on Screen\*\*\***

Of course, I am making light of Jonah’s situation but make no doubt about it... Jonah made a bad choice that led him to a bad place, a place he considered to be his grave. But God, because of His great love for Jonah rescued him from certain death and preserved him for His purposes. If you remember, last week’s message included a list of 5 miracles God used to rescue Jonah. Amid those 5 miracles, God also did a miraculous work on Jonah’s heart. As we’ll see in chapter 3, God changed Jonah’s heart from one that was rebellious, sinful, and disobedient, to one filled with thanksgiving and one filled with the immeasurable grace of a relentless God. Jonah’s story helps us understand how God’s love drives Him, when necessary, to pursue us relentlessly. This same love also drives our mighty and sovereign God to be relentless in His rescue efforts as well. While Jonah provides us with a glimpse into the nature of God, it is Jesus Christ, who is a better example. Jesus was never reluctant, like Jonah, and Jesus is willing to do whatever may be necessary to rescue you. He proved this to us through His death, burial, and resurrection. I want to repeat a point from last week - If you are here today, and you know that you need to be rescued from the pits of hell, may I suggest that you trust Jesus to do that for you. He is able and most importantly, He is willing.

### **Read Jonah 3:1-10**

Jonah finally obeys – We see here in verses 1-3 that Jonah decided to obey the command of God and go to Nineveh just as God had commanded. The word that Jonah received in both instances was similar. God wanted Jonah to go into a Gentile land and deliver a message, and speak against, as we read in chapter 1, their great evil. By this time in Jonah's journey, we see that God didn't give his reasoning the second time. Instead, God simply informed Jonah that he would receive the message once he arrived at the city. So, Jonah, no longer reluctant to follow God, but still, as we'll see next week in chapter 4, filled with discontent for the Ninevites, trusted God and followed His plan.

I've often heard this passage preached from the point of view that Jonah, because of God's mercy and grace, received a second chance. While this is certainly true based on the accounts recorded for us in chapter 3, have you ever considered that this may have also been Jonah's final chance? It's just something I thought about. I also thought, "Wow!" How many times have I forced God's hand because of my disobedience? How many times has God graciously given me another chance? Is there something in my life God is asking me to do, but I'm rebelling and acting with a heart of disobedience? If so, will God continue to give me chance after chance, or will there eventually be a last chance? I don't know for sure, because it's not given to us in our text, but this may have been more than a second chance for Jonah. It may have been His last. We can know from the text that God may have a timeline for us when it comes to our repentance and salvation. According to Jonah's message, God gave the Ninevites forty days.

At this point in my studies, God reminded me of His grace. His powerful and unmerited favor towards people who absolutely do not deserve it. It is obvious that Jonah has grappled with several shortcomings; disobedience, prejudice, and pride, just to name a few. But God's grace lifted him up, rescued him, and reminded him of how much He absolutely loved Him. Perhaps He has done this for you today. You know, it was not just God's love for Jonah that drove Him to offer unmeasurable grace, it was also God's love for the people in Nineveh. God wanted Jonah to deliver a message that condemned their sins against Him with the hope that they too would repent and receive His mercy, grace, and love. The same mercy, grace, and love that God had for His little run-away prophet. Jonah's story helps us see that God's grace is ever-present, immensely generous, and powerfully transformative., for all who receive it. The Bible teaches us that regardless of where we've been or what we've done, God's demeanor towards us is defined by love and mercy. God's grace is not merely a concept; rather, it is who God is at His core. When we think about God's grace, we can find comfort in knowing that He desires to lift us up and grace is the channel through which His love flows.

Like Jonah, every person in this room is loved by God. Every person in this room has an opportunity to participate in His amazing plans. God's grace is our constant reminder of these things and serves as the encourager for our soul. Let me close today by sharing with you some of the things we learn from the Bible about God's grace.

Paul says this about God's grace in **2 Corinthians 12:9** - *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

Peter, to the early church leaders in Asia Minor greeted them with these words - *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.* **2 Peter 1:2**

**Titus 2:11-14** informs - *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

And finally, a couple of my favorites

From **2 Timothy 1:8-9**: *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus.*

**Hebrews 4:16** says: *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Here is what we need to know today, and Jonah's story helps us see these things.

\*God loves you immensely. So much so, that He will relentlessly pursue you. He has a plan for your life and desires for you to get on board with the plan.

\*He loves you so much that He is also relentless in His rescue efforts. God is willing and able to rescue you.

\*God's grace is one of His ways of expressing His love for you. He is relentless in extended His unmerited favor to those who put their faith and trust in His Son, Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

God is relentless in His pursuit, in His rescue, and in His grace. Will you trust Him with those things today?