

Jonah 2 & 3

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Date: 01 May 2016

Preacher: Wilf Urquhart

[0 : 01] Now I have some very, very good news for you. News that may not encourage you, but for me it is very encouraging news.

The clock at the block of the church has stopped. And I no longer need to be constrained by the clock. That's wonderful. I won't look at that one. I can't see that one.

But I want us this evening to pick up the story of Jonah. And I would like you to notice the contrast. God has given us ten fingers.

Put one finger on Jonah chapter 1 verse 3. And put one finger on Jonah chapter 3 verse 3. Now you've got enough fingers to do that.

Chapter 1 verse 3. Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Chapter 3 verse 3. So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord.

[1 : 03] So what has happened in between? Isn't it wonderful? God had taken a rebellious prophet. And he had made him into a compliant prophet.

Tonight if I were to give a title to my sermon. It would be the obedient and yet out of touch with God prophet. Because he was out of touch with God.

That's a very, very sad thing to say. That here was a man of God. A man called by God. Set aside for the ministry of God's word to his people.

And yet he was not obeying and following wholly his master. And sometimes we can allow things in our lives.

Which later on trip us up. And I know that there's somebody in the congregation. That if I don't tell you this I'll get a run from him afterwards.

[2 : 10] So I had better tell you. About a visit that we made. To a man's house. On the border between Ghana and Burkina Faso. We had heard in the church.

In the village ten kilometres away. That this man had become a Christian. And we were to go to his house. The pastor and the assistant pastor. Along with umpteen members of the church.

And we were to encourage him. To give up his idols. Every animistic person. In Burkina Faso. Has idols.

No exceptions. Except. Those who come to Christ. And we went to his house. And this man was standing at the door of his house.

Now the door of African houses. Do not have hinges. Very interesting doors. You pick them up. And you put them to the side. And when you go out of the house.

[3 : 12] You pick up the door. And you put it back in the doorway. And you put that stone or something against it. It don't have locks or anything like that. And this man was standing in front of his house.

And the pastor said to him. Well. Have you got idols? And he said yes. I have lots of idols. And the pastor said to him.

What do you want to do with your idols? Bear in mind. That in scripture. An idol takes God's grace. So an idol is something which is very, very, very bad.

This man had become a Christian. The pastor said. Do you still need your idols? And the man said. Well. I don't think so. So the pastor said to him.

What do you want to do with your idols? And the man said. Well. If I don't need them. I could get rid of them. And from somewhere.

[4 : 14] Somebody said. Either he said. Or the pastor said. I don't know which. But the question of burning the idols. Came up. And they made a great big pile of his idols.

He had dozens and dozens and dozens of idols. All sorts of things. Some of them were just a piece of wood. Some of them were a piece of metal.

They were all sorts of things. But they had significance for him. And they were very precious. Had been very precious to him. And he took the lot of them.

That would burn. And they were put in this pile. And it was burnt. And I would have to say. Even in a free church. That the Christians were so happy.

They were. What would be the word? Exuberant with joy. What a wonderful situation to be in. Absolutely exuberant with joy.

[5 : 19] But standing behind them. At a distance. There were heathen people. Who were not Christians. Who every man jack of them.

Had an idol. Or handfuls. Barloads of idols. And they were terrified. To see this man destroying his idols.

When the idols had been destroyed. The pastor said to this man. My friend. Is there still one idol.

Left. That you may have forgotten. And he said. No. I don't think so. And the pastor said. Because if you have one idol remaining.

Later on. It will trip you up. In life. And that my friends. Is a lesson for you and for me. That if we. When we come to Christ.

[6 : 17] Hold on to something. That we should not hold on to. Later in life. It can trip us up. And Jonah. Having heard God's word.

For the second time. Isn't it wonderful. That this man of God. Who had failed. So badly. And let's be honest. He had failed very badly.

But God forgave him. Isn't that wonderful. God forgave him. For what he had done. And the amazing thing. And I keep finding it amazing.

God still trusted him. Isn't that wonderful. God did not call another prophet. And say. You go to Nineveh. God said to Jonah.

You go. To Nineveh. God gave him a second chance. The devil would have us believe. That when we fail.

[7 : 17] That's the end. We're finished. He would tell us. That because we have messed up. So badly in our life. God has no more time for us. We're finished.

That does not come from God. That comes from the enemy of souls. That comes from Satan himself. Because God. Has removed our sins.

As far as the east. Is removed. From the west. So far. Has he taken our sins away. And God. Forgave. Jonah. My friends.

If you only go home. With this tonight. Remember. Failure. Need not be final. Let me repeat that.

Failure. Need not. Be final. Jonah. Having heard the voice of God. Opened his ears. Wide.

[8 : 13] And he heard God. And he went in obedience to God. To go and to do. What God had told him to do. I think he was still scared stiff.

Because some of the commentators tell us. That where the fish spat him out onto the beach. He was 25 miles. From Nineveh. Or 25 days.

Sorry. 25 days journey. From Nineveh. So he had a long time. To think. About the message. He was the enemy.

Of the Ninevites. He was taking a message of. Judgment. To the Ninevites. He was not. Going to become popular. As anyone.

Who will declare. Faithfully God's word. They will not. Be popular. And God. Sent. Jonah. To Nineveh.

[9 : 11] And Jonah. Went. Because God. Dealt. With what had been wrong. In his life. Remember what. Is said in 1 John. 1 9. If we confess our sins.

God is faithful. To forgive us our sins. And to cleanse us. From all unrighteousness. In other words. To take away everything.

That would separate us. From himself. God. Gave. Jonah. A second. Chance. Isn't that wonderful. And when we fail. Our God. Is the God of Jonah. There is forgiveness. With God. Don't ever let.

The enemy of souls.

Ever tell you. That you are written off. By God. God. Does not. Write off. His children. He forgives. But we have got to come.

[10 : 07] In repentance. And acknowledge. Our failure. So. Jonah. Went. To Nineveh. To Nineveh. And God's commission. Had not changed.

God's commission. Remained the same. The message. He was to give. Was still. The message of judgment. It was not. The message of peace. It was not.

A message of love. It was not. A message of comfort. It was a message. Of impending. Disaster. Impending doom.

That was going to come upon them. And that was the commission. That had caused Jonah. To run away. In the opposite direction. And now. To go.

In the correct direction. Because God. Had forgiven him. And cleansed him. And made him able. To move forward. When we sin.

[11:04] When we acknowledge our sin. Get up. Move on. Because God's forgiveness. Is complete. And Jonah. Went on.

To Nineveh. God's message. Was for the people. Of Nineveh. God has given to you. And to me. A message as well. That we are. You and I.

We are God's messengers. I remember one occasion. When we were in. Burkina Faso. All the Brits. Whenever they came from.

In Britain. We were invited. By the ambassador. The British ambassador. To go to a reception. In one of the big cities.

And we went. And we listened. To the ambassador. Talking about all the things. That were happening in Britain. And it was nice. To hear someone.

[12:01] Telling us all the things. That we had forgotten. And the things. That we didn't know about. That were happening in Britain. He was God's. He was Britain's ambassador.

For the British people. Outside of Britain. And made a great job. Of telling us. If I remember. It was a lady. It wasn't a man. Yes.

It was a lady. And she made a wonderful job. Of telling us about Britain. God has given to you. And to I. And to me. A commission. That we are to go.

And tell all men. What does Matthew say? Jesus came and spoke to them. Saying. All authority has been given unto me. In heaven and on earth.

Go therefore. And make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father. And of the Son. And of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things.

[12:57] That I have commanded you. And lo. I am with you. Always. Right to the end. Matthew. 28. 18. Through 20.

And Jonah. Went. And Jonah. Gave the message. That God had given. And we see. The fearless. Prophet. It. I like to think of Jonah. Going to Nineveh. Nineveh was a large city. In those days. A very large city. A very disobedient city.

A city that had no time. For the God of Israel. That's why Israel. Had no time for Nineveh. They didn't want. To share their God. With heathen nations.

And yet. Jonah was sent. With a message. Of judgment. Not. The message. That was going to wake. Him in any way. Popular.

[13:54] To those people. God's word. Came. In its stark. Reality. The shortest. Sermon. Recorded. Anywhere.

Yet. Forty days. And Nineveh. Will be destroyed. That's. Eight. Words. And it brought. Tens of. Thousands of people. To their knees. It's not the length. Of what we say. It's what we say. And Jonah did nothing.

But give them. What God had given them. And that. Broke. Through. The hardness. Of their heart. Doesn't Jeremiah say.

Jeremiah 23. 29. Is not my word. Like a fire. Says the Lord. And like a hammer. That breaks the rock. In pieces. God's word.

[14:54] Broke through. Into that. Hard. Hardened city. But tell me. Why did God send.

Jonah there. In the first place. Why did Jonah. Go with God's word. To that city. Yes. It was a word. Of judgment. But God. Wanted them. To repent. God said. I take. No pleasure. In the death. Of the wicked.

But that he. Turn. From his wicked ways. And live. God. And God. And God. Sending. His word. To Nineveh.

Was. That they would hear. And that they would. Repent. And we see the. Effect. Of God's word. Upon those.

[15:47] Hardened. Hardened. People. God's word. Broke through. Through. Can you remember. That day. In your experience.

When God's word. Broke through. Into your life. Do you remember. That day. When as a hopeless. Helpless sinner. You came to the foot.

Of the cross. Of Calvary. If you have come. And God. Dealt with your sin. And took them away. I wonder how many.

If you have read. That wonderful. Wonderful. Wonderful book. The Pilgrim's Progress. If you haven't read it. You should read it. It's a wonderful book.

About a man. Called Christian. Who set out. On the celestial. Pathway. To walk. To the celestial. City. And all the experiences.

[16:42] That he. Passed through. And as he was walking. At the very beginning. Of his walk. He came up this hill. And at the top. He saw. The cross. Planted in the ground.

And he knelt. Down at the cross. And he had been. Carrying. A huge. Haversack. On his back. As. Had. Everyone. In his city.

Called the city. Of destruction. Even from the children. To the old. Old people. They all. Carried. A big bag. On their back. And there was no way.

To remove that bag. It wasn't held on. By straps. And buckles. It was held on. By cords. That had no beginning. And no end.

And no way of opening. They were held. Immovably. Onto the person's back. And when Christian knelt. Down at the cross. The bag of sin.

[17:39] Fell off. And rolled off his shoulders. And he never. Saw his sin again. Isn't that wonderful. At the cross. Jesus dealt with our sin.

He took it away. Never. To be seen. Again. God. Dealt with. His sin. And when Jonah went into that city.

Everywhere he went. He said. Yet. Forty days. And nearly. Shall be destroyed. Can't you see. What he's saying. He is putting a time limit.

On God's word. He is saying. That there are only. Forty days remaining. Until. This city. Is going to be destroyed. God.

Has set a time limit. On his word. Not Jonah. Jonah. Was God's mouthpiece. Go. Jonah. Only said.

[18:40] What God gave him to say. And there was a time limit. Do you ever notice. When you go into a shop. To buy something. I wonder.

Do you ever do. What some of us do. We look at the sell by date. And you don't buy something. That has already. Reached its sell by date. Why?

Because it might be dangerous. To eat it. It's past. It's best. It's got a sell by date. When it should be binned. If I can put it in words.

That are understandable. The gospel. Has got a sell by date. Today. If you will hear his voice.

Harden. Not your hearts. This is still. The day of God's grace. This is still the day. When we can come and. Kneel down at the cross of Calvary.

[19:37] Acknowledge. Our sin. Our guilt. Our transgression. Before God. God. And we can allow God. To take our sin away. That day will not always be there.

I want you to understand that. I want you to know. That God has set a day. In which he will judge the world. By that man.

Christ Jesus. Whom he has ordained. God has set a day. And when that day of judgment comes. The preaching of the gospel.

Comes to an end. Because the church of Jesus Christ. Will be complete. And I don't know how close.

The church of Jesus Christ. Is to completion. Because I know that there are millions. And millions. Possibly two and a half. Billion people. Who have yet to hear the good news.

[20:45] Of the gospel. So I think that the day of grace. Is still ongoing. How far. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.

But how long will your life be. You don't know. And I don't know. Maybe. Tonight.

That summons will come. And my friend. If. You have not closed in.

With God's. Offer of mercy. In the gospel. There remains. No more sacrifice. For sin. You will have crossed.

That line. Where there is no coming back. That's why scripture says.

[21 : 44] Today. Not tomorrow. Today. If you will hear his voice. Do not harden. Your hearts. Psalm 95.

Verse 7. Today. If you hear his voice. Do not harden your hearts. As Israel did. At Meribah. And Massah. Jonah went on.

Into the city. And I say. As I say. Everywhere. He went. He declared. God's word. And everywhere. He went. God's word.

Broke. Through. And people. Pulled off. Their clothes. And put on sackcloth.

And they sat in ashes. Right from the king. Down to the lowest. Lowliest. Home in the city. From the highest. To the lowest.

[22 : 41] From the richest. To the poorest. They sat down. In mourning. For their sin. And they got right with God.

My friend. Have you got right with God? Has your question. Of sin. Been dealt with? This was a. Exceedingly wicked city.

One of the wickedest cities. In the whole. Of the Old Testament. They brought brutality. To a totally. New level. Because of their.

Dreadful. Dreadful ways. And yet. And yet. God's love. And God's love. Extended to them. Don't ever.

Let the devil. Tell you. You have gone too far. Because you haven't. You have never gone as far. As they went. And yet. God's love. Reached down.

[23 : 40] Touched them. Changed them. Brought them. To their knees. And the sad. Sad.

Sad. Sad. Sad. Sad. Sad. Sad. Sad. Sad. Sad. Is that the prophet of God. Did not recognize. What God was doing.

When he saw these people repenting. I think it says at the. Beginning of chapter four. But it pleased. Displeased. Jonah exceedingly.

And he became angry. Why? Because God was doing something. That he said he would not do. God had said he was going to judge these people.

Now he was saving them. And you know what had happened? When Jonah repented. He kept back from God.

[24 : 35] One thing. And that one thing. Was now. Tripping him up. And this one thing. Can trip. You up.

It can trip me up. And it's a very small word. And it's called. Pride. You see. Jonah had made a prophecy.

A way back. And it had come to pass. Word for word. Back in 2 Kings 14. When the borders were restored to Israel. According to the word of Jonah the prophet.

From Gath-Hefer. That's this Jonah. And he had that to his credit. He had prophesied. It had happened. And now he was prophesying.

That Nineveh was going to be destroyed. And it wasn't going to be destroyed. And that hit his pride. Deep, deep, deep down. Now. God's love went deep in his life.

[25 : 37] But I have to say sadly. That Jonah's sin. Went deeper. God. Or rather Jonah.

Did not allow God. To deal with everything. In his life. He held back. One idol. Pride.

Pride. And here. When God was at work. When thousands of people.

Were coming to faith. The prophet of God. Was displeased. What kind of prophet was that? Sad.

Sad to the extreme. And Jonah. Left the city. Disillusioned. Then he went down. And he sat on the hillside. To wait.

[26 : 33] And to see. What God would do to the city. He did not recognize. That God had already worked. In grace. And in salvation.

He had brought. Thousands of people. Out of the darkness of sin. Into the glorious. Liberating light. Of his salvation. In salvation. And Jonah.

God's man. Didn't recognize it. And he went out of the city. And he sat there. Waiting to see. If God's judgment. Would come. Waiting for God to work.

Not recognizing. God had already worked. That's why I said. He was the out of touch. With God. Prophet. Prophet. I have to say.

That there are many ministers. In churches. Across Scotland. Today. Who are out of touch. With God. I can think of one minister.

[27 : 32] Who during the entire message. That he gave. Did not once mention. The name of the Lord. Jesus Christ. Christ. I would find that difficult.

If not impossible. But he had no problem. And he was a former moderator. Of the church of Scotland. No place. For Jesus.

Have you had the place for Jesus? Are you going to bow your knee to him? Instead of coming to church. Ad infinitum. Coming.

Week in. Week out. Month in. Month out. Year in. Year out. Decade in. Decade out. Where will it end? When will you bow the knee?

To the saviour. Who died on the cross for you. That's what church is all about. Bringing men and women.

[28 : 35] Into a living relationship with God. And if we disobey. And turn our backs. On that wonderful message of God's salvation.

There is. No more sacrifice. For sin. But a fearful. Looking forward. To judgment. loving things. In 1958. I almost died.

Because I tried to commit suicide. and why I tried to commit suicide was because my parents my brother and an auntie were killed in a road accident my life demolished and I tried to commit suicide I was desperate it seemed like the answer it was not the answer that answer comes from the bit it is never, ever the answer never and yet I thought it was and later three months later I came to the foot of the cross and discovered a God who loved me a saviour who died on the cross for my sin and I, a postman in Inverness bowed my knee to the saviour of the world and I became a Christian don't hold anything back from God if you are a Christian give everything that you have to God hold back anything it won't trip you up later on rest assured of that it always does give it to God don't hold on to any one thing it will drive a wedge between you and God like I was telling the children this morning with the light switch deal with that and come to the foot of the cross

God loves you and he sent his son to die on the cross for your sin and for my sin let's pray He sure He just would see Hisharma God is right let's pray.