

Jonah: The Mercy of God and the Actions of Man

Week 8 – The Sinner Saving God

Jonah 3:5-10

God saves wicked sinners who deserve death, and He uses redeemed people who sin and are restored to share the saving message

Action: I will praise God for saving a wicked sinner like me and desire for and petition to be included in God's work to save others

Series Graphic (SLIDE 1)

Opening Idea

A man and his wife are unaware that they are in a threatening situation. One day, they find out that they are at risk of suffering and find that there is a way out. They believe in the one who can provide that way out and they take it. Abraham and Sarah are given faith and by faith they obey God and are rescued from wrath and eternal separation, given a new home where God will establish a nation for His glory, and they will have a child as the first fruits of that promised nation. This is a great account of God saving someone and then including them in His work to save others. It isn't Abraham or Sarah that save people, it is the only God who can save and His work to save sinners.

Let's continue studying the book of Jonah and see God's mercy in saving sinners who at risk of suffering destruction and wrath.

Merciful Reminder: Do you do well to be angry? (SLIDE 2)

Read

Jonah 3:5-10 ESV

(SLIDE 3) **5** 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. **6** The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. **7** And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water,

(SLIDE 4) **8** but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. **9** Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." **10** When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

Series Graphic (SLIDE 5)

Notes on Jonah 3:5-10

Wicked People Repent (v.5)

5/8 words changed eternity for the people of Nineveh. Jonah is walking the city and calling out against it saying, “Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” Jonah writes that the people of Nineveh believe God. This is a complex statement. They believed that God was real. They believed that God was God. They believed that God was righteous. They believed that they were in a dangerous place with God. They believed that God would destroy them. They believed that no one was exempt from God’s wrath. They believed that they could find rescue from the same God they believed would destroy them. They believed God! Their belief caused them to repent and find salvation. The people of Nineveh did two things to show their repentance. One, they fasted. Fasting was part of expressing great sadness and grieving. Two, they put on mourning clothes. Sackcloth was poorly constructed cloth that was rough and itchy. This cloth induced suffering in wearing it and signaled that the wearer was in a state of great mourning and grieving. These two actions reveal the posture of the Ninevites towards God. They are people grieving their actions, and it appears that they are expressing the need for mercy. This collective grieving and begging for mercy were done by every aspect of the Ninevite culture. Jonah writes that from the greatest to the least fasted and put on sackcloth. Every aspect of society felt the impending calamity, their responsibility for its cause, and the urgent need for mercy. This wasn’t a situation where one aspect of society or class of people was engaged in this display of grief and need for mercy. The entire culture expresses grief and need for mercy.

The Message Goes Viral (v.6-9)

Jonah indicates that the entire city’s inhabitants heard the message proclaimed by Jonah. There is no evidence in the book that Jonah was given an audience with the King, yet in verse 6 he writes that the King of Nineveh heard the words preached by Jonah. This word of wrath causes the King to “arise”, remove his robe, put on sackcloth, and sit in ashes.

Ashes are frequently mentioned in the Bible in connection with the ancient custom of putting ashes on oneself as a symbol of extreme grief, penitence, humiliation,

*or sense of worthlessness...Examples of such expressions of emotion include... the king of Nineveh's repentance after hearing Jonah's preaching*¹

The king of Nineveh expresses great grief and humiliation over the realized sin and consequential wrath hanging over the city. This response by the king also includes issuing a city wide decree that directs all people and animals to fast, wear sackcloth, and call out mightily to God. The king is declaring that their God is real, that God will hear the cries of the people, that God will show mercy, and that God will not destroy the city and its people. The king acknowledges that everyone in the city has been evil and acted in their evil. This isn't the issue of one person bringing doom upon all the city. Everyone is guilty and needs to show grief, humility, and cry out for mercy. The king thinks that this is required to receive mercy from the powerfully destructive hands of a fiercely angry God who has the power, the authority, and would be justified to destroy them. This is evidence of dynamic faith! The message was proclaimed, and it fell on hearts made alive by faith causing them to turn from their evil ways and cry out to God for mercy!

This is the great evidence and mark of true revival!

God is Merciful to Hold His Wrath (v. 10)

God sees the heart and mind of every person in Nineveh and He sees that they have received His words with openness while responding in humility and genuineness. God shows mercy and holds His destructive hands back from wrathfully acting against the city. God is merciful! God's expressed will can be seen through His actions and through His words. Based upon the reception and humble repentance of the Ninevite people, it was God's will to save them. It is true that the Ninevites' sin caused them to be corrupt and evil and living under condemnation. Without faith that leads to repentance and forgiveness they are condemned, and God would destroy them in His wrath. This is not the case once they, by faith, understand that they are at odds with the perfect and powerful God who will destroy them unless they believe and repent. Jonah writes that when God saw their genuine repentance and turning from their evil ways, He forgives them of their sin and withholds His wrath. It is appropriate to not place greater importance on the changing of God's actions over the truth that all men sin, sin earns death, God gives faith, faith leads to belief and repentance, repentance leads to forgiveness, and forgiveness eliminates condemnation and brings the justified into an abiding relationship with God.

An interesting language note: Jonah uses the Hebrew word *Elohim* (*El – O – Heem*) for God. This is the pluralistic term used to indicate that all three persons of the trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit are involved. This is the same term used to describe when God created man. In the events

¹ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "[Ashes,](#)" in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 213.

of chapter three, the trinity is present and engaged in seeing the faith and repentance of the Ninevites and relenting from pouring out wrath upon them.

God is The Sinner Saving God (SLIDE 6)

All People Sin and Will Suffer God's Wrath (SLIDE 7)

John 3:36 ESV

36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

God Mercifully Gives Faith Causing Belief that Leads to Repentance Bringing Forgiveness (SLIDE 8)

Romans 5:1-2 ESV

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

People, dead in sin, are brought to life by God

You were once dead, but are now alive and abide

God is Still Saving Sinners

Merciful Response

Our Merciful God, Please Save Sinners! (SLIDE 9)

Read

1 Timothy 1:15 ESV (SLIDE 10)

15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

Series Graphic (SLIDE 11)

Daily Readings

Week 8 – The Sinner Saving God

Day 1

1 Timothy 1:15 ESV

15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

God is actively saving sinners who are lost. The great evidence of this action is that God sent Jesus Christ to save sinners. Paul gave evidence that God's work is effective. You can also give testimony to God's effectiveness. Praise God for saving sinners and plead for God to continue to do so. Our God is the sinner saving God!

Day 2

John 3:36 ESV

36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Sin causes people to be at odds with God. God's wrath will be poured out on those who sin. Everyone is in this dire situation until God gives faith causing you to believe and be saved. You were once there. Praise God that He is the sinner saving God and there is hope for those who, by faith, believe and are saved!

Day 3

Romans 5:1-2 ESV

1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Sinners who are given faith find that they have sin to deal with, repentance, there is forgiveness, and they have hope and celebrate their forgiveness and the abiding relationship that brings peace. You once did not have hope, but God mercifully gave you faith and you are forgiven your sins. Salvation is only found in Him! Praise God for being the sinner saving God!

Day 4

John 10:28 ESV

28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

Our God who saves sinners takes people who were once dead and condemned to eternal death and saves them. Those whom God saves will never be separated from Him again. You are one who will not die or be snatched out of God's hand. He saved you; He keeps you, and you will live with Him forever. Your God is a sinner saving God!

Day 5

Luke 19:10 ESV

10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

God sent His Son, the Son of Man, to seek for those who are lost. This work of the Messiah isn't just to find lost people, but in finding them He will save them. Let us who were found and saved plead for God to continue seeking and saving sinners who are lost. Praise God that He is a sinner saving God!