

**Introduction:** Something in each of us, even those God has called to a specific ministry and given the privilege of knowing His heart for people, is hostile to God's mercy and compassion – for other people! \*\*\* Most of us have some understanding that we need God's mercy to be reconciled to Him. If He were not merciful we would all be estranged from Him, and bitter about everything, unable to experience joy and gratitude. Until we tell Him we need His LOVE and mercy, and beg Him to fill us with all He has of these, we are incapable of loving anyone: God or people. \*\*\* But, most of us have also been deeply hurt by certain people who are determined to hurt us, sometimes for reasons known only to them. Other times they tell us why they don't like us in words that can scar our souls so much that we feel we can't be healed. It is hard to love and pray for people who hate us in this way. This is why Jesus commands us to love and pray for such people (*Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-36*). \*\*\* All this explains Jonah's actions when it came to speaking God's prophetic word to the Assyrians in their capital city of Nineveh. In 725 BC, Assyria attacked the ten northern tribes of Israel. They laid siege to the capital city of Samaria for three years. They finally captured the city and carried all the survivors into exile. The whole story, including why God did this, is found in *2 Kings 17*. \*\*\* Jonah was from a town 'winepress of digging' (*2 Kings 14:25*) some thirty miles north of Samaria, a day's journey away. It is likely The Covenant God of Israel sent him to the king of Assyria in Nineveh during the final siege of Samaria. Given this, it would be hard for Jonah to want Yahweh to be merciful and show compassion to Nineveh (*Jonah 4:1-3*). \*\*\* Now we are ready to look at the account of Jonah. Then, we will learn the same truth about God, and His mercy, as we look again at Jesus' parable in Luke's Gospel.

**I. After fleeing God in disobedience and endangering sailors, Jonah is disciplined and rescued by God to preach destruction to Nineveh; AND the people repent in faith and deeds; and God has compassion. (*Jonah 1:1-17; 3:1-10*)**

A. Jonah disobeys Yahweh, He brings a great storm on the ship Jonah boarded; but, He has mercy on the pagan sailors and provides for His prophet. (*Jonah 1:1-17*)

1. Then the word of Yahweh to Jonah, 'Rise! Go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry against it, for their evil came up before Me'. (*Verses 1-2*)

**Word to prophet:** Yahweh called Jonah ('dove') the son of Amittai ('my truth') to speak for Him.

**Wicked city:** Nineveh was great (used eleven times in our chapters), but also evil (wicked).

2. Jonah rose to flee Yahweh's Presence, paying fare on a ship from Joppa to Tarshish. (*Verse 3*)

**Jonah flees:** Nineveh was 600 miles northeast of Joppa, Jonah heads 2,000 miles due west.

3. Yahweh sent a great wind that became a great tempest; it was thought the ship would break. (*Verse 4*)

**Whirlwind:** The extreme weather, threatening the ship Jonah went down in, was a judgment on Jonah.

4. The sailors feared, each crying to his 'god', they cast off cargo, with Jonah in a deep sleep; the captain came to him, 'Sleeper, rise, call on your God, perhaps we will not perish'. (*Verses 5-6*)

**Every man – his 'god':** The word about the sailors confirms the adage each man has his unique idol(s).

**Jonah asleep:** Jonah had gone down deep in the ship before his deep sleep.

**Captain:** The captain hoped Jonah's prayer might cause God to 'think upon them'.

5. The men decide to cast lots to know who caused the evil and the lot fell on Jonah; they implore him to tell his occupation, country and people. (*Verses 7-8*)

**Cast lots:** Solomon said the result of casting lots is Yahweh's judgment (*Proverbs 16:33*).

**Jonah:** Jonah is asked to tell for whom this evil came upon them.

6. He said, 'I am Hebrew, I am fearing Yahweh, the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land'. (*Verse 9*)

**Fear God:** This is a lie. He did not fear God when he paid for passage on a ship going 2,000 miles in the opposite direction from where Yahweh commanded he go.

7. The men feared with great fear, questioning him because they knew he was fleeing Yahweh; they ask how to calm the sea; he said cast me in the sea and it will be calm, because the great tempest is of me. (*Verses 10-13*)

**Accuse Jonah:** Jonah had told them he was fleeing Yahweh, and they fearfully ask him what he did.

**How to calm sea:** Then they ask him how to calm the sea because it was becoming tempestuous.

**Throw me over:** He told them to cast him in the sea because they know he is the cause of their fear.

Let this teach us that God's discipline to those disobeying Him is a great deterrent to disobedience.

8. They called to Yahweh to not perish for his soul and that his innocent blood not be on them; they lifted him and cast him in the sea which stopped raging; they greatly feared Yahweh, worshipping Him. (*Verses 14-16*)

**Pagan sailors call on Yahweh:** These sailors with dozens of 'gods' now pray to The True God, entreating Him they would not perish or be guilty of his blood, because He does as He pleases.

**They throw him over – calm:** They trust the disobedient prophet's word, act, the sea becomes calm.

**Great fear of Yahweh and worship:** Great fear is the first step of faith in Yahweh, the acts of sacrifice to Him and vowing vows are the fruit of faith.

9. Yahweh prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah; he was in its belly three days and nights. (*Verse 17*)

**Jonah did not drown:** With this act, The True God demonstrates mercy to His disobedient prophet in addition to sinful sailors who called on idols, even in the great storm.

***God has mercy on sinners and His prophets***

B. Jonah obeys and gives the destruction prophecy to Nineveh; but, all repent and seek God in faith, with fasting and prayer, and God has compassion on them. (*Jonah 3:1-10*)

1. And the Word of Yahweh was a second time to Jonah, 'Rise! Go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim to it the proclamation I speak to you'. (*Verses 1-2*)

**Second chance:** After a prayer of confession and petition in the belly of the great fish (*chapter 2*), Yahweh tells Jonah to go to Nineveh a second time. He will speak what he is given when he arrives.

2. So Jonah did according to Yahweh's Word and went to the great city of Nineveh; then Jonah went a third of the way in and called, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown'. (*Verses 3-4*)

**Obeded:** Now Jonah obeys. He goes to Nineveh and tells its people they will be overthrown.

3. They trusted God, called a fast, and put on sackcloth from the great to the small; then the word came to the king, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, put on sackcloth and sat in ashes. (*Verses 5-6*)

**Believed:** The faith of the people bore the fruit of fasting in humble dress, from the greatest to the least.

Then the king joined them in sackcloth and ashes.

4. The king made a proclamation, decreeing with the nobles (great ones): none living will taste anything, nor feed, nor drink water, will be covered in sackcloth and call mightily to God, and each one will turn from his evil way and violence; God may turn from His fierce anger, comfort, and we will not perish. (*Verses 7-9*)

**Royal decree:** He covers everything for man and beast, herd and flock: no food or water, sackcloth and mighty prayer. Then they must turn from evil and violence.

**Who knows?:** With a question, he prays God will turn and comfort them. This is done in faith in The God of the Hebrews.

5. Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God comforted them (notwithstanding the evil He had said he would do to them), and He did not do it. (*Verse 10*)

**Then God saw:** He saw their acts of worship to Him motivated by their fear that led to faith.

**They turned from evil ways:** They sincerely turned from their evil ways.

**God comforted:** He did not destroy them. May we take hope and comfort that because God had compassion on a city of great evil, He will also have compassion on us. He had mercy on the sinners of Nineveh after His mercy gave Jonah a second chance to trust Him and obey Him.

### ***God has mercy on sinners and His prophets***

#### **II. Jesus speaks to confirmed self-righteous people a parable of two men praying. (*Luke 18:9-14*)**

- A. A Pharisee was praying, thanking God he was not like other men: immoral, or even as a tax collector, he fasts and tithes. (*Verses 9-12*)

1. He spoke also this parable to people persuaded that they were righteous, despising others. (*Verse 9*)

**Primary audience:** There are proud people who look down on others. This was Jesus' primary audience; but many of us can be like this.

2. Two men went to the Temple to pray: a Pharisee and a tax collector. (*Verse 10*)

**Religious and traitor:** Pharisees were respected by Jews because they believed God's Word and tried to do it. Tax collectors were Jews working for the oppressive and hated Roman government.

3. The Pharisee stood to himself and prayed to God, 'I thank You I'm not like others: grasping extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. (*Verse 11*)

**I am NOT as others:** He fits the target audience: persuaded he is righteous and despising others.

4. I am fasting twice a week and giving tithes on all I possess. (*Verse 12*)

**Righteous deeds:** These are admirable spiritual disciplines that he was continuing to practice. (Could he change as Jonah?)

- B. The tax collector was in no way willing to lift his eyes to heaven, and beating his chest begs God to be merciful to him: the sinner; Jesus said his humility justified him. (*Verses 13-14*)

1. The tax collector stood far off and in no way would lift his eyes to heaven. (*Verse 13a*)

**Far off:** He stood far off because he was fully aware he was a sinful traitor to his people and God.

**Not able to lift eyes:** He is not at all able to bring himself to look to God's dwelling place.

2. But, he is beating his chest saying, 'God be merciful to me, the sinner'. (*Verse 13b*)

**Physical torment:** The physical beating of his chest reflects his sense of himself as THE sinner.

**Begs mercy of God:** He addresses THE God, the True God of Israel and Scripture, and begs for mercy.

3. Jesus tells His audience that this one went down to his house justified, not the other. (*Verse 14a*)

**Jesus:** God's Son, God Himself, says this humble sinner who repented and called himself a sinner has been made right with God.

#### ***Humble sinners who repent and confess are right with God***

4. Everyone exalting himself will be abased, but he humbling himself will be exalted. (*Verse 14b*)

**God's reversals:** God's ways are not our ways. They are often opposite what we would think and do. Isaiah was given this prophecy: All who thirst, come to the waters, you who are hungry, eat. ... Seek Yahweh and let the wicked forsake his ways. ... My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor my ways your ways. My ways and thoughts are higher than yours. My Word shall not return empty. And you will go out with joy and be led forth with peace. (*Isaiah 55*)

This truth about God is why ***God has mercy on sinners and His prophets***.

**Conclusion:** Jonah was reluctant to carry God's message of destruction to the capital of Assyria and disobeys by boarding a ship sailing in the opposite direction, endangering the lives of many sailors. Then, given a second chance, he obeys God and gives the message to the people of Nineveh. They all repent, seeking God in acts of worship – and God has compassion on them. Jesus tells how God will justify a great sinner who truly repents and begs for mercy over a self-righteous 'religious' person.

#### ***God has mercy on sinners and His prophets***