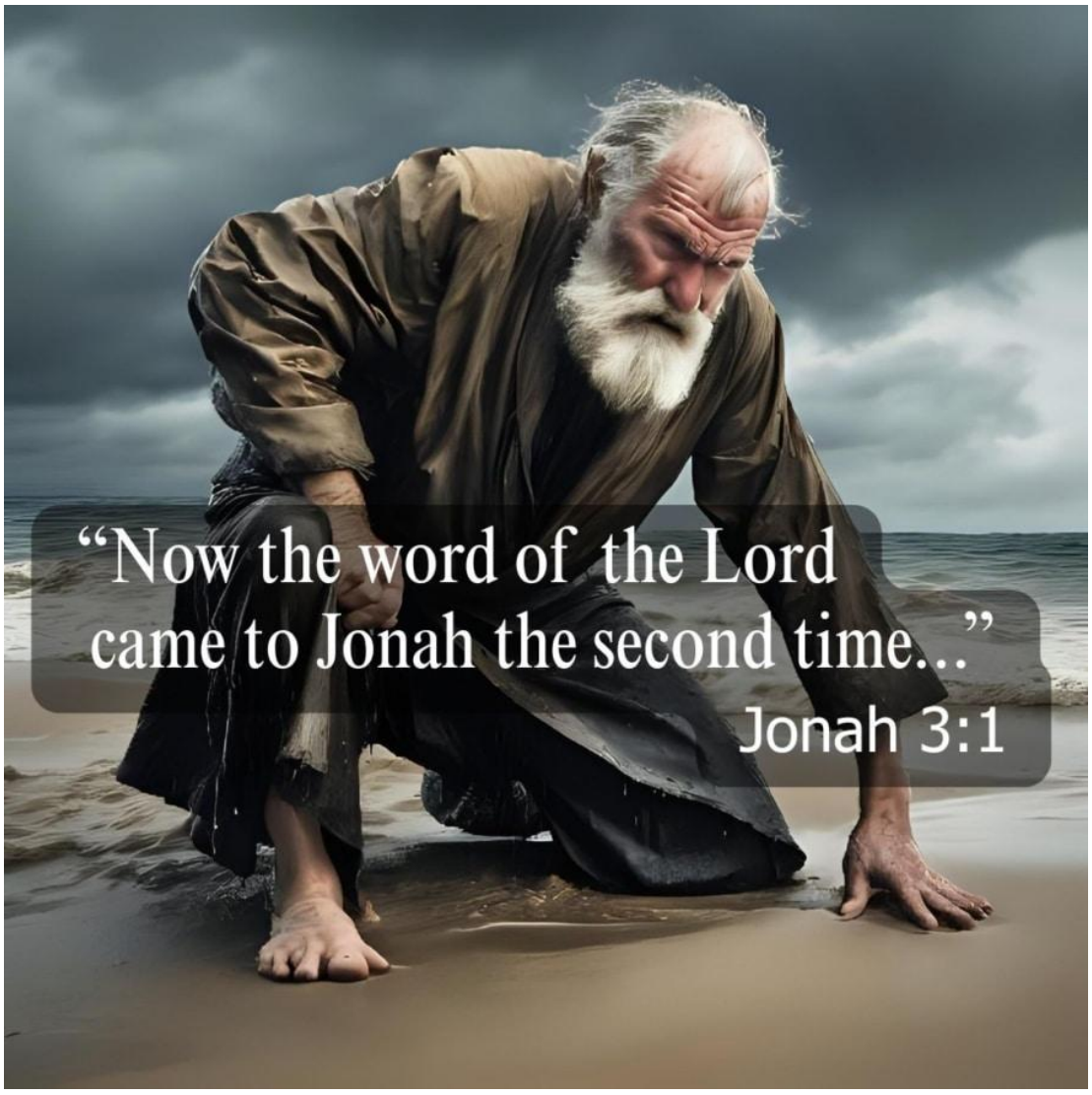
Basic Training Bible Ministries

presents

The Book of Jonah

America: Renaissance or Ruin

(Attitudes of Ambivalence



Prescott, AZ Conference

October 2025

The Book of Jonah

America: Renaissance or Ruin

(Attitudes of Ambivalence)

Introduction

1. The Book of Jonah is a:
   a. Prophecy of Israel (and of Christ),
   b. Parable to the Church, and
   c. Portent (warning) to America.

   Note: Commentators often say that Jonah is the only prophetic book without a prophecy. The truth is that the whole story is a prophecy, acted out, as it were.

2. The main lesson of the book: ***"Salvation is of the Lord"*** (Jonah 2:9).

3. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 that Jesus *"rose ... the third day"* according to the Scriptures." Which Scriptures? Jonah1:17 and Hosea 6:2.

4. The Outline:
   a. Chapter1—Rebellion
   b. Chapter 2—Repentance
   c. Chapter 3—Revival
   d. Chapter 4—Reproach.

5. In this little book there are ten miracles, seven *"great"* things, and four divinely *"prepared"* things.

6. Of the many paradoxes in the book:
   a. There is no mention of Israel.
   b. Nineveh repents but Israel (Northern Kingdom) won't.
   c. The mercy of God to Nineveh contrasted to Jonah's cold hard-heartedness.
   d. Paul echoes and expands Jonah, showing how the unbelief of Israel brought the Gospel to the Gentiles (Romans 11).
   e. Jesus mentions by name Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and Jonah, but only identifies with Jonah!

7. Jonah as a type of Israel:
   a. Elect/chosen to serve God,
   b. Called to bless Gentiles,
   c. Disobedient and unbelieving,
   d. Wins Gentiles through disobedience,
   e. Miraculously preserved by God, and
   f. Restored following repentance.

Point: There is a little of Jonah in all of us. There is a lot of Jonah in some of us. If you go through this study and don't see yourself in Jonah, and the Jonah in you, either I have failed, or you have!

JONAH CHAPTER ONE
Jonah's Rebellion

Disobedience
Jonah 1:1–3

1:1 ***"The Word of the Lord."*** God has the first and the last word in the book. This is the same Word that created all things (Gen. 1:1) and became flesh (John 1:1–4, 14).

"Jonah the son of Amittai." Jonah means "dove," Amittai means "truth." This identifies him as the prophet of 2 Kings 14:25–27. Under Jeroboam II, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" (Opening of *A Tale of Two Cities* – Charles Dickens).

He came from *"Gath-Hepher"* (2 Kings 14:25), showing the ignorance of the Pharisees: *"No prophet has arisen from Galilee"* (John 7:52). His hometown was just a few miles from Nazareth.

1:2 ***"Arise ... go ... cry out."*** Nineveh is a *"great city,"* actually a complex of cities built by Nimrod (Gen. 10:8–12). This three-fold commission is parallel to ours: *"Make disciples"* (Matt. 28:18–20) How? By *"going ... baptizing ... teaching"* (aorist participle).

The Will of God

1. Geographical: Where does He want me to be? I may be in the right place, but ...
2. Operational: What does He want me to do? Doing the wrong thing. Or, doing the …
3. Motivational: Why does He want me to do it? Right thing, with the wrong motives.

In Chapter 1, Jonah fails all three. In Chapter 2, it is only place in the book where he is in all three. In Chapter 3, he does 1 and 2 but fails in 3. In Chapter 4, he is again outside all three.

1:3 Jonah ***"arose to flee from the presence of the Lord."*** Had he read Psalm 139? Of course! But James reminds us, double-minded people are *"unstable in all their ways"* (James 1:8). This is what we call "ambivalence," holding two conflicting ideas or opinions.

Jonah would have known the prophecy of Hosea, that Assyria would rule over the Northern Kingdom, because of their refusal to repent (Hos. 11:5)

"He went down to Joppa." This began his downward spiral, down to Joppa, down to the ship, down into the hold, and down into the sea, and the fish.

Note: Peter was called in Joppa to go to the Gentiles (Cornelius) (Acts 10).

Jonah and James

I've never read Jonah without thinking of the book of James. They complement each other. Jonah's ambivalent attitudes are what James calls "double-mindedness" (James 1:8).

1. Do we count all our trials as joy (James1:2)?

2. Do we ever pray, yet doubting God will hear/answer (James 1:6)?
3. Do we ever blame God for our trials (James 1:13)?
4. Does our faith often lack works (James 2:14)?
5. Do we speak against our brothers or judge them (James 5:11)?
6. Do we pray for those who have hurt us (James 5:16)? Nothing is more Christ-like than forgiveness.

I think we can see that there is a lot of Jonah in us all!

The Downward Path of Disobedience (Seven Steps) (Ephesians 4:17–19)

1. Walk like Gentiles (heathen).
2. Vacuum of mind (not renewed by the word (Rom. 12:2).
3. Understanding darkened (loss of known Scripture).
4. Alienated from the life of God (not living by faith, in the Spirit).
5. Blinded in heart (love for God wanes).
6. Self-betrayal (from truth to lies, from good to evil).
7. Insatiable in lusts (unbridled self-gratification).

Peter's Downward Path

1. Self-confidence (Mark 14:29).
2. Sleeping in garden (Mark14:37).
3. Forsaking, fleeing (Mark 14:50).
4. Following from afar (Mark 14:54).
5. Seated with scorners (Mark 14:54; Psalm 1:1).
6. Seeking comfort (Mark 14:54, like Jonah in Ch.4).
7. Denying the Lord (Mark 14:66–71).

1:3 ***"He paid the fare."*** Disobedience is always costly!

Discipline
Jonah 1:4–9

1:4 The ***"great wind"*** is the first of ten miracles in Jonah:

1. Storm,
2. Lot falls on Jonah,
3. Storm abates immediately,
4. Great fish,
5. Jonah preserved in fish,
6. Jonah spit up,
7. Nineveh repents,
8. The gourd,
9. The worm, and
10. The east wind.

1:5 The *"mariners"* (often called "salts") were terrified, while Jonah slept! *"Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light"* (Eph. 5:14). Is God talking to you? To me?

Remember that Paul was in such a storm (Acts 27), not through disobedience, but faith. God also used this storm to bring many to faith in Jesus Christ.

1:6 The ***"captain"*** is one of two honorable unbelieving men in the story (the other—*"the king of Nineveh"*), who care for those under them. Both come to saving faith!

By his God's discipline, Jonah is forced to confess his sin, and his God, *"I fear the LORD (YHWH)* (Jonah 1:9), the God that was *"unknown"* (Acts 17:23) to them.

The Discipline of the Lord (Heb. 12:3–11)

1. Never to be despised (v. 5).
2. Always motivated by His love (v. 6).
3. Follows a discernible pattern (vv. 5–6).
   a. Rebuke (verbal, by His word)
   b. Chastening (child-training)
   c. Scourging if rebellion continues. The final form of discipline for the unrepentant, can be the "sin unto death" (1 John 5:16; 1 Cor. 5:5).
4. Proves we are His children (vv. 7–8).
5. For our benefit and blessing (vv. 9–11).

Three Great Deliverances in the Book

1. The sailors from the storm.
2. Jonah from the sea and the fish.
3. Nineveh from destruction.
4. And perhaps, Jonah, from himself!

Default

Jonah 1:10–17 (the worst way to lose!)

Jonah loses by failure to act. Why did he not just repent at this point?

1:10–11 *"What have you done? ... What shall we do?"*

> **Point:** Our sins always cause harm to the innocent! James teaches us that sin always leads to death (James 1:13–15). When we choose to sin, we do not know how far the repercussions will go.

1:14–17 Note that the men call upon the Lord, they feared the Lord, and they offered sacrifice to the Lord, and made vows.

The storm abates, the sailors are saved, and Jonah is preserved by the fish that God prepared for him.

You might be double-minded (apologies to Jeff Foxworthy)

1. If you believe God created all things but think you can run from Him.
2. If you can sleep when death is threatening you.
3. You would rather die than obey God's commands.
4. If more people are won to the faith by your disobedience than by your witness.
5. If you fear the Lord, but not enough to serve Him willingly.
6. If you only confess Him when your back is against the wall!
7. If at the point of conviction and exposure, you still refuse to repent.

Summary:

1. **The prophecy:** Israel will also flee from her Master and her mission, and will be cast into the "sea" of the nations (Rev. 17:15). Only to be "resurrected" by God, to finish her mission (Isaiah 11:11).
2. **The parable:** Has not the Church, by and large, also failed in our God-given mission?
3. **The portent:** America's future hangs in the balance, we are at the most critical stage of our national history. Nothing short of widespread repentance and revival will save us.

   Point: If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have a God-given ministry.

4. **To Israel**, as a **catalyst**, *"to provoke them to jealousy"* (Rom. 10:19; 11:11, 13).
5. **To the Church**, as a **model**, to be a follower of Christ, an example to other believers, and a witness to the lost (1 Thess. 1:6–8).
6. **To America,** as a **rebuke,** by genuine humility, effective prayer, daily seeking His face/presence, turning away from evil and doing Spirit-led good.

Historical Note: How interesting is it that the book of Ruth, which is a picture of Christ and the Church, is read by orthodox Jews at Pentecost, and Jonah, an acted-out prophecy of Israel, is read at Yom Kippur (Atonement).

We also have a calling and a mission (Matt. 28:18–20). Each and every believer has a threefold ministry: first to the Lord (priesthood/prayer); second, to the lost, (ambassadorship and witness), and third, to fellow believers (spiritual gift). See Hebrews 10:23–25; 2 Corinthians 5:14–15; Romans 12:1–8. How well are WE doing?

1. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29).
2. We are to walk worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1).
3. We are to be diligent to make our calling and election sure (confirmed, 2 Peter 1:10). We can only do this by consistent spiritual growth, daily self-examination and confession, and daily service in the three ministries listed above.

Reminder: There is a little Jonah in each of us. There is a whole lot of Jonah in some of us!

Luke 6:46 "*Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord', and not do the things which I say?"*

Inscription on an ancient cathedral in Lubeck, Germany (Chuck Missler):

"Thus, speaketh Christ our Lord to us.
You call Me Master, and obey Me not.
You call Me Light, and see Me not.
You call Me The Way, and walk Me not.
You call Me Life, and choose Me not.
You call Me Wise, and follow Me not.
You call Me Fair, and love Me not.
You call Me eternal, and seek Me not.
You call Me noble, and serve Me not.
You call Me gracious, and trust Me not.
You call Me Might, and honor Me not.
You call Me Just, and fear Me not.
Therefore, if I condemn you, blame Me not."

Point: While it is true that God uses *"the foolish ... the weak ... the base ... the despised ... the nothings"* of this world (1 Cor. 1:27–28), yet we must never forget how the passage ends, *"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."* (1 Cor. 1:30). The four negatives of our inadequacy are overcome by the four positives *"in Christ."*

JONAH CHAPTER TWO
Jonah's Repentance

This is the only time we see Jonah fully in line with the will of God in the book. In fact, we gain some insight into his knowledge of Scripture. In this chapter, there are allusions to at least seven Psalms.

1. Jonah 2:2—Psalm 130:1
2. Jonah 2:3—Psalm 42:7
3. Jonah 2:4—Psalm 31:22
4. Jonah 2:5—Psalm 69:1–2
5. Jonah 2:7—Psalm 18:6; 142:3; 6.)
6. Jonah 2:8—Psalm 31:6
7. Jonah 2:9—Psalm 116:17–18.

Confession
Jonah 2:1–4

When a believer sins, confession is the only thing that can restore fellowship with God (2 Sam. 12:13; Psalm 32:3–5; 1 Cor. 11:27–32; 1 John 1:9). But true confession must lead to correction (1 John 1:7), and correction to re-commitment.

2:4 How interesting it is that Jonah thinks he has been cast out of God's sight (Psalm 139:7–12)! Yet isn't that what he wanted—to escape from the presence of the Lord?

2:2 ***"Out of the belly of Sheol I cried."*** This is the place of death, from which, apart from resurrection power, none can return. Remember Luke 6:19–31, the rich man and Lazarus. Sheol has two compartments (in Old Testament). One for the saved; one for the lost. Jonah is immediately convinced that his prayer has been heard!

The Power of Confession

1. In 2 Samuel 12:13–15, note the simplicity of David's confession, and the immediate response of Nathan. David was near the sin unto death (1 John 5:16).
2. Read Psalm 32:3–7. Those who confess their sins are called "godly."
3. Read Psalm 51:1–13. See the cleansing power of confession, and how it equips the believer to be useful and effective again!
4. Why is confession so powerful? Because it lays hold of our great Advocate in Heaven (1 John 2:1–2). Confession is humility and honesty with self and with God.

Correction

Jonah 2:5–7

As said earlier, confession needs to be followed by correction.

2:5–6a Jonah describes the horror of sinking down into the depths of the sea. Remember in the prophetic application of the book, Israel would be cast into the "sea" of the nations (Rev. 17:15). It is out of this *"sea"* that antichrist will arise (Rev. 13:1). He is the personification of the "Leviathan," the sea monster, of apocalyptic Scripture.

2:6b When Jonah says, ***"You have brought up my life from the pit,"*** it is a picture of life from the dead.

1. Carnality is pictured in Scripture as a kind of living death (Eph. 5:14; 1 Tim. 5:6).
2. This is the death James speaks of, when we have faith without works (James 2:17, 20).
3. We even have a theological name for this: we call it dead orthodoxy.
4. It is analogous to the "deadness" of Abraham and Sarah, in their inability to bring forth life (Rom. 4:16–22).
5. The point in comparing carnality to death is to remind us that the flesh can produce nothing of value to God. Only by His life-giving Spirit are we able to serve Him acceptably.

2:7 The turning point, in v. 7, is that Jonah "remembers" the Lord, and prays to Him, and is heard.

In Revelation 2:1–7, Jesus rebukes the church of Ephesus, because they *"left your first love"* (v.4). They did not "lose" it, they *"left"* it, a conscious departure. They are given a three-fold path to recovery: *"Remember"* (v. 5), *"Repent"* (v. 5b), and *"Return,"* i.e., *"do the first works."*

How many of us have also left our first love? Do you remember a time when you were closer to the Lord? When you were very conscious of His presence. When your service was an offering of love, not just a "ministry" you were involved in? *"Remember ... Repent ... Return"*!

Note: The term "swallowed up" is often used by the prophets as an analogy of Israel's judgments from God (Isaiah 49:19; Jer. 51:34; Lam. 2:16; Hoshea 8:8).

The Sign of Jonah

1. Read Matthew12:38–42. In spite of all His wonderful works, the Pharisees demand a sign from Him. He tells them the only sign to the rebellious and unbelieving will be the sign of Jonah.

2. Jesus here declares that the events of Jonah 2 actually happened.

3. That Jonah was a *"sign"* to the people of Nineveh implies that his appearance gave evidence of having been in the great fish. There are several records of men swallowed by "whales" or whale sharks, who survived. Their skin was bleached a yellow-brown color.

4. This would have had a great effect on the Ninevites, who among other deities, worshipped the fish-god Dagon.

5. Jonah is the only prophet Jesus identifies Himself with personally. When He said, *"a greater than Jonah is here,"* it implies that He considered Jonah to be great!

Commitment
Jonah 2:8–10
(Matt. 16:1–4; Mark 8:11–12; Luke 11:29–32).

2:8 Here Jonah recognizes, perhaps for the first time, that even the Ninevites, who were idolaters, are in need of God's mercy.

2:9 Take note of the double commitment in the two "I will's" of v. 9. The **first** is the only offering he can give, ***"Thanksgiving."*** This is the very sacrifice we are challenged to offer to God daily (Heb. 13:15). In Revelation 5:8 and 8:3, we see that our prayers ascend up before God as incense (the picture of the altar of incense in the tabernacle). The **second** offering is obedience to his call! ***"Salvation is of the Lord."*** The word here is of course *Yeshua.* The Lord Jesus is the central theme of the Old Testament!

2:10 Here, the Lord speaks to the fish, and Jonah is vomited up on dry land. How amazing that God speaks to the storm, the fish, the worm, the wind, and all obey Him! All of nature is at His command, but men, who are made in His image, resist Him!

Is it any wonder that, on the "Day of Atonement," orthodox Jews read the Book of Jonah!

The Way of Return

1. The story of the prodigal (Luke 15:11–32) has much to teach us about spiritual recovery. In fact, there are parallels that we may see at the end of this book.

2. James gives us a very precise roadmap of what is involved in spiritual recovery (James 4:5–10). In contrast to the way down (Eph. 4:17–19), here we see seven steps of spiritual recovery. Though the Spirit is grieved (James 4:5, Eph. 4:30), He gives *"greater grace"* for our spiritual recovery:

    a. Submit to God.
    b. Resist the devil.
    c. Draw near to God (He will draw near to you).
    d. Cleanse your hands (stop doing what is evil).
    e. Purify your hearts (the inner source of all evil, from doublemindedness).
    f. Let your laughter be turned into mourning.
    g. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord.

3. In the same way that Paul warns of the seven steps down (Eph. 4:17–19), and James gives us the seven steps of return (James 4:5–10), Peter gives us the seven steps to spiritual maturity (2 Peter 1:5–8).

4. Yet, in the story of the prodigal, there is a subtle warning, in the older brother, that warns of a much deeper kind of defection from the Lord, that of self-righteousness. How we need to beware!

5. Analogous to the return of the carnal believer, Paul speaks of the yet future return of Israel to her rightful role in God's plan as *"life from the dead"* (Rom. 11:11–15).

6. The prophet Isaiah helps us, not only to understand what is happening to Israel, but also to interpret a passage of Scripture that has troubled many. In Isaiah 27:10–11, the prophet pictures the nation as a tree that is withered, cut down, and its branches burned. This is the very figure used of Jesus in John 15:6. Could it be He is talking about Israel here, in a similar analogy to Paul in Romans 11, and not the church, since the church has not yet been formed?

Summary

1. **The prophecy:** The day will come, possibly very soon, when Israel, like Jonah, will repent (Rom. 11:11–15). This will begin with the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, who will win countless millions of people to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 7:4–10).

2. **The parable:** How the Church at large needs to repent of our complacency, comfort, and distractions—there is still a world waiting to hear what we too. often take for granted. In Nigeria alone, in the last decade, over 100,000 Christians have been systematically killed.

3. **The portent:** Today America is saying *"Peace and safety!"* (1 Thess. 5:3), and we may be on the brink of great judgment, without a national awakening and repentance among believers, and revival among the lost.

JONAH CHAPTER THREE
Revival in Nineveh

The outline of this chapter is simply: **Grace**, **Mercy**, and **Peace**. Does this sound familiar?

What is the normal greeting of the Apostle Paul? *"Grace to you and peace."*

In what epistles does he change this to "Grace, mercy, and peace"? Only the pastoral epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus). Can you guess why? The fact that he adds *"mercy"* when writing to Pastors, suggests to me that they may have an even greater need than others.

James warns us, *"Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment"* (James 3:1). He then goes into a prolonged section dealing with the sins of the tongue. Since the ministry of the teacher is primarily in speaking, this is very suggestive.

Whereas grace gives us what we do not deserve, and mercy withholds judgment that we do deserve, it may be fitting to wish/pray for mercy for those who have the awesome responsibility of teaching God's Word and affecting the souls of God's people.

An interesting connection: in line with the lessons of Jonah, is that when Paul challenges us *"by the mercies of God"* to become "living sacrifices," that the word "mercy" does not occur in the book of Romans until Chapters 9 and 11 (nine times). We have much we can learn about God's mercies from the history of Israel.

The Need for Grace
Jonah 3:1–4

The grace of God is needed because His judgment is imminent.

3:1 ***"The second time."*** Our God is the God of second (and third, fourth, fifth, etc.) chances.

1. Moses had his second chance, after 40 years in the desert (Exodus 3:1–6).
2. Elijah had his second time, in the wilderness and the cave (1 Kings 19:5–12).
3. Peter also was given a second time (John 21:15–19).

3:2 Note that the message and the mission remained the same.

Now Jonah is in line with the geographic will, and the operational will, but still (as chapter 4 proves), was not in line with the motivational will of God.

3:3–4 The three-day journey was through the whole "metroplex" of Nineveh, like "greater Los Angeles."

The ***"forty days***" reminds us of similar times of testing: The flood on the Earth (Gen. 7:17), Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:18), Elijah's journey to Sinai (1 Kings 19:8), Jesus' temptations (Matt. 4:2).

The Motivational Will of God

1. In 2 Corinthians 5:14–21, Paul emphasizes the importance of the motivational will of God.
2. In 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 we see that it is the love of Christ. First, His love for us (subjective), then our love for Him (objective). As we know, "*We love Him because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:19)
3. This love cannot be produced by us! It must come from the Holy Spirit, as we submit to His control (Gal. 5:22–23).
4. It is this love by which faith is converted into works (Gal. 5:5–6).
5. Paul says that this love is to "compel" us. The word means to drive forward under pressure.
6. This love motivates us to live for Him, rather than for ourselves (2 Cor. 5:15).
7. It changes how we see others, in the same way our view of Christ has changed. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Can you look at the weak, the poor, the undesirable, and see a soul for whom Christ died?
8. This love sends us forth, as *"ambassadors for Christ"* (2 Cor. 5:20), into a "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18), with a message for every lost soul (2 Cor. 5:21).
9. Unless we are driven by this compelling force, all our efforts to serve God are in vain, (1 Cor. 13:1–3).
10. However, as with Jonah, who had no love for the Ninevites, God can still use the message, even if it is no credit to the messenger!

The Cry for Mercy
Jonah 3:5–9

3:5 The people of Nineveh ***"believed God"*** (*amen*, *hiphil* stem) (same word/stem used for Abraham in Genesis 15:6), before word came to the king. **Note:** The hiphil is the causative active stem. The agent of cause in both cases is the Word of God (Rom. 10:17)!

3:6 Fasting and sackcloth were common tokens of repentance in the ancient world. The idea was to identify as beggars, who have nothing to offer. It is an expression of absolute helplessness and spiritual poverty (Matt. 5:3, *"poor in spirit"*).

3:7 When the king heard, he and his nobles gave the command for all, man and beast, to neither eat nor drink—an extreme form of fasting. The destruction of Nineveh was to come in forty days. Without water, people would begin to die in three!

3:8 The king commands everyone, ***"to turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands."*** Nineveh was infamous in the ancient world for evil and violence. They were a brutal, violent, and immoral people. And what of America today? **Question**: If the millions who have died in our wars could see America today, would they believe their sacrifice was worthwhile?

Have you ever been on a farm, with lots of livestock, at feeding time? You cannot believe the clamor. Cattle, horses, pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, turkeys – all begin to bleat, and cry in a most pitiful way. This was Nineveh's cry for mercy from a God they did not know!

3:9 ***"Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?"*** With no instruction from Jonah, they cry to "the unknown God."
True repentance is no "get out of jail free" card! In 2 Kings 23:21–27, Josiah turned to the Lord with all his heart and soul, and yet we read in v. 26, *"Nevertheless the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath."* Sometimes it is too little too late!

The Gift of Peace
Jonah 3:10

Note carefully, ***"Then God saw their works."*** Deeds are the expression of the soul. The old English word "believe" means to "live by." Our true beliefs are shown by how we live!

While it is true that "God looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7; Jer. 17:10), it is also true that the broken or heavy heart cannot be hid (Proverbs 15:13).

Jesus even had to teach His disciples that one cause of their lack of power was the absence of fasting and prayer (Matt. 17:21). In this passage, He equated weak faith with lack of outward spiritual disciplines.

Fasting and prayer are the outward expression of everything Jesus taught in Matthew 5:3–12 on how to become a true disciple. ***"And God saw their works!"***

1. They express what it means to be *"poor in spirit,"* a spiritual beggar who has nothing.
2. They express what it means to *"mourn,"* to be grieved at our spiritual condition.
3. They express "meekness," which is spiritual self-control, the ability to say "no."
4. When we are hungry, we begin to understand the *"hunger and thirst for righteousness."*
5. They teach us to be *"merciful"* because we see ourselves as weak and needy as others.
6. We begin to understand what it means to be *"pure in heart,"* another way of saying "single-minded." We learn the value of spiritual, rather than physical, necessities.
7. We also learn to be *"peacemakers,"* by teaching us that getting what we want, at the expense of others, is at the heart of all sin.
8. Finally, we learn that enduring pain for spiritual gain is what life is all about. If we are willing to "persecute" our own bodies, we learn to endure the pain that others cause us.

Read Joel 2:12–14. Here, these ignorant Ninevites are doing instinctively the very thing God called on His own people to do, but they would not humble themselves.

"And God relented from the disaster ..." The word is *nacham*, which means, "to be sorry, to sigh, to repent." This is anthropopathism, language of accommodation, ascribing to God human thoughts or feelings. We know that God is omniscient, outside of time, and knows the end from the beginning (1 Kings 8:27). His great condescension is to become like us (in describing Himself, and ultimately, to become like us in Person (Phil. 2:5–9).

However, Scripture makes clear that He interacts with us within the boundaries of our existence. Read Jeremiah 18:7–10 (Jer. 26:2–3; 42:10).

Summary

1. **The prophecy:** This is best seen in Romans 11, where Israel, by her disobedience, becomes the means of bringing salvation to the Gentiles.
2. **The parable:** How is it that the Church is able to build ever bigger church buildings but has so little to offer to those around the world who do not even have a Bible?
3. **The portent:** How has America, the nation that was once the bastion of missions, fallen behind in our fervor for the souls of this world? Why are there greater revivals around the world, in places where believing is costly, far greater than what we see here at home?

JONAH CHAPTER FOUR

Jonah's Reproach

In this amazing chapter, we have the main, great lesson of the book. The lesson is framed in the great contrast between Jonah's great displeasure and God's great compassion.

> *"I solemnly charge you in the presence God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season;* ***reprove***, ***rebuke***, ***exhort****, with great patience and instruction."* 2 Timothy 4:1–2 (NASB)

This is a good challenge for all of us who are teachers of God's Word and a good outline for Chapter 4.

God's Reproof of Jonah

Jonah 4:1–4

4:1–2 The Hebrew literally says, *"It was exceedingly evil to Jonah, and his anger burned."* It is the same word for the *"fierce anger"* of the Lord, used by the king, in Jonah 3:9.

Jonah is still in Nineveh, he sees repentance taking place throughout the city, he knows God is merciful, and God's mercy on Nineveh is to Jonah a great evil!

He is burning hot at two things: first, that God used him to fulfill the purpose of the election and calling of Israel (Gen. 12:3; 22:18), and secondly, and far more serious, He is angry at God for being God! God's good is to him a great evil.

God called Israel *"to be a light unto the Gentiles"* (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 52:10; 60:3). While national Israel rejected this role (Jonah being a type of this rejection), it was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ (John 8:12; Acts 13:47; 26:23).

As Phillip Cary is attributed to saying in his book on Jonah, "His is the wrath of a theologian whose theology does not pan out"! The message of doom he was given has proven false. God has made him out to be a liar.

God proves to be *"much more"* (Romans 5) merciful than Jonah wants him to be.
This is the very thing, he says, that caused him to flee in the first place (v. 2). He knew his God but now does not like His character. He recites God's character from Exodus 34:6–7, a fundamental confession of Israel, that ***"God* [is] *slow to anger and* [abounding] *in lovingkindness and truth*** (Jonah 2:2)***."***

4:3 Like Elijah before him (1 Kings 19:4), he prays for God to kill him. He would rather die than see Ninevites in God's eternal kingdom (sounds like some Christians today).

Note: In Jonah 2:8 he spoke of those who forsake their own mercy, now he has joined them, with a vengeance.

4:4 The reproof of God comes in a very gentle question, ***"Is it right for you to be angry?"*** God shifts the discussion from His character to that of Jonah. How different they are at this point! If it is not "good," then it must be evil. God is pleading with Jonah to "examine himself" (1 Cor. 11:28). How often do we fail in this very area, when we are affronted by life.

God's Rebuke of Jonah
Jonah 4:5–8

This rebuke comes, not in words, but in a living parable to Jonah, about comfort vs. compassion. How often God uses events and circumstances to confront, reproach, and rebuke us, and we do not even see it.

4:5 Jonah refuses to answer the Lord's question, probably because he knows he has no ground to stand on.

He now leaves the city, finds a prominent viewpoint, and builds a shelter (*sukkah*), to watch, in the event God will yet destroy the city. His *"shelter"* is a symbol of the wilderness wanderings, when God was so gracious to Israel, celebrated at the Feast of Tabernacles.

It was at this very feast that Jesus stood and cried, *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:37–38).

It was at the Feast of Tabernacles that Israel was commanded to welcome Gentiles, foreigners, within their gates to worship the Lord (Deut. 16:13–14).

In fact, the "booths" were to be made of branches, anticipating the day when the *"Branch of the Lord,"* the Messiah, would shelter (tabernacle over) Israel in the Millennial Kingdom (Isaiah 4:2, 6; Psalm 91:1–2; Rev. 7:15–16; 21:3). In John 1:14, Jesus took on human flesh and tabernacled among us (*skenoo*).

4:6 ***"And the Lord God prepared a plant ..."*** In 1:9, Jonah revealed the name of God, YHWH, to the sailors. But the Ninevites only know of *Elohim* (3:8–9). Here, the two names occur for the first time in the book. God *"prepared"* the fish (1:17), the plant, worm, and east wind (4:6, 7, 8). This reminds us of God's providential control over His creation.

4:7 The gourd, the worm, and the wind, are instruments used by God to teach Jonah about the danger of self-comfort, the vanity of life, and the shallowness of our compassion. There are people who are compassionate toward animals, who would not cross the street to help a fellow human being.

4:8 Jonah concludes, ***"It is better for me to die than to live"*** (see Eccl. 7:1—what vanity!). Whenever we live at odds with the plan and purpose of God, death seems preferable to life! How many times have you been there?

God's exhortation to Jonah
Jonah 4:9–11

The double questions in vv. 4 and 9 set the stage for the great lesson of the book, in vv. 10–11.

4:9 Again, God questions Jonah, ***"Is it right …"*** (*yatab*—to be beautiful, harmonious, beneficial).

To be "right with God" is synonymous with a harmonious, attractive life. This is certainly not Jonah. To be "righteous" is to be "right with God," in harmony with His will and work.

Jonah declares that he would rather die than be merciful to Nineveh, for he surely knows the point that God is making.

4:10–11 Here, we have the real lesson of the book, and it lands like a thunderclap. ***"You had pity on the plant ... should I not have pity on Nineveh?"***

Note: Here, it is ***"the LORD"*** (*YHWH*), the God of Israel that is speaking!

The word for ***"pity"*** is *choos/khoos*, which speaks of compassion, the kind one gives to the helpless, the hurting, the needy. It is the compassion portrayed by the good Samaritan in Jesus' story (Luke 10:33–35). It cannot pass by without doing something to alleviate another's sufferings.

The ***"one hundred and twenty thousand"*** could refer to children, or also to those who are morally ignorant of right and wrong.

God also includes the beasts (***"much livestock"***), for they also are His creation, and He cares for them (Psalm 36:6; Deut. 5:14; Exod. 20:10). Paul teaches us that the creatures suffer because of our sins—not theirs—and that they will be included in the deliverance of *"the sons of God"* (Rom. 8:19–21).

The final question of the Lord requires an answer from Jonah, and from us. We are left without Jonah's answer, I believe, to place a greater burden on us to answer. God is in essence asking, "What do you think I should have done?"

He asks a similar question of Israel in Isaiah 5:4, *"What more could I have done to My vineyard?"* After all His grace and mercy and longsuffering to them, they had remained a hard-hearted and stiff-necked people, who refused not only God's commission to the nations, but His mercy to them, in the form of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Messiah!

So where does that leave America today? What have we done with His grace and mercy? **And where does that leave you?**

<u>The Main Thing/Lesson of Jonah</u>
The Character and Compassion of God

In Jonah 4:2, Jonah recites what was a common confession in Israel about the Lord, *"And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in … mercy'"* (Exod. 34:6). *"He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy"* (Psalm 103:7–8).

These passages speak about the character of God, from which comes His conduct.

In Jonah 4:11, God shows His conduct, which arises from His character. He has *"pity"* on the people of Nineveh. The Hebrew *khoos* means to "cover," as in giving shelter. It is a word-picture of compassion and mercy, as in sheltering or covering a cold, hungry child.

When we put these two together (vv. 2 and 11) we are reminded that conduct reveals character.

"Then God saw their works …" Jonah 3:10
"Even a child is known by his deeds …" Proverbs 20:11

The whole history of Israel, as well as of every one of the believers we read of in the Bible, is evidence of God's compassion and mercy.

We see the character of God in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, *"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd"* (Matt. 9:36).

It was out of His pity for them that He urged the disciples to pray (Matt. 9:37–38) and then chose the twelve and sent them out to preach, heal, cleanse, cast out demons.

Two parables have this theme of God's compassion as their main point:

1. In Luke 10:25–37, we have the Parable of the Good Samaritan. While others passed by the wounded man (v. 33) says the Samaritan *"had compassion"* for him. He provided everything that the man lacked. He "sheltered" or "covered" him with care.

2. In Luke 15:11–32, we have the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The real story is not so much about the son, as it is about the father. The key is in Luke 15: 20, *"But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."* The father had been watching for his return. He then fully restored him to all the rights and privileges which he had lost by his defection. This is what God does for us when we repent, confess and correct our conduct.

The last place I would like us to look is in Romans.

1. We all know Romans 12:1–2. The key word here is *"mercies."* But the word "mercy" does not occur until Romans 9:14 and 18. Note Romans 9:22–23, then see Romans 11:29-36.

2. God wills to have mercy on all who will receive it. So should we!