

# Word of The Lord

## The Book of Jonah

With Thoughts From Dr. Jerry Vine's Sermon Called "Jonah"



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**FOCAL Read Responsively** **Jonah 1:1-3** Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, **2** Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. **3** **But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.**

Just before Jesus went back to Heaven He gave His disciples what we call "The Great Commission". In that Great Commission the Lord told the believer to:

**Matthew 28:19-20** **Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: [20] Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ...**

Jesus placed a heavy responsibility on every person who believes in Him. If you are saved you are commanded by God to **go and tell others**. The Lord doesn't just tell us to **go and tell your friends**, but He says **tell all nations**. Tell people who might come from a different background than you about Jesus. If you have been saved by Jesus then you are obligated to tell others what He did for you. When Jesus healed the leper (**Matthew 8:4**) the Lord told him "**See that you tell no one what I did**". When Jesus healed the deaf and dumb man He said "**tell no one what I did**" (**Mark 7:36**). Jesus didn't want people chasing Him around the countryside looking for their bodies to be healed. He came to **seek and to save**

**those who are lost (Luke 19:10).** Jesus came to this earth to heal souls, not bodies. He came to give eternal life, not just a better earthly life. Jesus Christ came to introduce *whosoever will* unto God.

Though we who believe are familiar with the Great Commission, the Lord has been reaching out and saving people from the very beginning of time. The Lord loves people, and loves to save *whosoever will* come unto Him. The Lord has promised that if

**Isaiah 55:7 ... the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.**

God is ready to pardon any who will repent and come to Him. The Book of Jonah tells us in a very graphic way that God is Love, and that God in love will reach even the worst of people. When people think about the Book of Jonah the first thing that comes to their mind is the "whale" that swallowed Jonah. Yet this Book isn't about a "whale" at all. It's about Love, and about a God Who loves to save. We read:

**FOCAL Jonah 1:1** Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying ...

When the Book of Jonah opens we're not told anything about Jonah. He is called **Jonah the son of Amittai**. Jonah is a real person, and he is a saved person. We know this because **the Word of the Lord came to him**. The Word of God doesn't come to a lost man, and the

lost cannot understand God's Word. **The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him (1 Corinthians 2:14).** Jonah was a saved man. Jesus spoke of ...

**Matthew 12:39-40 .... the sign of the prophet Jonah: [40] For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the fishes belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**

Jonah was a Prophet according to Jesus, and our Lord tied His resurrection to Jonah. Jonah was saved. God came to Jonah and said:

**FOCAL Jonah 1:2** Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

God tells His people of every age to **go and tell others**. God told Jonah to "Arise ... Go ... Cry". Each of these words are *Imperatives* in the Hebrew text - they are not suggestions but are *commands*.

Just as the "Great Commission" isn't the "Great Suggestion", what God told Jonah wasn't open to debate. He was to **arise, go to Ninevah, and cry out against it**.

God told Jonah to "arise". "Arise" is the word **Cum** (קום pronounced *koom*), and it means "rouse yourself up, get up!". You could even translate it "let's go!". Can you imagine the God of the universe calling you,

and then saying "let's go". **I'm going to go with you, Jonah - now let's go!** God did that with His Church in the Great Commission. He said "**Go ... and I am with you always, even to the end of this Age**". God never sends His people off by themselves, but **is always in our midst**. We must go.

God also told Jonah to "**go**". This is the word **Yawlak** (יָלַק pronounced *yaw-lak'*), which not only means "**to go**" but also has the sense of "**to carrying and spreading**". Jonah wasn't just called to **go** to Ninevah, but God had a Gospel message that this man was to **carry and spread**. He was given a commission from God and told "go and carry it out". **Just as a farmer broadcasts seed on prepared soil, God tells us to broadcast His Gospel**. As we do that - like Jonah - we are told to "**cry against Ninevah**". The word "**cry**" is the Hebrew **Kawraw** (קָרָא pronounced *kaw-raw'*), and it means "**to publish, call out, make known**". Jonah's message wasn't to be whispered but it was to be **SHOUTED FROM THE ROOFTOPS**.

**ILLUSTRATE** Back in the day before the Internet, the telephone, or even newspapers every town had a "Town Crier". The Town Crier had several very important functions. First of all, he *informed* the town. When there was going to be some event that would effect the whole town the Town Crier would walk about shouting the news. Secondly, he *warned* the town. The Town Crier many times acted as a natural watchman for the town. When he saw enemies coming he would announce this to the populace so they could get ready. Finally, the Town Crier often announced the time of day. Not everyone had

a pocket watch, so they would order their day by the proclamations of the Town Crier.

Jonah was to be God's Town Crier for Ninevah. He was to *inform* Ninevah that God was giving one final call. Jonah was to *warn Ninevah*. If Ninevah did not repent it would be destroyed. God was done with their foolishness! Finally Jonah was to declare that *now is the time to repent and come to the Lord of Hosts*. Regardless as to what they were doing **now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2)**.

**ILLUSTRATE** The Ninevites were a terrible and cruel people. They were the *Taliban* of the ancient world, well known for their extreme cruelty. When they conquered their enemies they would many times tear off their lips and their hands. They made examples of those who stood against them by skinning them alive, or by impaling them on sharpened and greased poles. They would bury their enemies alive in sand. Often when they conquered a village they would behead many of its residents, and stack their heads at the gateway of that place. They were so cruel that whole towns in danger of being conquered by the Ninevites would many times commit suicide enmass rather than give themselves over to these terrible people.

But God had prepared the ground. He had been working in the hearts of the Ninevites, and now He needed Jonah to do his calling. The Lord has prepared the way of salvation, but He needs His people to proclaim that way. The Lord God, Creator of all things and all people **would have all men to be saved, and to come to the**

knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

But Jonah had other plans.

### **Jonah Ran From The Lord: Are You Running From The Lord?**

**FOCAL Jonah 1:3** But **Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof,** and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Jonah tried to run from God. Listen, dear one, no one can run from the presence of God. God is everywhere. The Psalmist wrote:

**Psalms 139:7-10** **Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? [8] If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. [9] *If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; [10] Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.***

God is everywhere, and wants to save *whosoever will*. But Jonah decided to run away from God. God had prepared the hearts of the Ninevites, but Jonah hardened his heart against the Lord Who loved him so. **Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish .... and he found a ship going into Tarshish.**

The world and the devil will help you when you try to go against God - but God will win in the end! Notice that verse 3 tells us "**he paid the fare thereof**". When you run from God you will always "**pay the fare thereof**".

There's a little rhyme I heard that says:

**"Sin will take you further than you want to go.  
It will teach you more than you want to know.  
Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay.  
It will cost you more than you want to pay."**

When we get out of the will of God and run from His Presence we pay a high price. But when we decide to walk *with* God and not *against Him* then He will *always* pay the fare.

The Bible says:

**Philippians 4:19** But **my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**

Jonah **went down into it**. He went *down* into the ship. God pointed him upward, but he went downward. Now I want you to notice how verses 3 & 4 begin. We read:

**FOCAL Jonah 1:3-4** But **Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD...** [4] **But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship**

was like to be broken.

Jonah ran from God, **but the LORD - the Eternal Yahweh, the God of Everlasting SENT OUT a great wind.**

The words translated as "sent out" is the Hebrew **Tul** (טול pronounced *tool*). When **Saul cast his spear at David to try and kill him (1 Samuel 20:33)** this same word is used. God cast a wind at Jonah's ship like Saul cast a spear!

When God told idolatrous Israel "**I will cast you out of this land into a land that you know not**" (**Jeremiah 16:13**), this same word is used. God cast the wind at Jonah.

When you get into a storm ask yourself whether this storm has come on you because you have rejected the will of God. As **Dr. Jerry Vines** once said,

"The same God Who can calm the storm can also stir up the storm".

**CONTEXT Jonah 1:5** Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that *were* in the ship into the sea, to lighten *it* of them. But **Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.**

The Church must *never* be asleep! The sleeping Church has let America fall to where it is now. The sleeping

Christian - like Jonah - is no good in the Church and no good in the world.

Sleeping in the belly of the boat Jonah was just *dead weight*. God calls the believer to be more than *dead weight*!

**CONTEXT Jonah 1:6** So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, **What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.**

The shipmaster didn't have a clue that Jonah was a Christian! It is so sad when professing Christians become so much like the world that they cannot be seen.

### **Sometimes God Will Put You In The Dark Belly Of A Fish To Get Your Attention**

**CONTEXT Jonah 1:17** Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Why do bad things happen to God's people? Sometimes its because the devil or the devil's world is attacking us. But there are times, dear Christian, when the attack comes because **God prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah.**

Though people focus on the "fish", but this is not the focus of the narrative. It is a **great fish** (דג pronounced *dawg*), not a whale. This fish is only mentioned *four*

*times* in the Book of Jonah. The Bible says "**The LORD - Yahweh, the Eternal and Everlasting God - had prepared a great fish**". The King James translators showed this as a *past tense* action. The **LORD had prepared**. The *New American Standard Version* gives a very interesting translation of the text. It states "**the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah**".

The Lord gave Jonah an appointment to go to Ninevah. He refused to go, so the Lord gave Jonah an appointment with a big fish. You will keep your appointment with God, dear friend, one way or the other, so you might as well quit fighting Him!

If you believe **Genesis 1:1**, "**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth**", then you will believe **Jonah 1:17**. The **Lord prepared. He appointed. He assigned a fish to do this job**. If man can make a space shuttle to fly beyond our atmosphere, how is it that we can't believe God could make a fish to take a man below our atmosphere. Jesus believed that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish. The Bible says it. I believe it.

I can't think of a worst predicament to be in as to be swallowed by a great fish. If God prepared this fish for Jonah it was certain that he was going to live. But what a life! Imagine being stuck in the darkness of the stomach of a fish. Imagine the smells, the sounds, the discomfort.

You can't keep running from God while you're stuck in the belly of a fish! You can only *repent* and *pray*.

You can only run *to* God.

Trials bring us to the place where we can look to God. Before we get into trouble we quickly pray, and at times neglect prayer. But when we get in trouble our prayers become very intimate and desperate.

**CONTEXT** **Jonah 2:1** Then **Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,**

There's nothing that gets our attention like suffering. Jonah was suffering, so Jonah prayed like he's never prayed before. He was running *to* and not *away* from God.

An interesting thing about Jonah's prayer is that *he prayed the Scripture back to God*. This is something I often do when I pray. The Christian's prayer life is always enhanced when you pray Scripture back to the Lord. For instance, in Jonah's prayer he prayed:

**CONTEXT** **Jonah 2:2** And said, **I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.**

The phrase "**I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me**" is a quotation from

**Parallel Text** **Psalms 120:1** ... **In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.**

Between four and six times Jonah quoted from the Book of Psalms. As a son of God Jonah prayed the Word of God back to it's Author. The exhale of prayer is most sweet when it is based on the daily *inhale* of the Word of God!

Jonah stopped running. He promised the Lord that he would "**pay that I have vowed**". If you are a child of God you *owe Him allegiance*. **Salvation is of the Lord**. The Lord saved you by Grace, if you are saved at all. Once Jonah realized and confessed that, the Lord removed the distress from his life.

**CONTEXT** **Jonah 2:9-10** But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay *that* that I have vowed. **Salvation is of the LORD.** [10] And the **LORD spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.**

Jonah is free! He is out of the belly of the great fish. Notice what the Scripture says next:

**CONTEXT** **Jonah 3:1** And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

God is the God of the second chance. If you have messed up in your walk with God - repent! Turn to God and He will give you a second chance. If you were once called to salvation but refused to come - REPENT! God will give you a second chance. Our God is the God of second - third - and even fourth chances. Come while you can!

Now we see the great miracle of this Book. **The miracle is not that God threw a wind like a spear at Jonah's ship. The miracle is not that a great fish swallowed Jonah for three days and three nights. The miracle is not that a man lived in the belly of the fish for that long.**

**CONTEXT** **Jonah 3:4-9** ... **Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.** [5] **So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.** [6] For word came unto the **king of Nineveh**, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. [7] And **he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh** by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: [8] **But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.** [9] **Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?**

Here is the greatest miracle of all. God had prepared the hearts of these people. God's servant preached a very simple Gospel to these *terrible Ninevites*. Something happened that no one but God could foresee.

Ninevah repented.

**CONTEXT** **Jonah 3:5** So **the people of Nineveh believed (AMEN) God**, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

The word "believed" is the Hebrew AMEN (אמן pronounced *aw-man*).

This same word is used of Abraham in

**Genesis 15:6** And he **believed (AMEN)** in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

These people (3:10) turned from their evil way, and God turned from destroying them.

**ILLUSTRATE** When I was in Korea there would be such fierce winds that - as big a man as I am - I could lean my full weight into it and barely move forward. That wind would push against me when I pushed against it. When I turned and walked *with* the wind it would nearly carry me to my destination.

While Ninevah pushed against God it was in danger of destruction. It could make some headway, but, sooner or later, God would destroy that nation. When Ninevah turned and walked *with* God it was no longer in danger of destruction.

Jesus Christ is the **Lion of Judah Who will crush His enemies**. Receive Him and He will be to you the

Lamb of God that taketh away your sin, and the sin of the world. Turn and you won't BURN!

**Run The Race Set Before You  
Don't Play Hide And Seek With God**

In **chapter one** Jonah ran *from God*. In **chapter two** Jonah ran *to God*. In **chapter three** Jonah ran *for God*. Now in **chapter four** Jonah ran *into God*. Like many Christians Jonah wasn't seeking God - he was playing **hide and seek** with God!

**CONTEXT** **Jonah 4:1-3** But **it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. [2] .... I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. [3] Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.**

Can you imagine that? Jonah was mad *because God saved these people*. How arrogant. Yet I have seen the same tendency among Christians.

Christians often think "God can save people like us" but often limit His power when it comes to those who are what we consider *really bad*.

**ILLUSTRATE** When I finished preaching revival at a sister Church not too long ago a young lady came up and chastised me for saying that God could save the

homosexual. Her attitude was that "those people" are already rejected by God and that we should have nothing at all to do with them. I disagree. The Bible says:

**Acts 10:34-35** .... **Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: [35] But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.**

If someone hearing the Gospel *repents* and turns toward God then the Lord will save them. He saved Ninevah, He will save *whosoever will*. My prayer for the judgmental young lady is that the Lord **prepare a gourd** for her as He did for Jonah.

**CONTEXT** **Jonah 4:6** **And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.**

The Lord prepared a gourd for Jonah just like He earlier *prepared a great fish*. And Jonah was **exceedingly glad of the gourd**. He wasn't happy that the Ninevites were saved, but he was happy over that gourd.

Isn't it strange how Christians can sometimes be happier over the gourds of life than they are over the greater eternal things?

Gourds come in all shapes and sizes, just like the things we allow to come between us and God come in all shapes and sizes.

**God prepared a gourd for Jonah, but He also prepared a worm (4:7) to eat the gourd.** If you *ever* take advantage of the blessed gourds that the Lord gives you, He may turn around and take it right back. Has God given you riches? He can remove them, just as He removed Job's. Has God given you children? If you worship them higher than you worship God then He can remove those children. He not only took Job's children, but He took King David's firstborn child. **The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the Name of the Lord (Job 1:21).**

If you let a gourd come between you and God, the **Lord can prepare a worm to eat your gourd.**

If you belong to Jesus, keep your eyes on that which matters most. The gourds of life are not what is important. What is important to God is the human soul. He said to Jonah:

**CONTEXT** **Jonah 4:10-11** **Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: [11] And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and *also* much cattle?**

There were **120,000 persons in Ninevah who could not discern between their right hand and their left hand.** Think about that phrase for a minute. Who is it that **can't**

**discern between their right hand and their left hand?**

This is *the children*. God told Jonah **consider the children**.

Here you are, Jonah, worrying about some silly gourd that you had nothing to do with, but within Ninevah there were 120,000 children that would have suffered and died if Jonah had not done what God told him to do. Have YOU considered the children!

When you do not witness, dear Christian, but instead focus on the gourds of life, you miss the bigger picture. That man that you do not tell about Jesus will not only die in his sins and go to hell, but his children may remain lost as well. That woman that you do not share Christ with may never be saved. If she is not saved, what of her children? What of the children?

The question is not "what of those who never heard of Christ?". The question is, "what will I do to obey my Lord and Master?" The answer is "I will go where He sends me, and will tell others of Jesus while I can. I will trust the *results* to the Lord, and will do His Will with all my heart."

If God can use Jonah to move a city to salvation, He can use you! And, dear friend, if you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, then come to Him by faith. God is faithful! He is ever ready to save. May God touch your hearts with His Word.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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**Matthew 28:19-20** Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: [20] Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ...

**Matthew 8:4; Mark 7:36; Luke 19:10; Isaiah 55:7; Jonah 1:1; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Matthew 12:39-40; Jonah 1:2; 2 Corinthians 6:2; 1 Timothy 2:4**

**Jonah Ran From The Lord:  
Are You Running From The Lord?**

**Jonah 1:3; Psalms 139:7-10; Philippians 4:19; Jonah 1:3-4; Jeremiah 16:13; Jonah 1:5; Jonah 1:6**

Sleeping in the belly of the boat Jonah was just dead weight. God calls the believer to be more than dead weight!

**Sometimes God Will Put You In The Dark  
Belly Of A Fish To Get Your Attention**

**Jonah 1:17; Genesis 1:1; Jonah 2:1; Jonah 2:2; Psalms 120:1; Jonah 2:9-10; Jonah 3:1; Jonah 3:4-9; Genesis 15:6**

- The Lord gave Jonah an \_\_\_\_\_ to go to Ninevah. He refused to go, so the Lord gave Jonah an \_\_\_\_\_ with a big fish.

- Between \_\_\_\_\_ Jonah quoted from the Book of Psalms. The exhale of prayer is most sweet when it is based on the daily *inhale* of the Word of God!

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