

How often do we underestimate the power of grace in a person's life? We often attach expectations and limitations to that grace. The prophet Jonah was told by God to go to Nineveh, a Gentile city. Jonah did not think that they were valuable enough to receive God's grace. It prevented him from seeing that he was just as in need of God's grace as those whom the Lord was calling him to minister His Word. Do we have the same prejudices against people that don't respond to God as we do?

**Jonah 1:1-5** *The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry out against it, because their wickedness has come up before Me. But Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship that was going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and boarded it to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the Lord. However, the Lord hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea, so that the ship was about to break up.*

**Jonah 1:15-17** *So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. Then the men became extremely afraid of the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. And the Lord designated a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish for three days and three nights.*

**Jonah 2** tells us of Jonah in the belly of the great fish where Jonah asked for God's mercy. **Jonah 3** tells of God giving Jonah a second chance. Our God is a God of many chances in yielding to Him. God speaks and will remind us where we have been disobedient so that we have another chance to respond.

**Jonah 3:4-5** *Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Forty more days, and Nineveh will be overthrown." Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.*

The people of Nineveh turned from their wicked ways. Confession involves acknowledging we are wrong, and repentance is a turning of our ways. Today, we find many remorseful people, but they are not willing to change. Notice that Jonah doesn't tell them of God turning His anger away from them. *Then Jonah... cried out and said, "Forty more days, and Nineveh will be overthrown."* Yet, their hearts broke from what they heard, and they responded to his words. **Jonah 3:9** *Who knows, God may turn and relent, and turn from His burning anger so that we will not perish.*

Jonah prays to God for compassion while in the belly of the fish. Then in **Jonah 4**, he doesn't want God to show Nineveh compassion. We are the same - wanting God to show us compassion but yet not wanting others to have the same compassion. We think we are somehow more worthy. Jonah knew God's character of compassion and forgiveness. Have we been judgmental in this way? Do we think we are more deserving of God's grace and mercy than others? Nineveh was not deserving but neither was Jonah. Neither are we! We are not deserving of God's grace.

**Jonah 3:10** *When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it. **Jonah 4:1-4** But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord and said, "Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life." The Lord said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?"*

Jonah retreated from the city to watch what would happen to Nineveh. He begs to die when God provided him a shade plant and then takes it away. God put Jonah in a difficult position. Jonah thought that God owed him something because he had the right heritage. Jonah did need God's grace but was not worthy of it. There is no amount of righteousness that we do on our own that will make us worthy of the grace that God extends. **Psalms 53:3** *There is no one who does good, not even one.*

**Jonah 4:10-11** *Then the Lord said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"*

How quickly we can become convinced that God's favor, His blessing, has to do with our unique attributes rather than His perfect grace which He has made available to all who would receive it! **Deut 7:6-10, Deut 8:11-14, 17-18, Deut 9:4-6** Jonah and the Israelite people had forgotten that God's blessings were the product of God's grace, not the result of Israel's righteousness or superiority over the Gentiles. They had forgotten that God had promised to bless all nations through Israel.

Salvation by grace alone becomes a stumbling block for so many as we tend to view our own righteousness as a contributor to the grace we received. Jonah despised God's grace given to Nineveh. Don't we do the same when we see our own works and faithfulness as better than others? The Book of Jonah ends with a rebuke - we don't see repentance from Jonah.

It is the same in Jesus' day...

- **Mark 2:16** with the religious complaining about who Jesus ate with and gave attention to.
- **Luke 9:51- 56** with the disciples.
- **Galatians 2** with Peter and Paul - Peter being corrected over the system of salvation.

It's the same today...

- When our process to salvation looks the same, making people change their belief system before salvation.
- When we make demands like taking a test to have salvation.
- When we think we deserve something from God and He doesn't give it to us.
- When we think someone is unworthy and get angry with God for giving to them.
- When God removes something from us and we say God doesn't have a right to do that.
- When we are self-righteous.

But, walking with Jesus changes our thinking, like Zacchaeus. Transformation begins when we introduce people to Jesus. Jesus is the only way this works. It's not our righteousness that makes the change, but only His grace made available to all.

The Book of Jonah has to do with evangelism and revival - taking the gospel message to others and an acknowledgment of sin that begins in our hearts. **Matthew 28:19-20** *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

The gospel is about salvation. Salvation is about grace - unwarranted, unmerited favor. Let's examine of lives. We are undeserving of God's grace and mercy.

Broken relationships are based on a judgement between 2 people - seeing the other as unworthy. What relationship are you waiting for God to judge? A marriage? A child? But God wants us to extend His grace, to lay down our pride and self-righteousness.

Revival starts here. Our love for one another will be our witness.

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When have you had the same prejudice against someone when they don't respond to God as they should?

Have you had a time when you wanted to withhold God's grace and mercy?

Can you explain salvation by grace alone?