

Engulfed by Grace: The Prophet Who Ran from God

Jonah 1:1-3

April 8, 2018

Introduction: Most people are so familiar with the story of Jonah that they overlook what it's all about. The book of Jonah is actually not so much about Jonah and the whale, or even the city of Nineveh where he was sent. The book is actually about God's mercy and grace offered to undeserving people, Jonah included. Today's message begins the series, "Engulfed in Grace."

1. The Messenger of God – "Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai" (1)

- a. Jonah's name means "dove." Throughout the Bible, a dove is a symbol of peace.
- b. God had given Jonah a message of peace to the nation of Israel (2 Kings 14:23-27). *"²³ In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. ²⁴ And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. ⁵ He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant **Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet**, which was of Gathhepher. ²⁶ For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. ²⁷ And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash."*
 - i. Jeroboam II led Israel into the sin of Jeroboam I, who caused Israel to worship two golden calves, and corrupted the priesthood. That opened the door for worship of Baal, and many other pagan deities.
 - ii. God used the Syrians to punish and enslave Israel because of their idolatry (2 Kings 13:3).
 - iii. Israel repented and experienced great blessing as Jonah had prophesied.
- c. Application: Jonah witnessed firsthand the mercy and grace of God. Israel deserved to be destroyed for their sins, but God in His mercy gave them a chance to repent, a chance that they did not deserve. Then He restored to them the lands they had lost because of their sins, which was a lavish display of God's grace upon Israel.

2. The Enemies of God – "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city..." (2)

- a. Nineveh was great in power. It was the capital city of the Assyrian Empire, located in what is now Mosul, Iraq. It was situated at the junction of two major trade routes and on the Western bank of the Tigris River. The city was the most powerful and prosperous in the world at that time. Its walls were 100 feet high and so thick that chariots could race three abreast on them.
- b. Nineveh was great in size. It was likely a city of 600,000 or more.
- c. Nineveh was great in wickedness. Nahum's prophetic book was written to decry the wickedness of Nineveh (Nahum 3:1-4). *"Woe to the bloody city! It is full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not; The noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses: Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts."*
 - i. They were treacherous.
 - ii. They plundered other nations.
 - iii. They slaughtered their enemies.
 - iv. They were full of immorality.
 - v. They were full of witchcraft.
- d. Application: God is very merciful toward those who oppose Him, but there comes a time when He has had enough. We must repent, or His judgment will fall.

3. The Grace of God – “But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD” (3).
- a. The book of Jonah is primarily about God and His grace and mercy toward undeserving sinners. Jehovah’s name is mentioned 26, whereas Jonah is named 18 times, and Nineveh 8 times.
 - b. The book of Jonah is about God’s grace, His unmerited favor.
 - i. Nineveh’s wickedness had not gone unnoticed (2).
 - ii. Nineveh did not deserve a chance to repent, but God sent Jonah to denounce their sin, and give them one last opportunity (2).
 - iii. God was reaching out to the capital city of the heathen world to display the riches of His grace to them just as He had to the Jews.
 1. Romans 3:23-30 “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set for to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.”
 2. This passage teaches that God’s righteousness is glorified when both Jews and Gentiles trust Christ by faith.
 - c. The book of Jonah is a reminder that those who’ve received God’s grace are quick to abuse it (3).
 - i. Jonah had experienced the grace of God toward Israel, but he refused to be the messenger of God’s grace to his enemies.
 - ii. Jonah abused the grace of God by trying to run as far away from Nineveh as humanly possible. Nineveh was East of Samaria where Jonah ministered, but Jonah set sail for Tarshish which was the farthest West that he could possibly go in the known world at that time.
 - iii. Jonah, along with the rest of the Jews, thought that God owed them grace, but they were calloused to the needs of the nations.
 - iv. Application: We must always remember that no one deserves the grace of God. Those of us who have experienced God’s grace must always remember that we are sinners always in need of more grace and forgiveness. Those of us who have experienced the grace of God must remember that God has called us to extend His grace and forgiveness to others.

Conclusion:

1. Are you like the Ninevites? Has there been a time that you realized that you have fallen short of God’s perfect standard and that your only hope of forgiveness is the grace of God through Christ?
2. Are you like Jonah? Have you received the grace of God, but you’re unwilling to extend it to others? Or, are you abusing the grace of God by ignoring God’s Word, and running from His will?