

Remnant Life Church  
July 20, 2025  
**Jonah – Part 3**  
**Running With God**  
Jonah 3:1-10

I think it is safe to say that the prophet Jonah is a complicated man

- Our examination of his account in the book that bears his name has revealed many things
- Among them is that he was a runner
  - First, he runs away from God
  - Second, he runs back to God
  - And this morning, in the third part of our study, Jonah is running with God

When God first called Jonah to go and preach the message of repentance to Nineveh, the prophet apparently did not believe or want to accept that it was right to extend mercy to Israel's mortal enemy

- IOW – Jonah did not trust that God knew what He was doing
- The great 19<sup>th</sup>-century English pastor and theologian Charles Spurgeon wrote:  
*Faith and obedience are bound up in the same bundle. He who obeys God, trusts God; and he who trusts God, obeys God.*
- This is the conflict that Jonah was wrestling with
  - His trust and obedience to God were not in sync with one another
- Now, in spite of Jonah's recent new-found commitment to obeying God, we really have no reason to believe that Jonah had changed his prejudice heart toward the Assyrians when God called to him a second time
  - But a near-death experience did force him to trust God for his survival
  - And it was this brush with a watery grave that shocked him into promising God his obedience
- It all begins with a strong-willed, self-centered Jonah running from God
  - Then in a time of great crisis, he ran back to God
  - Now, at least for the time being, Jonah is running with God in obedience to what he was told to do the first time

**READ – Jonah 3:1-10**

The first verse of the third chapter is a very powerful glimpse into the patience and mercy of God

- It is also one of my favorite verses in all the Bible
- He is the God of second chances (third, fourth, fifth...)
  - **Micah 7:8** - *Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise.*
  - This also fits in so perfectly with the words of the apostle John
    - **I John 1:9** - *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*
  - Notice there is no limitation on these confessions
    - How many times will God forgive?

- Jesus told Peter to forgive 70 times 7 times (Matt 18:22)
- How much more is God's capacity to forgive than ours – infinite
- You can never lose the call of God in your life if you are willing to humble yourself and confess your sins

Now, notice the subtle differences between God's first call to Jonah, and the second

- In **Jonah 1:2** we read - *Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.*
- But the second time God says in **3:2** - *Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.*
  - The first time it is preach against it, the second time is proclaim to it
  - This is not an indication of God changing the assignment, but of what God could now do because of the change that took place in Jonah
    - To *preach against* is a message of dire warning and impending doom
    - To *proclaim to* is to present a message of salvation with a promise of mercy and hope within repentance
  - It would appear that Jonah is now ready to preach with a mercy he did not possess the first time
    - And within that more cooperative spirit of Jonah we see how it changes the way he responded to the calls
      - I like how the NKJV presents his actions
        - The first one, in **1:3**, it says – *Jonah rose to flee*
        - The second time, in **3:3**, it says – *Jonah rose and went*
      - This is a heart that has undergone a change, and it is reflected in his actions
    - This also brings the question to each of us
      - In the times of God's disciplines brought about by our own times of strong-willed, self-centered actions
        - Are we more or less obedient?
        - Are we more or less flexible in our willingness to accept what He calls us to do?
        - Are we more willing to accept our assignment and run with God?

What God has called Jonah to do is no easy task

- Nineveh is not only the capitol of Assyria in the heart of the nation's god-less wickedness
  - But the city itself is very intimidating just by its sheer size
  - God calls Nineveh a great city in both the first and third chapters
    - The author expands on that for the reader and in **3:3** says – *Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent.*
    - Much debate about what "three-day journey" means
      - Regardless of the actual size, whether you consider only the city proper or include all of the surrounding settlement areas associated with the city, it is imposing
    - Yet in spite of any fear that may have evoked, in verse **4** we see that Jonah is not wasting any time

- Jonah begins by going a day's journey into the city
    - IOW as soon as Jonah enters the gates the first day he gets right to delivering God's message
- The message Jonah gives is not complicated, and the author only records 8 words in the English
  - *Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.*
    - In the original Hebrew it is an even more concise 5 words
    - Surely Jonah said more than this, but the author's emphasis is that Jonah got right to the point
  - I can't help but think this part of the message must have secretly thrilled Jonah's heart
    - The word *overthrown* is the same language used by the angels God sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah in **Gen 19**
    - Jonah might have been thinking that if the fate of Nineveh was going to be the same as Sodom and Gomorrah, that is fine with me!
  - But there is another thought to consider here that would be consistent with Jonah's attitude toward the Assyrians
    - Was this Jonah's own interpretation of God's message?
    - Did Jonah edit what God wanted the people to hear?
      - I think there is the chance that Jonah may have intentionally omitted the part where God says that if they repent, they will be spared.
      - And yet, you must realize that regardless of how Jonah presented the warning, God's mercy was still available to the Ninevites
        - Just as it is still offered to us when we fall time and time again
        - The meaning of the message was not only a warning of the impending overthrow of the city but a call to repentance as well
- At this point, I think we can all agree that Jonah appears to have rebounded from his earlier failures
  - But I want to end part 3 of our study by focusing, not on Jonah's preaching, but on the King's response to the warning
- It is not possible to identify with absolute certainty the king of the Assyrians
  - But we can line up, with extra biblical historical records, a king who would seem to fit what the author of Jonah records
    - Assur-dan III reigned from 773-756 BC
      - That would have made him a contemporary of Jeroboam III, the king of Israel in the time of Jonah
      - What we know of this monarch was his time in power was marked by several natural disasters which would have been considered omens
      - He experienced earthquakes, famine, and an eclipse

- The way the people of that time viewed those types of events – as heavenly harbingers - would have predisposed Assur-dan to receive a divine warning through this known prophet of Yahweh
- We don't know for sure if Jonah ever came face-to-face with the king, but his message certainly reached the throne
  - If Jonah relayed the full message of God, the king would have heard the conditions for their salvation
    - Repent of their sins
    - And turn from their wicked ways
  - This is virtually the identical message given to Solomon by God upon the completion of the temple and palace
  - **2 Chron 7:14** - *...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*
    - God's word to Nineveh through Jonah is consistent for all people
    - This verse is truly the only hope for America
  - And the king of Assyria got the message
    - **Jonah 3:8b-9** - *...Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.*
    - And while that is exactly what God did, we are reminded that while God is fully against sin, He is fully for us, His creation
- What we experience in this brief third chapter is the power of God, through the actions of one submitted imperfect vessel, to bring change to the hearts of a nation
  - Jonah was instrumental in God's plan to spare the city with a miracle of salvation
    - We read in the next chapter that there were over 120,000 who lived in and around the city
    - God's love spared them all as a city-wide revival took place!
  - What joy this must have brought to the prophet!
    - Or did it!?
    - If we continue to examine Jonah's responses from the beginning to the end of this account...
      - We can quickly surmise that Jonah did not expect, nor did he desire the results that occurred
      - Let's be honest, Jonah was still looking for divine judgment not repentance
    - And the final segment of our story will, unfortunately, take us back to a place we are now all-too familiar with
      - Jonah's selfish nature is about to rear its head once again
      - How can we avoid falling back into the same pattern that Jonah did when we are confronted with God's plan that does not line up with our own?