

# Jonah - the Training of a Disciple - Part 1

by Alan Redpath

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*God's grace is available to all, even those who have failed, and revival always begins at the top, with the leaders of the church.*

**Duration:** 47:03

**Scripture:** Jonah 1:17, Jonah 3:3, Jonah 3:5, Jonah 3:10, Jonah 4:2, Matthew 6:33, John 1:14

**Topics:** "Discipleship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the theme of grace and the story of Jonah from the Bible. He highlights the gracious nature of God, emphasizing that God is slow to anger, full of mercy, and quick to pardon. The preacher also points out the importance of having both grace and truth in preaching, as sometimes truth can be presented without grace. He then discusses the significance of God recommissioning Jonah after his failures and rebellion, highlighting the matchless grace of God. The sermon concludes by mentioning some key events in the book of Jonah, such as the disciples' rebellion, repentance, reward, reaction, resurrection, and the word of the Lord coming to Jonah the second time.

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## Transcript

We are taking in a series of messages in the book of Jonah under the general theme the training of a disciple. We come to our third message on Jonah and I ask you to turn with me to the third chapter of the book of Jonah this morning and we shall read it together. Jonah chapter three and the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time saying arise go unto Nineveh that great city and preach unto it the preaching that I did thee.

So Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey and Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey and he cried and said yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God and proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloths from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

For word came unto the king of his throne and he laid his robe from him and covered him with sackcloth and sat in ashes and he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles saying that neither man nor beast herd nor flock taste anything let them not feed nor drink water but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily unto God. Yea let them turn everyone from his evil way and through the violence that is in their hands who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not. And God saw their works that they

turned from their evil way and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them and he did it not.

Over each chapter of this book as we study it morning by morning I hope that you're able to place three words. Over the first chapter we had the disciples rebellion and the disciples redundancy and the disciples repentance. Over chapter two we had the disciples reward the disciples reaction and the disciples resurrection.

Now this morning we come to chapter three and this begins with a dramatic and wonderful and thrilling statement and the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time. There are some great things in this book of Jonah. The first chapter had four of them.

Verse two, a great city. Verse four, a great wind. Verse 12, a great tempest.

Verse 17, a great fish. But all of these four things seem to me to fade completely into the background. Absolutely insignificant compared with one thing, the amazing wonder of the grace of God.

And our first word this morning is the disciple recognition. The word of God came to Jonah the second time. That's the greatest thing in the book.

Indeed it's the greatest thing in all the universe, the matchless grace of God. After all Jonah's failure, after all his rebellion, after all his stubbornness and after all his short-sightedness, God called him again. Still prepared to use him.

But you see that's our God my friend. He's just the same today. We find it over and over again in the word of God.

You see it for instance in his dealings with Elijah in a cave on Mount Horeb, suffering from depression after an exciting and thrilling experience on Mount Carmel. And in his depression, as we all do in times of depression, he had an underestimate of the power of God and an overestimate of the power of Jezebel. And he ran for his life, just like Jonah did.

And when God confronted him in a cave and said, Elijah what are you doing here? Elijah just let go and said, Lord you know I'm the only fundamentalist left around here. I'm the only one left and everybody else has deserted. Elijah was angry and resentful at the desertion of other people and then the earthquake, the fire, and the still small voice, Elijah what are you doing here? Elijah was concerned about what other people were doing.

God was concerned about what Elijah was doing. And Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle. That's a good thing to do, a good thing to do when you're tempted to fume at people.

Wrap your face in your mantle. And he heard the still small voice, what are you doing here Elijah? And then found himself recommissioned, not dropped, but recommissioned and sent back to serve. Can you find the same thing in our Lord's dealing with Peter? Our risen Lord, who in John 21 and verse 5, that's a wonderful verse, in the morning Jesus stood on the shore.

I'm sure that Peter thought the morning would never come. That awful night that had gone on for months in his experience. He thought he was finished, his days of ministry was over, he would quit and resign.

But Jesus met him and said, Peter do you love me? Oh Lord you know I'm your friend. No I didn't ask you that, I said you love me. Lord I don't trust myself to say that after all I've done and such a failure.

Lord I can only say you're my friend. Are you sure you're even my friend? Oh Lord you know I am. Then Peter, feed my sheep.

He wasn't turned down, he doesn't have to quit, he was sent back to serve. Wonderful grace of Jesus. And Jonah is recommissioned.

The Lord speaks to him a second time, not merely preserved but sent back to work. And that's true of all of us. It staggers me completely.

Honestly it does, that the Lord hasn't finished with me years ago, hasn't got tired of me, hasn't thrown me aside, hasn't allowed somebody else to take on the work, hasn't put me on the shelf. Even Paul was afraid of that, not the loss of his soul but the loss of his fear of service. The fear that having preached to others he might be disqualified.

That's a wholesome fear. I don't believe in a second chance after death but I do believe in a second chance before it. Not a second chance but a million chances, million chances.

For it's never too late to start again. There's no need for the rest of my life to be wasted even though I've been a complete failure. And that's what the devil says to us.

Look what a mess you've made of it. You better quit, you better resign, you better get off from mission field, get into secular work, leave your ministry, resign from that Bible class. Look what a mess and failure you've been.

That's the language of the enemy and how easy it is to listen to it. Ah but our God is able to restore the years that the canker worm has eaten. As anyone is here this morning with a deep, deep sense of utter failure, I tell you the risen Lord is alongside you.

Jesus standing on the shore today and he's telling you that for every one of us here today the best is yet to be. God is able to restore the years. So he spoke to Jonah again.

He's spoken to me again. I'm so glad for a second chance. But what did he say to Jonah? What did he say to you when he recommissions you? Verse 2. Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I did thee.

Oh Lord, did I hear all right? Nineveh? Not again. I've had enough of that. I don't want to go to Nineveh.

Ah? Arise and go to Nineveh. Do the thing that you refused to do before. God speaks a second time, but he says the same thing.

He insists on obedience to original orders. Not another strap of light until I obey. The thing that I was afraid of, the cross that I refused to take up, the enmity against sin that I refused, the love of my enemies that I wouldn't show.

Yes, arise, go to Nineveh and preach unto it the preaching that I did thee. You see, my friends, now Jonah is recommissioned by the wonderful grace of God for submission to the absolute government of God. A free salvation demands the full control of a written Lord.

Know you not, said Paul in writing to Romans chapter 6 and verse 16, know you not that to whom you yield yourself servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey? If any man would come after me, said Jesus, let him deny himself, let him leave himself behind and come take up his cross and follow me. No man can serve two masters. He who will hate the one and despise the other holds the one.

You can't serve two masters. It's the same call all the time. Jonah had repented.

Now God tests Jonah's repentance, and won't him allow him to go back to his own life, merely a forgiven sinner? God says to him, are you willing to do that which you refused to do before? I've nothing, nothing else for you all through your life than the principle of Nineveh. I find that a very searching thing. I find that God is willing to give me a second chance.

He's willing to restore the years that the canker worm has eaten. He's willing to pick up the man who's been a failure time and time again. But I find that his grace overflowing in my heart depends upon my submission to his government over every area of my life.

We all want the grace of God, but how many of us accept the government of God? How many of us on a Sunday morning will pray our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come? But how few of us recognize that to pray thy kingdom come means first to pray my kingdom go. Arise and go to Nineveh and preach the message that I bid thee. Our Lord in his great forgiving mercy will always pin us down to a personal calvary all the time.

God gives, you notice, the place and he gives the message. Go and preach the preaching that I bid thee. No preacher has any right to preach anything else from that.

What he has received from God, what he has been taught in his own personal walk with God, that which I have received of the Lord have I delivered unto you. Nothing gets home to other people until first of all the Holy Spirit has driven it home to my own heart. Nothing comes with authority and with power through me as a witness or a preacher unless first of all God has driven it right into my own soul.

So Jonah is recommissioned to preach the message that God has given him. Recommissioned by grace for submission to government. Our first word therefore is the wonderful grace of God in recommissioning.

Our second word this morning is, I'm sorry to give it to you, and I trust I'm not doing Jonah an injustice. If I am I'll apologize when I see him in heaven. But the disciple's recommission is followed by the disciple's reluctance.

Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, so far so good. It was right to obey God, but I can't bring myself to believe that his heart was in it. It was solemn, reluctant obedience.

Not out of any love for God, nor out of any compassion for the people of Nineveh, but simply because he was afraid of anything else. You notice the language of verse 4 in this chapter, and you compare that with what he knew of God in chapter 4 and verse 2. He goes into Nineveh and says to them, in 40 days they'll all be overthrown. Went straight from the shoulder.

40 days you've had it. And what do you know about God? Chapter 4 verse 2, that he's a gracious God, slow to anger, full of mercy, quick to pardon. He'd already said in the belly of a whale that I will be free, I believe I'll be free to pay my vows to the Lord and sacrifice to him with thanksgiving.

I can't believe that Jonah's heart was in it. I read in the gospel of John chapter 1 and verse 14, the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory. The glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

How often, my friend, I as a preacher have been full of truth, but devoid of grace. How often I had gone about the task almost with reluctance because my heart wasn't in it. How often, yes, it was truth, it was orthodox, it was fundamental, it was sound.

Oh, but it was so unattractive. Forgive me, but isn't that the trouble with many of us Christians? We're not on orthodox, but we're unattractive. I don't mean physically, I mean spiritually.

There's nothing in us that really attracts to Jesus. So repelling that he often is, so repulsive, but always sound and orthodox. Do you hear anything about that? God has spoken to you in these days, or maybe not here, some other time.

He's spoken to you about an innervah in your life. He's spoken to you about taking sides with him against it. He's spoken to you about a personal revolution, about a real revolt in the name of the Lord against sin and for God.

He's spoken to you about loving some Christian you can't like. He's spoken to you about some relationship in your church which is wrong, and you've never done anything about it to be reconciled to your friend. He's spoken to you about your compassion for the lost.

Yes, you rebelled and you repented because of the suffering he put you through. You had to suffer until you came to terms with him about it, but in spite of all his mercy your heart isn't in it. It's a real effort to stay with obedience to God.

Do you find yourself on this Easter morning serving the Lord with a tip on your shoulder, some resentment that you won't bury, some sin still that you flirt with, some sin still that you know ought to be not to be there. You rebelled against it, sided with God against it once, but somehow or other not today, and there's no joy in your service. Don't you find, as I bear testimony to this myself, don't you find that every revelation of the amazing grace of God is accompanied by a revelation of the absolute corruption of your own heart? Isn't that progressive Christian experience, Jonah's reluctance? In old testament days the priest often used a flesh hook.

Do you know what he used it for? He used a flesh hook to keep the sacrifice under the flame, and today as I speak to you in Jesus name I say to him concerning my own life, Lord take the flesh hook again. Take the flesh hook on this Easter morning and pull back the sacrifice of my life and keep it under the flame, that I might know the authority and the unction and the power of the Holy Ghost constantly on my ministry and testimony. Are there anybody, is there anybody here to whom God needs to take the flesh hook to bring you back under the flame? Charles Wesley knew about that when he wrote, oh in that in me the sacred fire might now begin to grow, burn up the dross of base desire and make the mountain slow.

Oh thou who at Pentecost did fall, do thou my sins consume, come Holy Ghost on thee I call, spirit of burning come, the disciples reluctant. But the third word in my chapter, this morning in our chapter, is revival. First recommissioning and then reluctance, but now amazing revival.

Chapter five, verse five. 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. How amazing, how so sudden.

Well Jonah's message was straight from the shoulder, forthright, forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. You notice from verse three that it was a very great city, sixty miles in circumference, took him three days to walk to it. Jonah seemed very insignificant but he had a message from God and even though sullen he was true to it.

He came to a people who obviously had been prepared of the Lord and whose response to his message bore all the marks of genuine repentance, both in what they said, in what they did. But the Lord Jesus said that Jonah was a sign to Nineveh just as he was to the world. Listen as I read Luke 11 and verse 29.

And when the people were gathered thick together he began to say this is an evil generation, they seek a sign and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites so shall the son of man be for this generation. How do you think Jonah could be a sign to the people of Nineveh? Just think back a minute to the story again.

Go back in your mind to the 15th verse of the first chapter. Jonah has been thrown overboard, the sea has become calm, the storm has ended and Jonah has gone. And the sailors have time to catch their breath and to take stock.

Because that was the trouble, they hadn't any stock left. They'd thrown it all overboard too in order to lighten the ship. And so I can imagine those men saying there's not much use going on for Tarshish.

No, we'd better go back again and get another cargo. And I read between the lines and I think of that boat having thrown Jonah overboard and had a cargo having gone, turning around and going back to Joppa. If so, news of what had happened to Jonah reached Nineveh before he got there.

He had heard of his dive into the sea, they'd heard of that storm and what had happened to him. And so Jonah comes to Nineveh as a man alive from the dead, as a resurrection man. If I may put it this way, a man who once had been dead in sin but now was alive to God.

Jonah was a sign to Nineveh, a sign of the grace of God, a sign of the judgment of God, a sign of the government of God in his life. Now, my dear friend, every true Christian should be that, a sign from heaven, not because of what he does or because of what he can do, not because he can do miracles, but because he is one. A man alive from the dead, a man united with Jesus in his death and resurrection, a man who was once dead in sin but now is alive unto God.

Oh, to bear the stamp of Holy Spirit authority that comes upon a life that is crucified with Jesus and alive to him. How desperately the world needs men like that today. Wesley, Whitfield, Carey, Muller, Finney, Spurgeon, Moody, F.B. Meyer, Hudson Taylor, C.T. Studd, resurrection men.

Men who had failed, but men who had taken alive and taken light and caught fire. Eccentric men, yes. Unbalanced men, yes.

Fanatics, yes, but men whom God used mightily. And what the church needs today desperately is resurrection men who've taken fire and a light for God and who've been used and who have died out to themselves under the lies unto him. These were all men who had shirked and sinned but whom God spoke a second time and used them to stir the world.

You read Hebrews 11 again with that in mind sometimes. I used to have all the men there in a sort of picture gallery in my mind, high up, exalted, and saying to myself, oh, these are great men, the greatest

men who've ever lived. I could never match them, but they must have been wonderful men.

But I discovered one day they weren't the greatest men who ever lived, they were the weakest men who ever lived. Out of weakness they were made strong. Hebrews 11 is an amazing record of Noah who became an alcoholic, Moses who committed a murder, Samson whose morals don't bear looking at, David who committed adultery, Jacob about the biggest thief that the world has ever known, that they all came one day to the end of themselves.

They all touched rock bottom and when impotence, sheer impotence was put into the hands of an omnipotent God, God began to use them. God began to stir them and use them to move the world for him. God always does that.

I've said before, I repeat, that some of us get too big for God to use. God reduces a man to a minimum that he might do through him his maximum. They're told that the people of Nineveh believed God.

It didn't matter about Jonah that they believed God. God has spoken to Israel thousands of times but never with the best result. Here with one message, with all the authority of heaven behind it, the whole city is on its knees.

Mark it well, genuine faith always brings a man on his face before God. The greatest to the least put on sackcloth. And I read this chapter and I bow before it and I've said to myself again and again, oh God, why doesn't it happen now? Why doesn't it happen? Has God got so few resurrection men, men who really care, men who really love, men who are expendable and available to him? Is it that or is it because we're afraid? I want to say to you, quietly but thoughtfully, to my heart, revival always begins at the top.

May I repeat that? Revival always begins at the top. The king, the king rose from his throne, laid aside his robe and covered himself with sackcloth. Revival.

I've seen many a church. In fact, to be honest, I've been pastor of at least one where this happened, where revival broke out among a little group of my congregation and I was jealous of it and stamped it out. I've seen that happen in many a church.

Revival break out among a little group of God's people and at oversight level or at the accurate level, crushed because it's too emotional. I've seen many a seminary, institute, college where a little band of students have felt hungry for God and have sought his face all through the night in prayer, stand out at faculty level because too emotional. Revival.

Do I mean that which is emotional? Oh no. May I quote Charles Finney? Listen, here's Finney. Revival is renewal of the first love of Christians which results in the conversion of sinners to God.

It presupposes that the church is backslidden and revival means conviction of sin and searching of hearts among God's people. Revival is nothing less than a new beginning of obedience to God, a breaking apart and getting down into the dust before him with deep humility and forsaking of sin. Revival breaks the power of the world and of sin over Christians.

Truths to which our hearts are unresponsive suddenly become alive. Whereas mind and conscience may have assented to truth, when revival comes, obedience to the truth is the one thing that matters. It's not more knowledge of truth you and I need on this Easter day.

It's total obedience to what we already know. For revival is not something that God withholds at his sovereign pleasure. I cannot accept that view for he has no favorites and surely his concern in this world which is absolutely gone, absolutely crazy and really is heading for disaster.

Surely God's purpose is in these last days to pour us out afresh his spirit and empower. You can have a lot of evangelism, you can have a lot of very effective evangelism without that, but revival can begin in your life right now in this service if you are prepared to give total obedience to the will of God in everything. That's revival.

There may be signs, there may be signs that follow that seem strange sometimes, but these are not the authentic things. The authentic thing is that here the king, the king of Nineveh has repented and is on sackcloth and ashes, he's on his face before God. What a chapter of repentance it is.

Jonah repented, the king of Nineveh repented and God repented. God saw their works, verse 10, that they turned from their evil way and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do to them and he did it not. Does God repent? Yes he does.

His character never changes. With him there is no shadow of turning. He's always against sin, always ready to bless the sinner who turns from his sin to trust him.

Therefore his attitude to me or to you changes according to our attitude to him. Isn't that one great lesson of this book? One man's repentance shook Nineveh. Nineveh's repentance turned and moved God to mercy.

I believe it is still true if my people which are called by thy name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my faith and turn from their wicked ways then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. My friend revival is not going through the street banging a big drum. It is going back to Calvary with a big sob.

Our chairman told us this morning, not this morning, last night, that the prayer tents in this convention are empty. That went like a thought to my heart. Why? Why? Why? I'll tell you why.

Because outside of our hearts there's that label that I often find on the door of a motel where I stay from place to place. Please do not disturb. So many of us comfortable Christians doing our thing, praying at church, don't want to be disturbed anymore.

I'm not prepared to pay the price of revival. I'm not sure that I have all the actual facts correct but at least I have sufficient of them to tell you this. One of the greatest preachers in Britain of a generation ago was Dr. F.D. Meyer.

He was a man whose face just shone with the glory and the glow of the Lord Jesus. One time at Keswick he gave his testimony. The effect that for three years in his ministry at one time there had been a sin in his life which he knew was wrong.

He wasn't prepared to face it because he loved it. It didn't seem to affect other people. He thought well it's only between me and God.

Why should anybody else better? Why should I bother? But F.D. Meyer said you know every time I stood up to speak that sin came between me and my people. That sin set me off from heaven. That sin cut me

off from power and from blessing and everything was so dead and congregations grew less and less until one day I couldn't stand it anymore.

F.D. Meyer said I went to my study and like Jacob I battled and wrestled and God wrestled with me all through the night and I said to him Lord you've had every key to my life except one. Take the last key. I can't struggle on anymore.

And F.D. Meyer with a look on his face that absolutely made the people at that convention just sit in awe and wonder said do you know what the dear Lord did? He never took that key. He took out the door and ever since then the light of the knowledge of the glory of God has shone into my heart in the faith of Jesus Christ. There wasn't a dry eye in Keswick that day.

Lights were on at all the various missionary house parties all over Keswick. All the homes where guests were staying till early hours of the morning as Christians got right with God. The next day the post office in Keswick was sold out of money orders bought by Christian people to pay the debt.

And a real breath of God swept through that convention that year. Lord Jesus take the key. Jonah recommissioned, was reluctant but obeying and never repenting from the greatest to the least.

And the Lord working a miracle. How badly do and I want that today. I somehow feel that if God did that on earth these pretense would fill up.

Maybe before the day is out somebody here will have a broken heart. Someone will have written a letter of apology. Someone will have shaken hands with somebody else whom we've not spoken to for years and held a grudge against.

He'll have put it right. Someone will have written to another person who wouldn't dream of coming inside a church and isn't a bit impressed with your Christian faith. Simply because they've been hurt, hurt, wounded and they're the marks of what we've done to them.

And we haven't had the grace to go and say I'm sorry. Am I prepared to pay the cost of personal revival. May I just close with this.

I remember a man keep coming to speak to me after service one morning. And he said to me you know pastor, strange thing happened the other day. My wife and I had our 25th wedding anniversary.

And I had been anxious about her for about 10 years. Because for the last 10 years she had becoming increasingly cold towards me. And she said, he said you know I was so surprised at this because incidentally he was quite a wealthy man.

I had given her a new car every other year. New fur coats, new homes, new dresses, new houses. I had given her everything a woman could possibly expect but she was so cold.

I couldn't understand it. So I thought I'd take the opportunity of her 25th anniversary wedding to take her out for dinner and having given her a good meal to ask her why. So when we had a good dinner I plucked up courage and said to her you know I want to ask you something.

Why is it that the last 10 years you've been so distant, so remote. I've given you everything that you could possibly want. Cars and clothes and homes and dresses everything.

But somehow or other you're becoming so distant to me. And she said to that husband she said yes I'm so glad you asked me that. I've been trying to pluck up courage to tell you but I've never been able to.

She said I'm very grateful for the cars and clothes and coats and dresses and homes. Very grateful. But there's one thing that you've never given me and that is the love of your heart.

I wonder if that's what Jesus is looking for right now. I've given him work and service and preaching and ministry and testimony. But I haven't told him have I that I love him.

And we're going to meet together around this table in a minute. And I wonder if you and I will just tell him Lord I want you to have the love of my heart. That's the beginning of revival.

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