

Jonah - Part 4

by Dai Patterson

Faith comes first, and repentance follows faith, leading to life and works of faith that demonstrate the authenticity of our faith.

Scripture: Genesis 7:16, Jonah 3:4, Jonah 3:10, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 24:36

Topics: "Spiritual Blindness", "Second Coming"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Jonah and his anger. He highlights three instances in chapter 4 where Jonah is angry. The preacher emphasizes that it is the ordinary things in life that can blind people to their true spiritual need. He also mentions the importance of being watchful and prepared for the second coming of Jesus, emphasizing that it is the ordinary, mundane things that can distract people from recognizing the signs of the end times. The preacher concludes by discussing Jonah's simple yet powerful message to Nineveh and the importance of faithfully delivering the message that God gives.

Transcript

Second question is, are you, this night, just now, just where you are, without any emotion, without any other response, with a simple, yes, are you full of the Holy Spirit? Oh yes, yes, amen. On what ground do you believe that to be so? Because you feel something? I sure hope not, because tomorrow morning you'll feel differently than you feel tonight. I guarantee it.

So what do you live your life on? On what certainty is your life established? What is there in you that's so real that you know, this is not only God's will for me, this is not something I aim at, this is not something for some future occasion, when I've reached some level of holiness or sanctification that I don't presently have. Now listen, it's all by faith. It's all simply by faith.

And I want to talk from the book of Jonah. We're going to look at chapters 3 and 4. Now I can guarantee, before we begin, we're not going to get through chapters 3 and 4. Okay? So there we are. And what we don't get through, you will have to go and get through on your own.

But before we read, before we read, now don't look at your Bibles, I want to ask you a question. No cheating. What comes first? Faith or repentance? Now it's amazing, when you ask that question, it's a kind of stony silence.

Oh man, I know. What comes first? Faith or repentance? Faith? Margaret, you're wonderful. What comes first? Faith or repentance? How can any man repent unless he hears the word of God that commands him to? And you will know that God commands all men everywhere to repent.

God commands it. How do men and women hear that command if it's not through you and through me? And as we've been looking at in these past couple of days, I am to be the sign for my generation of a death and a resurrection. And did you know that in the New Testament, and you can read it for yourself in the Acts of the Apostles, that repentance is always unto what? Repentance is unto life.

It's not unto forgiveness. You can get forgiven in the Old Testament. It's unto life.

Life. Resurrection life. And I need, and you need, and the Church of Jesus Christ in this land of ours needs again and again to be brought back to this.

We are to preach in such a way that faith comes, and then men and women can repent. There's no point in telling them to do it unless, first of all, the word of God comes in such a way that faith is born in their heart. Then they can repent.

Doesn't mean to say they always will, but they can if they will. Now, we're going to go to the book of Jonah, chapter 3, and we're going to notice, well, I hope we're going to notice, anyway, some lovely things regarding the way of God in this place called Nineveh. You may remember that we come, or we came to the last verse of chapter 2, verse 10, and the Lord spoke.

You will notice that God has spoken already to Jonah. You know he spoke to him in the second book of Kings when he sent him to Jeroboam II to declare God's intention to bring deliverance to Israel from the Syrian invasion from the north, and God did just what he said. And then he speaks again to Jonah to go to Nineveh.

God is a speaking God. And let me say, just in passing, to all of you, listen, be sure that God wants to speak to you. If you don't hear him, if for some reason you can't, maybe you don't, maybe you won't, he wants to speak to you as surely as he speaks to men and women so that you should know him for yourself.

His voice in your heart. And all those of you who said just a moment or two ago, I believe I am to be filled with the Spirit. I believe tonight I am filled with the Spirit.

You've got within you the speaking one, that voice that will speak to your heart and lead you on. You know, one of the things, and I'm digressing but never mind, one of the things that in these past, past three months, I have come back to again and again and again and again, is the statements that Paul makes to the churches to whom he writes. And over and over again, he defines what it is to go on in Christian life.

And the only way to go on, and listen, please do listen, is not to have another experience, and another experience, and another experience, it's to have your understanding opened to see what it is that's in Christ, and what that Christ in you means. As you begin to see it, I see, Lord, this fullness of the Holy Ghost is for me, because I'm in you, and in you is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And if I'm in you, it's all going to be in me.

Open my understanding to see it. And I think, oh dear, dare I say it, I think that's what's lacking in so many. They are somehow governed by the tense side of life.

Lord, I don't feel like I felt. I don't feel the power I used to have. I don't feel.

And therefore, if I don't feel, I can't have it. That's not true. When you go through things which are not easy, and some of you in the course of the weekend, I've talked to you, you've asked me how Kay is, and I said she's not very good.

And I've gone through things as a husband. Nothing like she's gone through, but I've had to watch and see things I don't want to watch and see. And it's almost as if somehow that affects the feeling side.

But how do I live my life on that? Lord, I will not. I want to state that it's by faith that a man lives, not by sight, not by feeling. You live by faith.

Faith in the Son of God who's loved you, died for you. And this night, in Him is all fullness. And if I'm in Him, and thank God I am, I'm to enter into all the fullness that's in Him.

Isn't that wonderful? That's what it is. It's a simple living by faith and having the understanding open. And the more you see, you say, oh, it's that easy.

If it's in Christ, it must be mine. If it's in Him, it's got to be for me. And that takes all the struggling and striving and trying to get faith to believe something, and muster something up, and create some feeling thing that convinces you that you've got it.

Not a bit of it. Now, Jonah has passed through death. He's been down.

He's come up into resurrection life. And in verse 10 of chapter 2, we read that the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. And now there's a man on the shore.

I know another man who on the side of the sea, on the seashore, met disciples in resurrection life and power. And do you know the first thing he did when he met them? He fed them. He just met the fundamental basic need of their life.

He fed them. And here's a man on the shore. He's been down in the depths.

He's been down into death. He's up into resurrection life. And now he's on the journey.

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, listen, the second time. That's worth following through in your Bible. The second time.

The second time is a great little phrase, and I'm not going to touch on it. I'm going to pass right over it. But you study it for yourself.

And he now goes according to God's word to Nineveh, arise and go. That's another great little phrase. Have you noticed that occurring in your Old Testament? Particularly, arise and go.

But Jonah is to go in newness of life. And you and I are to go in newness of life. Go to that city, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.

Don't gloss over that, will you? He was not to make up a sermon. He was not to relate his experience. He was to speak the word that God gave to him.

And so Jonah arose and went to Nineveh. Now, if you can remember from the kind of little aerial map I drew on Friday night, Israel is here. You may remember that Syria was up here, coming in, invading the land.

And Assyria was over here, do you remember? And down here is the Euphrates Valley with Babylon down here, and about 300 miles north of it, Assyria up there. And Jonah fled over here to the Mediterranean Sea to Joppa, got on his boat to go to Tarshish, because he never got there. And he got vomited back up by the fish.

Where? And I'll tell you what, I'm not afraid to tell you where. Don't know. Now, of course, if this is the Mediterranean over here, it could have been, it was somewhere near to Joppa where he left.

Or was there some other way to get around to this side and get vomited up somewhere else? Well, it seems a bit unlikely. But I don't know. Anyway, whatever it was, up he comes.

Up he comes and out he comes, and there he is on the seashore. And as I kind of suggested to you, I think on Friday, having talked to my best friend in Romania, he said there would certainly have been marks upon him of the experience that he passed through. Bleached, perhaps blotched, not the man he previously was, but a new man.

And a man who bore on his body the mark of death and resurrection, and his life was changed. And so now he arises and he goes to Nineveh. Now, again, another question arises.

Did the people of Nineveh, did they have any knowledge of what had happened to Jonah? Was it a complete surprise to see this man arriving within their city, looking as he did, declaring the word that God was going to give him to declare? And again, none of us can be dogmatic about any of it, can we? But let me read you something. I'm going to make reference to my notes, because I found this in a book, and I found it fascinating. Now, here it is.

I'm going to read it to you. The Hebrew word for Nineveh is almost the same, N-I-N-E-W-E-H. Okay? You all get that? If I go too fast, stop me.

Which is a translation of the Assyrian word Ninua, N-I-N-U-A. Anybody go home yet? No? You're all there. Alright, so Nineveh, a translation of the Assyrian word Ninua, which is in turn a rendering of a Sumerian word called Ninah.

So Nineveh, Ninua, Ninah. Isn't this fascinating? Have you captivated? But now listen to this. Listen.

This is where it gets interesting. This Sumerian word Ninah was the name of the goddess Ishtar, written in the Sumerian language with a sign depicting a fish inside a womb. A fish inside a womb.

So the arrival of Jonah from the belly of the fish may have startled the pagan minds more than we realise, and raised hopes of a love that could ultimately pardon the repentant. Anyway, you all thought, what's he blabbering on about? Isn't that interesting? Okay, so you've got the Nineveh, the Hebrew word is Nineveh, with a W instead of a V, a translation of an Assyrian word Ninua, which is a translation of a Sumerian word Ninah, N-I-N-A. And that word Ninah is the Sumerian name for the goddess Ishtar, I-S-H-T-A-R.

The sign of the goddess Ishtar is a fish inside a womb. And out comes Jonah from the belly, the womb of the fish. Now, you might think, that's not very interesting.

I found that quite fascinating. Anyway, let me continue. Jonah goes and he enters the city on the first day's walk and he cries out and he says, and it seems as if his sermon is eight words long, yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

Now you imagine him repeating that over and over again as he travelled for about three days, it would take him that long to cross the huge city, the greater city of Nineveh. And as he goes, he preaches. Whether he acts, whether he expands, whether he expounds, I have no idea, but here is the fundamental of his message and it was to be as God gave him.

Preach to it the message that I tell you. Preachers tend to flower things out. Have you ever noticed how some of them can take an hour to say what they should say in ten minutes? Have you noticed? I'm not going to sit down yet.

They can kind of expand it and they can kind of, you know, look at it from this angle and then from that angle and you think after 20 minutes, come on mate, you've said it enough times, we're not that stupid. And you feel almost as if you're being spoken down to. By some superior intellect.

You want to be careful of preachers who do that. If you ever get talked down to by preachers, don't invite them back. They're not meant to talk down to you as if they're coming from some superior position.

They're sinners saved by grace. Just like you. Just like me.

Be careful of it. So he goes and he preaches his message. Verse 5, So the people of Nineveh believed God.

Now that's why I asked you the question at the beginning. What comes first? Faith and repentance. Well let me tell you the answer.

Faith. And that is followed by repentance. Repentance takes you unto life.

It doesn't take you unto faith, it takes you to life. But no man can repent unless he's heard that command, that word of God. And they heard it.

And it must have been delivered in such a manner by the man who was assigned to them. And let me, and excuse me for those who are here this morning, but repeat it. We read Jonah became assigned.

And his preaching was the outcome of what he was. A man who'd been eaten to death and was now living in resurrection. And that's where the power lay in his preaching.

It was not words. He wasn't verbalising some idea. He was not presenting some concept of God.

He was speaking as though it were God speaking. And there's not enough of that around is there? Do you think there is? I don't think there is. We sang something, I don't know what, I can't remember what it was, but about the only hope for our nation is this gospel.

But listen, how are you going to proclaim that gospel? How are you going to declare Christ to our nation? And not Christ, but Christ crucified. People don't mind having you talk about God. They don't even mind, some of them, having you talk about Jesus.

And we, in the place where I live, we have a university in Lampeter. It's the smallest one in Europe. Did you know that? It's interesting fact, isn't it? Full of interesting facts, hasn't it? And the little university in Lampeter is, first of all, the theology university for training clergymen who went into the Church of Wales.

It is one of the most liberal, godless places, I guess, in the country. And the stuff that comes out of it is dreadful. And I just forgot what I was going to say to you about it.

It'll come back about midnight. We get some of them come into our place, they come into the coffee shop, the pay ones, and they're quite happy to sit and talk about Jesus. I've talked to a man, oh, I've talked to him two or three times in the past few months.

He's just done his PhD. Oh, what a clever fuzz he is. He's done a PhD on some obscure Hindu sect.

And he will sit and talk all day long about Jesus, and all he is to him is a super guru. But you talk about Christ crucified, a boy, oh boy, he twitches, and boy is he uncomfortable. And you can see he can't wait to get out of the place.

It's Christ and Christ crucified who's the power of God. And the gospel must be preached like that, in power. And you need the same power to declare him just where you are, in whatever setting you are in, as a man who stands in front of 5,000 and preaches Christ.

The same power is required, whether it be to one, over a coffee table, or whether it be in a public auditorium. Jonah goes into Nineveh, and God moves. I'm staggered by it.

I cannot get my head around the incredible result, reaction, that his preaching has. I can only put it down to this, that the man is the sign, and out of that comes the ministry. And it is powerful, powerful to the setting free of a vast nation of people.

Marvellous. They believed God, and they're told so, they believed him. And the consequence of their believing is that there were works that came out of their faith.

Now please will you notice what they were? They proclaimed a farce, they put on sackcloth, and in verse 6, they sat in ashes. Three things mentioned. And will you please, please, please, I beg you, notice they didn't... those works were not performed in order to gain God's forgiveness.

They were not the consequence of some religious fervour that they hoped would bring them to faith. They believed, and as a consequence there came works of faith. Let me give you two illustrations, can I, from scripture that sort of emphasise it.

I suppose most of you, if not all of you, are very familiar with Abraham. And in the fourth chapter of the book of Romans, you will read that Abraham was justified by faith. Now have you all read that? Yes? You're familiar with that? He was justified by faith.

But now please if you will, will you turn way on into your New Testament, and will you turn to the book of James? And I want to read you something from that book. The second chapter of the book of James, and we are still talking about Abraham. And in verse 21 of the second chapter, you'll read this.

You all got it? Here we go. Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Was he or was he not justified by works? Ah, now then. Oh.

Or was he or was he? Yes he was. What a contradiction then. Romans 4 said he was justified by faith.

James 2 said he was justified by works. But now you've got to notice something. He was justified by works when? When was he justified by works? When he offered up his son on the altar.

When does the Bible record that Abraham believed God? In Genesis chapter 15. Abraham believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. Genesis chapter 15.

When did Abraham offer up his son on Mount Moriah? In Genesis chapter 22. So there's a big time gap between 15 and 22. In 15 we read, ah, he was justified by faith, why he believed God.

But then out of that faith there came the obedience of faith, but ultimately he said to God, I will do that. I will offer my son. And if you know your Hebrew letter, Abraham offered Isaac knowing that God had to raise him from the dead.

Because in Isaac all the promises were to be fulfilled. If he died, all the promises died. God could not be anything other than true to his word.

If Abraham was to kill Isaac, God had to raise him from the dead. What a staggering thing. And how amazing that that man was prepared to go up onto that mountaintop and offer his son.

And listen, it was because of his faith that he dared to do it. He dared to do it because he knew God had to raise him from the dead. So you'll notice in the life of Abraham there is, first of all, a justification by faith, but if there are no works that come out of that faith, that faith is not faith.

It's not the real thing. And we've been talking this weekend about the real thing. Are you the sign? Is there something authentic about your life? And out of a living, glorious, vibrant faith there come works of faith that men and women marvel at.

Yes. All right? Isn't that great? He was justified by works, but the works that he was performing, the offering of Isaac, was the outworking of a faith which he already had. So James is as right as his Paul.

Did you know that Mr. Martin Luther left his cotton socks? He declared the book of James to be an epistle straw. I am waiting to see Mr. Luther one day. I shall have something to say to him.

I expect he now knows that he was wrong. It's wonderful, isn't it? That you can be wrong. And if you are, let nobody point the finger at the one who's wrong, because you've been wrong too, haven't you? And how lovely, how quick we are to be judges of others.

Yeah. Okay, that's the first one. Now listen, let me also point you to another person.

Somebody whose name is associated with that which is not very present. Um, Rahab the harlot. Okay? In James chapter 2, will you please continue down the chapter? We've noticed Abraham.

Would you now notice in verse 24, you see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only. I'm making the emphasis because I want you to see that when we come back in a moment or two to Nineveh, there are works that proceed from faith. And if they don't proceed from faith, you and I must question whether it is the real thing.

But in Abraham's life there came demonstrations of works of faith. Now, likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works? Was she? Yes she was. When? When she received the messengers and sent them out another way.

She acted in such a way that she demonstrated that she had real faith. It all has to do with the timing. It's very easy to read James chapter 2 and think, well that can't be right because Romans 4 says this.

But if you keep it in mind that Romans 4 is in connection with Genesis 15 and that James chapter 2 is in connection with Genesis chapter 22, you see that there's a time gap. And that resolves the problem, doesn't it? Yes? Did you all follow me? Anybody not? You did? That's wonderful. Okay, now Rahab likewise.

She receives the spies who had been sent to take a look at Jericho. And the faith that she demonstrated was saving faith. She was saved as a consequence of that saving faith.

And what she did was, you are well aware, she hid the spies and then she sent them out. They could well have thought to themselves she's taking us in only to expose us to the authorities within Jericho and we're in for it. But not a bit of it.

She hides them and she demonstrates the conviction in her heart that Jericho is doomed. And what does she do? She sends them out another way. She does something.

She demonstrates that her faith is real. It's great to have that kind of certainty, isn't it? And to notice that there are demonstrations of a living faith. Okay, now in the case of the people of Nineveh, they, we are told, believe God.

It's wonderful to believe God, isn't it? To believe that what he says he means. And the consequence of it is this. They proclaim the fast.

They put on sackcloth. And would you please note in verse 5, from the greatest to the least of them, I hinted at that this morning or yesterday, whichever it was, when the Spirit of God is moving and people are coming into a place of real genuine faith, they believe that what Jonah had declared was God's word and if they did not respond within 40 days that was the end of their city. How God was going to destroy it, I've no idea.

What he was going to do, I've no idea. But we know that he relented of that declared intent because they believed him. And they came out of it these works.

In verse 6, the king got involved. Word reached him, something's happening in your city. Listen, king, whichever one it was, we're not told his name.

Some people suggest it could be a gentleman called Ashurnasipal. It's very interesting too. That's made your day, hasn't it? But if it was Ashurnasipal, fine.

If it wasn't, fine. But the king gets involved and you will notice that the king arises from his throne and he lays aside his robe and he covers himself with sackcloth and he sits in ashes and now you can't identify king from servant. You can't identify high from low and I want to say to you, listen, if there's one thing that the church should be a demonstration of is that we are all sinners saved by grace.

No matter what gifting you have got, my friend, whether you are the greatest preacher on earth, you're nothing but a sinner saved by grace. And just as you need to be careful of preachers who talk down to you, be careful of preachers who think they're superior to you. Here's the king from the highest to the lowest, all brought down and the ground is leveled and not one is superior to another.

Isn't that wonderful? That to me is wonderful and that's why the church should be such a glorious, glorious company of men and women where there should be no competition, no one fighting for position, no one wanting to debate and argue and divide. We're all the same. Isn't that marvelous? And I think that's wonderful when grace does that in a man or woman's life and they're not seeking for anything.

And yet, as I say it, in so many, many places where I go, that's the one thing that seems to stick out. There is division. There are people wanting to be something and they've forsaken this fundamental position where we're all leveled up and I'm the same as you and you're the same as me.

If God gives you a gift to preach, then do it and if he doesn't give you a gift to preach, don't do it. If he gives you a gift to give hospitality, give it. If he gives you giftings, use them.

But see that they are all the outworkings of a living faith and they demonstrate to other men and women that your faith is a real one and they're all works of faith that God calls on every man and woman who's in his church to exercise. I remember that Paul once said to a man called Apophroditus, don't you forsake the ministry that God has given to you. Get on with it and don't tell yourself, oh well I'm a shy, retiring type.

I'm not the sort of upfront person. Whatever it is, get on with it. Do it and do it as a demonstration of a living faith in a living Christ who's given it to you to do.

Isn't that lovely? I love that. I think, oh Lord, this is wonderful. You would stand and look at this great vast mass of people in the city of Nineveh and yet this something that was moving was operating all over the place.

The city walls covered a circumference of 60 miles. Can you imagine it? Greater London, greater Manchester. Do you think about it? And God was doing something utterly impossible and I think to myself, Lord, where are you going to move in our land again? And He's bigger than 60 million of us.

Can God reach men and women in numbers? Yes He can. But listen, He reaches everyone one by one. And don't be in any way kind of bowed down because it is just the one here and the one there and the one there.

It is one by one. And yet that one by one became a vast mass of humanity all on the same level. Down.

I was about to say down in the dust but it's not in the dust, it's in the ashes. Did you notice that? Have you ever wondered why the difference? I've stood beside gravesites and I've had to kind of, you know, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. That's the way the body goes, isn't it? He doesn't talk about dust in this passage, does he? He talks about ashes.

Why? Because they beam through the fire. And that's what was happening. When repentance comes, as it did to these people who would believe God and they were demonstrating that repentance, it had to do with fire.

And it had to do with sackcloth. And it had to do with putting off of all the things that were associated with a former kind of life. And we read even then that King himself, he arose from his throne and he lay aside his role.

He put it off him. I don't consider myself to be worthy of this position. I lay it down.

I was speaking just last week, I think, at our place back in Lampeter. Core is possessed by cotton socks. Elisha, he wants the double portion, does he not? And he says to Elisha, when Elisha says to him, tell me what you want.

And he says, I want a double portion of your spirit. Do you understand what he was asking for, don't you? He was asking for the inheritance of sonship. That's what it's about.

It rains like whales here, doesn't it? He wanted the double. I want to be as a son to you and I want the double portion. And when the chariot of fire came between Elijah and Elisha, what did he say? He said, my, yes, he said, my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, that's how Elisha viewed it.

And he said, I want the double portion. I want the inheritance of sonship. And listen, let me say it again to you, what I said a bit earlier.

Are you a son of God? Are you a child of God? Are you in Christ the Son? Then you are entitled to the double portion. Isn't that great? You are. And don't ever run yourself down and don't deny yourself that which God has given to you.

Don't let the devil rob you of it, it's yours. And when the chariot came between them and separated them, do you know the first thing that Elisha did? He ripped the crown that was on him in two. I'm finished with it.

And he got hold of the mantle of Elijah and it became his clothing. And boy, did he move in power. That's what we need.

I need it. Constantly, constantly, constantly need it. That I should live in this double portion, in this gifting of God, in that which he's provided for me.

But listen, let me just mention a funny thing. You sparked it off, John, when we were talking this afternoon. You know what happens in chapter 4, don't you, of this book? Do you know what it is? Elijah gets, Jonah gets the sons.

And you know what happens when you get the sons, don't you? You know what you do? You isolate yourself. You take note of it. I've noticed in our place, you know, suddenly brother Sosa's not in church and you think, oh I wonder where Sosa is.

And you think, oh, you know, he's got a sore throat. And then the next week he's not there again. And you think, oh dear.

So do you know what? It's time for the visit. And you go along and you pay a visit. And there, you kind of think, well I don't know brother or sister, I'm seeing Sosa.

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And then the next week, he's not there again. And you think, oh dear. So you know what? It's time for a visit.

And you go along and you pray a visit. And there, you think, you kind of go, wow, are you all right at all, sister? I'm seeing you, but, are you feeling well? No. And you, you, they've got the socks.

And immediately they isolate themselves. And Jonah did it. Listen, I'm amazed to see this man.

They've got moving in tremendous power. And I tell you what, if I was Jonah, I'd want to be there with you. I want to see it.

I want to see the workings of God. He walks out in the city, that great wally. And he isolates himself and he puts himself out there and he's got the grumps and the mumps.

Oh, not the mumps, the grumps and the the grumpsies or whatever. And he's all on his own. And there's this wonderful work of God going on.

And he's God. And I think, man, you must be off your trolley. Why aren't you in the city? Why aren't you there? Why aren't you rejoicing in God's grace and mercy? But he's not.

Isn't that strange? He's isolated himself. And oh, how many times I've seen Christian men and women. Seems to me to happen to men more than women.

I don't know why it is, but maybe they're stubborn and stupid. Don't you agree? I saw a nod or two. I agree with you.

But don't have to pay. Yeah, he's gone outside. Because you're not doing, Lord, what I think you ought to do.

These people don't deserve mercy. They don't deserve grace. Do you know one of the reasons why Jonah had a real difficulty with that which God had called him to do? Because he knew that the very people he had preached to, and if they repented, could be the very people that God could use to discipline his own people, Israel.

Which is exactly what happened. Because years later, the Assyrian army, they invaded, and the ten tribes of Israel were scattered. Taken into captivity, into Assyria.

And God used the very people that he had saved in Nineveh as a means of disciplining his own people. And he could not take that, so he has the grumps. He's got a complaint against God.

Lord, you're not keeping your covenant with my people. Your people. And I think that's what was going on inside his mind.

It was not only that he was prejudiced. He was racist. He thought that his people were superior to all other people's.

He did not want God's mercy to be extended. Because if God did, they could become a means of disciplining Israel. Now, think about that one.

Take it home and think about it. But I wonder about what was going on in his thinking. Okay.

Why do we notice these three things taking place amongst the people of Nineveh? There is a fast, there is set cloth, and there is ashes. The set cloth plainly declares that everything is made level. Okay.

We've already touched upon it. No rank, no title, no name, no nothing. All have sinned, all stand condemned, from top to bottom, from greatest to least, and no one is noticed or admired.

Isn't that something? Please can I also make mention of something else to be careful of in church life? Be careful of elevating anybody, won't you? Be real careful of it. Of elevating somebody. Admiring them to such a degree that they are elevated above others.

They are sinners saved by grace. And treat them as such and not as if they're some demigod who has to be put on a pedestal because they've got this ministry. They're rotten sinners like you're rotten sinners saved by grace.

They're rotten old sinners, they are. Saved by grace. Hallelujah.

And let's treat one another just as that and be gracious to one another and not be more gracious to the one who's slightly elevated and a bit less gracious to the one who's not quite, you know, in your camp, who doesn't think quite like you do. I'm glad Jesus was the same to Pharisee and Sadducee, to Harlot, to tax gatherer, to the middle class and to the upper class and to the working class, was he not? Yes he was. Thanks a lot.

Levels up. Now the ashes, again I've already suggested, it's not dust that speaks about the death of the body, but ashes that speaks of the fire of repentance. And you know what? When repentance really comes there is something about it that burns.

And they get burned out of the life, that thing which has been the dominant, powerful, controlling factor in the life. And the life is changed. And ashes declare it.

But why fasting? I want you to take notice of something, will you? Will you please turn with me to the Gospel of Matthew. I want to just to kind of make reference to something. In the 24th chapter, I might just step on your eschatological toes.

Oh, I didn't know why I didn't. Well, this passage has to do with the second coming. And you know that there are all kinds of opinions about it.

But let me just read you something from chapter 24 and in verse 36. And my purpose in reading the passage is this. That it is the ordinary, the very ordinary, the mundane things of life which blind people's eyes to the real crisis that they're in.

And the king, along with all the others, they proclaim to fast. We're going to separate ourselves from all the basic, ordinary, mundane things of life until we've got this resolved. Remember that when the door of the ark was closed, when the time of the great flood came, what were the people doing? Well, here we are.

Let's read 36 down. Of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Now, please note, if you are a person who believes that there are going to be some great signs and sort of demonstrations of something before the coming of Christ, just read this, will you? And take it on board and try and fit it in with your views of the second coming. Listen to this. Just as in the days of the flood, what were they doing? As in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.

Until the very day that Noah entered into the ark, and they did not know. Until the flood came and took them all away, they did not see anything. The only thing they saw was this rather large boat being built in the middle of a wilderness, with no water to launch it onto.

And seemingly the man who was building it must have gone off his head, because what's a man building a huge boat in the middle of a wilderness? There's no water anywhere to sail the jolly thing. And what were they doing? They were just going about their ordinary, everyday business. Marrying, there were marriage parties, there were salivations, they were eating, they were drinking.

It doesn't, it doesn't, you will notice, it doesn't define, you know, they were living in debauchery, they were going to nightclubs, they were looking at pornography over the internet. No one ever gets to do the ordinary things. It's the ordinary things which blind the eyes.

And we can go on doing the ordinary things day after day and be oblivious to the true need, until the word of God came to Nineveh and they stopped doing the ordinary. They obviously stopped doing the extraordinary too, but they stopped doing the ordinary because God's word had come and they believed it, and they knew if we don't do something about this, judgment's going to fall. Verse 40 says, then two will be in the field, one will be taken and the other left.

Two will be grinding at the mill, one will be taken, the other left. What's there for? Well, you don't know. You don't know what hour your Lord is coming.

Won't there be signs that point to it? Well, when I read this, I think to myself, no there won't. Well, aren't there meant to be some great signs in the heavens and so on? Well, so I'm told. Well, I wonder.

I think when I read Matthew 24, it suggests to me there won't be any. And just as he came, the flood came, unannounced, unexpected, and bang, it was there. Maybe that's just how he will come.

With the trump of the archangel, with the shout of God, and he'll be here, and every eye will see him, and it'll all be over. Now I know that's not, in many, many people's views, that's not good eschatology because this has got to happen, and that's got to happen, and that's got to happen, and that's got to happen. But I read this and I think, well it seems to me that he's going to come very unexpectedly, like a thief in the

night, who does not announce his coming, does he? Well, I'm not going to get on to that.

But they gave up their eating and their drinking and the ordinary everyday things because God was moving. And for many people in our day, would it not be true that the only thing that matters is to make sure that they have got all the basic essentials of life, along with a few trimmings and frills. If you've got your, you know, you've got the coloured TV, we've got the computer, and we've got the annual holiday, and we've got food for the table, and we've got a car, maybe two if we're well off, and that's fine.

We go, that's fine, that's life. And it goes on from day to day to day to day to day to day. Oh, sorry.

There's certainly a reason. I wasn't thinking about it, you can't, all right. You'll need it.

And if you talk to people today, oh, you know, as long as we've got all the necessary things, and it's those things that blind the eyes, is it not? The ordinary everyday things. And when God began to move, it was those things that they put to one side. Okay, and the was made by the king and his nobles saying, let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, cry mightily to God.

Can I just make one passing comment, because it's almost time to stop. The word cry that is used in verse 8 in Jonah chapter 3 is a word that not only denotes a strong utterance, but it also has in it the element of faith that demands an answer. And here's something wonderful.

Listen, faith demands an answer. Faith does not take no for an answer. Even if the answer is no, it demands an answer.

And these people were so real about this, they demanded from God an answer. And the word cry used in verse 8 has that sense to it. They cried out, Lord, we believe that you mean what you say.

We're fasting, we've put on sackcloth, we've put ashes upon our head. We want you to see that we mean this. We demand an answer from you.

And of course, the answer did come in verse 10, because God saw their works. Notice he saw their works. He saw their works.

You say, but didn't he see their faith? Of course he did. We're told that they believed God, but they believed it was demonstrating in works. And God saw their works.

That they turned from their evil way and God relented. Now here's good theology for you. Does God change his mind? Does he change his mind? Well, of course, if you are of a certain persuasion, he can't do.

God changed his mind? Well, I read that God relented from the disaster that he had said he would bring upon them. Why did he change his mind? Because he saw their works. What if he hadn't seen their works? He would have carried out his declared intent and word, and after 40 days there would have come destruction.

But he relented of it from the disaster that he had said he would bring upon them, and he didn't do it. He changed his mind. I think that's wonderful.

And let me just pull something out to you and pass on. Have you ever, in your prayer life, prayed something and found that God has changed his mind? Wouldn't it be wonderful to discover that you have

power with God and that you can change God's mind? All right. Yes, you might say to me, Da, have you ever proved that? And the answer is, not that I'm aware of.

But boy, how wonderful. He said God will change his mind. But listen, it's all on the basis of his word.

He spoke and the people believed it. And God altered his intent. I'm delighted to be able to read it in my Bible and to declare to all men and all women that God has an intent.

He's going to bring upon this world a day of judgment. But you and I do not have to be in that judgment, because through what Christ has done, God has relented. And to every man in this room, and every woman who believes what God has said in and through what he has done in Christ, then that judgment does not fall upon us.

Isn't that wonderful? You and I will not have to suffer the wrath of God. But if you will not believe what God says, you will. Even though you may have been coming to this church for the last five years.

You'd better get it sorted and recognize that what God looks at is your works, the consequences of whether you have real faith. All right? They turned, and God saw their works. And they cried out and they said in verse 9, this is the company of those who have repented, who can tell if God will turn away and relent, and turn away from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.

Now, please note in that there is still a measure of uncertainty. We are going to keep the word that God has spoken to us in our hearts. We will act on the basis of that word, and we're going to cry and we're going to demand an answer from him.

And we want that answer to be, Lord, relent, turn from your intention. But they kind of said, who can tell? Who can tell? And of course, at the time that they prayed it, they couldn't tell, could they? But the days went by, and when the fortieth day came and passed, they knew then, God has repented. Oh, praise God.

Praise God. All right. But then, we've already noticed, and I'm not going to go into chapter four.

Have I? Oh, Christ, what a kind of humiliation. We've got Jonah pouting outside, okay? In verse one of chapter four, it displeased Jonah, and there he is outside, instead of being inside, he's angry. Now, I want you priests just to notice three times in this fourth chapter, we read of anger.

Will you notice verse one of chapter four, angry? Verse four of chapter four, the Lord speaks to Jonah and says, is it right for you to be angry, Jonah? And again in verse nine of the chapter, God said to Jonah, is it right for you to be angry about the flood? Now, did you remember something I said the other day, whichever day it was? This Bible is a remarkable book because it gets right to the heart of something, and the best way to get to the heart of something is by asking a question. I remember when I was 19 years of age, I went along to an evangelical meeting where an evangelist called David Sheppard, a Welsh man who had just recently gone to be with the Lord, was preaching, and at the end of this meeting, this man came down from the pulpit, and he headed straight for me. You've got to be careful of these people, they seem to be able to sort of either sniff you out or suss you out or something, and he came straight for me, and he asked me a question.

He said to me, are you in the flock? Well, I didn't know what he was talking about, but I kind of said, well, I don't think I am, no. But he challenged me as to whether I was in the flock. Well, of course, you know what he meant, don't you? Was I Christ, or wasn't I Christ? Was I one of the sheep of the fold? And I kind of

said, well, I don't know.

And he talked to me, but he began by asking me a question. Three times God asks a question about yoga, and you know nothing challenges your heart like a question. Do you notice that? If somebody says to you, well, let's put an example.

Here's another example. Acts chapter 19. You're all familiar with Acts chapter 19? He's a group of 12 men, nice fellows.

Guess what? They've all been baptised in water, so they must be Christians, mustn't they? What do you think? Not necessarily, but you might think, well, they've been baptised in water, must be Christians. But Paul comes to this little place, or a big place called Ephesus, and he says to them, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? What a question to be asked. And they said, no.

Notice they were honest enough to say no. They didn't try and flannel their way out of it. They didn't try, well, we've had this experience, you know, we've been baptised.

We've known something of repentance. I guess we have. No, they said, we haven't.

We don't even know if there'd be any Holy Spirit. And right away, their innermost need was exposed by one question. Isn't that great? If you haven't met the Surgeon of Pre-Trials yet, people, just learn to listen to the voice of the Spirit of God, and ask the right question.

Don't ask questions, but ask the right one. Yeah. We can sometimes ask the wrong one.

Gets us nowhere, but ask the right one. And right away, sure. They said no, and Paul was in, he preached Christ, laid hands on them, and the Holy Ghost came.

Well, that's great. The question. Now, the three times that I just mentioned, verse 1, verse 4, verse 9, God says, why are you angry? Why are you angry? Why are you angry? And have you ever been angry with God? No, of course you couldn't.

Oh no, brother, certainly not. Well, let me tell you something, I don't believe you. I've been angry with God, because I don't understand what he's doing.

And I can't make head nor tail of what's going on. And I say to him, Lord, if I was you, I'd do this. And if I was you, I'd stop that happening.

And if I was you, I'd make sure that she wasn't sick anymore. And if I was you, and why don't you listen to me? And do as I suggest, because my idea is, I think I've got the edge on you over this, Lord. If you did that, what a testimony it would be.

And the heavens remained as quiet as could be, and not a sound comes. And I think, Lord, why won't you? Are you listening? Are you listening? Are you praying, heeding to me? And I've discovered how easy it is to become angry. Now, you've got to be real careful here, you know, because some anger is good.

Did you know that? Of course it is. There is a thing in Scripture called righteous anger. Jesus had it.

And when he had it, it was always round about him. He knew he had it too. But this anger is an anger that is the consequence of a complete misunderstanding of the heart and mind of God.

Which is why I want to go back to what I said at the beginning about understanding. Chilmer didn't understand his God. He didn't know him intimately enough.

Which is why I guess God is now going to deal with him. And have you noticed, when God deals with him in this fourth chapter, he never has to use the great fish again. Did you know that? It's not a whale, it's a world this time.

He doesn't say, hey, back to the sea for you, right? Come on, get in there again. No, no, listen. Once you've been into death, you've been into it.

What you now need is to have your heart and mind educated so you can begin to see. Lord, you don't need to do that again because that's been done once and for all in Christ, is it not? When Christ died, you died. And it never has to be repeated.

But what has to be done is we need to have our understandings open to see, Lord, why am I so slow? Why can I not see it? Why can I not live in this? And God says, well, you can. Come on. And so he raises up a worm and he raises up a good and he brings an east wind to teach him.

And do you know one of the things that bugs me about the book of Jonah? That there's not a chapter five. It bugs me because I want to know what happened to it. Jonah, did you learn? Jonah, did your anger disappear? Jonah, did you get it right, man? And I think, Lord, why haven't you written chapter five in there? Oh, if only I could see Jonah trial and punishment.

Oh, I can't. If only I could see Jonah living in the victory. Oh, I can't.

It's not. And I think, oh, dear, dear, dear, dear. Well, I just have to assume that God was dealing with him patiently and lovingly and carefully and dealing with his prejudices and his narrow-mindedness and his smallness and his devotion to his ideal, which was, of course, his nation.

And he stayed to see God's love for this great vast crowd of people. And I can only but assume that God taught him. I just have to assume that God did.

And Jonah saw it. But, of course, we never hear anything more of him. Did he ever prophesy again? I don't know.

Did his ministry suffer as a consequence? I don't know. But all I do see is God coming and saying, Jonah, is it right for you to be angry? Is this right? And isn't it great when God challenges the motives of your heart? Are you right in feeling this? Are you? Are you right in feeling that? Are you? Is it right for you to be angry with your brother? Is it right for you to feel bitterness towards your sister? Is it right for you to be... And he gets right down to the motives. Oh, isn't that great? And there's nothing left unexposed.

And Jonah was exposed to the very eye, the seeing of God. Oh, he went out to the city and you know what he did? He built his own shelter. It was all of his own making.

And what happened to it? It came to nothing. And then you think, well, God raised up this good and it covered him and he was sheltered. And he must have thought, oh, thank you, Lord.

And the next day it all disappeared. Have you ever noticed things happen in your life and you think you come into something and the next day it's all gone again? Why did God take it away from him? Because God wants to be your shade on your right hand. God wants to be your all in all.

God wants to be the shelter of your living. God wants you to rest in him. He can bring up a good and he can take it away again just as quickly as that.

And I'll bet Jonah was hopping mad. Oh, my son of God. And then he brings this east wind.

Did you know that in the Bible the east wind is always a wind of judgment and the west wind is always a wind of life? Did you know that? If you didn't, it is. And east wind speaks of judgment and destruction and the west wind brings rain. Remember Elijah upon the mountains? He said, it's a little hand.

He said, where's it coming from the west? He brought love. He brought rain. And the east wind brings dryness.

And he brought dryness to Jonah. And of course, if you're all pouting and complaining and moaning and groaning and you're not happy with your luck, you're going to get dry and shriveled on the inside until you learn. And I guess that's why God was saying, Jonah, why don't you learn, man? Well, it didn't stop him being a prophet.

Did you notice something? It didn't stop him from speaking the word of God and yet you see the frailty of this man. That brings me back to what you said earlier. I got there, John.

Took me a long time, but I got there. You see this guy, a mountain of God, moving in power and yet frail and mortal. Do you know one of the things that I'm having to learn? And I tell you what, I'm struggling to learn it.

I'm very frail and very mortal. And I don't like it very much. I don't, but I am.

Have you been there? Of course, none of you will because you're all young. And everything's in front of you. What do you think? It's wonderful.

And you suddenly discover you're 50 something. And you think, I don't know where I was. Where's my stamina? Where's my... And you discover you're getting oldish.

And there were two amongst us who are older than I. And we're not... Yeah, what do you do? Lord, Lord, oh Lord. I want to learn my frailty, but I also want to learn what it is to move in your power. I don't mind being frail.

And of course, you've got that great, great, great, great, great statement of Paul in 2 Corinthians in chapter 12 where he says, when I am weak, then, then, then, then I am strong. I'm not strong when I think I'm strong. I'm not strong in my youth, in my vitality.

I'm strong when I'm weak. What a contradiction it is. And maybe this man, John, who was having to discover how frail and mortal he was, maybe he thought, because he was of Israel, and maybe he thought because Israel was the chosen people, oh, that there was something, you know, he had a superiority about him.

God speaking to a pagan might stop. And if God does, well, you shouldn't. I've got to have a chat to him and give him some advice about this.

This is not the way you behave, Lord, because you have favoured Israel. And you know what? Let me just tell you something. There's an awful lot of that around these days, that somehow Israel is favoured above

other nations.

They are not. Jesus loves me. And I'm not Jewish.

No, I've been mistaken for one. It's the nose that's been made for me. Oh, glory be to God.

Now, listen, I've got to stop because our time has gone on. I haven't finished, but he's angry, angry, angry. Oh, I wanted to tell you, the word for anger, most of the occasions, chapter 4, verse 1, verse 4, verse 9, the word for anger in those is the Hebrew word c-h-a-r-a-h, kara, and it means a temper smouldering in the heart.

That was Jonah's condition. That's what he was like. He was smouldering away there.

There's another word for anger used in the book of Jonah. I'll tell you where they are. Chapter 3, verse 9, and chapter 4, verse 2. And they speak, that most of the occasions, speak of God's anger.

And it's a different word. It's a different word. It's a word a-p-h.

Ha! And it's, it's a snort of anger. It's a phew! And it's good to have a phew! And then you're finished with it. But if you've got one of the other kinds smouldering away in your heart, you're in trouble.

And that's why God had to deal with this man. I can't have you like that, Jonah. I'm not going to put you back into the sea.

I am going to kill you again. I am going to re-crucify you, re-kill you. You've been through that.

I'm going to bring things into your circumstances. I'm going to bring an end to this. And like I've already said, I wish there was a chapter 5, just to be able to see it all worked out right.

Well, let me tell you something before I stop. Even though you can't read it working out right in the old, you can read it working out right in the new. Because you and I are to know, and I'm back to the beginning, we're to know the fullness of the Spirit.

And if we live in the fullness of the Spirit, my dear friend, we will not have that kind of anger. We will be living in that life which is in Christ. And that life which is in Christ will be in us.

And God will be able to make use of your life and mine, make you a sign, and keep you as a sign to your generation as a man or woman living in death and in life. Let's pray, shall we?

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