

Jonah – When God’s Heart beats within

What in our lives will change under Jonah’s call?

The great English Baptist preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, rightly reminded his generation of this important truth. He said,

**“Nobody ever outgrows Scripture;
the book widens and deepens with our years.”**

“When the world beats you down, open up your Bible.”

Lysa TerKeurstⁱ

**“The Bible is the book of my life.
It’s the book I live with,
the book I live by,
the book I want to die by.”**

N. T. Wrightⁱⁱ

What do these people know about the Bible that so many people seem either to miss or ignore? What moved Abraham Lincoln to say (?):

“I believe the Bible is the best gift
God has ever given to man.
All the good from the Savior of the world
is communicated to us through this Book.”

Many of us would say something like this about the Bible because of our *experience* with this library. We’ve learned to hear God’s voice when we read its pages. Our *experience* confirms what Scripture itself claims. Paul put it this way (2 Timothy 3:16-17):

All Scripture is breathed out by God
and [therefore] profitable for teaching, for reproof,
for correction, and for training in righteousness,
that the man/woman of God may be complete,
equipped for every good work.

Kenneth Taylor captured this well when he offered this paraphrase in *The Living Bible*:

The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful

- to teach us what is true and
- to make us realize what is wrong in our lives;
- it straightens us out and
- helps us do what is right

It is God’s way of making us well prepared at every point,
fully equipped to do good to everyone.

Now, if Scripture's claim is truthful, then having read and thought about the prophetic book called Jonah, we shouldn't simply say something like, "Yeah...Pastor David did a series on Jonah last summer." What we must say is something more like this:

The Holy Spirit recently spoke to me
in the God-breathed book of *Jonah*?

Here's the truth He taught me.
Here's what I realized was wrong in my life.
Here is God's direction to straighten me out.
And this was His call for me to do what is right.

What's been your *Scripture experience* these past 6 weeks in *Jonah*? Let's take a moment to ask the Spirit of God to imbed in each of us *Jonah's most compelling lesson*.

PRAYER

One of the most fascinating – if not THE most fascinating – truths about Jonah's account is that the point of the book isn't fully explained until the last two verses of the book. We may have our suspicions as we are reading along, but it all really doesn't come into focus until the very end.

Look with me again at the final two verses, Jonah 4:10-11. You remember the context (vs.9)

(1) *Jonah is angry because a (God "appointed") worm attacked a large, leafy (God "appointed") plant that had provided wonderful relief, a cooling shade for Jonah from a scorching sun and east wind. Jonah was angry that the plant had not been spared, allowed to live, allowed to continue to provide for him shade and comfort.*

(2) *God asks Jonah if he "does well" to be angry about the plant, and Jonah spits back at God, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die!"*

And, it is right then that God is ready to make His point...the point He's been trying to make since the very first verse of the very first chapter. And, God is hoping that Jonah (and we) are listening (vs.10).

And the Lord said, "You **pity**" the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And **should not I pity** Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

Let me ask you (and me) something?

***What should happen
when God wants to show His grace and
we want Him to unleash His judgment?***

Because that is the question of this book.

I say that because of the smallest of words which you find twice in the final two verses. We have the Hebrew word **חָסַד** (pronounced “khoos” or “chus”) translated “have pity.” The word occurs 23 times in the books of the Old Testament (cf. endnote iii), often translated “to spare from destruction” or “to pardon from annihilation” because of compassion.

And even more fascinating, sometimes God declares He will “spare from destruction” while at other times He has determined that He will not “pardon from annihilation.”

(A) **There are times that He will** (“spare”)

Ezekiel 20:13 But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; and my Sabbaths they greatly profaned. “Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make a full end of them. ¹⁴ But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out. ¹⁵ Moreover, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land that I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands, ¹⁶ because they rejected my rules and did not walk in my statutes, and profaned my Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols. ¹⁷ **Nevertheless, my eye spared them**, and I did not destroy them or make a full end of them in the wilderness. ¹⁸ “And I said to their children in the wilderness, ‘Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor keep their rules, nor defile yourselves with their idols. I am the Lord your God; walk in My statutes, be careful to obey my rules...

Psalm 72:11 May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!

¹² For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper.

¹³ He **has pity** on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.

¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight

Romans 3:24 [we] are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had **passed over former sins**.

There are times, there are seasons when a holy and righteous God doesn't immediately “drop the hammer” on the sinfulness and sinful ways of human beings. He “spares from destruction.” To show His forbearance, His patience. Paul writes to the Romans asking “Do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4, ESV). However, Scripture also makes it clear...

(B) **There are times when He will NOT** (“spare”)

Isaiah 13:9 Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it.

- ¹⁷ Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them,
who have no regard for silver and do not delight in gold.
- ¹⁸ Their bows will slaughter the young men; they will have no mercy
on the fruit of the womb; their eyes **will not pity** children.
- ¹⁹ And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans,
will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them.

Jeremiah 13:13 Then you shall say to them, “Thus says the LORD: Behold, I will fill with drunkenness all the inhabitants
of this land: the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

¹⁴ And I will dash them one against another, fathers and sons together,” declares the LORD. “I will **not pity or
spare or have compassion**, that I should not destroy them.”

Matthew 24:36 “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the
Father only. ³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days
before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered
the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, **so will be** the coming of the Son
of Man.

So...there are times, there are seasons, there are long stretches of time when God forbears,
when God's patience and kindness prevails, when He gives opportunity after opportunity after
opportunity for people “who do not know their right hand from their left” (cf. Jonah 4:11) to hear His
call. He does not destroy. He refuses, for a time, to sweep away, to annihilate. We might call such
an era a “day of grace.”

But just as certainly, there comes day when He does not pity, that He will not spare. His long-
suffering kindness comes to a close. And so often, as in the days of Noah, people continue to eat
and drink and marry and give in marriage as if God ever do nothing about their rebellion and distance
and disobedience toward Him.

So here was Jonah's problem. God wanted a day of grace; Jonah wanted a day of judgment.

***What should happen
when God wants to show His grace even
as we want Him to unleash His judgment?***

Answer? It's time to discern the era in which we -- as God's children, as Jesus' disciples, as our
Lord's ambassadors -- are living.

***When in an era of grace,
align with God's heart by eagerly
offering His compassionate forgiveness.***

Ever ask yourself, “What keeps me from really aligning with God's compassionate heart for lost

people?” Might be the same things that kept Jonah from aligning with God?

- JONAH CARRIED AN OFFENSE! The Assyrians were a brutal and violent culture. They conquered and pillaged and mistreated and bullied every surrounding nation and neighbor. Jonah knew of their unchecked sinfulness; he may have even experienced it. He wanted payback...now!
- JONAH HAD AN AGENDA! (and it didn't include forgiveness) He'd rather die than see his enemies spared.
- JONAH HAD A SKEWED PERSPECTIVE! Like many in Israel, he believed that God's blessings should be reserved for God's own people.

In your walk with Jesus – the Savior who came to “seek and to save that which was lost” – have you ever assessed why you've talked yourself out of reaching others with God's love and compassion?

Perhaps you have an offense against people you know who have hurt you, or ridiculed your faith?

Perhaps you have an agenda, and you can't imagine finding joy in seeing people who deserve God's judgment actually be released from sin...and judgment. Perhaps you have a skewed perspective about just keeping God's blessings “in-house”?

But these two final verses are for me...and for you...and for us.

***When in an era of grace,
align with God's heart by eagerly
offering His compassionate forgiveness
(even to those whom we've concluded don't deserve it)***

Again, I think Tim Keller has it right:

As we have seen, the book of Jonah ends with a cliff-hanger. We are never told how the prophet responded to God's final appeal. I propose, however, that we can make a reasonable guess about how Jonah ultimately responded to God.

- *How do we know Jonah was so recalcitrant, defiant, and clueless?*
- *How do we know that he made that unbelievable “I hate the God of love” speech?*
- *How do we know about his prayer inside the fish?*

The only way we could possibly know these things is if Jonah told others. What kind of man would let the world see what a fool he was? Only someone who had become joyfully secure in God's love. Only someone who believed that he was simultaneously sinful but completely accepted. In short, someone who has found in the gospel of grace the very power of God (Romans 1:16)

If God's grace can change Jonah, it can change anyone. It can change you.^{iv}

CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that you and I live in the final era of God's grace. In no uncertain terms, Peter tells us this

2 Peter 3:3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. **4** They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." **5** For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, **6** and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. **7** But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. **9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.** **10** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Look, if we don't want to be JONAHs...more concerned over our comfort under the shade of a plant than for people who are lost, then **How do we best express that we live in the era of God's sparing compassion?** Together, as a team

(1) **Prayer...care...share** (our simple approach to begin reaching someone away from God)

(2) **Engage and Enrich**

**JESUS PUT US HERE
— TOGETHER —
TO CONNECT PEOPLE
TO LIFE-DEFINING
RELATIONSHIPS IN
CHRIST.**

Pastor David Staff

HOW? Step boldly into our Fall 2019 all-church initiative:
Engage and Enrich

Engage our mission through gathering, connecting, and serving, as well as deepening in the life-question:
Who Shares My Tough Stuff?

Enrich family life in our church and community and our growing relationship with Ames' wonderful international population.

"We head into the fall of 2019 with great momentum and facing great opportunity. Will you be a part of the team that God uses to connect people in a life-changing way to the Lord Jesus Christ?"

E2
ENGAGE AND ENRICH

ENGAGE:
GATHER—WORSHIP AND TEACHING
cakers@ccames.org

A Cord of Three Strands: Unbroken in the Tough Stuff
(8.25-10.20) [+journal and devotional]

Core Convictions: the Heart of Reformation Faith
(10.27-11.24)

Joy to the World: Uniquely in Jesus
(12.1-12.29) [+Christmas Eve 2/4/6pm]

CONNECT—JOIN OR START A CONNECT GROUP
kbartholic@ccames.org

SERVE—HOME | CHURCH | COMMUNITY | THE WORLD
khamby@ccames.org

ENRICH:

... through growing your family's biblical stewardship:
"Money, Possessions, & Eternity" (Sundays 10.6-11.24 9am)

... in discerning how CCC can best serve and enrich family life in Ames and Story County: "Family Enrichment Listening Sessions" (times and details coming soon)

... our connection with the many internationals God has brought to our community: International Friendship Partners | Coffee, Tea, and English | FISH dinners | Personally "adopting" international and/or family | International Thanksgiving Dinner (check the website and app as details come throughout the Fall; khamby@ccames.org)

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² Nicholas Thomas Wright FRSE is an English New Testament scholar, Pauline theologian, and retired Anglican bishop. Between 2003 and 2010, he was the Bishop of Durham. He then became Research Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at St Mary's College in the University of St Andrews in Scotland

³ For occurrences of this Hebrew word in the Old Testament, see the following from <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/2347.htm>

Deuteronomy 7:16

HEB: עליהם עינך תחוס לא- לך

NAS: to you; your eye *shall not pity* them, nor

KJV: thee; thine eye *shall have no pity* upon them: neither shalt thou serve

INT: will deliver nor *pity* your eye and

Deuteronomy 13:8

HEB: עָלָיו עֵינְךָ תִּחְוֶה וְלֹא- אֵלָיו

NAS: to him; and your eye *shall not pity* him, nor

KJV: unto him; neither shall thine eye *pity* him, neither shalt thou spare,

INT: about nor *pity* and your eye and

Deuteronomy 19:13

HEB: עָלָיו עֵינְךָ תִּחְוֶה תִּחְוֶה לֹא-

NAS: *You shall not pity* him, but you shall purge

KJV: Thine eye *shall not pity* him, but thou shalt put away

INT: shall not *pity* eye and

Deuteronomy 19:21

HEB: גַּפְשׁ עֵינְךָ תִּבְרָח תִּחְוֶה וְלֹא-

NAS: *Thus you shall not show pity:* life

KJV: And thine eye *shall not pity;* [but] life

INT: shall not *show* eye life

Deuteronomy 25:12

HEB: ס עֵבְדָךָ: תִּחְוֶה לֹא כַּפָּה

NAS: her hand; *you shall not show pity.*

KJV: thine eye *shall not pity* [her].

INT: her hand shall not *show* eye

1 Samuel 24:10

HEB: וְאִמַּר עָלָיְךָ וְתִחְוֶה לְהַרְגֵנִי וְאָמַר

NAS: to kill *you, but [my eye] had pity* on you; and I said,

KJV: [me] kill *thee: but [mine eye] spared* thee; and I said,

INT: said to kill *but had pity* on said

Nehemiah 13:22

HEB: כָּרַב עָלַי וְחַסְדָּה אֶלְמֵי לֵךְ

NAS: me, O my God, *and have compassion* on me according to the greatness

KJV: me, O my God, *[concerning] this also, and spare* me according to the greatness

INT: remember my God *and have* on to the greatness

Psalms 72:13

HEB: גָּל עַל- יְהוֹם

NAS: *He will have compassion* on the poor

KJV: *He shall spare* the poor and needy,

INT: *will have* on the poor

Isaiah 13:18

HEB: עֵינֵיהֶם: תִּחְוֶה לֹא- בְנֵיהֶם

NAS: [Nor] will their eye *pity* children.

KJV: their eye *shall not spare* children.

INT: children not *pity* will their eye

Jeremiah 13:14

HEB: אֲרַחֵם וְלֹא אֶחְוֶה וְלֹא- אֶחְמָל

NAS: nor *be sorry* nor

KJV: I will not pity, *nor spare,* nor have mercy,

INT: show nor *be sorry* nor have

Jeremiah 21:7

HEB: וְלֹא עָלֵיהֶם יִחְוֶה לֹא- חֶרֶב

NAS: of the sword. *He will not spare* them nor

KJV: of the sword; *he shall not spare* them, neither have pity,

INT: of the sword nor *spare* and nor

Ezekiel 5:11

HEB: וְגַם- עֵינֵי תִחְוֶה וְלֹא- אֶגְרַע

NAS: withdraw, and My eye *will have* no pity

KJV: [thee]; neither shall mine eye *spare,* neither will I have any pity.

INT: withdraw no *will have* and my eye will also

Ezekiel 7:4

HEB: עָלָיְךָ עֵינֵי תִחְוֶה וְלֹא-

NAS: For My eye *will have* no pity

KJV: And mine eye *shall not spare* thee, neither will I have pity:

INT: no *will have* my eye on

Ezekiel 7:9

HEB: וְלֹא עֵינֵי תִחְוֶה וְלֹא-

NAS: My eye *will show* no pity

KJV: And mine eye *shall not spare,* neither will I have pity:

INT: no *will show* my eye nor

Ezekiel 8:18

HEB: וְלֹא עֵינֵי תִחְוֶה לֹא- בְחַמָּה

NAS: in wrath. My eye *will have* no pity

KJV: mine eye *shall not spare,* neither will I have pity:

INT: wrath no *will have* my eye nor

Ezekiel 9:10

HEB: וְלֹא עֵינַי תִּחְמוֹס לֹא־ אֲנִי

NAS: But as for Me, My eye *will have* no

KJV: And as for me also, mine eye *shall not spare*, neither will I have pity,

INT: I no *will have* my eye nor

Ezekiel 16:5

HEB: עֵינַי עָלֶיךָ תִּחְסֶה לֹא־

NAS: eye *looked with pity* on you to do

KJV: None eye *pitied* thee, to do any

INT: No *looked* and eye

Ezekiel 20:17

HEB: עֵלֵיהֶם עֵינַי וְתִחַסֵּם

NAS: Yet My eye *spared* them rather than

KJV: Nevertheless mine eye *spared* them from destroying

INT: *spared* my eye and

Ezekiel 24:14

HEB: אֲנִי לֹא אֶפְרָע וְלֹא אֶחְמוֹס וְלֹא־ אֶפְרָע

NAS: I will not relent, *and I will not pity* and I will not be sorry;

KJV: [it]; I will not go back, *neither will I spare*, neither will I repent;

INT: relent and I will not *pity* and I will not be sorry

Joel 2:17

HEB: עַל־יְהוָה תִּחְסֶה וְיֹאמְרוּ יְהוָה

NAS: And let them say, *Spare* Your people,

KJV: and let them say, *Spare* thy people,

INT: the LORD'S say *Spare* LORD and

Jonah 4:10

HEB: הִקְיִינוּ עָלַי חֶסֶד אֶתְּהָ יְהוָה

NAS: said, *You had compassion* on the plant

KJV: the LORD, *Thou hast had pity* on the gourd,

INT: the LORD You *had* on the plant

Jonah 4:11

HEB: בִּיעֹה עָלַי אֲחֻמוֹס לֹא־ נִאֲמָנִי

NAS: *Should I not have compassion* on Nineveh,

KJV: *And should not I spare* Nineveh,

INT: I not *spare* and Nineveh

23 Occurrences

^{iv} *The Prodigal Prophet: Jonah and the Mystery of God's Mercy*, pp.227-228).