

SHOULD I NOT SPARE NINEVEH JONAH 3:10-4:11

Text: Jonah 4:11

Jonah 4:11 (KJV)

¹¹ And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and *also* much cattle?

Introduction:

What is the Book of Jonah about? Well, it's not simply about a great fish (mentioned only four times), or a great city (named nine times), or even a disobedient prophet (mentioned eighteen times.) It's about God! God is mentioned thirty-eight times in these four short chapters, and if you eliminated Him from the book, the story wouldn't make sense.

The songwriter William Cowper penned the following words:

*God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines Of never failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.*

Jonah watched the Lord work His will in the city of Nineveh and Jonah did not like God's way at all!

As we look at this text tonight, I want to point the lessons that are taught here. Hopefully, this passage will serve to teach us that God is in charge and our duty is to work with Him in all that He does. As the Lord leads, I want to preach for a while on *Plants, People and Priorities*.

1. V. 3:10 THE REVIVAL IN NINEVEH

(III. The book of Jonah records what may be the greatest revival in the history of the world. An entire town repented of sin and got right with the Lord!

Notice that this revival did not happen by itself! A few things were involved in bringing this dispensation t the people of Nineveh!)

A. V. 1:1-3:3 Involved A Man

We are given the details of Jonah's call, his disobedience and his restoration. We are told how the Lord used this prophet to bring the word of God to a lost people.

There is good news in this for you and me! It is a blessing to know that God can use even those who have fallen short for His glory!

B. V. 3:4 Involved A Message

Jonah walked into Nineveh with a simple eight Word message from the Lord. When this message was preached, God used the Word to prick the hearts of the Ninevites and revival followed.

C. V. 3:5-9 Involved A Miracle

The miracle lies in the fact that a whole town turned to God! There have been great revivals throughout history, but this is the only instance of a town of this size, filled with such wicked people, being converted and delivered from sin. (Note: It is a great miracle when revival comes and lives are changed. But, it is always a miracle when even a single soul hears the good news of salvation and comes to faith in Jesus! That is the glory of the Gospel, Rom. 1:16; John 1:12.)

D. V. 3:10 Involved God's Mercy

When the people of Nineveh repented of their sins and turned to the Lord, God reacted to their faith in grace. When they turned to Him, He saved their souls by grace! Of course, God knew what would happen before Jonah ever arrived! Their conversion was part of His perfect plan! (Note: Salvation always works this way! God loves the sinner, has a plan to save his soul and He sends the Word so that the sinner might be convicted and see his condition. When that sinner

repents of his sins, God saves him by grace through faith, Eph. 2:8-9. Of course, it's all part of His plan!)

2. 4:1-5 THE REACTION IN JONAH

(III. When the Lord takes the message of Jonah and saves a city, Jonah reacts in a very bad way.)

A. V. 1 The Prophet's Rage

The phrase "*very angry*" means that Jonah "*burned with anger*". He was hopping mad at God because God did not kill the people of Nineveh! Why was he so mad? There are several reasons. Here are a few:

1. One of the marks of a true prophet was that his prophecies always came true, Deut. 18:20-22. Jonah had said that the Ninevites would be overthrown, Jonah 3:4. If this did not happen, then Jonah would be looked upon as a false prophet.

2. His fellow Jews would be angry with him for preaching a message that brought salvation to their enemies. They might see him as a traitor.

3. Jonah hated the people of Nineveh! Nothing would have pleased him more than seeing them all destroyed by God!

B. V. 2 The Prophet's Resentment

Jonah tells the Lord that this is what he knew would happen.

C. V. 3 The Prophet's Request

To put it bluntly, Jonah wanted God to kill him!

He wasn't the first. Moses and Elijah both prayed for the same thing, Num. 11:15; 1 Kings 19:4.

Because he didn't get his way and because he had to endure embarrassment, he wanted to give up on life itself. What a sad commentary!

D. V. 4-5 The Prophet's Resolve

After Jonah is confronted about his anger, he does not change his mind. Instead, he climbs a hill outside the city, folds his arms and sits down to wait. He is probably hoping the Lord will change His mind!

Jonah doesn't get his way about Nineveh and he doesn't get his way about dying so he just starts to pout!

(Note: There are lots of people just like Jonah in the church! For some reason life has not gone as they had it planned. Their response is not humble

submission to the will of the Lord. No! They just quit on Him!

3. V. 4:6-11 THE RESPONSE FROM GOD

A. V. 6 God Responds In Tenderness Toward The Prophet -

The Lord extended grace to Jonah, even when his heart was obviously not right with God. The Lord graciously allowed a vine to grow over the prophet to give him shelter and comfort.

(Note: Isn't it a blessing to know that even when we walk outside the will of the Lord, the Lord will still look after us and bless us?)

Ill. Elijah - 1 Kings 19:5-7; Ill. Peter and the disciples - John 21:6.) How many times has He continued to bless and use you even when you were out of His will?

Thank God for His grace, Rom. 5:20!

B. V. 7-11 God's Responds By Teaching About Priorities -

Just as Jonah was beginning to enjoy the vine, God sent a worm to destroy the vine. Jonah gets even angrier!

(Note: He is getting a tiny taste of the horrors of the Hell the Ninevites were headed to before they were saved.)

This time, God sets the record straight! He reminds Jonah that Jonah cared more about a vine than he did the souls of the people of Nineveh.

People made in the image of God and people who would have perished had He not intervened!

(Note: Every time I read this I get under conviction! Why? I see the same attitude in my life all the time. We tend to get upset about things that simply do not matter.

Think about the last thing that made you mad. Now, ask yourself this question: What will it matter in 100 years?

Friends, the only thing that really matters as we pass through this life is finding God's will for our lives and following after it with our whole heart.

People are going to Hell and we are worrying about vines and other comforts.

Our priorities need to be refocused and narrowed until they want only what He wants in all of life.

That would please Him and it would get His work done in the world!

Ephesians 6:6 (KJV)

⁶Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

Hebrews 13:21 (KJV)

²¹Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 John 2:17 (KJV)

¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Close:

What has your attention this evening? Jonah didn't care about the eternal destiny of the people in Nineveh! All he cared about was his reputation as a prophet and the foolish prejudices he carried with him through life. He learned, or at least we hope he did, that God's will in this world is all that really matters. Isn't it time we put aside all the things that cloud our vision of His will? Isn't it time we put aside our hurts, our desires and our wills so that we might be better able to do His will in the world? Jonah suffered because he didn't care about God's will. What do you care about?