

Meditation #1  
**Jonah 1:6**  
Rev. Cory Griess

*So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.*

How could Jonah sleep in the middle of such a storm? Jonah's sleep in the storm is a frightening witness of the power of sin. Jonah slept because he convinced himself that everything was okay between himself and God. Sin can have such a power for a time even on a child of God (which Jonah was). Sin can blind us, so that even when the consequences of our sin are evident to everyone else, we are not aware of the storm or its significance in our lives. Everyone on that boat lived in the reality that God was present with discipline! Jonah was willingly blind to the fact that God would not let his child walk in disobedience.

God would rescue his child from his willing blindness, however. The captain, having come down to the hull of the ship looking for cargo to throw overboard, finds Jonah. He rouses Jonah with what must have been a startling message for Jonah to hear. To the captain, of course, the message is rooted in superstition. The sailors know the storm is unique. They think some god, whether theirs or another's, is out there punishing someone on this ship. Everyone must pray to whoever their god is, Jonah included. They even decide to cast lots to see who is being punished, and in God's sovereignty the lot falls to Jonah. God uses the pagan shipmaster to rouse Jonah not only physically, but spiritually. "Arise, call upon thy God" And in verse 8, "What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?" And after Jonah is forced to tell all, there is a stinging word in verse 10: "Why hast thou done this?" The irony would not have been lost on Jonah. He was a believer sent to rebuke pagans, but here God sends pagans to rebuke him. How humbling.

Whatever means God uses to rebuke his child, the rebuke is always his love and faithfulness. He will never let one of his elect children go, but will lead him back to repentance. Jonah is a sinner/saint, loved from eternity. Therefore, Jonah is preserved by the chastening hand of God. And so are you, dear child of God. When he rebukes you he is preserving you, loved as you are. Regularly he does that rebuking in the preaching of his Word on Sunday. He does it also through the discipline of the elders or the love of a godly friend. Whatever the case, always it is his covenant faithfulness to lead his people to repentance.

In the way of his preserving grace leading us again to repentance, we experience the true peace of forgiveness and a godly walk. This passage makes us think of another who was asleep on a boat in a storm—the Lord Jesus in Mark 4. Only in the way of confession and forgiveness can we be at peace no matter what God sends into our lives; not now with a false peace like Jonah had at the first, but with the peace that is found in Christ himself.

Memory Verse: *1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.*

Meditation #2  
**Jonah 3:9**  
Rev. Cory Griess

*Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?*

A humbled Jonah arrives in Nineveh and preaches as God had commanded. Jonah preaches the just judgment of God for sin. Verse 4: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." How much preaching today refuses to faithfully proclaim the just judgment of God for sin! Nineveh was a very pagan city, known for its wickedness and cruelty. Jonah must come and speak what God thinks about that sin, and warn of judgment to come. Jonah also preaches the great mercy of God. The very question of verse 9 reveals that Jonah preaches God's mercy. Mercy is only meaningful in light of justice. Mercy must not be neglected either in preaching. Faithful preaching, faithful parenting, and faithful witnessing must speak of both the justice and mercy of God.

By God's sovereign grace, and at the preaching of Jonah, many in Nineveh truly repented and are now in heaven. True repentance is four things, all four of which the Ninevites display. The first is a sense of God's fierce anger at sin. The Ninevites' question in verse 9 shows they had this: "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger...?" The second is not just fear about the judgment of God for sin, but true sorrow over the sin. This the Ninevites had as well. Verse 5: "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." Third, true repentance is a turning away from sin. Verse 8: "But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands." And fourth, Nineveh displayed the turning to God for mercy that is always part of true repentance. Again in verse 8: "But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God."

There was such repentance in Nineveh by God's grace. Is there such repentance in your heart and in mine this day? Are we toying with sin, thinking it is no big deal? Let Jonah and the Ninevites speak to you: "Sin will not go unpunished!" There is a day determined by God for judgment. Safety is only found in God's mercy displayed in Jesus Christ. Jonah was a picture of this Christ. For three days he was in the belly of the whale and the third day came back out alive. So too Christ was three days in the heart of the earth, and the third day He rose again with heavenly life. Having taken the sins of his people upon himself, he took also our death and rose again in victory. Though you have the might of Nineveh, do not trust it to shield you from judgment for sin. Though you have a privileged place, born in the church as Jonah, do not trust it as your deliverer. Only by the humility of repentance and fleeing to Christ do we find mercy. In that way there is no question: he *will* turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not. Is not God then also just? God is indeed just, but also merciful!

Memory Verse: Acts 8:22 *Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.*

Meditation #3  
**Jonah 4:4**  
Rev. Cory Griess

*Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?*

Can you imagine a missionary sending a report back that says, "A whole city was really, genuinely repentant at my preaching...and boy, did it make me angry!" Such anger would be unbelievable. Jonah's anger at the repentance of Nineveh seems unbelievable too. But let us understand it. Nineveh is the capital of Assyria. The Assyrian Empire is the up and coming empire of the day, and its border is close to Israel's northern border. Jonah is from the northern city of Gath-hepher (2 Kings 14:25), close to that border. Assyria has likely already made raids into Israelite territory. Assyria is Israel's enemy. Jonah hates the Ninevites. That is why he ran from God's call in the beginning. And that is why now, after preaching faithfully God's word without influence of personal feelings, the old hatred has come back. Jonah is now thinking of home (v. 2) and facing the people who had family members killed by these Ninevites. He would rather die than face going home as the missionary to the Ninevites. If we have been hurt by someone, how hard it is to love them, desire their well-being, and pray for them. Some of God's people carry bitterness in their souls toward others for long years. How much like Jonah are you today?

God had sovereignly sanctified Jonah. He corralled him back by the lasso of his storm. Jonah preached faithfully. But this hatred is Jonah's besetting sin. And sanctification is always progressive. Rarely does God simply cause something that is tempting for us to never be tempting for us again. The usual way is that he sanctifies us slowly but surely, giving us strength to cut off our besetting sins more and more, with real progress! Jonah falls again, but he does not fall as far. He does not flee this time. And though his prayer is sinful, at least he turns to God and not away from him. Do not be too discouraged, child of God, that you yet battle the same temptation you battled years ago. It does not mean you are not his own. There is progress in your life too, if you will look closely and broadly enough. He has not let go of you. As he works his grace in you, keep up the fight.

He is a good Father. He knows that sometimes in that lifelong battle we need a storm to be hurled in our path, and at other times we need a fatherly yet blunt reminder. Jonah knows his sin now. He doesn't need a storm. He needs a fatherly reminder and rebuke (a good thing for earthly fathers to take note of!). "Doest thou well to be angry, Jonah?" Is your anger right? Is it justified? This was a reminder of undeserved grace, wasn't it? Do you deserve my mercy, Jonah? Does Israel? Remember your own sin and how you fled from me? Did you deserve my mercy toward you? This reminder of undeserved mercy will be what melts away the hatred and bitterness from Jonah's heart. And always it is the main thing that melts away the anger and bitterness from ours. Has someone hurt you? Has the church herself done evil by you? The mercy of the gospel to you, rebel that you are, will be what melts the bitterness and heals the soul today and every day. This is a vital part of how he progressively sanctifies us in that battle and all the battles we face all our lives long.

Memory Verse: *Exodus 34:5-7a And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.*

Meditation #4  
**Jonah 4:11**  
Rev. Cory Griess

*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?*

As God sanctifies us he always works to set our hearts on him and his grand spiritual kingdom, and not on ourselves. God has been working that spiritual reality into Jonah, and now at the end of the book he uses an object lesson combined with a question. God causes a gourd to grow for Jonah to shield him from the heat of the Arabian Desert. After God does this, we read for the first time in the book that Jonah is happy (verse 6). But then God takes away Jonah's gourd, and Jonah is angry. Jonah loved that gourd. Jonah loved it because he loved Jonah. And he hated Nineveh because he loved Jonah. He was not enthralled with the salvation of souls in the grand worldwide kingdom of God because he loved himself and what he wanted above all. He needed to have the eyes of his heart set on something much greater, the salvation of God's elect in his worldwide kingdom.

God exposes Jonah's selfishness by comparing the gourd that Jonah pities (or loves) to Nineveh that Jonah hates. First of all, God points out the time aspect of the comparison. The gourd was there for a night; Nineveh is a great and ancient city where many people have lived. Second, there is the value aspect of comparison. The gourd is of little value, but in Nineveh are people and even 120,000 small children who cannot yet discern between their right hand and their left. Even the cattle of Nineveh are of more value than this gourd. Third, there is the labor aspect of comparison. Jonah did not labor for the gourd. God labored in his eternal decree and sovereign providence to produce this city and to give elect people in this city at this time. And yet Jonah is angry at God for saving his elect from this city and has pity for the gourd. Jonah's self-love could not be made more clear.

How often God exposes this same self-love in us! We care more about our little gourds, the things in life that make us comfortable, than we do about the grand spiritual kingdom of God from all nations, tribes, and tongues. We hardly bat an eye when there is a baptism or confession of faith in church, or if the report of the missionary comes out; but if our air conditioner breaks, then the emotions run high! We can get so stuck on ourselves and our little gourds in life that we care more for them than for the spiritual kingdom of God. We can be like Jonah.

It is striking that this is the last verse of the book. Does Jonah repent? Surely he does, for he is God's child. But that is not the point by the time we get to the end. The point is for the focus to shift from the story being read to the one reading the story. The point is not Jonah anymore; it is you and me. That is why the Spirit leaves it open, so that the spotlight might shift from Jonah to us. The question comes to us, "We see ourselves in Jonah; now how will we go forward?" Living our lives for the church and for God's glory, or solely in the hope of more gourds? Let us live for the kingdom and press all that God gives us, even gourds, into the service of his great kingdom that alone will last to all eternity and of which we are privileged to be a part!

Memory Verse: *Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*