



## Jonah

**Tape #7359**  
**Jonah**  
**By Chuck Smith**

*This is the word of the Lord that came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me (1:1-2).*

Now, in II Kings 14:25, we discover that Jonah was a prophet to Israel, during the reign of Jeroboam the second. So it puts him around the year of 800 or so, during the reign of Jeroboam, in the 800 BC. He was, it says, and he restored, “Jeroboam restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath, under the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai”. So somewhere around 826 or so, is when Jonah there prophesied in Israel.

The book of Jonah has come under a lot of criticism by those men who do not believe in God. It’s sort of been made a joke by a lot of people. A lot of what they call higher critics of the Bible, have tried to give explanations concerning the book of Jonah. But suffice it to say it takes more faith to believe their wild explanations than it does to believe the book itself. It’s, they can become very fanciful in their endeavoring to interpret, but their interpretations just are difficult to really accept.

I have no problem with the book of Jonah. I believe that God can do anything. The God that I believe in, and the God that I worship, is the God that created the universe. He created all of the life forms within the universe. He created dinosaurs, and all of the life forms, huge life forms, and I believe that God was able to prepare a fish or, a sufficient. Some say the translation is sea monster sufficient to do what the bible says was done to Jonah.

Jesus attested to the genuineness of Jonah. He made of couple of references. First of all, his death and resurrection after three days, would be similar to Jonah, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights, in the heart of the earth.” Jesus confirming Jonah’s experience. Then Jesus also confirming the effectiveness of Jonah’s ministry in Ninevah. For Jesus said that, “Ninevah will arise in the day of judgment with this generation, and they will condemn it. Because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here.

Well might the men of Ninevah testify against this generation. Because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, but that’s quite a thing! Because they had only one prophet of God to speak to them, and he was not a loving, friendly prophet. He was an angry prophet. He didn’t have a lot of messages interspersed with psychology, and all kinds of titillating things to tickle their ears. His message was one of doom and gloom. It was monotonous. All he was saying is, “Forty days, and comes destruction! Forty days and comes destruction!”, and they repented.

So, today we have, you know, you can turn on the radio and get a wide variety of types of messages. Messages to appeal to every palate. Yet there are people today who are rejecting God’s love, God’s invitations of grace and love, to experience the love of God, and the grace of God. There was no promise of salvation to them. In fact as we’ll be reading tonight, they repented on the basis, “Who can tell? Maybe God will relent, and maybe we can be spared!”. They didn’t even know. Jonah didn’t give them any promise that, “You better repent, or destruction”. He just said, “Forty days, and comes destruction”.

Ninevah the great city. The city of Ninevah had what they called, “The Greater Ninevah”. The actual city itself was three miles long, and about a mile wide, but the Greater Ninevah extended out to about ten miles wide, and thirty miles long. It was a city, a three days journey. That is, it would take you three days to walk from one end of Ninevah to the other. It was the capital of Assyria. Assyria was a strong empire that began its real powerful reign, or its real powerful conquering, about 900 B.C., and it continued to about 607 B.C. when it was conquered by Babylon. The cities of Ninevah, and Babylon were more or less always in competition, they were about three hundred miles apart. Ninevah was the first to arise in great power.

The city of Ninevah was one of the oldest cities in the world. It is actually mentioned way back in the book of Genesis. It was established by Nimrod, and that’s one of the oldest cities in the world. A great city indeed, a three days journey to pass through the city of Ninevah, and your making about ten miles a day, take

you three miles to go the thirty miles from one end to the other.

There were in Ninevah a tremendous population. There was 120,000 babies, small enough that they did not know their right hand from their left hand. So well over 1,000,000 inhabitants in the city of Ninevah. So, “Go to Ninevah, that great city, cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.”

They were a very wicked people. They were a very cruel people. They cruelly subjugated their enemies. They would physically mutilate their prisoners of war. History records how that many times when a city was under siege by the Assyrians, much as Muscidae, the inhabitants of the city would commit suicide, rather than to be taken captives, as from, or, captives of the Assyrians, because of the cruel mistreatment of their prisoners. Mutilating their bodies.

The first sortie of the Assyrians against the northern kingdom of Israel came before Jonah, under Sargon, the Assyrians first came against Israel. They were ultimately the victors over Israel, but Jonah was called of God to go to this city.

Now, Jonah being a patriarch, Jonah knowing that this city was the capital of Assyria, which was a threat to his nation. Already having come and besieged the nation, he did not want to go to Ninevah. In chapter four there, he, he tells in verse two, he said, “Was this not what I said when I was yet in my country? And this was the reason I fled to Tarshish: for I knew that you were a gracious God, and a merciful God, slow to anger, of great kindness, and you change from the evil!”

Because Jonah feared that God would not destroy them, he was afraid of a successful evangelistic campaign. He didn’t want them to repent! He wanted to see them destroyed, and was angry with God, because God did not restore them, angry with God because God was merciful, and God was gracious, and God did not bring the judgment at that time. The judgment ultimately came, but not within the appointed time that Jonah had declared, because of the repentance of the people. But let’s get into the story, because it’s a fascinating story.

So Jonah, the Lord said, “Go to Ninevah, that great city, cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me”.

*But Jonah rose up [Not to go to Ninevah, but] to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord (1:3),*

Jonah tried to run from this call of God. Tarshish they figure was somewhere in Spain, but it was the last outpost of civilization at that time. That was as far as you could go. Jonah was determined to go as far as he could to escape the call of God, and the commission of God, to go to Ninevah. If he can get to Tarshish, he figured, “I’ll die in Tarshish, rather than go to Ninevah”.

*and so he went down to Joppa (1:3);*

Interesting. He’s trying to run from God’s call, which is sending him to the Gentiles. He doesn’t want to preach to the Gentiles. What does he do? He goes to Joppa to escape the call of God, to preach to the Gentiles. Interestingly enough, some eight hundred years later, it was in Joppa, that Peter was on the housetop of Simon, the tanner, when the Lord gave him the vision, and sent him unto the Gentiles, with the gospel. The very place where Jonah tried to run from the call of God to go to the Gentiles, is right where God called Peter to go unto the Gentiles. So he went down to Joppa.

*and he found a ship going to Tarshish: and so he paid the fare, and he went down into it, to go with them into Tarshish from the presence of the Lord (1:3).*

Twice repeated in this verse. Seeking to escape from the presence of the Lord, from the call of God upon his life.

*But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and they cried every one unto his god, and they cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them (1:4-5).*

This great storm it began to threaten the very ship itself. Beginning to break up in the waves. So in order to lighten the ship, that it would ride higher in the water, not take in the water, they threw out all of the cargo. They, they cried unto their gods. There’s a psalm that talks about, they that go down to the sea in ships, and they see the, you know they rise into the heights, and go down into the depths, and the storms and so forth, then they cry unto the Lord, and the Lord hears them and brings them safely into harbor.

It’s, it’s an interesting experience, how that, when people really get into trouble, who do they call on? You know, they may, they may in their normal everyday life, take the name of God in vain, you know really

don't think much about God, but oh my! When their life is threatened, when they get into a life threatening position, they are quick to cry upon God. So, these mariners were praying and throwing stuff over.

*But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep (1:5).*

He didn't care! "Let it sink!" You know. "I won't go to Ninevah!" He was determined not to go to Ninevah, and rather, he ended up in Tarshish, at the end of the world, or whether he ended up in the bottom of the Mediterranean. Didn't really matter to him. "I'm just not goin'!"

*So the captain of the ship came to him, and said unto him, What do you mean, O sleeper? ["Why are you sleeping?"] arise, call on thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, and we perish not. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause that this evil is upon us. And so they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. So they said unto him, Tell us, we pray, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is your occupation? where did you come from? and what is your country? what is your nationality (1:6-8)?*

Giving him the third degree you know. "What's your occupation?" When he told them, they became even more frightened!

*He said unto them, I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord the God of heaven, [If he truly feared the Lord the God of heaven, then why is he trying to run from Him?] He said,] which has made the sea and the dry land. ["The God that I fear has made this sea."] Then they were exceedingly afraid, and they said, Why have you done this (1:9-10)?*

It's interesting how that many times worldly people will rebuke the service of the Lord. You know when you're in fault, when you're out of fellowship with God, it's many times the worldly people that, that will rebuke you. Here they are these tough mariners rebuking the prophet. "Why have you done this fellow?" Those are the questions that are hard to answer aren't they?

*For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them (1:10).*

I mean, when he came on board, he said, "I'm getting out of here. I'm trying to escape from God". So they're saying, "Why have you done this!" Then he said unto them, or...

*Then they said unto him, What shall we do with you, that the sea may be calm? for the sea was wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Just throw me over into the sea; and then the sea will be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great storm is upon you. ["My fault, throw me over and you'll be okay."] Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: because of the sea that was tempestuous against them (1:11-13).*

They tried to not throw him over. It isn't polite to throw over the fare paying passengers. So they are rowing hard to try and make it to land, but the seas were against them. They just couldn't do it. So what Jonah figured, "Throw me over, I'll drown. At least I won't go to Ninevah!" "I'm not going to Ninevah! I'd rather drown than go to Ninevah. Just throw me over." I mean uh, it's interesting that he had sort of a death wish. Isn't it sort of sad that the, the, the type of men that God has to sometimes use to accomplish His purposes? This guy is really reluctant! In fact, later on he says, "Okay God just kill me. Kill me, kill me! I've been successful. Kill me, I don't want to go home, I'll be in trouble!" He didn't destroy him.

*So they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beg you, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, ["Don't let us suffer for what he has done!"] and don't lay upon us innocent blood: ["Don't, don't really hold us responsible for throwing him in."] for thou, O Lord, has done it as it has pleased thee. [Recognizing the hand of God, believing the prophet of God.] So they took up Jonah, and they cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased her raging (1:14-15).*

So you see, you got problems with miracles before we ever get to the great fish. The storm itself, his sleeping in that kind of a storm. The lot falling upon him, and now the sea becoming calm as soon as he is thrown in.

*Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, they offered sacrifices, and they made vows (1:16).*

I mean, they really took the pledge, and just--they were, they were impressed!

*Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights (1:17).*

"The Lord had prepared..." Now we find that in the fourth chapter, the Lord is going to prepare other things. The Lord is going to prepare a gourd, to grow up and provide shade. Then the Lord is gonna prepare a

worm, to eat the gourd that it dies. Then the Lord is gonna prepare vehement east wind, hot wind to blow. So God's hand in these things. "And the Lord prepared a great fish." That's all I need to know! God's able.

As we were saying this morning, if man can make a vessel that can take men under the sea, where they can spend days in a submarine, and then come up unscathed, and get out at the dock, and go do their weekend thing. God can surely prepare a great fish. God could've made a submarine, as far as that goes! God can do anything! Thus, I have no problem with this story at all. "God prepared a great fish." Now God has created every life form that exists, and even those that are extinct, could surely prepare a great fish to swallow Jonah, whereby he could be held in the belly of that fish, for the three days and the three nights. The interesting thing is that he was in the belly of the fish three days, and three nights...

## Chapter 2

*Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord (2:1).*

That's stubborn! Sitting there for three days, and three nights, saying, "I won't go! I'm not going to Ninevah! I will not go to Ninevah!", and three days and three nights there in the belly of this fish, refusing to surrender. Refusing to submit! Stubborn! Again, God has such difficulty many times, with those men through which He desires to do a work! Stubbornness. Our own way. We'll do it our way, our own desires. But after three days, he prayed unto the Lord...

*his God out of the fish's belly, And he said, I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord (2:1-2),*

He, he broke after three days. Some people are really stubborn, and it takes really pressure to break them. But, you know, it is so important that we be broken. God knows that we cannot really attain the full potential of our ministry, before we've gone through the breaking experiences. Those times when we are broken by the Lord, are healthy times spiritually in our lives. So he was broken after three days, and three nights. He was so miserable. He said, "I cried unto the Lord out of mine affliction"...

*and he heard me; out of the belly of hell I cried, and thou heardest my voice (2:2).*

No doubt, very dark inside of that stomach of that whale, or fish, or whatever it was, the great fish. If it were a mammal, it was hot. 98.6, humidity would be horrendous! Like someone said, "It aint the heat, it's the humidity!" Ha, ha! I can see where he really thought he was in hell. Hell, a place of darkness, and a place of heat, and misery. He talks about the waves overflowing him. Interesting, in his prayer, there's about five quotations from the Psalms, indicating that he had a pretty good working knowledge of the Psalms.

*the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me (2:3).*

That, "All thy billows and thy waves passed over me", is a quotation of Psalm 120. He was quoting the Psalm, he was, he was well versed in the Psalms, which makes it interesting that he had told the sailors he was wanting to escape the presence of God, by going to Tarshish. The uttermost parts of the sea. For if he is familiar with so many of the Psalms, which he quotes here, surely he knew also the 139<sup>th</sup> Psalm, where the question is asked, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence? Whither shall I escape from your Spirit? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there. If I descend into hell, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and I flee to the uttermost parts of the sea, there your hand will guide me. You will hold me by the right hand."

So he should know that he could not escape, even if he got to Ninevah, he could not escape from the presence of the Lord, or from the call of God upon his heart! So he quotes the Psalm, "For thou hast cast me into the deep, into the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about:", the water just engulfing him. I mean, it was, it was no doubt miserable, trying to just survive! "All of thy billows and thy waves passed over me."

*Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; and yet, will I look again toward thy holy temple (2:4).*

"God really is through with me, He's gonna really work me over, and this is it! But it's a miserable way to die!" So, he's turning to God, there's a breaking, and there's a repentance. Turning towards, looking again towards the holy temple. I don't know how he knew which direction to look. Ha, ha!

*The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: [A quotation from Psalms 69:1.] the depth closed me round about, and the weeds [the seaweed] wrapped around my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; [The thing's going down into the depths of the water.] and the earth with her bars was about me*

*for ever: yet hast thou [brought me up my life from corruption] brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. And when my soul fainted within me [Given up hope of life.] I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple (3:5-7).*

“Lord I called upon you, I remembered you, when I despaired of life.” There are important lessons that we need to learn in life. Lessons concerning God and the purposes of God, and God is determined that you’re going to learn these lessons one way or the other. You can learn the easy way, or you can learn the hard way. The bible says, “The way of the transgressor is hard”. If you insist on transgressing the laws of God, you’re gonna learn the lessons the hard way. God has established His laws for your benefit, and for your good. There is not one good thing that God prohibits you from doing. God isn’t against any good, beneficial thing. In fact God is for, every good, beneficial thing in your life. The only thing that God is opposed to, are those things that are destructive to you. Those things that can bring you pain, those things that can bring you suffering, those things that can bring you heartache, physical impairment. God is against those things. The law of the Lord is perfect.

But many times people think that they know better than God. Like Jonah, they figured that they know better than God, and they transgress the law of God. Now, you will learn that it pays to obey the law of God. You’ll learn that one way or the other. There’s an easy way to learn, there’s a hard way to learn. I always say, make it easy on yourself! You know, the more stubborn you are, the harder the lesson will be. But God loves you and He’s determined that you’re gonna learn the lesson. He can out stubborn you! Ha, ha! He keeps the pressure on, and the pressure increases, until you finally come around. But, why do it the hard way? Make it easy on yourself. So the lesson that Jonah learned...

*They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy (2:8).*

It is a lying vanity to think that you can escape from the presence of God. It’s a lying vanity to think that you can escape from the call of God. It’s a lying vanity to think that you can work a better plan in your life, than God’s plan. When you are observing these lying vanities, you are actually running from your own good. You are forsaking your own mercy. What God has for you is the best thing that could happen for you. God’s plan for your life, is the best thing that could ever take place! God loves you, and God is merciful, and God wants to really bless you, and you’re running away from the blessing! You’re running away from your own good, when you try to run from God. He said...

*I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord (2:9).*

He makes some promises to God in there, and probably one of them is, “Lord, you get me out of here, and I’ll go to Ninevah. Okay, you know I give up. Just get me out of here and I’ll go!” He vowed. He had made some vows. I think when you get in tough situations like that, you’re prone to make vows. “Lord get me out of this, and I’ll do this”, or “I’ll not do that”, and we make our vows in times of pressure and hardship. But it’s important then that we keep those vows. The Psalmist said, “I will pay the vows that I made to you in the day of trouble”. That’s always important!

“Salvation is of the Lord.” He knew that he couldn’t save himself out of this circumstance. He knew that he was helpless. “Salvation is of the Lord”, and of course that, that the figure of passage can be taken out of context, because we can’t save ourselves. There’s no way that you can by any good works, save yourself. Salvation is of the Lord, it comes through faith in Jesus Christ, and that alone! Thus, he recognizes that God is the only hope of salvation.

*And the Lord spake unto the fish, [God speaks unto His creations.] and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land (2:10).*

It was a more obedient servant, than was Jonah himself! Just where he vomited Jonah out, it is not declared. Most commentators sort of figure back in Joppa. God brought him back to the place from whence he tried to run. You know, God often times brings us right back to the place of failure, and let’s us start over again, because having brought him back...

### Chapter 3

*And the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, and go to Ninevah, that great city, [You can’t escape it, brings him back and says, “Okay, go to Ninevah.”] and preach unto the preaching*

*that I bid thee. ["Tell them what I tell you."] So Jonah arose, and went to Ninevah, [God did not compel him to go against his will, but He sure made him willing to go!] according to the word of the Lord. Now Ninevah was an exceeding great city of three days' journey (3:1-3).*

That is, it took three days to walk from one end of the city to the other, the thirty miles length of the greater Ninevah. The ancient historians say that it was the biggest city and territory in the world, at that time at least. Some three hundred square miles.

*And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey (3:4),*

The first day into it, walking. One third of the way through the city.

*and he cried, and said, Forty days, and Ninevah shall be overthrown (3:4).*

That was his message. The miracle, and the amazing thing is that the people believed the prophet of God, and they repented.

*So the people of Ninevah believed God, and proclaimed a fast, they put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even unto the least of them. [There was a period of mourning before God, repentance before God.] For the word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and he covered himself with sackcloth and ashes. [Even the king himself laid aside the royal robe, and put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes in repentance before God.] And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, pass any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from his violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent (3:5-9),*

So this great movement of God in the lives of the people, the proclamation of the kings and the nobles, or the king and his noblemen, to fast, to pray, to put on sackcloth, to afflict their souls. On the basis of, "Who can tell? Who knows, maybe God will change, and we will not be judged." There was no promise. Jonah wasn't saying, "If you don't repent, destruction will come in forty days!" No promise. Just a declaration that their judgment was hanging over their head. But on that slim, narrow, "Who can tell?", they repented.

Now, when God speaks to you, God gives His promise of forgiveness. "If thou shalt confess thy sins, He is faithful, and just to forgive your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness." Over, and over, God promises that if you will repent, and if you will turn from your sin, that He will have mercy upon you, and He will abundantly pardon your sins. You hear the message that God is going to judge sin, and that is a true message. Judgment is gonna come upon the sinner, that is a true message. That's the message that Ninevah heard. "Judgment is gonna come upon the sinner." But with the men of Ninevah, there was no promise. There was no hope that was offered to them, if they repented. But they repented anyhow, just on the basis of, "Maybe, who can tell? Perhaps God will be gracious and merciful". We know that He'll be gracious and merciful to us. The scripture promises the forgiveness. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they can be as white as snow."

That is why the condemnation on us will be much greater than the men of Ninevah. Because, they repented on just the slim hope of, "Who knows? Maybe God will be gracious. Who can tell if God will turn and change, and turn away from the fierce anger, and that we will not perish? Who knows?"

*And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not (3:10).*

God saw their changed hearts. God saw their repentance, and thus God relented from the judgment that was promised.

#### Chapter 4

*But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry (4:1).*

Oh man what a guy! Why would God ever use a Jonah? Well, I'll ask you another question. Why would God ever use you? You know He has His problems with all of us! Jonah was angry! Exceedingly! He was displeased, and he was very angry!

*And he prayed unto the Lord, and he said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? And that it why I tried to flee to Tarshish: for I knew that you are a gracious God, a merciful God, you're slow to anger, you have great kindness, and you turned from the evil that you were going to do*

(4:2).

“I knew that about you. I knew how loving, and gracious, and wonderful God you were!” And, he was afraid that they would believe and repent, which they did.

*Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beg you, my life from me; [“Kill me!”] for it is better for me to die than to live (4:3).*

“I’d rather die than to see this revival, I’d rather die than see this great move of your Spirit!” Oh man! Can’t believe this guy!

*Then the Lord said, Is it right for you to be angry? So Jonah went out of the city, and he sat on the east side of the city, and he made there a little booth, that he might sit under the shadow of the booth, just to see what maybe God will wipe them out, just gonna wait and watch. And the Lord God prepared a gourd, [Now He prepared a fish, now He prepares a gourd.] he made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was very glad for the gourd (4:4-6).*

“Oh my! That’s a relief, you know, a little shade, and comfortable.”

*But God then prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd and it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared then a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and he wished himself to die, [Ha, ha!] and he said, It’s better for me to die than to live (4:7-8).*

Again, his desire to die. There was another prophet that wanted to die, and that was Elijah. He, he really wanted the Lord to kill him. It’s interesting the Lord didn’t grant either Elijah’s, or Jonah’s request, but he wished himself dead. “Better for me to die than to live.”

*And God said to Jonah, Do you do well to be angry because of the gourd that died? And he said, You bet I do well to be angry, even unto death (4:9).*

Then the Lord points out the inconsistency. He was mad because the gourd died. Ha, ha! Mad at God because the gourd died! God said, “Do you do well to be angry because the gourd is dead?” “You bet I am!”

*And the Lord said, You have pity on a gourd, for which you did not labour, you didn’t make it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night (4:10):*

“A gourd that just was, grew up one night, and perished in the next night, and you’re angry because that gourd perished.”

*Should not I spare Ninevah, that great city, wherein there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand little children that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle (4:11)?*

God’s concerned for the little children. To me that’s beautiful! Jesus was always concerned with the little children. He said, “Allow the little children to come unto me. Forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven”. And, He took them into His arms, and He blessed them. He would set a child in the midst of them and say, “Unless your faith is as a little child, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven”. He was fascinated, and loved little children. We used to sing in Sunday School, remember? “Jesus loved the little children, all the children of the world”. Here you are! God is saying, “Jonah, there are a hundred and twenty thousand little babies in that city of Ninevah, so little they don’t know their right hand from their left hand. You want me to destroy them? You want me to wipe them out?” God’s mercy, and God’s kindness unto the children. I love it! God’s sparing the city.

So, an interesting story. A lot of lessons to learn. But, if nothing else, it should encourage you to the fact that God can use you too. He used Jonah, a very reluctant servant! But the important truth is not to fight God, not to run from the call of God. Because you’re only running from what’s best. “They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy.” I think that’s the central truth of the book of Jonah. The rest is to amplify, and to illustrate that you’re only making it hard on yourself, when you try to run from God.

Father we pray that we might learn the lessons, and that Lord, we will yield ourselves to You. Lord, may You not have to deal with us severely to make us willing to do Your will. But Lord, may we obey your command. Yield ourselves to Thy obedience, serve and love You all of our days.