

Jonah -by Tommy Lee

Chapter 1

1 - The book of Jonah is so full of spiritual treasures; we'll just gesture towards a few of them. We can come up with any number of reasons why Jonah chose to disobey God, but no reason is actually given. We're just told of his stark, blunt, and simple disobedience. Perhaps one point we may take away from that is that there is never a good excuse or a legitimate reason to disobey God. Never.... We also see here the vast and profound consequences of our sin. There's no such thing as a purely "private" sin. Jonah's sin affected and brought consequences that threatened and endangered many who were on the sea that day. Our sin affects others as well.... Also, note here the absolute sovereignty of our God. Weather, waves, fish: all these and more bend to his will, to achieve his purpose. At the end of the book even wicked Nineveh will bend to his will.... Also take note of the marvelous grace of God in the fish appointed to swallow Jonah. The wages of Jonah's sin is death. Why did he not get what he deserved? *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved"* (Ephesians 2.4,5).

Chapter 2

2- One of the very best practices of spiritual formation you could cultivate in your life—and one that Cultivate itself seeks to encourage in you—is learning how to pray the Psalms. Prayer is one of the central and essential means of grace God has provided for his children. Everywhere in the Bible God is commanding prayer, inviting prayer, encouraging prayer, and teaching about prayer. And perhaps the chief place God teaches us about prayer is in the book of Psalms. Every kind of prayer you will ever need to pray can be found in the Psalms. Ambrose (c.340-397 AD) referred to the book of Psalms as *"a gymnasium for the soul."* If you want to find prayer workouts that strengthen your soul, this is where you go. And look where Jonah went, when he prayed in the belly of the fish. This whole prayer, both in content and structure, bears the marks of a man who learned how to pray through the Psalms. Bringing the Word of God into your prayers to God is a powerful thing. Praying God's Word back to him is itself a declaration of our confidence in his faithfulness. God wants you to pray. And that big book in the very middle of your Bible is the manual.

Chapter 3

When Jonah finally obeyed, *"the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them"* (v.5). They *"call out mightily to God,"* turning from their evil ways (v.8). And when God saw it, he *"relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it"* (v.10). Consider the abundant grace of

God. As Paul says in Romans 5.20: *"where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."* No one is so far gone in wickedness and evil that he or she couldn't receive God's salvation. Even the Ninevites were stirred by the Word to turn from their sin and run to God. And God joyfully received them (Luke 15.7,10,32). Remember the words of Jesus in John 6: *"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."* God has a sovereign plan and a gracious purpose that even Jonah's stubborn disobedience could not frustrate. The Scripture says that *"faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."* May we be encouraged today to be unashamedly open and lovingly free with the gospel! *"For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'"* (see Romans 10.13-17).

Chapter 4

Back in 2.9 Jonah confessed, *"Salvation belongs to the Lord!"* And it's a very good thing that this is true. If salvation belonged to Jonah, the Ninevites would have never received it, as Jonah made very clear in the opening verses of chapter 1, and as he reaffirms here in his anger over their repentance and deliverance. But salvation does, in fact, belong to the Lord, and if he is pleased to use his Word to save a people through the means of a pouty prophet who hates the very people to whom he is preaching, he can do so! Notice the creed Jonah confesses about God in v.2. Every word of it is absolutely true, and yet—by trying to make it the excuse for his disobedience—Jonah does not apply this truth correctly. There's an important principle here for us. The Scriptures not only teach us what is true; they also teach us how to apply that truth. There are many examples of Christians applying God's truth wrongly. May we be on strong and careful guard against that great wrong. The whole deal with the plant and the shade exposes Jonah's immense selfishness. Everything is all about himself. Let's examine ourselves today, repenting vigorously of the selfishness within each of us.