

Jonah: Lessons From a Man Who Ran.



PART Three **Jonah Chapter 3 & 4**

17th April-
24th April-
1st May-

The Race you can't win
Insights from an insider
A matter of great concern



Recap: Last week we learnt five things about God's attitude towards those who run.

- God listens to the runners prayers
- God is in the circumstances that stop us running
- God's discipline is thorough
- To run from God is to run from his resources and protection
- Our God is the God of the second chance

This week: We look at our own attitudes to the lost and compare them with God's.

BIG POINT- Don't ignore God's prompting- He's often at work back-stage.

3:4 On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: "Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!" The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they declared a fast and put on burlap to show their sorrow.

Historically Jonah's message came at the perfect time (An eclipse- marauding tribes- two plagues preceded Jonah). God had already got Nineveh's attention. The ground had been prepared for Jonah's message.

Question:

- How often do we think people we know would never listen to God because they're so comfortable and secure? Is God able to work behind the scenes?
- Think about your own story. Did God use circumstances to prepare you to receive his message?

BIG POINT- There's a bit of Jonah in us all

4:1 This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. So he complained to the Lord about it: "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. Just kill me now, Lord! I'd rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen."

Jonah's problem was not that he didn't know God. It was that he did and he didn't like it! He had perfect theology. God is far too gracious according to Jonah.

Question:

Is there a bit of Jonah in us all that believes some people should NOT get off lightly?

Example? Think of a group or atrocity you'd find hard to forgive. i.e. If the head of Al Qaeda came forward and apologized for 9/11 or 7/11, Or the heads of Isis disarmed and disbanded the organization saying they were wrong- would there be some of us who would say- that's irrelevant, you need to pay!

BIG POINT- We Can all be a little selective when it comes to grace.

4:5 The Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry about this?"

God asks Jonah to think if he, of all people, should have a problem with His grace and second chances!

Questions:

- Do we sometimes apply different rules to ourselves when it comes to demanding justice?
- If you demanded justice for your own sin- where would that leave you?

BIG POINT- Do we care about what God cares about?

4:10-11 Then the Lord said, "You feel sorry about the plant, though you did nothing to put it there. It came quickly and died quickly. But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness,[a] not to mention all the animals. Shouldn't I feel sorry for such a great city?"

God tries to teach Jonah an important lesson through the provision of some shade. Jonah is concerned about the wrong things.

Jonah is concerned that the Ninavites are not getting what they deserve (judgement). He's also concerned that he's not getting what he deserves (comfort). God, on the other hand, is very concerned that NOBODY gets what they actually deserve!

Questions:

- In your daily life, does what's most concerning to God get overshadowed by what's most concerning to me?

(Example). Ever found yourself more bothered about a problem with the car, or the waitress forgetting you at the restaurant, than you are about where that mechanic or waitress will spend eternity? Ever get more concerned for the efficiency of the office than the people in it?

- What is the thing you're concerned about that is getting in the way of noticing the spiritual situation of the people around and in front of you?

(Examples)- Your reputation? Your diary? Your comfort? Your ministry? Your hobby? Your Hobby-horse?

- What stops you talking with those people? Inviting those people? Sharing your faith with those people? Be specific and see if you can identify what you are actually concerned about?

A Challenge-

Will you be prepared to let that temporary concern wither and die- just like Jonah's plant?

Will you stop watering it and caring about it- and see that concern just like Jonah's plant.- temporary and even selfish- when compared to the mass of people around you who will spend eternity..... somewhere.