

Jonah 1 “Learning about God from a Man Who Ran from Him”<sup>\*\*1</sup>

Main Idea: In Jonah 1 we learn about God from a man who ran from Him. There are five scenes in the account.

- I. The Lord said, “Go!” (1-2)
    - A. God sees the world.
    - B. God hates sin.
    - C. God speaks the truth in love.
  - II. Jonah said, “No!” (3)
    - A. He had an inflated view of himself.
      1. We’re good people.
      2. We deserve God’s blessings.
    - B. He had a deficient view of God.
      1. God belongs to *us*.
      2. God is soft.
  - III. The Lord said, “Oh?” (4-10)
    - A. God sent a storm (4).
    - B. Pagan sailors got the message (5-7).
    - C. Jonah missed the point (8-10).
      1. We’re in trouble when our claims don’t match our actions.
      2. We’re in trouble when we live in the past.
  - IV. Jonah said, “Throw!” (11-16)
    - A. The prophet became a practical atheist (12).
    - B. The pagan sailors began to worship the Lord (13-16).
  - V. The Lord said, “Tow!” (17)
    - A. We see God’s sovereignty.
    - B. We see God’s mercy.
- Take Inventory: Three questions to consider...
1. Do I see the world the way God sees it?
  2. Do I give others an accurate picture of God?
  3. Do I really believe what I say I believe?

*Scripture Reading: Matthew 12:38-42*

Beginning this morning we’re going to investigate one of the most intriguing books in the Bible. I believe it’s also a book with a timely message.

*Jonah.* Bible critics often deny the historicity of the Jonah account. “It’s just a parable,” they say. “A fish swallowing a man? For three days and nights? And he survived? Get real!” Yet Jesus affirmed the validity of Jonah and his under-water taxi ride (Matt. 12:40).

Arguing about the fish misses the point. “Men have been looking so hard at the great fish,” says G. Campbell Morgan, “that they have failed to see the great God.” And that’s the purpose of the book of Jonah. It’s not just a story about a disobedient prophet, although it is that. It’s meant to teach us *about God*, the great Creator God that we are prone to minimize and marginalize in our thoughts and lives.

He’s a *sovereign* God who controls everything from storms to fish to gourds and worms, and He used each of these in the book of Jonah to accomplish His purpose of redemption. He’s also a *persistent* God who doesn’t take no for an answer when it comes

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For an earlier development of this passage, see the Jonah series in 2007 at WBC.

to fulfilling His plan. And “no” is the shocking answer Jonah gave God as our story begins.

I need to prepare you, for you’re about to hear some things that may disturb you, perhaps irritate and anger you, just like they did Jonah.

I’ve entitled today’s message, “*Learning about God from a Man Who Ran from Him.*” There are five scenes in Jonah 1. I’m indebted to the late Charles Wagner, president at my alma mater, Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary, for his memorable outline of Jonah 1, which I’ve borrowed and elaborated upon as follows.

### I. The Lord said, “Go!” (1-2)

Verse 1—“The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai<sup>2</sup>.”

Jonah was a prophet. That meant he received direct revelation from God and proclaimed God’s special revelation to his world. Jonah is mentioned in only one other Old Testament account, 2 Kings 14:25. There we’re told that Jonah was from Gath Hopher (about fifteen miles west of the Sea of Galilee) which indicates Jonah lived in the northern kingdom of Israel. That text also tells us that Jonah made a prophecy that was fulfilled, saying that King Jeroboam II would restore Israel’s borders. Since Jeroboam reigned from 793-753 B.C., that would place Jonah’s ministry *after* Elisha and *before* the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah.<sup>3</sup>

So Jonah was the prophet with the “make Israel great again” message. That may help explain his reluctant response to the message God sent him in our text.

Notice verse 2, “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” So God gave Jonah two commands, “Go” and “preach”, followed by one explanation, “Because its wickedness has come up before me.”

We learn three things about God from this.

**A. God sees the world.** Not just Israel, but the *whole* world, including Nineveh. What do we know about Nineveh? It was a major city, with a population exceeding 120,000 people (according to 4:11), located in Assyria (modern day Iraq). I’m intrigued that God repeatedly called Nineveh a *great* city in the book of Jonah (also in 3:2 and 4:11).

Ponder that for a moment. God saw Nineveh, a massive, pagan city. The last verse of Jonah says He had fatherly compassion for the teeming masses in Nineveh. What’s your assessment of the cities of the world?

“I’m just glad I’m not living in one of them!” you might be thinking. “I like my cozy, small town life.” Be careful. That type of “I do what’s best for me” thinking got Jonah into a lot of trouble. Please realize that God sees the world, and we’re called to be like Him (Matt. 5:48). What’s more...

**B. God hates sin.** The reason He ordered Jonah to go to Nineveh was because that great city’s wickedness was *great*. Just how wicked were the Ninevites? The city was well known for its idolatry, with temples there dedicated to the gods Nabu, Asshur, and Adad. They also worshiped Ishtar, a goddess of love and war. The Ninevites were known for their cruelty to war prisoners—they stacked skulls in front of defeated cities. In Jonah 3:8 their own king speaks of the city’s “evil ways” and “violence.”

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<sup>2</sup> Amittai means “my truth.”

<sup>3</sup> Observation by John Walton, *Bible Study Commentary: Jonah*, p. 11.

About one hundred years after Jonah, the prophet Nahum had this to say about Nineveh in Nahum 3:1, “Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims!” And in Nahum 3:4, “All because of the wanton lust of a harlot, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft.”

**C. God speaks the truth in love.** “Go, *preach against it*,” were God’s orders. He certainly didn’t have to send this warning to Nineveh, for “the wages of sin is *death*.” Don’t miss God’s mercy here. Jonah was to deliver God’s message of judgment, yet even that was an expression of His love, for as we’ll see in chapter 3 that message brought about repentance and postponement of the judgment.

So there’s scene one. The Lord said, “Go!” In scene two we see the first of many surprises...

## II. Jonah said, “No!” (3)

“But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.”

So this man of God did the unthinkable. God said to *go* to Nineveh. Jonah said *no* and took off in the opposite direction. Why in the world did he do that?

Perhaps it was *fear*. After all, Nineveh was 500 miles northeast of where Jonah lived and would have required a hazardous two week trip to get there. Plus the Ninevites weren’t exactly welcome-wagon candidates. Just a few decades later, in 722 BC, the Assyrians are going to invade Jonah’s homeland and carry his people into captivity. It’s like sending a Jew into Berlin in the 1930s and telling Hitler and his followers that God was going to judge Germany. That’s the sense of what God’s plan sounded like to Jonah.

Although Jonah must have felt fear, it wasn’t fear that prompted him to run. He actually confesses his motive in a conversation he had later with God, after he went to Nineveh and after God spared Nineveh.

Jonah 4:1-2—“But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the LORD, ‘O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.’”

There’s why Jonah ran. It wasn’t fear. It wasn’t that the Ninevites would kill him. It’s that God *wouldn’t* kill *them*.

That reveals a couple of things about Jonah, doesn’t it? First...

**A. He had an inflated view of himself.** So did a lot of God’s people in Jonah’s day. If you could have polled the people on the streets of Gath Hopher, you would have discovered a couple of things regarding their self esteem.

1. *We’re good people.* We don’t kill people. We don’t worship false gods (never mind that we aren’t too serious about worshiping the true God). But the fact is, we’re not like those wicked Ninevites. We’re *good* people. Therefore...

2. *We deserve God’s blessings.* Just look at all the good things we do. We’re good, God-fearing citizens. Which means we deserve God’s blessings, for God, You’re supposed to bless good people (like us) and incinerate bad people (like the Ninevites).

Jonah’s confession revealed that something else was out of focus, not only an inflated view of himself, but also...

**B. He had a deficient view of God.** Jonah's prayer revealed Jonah's theology. Listen between the lines and you'll discover two erroneous beliefs in his heart.

1. *God belongs to us.* To the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He's *our* God.

Answer this. Was the Lord the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Yes, indeed. Did He choose Abraham and enter into a covenant relationship with him and his descendants? Yes, He did. By His grace He became *their* God.

But they didn't *own* Him, nor did they have exclusive rights to Him. He chose them as a means to accomplishing His world-wide agenda. Through them He intended to bless the world.<sup>4</sup> Through them He would ultimately bring salvation to every nation, tribe, and language, by sending His Son into the world, born a Jew, yet through His death and resurrection a Savior for all peoples.

Prejudice is an ugly thing. They don't deserve God's blessings, but *we do*. He belongs to us.

Jonah held on to another twisted thought...

2. *God is soft.* "I knew You wouldn't follow through, Lord! I knew if I preached a message of judgment, they'd repent, and You'd give in. I hate to be critical, but You're kind of *soft*, Lord."

That's why Jonah said *no*. That's why, instead of heading northeast to Nineveh, he went west to Joppa (near Tel Aviv) and boarded a ship heading to Tarshish (probably in Spain; we might say he took off for Timbuktu). The point is, this is a premeditated, defiant decision by the prophet of God to disobey God.

He knows he can't run from God. As he will later affirm to the sailors, God rules over all. Jonah's flight isn't from God so much as *from His Word*. He wants to go the place where he is *least* likely to hear God's Word again.

By the way, please beware of concluding that an "open door" guarantees that something is God's will for you. "Well, the man called me out of the blue and offered me this new job. It's got to be God's will!" Not necessarily. The text says that Jonah "found a ship" going exactly where his sinful heart wanted to go. Someone has well said, "When a person decides to run from the Lord, Satan always provides complete transportation facilities."

We need to realize that the Hebrews were landmen. They didn't like the sea. The fact that Jonah chose to get in a boat on the Mediterranean rather than obey God's Word reveals just how determined he is to disobey God. He's deciding to forsake everything in his life, his family, his home, his possessions, even the promised land itself, rather than obey God.

Scene one, the Lord said, "Go!" Scene two, Jonah said, "No!" So in scene three...

### III. The Lord said, "Oh?" (4-10)

Verse 4—"Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up."

Know this, my friend. You cannot stop God's plan. If He wants Nineveh to hear His Word, Nineveh will hear it. And if He wants to use Jonah to preach that Word, Jonah will preach it. That's because He is *sovereign*. In fact, as we'll see He will actually use Jonah's disobedience to reach some pagan sailors along the way.

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<sup>4</sup> See Genesis 26:4 and Psalm 67:1-2.

God is the main character in this short story. Not the fish, not Jonah, *God*. Watch what God did in response to His wayward prophet...

**A. God sent a storm (4).** A *violent* storm, one that caused Jonah's mode of running to start coming apart. Did the storm get Jonah's attention? Not at first, but ironically...

**B. Pagan sailors got the message (5-7).** Verse 5—"All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship."

Everybody worships something (even the atheist—he worships himself). When it looked like the ship was going down these sea-hardened Gentile sailors started calling upon their various gods.

John Walton explains, "Phoenicians or Canaanites may have worshiped Baal, Hadad, or Anat; Assyrians could have been worshipers of Assur, Ishtar, Ninurta, or Shamash; Babylonians would serve perhaps Marduk or Nabu."<sup>5</sup>

What's more, in the minds of polytheistic pagans, there was an accepted hierarchy in the standing of the gods. The average person could not approach, for instance, the chief deity Marduk. Instead a person would call on a lower level 'family' god, who would use his connections to pass along the request to a higher level god, who in turn would give the message to the god at the top of the pile, Marduk.

That's why the text says the sailors "each cried out to his *own* god," since they're not sure which 'god' is responsible for this storm, and their own personal god may not have the clout to stop the storm.

And what's the runaway prophet doing while the pagans are praying? Verse 5, "But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep."

There are different kinds of sleep. There's the sleep of the trusting child, like David in Psalm 3:5, "I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me." But there's also the sleep of the runaway, who knows what God wants but refuses to do so.

Like the person who slams the pillow down and says, "I'm not going to forgive that person! I'm going to sleep!"

Sin is a narcotic, a spiritual anesthetic which beclouds reason, stifles conviction, twists character, and perverts our will. Sin hardened Jonah, and it didn't take long either.

Verse 6—"The captain went to him and said, 'How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish.'"

Do you see the irony in this picture? A pagan sea captain telling a Hebrew prophet he ought to be praying. Kind of reminds us of the rebuke godly Abraham received on two occasions from pagan kings when he lied and said his wife was his sister.

God has lots of ways to get our attention.

Verse 7—"Then the sailors said to each other, 'Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.' They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah."

Now the cat's out of the bag. How will Jonah respond? The pagan sailors got the message.

**C. Jonah missed the point (8-10).** Verse 8—"So they asked him, 'Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?'"

Now there's a tragic situation, a man of God being interviewed by pagan sailors. You might call it *reverse evangelism*. Unregenerate men are forcing a runaway preacher to tell them about his God.

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<sup>5</sup> John Walton, p. 17.

Jonah reluctantly complies in verses 9-10, “He answered, ‘I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.’ This terrified them and they asked, ‘What have you done?’ (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.)”

Jonah gave a good doctrinal statement, didn’t he? He tells pagan men who worship false gods about the true God, Yahweh. He makes it clear that his God isn’t part of their pantheon, but rather is the God of heaven. And his God doesn’t have to work a deal with some higher “god” to do something about this storm, for his God created the sea and the land.

Yes, what Jonah *says* is good. What he’s *doing* isn’t. And he isn’t alone, is he? There are a couple of warnings for us here, too.

1. *We’re in trouble when our claims don’t match our actions.*

“I’m a Christian.” How many thousands of people in our community would make that claim? But what does it mean? Sadly in many cases, not much.

The term “Christian” means “a follower of Christ.” That should indicate that if you followed a person who calls himself a Christian for a few days he or she would point you to Christ and show you what Christ is like by words and life. Unfortunately, something else comes from these “Christ followers.”

*“You don’t have to report all your income to the IRS. They’ll never know.”*

*“There’s nothing wrong with a little pornography. Nobody gets hurt.”*

*“My neighbor is a real jerk. That’s why I’m not talking to him any more.”*

*“Sure, I padded my resume a little. Everybody does.”*

My friend, it’s bad enough when those words come out of a pagan sailor’s mouth. But out of the mouth of a person who claims to be a *follower of Christ*? It’s not only hypocrisy, but a blight upon the reputation of person they’re claiming to follow.

Years ago my grandfather started a nursery business. He was a hard worker and established a good name in the community. After he died two of his sons (my uncles) took over the business. The good name continued. In the course of time, the family business was sold with the name to a man outside the family. That man did sub-standard work, didn’t fulfill contracts, and turned off customers to a *name*, not his name but to the name he represented, another family’s name.

That’s why there are legal contracts that stipulate, “If you do work that discredits the name, you have to stop using the name.” What would happen if we had contract laws for the name “Christian?”

The fact is, we do. Listen to 1 John 2:4 & 6, “The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him...Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.” The contract says if our *claim* doesn’t match our *actions*, we are lying and have no right to make the claim.

We see a second warning coming from the deck of that eighth century ship...

2. *We’re in trouble when we live in the past.* Jonah is telling the truth, sort of. He was a Hebrew. But does he worship *Yahweh*, the Maker of sea and land? Granted, he *used to*, but is he now? No, he’s reading his old doctrinal statement. He’s living in the past.

My friend, you can’t stockpile grace. God supplies fresh grace one day at a time, today’s grace today, tomorrow’s grace tomorrow. But what happens if we stop asking and start coasting, or worse yet *running from God*?

As tragic as seen three is, it gets even worse in scene four. The Lord said, “Go!” Jonah said, “No!” The Lord said, “Oh?” To which Jonah said...

#### IV. Jonah said, “Throw!” (11-16)

Verse 11—“The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, ‘What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?’”

What’s the correct answer? Jonah should say, “What you should do to me is give me some space so I can get down on my knees and repent! Then the storm will stop and you can take me back to Joppa. I’ve got a job to do in Nineveh!”

Unfortunately, Jonah isn’t ready to repent yet. Sadly, he offers his own alternative in verse 12—“Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, ‘and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.’”

I’m intrigued by Jonah’s request. Why does he ask the sailors to throw him in? Why doesn’t he jump in himself? Maybe he’s afraid of the water. Or perhaps he reasoned, “It wouldn’t be right to take my own life.”

I don’t know why he asks them to do it. It’s worth noting that he does now admit his guilt. “It’s *my* fault,” he says. “You sailors are in this mess because of *me*.” He knows his sin is about to cost others their lives, which of course is the way sin works. But still Jonah refuses to repent.

He settles instead for *partial obedience*. Admitting guilt is good, but it’s not enough. It’s *partial* obedience. Hell will be filled with people who obeyed God *partially*. They obeyed Him just enough to convince themselves they were good people.

My friend, Satan doesn’t mind if we obey God in a few ways, even in *many* ways, as long as we refuse to obey Him in the area He is presently putting His finger on.

When a person says to you, “Oh, I know I’m not living exactly as I should, but...” the appropriate response, if you’re a true friend of that person should be, “Whoa! What do you mean ‘not exactly’?”

“Well, I know there are some things I ought to take care of, and I’ll get around to it, but I’m alright. I’m basically a good person.”

“Whoa again! Do you mean there’s something specific in your life that you know God is wanting you to change and you’re refusing to do it?”

“Well, yea, I guess. I know He’s not pleased with my hot temper, especially at how I blow up at people, but...well, I do have my devotions every day. And I pray, and I give my tithe to the church, and I... and I...”

It’s amazing how our sinful hearts work. Instead of dealing with the sin in our lives that needs to change, we justify ourselves on the basis of the “good” we’re doing in our lives.

What’s needed? Instead of justifying ourselves with our partial obedience, we need to trust in the full obedience of Another, the One who lived a perfect life and who died in our place, Jesus Christ. The fact is, God’s grace is sufficient so that through His Son we have *everything* we need to change in *every* area we need to change. That means to excuse our sin is to insult our Savior.

So back to the story. Notice the stark contrast...

**A. The prophet became a practical atheist (12).** He says he worships the Lord, but his life says otherwise. On the other hand...

**B. The pagan sailors began to worship the Lord (13-16).** “Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than

before. Then they cried to the LORD, ‘O LORD, please do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, O LORD, have done as you pleased.’ Then they took Jonah and threw<sup>6</sup> him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him.”

Granted, this doesn’t necessarily mean the sailors became true believers. Remember, they’re polytheists who believe in *many* gods. There’s no mention of repentance here. It’s possible these men are simply *adding* a new god to their collection. As John Walton rightly observes, “Anyone who comes in contact with the power of the LORD cannot help but be awed by Him, but such awe does not necessarily produce a relationship with Him.”<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, it’s still impressive. Pagan sailors *calling* on Yahweh, *acknowledging* Yahweh’s sovereign control, *fearing* Yahweh, offering *sacrifices* to Yahweh, and making *vows* to Yahweh! Those are the things Jonah used to do and ought to be doing now. But he’s not and the sailors are. That’s about to change.

The Lord said, “Go!” Jonah said, “No!” The Lord said, “Oh?” Jonah said, “Throw!” To which, in the fifth and final scene...

#### V. The Lord said, “Tow!” (17)

“But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.”

You can run but you can’t escape the Lord. We see two of God’s attributes demonstrated powerfully here...

**A. We see God’s sovereignty.** The text is quite clear, “The *LORD* provided a great fish.” This was no accident. This was a divinely appointed, scheduled pickup. Jonah hit the water, the storm ceased, an underwater taxi picked him up with clear instructions, “Tow that package to shore! It’s going to Nineveh.”

But it’s not just His sovereignty that we see in this. In addition...

**B. We see God’s mercy.** God didn’t *need* Jonah. He had other prophets He could send. And for sure, Jonah deserved to go to the bottom of the sea for his defiant disobedience, just like we do for ours. But God spared him. God pursued him. God isn’t through with him. How do you explain that?

One word...*mercy*. In His great mercy, God doesn’t give sinners what they deserve, but rather offers them a way of escape.

Hear Jesus’ words: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt 12:40).”

Jonah spent three days and nights in his tomb because he deserved it. Jesus spent three days and nights in His tomb because He took what *we* deserve. That’s mercy.

And what God did for Jonah, He has done for us. In the person of Jesus Christ God extends mercy to sinners who have run from Him. Jonah is going to come out of that

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<sup>6</sup> The word appears three times in chapter one. In verse 4 the wind was ‘hurled’ into the sea by the Yahweh. In verse 5, the cargo was ‘hurled’ into the sea by the sailors. In verse 15, Jonah is ‘hurled’ into the sea as well. (John Walton, p. 28)

<sup>7</sup> John Walton, p. 29.



underwater tomb a different man. Those who come to the crucified, buried, and risen Christ come away from His empty tomb different, too.

For those of us who have run from God into sin, that's good news.

Take Inventory: Three questions to consider...

1. *Do I see the world the way God sees it?* Jonah refused to go to Nineveh, in part, because he didn't see the lost people of Nineveh the way God did. How about you? What's your attitude towards the cities of the world, like Bangkok, and Pyongyang, and Kabul, and Los Angeles, and Columbus? Do we see the teeming masses of lost people?

Now contrast Jonah with another servant of God named Dal Washer. Dal Washer, who served as an ABWE missionary to Niger and Togo, said: "I have but one candle of life to burn, and would rather burn it out where people are dying in darkness than in a land which is flooded with light."<sup>8</sup>

And by God's grace, that what he did. In 1989 Dal died suddenly in Togo at the age of 67. After his funeral his family, while looking through his Bible, found these words written by Dal in the space below 2 Corinthians 12: "Yes, Lord, I will be spent as a candle which is lit and gives out light, but in order to give out light it consumes itself in the interest of bringing light to others until there comes a time when it sputters for the last time and is consumed. I will gladly spend and be spent like this and SPUTTER OUT SOMEDAY IN TOGO—AFRICA."<sup>9</sup>

What are you doing with your candle of life, my friend? Do you see the lost world all around you? Do Far too often we curse the darkness, like Jonah did. Those Ninevites are wicked, Lord! They don't deserve to hear Your Word. Yet God didn't call us to curse the darkness, but to shine the light of His Son.

Are you praying for the cities of the world? Are you available to go?

2. *Do I give others an accurate picture of God?* The fact is, God chose and blessed the Israelites so that through them the Gentile nations would come to know Him. All along it was God's intent to do for Gentiles what He had done for Jews, that is, reconcile them to Himself by His grace and for His glory. But along the way, the idea of pure and sovereign grace, whereby Jew *and* Gentile could both be saved, was lost. Israel in Jonah's day had become self-righteous, proud, and intolerant. Real faith had given way to formalism. Genuine gratitude to God was replaced by cold ceremony. The Jews took their eyes off of the *God of grace* and became preoccupied with their *position of grace*. In time they convinced themselves that they *deserved* God's favor and the Gentiles didn't.

My friends, if we think that way, it shows. Jonah didn't give the sailors a very accurate picture of the majesty and worth and mercy and love of God. What kind of picture are we giving the lost people around us?

And then there's one final question this text insists we ask ourselves.

3. *Do I really believe what I say I believe?* Do I believe in Jesus Christ? Then I must make sure I'm putting my total trust in Christ and following Him day by day. Do I say I believe in God's grace? Then I must look for ways to show that grace to the sinners He places in my life. Let's make sure we believe what we say we believe.

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<sup>8</sup> Kay Washer, *One Candle to Burn*, p. 265.

<sup>9</sup> Kay Washer, p. 279.