

Main Idea: Sometimes you see things, and the only explanation is grace. That’s what we see in Jonah 3 where God demonstrates His grace in two explanation-defying ways.

- I. When we look at what God did with Jonah, we see grace (1-2).
 - A. Jonah blew it the first time.
 - B. The Lord recruited Jonah a second time.
- II. When we look at what God did with Nineveh, we see grace (3-10).
 - A. Jonah responded to God’s Word (3-4).
 1. He went where God told him to go.
 2. He preached what God told him to preach.
 - B. The people responded to God’s Word (5).
 1. If you believe God’s Word, you are believing God.
 2. If you believe God, it will show.
 - C. The king responded to God’s Word (6-9).
 1. There was humility (6).
 2. There was conviction (7).
 3. There was calling on God (8a).
 4. There was a call for change (8b).
 5. There was a clinging to God’s character (9).
 - D. God responded to God’s Word (10).
 1. Contrary to open theism, God has not limited Himself.
 2. Contrary to fatalism, God responds when people repent.

Application: Three lessons to ponder...

1. No one is beyond the reach of grace.
2. No one is beyond the need of grace.
3. No one compares to the God of grace.

Scripture Reading: Titus 3:3-8

Has God ever made it clear to you that He wanted you to do something, and you responded by refusing to do it? I mean, flat out, “No God, I do not want to do what You want me to do.”

What does God do with people who refuse to obey Him? You might be surprised.

Turn to Jonah 3. In Jonah 1, God gave Jonah an assignment, but Jonah refused and tried to run from God. So God sent a fish to swallow the runaway prophet, and in Jonah 2 Jonah turned to God in prayer from the belly of that fish. The fish eventually vomited Jonah out back in Israel.

And then we read three of the most shocking words in the Bible, the final three words of Jonah 3:1, “Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah *a second time*.”

Amazing. A second time? Yes.

The truth is, the Almighty God used a man who had blown it big time to initiate what may well be the greatest spiritual awakening recorded in the Bible, if not in the history of mankind. Jonah thumbed his nose at God, yet God didn’t give up on Jonah, not because He couldn’t find another prophet and needed Jonah, and not because Jonah was so valuable to God. No, God didn’t give up on Jonah for a one-word reason, and it’s the same reason there is hope today for the rest of us who have disobeyed Him.

Grace.

** 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.

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

Grace defies explanation. God's unmerited favor. The Bible declares that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Rom. 5:20). Grace means that God gives a guilty rebel what he or she does not deserve.

I'm not sure you'll find more vivid and compelling illustrations of grace than the two we're about to see in the third chapter of Jonah. In Jonah 3 God demonstrates His grace in two explanation-defying ways. We're going to look at them and then conclude by pondering three practical implications of grace.

I. When we look at what God did with Jonah, we see grace (1-2).

Verse 1 declares, "Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time." Look back at the beginning of the book and you'll notice a similar statement in 1:1-2: "The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 'Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.'"

Jonah, of course, was a prophet of God in the northern kingdom of Israel about eight hundred years before Christ. God called him to be His spokesman. But Jonah didn't like this particular assignment, so he ran from God and headed west for Tarshish.

To put it bluntly...

A. Jonah blew it the first time. God said *Go!* And Jonah said *No!* In fact, he chose death over obedience, for instead of repenting on the deck of the ship he told the pagan sailors "Throw me into the sea."

It wasn't that Jonah's faith needed reviving. It's that his theology needed correcting.² Like his fellow Israelites, Jonah perceived God as being only the God of the Jews. He's *our* God. So Jonah didn't think the Ninevites deserved to hear God's Word.

The Lord provided a great fish to swallow the runaway prophet, not to punish him but to rescue him, and not rescue him merely from the sea but *from himself*. So Jonah spent three days and nights inside that fish, reflecting and praying.

His prayer? "Help me" was his cry in 2:2. And God did by instructing the fish to deposit Jonah onto dry land.

Picture Jonah. With the words "Salvation is of the LORD" still reverberating in his heart, the prophet stands to his feet on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. He's exhausted but alive. The stench of vomit fills the air. His skin is scarred, an unearthly pale white. He would never be the same again, yet he's alive, standing on the shores of his beloved homeland, and grateful to be so.

And then he heard a familiar voice. How much time had elapsed we're not told. The text would suggest not much time, as chapter three begins, "*Then* the word of the LORD came to Jonah..." And so...

B. The Lord recruited Jonah a second time. This set of instructions were similar to the first, only this time without any explanation. Verse 2—"Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."

It's not that God had run out of other options. He didn't *need* Jonah. To the contrary, Jonah needed Him. Throughout the entire book God keeps going after and capturing the attention of undeserving people: the pagan sailors in chapter one, the Ninevites in chapter three, and Jonah throughout the book.

That's the message of the Bible. The God who created the universe is pursuing and rescuing undeserving rebel sinners. That's why He sent His own Son, Jesus, into the world who in His own words said He came "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

² Terence Fretheim, *The Message of Jonah*, p. 79.

His rescue mission cost the Messiah His own life, as the Scriptures declare, “Christ died for our sins, was buried, and raised on the third day (1 Cor. 15:3-4).”

My friend, perhaps you can relate to Jonah. Perhaps you too are gripped by the haunting reality that you have disobeyed your Maker. You’ve run from Him. And you know what you deserve.

Now hear the hope in these unexpected words, “Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah *a second time*.”

Granted, the fact that God gave Jonah a second chance doesn’t mean He must do so or always does. The Bible is full of accounts of *no second chance*. Think of the disobedient prophet who was mangled by a lion in 1 Kings 13. Or Ananias and Saphira who dropped dead in church after lying about how much they put in the offering (Acts 5).

The Holy One doesn’t owe us a second chance. Nevertheless, my fellow sinner, because of His great mercy, today we *are* hearing His Word again. What will we do with this opportunity He is giving us?

You say, “What should I do?”

Repent and believe. Repent—O God, I’ve been going my own way, but now I see what a fool I’ve been. I want to go Your way in life. And believe—You said believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Acts 16:31). I’m doing that now, by Your grace. I cannot save myself. I cannot turn my life around. But You can, Lord Jesus. I put my total trust in You.

There’s the first demonstration of grace in Jonah 3. When we look at what God did with Jonah, we see grace. But there’s more.

II. When we look at what God did with Nineveh, we see grace (3-10).

As we’ll see, God worked through His Word to accomplish the purposes of His grace. That’s the way He does it today, too. He works *through His Word* to transform people *by His grace*. In scene two we see four different responses to God’s Word.

A. Jonah responded to God’s Word (3-4). Verse 3 begins, “Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh.”

Hurray for Jonah! God said *Go!* And Jonah said *Okay! I’ll go!* In response to God’s Word...

1. *He went where God told him to go.* Don’t underestimate the cost of his obedience. The trip from Joppa to Nineveh was between 500 and 600 miles, depending on the route chosen. If Jonah traveled in a donkey or camel caravan, the journey probably took him around a month. If he walked, it would have taken five weeks or more.³

Notice what he found when he arrived. Verse 3 states, “Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days. On the first day, Jonah started into the city.” Notice the description of Nineveh. It was an “important city.” Back in 1:1 God called it “the great city of Nineveh,” an adjective God repeats in 3:1 as well as in the last verse of the book.

Why does God call this city ‘great’? Perhaps it’s a reference to its geographic size, for the text indicates “a visit required three days.” In other words, this city wasn’t like Wheelersburg. If a stranger came to our town and wanted to get a message to the community, it wouldn’t take him three days to accomplish it.

Not so in Nineveh. In statistical records written about 75 years after Jonah’s trip, the Assyrian ruler Sennacherib said he enlarged the circumference of Nineveh from 9300

³ Time frames suggested by John Walton, p. 36.

cubits (a little under three miles) to 21,815 cubits (a little over six miles).⁴ What's more, archaeologists suggest that the region of "Greater Nineveh" had a circumference of sixty miles. At a rate of twenty miles a day it would take three days to walk around it.

Why did God call Nineveh a "great" city? Perhaps it's because of its huge dimensions, but maybe not. After all, to God the entire universe is as a speck of dust. Perhaps He assessed the city to be great because of the vast number of His image-bearers that lived there. In Jonah 4:11 God Himself declares that at least 120,000 human beings lived in Nineveh. I read that Samaria, the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel where Jonah lived, had a population of about 30,000 (and that Samaria was even larger than Jerusalem at the time).⁵

There are 3,400 cities in today's world in excess of 100,000 inhabitants.⁶ Cities like Aachen, Aba, Abaeteluba, Abakan, Abeokuta, Aberdeen, Abijan, Abiko, Abilene... I had to read nine cities alphabetically just to find one that's in our country.

Brothers and sisters, our heavenly Father sees the cities. Do we? Do we see the teeming masses of lost people? We'll come back to that thought next time when we hear God's assessment (in chapter four) of great cities like Nineveh.

For now our focus is on Jonah's response to God's Word. First, he went where God told him to go. Once there...

2. *He preached what God told him to preach.* Verse 4—"He proclaimed: 'Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.'"

Where did Jonah preach? On the streets? Did he go door to door? We're not told. How many times did he deliver his message? Perhaps many, but we're not told; it may have been only once which makes the results staggering. What we are told is that Jonah did exactly what God told him to do. He preached the message God told him to preach.

"Yea, he sure preached a hell-fire and brimstone message!" some would say. That's true, but there's grace in this message, too.

"Grace?" you ask. "There's grace here?" Yes. Think about it. Why did God give the Ninevites *forty* days? He gave Lot and his family only a few *hours* to get out of Sodom. In the Bible the number forty is a typical *waiting and testing period*.⁷

I noticed an intriguing comment by God in Jeremiah 31:20, "Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? *Though I often speak against him, I still remember him.* Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him." To speak *against* someone, to warn someone about judgment, is an expression of love to that person, if they're in sin.

So Jonah responded to God's Word. An even bigger shock followed...

B. The people responded to God's Word (5). "The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth."

Look again at Jonah's message. It's only eight English words, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." The message includes but five words in Hebrew: *Ode arbaim yom veNineveh nehpatchet*. And that may have been what it sounded like to the Ninevites, for few in Nineveh would have spoken Hebrew and it's questionable whether Jonah knew their language. What's more, knowing that Jonah didn't want God to spare the Ninevites (based on his response in 4:1-2), Jonah wasn't inclined to make it any

⁴ John Walton, p. 37.

⁵ Observation by H. L. Ellison, p. 380.

⁶ <http://www.travelgis.com/default.asp?framesrc=/cities>

⁷ Leslie Allen, p. 222. Israel was in the wilderness *forty years*. Jesus was tempted in the desert *forty days*.

easier than necessary for them. “Lord, you told me to say, ‘*Ode arbaim yom veNineveh nehpaçhet,*’ so that’s what I said!”⁸

Apparently, Jonah didn’t tell them why the judgment was coming, nor what they should do about it. He didn’t mention that *Yahweh*, the God of Israel, had sent him. He didn’t even introduce himself. He just gave them God’s message. He obeyed the letter of the law, but that was it. And his heart apparently wasn’t in it.

Yet what happened? The people heard God’s Word and *believed God!* Terence Fretheim puts it this way, “No preacher has ever met with such success. Little effort, poor skills, a terrible sermon—and total success...God had prepared a way for this message so that in spite of the missionary it found its way into the hearts of the Ninevites. God *can* write straight with crooked lines.”⁹

The timeliness of Jonah’s message may have contributed to its effect. Scholars suggest one possible date for Jonah’s trip to Nineveh was 760 BC. A serious plague swept through the country five years earlier, and many Assyrians died. Then on June 15, 763, a total eclipse of the sun occurred, causing fear to spread.¹⁰

No sermon is ever preached in a vacuum. When people respond like they did in Nineveh, it’s because God has been preparing the soil. I love the explanation Peter Craigie offers, “As though primed by some divine hand, the suburbanites immediately respond to Jonah’s preaching.” And then adds, “Like a brush fire whipped by the wind, the message travels quickly through the suburbs to the heart of the city.”¹¹

Let’s make a couple of observations at this point. Here’s the first...

1. *If you believe God’s Word, you are believing God.* Jonah preached God’s Word and the Ninevites believed *God*. They recognized that Jonah was speaking for God.

2. *If you believe God, it will show.* The Ninevites did two very tangible things to demonstrate that they believed God. One, they started fasting. And two, they put on sackcloth, a coarse material usually made out of goat’s hair that was uncomfortable to wear. In other words, they stopped eating and started wearing burlap!

Why? Because they just heard that in a little over a month they were going to perish, and they believed that message came from God. And if you believe what God says it’s going to show up in your life. They believed God, and it showed!

Does the fact that the Ninevites *believed God* mean they became regenerate, truly born again people? I’m not sure, any more than we can be sure today when a person professes faith in God and makes some initial changes. Profession is no guarantee of possession.

The NASB actually translates the phrase “believed *in* God,” but that’s adding a thought not in the Hebrew text. There’s a difference between believing a message from God and believing *in* God.

For instance, years later many people came to Jesus because they heard the message that this miracle-worker could heal them. They believed the message. That’s why they flocked to Him, so He could heal them. But did they believe *in* Him? Many did, but many did not. As soon as He stopped making this life better for them, they left Him.

Yes, the Ninevites believed God, that is, they believed the message of God Jonah proclaimed, saying that judgment was coming. And they did some religious deeds and,

⁸ Terence Fretheim points out that some in Nineveh would have known a closely related language to Hebrew; p. 108.

⁹ T. Fretheim, pp. 108-9.

¹⁰ Leon Wood, *The Prophets of Israel*, p. 289.

¹¹ Peter Craigie, p. 230.

as we'll see, tried to clean up their act in order to appease Jonah's God. But does that mean they turned from their other gods (remember, they're polytheists) and made a commitment to love and serve only the LORD God?

We can't be sure. The fact that about forty years later in 722 B.C. the Assyrians attacked, conquered, and deported the Jews from the northern kingdom would suggest that the transformation in Nineveh was short-lived. And that may suggest that the response to Jonah's message produced temporal moral changes, rather than fundamental spiritual changes.

Nonetheless, God's Word did a staggering work! After a one sentence sermon, an entire city dropped to its knees.

C. The king responded to God's Word (6-9). "When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: 'By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.'"

Notice five characteristics of the king's response.

1. *There was humility (6).* Verse 6 says the king got up from his throne (an admission that he's not in charge), took off his royal robes (a self-debasing act), put on sackcloth (which identified him with his people who were already wearing sackcloth), and sat down in the dust (an act of self-humiliation for a powerful king).

2. *There was conviction (7).* Verse 7 states that the king made a proclamation, and even got Capital Hill involved for it says "his nobles" joined him. No one was to eat a bite of food, or drink even a sip of water, not a taste! The proclamation applied to every living creature in the city, including the animals.¹² The word "beast" covers the animal world in contrast to humans, while "herd" and "flock" are sub-classifications of all large and small domesticated animals.¹³

I suggested that Jonah's preaching may have been half-hearted, but for the Ninevites even the animals got involved! A total fast, with every man, woman, child, and beast wearing sackcloth. That's what I call conviction.

3. *There was calling on God (8a).* "Let everyone call urgently on God," said the king. Back in chapter one, when under conviction the pagan sailors called on "the LORD" (*Yahweh*). But notice the Ninevites were to call, not on *Yahweh*, but on "God," the text uses the general name for God, *Elohim*.

Just imagine the noise going up to God, the people crying out, and the hungry animals bawling. And by making themselves physically miserable they were trying to show God how serious they were in their prayer for mercy.

4. *There was a call for change (8b).* "Let them give up their evil ways and their violence," ordered the king. Evil and violence, God hates them both.¹⁴ "Evil ways" refers to anything condemned by law and conscience. "Violence" was the national sin of

¹² H. L. Ellison, p. 383, shares an account where the Persians, after the death of Masistius, "shaved their heads" and "cut the manes of their horses and mules." Ellison adds, "The concept of a common Creator, today so often replaced by an impersonal idea of evolution, saw man and animal far more closely linked than does the modern concept of a purely biological link."

¹³ Freitheim, p. 111.

¹⁴ In fact, in God's first message to Jonah back in 1:1, He gave this reason for the impending judgment, "Because its wickedness has come up before me."

the Assyrians—they were known for brutality and treachery. So often people slip into the notion that one’s position gives him the right to dominate others. That thinking is at the heart of prejudice and discrimination.¹⁵

“No more!” said the king. “Let’s stop violating the laws of God (“evil ways”) and violating the dignity of man (“violence”). It’s time to change!”

Did the king really think it would make a difference? After all, Jonah said, “In forty days Nineveh *will* be overthrown.” What motivated the king to make these changes? Listen to verse 9 again, “Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.” There’s the incentive for this edict...

5. *There was a clinging to God’s character (9)*. Ponder that. The Ninevites didn’t possess even a shred of God’s written revelation, yet having heard this spoken Word (and that was a word of judgment!), they saw a glimmer of hope.

That’s amazing. A wicked and violent city received just a tiny bit of God’s Word, yet they believed it, and the result was, in the least, moral reform, if not spiritual transformation.¹⁶

Think of it this way. Throughout the Old Testament when the Jews, God’s chosen people, got out of line, and when God warned them, and when they responded rightly to that warning, what did they do? They exhibited humility, fasted, got rid of sin, called on God and clung to His character.¹⁷ The point is, these “unsavable” Gentiles are doing the same thing God’s own people did.

How do you explain that? It’s the difference *grace* makes. Titus 2:11-12 says, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age.”

Grace is a great teacher and motivator for change.

Yet there’s more. In Jonah 3, Jonah responded to God’s Word. So did the people of Nineveh. And the king. Now watch this, verse 10, “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.” Who responded to God’s Word that time?

D. God responded to God’s Word (10). I hesitated to use the word “responded” in connection with God. God doesn’t *respond*, does He? He’s God. He initiates. He causes things to happen. He doesn’t *respond*, does He? He did here. He said He was going to judge Nineveh, but when Nineveh turned from its evil, He chose not to destroy the city. The KJV even says that God “repented of the evil that He said He would do.” How do you explain that? Simply put, the explanation is that God responded *to God*, namely, to the promise that God Himself made in His Word.

We need to put a couple of guardrails in place to keep us from veering off of the road into heretical destruction. Here’s the first guardrail, the one on the left side of the road...

1. *Contrary to open theism, God has not limited Himself*. Open theism is a term to describe a teaching that’s been hitting the American church in the past couple of decades. Open theism says that in order to protect man’s free will God limited His foreknowledge. Its premise is that God does not perfectly know the future before it happens. The future is an “open book” for everyone, including God. Here’s a statement taken from the Open Theism website:

¹⁵ Observation by H. L. Ellison, p. 383.

¹⁶ What about us? We’ve been given the complete canon of Scripture, sixty-six God-inspired, hope-giving, life-changing books. How are we responding to this precious gift?

¹⁷ For instance, 1 Samuel 7:2-14; Ezra 8.

God has, in *sovereign freedom*, decided to make some of his actions contingent upon our requests and actions. God elicits our free collaboration in his plans. Hence, God can be influenced by what we do and God truly responds to what we do. God genuinely interacts and enters into dynamic give-and-take relationships with us. That God changes in some respects implies that God is temporal, working with us in time. God, at least since creation, experiences duration.¹⁸

So according to Open Theism some aspects of the future remain unsettled, owing to human freedom. God knows everything that could be and might be but He cannot know everything that will be.

Does Open theism square with Scripture? No, it doesn't. It undermines the biblical teaching of God's sovereignty and omniscience. For instance, David prayed in Psalm 139:16, "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." Hebrews 4:13 states, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."¹⁹

So we need a guardrail on the left side of the road. God has not limited Himself. But lest we pull too hard on the steering wheel and end up in the ditch on the right side of the road, let's put another guardrail in place...

2. *Contrary to fatalism, God responds when people repent.*

At a ministers' meeting in 1787, William Carey, raised the question of whether it was the duty of all Christians to spread the Gospel throughout the world. An older minister, John Ryland, is said to have retorted: "Young man, sit down; when God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid and mine."²⁰

That's what I mean by fatalism. And Carey responded by going to India and becoming the father of modern missions.

Yes, God has chosen a people, but He has also chosen the means by which He will reach them, including the preaching and praying of His people.

And when we preach and pray, we see people repent, as God graciously gives them the ability to do so. And we see God respond and pardon those who repent.

That's happening in Jonah 3:10. In Jonah 3 God is simply doing what He said He would do elsewhere in His Word. For instance, in Jeremiah 18:6-8: "'O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?' declares the LORD. 'Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.'"

Did God respond in Jonah 3? Indeed, God responded to His own Word. Does that mean He *changed*, or turned to Plan B? No, as H. L. Ellison explains, "When he does not do what he said he would, we as finite men can say only that he has changed his mind or repented, even though we should recognize, as Jonah did (4:2), that he had intended or desired this all along."²¹

Earlier I suggested that even though the people of Nineveh "believed God," they may well have possessed less than a "saving faith." Granted, they fasted, called on God, made

¹⁸ <http://www.opentheism.info>

¹⁹ God even knows things that are *possible* but do not take place. For instance, in 1 Samuel 23:11-13 David asks God whether the men of Keilah would surrender him to Saul if they were given the chance. God said they would, so David fled the city.

²⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Carey_\(missionary\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Carey_(missionary)); note: Ryland's son, John, disputed that his father made this statement.

²¹ H. L. Ellison, pp. 383-4.

some necessary moral changes (they “cleaned up their act”), all good. But something was missing. What?

The prophet Joel tells us. In a message to the wayward Israelites, here’s what the Lord said in Joel 2:12-14, ‘Even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.’ Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing— grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.”

Does the final question sound familiar? “Who knows? He may turn and have pity.” What did the Lord desire from the sinning Israelites? He mentions fasting, weeping, mourning, all things the Ninevites did. But what else? Hear Him: “Return to Me with all your heart.” Did the people of Nineveh do that? Was there a life-changing heart reorientation? Did they return to their Creator and surrender their lives to Him?

You say, “Well, if their response was deficient, why did God spare them?”

Good question. If you’ll recall, that’s the same kind of question we asked at the end of chapter 2. There I suggested that although Jonah prayed a prayer from the belly of the fish, there’s reason to question whether he truly repented. Sure, he said he missed God in his life but he never confessed that he was wrong for refusing to take God’s Word to Nineveh, nor that he was wrong for running from God, nor that his attitude towards the Ninevites was wrong. Yet God spared Jonah. Why?

God spared Nineveh for the same reason He spared Jonah. Not because they deserved it, but because He is so gracious. There’s no explanation but grace.

Application: Three lessons to ponder...

Here they are.

1. *No one is beyond the reach of grace.* Who are you thinking of right now? A family member, or friend, or perhaps yourself. Be encouraged. God doesn’t save the likely, the worthy, the good catches, but rather the unlikely, the unworthy, and those who have nothing to offer Him. No one is beyond the reach of His grace.

“Christ died for sinners, of whom I am chief,” said the former Christian killer, Saul of Tarsus. “But I was shown grace,” he said.

2. *No one is beyond the need of grace.* Isn’t it amazing that the preacher whom God used to bring about perhaps the most amazing transformation of a city in world history didn’t want to go? Indeed, he resisted and ran from this God-given opportunity! How do you explain that? There is no explanation but grace.

It’s no different for us. The fact that God should use us in gospel ministry, after the multitude of times we have resisted Him and transgressed His Word, is humanly unexplainable. Ministry is an undeserved privilege.

God doesn’t use *worthy* people, for there are none. He uses the *unworthy* to do His work. It boils down to this...

3. *No one compares to the God of grace.* So let’s trust Him, praise Him, thank Him, and serve Him.

**Special harvest offering to follow to help Shepherds Ministries