

“The Angry Prophet”
Jonah 4:1
(Preached at Trinity, January 10, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. God commanded Jonah to go and preach to the pagan city of Nineveh. At first, Jonah would have no part of it. In an open act of defiance, he packed up his bags and fled from God. But God had mercy upon Jonah and brought him to repentance.
2. God came to Jonah a second time. This time, without hesitation, Jonah arose and went. **Jonah 3:1-3 NAU** - "Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD."
3. Jonah entered the great city and began to preach. **Jonah 3:4 NAU** - "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." The city was so stirred by Jonah's preaching that the entire city, from the greatest to the least, cried out in repentance. It is probably the greatest display of national repentance in all of Scripture.
4. One would expect the next scene to show Jonah overwhelmed with joy. Instead, we find the exact opposite. **Jonah 4:1 NAU** - "But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry."
5. This seems most unusual in light of what we've read thus far.
 - A. First of all, as we've seen Jonah was one of God's elect. God had raised him up as a prophet. In an act of defiance he disobeyed God's command and fled from His presence. In a great demonstration of God's mercy He pursued Jonah in order to bring him to repentance. God doesn't let His people go. It was a powerful act of God that included a powerful storm and a great fish that swallowed Jonah.
 - B. Second of all, Jonah had demonstrated genuine repentance before God.
 - a. Jonah responded as a broken believer. He prayed. **Jonah 2:4 NAU** - "I have been expelled from Your sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple" **Jonah 2:7 NAU** - "While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, And my prayer came to You, Into Your holy temple."
 - b. He remembered his commitment to God. **Jonah 2:9 NAU** - "That which I have vowed I will pay."
 - c. Upon his repentance, he heard God's command the second time and responded in obedience. **Jonah 3:1-3 NAU** - "Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD."
6. All of this bears the marks of genuine repentance. How do we explain Jonah's actions in **Chapter 4**? What we are seeing here is an example of what we call besetting sins.

I. What are besetting sins?

A. Salvation is a wonderful deliverance from sin

Romans 6:5-7 NAU - "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin."

1. Paul describes it as being dead to sin
2. The old life is gone

Romans 6:6 NAU - " knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;"

3. We are no longer in Adam – we are no longer bound by sin. We are no longer controlled by our corrupt nature.

B. But salvation doesn't completely annihilate sin.

1. Our flesh is still very much hungry for sin.
2. Our life is a life of competing desires.

Romans 7:18-20 NAU - " For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."

3. Most of our sin is greatly weakened by our redeemed life. We are truly no longer what we once were

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NAU - "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

4. There are some sins of the flesh that are incompatible with our new life. We are no longer adulterers and fornicators and homosexuals.
5. There are some sins in our past, however, that had a powerful grip upon us.
 - a. The Christian is no longer characterized by adultery or fornication but he can still struggle with lust.
 - b. A former homosexual may struggle with same-sex attraction.
 - c. The tongue is a mighty weapon that is difficult to control.

James 3:6-8 NAU - "And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. ⁸ But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison."

- d. A Christian may struggle with lust, covetousness, gluttony, sloth, jealousy, covetousness, anger
- 6. These are what we call besetting sins. Powerful sins of the flesh that the Christian battles hard against. They are sins that are a constant struggle and sins that are sometimes repeated to his great sorrow.

II. Jonah's besetting sins

A. Jonah struggled with the sin of anger

Jonah 4:1 NAU - "But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry."

- 1. It is true that Jonah repented of his disobedience before God. When God called the second time Jonah rose up in obedience and went and preached to the Ninevites.

What Jonah did not repent of is the anger that led to his disobedience in the first place. He held on to this sin.

This has been the besetting sin of many saints

- 2. Moses struggled with this sin his whole life
 - a. Upon seeing the golden calf he flew into a rage.
Exodus 32:19 – "Moses' anger waxed hot"
Exodus 32:19 – "Moses' anger burned"
 - b. When he was a young man he slew an Egyptian in anger and hid him in the sand. When he thought his secret was known he fled to the wilderness.
 - c. It was ultimately this sin that kept him from entering into the promised land.
- 3. James and John were nicknamed "Sons of Thunder."
Luke 9:52-54 KJV - "and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. ⁵³ And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?"
- 4. John Calvin had a life-long struggle with anger but he recognized it and fought against it.
Bruce Gordon writes in his biography on Calvin,
"One of his greatest strengths in his later career was an acute awareness that despite remarkable confidence in his calling and intellect he remained dangerously prone to moments of poor judgment on account of anger"
- 5. Jonah also struggled with this sin. He was infuriated that God did not consume the Ninevites.

B. Jonah's problem is he didn't battle hard against his sin

- 1. The anger and resentment rose up in his heart. He hated the Ninevites. They were the bitter enemies of Israel The very thought of them being blessed of God threw him into a rage.
- 2. Instead of addressing the sin of his anger he justified himself
Jonah 4:2 NAU - ""Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish"

3. His anger against the Ninevites festered and led him into the greater sin of anger against God. He began to see the perfections of God as something negative.
Jonah 4:2 NAU - "I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity."
4. For Jonah, he would rather die than part with his sin
Jonah 4:3 NAU - "Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life."
5. Unconfessed sin festers within us eating away like a cancer.
Psalms 32:3 NAU – "When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long."
6. All of this was while God was showing Jonah the unjustness of his anger.
Jonah 4:4 NAU - "The LORD said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?"

III. Besetting sins are those sins we fail to adequately deal with

- A. We must continually give ourselves to the matter of mortifying our sin
 1. John Owen – "The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin. Always be killing sin or it will be killing you.
 2. We are in the greatest danger when we become hardened against the convictions of God.
Unconfessed sin will continue to deceive and harden us
- B. Do you have a particular sin that you have refused to deal with? It is that one sin you delight in.
 1. You find yourself defending it. You find yourself gratified and justified when you hear of other Christians doing it.
 2. Thomas Watson – "The sin which men use arguments to defend is the beloved sin. He that has a jewel in his bosom will defend it for very life. So when there is sin in the bosom, men will defend it. The sin we advocate and dispute for is the besetting sin. If the sin is covetousness and we vindicate it and perhaps wrest Scripture to justify it, that is the sin which lies nearest to the heart."
 3. Do you have that secret idol of which you are not willing to part?
 4. Which sins make you the most uncomfortable when they are mentioned from the pulpit. Are there times that you get angry?
 5. Is it covetousness which is idolatry (materialism), anger, pornography, independence and a dislike of authority, pride. Even good things can turn into an idol. Your children can become an idol, or your wife or your husband.
 6. Are there things you are not willing to abandon?
Are there things that you know have captured an unhealthy affection in your life?
Could you give up your favorite hobby?
Could you part with your prized possession?

- C. Unconfessed sin will only grow and increase
1. We can see Jonah's sin growing. This would have been a life-long sin. The sin was now causing him to flee from God. It was causing him to devalue God's wondrous grace.
 2. Unconfessed sin will destroy you. We've seen it with the Ashley Maddison scandal. There were pastors crushed under the shame. I know of at least one suicide. How long had they struggled with lust? How long did they refuse to confess it? How long did they refuse to deal with their own hearts? It consumed them and destroyed their ministry.

Conclusion:

1. Sin will rob you of all that will bring true peace and joy. It will eat away at your flesh like a cancer.
Psalm 32:3 NAU – "When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long."
2. Unconfessed sin weakens families and hinders the work of the church. The only solution is to deal firmly with every last remnant of sin. Labor as if it all depended upon you, but look to God through whom true confession and mortification comes.
Philippians 2:12-13 NAU - "work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."