

WHEN MAN TRIES TO RUN GOD *continued*

creatures we are when left to the predominating influence of any area of our own carnality. Jonah is a justified man, but struggled against God's will and never got his heart into it. How stubborn remaining sin really is + how great is God's grace! Did Jonah ever get right with God? Was he sent on another mission? The sobering fact is the biblical text is silent. (ii) COMPASSION: Jonah serves up a sight of the infinite patience and lovingkindness of God in dealing with His erring children – the storm/shipmaster/fish/plant/worm/wind, etc., all point to the largeness of our Father's heart and His determination to bring us back on track. (iii) CONFORMITY: Jonah underlines the necessity for us to plead for a heart that is more and more conformed to the heart of Christ; cf. **Romans 8:29**, **Philippians 2:5**. (iv) CONSISTENCY: it is alarming to note how a man's usefulness in preaching may bear little or no relationship to his true condition of heart in the presence of God. If the book of Jonah ended with **chapter 3**, we could build tremendous (but totally inaccurate) expositions on the power of prevailing prayer that we supposed were key to Jonah's passionate preaching and success. But the story goes on to say, *"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry"* (**Jonah 4:1**): this attitude of anger was the sub-soil out of which he preached! At the same time, this should be both a word of consolation and one of conviction: **1 Corinthians 3:6-7** is our staple diet as messengers of God – we are nothing, God is everything! Sometimes the 'increase' is no reflection of our rending of heart ... but pray on! speak on! weep on! We shall reap if we faint not! If unconverted – consider **1 Peter 4:17-18**: if God pursues one of His own like this, how will He treat you?



MEETINGS TODAY

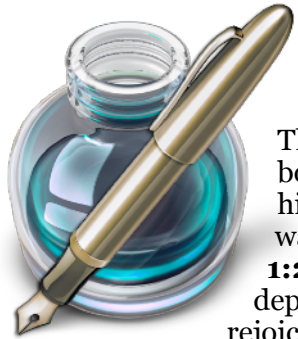
- Morning Worship – 11.30am:
"Jonah #9: When Man Tries to Run God."
- Evening Service – 7.00pm: *"Isaiah 55 #6: The Abundance in the Covenant."*
- Ladies' Meeting – 8.30pm:
Sophie Shiels to sing and testify.



FEEDBACK FROM FEBRUARY VISITORS

Response to the services at Martyrs is always welcome. Messages recently received from a Bulgarian family (now living in Norway) and from a brother in South Africa, appear below:

- From Pavlin Angelovi (20/2/2020):
"Dear Dr Brown. Thank you for the hospitality and warmth with which you have received us in your church, and the love you have shown us by sharing the holy communion with us. That Sunday 9/2 will remain unforgettable for us, it was a privilege to us to hear the Word of God preached with such boldness and respect, and our hearts were touched greatly. The Holy Spirit was really among us. With all this said, we want to give glory to God and our Saviour Lord Jesus Christ. Please send our love to all brothers and sisters we met at Martyrs. We don't remember most of their names, but we will always remember their hearts. We bless you in the name of Jesus Christ. Have a nice weekend. Love Pavlin, Jivka and family."
- From Bruce Troeberg (28/2/2020):
"Rev Ian Brown, I love your messages and am blessed by them. Wonderful to hear messages based on Bible truth. Thank you for your ministry. I live in South Africa and if ever I am able to visit Ireland I would love to visit your church."



WHEN MAN TRIES TO RUN GOD Jonah 4:6-11.

Throughout the narrative contained in this book, Jonah is almost always working off his own 'drawing board' – doing what he wants rather than what God wants.

1:2-3: God directs to Nineveh; Jonah departs for Tarshish; **3:10-4:1:** instead of rejoicing over the repentance of Nineveh, Jonah rages against God's mercy; **4:2-3:** rather than survey God's grace as it reaches out to multitudes in salvation, Jonah demands that God focuses on him (and slays him); **4:5-11:** Jonah's pity is for a withered plant, not for perishing people. In effect, Jonah is constantly trying 'to run God.' This sinful activity rises to prominence in the final section of the book. After considering [1] THE RESPONSE OF GOD TO THE REPENTANCE OF THE NINEVITES; **3:10** and [2] THE REACTION OF THE PROPHET TO GOD'S RESPONSE TO THE REPENTANCE OF THE NINEVITES; **4:1-5**, our study concludes with:

[3] THE REBUKE OF GOD AGAINST THE REACTION OF THE PROPHET TO GOD'S RESPONSE TO THE REPENTANCE OF THE NINEVITES; 4:6-11.

Trace how God delivered His rebuke to this pouting prophet: **(a) GOD'S ACTIVITY WITH HIS PROPHET.** A key theme in Jonah is how God takes the initiative in the discipline of His child – and chiefly operates in mercy! It should therefore come as no surprise to note how God's activity with this man, as a perfect father, was (i) GOVERNED BY MERCY; **4:6:** He provided a gourd (eastern pumpkin that grows with extraordinary speed and spreads to act as an effective covering). God had brought Jonah's feet onto the path of duty (he had got him to Nineveh), but his heart was not yet filled with the passion of delight. It is possible, under the chastening of God, to get our feet into the way of duty while our heart is still lagging 'miles behind.' (cf. Quaker girl: "Me sitteth on the outside, but me standeth on the inside!"). Jonah's message to Nineveh is without heart.

(ii) GIVEN THROUGH MEANS: God used both His Spoken *Word* and Symbolic *Action* (the gourd):
a. THE DIRECT INTERROGATION; **4:4:** God's question re Jonah's anger was designed to provoke deep reflection/repentance: "Jonah, I've shown huge mercy to you, why not crumbs of mercy to the Nineties?" God often uses questions to turn our hearts back to His will, cf. Elijah; **1 Kings 19:9,13.**
b. THE INDIRECT ILLUSTRATION; **4:6-11.** With the whole realm of the physical creation at His disposal, God does what He wills with His own: three times over this passage says that God "prepared" ... a special plant / worm / wind – all to get to the heart of this prophet. This was all intelligent (and merciful) design; but Jonah responds with an iniquitous design off his own 'drawing board,' seen in his compassion for the gourd, his consideration beyond it, and his chagrin over it. Both worm and wind combine to ruin his creature-comfort and Jonah's ire is stoked even hotter. We need to remember that our obligation is to stay true to the Creator, not to those creature comforts – for a small worm by God's direction can quickly destroy a large gourd. When Jonah throws back God's Interrogation and Illustration and insists that he has good cause to be angry (**4:9**), God advances with the ultimate arrow into Jonah's heart; **4:10 ...**
(b) GOD'S ARGUMENT TO HIS PROPHET.

Note (i) THE BASIC DATA IN THIS ARGUMENT: God explores Jonah's connection to the gourd. It's not one of creation (Jonah didn't develop it), nor of continuance (the essence of this plant was transience: it came up in a night and went down in a night): "You didn't create or sustain the plant, yet you loved it – fair enough ... but has God no right to show love to those Ninevites whom He created and sustained?!"

(ii) THE BIG DETAIL IN THIS ARGUMENT – both in terms of the contrast in Scale and in Souls; **4:11:** one gourd vs. A huge number of people (including 120,000 who have not yet come to an age of moral distinction) + one soulless gourd vs. multitudes of perishing human souls!

(c) GOD'S APPLICATION FROM HIS PROPHET.

Some lines of application come, not only from this particular passage, but from the entire book of Jonah. For example, (i) CARNALITY: in this **Book of Jonah** we see what miserable