

### 1. Introduction

- a. We are examining the topic of Sin to identify what the Bible says is fundamentally wrong with us
- b. God here calls Jonah to the wicked and very large city of Nineveh (population of 120,000 when most cities were around 3,000 at the time)
  - i. God wants to hold them accountable for their violence and threatens a calamity unless they repent
  - ii. Jonah, an Israelite, doesn't want to bother with Nineveh and he tries to get away from the responsibility by going on a boat to another city
- c. At the end of story, Nineveh repents, God forgives and Jonah is extremely upset
  - i. Jonah is a religious man and yet we see that he is more of a slave to sin than the people in Nineveh.
  - ii. A very religious person can be even more captured by sin than others.

### 2. The Self-centered Sin

- a. Jonah is angry (v4, v9) and his anger reveals an incredibly humbling truth about his heart
  - i. Twice God asks him if his anger is justifiable.
  - ii. Anger in itself is not a sin—Jesus gets angry at injustice (see Matthew 21)
  - iii. Even to wishing to die isn't a sin necessarily—depression can bring about a plethora of valid emotions (see Job 30).
  - iv. But in this case Jonah's anger was inordinate.
  - v. Jonah sees that God is gracious and he's mad that the sinners in Nineveh get the same love and grace that Jonah's people have received
    - 1. God first points out that Jonah has no concern for the city.
      - a. God is lovingly grieving over the city. Jonah feared the city. He didn't serve it.
      - b. He hated the pagans and didn't want God to give them any blessings.
- b. Self-righteousness is his primary sin.
  - i. We all search for value and something to provide meaning for our lives—Jonah rested in the saving power of God for his comfort and yet he didn't want others to enjoy the same blessing
  - ii. When Jonah sees love going out to undeserving people he loses hope and becomes suicidal.
  - iii. His religion had become his idol and he was angry to share it with people he felt were undeserving
  - iv. He was religious—and yet his religion was blinding him to the true breadth and power of free grace for all—we not only need to repent of our bad deeds, but also our good (oftentimes self-righteous) deeds and thoughts)
  - v. Jonah had lost sight of himself as a miracle of grace.
    - 1. At one time he recognizes that salvation is entirely about God and not Jonah himself (Jonah 2: “Salvation belongs to the Lord!”)
    - 2. But he quickly forgets grace and he doesn't want to serve others because he's too busy serving and justifying himself.
    - 3. This is why we need to remind ourselves of the gospel again and again—grace renewed and grace for all
    - 4. If Jesus justifies our existence then we lose superiority over “dirty sinners”

### 3. The Self-less Answer

- a. How can we begin to lose our superiority over others? How can we remind ourselves that grace is shown to us as well as those we most despise?
- b. God will need to clear out our “vines”—he gives Jonah a plant as an example and Jonah feels a sense of entitlement over the plant though he did nothing to create it
  - i. Our notions of entitlement and ownership of our lives causes us to miss the beauty of free grace for everyone and God will need to send “an east wind” to blast it away.

- ii. God questions Jonah—Jonah is mourning over a plant and God says He is mourning over people! The very people who Jonah thinks aren't worthy!
    - 1. God mourns for the spiritually lost (they don't know their right hand from the left) and blind
    - 2. He mourns people who don't know the meaning of their life
    - 3. You and I roll our eyes (at best) but God forgives and mourns
- c. God needs to root out the "Pharisee sickness" in our heart whereby we lose our sense of entitlement and open our eyes to see grace for everyone—even the "worst" of people
  - i. There was another one who wept over a city as God weeps over Ninevah (Matthew 23: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!")
  - ii. Jonah went outside of the city to judge the people in the city!
  - iii. Jesus went outside of the city to be put on a cross to forgive the people in the city!
    - 1. Matthew 12:38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." 39 But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.
  - iv. Jesus is saying that the people of Ninevah, the "dirty sinners" so to speak, were the ones who will rise up in judgement because they understood the gospel of grace better than Jonah (and other Pharisees-in-heart such as us) did!
  - v. We get one greater than Jonah.
    - 1. Jesus took the place of Jonah in the storm of our lives.
    - 2. With the gospel we can start getting rid of the vines in our lives.
    - 3. God's grace for everyone is gentle and strong but it's also patient.
- d. God's compassion is not as narrow as ours (though we often blame God for not being compassionate enough)
  - i. He doesn't make Ninevah grovel (as you and I would)—they don't adopt the Mosaic law and yet they are forgiven!
  - ii. Jonah has every right to be angry!!

#### 4. Conclusion

- a. If God's compassion for Ninevah stretches Jonah's understanding of grace, how does this change the way we live and serve those around us in the city of Seoul?
- b. If we are merciful as God is merciful, we are readily able to forgive—and forgive those in the big "evil" city!!
- c. If Jesus was self-less in his life, death and resurrection for our benefit—what does that mean for the way we live and treat others? Especially towards those in our lives who most sharply disagree with or mistreat us?