



# RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

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## JONAH, FRIEND OF GOD? Part 2

In Part 1 of this message, began looking at the book of Jonah. We saw how God commanded Jonah to go and preach in Nineveh, and Jonah refused to obey and ran in the opposite direction. He was swallowed by a whale and as he faced death he called out to the Lord. The Lord saved him and once again commanded him to go to Nineveh and preach. This time Jonah obeyed. We talked about how we can compare ourselves to Jonah. God commands us to believe and trust Him, and to do the good works he has prepared for us, but sometimes we refuse. In the areas where we are unwilling to believe and obey him, He disciplines us in his love, so that we will be willing to believe and obey. This is for our own good and the good of those around us. Let's now see what happened when Jonah finally did obey.

*Then the LORD spoke to Jonah a second time: <sup>2</sup>"Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh, and deliver the message of judgment I have given you." <sup>3</sup>This time Jonah obeyed the LORD's command and went to Nineveh, a city so large that it took three days to see it all. <sup>4</sup>On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: "Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!" (Jonah 3:1-4)*

So now Jonah obeys. Nineveh was a city of 120,000 people, and was probably the principal city of the nation of Assyria. This was a fierce, warlike nation. You can understand why Jonah didn't want to go there, as a foreigner, and preach judgment. But he had learnt his lesson in the whale, and now he obeys and preaches the message God has given him. Sometimes it is uncomfortable for us to believe and obey God, but we must believe and obey anyway.

*The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they decided to go without food and wear sackcloth to show their sorrow. (Jonah 3:5 NLT) When Jonah preached God's message of judgment, what was the result? Did they kill Jonah? No! The people listened and repented!*

*When the king of Nineveh heard what Jonah was saying, he stepped down from his throne and took off his royal robes. He dressed himself in sackcloth and sat on a heap of ashes. <sup>7</sup>Then the king and his nobles sent this decree throughout the city: "No one, not even the animals, may eat or drink anything at all. <sup>8</sup>Everyone is required to wear sackcloth and pray earnestly to God. Everyone must turn from their evil ways and stop all their violence. <sup>9</sup>Who can tell? Perhaps even yet God will have pity on us and hold back his fierce anger from destroying us." (Jonah 3:6-9 NLT) Not only did the ordinary people listen and repent, so did the king! The whole city turned to God in a wholehearted repentance.*

*When God saw that they had put a stop to their evil ways, he had mercy on them and didn't carry out the destruction he had threatened. (Jonah 3:10 NLT) As a result of the people's repentance, God did not judge the city. Jonah's obedience gave God the opportunity to call the people to himself and save an entire city.*

Now, how would you feel at this point if you were Jonah? You would expect that he would have felt very, very happy and content. He had finally obeyed God, and God had poured his mercy on a whole people because of that obedience. This wicked, warlike city was now honoring and loving God.

**Jonah is angry because although he has obeyed, things have not turned out as he wanted them to.**

**B**ut there was something wrong in Jonah's heart. He was not at all happy at this turn of events. In fact he was angry. Let's look at what happened next and why.

*This change of plans upset Jonah, and he became very angry. (Jonah 4:1 NLT) Jonah was angry because God had changed his mind and chosen not to judge Nineveh. So he complained to the LORD about it: "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, LORD? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you were a gracious and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. I knew how easily you could cancel your plans for destroying these people. <sup>3</sup>Just kill me now, LORD! I'd rather be dead than alive because nothing I predicted is going to happen."* (Jonah 4:2-3 NLT) Jonah is angry because he feels that God has made a fool of him by not judging Nineveh, because he predicted that God would judge it. And that judgment never happened because the people repented. Jonah thinks that he looks bad because his prophecies haven't come true. So he now starts to make excuses, saying that this is the very reason he didn't obey in the first place, because he knew that God would be merciful to the people. He didn't want to preach judgment to them because he knew they would repent and God would be merciful and judgment would not happen! He is actually angry that God has shown mercy to these people! He is angry because although he has obeyed, things have not turned out as he expected or wanted them to.

**In the end Jonah obeyed the command, but he did not enter into close relationship with God.**

*The LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry about this?"* (Jonah 4:4 NLT) God simply asks Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about this?" If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that at times we become upset and even angry with God when we are obeying him and things do not turn out as we expect them to. We say that the things he is asking us to do are too difficult, or perhaps we have our own agendas and God's plans do not fit with our agendas. Is it right for us to be angry when we obey God and then things don't turn out like we think they should have? We acknowledge, "Yes, God wants me to believe this or to do that", but then we become angry with him and put him on trial, accusing him of wrongdoing when things do not turn out as we want them to. Why do we become angry like this? Why did Jonah become angry like this? We will see in just a moment.

*Then Jonah went out to the east side of the city and made a shelter to sit under as he waited to see if anything would happen to the city. <sup>6</sup>And the LORD God arranged for a leafy plant to grow there, and soon it spread its broad leaves over Jonah's head, shading him from the sun. This eased some of his discomfort, and Jonah was very grateful for the plant. (Jonah 4:5-6 NLT)* Jonah is still hoping that God will judge the city. He is still hoping that God will conform to Jonah's agenda and way of seeing things. So he makes a shelter and sits and watches and waits for God to judge the city. God shows compassion and concern for him by making a leafy plant to shield him from the sun.

*But God also prepared a worm! The next morning at dawn the worm ate through the stem of the plant, so that it soon died and withered away. <sup>8</sup>And as the sun grew hot, God sent a scorching east wind to blow on Jonah. The sun beat down on his head until he grew faint and wished to die. "Death is certainly better than this!" he exclaimed. (Jonah 4:7-8 NLT)* God is wanting to teach Jonah something. So he sends a worm to eat the plant away, and then sends a hot wind to blow on Jonah and cause him to become exhausted and dehydrated- so much that he wants to die. He becomes angry that the plant has died, because it was giving him shade.

*Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry because the plant died?" "Yes," Jonah retorted, "even angry enough to die!" <sup>10</sup>Then the LORD said, "You feel sorry about the plant, though you did nothing to put it there. And a plant is only, at best, short lived. <sup>11</sup>But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness, not to mention all the animals. Shouldn't I feel sorry for such a great city?"* (Jonah 4:9-11 NLT)

God asks Jonah if it is right that he be so angry that the plant died. Jonah says, yes. So now God shows Jonah where his attitude is wrong. Jonah cares for a plant which he neither planted nor caused to grow. He cares for it because it was shading him from the sun. That is why he cares that it dies. God created the people of Nineveh. There are 120,000 people there who were living in spiritual darkness. He cares deeply for them and does not want them to perish, because he created them and he loves them.

That is why he sent Jonah there to preach. That is why he did not judge Nineveh when the people repented. He even mentions all the animals in the city- to emphasize the deep love and concern he has for his creations. If Jonah is justified in caring for the plant that shaded him and then died, how much more is God justified in caring for the thousands of dear people and even animals that he created and loves!

**Be God's friend!**

Why did Jonah become so angry after Nineveh's people repented? Here is the reason. Jonah obeyed God's commands to him. But God did not design us just to obey his commands like robots. He designed us to have a close and intimate relationship with him. To come to know and share his heart and desires and feelings and purposes. Jonah obeyed the command (in the end), but he did not enter into close relationship with God. He enter into the knowledge of God's heart, God's way of seeing things, God's character and God's purposes.. He finally did what God told him to, but he didn't want to see things from God's perspective. He didn't want to share God's heart. Even while he was carrying out God's commands, Jonah was selfishly focused on himself and his own desires and reputation and way of seeing things.

**A**t times we are guilty of the same thing. We do what God tells us to do, but we do not walk in relationship with him, opening our hearts to him and coming to know him and allowing him to share his heart with us. We don't fully enter into God's heart, his way of seeing things and people; his desires, his plans and purposes. Sometimes we have our own agendas and so we do the minimum we feel is required to obey God. And then we are so concerned for our own comfort and our own desires and plans, that we do not partner with God as his friends; instead we simply serve him like hired servants.

We do not know what happened next with Jonah. Maybe he chose to open his heart to God and become God's friend and not just his servant. We do not know. But we can look at our own lives.

**O**f course God wants us to serve him, to do the things he is asking us to do. But he wants us to do this as friends. *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. (John 15:15 KJV)*

What is God asking you to do?

Maybe he is at this point asking you just to believe His word to you. Then don't just believe the word. Seek to know the person of Jesus Christ, the person behind the word. Seek to see things from his perspective, to feel what he feels, to desire what he desires. Become his friend.

Maybe he is asking you to do a particular thing. No matter how uncomfortable it may feel, do that thing! But don't just do the thing! Allow God to show you his heart for why you are doing the thing. Do the thing in a way that reflects his heart and who he is! Seek to know him better, so that you will be able to embrace what he has told you to do, and do it with your whole heart, mind, soul and strength! Be his friend!

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"IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK" - JESUS ( JOHN 7:37 )