

JONAH: GOD'S REMINDER OF ISRAEL'S OUTREACH DUTY

III: Vigorously Heeding God's Calling

(Jonah 3:1-4)

I. Introduction

- A. Since the Abrahamic Covenant provided that God would bless the Gentiles through Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:1-3), Israel was responsible to proclaim God's truth to the Gentiles. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1462)
- B. The book of Jonah was addressed to Israel to remind her of her duty to proclaim God's truths to the nations, and Jonah 3:1-4 records how Jonah vigorously heeded God's calling to evangelize Nineveh in that wider responsibility of Israel to reach the nations. We view the passage for our insight and application (as follows):

II. Vigorously Heeding God's Calling, Jonah 3:1-4.

- A. Jonah had been so reluctant to obey God's Word in going to evangelize Nineveh that he had actually fled from the presence of the Lord in the opposite direction, Jonah 1:1-3.
- B. Consequently, God had intercepted Jonah, causing a large fish to swallow him until he repented, calling on the Lord for deliverance, and the Lord had thus caused the fish to vomit Jonah up onto dry land, Jonah 1:4-2:10.
- C. With a repentant Jonah once again on dry land, the word of the Lord came unto him a **second** time, renewing the divine call that he arise and go to Nineveh, and *this* time Jonah **strongly obeyed**, Jonah 3:1-3a.
- D. Significantly, this second divine calling and Jonah's response to it examples the **vigor** that any servant of the Lord must have in fulfilling the ministry that God assigns him. We view those truths (as follows):
 1. First, one must realize that God's calling deals with what God personally holds him accountable to do:
 - a. Jonah was introduced as the "son of Amittai" in Jonah 1:1, but in God's second call to Jonah, that reference to his father is omitted (Jonah 3:1), the focus being **only** on *Jonah* and his **personal** accountability to God!
 - b. Accordingly, we believers must realize that serving the Lord requires that we heed Him as our personal responsibility, as those who are individually accountable to our Creator God Himself!
 2. Second, one must present the message that God wants him to give, Jonah 3:2:
 - a. Back in Jonah 1:2, God had simply directed Jonah to arise, to go to the great Assyrian city of Nineveh and cry against it because its wickedness demanded that God warn Nineveh of His punishment.
 - b. However, in Jonah 3:2, God's command was that Jonah proclaim the message that **God** wanted him to deliver. The pronoun "I" in the Hebrew text is the Hebrew word '*anoki*, meaning "I Myself," and it is written separate from and before the participle "preaching" to emphasize the fact that Jonah was to give **God's** "preaching," *not* his *own* message! (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 931)
 - c. Since God had sent Jonah through the experience of being in the fish's belly, he may have been willing to go to Nineveh and preach, but he still might have been tempted to "modify" his words to avoid getting the people of Nineveh to repent! However, God wanted to counter that temptation effectively!
 3. Third, we must realize that our ministry involves eternal consequences for people, explaining God's intense requirements of His servants in their ministries for Him, Jonah 3:3:
 - a. The KJV adjective "exceeding" should actually be translated "before God," meaning that Nineveh was not just a great city from the human viewpoint, but it contained many people whose destiny was on the line, and that was important to God. (Ibid.; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Jonah 3:3)
 - b. This explains God's persistence and intensity in driving Jonah to end up in the belly of a fish to reconsider heading to Nineveh – the eternal destiny of hundreds of thousands of people in Nineveh (Jonah 4:11) was a great concern to Israel's God, so He strongly wanted Jonah to evangelize it!
 4. Fourth, Jonah promptly fulfilled his mission, Jonah 3:4:
 - a. The circumference of the city of Nineveh, including some of its surrounding land, was about sixty miles, Ibid. Thus, it would take one three days to travel through the realm of the city, Jonah 3:3.
 - b. The text at Jonah 3:4 states that Jonah began to enter the city a day's journey, and this does not mean that he traveled for an entire day before preaching, but that he began preaching the first day that he entered Nineveh. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1469) Jonah promptly fulfilled his mission to evangelize Nineveh!

Lesson: When Jonah returned to his calling, he vigorously served God as his personal responsibility, he gave the message God wanted him to deliver, he ministered on behalf of God's intense concern, and he ministered promptly.

Application: May we vigorously fulfill our callings from God by sensing our personal accountability to obey Him, by giving the message God wants us to give, keeping His intense concerns in mind, and fulfill our duties promptly.