

Lesson 85 Jonah and the Ninevites

God Calls and Jonah Runs

One day, the Lord spoke to Jonah. He said, "Get up, go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it. I see the evil things they do."

But Jonah didn't obey God. Instead he found a ship that was going to the city of Tarshish, which was nowhere near Nineveh.

But the Lord sent a great wind on the sea. This wind made the sea very rough. So the ship was in danger of breaking apart. The ship's crew learned that Jonah was responsible for bringing the big storm, and Jonah told them that the only way to make the wind stop was to throw him overboard!

The sailors reluctantly did as Jonah said, but Jonah did not drown, because God sent a whale (large fish) to swallow Jonah. Then, Jonah prayed to God again. He thanked God, who had rescued him. And God caused the fish to return Jonah to the dry land after three days.

Jonah Follows God's Orders

So, Jonah went to Nineveh. He warned the people that they must confess their evil deeds to God. Otherwise, God would destroy their nation. The people listened to Jonah, and they repented before God of their sins. So, God forgave the people in Nineveh. God did not destroy Nineveh at this time.

But Jonah was sad, because Nineveh was his enemy. Jonah wanted God to destroy Nineveh. But God told Jonah that God cares about the people from every nation.

Jonah's story is an awesome reminder of God's mercy. Nineveh was a wicked place, but God was willing to forgive their sin if they confessed and repented of their wrong ways. This is good news for all sinners; Jesus promises to forgive the sins of anyone who repents, and in Faith, confesses Him as Lord!

Jonah's story also is a warning about how hard it is for people to be merciful toward each other. God did a wonderful thing for the nation of Nineveh, and Jonah should have been very happy for them. But instead, he did not feel merciful toward the Ninevites. It is an important lesson for all of us that our hearts are slow to forgive. It is something God very much wants to change in our lives. Mercy is a mark of a heart transformed by God.