

The Minor Profits

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[0 : 00] Well, we're in the book of Jonah and we are arriving at what may very well be our final study in this book, but we do not need to conclude it if there are issues that yet remain undiscussed that you would like to talk about.

So if you would turn please to Jonah and note, if you will, the last verse of chapter 3, and we pointed out in the past, and I won't labor the point, but we pointed out in the past how that for the purposes of studying the text and understanding the content, we ought to ignore the chapter divisions. And here, of course, is just one more case where that's true.

Because as you read verse 10 of chapter 3, it says, End of chapter. Breaks the continuity and the thought.

But it shouldn't be the end of the chapter because the very next word is really important. It is a conjunction of contrast. But! But! In other words, chapter 3 is not the end of the story.

There is a big but that is coming, and it is going to indicate the complete displeasure of Jonah. He didn't want to go to Nineveh in the first place.

[1 : 29] And by the way, we don't know this for sure, but there's probably every reason, I think, logically to suspect this, that the city of Nineveh was probably the premier city by way of population and size in the Mediterranean world at the time.

It was probably the largest that there was. And it was completely filled with pagans. People who worshipped multiple gods. And there is no indication that they really believed in Jehovah at all.

Maybe not as even one of the gods. And God called Jonah to go to Nineveh and indicate to these people that their wickedness and their violence had reached the breaking point of God's willingness to abide it.

And he was going to bring down the curtain unless those people repented. And we pointed out to you, and this is a very, very important point, Old Testament and New, how repentance turns everything around.

When men and women are willing to repent of their sin, that is to acknowledge it, and to change their mind regarding it, just like Randy was singing in the song, Living by the Book, change their mind regarding it, God will back off from the judgment that is deserved, and instead infuse the recipient with grace.

[3 : 06] And that is precisely what is going to happen to Nineveh. And yet, if you can imagine this, that's the very opposite of what Jonah wanted.

And the reason being, Jonah had developed such an intense hatred and animosity toward those people of Nineveh.

He wanted God to zap them. He didn't want to go there. Some people mistakenly think that Jonah was just a rebel and didn't want to do what God told him. That's true. But he probably would have been willing to do anything else but go to Nineveh and preach this message?

No! Absolutely. And, fellas, maybe we need to think in terms of how incredibly arrogant we human beings can be capable of being.

This man, this human being, puts on his pants just like you and me. This human being took it upon himself to actually tell God that he was wrong and what he wanted to do.

[4 : 19] He was so arrogant, he was willing to at least infer that God should treat Nineveh the way he, Jonah, thinks that God should treat them.

And, of course, God has never really been interested in taking advice from us. Like Paul wrote to the Romans, Who has been his counselor? Or who has given advice to God?

Well, nobody. But Jonah was actually in a position, he thought, to do that. And when he preached this message, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

The thing that puzzles me is, Why were these people convinced of it? Why did they believe the message? This had to have been a message that was so foreign to them, There's no indication that they even knew who this true God really was.

And yet, it becomes very apparent from the text that they got on board. They believed what Jonah told them. And there was a tremendous revival and change in attitude, Not only in the population, But in the king's chamber, That came from the throne.

[5 : 35] And if you will look at verse 6 of chapter 3, When the word reached the king of Nineveh, He arose from his throne, Laid aside his robe from him, Covered himself with sackcloth, And sat on the ashes.

Now, some may say, Well, maybe he did that just out of superstition. Maybe he thought he would just play it safe, And take to heart what Jonah was saying.

Maybe he wasn't really convinced of it. Maybe he didn't really want to know the true God. And by the way, It will be about a hundred years later, Approximately, That Nineveh will be overthrown.

And the city will be decimated. Indicating that these people, Or the succeeding generations, Had obviously fallen back into their old ways. And the city is eventually going to be judged and destroyed later on.

So, keeping that in mind, And verse 10, This is, Fellas, Verse 10 sets forth that principle, That God is the God of the second chance.

[6 : 48] God is the one who is willing to change your actual destiny, Your eternal destiny, Based upon your repentance.

And repent means to change your mind. People have all kinds of erroneous attitudes about God, About themselves, About their sin and everything. And they have to come, To a biblical position, Regarding themselves, And regarding God.

And where are they going to get that information? That's what the gospel is all about. And that's why we are commissioned to preach the gospel. Because when people hear the gospel, The good news, That provides them with a rationale, And a reason, To change their mind.

And what they do when they change their mind, Is they make a decision, For Jesus Christ. And that's the end game, Of repentance.

It's changing the mind. And that changes everything. These people, Had come to, Understand and believe, The information, That Jonah was preaching.

[7 : 58] And here, Jonah has to have communicated the idea, That I serve a God, Who is so big, And so powerful, That your supposed gods, Your so called gods, Don't even exist, As far as he's concerned.

And these deities, That you falsely worship, My God, Is simply going to brush them aside, And he's going to bring, His wrath, And his judgment, On this nation, Unless you people, Get in line, With the message I am preaching.

And they did. I'm not real sure, What their motivation was, Maybe it was just, That they were scared, Maybe it was foxhole religion, I don't know, But at any rate, Their decision, Satisfied God, To the extent, That he withheld, The judgment, He was going to bring, On the city of Nineveh.

And then, We get Jonah's response, To that, In verse one, But it greatly, Displeased Jonah, And he became angry, Can you imagine, Can you imagine, The late Billy Graham, Standing before a crowd, Of a hundred thousand people, And ten thousand of them, Come forward, Saying that they want to, Respond to the gospel, And they want to receive Christ, And Billy, Looks at the ten thousand, And says, This is pathetic, I don't like this, Of all, I wish these people, Hadn't come, Can you imagine, Seen like that, Of course not, It's unthinkable, But that's, That's the essence, Of what Jonah, Was experiencing, He was actually, Angry with God, That he spared these people, And do you know, Does not that also, Indicate, Some degree, Of self-righteousness, In Jonah, Where he thinks,

I deserve to be spared, But these people don't, I am worthy, But these people are not, Amazing, I, Anytime, Anytime I want to revisit, The capacity, For human arrogance, I visit, I visit the book of Jonah, And he takes the cake, For human arrogance, And you know something, Miracle of miracles, God loves him anyway, Isn't that something, How God puts up with us, And in our arrogance, Greatly displeased Jonah, He became angry, And he prayed to the Lord, And said, Please Lord, Was not this what I said, While I was still in my own country, Back in Israel, Where I was, When you called me, To go to Nineveh, And I didn't want anything, To do with these people, Or preaching any kind of a message to them, Because they deserve hell, They deserve judgment, And he got on the ship, And went in the opposite direction, To Sharshish,

[10:54] Was not this what I said, While I was still in my own country, Therefore, In order to forestall this, In order to make sure, These people did not repent, And avert your judgment, I refused to go to them, And headed in the opposite direction, Because I know, That thou art a gracious, And compassionate God, Slow to anger, And abundant in loving kindness, And one who relents concerning calamity, And I wish you weren't that kind of a God, Can you believe this stuff?

I knew you were compassionate, And full of forgiveness, And I resent that, I don't want you to spend it on those people, Because they are not deserving, The implication is, I am, And my people Israel, We are, But not them, Wow, Knew you were gracious and compassionate God, Slow to anger, Abundant in loving kindness, And one who relents concerning calamity, Therefore now, O Lord, Please take my life from me, For death is better to me than life, Unbelievable, This guy should have been, Jumping up and down with joy, Over the success of his message, And here he is actually sore, That they believed it, Death is better to me, Than life, And the Lord said, Jonah can be glad,

I was not the Lord, Because, I probably would have just sent, A little light, A little bolt of lightning down, And say, Okay, Buster, Have it your way, Zap! And that would have been, The end of him, It would have just been a little grease spot, Take him to heaven, Get him out of there, I mean, This guy, This guy, Is, A liability, On God's team, And, As I've often said, In times past, There are Christians, Who are an asset, To the cause of Christ, Because they reflect, The character and nature of Christ, And they are walking, In the spirit, And God can use them, And does use them, And then there are, Professing Christians, Who are a liability, To the cause of Christ, Because, They may go to church, Every Sunday, But what they get, In church on Sunday, Does not count for them, On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, You know, This is, These are the kind of people, That cause some people, Outside the church,

To say, The church is full of hypocrites, And to a certain extent, There is certainly, Some truth in that, So Jonah, Jonah is not, At all, What we would call, An asset, Or a positive example, For the grace of God, Do you have good reason, To be angry, And then, Verse 5, Jonah went out, From the city, And sent east of it, He's going to go, On a big, Pout, He's going to be, Angry, And upset with God, Because God wouldn't do, What he, Jonah, Wanted him to do, And now, He's going to go out, And pout, And mope, Amazing, This is just incredible, Isn't it something, How, How God incorporates, In scripture, Just about, Every kind of personality, And motivation, That you can imagine, And whatsoever things,

Were written aforetime, Were written for, Our learning, That we through patience, And comfort of the scriptures, Might have hope, And what Jonah has to say here, Is one of them, Jonah went out, From the city, Sat east of it, Went out, Went out from the city, And as he sits there, He's saying, I had hoped, By now, I would see this city, Burning, Going up in smoke, And what is it?

[15 : 16] Peaceful, And serene, The people have repented, And they're happy, And God is happy, And everybody is happy, But me, And I'm angry with God, Because he wouldn't do, What I wanted him to do, Unbelievable, There he made a shelter, For himself, Sat under it, In the shade, Until he could see, What would happen in the city, He's just waiting, Looking for smoke, Hoping that something, Is going to play, And boy, It's not going to happen, And the Lord God, Appointed, A plant, And chapter 1, The Lord God, Appointed, A great fish, And here, He is appointing, A plant, This means, This is a specially, Derived, Specially provided, Plant, Just for this occasion, In the same way, That there was a, Just right, Provided, Fish,

For the occasion, To swallow Jonah, In chapter 1, And he sat, Under the shade, That God appointed, Over him, To deliver him, From his discomfort, Probably, The temperature, Was significant, Really hot, Maybe not much shade, At all, You know, The kind of thing, It's a hundred degrees, In the shade, But there isn't any shade, So God provides, This wonderful, Shelter for him, Miraculously, Provides this plant, This foliage, To cover Jonah, To deliver him, From his discomfort, And Jonah, Was extremely, Happy, About the plant, This guy, Has got, Such a system, Of misplaced values, He's sad, About Nineveh, Being spared, But he's happy, About this plant, Because it provides him, With the shade, And here again, This, Is an example, Of extreme, Self-centeredness, What about Nineveh, Well those people, Can go to hell, And they deserve it anyway,

But I deserve, To be comfortable, And here I have, This wonderful, Plant, Providing shade for me, And so, Do you think, He's going to have, The spiritual sense, To be able to understand, What God is doing, Nope, Nope, Let's read on, And God, Appointed, A worm, Isn't it amazing, What God appoints, When just, Whatever is needed, Arises on the scene, He appoints a great fish, And he appoints a plant, And now he is appointing, A devouring worm, When dawn came, The next day, And it attacked, The plant, And it withered, There goes the shade, There goes his comfort, And it came about, When the sun came up, That God appointed, A scorching east wind,

And the sun, And the sun, Beat down, On Jonah's head, So that he became faint, And, Begged with his soul, To die, This sounds like, He's on the verge, Of heat stroke, I mean, This is, You know, When you get too much sun, And it can really do a job, On the physical condition, Of your body, And now he is saying, Death is better to me, Than life, This guy has a death wish, That just won't quit, And in every case, It is because, Things aren't going his way, Wow, It kind of reminds me of, It kind of reminds me of Elijah, When he was fleeing from Jezebel, And he had, He had, Killed the prophets of Baal, And these were, The palace's personal prophets, You know, So he takes it on the land, Because Jezebel, Is after him, She's got her troops out after him,

Jonah takes off running, And finally he stops, And he, He pleads with God, And he said, I'm the only one left, I'm the only one that's standing for the truth, And the Lord rebuked him, And said that, He had, He had those, That had not bowed the knee to Baal, And of course, Elisha's wondering, Where are they?

[19 : 44] You know, I feel like I'm all alone in this, And he pled, And asked God to take his life, And you can see, The mixed feelings here, Because all, All Elijah had to do, Was stop running, And Jezebel's men, Would catch up with him, And they'd take his life, But here he is, Running, Running from death, And then he's telling God, To take his life, Fellas, This is an example, Of mixed emotions, And how desperation, Produces irrationality, And that's exactly, What both of these men, Are experiencing, It's a crazy thing, And it's characteristic, Of the human condition, Larry, Sometimes, Don't we, Feel that way, When our prayers are on the internet, Oh, Of course, Of course, Phil Yancey, Has written a book, I don't know, If you read it, But it was a, It was a runaway bestseller, An outstanding book, And it was called, Disappointment with God, And, I don't think,

There is probably, A believer, Anywhere, Of, Of any, Long standing at all, Who has not, Had some disappointments, With God, Particularly, In connection with prayer, And, Especially, When we are convinced, That the prayer, That we are offering, Is worthy, It is beneficial, For somebody, And it would be honoring to God, And it would be such, A right thing, For God to do, Is to answer my prayer, And you know what, He didn't, Well, Thanks a lot, You know, It's almost as if, Well, Well, If that's the way, You're going to be, See if I go to your old church anymore, See if I'm going to pray anymore, See, We can have our own pouting party, When God won't do things our way, Or in our timetable, We tend to get very upset, And that is nothing more, Than another example, Of our imposing,

Our wisdom, And our will, On God, Now God, I've got this particular problem, This big problem, And I can't fix it, But here's what, I think you ought to do, You know, And we begin to give God directions, And step A, Do this, And then B, And you know, God is not interested, He just wants us, To trust Him, And leave the wisdom, And the decision, With Him, And there isn't any way, That we can honor God, Better than that, Joe?

Joe, Had the same problem, Joe, Sure he did, Job had the same problem, Job had the same problem, And David, David the psalmist, Had the same problem, Here is a man, With a heart after God, And yet, There were times, When David, You read the Psalms, He got so ticked with God, He told him off, Can you imagine that?

That all that, All that tells me, Is that David, The king, The shepherd lad, Sweet singer of Israel, David, David was just a human being, Like us, And so was Job, And so was Jonah, All of these, Biblical examples, That come to us, From the scriptures, Are designed, To inform us, Don't be like that, Some of them, Are negative examples, And we see how it plays out, So, We're continuing now, In verse 8, Sun came up, God appointed a scorching east wind, The sun beat down on Jonah's head, So that it became faint, And begged with all his soul to die, Death is better to me than life, This is depression, And depression, Is a common response, When we don't get what we want, When we see something, That needs to be done, Or attended to, And maybe only God can do it, And he doesn't, He has the audacity,

[23 : 43] To override, What we think he ought to do, And we get depressed, And we get down, And this is, You know what you're doing?

You're proving that you're a human being, And perspective changes everything, And we are all too prone, To swap God's perspective, For ours, Joe, I have to bring up, I told you about Russ this morning, Yes, But I had, He witnessed to me, Like I couldn't believe, He was so positive yet, And upbeat, He was telling me, All these bad things, But his attitude, Was not one of, Angry with God, Or with the world, Or depressed at all, He had a positive attitude, Beautiful, Beautiful, I mean he did, Yeah, When you bring this up, I just, It just hit me, How can that man be, So positive and upbeat?

It's perspective, Perspective changes everything, Listen, Anybody can sing, A sweet song, In the sunshine, Can you sing in the shadows, Can you sing, Can you sing when it's darkening, Can you sing, When you can't see, Any solution, Any solution, Or any end, To the situation, That you're facing, That's, What tests the metal, And this is exactly, What Paul's talking about, And Paul was a man, Who could speak from experience, And he says, As we rejoice in tribulations, Are you kidding me, Tribulations, Work, Patience, Patience means, Staying power, Means the ability, And the willingness, To hang in there, When the world tells you, Like Job's wife told him, You old fool, Don't you know when you've had enough, Curse God and die, Get it over with, And you speak as a foolish woman, Ought not we who have received,

Good from the Lord, Receive calamity as well, God has given, And God has taken away, Blessed be the name of the Lord, That certainly wasn't Jonah's attitude, God said to Jonah, Do you have good reason, To be angry about the plant, And he said, Yes, I do, I do have good reason, To be angry, And the Lord said, You had compassion, On the plant, For which you did not work, And which you did not cause to grow, Which came up overnight, And perished overnight, Now Jonah, Should I not have compassion, On Nineveh, These are human beings, Not a plant, Nineveh, A great city, In which there are more than, A hundred, Twenty thousand persons, Who do not know the difference,

Between their right and left hand, And I don't think, He's talking about intelligence, At all, I think he's talking about, Spiritual information, Spiritual knowledge, Fellas, You would be surprised, How many people, You are going to meet today, That spiritually speaking, They don't know the right hand, From their left, There are people out there, With whom we rub shoulders, Every day, Not only do they not, Have a clue, They don't even have a clue, That they don't have a clue, And we have some information, That is vital to them, Can we care enough, To share it, That was Jonah's plight, And you know something, Nothing has changed, I'll tell you, Every one of us, Has some Jonah in us, I've got some Jonah in me, And every one of us, When it comes to, Bold witnessing, For Christ, Every one of us, Has,

[27 : 43] A yellow streak, That runs right down our back, And for some, It's pretty wide, And for some, Maybe it's pretty narrow, But we've all got, A tinge, Of fear, And trepidation, In speaking to someone, About that, Which could change their life, And change their destiny, But, Maybe our motivation, Isn't that we're angry with them, We're just fearful, But Jonah, Jonah was just flat out angry, He didn't want these people, To be saved, 120,000, Don't know their right hand, From their left hand, As well as, Many animals, Now that's an interesting, Addition there, And it does, Give us, An indication, That God, Does have, A certain, Level, Of divine care, For animals, And you know, I think this is why, It is in, The heart of man, And it is in the laws, Of the land, That it is against the law, To abuse,

An animal, People go to jail, For setting kittens, On fire, And for, For, Torturing dogs, And other things, Why do we do that?

Why do we put that kind of value on them? Well, You might not get, A lot of people to admit it, But I am confident, That it is because, They recognize, That life, Whether it is human life, For animal life, Is derived from God, And we have, Responsibility, To be, Humane, In our treatment, Of animals, And, I, There is a passage, Where, Where the Lord says, And actually, Paul, Paul piggybacks on this, And picks it up, From the law of Moses, And he uses it, He uses it, By way of an application, For, Remunerating, And, And paying, Pastors, And, He is talking to the Corinthians, About those who, Preach the gospel, Should live, Of the gospel, That is, Should be supported, By those who are recipients, Of the gospel, And the analogy, That Paul uses is, You shall not,

Muzzle the ox, That treads out the grain, What is that all about? Well, Back in biblical days, They had this, Huge contraption, With, That they used, With stones, With millstones, And it was, Tied to, A rod, Or a pole, And, Put to the, Neck of the oxen, And this oxen, Would walk around, Circles, All day long, Treading out the grain, And this, Huge stone, Would be, In the trough, And it would go, In a circular way, Around the trough, This huge stone, Maybe four or five feet, In diameter, And six or eight inches thick, Very, Very heavy, With a hole in the middle, And a pole attached to it, So that that thing, Would go around, And they would harness it, To an ox, And that ox, Would, All day long, Would, Pull that, Pull,

Drive that pole, That move the stone, That ground the grain, And they would just keep, Pouring grain in there, And it would be ground, Then they would take it out, Had a place to take it out, And they'd pour in it, And the law of Moses, Forbad the people, To put a muzzle on the ox, Because the ox, Was entitled, To eat the grain, That he was treading out, And the analogy, That he brought over was, That the pastors, Of the church, And I'm not putting in, A dibs for a raise guys, Okay, But the pastor of the church, Was entitled, To a living, On the basis of the gospel, That he was preaching, And he uses that analogy, From the ox, You shall not, Don't put a muzzle on the ox, So that his mouth, Can't get the grain, And that's a beautiful, Beautiful illustration, Any other thoughts, Or comments, Anybody?

[31 : 58] Yeah, Dan, And then Don, The analogy of Jonah, Reminds me of a two year old, That doesn't get their way, I mean, Well yeah, I mean, Yeah, Sometimes you wonder, How mature are we?

Yeah, Well, Hey, Given, Given the right set, Of circumstances, Guys, Given the right set, Of circumstances, All of us are capable, Of embarrassing ourselves, With our spiritual immaturity, And stupidity, And given the right set, Of circumstances, I don't think there is, Such a thing as, What we would call, A spiritual giant, We're all flawed, We're all sinful human beings, It's just that, We have our sins, Cared for in the person, And the death, Burial, And resurrection of Christ, And makes all the difference, In the world, Don do you have a comment, A question?

Yeah, I don't know if you've done it, A little different way, I'm glad, There were people like that, In the way, Because, If everything in the bible said, When God said something, Everybody jumped, And said, We can kind of come back down, That wouldn't really have patience, Well, You're right, You're absolutely right, We've got a cross section, Of every kind of behavior, And every kind of personality, And every kind of flawed individual, That we, With whom we can identify, In so many ways, And that's just, That's just the nature, Of humanity guys, We're all cut from the same, Bull to cloth really, Joe, We just have to remember, Everything works together, To the good of those, Who love you, Yeah, But we don't, Recognize, Something that happened to us, As good for us, We just got to realize, All those things, Are good, They are, They are, And they often don't seem like it, At the time, We've talked a little bit, About Romans 8, 28, In the past, And it is that passage, Of scripture, That provides,

The perspective, That we all need, And we need to cling to that, And when you do, You are simply trusting the Lord, But the tendency is to think, Well, This Romans 8, 28 thing, Works for others, But it doesn't work for me, Because I'm an exception, You know, I'm different, No you're not, No you're not, You're just like all the rest of us, And you're just flawed, Like we are, And you are just, A recipient, Of the magnanimous, Grace of God, Like we all are, So, Hey guys, Appreciate you being here, Enjoy your breakfast, And, Can we consider, Jonah concluded, Is that okay?

John? Where are we going next? Chronologically, Well, I've got a list, But I don't have it with me, We'll be, We'll be partly on track, But, Yeah, We'll still be in the minor prophets, I mean, We've got 11 more to go, So, And by the time we get through them, You're all going to be, Reciting them perfectly, And you might even be, Singing them, Okay?

[34 : 56] Thanks to Randy Art.