



## Major Lessons from Minor Prophets Lesson 6 2Q 2013

### Eager to Forgive (Jonah)

#### SABBATH

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Read key thought: “The book of Jonah reveals, among other things, that God is more willing to forgive others than we often are.”

Thoughts about this?

Does it almost sound like God is willing to forgive – but not always willing, just more willing than us most of the time?

How do you understand forgiveness? What is it?

Is forgiveness and legal pardon the same? Do you get a different definition and understanding of forgiveness depending on which law, imposed or nature, you look through?

Have you been taught God forgives us?

Have you ever heard Jesus paid our sin penalty?

Is that confusing? If you owed someone \$10,000 and couldn't pay, and your brother stepped up and paid your \$10,000 debt, what would you think if the person to whom the money was paid, after receiving the money looked at you and said, “Now that your debt has been paid, I forgive you your debt.” How does that sound to you?

Do you notice many Christian theories put God in such a position – Jesus died to pay our debt, yet the Father forgives us our debt.... Something doesn't quite seem right does it? What is wrong with this picture?

What about Heb 9:22:

- In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (NIV)
- And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. (ASV)

Which do you like better? According to the lexicon the Greek translated either forgiveness or remission is:

ἄφεσις [*aphesis* /af-es-is/] n f. From 863; TDNT 1:509; TDNTA 88; GK 912; 17 occurrences; AV translates as “remission” nine times, “forgiveness” six times, “deliverance” once, and



“liberty” once. **1** release from bondage or imprisonment. **2** forgiveness or pardon, of sins (letting them go as if they had never been committed), remission of the penalty.<sup>1</sup>

So since it can be either, what makes the difference?

The law lens one looks through: If one looks through the imposed law then one sees legal payments, debts that need paid and thus forgiveness or pardon, but if one looks through the natural law, then one sees healing, or remission.

If someone has cancer we want the cancer to go into remission – to remit to their precancerous state. In regard to sin in our lives what do we want, mere pardon, or to have sin remit, have our characters healed and cleanse?

God forgives from his heart, without the death of Christ, but it took the death of Christ to have sin remit, to cleanse us to actually heal us.

Here is what one of the founders of our church wrote:

**But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose.** When God gives the promise that He "will abundantly pardon," He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:7-9. **God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin.** It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had **the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."** Psalm 51:10. And again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath **He removed our transgressions from us.**" Psalm 103:12. {MB 114.1}

Thoughts?

Then how do we understand 1John 1:9:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Is it like the first paragraph suggests, Jonah “suspected that these non-Hebrew people might repent of their sins and that God would forgive them.”

What about the idea the people might repent and God would forgive them?

What comes first, our repentance, or God’s forgiveness?

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<sup>1</sup> Strong, J. (2001). *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.



If we don't repent does God have a heart of forgiveness or unforgiveness?

So, are those who don't repent forgiven or unforgiven?

It depends upon which law lens and upon whose heart you are looking – the unrepentant are forgiven in the heart of God, but they remain unforgiven, i.e. unhealed, in their heart because they never received the forgiveness freely extended by God.

Consider those who crucified Christ – he forgave them, yet they remained his enemies; they weren't forgiven in their hearts, even though they were forgiven in God's heart.

This is critical to consider. The heart of paganism, and false Christianity, is that God doesn't forgive until some legal payment happens, Christ's blood, and then not until we repent. This is all a lie. God forgave us and thus sent Christ to lead us back to Him, but many refuse to repent. God's heart remains forgiving, but they remain terminal and unhealed.

Thoughts?

## **SUNDAY**

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Read second paragraph, "Nineveh was historically..." thoughts?

Would it help or hurt if we changed it to say instead of "Because God is the Lord of all nations and all people are accountable to Him..." to "Because God is the Lord of all nations and He loves all people..."?

What does the accountable to Him seem to focus on? What kind of ideas or feelings does this description engender?

Does it enhance your desire to be with God?

Remember the analogy of breaking both the laws of health and the government by doing IV heroin and getting endocarditis – do you want to go before the judge knowing he will hold you accountable? Do you want to go to the doctor? What makes the difference?

How do we portray God as a judge or doctor?

Which law is actually more powerful and uncompromising the law used by the judge or the law used by the doctor?

Read fifth paragraph, "Jonah ran from God..." thoughts?

Why do people run from God?



- Fear
- Guilt and shame
- Feel unworthy
- Believe lies about God
- Don't recognize a need
- Don't trust Him, He might want them to do something like go to Nineveh
- Don't want to give up some earthly pleasure
- Other?

What do you think of this rhetorical question, “After all, if there is no higher power to answer to, why not do whatever you want?”

What does this question imply?

What is the reason for doing right and avoiding wrong? Not because sin is inherently evil, not because sin damages, but because one must answer to God. And what if there were no God? Then, according to this logic, there is no reason not to do bad stuff because there isn't anyone ultimately to answer to.

So, if God could only get a grip on his anger and wrath, we could live fine for all eternity in sin, because there isn't anything wrong with sin there is something wrong with God – this is SATANs argument and position.

Why don't we do whatever we want? The ceremonial laws were done away with at the Cross so why don't we eat whatever we want? Because the laws of health were not done away with.

The reason we do not do whatever we want is because selfishness violates God's design for life, his law, and automatically damages the sinner, sears the conscience, warps the character and leads to fear, anxiety, inflammatory states and ultimately ruined relationships, health and death. Sin is incompatible with the way God constructed life to operate.

But this question makes it sound like if we could just get God out of the way then we could do whatever we want. And many theologies are based on this very thing –

- Jesus is my substitute, all my sins past present and future are laid on him and he stands before the Father and takes the punishment for me.
- Or, Jesus pleads his blood to the Father in my behalf,
- or Jesus hides me with his robe of righteousness –

In other words, all these theologies are designed to take God out of the picture because we believe falsely that if He was in the picture He would strike out against us. This is Satan's view based on imposed law constructs.

Bottom pink section states, “We believe that God not only sees all that we do but knows ever our thoughts... How differently would you act if, at all times, you were keenly sensitive to the fact that God does know your every thought?”



Thoughts?

Is this a comforting or disturbing thought?

Does it depend on the kind of being you understand God to be?

If one views God as a God of stern justice, who must impose punishment for disobedience, what would likely be the response of realizing God reads all of our thoughts?

What if one viewed God as the Creator, who built his universe to operate upon the law of love, and doesn't ever inflict punishment, but is constantly seeking to heal and restore all deviations from his design for life back into harmony for our good and happiness?

## **MONDAY**

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Read first paragraph, "In Jonah 1..." thoughts?

What do you think of the idea of casting lots? Doesn't this passage give us a clear Biblical example of using lots? The Bible said it, I believe it, that's all there is to it – right or wrong?

In what ways are lots used today?

- Coin toss
- Drawing straws
- Opening Bible randomly and pointing finger in and believing it is a message from God
- Paper with yes and no on either side and drop it
- Dice
- Rock paper scissors
- Magic 8 ball

Casting lots and these other methods are a form of divination – a form of trying to determine answers without use of reason or investigation of evidence. This is the same root method of spiritualism –

- Ouija board
- Tarot cards
- Palm reading
- Astrology

All trying to get knowledge, answers, without using their reasoning powers and/or investigating the evidence, and without using their God-given individuality in self-determination.

These methods seek to turn off the higher faculties and surrender one's responsibility to some other party or method.



Here is what one of our founders said:

Let none be led **from the sound, sensible principles** that God has laid down for the guidance of His people, to depend for direction on any such device as the tossing up of a coin. **Such a course is well pleasing to the enemy of souls; for he works to control the coin**, and through its agency works out his plans. Let none be so easily deceived as to place confidence in any such tests. Let none belittle **their experience** by resorting to cheap devices **for direction in important matters connected with the work of God.** {6BC 1054.7}

**The Lord works in no haphazard way.** Seek Him most earnestly in prayer. He will impress the mind, and will give tongue and utterance. **The people of God are to be educated not to trust in human inventions and uncertain tests as a means of learning God's will concerning them.** Satan and his agencies are always ready to step into any opening to be found that will lead souls away from the **pure principles** of the Word of God. The people who are led and taught of God will give no place to devisings for which there is not a "Thus saith the Lord" (SpT, Ser. B, No. 17, p. 28). {6BC 1054.8}

**I have no faith in casting lots.** We have in the Bible a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in regard to all church duties. . . . Read your Bibles with much prayer. **Do not try to humble others, but humble yourselves** before God, and **deal gently with one another. To cast lots for the officers of the church is not in God's order** (Letter 37, 1900). {6BD 1054.9}

Thoughts?

## TUESDAY

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The lesson points out that in Jonah chapter 2 Jonah celebrates deliverance from the perilous depths.

Many stories in the Bible are recorded there because they not only have historical context, but also are themselves metaphors of God's plan of redemption.

- The children of Israel in bondage in Egypt, metaphor for humans in bondage to sin.
- Moses a deliverer, represents Christ our deliverer etc. etc.
- Manna from heaven represents Jesus, the bread of life
- All the miracle births representing Jesus:
  1. Sarah- Isaac – Mount Moriah willing to be sacrificed
  2. Rebekah – Jacob – who became Israel the father of the nation built upon twelve sons, Jesus the cornerstone of the church built upon twelve apostles
  3. Rachel – Joseph – who sold into slavery (becomes a servant), became ruler to save people from famine, Jesus humbled himself to be a servant but is exalted to be ruler
  4. Monoah's wife – Samson – blessed with strength to deliver Israel from bondage of oppressors and rule over them, Jesus has the strength to deliver us from sin and rule the universe
  5. Hannah- Samuel – who became High Priest, Jesus is our High Priest
  6. Shunammite woman – child died and resurrected, of course Jesus died and rose again



7. Elizabeth – John the Baptist – who greatest of prophets, and Jesus was the greatest of all prophets

What about Jonah any application of his experience to a larger reality?

- Called by God
- Ignore God's call and does own thing
- Experiences storms of life
- Tries to hide from reality
- Reality finds him/you anyway
- Find self sinking into the depths out of control
- God steps in to help, to deliver, but perhaps seen as terrifying and destructive, being consumed or destroyed, but God carries you through the dark days where you languish in reflection
- Leads to repentance
- God returns one to self-governance, autonomy, puts you back on mission for Him

Thoughts?

Has anyone gone through experiences in which difficulties brought them closer to God?

## WEDNESDAY

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Read Jonah 3:1-5:

Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: <sup>2</sup>“Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”

<sup>3</sup>Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days. <sup>4</sup>On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.” <sup>5</sup>The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

Thoughts?

What do you think of this evangelistic style? Why do you think it worked?

Do you think the preaching was accompanied by the work of the Holy Spirit which brings conviction of sin?

When the Ninevites repented, do we have any record of them engaging in sacrifice?

How is it God was able to turn from his anger, from their destruction when no sacrifice was offered, no blood, no animal, no temple service, no atonement service?



Where did their sin go? Didn't their sin have to be placed on a lamb, and then that sin be transferred to the sanctuary and then at the end of the year have that sin removed by a special service?

What does this story tell us about some of the things we have been taught or assume regarding how sin is dealt with by God?

Were animal sacrifices necessary for salvation, even in OT times? What was necessary in all times?

Repentance, change of heart, turning away from selfishness and opening the heart to God to heal and restore in love and righteousness.

What did the Ninevites do? They repented and turned away from evil.

Why do so many get caught up into ritualistic religions and fail to see the real matter, what is the condition and quality of the heart/character?

How many religious wars are started over transformation of character, in other words people fighting because those people are too kind, patient, generous, loving, meek, self-controlled etc.?

How many religious wars were fought over rituals, rites, and theological ideas? It doesn't matter that they are kind, loving, patient, etc. they still haven't been baptized in the right way, or they don't take the right communion, or worship on the right day...

## **THURSDAY**

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Read first paragraph, "Jonah 4 reveals..." thoughts?

What does this tell us? Any other examples of people used by God who had serious problems in their lives?

- Abraham polygamist and liar
- Jacob liar and cheat
- Moses murderer
- Rahab prostitute
- Samson philanderer
- David polygamist and murderer
- Solomon polygamist and worshiper of Moloch
- Peter impetuous and selfish
- Martin Luther prejudice against the Jews.

Is there a lesson for us regarding how we treat people and God's attitude toward people's usefulness for his cause?



Is it possible that some of the best people in God's cause are those who have made the biggest sins and then repented?

- Saul who was a Pharisee of Pharisees, later called himself the chief of sinners?
- Peter after his denial
- Moses after the murder –

Is it possible it is after these mistakes, where our own human strength has failed us, that we are brought to repentance and lose confidence in self and depend more fully in God and thus are much more useful to God?

The third paragraph states, "He could not control his desire for vengeance. He was small-minded and ill-tempered."

Do we today have people who prefer to see the wicked die in the end, the wicked suffer in flames and long for God to stick it to them? Who long for God to take vengeance on them?

Is such an attitude Godly?

## FRIDAY

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Question 1 states "The book of Jonah teaches that God is in full control of nature."

Does the book of Jonah teach this? Would you say it differently?

Are there any events occurring in nature for which God is not in full control?

When Job's children were killed was it because God was in control of nature?

In Revelation 7, when the four angels let go the four winds and nature falls apart, is God in control of those tragic events?

- Nature is certainly sustained by God – but what happens when God withdraws? Can Satan affect nature?
- Can humans affect nature?
- What about Global warming? Is God in control of this?
- What about survival of the fittest and animals who are predators, if God were in full control of nature would animals kill each other?

Read question 2 – "But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?" Jonah 4:11

Thoughts? What lessons do we take from this insight into God's heart?  
Discuss question 3.