

## AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

### THE PROPHECY OF

# JONAH

Jonah was a native of Galilee, <sup><24></sup>2 Kings 14:25. His miraculous deliverance from out of the fish, rendered him a type of our blessed Lord, who mentions it, so as to show the certain truth of the narrative. All that was done was easy to the almighty power of the Author and Sustainer of life. This book shows us, by the example of the Ninevites, how great are the Divine forbearance and long-suffering towards sinners. It shows a most striking contrast between the goodness and mercy of God, and the rebellion, impatience, and peevishness of his servant; and it will be best understood by those who are most acquainted with their own hearts.

## CHAPTER 1

*Jonah, sent to Nineveh, flees to Tarshish. (1-3) He is stayed by a tempest. (4-7) His discourse with the mariners. (8-12) He is cast into the sea, and miraculously preserved. (13-17)*

### <sup><300></sup>Jonah 1:1

**Vs. 1-3:** It is sad to think how much sin is committed in great cities. Their wickedness, as that of Nineveh, is a bold and open affront to God. Jonah must go at once to Nineveh, and there, on the spot, cry against the wickedness of it. Jonah would not go. Probably there are few among us who would not have tried to decline such a mission. Providence seemed to give him an opportunity to escape; we may be out of the way of duty, and yet may meet with a favorable gale. The ready way is not always the right way. See what the best of men are, when God leaves them to themselves; and what need we have, when the word of the Lord comes to us, to have the Spirit of the Lord to bring every thought within us into obedience.

## Jonah 1:4


**Vs. 4-7:** God sent a pursuer after Jonah, even a mighty tempest. Sin brings storms and tempests into the soul, into the family, into churches and nations; it is a disquieting, disturbing thing. Having called upon their gods for help, the sailors did what they could to help themselves. Oh that men would be thus wise for their souls, and would be willing to part with that wealth, pleasure, and honor, which they cannot keep without making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and ruining their souls for ever! Jonah was fast asleep. Sin is stupefying, and we are to take heed lest at any time our hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of it. What do men mean by sleeping on in sin, when the word of God and the convictions of their own consciences, warn them to arise and call on the Lord, if they would escape everlasting misery? Should not we warn each other to awake, to arise, to call upon our God, if so be he will deliver us? The sailors concluded the storm was a messenger of Divine justice sent to some one in that ship. Whatever evil is upon us at any time, there is a cause for it; and each must pray, Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with me. The lot fell upon Jonah. God has many ways of bringing to light hidden sins and sinners, and making manifest that folly which was thought to be hid from the eyes of all living.

## Jonah 1:8

**Vs. 8-12:** Jonah gave an account of his religion, for that was his business. We may hope that he told with sorrow and shame, justifying God, condemning himself, and explaining to the mariners what a great God Jehovah is. They said to him, Why hast thou done this? If thou fearest the God that made the sea and the dry land, why wast thou such a fool as to think thou couldst flee from his presence? If the professors of religion do wrong, they will hear it from those who make no such profession. When sin has raised a storm, and laid us under the tokens of God's displeasure, we must consider what is to be done to the sin that raised the storm. Jonah uses the language of true penitents, who desire that none but themselves may fare the worse for their sins and follies. Jonah sees this to be the punishment of his iniquity, he accepts it, and justifies God in it. When conscience is awakened, and a storm raised, nothing will turn it into a calm but parting with the sin that caused the disturbance. Parting with our

money will not pacify the conscience, the Jonah must be thrown overboard.

 **Jonah 1:13**

**Vs. 13-17:** The mariners rowed against wind and tide, the wind of God's displeasure, the tide of his counsel; but it is in vain to think of saving ourselves any other way than by destroying our sins. Even natural conscience cannot but dread blood-guiltiness. And when we are led by Providence God does what he pleases, and we ought to be satisfied, though it may not please us. Throwing Jonah into the sea put an end to the storm. God will not afflict for ever, He will only contend till we submit and turn from our sins. Surely these heathen mariners will rise up in judgment against many called Christians, who neither offer prayers when in distress, nor thanksgiving for signal deliverances. The Lord commands all creatures, and can make any of them serve his designs of mercy to his people. Let us see this salvation of the Lord, and admire his power, that he could thus save a drowning man, and his pity, that he would thus save one who was running from him, and had offended him. It was of the Lord's mercies that Jonah was not consumed. Jonah was alive in the fish three days and nights: to nature this was impossible, but to the God of nature all things are possible. Jonah, by this miraculous preservation, was made a type of Christ; as our blessed Lord himself declared,  Matthew 12:40.

## CHAPTER 2

*The prayer of Jonah. (1-9) He is delivered from the fish. (10)*

### **Jonah 2:1**

**Vs. 1-9:** Observe when Jonah prayed. When he was in trouble, under the tokens of God's displeasure against him for sin: when we are in affliction we must pray. Being kept alive by miracle, he prayed. A sense of God's goodwill to us, notwithstanding our offenses, opens the lips in prayer, which were closed with the dread of wrath. Also, where he prayed; in the belly of the fish. No place is amiss for prayer. Men may shut us from communion with one another, but not from communion with God. To whom he prayed; to the Lord his God. This encourages even backsliders to return. What his prayer was. This seems to relate his experience and reflections, then and afterwards, rather than to be the form or substance of his prayer. Jonah reflects on the earnestness of his prayer, and God's readiness to hear and answer. If we would get good by our troubles, we must notice the hand of God in them. He had wickedly fled from the presence of the Lord, who might justly take his Holy Spirit from him, never to visit him more. Those only are miserable, whom God will no longer own and favor. But though he was perplexed, yet not in despair. Jonah reflects on the favor of God to him, when he sought to God, and trusted in him in his distress. He warns others, and tells them to keep close to God. Those who forsake their own duty, forsake their own mercy; those who run away from the work of their place and day, run away from the comfort of it. As far as a believer copies those who observe lying vanities, he forsakes his own mercy, and lives below his privileges. But Jonah's experience encourages others, in all ages, to trust in God, as the God of salvation.

### **Jonah 2:10**

**Vs. 10:** Jonah's deliverance may be considered as an instance of God's power over all the creatures. As an instance of God's mercy to a poor penitent, who in distress prays to him: and as a type and figure of Christ's resurrection. Amidst all our varying experiences, and the changing scenes of life, we should look by faith, fixedly, upon our once suffering and dying,

but now risen and ascended Redeemer. Let us confess our sins, consider Christ's resurrection as an earnest of our own, and thankfully receive every temporal and spiritual deliverance, as the pledge of our eternal redemption.

## CHAPTER 3

*Jonah sent again to Nineveh, preaches there. (1-4) Nineveh is spared upon the repentance of the inhabitants. (5-10)*

### <B>Jonah 3:1

**Vs. 1-4:** God employs Jonah again in his service. His making use of us is an evidence of his being at peace with us. Jonah was not disobedient, as he had been. He neither endeavored to avoid hearing the command, nor declined to obey it. See here the nature of repentance; it is the change of our mind and way, and a return to our work and duty. Also, the benefit of affliction; it brings those back to their place who had deserted it. See the power of Divine grace, for affliction of itself would rather drive men from God, than draw them to him. God's servants must go where he sends them, come when he calls them, and do what he bids them; we must do whatever the word of the Lord commands. Jonah faithfully and boldly delivered his errand. Whether Jonah said more, to show the anger of God against them, or whether he only repeated these words again and again, is not certain, but this was the purport of his message. Forty days is a long time for a righteous God to delay judgments, yet it is but a little time for an unrighteous people to repent and reform in. And should it not awaken us to get ready for death, to consider that we cannot be so sure that we shall live forty days, as Nineveh then was that it should stand forty days? We should be alarmed if we were sure not to live a month, yet we are careless though we are not sure to live a day.

### <B>Jonah 3:5

**Vs. 5-10:** There was a wonder of Divine grace in the repentance and reformation of Nineveh. It condemns the men of the gospel generation, <B>Matthew 12:41. A very small degree of light may convince men that humbling themselves before God, confessing their sins with prayer, and turning from sin, are means of escaping wrath and obtaining mercy. The people followed the example of the king. It became a national act, and it was necessary it should be so, when it was to prevent a national ruin. Let even the brute creatures' cries and moans for want of food remind their owners to cry to God. In prayer we must cry mightily, with fixedness of

thought, firmness of faith, and devout affection. It concerns us in prayer to stir up all that is within us. It is not enough to fast for sin, but we must fast from sin; and, in order to the success of our prayers, we must no more regard iniquity in our hearts, ~~Ex~~ Psalm 66:18. The work of a fast-day is not done with the day. The Ninevites hoped that God would turn from his fierce anger; and that thus their ruin would be prevented. They could not be so confident of finding mercy upon their repentance, as we may be, who have the death and merits of Christ, to which we may trust for pardon upon repentance. They dared not presume, but they did not despair. Hope of mercy is the great encouragement to repentance and reformation. Let us boldly cast ourselves down at the footstool of free grace, and God will look upon us with compassion. God sees who turn from their evil ways, and who do not. Thus he spared Nineveh. We read of no sacrifices offered to God to make atonement for sin; but a broken and a contrite heart, such as the Ninevites then had, he will not despise.

## CHAPTER 4

*Jonah repines at God's mercy to Nineveh, and is reproved. (1-4)  
He is taught by the withering of a gourd, that he did wrong. (5-11)*

### <img alt="decorative icon" data-bbox="102 204 135 226"/> **Jonah 4:1**

**Vs. 1-4:** What all the saints make matter of joy and praise, Jonah makes the subject of reflection upon God; as if showing mercy were an imperfection of the Divine nature, which is the greatest glory of it. It is to his sparing, pardoning mercy, we all owe it that we are out of hell. He wishes for death: this was the language of folly, passion, and strong corruption. There appeared in Jonah remains of a proud, uncharitable spirit; and that he neither expected nor desired the welfare of the Ninevites, but had only come to declare and witness their destruction. He was not duly humbled for his own sins, and was not willing to trust the Lord with his credit and safety. In this frame of mind, he overlooked the good of which he had been an instrument, and the glory of the Divine mercy. We should often ask ourselves, Is it well to say thus, to do thus? Can I justify it? Do I well to be so soon angry, so often angry, so long angry, and to give others ill language in my anger? Do I well to be angry at the mercy of God to repenting sinners? That was Jonah's crime. Do we do well to be angry at that which is for the glory of God, and the advancement of his kingdom? Let the conversion of sinners, which is the joy of heaven, be our joy, and never our grief.

### <img alt="decorative icon" data-bbox="102 684 135 705"/> **Jonah 4:5**

**Vs. 5-11:** Jonah went out of the city, yet remained near at hand, as if he expected and desired its overthrow. Those who have fretful, uneasy spirits, often make troubles for themselves, that they may still have something to complain of. See how tender God is of his people in their afflictions, even though they are foolish and forward. A thing small in itself, yet coming seasonably, may be a valuable blessing. A gourd in the right place may do us more service than a cedar. The least creatures may be great plagues, or great comforts, as God is pleased to make them. Persons of strong passions are apt to be cast down with any trifle that crosses them, or to be lifted up with a trifle that pleases them. See what our



creature-comforts are, and what we may expect them to be; they are withering things. A small worm at the root destroys a large gourd: our gourds wither, and we know not what is the cause. Perhaps creature-comforts are continued to us, but are made bitter; the creature is continued, but the comfort is gone. God prepared a wind to make Jonah feel the want of the gourd. It is just that those who love to complain, should never be left without something to complain of. When afflicting providences take away relations, possessions, and enjoyments, we must not be angry at God. What should especially silence discontent, is, that when our gourd is gone, our God is not gone. Sin and death are very dreadful, yet Jonah, in his heat, makes light of both. One soul is of more value than the whole world; surely then one soul is of more value than many gourds: we should have more concern for our own and others' precious souls, than for the riches and enjoyments of this world. It is a great encouragement to hope we shall find mercy with the Lord, that he is ready to show mercy. And murmurers shall be made to understand, that how willing soever they are to keep the Divine grace to themselves and those of their own way, there is one Lord over all, who is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. Do we wonder at the forbearance of God towards his perverse servant? Let us study our own hearts and ways; let us not forget our own ingratitude and obstinacy; and let us be astonished at God's patience towards us.