

SERMON PREACHED BY MR. L.S.B. HYDE AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL,
LEATHERHEAD, ON LORD'S DAY AFTERNOON, 3rd JANUARY, 1965

TEXT: JONAH 3 - 1 & 2 vv

"And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

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This text should be sufficient for men to realise that if they are God's servants they should go in the strength of the Lord, and be dependent upon Him for the preaching that shall be preached at that time. Jonah we may look upon as a man who knew the wonderful truth of this, (and yet he was overcome by his own spirit) because he knew that if God gave him the preaching that he was to preach, it would be successful. We may sometimes bring ourselves into a great deal of cross-examination as to why the word is not prospering. Well, it is as prosperous as the Lord will make it to be.

How often does God take some of those characters that are most unworthy to bring forth some of His greatest works. I venture to feel that when Jonah, at this second time of asking, went to preach to the Ninevites, he never felt himself a greater sinner than he did then. He had known something, not only of inward sins in more general things, but he had disobeyed God's voice. He had cast aside God's voice to such an extent that he had determined to go his own way, and not preach the gospel. It is a very solemn thing for any man to do this, when God has commanded him to go and preach the gospel to every creature. But should we come across those people, and we do sometimes, who are in this very place, may the Lord help us to remember the case of Jonah. He was in that place where he went another way, rather than go and preach what God had commanded him to preach. Let us be assured of this that whenever any man is the servant of God, because he says, I will not go and preach that preaching, it does not mean to say that God's intention has altered, but what is entailed is this that God has to deal with the man and bring him into the place where he is made willing in the day of God's power.

Therefore, we find God patiently dealing with Jonah. He does not thrash him into this, but he brings him into such a place where he is condemned in his own spirit, and the time comes when, having been through that painful experience, yet that blessed experience, in the fish's belly, he is now thrown up upon the dry land, and then this word came unto Jonah the second time. And it may be that the word of God has come to us this afternoon for the second time. Whatever that word may be it is not known to me, but it will be known to you whether the word of God has come to you the second time. If it has done so, then you will remember the first time and your reactions then, and whether there was anything

in respect of God's commandment concerning you, which is like unto Jonah's attitude when he booked a passage to Tarshish. You see, friends, sometimes when God's ordinances come before us, and the question of obeying His commands comes before us, we are intent to go in the opposite direction, as though we would make sure as far as we can that God's command will not be attended to. But, you see, how many times over the years and through the ages, has God come and spoken the second time. He did not come to Jonah the second time and say to him, well perhaps what I commanded you on the first occasion was a bit high, now you go, and you can go a little more softly. No, He came to him a second time, and He gave him the same mission. And we shall find it has not been altered the second time one iota from the first.

Now, says God to Jonah: "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. "What an important word is this word 'arise'. We shall find instances in the Scriptures where God spoke to people to 'Arise', who were lame and weak in their limbs. We may call to mind the case of Peter and John standing before the man who was begging alms outside the Temple. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee, In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk" (Acts 3.6v). And the record tells us that the man immediately arose. It is worth while considering when God speaks to us to arise. Sometimes we may have to wait a long time before God says to us, Arise. It may be that we shall be tempted that we have to arise before God says so, and there may be very many tempting providences which may come along and say, Well now, there is an opportunity you are missing, you must arise. But when you attempt to get up, if you do attempt it, perhaps you have felt like I have on these occasions paralyzed, as it were, and unable to move at all. But, you see, when God speaks to us and says Arise, He will give us strength and He will give us power.

During years of exercise myself concerning the preaching of the gospel, and after God had made one or two things very clear, God spoke, I believe, three definite words to me in respect to the preaching of the gospel, and the last one was this: "Thou therefore, gird up thy loins and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces lest I confound thee before them, For behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." (Jeremiah 1. 17-19vv). And, you know, friends, when God spoke to me those words, He communicated strength, and I was able to arise, and I knew the time had come. If God makes the way, there will be many enemies rise up to stop it, but they could not stop it then, because God had said, Arise.

And not only did He say, Arise, but He said, Go. So that, when there was a rising there was also to be a walking. If this had not been so, then we may presume something like this, that he could have arisen and stood just where he was, but God said: Arise and go. Another part of the Scripture just comes to our mind, recorded in the Prophecy of Isaiah: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isaiah 60.1v). How often you have been unable to arise because you have sat in darkness, but when God comes and He says unto thee, Arise, then you can. O, you say, I cannot arise because of the darkness which is round about me; I cannot see where I am going. But God says: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. And what is the light of the people of God? The Lord Jesus Christ said: "I am the light of the world" - the light of the people of God. Has He shone upon us? Have we seen the things of God in His light? Then it is that we are able to venture forward.

Now then, says God, "Arise, go unto Nineveh". And we shall not go alone; we shall not go at our own charges, because this is the commandment of God. "Arise, go unto Nineveh".

Now, there is another point that we have to notice here, that God had the appointment. And you know, we may live to bless God that we can see a similar word in respect to our coming here this afternoon. If we should feel such a word to "Arise, go" (not to Nineveh, but to Leatherhead), may not we hope that God has sent us here for a purpose, and that you will benefit, if not this afternoon, perhaps at some later date? Then we should feel that we are under the directing hand of God. Where the ministers of God go, if they are rightly exercised, they want to feel that God has sent them to that place, that they have not made a personal selection, but God has said: "Go unto Nineveh". And this is what He said unto Jonah. So we see that though Jonah was to arise, he was not to do any thinking at all, but he was to listen only for one thing: "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isaiah 30.21v). If that were more in our lives how much better it would be. If we were preserved from making our own plans, our own decisions, what a lot of trouble we should be saved from.

"Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city". Nineveh was a well-known city in those days, a great city. It was prosperous, and rich. And you know what happens in prosperity, and when riches increase. The Scripture tells us this, and we have need to take heed to it: "When riches increase, set not thine heart upon them" (Psalm 62.10v). And the Scripture does not say these things for nothing, you know. The Scripture, when it puts such a thing before us, indicates this, that when riches increase there is one thing that we are most likely to do, and that is, set our heart upon them. And God warns us about it. And in the same way, Nineveh was a great city, a prosperous city. We read in the Proverbs: "Give me neither poverty nor riches ... lest I forget God" (30.8v).

Though we do not read a great deal about Nineveh, we read sufficient to show us that in all their prosperity they had forgotten God. Some people may say, Well, of course, I will never forget God, I have always been accustomed to worship God, and come to the House of God on the Lord's Day. But we can do this, and still forget God. Some of you know, as well as I know, that though we have been in the House of God, we have been doing tomorrow's business, or working out last week's problems, and so we have sat in the House of God with a solemn face, looking as though we were drinking in the truths of God, and all the time we were doing nothing of the sort. In other words, although we sat in the House of God, we had forgotten God, and this is one of the dangers of prosperity. We shall need to be kept from this danger, and who can preserve us from it but God?

The people of Nineveh were surrounded with prosperity, and there was no fear of God before their eyes, yet God had to them a purpose of love and mercy. And God had a prophet whom He had singled out, and because he had singled him out, He had given him a special training so that when he went to these Ninevites, and saw them steeped in their idolatries, buried in wickedness, he would not be in that position where he would say, It is no use preaching the gospel here; these people are in a dreadful state, they will never listen. Well, you know, friends, how essential it is, under such circumstances, that God should specially prepare a man. And how does He prepare a man to meet people like that? Well, the way He prepared Jonah was that He showed Jonah what he was himself; He showed him what a desperate sinner he was; He showed him that he was equally rebellious, though he had a religious outside. And so you see, whilst God led him in a strange way, it was to bring him to one conclusion, which I believe if he had ever diverted from before, he never diverted from afterwards - "Salvation is of the Lord". And when God shows that to you and to me, when He shows you that salvation is only of Him, it is not by works of righteousness that we have done. - it will show us this that God is able to save the most outrageous character in the streets this afternoon, as well as you and me. God is able to do it, and if God should come to some of His servants and begin to prepare them in this way, begin to show them the depth of their own iniquity, perhaps lead them in some strange providential circumstances, it is but to prepare them and make them preach the free and full salvation that God is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

And so we find Jonah being commanded of God to arise and go unto Nineveh, that great city. And he was to preach. He was not to preach what he thought, he was to preach what God gave him to preach at that time, and he was to begin to preach when God told him to begin to preach, and not a moment before. Sometimes we lose sight of all these things, you know. We lose sight of them. Although we say we are not our own, how often we make our own plans, and we say we will go to such a place at such a time, but, you know, friends,

it will be a mercy if we are enabled to consider some of these things. I know perhaps you may feel that the words this afternoon seem to be more directed at preachers of the gospel, and for that reason I cannot understand why God has bidden me to preach this this afternoon, but there are also other versions, there are parallels in your life. It perhaps does not concern preaching of the gospel, but it does concern certain things, though on the other hand it may concern the preaching of the gospel. You see, friends, the preaching of the gospel is not always confined to those men who may go as ordained to stand in the pulpit. I believe that people, every one of God's people, are preachers of righteousness, and they preach righteousness as they go about from day to day, as they go about their business transactions, as they deal with their neighbours. There is much in the Scriptures about these things, and we need a great deal of grace for them. Arise, go and preach in your daily lives that which I shall bid thee. And this may bring us into strange circumstances sometimes, because you know, friends, the preaching which God bids a man to preach, even as he stands in the pulpit sometimes, it does not make sense, if I can put it that way - he comes out of the pulpit feeling absolutely demoralized sometimes, or very near to it, because he seems to have preached one of the worst sermons. And we shall need this consolation sometimes to feel that though it has been a poor sermon, though it has been disconnected in many ways, yet it is the preaching that God has bid us preach at that time.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness. And how did he preach? He did not stand in a pulpit, but he kept on day by day pressing on with that task of building the ark. And there was not any persuasion. Preaching is not persuasion, you know. It is setting before the people the truth of God as God inspires them to speak at that time. We may be very discouraged sometimes about our way of going on. Perhaps some of us have been very exercised respecting our own profession. I can go back a few years now (I do not want to press my own experience upon you), and I was under great exercise because I feared that my light was not shining before men. And I seemed to be so afraid, that if anything might have been mentioned which perhaps would involve me in some religious argument, my tendency was either to say nothing, or quietly disappear. And these things, of course, were the outcome of weakness. There was something in me that wanted to do that which was right - make a good profession - but there was also something in me which was weak through the flesh. Well the days went by, and the time came when unexpectedly and suddenly I became involved in certain things which happened at my place of business. And to my astonishment I began to speak of the things of the Scriptures, and in some respects how God had taught me concerning them, and the person bringing the argument was quoting and bringing his arguments from a very well-known Atheist of the last Century. Some of the questions I was unable to answer, and I asked him to give me time. But this is the point I want to come to. How God has a time to prove all things. The next day, after some exercise, I had found the answer from the Scriptures. Now I met this man

the next day, and of course, he was anxious to know the answer. This involved getting out my Bible in the midst of the office, a thing that I had dared not do for many a long year. And there, without any qualms, without any difficulties, without any embarrassment, I got out my Bible, because I believe at that time the Spirit of the Lord came upon me and strengthened me with His might in my inner man. May this serve to show in this connection how the Lord can help us in our daily lives.

"Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee". This may be in the pulpit, or more generally, as we go about our business from day to day. We are concerned because we have not been preachers of righteousness as we ought to have been; we have not carried our Bible under our arm, so to speak. You have heard the voice of Satan saying, You do not think you are much of a Christian, look at these other people that are about you, they deliver tracts and all that sort of thing, and look at you. Well, friends, if we are the children of God, we are daily meeting with people. Our daily walk, our daily conversation, if it is to be prosperous, let us be sure of this that we preach the preaching that God shall bid us at that particular time. The Scripture says that it shall be given thee in that hour what ye shall speak, and certainly it shall be in our daily lives, because we do not know what is going to come into our lives, we do not know whom we are going to meet in the course of the day, to whom we may have to speak a word in season. But what a mercy if when suddenly a circumstance comes into our lives we should hear this word: "Arise, go to Nineveh".

Our immediate reaction is this: This is ridiculous; this people is ungodly; it is no use going to Nineveh. You know, friends, if we say that, God will speak unto us the second time: "Arise, and go to that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Now, just for a few moments, What is the preaching that God bids His servants preach? God is in one mind in this matter, and though we may indeed discover diversities in preachers, as we may see John and James, sons of thunder, we may also see Barnabas, equally a servant of God, a son of consolation. Yet nevertheless, God will teach all and sundry and bid them to preach the same things. Though it may be in different ways, yet the preaching will be the same, whether it be the preaching of thunder, or whether it be the preaching of consolation. Sometimes God raises up men to preach thunderings, warnings to the wicked. He raises up men such as George Whitefield, and uses them specially in the calling of many sinners to repentance. But, you see, friends, He does not make George Whitefield a Pastor, He does not bring him as under-shepherd over the Church of God in order that they may be nourished and built up in their most holy faith. That does not mean that because God did not send George Whitefield to be a Pastor of the flock of God that He did not send him to do the work which he did.

"Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee". The preaching that I bid thee.

That is, that which is spoken inside, so to speak, moving our spirits, and we feel it is God's word. This is what I bid you to speak at this time. There will be cause for a deep reverence for God. Sometimes I have trembled in my spirit when I have read that word in the Scriptures: "Know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost?" To feel that God is dwelling in our spirits - a very solemn consideration, is it not, especially when we realise that we are such great sinners as we are.

God sent Jonah to preach unto Nineveh the preaching that He bade him. On this particular occasion there is little doubt that he preached what he had experienced. His experience, as we have already noticed, was an extreme experience. He had run away from God. In other words, he had virtually finished with his preaching, but he did not get very far. And what a mercy it is that when the people of God sometimes in our day have come to the place where they have said as one in the Scriptures did: I will not call on His Name any more, they do not get very far. If you are in a despairing case this afternoon, you will not get very far, if you are God's child. One of old John Warburton's members at Trowbridge was in a despairing case on one occasion, and she went to the Pastor, and she said: Mr. Warburton, you will have to cross my name off the Church book. And after making one or two enquiries, he replied, Very well, but you have got to promise me one thing - that you will never call upon the Name of God any more. But the woman could not give that assurance, she knew that the Name of God meant so much, and that the Name of Jesus Christ meant so much, and prayer meant so much to her then, though she had got to that desperate place where she had said, I will call on His Name no more.

When a man is called to preach the gospel, he cannot remain silent indefinitely. It is like something burning in his bones, and he must come forth. But why did God put Jonah in this place? He had to teach him something. He had to show him what a great sinner he was. He had to show him the extent of His wonderful mercy to sinners. Now, He says, you go to some of these terrible people in Nineveh, and you will be able to preach to them as you never could before. We may perhaps view him as we may view some in our denomination today, and when I say this I have nobody in mind. You may say, O well, we could not preach to them, we always preach to the people of God, the people in these four walls. We feel we can preach to them. I know, but God is able to save, and does, and I have been sometimes (more recently, than formerly) severely exercised concerning that Scripture: "The hypocrites in Zion shall tremble". The hypocrites in Zion, not the hypocrites outside, not those people that you look upon as hypocrites. But the hypocrites in Zion shall tremble. Now, God alone can make these people different. God's people sometimes have been very concerned, and perhaps you have been concerned, lest you should afterwards be found to be a hypocrite. Mingling with the people of God, but having this spirit which God hates, "Come not near to me; for I am holier than thou" (Isaiah 65.5v). But, you know, friends, God can change all that, and God does change all that. He deals with the man or woman or child individually. It is not done by persuasion, but

God prepares them, and shows them their hypocrisy, as well as showing them that He can save sinners deep in vice and sinfulness. And this is one of the things that Jonah had to learn, that God was able to save some of those wicked people outside, in that city which was entirely given up to idolatry, which had never known the preaching of the prophet before. But God said, as He said to Paul, "I have much people there." We have only to read the opening chapters of Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, to discover they way they went on after they had been called by grace, to see what a hot-bed of wickedness and vice Paul was sent to. Paul had to be strengthened, and God strengthened him. Jonah had to be strengthened, and God strengthened him. To Paul, He said: "Be not afraid, I have much people in that city." You cannot see them; you look upon them and you feel they are all lost. I have got much people there, and I am going to bring them in, and I am going to save them, and I am going to send you unto them. And this is just what he said to Jonah. He was going to use Jonah - that rebellious person who would have been struck off the Church books, but God did not strike him off. He said, I am going to use you. You will go in deep humility; you will go with this knowledge, that I am able to save the vilest and the worst of sinners. And this was to be the burden of his preaching.

"And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." He did not go like some people would have gone, from door to door, and say: Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? He did not do that at all, but he told these people what their sins were bringing them into, and how God's eye was upon them, and how God would deal with them in forty days, if they did not repent. Well, you might say, it does not say that in the Scripture here. Well, how did they know about the repentance if they had not heard Jonah preach it? This is how Jonah began: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." You know, friends, if a man is sent of God to preach the gospel, that he may warn the wicked, he is bound to show also that repentance is an important feature of God's work. "Repent, therefore". And these people humbled themselves in sackcloth and ashes from the king downwards. He put off his fine garments, and he put on sackcloth - the same garment as the poorest peasant. And this is what real religion will do for anybody, it will put all on a level. It does not matter whether you are a wealthy person, or the poorest person in the parish, it will put you all on a level under the preaching of the gospel.

"Preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." One can well imagine that in Jonah's heart there was much enmity concerning this, and Satan trying to move him to stop his mouth, if possible. But what a mercy that power belongeth unto God. And God is determined that the preaching shall be preached on every occasion, preaching that shall come into the hearts of sinners, preaching that shall come into their hearts so that they have hope, so that they are justified in Jesus Christ, and called. "The preaching that I shall bid thee". You know, this is very important that God should bid us how to preach, and what to preach, as we come to the House of God

this afternoon. Your hearts are open before Him; they are not open before me. And I may make a very grave mistake if I should be left to myself to select a word of Scripture, and should say, Now that will fit that congregation; well, that is just what they want. You know, friends, it might be the very last thing they want. What a mercy it is for us to be preserved from that, and to preach the preaching that God bids us. God leads His people about in strange ways sometimes. It has been known - and some of you may be living witnesses to this - where people, very often in their earlier days, in what we may call their seeking days, more particularly, they come to the House of God, and they want God to confirm a word. They have even asked God sometimes to direct the servant of God to a certain text to preach from. And God can deal with this, and He does it just as He did with Jonah, and He says: "Preach unto them the preaching that I bid thee", and take the text that I shall tell you to take, no matter how strange it may seem. You see, friends, we do not have to ask questions. Where there is confidence in our Master, though we as servants be commanded to do strange things, our very confidence in our Master will prevent us from asking questions. Have you had that experience? Have you sometimes come into the House of God, and there has been a burden upon your spirit, and you have come and said: Lord, there is that word on which Thou hast caused me to hope, O that it might be confirmed in the discourse today, in the services of Thy House today? How is the poor preacher going to find things out? God knows. And if God fulfil such a matter in your experience, what are you going to do? What is going to be the reaction? It is going to be exactly the same as it was in the case of these Ninevites. We do not read here that the people of Nineveh believed Jonah, but the people of Nineveh believed God. And this is just what will happen to you when God uses a poor man sometimes to take a certain text, to repeat a certain text, or to go through a certain incident, in order that you may be confirmed, in order that God may assure you that He has known all about you, that He has known what your thoughts were, He has heard your prayer in heaven. And not only so, but He has given you faith to believe that God is able to do these things, and able to lead a man in such a way.

This goes to show how important it is that in the preaching of the gospel, God should bid us, God should tell us what to speak. My dear old Pastor, Mr. Windridge, used to say sometimes in private conversation that sometimes when he was in the pulpit he did not know what to say, but a voice spoke to him and said: Say that. And, you know, friends, that is just what preaching is. It is a poor man standing in the pulpit waiting for God to say: Say this, say that. Now, that was the testimony of an old preacher of many years' standing - he was over ninety - and that is just how he stood in the pulpit, waiting for God to whisper in his ear: Say that, say that. And that is just how we should be - dependent upon the Spirit of God. Why - God knows, but we do not understand. He is looking at all your hearts at this moment. He is discovering what is there. He knows for what you are looking up to Him. You may be saying even at this moment, Why, the sermon has gone over

the best part, and it is almost finished, and God has not spoken to me yet. Do not give up hope, while there are a few minutes left before the benediction; and who can tell but God in the closing prayer will answer your prayer.

"Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." You see, friends, this is first-hand, it is not second-hand. This is not the outcome of ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ - meditation - though we do not in any way speak against meditation. What do we mean by meditation? When ministers speak about meditation, what do they mean? Do they mean endeavouring to open up their subject in order that it might fit the congregation, might fit the hearers? Is it endeavouring to open up their subject in such a way, and even go so far and be so foolish as to think, Well, now if I say that it will suit Mr. So-and-so? Well, you know, God will soon deal with us in matters like that, and will show us that we cannot benefit people by such meditation as to how it is going to fit the people's cases. God is sovereign in this, and as the time goes on He shows us, O so clearly, that the servants of God have to preach the preaching that He bids them.

We received a letter at home only this week, and in it there was an account of a poor woman who wanted to know what to put on her son's grave stone. And after some prayer and exercise in the matter, there were three texts that she felt that she would like to have put on. But still being in trouble, she went to the House of God (I think it was an Anniversary Service at the time), and in the evening the servant of God mentioned each of these three verses. Now, you see, friends, that is what God does, and that is why it is so essential that man should preach the preaching which God bids him. And is not that why you want God's servants to preach the preaching which God bids them? It may be some circumstance in your life, as it was in this woman's. We do not always, although there are times when we do come to the House of God wanting to be confirmed in regard to the salvation of our soul. That is so sometimes, indeed it is, but there are other times when we are anxious to hear a word from God, such as we have already mentioned: "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way walk ye in it."

This is the way the people of God go forth, says the Lord: "I will hold thee by my right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not: I will help thee" (Isaiah 41.13v). Now, what more can you want if God takes you by the hand? It shows you that you are saved. He will lead you on, He will lead through the fires, and the flames shall not kindle upon you. What a mercy it is when God takes us by the right hand and leads us safely through.

Amen.

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