

“The Word of the LORD”
Jonah 1:1
(Preached at Trinity, October 4, 2015)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last week we began our journey through the Book of Jonah. God commands Jonah to go and preach to the Ninevites. It is a message of hope and mercy even in the midst of the warning of condemnation. God has dominion over all and demands obedience from all.
2. The primary focus here is upon Jonah and the message from God. He is receiving a direct charge from God. **Jonah 1:1 NAU** - "The word of the LORD came to Jonah "
 - A. It uses the Hebrew form, דְבַר־יְהוָה – “the Word of the LORD.” The phrase occurs 242 times in the OT; over 250 times in the Bible. It conveys God’s infallible Word to man. It is often used on prophet terms. This is a powerful charge to Jonah – “Arise, go to Nineveh”
 - B. The “Word of the LORD” is synonymous with the Bible – the Word of God, God’s revelation to man.
Acts 13:48-49 NAU - "When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region."
2 Thessalonians 3:1 NAU - "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you"
3. Tonight I want us to reflect on the glory of God’s revelation to man. It is a wonderful blessing. It is a marvelous condescension of God’s grace. God speaks to men.
 - I. The nature of Divine revelation
 - A. God is beyond His creation. He is transcendent
 1. **Verse 1** is amazing as we consider the nature of God – The Word of the Lord came to Jonah. In other words, God unveiled Himself and His will to Jonah.
 2. Human beings are gravely sinful in taking lightly our knowledge of the existence of God. This would be impossible had God not condescended to us by letting Himself be known. We have to understand that God is beyond our understanding. He cannot be defined by any human concept.
 3. Martin Luther described God as Deus absconditus – “the hidden God.” He is veiled from the human eye; He is hidden from the human comprehension.
 4. Herman Bavinck - “There is between God and man a distance as between the infinite and the finite, as between eternity and time, as between being and becoming, as between All in all and nothingness.”

5. God could have continued in His infinite eternal existence without revealing Himself to us and He would not have remained unknown. God exceeds the limits of human experience. He is beyond our comprehension. God exists outside our material existence.

6. Paul described God's transcendence:

Romans 11:33 NAU - "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"

The Greek word for "unfathomable" literally means, "something that cannot be traced out." The KJV translates it "past finding out."

B. Our knowledge of God is only possible because of God's revelation; because He has chosen to reveal Himself.

God has revealed Himself in various ways

1. The light of nature – God has left the mark of Himself upon the hearts of all men. We all have a conscience that tells us we have offended God
Romans 1:19 NAU - "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them."

2. The works of Creation

Romans 1:20 NAU - "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."

3. The works of Providence

Romans 2:4 NAU - "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?"

4. Through the prophets

Hebrews 1:1-2 NAU - "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."

In this period of prophetic history God spoke in various ways

Visions:

Gen. 15:1 NAU - "After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."

God spoke to Moses face to face:

Exodus 33:11 NAU - "Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. "

God sometimes spoke in an audible voice

1 Samuel 3:1-4 NAU - "Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli. And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent. ² It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim *and* he could not see *well*), ³ and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was, ⁴ that the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am."

Ezekiel 3:16-19 NAU - "At the end of seven days the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ¹⁷ "Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me. ¹⁸ "When I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ¹⁹ "Yet if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself."

We aren't told how God spoke to Jonah but it was unmistakable. He understood clearly God's command.

5. Finally, God has spoken through His Word – The Word of the Lord
Chapter 1; Of the Holy Scriptures

“The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto His church being now ceased.”

II. Jonah was receiving a manifestation of Divine truth.

- A. For Jonah it was, “thus saith the Lord.”

"The word of the LORD came to Jonah"

1. 413 times we read in the Bible, “Thus saith the Lord.”
2. God was revealing His Divine prerogative to Jonah. It was expressed by way of the imperative.

"Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it"

3. It was God's revealed will—or God's will revealed. The infinite mystery of God's sovereign will is hidden in the infinite mind of God. It is not for us to know. But His revealed will is for us.
Deuteronomy 29:29 NAU - "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."
 4. Jonah was rejecting the Word of God. He was rejecting God's clear sovereign determination in his life.
Jonah 1:3 NAU - "But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."
- B. Today we have God's full and complete revelation—God's revealed will.
1. It is Divine authority proceeding directly from the mouth of God carrying the infinite authority of the Almighty.
Matthew 4:4 NAS - "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"
 2. God's revealed will is given to us in written form and then God has sent His Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds to give us understanding.
 3. It comes to us as that which must be obeyed.
This is at the heart preaching
 - a. Paul told Timothy to "preach the Word" – always in command mode.
2 Timothy 4:2 NAU - "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."
 - b. Peter described it
1 Peter 1:24-25 NAS - "All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, ²⁵ But the word of the Lord abides forever." And this is the word which was preached to you."
- C. God's Word is absolute.
Isaiah 46:9-12 NAS - "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; ¹¹ Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned *it, surely* I will do it. ¹² "Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded"
1. To declare anything as being absolute today seems strange. We live in a culture that rejects absolutes. We want to be self-determining. God's Word is absolute. It is infallible. It is infinite, comprehensive truth.
 2. God's Word is driven by His infinite power. It carries infinite authority. It is absolute because God has the absolute power to accomplish it.
The Bible opens with this grand display:
Genesis 1:3 NAU - "Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light." God spoke, and it came to pass.
 3. As God commanded Jonah there is a solemn charge with an expectation of obedience. "The word of the LORD came to Jonah"

- III. God has been pleased to record His Word for us in written form
2 Timothy 3:16-17 NAU - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
- A. God's written Word has exactly the same authority as that spoken to Jonah
1. When we read from the pages of Scripture we must receive every word as coming with absolute authority
 - a. Far too many people find it too easy to dismiss the Word of God.
 - b. We find it too easy to climb on the next departing ship and flee from God's command.
 - c. Like Jonah, we will quickly find we cannot escape God's Word. We cannot escape its demands.
 2. God's Word will never fail. It will never be diminished.
- B. Satan has tried for centuries to destroy the Word of God without success
1. His infamous words to Eve, "Hath God said," continues to be his chief method today as he calls into question God's Word. Fallen men continue to drink from the cup of his lies, but God's Word will never be defeated.
 2. The Book may be burned but the truth shall abide
Psalm 117:2 – "For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD *endureth* for ever. Praise ye the LORD."
1 Peter 1:24-25 NAS - "All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, ²⁵ But the word of the Lord abides forever."
- C. God's Word will not be hindered from accomplishing God's divine purpose
Isaiah 55:11 NAS - "So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it."
1. The Word of God always prevails, is always victorious – It will always accomplish the will of God.
 2. It is not dependent upon our obedience. God's perfect will be accomplished.
 - a. We'll see this with Jonah. God gave Jonah His Word, the revelation of His will. Jonah rebelled against God's will. God could have raised up another. Instead, He showed mercy upon Jonah.
 - b. By the time we get to **Chapter 3** we'll find that God has arrested His servant Jonah and brought him to repentance.
Jonah 3:1 NAU - "Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time"
Jonah 3:3 NAU - "So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. "

Conclusion:

So what are the implications for us?

1. If the Bible is the word of God it is as if He is standing before us speaking.
"The word of the LORD came to Jonah "
2. If the Bible is Word of God, God speaking, it demands absolute obedience. Jonah would discover this truth.
3. If the Bible is the Word of God it speaks with absolute authority. There is no higher court, no greater place of appeal.
1689 London Baptist Confession, Chapter 1, Article 10
"The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved."
4. All of our social, ethical, and ecclesiastical controversies can be answered in this book – evolution, homosexuality, abortion, women in ministry – the answers are in this Book. Answers on how to have a strong marriage; how to raise your family; how to conduct yourself in the work place – all found in this Book, the "Word of the Lord."