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Daily Devotional - Friday, February 14, 2025 - A Lack of Love

FEBRUARY 14TH 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Who do you view as “the enemy”? In Jonah’s day, Assyria was Israel’s despised enemy. While the country was not as militarily strong as it had been or would become, it was still a threat. Assyria would conquer the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. As the *Moody Bible Commentary* summarizes: “Assyria was a hated and cruel nation. To bless them was to curse Israel in Jonah’s mind.”

So Jonah’s jaw likely hit the floor when God commanded him to prophesy to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria (vv. 1–2). He was tempted to disobey. Why? A lack of godly love. He knew that if he brought a message of judgment, the Assyrians might repent and then God might relent or even forgive them (Jonah 4:1–3). Frankly, he didn’t want that to happen. He preferred to see God’s judgment crush Israel’s enemies.

Jonah’s failure didn’t lie in misunderstanding the situation, but rather in not trusting the Lord and not imitating His grace and mercy. Jonah loved as normal humans do. We love our own group, our own people. But Israel was supposed to be a blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:3). And as Jesus preached in the Sermon on the Mount, our “neighbor” might be our enemy (Matt. 5:43–48). God’s love is far greater than human

love. Jonah knew that, but he chose the wrong direction.

Jonah fled in the opposite direction, directly disobeying God’s command (v. 3). What did he think would happen? After all, God is everywhere (Ps. 139:7–12). Did he really think he could stall or derail God’s plan? God could have given up on Jonah or sent another prophet. Instead, the same love that pursued the Assyrians pursued Jonah—via a storm and a pagan ship’s crew. The Lord showed grace and mercy to His sinful prophet.

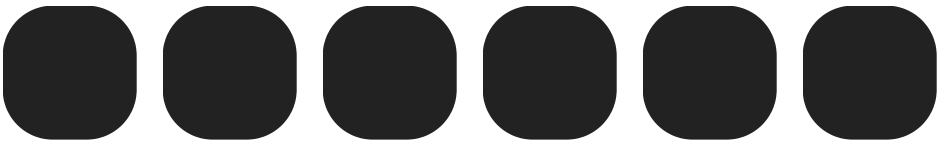
Why did Jonah resist God’s command? Why was it so difficult for him to preach to his enemy? What does this teach us?

Jesus, You tell us to love one another as You have loved us. Yet, we confess how difficult it is to care deeply for the well-being of others. Like Jonah, we are quick to judge. Show us the “Ninevites” You want us to reach.

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