



OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD
THE COMMITTED FANATICS
MAY 14-20, 2017

SERMON OUTLINE

The Committed Fanatics
Acts 9:1-31

How God Transforms a Stubborn Fanatic

The Persevering Pursuer . . .

1 Timothy 1:15-16
2Peter 3:8-10
Romans 2:4-5

Luke 19:10
Matthew 9:12-13

. . . Redeems and Redeploys a Persevering Preacher

Galatians 1:13-21

2Corinthians 11:24-27
Philippians 4:11-13

What do I need to do with what I have heard today?

MAIN POINT

God patiently waits for people to repent and for His servants to obey.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

1. Describe a time when you struggled to learn something (a subject in school, a new skill, etc.). How did your teacher or instructor show you patience?

2. What does it feel like to need the patience of others? What often makes this an unpleasant place to be in?

Leader: Whether we like to admit it or not, at times we do things that test the patience of others. When we struggle to learn things such as how to drive or how to master that new software at work, we are dependent on the patience of someone else to help us learn. People show us patience in many ways every day, but no one more so than God. God was patient in bringing us to a saving relationship with Jesus, and He remains patient with us every day as we make choices that are not in line with who He has created us to be. The story of the prophet Jonah paints a clear picture of how God patiently waits for people to repent and for His servants to obey.

DIGGING DEEPER

Un3. Jonah is a well-known story. Briefly review what happens in the first two chapters. Who were the Ninevites, and why was Jonah so reluctant to go to them? How did God show patience with Jonah early on?

Leader: Before your group meeting, read through Jonah 1–2 and be prepared to summarize it for your group. Jonah was a prophet at a time when Israel was successful and expanding its borders. When God told Jonah to go and preach to the Ninevites, he ran. The text doesn't tell us why, but there are two possible reasons. First, Nineveh was the capital of Assyria whose army was known for its immense and brutal power. They were vicious and evil people. Perhaps Jonah was shocked that God would want to love such people. Another possibility is that if God had decided to destroy the city, it would be easier for Israel to expand her borders. Either way, Jonah rejected God's mission. Through the rest of the book we see God's perfect patience toward a sinful people and sinful prophet.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JONAH 3:1-10.

4. What was the result of Jonah's eventual obedience to God? What can we expect when we are obedient to God's call?

5. Describe a time when God had to exercise His patience with you. What did you learn about Him throughout the process? What did you learn about yourself?

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

Leader: The response of God's reluctant missionary in Jonah 3:3 is what it should have been in 1:3. Jonah obeyed the Lord and went to Nineveh. God is good. He had extended His grace and mercy to His servant Jonah. He now would use His servant to extend His grace and mercy to the sinners of Nineveh. Both the messenger and his message would be evidence of God's love and compassion for people in need of His grace.

6. Look again at verse 10. What does "God relented" mean? What does this action mean for us today?

Leader: God saw that the Ninevites had turned from their evil ways. When a person is caught doing something wrong, he may regret that he was caught or that he faces punishment. That's not true repentance. True repentance involves more than a temporary feeling of remorse or regret. It involves a change of mind about sin and about God. That change of mind produces a change of direction from self and sin to God and righteousness. Because Nineveh repented, God relented. The Hebrew word translated *relent* also can be rendered "repent." For modern readers the word repent, however, can convey the mistaken impression that God has erred, something that God, who is free from all sin, never does. The root of this verb reflects the idea of breathing or sighing deeply.

> [HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JONAH 4:1-11.](#)

7. Jonah reacted strongly to God's mercy and patience toward the Ninevites (v. 1), but look at how he also described God in verse 2. Why is patience such an important aspect of God's character?

Leader: Jonah had a difficult time accepting the mercy God showed the sinful people of Nineveh, in large part because of the racist judgment he had toward this group of people. But even in his anger he acknowledged God's patience. Then God showed Jonah that patience again. Instead of rebuking Jonah or breaking off the conversation, God reached out to him and encouraged him to think. God tried to help Jonah see that he should have compassion for all people, even people he may not like. Jonah pitied himself. God pities sinners. Seeing Nineveh destroyed would have made Jonah happy. Seeing Nineveh spared made God happy. The contrast between Jonah's heart and God's heart could not be clearer.

8. What lesson did God teach Jonah through the vine?

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

9. How would you answer God's question in verse 11? What steps do you need to take to come around to God's way of loving and showing patience to the lost?

Leader: God used the vine to highlight the lack of compassion in Jonah's heart. He cared more about the plant and the physical comfort it brought than the spiritual state of a nation. The prophet had reluctantly obeyed God's command to preach in Nineveh but had no real concern for the Ninevites' spiritual well-being. The Book of Jonah ends abruptly. Jonah was confronted with a question that we also face: Will I have a heart for lost people as God does, or will I have a heart for lost people as Jonah did? The obvious answer to the question is that God's concern for Nineveh was consistent with His character. Since God cared for the Ninevites, so should Jonah. That Jonah even relayed or recorded the events of this book, which were humiliating and embarrassing to him, suggests that he was brought to conviction and repentance by God's word. Jonah's silence at the end of the book implies his quiet acceptance.

pack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

10. Jonah was one flawed individual who God used to change a nation. Where is God exercising His patience with you right now? What might happen if you obey?

11. As we grow in our relationship with Christ, He makes us more like Him. Is there a relationship where you need to model godly patience? What about our relationships in this group?

12. What can you do to be more consistently aware of the kindness and patience God has shown you? How might such an awareness change the way you relate to the lost people God has placed in your life?

PRAYER

Praise God for His perfect patience that is most clearly demonstrated as He waits for lost people to repent and believe in Him. Thank Him for loving you and ask Him to break down the barriers in your heart that keep you from seeing people the way He does.

MEMORIZE

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. – Jonah 3:10

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

JONAH 3–4

Jonah 3: Perhaps about a month later, Jonah arrived in the great city of Nineveh (“a very important city” is literally “a city great to God”). After Jonah preached for only a day rather than the expected three days, the people repented. The message God gave Jonah to preach did not explicitly call for their repentance. Rather, it told the Ninevites that they had angered Jonah’s God and that punishment was on the way. The Ninevites did not presume that God could be appeased but repented in humility, hoping that “God may yet relent” (3:9; see 1:6), which He did. That God’s judgment message was conditional is clear from His sending the prophet, giving them forty days’ warning, and postponing Nineveh’s destruction (see Jer. 18:7-10).

Jonah 4: Jonah despised the Ninevites so much that he would rather die than live, knowing he helped them escape destruction. Still hoping God would give Nineveh what they deserved, Jonah waited and watched. Through the incident of the plant and the worm (sent by God like the wind and the fish in chap. 1), the Lord chided Jonah for his double standard. Jonah was concerned for the transitory plant that gave him shade but not for the 120,000 people of Nineveh who despite their limited knowledge had trusted God.