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THE SPIRIT OF JONAH

If you have ever heard any bible stories, then you know the story of Jonah and the whale (Old Testament says great fish). Jonah was a prophet. Jesus mentioned him in Matthew 12, citing the three days he spent in the belly of a whale.

Jonah is mentioned in 2 Kings 14 also, but besides being in the belly of the whale or great fish, we might ask, what put him there? Jonah was called by God to arise, go, and cry unto the city of Nineveh. Since he was a prophet, that sounded like a fair task, but for Jonah it wasn't. Nineveh and its rulers had long been the enemies of Israel. The city had been built by Nimrod and it was the capital of Assyria. The Assyrians hated the Israelites.

Jonah didn't want them to be spared. He felt they deserved the judgment of destruction since they were Israel's enemies. He didn't want to go there because he knew that God was a God of mercy and if Nineveh repented, they would be spared.

This same spirit is prevalent today. Many people have been offended by others and want to see them "tried, judged, convicted, and condemned" by God. They don't see the mercy that God has given them. They only see the offense.

When we look at John 3:16, it says, "**For God so loved the world...**" Notice, it doesn't say "the righteous." He loves those in the world. The ones that have turned to idolatry, sin, and turned from God willingly. They are the ones that have gone astray just like you and I had gone astray before we met Jesus, and he redeemed us.

The hatred that is focused on those of the world will only push them farther from God. God wanted Jonah to arise, go, and cry so he could show them mercy, but instead he went in the opposite direction. Then a storm came up and almost destroyed the people and the ship that Jonah was on. How often do we bring storms into others' lives because of our disobedience? You might not think this is the case, but it is. Our hatred of those we perceive as enemies has brought storms into our lives and has had an impact on others. We have the same spirit Jonah had. We are a rebellious people and need to repent.

Our love given to our enemies causes them to turn from their evil ways. Let us not forget that we are to be salt and light, not hatred and darkness. Let us be willing to arise, go, and share the love of God to those that are lost, or we might end up in the "belly of a whale" ourselves.