

Everyone knows the story of Jonah and how he ran from his responsibilities when God told him to preach to the people of Nineveh. In one of the most memorable childhood Bible stories of all, Jonah was swallowed by a big fish as he was trying to escape from God. Jonah definitely did not agree with God's love as it was being extended to them.

His eventual obedience was outward only. He didn't really care what God wanted. He hoped with all of his might that God would still destroy the city, and set himself up a booth on a hill nearby in hopes of watching a great show. But when God saw how the people of Nineveh truly humbled themselves and turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

Jonah's story can really be put into perspective if we think about ourselves in the same position as the Ninevites. What if Christ, like Jonah, was forced to go to earth and preach to us against His will? What if He had no love for us and did not want us to be saved? What if He grudgingly obeyed but even now waits up in heaven hoping that God will still send us to hell? How terrible that would be!

We are so fortunate that He does not have that attitude. He loves us and willingly gave Himself up for us. He treats us as friends if we follow Him. And He longs to gather us into His arms to lavish His love on us, if we are but willing to let Him.

Love for our enemies is one of the hardest things to keep in our hearts. Christ showed us the way when he said, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do" to those of us who were causing his death. And He died for us while "we were yet enemies." He has given us His saving compassion as well.