

Open in prayer

Read Jonah 3:1-10

¹ The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: ² “Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach the message that I tell you.” ³ Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the Lord’s command. Now Nineveh was an extremely great city, a three-day walk.

⁴ Jonah set out on the first day of his walk in the city and proclaimed, “In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!”

⁵ Then the people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth—from the greatest of them to the least.

⁶ When word reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷ Then he issued a decree in Nineveh: By order of the king and his nobles: No person or animal, herd or flock, is to taste anything at all. They must not eat or drink water. ⁸ Furthermore, both people and animals must be covered with sackcloth, and everyone must call out earnestly to God. Each must turn from his evil ways and from his wrongdoing. ⁹ Who knows? God may turn and relent; he may turn from his burning anger so that we will not perish.

¹⁰ God saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it.

Introduction

P I should preach shorter sermons. ●●

R Jonah did in **Jonah 3:4**. ● Just five words in Hebrew. ● Seven in our English translation. ● No stories. No jokes. No clever structure. No illustrations. Just judgment. ● And a whole city turned from its evil ways. ●●

P I definitely should preach shorter sermons. ●●

R The sermon today follows the movements of **Jonah 3**. ● I've titled each point with a single word. ● I have five points. ● It's almost like I have a five-word sermon. ● Five words. Again. Believed. Perhaps. Spared. And a name. Jesus. ●●

R Quick recap. ● A huge fish swallowed Jonah. And vomited him up onto dry ground. ● And the word of the Lord is about to come to him for the second time. ● And so, the first word. Again. ●●

1) Again (Jonah 3:1-3)

R Verse 1 says, The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. • A second time. God still has a plan for his runaway prophet. • Verse 2, “Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach the message that I tell you.” ••

R We have heard this before. Remember Jonah 1:2. • Same God. Same city. Same command, “Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it because their evil has come up before me.” • Their evil. Nineveh was not merely rough around the edges. It was a violent place. The city's wickedness came up before God. ••

Å After getting the command to go from God, Jonah ran. Not toward Nineveh. Away from it. • And it cost him the storm, the sea, and three days and nights in the belly of the huge fish. ••

P But this time, when Jonah gets the command to go from God, he goes. • Jonah 3:3, Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the Lord's command. • He got up. He went. No ship. No running. The fish made its point. • The violent city of Nineveh may be frightening, but being fish food again was a far worse thought. ••

ð Nineveh sat on the east bank of the Tigris. Today, it's northern Iraq, across from Mosul. Hundreds of kilometres from Israel. • It was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, the superpower of Jonah's day. • Jonah was walking into the lion's den. ••

R Verse 3 adds, Now Nineveh was an extremely great city, a three-day walk. • Great. Not small. Not average. That may have meant the city itself or the city and its surrounding towns. This was not going to be an afternoon stroll. ••

~ So here is the point. • God speaks a second time, and this time Jonah obeys. • The runaway prophet is now walking toward the city he fled, carrying God's message. ••

on But what will he say when he gets there? And what will Nineveh's response be? • That brings us to the second word. Believed. ••

2) Believed (Jonah 3:4-8)

ð Verse 4 says, Jonah set out on the first day of his walk in the city and proclaimed, “In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!” • That's it. Five words in Hebrew. No introduction. No comfort. No way out. Just judgment. ••

Ø It sounds harsh. It is harsh. Nineveh will be demolished. • Why? • Because God is holy, and Nineveh was evil. Not a little messed up. Not a few weaknesses. They were a violent, sinful people. ••

on Then comes the surprise of verse 5. • Then the people of Nineveh believed God.

They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth—from the greatest of them to the least. • Sackcloth is rough, scratchy cloth, worn against the skin. Ashes were sat in. • Fasting meant going without food. In the Old Testament, these were signs of humility. ••

Å Now look at the king. • Verse 6 says, When word reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. Then he issued a decree in Nineveh: By order of the king and his nobles: No person or animal, herd or flock, is to taste anything at all. They must not eat or drink water. Furthermore, both people and animals must be covered with sackcloth, and everyone must call out earnestly to God. Each must turn from his evil ways and from his wrongdoing. ••

R Repentance looks like something. • Look at the outside. Sackcloth. Ashes. Fasting. Crying out. • And what does that reveal about their inside? • These people are earnest. These people turn. These people acknowledge their wrongdoing. They did not only feel sorry. They turned from their sin. • Inside change motivates outside action. ••

So here is the point. • The preached word, by God's power, produced a citywide turning, from the least to the king. • Violent Nineveh turned from their evil. ••

on But wait. Does the king know God will forgive? • No. He has no promise. • That brings us to the third word. Perhaps. ••

3) Perhaps (Jonah 3:9)

Å The king has issued his decree. The city is in sackcloth. And now he asks a question. • Verse 9 says, Who knows? God may turn and relent; he may turn from his burning anger so that we will not perish. ••

Å Who knows? God may turn and relent. • The king does not know. He has no promise. Jonah's sermon had no offer of mercy in it. Forty days. Demolished. That is all. So the king can only hope. Perhaps. Perhaps God will turn and relent. ••

O Next, look at the king's words again. • He may turn from his burning anger. • Burning anger. Not a mild frustration. Not a bad mood. Burning anger. • Anger is God's right response to evil. Nineveh was violent. God is a holy God. His anger is just. ••

R Here is the tension. • The king said, Each must turn from his evil ways and from his wrongdoing. • That is the responsibility of man. • Nineveh must act. Nineveh must repent. Nineveh must cry out. • But the king also hopes God may turn and relent. • That is the sovereignty of God. • God is free. God is under no obligation. He does not owe Nineveh mercy. Because Salvation belongs to the Lord. ••

R So which is it? • Does man turn, or does God turn? • Both. Man must repent. Yet man cannot demand mercy. • The king does not say, God must forgive us because we fasted. He says, Who knows? • He lays down his pride. He asks. He hopes. • Scripture holds both these truths together, and so will we. • Man is responsible. • God is sovereign. • We do not flatten one to make room for the other. ••

ð Then the king says why he is doing all this. • So that we will not perish. • Perish is a heavy word. The king knows what is coming. He knows what Nineveh deserves. And he is not alone. • Paul wrote, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And again, the wages of sin is death. • Death is the penalty coming to all who have sinned. Not only the grave. Eternal separation from a holy God. • Not a small thing. Not a distant thing. Perishing is what sin earns. ••

Å The king understood this. • He did not say, Let us hope for a better future. He said, We will perish. • He did not call it a mistake. He did not call it a weakness. He called it what it was. A debt too great to pay. A judgement too just to dodge. ••

~ So here is the point. • The king can only hope that God may turn and relent. He has no guarantee. He only has hope to cling to. • And here is what this does for the story. God is free to relent toward even violent Nineveh when it turns from evil. ••

on But hope is not the end of the story. Nineveh turned. The king asked. Now, what will God do? • Will the fire fall? • Will the city be demolished? • Five words started this. Three are behind us. • Now the fourth. Spared. ••

4) Spared (Jonah 3:10)

~ Now we reach the verse the whole chapter has been leaning toward. • Verse 10 says, God saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it. ••

R Look at what God saw. • Not just their sackcloth. Not just their hunger. He saw their actions. • And it revealed they had turned from their evil ways. God saw it. ••

R Then comes the word. • Relented. • What does it mean? • It does not mean God was surprised. It does not mean God made a mistake. It does not mean a king in sackcloth won an argument with God. • God knew all along. • Relent means God set aside the judgment he had threatened. • The warning was real. The judgment was just. But when the people turned, God turned from the disaster. • Same God. Same holiness. A different outcome, because Nineveh now stood in a different place. ••

P So why did God relent? • Because of who He is. God takes no delight in

destruction. • As John writes, For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. • And as Peter writes, The Lord is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. • Hear that. Not wanting any to perish. That is the heart of God for the lost. ••

R And this is not new. • In Exodus 32, Israel sinned. God's anger burned. Moses plead. • In verse 12 he asks, Turn from your fierce anger and relent concerning this disaster planned for your people. • Then verse 14 says, So the Lord relented concerning the disaster he had said he would bring on his people. ••

R Now listen to Jonah again. Turn. Burning anger. Relent. Disaster. The same words. The writer echoes Exodus 32 in Jonah 3. • This is how God has always acted. His relenting does not begin with Nineveh. It begins with His own character. Nineveh did not earn mercy. Nineveh did not force God's hand. Nineveh turned, and God, being who He is, showed mercy. ••

P Now picture the city. • Forty days. Every morning, the same fear. Every night, the same silence. • And then nothing falls. No fire. No ruin. No walls coming down. • And he did not do it. • Can you imagine the relief? • They were warned. They were guilty. And they were spared. ••

~ So here is the point. • God sees they have turned from evil, relents, and spares the city. • And here is what this does for the story. God is free to relent toward even violent Nineveh when it turns from evil. ••

on But hold on. Four words are behind us. Again. Believed. Perhaps. Spared. • Jonah's five words turned a city, and God spared it. • So who is greater than Jonah? Whose words can do more? And what does He say to us? • The fifth word is not a word at all. It is a name. • Jesus. ••

5) Jesus (Matthew 12:41)

R Hold on to what the author has shown us. God is free to relent toward even violent Nineveh when it turns from evil. That is wonderful. • But it raises a question. • How can a holy God set aside his burning anger and still be just? • Nineveh deserved judgment. The warning was real. • Who paid the price their sin deserved? ••

R Listen to Jesus. • As he says in Matthew 12:41, The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at Jonah's preaching; and look—something greater than Jonah is here. ••

~ Something greater than Jonah. • Jonah came out of a fish. Jesus came out of a tomb. • Jonah carried five words of judgment. Jesus was the embodiment of the whole gospel. • Jonah walked into a city under a

sentence. Jesus walked into our sin and bore the sentence himself. •

Å At the cross, the burning anger fell. Not on Nineveh. On him. Not an accident. Not a defeat. Mercy, paid for in full. • They laid him in the tomb. The stone was sealed. It was over. • But God. • He is not here. He is risen. ••

P So God can relent toward sinners and stay just. • *“Mercy did not cost God his holiness. It cost him his Son.”* • Nineveh's sparing was never cheap. It pointed to the One who would pay. ••

O Now hear what this presses on us. • Nineveh turned at a bare warning. Five words. No promise of mercy. • We have heard far more. We have the cross. We have the empty tomb. We have a Saviour who calls all to be saved. • So who can say, **I need more time?** Who can say, **I need more proof?** Nineveh will stand up and answer that. ••

~ **And here is my argument this morning. Turn to Jesus, because God is free to spare you.** ••

R **So what will we do with these five words? Have you heard them? Have you turned? And who around you has not yet heard them from your mouth?** ••

Applications for Christians

~ **Christians, this is for us. • Turn to Jesus, because God is free to spare you.** ••

~ **And if God is free to spare, then who are we to stay silent?** ••

R Think of Jonah. Five words. No promise of mercy. No happy ending in his sermon. • And God used it. God used a reluctant prophet with a bare message to turn a whole city. ••

~ So hear me. The God who used five words can use you. • Not a perfect speech. Not a theology degree. Not the right moment. Only the gospel, spoken plainly. • Jesus died for sinners. Jesus rose. Turn to him. ••

R Don't keep the gospel to yourself. • This week, think of one person. One name. A neighbour. A colleague. A brother. A friend who is drifting. • Now plan. **When will you see them? What will you say?** Keep it short. Keep it simple. Pray for them by name. Then speak. • Jesus died for sinners. Jesus rose. Turn to him. ••

P You do not know how God will use it. Neither did Jonah. • **Who knows?** • Perhaps God will turn them. Perhaps he will spare them. • The same God who spared you can spare them. ••

Who is your Nineveh? • And when will you go? ••

Application for non-Christians

Friend, I want to speak to you directly. • Turn to Jesus, because God is free to spare you. ••

Å Maybe you think you are too far gone. Not me, you say. Not after what I have done. Not after how long I have run. •

P Hear this. Nineveh was violent. Evil. Its wickedness had reached heaven. • And God spared it. If God can spare Nineveh, he can spare you. ••

R Or maybe you think you need more proof. More time. One more sign. Nineveh had five words. No promise. No cross. No empty tomb. You have heard far more. You have heard about a Saviour who died for sinners and rose again. What more could be given? ••

So I ask you. Is God's Word enough? • Is Christ Lord? • Will you bow the knee? ••

Ø Do not wait. Not even for a moment. • Nineveh did not wait. Forty days was the warning. They turned at once. Not tomorrow. Not when life is quieter. Now. ••

Repent. • Turn from your sin. • Believe. • Trust the One who can save you. • Jesus bore the burning anger so that you would not perish. He is risen. He is able. ••

P Perhaps you have never done this. • Do it today. Where you sit. Tell God you have sinned. Tell him you trust his Son. ••

God is free to spare you. Will you turn? •

Conclusion

P Maybe I should preach shorter sermons. •

R Jonah did. Five words. And a whole city turned. • Not because the words were clever. Not because the prophet was willing. Because God was behind them. ••

R Again. Believed. Perhaps. Spared. Jesus. ••

R Here is the burden of Jonah 3. God is free to relent toward even violent Nineveh when it turns from evil. • But how can a holy God spare the guilty

and stay just? ●●

^ The cross answers. The burning anger fell. Not on Nineveh. On him. The tomb was sealed. It was over. But God. He is not here. He is risen. *“Mercy did not cost God his holiness. It cost him his Son.”* ●●

R Christian, who is your Nineveh? When will you go? ●●

^ Friend, Nineveh turned at five words. You have heard the cross. You have heard the empty tomb. Is God’s Word enough? Is Christ Lord? Will you bow the knee? ●●

O Do not wait. Turn from your sin. Trust the One who bore the burning anger so that you would not perish. ●●

P Five words. And the last is a name. ●●

^ Turn to him. ●●

Close in prayer

Benediction

Hebrews 13:20-21, Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus—the great Shepherd of the sheep—through the blood of the everlasting covenant, equip you with everything good to do his will, working in us what is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Homiletic indicators

- The operative word in the sentence is underlined.
- R – Instruction
 - **Body:** Natural, one hand gestures.
 - **Voice:** measured, firm.
- ^ – Uncion
 - **Body:** Forward, expressive.
 - **Voice:** Raised, faster.
- Ø – Fear
 - **Body:** Narrow eyes, still shoulders, lift your chin slightly (exposed posture).
 - **Voice:** Breathy, higher pitch, quick shallow breaths. Speak into the back of the throat.
- O' – Anger
 - **Body:** Jaw forward, stable feet (no shifting weight), sharp hand strikes (karate chop motion).
 - **Voice:** Hard attack on consonants. Drop pitch slightly, but increase volume on key syllables. Staccato.
- P – Happiness
 - **Body:** Relax shoulders, soften the brow. Open palms, wider stance.
 - **Voice:** Rise in melody at the end of phrases. Bright, forward resonance (smile while speaking).
- Å – Sadness
 - **Body:** Heavy eyelids, slight forward slump, hands still or clasped low.
 - **Voice:** Lower volume, monotone descent (each phrase ends lower than it started). Use mostly single-syllable words.
- □ – Disgust
 - **Body:** Wrinkle nose, pull back your head, sharp turning away from the pulpit.
 - **Voice:** Nasal, sharp, with a "negation cadence" (rising then falling sharply on the sin's name). Hard glottal stops.
- ʘ – Surprise
 - **Body:** Eyebrows up, slight backward step or open-mouth inhale.
 - **Voice:** Bright, high onset. Use a sudden upward interval (a leap in pitch on the unexpected word).
- • – Pause
 - **What it does:** Allows the last sentence to land, convict, or heal.
 - **Length:** 1 second (colon), 2 seconds (period), 3+ seconds (after a weighty statement or call to worship).
 - **Body:** Stop moving. Hold eye contact. Do not smile or nod. Let the silence be uncomfortable.
 - **Delivery note:** A pause feels longer to you than to them. Trust it. Hold one more beat than you think is comfortable.

1) Setting (Jonah 3:1-3)

The Lord commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach a second time, and this time he obeyed.

¹ The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time:
² “Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach the message that I tell you.” ³ Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the Lord’s command. Now Nineveh was an extremely great city, a three-day walk.

The word of
the Lord
came a second
time

Jonah went
to
Nineveh

The word of
the Lord
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Nineveh and
preach the
message

2) Conflict (Jonah 3:4-8)

Jonah’s five-word sermon proclaimed destruction, the people believed, and the king’s decree ordered them to turn and plead.

⁴ Jonah set out on the first day of his walk in the city and proclaimed, “In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!”
⁵ Then the people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth—from the greatest of them to the least.
⁶ When word reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.
⁷ Then he issued a decree in Nineveh:
By order of the king and his nobles: No person or animal, herd or flock, is to taste anything at all. They must not eat or drink water. ⁸ Furthermore, both people and animals must be covered with sackcloth, and everyone must call out earnestly to God. Each must turn from his evil ways and from his wrongdoing.

On the first day
Nineveh
turned

Jonah
proclaimed
Nineveh’s
destruction,
resulting in
everyone,
from the king
on his throne,
to the least
humbling
themselves
to sackcloth
and ashes.

Jonah
proclaimed
and all
the people,
from the least
to the king on
his throne,
believed God
and earnestly
called out to
him

3) Climax (Jonah 3:9)

The king asked “Who knows?” whether God would turn and relent, so that they would not perish.

⁹ Who knows? God may turn and relent; he may turn from his burning anger so that we will not perish.

The King
wonders if
God will turn

4) Resolution (Jonah 3:10)

God saw the people of Nineveh had turned from their evil ways, relented, and spared the city.

¹⁰ God saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it.

God sees the
people have
turned and
he relents

Sermon preparation worksheet

Passage: Jonah 3:1-10 **Preaching Audience:** Benoni Baptist Church, a diverse congregation, with non Christians in attendance.

1. How has the author organised this passage? a) Sections, b) Strategies, c) Emphasis.

- a) 1) The Lord commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach a second time, and this time he obeyed (Jonah 3:1-3).
- 2) Jonah's five-word sermon proclaimed destruction, the people believed, and the king's decree ordered them to turn and plead (Jonah 3:4-8).
- 3) The king asked "Who knows?" whether God would turn and relent, so that they would not perish (Jonah 3:9).
- 4) God saw the people of Nineveh had turned from their evil ways, relented, and spared the city (Jonah 3:10).
- b) I identified the text type as narrative, with some dialogue advancing the plot. I used plot arc to reveal the emphasis. The threat of destruction is stated in Jonah 3:4, and the outcome is left hanging in Jonah 3:9. Jonah 3:10 resolves the tension as God relents from the disaster. The repetition of the words turn (Jonah 3:8, 9, 10), relent (Jonah 3:9, 10), and evil (Jonah 3:8, 10, 10). One verse on Jonah's message of destruction (Jonah 3:4), five on Nineveh's response (Jonah 3:5-9), and one on God's relenting (Jonah 3:10). All this indicates that the focus is about Nineveh and God's response rather than Jonah. The shift from Jonah and the Lord (Jonah 3:1-3) to Nineveh and God (Jonah 3:5-10).
- c) God freely relents toward a city that turns.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? a) Literary, b) Historical, c) Cultural, d) Biblical.

- a) In Jonah 2, Jonah cries out to the Lord, eventually acknowledging that salvation belongs to the Lord (Jonah 2:9). In Jonah 3, Nineveh cries out to God (Jonah 3:8), and is spared by him (Jonah 3:10). Because Jonah confessed that salvation is from the Lord, he should understand God's action in Jonah 3:10, but Jonah 4:1-2 shows he is angry that the Lord relented. This matters because Jonah knows God's character, that he relents from disaster, and this reinforces the emphasis that God freely relents toward a city that turns.
- b) The book does not name its author or date, and so the first audience is uncertain, therefore no historical context informs the meaning.
- c) Sackcloth, ashes and fasting are recognised signs of humility (1 Kings 21:27-29; Nehemiah 9:1). This matters because Nineveh's actions express grief and humbling, but what God sees is their turning from evil.
- d) Jonah 3:9-10 echoes Exodus 32:12, 14. In Exodus 32, Moses asks God to turn from his anger and relent concerning the disaster, and then God relents. Jonah 3:9-10 uses the same cluster of words, turn, burning anger, relent, and disaster. This matters because relenting is grounded in God's own character, occasioned by Nineveh's turning.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?

God is free to relent toward even violent Nineveh when it turns from evil.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ? a) Connection, b) Function, c) Significance.

- a) Jonah 3 connects to Jesus by a comparison. Jesus said the men of Nineveh repented when Jonah preached, and that someone greater than Jonah was here (Matthew 12:41). God used 5-words to turn a city. Jesus came with the whole gospel and calls all to be saved.
- b) The connection pushes us to act. Jonah 3 shows that God is free to spare even a violent city that turns from evil. Jesus presses that on people who have heard far more than Nineveh did. Nineveh turned at a bare warning. So no one who has heard the words of Jesus can say they need more time or more proof.
- c) For the believer, this is encouraging. Jonah's 5-word sermon of destruction was used by God. When we share the gospel we can expect the same. For the unbeliever, it removes two excuses. You are not too far gone, because God spared a violent city. And you do not need more proof, because you have a greater revelation.

5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?

Turn to Jesus, because God is free to spare you.

6. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Title, b) Outline.

- a) Five Words to Spare Benoni
- b) 1) Again (Jonah 3:1-3) – God speaks a second time, and this time Jonah obeys.
- 2) Believed (Jonah 3:4-8) – Jonah announces destruction, and the whole city, from king to least, believes God and humbles itself.
- 3) Perhaps (Jonah 3:9) – The king can only hope that God may turn and relent.
- 4) Spared (Jonah 3:10) – God sees they have turned from evil, relents, and spares the city.
- 5) Jesus (Matthew 12:41) – Someone greater than Jonah is here, turn to him.

7. What applications will you make? a) Christians, b) non-Christians.

- a) Christians, tell someone the gospel, because God who used 5-words can use you. Think of a specific person to speak to, and plan how you may speak to them. In point 5.
- b) Non-Christians, turn to Jesus now, because you are not too far gone and you do not need more proof. Repent and believe on the One how can save you. In point 5.

On my sermon preparation sheet, these are the questions and an explanation:

1. How has the author organised this passage?

- a) An outline: The author's organization (or structure) is a way of talking about the shape or form of a biblical passage. Beneath the surface of each passage is an underlying arrangement of material and a logic that the author has used to organize the passage. And each part of the passage has a role to play in that structure.
- b) Tools: Identify the text type (it might be the separation of the passage into stanzas), and any grammatical tools used to identify the structure.
- c) The emphasis: The structure will reveal an emphasis that the author is making.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?

- a) Literary context: How do the passage that comes before and the passage that comes after relate to your passage?
- b) Historical context: The historical situation or circumstances experienced by the first audience at the time when the book was written.
- c) Cultural context: The setting in the daily life of the people/characters in the book and how that will have been understood by the first audience. This is distinct from historical context in that it does not relate to a particular audience in a particular place at a particular time, but the details of life that the people/characters in the text had in common. Anything that requires extra-biblical knowledge should be treated skeptically.
- d) Biblical context: Is the author citing or alluding to some previously written Biblical passage? What connections could the author have reasonably expected his first audience to make.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?

The author's main point is a way of talking about the aim of a passage as a whole. It can be descriptive or prescriptive. It is not simply a summary statement. But rather, it is the idea of which the author is trying to persuade his audience. As you work on articulating the author's argument, please keep in mind that it needs to be specific enough to the passage that it clearly comes from the particular passage (and not any other passage), it is for the first audience, it should be one single sentence that is both short and clear, and captures the argument of the passage.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

What part of the gospel (the death and resurrection of Christ) is in view? Every part of the Bible, every passage of Scripture, in some way relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ. What parts of the passage connect to the gospel? The connection must be legitimate and textually driven.

5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?

6. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.

7. What applications will you make? a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.

The main point of a sermon is the fundamental statement of what you, as a speaker today, are trying to convince your audience today. It will certainly be intimately related to the author's main point for his original audience and it will consider the gospel connection. It should be well reasoned and, perhaps, articulated as the result of proof (so depending on premises and building arguments).

On my sermon preparation sheet, this is how questions relate to one another:

- 1 a) should be driven by the text.
- 1 c) should be driven from the outline in 1 a).
- 2) should be directly relevant to 1 c).
- 3) cannot be disconnected from 1 c), and should be clarified by 2).
- 4) must be found in the text.
- 5) cannot be disconnected from 3), and should be driven by 4).
- 6) should flow from 5).
 - 7) should structurally relate to 1 a), and make the argument in 5), and show relationship to 6).