

times of depression. I have not been able to sleep at night. At times I have threatened to take my own life, the darkness was so heavy. Since I started attending the revival services at the Gospel Tabernacle, I have received new hope. I have asked God for forgiveness. For the first time in years I have peace with God.

"I want you to know the same joy. You have been my friends for years, and I appreciate this. You will always have my love, but I'll not be playing cards with you any more. The desire is gone because of a new purpose in my life. What the Lord has done for me He will do for all who ask Him."



Indifferent to mercy

By MAXINE WILLIAMS

THERE, SPREAD OUT IN THE Assyrian sun, lay the great city of Nineveh. Famed far and wide for the cruelty of its leaders, founded many centuries before by that God-rejecting hunter, Nimrod, it was also identified by its flourishing evil. Its sadistic treatment of conquered peoples terrorized the surrounding nations. Nineveh cut off the hands and feet of its victims, and put out the eyes of captives. It impaled men and women alive on stakes, to make them flaming torches. It raised mounds of human heads.

The sun was its god, and animism its religion. Magic, omens, sorcery, incantations to both good and evil spirits, and intricate rituals of exorcism were the daily religious practice.

How did God view all this? He saw it as worthy of judgment. Yet He wept because these debased people were the works of His hands and the object of His love. How to avert judgment? How to spare them from the inevitable consequences of such evil?

He would send them one of His sons, a man who knew Him so well that he could be trusted with prophetic utterance. So God sent Jonah, not for Jonah's sake, but for Nineveh's sake. For the call of God to His children springs always from His longing for the lost.

Surely a child of God will be sensitive to his Father's heart. But Jonah was not. He was out of sympathy with the Father's purpose. He was engrossed not in Nineveh's pain but in what would happen to himself.

The Assyrians were cruel; Jonah felt they deserved to be punished. Then there was his own reputation of truthfulness. As surely as he preached God's judgment and mercy, the Assyrians would repent; God would forgive—and since no judgment would come, he would be

Maxine Williams has been a faculty member at Northwest College of the Assemblies of God, Kirkland, Washington, since 1950. She teaches Spanish and Christian Education courses.

At this point she introduced me to the group. We sang some gospel songs and choruses. For a few minutes I spoke from the Word of God, and then invited them to join in prayer. To my joy, many of those women that afternoon wept before the Christ of Calvary. Definite decisions were made to follow the Lord. Homes and lives were changed because of their friend's testimony at that birthday gathering.

From that day forward this young mother served God. Her family followed her. Today many are active Christian workers. Through the years her life was a testimony of faith and peace. Recently she passed on to meet the Lord she loved and served.

made to seem a liar. Besides, they were not even God's people; they were Gentiles. Intolerable. To Jonah, the forgiveness of thousands of people in that doomed city was less important than his being recognized as a reputable prophet.

When Jonah turned his back on God's command, more was involved than his own disobedience. The judgment-destined Ninevites lost their opportunity to experience God's mercy!

So God prepared a big fish to swallow the prophet. Jonah's experiences in the big fish were not only for the purpose of teaching Jonah obedience, but also for Nineveh's salvation. God desired an opportunity to be merciful to wicked Nineveh. Jonah could not forgive them, but he could and *must* proclaim the God who could and would.

How quick God was to forgive, when they repented and called for mercy! Deserving? Oh, no. Receiving? Oh, yes.

After Nineveh repented and was saved, Jonah sulked, and God rebuked him. Why? Because of his lack of desire to see the people saved; his indifference to their forgiveness; his anger against God for showing mercy.

The reasons given by modern-day Jonahs are as selfish as ever. Parents say, "But I won't get to see you; I won't get to see my grandchildren grow up." Or, trembling, "But I'm afraid of snakes." Or, "Maybe the people won't accept me." Or, "I couldn't stand to live where it's dirty, or to eat their food."

What did one young American find difficult in going to a foreign field? "There's not any hamburgers." (For such, may it be said that McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Pop's Ice Cream have now reached some mission fields!)

But there are modern-day Ninevehs at home, too. People are destined to perish in America unless God's ambassadors of reconciliation intervene. Where are the Jonahs? Has not God called? He is yearning to save men, and has called us to be His ambassadors so He can show mercy.

The heart of this story is not Jonah, yet Jonah is the key figure. The message is mercy, God's mercy for sinful Gentiles who had no interest in Jehovah. God's loving, eager heart was satisfied when they repented. Gladly and freely He forgave them. But all "Jonahs" are central to God's plan. Without them, God's mercy cannot be experienced by a lost world. The self-concerned world is indifferent to God's mercy. As surely as the salvation of Nineveh depended on Jonah, the salvation of the world depends on us.