

JONAH Lesson 04

Jonah Chapter 4

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Memory verses for this week: *Mat 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them..*

Introduction: In Chapter 3, Jonah was given the commission a second time to go and preach the message to Nineveh. This time he did arise and did what God had commanded. And the great thing was that the people, even to the King, heard the message and repented of their sins and came back to the Lord. Oh that all who hear the gospel message might do the same and be saved.

Chapter 4 is the record of God dealing with one individual in a very personal way. Instead of rejoicing at what had just transpired, we see Jonah in chapter 4 upset and angry over the tender loving kindness of God. In this chapter Jonah was made to realize that God in His love and compassion for others was not only gracious and infinite, but also reasonable and just, according to His own sovereign purpose and will.

I. A Displeased Servant of God

Jonah 4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

Jonah shows his displeasure with an angry outrage. Jonah was extremely unhappy over the results in Nineveh. While the city was no doubt rejoicing over God's divine demonstration of His unfailing mercy, Jonah was upset and frustrated. Jonah's outrage over what had happened is emphasized by describing him being "*exceedingly*" displeased and "*very*" angry. He should have fallen on his knees in gratitude and praise to God for Nineveh's preservation. The Bible teaches there is joy in heaven over "*one sinner that repenteth*".

Luk 15:7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Jonah 4:2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

Is this not a bit unbelievable? Here a man of God comes and preaches his message, the whole city hears, repents, and comes back to God, and what does Jonah do? You'd think he would rejoice that thousands of lives had been spared when God holds back the judgment. But no, verse 1 says it displeased Jonah

exceedingly, and he was very angry. He had no right to be angry. It was like he came and preached judgment, and by the powers above, there should be judgment. God help us when we get such an attitude that we want sinners to fall into the hands of an angry God.

Jonah 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

Because they repented, God forgave them and did not destroy them. This is what upset Jonah so much. There are many times in the work of God that things do not go as we think they should and we become displeased. But no matter what God chooses, we have no right to question God.

Rom 9:20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

Rom 9:21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

Job 38:4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

Verse 2 makes it clear that Jonah knew God would spare the city of Nineveh if they repented. He had told God this while he was still in his own country, and this was part of the reason he refused to go to Nineveh originally.

Jonah saw many of the attributes of God.

1. God is Gracious
2. God is Merciful
3. God is slow to Anger
4. God is of Great Kindness
5. God is one that stands by His Word, and if these in Nineveh repented, then God would not bring judgment on the people.

Jonah delivers a weak excuse for his disobedience by explaining that he knew God to be a God of unlimited grace, mercy, patience, and kindness and he was afraid the Ninevites would be spared and forgiven.

*Exo 34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,
Exo 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,*

and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Joel 2:13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

Jonah was more upset over God's abundant mercy than his own flagrant disobedience. What Jonah completely overlooked was the fact that he himself was a product of the mercy of God. If it had not been for these divine qualities of God, Jonah would still be in the belly of the fish.

W. A. Criswell in the Bible Believers Study Bible said this about verse 2 which affirms our list of five things above.

4:2 This verse records Jonah's second confession of faith (cf. 1:9). Here Jonah affirms five truths that accurately reflect the nature of YAHWEH: (1) God is gracious—He longs for and favors all people who respond to Him; (2) God is merciful—He is tender in His affection; (3) God is slow to anger—He does not delight in punishment; (4) God is abundant in lovingkindness (hesed, Heb.)—He is faithful in His covenant relationship; and (5) God is One who relents in sending calamity—He is gracious and merciful, responding in forgiveness and the staying of judgment for those who repent (cf. Ex. 34:6)

II. Jonah Requests that His Life be Taken Away

Jonah 4:3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

Out of total frustration and displeasure, Jonah foolishly cries out to God to take his life away. Death seemed more preferable to Jonah than to submit to the perfect plan and purpose of God. He had already concluded that Nineveh did not deserve God's pardon.

While he had received pardoning mercy from the Lord when he repented, he was not willing for Nineveh to have the same because they were Israel's enemies. Jonah was not complaining that God was a God of mercy and grace, rather he was displeased where God chose to display that mercy and grace.

Jonah 4:4 Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

Jonah comes to a conclusion on his own without a lot of thought or prayer, and says 'it is better for me to die than to live.' Part of the problem we have with society as a whole (and even some Christians) is that they want to be the god of their own life, not recognizing that the all knowing God has a plan laid out that is

better than anything you or I could ever put together for ourselves. Now we have a record where Paul spoke of it being better to depart and be with the Lord than to be on earth, but his reasoning was totally different.

Paul had a longing to be in the presence of the Lord and to fellowship with Him. And yet he also acknowledged that he needed to stay for the church's sake until the Lord chose to take him home. Jonah's desire was to die because God did not destroy Nineveh, a very wrong attitude to have.

Phil 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Phil 1:22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

Phil 1:23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

Phil 1:24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

Notice the question in verse 4... "Doest thou well to be angry?" No... he did not do well... he had no reason to be angry. When we preach that God will bring judgment upon those who are disobedient and they repent and God spares them, we should rejoice.

Luke 15:4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

Luke 15:5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

Luke 15:6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

Luke 15:7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

God made divine preparations for Jonah. In order to get Jonah to see his own sinful behavior of sulking and resentment, God pointedly asked him if there was any a reasonable ground or justification for his anger. The question God asked Jonah implied that his anger was totally uncalled for and dishonoring to God.

III. Jonah Waits to See What God Would Do

Jonah 4:5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

Jonah's response to God's question was to go outside the city walls on the eastside and build for himself a small temporary place of shelter in order that he may watch and wait to see what the ultimate fate of the city would be. This booth served to provide Jonah shade from the burning rays of the hot sun. In spite of the fact that Nineveh had been spared divine judgment, Jonah still foolishly thought that maybe some form of punishment would fall upon the city.

You know if we do God's will in our lives, it is good to wait and see what God will do. But that is when we have the right heart and attitude towards God and our fellowman. We should love our fellow Christian brothers and sisters with a fervent love, and care deeply for the lost ones we come in contact with. We should not love their sins or their sinful condition, but we should love their souls the way that Jesus loved those in whom He came in contact with during His personal ministry.

Most preachers bring a message and rejoice when people step out by faith and repent and get their lives right with God. Jonah appears to be sitting there waiting for something to happen to the city. When he built the booth, I don't think he knew what was going to happen, but it is pretty sure he was expecting God's wrath to be poured out.

IV. The Prepared Gourd

Jonah 4:6 And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

Jonah hoped that the justice of God would exceed or surpass His mercy and waited to see whether there might be a change in the plan and purpose of God concerning Nineveh. Such is the folly of a pouting and fuming spirit. With Jonah comfortably entrenched under his place of shelter, God caused a plant to grow at a miraculous pace over Jonah's booth and head, providing further shade and relief from the heat of the sun.

The principle reason for the prepared gourd was not just for Jonah's enjoyment but to reveal and correct the evil attitude of his heart. His response and reaction to the gourd ("was exceeding glad") demonstrated that he was more concerned with the comforts of the flesh than with the spiritual problems of his heart.

God can use all things to accomplish His will. In this case, he prepared a gourd to come up over Jonah and shadow his head. Perhaps it was very hot, and the shade made a big difference in his feelings. For certain, he rejoiced in this special provision from the Lord and it delivered him from his grief. Aren't we all like this at points in our life? The little comforts of life bring us so much happiness. But in contrast, the serious things, the great issues of life such as

dealing with peoples lost condition and doing the work of the Lord, they seem almost insignificant.

Psa 90:12 So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

V. The Prepared Worm and Wind

Jonah 4:7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

Jonah 4:8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

Jonah's personal comfort was soon taken away when a worm comes and destroys the vine and causes the gourd to wither. Little comforts are great, but they may not last. God can take everything from us in a blink of an eye. God used this worm to teach Jonah a lesson. Then the Lord used the east wind and the hot sun to make Jonah's life miserable. Remember how that Job's children were destroyed in his testing when a strong wind came and blew down the dwelling where they were eating.

Jonah again says that it would be better for him to die than to live. Funny how adversity will destroy us if we don't keep an eye on the Lord and look to Him for provision. Those of you who grew up in the country know how the hot sun can just about melt you in the summertime. It takes the grace of the Lord to keep on in those long hot days. But when we grow weary and think about going on to be with the Lord, we need to think about those who still are lost and in an undone condition. That will give us reason to go on and to preach the gospel. We need to ask God for a vision to reach the lost, and the strength to follow through and be about the Master's business.

Prov 24:10 If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

Verses 7 and 8 record that the next day God divinely prepared a devouring worm and a dry, blistering, hot wind to destroy and demolish Jonah's place of shade and rest, causing him despair of life. These divine appointments or preparations made by God were God's way of showing to Jonah that a loving and longsuffering God could shield or slay His servant just as easily as He could destroy or spare a city, according to His sovereign will and purpose. Divine pity was shown by God to Jonah.

VI. The Question God Asks Jonah

Jonah 4:9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

God asks Jonah if he had a justified reason to be angry because of the gourd to which Jonah stubbornly and arrogantly replies by declaring with emphasis that he

had every right to be angry, even to the point of death. The question by God was to once again expose and denounce Jonah's proud and callous heart.

Jonah 4:10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

Jonah 4:11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

As a stern rebuke of Jonah's own self-centered attitude, the Lord compares and contrasts Jonah's pathetic sympathy for the gourd and God's boundless love and compassion for the Ninevites. God in His tender love was willing to spare the entire city of Nineveh, including 120,000 precious souls of innocent children.

Jonah's care and concern was out of balance; his spiritual eyesight was blurred to the point he had a sense of pity for the gourd destroyed by worms but was greatly perturbed at God for manifesting His mercy and grace towards a city full of people in desperate need of God's forgiveness and salvation.

Jonah was angry due to the gourd being destroyed. If Jonah had pity on the gourd which he had nothing to do in preparing, God was showing him that he has the right to spare the creatures that are His. There were 120,000 children in the city of Nineveh who were not old enough to know their left hand from their right. Many innocent would have died in the destruction of the city.

Many suffer due to the sins of wicked people, many who are innocent and have done no wrong. Look at all those people and the lives that were changed forever in the destruction of the World Trade Center some years back. A few wicked men caused heartache to a whole nation, and killed thousands. Sometimes the innocent suffer due to the sins of the parents. We need to learn from this study that it is important to hear God's message, and to repent and get our hearts right.

CONCLUSION: A key lesson on this entire book was to reveal the heart of a servant of God whose heart was not touched with the love of God for the souls of mankind. He was willing to challenge and dispute with the goodness, mercy, and love of God and try to escape from fulfilling God's will for his life in telling those without God of His marvelous grace and power to save unto the uttermost.

*Like our Saviour, Jesus Christ, we must be moved with compassion towards others who are lost in their sins (Mt.9:36).

*We must be willing to move out of our comfort zone and go into the highways and hedges to preach the gospel of Christ to every creature.

*If we become all wrapped up in the "gourds" of life, if we are more concerned

about our own material and physical well-being than about spiritual matters and souls of men, God will send His giant fish, worms, and winds to wake and shake us up out of our lethargy, indifference, and apathy.

*We need to renew our commitment to carry out our tremendous responsibility of telling others, by our lives and lips, of Jesus Christ and His saving, life-changing gospel.

*Being a living testimony and witness for our Lord is our God-given duty that should be carefully and consistently obeyed *"for the love of Christ constraineth us"* (2 Cor.5:14).

2Co 5:14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.