

Jonah 4:1-11

Ch 4 of the book of Jonah is almost like an addendum. It's extra *information* for the sake of our *application* but as for Jonah's mission, it was accomplished in Ch 3. God has dealt with the Ninevites; this wicked and ruthless people. His word has come to them, they've responded and repented therefore God has relented from judgment. Every warning of coming *condemnation* from God is simultaneously an open *invitation* to repent and be forgiven. The Ninevites did just that, they responded to the warning, they repented therefore God showed them mercy and did not bring judgment upon them. Mission accomplished. However with regard to His prophet there remains the need for additional attention. Ch 4 informs us of God's ongoing work in Jonah; and though we have the tendency to stand back with a flabbergasted kind of countenance when we read some of the things that people did and the audacity with which they would resist the Lord though they were supposed to be the servants *of* the Lord we do well to remember the admonition found in 1 Cor 10:11 which informs us quite clearly, "*Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*"

It's so easy for us to think, "Man what a loser," or "I can't believe after all God did for *them* that they responded that way to *Him*." Yet we do well to remember that God didn't record these things for us so that we could see how lame *they* were but rather so that we can see the tendency that *we ourselves* have and be careful to avoid the same mistakes.

If the book of Jonah would've ended in Ch history would've remembered him as the single greatest prophet who ever lived... Though initially he resisted God's call he ultimately received the call, repented of his rebellion, went and preached the word of God to a wicked and ruthless people and the entire city including the king repented. Over ½ million people turned to the Lord, God saw their works, that they turned from there evil way, relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and they all lived happily ever after; right?

We would like to have seen it go that way, however as we note the very 1st word of Ch 4 it informs us differently doesn't it, notice there it's the word "But."

The word "But" is a word of contrast isn't it, it tells us that whatever was happening previously something contrary is happening currently. Previously God was moving, people were repenting, the word of God was at work in the hearts of the people of Nineveh, it was going forth and accomplishing the purpose for which God sent it. Revival was breaking loose in a way unparalleled in human history however concerning God's prophet we read in Vs 1 of Ch 4.

So we have comparison and contrast happening here don't we, between God's compassion and Jonah's discontentment, from God's turning *from* anger and Jonah's turning *to* anger; Jonah couldn't be any more in a polar opposite position from the heart of God on this. His hopes and his reaction are exactly the opposite of God's desire and God's reaction.

If it weren't for the fact that Jonah is such a familiar story I think that we would genuinely be able to say that it shocks us to read of his reaction. It leaves us almost in a state of confusion. "Wait a minute, what were you hoping for Jonah? What did you want them to do?"

Because in all my years of being a preacher/teacher of the word of God I can't think of a single instance whereby a person or people repented and the reaction that welled up in me was one of disappointment or displeasure... I mean, that's the goal isn't it? To see people repent, lives change, people delivered from the snare of their sin!

With Jonah it wasn't only displeasure that came over him, we read that it displeased him *exceedingly* or *greatly*; this is a word that speaks of magnitude and intensity. He even became *angry*, again the word speaks of a burning, to become hot, to be vexed with fury. This was way more than being a bit disgruntled, Jonah was ticked! The fact that God didn't nuke *them* lit *his fuse* and set him off!

Of course the application here would lie in how we respond when God doesn't react in the way that we hoped He would or think He should? When we realize that God's way in a given situation is not our way how do we handle it? Do we say, "God there's something here that I must not understand, I can't see it but I want to be in line with You through it, change my heart." Or like Jonah does it just make us mad, we can't believe God would be gracious to the likes of _____ (fill in the blank) whom we think should be baked. Or that God allowed it to go that way when it's obvious it should've went another way... Jonah didn't ask God to change his heart, he got mad, and he vented on God through prayer, notice.

Vs2-3

Isn't there something in us that as we read this wants to call for a time out? There's a flag on the field here somewhere because there's been an obvious violation of sorts... All kinds of things are floating to the surface here that show us the position of this prophets heart.

This is the 2nd time in this book that we read of his prayer. However this his 2nd prayer is radically different than his 1st prayer both in *content* and *intent*. It's interesting to realize that he prayed his best prayer in the worst place, in the belly of the great fish. He prayed his worst prayer in the best place, there at Nineveh where God was working and moving in a radical way through his life.

His 1st prayer came from a *broken* heart, his 2nd prayer came from a disillusioned, disappointed and angry heart. In his 1st prayer he asked God to *save* him, in his 2nd prayer he asked God to just take his life, it's as though he'd rather die than not see it go his way, the way he thinks it should.

But such is the nature of man isn't it? When you're at the bottom and the only way to look is up it's not too difficult to humble yourself before the Lord, cry out to Him, repent and submit your life to Him. But when things are going well we have the tendency to be a little more on the self confident side of things, feel justified in having attitude with God, rather than saying "God just have Your way" we want things done *our* way and if they're not we get mad at God. Oh we may not always articulate it, but that's the position of our heart nonetheless.

What else is surfacing here? Jonah's motive for his disobedience, did you see it there in Vs 2? When we 1st read of Jonah's disobedience we're kind of left to surmise why he ran the opposite direction. These guys were ruthless killers, cruel and vindictive, a people you don't want to cross. But we learn here that the reason Jonah fled initially wasn't because he was worried that they might rip him apart, but rather because he was worried that they might *repent!* He wasn't worried that his message might not take, but rather that God's word would be effective in their lives!

God grant us the boldness to believe in the power of the word of God such to the extent that we know that when we share it people's lives are going to be changed and sinners are going to repent! Jonah was worried that the people would repent and that God would relent from judgment. Because he knew a few things about God, Jonah's theology was on the money.

He lists 5 things about God's character here that though they should be reason for rejoicing he actually got angry over the fact that they were a working reality. What are they? #1 I know that You Are Gracious. That is, God will bestow favor on people even though they don't deserve it, that's what grace is right? Unmerited, undeserved favor; getting what we don't deserve, that's grace. We may as well use the obvious example; salvation. Who among us *deserves* to be saved? Who has somehow earned God's salvation? There *none* that are righteous, no not even one. So then how are we saved? By grace, "*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*" Eph 2:4-5 We serve a gracious God, Jonah knew that.

#2 You Are Merciful: the bible teaches that God is *rich* in mercy, or the word could be rendered *compassionate*, God is both considerate and concerned for our well being; not only practically but more importantly *spiritually*. He's concerned for our well being eternally and through mercy, through compassion He reaches out and extends the opportunity to you and me of repentance. We read in Dan 9:9, "*To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.*" Jonah knew that about God, that though people might rebel God will show mercy if they will but give Him the opportunity through repentance.

#3 You Are Slow To Anger, God is patient with us. We thank God for His patience, my patience varies, in some cases I feel like I'm graciously patient, in other cases it doesn't seem to take much and my patience is both tried and exhausted. God doesn't anger easily, He waits for us to repent patiently. These attributes of God are like a giant dessert and each attribute is like caramel sauce, then whipped cream, candy sprinkles...it just keeps getting sweeter and sweeter.

#4 You Are Abundant In Lovingkindness. Not only is God gracious, and merciful, not only is He patient with us, and longsuffering toward us add to the equation that He is abundant in lovingkindness; it's a word that mingles together concepts such as *goodliness, faithfulness and pity*. It's a word that speaks of the loyalty of God's love, God's lovingkindness is abundant, or overwhelming toward you.

Finally #5 You Are One Who Relents From Doing Harm. Which is to say that God is One who looks for opportunity to avert judgment.

Now let me point out a couple things in light of what we just learned about these attributes of God. #1 Take comfort *in* them and be assured *of* them. He is for you and not against you. "*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*" Jer 29:11 These are qualities of God that are working *for* you, that are in your corner seeking to encourage and strengthen you.

The 2nd thing I'd point out about these attributes is that they also let us know how we're doing in our endeavor to be like Him. If you are growing in Christ, if you are decreasing so that He might increase in your life. These are the qualities that will surface more and more dominantly in your life.

Jonah was so far from where he needed to be, he wasn't being gracious. He wasn't dispensing mercy, he seems to have been angry fairly consistently throughout the book, definitely isn't displaying an abundance of lovingkindness and he *wants* harm to fall, wants judgment to visit these people... If you're growing in godliness these character traits will manifest themselves more and more.

Jonah *enjoyed* the mercy of God when it was applied to himself, he just didn't want the Assyrians to have that same resource available to them. It doesn't work that way. If we want mercy extended to us than we need to extend mercy to others; remember Jesus taught us that the measure we extend to others that's the measure that will be extended to us. We want a lot but we extend a little. Then when God extends a little to us we think, "Wait a minute God, I need a lot of mercy here! However that measuring cup looks strangely familiar..." God says, "Yeah, it's the one you've been using for others." Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Jonah here is like, "God *I knew You'd be merciful to them! How could you do that to me?*" You see not only is Jonah's motive for disobedience surfacing here, but the position of his heart in his *obedience* is as well. He was brought to a place of willing surrender, but his obedience wasn't from the heart. He seemed to serve out of resentment more than surrender.

I remember an episode of the little rascals from when I was a kid and there was a bunch of kids sitting around a table and they were being served "mush." They were whispering around the table, "Don't eat the mush, don't eat the mush!" One of them get's busted out, "You'll eat that mush and like it!" To which he responds, "I'll eat it, but I won't like it!" That was Jonah, he did as he was told but he didn't like it, he despised it.

God not only wants our obedience, He wants us to obey from the heart. Paul wrote to the Ephesians and said, "*Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,*" Eph 6:5-6 God doesn't want our obedience to be laced with bad attitude and poisoned through bitterness. But like the psalmist that we would *delight* to do His will and content with His calling upon our lives.

Jonah says, "Just take my life God, it's better for me to die than to live! If You're going to spare them, than just kill me!"

Vs4

That's a rhetorical question isn't it? The answer implied is, "No" it's never right for us to be angry with God, or angry with God's decision to show mercy. Because none of us deserve it so it's His to show mercy to whom He'll show mercy and to be gracious to whom He'll be gracious. It may come as a shock to Jonah but God didn't only want the Jews to be saved, He wanted Salvation to be extended to the Gentiles as well.

Now, there are times that we don't understand God's ways, or the "whys" of God, why He does what He does or allows what He allows. Because of that there are times we get confused, or upset or any # of emotions may flood into us. That's ok, go ahead and give them to God, if you're mad, let Him know, don't pretend you're ok if you're not ok. Having said that once you've confessed it to God, repent of it; because He's not wrong in His *decision*, we're wrong in our *perspective*.

In one of Jesus' parables He asked the question, "Is your eye evil because my eye is good?" The idea being is it right that we be provoked to negative or sinful emotions because He's done something good or gracious? Because He has good intentions toward a person or a people how does that move us to an *ungodly reaction*? It's not right and we need to be put in check with regards to our out of line response to His goodness, that's what's going on here.

"Is it right for you to be angry?" Now remember the word angry speaks of a burning, of getting "hot under the collar" so to speak. So God is going to bring a little heat to Jonah.

Vs5

Notice he didn't even answer the Lord, he just huffed off to place that he could get a good vantage point probably hoping that their repentance was superficial at best and that by the end of 40 days God would go ahead and nuke them.

Now I don't know about you but about this time it would seem to be that if anyone deserved to be blasted it was *Jonah*. Ticked off toward God, throwing a fit because of His good grace, upset that they actually repented, asks God to take his life, then when God says something to him he doesn't even respond! If I were God I would blast him, but God didn't blast him, notice He *blessed* Him.

Vs6

So he deserved to be blasted, instead God blessed him, that's called *grace*. Just when we deserve it the least God reminds us that it's not about what we deserve, it's not about our goodness, (which really isn't good at all) it's about God's goodness toward us.

But we note that God *prepared* this plant, earlier God prepared a great fish, here He prepares a plant, in a minute we'll see Him prepare a worm and a strong east wind. The sovereignty of God is still on display here His creation is at His command with the exception of 1 aspect of...man. But God will *prepare* these things that He might *repair* His prophet. There are times that God will do the same thing with you and with me. He will *prepare* certain circumstances that upset our comfort level, or go against the grain of our personal perspective so as to *repair* our self centered nature.

God is giving Jonah an object lesson, this plant comes up, provides shade from the sun beating down on him and man he's happy. By the way this is the only time we see Jonah happy in the entire book and notice what did it...something that served his personal interest. He was delighted that he received a little relief from the "heat" of the sun. But he was displeased that the Ninevites received reprieve from the "heat" of God's judgment; isn't that ironic...

Vs7-8

Are you guys catching this? Whose world does Jonah's revolve around? *Jonah's!* All of the sudden death would be a better alternative than his discomfort in the hot desert sun. Now again I have no doubt that it was miserable, but do you see how easily swayed he is? Shade = life is good, Sun = it's better to die than to live. Yet for the Ninevites there should be no shade from God's judgment, no reprieve from the heat just burn them...

But God is dealing with Jonah, He's seeking (remember) not to *destroy* Jonah but to *develop* him. God is way more concerned for our character than He is our comforts. God wants Jonah to be contented in Him.

To be able to say, "*The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.*" Job 1:21 Not tossed to and fro like a wave of the sea in complete instability. So God is *preparing* these things in his life because He's *repairing* the things that need some godly attention in him.

You see, God has used Jonah to bless the Ninevites, now (unbeknownst to him) He's using the Ninevites to bless him. God is using them to work ungodliness out of him. Think about it, it was relatively easy for God to deliver Jonah out of the belly of the great fish. The true challenge would be in delivering him from the bowels of his "self-fish" nature. Jonah seems to have been a man who lived *for* himself, who thought only *of* himself, and who was completely wrapped up *in* himself. But God was going to repair those areas in his life, He was going to deliver him from the self centered mentality, through these things He'd prepared for Him circumstantially.

Vs9

Wow! He feels justified in his position! Think for a minute what his anger has done for him. #1 It made him quit, he was in Nineveh, got mad and left. Anger will cause people to quit interacting and ministering, they'll just pull the rip cord and check out. #2 His anger isolated him, he went off to be by himself, didn't want to be around anyone. Angry people have a tendency to isolate themselves which only indicates sinful tendencies anyway (Prov 18:1). #3 It made a spectator out of him. He with drew from the city got all alone and just watched what would happen, he wasn't participating in God's work anymore he was mad so he thought he'd just watch and see how it all worked out.

That's what anger does to people; they quit, isolate themselves and decide to just be a spectator as the stew in their bitterness. We might also add the obvious that anger skews your perspective, you feel justified in your sinful position, you become unreasonable. You're no way in the right yet you insist that you are. Again we see here the "slow to anger" attribute of God at work, you'd think this guy would've been dusted. God continues to reason with him.

Vs10-11

God finally puts it plainly to Jonah, "Your priorities are way off base. You have more pity upon a plant which is temporal at best than you do on a people who are eternal in nature! You're more concerned for this plant's physical well being than you are these people's spiritual well being. You've done nothing to facilitate the plant's growth yet these Ninevites are *My* creation whom I've created in *My* image. You're more worried for your personal comfort than the eternal destiny of hundreds of thousands of people."

That plant was of relatively no value, the souls of those people are of more worth than all the riches of the world. Here we see that God is merciful even to the lower levels of His creation, yet Jonah had compassion for no one, or nothing other than himself.

How many of us have cried over the death of a pet, or felt the stress of a sentimental object was broken yet we've never shed a tear over our friend who doesn't know the Lord? You see it's a priority thing.

Salvation is of the Lord, and God isn't willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Jonah, who was a believer had sinful attitudes that God wanted to rescue him from. Those sailors represented the good ol' boys of the world, trying to work hard and do right by others, they didn't know the Lord, God wanted to save them. The Ninevites represent the lowest of the low, cruel, wicked, violent, idolaters; on the level of Sodom concerning sin. Yet God would reach out to them as well and they would receive His grace through repentance.

For God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son. God reaches out, not to a certain aspect of humanity; but to every tribe, tongue and nation. From "good ol boys" to the most vile of sinners, if you will repent God will relent of His judgment and show you mercy. Forgiveness is available to *all* who will call upon the Lord.

Did Jonah learn the lesson? Personally I believe he did, God is the 1st to speak in this book and He has the last word as well, He drives the point home to Jonah's heart so that he might learn from it and be changed by it. He does the same for you and for me. So let's give God's word, God's way in our lives, be open to Him that you might be changed *by* Him and made more *like* Him. Gracious, merciful, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

Prayer Points:

Lord make us like You, deliver us from our selfish nature. We want to decrease that You might increase in our lives. Help us that we not resist You, or justify ourselves before You, but rather that we be willing and eager to change through the simple instruction of Your word. Have Your way in us...for the glory of Your name.