

Subject: A Pouting Preacher and a Patient God
Scripture: Jonah 4:1-11

Here is an overview of the book:

- Chapter 1 – Jonah protests (he runs from God’s will)
- Chapter 2 – Jonah prays (he submits to God’s will)
- Chapter 3 – Jonah preaches (he obeys God’s will)
- Chapter 4 – Jonah pouts (he questions God’s will)

Chapter 4 is one of the strangest chapters in the Bible. After the people of Nineveh repented and turned to God, we would expect Jonah to praise the Lord for His mercy. Instead we are shocked to read in 4:1, “it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.” Can you imagine that? Instead of rejoicing, Jonah resented what happened. It is amazing that God used a preacher who didn’t even care about the people he preached to.

1. THE RESENTMENT OF A MISERABLE PROPHET

The problem is no longer with Nineveh. The problem now is with Jonah. He was truly a problem child. God had a lot more trouble with Jonah than He did with Nineveh.

A. Jonah’s displeasure

The Bible says that Jonah was “displeased exceedingly” and “very angry” (4:1). The Hebrew word for angry means “to be hot or burn.” Jonah was hot. Why was he so angry? Because his prophecy of judgment was not fulfilled. His message was, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (3:4). His reputation as a prophet was ruined.

B. Jonah’s defense

At least Jonah knew God’s character. He understood that He is gracious, merciful, and slow to anger (in contrast to Jonah’s sudden anger). But Jonah also knew the character of Nineveh, and he had no use for these people. At last we learn why Jonah tried to run away from God’s assignment (Chp. 1). When God told Jonah to preach in Nineveh it was like telling a Jew to preach to Hitler and the Nazis. Jonah hated Nineveh and felt like these cruel people deserved God’s judgment.

C. Jonah’s despair

He asked God to take his life. In chapter 2, Jonah asked God to spare his life, but now he asks God to take his life. Thank God for unanswered prayer. Aren’t you glad that God doesn’t answer all our prayers? Jonah did his best praying in the fish, and he did his worst praying in Nineveh. God asked Jonah (vs. 4), “Is it right for you to be angry about this?” Jonah had no answer. He just sat and sulked.

D. Jonah's desire

Jonah went outside the city (vs. 5) to the east side which was the highest point to overlook the city and he waited to see if God's judgment would fall. Maybe the people were not truly repentant, so he waited and watched, thinking that God might send judgment after all. This is the picture of a miserable man.

2. THE REBUKE OF A MERCIFUL GOD

The book of Jonah reveals the character of God. It shows us the extent of God's power, the extent of His presence, and the extent of His patience. God was patient with the wicked people of Nineveh and He was patient with the prophet Jonah.

God prepared a gourd (vine) to provide a shade from the sun. God made a natural umbrella to shade Jonah. The umbrella (from the Latin *umbra*, meaning "shade, shadow") was actually invented to block sun rather than rain. Then God prepared a worm that ate the vine. Then God prepared a scorching wind. Jonah was mad, then glad, and then finally he was sad. For a second time Jonah wanted to die. For a second time God asked Jonah about his anger. Jonah said, "It's right for me to be angry." What a terrible thing to say and what a terrible way to feel.

God showed him that a plant is nothing compared to a soul. God rebuked Jonah for his pride and his mixed-up priorities. Jonah was more concerned about the plant than the people of Nineveh. Nineveh had 120,000 babies and little children, which suggests there were probably at least 600,000 total people living in the city.

What a rebuke to people in our day. Some people are more concerned about saving endangered animals than about saving endangered people. Some are more concerned about plants, possessions, and pleasures than about people. What makes you mad? What makes you glad? What makes you sad? You can scan the posts on Facebook and find out what makes people tick and what ticks people off. To apply the truth, let's do an attitude check.

You have an attitude like Jonah...

- 1) If you do God's will, but inwardly you resent it.

Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. The Lord weighs our motives and He examines the thoughts and intents of our heart.

- 2) If you know God's character, but you don't reflect it.

Jonah knew that God was gracious and kind, but he wasn't like God. Remember the other son in the story of the prodigal son (Lk. 15)? He stayed at his father's house, but he didn't share his father's heart.

3) If you value things more than people.

Jonah was more concerned about his own interests than the interests of God. His own comfort was more important than his concern for lost people headed for judgment.

4) If you think some people don't deserve God's grace.

God was patient with Jonah and Nineveh. If we feel like Jonah, we don't understand God's grace at all. God spared the sailors when they cried out for mercy in the storm (1:15). God spared Jonah when he cried out for mercy from the belly of the fish (2:2). God spared Nineveh when they cried out for mercy instead of judgment (3:10). God will spare anyone who humbly asks for mercy. If we have received God's mercy, shouldn't we have a desire for others to receive mercy, too?

Every worship service should be the time for an attitude check.

Important truths about God's mercy in the book of Jonah:

- No one deserves God's mercy
- No one is beyond God's mercy
- No one should live and die without God's mercy

Is there any Jonah in me and in you?

The book of Jonah doesn't have a happy ending. It ends with God's rebuke of Jonah and his rotten attitude. We don't know if Jonah got his heart right or not. All we know is that God told Jonah what he needed to know. It's just like that whenever we read and hear God's Word. God tells us what we need to know, and then we either accept or reject it. We either submit to God's will or we resist it.