

Message #7**Jonah 4:1-3**

When we come to this final chapter of Jonah, Jonah is a pathetic mess. He is an emotional wreck. In chapter one he wants to die. In chapter two he wants to live. In chapter four he wants to die. He is up and down, totally unstable and irrational.

WHEN A CHILD OF GOD IS OUT OF STEP WITH THE WILL GOD, HE WILL BE ANGRY , CONFUSED AND DEPRESSED .

Now the context of all of this depression is that God had spared Nineveh. Nineveh had repented of sin and God spared her. One would think Jonah would have been the happiest man on the earth. He was a prophet of God who had marched into the most prestigious city in all of the world and the whole city positively responded to him and his message; everyone got right with God.

There are three ways Jonah responded:

RESPONSE #1 – Jonah was displeased with God. 4:1a

The conjunction “but” which begins the verse shows a sharp contrast between the way God moved and the way Jonah was moving. God had turned from being angry and Jonah was turning to being angry.

Jonah was “displeased” with what God had done, namely, demonstrated grace to Nineveh. The Hebrew word used for “displeased” is one that suggests that Jonah was so emotionally upset that he actually trembled. He was so displeased that this physically affected him (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 369).

Rabbinical teaching suggests Jonah was worried that, based on Deut. 18:21-22, he would lose his credibility.

As John Calvin said, Jonah did not want to appear as an empty and lying prophet (Fairbairn, p. 148).

RESPONSE #2 – Jonah was angry with God. 4:1b

The idea of Jonah becoming angry is a key idea of this chapter. The particular word used here is used again once in verse 4 and twice in verse 9. The Hebrew word is “charah” which refers to an anger that burns. It describes an anger that has been kindled and is burning (*Ibid.*, p. 303).

As one commentator said, Jonah has such an unbalanced patriotic fervor for Israel and hatred against Assyria that when God did not destroy Nineveh, he became hot (John Hannah, p. 1470).

Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh in the first place. But now that he was there, his worst nightmare had occurred; Nineveh repented and God relented, so Jonah raged.

RESPONSE #3 – Jonah prayed to God. **4:2-3**

Knowing God's Word and will was never Jonah's problem; doing God's will was his problem.

There are three areas of communication:

Communication #1 - Jonah admitted what he did. **4:2a**

One thing is admirable about Jonah—he is honest. He tells God exactly why he is angry.

Communication #2 - Jonah acknowledged why he rebelled. **4:2b**

He rebelled and blames God's character for his rebellion.

(Fact #1) - Jonah knew God is a gracious God. **4:2a**

Jonah had originally stressed that God was a God of ferocious judgment who would judge Nineveh in 40 days. But Jonah also knew that God was a gracious God. The word "gracious" indicates Jonah knew that God has a part to Him that is inclined to take pity on or show favor toward those who do not deserve it (Gesenius, pp. 292-293).

Even in O.T. days, Jonah knew of the grace of God. He knew many O.T. passages of Scripture (Ex. 34:6-7). He certainly had experienced it himself. He was a rebellious prophet and he did not deserve a second chance.

(Fact #2) - Jonah knew God is a compassionate God. **4:2b**

This is a beautiful word for it means that God has a tender and gentle affection for fallen mankind, both men and women, especially when they repent (*Ibid.*, p. 765).

God takes no pleasure in destroying or damning people. He has a heart that is very compassionate. He provides a way that even the worst of sinners can be saved and Jonah knew all about this attribute of God.

(Fact #3) - Jonah knew God is a slow-to-anger God. **4:2c**

The specific thing Jonah knew was that God is slow to anger in the sense of being slow to pour out His wrath and judgment. Judgment is always the last thing God does. First, He reaches out to people in His grace and His compassion.

God is not a God who typically instantly sends His judgment.

(Fact #4) - Jonah knew God is a lovingkindness God. 4:2d

The Hebrew word for “lovingkindness” is one that means that God has an eager and ardent desire and zeal to demonstrate His grace and mercy to people (*Ibid.*, pp. 293-294). God loves to demonstrate His grace and mercy and compassion on sinners who have botched it and blown it.

I love what Kohlenberger said—Jonah was glad to experience the lovingkindness of God himself, but he could not tolerate the idea that God would extend His lovingkindness to Nineveh (p. 66).

(Fact #5) - Jonah knew God is a relenting God. 4:2e

Jonah knew that God moved in accordance with people’s response to Him. If people persist in sin, God sends judgment. If people turn from sin, God sends blessings. Jonah knew that even heathen wicked sinners could escape the judgment of God if they would repent.

Communication #3 - Jonah asks that he be killed. 4:3

In chapter two, he praises God for saving his life (2:6, 9) and now in chapter four he is praying and asking God to end his life.

Now it is not uncommon for a prophet of God to become depressed. Elijah once became so depressed that he asked God to end his life (I Kings 19:4). There was a major difference, however, between Elijah and Jonah. Elijah was asking God to take his life because he sensed he was a failure. Many wanted him dead and he thought he was the only righteous man left on earth. Jonah was asking God to take his life because he was a success! He had gone to Nineveh and preached and the whole city had repented!

There are many practical lessons to be gleaned from this passage:

- 1) Are we displeased with God when He does things His way and not our way?
- 2) Do we get angry with God when He doesn’t immediately judge sin?
- 3) Have we ever been so depressed because of the world that we want to stop ministering and die?
- 4) Have we experienced the grace and mercy of God?

Here is wonderful news for everyone! God is a gracious, compassionate, loving and patient God. If we will turn from our rebellion, from our sin, from our failures and turn to Him, we will find His mercy. That is the story of Jonah.