

1. If this book had ended at the last verse of chapter 3, history would have portrayed Jonah as the greatest of the prophets.
2. But God does not look on the outward things; He looks at the heart and weighs the motives. (1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Corinthians 4:5)
3. As we begin with verse 1 - we find that several emotions were involved: anger and displeasure as well as a lack of understanding.
4. Jonah literally hated what God had done and his anger was incited. So - why was Jonah's reaction so negative?
5. Nineveh was head of a resurgent Assyrian military state. Even in this period of Assyrian history, their imperialistic ambitions had been displayed. They were an enemy of Israel.
6. Perhaps Jonah foresaw and feared the movement of the Assyrian armies toward Israel.
7. Being instrumental in the sparing of one of Israel's greatest enemies may have been more than Jonah could withstand. It appears that Jonah felt his personal reputation was at stake.
8. After all - he had prophesied destruction and then it did not occur.
9. At the very worst we see a prophet with a bitter hatred toward those who had experienced mercy.
10. He also was a prophet who misunderstood God's mercy and had a limited view of God's plan for the redemption of his own people.
11. It is sad to see Jonah place limits on the same grace that saved him. How often do we share the same attitude today?
12. In verse 2 and 3 - Jonah shares with God his reason for being so angry and in such emotional unrest. At least Jonah did express this to God in prayer.
13. Instead of complaining about God - he complained to God. However, this prayer was quite different from Jonah's prayer in 2:1.
14. In the prayer of chapter 4 - we find a reversion back to the "Jonah" who ran away from God's original call.
15. Notice the use of the word "I" or "my" in the prayer. Not only does this prayer show an extreme selfishness, but it also indicates Jonah's shortsightedness.
16. He presumptuously felt that God should have shaped his course according to his (Jonah's) mind. Jonah did not want God to do what was right and proper according to his merciful nature.
17. Instead of bestowing upon Nineveh the kind of grace God had granted to Israel, Jonah wished the Ninevites' destruction without any chance to repent.

18. Jonah even went as far as to argue with God by complaining about God's goodness! It indicates that while Jonah had become obedient, he still lacked a spirit of submission.
19. Notice the question from God in verse 4. Jonah is asked if it was right or justifiable for him to be angry.
20. Jonah's anger was not justifiable. His anger was inappropriate, and God sought to help Jonah understand His compassion for all people.
21. Now - the text is silent about the time span, if any, between vv. 4 and 5. Some believe Jonah left the city as soon as he preached his judgment message.
22. Jonah saw the repentance of Nineveh and was inwardly convinced from the merciful character of God that God would - and indeed did - withhold judgment prior to the forty days.
23. So - Jonah went out and stationed himself outside and to the east of the city.
24. Notice once again the mercy and grace of God in verse 6 - God had another lesson in mind for Jonah.
25. Having prepared the vine (v. 6), as he had prepared the great fish, in verse 7-8 God then prepared a worm and an east wind. Just as the vine was to make Jonah happy and the fish to rescue him, God used a lowly worm to drive home his intended message.
26. The word "prepared" (*mānâ*) was not used loosely. It showed the Lord's intention to demonstrate his control, his sovereignty over creation.
27. The issue went even deeper than a lack of understanding about God's justness.
28. Having been asked by God to consider the rightness of his anger and then thinking for a brief time that perhaps his anger was vindicated, Jonah then was shown by the Lord that he was wrong.
29. In verses 9-11 the text portrays God as the great teacher, trying to help Jonah recognize the divine character and his own inadequacy in understanding.
30. In this text God attempted to show Jonah how wrong his attitude was - yet in a tender fashion.
31. God's mercy toward Nineveh had made him angry, and then he was angered by God's withdrawing mercy from him.
32. God attempted to deal with Jonah's inconsistency by asking him, "Do you have a right?" The question is identical to the one God asked in v. 4.
33. The Lord continued his teaching lesson as he admonished Jonah for his inappropriate compassion for a plant for which he had done nothing. It had been a gift of God's grace.
34. Just as Jonah's provision was the shade of the vine he did not deserve, the Ninevites' was a deliverance they did not deserve based upon a repentance they did not fully understand.