

The Pouting Prophet

Jonah 4: 1-11

We have discovered an interesting journey while studying the book of Jonah. The prophet's life was filled with several twists and turns after hearing the call to go to Nineveh. Initially making the decision to flee from God, Jonah soon discovered such an endeavor was impossible. His rebellion was not fatal, but it certainly was most difficult and horrifying. Following three days and nights within the belly of the great fish, Jonah was spit out on dry ground. No doubt, this got his attention, and he wisely decided to make his way to Nineveh in obedience to the Lord.

Unsure of how the people would respond, Jonah was surely surprised at their reaction to his message of repentance in the face of impending judgment. Hearing such a dire warning, the people of Nineveh, including the king, repented of their sin and turned to God. It would appear that Jonah could have returned home with joy and satisfaction, praising the Lord for his graciousness and sovereignty. However, Jonah's story doesn't end there. Rather than being thankful for all God had done, Jonah becomes angry and pouts about the results of his endeavor in Nineveh. He was not concerned for the people in Nineveh, and was quite upset they had responded favorably toward the Lord.

Our last chapter finishes open ended. We find Jonah pouting about the events in Nineveh, facing a stinging rebuke from the Lord. At times we respond in obedience to the Lord's will, but we aren't always pleased with what He is doing in our lives or the lives of others. We need to guard against an attitude like Jonah's. As we finish our study, I want to discuss the **realities** within the text as we consider: [The Pouting Prophet](#).

I. The Displeasure of Jonah (1-4) – Here we discover the genuine displeasure of Jonah regarding the events in Nineveh. Consider:

A. His Attitude (1) – *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.* Jonah's displeasure and anger are directly associated with the repentance of Nineveh. While Jonah had reluctantly been obedient to go to Nineveh, he never desired them to respond favorably to his message. He is the only preacher I've ever heard of who genuinely hoped the people would not respond to his preaching. He had no compassion for Nineveh, and hoped God would judge them. (It is easy for us to be critical, and even judgmental of Jonah, but we have all had similar desires. No doubt we have all wished for individuals or groups to get "what they deserved.")

B. His Argument (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.* I am amazed at the boldness of Jonah as he argued with the Lord regarding the outcome in Nineveh. “This is what I told you in the beginning. That is why I fled toward Tarshish. I knew you were a gracious God, one who is merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. I knew they would repent and you would turn from bringing judgment. I told you God; and that is why I didn’t want to come!” (We maybe aren’t as bold, and may not actually speak like this to God, but I am sure we all have had similar thoughts and emotions. Sometimes we too get angry when God reacts in a way that we hoped He wouldn’t, or chooses to move in a way we thought should be different.)

C. His Assessment (3) – *Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.* At least Jonah is honest, but his honesty reveals the true condition of his heart. He admitted that he would rather die than live, all because Nineveh had repented and God chose not to destroy them in judgment. Jonah’s hatred for Nineveh exceeded his desire to live. Bitterness had taken root in his life and it has consumed his being. [Heb.12:15 – Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.](#) Bitterness is a poison that destroys the vessel in which it is stored from the inside-out. It has been said, “Bitterness doesn’t affect those upon whom it is poured; it destroys the vessel in which it is stored.”

D. The Admonition (4) – *Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?* God had been gracious with Nineveh, and He continued to be gracious with Jonah. He urged Jonah to look deep within his heart. “Is such anger right? Do you bring honor to God with such an attitude? Is your current state adding to your spiritual growth and relationship with God?” He wanted Jonah to wisely consider his attitude and approach toward the events in Nineveh.

- We usually don’t enjoy such admonitions from the Lord. I am certain He has spoken to each of us in similar fashion. “Is your attitude helping the situation? Do your actions reveal the grace and compassion of the Lord your serve? Are you benefiting spiritually from such behavior” These are hard questions, but at times we too must answer them and respond appropriately.

II. The Dissension of Jonah (5-8) – Here we see the continued rebellion and disgruntled attitude of Jonah following Nineveh’s repentance. Notice:

A. The Surveillance (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.*

Following his conversation with God, Jonah went out to the east side of Nineveh and built a small booth to sit under in the shade, watching to see what would come of Nineveh. It appears Jonah was still hopeful their repentance wouldn't last and that God would eventually bring judgment. He sat there, stewing in his bitterness, angry that judgment had not yet fallen on Nineveh.

- Such rebellious attitudes are often prevalent within the church. Likely, we too have possessed a similar attitude, at some time or another. Rather than being thankful for God's blessings and mercy, we want to find a place to watch God's wrath poured out. Maybe we have been hurt by another, and we want a front-row seat to the show. We want to have a clear vantage point when they "get what they deserve." Is such an attitude pleasing to the Lord? As difficult as it may be, we are not called to relish in the punishment of another, even if it is deserved. We must be like our Lord, showing compassion and seeking to forgive those who have wronged us.

B. The Shelter (5-8) – In these verses we find that Jonah had constructed a booth for shelter from the relentless heat of the desert sun. He found a measure of comfort in the shade, while stewing in his bitterness. God was still teaching Jonah and would soon provide another valuable lesson. God prepared a gourd to grow near Jonah's booth, to provide another means of shade from the heat of the sun. As the vine grew, Jonah rejoiced for the shade it provided. However, God was still at work in Jonah's life. The next morning, God prepared a worm to smite the gourd and it died. These seem like small, insignificant details, but they reveal much about Jonah and the current condition of his heart. We see that in:

C. The Suffering (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 condition continued to deteriorate as he sat hoping to see judgment fall on Nineveh. After the gourd died, God prepared a strong east wind to blow, with the sun beating down on Jonah's head. Jonah became so hot that he fainted. He was so miserable that he wished to die. His hatred and determination to see Nineveh suffer brought immense suffering to Jonah himself. Rather than heading home, knowing his job had been completed, he chose to wallow in misery in the heat of the sun, hoping for judgment. Jonah would rather die than live knowing God had spared the city.

- This is where hatred and bitterness lead. We become so consumed with seeing those who have wronged us suffer, that we are willing to endure more suffering to see their judgment. Bitterness clouds our vision and consumes our being. It is sad when someone reaches a place in life where their joy and satisfaction is dependent upon the suffering of another!

III. The Debate with Jonah (9-11) – Here we discover a final conversation that God had with Jonah. Consider:

A. The Inquiry (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 asked Jonah about his anger regarding the gourd. Is it well that you are angry about the gourd dying? Jonah replied that he was satisfied with his anger, and even hoped to die. In his suffering, Jonah remained defiant toward the Lord. His hatred for Nineveh had consumed his being. He was no longer concerned with honoring God or showing basic compassion toward others. If Nineveh was not going to face the wrath of God, Jonah saw no reason to live.

- We don't enjoy these conversations either, but I am sure most believers have been confronted by the Spirit in a similar way. Is it well with your soul to be consumed with anger and bitterness toward another? Does that reflect the salvation you've received and the new nature you were given in Christ? Many times, we respond in a way much like Jonah. We know the Spirit is right, and yet we don't want to admit our failure or sin. Rather than submit in repentance, we continue in angry defiance.

B. The Indictment (10-11) – *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: ^[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?* God revealed the selfishness of Jonah and iniquity in his attitude. He was hurt over the gourd dying, having pity on the vine, and yet he was angry that God had spared tens of thousands of people in Nineveh. If he had shown pity upon a vine that he had nothing to do with, should God not have compassion upon those souls He had created? Jonah's attitude was terrible, and God rebuked his sin and lack of compassion toward the needs of others.

- This is quite convicting when we pause to consider it. We often get worked up and angry about the simplest of things, and yet ignore the needs of others. Many would rather have their way, ensuring their wants and desires are met, even at the expense of others. We show pity on things that are temporal, and yet ignore needs that are eternal. Our focus should always be on reaching others with the Gospel, even if that comes at a cost for us. We may not always be pleased with the way God is leading, but we must obediently submit to His will. The church will never prosper if we possess the attitude of Jonah. Christ died for the sin of humanity, and we must seek to win all we can for His glory!

Conclusion: The book of Jonah ends abruptly. We do not know how Jonah responded following this rebuke. Did he repent of his sin and hatred for Nineveh? Did he continue to remain defiant, finally choosing his own path instead of seeking to walk with God? I believe the book ends this way with purpose. It causes us to reflect on our lives and the needs around us. What will the next chapter of our book reveal? Did we learn from the Lord, seeking to show compassion and reach others for Christ; or did we continue the path that was familiar? The story of our lives is yet unfinished. What will the final chapter record?

If there are needs, bring them to Jesus. Maybe you are dealing with anger and bitterness. Maybe you are struggling with being obedient to God's will for your life. Maybe you have yet to respond to His gracious offer of salvation. The Lord desires you to have a fulfilling relationship with Him. If anything stands in the way of that, come to Him today!