

Bible Survey - Jonah

by Peter Hammond

Peter Hammond's sermon on Jonah explores themes of obedience, God's mercy, and the significance of repentance in the face of prejudice and anger.

Scripture: Jonah 2:9, Jonah 3:10, Matthew 12:38, Acts 10:34, Ephesians 4:31

Topics: "Repentance", "Gods Mercy"

Description

Peter Hammond preaches on the story of Jonah, a prophet from Galilee, who was called to a mission to Nineveh, a great city of wickedness. Despite Jonah's initial disobedience and anger towards God's mercy on Nineveh, the people's repentance and God's compassion are highlighted. The sermon emphasizes the importance of responding to God's Word and works with humility, repentance, and gratitude, rather than being consumed by anger, selfishness, and a sense of entitlement.

Transcript

"But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." Jonah 2:9

A Prophet from Galilee

Jonah (dove) the son of Amittai, is reported on in 2 Kings 14:25 as the prophet from Gath Hepher, who ministered in the reign of King Jeroboam II (793-753BC). It was during the reign of Jeroboam II and the ministry of the prophet Jonah, that the Northern Kingdom of Israel was able to reclaim the land which had been lost and extend their border beyond the frontier of Syria. The pharisees were wrong when they claimed that "No prophet has arisen out of Galilee" (John 7:52), because Jonah was a Galilean. By Jewish tradition, Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath, who Elijah raised from the dead (1 Kings 17:8-24).

Historic

The Lord Jesus Christ refers to the Book of Jonah as an historic narrative firmly rooted in historic reality (Matthew 12:38-41; Luke 11:29-32). For those who think it impossible that a man could be swallowed whole by a whale, the Daily Mail of 14 December 1928, reported a whale carcass displayed for a week in Birmingham, where 12 men could fit through its mouth and into its belly at one time.

Swallowed by a Whale

Sir Francis Fox in Sixty Three Years of Engineering, recorded that sperm whales routinely swallow lumps of food eight feet in diameter and that in one of these whales they actually found the skeleton of a shark, 16-feet in length. M. De Parville, the scientific Editor of the Journal Des Debats of Paris and Sir Francis Fox, carefully investigated an incident which occurred February 1891, near the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic. The whaleship Star of the East harpooned a large sperm whale, which, with a lash of its tail, threw two men into the sea, both having presumed to have drowned.

Survived

Later the whale was killed and the sections brought on deck. Over a period of days the sailors cut up the great body of the whale and were astounded to find spasmodic signs of life in the stomach. Inside was found the missing sailor, James Bartley, doubled up and unconscious. He was laid on the deck and washed in sea water. He remained unconscious for some time and only recovered from the shock three weeks later. He explained that after been hurled into the sea, he was drawn into darkness and found himself in a place of intense heat. In the dark as he felt about for an exit, he found only slimy walls around him. When the awful truth dawned on him, he fell unconscious in shock until revived on the ship's deck. James Bartley's exposed skin had been bleached to a deadly whiteness by the gastric juices of the whale. Bartley reported that he probably could have lived inside this house of flesh until he starved, for he lost his senses through fright and not from lack of air.

The Drowning of Jonah

Most Sunday school pictures of Jonah and the whale, picture the whale at the surface with his mouth wide open to receive Jonah as he is thrown from the ship. Actually, Jonah Chapter 2 makes it clear that he drowned. "Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly. And he said: I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, and He answered me. 'Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice. For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.' The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me forever; yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God. 'When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer went up to You, into Your holy Temple. 'Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.' So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land." Jonah 2:1-10

The Sign of Jonah

Jonah speaks of being cast into the deep, into the heart of the seas, with the waves passing over him, "the waters surrounded me, even to my soul. Weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me forever; yet you have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord My God." It only takes three minutes being deprived of air for a person to die. To sink to the bottom of the sea takes a lot longer than 3 minutes. Jonah describes himself as being in Sheol, the abode of the dead. So when Jesus speak of the sign of Jonah, he is referring to dying and being raised to life. Jonah is the most outstanding example of Resurrection in the Old Testament.

Nineveh

Nineveh was one of the greatest cities of the Ancient world. Situated on the East bank of the Tigris River, 400 miles from the Mediterranean Sea, it was the capital of Assyria. The stronghold of the city was 30 miles long and 10 miles wide. There were 5 walls and 3 moats surrounding it. The walls were 100 feet high and were so thick that four chariots could be driven abreast on the tops of these walls. The 15 gates were decorated with lions and bulls and heavily guarded. The temple in the city was in the form of a great pyramid, or ziggurat. The city was as great in wickedness as it was in wealth and power.

Jonah and Israel

Jonah is a type of Israel.

As Jonah was called to world missions, so too was Israel.

As Jonah refused to fulfil his mission, so too did Israel.

As Jonah was punished by being cast into the sea, so was Israel exiled by Assyria and Babylon.

As Jonah was preserved in the whale, so too was Israel to return from the exile.

As Jonah repented and was restored to life, so Israel was restored to the land in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

As Jonah became obedient to God and carried out his mission to Nineveh, so Christ's disciples from the Day of Pentecost have been taking the Word of God to the ends of the earth.

As Jonah's ministry was blessed with the repentance of Nineveh, so Israel has been blessed in the conversion of people from every tribe and nation.

Jesus and Jonah

Jesus Christ Himself drew attention to the Book of Jonah and gave it great importance. When the Lord Jesus Christ was asked for a sign to prove His claims, He told the people that the only sign they would be given, would be the sign of the prophet Jonah. "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.' But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here'." Matthew 12:38-42

Nineveh Will Condemn Jewish Unbelief

Jesus rebuked the people of Judah saying that the men of Nineveh will rise up in the Judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed one greater than Jonah is here.

Miracles in Jonah

Skeptics have often scoffed at the story of Jonah being swallowed by a whale. However, this is not the only miracle related in the Book of Jonah. There are eight miracles recorded in Jonah:

1. "But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up." Jonah 1:4
2. When the sailors cast lots "the lot fell on Jonah." Jonah 1:7 - God controlled the outcome of an apparently random selection.
3. When the sailors "threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging." God calmed the sea.
4. "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah" Jonah 1:17
5. "So the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah onto dry land." Jonah 2:10
6. "So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed the fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them." Jonah 3:5 - the remarkable city-wide repentance and faith of the people of Nineveh was a work of God's grace.
7. "And the Lord prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery..." Jonah 4:6
8. "But as morning dawned the next day, God prepared a worm and it so damaged the plant that it withered." Jonah 4:7
9. "And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement East wind..." Jonah 4:8

How Do You React to the Word of God and the Works of God?

How we react to these events tells a lot about us.

1. The Atheist declares that God does not exist and therefore did not create the world, nor controls it. Therefore the atheist rejects the very possibility of miracles.
2. The Deist believes that God created the world, but maintains that he does not intervene or control it now. Many people who claim to be Christians seem to fall into this kind of practical deism where they believe that God created the Heavens and the earth, but they do not seek Him in prayer for either wisdom in their decisions, or His blessings on their actions.
3. Theism is the Biblical understanding that God who created the world and everything in it, is sovereign and interacts with His creation, answering prayer, blessing obedience and punishing disobedience to His Law.

Anti-Gentilism

We hear much about anti-Semitism, but in the Book of Jonah we see another kind of prejudice, anti-Gentilism. One would imagine that any missionary or Evangelist would be ecstatic if a whole city repented, but the prophet Jonah was bitterly disappointed: "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the Lord, and said, 'Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.'" Jonah 4:1-2. Jonah

wanted to see Nineveh destroyed. He did not desire that the Assyrians escape condemnation. He was frustrated and angry at God's compassion and mercy.

The Tomb of Jonah

The tomb of Jonah is situated in Northern Iraq, on top of a hill in Eastern Mosul, called Tel Nebi Yunus. Jonah is recognised as a prophet in Islam. Surah 10 in the Quran is named after Jonah.

Nevertheless, on 24 July 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) broadcast video footage of them blowing up this tomb of Jonah which has been respected for over two and a half millenniums and the destination of many visitors who revere his memory.

Jonah's hometown was Gath-Hepher (2 Kings 14:25) is near Nazareth, the home of Jesus, of whom Jonah was a sign.

Joppa and the Mission to the Gentiles

Joppa, from where Jonah embarked on his sea journey to Tarshish, to avoid preaching to Nineveh, was the very place which God chose, 800 years later to reveal to the Apostle Peter his commission to receive men of other nations. "Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter." Acts 10:5. "Then Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation, whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The Word which God sent... through Jesus Christ - He is Lord of all - that Word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea and began from Galilee after the Baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses of all things which He did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on the tree. Him God raised up on the third day and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and of the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His Name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins. While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon those who heard the Word... can anyone forbid water that these should not be baptised who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? He commanded them to be baptised in the Name of the Lord.'" Acts 10-34-48

God Has Also Granted to the Gentiles Repentance to Life

"If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God? When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life'."

Acts 11:17-18

Joppa and the Jerusalem Council

At the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), the Apostle Peter refuted the Judaizers by reporting on what God had revealed to him at Joppa, and by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Roman centurion Cornelius' household. "...Peter rose up and said to them: 'Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the Word of the Gospel and believe. So God,

who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.' Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, 'Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return and will rebuild the Tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My Name, says the Lord who does all these things.'" Acts 15:7-17

Do You Have Any Right to Be Angry?

"Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them and He did not do it. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the Lord, and said, 'Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!' Then the Lord said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?' So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. And the Lord prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. But as morning dawned the next day, God prepared a worm and it so damaged the plant that it withered. And it happened when the sun arose that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself and said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.' Then God said to Jonah 'is it right for you to be angry about the plant?' And he said, 'it is right for me to be angry, even to death!' But the Lord said, 'You have had pity on the plant for which you had not laboured, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night, and should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than 120,000 persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left - and much livestock?'" Jonah 3:10-4:11

Why Are We Angry?

Anger flows out of perceived injustice. We are angry when we are mistreated, or when somebody we care about is wronged. The Scripture tells us not to let the sun go down on our wrath, to be careful that we do not allow our anger to lead us into sin. It is possible to be angry without sin, but it is all too easy to sin in our anger.

Examples of Anger

For every example of righteousness anger in the Bible there are four examples of destructive anger.

We read about how Cain's jealousy caused his anger against his brother, and led to the murder of Abel (Genesis 4).

Pride prompted Naaman to become furious when the prophet Elisha did not come out and speak with him personally, concerning how to deal with his leprosy (2 Kings 5).

Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites were very angry when they heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and that the gaps were being closed (Nehemiah 4:7).

King Xerxes was furious when Queen Vashti refused his summons (Esther 1:12).

The Word of God on Anger

The Word of God commands us: "Cease from anger and forsake wrath. Do not fret, it only causes harm."
Psalm 37:8

"A quick tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of wicked intentions is hated."

Proverbs 14:17

"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city."
Proverbs 16:32

"The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression." Proverbs 19:11

"Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go."

Proverbs 22:24

"Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?"

Proverbs 27:4

"Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools."

Ecclesiastes 7:9

"But now you yourselves are to put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth." Colossians 3:8

"For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money." Titus 1:7

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." James 1:19

The Wrath of Jonah

The prophet Jonah had a problem with anger. God asked him a dangerous question: Do you have any right to be angry?

Mission Rejected

God had commanded His prophet to go to Nineveh and warn the people that they had 40 days to repent, or He would destroy their city. Nineveh was a wicked, brutal, pagan city. They were an enemy of the people of Israel. Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. He did not want to preach in Nineveh. He did not want to see the people of Nineveh repent. He wanted to see them destroyed. Jonah took a ship to Tarshish (present day Spain) to flee from the Lord, going in the very opposite direction to where Nineveh

was.

A Mighty Tempest

"But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up." Jonah 1:4. The mariners were so afraid that they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the load.

Arise and Call on Your God

When the captain saw that Jonah was fast asleep he challenged him: "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us so that we may not perish." (Jonah 1:6)

Confession

Jonah confessed: "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, Who made the sea and the dry land." He admitted that he was fleeing from doing his duty. As "the sea was growing more tempestuous" Jonah said that they should "pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that this great tempest is because of me." Jonah 1:12

Into the Deep

After every attempt to row to land, the sailors, in desperation, cried out to the Lord: "'We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood...' so they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows." Jonah 1:14-16. God is Sovereign. He called Jonah. The Lord sent the storm to prevent Jonah from fleeing from doing His Will. He controls the winds and the waves. He is to be feared.

Deliverance from Death

"Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights." This great fish was God's instrument to rescue Jonah from the perils of the sea. Our Lord Jesus, during His earthly ministry, referred to the Book of Jonah to communicate truths concerning His own message and mission. The Lord Jesus spoke of "the sign of the prophet Jonah", which was fulfilled, not only in Christ's Resurrection from the dead, but in the impact of His message, which brought about widespread Repentance.

The Worship of True Repentance

"Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly... 'I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction and He answered me... You heard my voice, for You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me... the waters surrounded me, even to my soul, the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down... yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer went up to You, into Your Holy Temple. Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy, but I will sacrifice to You with a voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord!'"

Salvation is of the Lord

"So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land." Jonah 2:10. Again Creation responds obediently to the Sovereign commands of the Creator. The fish which might have been God's weapon of death, by Grace, became God's tool of deliverance. Jonah declares his loyalty to the Lord and extols Him as the only source of Salvation and Deliverance. God had sovereignly moved the prophet Jonah from rebellion and disobedience to Repentance and obedience, from impairing God's work of Redemption for the Ninevites to seeking to bring the message of Repentance to the Gentiles.

Mission to Nineveh

"Now the Word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.' So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the Word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three day journey in extent. Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said: 'Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. He caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, 'Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily to God; Yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger so that we may not perish?'" Jonah 3:1-9

A City Transformed

As God had sovereignly moved the prophet Jonah from disobedience to Repentance, from being an obstacle to bringing Salvation to the Ninevites, to being a channel, so now God moved the people of Nineveh from idolatry, violence and cruelty, to Repentance and Faith in Jehovah God.

Mercy

"Then God saw their works that they turned from their evil way and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them and He did not do it." Jonah 3:10. Jonah's worst fears were realised when the people believed, repented, proclaimed a fast and adorned themselves in sackcloth, the traditional attire of mourning in the Near East. The Repentance was swift, city-wide and complete.

The Repentance of Nineveh

The reference to the king of Nineveh ordering the entire population to Repentance has been identified by some scholars with the religious reforms of Adad-Nirari III (810-783BC). The immediate and spontaneous wholehearted response of the king and all the subjects of Nineveh in Repentance and humility, and the royal edict mandating prayer, mourning rites and a fast, transformed Nineveh. The royal edict also addressed the most prominent of Nineveh's sins: violence. "Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands."

Grace

The king gave personal and corporate expression to the hope that genuine Repentance would avert the Divine Judgment on Nineveh. As the people of Nineveh responded positively to the proclamation of imminent Judgment, the Lord responded by withdrawing His sentence of destruction on the city.

A Reason to Rejoice

Jonah's message to Nineveh was one of the most influential sermons ever preached. In a city where the people were likely to ignore, or even kill, Jonah, the miraculous happened. A huge number of people repented. A large and powerful city was spared from destruction. Surely the prophet should have been dancing for joy?

The Anger of Jonah

"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the Lord and said: 'Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country?... for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!'" Jonah 4:1-3

Blinded by Anger

Jonah felt that he had a right not to go to Nineveh. He felt he had the right to preach Judgment and to see Judgment fall. All he could see was his rights, and he wanted everything to go his way. Jonah seemed oblivious to the spectacular work of God's grace that he had just witnessed. Jonah was so blinded by his rights and offended by what he saw as the wrong actions of God that Jonah fell into a deep and suicidal depression. "It is better for me to die than to live!"

A Devastating Question

Then the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Jonah 4:4. One short question. Eight simple words.

What did Jonah do when God asked him this penetrating question?

Nothing.

Hoping for Destruction

Jonah was so immersed in self-pity that he did not even reply. Jonah went out of the city and sat on the East side of the city making himself a shelter. Perhaps Jonah was still hoping the Ninevites weren't sincere in their Repentance and that God would still destroy the city.

The Plant and the Worm

"And the Lord prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant, but as morning dawned the next day, God prepared a worm and it so damaged the plant that it withered. And it happened when the sun arose that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself and said, 'it is better for me to die than to live.'" Jonah 4:6-8

Missing the Big Picture

The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. Jonah was missing the big picture. Here he was looking over a vast city which was responding to God's Word in humility and Repentance. But Jonah seemed oblivious to this. All he could see was that his rights had been violated and his enemies were escaping the Judgment they deserved. Jonah was more concerned about his comfort and his plant, than

about all the people and animals of the great city of Nineveh.

A Penetrating Question

Like most men, Jonah does not seem to grasp things the first time. So the Book of Jonah records two calls of God and two questions from God. Repetition brings Revelation. For a second time God challenges Jonah's selfishness by asking this dangerous and penetrating question: "'Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?' and he said: 'It is right for me to be angry, even to death!'" Jonah 4:9

A Catalogue of Complaints

All Jonah could see was the violation of his supposed rights. Jonah complained that God had sent him where he did not want to go. The Lord had given him a message that he did not want to deliver. The people had responded in a way that he had hoped they would not. God had given mercy to people whom Jonah knew did not deserve it. Then the Lord had taken away "his vine". In Jonah's mind he had every right to be angry. Angry enough to want to die!

An Object Lesson

"But the Lord said, 'You have had pity on the plant for which you have not laboured, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city in which are more than 120,000 persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left - and much livestock?' Jonah 4:10-11. There were more than 120,000 children and many animals in Nineveh. For their sake's, God chose to be merciful. Jonah seemed more concerned about his comfort and "his plant" than about all of God's creatures in Nineveh.

Undeserved Favour

In Jonah chapter 2, Jonah had rejoiced over his own deliverance from the storm. He knew that he had deserved to be thrown overboard and to drown in the ocean. God had poured out His grace upon him. Undeserved favour. Yet, while Jonah was happy to receive grace from the hand of God for himself, he was offended that God had extended similar grace to the Ninevites. Jonah had hoped that God would destroy Nineveh. He found himself a grandstand seat where he could watch God rain destruction upon the wicked Nineveh.

Compassion

In the hot Near Eastern sun he made for himself shade. The Lord prepared a plant which provided him with shade. With the same Divine hand that in mercy provided the great fish, which had saved Jonah from the tempest, the same Lord provided the plant and the shade. Now He also prepared a worm to kill the plant and sent a hot east wind to torment the bitter prophet. God's Divine object lesson is clearly revealed. God is compassionate for people and animals. The Lord Jesus said not a sparrow can fall to the ground without God caring (Matthew 10:29).

Demanding our Rights

If God was to give us what we deserve we would receive Eternal Judgment in hell. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). If we were to fully understand the holiness of God, and the depravity of man, we would not allow ourselves to be angered over the apparent violation of our selfish rights. We deserve

eternal damnation. Grace is God's undeserved favour.

Do you have any right to be angry? No, you certainly do not have any right to be angry, not against God. God pours out His abundant blessings upon you: Life, family, talents, gifts, opportunities, every drop of rain that falls, every ray of sunshine, every breath that we breathe is a gift from Almighty God.

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger; brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Ephesians 4:31-5:2

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/peter-hammond/bible-survey-jonah/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net