

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Angry with God

Jonah 4:1-11

2000

Introduction

Jonah's mission was a success! 120,000 men, women and children who were headed for eternal destruction were saved! You would think that Jonah would have been elated. 120,000 converts!! And Peter thought 3,000 in one day was exciting! But in the final chapter we are surprised to see that Jonah, instead of being thrilled, was intensely angry that the Ninevites had been spared and had received God's mercy instead of His divine judgment.

I Jonah's Heart Revealed

A. Jonah vented his displeasure

Why was he displeased?

1. He hated the Ninevites and didn't want them to have God's favor
2. He was concerned about his credibility as a prophet

James 1:19-20 "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."

1. His displeasure led to anger

Anger = Charah; "To blaze up in anger, to be incensed."

"The emotion of displeasure and indignation arising from the feeling of injury done or intended."

Jonah's response reveals several significant character flaws:

a. He had little self-control

Prov 25:28 "Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control."

Prov 29:11 "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control."

b. He had little fear of God

Proverbs 8:13 "To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech."

c. He had little concern for the lost

He was actually upset that the Ninevites had repented of their sin and turned to God.

Illustration: Luke 9:51-56

Reminds me of when James and John asked Jesus if He wanted them to "call fire down from heaven to destroy" a Samaritan village that had failed to welcome them. But Jesus turned and rebuked them!

2. His anger led to carnal a prayer
 - a. His first prayer in chapter 2 was motivated by fleshly sorrow
He cried out to God for mercy while in the fish's belly
 - b. His second prayer was motivated by fleshly anger
Eph 4:26-27 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."

Now that he is safe from harm, he demands judgment for Nineveh!
Very ugly and unbecoming of a recipient of God's mercy & grace!

B. Jonah's grounds for anger

1. The character of God

- a. He is gracious
Gracious = chanan; "To be considerate, to show undeserved favor." To bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior.
- b. He is compassionate
Compassionate = rachum; "To be merciful and sympathetic."
Kindness in excess of what may be expected or demanded by fairness."
- c. He is slow to anger
Anger = 'anaph; "To breathe hard, or to be enraged."
- d. He is abounding in love
Love = Checed; "Long-suffering loyalty and devotion."

Exod 34:6-7 "And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."

It is a bizarre irony that Jonah faults God with being too good!
The very same mercy that saved Jonah from God's justified judgment, is now that basis of His complaint against God.

Application:

God's mercy is the only reason we're not all in hell. And it is only reasonable that we extend the same grace and mercy to others -- both to believers as well as unbelievers.

2. The mercy of God

a. He relented from sending calamity

Jonah 3:10 "When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened."

Was it right for Jonah to be so angry at the mercy of God for repenting sinners? Of course not! It was foolish for him to be angry at the same grace that he himself needed and would have perished without.

Illustration: Chuck Smith, Calvary Chapel Distinctives

"Whenever I pray, I never ask God for justice, unless I'm praying about somebody else. Whenever I'm praying about myself, it's always, "Grace" or, "Mercy, Lord, mercy! Have mercy on me! Deal with justice with that guy that's wronged me, but, Lord, I want mercy."

Matt 7:2 "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

C. Jonah's anger led to self-pity

1. He preferred death to life

Have you ever wanted to die?

If you have, you're not alone. There are numerous examples, even in the Bible, of believers who had come to the end of themselves:

a. **Job:** Wanted to die because of **despair** - Job 6:8-9; 7:13-16

b. **Rebekah:** Wanted to die because of **irritation** - Gen 27:46
(Her Hittite daughter-in-laws)

c. **Moses:** Wanted to die because of **overwork**

Num 11:14-15 "I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now-- if I have found favor in your eyes-- and do not let me face my own ruin."

d. **Elijah:** Wanted to die because of **exhaustion and spiritual warfare** - I Kings 19:3-4

He ran from Jezebel and came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough,

LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."

- e. Solomon: Wanted to die because of the meaninglessness of life.
Eccl 2:17 "So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind."

Illustration: The many times I felt like quitting life.

Now if I had been God at this point, I would have gladly granted Jonah's request and struck him dead on the spot. But instead, God reasons gently and patiently with Jonah -- a demonstration of His character.

II God Replied To Jonah's Anger

A. He asked Jonah a question

- 1. Do you have a right to be angry?

This is a rhetorical question demanding a "No!" answer.

Jonah is in no position to be angry over God's mercy toward the Ninevites since he himself was a frequent recipient of God's generous mercy.

Eph 2:1-7 "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

But instead of extending the same mercy to the Ninevites, he exhibited the same heart as:

- 1. The elder brother of the prodigal son - Luke 15:28-32
Who was angry that the father had extended mercy to his sinful brother who had returned with a repentant heart.
- 2. The unmerciful servant - Matt 18:23-35
Whose multi-million dollar debt was forgiven but who immediately went out and put the pressure on someone who owed him a few bucks.

"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Application: We need to be so very careful even in our relationships among one another, to demonstrate the mercy of God toward one another.

2. Jonah responded with sullen anger

He had nothing to say to God. His attitude was indefensible. And he knew it! But rather than repenting and confessing his many sins ...

- a. He went out of the city
- b. He sat down east of the city
- c. He made a shelter for himself
- d. He waited to see what would happen to the city
 1. Hoping and praying for its destruction
Like Sodom and Gomorrah - Gen 19:27-29

B. He gave Jonah an object lesson

1. God provided a vine to comfort Jonah

Jonah was sitting in his flimsy shelter, dealing with the discomfort of the cold of the night and the heat of the day, and God might have said, "It's his own choice, his own doing, a house of his own building, let him make the best of it."

But instead, he looked on him with compassion and provided a vine of protection even though his discomfort was the result of his own foolish willfulness.

Application:

I find it very comforting and reassuring to know that God is compassionate even when I am in sin. He doesn't give me what I deserve! But is slow to anger, abounding in love!

Unfortunately, although Jonah is quite happy about the vine, he makes no effort to acknowledge God for his gracious provision. But, as we'll discover, he is quick to blame God for its loss.

Aren't we like that?

When good takes place in our lives we congratulate ourselves.

But when we suffer some sort of setback or disappointment,
we immediately question the faithfulness of God.

2. God provided a worm to destroy the vine
God has already provided a great wind and violent storm to get Jonah's attention. Now he provides a pesky worm to eat the vine.

Good rule of thumb: When it comes to things, enjoy them, but don't put your hope in them.

3. God provided a scorching heat
 - a. To blaze on Jonah's head
God is literally turning up the heat of discipline on Jonah.
Rev 3:19 "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent."
 - b. To make Jonah faint
Rev 16:8-9 "The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him."

C. Jonah's response to the lesson

1. He wanted to die!
Wanted = "To inquire, request or demand."

His initial thoughts of death have been nurtured into a demand for death!

III God Replied Again to Jonah's Anger

- A. He asked Jonah another question
 1. Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?
What right did Jonah have to be angry about the vine?
Did he plant it? **NO!**
Did he tend it? **NO!**
Did he make it grow? **NO!**

Illustration: Job's response to suffering

In a single day, Job lost all his worldly possessions, his entire household of servants and his 7 sons and 7 daughters.

His response?

Job1:20-22 "He fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of

the LORD be praised." In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing."

2. Jonah responded with irrational rage
 - a. "I do have a right to be angry!"
 - b. "I am angry enough to die!"

Eccl 7:9 "Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools."

Illustration: A child's temper tantrums

"I don't ever want to play with you again!"

"I don't love you!"

"I'm going to run away!" (Fine, let me help you pack!)

Jonah was so angry that:

1. He has little regard for God
2. He had little regard for his own life

B. He gave Jonah the conclusion of the lesson

1. Jonah was concerned about a vine
 - a. The lost comfort it gave him
 - b. The lost protection it gave him
 - c. The lost joy it gave him
 1. The vine that Jonah was so concerned about was given to him by God. He didn't plant it or water it or care for it. He had nothing to do with it. He only enjoyed it.

But the people in Nineveh were the work of God's hands. They were made in his image. He formed them in their mother's womb. He preserved their lives and loved them deeply – in spite of their sin.

2. The vine appeared suddenly
But the city of Nineveh was an ancient city that God had watched over for years.
3. The vine withered in the night
But the souls of the Ninevites were immortal and therefore, of much greater value than a simple garden vine.

2. God was concerned about the city of Nineveh

- a. 120,000 Ninevites
 - 2 Pet 3:9 "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

1. Who can't tell their right hand from their left

A phrase denoting:

a. Or 120,000 people who were ignorant regarding the things of the Lord

b. 120,000 underage children - Deut 1:39

Meaning that there may have been a total population of over 500,000

b. Many cattle as well

Ps 36:6 "Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep. O LORD, you preserve both man and beast."

Ps 145:9 "The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made."

Conclusion

Tragically, the book of Nahum contains the prophetic account of Nineveh's destruction. Their repentance was evidently short-lived and they reverted to their extreme wickedness, brutality and pride.

Nahum 1:3 "The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished."

So Nineveh was destroyed, according to God's Word, in 612 B.C.

One has to wonder what might have happened had Jonah:

1. Spent a few years discipling and encouraging these new believers!

a. He could have had a key role in the conversion of an entire nation.

b. But instead he had a giant pity party and faulted God for His mercy!

1. The book of Jonah reveals God's nature

a. He is gracious, merciful, and slow to anger

1. With believers

2. With unbelievers

b. He full of lovingkindness and is willing to relent wherever there is true repentance and obedience!

c. He is concerned about the eternal destiny of the lost

2. The book of Jonah is a warning to us against the dangers of having a critical, unmerciful, judgmental heart.

Remember what the scripture says: "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Matt 7:2

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