**A Pouting Prophet**

***Jonah 4:1-11***

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Introduction: One writer asks, “Should God be merciful to a murderer? Is there any place for compassion on the monsters who prey on society? Why should a just God have mercy on those who have not demon-strated any love or obedience toward Him? What about mass murderers like Adolph Hitler? What about monsters of immorality like the serial killers that prey on the weak or helpless in society? What about people who kill randomly for their own ends through acts of terrorism & violence? Is it really just that these incredible monsters of society should receive forgiveness & spiritual deliverance from God simply by asking for it?” (Horn). Jonah was faced with such a dilemma. God’s wrath against His own people, Israel, was about to be poured out on them using the Assyrians as His instrument\*. Other prophets of God had predicted that one day Israel would be taken captive by the Assyrian nation. Jonah has been commissioned by God to go & preach to Nineveh, Assyria’s capital. Yet Jonah knew the character of God & was certain that if the Ninevites repented, God would forgive them. Jonah refused his initial commission & fled towards Tarshish. God “arrested” him by the weather & a “whale.” After his re-commissioning, Jonah fulfills His mission by preaching, *“Yet 40 days, & Nineveh shall be overthrown”* (3:4). Upon the preaching of Jonah, Nineveh repents, from the king down to the lowest slave. Jonah does not rejoice however, for he wished their judgment, not their repentance. Yet God has the right to show mercy to a repentant people as well as to a reluctant prophet. Notice with me here in chapter 4 Jonah’s complaining in the sun as we see the anger of Jonah & the answer of Jehovah.

[\*Consider how cruel, proud, & arrogant these Assyrians were.]

IV. Jonah’s complaining in the sun > his displeasure - chapter 4

A. The **anger** of Jonah:

[Note the severity of the language: *“displeased”* - was objectionable; *“very angry” -* made him

furious, hot with rage > contrast the “quickness” of Jonah’s anger to God’s longsuffering]

1. Because of a spared people (4:1-3) >

a. His correct assessment of God’s character - “This is the uniform character assigned to God

in the law, and the Psalms, and the prophets. It is the memorial of God to all generations”

(Martin).

(1) See Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Psalms 86:15; 103:8; 145:8.

(2) Shows the loving mercy & willing forgiveness of God to unworthy men.

b. His mistaken argument against God’s compassion - Jonah’s patriotism; wanting Israel’s

enemy to be judged and destroyed?

(1) Consider the subtle, underlying message - who has the hardest heart? Assyrians or

Israelites? A pagan king or a pouting prophet?

(2) “Jonah is using orthodox theology as an excuse for his disobedience & his cold heart”

(Horn). - [Jonah thinks he can govern the world better than God can! Contrast his

prayer in chapter 2 with that of chapter 4 – see Wiersbe’s commentary.]

2. Because of a spoiled plant (4:6-9) >

a. His initial gladness for the plant’s development (notice this is the only mention of

Jonah being *“glad”* in the book). [What makes you happy? Angry?]

b. His eventual grief for the plant’s demise.

[Note: The Bible is faithful to show the faults as well as the virtues of its chief characters.]

B. The **answer** of Jehovah:

1. God’s “construction” of the lesson (4:4-10) >

a. His sovereign concern for His creature (Jonah) - *“Doest thou well to be angry?”*

(1) God asks Jonah if his anger is warranted; is it justified. (Yet no word of rebuke here.)

(2) Jonah’s answer is to build himself a booth outside the city & watch to see if the city will

be destroyed.

b. His sovereign control over creation (:6,7,8, *“prepared”*).

(1) Consider God’s compassionate care for a pouting prophet (:6).

(2) Compare God’s object lesson for the obstinate prophet (:7-8). [cf. Luke 15:28-30.]

Summary: “God was saying to Jonah: If you became so attached to the gourd, because it served

you & gratified your desires - a gourd upon which you expended no thought, no labor, no toil,

no sacrifice, no care, no planting, no watering, no tending, no pruning, a gourd of short

duration which grows up quickly & as hastily passes away - shall I not permit My love & pity

to flow forth unstintingly to multitudes of My creatures, the work of My hands, the crown of all

My creative acts, nurtured, fed, provided for by Me, those who will never go out of existence?”

(Feinberg). Plants or people? What do we really care about? Personal comfort or spiritual

compassion?

2. God’s compassion for the lost (4:11) >

a. An ironic-laden challenge - Ryrie suggests a touch of irony is found here: “Jonah, even if

you approve of the destruction of hundreds of thousands of people, think of the waste of

livestock that would be involved!” (Ryrie).

b. A thought-provoking conclusion - “...Jonah is silenced; he can make no reply; he can only

confess that he is entirely wrong, and that God is righteous. He learns the lesson that God

would have all men saved, and that narrow-mindedness which would exclude heathen from

His kingdom is displeasing to Him and alien from His design” (Spence).

Consider: What is the only other Bible book ending with a question? Both deal with the city

of Nineveh. Nahum deals with the city’s punishment; Jonah with God’s pity.

Conclusion: One cannot read the Book of Jonah without contemplating the character of God. Jonah reveals to the reader God’s saving compassion, His sovereign control, and His searching conviction. God is revealed as Savior (*“Salvation is of the Lord”*), as Sovereign (control of His creation, command of His prophet, and constraint of the circumstances), as well as Speaker (His voice speaking to His messenger, for His messenger, and through His messenger). How do you stand before such a God as this? Do you know Him as your Savior? Are you surrendered to Him as your Sovereign? Will you heed His voice, speaking to you in His Word and through you to do His will? Because of Jonah’s disobedience, he found himself in distress and yet was delivered that he might declare God’s message, though he was unfortu-nately displeased with the result. Though the book ends abruptly and with a touch of irony, Jonah’s silence at the end indicates God’s graciousness. Having reflected on his original instructions, his initial insubordination, his eventual interdiction, and his final insensitivity, Jonah records under the inspiration of God this treatise, having been the recipient of a “second chance.” Rather than criticizing Jonah for his rebellion and resentment, we should be examining our lives to expose any evidence of such rebellion or resentment. We should respond immediately, unquestioningly, & cheerfully to the voice of God, not presuming upon the grace of God for a second chance (though rejoicing if such a chance has already been given). This book reveals to us the heart of God - His mercy, His grace, and His love. Such compassion is able to be shown by God to any and all He sees fit. How do we answer God’s question about compass-sion? Might we respond with similar love and compassion for a lost world, including those we sometimes deem to be unworthy of God’s grace. Truly, *“Salvation is of the Lord.”*