

## **“The Angry Prophet” Jonah 4, Sermon Notes**

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**Saving Grace Bible Church**

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**Morning worship Service**

Text: Jonah 4

Title: The Angry Prophet

Focal Points: 4:2 and 4:4

“He prayed to the LORD and said, “Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.” (Jonah 4:2 NAU)

“The LORD said, “Do you have good reason to be angry?” (Jonah 4:4 NAU)

Homiletical Key Word: Lesson

Interrogative: Why? (Why would God’s Prophet become angry with God?) What? (What is God’s response towards the righteous Prophet’s sin?)

Teaching Aim: To show how God’s people become angry with God when He does not act in the way they expect and to demonstrate the lessons the Prophet Jonah needed to learn.

- Jonah’s Attitude: God save my family but not my enemies

“But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. 2 He prayed to the LORD and said, “Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. 3 “Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.” 4 The LORD said, “Do you have good reason to be angry?” 5 Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city. 6 So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant. 7 But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day and it attacked the plant and it withered. 8 When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, “Death is better to me than life.” 9 Then God said to Jonah, “Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?” And he said, “I have good reason to be angry, even to death.” 10 Then the LORD said, “You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. 11 “Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city

in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?" (Jonah 4:1-11 NAU)

## Introduction

We all do foolish things

- Darwin Fish Awards – Natural selection and survival of the fittest
- Man who tied a rocket to his car

Story – which in the 90's was believed to be true, but later was questioned, so you be the judge:

The Arizona Highway Patrol were mystified when they came upon a pile of smoldering wreckage embedded in the side of a cliff rising above the road at the apex of a curve. The metal debris resembled the site of an airplane crash, but it turned out to be the vaporized remains of an automobile. The make of the vehicle was unidentifiable at the scene.

The folks in the lab finally figured out what it was, and pieced together the events that led up to its demise.

It seems that a former Air Force Sargent had somehow got hold of a JATO (Jet Assisted Take-Off) unit. JATO units are solid fuel rockets used to give heavy military transport airplanes an extra push for take-off from short airfields.

Dried desert lakebeds are the location of choice for breaking the world ground vehicle speed record. The sergeant took the JATO unit into the Arizona desert and found a long, straight stretch of road. He attached the JATO unit to his car, jumped in, accelerated to a high speed, and fired off the rocket.

The facts, as best as could be determined, are as follows:

The operator was driving a 1967 Chevy Impala. He ignited the JATO unit approximately 3.9 miles from the crash site. This was established by the location of a prominently scorched and melted strip of asphalt. The vehicle quickly reached a speed of between 250 and 300 mph and continued at that speed, under full power, for an additional 20-25 seconds. The soon-to-be pilot experienced G-forces usually reserved for dog-fighting F-14 jocks under full afterburners.

The Chevy remained on the straight highway for approximately 2.6 miles (15-20 seconds) before the driver applied the brakes, completely melting them, blowing the tires, and leaving thick rubber marks on the road surface. The vehicle then became airborne for an additional 1.3 miles, impacted the cliff face at a height of 125 feet, and left a blackened crater 3 feet deep in the rock.

Most of the driver's remains were not recovered;

(BTW this story was passed around the internet in the 90's as a true story and has since been proven false)

As I said, people make foolish decision and often times we do silly things. – This fits in the category of “what were you thinking?” The same category we can say Jonah invented.

- This chapter is another account of a foolish response of one of God’s people
- You are left wondering: what was he thinking? Just like with the little story I told you, we wonder what was the Air Force Sargent thinking? So here too we wonder the same about Jonah.
- Chapter 4 seems to leave us where Chapter 1 began
- Presenting a rather unremarkable picture of a prophet of God

Jonah reveals to us an attitude which is often hidden in the man of God but too regularly fills the heart

Have you heard of the old saying the “skeleton in the closet”?

- An idiom used to mean that people have something ugly they are hiding from everyone else
- For Christians it could be a secret life of drinking
- Cheating on your taxes
- Or maybe pornography
- Or an affair
- For some people it was their names being found on an adultery website
- Here Jonah reveals a skeleton in the closet which is far too common for professing believers – anger with God

How do you respond when the God you know and serve does not act in the way you like? What do you do when the providence of life does not meet your approval?

- God why did you make me this way?
- Why can she eat anything and I have to watch everything I eat?
- Why aren’t my kids behaving in the way I want? I did what your Word requires!
- How come these kids are so hard to deal with?
- Why do I not get acknowledge for the work I do?
- Why did God allow my loved one to die?
- Why did God allow me to get a disease?
- How do you respond when God does not act according to your liking?
- Are you like Jonah? You get angry with God.

This is the secret sin of many Christians

Chapter 4 of Jonah is the strangest ending to a rather remarkable story

- Here the foolishness of Jonah is on display
- In fact, we should have stopped this story in chapter 3
- Americans love a story which concludes on a high note
- We want a story with a happy ending

- We want a story where all the tension is resolved
- We do not like a story which ends “And the bad guy got away and lived happily ever after.”
- This chapter is like the last scene in a horrible movie
- It leaves us with unanswered questions
- It begs us for a resolution
- Even the dialogue seems to be cut off
- Most people forget this chapter and most of you probably remember Jonah getting eaten by a big fish and giving the best gospel presentation
- They stop at the greatest revival ever
- But Chapter 4 comes and now we see the point of the whole book

This should have been a time when the Prophet Jonah turned to God and worshipped Him as he sees the repentance of his enemies

- The prophet should have stepped back and said to himself and God “How could I not see this wonderful plan? How could I not appreciate this great work? What would it mean for us that God is this great and compassionate?”
- But that is not what happens here

Now remember I told you that there is an unanswered question

Why didn't Jonah want to obey God to share the gospel with Nineveh?

- This question is left hanging in the whole book to now
- Nothing in Ch 1
- Nothing in the gospel presentation in Ch 3
- Even the talk of repentance is cut out in Ch 3

Reasons given

- Success in Nineveh would lead to the downfall of his own people
- Feared the conversion of the gentiles lest it distract from God's work among Israel
- Could be that Jonah was trying to delay judgment upon Israel because he knew that the Assyrians were God's chosen instrument to bring judgment upon Israel. Hos 9:3

Reason: He was afraid God's message would be successful and He did not like the idea of his enemies receiving the same grace he did.

- This is the ugly conclusion to this amazing book

While God is willing to demonstrate His grace, His mercy, and His compassion, His own people are living in self-absorbed hatred and are unwilling to care for those who are in need around them

- This book opens with this theme and concludes with it
- Jonah runs from God's commands

- Jonah is angry God is gracious
- And Jonah keeps us hanging until the end even making us believe that in the process he got back on track to bring God honor

Now here is the answer in his own words:

- Jonah, the man of God, did not want to share the mercy of God with others

"He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity." (Jonah 4:2 NAU)

- And Jonah was mad at God for granting mercy to Nineveh
- And Jonah was mad at God for not being like him and casting judgment on Nineveh

Jonah throws a tantrum here

"Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life." 4 The LORD said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?" (Jonah 4:3-4 NAU)

- He is basically saying I would rather die than see my enemies receive your mercy
- I would rather die than see your grace given to the people I hate
- This has to be the ugliest moment in redemptive history other than the betrayal and death of Jesus Christ
- But to have a missionary of God say, "I would rather die than share the truth of God's mercy" is unimaginable

It is now time to teach Jonah the real lesson. So God grants three significant events to teach Jonah.

In the whole book there were four works of God which demonstrate God seeking to teach Jonah something

- God appointed the great fish in 1:17
- Now God is going to appoint a Weed, Worm, and Wind
- Each is intended to teach Jonah a lesson about himself and God
- BTW in this book Creation, nature, and animals obeyed God, but not the prophet of God
- As God squeezes Jonah, he is seeking to demonstrate the foolishness of Jonah's response

"The LORD said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4 NAU)

Then God said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death." (Jonah 4:9 NAU)

- These three lessons are given to demonstrate to Jonah that he has no basis to be angry with God

- God is taking the time to demonstrate the hardness of the prophet's heart
- Each lesson is a unique miraculous work of God to reveal how low Jonah had sunk

### # 3 Major Lessons in this chapter

Three lessons to teach us how to show compassion to others

Lesson of the Weed, the Worm, and the Wind

Lesson # 1 The Compassion of God – The Lesson of the Weed

“Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city. 6 So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant.” (Jonah 4:5-6 NAU)

- This is the lesson from the weed

Now it is rather amazing the response of this prophet. He gets angry with God. He gives God a piece of his mind.

- Then he decides to leave the city and sit east of it and wait to see what would happen
- Maybe he thought God would see his displeasure and accept his judgment and destroy Nineveh
- Maybe he thought there was no way God would accept their repentance
- He clearly believed that Nineveh was not deserving of God's grace
- Jonah thought that he was in control and that he had the right to determine who would receive the grace of God
- No sinner has the right to withhold grace from another sinner
- God had already forgiven Jonah a great debt
- Jonah even had his own excuse, he admitted he did not want to see the repentance of Nineveh

So God is going to teach Jonah a lesson through Jonah's own actions

Jonah setup a little shelter to cover himself from the sun and waited to see what would happen

- He was harboring the hope that God would demonstrate His wrath and destroy Nineveh
- He makes a little shade covering which would kind of work, but not well
- It was like setting up a lattice
- Sun would get through but it would provide a bit of shade

But as always God demonstrates His mercy and compassion to sinners

- God caused a plant to grow up to cover up Jonah
- Jonah was glad to receive mercy from God

- Jonah thought He was standing on the truth. God is not supposed to show mercy to sinners “he does not like.”
- God was supposed to show mercy to sinners he does like
- Sinners like Jonah
- Jonah may even at this point have thought that his actions were just because God was showing grace and mercy to him at this moment
- This may have even given Jonah greater encouragement that he was right

After all, how could he be wrong about God if God has given him so much grace?

- People believe they can define what God is like because they have received grace from God. Rather than seeing that God defines Himself and makes Himself known.
- The lesson of the weed is that God is compassionate to sinners. If there is a sinner there is a God who will demonstrate His compassion.

Lesson #2 Compassion is for people not things - The lesson of the worm

“But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day and it attacked the plant and it withered.” (Jonah 4:7 NAU)

- God raises up a worm to kill the plant
- The plant died as quickly and miraculously as it came up

Notice Jonah’s response in verse 9 & 10

“Then God said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death." 10 Then the LORD said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight.” (Jonah 4:9-10 NAU)

- Jonah was showing more compassion for a plant than for people
- He cared more for a plant which would benefit him than people who were his enemies
- God, on the other hand, showed no mercy to the plant and took it away as quickly, and He gave it to demonstrate that He shows compassion on people not things

Jonah wanted Nineveh destroyed Vs 11

- Jonah would have God destroy the city of Nineveh
- But Jonah did not think God should show mercy to them
- BUT God should have saved the plant for him
- Jonah wanted to see these little children killed
- Jonah should have had pity on children, not on a plant

Compassion is for people and not for things

## Lesson # 3 Life is unbearable without God's compassion

### Lesson of the Wind

#### God prepared a wind

"When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life."  
(Jonah 4:8 NAU)

- God literally turns up the heat on Jonah
- He sends a hot wind
- As if the sun is not enough, then the wind comes and scorches Jonah

I have seen this with humidity here in FL

- CA dry heat is much like what Jonah would experience, so you can get out of the heat by getting into shade
- But here in FL it is humid, and the heat follows you into the shade
- But in CA or dry areas there can be significant differences in temperature
- So God removes the shade from Jonah and then blows on him with a hot wind leaving him in agony

#### Wanted pity from God

- Wallowed in self-pity
- Spiritually destructive
- Pity because he was not getting what he wanted

He was feeling miserable and was willing to give up his life

"Then God said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death." (Jonah 4:9 NAU)

Bad doctrine is dangerous.

- Jonah wanted God to destroy the largest city and he did not care about a single child or woman in the whole city
- Instead he showed more grace and compassion to a plant than a child
- His self-righteous desires led him to care about himself and his need for grace and compassion but not care about others

This is often what happens to the human heart when it is hardened by sin. We can make excuses for why we are good or why we deserve grace and have many more excuses for why others do not deserve it.



- We want to tell God how to use His grace
- Now that we are on the inside with God, we then decide how His grace should work
- This is bad doctrine and it leads to destruction when God does not act in the way we want

The true missionary spirit is not just zeal for the truth but zeal tempered by love and concern for others.

– Phil Johnson

- The true missionary is the one who cares for others

The real problem for Jonah is that He was filled with pride and or bigotry: could not rejoice in seeing the deliverance of these people for God's glory

File this away for your own understanding of the New Testament and the gospels: This same attitude filled the Pharisees

Conclusion

Matter of unbelief

- Lack of faith in God
- Disobedience is always born out of unbelief
- Doubt God's justice
- Doubt God's mercy and holiness can work together
- Here the ultimate act of unbelief by this Prophet is the idea that "God is too good to be just."
- He will not deal justly with these Ninevites because He is too good to deal with their sin
- He is going to forgive them and they do not deserve to be forgiven
- BTW some may say at this point "See? God is too good to judge people so that He will not judge them"
- That is not the lesson – The Lesson is that God is so good that He will give people the chance to repent before bringing His harsh judgment
- Judgment will come when His ways have been rejected
- His goodness does not allow sin, His goodness allows man to leave their sin and turn to Him

Will we remember the goodness of God in the midst of every circumstance?

God seeks to care for the lost and this passage makes that clear

- Jonah hid his hatred behind a false view of God's justice and then condemns God when He operates contrary to man's will
- God shows compassion on people, not animals or things
- We arrest men and jail them for killing a dog and yet we allow women to murder babies
- CH 4 reveals the true goal of this book
- God must teach His servant the true narrowness and wickedness of His own heart
- And the greatness of His love and compassion

We also learn of God's Patience

- He shows love and compassion to Jonah even when he was in rebellion
- Jonah's stubborn rebellion
- Men, do we think so lightly of our sin?
- Do we think that it is no big deal while we look at others and condemn them?
- Do we not see the great mercy needed ourselves? DO we not break?

Do you want to know when you are ready to be used in gospel witness to others?

- Many think it is when they have gained knowledge
- When they can refute others' arguments
- When they can reason soundly

That is not it. It is when you are broken under the weight of the message yourself.

- When you have come to see your need for mercy and grace and then you are broken and humbled
- When you have compassion for sinners and a zeal for holiness, then you are ready
- Many have a lot of zeal and no compassion
- Others have great compassion but no zeal for holiness
- We need to have compassion and zeal or we will be worthless vessels ourselves

Sadly, the Prophet of God thinks he knows better than God

- The righteous man who spends time doing God's work thinks he knows better than the God who has called him to work
- He wanted judgment instead of sacrifice

So often our gospel work is built around our love for ourselves

- We will serve others when it makes us look good
- We will serve God when it is popular
- Or when God betters our life
- Or when we need something from Him

But as a course of life there is no fear of God in the eyes of the people

So what spiritual lessons should we take home for this spiritual influence week?

1. That God is in control of all things and He works all things for His good
2. We are to pray passionately, plainly, praiseful, and penitent prayers
3. We should repent from our sin

4. We should guard our hearts to make sure sin is not hardening our hearts from having genuine love and compassion

The Man of God gets angry with God because God does not respond in the way he likes

- Is this you?
- Do you have nice tight boxes to put God in?

The Man of God makes God do his work?

- Again is this how you operate? Do you make God your servant?

The Man of God defines God's grace and compassion and explains to God and others how it should be used?

- Do you have expectations for how God uses His grace?

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