

Jonah 3:10-4:11 ESV (Pg. 452) When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it. **4:1** But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. **2** And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. **3** Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” **4** And the Lord said, “Do you do well to be angry?” **5** Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. **6** Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. **7** But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. **8** When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.” **9** But God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry for the plant?” And he said, “Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.” **10** And the Lord said, “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. **11** And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”

- I. We are at the climax of Jonah’s story. After fleeing from the Lord’s presence, being pursued by God with a deadly storm at sea, being tossed overboard and swallowed by an enormous fish (which God also provided, and in which Jonah miraculously survived for 3 days and 3 nights), the prophet finally completes his long journey to Nineveh and preaches a minimalist message of doom and destruction to the wicked pagans: “You’ve got 40 days, then it’s curtains for you!”
 - A. With no evidence that Jonah ever mentioned God, or offered them the possibility (or even the concept) of grace, the people were inexplicably moved to repentance by the news of impending catastrophe, and they humbled themselves before God to the uttermost, from the least of them to the greatest.
 1. The common people and the King alike wore sackcloth and sat in ashes. Both they and their livestock fasted in contrition before God in their guilt. They were commanded by royal decree to abandon both evil and violence.
 2. They hoped that their penitence would turn the anger of God away from them so their lives would be spared. **Jonah 3:9 ESV** “Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”
 - B. And sure enough, that is exactly what God did! Disaster was averted, lives were spared, and a city was introduced to the all-powerful, yet merciful God of Israel.
- II. How would you imagine Jonah would react? He was God’s man, with God’s call, and God’s word. Surely he’d rejoice at this display of grace on Nineveh’s behalf?
 - A. But that is not what happened! **“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.”** Jonah is actually upset that his preaching was effective. He is angry with God for turning away from the wrath he had promised the Ninevites! Jonah would have greatly preferred the destruction of Nineveh to its repentance. A

picture is coming into view of Jonah as a cold and heartless man toward those whom he deemed to be undeserving of God's mercy.

1. Remember the sailors on the boat? They were crying out to whatever god might hear and save them from destruction. But Jonah, who knows the one true God, is fast asleep below deck, apathetic and indifferent.
 2. Now here he is in Nineveh, where a massive revival has taken place in response to his pathetic preaching, and he throws a temper tantrum!
- B. "And he prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster." Now the story begins to make more sense!
1. Jonah admits that this rotten attitude isn't new, but the reason for his original defiance of God's command. He originally didn't want to go to Nineveh because he was afraid God might be true to his merciful nature.
 2. Jonah had an expectation. Sinners should get what they deserve. He had preached wrath, and that's what God should have delivered. Jonah wanted God to be consistent with his own view of the how the world should work.
 - a) But God can't be boiled down to a formula like that! **Romans 9:14 ESV** What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! **15** For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."
 - b) What hypocrisy! When Jonah was in the fish, he was praising God for his merciful salvation; but now that mercy is shown to the Ninevites, his sworn enemies, he is seriously ticked off, crying, "foul"!
- C. At the beginning of Israel's national identity, God revealed to Moses his nature: **Exodus 34:6b ESV** "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, **7a** keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..." This statement is repeated in one form or another 9 times in the Old Testament.
1. But notice that Jonah doesn't proclaim these attributes back to God in worship, but as an accusation! He has a problem with the character of God!
 2. Jonah sees God's compassion on the Ninevites as a weakness, even though he has recently benefitted from similar mercy. He has 4 issues with God:
- D. First, he has a problem with God showing grace. He's ok with receiving grace for himself when he needs it, but he doesn't want God showing grace to those he thinks do not deserve it, specifically non-Israelite pagan enemies of the state.
1. What can this say to conservative Christians and their attitudes towards immigrants, Muslims, the incarcerated? We may be OK with people in these groups who convert, but how much mercy do we display before they do?
 2. What about those who sin differently than we do, like homosexuals, abortionists, greedy industrialists and lying politicians. Do we plead with God to show them mercy or do we celebrate their destruction when it comes?
- E. Next, Jonah doesn't want a God who is merciful. I mean this distinct from grace in that it speaks not only of God's unmerited favor, but also points to his tender and compassionate nature. Mercy expresses how God hovers over his helpless fallen creation like a mother leans into a crib to comfort her crying infant child.

1. **Matthew 9:36 ESV** When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.
 2. If you are a believer today, it is only because Christ saw you in your helplessness and sin, had compassion on you and called you to himself.
- F. Thirdly, Jonah was not excited that God was slow to anger. He wanted swift and absolute judgement meted out on those uncircumcised Assyrians. Why would God give these rascals chance after chance to humble themselves before him?
1. Again, can you see the irony in this sentiment? If anyone should celebrate the fact that “the mercy of the Lord endures forever” it’s Jonah!
 2. When you find yourself frustrated by the Lord’s patience toward others, you should remember that without his mercy and grace every moment, you and I couldn’t survive even a minute. **Lamentations 3:22 NIV** Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.
- G. Lastly, Jonah takes offense at the covenant-keeping love of God, shown in spite of the sin of the people. The Hebrew word for this love is *chesed*. The ESV translates *chesed* as “steadfast love”. Bible commentator James Bruckner suggests the alternative, “unrelenting love” - it never quits; never gives up.
1. Jonah is fine with God directing this love to the Jews, the people of the covenant. But for the non-jews? That just can’t be acceptable or expected!
 2. But this is nothing short of Jonah telling God he has no right to be God! What a fool! He has seen God exercise his control over the climate, the sea, and aquatic creatures - and all to his benefit and deliverance. But now he curses God for exercising authority over the judgement of human life!
- H. Once again we see Jonah sink in despair! **“Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”** And the Lord said, **“Do you do well to be angry?”** This is the second time that Jonah chose death while fighting God’s purposes, rather than living to accomplish God’s will. God patiently reasons with him, asking him to examine the basis for his anger.
1. Examine your life and be honest. Are you disappointed right now? Are you angry that God hasn’t moved as quickly, or in the manner you expected? Perhaps someone has yet to apologize, or they seem to be receiving mercy and grace they do not deserve. Maybe there are circumstances that aren’t changing for you, and you feel like you’re doing everything right you can.
 2. **“Do you do well to be angry?”** Can you trust God to be God? **Mark 7:37b ESV** **“He has done all things well.”** He will not fail you nor forsake you.
- III. **“Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.”** Jonah goes out of the city and sets up a little shelter to watch, hoping God has listened to his complaint and will fry the Ninevites into crispy critters. He has a front row seat, just to watch them burn.
- A. God decides to do a little object lesson with Jonah. The God who hurled a storm at him, and appointed a fish to swallow him, sends a vine to shade him.

1. This was a miraculous event! That plant sprang up in one day, and was big enough to act as a natural umbrella so that Jonah could watch the big show in air-conditioned comfort. Jonah is very happy to have this accomodation.
 2. What is happening here? Something appeared out of nowhere (the vine), bringing comfort to Jonah, and he is rejoicing! Isn't this the definition of grace? God provides something based on his goodness and loving care, whether we deserve it or not? This becomes clear by what happens next...
- B. "But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'"
1. God had mercifully provided the "grace" of a shady plant. Now he appoints a worm to destroy it! You may understand God to be the master of winds and waves, but he is also King of every worm, appointing them to do his will.
 2. Jonah's shade removed, God once a again sends a wind (ch. 1). This time it's a scorching wind out of the east, to bring him to the point of a sunstroke.
 - a) For the 3rd time in the story, we hear the despondent, selfish prophet call out for the sweet release that only death can bring to him!
 - b) He was willing to see an entire city perish without a thought, as they starved for a trace of grace or mercy. Now he sees how very frail he himself is when God removes the smallest measure of grace from him.
- C. Perhaps you will remember the words Jonah prayed in the belly of the fish: **Jonah 2:9 NIV (84)** "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs." The "worthless idol" was Jonah's own selfishness, apathy, judgementalism an lack of compassion. Now he is learning what it looks like to be deprived of the grace he so desperately needs! God has his attention.
- D. "But God said to Jonah, 'Do you do well to be angry for the plant?' And he said, 'Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.'" God asks Jonah to assess his anger for the 2nd time in this passage. This time, Jonah blatantly justifies himself. He tells God he was wronged, and that God has been unfair with him.
1. **Matthew 12:37 ESV** "for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."
 2. God is about to deliver the punchline to his object lesson, and in so doing will shed holy light on Jonah's pity part and temper tantrum.
- IV. "And the Lord said, 'You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night.'" God points out that Jonah had nothing to do with the plant's existence. He didn't plant it, he didn't cultivate it, he didn't fertilize it. It only lasted one day. In the big picture it was a very meaningless thing. No one but Jonah would miss it being there.
- A. But for the city of Nineveh, it was a different story: "And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?" Jonah had so much grief for the death of a plant that he was ready to die! But he had made himself comfortable to see the wrath of God poured out on men women and children, created in the image of God.

1. There was the large population (120,000 ppl). This was an infinitely larger population than most of the cities in the ancient world. Most people lived in communities of a few dozen to a few hundred. Jonah ignored their worth. He failed to reflect the heart of his God, willing to watch them perish.
 - a) How often do we interact friends, family, and strangers who are perishing while we sit comfortably in the shade of grace?
 - b) We know what Christ has done to redeem both them and us, and yet we stretch and yawn in our faith, letting them die while we withhold the truth that can save them from eternal destruction. We'll surely answer for this.
 2. But there was also their ignorance. God said they did not "know their right hand from their left". No one in that city had the capacity on their own to know how to call on God and receive grace. They needed someone to help.
 - a) Are there people like that where you work or go to school? Paul said in Romans, how will they hear unless someone preaches to them?
 - b) **Ezekiel 3:18 ESV** "If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand."
- B. Lastly, as kind of a wake up call to Jonah, God mentions their cattle. If this prophet cared more about vines than souls knew that cattle were at stake, that might get his attention! Do we care more about stuff -the things that this world tells us are important - than about the perishing souls around us every moment?
1. Would it bother you more if your car was totaled or if your neighbor, your brother, or your co-worker entered hell for all eternity, with no more hope?
 2. May we treasure what God treasures. May we go where he sends us, and speak what he commands us. May we celebrate mercy whenever it is shown to anyone, especially to the least deserving. May we realize how often we benefit from God's mercy towards us, and pray for others to experience it.
- V. **1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
- VI. **Benediction: Ephesians 6:23 ESV** Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **24** Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.