THE POUTING PROPHET

Jonah 4:4 But the LORD replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

Review

God tells Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach against it. Jonah tries to run away. God stops him and after three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, Jonah decides to obey God and go to Nineveh. Jonah preaches, “In forty days Nineveh will be overthrown.” Nineveh repents, God forgives and relents concerning the calamity He had threatened.

Jonah’s Reaction

Jonah 4:1(NASB) But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry.

“Became angry” is literally: “burned (with anger)” Many translations say “very angry.” He was not just displeased, he was “greatly displeased.”

Why Jonah Was Angry

Jonah 4:2 He prayed to the LORD, “Isn’t this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.”

The real reason Jonah initially refused to go to Nineveh and deliver God’s message was that he wanted the people of Nineveh to get the punishment he was sure they deserved. Because he knew that God is a “gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity,” he was afraid that they might repent and then God would forgive them. We tend to want grace for ourselves but justice for everyone else.

The reason Assyria would eventually conquer Israel and almost conquer Judah was that God was angry with them because of their sin. Jonah could see the sins of Nineveh and the Assyrians clearly; he could not see his own sins and the sins of God’s people with anywhere near the same clarity.

Jonah 4:3 “Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.

Jonah has gone to Nineveh, but his heart attitude toward Nineveh has not changed. He wanted to be thrown overboard rather than go to Nineveh. Under duress, he agreed to go, but he still didn’t want the people of Nineveh to repent and be forgiven, and now that they had, he wanted to die.

God’s Response

Jonah 4:4 But the LORD replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

God has dealt with Jonah’s disobedience using a huge fish, now He deals with his heart attitude using a leafy plant, a worm and a scorching east wind.

Jonah 4:5-7 Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm which chewed the plant so that it withered.

Jonah 4:8 When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, “It would be better for me to die than to live.”

Jonah 4:9 But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?” “It is,” he said, “And I’m so angry I wish I were dead.”

Jonah 4:10&11 But the LORD said, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left – and also many animals?”

Did Jesus Deal with This Same Issue?

Luke 15:1&2 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Luke 15:3-7 The parable of the lost sheep. Verse 7 reads, “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

Luke 15:8-10 The parable of the Lost Coin. Verse 10 reads, “In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Luke 15:11-32 The parable of the Prodigal Son. Verses 22-24 say, “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”

Luke 15:25-27 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ ”

Luke 15:28-30 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ ”

Luke 15:31&32 “ ‘My son, the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ ”

Luke 18:9-12 To some who were confident of the own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ ”

Matthew 23:23b “You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cumin.”

Mark 12:38-40 As he taught, Jesus said, “Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.”

Luke 18:13&14 “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me a sinner.’ I tell you this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

As We Conclude the Book of Jonah,

Here Are Some Things to Think About

God is a “gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.”

God is extremely serious about getting His people to obey Him and take the message He wants to send to those He wants to forgive.

God will forgive even the worst of sinners if they truly come to him in humility and ask him to forgive them.

God’s people are often very aware of other people’s sins and oblivious to their own sins. (How Jonah saw the Ninevites, how the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law saw the tax collectors and sinners, the older and younger brother.)

God not only wants our obedience, but He also wants to change our hearts.

God does not want “anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

2 Peter 3:9b