

JONAH 4:1-11
Jonah's Reaction to Nineveh's Repentance

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Jonah, who was disobedient to God because he failed to preach repentance to the Ninevites, was given a second chance by God to be faithful to his calling. He preached repentance to the city and God was sovereignly at work in their midst. The whole city turned to God.
- B. Jonah was God's instrument to preach the gospel. God moved in grace upon these Assyrian Gentiles and they repented of their sins.

II. JONAH'S COMPLAINT (4:1-3): Jonah's Heart

- A. **"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry"** - When Jonah saw the Ninevites repenting, he was very angry and upset with God, for God had shown them mercy. Jonah was a Jewish patriot and saw the conversion of the Gentiles a threat to Israel; therefore, he hated the Assyrians. NOTE: Most people quarrel with God over His sovereignty, the existence of evil, or the baffling of good, but Jonah was upset because God showed mercy to Gentiles. Obviously, Jonah had an attitude problem. NOTE: God had more trouble controlling Jonah than He did the great fish or the Ninevites. Jonah apparently preached repentance rather reluctantly. He preached out of obedience but he did not have a heart of compassion for lost Gentiles. Preaching is mechanical unless a man has God's heart beat to save sinners.
- B. **"And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."** - Jonah did not complain of God to others but he complained to God in prayer. This man was not ignorant of God and His ways. He ran from preaching to Nineveh not because he did not know God but because he knew Him. He knew that God is gracious and full of compassion to sinners and does save for His own glory.
- C. **"Therefore now, O Lord, Take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better' for me to die than to live."** - Jonah wanted God to take his life because he had become so despondent. He felt he had been shamed as a Jew before the evil Gentiles. Pride was at the basis of this extreme discouragement.

III. JEHOVAH'S COUNSEL (4:4-11): God's Heart

- A. **"Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?"** - God asks Jonah whether it was right for him to be angry. God's goodness was a displeasing act in the sight of Jonah. NOTE: Jonah could not get in tune with God. Nineveh was a wicked city and it was logical that it should be judged, but God is gracious and it is illogical that He should save but He does. Hell is logical and reasonable. Heaven is illogical and unreasonable but men are saved by the mercy and grace of God.
- B. **"So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow till he might see what would become of the city."** - This probably occurred just before the 40 days of warning to Nineveh. Jonah thought that God would still judge this wicked city even though many were turning to Jehovah. NOTE: There Jonah sat, not in prayer for the city or in preparation for more preaching but in anticipation of God's judgment on it. Jonah had delight in the destruction of the wicked and God never does. Jonah needed more understanding on the grace and mercy of God.

- C. "And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd."** - God caused a gourd to grow over Jonah's shelter so as to protect him and give him shade from the sun. Jonah became very excited about this gourd and took a definite interest in it. Perhaps Jonah thought God was going to take his side and finally judge Nineveh. However, God prepared the gourd to teach Jonah a lesson.
- D. "But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered."** - God sovereignly prepared a worm to eat the gourd that Jonah thought so much of. NOTE: God controls great fish and worms alike and they all do His will. Big things and small things are all under the sovereign control of God, and everything happens for a purpose (Rom. 8:28).
- E. "And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and said, It is better for me to die than to live."** - The gourd removed, Jonah puts his mind back on the repentance of the Ninevites. He was hot and miserable and wanted to die for he did not want to see these people repent and believe. Perhaps he thought he had failed as a prophet of Israel.
- F. "And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death."** - God challenged Jonah about his anger over the destruction of the gourd, and Jonah replied that he was angry and frustrated that he wanted to die.
- G. "Then said the Lord, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night."** - If Jonah could show so much interest in a vegetable weed that he did not make or labor over, how much more should God care for real people in Nineveh?
- H. "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"** - God is the creator of all men and all men have eternal souls. Is not God's grace and mercy in the salvation of souls more important than a gourd? The 120,000 persons who could not discern good from evil were obviously little children. God in his mercy withheld judgment on Nineveh, not only because the adults were repentant but because innocent children would have been killed as well. NOTE: God could have judged and should have judged Nineveh for its wickedness, but He chose to be gracious and spare the city. However, at another time or another place, He might not choose to be gracious and bring judgment on a city. Surely we see from this incident in Jonah that God is a God of mercy and compassion as well as a God of wrath.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A.** We are never told directly that Jonah was ever truly repentant over God's graciousness to Nineveh. However, the silence on the subject plus the fact that he wrote the book of Jonah with real honesty and humiliation leads most to think that he did repent and finally thank God for the conversion of Nineveh (I Thess. 5:18).
- B.** The Book of Jonah is about missions. Missions involve God sending His servants to share the gospel. God must move in grace, servants must speak with authority and love and sinners must repent in faith. When these three things happen, conversion takes place.