



GOD IS PLEASED BUT JONAH IS NOT, PART 2

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Review:

- Last week, we began to explore a passage in *Jonah* which displays a stark contrast. That passage began in **Ch. 3:10** and it continued through **Ch. 4:3**. We'll be looking at this same passage today.
- It's in this passage that we see God's response to the repentance of Nineveh, and we also see Jonah's response.
- They are two *very different* responses. God shows compassion, but Jonah shows anger. That is why the lesson last week and our lesson this week is called, "**God is pleased, but Jonah is not.**" Last week was **Part 1**, and this week is **Part 2**.
- In **Part 1**, we learned that our God is a God of compassion. This is not an occasional quality in God.
- It's not something that unexpectedly showed up in God following the remarkable repentance of the city's residents.
- Rather, Nineveh's repentance reveals to us that enduring element of God's character – and that is His compassion. It's who He is.
- **Psalms 86:15** says our God is "*a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.*"
- Several other OT passages affirm the same thing, proving that the God of the OT is the same as the God of the NT. (NOTE: I shouldn't have to say that, but some liberal commentators and pastors try to claim God is different between the OT and the NT - and that is simply not true).
- Compassion is one of God's attributes, and so His compassion is beyond measure. His compassion is eternal, integral, and infinite. Again - it's WHO He is!
- We looked at several things that the Bible makes clear concerning God's compassion, and here are a couple of those that bear repeating:
 - **First**, God DOES notice us. While God often moves quietly and almost imperceptibly, nevertheless - He notices us and our choices. He tests us, and He gently moves us along.
 - That is true even when we struggle with many questions, fears, and doubts during periods of God's relative silence. This was certainly Nineveh's situation as they wondered what might happen to them after 40 days.

- God still notices us, and whether we comprehend it or not, He is exercising His compassion in our lives and in our circumstances.
- We were reminded that because our God is a compassionate God, we are reflecting His nature in our lives when we show compassion to others.
- **Second**, we learned that because God is compassionate, He relents from bringing destruction.
- In Nineveh's case, we saw that they narrowly avoided a similar catastrophe as what Sodom and Gomorrah received.
- Jonah THOUGHT this would happen – and he HOPED it would happen. But God relented.
- He chose to not destroy Nineveh as He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. He decided this because Nineveh genuinely repented.
- As a result, God was pleased to turn away from His plan of destruction and to display instead His character of compassion.
- God noticed Nineveh. He noticed their sin, and He noticed their repentance.

NOTE: Allow me to 'bring this home' a bit (soap box). I want to underscore a couple of related points on these matters as we transition into **Part 2** of this passage.

1. First, our political situation in America is not a good one.

- Various elections this past week - together with certain partisan postures that have been on display as of late - prove we only have thin isolated crusts of common sense here and there.
- But underneath those shallow remote islands of sensibility, there is a deep boiling cauldron of rage, insanity, senselessness, and corruption.
- Depravity is building up pressure, and it is striving in every way to erupt and take over.
- This nation **cannot** vote its way out of its moral dilemma. We cannot vote our way out of our problems.
- We cannot achieve these things because we have an endemic problem of sin. Our nation has rejected God. It has rejected God's laws and His values. It has rejected truth and common sense.
- Let me be clear: President Trump is NOT our answer. While I'm grateful for a few sensible reprieves that his leadership has brought, this will not last.
- If America is going to escape *'the wrath of God that is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness'* (**Cf. Rom. 1:18**), then it must comprehensively repent, from top to bottom - - **just like Nineveh did**.
- And for THIS to happen, God needs His 'prophets' to speak up, to be bold, and to face personal risk by saying the things that most need to be said.
- They need to speak God's message God's way – just as Jonah did. They need to do what is right and stop following their own desires.

2. Second, our spiritual situation in America is not a good one.

- I've spent the better part of the last two to three weeks personally contacting area churches and pastors as I prepare for this new series I'm teaching on Sunday evenings in Windsor.
- I've sent over 50 letters and personal notes to these churches and to their leadership.
- And for each one, I've looked up their beliefs, their stances on key issues and doctrines, and how they approach and teach God's Word.
- Let me tell you it's been a very revealing and a rather discouraging process. Our spiritual situation in America is not a good one. That's a plain FACT!
- By far, most of these churches I've reached out to are emphasizing a 'social gospel' and a 'woke agenda.' Some of them had a rainbow-colored design element on their website somewhere.
- They are making obvious efforts to 'virtue signal.' They want to be accepted by the culture they are in - - but there is nothing Biblical about that.
- These churches promote (and I'm using THEIR words here...) *'progressive theology;'* *'a peacemaking outreach;'* *'a space of inclusiveness and acceptance;'* *'unified worship and loving tolerance;'* *'a gospel of love rather than a message of judgment;'* *'a place where everyone, regardless of age, gender, or belief can find common ground;'* *'a God who is safe and accepting;'* *'a diversity sensitive environment;'* and so on....
- **These are thinly veiled efforts to 'conform to the world' rather than being 'transformed by the renewing of their mind.'**
- What was **very hard** for me to find were churches that taught strong doctrine, or churches that said AND showed they are Bible-based. It was clearly the much smaller churches that showed the best foundations.
- Most of these churches did not even address the return of Jesus Christ under their 'What we believe' tab on their websites.
- Bible prophecy – though it is MORE than one quarter of God's Word – is not something these churches pay any attention to.
- They don't seem to care one bit that God's Word links wrong attitudes about Bible prophecy to an unhealthy spiritual condition.
- I could say more here, but you get my point. What I'm seeing is the greater church in America today is a shallow, lukewarm, and deluded institution.
- It is a worldly institution, for sure. It has defined itself by worldly standards and constructs, and it fails to see its poor spiritual condition as it needs to.
- It is – quite simply – the church of Laodicea in **Rev. 3:14-20**. This is a picture of the church right before the Rapture, and it is a church in **vs. 20** that Jesus is trying to get INTO. This accurately describes the greater church today...
- Believe me when I say our spiritual situation in America is NOT a good one. We lack the spiritual leaders who speak God's message boldly the way Jonah did.
- Our nation's prognosis is dire as a result. If we look at the past and present together, Nineveh's and America's situations are very different.

NOTE: And speaking of two different things, let's now evaluate Jonah's response to Nineveh's repentance. It's an opposite response to God's compassion.

NOTE: As I shared last week, we're working with a basic two-point outline. Last week we looked at the first point: **God is pleased, and He shows compassion.** But now we see....

A. Jonah is displeased, and he shows anger (let's just march our way through these first few verses that begin **Chapter 4. READ vs. 1**)

1. Here we see Jonah pouts, he unloads, he vents, he throws a tantrum.

- This is one of those moments where I have to step back and blink a bit. This is something that's happening between God and Jonah, and I confess I'm a bit surprised at Jonah's audacity.
- Jonah's not just 'displeased,' he's GREATLY displeased. And he's not just greatly displeased, he's ANGRY.
- The Hebrew word here literally means Jonah was 'burning with rage.' We might say he was 'livid.'
- Now - we need to pause for a second and wrap our heads around what exactly is happening here.
 - The phrase "*was greatly displeased,*" could equally be translated "*he displeased,*" - in which case the sentence here would read, "*But He displeased Jonah exceedingly.*"
 - If we understand this verse in this way, the one who displeases Jonah here is God.
 - God had previously told Jonah about a great disaster He was going to bring upon Nineveh. And no matter what various translations present here, the simple fact is "IT" displeases Jonah—that is, God's relenting displeases him.
 - Some commentators dig deep into the Hebrew nuances here and they conclude that the text is saying that God's relenting here was perceived as a "great evil" to Jonah.

2. I think it's reasonable to suggest Jonah feels the situation or the outcome here is unfair.

- We can only imagine all the reasons why:
 - Jonah's been through a lot of personal challenges getting this job done – his life has been on the line several ways and several times
 - God had said He was going to destroy Nineveh, and Jonah – being very prejudiced against the Assyrians – was seriously hoping for that
 - Jonah might feel at this point that God isn't giving *him* enough consideration for the things he's been through, the fears he's faced, the several times he's faced death, the long and hot journey to

Nineveh, and walking through the sordid evils of Nineveh for three days, and so on...

- We just don't know – and so we have to imagine – but I certainly think Jonah believes this outcome is unfair, that it's not right, that it needed to be something different, and God has made a BIG mistake.
- And so Jonah becomes livid. He's (we might say) 'shaking with rage.'
- Before you come down on Jonah too hard – stop and take an honest look in the mirror. You've felt like Jonah does plenty of times yourself.
 - There have been times you felt like God wasn't sending down the lightning bolts on certain people fast enough.
 - You have been upset that God didn't do this or do that in response to obvious injustices or evil people.
 - You have nurtured your resentments towards God. There have been times you felt God had slipped up and He needed YOUR advice to get things back on track.
 - Again – Jonah is just like us. Or - - maybe I should say, WE are just like HIM!

3. I want you to now see a PROCESS. I want you to see a 'de-evolution' in human nature in what happens with Jonah, and we'll dig a bit deeper to see this.

- Jonah's very angry. We've seen that much. That's clear.
- He's livid with God. That's awkward for some of us to comprehend – but yes - - it's there. The text is plain.
- So, let's start with that - **What do we know about 'anger' from God's Word?**
 - Before I answer, have you ever seen someone who is so angry they are shaking with rage, and they are completely irrational?
 - Have you ever watched any of the YouTube videos of people who act out their anger in an immature, irresponsible, unwarranted, and totally inappropriate fashion?
 - If you have, you know the saying that "*anger is a form of insanity*" holds a lot of truth.
 - This quote probably finds its origin with the ancient philosopher, Seneca, who described anger as a "temporary madness." He said anger overrides reason.
 - There's been a lot of research which supports this. Anger leads to impaired judgment, irrational decision-making, and a loss of cognitive ability.
 - Christian counselors report in some studies that 50% of people who come in for counseling have deep problems dealing with anger and resentments. 50%!!!
 - Anger is destructive. Many crimes are committed in anger. Many bad decisions are made in anger. Many personal regrets find their

source in anger. Many hurtful and consequential things are said in anger.

- Putting all that another way, **‘Angry people are stupid people,’ (and the vice versa is true too: stupid people are often angry people).** They have impaired judgement and they act unreasonably. We all see it.
- So, back to our question, **“What do we know about ‘anger’ from God’s Word?”** (and I’m not talking about ‘righteous anger’ which is a different matter altogether - - I’m talking about the sort of anger Jonah is showing here, and the sort of anger which we sometimes display)
 - **Eph. 4:26-27** says, *“Be angry, yet do not sin.” Do not let the sun set upon your anger, and do not give the devil a foothold...*
 - From this verse we can conclude that a controlled anger is not necessarily sinful, but an uncontrolled anger **certainly is.**
 - We can also conclude that we should not let our anger fester. We need to acknowledge it, deal with it, resolve it, and put it down before it gets the best of us.
 - And perhaps the biggest point is this: our anger gives Satan an inroad into our lives. This should concern all of us.
 - Our anger is an entryway with an ‘Open’ sign flashing above it. Satan *‘prowls about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour’* according to **1 Peter 5:8**. When we are angry, we are teaming up with him, and to our own danger.
 - When we become angry, we not only lose our rational abilities, but we are inviting Satan to control us, to use us - - and to even destroy us.
 - The Bible has a great deal to say about the problem of anger, but in view of today’s text, here are a few other passages which underscore Jonah’s self-centered and ridiculous response:
 - ✓ **Eccl. 7:9** – *“Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.”*
 - ✓ **Prov. 14:29** – *“Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.”*
 - ✓ **James 1:20** – *“For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”*
 - ✓ **Prov. 29:11** – *“A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.”*
- Jonah’s example affirms these passages - - and many others like them. By his anger, he shows he is foolish, he has no understanding, he is unrighteous in his perspectives, and he is without self-control.
- These are the qualities of an angry, resentful, and self-entitled person. They do not realize how foolish they become and how foolish they appear.
- They ‘do not understand that they do not understand,’ and they tend to be the kind of person that speaks too much, too quickly, and without wisdom.

- They are often complainers and whiners. And ‘whining is nothing more than anger forced through a small opening.’

4. So, Jonah is very angry. That’s been established. He doesn’t have a right to be, but he is.

NOTE: Now let’s look at **vss. 2 and 3** to see how he comes across foolish and self-centered as a result.

- (Observation #1): This is a prayer that smacks of insincerity and is chock full of ridiculous personal excuses. It’s a self-centered ‘temper tantrum’ if you will.
- It’s in many ways a pathetic prayer - - and the fact that Jonah later records it as he does is a great testimony to Jonah’s eventual humility and maturity. He achieves this AFTER the details of this story.
- (Observation #2): For the **second time** in this book, Jonah prays. The first time he prayed, it says, “*Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God*” (**Ch. 2:1**).
- Jonah’s second prayer begins this way: “*And he prayed to the Lord.*”
- It would not be unreasonable for you and me to imagine that after what has taken place in Nineveh, we might expect another prayer of thanksgiving as sincere as Jonah’s first recorded prayer was.
- But notice, this second time the Lord is not identified as Jonah’s God - - it’s a subtle difference because, evidently, Jonah is anything but thankful this second time around.
- And Jonah faithfully records this difference when he authors this book that bears his name. Again – we need to appreciate his eventual humility here.
- You see, back in **Jonah Ch. 2**, there was something missing in Jonah’s prayer: he was thankful that the Lord rescued him from drowning.
- But he does not show thankfulness that the Lord rescued him from his sin, which got him INTO the sea in the first place.
- Yes, he ultimately went to Nineveh, but now it’s quite clear that his heart wasn’t in it. He did his job reluctantly.
- The Lord’s provision of the great fish could have changed Jonah’s heart. He could have come away from that landmark trauma being a different man, but we see here that things didn’t work out that way.
- We see here an unfortunate and persistent ‘disconnect’ in Jonah. It’s very apparent:
 - He KNOWS the truth – but he doesn’t apply what he knows.
 - He KNOWS about God’s infinite attributes – but he wants to put God in a box instead.
 - He KNOWS God’s instructions – but he wants to run from them.
 - He KNOWS God’s compassion – but he wants God’s judgment.
 - He KNOWS God’s love – but he wants God’s destruction.
 - He KNOWS God’s patience – but he wants God’s anger.
 - He KNOWS God’s purpose – but he wants his own plan instead.

- He KNOWS about the Lord's mercy to him – but he doesn't want that mercy to be extended to others.
- He KNOWS God spared the lives of the Ninevites – but now he wants God to take his own life.
- (and so on....)

NOTE: Do you see the danger here? Do you see the extreme disconnect?

- Jonah is God's prophet - he is God's man. That's been established. As we learned earlier, Jonah was called "*God's servant*" in **2 Kings 14:25**.
- He had a great resume, and he was accomplished. All of that was the 'real deal.' Jonah was legit! The Bible makes this point clear.
- But underneath it all, Jonah also had his 'personal demons' so to speak. He had prejudices, anger, resentments, and other shortcomings that tripped him up over and over. These things kept getting in the way.
- In other words, Jonah was functionally operating in 2nd gear. He was his own worst enemy. As a result, he was never able to be fully committed to the things he most needed to be committed to.
- He cared about himself first. His vices kept getting in the way of his virtues. That was his choice, every time. Consequently, he was someone that learned all of his lessons the hard way.
- He was what we'd call today a two-faced person. He had a double standard. Jonah had personally experienced the Lord's mercy, and he had benefitted from it.
- When the Lord was merciful to him and saved HIS life, Jonah was thankful. But, when the Lord was merciful to Nineveh and spared it, Jonah was not thankful, and he didn't want to live anymore.
- It's a bone fide two-faced situation, and dare I say, you and I are feeling a bit uncomfortable right now because – once again! – it's here we see ourselves in Jonah.
- I mentioned the 'process of Jonah's human nature' earlier. That is to say, we can see in this passage how he '**devolves**' – how he goes down the spiral of character.
- And that brings us to the last element of Jonah's prayer where he wants to die.

5. The irony of his request to die.

- Jonah is so petulant – so sulky and bad-tempered – that he doesn't want to live anymore.
- It's a knee jerk reaction. It's a stupid thing to say, and it's much like when we bellow, "I'd rather die" when we face something we don't want to face.
- Jonah, in fact, shows extraordinary self-centeredness here. He asks the Lord to take his life, essentially erasing what the Lord had just accomplished by saving his life a bit earlier.
- This shows a spirit of prodigious ingratitude. Everything is about him right now. Jonah has zero consideration for other things, other people, other possibilities, and so on. He wants to die. He is consumed with himself.

- The text lays out that Jonah says it is “good” for him to die, or ‘better’ for him to die.
- This is another indication that Jonah believed that the Lord - or at least what the Lord did - in relenting to destroy Nineveh, was “evil.”
- Jonah hated Nineveh. He therefore wanted to see it destroyed, not spared. What Jonah most feared has happened: his God spared his enemy.
- What’s worse—and this probably galled him to no end— God used him (Jonah!) to save his worst enemy.
- God used the message that he was compelled to deliver, to preserve his enemy from destruction. Jonah had been a tool for a great end – but Jonah did not like that, and so he wanted to end it all.
- This is a commentary on an extremely self-absorbed, self-righteous, self-centered person.
- In a shortsighted and uncontrolled moment, Jonah wanted to ‘end it all.’ His immaturity shows.

Closing with some applications:

First, God can still use us when we are reluctant to be used.

- God is not looking for perfect people to accomplish His perfect will.
- Just like Jonah, God used Gideon, Samson, Moses, Rahab, and countless other imperfect people to accomplish a far greater purpose that none of those people saw at that time.
- God is still in that same business today. He can use us even when we are reluctant to be used.
- That is NOT an excuse to exercise reluctance - - rather it is a reassurance that God is greater than our own shortcomings.

Second, there is a great personal risk in being knowledgeable about things of God while not showing a heart for things of God.

- I think this describes many Christians today. They know God’s Word, but they don’t apply it.
- I was raised in a Christian family - - so was my wife. We both have talked from time to time how we have members on both sides who KNOW many things about God, who KNOW many details and doctrines about the faith - - but fundamentally fail to apply those things in ways that really count.
- That is NOT where you and I want to be. We do NOT want to have this disconnect. The example of Jonah is provided to us in God’s Word to be a lesson to us.
- It is the wrong kind of assessment to be levied against us - - when it can be said we are knowledgeable about the things of God, but we lack a heart for showing what we know.
- It’s better to be faithful with a few things we know, than to be unfaithful with many things we know.

- It is my prayer for myself - and for each of you! – that we will SHOW and DISPLAY and DEMONSTRATE our faith. Our faith needs to show up. It needs to be real.
- It's not enough to know something; we need to PROVE OUT what we know.

NEXT TIME: “God Gives Jonah a Reality Check”



Solid Bread Community was started with a passion to teach the truth of God's Word – every part of it, as it was divinely inspired to be understood.

The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don't pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

Second, don't teach what is NOT there. Don't force a passage to mean something it really doesn't.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.

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