



GOD GIVES JONAH A REALITY CHECK

Week #12; Nov. 16, 2025



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Review:

- We're getting close to completing our study in **Jonah**. Next week will be lesson #13, and our **last** lesson in this series.
- The week after that, we celebrate The Lord's Supper. The lesson that morning will focus on an important theme concerning this special time of fellowship.
- Please be in heartfelt prayer – for yourself, and for others within this community – as we approach The Lord's Supper. Remember, this is a time to closely examine ourselves; let's do that sincerely before the Lord.
- Starting Sunday, Dec. 7, we begin our new series in **1 & 2 Thessalonians**. I am calling that series, "*Faithful Endurance in One Direction*."
- Further information about this series was included in this week's e-letter. KEY: If you're not getting that, go to our website: www.solidbreadcommunity.com and to the bottom of the Home Page where you can enter your email and sign up to receive it.
- Now, let's direct our focus on the lesson for today. We saw last time that Jonah's response to the repentance of Nineveh was opposite of God's response.
- God was pleased, and He showed compassion – but Jonah was displeased, and he showed anger.
 - The outcome seemed unjust to Jonah – and the text makes the case that he was angry with God.
 - It's worth noting that we are always most angry when we are most wrong. This was Jonah's problem.
 - We explored what the Bible has to say about the problem of uncontrolled anger. We lose our rational abilities, and we invite Satan's control.
 - Jonah then prays a pathetic prayer – one that appears to be full of self-pity and personal excuses. He concludes that prayer by asking God to take away his life.
 - We unpacked the various ways in which there is an unfortunate and persistent 'disconnect' in Jonah. Many things he knows, he does not apply.
 - And – we saw how there is great personal risk in being knowledgeable about things of God while not showing a heart for things of God.

NOTE: Today, we look at God's response to Jonah. Jonah has vented, he's thrown his temper tantrum, he's wallowed in self-pity, and he has trembled with rage. Now God answers him.

NOTE: Again, as we did last time, we'll just march through the next section verse-by-verse, and we'll start with **Jonah 4:4**.

A. It's here we see that God compels Jonah to self-reflect.

NOTE: Permit me to paraphrase God's question to Jonah a few other ways:

- *"Is your heart right, Jonah?"*
- *"Is your heart REALLY any better than the hearts of the Ninevites?"*
- *"Are you able to step outside yourself and see the bigger picture here?"*

1. Here, at the conclusion of this book of Jonah, we find that it ends more or less where it started - with a rebellious and self-centered prophet.

- Jonah had done what God wanted him to do. He had delivered the message to Nineveh that God wanted him to deliver.
- But he'd done **the right thing the wrong way**. God has still USED Jonah to display His immeasurable grace and mercy, but that had nothing to do with Jonah – it had everything to do with God.
- Now here, we also see God's interaction with Jonah. We've not seen this dynamic before.
- We've seen Jonah's words and prayers TO God, and we've seen Jonah's words ABOUT God.
- We've seen God's instructions TO Jonah - - but here, near the end of the book of **Jonah**, we see God's words BACK TO Jonah. We see God's interaction.
- It's not unlike the pattern of the book of **Job**. There's a lot of things said TO God and ABOUT God through most of that book.
- But it's at the end of that book that God finally interacts personally with Job. It's at the end of that book that God gives Job a reality check.
- Here, it's much the same. God gives Jonah a reality check. He causes Jonah to engage in some much-needed self-reflection.
- God is being quite gentle and gracious with Jonah here – all things considered. Jonah has been a petulant and grouchy prophet to this point. And he's continuing to be that way...
- The things he's done wrong, he's done terribly wrong. The things he's done right, he's only done those things reluctantly.

2. Here's a subtlety we need to see: Jonah wasn't angry that God WAS a God of mercy and grace. Jonah was angry HOW God showed that mercy and grace.

- As long as God showed that grace and mercy to HIM (to Jonah), and as long as God showed that grace and mercy to Jonah's people, it was all right. Jonah didn't complain.

- But when God showed His grace and mercy to Nineveh - well, that was a totally different matter!
- This underscores Jonah's extreme hypocrisy and his two-faced attitudes. And so God essentially asks Jonah, *"Is your heart right?"*
- The implied answer, of course, is "No."
- Again – going back to Jonah's prayer in **vss. 2 and 3** – he complained to God, he blamed God, he did not honor God. Some commentators try to make the point that Jonah slandered God.
- But Jonah was totally focused on himself. There are 10 personal pronouns in that prayer. He was looking inward only. It was all about HIM!
- Jonah was on an ego trip, and he had appointed himself as God's advisor.

NOTE: It's impossible to be properly focused on God when we are consumed with ourselves. Two cannot sit on one throne. Let me unpack this fact a little bit more...

- Emotions like anger, self-pity, discontent, selfishness, and so on - - fundamentally, **these things are sins**. But they are also energies that pull our focus AWAY from God.
- No person is bigger than the things which MAKE him angry. If little things upset us - - then that shows we are little in character.
 - ✓ What's your reaction to long slow trains at crossings, to the lady in the checkout line in front of you that can't find her grocery coupon - - - or to a bad Broncos game?
 - ✓ How are you inclined to respond when people who were seated in a restaurant later than you get their food first?
 - ✓ Again – if petty things upset us and make us angry, it's a sign that we are little in character.
- You see, Jonah served a great, marvelous, and awesome God – a God who (as Jonah said himself in **vs. 2**) *"is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love."*
- Jonah could have chosen to focus on God. He could have CHOSEN to focus on very great matters that were far beyond his comprehension – and WORTHY of his focus.
- Jonah had every reason to worship God for what God had done in Nineveh. It was a historical event that still stands today.
- But those things didn't matter to Jonah. He was focused on himself instead. **That was his choice.**
- And so, Jonah was focused on little things. He was focused on HIS petty interests - - and that's why he had little inhibition to showing his rage.
- Jonah could not be bigger than the small things that made him angry.

NOTE: This is one of the reasons The Lord's Supper is so important. Our natural tendency is to lose proper focus. Our normal propensity is to focus on ourselves and to let lesser things consume us. Like Jonah, our natural tendency is to do **the right thing the wrong way**.

- That is why Paul instructs us in **1 Cor. 11:27** to be careful of HOW we approach The Lord's Supper. We need to avoid participating the wrong way.
- It's too easy to be self-absorbed. It's too easy to keep our passions, concerns, interests, and obsessions horizontal.
- It's too easy to let the occasion of The Lord's Supper erode in significance and worship.
- It's too easy to focus on little things - - to let our personal problems and our private sins avoid accountability.
- It's too easy to let our mind wander - - to not give God the proper attention and adoration that He deserves.
- All to say, it's too easy to come to The Lord's Supper in "*an unworthy manner.*"
- And so, I encourage you again, be in prayer as we approach The Lord's Supper the last Sunday of this month. Make a concerted effort to prepare your heart.
- Examine yourselves. Pray for those around you. Focus on a right view of Jesus Christ. Get some important things back on track.

- **OK – back to Jonah:** God comes alongside Jonah in that angry and self-absorbed moment, and God gently asks him, "*Can you lay aside yourself for a moment and see the bigger picture here?*" "*Is your heart right, Jonah?*"
 - If Jonah had been honest, he would have said, "No!"
 - But we don't see that reply recorded. We don't see any reply recorded. The assumption here is Jonah continued to sulk.
- **Question:** Really, are we any better than Jonah?
 - Jonah didn't want to see the Ninevites repent and be spared because he hated them.
 - Do we really want to see the sort of folks that we dislike the most - saved?
 - Do we really have genuine compassion for the lost - - or do we just say we do?
 - Do we rejoice when those who have offended or hurt us turn a corner and they see the light - or do we secretly hope they face consequences?
 - Do we sometimes nurture resentments against God as we struggle in our prayer life?
 - These are good questions to quietly reflect on.

B. Jonah is unreasonable, so God teaches him an object lesson (Cf. vss 5-8).

NOTE: In this passage, we see God getting practical with Jonah. This is 'brass tacks' stuff. Let's look at the basic points of this passage.

1. First, Jonah finds himself a front row seat to see what will happen to Nineveh.

- He already knows God has relented from bringing destruction on the city – that has been made clear already.
- But something here makes Jonah want to 'wait and see.'

- The answer may be Jonah's attitude. Recall, he was angry with God, he resented God's decision.
- As I said earlier, he basically made himself as 'advisor' to God. Jonah's view of God was too small. He wanted to put God into a box that he could define and control.
- But regardless of what was going on inside of Jonah, something made him think, "Well, let's just wait and see what happens."
- Jonah desired Nineveh's destruction above any other outcome. He had proclaimed God's message hoping 40 days later would bring disaster.
- So, Jonah goes to the east side of the city and builds himself a lean-to for shade. This is a hot and dry area of the world.
- If God's going to destroy this city the next day – and that's implied in **vs. 7** – Jonah doesn't want to miss it.
- He waits for God to destroy the city, and he hopes God will. But that doesn't happen.
- And Jonah pouts once more when God doesn't do what he wants God to do. Jonah's behavior patterns are predictable.
- Keep in mind – Jonah still hasn't answered God's question to him in **vs. 4**, "*Have you any right to be angry?*"
- And so now, God sets up a series of events in order to ask Jonah the same question in **vs. 9**. God is going to get through to Jonah no matter what...

NOTE: Notice the phrase in **Jonah 4:6 and 7**: "*God provided.*" We've seen this phrase all through the book of Jonah -

- **Jonah 1: 4** – God provided a great wind or a great storm;
- **Jonah 1: 17**- God provided a great fish;
- Here in this passage, God provided a vine in **vs. 6** that "*sprang up overnight*" in **vs. 10**. God provided a worm in **vs. 7**, and a scorching east wind in **vs. 8**.

In every case, God providentially intervenes in normal physical affairs. These are not natural events or provisions, they are supernatural. The sailors recognized this fact for themselves...

- We noted this specific issue several lessons ago - this point that "*God provided.*"
- Put another way, God has, up to this point, given Jonah multiple object lessons to learn from - - but Jonah's been a reluctant student of the truth.
- And that's why Jonah was watching for God to do something that God was not going to do, because God had already spared the city. Jonah knew that.
- But Jonah is stubborn. He wanted God to think like him, act like him, hate like him, judge like him, be prejudiced like him - - and so on.
- Jonah was sulking and stewing and being out of sorts with God because God wouldn't reduce Himself to Jonah's level.
- God wouldn't do what Jonah would've done. And so Jonah was unhappy.

- God supernaturally provided shade for Jonah with the vine, and God supernaturally provided a worm to kill that vine.

NOTE: There is something here – perhaps a bit of ‘psychology’ at play – that I want you to notice:

- a. Jonah went from "very happy" to very upset in three verses. **Why?** Because God had messed with Jonah’s comfort zone.
- b. Jonah’s responses to life and his personal circumstances were not based on the bigger picture. His responses were not based on a proper view of God and ministry.
- c. They were based on his feelings and emotions instead, and feelings are fickle and fragile. They are not always based on reality - - in fact, they often are not.
- d. The lesson here is the things that make us glad or mad reveal a lot about the condition of our faith. They say a lot about how much of a priority things of God are to us.
- e. It’s worth noting that **Jonah 4:6** is the only time in this book that Jonah records he was glad or happy. All the rest of the time, we see someone who is upset, angry, and self-centered.
- f. God is in control of our comfort and discomfort – but the bigger point is He was with Jonah and He is **with us**.
- g. **We can choose our attitudes.** Though he himself was writing from a prison cell in Rome, Paul instructed us in **Philippians 1:27** about managing our attitudes.
- h. He said “*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.*”
- i. He also encourages us in **Eph 5:1** to be “*imitators of Christ.*” There is no justification in the Christian life to foster and nurture a bad attitude. That only shows that we have our priorities wrong.
- j. And that was Jonah’s problem. His priorities were wrong. He cared more about a plant than he did about the people of Nineveh.
- k. God sent a worm to teach Jonah a lesson. Worms take many forms – sometimes they are financial, sometimes they are family-based, sometimes they are health-related, and so on.
- l. If there is a key lesson here, it’s this: Make sure you don’t push God with your wrong attitudes to the point where God sends a worm in your life to teach you the most important lessons the hard way.

2. Wrapping up here – we see Jonah, predictably, ‘wants to die’ again in vs. 9.

- He’s physically uncomfortable – God sees to that.
- Jonah’s still alive, and he still has a lot to be thankful for, but he’s too upset about his personal situation to keep a proper perspective.
- The heat is getting to him, and so he says again what he said up in **vs. 3**, “*It would be better for me to die than to live.*”
- We’ve noted before that Jonah always resorts to this statement, to this ultimate ‘woe is me’ attitude. If he cannot have his way, he wants no way at all.

- Jonah's problem was his sinful ego – and that ego kept edging God out. It was completely self-centered.
- We are much the same as Jonah here. Our ego, our selfish desires, our wants and our biases - - these things keep us from exalting God only.
- A lot of our problems come down to our motives. God is not just interested in what we do (that's often where our focus stops), but He's much more interested in WHY we do it. What's our motive?
- Jonah is a great example of doing the right thing the wrong way and from a wrong motive.
- And right up to the end of the book here, it's Jonah's motives and Jonah's sin that keep him on the wrong side of a right relationship with God.
- In ***Psalms 51:10***, when he recognized his own sin, David prayed, “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*”
- We need to guard ourselves carefully against the fallacy that our actions are what God notices - - that it's our actions which are most important to Him.
- The greater truth is He notices our hearts, our motives - - or as David says, our ‘*spirit*.’ That's what's most important to God.

NEXT TIME: “God Shows His True Heart.” (We wrap up this study in Jonah, and we'll look at some broad takeaways from it).



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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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