

Jonah 4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

Jonah 4:2 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.*

Now we find out that although Jonah obeyed God, he did so out of duty and not out of love. In fact, he was angry that Nineveh had repented and been spared.

Now we find out why Jonah had run away from God the first time. He knew that God was—

- gracious (kind, looking on man with pity and mercy)
- merciful (compassionate, unwilling to give pain or punish)
- slow to anger (patient, long-suffering)
- having **great** kindness (ready to show grace, tenderness, generosity, and compassion in abundance)

Jonah knew that God would respond to repentance by deciding not to destroy the city. Jonah remembered the words from the Torah:

Ex. 34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

Ex. 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*.

Jonah 4:3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for *it is better for me to die than to live.*

Jonah now becomes petty and childish as he continues to talk to God. He begs God to kill him; he would rather die than live and see the people of Nineveh live in righteousness before God.

Jonah 4:4 Then said the LORD, **Doest thou well to be angry?**

God is so patient and understanding. He knew the reputation of the Assyrians and how evil they were to those they had conquered. They were known to skin people alive, to cut off appendages, and to stack a mound of heads in a conquered city to warn the people not to even think of rebelling.

God deals with Jonah's anger with wisdom and patience. He asks Jonah a question, "Does it make you happy or make you feel better to be angry?"

Jonah 4:5 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.

Jonah goes out of the city and builds a booth/hut on the east side to sit in the shade and wait to see what happens next.

Jonah 4:6 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.

“gourd” – JFB describes this gourd as the “castor-oil plant, commonly called ‘palm-christ’ (*palma-christi*). It grows from eight to ten feet high. Only one leaf grows on a branch, but that leaf being often more than a foot large, the collective leaves give good shelter from the heat. It grows rapidly, and fades as suddenly when injured.”

God causes a gourd to grow up and provide extra shade for Jonah in an effort to comfort Jonah. Jonah was cheered up, comforted by the gourd.

Jonah 4:7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

Jonah 4:8 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 wished in himself to die, and said, *It is better for me to die than to live.* When the sun rose the next day, the heat dried up the gourd. Then God sent a quiet, hot east wind; the Hebrew indicated a “sirocco” which Webster defines as “an oppressive, relaxing wind from the desert.” The heat from the sun was relentless and Jonah covered himself (from the word *fainted*). Jonah was so miserable he wanted to die.

Jonah 4:9 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.*

Again, God speaks to Jonah. The same Hebrew word is used for “angry,” but this time I think it makes more sense to say “grieved” (another one of the choices according to the Hebrew). He asks Jonah if he was grieved at losing the gourd. Jonah basically says, “Yes, I’m sorry the gourd withered, so sorry that I wish I were dead.”

Jonah 4:10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

Jonah 4:11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and *also much cattle?*

God now uses the circumstances to teach Jonah. He points out to Jonah that he had pity on the gourd; he had wanted the gourd spared. Jonah had invested absolutely nothing of himself in that gourd. God, the Creator, on the other hand, had at least 120,000 people (depending on how you interpret “that cannot discern....”), products of His creation, living in the city of Nineveh, let alone the cattle.

The obvious implication—Aren’t these people more deserving of your pity and sorrow than a gourd?

Our tendency is to focus on self. I think one of the biggest lessons in the story of Jonah is that we need to learn to look at the world through God’s eyes. The only way we can even attempt to do that is by knowing God and understanding Who He Is. The only way we can attain that type of knowledge is through intimate fellowship with Him through the ministry of His Spirit in our hearts through His

word and worship and prayer. I just can't emphasize enough the importance of immersing oneself in the Word of God. That is the whole motivation behind my sharing my journey through the scripture with others on the web.

Again, I am reminded of a song:

Looking Through His Eyes, by Mike Otto

Let me see this world, dear Lord, as though I were looking through Your eyes.
A world of men who don't want you, Lord, but a world for which You died.
Let me kneel with You in the garden, blur my eyes with tears of agony.
For if once I could see this world the way You see, I just know I'd serve You more faithfully.

Let me see this world, dear Lord, Through Your eyes when men mocked your holy name. When they beat You and spat upon you, Lord, let me love them, as you loved them—just the same.
Let me stand high above my petty problems, and grieve for men hell-bound eternally. For if once I could see this world the way You see, I just know I'd serve You more faithfully.

A friend of mine, Scott McClintock, had some thought-provoking comparisons of Jonah and the Church:

- My (God's) church is just like Jonah. I have given My church its marching orders, and it has refused to move because of its prejudices, traditions, and man-made doctrines. It truly has become the Church of Laodicea.
- My church, in its self-centeredness, is running from Me and is now asleep in the bottom of the ship.
- I will wake My church up with the storm of My judgment.
- When My church dies to self, then it will walk in My way; and My glory will be seen, My power will be experienced and a great harvest of souls will take place.

JFB = Jamieson, Fausset & Brown