

Jonah 4:1-6, 8, 11 *But it [when God had mercy on Nineveh] displeased Jonah exceedingly [very much], and he was very angry. 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 [Israel]? 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 [and not wanting to judge harshly]. Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech [beg] thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." Then said the LORD, "Doest thou well to be angry?" 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. And the LORD God prepared a gourd [a vine or leafy plant for shade], and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief [Jonah had been sitting in direct sunlight]. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. ... And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement [strong] 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." ... And should not I [God] spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand [120,000] persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand<sup>1</sup>; and also much cattle?*

1. Introduction:

- a. Jonah's previous actions
  - i. Jonah is the preacher without forgiveness in his heart
  - ii. Jonah first took a ship & ran the other way from God's instructions – Jonah 1:3
  - iii. Jonah was thrown overboard by the ship's crew & God got his attention inside belly of big fish – Jonah 2:1
  - iv. Big fish vomited Jonah out on the beach – Jonah 2:10
  - v. This time Jonah goes to Nineveh and preaches one simple sermon. Then the entire city repents – Jonah chapter 3
- b. But Jonah is displeased after city's conversion. Jonah's experience with the Ninevites was that they would send armies to steal from Israel and kill the defenders.

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<sup>1</sup> "...cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand..." This phrase is probably citing the number of children who are too young to know right from left, about 3 – 4 years old. The total population of the city would be much larger.

c. Root of bitterness

- i. Jonah robbed of joy of revival with his bitterness & anger

Jeremiah 4:18 *Thy way and thy doings have procured these things* [armies from other nations attacking] *unto thee* [Your own actions have brought this upon yourself]; *this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.*

- ii. Bitterness is an evil root that wraps itself around person's heart

Deuteronomy 32:29, 32-33 *O that they* [Israel] *were wise, that they understood this* [that God has protected and cared for them], *that they would consider their latter end* [what will happen if they continue being unthankful]! ... *For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah<sup>2</sup>: their grapes are grapes of gall* [poison], *their clusters are bitter: Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.*

- iii. Bitterness robs person of spiritual life

Acts 8:23 *For I perceive that thou* [Simon, a Satanic magician from Samaria who became a believer as a result of Philips' preaching] *art in the gall* [poison] *of bitterness, and in the bond* [handcuffs] *of iniquity.*

- iv. Bitterness blocks Holy Spirit working with us

Ephesians 4:30-31 *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. **Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:***

- v. Bitterness left unattended leads to us totally lacking God's grace in life

Hebrews 12:15 *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you* [something you won't forgive causes you to be always angry], *and thereby many be defiled;*

d. There are four benchmarks of bitterness in Jonah's life

2. First Benchmark: Selfish Expectations

- a. Jonah wanted God to destroy Nineveh, but he knew that God was sending him there so that they wouldn't have to be destroyed
- b. Jonah wanted judgement & destruction of Nineveh because of what they'd done to his people
- c. His expectation turned into bitterness when it didn't happen
- d. God's heart was to forgive the sins of Nineveh if they would repent

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<sup>2</sup> "...Sodom, and...Gomorrah..." The Jews understood that the judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah were direct judgements from the hand of God, not something in which God used people or things to bring about His plan. The fear of God Himself was to be considered when Sodom and Gomorrah were mentioned.

- e. God's expectation is that Christians are eager to have God forgive others  
 Luke 17:10 *So likewise ye [Jesus' disciples], when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say [your attitude should be to say], "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."*
  - f. Paul's had no expectations except to preach the gospel  
 1 Corinthians 9:16 *For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me [this is the job God Himself has given me to do]; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel [I'll be in deep trouble if I don't preach the gospel]!*  
 Philippians 3:7 *But what things were gain to me [the things I might say I deserve because of how hard I work], those I counted loss for Christ.*
3. Second Benchmark: Sanctimonious Escape (Failing to do what God clearly tells us to do)
- a. Bible people who knew "better than God" rather than obey God
    - i. They wanted their desires more than doing their responsibilities
    - ii. Jonah thought he knew better than God and took a ship, running from God – Jonah 1:3
    - iii. King Saul thought he knew better than God and disobeyed several of God's commands 1 Samuel 10:8, 13:7-14, 15:1,3, 9, 11-14, 19
    - iv. King David thought he knew better than God and didn't go out with his army. He stayed at home and, as a result, committed adultery & murder – 2 Samuel 11:1-15
    - v. Samson thought he knew better than God and disobeyed his Nazarite vows several times – Judges chapters 14-16
  - b. God's desires the inward heart of people
    - i. God's will does not depend on whether we get what we think we deserve
    - ii. God's requires the submission of the inward heart to his commands  
 Micah 6:8 *He [God] hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and **what doth the LORD require of thee**, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*
4. Third Benchmark: Sinful Expression (Doing what God clearly tells us not to do)
- a. Jonah wanted to die – Jonah 4:3
  - b. Jonah thought that he was right to be angry with God – Jonah 4:9
  - c. Bitter heart expresses itself outward
    - i. Esau sold his birthright to Jacob his younger brother for a pot of stew – Genesis 25:30-34, Heb 12:16

- ii. Then Esau accuses Jacob of stealing his birthright & blessing – Genesis 27:34-36
  - iii. This is what God has to say about Esau after he sold his birthright:  
Hebrews 12:16-17 *Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person [a person who always uses bad language], as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited [wanted to inherit] the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance [for it was too late for repentance], though he sought it carefully with tears.*
  - d. Evil thoughts come from within a person  
Mark 7:21-23 *For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: **All these evil things come from within**, and defile the man.*
  - e. Guard & protect your heart carefully  
Proverbs 4:23 *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*
5. Fourth Benchmark: Squandered Enjoyment (When Jonah should have been rejoicing with the angels, he was grouchy and depressed)
- a. God wants Christian to have joy in life & fulfilled  
John 10:10 *The thief [the person controlled by evil] cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I [Jesus] am come that they [everyone] might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*
  - b. Full of self-pity
    - i. Jonah stood outside the city full of self-pity – Jonah 4:3-8
    - ii. In the same way, Elijah also felt all alone in the world after a great revival– 1 Kings 19:9-10
  - c. The only antidote to bitterness is forgiveness
  - d. God had a different kind of pity for Nineveh, full of mercy
    - i. God forgave the whole city's sins & gave them mercy – Jonah 4:11
    - ii. In the same way, God reminded Elijah that he still had 7000 men who had not gone astray – 1 Kings 19:18
6. Conclusion
- a. See the blessings in God's forgiveness
  - b. See the miracles God does for His people
  - c. See the joy of the Lord in repented souls