

# Jonah's Anger

## Jonah 4

November 23, 2014

### Jonah Vents

Mackey points out:

The first clause is literally, 'It was evil to Jonah a great evil,' continuing the play on the word 'evil' found in 3:10. The prophet's attitude is that the lack of calamity coming upon Nineveh was itself a calamity. He displayed the discontent of a faith that lacked understanding. His reaction is described in a very strong fashion. It goes beyond mere irritation to fury. Jonah is burning with rage - violently angry with the way God has acted in showing compassion. In this he shows that he still did not appreciate the sovereignty of divine grace. Though he had obeyed God and gone to Nineveh, it was not as one who was completely in harmony with God. He had still a lot to learn.<sup>1</sup>

Ferguson says:

It is now possible to assess Jonah's position. *Geographically* he was outside Nineveh; *chronologically* he was in days of revival; but *spiritually* he was almost back to square one again. *He was certainly defending what he had done before and beginning to dig himself into the spiritual pit of his former disobedience.* But so miserable has he become about both his obedience and his disobedience that, rather than see the matter through, Jonah would prefer to die. So he prays for a kind of divine euthanasia: Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live (*Jon. 4:3*).<sup>2</sup>

### God questions

Brian Estelle points out, "Anger is one letter away from danger!"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Mackay, Jonah, Focus on the Bible Series, Christian Focus, 2008, p61

<sup>2</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, Man Overboard, Banner of Truth, 2014, p80

<sup>3</sup> Brian Estelle, Salvation through Judgment and Mercy, P&R, 2005, p124

- **What is a justifiable cause?**
  
- **What is the appropriate action?**
  
  
- **Duration**

## God Provides

Dennis Baly describes it thus:

"During the period of a sirocco the temperature rises steeply, sometimes even climbing during the night, and it remains high, about 16-22 F. above the average ... at times every scrap of moisture seems to have been extracted from the air, so that one has the curious feeling that one's skin has been drawn much tighter than usual. Sirocco days are peculiarly trying to the temper and tend to make even the mildest people irritable and fretful and to snap at one another for apparently no reason at all." Obviously such a wind desiccates and withers all green growth<sup>4</sup>

## God Rebukes

God comes again with the same question: Do you have a right to be angry?

Ferguson:

In a sense Jonah had committed exactly the sin that the Pharisees were later to commit. They distorted the grace of God into legalism; they made his unconditional love depend on restrictive conditions; they *disgraced* God! That is why Jesus' conflict with them was essential, for they were destroying the character of his heavenly Father and detracting from his reputation as love itself (see *Matt.* 23:1-36). Jonah was guilty of the same crime.

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<sup>4</sup> Dennis Baly (*The Geography of the Bible* [London: Lutterworth, 1957], pp. 67-68)

What Jonah wanted was a God made in his own narrow-hearted image; a God with his own prejudices who would only come into fellowship with sinners under certain restrictive conditions. There was an element of the devil's character in Jonah! The prophet also knew that serving the true and living God, and allowing himself to be transformed into his image (see *Rom. 8:29*) was a costly way for him to walk. It would mean conforming to the image of a God who was even then willing to make himself of no reputation in order to let Nineveh hear of his grace. It would mean that Jonah too would need to be willing to make himself of no reputation (see *Phil. 2:7*, AV). Jonah sat outside Nineveh (why was he not in the afflicted city, ministering God's word, engaged in personal work and being a true servant of God?) He now faced the greatest decision of his life: *Was he willing to die to his own reputation?*<sup>5</sup>

## Home Study Guide

**Monday:** Read Jonah 4. Review your sermon notes. Why was Jonah angry? Did he have a justifiable reason?

**Tuesday:** Jeremiah 21 Why is God's anger justified?

**Wednesday:** Isa 12 How can God's anger be turned away from us?

**Sunday's Sermon will be "I Will Carry You" Isaiah 46:1-13**

Guest minister Cpt. Mike Stephan, Chaplain, US Army

**Thursday:** Neh 9 How did God carry Israel?

**Friday:** Heb 1 Who is the sustainer? How does he do it?

**Saturday:** Ps 55 What does the Psalmist urge us to do because God sustains us?

**Memory: Isa 46:4**

***Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.***

## Prayer Items:

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<sup>5</sup> Ferguson p92



## Family Catechism Study

[Westminster Shorter Catechism]

### **Q. 66. What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment?**

A. The reason annexed to the fifth commandment is, a promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good) to all such as keep this commandment. Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; Eph. 6:2-3

Paul reiterates the promised blessing given in the command when he commands children to obey their parents. The opposite curses are everywhere evident in our society today. We cannot say absolutely how this blessing is accomplished. Is it done through some super-natural working of God for the benefit of those who obey? Or is it a more natural process in which obedience and respect builds a civilization, which is stronger and more productive, so that the people are not oppressed and starving? The later is assuredly part of it but we cannot tell from these texts whether the former is also true.

The goodness of God's law is very evident in this command. God tells us to do that which is good for us and for our posterity. A culture based on this kind of love and respect is going to be a great place to live. Many of the commands are given in general terms and do not always apply in the specific. Just because someone dies early or a teen is killed by a drunk driver does not mean that the person who died disregarded this command. On the average, the society, which keeps this command, will have a higher degree of prosperity and longer life than the one who does not. The determining factor is, as the Catechism says, the glory of God. God is going to work every situation to his glory and the good of his people.

So do yourself a favor, respect those with whom you have a relationship whether as a superior, equal, or inferior.