

Sermon Notes

“Jonah: Pursued by the Hound of Heaven”
Jonah 4 — “Submitting”

November 25, 2007

A. Introduction

1. our book outline: Jonah ...
 - a. chapter 1 ... S_____
 - b. chapter 2 ... S_____
 - c. chapter 3 ... S_____
2. the two primary lessons from the book of Jonah
 - a. God's ... S_____
 - b. God's ... G_____

B. Jonah's Petulant Prayer 4:1-5

1. 4:1-3 — Jonah's 'Cross Purpose'
 - a. how would you describe this prayer?
 - b. why does Jonah say he disobeyed originally?
 - c. what do you believe to be Jonah's real problem?
 - d. I Corinthians 2:16 ... I need to learn ...

2. 4:4-5 — God's Pointed Question and Jonah's Response
 - a. what is God's point in questioning Jonah's anger?
 - b. how does Jonah answer God?
 - c. Romans 5:8, 2 Corinthians 5:14, 19-20: ... I need to remember

C. God Appoints Jonah's Plant 4:6-9

1. 4:6 — God Appoints its Growth
 - a. what is the purpose of the plant?
 - b. does Jonah's attitude make him deserve the plant?
 - c. how does Jonah feel about the plant?
2. 4:7-8 — God Appoints its Demise
 - a. what further two things does God appoint (prepare, provide)?
 - b. how does God use this plant?
 - c. what is Jonah supposed to learn?
3. 4:9 — God's Pointed Question and Jonah's Response
 - a. what is God's point in questioning Jonah's anger?
 - b. has Jonah learned his lesson yet?

D. God Deals with Jonah's Prejudice 4:10-11

1. how does God apply the lesson to Jonah?
2. what is the final truth revealed in this history of Jonah?

E. Conclusion — things I need to learn about God's lordship and grace are

A. Introduction

1. What has preceded

a. chapter 1 ... Jonah Shirking

- (A) from obeying God's command
- (B) from giving the judgement message to wicked Nineveh

b. chapter 2 ... Jonah Saved

- (A) from drowning in the depths of the sea
- (B) from the stomach of the great fish

c. chapter 3 ... Jonah Serving

- (A) obeying God in going to Nineveh
- (B) delivering the message of judgement
- (C) seeing the people repent, both great and small

d. the history of Jonah has two primary lessons:

- (A) one: the sovereignty of God
 - (1) shown in God's dealing with Jonah
 - (2) shown in God's dealing with Nineveh
- (B) two: the grace of God
 - (1) shown in God's dealing with Jonah
 - (2) shown in God's dealing with Nineveh

e. Jonah has learned some lessons

- (A) but he has more to learn!
- (B) as the song goes
 - He's still workin' on me
 - to make me what I ought to be;
 - It took Him just a week to make
 - the moon and stars,
 - The sun and the earth

and Jupiter and Mars –
How loving and patient He must be!
He's still workin' on me! –{2}.

(C) well, today we will see that God is still working on Jonah, and the lesson that Jonah needs to learn is that of submission, submission to the Sovereign Lord – this may be a lesson that we need to learn as well...

2. « Scripture Reading Jonah 4 »

B. Jonah's Petulant Prayer 4:1–5

1. Jonah's 'Cross Purpose' – 4:1–3

a. But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the LORD, 'LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.' – (NIV)

b. now, this is called a prayer but when you examine it you find that it is simply a way for Jonah to complain

(A) Jonah is cross with God, because, ...

(B) Jonah's purpose differs from God's purpose

c. here is the explanation of Jonah's original disobedience

(A) Jonah is peeved because God didn't punish Nineveh

(1) Jonah is going to pout about it

(2) Jonah isn't going to let God get away with this

(3) so he complains petulantly in this 'prayer'

(B) Jonah realized God is gracious and compassionate

(1) he was happy to accept God's mercy for himself

(a) thrown overboard, Jonah decided drowning in sea was not such a good idea after all

(b) so he prayed and God delivered him

(2) But to the heathen Ninevites, to these *goyim*

(a) Jonah is resentful of God's showing His mercy

- (b) Jonah wants to see them punished
 - (c) and if Jonah cannot get his own way in this
 - (d) then let God slay Jonah
 - (e) for he doesn't want to serve a God who lets these Ninevites be excused from punishment
- d. for this is really a matter of submitting
- (A) Jonah is not submitting to the Sovereign God
 - (B) Jonah was 'anti-submitting'
 - (1) instead of placing himself under God's control
 - (2) he seeks to control God
 - (C) have you ever heard yourself 'praying' as Jonah is?
 - (1) as a way of telling God what He should do?
 - (2) teaching God what the Bible says so God can see what the proper course of action is?
 - (3) and throwing in an 'or else' at the end?
 - (D) Jonah knew what God would do, but he had not yet learned the why, he was insensitive to God's purpose,
 - (E) Jonah, same as we, needed to learn the truth Paul tells in 1 Corinthians 2:16, '[For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.](#)' (NAS)

2. God's Pointed Question and Jonah's Response – 4:4–5

- a. [But the LORD replied, 'Have you any right to be angry?' Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. – \(NIV\)](#)
- b. the point of the question concerning Jonah's anger
 - (A) do you have the right?
 - (B) is it well (proper or good)?
 - (C) do you have a good reason; is it reasonable?
 - (D) however the translators express it, is the same ... is it sensible for you to set your opinion against God's?
 - (E) for faith must include trusting God's sovereignty
 - (F) faith expresses itself by confessing, 'He is Lord'

- c. Jonah doesn't answer God's question in words
 - (A) Jonah's response comes in his actions
 - (B) he walks away
 - (C) he goes out to where he can see the whole city
 - (D) and he sits and he watches the city
 - (E) he waits for the inevitable relapse of the repentant Ninevites – Jonah was an Israelite and he knew that his own nation had repented and then relapsed into sin many times – and then, kapow!
 - (F) he is for judgement, destruction, fire and brimstone!
- d. you know, Jonah's attitude is an easy one for us to adopt
 - (A) against those who belittle our faith, who ridicule us, who are so foul tempered or foul mouthed at work
 - (B) forgetting that 'But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' (Romans 5:8 NAS)
 - (C) and neglecting the exhortation of 2 Corinthians 5: 14, 19-20: ¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; ... ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.' (NAS)
 - (D) how do we regard the wicked people around us, at work, at school, in our neighbourhood?
- e. So, how does God deal with His prophet's bad attitude?

C. God Appoints Jonah's Plant 4:6–9

1. God Appoints its Growth – 4:6

- a. ^{5b} ... he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. ⁶ Then the LORD God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. – (NIV)
- b. this is another event that the skeptics question in Jonah
 - (A) the critics just cannot swallow
 - (1) that a fish that could swallow a man
 - (2) that a plant could grow this fast

- (B) but they miss the key part of the history
 - (1) it was God provided or appointed the great fish
 - (2) it is God who appoints or provides this plant
- c. whether translated as **provided, appointed or prepared**
 - (A) it is the same Hebrew word
 - (B) it is used four times in this book
 - (C) this is the second time
 - (D) these first two have shown God's grace
 - (E) the kindness he shows which is not merited by man
 - (F) we will encounter the third and fourth in a moment
- d. the question to Jonah was, is it sensible for you
 - (A) to set your opinion against God's?
 - (B) to be angry at God's accepting Nineveh's repentance
- e. so, God takes a few moments out from running the cosmos
 - (A) to prepare a little object lesson for Jonah
 - (B) this is part one of that object lesson
 - (1) there you are Jonah, you're hot and angry
 - (2) what you've erected won't provide much shelter
 - (3) let Me give you a real shelter, a vine, a plant
 - (4) so that you can sit there in comfort and stew about the people of Nineveh!
 - (C) and with this small thing – a few leaves overhead to shade him for the sun – Jonah is happy
 - (1) he should have been happy at God's work of grace
 - (2) but no, his own comfort is more important
 - (3) what an easy example for us to follow!
- f. so then God proceeds with part two of the object lesson

2. God Appoints its Demise – 4: 7–8

- a. **But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, 'It would be better for me to die than to live.'** – (NIV)

- b. the application of the object lesson now becomes obvious
 - (A) the third thing God prepared, provided or appointed
 - (1) is the worm
 - (2) just the right worm to teach Jonah a lesson
 - (3) a worm that kills the sheltering vine
 - (4) which is impressed on Jonah's head, his mind with
 - (B) the fourth thing God prepared, provided or appointed
 - (1) the scorching east wind
 - (2) a wind that tore across the desert sand
 - (3) rising to temperatures of 40° or 50° C
 - (4) so Jonah took notice, felt faint, wished for death
 - (5) so learn this Jonah! learn this pastor! ... people!
- c. God has the right to appoint matters leading to grace
 - (A) the grace that delivered Jonah from drowning
 - (B) the grace that delivered Jonah from the sun's heat
 - (C) the same grace that God showed to the Ninevites
- d. and God has the right to appoint matters to judgement
 - (A) the judgement that withered the shading plant
 - (B) the judgement that sent the withering heat
 - (C) the same judgement that sent Jonah into the storm and into the sea
- e. God is the Sovereign Lord and
 - (A) he has the right to show grace
 - (B) and the right to exercise judgement
 - (C) now he comes to make this point to Jonah

3. God's Pointed Question and Jonah's Response – 4:9

- a. Jonah {^{8b} ... wanted to die, and said, 'It would be better for me to die than to live.'} But God said to Jonah, 'Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?' 'I do,' he said. 'I am angry enough to die.'
(NIV)
- b. This is the same question God has already asked

- (A) 'are you right to be angry?' ... 'do you have reason?' ... 'do you do well?' ... 'are you being sensible?'
- (B) are you right to be angry about Nineveh?
- (C) are you right to be angry about the plant?
- c. and Jonah – though a prophet – still doesn't get it
 - (A) how often we are like Jonah
 - (B) we are God's children
 - (C) we know the truth of God
 - (D) and God has to keep asking us; prodding us
 - (E) until we are ready to acknowledge
 - (1) to ourselves and to Him
 - (2) that in this matter or that matter
 - (3) He is indeed the Sovereign Lord
- d. in this book the God of providence has worked four times: preparing, appointing and providing
 - (A) a great fish to rescue Jonah from the sea
 - (B) a plant to shelter Jonah from the weather
 - (C) a worm to destroy Jonah's shelter
 - (D) a scorching wind to bring Jonah to his senses
 - (E) all so that Jonah will submit to the Sovereign Lord
- e. and now God is ready to make the application, to disclose to his reluctant prophet a life-changing truth

D. God Deals with Jonah's Prejudice 4:10–11

1. *But the LORD said, 'You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?' (NIV)*
2. what lay behind Jonah's anger, was, of course,
 - a. his prejudice concerning the heathen
 - b. that the Jehovah God of Israel should deliver Israel was the right and proper action of their God

- c. but to this insular, provincial prophet
 - d. that God should deliver a heathen person, city or nation from just judgement and punishment, was totally wrong
3. yet permeating throughout the Bible is the message
- a. that although God had sustained a covenant relationship with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - b. Jehovah God is not a mere tribal deity
 - (A) as was common with the nations round about
 - (B) one worshipped only by them
 - (C) and alone interested in their well-being alone
 - c. no, He is God of all the earth, or, in Jonah's words, 'He is the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.'
4. Jonah ends this book ...
- a. ... not with an explanatory summary of its events; if you or I had written it we would have included a fifth chapter that neatly wrapped it all up
 - b. ... not with a description of his own repentance from his wrong attitude towards Nineveh and towards God
 - c. for all of those matters pales into insignificance
 - d. with this tremendous revelation from the mouth of Jehovah God Himself
 - e. this great city of Nineveh has in it 120,000 innocents – those who cannot tell their right hand from their left
 - f. and 'I, the Sovereign Lord, am concerned about them'
 - g. to Jonah, sitting angry with God, is given the lesson of the sign of Jonah; to Jonah is revealed the heart of the gospel: 'For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.'
 - h. with that mind-numbing fact, Jonah has nothing further to say, and the book closes, leaving us to ponder upon it

E. Conclusion

1. what has God yet to teach you about His lordship?

a. the Lordship of Jesus Christ is recognized

(A) by discarding every pursuit of salvation by our works

(B) *Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favour, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness* – (Romans 4: 4-5)

(C) by accepting His gracious invitation of salvation

(D) *that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved* – (Romans 10: 9)

b. but, are we not often like the prophet Jonah?

(A) needing to be reminded that in this part of our life

(B) or in that attitude we hold

(C) *Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: 'He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us'? But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'* Submit therefore to God. ... (James 4:5-7a)

2. what has God yet to teach you about His grace?

a. have you accepted his gracious invitation of salvation?

b. do you see others around you

(A) your immediate family

(B) your more distant relatives

(C) your friends

(D) your neighbours, workmates, acquaintances

(E) in the light of that same grace?

c. *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.* –(2 Corinthians 8: 9)

d. Paul did; do you?

e. Won't you let them know of the love God has for them?

f. Won't you submit to this gracious God as Lord that others may come to know Him as their Saviour, too?

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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