

JONAH'S FRAILITY AND GOD'S GRACE

Jonah 4.1-11

Jonah tries to flee God's will and he meets the consequences. God graciously rescues Jonah and the prophet's ministry leads to the repentance of the Ninevites. Why don't we have a happy ending?

Jonah continues to harbor hatred in his heart

The repentance of the Ninevites is "exceedingly evil" to Jonah (Jonah 4.1, vs. 3.10). This moral inversion goes back to humanity's primal rebellion when Adam and Eve decided to define good and evil (Genesis 2.17).

Jonah hates the Assyrians because they threatened Israel and were ethnic outsiders. Did Jonah think he could protect Israel better than God could?

We should note that Jonah's issue with God tends to be the exact opposite of our contemporaries who think of God as ruthless, harsh, or short-fused. Jonah's accusation is that God has been too gracious (We have older brother overtones from the prodigal son parable, Cf. Luke 15.11-32)

God did not save Jonah because of his merit.

Jonah teaches us about the connection between anger and depression

The Lord identifies Jonah's anger regarding the Ninevites' repentance (Jonah 4.4). It is precisely in this moment that we see Jonah despairing of life itself (Jonah 4.3). Did Jonah secretly hope that the Ninevites returned to wickedness?

Jonah's anger stands against God being "slow to anger" (Jonah 4.2; Cf. Exodus 34.6-7; Psalm 86.15).

God's question to Jonah comes to us – Are we angry with how God is working?

God teaches Jonah about grace

Why does God provide a plant for Jonah and then send a worm to destroy it (Jonah 4.6-8)?

God tells Jonah he should be more concerned about lost people than his own comforts (Jonah 4.11). When we look beyond ourselves to God's mission, we come out of our anger.

Jonah is absorbed in self-pity. Jonah misses that God is trying to change his heart.

What is our attitude towards the lost?

Why does Jonah end the way it does? Unlike the other prophetic books, there is not much teaching in Jonah. In this book, the prophet's life is the message to Israel. Am I like Jonah? Have I exchanged God's good and my evil? Do I care about the wrong things?

Sadly, for much of its history, Israel followed Jonah, unconcerned about the faith of the nations.

Jesus comes to fulfill God's plan to rescue the nations.

Key Point: What is our attitude towards the lost?

Small Group Application Questions:

Why is Jonah so angry that God granted the Ninevites repentance?

What is the common disconnect between our receiving God's grace yet withholding grace from others? Have I set limits on God's love?

Share a time when God tried to change our heart on a particular view or habit.

How can God's people deal with their anger in healthy ways?