

Is It Right for You to Be Angry

When You Taste God's Grace?

Շիտա՞կ է Բարկանալ Երբ Շնորհքը Վայելած էս

Jonah 4

We arrive to the end of this short book. Jonah is done with his preaching, and the Assyrians (starting from the bottom the way to the king) repent, turn to God, and pledge to turn from their evil ways.

Any preacher would be happy for this outcome. But Jonah...

-Uncontrolled Anger

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. (Jonah 4:1 NIV11)

The Hebrew words used here are very strong. The verse can be translated like this: “To Jonah it was a disaster, a great disaster. He became angry.”

Why?

a-Jonah is angry that God has compassion towards the evil Nineveh.

It seems Jonah cannot accept prophet Micah's statement:

“You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.” (Micah 7:18b)

b-Jonah is angry that the Assyrians were not punished.

The word angry appears five times in chapters 3 and 4. The Hebrew the word is *harah* (“burning” as with fire); it can also be translated “was inflamed.”¹

Brothers and sisters, Jonah's anger was out of control.

Do you face similar situations?

-Attributes of God

² He prayed to the LORD, “Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing 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. ³ Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” (Jonah 4:2-3 NIV11)

Here is another prayer from Jonah. The first one was from the belly of the fish, and here is another. In this one, he explains why he is angry, especially with God. But in his prayer, he also **describes who God is.** (Here we find five of God's attributes).

1) Yahweh is “gracious” or “merciful” derives from a Hebrew word (*hannun*) that appears thirteen times in the Old Testament and is used only of God.

If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset, because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in? When he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am *gracious*. (Exodus 22:26–27)

2) Yahweh is **compassionate** derives from a Hebrew word (*rahûm*). The primary meaning of this word is “to be soft like a womb.”

It is illustrated in the soft compassion of a mother for her child in the womb. Both the sailors and the Assyrians knew about this attribute of God and were seeking God's compassion.

3) Yahweh is **slow to anger** drives from a Hebrew words (אָרֶךְ אַפַּיִם) (*'ārēk apim*) literally long nose (not like Pinocchio).

God has long patience, a long fuse.

The Hebrew expression means “forbear, continue long, be patient, postpone anger, tarry long.”

“Better a patient man [one slow to anger] than a warrior.” (Proverbs 16:32)

4) Yahweh has **loyal love**; He is **abounding in love** from a Hebrew word (*hesed*).

God's **“unrelenting love,”** which is God's covenant commitment to his people.

With this unrelenting love He binds Himself to His promises to them. It is translated in modern Hebrew as “grace” but most often in the English Bible as “steadfast love.”²

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

His love endures forever.

² **Give thanks to the God of gods.**

His love endures forever.

³ **Give thanks to the Lord of lords:**

His love endures forever. (Psalm 136:1-3)

Read this psalm if you want to know our God and **His enduring love**, His loyal love, His abundant love.³

One of the contemporaries of Jonah is Hosea.

“I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.” (Hosea 2:19 NIV)

Israel was disobedient to God. They were practicing idolatry. God illustrated to Hosea how he felt about His people. “God tells Hosea to marry a prostitute and to be faithful to her as an example of God's faithfulness to a faithless people.”⁴

In the New Testament, we have ***agape***, translated as **“unconditional love.”**

“Both God's Old Testament ‘covenant’ love and God's New Testament ***agape*** communicate God's unrelenting love for His creation and His people.

Both expressions of love will unconditionally receive the repentant sinner into reconciliation with God. The unconditional love of Jesus reveals this love in his incarnation, death, and bodily resurrection; but it is the same love of the Father in each case”.⁵

5) Yahweh is **“a God who *relents* from sending calamity.”** “Relents” (*naḥam*) was discussed in the previous message. (see sermon May 30, 2021)

Yahweh is **gracious** or **merciful**

Yahweh is **compassionate**

Yahweh is **slow to anger**

Yahweh has **loyal love, abounding in love, unrelenting love,”**

Yahweh is **“a God who *relents* from sending calamity.”**

So this is our God.

Wow and wow and wow! I love my Lord Jesus Christ. I love God the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amazing God and amazing compassion.

-The question God asks:

Is it right to be angry when one tastes God’s Grace, Mercy, Compassion, Long fuse of patience (Slow to anger), love and care towards His creation?

⁴ But the LORD replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

⁵ Jonah had gone 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. ⁶ Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. ⁷ But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. ⁸ 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.” (Jonah 4:4-8 NIV11)

Ok, here we have a funny yet sad event. Remember this book should make you laugh.

God asks question to Jonah. There is no answer from Jonah. He leaves the city, thinking, “I am angry.” God is dialoging with him. “Talk to me, Jonah”. Jonah leaves... “I am done; leave me alone.”

You know God asked question to Cain, about his anger (Gen 4:6). He did not answer and went and killed his brother.

Jonah is tired, he leaves the city and tries to find some shade. Maybe he is thinking: "Let me wait for 40 days, who knows maybe they change their mind." *(those are my words).*

It is a desert. It is hot, guys. He made a shelter (tabernacle) (*sukâ*). *(Do you remember the Feast of Tabernacles, God providing shelter, light, water in the wilderness)*

-Again, we find the **mercy of God** towards Jonah.

God provided fish to rescue Jonah. The same language is used here.

God provides a leafy plant, then a worm that chews the plant.

Let us make the condition more miserable.

God provides a scorching east wind. Most likely the wind was called **Shamal** (North in Arabic). "It is a northwesterly wind blowing over Iraq and the Persian Gulf states (including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait), often strong during the day, but decreasing at night.⁶ I have seen those sand storms in Aleppo. As a child, I remember how I used to be frightened thinking this was the end of the world. Hot, it dries your skin, and makes it like sandpaper. It sucks the moisture of the body. It is not fun. I don't know what is now going in the head of the Jonah.

"What is your game, God? Plant, shade, worm to kill the shade, now sandy wind, what is this?"

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. (8)

-I love My Creation

⁹ But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

"It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead."

¹⁰ But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. ¹¹ And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?" (Jonah 4:9-11 NIV11)

Here we find a dialogue opening between God and Jonah.

God asks to Jonah an important question.

"Ok Jonah, you are angry. I get it. You are angry because the plant died. Now you want to die."

In this chapter, three times he expresses his wish to die.

“LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” (4:3)

“It would be better for me to die than to live. (4:8)

“I’m so angry I wish I were dead.” (4:9)

Well, someone is down.

How does this book end? It is a very strange ending. In fact, it is an open ending. God says His words and keeps the ending open.

“But Jonah my son, you are worried about your plant that even you did not plant it, how about me, I created all these. In this great city 120,000 people live, who are confused, and they don’t know their priorities. They are wicked; I love my creation as you love the plant. So, don’t you think I should have compassion towards my creation although they were wicked and now they turned and repented? What do you think Jonah?”

Application

1. God does not take pleasure in judgment. He loves His creation, and He loves to see His creation repent and turn towards Him. His judgment is serious, but His real desire is to express compassion and love. Why did He send His Son?

2. God asks Hosea to marry a prostitute to understand how God feels towards His people. God asks Jonah to go and preach to the vicious Assyrian people, and on the road Jonah experience God’s mercy and compassion. Those were lessons for Jonah to learn.

God can lead us towards some situations where He is teaching us lesson. What are those lessons in your life?

I have seen people who went through trauma and can help others who are going through trauma. In the Bay Area, I have a pastor friend who was alcoholic. He repented and became a pastor. He leads and helps other alcoholics. He has a great ministry. He once hit rock bottom, and now with the help of the Lord, he can raise others up.

Where is God leading you today?

3. Jonah tried to find security in the wrong places. He thought the “belly” of the ship would keep him secure. He thought the shade that he prepared would help him. Only God can provide real security, a fish, a plant for shade.

“Seeking protection apart from God leads to false security because life is fragile and unpredictable.”⁷

4. Four times we see Jonah angry, and in contrast we find God slow in anger. I will urge you to surrender to God to work on your anger issues. To become angry for the right causes is good; but most of the time our anger is very selfish and self-centered.

5. **The parable of the two prodigal sons:** one left and embezzled the father's inheritance, then one day came back in repentance. The older brother who stayed home could not accept his father's compassion and mercy towards his younger brother.

Jonah is both of these prodigal sons. He escaped from God as far he could go. He also could not accept God's compassion towards repentant people.

The story of the prodigal sons is open ended as well. Where is the ending? It ends when the father says:

“‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.’³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” (Luke 15:32)

I don't know what happened to the story after that. I know the ending of the gospel message: Jesus died on the cross so we can have salvation, redemption.

That is why we can approach the table.

Let me read this passage from Micah

**Who is a God like you,
who pardons sin and forgives the transgression
of the remnant of his inheritance?
You do not stay angry forever
but delight to show mercy.
You will again have compassion on us;
you will tread our sins underfoot
and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.** (Micah 7:18–19 NIV)

AMEN

1. James Bruckner, *NIV Application Commentary (Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah)*. P 109

3:9: “Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his *fierce anger* so that we will not perish.”

4:1: But Jonah was greatly displeased and became *angry*.

4:4: But the LORD replied, “Have you any right to be *angry*?”

4:9a: But God said to Jonah, “Do you have a right to be *angry* about the vine?”

4:9b: “I do,” he said. “I am *angry* enough to die.”

2. Those attributes taken from NIV commentary p 110-111

3. We read in NIV commentary: God gave Hosea a marriage metaphor to illustrate this kind of abounding love. Note Hosea 2:19: “I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in *love* and compassion.” He tells Hosea to marry a prostitute and to be faithful to her as an example of God's faithfulness to a faithless people: “The LORD said to me, ‘Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. *Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes*’” (Hos. 3:1). P 111

4. *ibid* p 111

5. *ibid* p 111

6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shamal>.

7. James Bruckner, *NIV Application Commentary (Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah)*. P 124