

The Mission and Call of God For His People: Jonah Chapter 4

Preached by Pastor Caleb Mayberry @ Harambee Church on August 30th, 2009

Intro

Upon finding out that the Ninevites were not going to be judged, we see Jonah's deep hatred for the Ninevites is revealed when he complains to God. In the final chapter we will see how Jonah's and our anger is rooted in pride and self-righteousness and how this blinds us to our own dependency on grace and renders our hearts incapable of compassion. Moreover we see that character of God is in stark contrast to the anger and pouting of Jonah. We see that God actually desires grace and mercy over that of judgment and it is from his gracious character that God seeks to teach Jonah about compassion.

From the Head...

I want to make three key points from the text in Jonah Chapter 4. **First**, that man's hate and anger is rooted in pride and self-righteousness. **Second**, that our pride blinds us to our own dependency on grace and renders our hearts incapable of compassion. And **Third**, that God's grace is dispensed liberally to even the ones we hate.

1. Our pride and self-righteousness is revealed in hatred and anger.

Verse 1 states that it displeased Jonah exceedingly, or it also has the idea that what God did was exceedingly evil. In other words, Jonah felt God did not do the right thing. Jonah believed in his anger that he was more advanced in his view of righteousness than God. Is this not pride? Is Jonah not thinking more highly of himself than he ought?

Questions for reflection: Who are you angry at and why? Are you better than them? Are we quicker to anger than God? The Bible says that God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. How do you measure up?

2. Our pride blinds us to our own dependency on grace and renders our hearts incapable of compassion

Pride, self-righteousness, and anger are a barrier to mission because it goes counter to the gospel. Jonah has just been blatantly disobedient to a direct command that he heard from God. Disobedience to God's word was what got Adam and Eve kicked out of the garden and stained humanity with sin. And so Jonah is just as guilty as Adam and any other sinner that has come after him. But instead of Jonah perishing in the belly of the fish and being cast forever away from the presence of God, God graciously hears Jonah's plea for mercy and gives him another chance. However Jonah's heart was still very wicked. Though he demonstrated some measure of faith in obeying God's command the second time, his heart was clearly not in alignment with God's. Jonah still felt that his people were superior to the Ninevites and that they deserved nothing but judgment. Because of Jonah's pride that fueled his hate and anger, he was unable to have compassion because somehow he believed that he deserved God's grace where the Ninevites did not. Once we start to pick and choose who deserves or doesn't deserve God's grace, then we've absolutely misunderstood the gospel, because the good news is that Christ died for the UN-deserving! God gives grace to the UN-deserving. This is the definition of grace, unmerited favor. No one deserves it, yet God in his love generously bestows it.

3. God's grace is dispensed liberally to even those we hate

We see in this chapter a glimpse into God's compassionate heart. God pitied the City of Nineveh. He called it a great city, for there were many people and many resources, but they were wasting it all in opposition to God. And so God announced judgment upon them, but he did so in a way that demonstrated that his ultimate purpose was not judgment but of their salvation. God cared about the Ninevites. God had been personally working on the Ninevite people to prepare them for this time of salvation. Even though they were evil. Even though they were enemies of Israel, God's chosen people. Even though years later they would return to their evil ways. God still loved them and he purposed to choose them at that time for salvation rather than judgment regardless of whether we think God is right in doing so.

...to the Heart

But not only is God gracious to save those we hate, God is also gracious to expose us of our own hate and lack of compassion. God not only was working on a plan to save 120,000 people from destruction, but he was also, in the mean time, working to reveal the hatred and sin in the heart of Jonah. Why did God choose Jonah? Was Jonah the only man that could do the job? Not at all. God could have sent anyone down there to call out against the city, but he chose Jonah. Why? Because God wanted more of Jonah's heart. God knew that Jonah was harboring some serious pride and hate that God wanted to deal with. Hate and pride are very destructive. And just as God did not desire the destruction of the Ninevites, he also didn't want Jonah to be destroyed in his hatred and pride. So God chose Jonah for the task, at least in part, as an exercise in sanctifying his heart. God cares not only about obedience, but he cares about the attitude from which we obey. God loves us enough to put us in situations that test where our hearts are at with God. He did this with Jonah and he is doing it with us today. What situations has God put you in to reveal sin in your heart? Where have you been too quick to judge? Who do you find difficult to forgive? How is God showing you his compassion and to whom are you in turn expressing it to? Our hearts matter to God, so we need to repent of our sinful attitudes and turn to Jesus and acknowledge that we are sinners in desperate need of God's grace. I think in our humility God will give us hearts to love even those we hate.