

A Study of Book of Jonah

Sermon # 6

Too Angry to Serve God!

Jonah 4:1-11

Have you ever witnessed a child throwing a temper-tantrum in the middle of a department store (hopefully it was not your own). The child may do any number of things: He or she may pound on the floor with their hands and feet. They may lie on the floor and scream at the top of their lungs. They may throw things or sling their arms about. Or they may be very creative and do all of these things at the same time. But in all of this the child has a purpose - he is demanding that he get his own way. In tonight text we see Jonah throwing a temper tantrum with God.

For our study tonight the reason for Jonah's anger is not as important as the object of his anger. Jonah was angry with God!

In verse one of chapter four we read, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry." Jonah is angry. He had obeyed God (finally).he was doing what God wanted done but God had not done what Jonah wanted. Jonah has just preached the most successful revival in history as a result the whole city of Nineveh from the King on down have repented. But because they have repented God will spare the entire city and this is not what Jonah wants to hear. He felt betrayed.

Dr. James Montgomery Boice writes that Jonah "... is a warning that it is possible to obey God but to do so with such a degree of unwillingness and anger that, so far as we are concerned obedience is not better than disobedience..... We often act the same, even when we are apparently obeying Go. We are doing what we think we should be doing living the kind of life we think a Christian should live. But secretly we are unhappy and angry with God for making the requirement."

[James Montgomery Boice. The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary. Volume 1 Hosea-Jonah Chap 34. "God More Merciful Than the Prophet." pp. 146-147]

None us is immune to the spirit of resentment that ate at Jonah and we too can give in to that resentment. But what we do need to recognize is that resentment affects us in several damaging ways. [principles drawn from O.S. Hawkins book Jonah: Meeting the God of the Second Chance. Neptune, NJ., Loizeaux Brothers, 1990) pp. 107-117]

First, Resentment Destroys Our Peace (vv.1-2)

Verse one stated that Jonah was "exceedingly displeased and became angry". The word translated "angry" means to burn. Jonah was literally fuming. One of the first things that resentment does in the life of a believer is it robs us of our peace and happiness.

Everything in life is seen through the lenses of our anger and resentment. In verse two Jonah's attitude and anger is revealed even further when he says, "... Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I

was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm."

How many times have you heard someone say, *"I knew this would happen! I just knew it!"* That is what Jonah is saying verse two, *"I knew this is what would happen. This is why I didn't want to go to Nineveh in the first place."*

Notice Jonah tried to justify his attitude of resentment. The fact is that we all do what Jonah did. When it gets tough to do the right thing, we seek to justify our disobedience. We even go to the word of God seeking grounds to justify doing what we want to do. But when we find ourselves reading the Bible in order to find verses and passages that justify our behavior we are not only wrong we are in danger.

Jonah is blaming God and in the process resentment is destroying his peace.

Secondly, Resentment Distracts Us From Our Purpose (vv. 3-4)

"Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"

Jonah became so depressed and despondent over God's course of action that thought the only solution was that God just take his life. The prophet Elijah once had that problem as well. It is interesting that Elijah's depression also came right after a great victory. Immediately after defeating the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, the Bible records:

"And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. (4) But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" [1 Kings 19:3-4] (NKJV)

Like Jonah, Elijah went out and sat down. Elijah sat under a juniper tree not a vine, but like Jonah Elijah requested to die.

I would imagine if the truth be known a lot of Christians have had this problem from time to time. R. T Kendall said he knew a man who prayed daily for twenty years that he might die. He was well into his eighty's when he died. I suppose that God does not pay a lot of attention to our pity parties.

Speaking for myself I have never gotten to the place that I ask God to let me die, I suppose I am afraid he just might answer my prayer.

The Lord responded to Jonah with a simple question in verse four, "Then the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

In other words God says, *"Jonah do you think you have a right to be angry with me?"* The question is a challenge to Jonah to really stop and think whether an angry prophet or the sovereign God of the Universe is right.

David Wilkerson once noted in a message he delivered, "I believe there is nothing more dangerous to a Christian to carry a resentment against God . Yet I am shocked by the growing number of

believer's I meet who are peeved at the Lord. They may not admit as much – but deep inside, they hold some kind of grudge against him. Why? They believe he's not interested in their lives or problems! They're convinced he doesn't care – because he hasn't answered a particular prayer or acted on their behalf." [David Wilkerson. "Are You Mad At God?" Feb 16. 1998 *Times Square Church Pulpit Series*]

Jonah problem was the thought that he had been made to look like a fool. He had prophesied that disaster would come in forty days and now God has decided not to destroy the city. How is this going to look, how will the people view him? As far as he is concerned his reputation as a prophet of God is ruined.

But Jonah did not confess his error instead he became even angrier and left the city.

Third, Resentment Diminishes Our Productiveness (v. 5)

When I was a small boy my cousin lived right across the street and we constant playmates. That is until one of us got mad, which was pretty often (usually it was his fault ha). If we were playing baseball and he got mad he would take his ball and glove and go home. When figuratively that is what Jonah was doing. He was mad at God and so he just wasn't going to play anymore.

It is hard to be productive when we figuratively take our ball and glove and go home. Verse five says, "So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city."

So what do you do when you are angry with the way God is doing things? You start your own little church.

Jonah still had some hope that God would destroy the city. It may be that Jonah doubted the sincerity of the repentance of the Ninevites. While he knew that God was merciful he also knew that God can not be fooled and if the Ninevites were faking it God would still carry out the destruction of the city.

Fourth, Resentment Distorts Our Perspective (vv. 6-7)

"And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant."

Jonah was angry with God and how does God respond to him? Instead of sending a burden into his life God sent a blessing. God responded to his anger by allowing a plant to grow over him to provide for his comfort.

Although Jonah was in a place he had no business being and was filled with anger he could not justify, God still cared about him.

Jonah was his child, and he was hot and tired and hurting, so God provided what he needed.

Finally Jonah is grateful [NIV translates - happy]. Why? The answer is clear, Jonah is pleased because at last, after all the things he had done for other people he is at last doing something for himself. Isn't that incredibly selfish? Of course it is.

But Jonah happiness was short lived because in verse seven we read, "But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. (8) And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

An angry and resentful person loses his or her sense of perspective and begins to pick at little things. We see it all the time in the business world, within our own families and even in the Church. In verse nine God again reasons with Jonah saying, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" (10) But the LORD said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. (11) And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left--and much livestock?"

Did Jonah ever back on the right track? I think he did. On what do I base that conclusion? On the fact that it is Jonah that records this whole story and he kept nothing back not even his own disgraceful behavior.

Conclusion

"In 1921, two young couples in Stockholm, Sweden, answered God's call to the African mission field. During one particular mission's service, these two couples received a burden to go to the Belgian Congo, which is now Zaire. Their names were David and Svea Flood and Joel and Bertha Erickson. But both couples gave up everything to lay down their lives for the gospel.

When they arrived in the Belgian Congo, they reported to the local mission station. Then they took machetes and literally hacked their way into the Congo's insect-infested interior. David and Svea had a two-year-old son, David Jr., and they had to carry him on their backs. Along the way, both families caught malaria. But they kept going forward with great zeal, ready to be martyrs for the Lord.

Finally, they reached a certain village in the interior. Yet, to their surprise, the people wouldn't let them enter. They told the missionaries, "We can't allow any white people here, or our gods will be offended." So the families went to a second village - but they were rejected there also.

At this point, there were no other villages around. The worn-down families had no choice but to settle. So they hacked out a clearing in the middle of a mountain jungle and built mud huts, where they made their homes.

As the months went by, they all suffered from loneliness, sickness and malnutrition. Little David Jr. became sickly. And they had almost no interaction with any of the villagers.

Finally, after about six months, Joel and Bertha Erickson decided to return to the mission station. They urged the Floods to do the same, but Svea couldn't travel because she'd just gotten pregnant. And now her malaria had become worse. Besides all that, David said, "I want my child born in Africa. I've come to give my life here."

For several months Svea endured a raging fever. Yet all that time, she ministered faithfully to a little boy who came to see them from one of the nearby villages. The boy was the Floods' only convert.

Eventually, Svea's malaria got so bad she became bedridden. When the time came for her to give birth, she delivered a healthy baby girl. But within a week she was at the point of death. In her final moments, she whispered to David, "Call our girl Aina." Then she died.

David Flood was badly shaken by his wife's death. Summoning all his strength, he took a wooden box and made a for his wife. Then, in a primitive grave on the mountain-side, he buried his beloved wife. As he stood beside her grave, he looked down at his young son beside him. Then he heard his baby daughter's cries from the mud hut. And suddenly, bitterness filled his heart. Anger rose up in him - and he couldn't control it. He flew into a rage, crying, "*Why did you allow this, God? We came here to give our lives! My wife was so beautiful, so talented. And here she lies, dead at twenty-seven.*"

"Now I have a two-year-old son I can hardly care for, let alone a baby girl. And after more than a year in this jungle, all we have to show for it is one little village boy who probably doesn't understand what we've told him. You've failed me, God. What a waste of life!"

At that point, David Flood took his children to the mission station. When he saw the Erickson's, he blurted out angrily, "I'm leaving! I can't handle these children alone. I'm taking my son with me back to Sweden - but I'm leaving my daughter here with you." And with that, he left Aina for the Erickson's to raise.

All the way back to Stockholm, David Flood stood on deck and seethed at God. He'd told everyone he was going to Africa to be a martyr - to win people to Christ, no matter what the cost. And now he was returning a defeated and broken man. He believed he'd been faithful - but that God had rewarded him with total neglect.

When he arrived in Stockholm, he decided to go into the import business to seek his fortune. And he warned everyone around him never to mention God in his presence. When they did, he flew into a rage, the veins popping out on his neck.

Eventually, he began drinking heavily. Shortly after he left Africa, his friends the Ericksons died suddenly. Little Aina was handed to an American couple - Arthur and Anna Berg. The Bergs took Aina with them to a village in the northern Congo. There they began calling her "Aggie." When the Bergs went on furlough to America, they took Aggie with them, to the Minneapolis area. As it turned out, they ended up staying there.

By this time, David Flood had become a total alcoholic, and his eyesight was failing badly. For forty years Aggie tried to locate her father - but her letters were never answered. Finally, the Bible school gave her and her husband round-trip tickets to Sweden. This would give her the chance to find her father personally.

After crossing the Atlantic, the couple spent a day's layover in London. They decided to take a walk, so they strolled by the Royal Albert Hall. To their joy, a mission's convention was being held. They went inside, where they heard a black preacher testifying of the great works God was doing in Zaire - the Belgian Congo!

Aggie's heart leaped. After the meeting, she approached the preacher and asked, "Did you ever know the missionaries David and Svea Flood?" He answered, "Yes. Svea Flood led me to the Lord when I was just a boy. They had a baby girl, but I don't know what happened to her." Aggie exclaimed, "I'm the girl! I'm Aggie - Aina!"

When the preacher heard this, he wept with joy. Aggie could hardly believe that this man was the little boy convert her mother had ministered to. He had grown up to be a missionary evangelist to his own country - which now included 110,000 Christians, 32 mission stations, several Bible schools and a 120-bed hospital.

The next day Aggie and Dewey left for Stockholm - and word had already spread there that they were coming. When she got to Sweden she met her brothers and sister from her father's second marriage. When Aggie asked about her father, her brothers flushed with anger. They all hated him. None of them had talked to him in years.

Aggie's sister promised to find their father. So they drove to an impoverished area of Stockholm, where they entered a rundown building. When they knocked on the door, a woman let them in.

Inside, liquor bottles lay everywhere. And lying on a cot in the corner was her father - the one-time missionary, David Flood. He was now seventy-three years old and suffering from diabetes. He'd also had a stroke, and cataracts covered both of his eyes.

Aggie fell to his side, crying, "Dad, I'm your little girl - the one you left in Africa." The old man turned and looked at her. Tears formed in his eyes. He answered, "I never meant to give you away. I just couldn't handle you both." Aggie answered, "That's okay, Daddy. God took care of me."

Suddenly, her father's face darkened. "God didn't take care of you!" he raged. "He ruined our whole family! He led us to Africa and then betrayed us. Nothing ever came of our time there. It was a waste of our lives!" Aggie then told him about the black preacher she'd just met in London - and how the country had been evangelized through him. "It's all true, Daddy," she said. "Everybody knows about that little boy convert. The story has been in all the newspapers."

Suddenly David Flood broke. Tears of sorrow and repentance flowed down his face - and God restored him. Shortly after their meeting, David Flood died. And although he was restored to the Lord, he left only ruin behind. Besides Aggie, his legacy was five children - all unsaved and tragically embittered.

David Flood represents many Christians today. They've been disappointed, cast down - and now they're full of rage toward God!

[David Wilkerson. "Are You Mad At God?" Feb 16. 1998 *Times Square Church Pulpit Series*]

Conclusion

1. *Resentment Destroys Our Peace*

2. Resentment Distracts Us From Our Purpose

3. Resentment Diminishes Our Productiveness

4. Resentment Distorts Our Perspective