

## AM I DRIVEN BY PERSONAL COMFORT OR CHRIST'S COMPASSION?

### **Jonah's Anger and the LORD's Compassion**

**4** But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. <sup>2</sup> And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. <sup>3</sup> Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." <sup>4</sup> And the LORD said, "Do you do well to be angry?" <sup>5</sup> Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. <sup>6</sup> Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. <sup>7</sup> But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup> When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." <sup>9</sup> But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." <sup>10</sup> And the LORD said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. <sup>11</sup> And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

### When our comfort overcomes our compassion...

- We **forget** God's mercy towards us and become angry at God's mercy towards others who don't deserve it – 4:1-2

*But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. <sup>2</sup> And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.*

- We despair when there is still **hope** – 4:3

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

- We argue with God because we think the **problem** lies with Him – 4:4  
*And the LORD said, “Do you do well to be angry?”*
- We forget our **mission** and become obsessed with things that don’t really matter – 4:5-9

*Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. <sup>6</sup> Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. <sup>7</sup> But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup> When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>9</sup> But God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry for the plant?” And he said, “Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.”*

- God mercifully appeals to our **conscience**: Are people far from God not more important than your personal comfort? – 4:10-11  
*And the LORD said, “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. <sup>11</sup> And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”*

### Soul questions

- ⇒ Is what moves me most what should move me most?
- ⇒ To what level, if any, do I see myself in need of God’s mercy? Do I remember God’s mercy towards me?
- ⇒ Where is my personal comfort smothering my compassion? How can I serve as a vehicle of God’s compassion?

## JONAH 2

- 1:17 The focus shifts to Jonah
- 2:10 Jonah is spared
- 2:1 Jonah prays
- 2–6a He refers back to his distressing situation in the deep
- 6b–8 He asserts God’s merciful deliverance and draws an insight from it: idolaters forsake the One who loves them
- 9 Jonah’s response to Yahweh: worship with sacrifices and vows
- 10 Yahweh’s response to Jonah: he acts so that the prophet may respond favorably to the divine mission (still to be accomplished)

## JONAH 4

- 4:1 The focus shifts to Jonah
- 4:1 Jonah is angry because Nineveh is spared
- 2a Jonah prays
- 2a He refers back to his distressing situation in Palestine
- 2a He draws an inference from the thought that God might save Nineveh: he must flee to Tarshish
- 2b He asserts the mercy of God that leads to deliverance
- 3 Jonah’s response to Yahweh: a plea for death
- 4-11 Yahweh’s response to Jonah: he acts so that the prophet may respond favorably to the divine mission (already accomplished)

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<sup>1</sup> B. D. Estelle, *Salvation through Judgment and Mercy: The Gospel according to Jonah*, T. Longman III & J. A. Groves, eds. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 100.