The Book of Jonah
Overview

Jonah 4:2 is a verse that can sum up the whole book: "So he prayed to the LORD, and said, ‘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.’"

Jonah is considered one of the “minor prophets” in the OT. This designation only has to do with the length of the book, not the content.

Overall view: “God commissioned the Hebrew prophet Jonah to proclaim a message of repentance to the Assyrian city of Nineveh. Jewish nationalism, however, blinded both the prophet and covenant people to God’s worldwide purposes of salvation. The story of Jonah is one of the clearest demonstrations in Scripture of God’s love and mercy for all peoples. Assyria, a nation which had achieved a near-legendary reputation for cruelty, was in mild decline during these years, but it remained a threat. The book is rich in irony: the disobedience of the prophet is contrasted with the surprising faith of the mariners (ch. 1), and Jonah’s petty concern for the plant contrasts with God’s gracious care and concern for the people of pagan Nineveh (ch. 4).

The sovereignty of God over life, elements, and circumstances is clearly stressed in the descriptions of the storm (1:4), the fish (1:17), the plant (4:6), and the worm (4:7).”¹

Warren Wiersbe says Patience and Pardon are seen in chapters 1-2 as well as Preaching and Pouting in chapters 3-4. He gives this outline for the book (main points):
1. God’s Patience With Jonah (Chapter 1)
2. God’s Mercy Toward Jonah (Chapter 2)
3. God’s Power Through Jonah (Chapter 3)
4. God’s Ministry To Jonah (Chapter 4)
(The Bible Exposition Commentary, Cook Communications, Colorado Springs, 2002, p. 377)

Interesting observations in this account of Jonah and Nineveh:
1. All of nature obeys God in this book but a prophet of God does not. What do you think about the free will of man?
2. Jonah is not willing to preach repentance to thousands of people but the mariners are willing to work so one prophet will not die (1:12-13). Do you see the dislike for people turn into disobedience and then unrepentance at this point?
3. How bad can anger, dislike, and disobedience warp our view of others eternity? (See 4:10-11)
4. What will God do in order to spare sinners from His wrath... work through a disobedient prophet... send His only begotten Son to die on a Roman cross through crucifixion?

**Where to find it:**

- Feeding from God’s presence.......................... Chapter 1
- In the belly of the great fish.......................... Chapter 2
- Speaking God’s truth in Nineveh...................... Chapter 3
- Hoping for Nineveh’s destruction.................... Chapter 4


**Life Lessons from Jonah:**

- You cannot escape God’s call on your life.
- God’s love and mercy are for all people.
- Disobedience leads to catastrophe in your life.
- It is impossible to run away from God.
- There is no limit to what God will – and can! – use to get your attention.
- Failure does not necessarily disqualify you from God’s service.
- Your disobedience affects the lives of others you come in contact with.
- Nationalism/patriotism should never stand in the way of God’s plan.