

Jonah 4:5-11

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 3/1/2009

Unveiling wicked thinking and behavior in the believer

Prayer

Would you bow with me? Father, we do just come before You and praise You for Your great mercy towards us, for Your love towards us, for Your grace towards us. Lord, we don't deserve Your compassion. We don't deserve Your pity, Lord God; but You were gracious in that while we were yet sinners, Your Son Jesus Christ died for us. That You intervened into the sphere of mankind by sending Your Son, Who took on human flesh, Who lived a perfect life, Who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, Who rose and appeared and now has ascended to Your right hand. Who is exalted above all, King of kings and Lord of lords, that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to Your glory. Lord, we praise You that You have changed our hearts to confess that Lordship now. Thank You so much for Your grace towards us. And Father, I pray as we look into Your Word today, that we would see it just as that, as Your Word. And that we would respond by Your power and strength and do what You say. That we would learn from the life of Jonah, that You have given us this testimony to his life that we would learn what You want us to learn from it and that You want our lives to bring You glory. Thank You so much for this morning. We commit it to You and entrust it to You. In Your Son's precious name, Amen.

Sermon

Well, if you have genuinely come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you have gone from darkness to light. You have been delivered from Satan's domain to the kingdom of His beloved Son. And there are changes that happen, when we go from death to life. And there are evidences of those changes. Throughout Scripture, we see the apostle Paul praising God for the faith of those he writes to and their love for the saints. In the book of 1 Thessalonians, the apostle Paul declares the truth concerning the Thessalonian church and how their faith had been proclaimed throughout all of Macedonia. And the message that came from the example of their lives - that people heard and saw, that was proclaimed - was ultimately that they had turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God. To serve a living and true God. You see, if you've come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ genuinely, you have turned to God from your idolatry, from your selfishness, from your sin to serve Him. And we see in Scripture that God's true people are His servants. And so often these days in churches, there is a message that goes out that the Gospel is for *you* so that you can be better, so that you can be fixed up. But the Gospel goes out to declare our sin, that we would be saved from our sin in Christ. So that we could turn and be in a right relationship and serve the Lord, the living and true God.

Nick read in Isaiah and in a little earlier, in chapter 6, we see Isaiah who comes before the Lord; and he is undone because of God's holiness. And the Lord God forgives his sin. And after He forgives his sin, he is called out to serve Him. And he says, "Here am I, I will go. Here am I, I will serve." And I believe genuine believers will have a genuine desire from God, if they are saved, to serve Him. Now, the thing

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that troubles me and maybe troubles you is that there are not many people serving the Lord. Maybe it's because they've gone into bad churches with ungodly men who do not teach the Word of God. That's possible. Maybe they're being tossed here and there by various winds of doctrine. Maybe they're not even saved – that's possible too! Or maybe they're own thinking has gotten in the way. And they have now looked at serving in a different light, other than what God has shared in His Word. And sometimes that happens. Sometimes we come to serve the Lord and things don't work out the way we think, and we split. Or we move and we move on to whatever it might be. And we're going to see today in the life of Jonah that he doesn't like the way God wants him to serve, and he doesn't like the results of how God wants him to serve. So he takes off again and splits from the ministry and starts to pout.

And we'll see how the Lord God graciously deals with Jonah. And we're going to see today, I believe, how God addresses sinful, twisted thinking in His people that manifests in wicked behavior in the context of serving Him. And I see it all the time. People who they get some idea in their head that is not Biblical, and they separate, or they want to serve in a different way other than what God has revealed in His Word. And we're going to see that in the life of Jonah. But we're going to see that God is a gracious God who corrects him, and it is for our benefit too because we are tempted in the exact same way that Jonah is tempted.

So would you turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Jonah. We're going to be looking at the last portion, verses 5-11. And we're going to review the whole book. And we're going to review what we saw last week. And then we're going to sum it up as we come to the end of the book of Jonah. And I hope you've been blessed by it. I've been greatly blessed in my study. And God's Word is always that way, as we just get into His Word and study it, we are always blessed. And it does not return void; it accomplishes what He desires.

I'm going to review the context. Jonah is a true story. Jonah is a real prophet. He is a servant of the Lord. It is not a fish story; it is not an allegory. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself testifies to the genuineness of Jonah, the preaching of Jonah, the salvation of the Ninevites, that Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights. He testifies it and uses it as a type to picture what He would do, being in the ground, dead for three days and three nights and then rise from the dead. It is a true story. Now I've shared in the last few times the context. And there are two threads that we need to understand behind the book of Jonah. We need to look at the Ninevites; and we need to look at Israel.

First of all, we need to recognize that Israel was disobedient on the way to exile. They were God's people, and they were disobedient on the way to exile. And we need to realize that most likely what God was doing in this book for them at that time, was showing that Jonah actually typifies Israel's reaction and how they related to those around them. Israel was disobedient on the way to exile. Now Jonah was written during the time of the divided kingdom, during Jeroboam II's reign – 793 B.C. – 758. The northern kingdom was only a generation or so away from going into captivity in judgment, discipline from God. Jonah's name means "dove," and he is called as we will see at the end of the message a "prophet." So Israel was disobedient on the road to discipline. God was going to discipline them. He

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was going to do what He had said He would do in Deuteronomy 28-30. And within a generation, they would be taken into captivity by the very people that Jonah preaches to.

Now along with this, we need to understand Nineveh at this time. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire, the Assyrians being the super power of the day. And we've seen from the book of Nahum chapter 3 (And we've looked at it, and you can look at the historical accounts which are plentiful), but the Ninevites were a wicked, evil people. They were a bloody people. And they were people that turned the hearts of God's people. They were a spiritual harlot of a nation, as we see in Scripture (Nahum 3). They were wicked. They were bloody. But yet, as we see in the book of Jonah, God has compassion upon sinners. And God had compassion upon Nineveh, and we'll see that God sent Jonah to them and see what the Lord God did.

Now Nineveh was a bloody city, full of lies, spiritual harlotries. They were a wicked, violent people and therefore God sent Jonah to declare their demise because of their sin. So Israel was spiraling into God's discipline and Nineveh was spiraling into God's judgment. And that's really the two places that most mankind is apart from being obedient, and that's where we want to be, right? And we see this here in the book of Jonah.

Now it's important that we review the first three chapters, and I'm going to go through this. So we're going to look at it quickly. I did it the first week. We went through Jonah and I'm going to do it this week. We're going to read through each chapter and summarize it and come up to the place where we are at today. Because if you've noticed, you can read through the book of Jonah probably in about ten minutes. It's a wonderful book and we need to see it in its context.

Chapter 1:1,

¹ The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." ³ But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. ⁴ And the LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. ⁵ Then the sailors became afraid, and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down, and fallen sound asleep. ⁶ So the captain approached him and said, "How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish." ⁷ And each man said to his mate, "Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us." So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ Then they said to him, "Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" ⁹ And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew,

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and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land." ¹⁰ Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, "How could you do this?" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. ¹¹ So they said to him, "What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?"-- for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. ¹² And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you." ¹³ However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them. ¹⁴ Then they called on the LORD and said, "We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for Thou, O LORD, hast done as Thou hast pleased." ¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. ¹⁷ And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights. [Jonah 1]

God calls Jonah to go and proclaim against Nineveh because of their wickedness. Jonah, because of his attitude towards them as we see in chapter 4 and a lack of faith concerning the character of God, disobeys Him and heads the opposite direction to Tarshish. But the Lord God does not allow him to go far. He sends a storm upon the ship – a storm in which everyone is about to perish. A storm in which the pagans are calling on their gods to discern why this calamity came upon them, and the lot falls on Jonah. And he is questioned. And it becomes evident that he is the reason why all this is happening upon them. The sailors try to desperately save the ship, but things get worse. And then the most wonderful thing happens. These sailors were crying out to their gods, and then they cried out to the Lord. And they recognized His sovereignty and then Jonah's discipline continues as he is thrown over and swallowed by a great fish.

And in chapter 2 we saw God's hand of discipline continuing in Jonah, as he prays from the belly of the fish, a prayer in which he recounts his drowning. A prayer in which God answers and spares his life. Then we saw the fruit of God's discipline in Jonah's life, as inside the whale he declares his thankfulness to the living God for His loving salvation, his desire to obey, and he recognizes that God is sovereign over all things, that salvation is from the Lord. Chapter 2,

¹Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, (And he recalls his prayer when he was drowning) ² and he said, "I called out of my distress to the LORD, And He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; Thou didst hear my voice. ³ "For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the current engulfed me. All Thy breakers and billows passed over me. ⁴ "So I said, 'I have been expelled from Thy sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Thy holy temple.' ⁵ "Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, Weeds were wrapped around my head. ⁶ "I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, But Thou hast brought up my life from the

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pit, O LORD my God. ⁷ "While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer came to Thee, Into Thy holy temple. ⁸ "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness, ⁹ But I will sacrifice to Thee with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD." ¹⁰ Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land. [Jonah 2]

Jonah was within an inch of his life and God answered his prayer and saved him. And when he gave thanks and declared God's truth, God had the fish vomit him up. And that leads us to chapter 3. Do you remember when we saw in that chapter what true repentance looks like from the Old Testament, as exhibited first of all in the life of Jonah as he obeys and then secondly in the lives of the Ninevites as they hear the Word of God and turn? The greatest revival that mankind has ever seen based on the preaching of the Word of God, that the Lord Jesus Himself declares that the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. Chapter 3,

¹Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk. ⁴ Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk (That's important; we'll see that later today.); and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." ⁵ Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; (He declared a message of God's judgment upon them for their sin and they believed in God.) and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. ⁶ When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on the ashes. ⁷ And he issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. ⁸ "But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. ⁹ "Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?" (They got the message. They understood the message of Jonah, that they were going to perish, that God is angry at them for their sin. And they turned and they cried out earnestly to God. And the evidence of their true repentance was their actions. Their actions did not save them; it was an evidence of their turning to God.) ¹⁰ When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it. [Jonah 3]

And this leads us to our passage today. We're going to review the first four verses, where I believe we're going to see how in the life of the believer God addresses sinful, twisted thinking that will manifest itself in wicked behavior. And we're going to see this through the example of Jonah's sad and pitiful compassion compared to God's gracious mercy. Turn with me again to Jonah chapter 4 if you're not already there. And we're going to review what we first saw last week. We went through verses 1-4

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in detail. And I think first of all we need to recognize that twisted thinking concerning God will manifest itself in sinful behavior. And if you will remember that God revealed this wicked behavior of Jonah, as He declared His Word to Him. Jonah 4:1,

¹ But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry. ² And he prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. ³ "Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life." ⁴ And the LORD said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?" [Jonah 4:1-4]

Now we saw last week the glorious salvation of the Ninevites, which God brought about through the preaching of the Word of judgment by Jonah. This glorious salvation on a wicked people. And evidently Jonah, as we will see, is still in Nineveh at this point, in the beginning of chapter 4. He is still in the city as we will see, because later he leaves the city. And he is in the city, seeing their repentance, and he is greatly displeased. And we saw last week that the absolute opposite reaction that we would expect from anyone who loves the Lord: Jonah is angry that the Ninevites are repenting rather than rejoicing at their repentance! They've turned from their wicked ways, the very things Jonah hates. And they have turned to God, but yet it says, "But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry." And we saw, you could literally translate this "It was evil to Jonah, a great evil, and he became hot" – angry! The salvation of the Ninevites to Jonah was a great evil. A great evil. And he became furiously hot. Instead of getting the reasons why Jonah might be angry, we could go through a myriad of reasons...why is Jonah angry? What are the reasons why he is angry? Maybe it's the wickedness of the Ninevites. Well, they repented. Maybe it was Israel's pride because they were God's chosen people. Maybe it was the possibility that Jonah thought, "Wow, when I go back, Israel is going to think I'm a false prophet. I said God's going to judge them. God didn't judge them! That's a false prophet!" A whole bunch of reasons why Jonah might think that and be upset.

But for whatever reason, God doesn't share it. And that's really important to see in the book of Jonah. We need to look at what God reveals to us in the book of Jonah and not go way off into all the other stuff which is interesting to look at but not what God wants us to know. What God wants us to know was it was a great evil to Jonah. And we see ultimately that his thinking is messed up. Verse 2, "And he prayed to the Lord..." He's upset. He's in Nineveh and he's upset, seeing this revival. First day. First day's walk. It isn't even the third day. First day's walk. And he prayed to the Lord, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity." [Jonah 4:1-2]

What a wicked prayer, stemming from wicked anger. His thinking is all messed up. We saw this last week. Jonah seemingly justifies his running away from God here in this prayer. He has been disciplined almost to death, and now he's kind of going back and sort of justifying it. "See God! I told You this

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would happen, that's why I ran!" Jonah knew the truth concerning God in Scripture. But yet his view of God was all messed up. And his messed up view of God manifested itself in anger, and as we see, a wicked deadly depression. For he says in verse 3, "Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me..." "This is too hard to bear these people repenting." We think it's crazy to think this way, right? But Jonah has messed up thinking like we often do! And the reaction to his whole messed up thinking is anger. Jonah was leaning on his own understanding, and we need to see that today, as we do. As we are tempted to do also as we're serving the Lord. As we saw last week, our salvation is good. And so is our sanctification! The difficulties or discipline that God brings on us, which we may see as evil, are not evil! It is good! Because God is bringing about the character of Christ in us. And if we are not confronted for our stinking thinking, then we will get angry just like Jonah. And as we saw last week in detail, and you can listen to it another time, but we give Satan a place in our lives. We give Satan a place in our thinking.

So there we see Jonah, very upset. "Take my life from me for death is better than life." But God is gracious! And God confronts him first and foremost with His Word. Verse 4, "And the LORD said, 'Do you have good reason to be angry?'" Do you remember last week we saw this phrase could be translated this way, and I lean towards it. I'm not fully set on it. But it's "Is doing good angering you?" Jonah saw it as evil. God does good. The salvation of the Ninevites was good! "Is that doing of good, their salvation Jonah, angering you?" God went right to the point. He addressed Jonah's error right on focus. Jonah saw it as evil, but it was the doing of good. And at this point, we move to our chapter, our portion in the chapter. Jonah 4:5. Which I believe we're going to see that God uses difficulty, combined with His Word, to reveal our sinful thinking and thus our sinful behaviors. He's going to address our messed up thinking here with the Word of God, and then He's going to use discipline to pave the way for Jonah to respond to that Word as He shares with him again. To our passage again today, chapter 4 verse 5,

⁵ Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city.

⁶ So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant. ⁷ But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day, and it attacked the plant and it withered. ⁸ And it came about when the sun came up that God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life." ⁹ Then God said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death." ¹⁰ Then the LORD said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work, and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. ¹¹ "And should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?" [Jonah 4:5-11]

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And that's it. The end of Jonah. Ends in a question. What do we see here first of all?

The Lord God had said to Jonah while he was in the city, "Do you have good reason to be angry?" Verse 4, right? "Is doing good angering you?" Then look at what Jonah's response is, verse 5. "Then Jonah went out from the city." Then, right away, boom. The Hebrew text. God said this to him, then Jonah split. Jonah went out from the city, east of it. He should have been going through the city, a three day's walk. It's one day that has gone by, and God confronts Jonah's thinking right away as he is serving Him. And I believe God wants our thinking through His Word right away when we serve Him and things are wrong. He confronts him right away, and look at Jonah's response. "Then he went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city." [Jonah 4:5] Right away, *vav*, consecutive in Hebrew. Jonah went out of the city. God confronted him and he split.

This is important to note, because Jonah was actually in the middle of obeying God. But he didn't like it. And God confronted his disobedient attitude underneath the external obedience, and he got mad again. And he left. And God intervenes with a question. Some of you may be serving the Lord with a wrong attitude. And God is going to intervene in your life if you are a true believer. With His Word He is going to address your attitudes. He's going to address our attitudes. Will you get angry and split? I see that all the time! Maybe not all the time, but I see it a lot. People serve with the wrong motives, and someone comes alongside them and graciously shows them the Word concerning those attitudes; and boom, they are gone to the next church. Jonah's off. He's still going to wait for God to do something, but he is gone from what God had called him to do. Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. This is an affirmation of a Proverb, which Jonah should have known. Proverbs 18:1,

¹ He who separates himself seeks his own desire, He quarrels against all sound wisdom. [Proverbs 18:1]

Jonah should have known that. He split. But God, as we will see, will confront him again. Now it's interesting he says, "He sat east of it." Now we don't want to make too much of this. But in Scripture, there is a precedent of God declaring this idea of east. And we need to look at that a little bit. If you'll remember that in Genesis in the garden, the cherubim were stationed east. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and settled east of Eden. In Genesis 10-11, in disobedience mankind stayed together and journeyed east and settled in the plain of Shinar and built the tower of Babel. So why does the author mention east? It certainly could be because that's just the direction he went. But often in the Old Testament, there is a parallel theme speaking to the point of disobedience. And that's quite possible, that in God's sovereignty the direction Jonah went is the same direction that He uses to relay the disobedience of others in Scripture. Now I'm not going to hold hard and fast to that, but it's something interesting to note. Jonah says here, "He went out, east of it."

So then in the midst of a great revival, Jonah gets angry; and God confronts him with the Word. He gets up and splits. He is a stubborn man, rebelling against God. God commanded him to go to Nineveh, a great city – three days' walk, chapter 3:3. He began that, chapter 3:4. The city repents. He's not even

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all the way through yet. God confronts him and he splits. Goes right out. And he makes a booth for himself. Same word that they use concerning the feast of booths. Little shanty shacks. They would be like a little tent. He makes a booth there, a shelter for himself and sat under it (middle of verse 5) until he could see what would happen to the city.

Remember Jonah's message was, "Yet forty days Nineveh will be destroyed." So he is stubbornly going out, "Ok, I'm going to see what happens to this city. I'm going to see if God does it my way." Jonah is totally messed up, folks; and we see it. But we're messed up too. And God uses His Word to confront our messed up thinking also. Jonah is a believer. But God's not going to let him get away with such behavior. If you are a believer, and you have a bad attitude in the midst of serving, God's not going to let you get away with that attitude if you are a true believer.

Notice what happens next. God disciplines Jonah to get to the root of the matter here. And I believe we're going to see Jonah is a sinful, selfish worm who lacks godly compassion. He's the worm of the story here. Verse 6,

⁶ So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant. ⁷ But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day, and it attacked the plant and it withered. ⁸ And it came about when the sun came up that God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life." [Jonah 4:6-8]

So first of all, Jonah rebelliously disobeys and goes out of the city; and he's going to see if God's going to wipe it out. Stubbornly, right? He's got a few days to wait there. He makes a shelter. And God appoints a plant to relieve Jonah. Verse 6, "The Lord God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his ("evil" or) discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant." Now I think first of all we need to recognize this is a miracle that God does. He appoints a plant; as we see later on in verse 10, it grows up in one day and it is dead in another day, right? It's up in one day. And I don't know of any plant that grows that high in one day, and there are all sorts of non-believing religious scholars that want to figure out ways that plants will grow that way in a day. It's a miracle! The Lord God appointed the plant. The Lord God. Jonah was in discomfort because of the sun.

This area where Nineveh is modern day Mosul, Iraq. It's really hot out there. Jonah was, by the way, in the city. He probably could have gone in and prayed with some of these repentant sinners and hung out with them. But he splits and goes into the desert. And it's hot. So God appoints this plant, and we have the term "The Lord God" here. Yahweh, Elohim. It is the Great I AM. It is the sovereign God. It's only used earlier in chapter 1 once, verse 9, where Jonah says, "I am a Hebrew. I fear the Lord God, the sovereign one." It is the Lord God who is sovereign over salvation. He is sovereign over His servants. He is sovereign over creation. And He caused the plant to grow in one day. And this term "plant"

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speaks of a generic-type plant. It could have been a castor vine or a gourd type plant. The type of plant is really not important. What is important? That God brought it about miraculously in a day. And I actually believe as I've studied this passage that I don't think Jonah was under any misconception that this was just a normal plant. I think this was part of God's lesson that He was doing with Jonah here. He miraculously took care of Jonah's discomfort with this plant. Plants don't grow six or seven feet in one day. And I believe the miraculous nature of this plant was obvious to Jonah. And I believe it's quite possible that Jonah thought it was an affirmation of his departure. "Maybe God is on my side! Maybe He is going to destroy Nineveh. Ok! Maybe I'm right." I'm sure he thought he was right. But now God's coming around.

Now was God tricking him because He's going to destroy the plant? No. We'll see God was revealing the wicked heart. That's what He was doing, and He was going to use discipline to do that. He was going to give and take away. He was going to make him comfortable and then He was going to take it away to show elements of Jonah's heart which he really was not seeing properly.

Now notice in the end of verse 6 it says, "And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant." He is really furious. He splits from the city. He goes, he makes this booth, he sits down, and God causes this plant to grow; and Jonah is rejoicing. But you could literally translate this, "Jonah rejoiced over the plant with great rejoicing." Jonah was doing the plant dance. It doesn't say that, but he was jumping around probably. He was greatly rejoicing. He was happy because of this plant. Now obviously, folks, doesn't something strike you here? Jonah is greatly rejoicing because he has been delivered from the calamity of the heat of the sun. The Ninevites were delivered from great calamity, their eternal judgment. And Jonah should have been rejoicing greatly at that. He wasn't. Because his thinking was messed up. Because his view of God was all skewed. It was based on his own wisdom, and his own understanding. The Ninevites repent; Jonah gets mad; God confronts Jonah; Jonah splits to see if He'll destroy it. Jonah begins to experience great discomfort; God appoints a plant; it grows over him; he's extremely happy. We're going to see that Jonah is messed up, that his whole focus, his compassion and pity is all self-centered. Jonah is happy about what effects him and not others. Even a little plant or a big plant.

And I believe this ought to be a clue to what the Lord is trying to reveal. Jonah is happy about the good things from God's hand that happen to him. But he is greatly displeased concerning the good things that God does to others. And I want to ask you, what do you rejoice in? Is it the work of God through the Word of God towards others? Or is your rejoicing centered around your own favorable circumstances, whether it's in ministry or whatever it is? What do you rejoice in? Jonah is really happy here. He probably went to bed that night just with a smile on his face, looking at his plant he loves so much; waiting for God to destroy the city, which he expects now. Very happy. Greatly rejoicing.

But what happens the next day? Verse 7, "But God..." We've had a lot of "But Jonah's" here in this book but now we have "But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day, and it attacked the plant and it withered." So God is doing some more appointing here. The worm gets the job for the living God. And the worm's job is to attack the plant. And on a side note, we'll see later on that this worm brings about the only destruction in the book of Jonah, which is the plant. But this little worm

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does his job. Verse 7, "But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day (The next day, so Jonah probably had a nice sleep that night, very happy.), and it attacked the plant and it withered." The only destruction in the book of Jonah. Sailors saved – chapter 1. Jonah's life spared – chapter 2. Ninevites spared – chapter 3. Chapter 4 – a worm attacks the plant and it dies. This is the plant that Jonah's extremely happy over, but God's not finished here. It gets worse for Jonah. Verse 8, "And it came about when the sun came up that God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head..." God is sovereignly causing things to be difficult. He's sovereignly allowed them to be good. So we need to be careful when we say, "God opened that door!" Well maybe He did, but why did He open the door? Why did He do that? Here we're going to see that God blessed Jonah for the purpose of taking it away so that Jonah would see ultimately his own sinfulness.

"And it came about when the sun came up that God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head..." God has been sovereignly controlling these circumstances for Jonah's discipline all the way through. The storm, the fish, all these things, the plant, the worm, the scorching east wind. Now a lot of people write a lot of stuff about this. And they say this wind is most likely the *surako*, a wind that causes the temperature in the desert to go up dramatically with a drop of humidity. It constantly hot wind mixed with sand. And that's possible, obviously. But all God says here is it's a scorching east wind. And that just means it's hot. And the text says, "The sun beat down on Jonah's head."

What's the result here? Middle of verse 8, Jonah "became faint and begged with *all* his soul to die..." Extremely happy the day before. Now he's begging with all his soul to die again. Here we go, selfish Jonah again, just like us at times. Things get difficult and he wants to die. "Death is better than life. It would be much better to not be around – this is so difficult." Now you may not have said that in those certain words, but maybe you had those thoughts at times where you felt like, "Whoa it's too hard." Those sinful, Satanic thoughts based on a wrong view of your circumstances. "And he begged with all his soul..."

Now let me remind you, brothers and sisters, who is causing this discomfort here. It is God, it is the sovereign Lord who giveth and taketh away. He is doing so in the life of Jonah as I believe we will see, to prepare the way for His Word. Jonah has rejected God's Word so far concerning his attitude, but God is now making things difficult again for Jonah to prepare the way for him to hear His Word. To reveal his sinful attitudes and actions. And folks, if you're serving the Lord God as a believer with the wrong attitudes expecting things to happen your way rather than what God says in His Word, God is going to bring difficult things in your life. He's going to discipline you and me. He's going to humble our heart to prepare it to hear the Word of God concerning our wrong thinking. God uses discomfort to cause us to come to our senses, to prepare us to respond to His truth. Hebrews chapter 12, a quote of a portion of Proverbs chapter 3, which Jonah would have known. Hebrew 12:4,

⁴ You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; ⁵ and you have forgotten (You Hebrews, you have forgotten.) the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, (Jonah obviously forgot this too.) "My son, do not regard

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lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him (Jonah is fainting, right?); ***⁶ For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.*** ***⁷ It is for discipline that you endure*** (Jonah should have known that.); ***God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*** ***⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*** ***⁹ Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?*** ***¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, (It's good, it's good.) that we may share His holiness.*** (Jonah is not acting very holy right now. He's not exhibiting Christ-likeness at all. And God is disciplining him just like He does with us.) ***¹¹ All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. [Jonah 12:4-11]***

And I believe we're going to see, I think it did yield that fruit in the life of Jonah eventually. Jonah had totally forgotten Proverbs 3, which he knew probably. I'm sure he did as a prophet of Israel. He had forgotten God's Word and he was fainting in the context of discipline. But God was preparing the soil of his heart to stir it up that he might listen to the Word of God and be changed. Maybe the Lord God has allowed you to be temporarily blessed, and He has taken it away from you to show you where your heart really lies. To reveal your twisted thinking towards Him and towards your circumstances. This is His discipline. And He is preparing your heart to hear, and my heart to hear the Word of God, which confronts those attitudes right on. And I pray that we will listen.

Next we see here that God uses His Word again to uncover Jonah's sinful thoughts in verses 9-11. And we have the question again. Verse 9, "Then..." Right away! Boom boom boom boom boom. Jonah's angry again because of the sun. The plant died.

⁹Then God said to Jonah (same question), ***"Do you have good reason to be angry*** ("concerning") ***about*** (or "on") ***the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death." [Jonah 4:9]***

Jonah's got a bad attitude. Now I admittedly struggled in my study concerning this phrase, because if you literally translate it, "Is doing good angering you because of the plant?" It's difficult to understand this phrase. It's an interpretive challenge as we saw back in verse 4. But I believe clearly it is the doing of good in the context of God's discipline, in the context of God's salvation, that is angering Jonah; because Jonah has a wrong perception of things. I think the same case could be made here as it was in verse 4. God is doing good with this plant, raising it up and allowing it to be destroyed. And Jonah is missing it. At least for now. In the context of his self-centeredness and self-focus, he's angered. "Do you have good reason to be angry? Is there really any good reason?" Jonah's really hot again. And why is he? God raised up a plant, shaded Jonah's head, Jonah possibly saw that as an affirmation of God towards him concerning Nineveh. We need to remember that. Jonah was certainly selfish, but his selfishness was twisted in his theology. He had a wrong view of God, as we've seen; and quite possibly

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that wrong view, God allowed Jonah to vindicate that within himself and then He took it away to reveal where Jonah's heart really was. And Jonah got angry again. And brothers and sisters, Jonah is totally circumstance driven. And his view of his circumstances drives his attitudes and behaviors. And his view is not God's view, and that's why Jonah is all messed up. And that's why we get messed up.

God does good, Jonah perceives it as evil. Verse 9, "Then God said, 'Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?'" And in this text here, the "you" in Hebrew is emphatic. "Do *you*, Jonah, *you* (God is addressing Jonah) have good reason to be angry?" What's Jonah's answer to God's Word? Another wicked one. And maybe it's your answer. "Yeah I do have good reason, to death." Jonah takes basically God's statement to him, turns it around and affirms it to himself. "Yes, I've got good reason, even to death." Jonah is at the pinnacle of his disobedience at this point. Yet God is right there, disciplining him and confronting him; and He doesn't let Jonah go very far at all. And if you're a true believer, He does not let you go very far. He addresses you right away. He disciplines for your good.

Let me remind you what we saw last week, the dangers of anger. The core of anger, as we saw last week (you can get the CD) is that we have a twisted view of God based on our circumstances. And God's solution is to confront us with His truth. Jonah's problem being here he is analyzing things through his own wisdom, rather than through the Word of God. Jonah totally misunderstood the nature of God as revealed in his anger towards God because of the salvation of the Ninevites. And now he is totally angry to God because his pet plant has been destroyed, and he's getting hot in the desert. Which by the way, don't forget, is his fault he is out there by the way. God didn't say, "Jonah go out from the city." God said, "Go to the city and proclaim," and he hadn't even gotten through three days and he split because he's mad. And now he's suffering. So some of it is his own consequences, but the other is certainly God's discipline. All of it is fashioned that way.

And at this point, the end here of the book, we have this lesson towards Jonah explained. God uses His Word to reveal Jonah's sinful heart. Verse 10, "Then the LORD said (And again we have God's Word here, right? We have God's Word again.), 'You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work, and *which* you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight.'¹¹ And should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?'" [Jonah 4:10-11] God confronts Jonah's snappy anger. "Then the Lord God said," right away. Jonah is saying, "I've got good reason to be angry, even to death." *Then* God said, (simple object lesson) "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work, and *which* you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight." God declares that Jonah had compassion, the first time this particular word is used in the book of Jonah. The word speaks of pity. It speaks of pity, and it's used throughout Scripture to speak of God exhorting His people not to pity those who are disobedient that God will judge. Don't show pity for them! But God shows pity ultimately. We see here ultimately that Jonah had pity for the plant. He had pity for it, a selfish, self-centered pity.

Now I want to clarify. God certainly wants us to have compassion for people who are dying. But in the Old Covenant, they were told to not have pity on those who would go away with false teachers and false

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prophets (Deut. 13). It's that same word that's used here. Jonah had pity for the plant. And he had no ties to it. He didn't cause it to grow. He didn't work it out. He didn't pour water on it. He didn't, you know, get the ground ready. He didn't work it, he didn't cause it to grow. It came up overnight and perished overnight. Do you see it? "Jonah, you pitied the plant which you had nothing to do with; except that it brought *you* blessing. You didn't work, cause it to grow. It came up overnight, perished. You had pity for it."

And here's the real lesson. In contrast, Jonah's pity for a worthless plant versus God's pity (same word) for people. Verse 11, "And should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?" "Jonah, you pitied a plant that you had nothing to do with except what it had to do with you in your selfishness, Jonah. Should I not have compassion on others? On people? This great city? 120,000 persons who don't know their right and left hand." And there's all sorts of talk about what that means. I think it simply means children who don't know what their right and left is. And therefore, the city was a great city as we see in history. And there was probably more than a half a million people. And there were a lot of animals too. And God is saying, "Should I not have pity on them?" Here's where Jonah missed it completely. Twisted compassion for the plant, compared to God's loving compassion for sinful people. Jonah's compassion was for things that blessed him.

Some people serve the Lord only in the context that it blesses them and aligns with their thinking concerning God. And that's what Jonah was doing. And when God called him to go out of that into where He wanted him to be, Jonah got angry. And when God brought about gracious results, Jonah got angry. And God showed him this lesson here. In contrast to his pitiful compassion, through a very extreme example, we see God's loving compassion for sinful people.

There are a lot of lessons in this passage. But what is the lesson that God is teaching us here? I think through a very extreme example God has unveiled Jonah's sinful, selfish compassion, which is so unlike God's. "Jonah, your compassion and thinking is totally messed up." And God used His discipline and His Word to reveal it. Do you remember in chapter 1 Jonah was selfishly willing to let everyone die in the boat? He went under and he was going to go to sleep and let God just take them all. It's selfish. He didn't care about the sailors. He had no compassion upon them except a self-pity for himself.

We see the same thing in chapter 3-4. A pitiful self-pity. And folks, if you have focused on yourself rather than others, this is going to be the manifestation of that in your lives too. Everything you do for God is going to be centered around yourself. Rather than Christ and others.

So what's the message here? "Jonah, you are so unlike God. Your compassion is for self, not others." So then we have the end of the book of Jonah. Now this may trouble you because it ends with a poignant question, addressing the heart of Jonah. And the question in our hearts is, "Did Jonah repent? Did Jonah actually, finally respond to God's discipline and His Word?" The text doesn't say. But I believe he did. It's my view that Jonah finally got it after this. There's nothing else recorded. I believe this is what God finally did to show him how wicked his thinking was. And I'll share why.

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Second Kings 14:25 says, "According to the Word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His *servant* Jonah." He's not called "His servant" here, but in 2 Kings he's called "His servant." And I shared the first time that we looked at the book of Jonah that there is not a very long list in Scripture in which people are called "His servant." Now besides Nebuchadnezzar, who was unwittingly God's servant and ultimately brought wrath but ultimately came to faith – we see Job, Jacob, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, David, Abijai, Elijah, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Zerubabel, Israel, and Jesus Himself called "His servant." And here we have Jonah, His servant. I think Jonah did repent. I think Jonah did repent. And I think another evidence of his repentance is the book of Jonah itself. It's obviously autobiographical. And it's widely accepted, and I believe, that Jonah wrote it himself; and it is a testimony to his repentance because he shares all the bad stuff. And when someone is truly repentant, they say, "Woe is me. I'm a man of unclean lips. Here's how bad it was." And Jonah, I think, wrote that and I think he did repent.

But the real question is not whether Jonah repented. The real question to us is have we repented? Some of you are like the sailors on the ship. You're basically good people. You're not living lives of wickedness. You have compassion for other people. They had compassion on Jonah. They served their gods. They were pagans. They did their jobs well. Yet, they were one storm away from God's ultimate judgment. And God was gracious to them, and He shared His Word to them. And they repented, and they greatly feared the Lord. They believed.

Now some of you are like the Ninevites. And your actions demonstrate it. You're wicked. You are adulterous in your actions. You have idols in your heart and life. You don't fear the Lord God, and He is going to judge you. But God's gracious, and He will relent if you repent. He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for your sins. He paid the penalty on the cross for you.

And then there's some of us here who are tempted to be like Jonah. We fear the Lord, but yet in some ways we are very much like Jonah. We've been saved, but our view of God is messed up because it's self-centered. It's twisted; it's not from the Word of God. It's from our experiences and our circumstances. And if you're a true believer, God is going to do what He did with Jonah. He may need to bring you to the edge of your life in discipline. But He's going to address your attitudes towards the way you serve Him. And I believe Jonah did serve Him rightly. "My servant Jonah..."

And then there are some of you here that are not like Jonah. You're faithful! You don't have bad attitudes. You serve the Lord faithfully; you are walking in a manner worthy of the great calling in which you have been called. The book of Jonah is a testament to how easily we can slip. "Take heed you who stand, lest you fall!" We can easily start to think this way, and it is a warning to us not to crave evil things such as our will rather than God's. The question is not today whether Jonah repented but whether we have repented. God's a gracious, compassionate God. It is shown in this book. He saves the Ninevites. He saves the sailors. He deals graciously with Jonah. The only thing that He destroyed was a plant. He's a gracious God. And His Word declares that graciousness.

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¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. [Jonah 3:16]

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. [Romans 5:8]

¹² "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping, and mourning; ¹³ And rend your heart and not your garments." ¹³ Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, And relenting of evil. [Joel 2:12-13]

God's a compassionate God, and He is in the business of making us like His Son – compassionate. And He was working on Jonah, and I believe it worked. And I pray it works with us, too. I pray His discipline and His Word, that we yield and allow it to change our hearts to be like Christ.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for Your Word. You are a compassionate God. And we so lack Your compassion. We fall so short. You're a faithful God. You pardon our sins. We see the testimony of Your salvation of the pagan sailors. We see Your saving Jonah from death when he was disobeying You so greatly. We see Your salvation of the Ninevites – a wicked people. That you changed their hearts, salvation is from the Lord. Lord, we pray that You would save those in here today that don't know You. It's from You, not from them. That You would convict their hearts, and they would cry out to You for salvation. That they would fear You. And Lord, I pray for those of us who know You. May we not be like Jonah. May we not be like what we've seen in this book. May we be, may we learn from this. May it convict our hearts when our thinking is wrong, when we see our circumstances as evil or meant for evil when You mean it for good. Help us to perceive things rightly as we serve You. Lord, I thank You for Your preparation of Your servant Jonah and what he had to go through to be Your servant. And I pray You'd do the same in our lives for Your glory. Thank You for Your Word. We praise You for Your Son. It is in His name alone that there is salvation. We praise You now. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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