

## Jonah 3:10-4:11

**Introduction:** Have you ever caught yourself getting angry over something little or something silly? Many times our anger comes out at those who were not part of the problem or we are frustrated by the situation but we end up taking it out on a person instead. This morning we want to look at how our misplaced anger can lead to misplaced priorities.

### **Background:**

Jonah was a prophet in the northern kingdom. He was sent to the city of Nineveh which was in Assyria. Being a Jew, Jonah hated the Assyrians because they constantly antagonized the Israelites. Jonah's hatred ran so deep that he chose to disobey God by running the opposite way from Nineveh. We all know the story of what happened to Jonah as he ran away from God. But what many people don't know is what happened later. After being in the belly of the great fish Jonah went to Nineveh to preach the message of repentance. The result of that preaching is given in Jonah 3:10, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not." As a result of God working through Jonah's preaching the people repented! As a man of God who just saw God turn an entire city to Himself, what do you think Jonah's reaction was? Jonah 4:1 says, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." God had just done a mighty work of turning people back to Himself, and Jonah was mad. In fact we see in Jonah 4:2 that the reason Jonah didn't want to preach to the people of Nineveh was because he knew that if he preached, God would change the people of Nineveh's hearts. Look at Jonah 4:2, "And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, *was* not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." Jonah was so angry and had such a deep hatred for the people of Nineveh because they killed Israelites, took them captive, and constantly mistreated them, that Jonah was happy that God was going to destroy Nineveh and Jonah didn't want to do anything that would change God's course of action. Jonah is so

disgusted by what God has done notice what he says in verse 3, “Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for *it is* better for me to die than to live.” As bad as this is, the story still isn’t over. Before we go any further we need to get a timeline down for the rest of this chapter. When Jonah was told by God to go preach to Nineveh, he was told to preach that in 40 days God would destroy the city (3:4). Therefore beginning in Jonah 4:5 the events described from there to the end of the chapter take place after the 40 days, in other words after Jonah realizes that God has spared Nineveh.

### **How to Tell If You Have Misplaced Priorities:**

- ✠ **Things become more important than people.** Let’s look together at verses 6-9. God provided a gourd to shade Jonah from the hot sun; however, God allowed a worm to destroy that gourd during the night. As a result of the gourd dying Jonah gets mad at God. Jonah cared more about his personal comfort than the eternal destiny of the people of Nineveh. This happens in the church when we care more about people coming to us rather than us going to them. The Great Commission didn’t say “tell the people to come to church and get saved.” The Great Commission tells us as Christians to “go and preach the Gospel.”
- ✠ **Feelings become more important than faith.** Jonah got his feelings hurt because God took away his source of comfort, and Jonah felt justified at being mad at God. When we care more about our feelings than God strengthening our faith we are in trouble. It is like the man who was rescued from being on a deserted island. When the rescuers got to him they saw three buildings, but the man said he was the only one on the island. One of the rescuers asked him about the three buildings. The man said, that one was my house, that one was my church, and the third one was the church I use to go to before I got my feelings hurt. We cannot be controlled by our feelings, because we will run away from things that God is trying to use to strengthen our faith. James put it this way in James 1:2-4, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

- † **Comfort becomes more important than obedience.** Jonah would rather have sat in the shade of the gourd than get out in the sun and obey God. There will come a point in your Christian life in which your fear and your faith collide. Dr. Henry Blackaby called this a “crisis of belief” in his study *Experiencing God*. Abraham faced it in Genesis 12 when God said, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house unto a land that I will shew thee.” Peter faced it in Matthew 14 when Jesus told him to walk on the water to him. There are many, many more examples in the Bible in which people had a choice, do I stay comfortable or do I become obedient to God. You can’t stay where you are and go with God.
- † **We are out of touch with what God cares about.** Look at verses 10-11. Jonah cared about a plant, God cared about the people. God cares about the Ninevehs of the world. And when you and I become preoccupied with things other than what God cares about it leads to misplaced priorities which always leads to sin. I want to ask a couple of questions that will lead us into a time of response to God. First, are you running from God? If God can save Nineveh, He can save you. Secondly, would God say that your priorities in life are in line with His priorities? Jesus said if you want to be blessed you must seek Him first.