

## Chapter 17

### GOD'S METHOD OF CORRECTING JONAH

***"Then the Lord said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?' 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. 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. But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. 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.'" (Jonah 4:4-8)***

We are getting close to the end of our journey in the book of Jonah. In the last chapter we left Jonah in an angry fit of rage against God because Nineveh had been spared. He is so frustrated about what he thinks is in store for himself and his people that he cannot bear to live to see it come to pass, and he makes this foolish request for God to take his life. He believed that if Nineveh must live, he would rather die than to see the glory of God transferred to the heathen Gentiles. We closed the last chapter with Jonah reflecting upon God's question, ***"Is it right for you to be angry?"***

In this chapter, we will look at God's method of correcting Jonah. In so doing, God is preparing Jonah to see and enter into what we call "the great heart of God." We will begin in verse 4 where God begins His correcting procedure with a question, which is actually a reply to Jonah's prayer. However, it is not the answer or reply that Jonah desired. God's question to Jonah is this, "Are you doing well? Are you doing right by being angry?" In other words, "Does doing good displease you, Jonah?" "Are you displeased because much good came about from your preaching to Nineveh?" This question is God's answer to Jonah's insane request for God to take his life. God mercifully ignores his prayer. The Bible teaches us that we must pray according to the will of God and that ***"if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."*** (I John 5:14). Oh, how we should be thankful that God usually ignores our foolish requests and leaves us to ponder in our minds the rightness of what we are requesting. As you look back over your life, are you not thankful that God did not answer everything you asked Him to do? We ask many things foolishly. Jonah wanted God to take his life, and in mercy, God did not answer him. God answers Jonah's request with a mild and a gentle rebuke. When God sets out to correct one of His wayward children, He starts with a mild and gentle reproof. This reveals God to be truly gracious and merciful and slow to anger. He has not only spared the Ninevites for so long a time, He is now sparing one of His own prophets. God could have answered Jonah's passionate request and struck him dead on the spot. Some of us might have

entertained that thought after what God had done for Jonah. This shows the difference between God's passions or emotions and Jonah's. Men's passions are subject to be out of control and dominate our wills. God's passions are never out of control and are always under the control of His will. Thus, whenever and however God expresses the emotional makeup of His being, it is always under the control of His will of purpose. While God's anger is real, it is never out of control like Jonah's. It is an anger of purpose under the dominion of His righteous character. Therefore, instead of choosing to strike Jonah dead, God speaks to Jonah's mind saying, "Do you, a creature, have a right to be angry with your Creator, God?" Do you ever find yourself upset with God, and hear the question running through your mind, "do I have a right to question God?" This is the searching and self-judging question given to Jonah. The question is worded in such a manner as God withholds his judgment in the matter and asks Jonah to judge for himself. Jonah must bring himself, his attitude, and his actions before the bench of judgment, and then sit upon that bench and judge himself. Have you ever had to appear in a court to pay a ticket or something? You walk before the Judge on the bench to be judged by the judge. Jonah now must sit on the bench and judge himself. Passionate people are quick to judge others but very slow to judge themselves.

Nathan the prophet was sent to David to rebuke him for his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, and he told David the story of man who had a large flock of sheep. The man had a neighbor who had a little lamb which was the family pet. When the rich man had a guest for dinner he killed the neighbor's little family pet instead of taking one from his own flock of many. Nathan asked David, "David you are the king and judge and the one in authority. What should we do to the fellow such as this?" Immediately David was angered at the wrongness of the act and called for the man's punishment. Oh how quick passionate people are to see the faults of others, but David did not see his own fault. When Nathan the prophet pointed out that David was the guilty party, for taking another man's wife, David's conscience smote him and he cried out, "I have sinned, I have sinned." (Cf. II Sameul 12). That is what God is making Jonah do here.

Consider the question, how is it that we can see others' sins so clearly, but we cannot see our own sins? The answer is because we do not judge ourselves as God tells to. I Corinthians 11:31-32 states: **"For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world."** It is the duty for a Christian believer to administer self-judgment upon our actions and our attitudes.

I ask a second follow up question. Why is there so little repentance in the midst of today's churches with all of our religious activities? Why is it that church attendance is at an all

time high, but there is so little repentance and godly sorrow in the midst? The answer is because people are not asking themselves the question, "is this attitude or this action which I am presently indulging in, right in the sight of God, my Creator?" We are ready to see the problems in other people's lives, but we do not want to have to sit on the bench and judge ourselves. There will not be repentance without self-judgment. In Jonah's case, God is causing Jonah to have to judge himself when He asked Jonah, **"is it right for you to be angry?"**

Now let us suppose for a moment that Jonah was assigned to go and rebuke himself as Nathan did David. It might go something like this. Jonah, the judge would say,

"Jonah there once was a man who was so blessed by God that God bestowed upon him the highest calling that he could ever give a person in this life, that being the honor of holding the office of a prophet of God. Jonah, after faithfully executing this office for sometime, he was given an assignment which he did not like, and so he ran from God and ended up in the belly of a great fish. But Jonah, instead of dying there, this man cried out for mercy and God delivered him. He was then permitted to go to the world's greatest city and there be the lone preacher whom God would use to bring about the world's greatest revival. But after being given all that honor and all of that mercy, this prophet gets mad at God for showing mercy to this great city. Now Jonah what do you think we ought to do with a fellow like that?"

Now Jonah, the sinner, might act like David and say in anger, "Bring that preacher here before his ordination council and strip him of his certificate and send him to the back side of the desert to tend sheep. He certainly does not deserve to be a prophet of God." Then Jonah, the judge, would say, "You are that man." Could we apply this self-judgment to ourselves? Dare we do it as husbands? Read Ephesians 5:25, **"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her."** Are you that kind of husband? Also, wives, do you dare to apply this self-judgment to yourselves as found in Ephesians 5:22? **"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord."** Do you measure up like a Sarah who called Abraham her lord? Do you dare to judge yourself with that criteria? If so, what kind of grade would you give yourself on a scale of one to ten? What would your conscience allow you to place on the grade card? Let's keep going, **"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."** (Ephesians 6:1). Our Lord Jesus Christ obeyed and honored His parents when He was in the home? Now, what does the Bible say about the conduct of elders and pastors, how do we pass? Look at I Peter 1:5 - **"Elders . . . shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."** Do

we take the oversight of the church thereof willingly, not grudgingly? Are we accepting the role of a servant, or do we lord it over God's heritage? Dare we judge ourselves by God's standard? What about those who are not pastors? The word has something to say to you as well. What is your relationship to your pastor, to your overseer? Hebrews 13:17 tells you to **"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."** Did you know that the word of God gives your elders a spiritual rule over you which is to be honored and respected as the office of a shepherd? If we are not carrying out that office as God commands, then we need to be removed from it. If our very own conscience is sensitive to the ministry of God's word and His Holy Spirit, we are to judge ourselves, and ask ourselves like Jonah, "Do you really have a right to maintain the attitude and perform the actions that you are performing right now?"

God started with a mild, gentle method of correcting Jonah with a verbalized wording, and now in verses 5 through 8, He moves to a symbolic teaching. **"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."** Here is Jonah's response to the question that is put in his mind. You would think that such a searching question as this would surely bring about godly sorrow and repentance, but it doesn't. You would think that it went in one ear and out the other. Just like some of these exhortations I have given may go in your ear and out the other. If they are not heeded, I will assure you of this if you are a believer, there is some correcting chastening on the horizon and it won't necessarily be in a mild rhetorical fashion.

Look at Jonah's departure from the city. We read, **"So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city."** Instead of taking God's reproof at His word, Jonah allows his passion to continue to control his thoughts. He continues with his strife with God. When a person is striving with God, he will seek to distance himself from people who are seeking to follow God. Jonah doesn't want to be around the Ninevites. The Ninevites now want to serve God, so Jonah leaves the city. If he stays in their midst, he is going to be reminded that God is working. He is going to be reminded that he doesn't like what God is doing and does not want to be a part of it. **"Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."** (John 3:19). Proverbs 17:14 states: **"The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts."** When a flood gate or a dam is released with its gate of waters it makes a gully wider and wider downstream. When anger and strife are released, it only makes matters worse. The Lord says in Isaiah 45:9, **"Woe to him who strives with his Maker!"** Jonah, that is what you are doing. You are striving with your Maker, and because you are refusing to

judge yourself, you are once again exposing yourself to the chastening hand of God. He proceeds to depart from the city to the eastern side which is elevated toward the mountains. The western side of Nineveh was bordered by the Tigris River, and Israel was about six hundred miles west of Nineveh. On this eastern side, elevated toward the mountains, Jonah would have a spot to look down upon the city and observe what was happening in the city. We read that he was concerned about his comfort, so he made himself a little shelter or hut where he could sit under it in the shade. When he had located a spot of his own choosing, he then proceeded to build this little hut made out of limbs and branches to protect himself from the rays of the sun. Now think just a moment with me as thankful as the Ninevites are for their salvation, Jonah could have had access to any of the best houses in Nineveh to stay in, probably even sleep in the king's palace, but he is in a hut up in the mountains. He would rather stay in a hut in the mountains than associate with the enemies of Israel. This must have offended the Ninevites. The very prophet whom God had sent to them with the message of deliverance, didn't even love them enough to stay for a fellowship dinner. Don't you think they would have given him a banquet and called all to the best feast? Here is the one whom God has sent to preach deliverance unto us, but Jonah will not even stay for dinner. He is mad at God in a hut out in the heat when he could have had all the conveniences and praises of Nineveh.

Even though the Ninevites are new converts to God, they are quickly being taught an invaluable lesson. I want to repeat this same lesson to all of you who are already converts to God, whether you are new or whether you have been in the Lord for many years. What lesson could the Ninevites learn from Jonah's behavior? Trust the God who saves you, not the preacher who preaches to you. God is the Savior, the preacher is only an instrument in God's hand, and God may use all kinds of instruments. He may use faithful ones or unfaithful ones. He may use gifted ones or ungifted ones, and He may use loving ones or unloving ones. Trust God, not the preacher. If you don't get that lesson, sooner or later you are going to be disappointed by a preacher. Then you may do what so many have done because a preacher let them down. I have heard so many tell me that they don't go to church any more because the preacher hurt their feelings, or the preacher ran off with some money, or a preacher became involved with another woman. That person never learned this lesson. The Ninevites were taught early as new converts. Don't trust the preacher for your salvation. It wasn't the preacher who saved you. It was God.

Up on the mountain, Jonah probably sat in his hut and complained about how hot it was. He had no grounds on which to complain. He could have been down there in Nineveh. He had brought this inconvenience upon himself. I have observed that those, who have passionate spirits, create inconveniences for themselves all the time. If you are an angry person, you are always going to be in hot water. An angry person will create for himself a

state of inconvenience. Kids, if you are growing up in the home with a bad attitude toward your parents, you are going to be in constant conflict with them. You will also be in conflict with your teachers at school. You will also experience problems in your church or with your pastor. If you have an angry disposition, everywhere you see authority, you are going to be in trouble all the time. Passionately angry people bring inconveniences upon themselves, and then they complain so that they may have something to complain about. The discontented spirit cannot be satisfied unless it has something to complain about. I know people that aren't happy unless they are complaining. In order to be satisfied, a discontented spirit must have something to complain about.

Jonah is complaining about the heat. The situation he was in had been brought about himself. Look at his attitude, one of spite toward the Ninevites. The text reads that he sat under his shelter, **"till he might see what would become of the city."** Jonah was still holding out hope that Nineveh might yet be destroyed. Nineveh has repented, the forty days are over and God has removed His wrath from them. Jonah had a knowledge of human nature, and that all repentance is not true repentance flowing from godly sorrow. He has been in the ministry long enough to know that not everybody who says they have sinned, truly has repented of their sin. We also see this today. We hear people say, "I want to be a Christian," repent of their sin, and then go back into the world. Their repentance is not genuine, but hypocritical. Jonah knows this about human nature, and as he is observing the city, he is entertaining the hope that Nineveh may yet repent of her repentance, and return to their evil ways. He was hoping that God will yet judge them. So Jonah sits on this hillside and watches for signs of this occurring in the city, as people begin to get angry with each other and violence begins to break out again. Then Jonah says it won't be long, I knew their repentance was not genuine. Or maybe, just maybe, God might come to His senses, realize the great mistake that He has made, and come over to see my way of thinking. Jonah is going to sit up there and observe the city.

As long as Jonah is consumed with this attitude of scorn and spite, it is well for the Ninevites that he is not in their midst. Jonah would be nothing but a source of discouragement and confusion to them, as well as a grief to the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God. God's providence has separated Jonah from the Ninevites for two reasons: (1) so that Jonah might not hinder God's workings in Nineveh and (2) so that God might correct His prophet by means of personal and private chastisement. Jonah is more concerned about proving his point than he is about the ministry of God. Whenever selfishness is in the heart, it will cause us to resign our God-appointed duty to others and begin to expect more than we are getting from others. Selfishness in the heart will do that.

Look at Proverbs 22:10. This text speaks so pointedly to our story of Jonah. The wise

man states: **"Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; Yes, strife and reproach will cease."** Contention will go out, and strife and reproach will cease. In order to prevent a hindrance to what God is doing in Nineveh, God cast out His scorning prophet from their midst, and isolates him from His workings in Nineveh. Then God will reprove, rebuke, correct and chastise His scorning prophet in order to prepare and restore this wayward prophet for future service. That is a beautiful lesson. God separates scorners that they may not hinder His work and then He goes to work on the scorners to correct them from their scornful and spiteful attitude toward the working of God that God might yet prepare them for restored service later on.

God will bombard Jonah with changing circumstances which will leave Jonah reeling in confusion until the final scene in the book unfolds.

Watch as God begins to do this with the plant in verse 6: **"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 the misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant."** Now God is not speaking to Jonah by a verbalized question, He is using a symbol to speak to Jonah. God is now going to teach Jonah a spiritual lesson by means of a sensible sign, and He prepares a plant, or a tree like shrub containing vines, which grew over and shaded Jonah's shelter. This plant appears to have grown very rapidly. Men have sympathy with nature, and God often touches this sympathy. I am a lover of nature. I love animals, plants, and the things of the outdoors. Spring and summer, fall and winter, each of the seasons produce certain feelings in our hearts. We rejoice when the flowers bloom and the trees shelter us. We feel upbeat when spring is coming. When the beauty fades and the plants die, we grieve and find our spirits to be depressed. This leafy green plant speaks of encouraging times of refreshment which come into our lives. The plant represents our comforts, our joys, our achievements and successes which lift the human spirit and give hope for the future.

God saw Jonah sitting there in his own little hut filled with grief and praying to die. Then as a tender Father, God comes to the aid of His child and relieves him of his grief. This plant is the second prepared thing in the book. Remember the first prepared thing was the great fish. This shows that God chose the origin of life and death of plant life just as He does animal life as seen in the preparation of the great fish. It is no more difficult for God to create a plant than it is to create a great fish. He is the Creator and has control over all things.

Now look at Jonah's interpretation of the plant. We read in the text, that **"Jonah was very grateful for the plant."** This really lifted his spirits. Remember that Jonah had

prayed to God to take his life. Now suddenly something positive happens and he is encouraged. We read that Jonah was exceedingly happy over the appearance of the plant. We are given a real insight into the character and psychological makeup of Jonah's personality. Jonah was a passionate man given to extremes. Notice back in Chapter 4:1 how he became exceedingly angry. Now he is exceedingly glad. Jonah could be very happy or very depressed depending upon the circumstances around him at the time. He was a man of tremendous mood swings. He could go from one side of the pendulum to the other in a mood swing. Jonah would be a very difficult person with which to carry on a relationship. What if Jonah was your pastor? You would never know which Jonah was going to show up, the mad one or the glad one. That is just the way he was. He bordered on what modern psychology calls a manic depressive personality. Manic meaning exuberant one day and then depressed the next day. We get these insights into Jonah's character and personality. However, while Jonah was a passionate man, he was not a compassionate man. Jonah was very passionate. He could be happy or he could be mad, but he was not a compassionate person, and that is what God is about to reveal to him. Remember in the last chapter, I told you that Jonah was in for the most painful part of his pilgrimage. It is at the end of the book when God is going to show him just how uncompassionate he is. Also, God is going to show us the same thing, because **"these things are written for our admonition"** and our learning (I Corinthians 10:11). Now listen, it is virtually impossible for a person, who is dominated by his passions, to possess a consistent character of compassion, kindness and sensitivity to the feelings of others. You cannot consistently manifest kindness, gentleness and compassion toward others while you are ruled by your passions. You cannot continually be shifting between anger and joy and be known as a kind person who is easy to get along with. If you are experiencing mood swings, joy here and anger there, you cannot be developing a character in which people enjoy being in your presence.

Now what was it that made Jonah so happy with restored joy that he wanted to remain alive and not die? C. F. Kiel in his commentary has touched on what I think is the correct answer.

Jonah rejoiced exceedingly at the miraculous growth of the shrub which provided a shade for him, because he probably saw therein a sign of the goodness of God and of the divine approval of his intention to wait for the destruction of Nineveh. (C.F. Kiel, *Commentary on Jonah*).

E. B. Pusey is more specific when he states,

Jonah must have looked upon its sudden growth as a fruit of God's goodness toward him, (as it was) and then perhaps went on to think (as people do) that this favor of God showed that God meant, in the end, to grant him what his heart was set upon. Those of impulsive temperaments are ever interpreting the acts of God's providence, as bearing on what they strongly



desire. (E. B. Pusey, *Commentary on Jonah*).

In other words, because of God's kindness to him, Jonah is interpreting the growth of this plant to mean that God is going to give him what he wanted, which is the destruction of Nineveh.

A most valuable lesson can be learned from this. When we are living in known rebellion and disobedience to God's revealed will in His Word, we should never interpret earthly comforts or outward prosperity as infallible evidence of God's approval upon our lives. If you are not in God's revealed will today, and you know that you are not doing what He has called you to do, if He has blessed you with an earthly comfort, or many earthly comforts, do not interpret that as God's approval on you. That is exactly the fatal mistake that the evangelists have made here in our country who have fallen in disrepute. About four or five years ago, there were several well known evangelists who destroyed their lives by living in sin, and yet they were able to preach gifted messages. They were confiscating money, driving around in luxurious automobiles, and living in luxurious homes. What were they mistakenly thinking? They thought they could live in sin, and that God must be overlooking it, because of the successes they were experiencing. No, God is not overlooking it. The worm is on the horizon, and we will see their empires crumble and fall. They misinterpreted that external prosperity must be an indication of God's approval upon their sin.

So, now Jonah is getting happy. However, his happiness doesn't last long. In verse 7, God has prepared a worm. **"But as morning dawned the next day, God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered."** This is designed to teach us that God creates and controls the insects. This is the third prepared thing in the story. It shows that God is the Creator of the smallest creatures as well as the largest whales. The smallest insect is a display of the wisdom and power of God. I say that because there were some heretics in the early history of the church, and even one or two of the church fathers, who were known for their orthodoxy, who imbibed the idea that because flies and lice, and other like insects, were not desirable, that it was not a proper reflection upon the glory of God. Therefore they taught that some other source outside of God had to create these things, because their creation was not honoring to God. God creates the flies, lice and insects, and He also controls them. If you don't believe that, then ask Pharaoh.

Be careful of developing some view of God, and then trying to say God wouldn't do that, if it conflicts with the Bible. People often say, "God is such a loving God, He would never have created a thing called hell, so therefore, there is no such thing. It is not becoming to the image I have of God." That is what these early people were saying of the flies and the

lice. This is just not glorifying to God, therefore God could never have created these insects, and yet God is the origin of them all. Every insect has a purpose in the divine order of God's creation. The same God that prepared the great fish to swallow Jonah and the plant to shadow him, prepared the worm to destroy his shade and thus to try Jonah's patience.

Look again at verse 7 and see the brevity of life's comforts. **"But as morning dawned the next day."** Jonah was given but one day to enjoy the shade of his plant. He really fell in love with that plant, but he woke up the next morning expecting that something good was going to happen to him today. He thought, "I got a plant yesterday, so I wonder what is in store today?" Little did he know that God had already prepared a worm to kill the plant, probably by chewing through its underground root system.

On this passage in Jonah, my friend, Pastor Mark Webb, has a sermon called "Willy the Worm." His message tells how little Willy came out of a large group of children. God has something in store for Willy. Willy grows and grows and escapes all the ravages of nature, and then suddenly one day God's providence brings him to the root system of a delicious plant. Willy said, "This is what God has planned for me - to eat that plant." You say that is silly. No, that is God's providence. Only in reality, the worm did not know anything about God. He was just doing what his nature was created to do, and God's providence directed the worm to Jonah's plant. The only earthly comfort Jonah had left was being eaten by the worm, and he did not even know it was happening. Let us not forget the same hand that gives earthly comforts, can take away those comforts, sometimes in just a few hours, as he did in the life of Job.

What lesson do we learn from the worm? We read, that the worm **"damaged the plant that it withered."** The lesson which God will teach Jonah by the worm, is that this life is brief. Its joys and its comforts will soon pass away. If man is to have any lasting happiness, it must be in the Creator and not in the creation. I emphasize "lasting happiness." We only have one life that will soon be past, and only what is done for God will last. May we soberly learn that all of our earthly comforts, our home, our health, our family, our wives, our children, our husbands, our jobs, all of these earthly comforts are withering things that will perish some day. We shall soon be deprived of them all. Our most happy expectations are usually followed by the most bitter disappointments. Our health, families, jobs, friends, earthly hopes and plans, all have an unseen worm chewing at the roots of them. They will soon wither and pass. Jonah, you need to learn that lesson.

In verse 8 God prepares a wind. **"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.'***" This lesson teaches Jonah that God controls the elements of nature. There is absolutely nothing in the creation which the Creator does not control by his sovereign will and power. That even means the devil. This is the fourth prepared thing by God, the fish, the plant, the worm, and now the wind. The wind put the finishing touches upon the plant and Jonah's hopes as well. Troubles seldom come alone but they come in groups, one wave after another. Again, we look at the example of Job. He experienced unexpected loss, financial anxiety, family stress, and failing health all combined to bring an end to earthly expectations. I remember not too long ago seeing a documentary on CBS of a homeless man eating out of a garbage can in one of the major cities of our country. They gave the history of the man. He was a former bank president, had a half million dollar home, and a lovely wife and three children. He had boats, cars, took trips around the world, and lived a lifestyle of the rich and famous. Now he was eating out of a garbage can. Everything was gone, no wife or children, no job, failing health, no transportation. He said it was just a series of events that took it all away. I think he said that in six to eight months time he was stripped of all that he had, and was now homeless. It can happen that quick, folks. It can happen to you, it can happen to me. This has happened now to Jonah. Just when we settle down to enjoy all of these comforts for a lifetime, God then removes one of them to remind us where these comforts come from. Be reminded that they come from God. Look at your wife, your children, your job, how long do you think you are going to have those? Have you settled down expecting that they are going to be there for a long, long time? You have gone to the doctor, and he has given you a clean bill of health. Can you now expect your health to be there for a long, long time? If you don't stop and give thanks to God, He will remind you where your health and your earthly comforts come from by removing one. Then you will be made to feel your sense of loss as a result.

This teaches us of the danger of becoming lovers of our earthly pleasures more than lovers of God and His service. (Cf. II Timothy 3:4). We are not put here for just threescore and ten of pain free, carefree living and then in our sleep God takes us away to a better world to come. We are put here as a servant and as a soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ to serve in whatever capacity He appoints us by His foreordained purpose, and we are to find happiness and joy in that role whatever it may be, enjoyable or unenjoyable. "*Whatever our lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well with my soul.*" When we begin to lose sight of that and start to settle down with our nice family, just making money, going on vacations and such, and we lose sight that we are here as believers to honor and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, the worm and the wind may hit our lives, and things begin to wither. Then it is followed up by an over-whelming circumstance that leaves us reeling. What is

God doing? He is teaching us we are not here for a Sunday School picnic. We are here to do battle and serve the king. We are not living in a paradise, it is a fallen cursed world, a world of evil. Our retirement will come at the end when we are taken from this world and are put in another world.

Now finally, what was God's purpose in the wind. We read that Jonah fainted and wished to die. He said "***it is better for me to die than to live.***" The last hope that motivated Jonah to stay alive is gone. He has lost his beloved plant. All of his earthly comfort is gone. That which gave him hope to stay alive is taken away. What is God's purpose in exposing Jonah to all of these uncomfortable painful events? I will give you a little hint which we will develop it in the next lesson. God's purpose is to make Jonah sense the loss of something which his heart had grown to love. Jonah had watched his plant grow only to see it destroyed. If Jonah could love a lowly plant and sense a loss at its destruction, cannot God love His higher creatures made in His own image and His own likeness and, yes, even sense a loss in their destruction? You theologians, this will turn your wheels to turning. Can the God who has foreordained that all things come to pass, sense a loss in the destruction of His creatures when they are destroyed and cut off from Him eternally? This is the very lesson of the whole book of Jonah. If that doesn't fit into your theological system, throw your system out the window. We have to deal with this book. You may ask, how does that coincide with election, reprobation, hardening and loving? Work it out for yourself. We have to deal with this text right here. Jonah, if you can love a weed, grieve and sense its loss, don't you think that God, who had grown Nineveh up to the greatest city in the world, and in that city there were one hundred and twenty thousand little kids who don't know their left hand from their right hand, and there are many cattle who have done nothing to contribute to the moral evil of the city, don't you think God can love them and show pity upon them? If Jonah can sense the loss of a weed, don't you think God could sense the loss of His creatures? God is about to open the door of Jonah's heart to enter into the great heart of God for His creation.

Here is a summarizing lesson for you who are believers. Every circumstance, every day, and every hour has its proper lesson for you to learn. It is your duty and my duty and privilege to learn that lesson. The end design of all the changing providences in our lives is an entire process of sanctification to prepare us for a future state of glory in the presence of God and His Christ in the midst of His people. Let us then desire but one thing. That is to know God and to do His will. Did you set out at the beginning of this day, wondering what you are going to learn about God today? Do you wonder about all the changing circumstances that will happen today, whether there be anything you can learn about God and me? We are in a school, an institution of learning. Every day, every circumstance that brings about a change, whether there is a refreshing blessing, or a

worm, learn something from that circumstance. If there is a worm which takes away some comfort, ask God, "what are You teaching me in this?" If there is a wind which hits me broadside and knocks the props out from under me, what is God saying in this situation? Every hour, every day, our God is teaching us? Are we listening? Are we learning? Are we profiting? Or do you find that your knowledge of God has not changed in the last twenty years. Wake up, you are in class and the Teacher is instructing. Give heed to your God. He is going to call all of us to give an account of our stewardship one day. Learn from it and purpose with determination, **"As for me and my house, we are going to serve the Lord."** (Joshua 24:15). I want to know God and do His will. Paul purposed, **"to know Him and the power of His resurrection"** (Philippians 3:10) that I may live a life of service here to prepare me for a life of eternal service to come. That is what God is about to teach Jonah. It is going to be painful, but it is going to benefit him, because it is preparing Jonah for greater service on down the road. What about you? Have you heard any word from the Lord today? Has God convicted you about anything? Has He turned you over in your thinking to judge yourself so that you don't like what you see. If you just disregard that, you had better watch out. He may bless you tomorrow so that you don't pay any attention to what this preacher has said. Then on Tuesday the worm hits your blessing. Then you call the pastor to see what in the world the Lord is doing in your life. Then you expect the pastor to put all the pieces back together. The pastor is here to help in these matters, but only you can learn the lesson. Do you see what I am saying? Let us pray.