



Repeated Refusals to Repent

May 28, 2017

Jonah 4:1-11

“And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?” (Jonah 4:11).

Because God had forgiven and saved the Ninevites after they had believed God and repented of their evil and violent ways, three times Jonah told God that he was so angry with God that he wanted to die. Bondage to sin leads to unreasonable thinking, strange behavior, and irrational prayers. Jonah accused God of wrongdoing because God did not do what he wanted God to do. He became so angry with God that he unreasonably wanted to be eternally separated from God through death. He even told God that he had fled from God to Tarshish because he knew God was gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love. He told God that he wanted to prevent God from forgiving the Ninevites. He wanted God to send calamity upon them. Perhaps we have never been as angry as Jonah, but perhaps we have come close to those feelings despite the truths we know about the character of God. God’s redeeming discipline of the Ninevites consisted of a simple warning of destruction that contained within it the seeds of hope, and the Ninevites believed God’s word and repented. In many ways throughout the Book of Jonah, God encouraged Jonah to repent of his sins: saving him from drowning, reasoning with him, and teaching him about right and wrong. Still, Jonah wanted nothing to do with God. We do not learn if Jonah ever repented from his self-centered and unforgiving attitude toward God and others; still, God used Jonah to save a great city.

Thinking Further

1. When God chose to forgive the Ninevites for their sins, how did Jonah respond?
2. What kind of God is God according to Jonah?
3. Jonah was so angry that it made him unreasonable; therefore, what did Jonah tell God he wanted Him to do?
4. What did God do to Jonah after he complained to God and became angry?
5. Why was Jonah concerned about the plant? What concerned God?

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