



## **Repeated Refusals to Repent**

### **Jonah 4:11**

*“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—ESV).*

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. Anger, hatred, and 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. Divine traits for which all Christians give God eternal thanks! Instead, Jonah 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, especially with God, 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 through Jonah and repented. In many ways throughout the Book of Jonah, God encouraged Jonah to stop hating and 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. And because God loved the Ninevites and Jonah, I tend to believe that God continued to work in the life of Jonah until Jonah got over his anger and hatred and repented, and came to trust in the LORD of Love and Forgiveness. In God’s forgiveness of the Ninevites, the Bible gives us hope for any lost person or group—even ourselves.