

Chapter 16

JONAH'S DISPLEASURE WITH GOD

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the Lord, and said, "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live! Then the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

In the last lesson we looked at the question posed in Chapter 3 verse 9 of how it is that God is said to repent. We found a collection of verses in the Bible that say God can and does repent. We also found a collection of about twelve verses in the Bible that say God cannot and does not repent. We proceeded to try to state the apparent contradiction between these two large sets of scripture by explaining that in His essential nature, God cannot change in His being. He is God, and therefore unchangeable. He will always love righteousness and hate evil. He cannot lie, and He can never change into something other than what He is eternally.

Also, we found that God does not change His preordained purposes which were formulated in infinite wisdom in eternity past, and which include all things that come to pass in time or history. There would never be any need for God to change His eternal purposes that were formulated in His infinite wisdom. However, because of God's moral being, He must and does change His conduct or course of action whenever moral creatures change their conduct and course of action. Therefore, in His secret decretive will of electing grace, God had purposed to save the city of Nineveh. The method of achieving this purpose was to manifest His wrath in His moral character through His revealed will by threatening the city with destruction if the Ninevites did not repent in forty days. Subsequently, by the secret working of His spirit, He granted them repentance which resulted in their changed conduct. Then God withdrew His threat of wrath and changed His conduct granting the Ninevites mercy and pardon. In his *Commentary on Jonah*, Matthew Henry expresses it like this,

God takes notice of every instance of the reformation of sinners, even those instances that fall not under the cognizance and observation of the world. He sees those who turn from their evil way and who do not, and meets those with favor that meet Him in a sincere conversion. When they repent of the evil of sin committed by them, He, (God) repents of the evil of judgment pronounced against them. Thus He spared Nineveh, and ***"did not the evil which He said He would do against it."***

Now let's examine how Jonah the prophet responds to this scenario. We will first consider

the preliminary considerations before we get into the life of Jonah and his response. Let us look at the aftermath of what has happened in Nineveh. We now leave behind the account of the greatest revival or moving of the Spirit of God in the history of the world. The world's greatest and possibly the most wicked city on the face of the earth has turned to God. Forty days after Jonah enters this city, it is the most righteous city on the face of the earth. Violence has ceased, marriages have been saved, families reunited, honest business practices restored, and neighborhoods once again have become safe places in which to live. Nineveh is not the same city it was prior to Jonah's entrance into it. Everyone in Nineveh is happy, there is rejoicing in the streets, and they have hope for the future. Furthermore, if there is rejoicing in heaven among the angels over one sinner who repents, the angels must truly be beside themselves when hundreds of thousands of sinners have repented in so short a period of time. Remember that the angels have never seen anything like this before. They had seen God display His righteous judgment in the days of Noah, and wipe out the world with a flood. They had seen God destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven in the days of Abraham and Lot. The angels had seen the plagues upon Pharaoh in the days of Moses, but they had never seen a display of mercy in proportion to this before. Also, the divine Godhead in heaven is rejoicing. The Father, the Son and the Spirit are rejoicing in what is the successful outcome of a redemptive purpose planned before the foundation of the world. In the parable of the prodigal son, if the Father can welcome home one prodigal son and prepare the best feast of rejoicing the household has ever seen, what do you think the heavenly Father prepared when he heard hundreds of thousands of prodigals crying up to heaven in repentance? Do you think the God of the Bible was unmoved as He watched this happening? Do you think the God of the Bible who loves lost sinners was unaffected by the cries of those thousands of prodigal sons coming home? My friend if you question that, you need to get in your closet with your Bible and ask God to show you who He is.

Now let us leave the aftermath of Nineveh just as we left the fish in chapter 2 and the storm in chapter 1, and look at what is ahead for Jonah. You would think that it must be all anti-climatic from this point forward, but that is not so. As we enter into the fourth chapter it first appears that it is an appendix to the book seeing as how Jonah's mission to Nineveh is accomplished. In chapter one, Jonah leaves his homeland and encounters the storm at sea. After a slight delay in the fish's belly, Jonah arrives in Nineveh and performs his mission. It would seem that the book ought to end here, but instead we are given a description of the negative effect produced upon Jonah by the Lord's mercy to Nineveh, and the method taken by God to rebuke and correct him.

The fourth chapter is not a mere addition to the book. On the contrary, it is the focus point of the entire book. Sad to say, that is not what most people remember about the book of

Jonah. I dare say that ninety-five percent of people who are familiar with the Bible believe the focus of the book of Jonah is that Jonah got swallowed by a whale or some great fish, and they will have missed the focus point of the entire book of Jonah. The main point is not focusing on the exploits of Jonah, or the storm at sea. It is not even about a man surviving an experience in the fish's stomach, or the amazing repentance of Nineveh. The grand lesson of the book is now about to be unfolded to us, and that is the amazing love and compassion which God has for His creation. That is how it is going to end with the last verse.

In the first chapter we saw Jonah entering into the middle of a ship. In the second chapter we saw him entering into the middle of a fish. In the third chapter we saw Jonah entering into the middle of a great city. Now we are about to follow Jonah as he is about to enter into the middle of the great heart of God. Many of you may have discovered an aspect of Jonah in yourselves at various points in the book, and how that it has not always been a pleasant experience. Jonah has certainly been exposed to some unpleasant and painful experiences thus far, but the most painful and humiliating experience of all lies ahead for him. I want to forewarn you what may prove to be the most painful, spiritual experience of our entire lives, may be before us in the concluding verses of this book. That may seem to be a strange statement. What could be so painful in learning of God's love? Surely, that would be a whole lot easier than learning about God's chastening in the belly of the fish. However, every time that God reveals an additional level of his moral perfection to us, it always exposes our moral imperfections, and that is painful. For example, when Isaiah was given a view of God's holiness in Isaiah chapter six, he immediately saw his own unholiness. As God is about to reveal his immense loving heart to us, as He did to Jonah, the spotlight will be focused on our own hearts, and we will be made to see just how unloving, unthankful, insensitive and uncompassionate our own hearts are. I forewarn you there are painful days ahead if the Lord allows that spotlight to penetrate our hearts. But there are also joyful days ahead as our God takes us into a deeper understanding of His great heart. Are you ready to go? Are you ready to go through the storm? Are you ready to go through the fish? Are you ready to go through the mockery of Nineveh? Are you ready to enter into the great heart of God?

In chapter 4, verses 1-4, we will look at Jonah's displeasure with the Lord; in verses 5-9, God's method of reproving Jonah, and in verses 10-11, God's compassion confronting Jonah. Verse 1 says, **"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry."** What was Jonah's problem? You would not think that this preacher would have a problem after having many people converted under his ministry. Many preachers get so discouraged that they leave the ministry because they have so few conversions. Jonah was resigning the ministry because everybody he preached to got converted. We have a

strange fellow here on our hands at this time. Heaven is rejoicing. Nineveh is rejoicing, but the prophet of God is mad at God. Even though Nineveh is now a righteous city, Jonah would rather have it destroyed as a monument to the justice of God. Why? Jonah had predicted Nineveh's destruction and it was not destroyed. When Jonah returns back to Israel, he will be viewed as a false prophet because his prophecy did not come true. God explains in Deuteronomy 18:21-22 how a true prophet was to be understood and identified. **"And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?'— when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him."** If a prophet says something is going to come to pass and it doesn't come to pass, the people will assume that God is not in that fellow's ministry. Jonah had predicted that Nineveh would be destroyed. Now he will be the laughing stock of his own people when they find out his prophesy did not come to pass. They will no longer give him credence and listen to him as one of God's spokesmen.

Jonah tells us that he is mad because God did not destroy Nineveh. Chapter 4, verse 1 says **"it displeased Jonah exceedingly."** What is it that displeased Jonah? In chapter 3:10 it says **"He (God) did not do it."** In other words, God did not destroy Nineveh as He said He would. Jonah's spirit at this time in his life is like that of the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son. Instead of joining his family in rejoicing over the younger brother's recovery from his evil ways, the elder brother took exception to the father's tender kindness toward the younger son. Then the elder son went to his father and charged his father with being partial and unkind to him by never rewarding him for his faithful obedience. Jonah had labored a long time in Israel with the assigned task of seeking Israel's repentance, and he had seen no change in the life of that nation. If you look at the time schedule in which Jonah preached, you will find that this preaching of repentance, and God's warning that judgment was coming, had been going on for about one hundred and fifty years. Jonah had preached and preached and there had been no repentance in Israel, the nation Jonah loved. Now to his dismay, God has granted repentance to an enemy nation and forgiven them when they deserve to be destroyed for their sins. Jonah believed that God should grant a repentance to Israel and save Israel under his preaching. Instead, Jonah thought that God wasted His mercy on Nineveh when He should have granted it to Israel.

Was Jonah's attitude right or wrong? Let us look at the wrongness of Jonah's anger. There are three reasons why his anger is not commendable. First, because he lost control of his spirit. Prov. 16:32 says: **"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city."** Jonah has lost control when he argues

in the face of God. When a person cannot control his anger, he exposes himself to many temptations and snares. We must get our anger under control. God may allow you to get by for a long time. Get your anger under control, or else you will find yourself in a situation to your own great harm and those round about you. Jonah lost control of his spirit.

Secondly, Jonah's anger is wrong because he shows disrespect to God. It pleased God to save Nineveh. Whatever pleases God should please us. Even when we cannot explain and understand what God is doing. Be careful about arguing with God and charging Him foolishly. Is that not what Job was commended for? The Bible says that Job confessed, **"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong."** (Job 1:22-22). Make sure we keep our anger under control when we are dealing with the interpretation of God's providence, and bow before that even when we do not understand it, even when it gives us great physical and emotional pain. Be careful that we do not show disrespect to our God.

The third reason Jonah's anger was wrong is that he showed no affection for the Ninevites. As far as he was concerned, they were the scum of the earth. The Ninevites were Israel's main enemies who had inflicted horrible tortures upon the people of God. So now God has saved the enemy, and it appears that the nation of Israel is doomed. This error of not having affection for other people, particularly our enemies, was the error of the scribes and Pharisees who criticized our Savior because He associated with the publicans and sinners who were considered moral outcasts. The scribes and Pharisees regarded these people as the enemies of God, and should not even be associated with. Our Lord was criticized for identifying with them and even entertaining them in His presence.

The fourth reason Jonah's anger was wrong, is that an angry spirit is a proud spirit. I base that statement on Proverbs 13:10, **"By pride comes nothing but strife"** If you have a problem with anger, you most likely have a proud heart. I have observed that as long as a Christian himself confesses that he is a "wicked sinner" it is all right, but if he becomes angry when someone else says the same thing, it reveals whether he has a humble heart or not.

So Jonah was wrong when he lost control of his spirit, showing disrespect for God, and lack of affection toward his fellow men, the Ninevites.

In Jonah's prayer in verse 2 we first see his complaint to God. **"So he prayed to the Lord, and said, 'Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness. One who relents**

from doing harm." In this verse, we find Jonah quarreling with God rather than praying to God. It contains none of the ingredients found in true prayer, particularly like those in chapter 2 when he was praying in the fish's belly. It is more like a dumping into the lap of God the entire collection of his frustrations which have developed and grown in intensity throughout his entire ordeal. He is ready to blow his stack, so to speak, and he is going to do it right in the face of God. Frustrations often bring out of men what has been concealed in their heart all the time. Jonah now reveals to God, (as if God did not know) the reason he fled to Tarshish at the first. Notice how he lets the cat out of the bag when he says, **"Ah LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country?"** "Wasn't this what I thought when you commissioned me to go to Nineveh? That is why I fled to Tarshish." The reason Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh was because he just knew what the outcome was going to be if he went. "Was this not my saying when I was in "my country?" These words "my country" here reveal Jonah's heart of love for his native land, his people, the religious privileges and traditions such as the temple in Jerusalem, the priesthood, and the sacrificial system of approach unto God. Jonah was thinking of all the advantages that God had bestowed upon the Israelites, God's people.

The Apostle Paul mentions these advantages in Romans 9:4-5 when he says **"Who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."** Israel had many blessings bestowed upon them which the Gentile nations did not have. Jonah believed that if God allowed the Assyrians to carry Israel away into captivity, then it would bring about an end to God's purposes for Jonah's beloved country. This is what brought fear to his heart when he was first commissioned to go to Nineveh. Now his worst fears have materialized. Nineveh has been spared, therefore Israel is doomed to destruction. It appears that God has cast away His people and is now turning to the Gentiles. Jonah is not the only one who had this problem. Peter and the early Jewish converts struggled with the salvation of the Gentiles and their introduction into the people of God. They struggled with what this seemed to be doing to the temple, the priesthood, and all that God had established. It seemed to be destroying all of that. Even today there are theological systems of those who hold to Eschatology still struggling with God's relationship to Israel as it relates to the Gentiles? It took some time before Peter could be convinced to believe that the Gentiles could be saved apart from converting to Judaism. God had to give him the vision of the sheet let down with all the unclean animals. That was after Peter had preached his message on the Day of Pentecost when 3,000 people were saved. You don't have to have a perfect understanding to preach the Bible, because no one has a perfect understanding except the Author of it Himself. We ought to **"be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be**

ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (II Timothy 2:15). But at the same time, let us avoid a spirit of thinking that we have accomplished the understanding of it all. We are not masters. All that were saved on Pentecost were Jewish people. Later on, Peter's Jewish converts had the same problem. In Acts 10:45 we read that as Peter was preaching in the Gentile household of Cornelius, **“those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.”** They were just amazed why Gentiles were being blessed by God in the same way that the Jews were. Later on in Acts 11:18 we read, **“When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’”** That is, when they saw that it was God's work, and that God was granting repentance to Gentiles in addition to Jews, then they finally could accept that this was truly a work of God. However, Jonah did not see that. Jonah's mistake was in thinking, that he could see the future better than God, and that his own predictions were more accurate than God's. Jonah could not envision that God could save both peoples and join them together in one body under the rule of the Messiah. Not two bodies, but one body in Christ. “Either/or” thinking ruins much Bible interpretation. We are prone to believe that everything must be an “either/or,” “black or white,” “left or right,” or “up or down,” matter, and that is the way we want it to be. On several occasions, our Lord refused to be trapped into “either/or” theology. His critics continually tried to back Him in corners with questions like, “Master, to whom do we owe our taxes, either Caesar or do we pay tribute to God at the temple?” (Matthew 22:15-21). That is an either/or question our Lord refused to answer because the large volume of Biblical truth was not “over here” or “over there.” There is a certain section of Biblical responsibility which we have to our governments to render taxes unto them. There is another set of Biblical revelation wherein we have duty to God. It is not either/or. Again, there are so many issues that Christians have been divided on because they have insisted on either/or answers. Our Lord would not be backed into that kind of thinking. Some of these issues are: “either God must be sovereign or man must be responsible.” It cannot be both. “Either the church must be universal or it must be local.” It cannot be both. “There must either be a general call or there must be a particular call.” There cannot be both. “There must either be a special love or there must be a general love.” There cannot be both. This is the way Christians think, dividing themselves into sects and groups so they cannot get along with each other. This can be illustrated by the story of the 10 blind men trying to describe what an elephant looked like by each of them feeling a different portion of the elephant's body. They each had a totally different description because they could only feel the part of the elephant they had a hold of. One could refute another by calling him a heretic because he didn't see the elephant like he saw it. The elephant was bigger than what they could see. Likewise, this Bible is bigger than your mind and my mind can comprehend. It has masses of truth contained

therein.

Now let's consider Jonah's knowledge of God as evidenced by his prayer. I have heard it said that if Jonah had just known more about God he would not have acted in the way he did. The very opposite is true. It was because of what Jonah knew about God that caused him to refuse to go to Nineveh in the first place. Jonah knew that God's greatest glory was delighting in showing grace and mercy to repentant sinners. Nothing delights God more than showing mercy to repenting sinners. God so delights in showing mercy to sinners that in Isaiah 28:21, God's justice or His judgment is said, **"He may do His work, His awesome work, and bring to pass His act, His unusual act."** This scripture indicates that God's punishment of the wicked is not that which He delights in. It is His mercy and His grace that He takes delight in, and that when He punishes injustice, it is said to be **"His unusual act."** This means that though God judges the sins of the guilty, it gives Him no delight to afflict them with punishment.

David said of God, **"For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You."** (Psalm 86:5). Jonah knew of the merciful character of God because it was the very message that God gave to him and the other prophets to proclaim to backsliding Israel. All the prophets preached the wrath of God and His threats to send them into captivity, but as they were preaching that wrath, the merciful character of God was to be proclaimed as well. Joel, a minor prophet, almost a contemporary of Jonah, in Chapter 2:12-13 says, **"Now, therefore, says the Lord, Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm."** That is the punishment and the prophet's message. While the message of the prophets was threatening Israel with impending destruction, at the same time, the prophets were to say on the behalf of God, "I am a gracious, merciful God who is slow to anger, turn from your sin, I take delight in forgiving you and I will withdraw my threat."

In Lamentations 3:31-34 God is describing that when He punishes people, He does not afflict willingly: **"For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. To crush under one's feet all the prisoners of the earth."** Do you not see two aspects of the divine will of God? Is it not said in the Bible that it pleased the Lord to bruise His own Son? (Cf. Isaiah 53:10). Did our heavenly Father view the bruising of His Son from Heaven and say, "Oh, I am enjoying every minute of this?" If that is the image you have of your Heavenly Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, then you need to enter into the great heart of

God. Even when it is necessary to do so, God takes no delight in afflicting His creatures. The main attribute that He desires to demonstrate is that He takes delight in His grace, mercy, and longsuffering. The same character of God is revealed in Ezekiel 33:11: **"'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'"** These texts should correct the mistaken notion that the God of the Old Testament was a God of wrath, while the God of the New Testament is a God of love and mercy. He is the same God throughout history. Be careful of reading any studies of the Bible by preachers and writers of various commentaries that divide up God as being one God in the Old Testament and another God in the New Testament. He is a God who pours out His wrath upon impenitent sinners, and He is a God who delights in showing mercy to repentant sinners. Read Exodus 34:6-7 where God revealed Himself to Moses: **"And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.'"** Jonah was familiar with all the Old Testament scriptures that revealed the character of God. He knew his God well, but he insisted on his self-justification in spite of what he knew about God. He believed that he was right. Remember how Peter argued with the Lord when Jesus tells him that He is going to the cross. Peter replied **"not so Lord."** How do you argue with the Lord? How do you acknowledge Christ as Lord and say, "I know you are Lord, but you are wrong about this?" In Jonah's words, "was not this my saying," he is still clinging to the idea that he was right all along for fleeing to Tarshish. Even after God had brought him through the experience in the fish's belly for being disobedient, he is still saying, "I was right back there, and I am still right." Later on, we will see that Jonah will be saying, "I will go to my grave believing I am right." What a prophet we have before us. Would not you think that if you went through the belly of a fish, it would correct you of your backsliding and your straying? While the experience in the fish's belly corrected his disobedience, it did not give him a love for obedience. You may be an obedient preacher, but not be a loving preacher. You may obey because you fear God's chastisement, but without loving God and the people to whom you are preaching. What a tragedy to have a spokesman for God who will obey, but not out of a heart of love. God's chastisements do not always produce a loving response. They may produce obedience, but it is not until one enters into the great heart of God, that he is enabled to love as God loves. Jonah has yet to learn this lesson, and this is going to be more painful for him than his experience in the fish's belly. There is probably nothing more hurtful than for someone to point out how unloving that we are.

If and when you are given a vision of the greatness of the heart of God, you will also receive a vision of your true self, and this is not a pretty picture. It will be hard, and for Jonah, it was painful. In verse 3 he said, ***"Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"*** Jonah is so frustrated in what he believes is in store for his people, Israel, that he cannot bear to live to see it come to pass. He asks God to take his life. He would rather die than see the glory of Israel transferred to the Gentiles. He could not bear to see all of their traditions, their temple, the priesthood, and the sacrifices, taken over by the Ninevites.

This request reveals Jonah's lack of faith in God. If you become unthankful for God's providence in your life, like Jonah, it will not be long before you will begin to desire death. This chilling desire dampened Jonah's hopes and plans, but God's plans were better than Jonah's plans. Jonah should have trusted the wisdom of God. Jonah's pouting not only revealed his lack of faith in God, but his unthankfulness for his own forgiveness. He had been in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, and God had shown mercy unto him. That should have made Jonah merciful and tenderhearted toward others, and to rejoice to see others come to repentance and be saved. Instead, his heart was hardened. That is Jonah's problem. You will never become a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ until you are enabled to love the people to whom you are witnessing. That will not happen. Tillotson has well said that, "anger is a short fit of madness," or insanity. Jonah has demonstrated "madness" at this point in desiring God to kill him. We should leave the time of our dying up to the Lord, and spend our energies desiring to do what God desires to be done. We should desire to stay here until God is through with us in fulfilling His desires for our lives. When He is through with us, He will call us on to glory.

We should make three applications regarding the sins committed by Jonah in his anger. The first of these would be the sin of sectarianism and narrow-mindedness. The attitude of my country, my denomination, my creed, my race, and my family needs to be reprovved. Jonah is displaying a form of bigotry here. I live in the United States of America, and I am thankful for my country. It is my native land, but I do not defend America right or wrong. When America is right, I will support her. When America is wrong, I will oppose her. I am a Baptist by conviction, not by convenience, but God spare me from the sectarian position of Baptists who believe that they are the only group that has the truth, and they are the only narrow circle that God is working through. God spare us from that narrow-mindedness. In my creedal conviction, I confess I am a Calvinist, but I will not use that creed to browbeat brothers and sisters of mine in Christ who do not ascribe to that creed. God spare us from sectarianism, denominationalism and creedalism.

The second of Jonah's sins is his opposition of missionary and evangelistic efforts. God did

not say, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone except the black people, everyone but the Asian people, everyone but the Spanish people." We need to get that clear in our minds before we meet God face to face in heaven. We would not want to face God angry like Jonah in opposition to something that God loves. Many times we ignore our Christian duty to evangelize other races with the opinion that "if God wants these people saved, He will save them without my help." That is a truth set forth in the Bible, but that same Bible commands men everywhere to "repent and believe the gospel," and that gospel is to be proclaimed, exhorted and encouraged. Men and women, boys and girls, wherever we are, we must proclaim, exhort and encourage people to do so until the trumpet sounds.

The last sin for which Jonah had to be rebuked, is the sin of envying the success and the happiness of others, especially those he was angry with because they were receiving the blessings of God. Does that kind of envy occur in our lives and in our culture? Here are a few scenarios that may occur. We as preachers may go to a Bible conference and hear a very gifted speaker. Instead of thanking God for blessing him with that ability, we are envious about why God didn't bless us with like gifts. Say you are in line for a promotion on a job and somebody, that in your opinion, has caused harm to your company, is called in and promoted ahead of you. Do you get alone with God and say, "oh thank you Lord for blessing that person." On the contrary, you are eaten up inside with envy, strife and division, because God blessed someone else and didn't bless you. Here is one scenario for you young people. You have your eye on a certain girl or a certain boy, and they show a little interest in you. You are thinking this could possibly be the one God has prepared for you. Then here comes along a guy (who is not near as good looking as you), and he is able to sweep her off her feet. You are invited to their wedding ceremony, and you sit there thinking, "I am so happy that these people are going to make such a happy couple." I doubt that very seriously. Envy is eating you up. This is exactly what Jonah is going through. This is Jonah, but this is also descriptive of you and me. Does it then not make you so thankful for the grace and mercy of God in His tenderness and longsuffering with the likes of us all? God, enable us to enter in to see Your great heart of goodness. I know my heart, and if Jonah had served under my administration, I would have called him in and given him a tongue lashing. We would have gotten things straightened out, or he wouldn't be on the ministerial team anymore. But not only is God tender and compassionate with the Ninevites, but notice how tender and compassionate He is toward one of His own, who is arguing to His very face. That gives me hope. That is the kind of God with whom we are dealing. I need to have that kind of God, because I may duplicate this sin that Jonah is demonstrating right now.

Finally, as we leave Jonah, he has just asked God to take his life because he is mad at

God. Do you think this is a good time for God to take Jonah's life and for him to appear before the eternal presence of God with the last thing on his lips, "I am mad at you?" Do you want to leave this world and go into the presence of an eternal God with anger in your heart and malice on your lips against Him? What is your attitude toward God this day? Search your heart. Let us pray.