

KEEP THY HEART

A Bible-Based Devotional

Turn to: **Jonah 1**
“The Cycle of Sin”

God used the prophet Jonah to spark an incredible revival. Yet sadly, oftentimes Jonah chose to be a stubborn man who didn't even want revival—not in Nineveh, anyway. In chapter 1 of Jonah, we will look at the cycle of sin as it plays out in the life of this prophet.

1: The sin (v1-3). Jonah blatantly disobeyed God's command to preach. Perhaps he was a "popular" and "positive" prophet, well-known in Israel for prophesying how Israel would regain part of its land (II Kings 14:25). He may have even been a bit of a celebrity. Yet now, God wants him to cry *against* a city (v2)? Maybe Jonah didn't want to be "one of those" types of prophets.

(v3) I can imagine Jonah as he **fled** from God's presence, perhaps as though he were in trouble with the law, maybe under cover of darkness. Perhaps his friends saw him as he fled and asked, "What's wrong, Jonah?" If we're not right with God, we are fleeing **from the presence of the LORD** also—ignoring the Bible, avoiding godly people in our lives, or trying to stay away from holy conviction by drowning it out with sinful entertainment, parties, or alcohol and drugs.

Perhaps as Jonah arrived at the shipping dock in **Joppa**, he scanned the list of possible ships and their destinations; and, as it turns out, there's one going exactly where he wants—**Tarshish!** Satan will try to pave the way for sin, making it much more convenient than it otherwise would be. He will position sin within just a couple of clicks on the internet, or within a quick drive to the dollar store on the alcohol shelves; and he will bring deceitful friends into your life who will encourage you to sin.

Jonah had to **pay the fare** to board the ship. He was a prophet, probably not very wealthy. He may have spent up his life's savings for this trip. Please don't forget about the fare that sin charges. Its price is high; it has hidden

fees; and it has false advertising. If you're planning to dabble in satanic or dark things, don't forget the high price. If you're tempted toward a deceitful and lying tongue, don't overlook the massive price tag that comes with it. If you're planning to get caught up in indecent or profane movies, don't forget the "side effects"; it pollutes the mind, ruins marriages and families, and leads to yet worse sins.

2: The uncovering (v4-7). I imagine as Jonah left the dock, the sky was likely clear, and perhaps the sea breeze felt good. If only he could have seen the approaching hurricane-force storm on radar! And if only he could have used sonar to see the whale which may have already been swimming below the ship. Poor Jonah; when we run from God, we're **like to be broken**; and the wicked are like the troubled **sea** (Isaiah 57:20; Jude 1:13).

(v5) The storm hits; and if even the seasoned *seamen* **are afraid**, then it's time to be afraid! Sadly, they had custom, "made-to-order" false **goods** which couldn't deliver them. Don't be like that; and don't think you can avoid God's judgment by throwing a few things overboard in your life. You need repentance—a fundamental change in *direction*, or turning the ship around. But anyway, how could Jonah sleep through this storm? Maybe he was utterly exhausted and depressed from his journey to the shipyard. Running from God is wearying (Isaiah 50:11).

(v6) Imagine Jonah's surprise as a probably rough, burly sea captain abruptly wakes him up, makes fun of him, and dubs him with a new nickname similar to our modern "Sleepy-Head"! **(v7)** These seasoned sailors know that this isn't a natural storm, so they want to find out who is to blame by **casting lots**. It's a good thing that no one has thrown the dice overboard yet with all the other stuff. As Jonah will find out, and as others and I have personally seen, God is capable of using seeming "coincidence" to work miracles in our lives.

3: The confession (v8-10). These sailors don't follow Robert's Rules of Order; they just start blasting poor Jonah with questions from all sides, asking him for everything except his social security number. Yet they give him the

benefit of the doubt by suggesting that, perhaps, he's not *personally* responsible for the storm.

(v9) Jonah is probably the only **Hebrew** on board; and he describes God's power in a way that these seamen uniquely understand, saying that He is the **Maker of the sea and dry land**.

(v10) Sometimes, the world actually wants us to remain faithful to God (though not always). Some people want to see Christians who are "real" and who actually obey God. Apparently, Jonah had already **told them** of his disobedience. Can you imagine that conversation? Maybe they thought he was joking when he said he was **running away from God**, but now it's clear...he's not joking, and this storm is certainly no joke!

4: The consequence (v11-17). I picture this entire scene to be full of chaotic shouting as rough sailors grab railing or rope to balance themselves on the reeling ship, as waves crash on board and ocean spray gets into their eyes. There is an urgency, yet they don't kill Jonah; they want to make sure they handle this the right way. I think they want to appease God.

(v12) Jonah knows he must be thrown overboard, but instead of just jumping out of the ship, he asks these sailors to throw him out. He admits that this whole thing is his fault, which is the first step to getting things right.

(v13) Does it surprise you that these seamen, who were probably rough and hardened, don't throw Jonah overboard right away? You'd think they would say, "Well, you asked for it!" and then just toss him over the edge before he could change his mind. Yet they bravely try to bring the ship to land (maybe they hadn't gone very far at all). Yet now the sea seems to be angry **against them** personally, as the waves perhaps crash violently against their oars, and one thing after another goes wrong.

(v14) These pagan seamen pray a pretty good prayer! It would be really weird to throw someone overboard, even if that person asked for it. Is Jonah just nervously waiting for them to make up their minds? **(v15)** You can almost hear them saying, "Sorry, man," as they toss him over, and I would imagine Jonah probably didn't put up much of a fight. And what a scene the seamen saw! I'll bet the turbulence stopped

instantly; maybe there was a little leftover rocking back and forth, but all the violent energy of the sea was suddenly absent. And maybe it was calm soon enough for the men to see what happened to Jonah...

(v16) Now they know without any doubt that God was behind this storm! Maybe the sun is shining again and the sea is glassy calm in a matter of minutes (or even seconds). Most people make **vows** to God when they are going through a storm, and when the storm is over, they forget all about their vows. Not these seamen! They didn't have a "foxhole conversion"; they really meant it, and they made vows *after* the storm was over and they were safe again. They apparently had some animals on board for a sacrifice. But it seems that everywhere Jonah goes, revival breaks out: not because of him, but in spite of him.

(v17) Perhaps God had this **great fish** swim below the ship from the time it left the dock; or maybe God had this fish keep an appointment for this spot of water at this time. But whatever happened, this whale (Matthew 12:40) literally **swallowed up Jonah**. I think God is giving Jonah a taste of hell, perhaps so that Jonah will feel some compassion for the Ninevites and want them to be saved. Perhaps it would do us good to think more often on the horrors of hell so that we will have more of a drive to win lost souls for Jesus Christ. Maybe that will help us have a more fervent desire to see our family members, co-workers, and neighbors saved.

That's the "cycle of sin" in Jonah's life; first, he flatly disobeyed God, but then God uncovered his sin (Numbers 32:23). Thankfully, Jonah confessed his sin (I John 1:9), but he still had to pay the consequences. Let's strive to avoid this entire cycle by staying as close to Jesus Christ as possible. And let's try to do a better job reaching the lost, not running from *our* commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

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A Bible-Based Devotional

Turn to: **Jonah 2**
"The Underwater Prayer"

Some people think that in order for God to respect their prayer, they have to stand a certain way, or kneel, or speak out loud; but did you know that God can hear your prayer wherever you are, and whether you speak out loud or in your heart? In this chapter, we will see that the most important part of prayer is the posture of your heart, not of your body. I believe this is the only recorded underwater prayer in the Bible. Whether you are in a church, at home, driving a car, alone in a hospital room, or in a whale's belly, you can pray to God. If you come to Him with the right heart, you can have hope that God will hear you in spite of three things.

1: Hope in spite of punishment (v1-4).

Jonah prayed **out of the fish's belly**, which was as good a place as any to pray! God can hear us wherever we are, whether we are in a palace or whether we are spending the night in, as McGee called it, the "fish motel" like Jonah. He prayed **unto the LORD his God**, not to idols or nature, or to the fish, or to the sun or moon or stars. He didn't try to remember his horoscope; he prayed to the God of heaven.

(v2) Oftentimes I don't pray enough, until it is **"by reason of mine affliction"** (cf. Psalm 119:67). Affliction can either draw us close to God or push us away from God, depending on our reaction. Jonah seems a little surprised that **"God heard him"**; even when we are disobedient, God is ready to take us back when we repent! I think Jonah expected the silent treatment from God (see Isaiah 1:15).

Also, how can Jonah be so sure that **God heart his voice** when he is still in the fish's belly? Maybe God allowed Jonah to find some air. But in any case, God showed Jonah He was still there. God is always with us if we are saved, and we can confidently say He has heard our prayer, even if we haven't yet been delivered.

(v3) Whales can go down **into the deep** quite low, thousands of feet below sea level. I'm not sure how low Jonah could have survived before his lungs collapsed, but I'm sure he felt a

lot of pressure. Jonah probably felt the **floods** of ocean currents pushing on the whale, as well as the small currents inside the whale's belly. I think the **billows** constantly made Jonah feel like he was drowning, crashing over his head time and time again.

(v4) As a prophet who probably knew his Bible and prophecies of others, Jonah may have worried that I Kings 9:7 applied here, and that he had been **cast out of God's sight** forever. Yet even the slightest glimmer of hope caused Jonah to pray anyway. How sad that many people today reject the gospel outright, in spite of being offered lots of hope from God's Word if they turn to Him. Jonah was willing to grasp at any hope possible of God hearing him.

God chastened Jonah because He loved him, not because He hated him or had abandoned him (Proverbs 3:11-12, Isaiah 54:7-9). God chastens all true Christians at some time or another (Hebrews 12:5-8). Because of that, we can have hope in spite of punishment.

2: Hope in spite of corruption (v5-7). Can you imagine the sloshing waves and intense heat inside the whale? The verse mentions plural **waters**, not singular; and similarly, in hell are multiple torments (Luke 16:23). I think this chastening **even to the soul** may indicate that Jonah experienced a taste of hell itself, possibly even dying (cf. Matthew 10:28). Imagine Jonah's hopeless feeling as the whale's mouth **"closed him round about"**, and the light went out, with no more escape.

Hell will also have unexpected torments, as Jonah experienced the **weeds wrapped about his head**, which may have started drowning him as he became tangled in them. Similarly, hell has specific difficulties people haven't considered, including worms (Isaiah 14:11).

(v6) Jonah **went down** (cf. 1:3), and hell is a place of descent, a bottomless pit (Revelation 17:8). Jonah felt a taste of the hopelessness of being locked in hell forever. Jonah experienced **corruption**, unlike Jesus (Psalm 16:10). And although Jonah previously told the sailors about the LORD (Luke 6:46), now he actually means it.

(v7) In hell, a person's **soul faints**, and he loses all hope (Proverbs 10:28; 11:7; ~Job 8:13). But Jonah's troubles led him to **remember the LORD**; do you remember Him? Do you thank Him for everything He has done for you? Or do you ignore him in your life? I like how Jonah's

prayer came in unto God, as though it came to His mail inbox. I'm afraid His "inbox" is not nearly as full as it ought to be; we ought to be praying much more (Luke 18:8).

And isn't it amazing that if we're right with Jesus Christ, our prayers also come **into His holy temple** (Rev 5:8)? We now have a direct connection to God through Jesus Christ. It's better than having the President on speed dial.

Jonah's difficulties were because he was disobedient. But very often, godly, obedient Christians have physical difficulties as well, having their flesh eaten away by disease and corruption (e.g., Job). But one day, all of us Christians will receive brand new, glorified bodies (Job 19:26), without even one hair missing (Luke 21:18)! Not even the chill of death or the ugliness of disease can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:38-39). Like Jonah, we can have hope in spite of corruption.

3: Hope in spite of the past (v8-10).

Sadly, many people **observe** wicked things, like the occult, horoscopes, superstitions, or false religions. But anything contradicting the Bible is a **lie**. Sin's price tag is always incorrect and always has a lot of fine print. Ask a drunkard on the street whether he thought he would end up that way; likely, he thought he would be cool and popular by drinking and having a good time. But the pleasures of sin are **vanity**, as they last for just a moment and then disappear like a puff of smoke (Hebrews 11:25, James 4:14).

Sinners who choose to follow their own way, instead of following Jesus Christ, are **forsaking** the only key out of hell; they are tearing up their signed pardon (cf. Hebrews 2:3). The salvation that God offers people is **their own**, prepared especially for them; Jesus died for each person in particular, not just for the world as a whole (Galatians 2:20). And anyone who thinks he or she can get to heaven on their own merits is sadly mistaken; they absolutely need God's **mercy** if they hope to enter heaven, just as a pardoned prisoner needs mercy, not justice, to enter the king's palace.

(v9) The world may reject Jesus Christ. But let us say, "**But I receive Him**" (cf. Joshua 24:15). It is better to go to heaven alone than to hell with a crowd. And let us serve Jesus Christ **with the voice of thanksgiving!** Let's not have sour faces and grumpy hearts when we serve Jesus. When the offering plate comes by at church, we

shouldn't give with a frown on our face. It's not always easy to have the right attitude, but we should strive for that. "God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7).

Jonah paid what he had vowed

(Deuteronomy 23:21; Jonah 1:16). If we made a loan at the bank, wouldn't we follow through? How much more should we take a vow to God seriously?

(v10) I'll bet this **fish** received a special reward for this gross assignment; maybe, after **vomiting out Jonah upon the dry land**, God gave him an extra burst of excitement as he swam away. Did he drop Jonah off at Joppa, where he left? If so, he took the scenic three-day route on the way back to shore. Did anyone see this? I think perhaps some people did; maybe Jonah just lay there, face down in the sand, so glad just to be on solid land again; and maybe others came and helped him get to a place where he could recover and regain his strength. He would need it for the long journey ahead.

In spite of Jonah's past of disobedience, he could have hope in God. You can have hope, too, in spite of your past. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery (Genesis 50:15, 19); Jephthah was born illegitimately (Judges 11:1); Saul had an extremely religious background (Philippians 3:4-6); and John Mark had a reputation for "jumping ship" (Acts 13:13, II Timothy 4:11). Cf. Isaiah 1:18. Yet each of them, and many others, were still used by God.

We can have hope in God in spite of punishment; God is merciful and forgiving. We can have hope in spite of corruption; though worms or disease destroy our body, yet our brand new body awaits, immune to the curse of sin. And we can have hope in spite of our past; God is willing to throw our sins into the depths of the sea, much further down than this whale that swallowed Jonah would ever be able to swim (Micah 7:19).

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Turn to: **Jonah 3**
“The Greatest Revival in History”

Don't you wish we would have another sweeping revival in our country? That would be so exciting. There have been incredible true stories, even in somewhat recent times, of sweeping revival taking place, such as the Welsh revival; and others have caused saloons to go out of business. God is able to do that again if we really want it. Let's look at three steps of revival as seen in what may be the greatest example in all of history: the revival of the wicked city of Nineveh.

1: Obedience (v1-4). The **word of the LORD** is necessary for revival (Romans 10:17); sadly, many churches are pushing the Bible aside, marginalizing it, or watering it down. Any revival not rooted in God's Word will be superficial. We should consider it an *honor* that God's Word should **come unto** us as it did unto Jonah. Not everyone has it in their language yet. And God is a God of **second** chances (John 6:37).

(v2) The command here hasn't changed; but now Jonah is obeying it. I think God is waiting for us to obey His great commission, and I know I can do better at that—but we should pray for opportunities to share the gospel. Yes, it's scary; we're not sure what we're going to say, but neither was Jonah! God just said he was to preach “**the preaching that I bid thee**”, so apparently he would receive instructions when he got there (see Matthew 10:19). If you don't know what to say, sometimes you just need to open your mouth (Acts 8:35; 10:34).

(v3) I wonder if Jonah had taken some time to recover before God's word came to him again. Getting orders like this when you're relaxing in your “easy chair” can be difficult. But he apparently gets up and obeys, no matter how he feels. He's not about to run away from God again!

When he **went to Nineveh**, it was likely about a 500 mile trip, or about a month of

walking, unless he rented a camel. And this was an **exceeding great city**; in our day, think New York or Beijing or San Francisco. It was a major hub, a “happening place” of that day. I think it took **three days** to walk through it. You could probably just hit the highlights in three days; and perhaps Jonah had to wind through alleyways and streets to get from one end to the other, perhaps through throngs and great crowds. His walk would take as long as his whale ride took. And can you imagine as he approached this big city, as people became more and more numerous, as he walked through the intimidating entrance gate? He must have been nervous, especially knowing what he was about to do.

(v4) I wonder if, as Jonah **began to enter**, others looked at him sideways; maybe he still had effects of the whale acid on him; maybe his beard hadn't grown back much, or maybe his skin was discolored. And maybe Jonah hears the sounds of unusual music and the Assyrian language and feels even more out of place. Since he went **a day's journey** (or about a third-way) into the city before preaching, he couldn't bolt for the exit if they got really mad with him. He was committed. I wonder if he had lunch or dinner at a local restaurant before giving his sermon, or whether he was hungry at all. I can imagine Jonah then picks some random street corner, closes his eyes, clears his throat, takes a big breath, then preaches.

Interestingly, God gives this city the opportunity to read the “meter” on the time bomb of their judgment—**yet forty days**. Not everyone is given that opportunity; we could die at any moment. If you're not saved, please don't put it off—you have no idea how long you have left. (Revelation 2:21, II Corinthians 6:2). And what a gutsy sermon: **Nineveh shall be overthrown**. There are times for the “God has a wonderful plan for your life” sermons, but there are other times for hell-fire and brimstone sermons. A mother yells “Stop!” to her child reaching for the stove out of love, not hate. The fire and brimstone of hell is pounding against the dam of God's mercy, and it's important that people know that.

2: Repentance (v5-9). What a surprising turn of events! You'd expect Jonah to be

laughed out of town, killed, or have food and rocks hurled at him by a jeering crowd. But instead, they **believed God!** And it's almost worded as an "of course" thing—God knew that this city was ready for revival. Faith in God has always been what saves, even back then. And theirs was a genuine faith; they **proclaimed a fast** (I think that was a grass-roots idea started by the common people), and they wore uncomfortable **sackcloth**, or cloth used to make sacks. Sometimes, fancy and expensive clothes can get in the way of worshiping God. The gospel call applies **from the greatest of us to the least of us**—you're not too big to need God, but you're not too little to be overlooked either. And notice that their faith, as is the case with all genuine faith, produced action (James 2:18). If you say you believe God but haven't experienced any change in your life, then yours was a dead faith.

(v6) How incredible that the **king of Nineveh** gets on board with this revival! Leadership makes a big difference. And what this king does is a great example of salvation. He **arose from his throne**, giving domain of his life to Jesus Christ. No longer was *he* on the throne: God was. He **laid his robe from him**, willing to put aside the pleasures of this world for the kingdom of God. Many people refuse to get saved because they are afraid of losing their wealth or popularity or sin. He **covered him with sackcloth**, the opposite of a fashion statement; this was humiliating. No one struts haughtily to the cross of Christ; those who come must humble themselves. And he **sat in ashes**, recognizing his deserved punishment in hell. Do you recognize that hell is the place you deserve? Or do you think you're a pretty good person on your own?

(v7) I think this king is reinforcing this grassroots proclamation. He **proclaimed and published it**; that is, he used all forms of media at his disposal, print and oral. If he had been living today, I think he would have bought up radio, television, newspaper, and website adds to get the word out. And he wasn't afraid to use his influence or power for good; he made this official business **by the decree of the king**. I'm frankly a bit surprised his nobles stood with him; but God must have been

working a lot behind the scenes before this point. They all fasted; they didn't even feed their pets or dogs or cats (if they had dogs and cats); this fast lasted probably only 2-3 days max.

(v8) During this fast, they weren't dressing up their pets in holiday suits; they put ugly sackcloth even on their animals. And the beasts probably **cried** for hunger and thirst during this fast, as did the people. In this verse, I think we see from the wording that they repented humbly (**sackcloth**), passionately (**mightily**), increasingly (**yea**), personally (**every one**), and specifically (**violence**). Do we repent that way? Let's not have the generic "I'm sorry if..." type of repentance. Let's not have the "roll-your-eyes" type of fake repentance at the altar, and let's certainly not make repentance a joke. If you are sincere, it will be from your heart.

(v9) They weren't presumptuous, and they didn't know theology too well, but they did have faith in God. The Bible never records that Jonah ever said the city would be spared if they repented; but they knew that the mercy of God was their only hope, and they staked everything on the possibility of God's mercy.

3: Mercy (v10). Earlier, God smelled the "stench" of Nineveh, so to speak; but now, He **sees their works**; their repentance was real. It resulted in a lifestyle change, since they **turned from their evil way**. They didn't proclaim a fast just for show or use empty, insincere words. Some "conversions" have a lot of emotion but fizzle out in a couple of weeks, but not this one. If you sincerely turn to God, He sees it! And He is delighted to show you mercy.

If you **repent**, God will **repent** of sending judgment. The jail cell in hell may be ready for you, the fire hot, and the judgment sure—but if you turn to Jesus Christ, He will still save you.

Let's pray for God to send another revival. And let's be willing to change our lives where it hurts. Let's get rid of any evil ways we may be holding on to, whether in our media choices, our music, what we read, what we think about, what we drink, how we talk, and how we spend our time. Let's get back to the Word of God and to godly repentance.

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Turn to: **Jonah 4**
“**Three Effects of Bitterness**”

Bitterness is powerful. It can destroy our attitude and poison our soul. Unfortunately, Jonah experienced quite a bit of it in this chapter. Let's see some of its effects on his life so that we can hopefully avoid this toxic sin.

1: Irrational anger (v1-4). Jonah had just witness an unprecedented revival in a very wicked city; but breaking all expectations of a revival preacher, **it displeased Jonah exceedingly**. But this is what bitterness can do; it can make you angry irrationally. Sometimes, we might want to call fire down from heaven on our enemies right now (Luke 9:54-56), but really, at this point, we should desire their salvation. I wonder if the Ninevites were confused when **he was very angry**. All these people are getting right with God, yet the preacher himself storms out in a huff, and no doubt his body language was full of anger.

Maybe this city had slaughtered or tortured his friends. As silly as this anger seems at first glance, if we try to put ourselves into Jonah's sandals, we may understand that he may have had some *human* justification for his bitterness. Hopefully this wasn't a permanent trait of his. If he were truly saved, I think he would have forgiven them in the end (Matthew 18:35). But we aren't given the end of the story, so we don't really know.

(v2) Jonah **prayed** his best prayer in the worst of times, and his worst prayer in the best of times. It's as though he tells God, "I told you so!" ("**was not this my saying**"); and perhaps there's a bit of racism as well (**my country**). His *real* reason for fleeing, according to him, was not cowardice, but bitterness. It wasn't that he was afraid to preach; he just didn't want them to get saved. And oddly, knowing good theology led him to take the *wrong* action in this situation, and he lists the sweet, beautiful attributes of God with apparent contempt or

even mockery. Bitterness certainly warps our views.

(v3) Jonah may have been serious about wanting to **die**, having his emotions compounded by the physical effects of being in the whale; but I suspect that at this point, he's just throwing a temper tantrum (cf. Acts 22:23).

(v4) God wants to hear us out. And we do **not do well** to be angry in certain situations, such as when our anger lasts into the evening (Ephesians 4:26), when we don't have a reason that is legitimate (Matthew 5:22), when we're envious (I Samuel 18:8), when we're angry with God (Psalm 2:1), when others take a stand for God (Daniel 3:19, Genesis 4:5), or when people are getting right with God (cf. Luke 15:28). Bitterness produces irrational anger.

2: Self-inflicted isolation (v5-8). Isolation is *not* always self-inflicted; in fact, oftentimes doing the right thing results in isolation from friends, coworkers, peers, church members, or family members. But if isolation is a result of bitterness, then that's a problem. And that's what happens with Jonah.

(v5) Apparently, Jonah doesn't answer God's question and just storms out. Since he went to the **east** side, he likely saw this beautiful city full of people getting right with God below an incredible sunset, though I doubt he noticed any magnificent colors. Jonah is acting like a child in some ways, going off and pouting. I think he **made him a booth** to get a front-row seat in case God's judgment fell after all. Sadly, I think he hopes that this repentance of theirs doesn't stick.

(v6) Most people seem to think that the **gourd** is a castor-oil plant, or a plant with very large leaves. It probably felt good being sheltered by it from the hot sun. He already had a booth, but this gourd increased the **shadow** area around Jonah, thus decreasing the radiating heat from the surrounding ground. I think his **grief** was a combination of bitterness and the physical effects of the whale. The fact that he was **exceeding glad of the gourd** seems to show us that his emotions were unstable; he was going through a difficult time in his life.

(v7) Some think the **worm** was a black caterpillar. We're just worms before God, but if

God can use this worm, He can use us, too! Imagine the brilliance **when the morning rose the next day**—casting its rays on the city from behind Jonah, his shadow long in front of him. And maybe the gourd was *behind* Jonah, explaining why he didn't see this worm. Perhaps this worm eats through the base of this gourd like a tiny chainsaw, leaving the gourd to wither and collapse.

(v8) As the morning wears on, the **sun did arise** fully, and the day is starting to get warm; and the **vehement** east wind was blowing from behind Jonah toward the city; and some say this wind likely contained particles of sand, like a dust storm. I wonder if Jonah's booth blew away. Or perhaps his booth was a failed DIY project. Maybe he purchased the booth kit in a hardware store in Nineveh as he stormed out of the city; but maybe he purchased the wrong size or had no clue how to build it (he was a prophet, not a builder, after all). But in any case, it's not protecting him from the sun anymore. So now, if we snapped a photo at this point, you would probably see a rubble pile of booth material, a withered plant, a **fainted** Jonah, and a happy, well-fed worm all in one place by themselves on a hot, summer day.

Jonah now **wished in himself to die**, so it's not just a tantrum; he is utterly exhausted. But let's think about this for a moment; Jonah surely *could* have been in the finest hotel in Nineveh, maybe with the king himself, under the shade of the best trees, sipping lemonade and cool fruit punch while the others sat in sackcloth. But his bitterness resulted in self-inflicted isolation. If we are to be isolated, let it be because we love Jesus; let it not be because we are cold, bitter, and unfriendly.

3: Misplaced priorities (v9-11). Now God asks Jonah the same question He asked before, but with a twist. And Jonah effectively responds rather haughtily, "You bet I do!" He's a hard person in a lot of ways.

(v10) God **pities** us in a good way and is upset when anyone goes to hell (Ezekiel 18:32, James 5:11); He has spent **labor** in forming us (cf. Psalm 139:13-14) and considers us an investment! He **makes us grow** and knows we have intrinsic worth (cf. Job 31:15). Unlike a mushroom that **comes up overnight**, God has

invested much time in creating us, and He knows that we will spend eternity somewhere, unlike plants which can **perish in a night**. For these reasons, human souls are far better than plants.

(v11) When others repent, our attitude should be, "Let the party begin!" (Luke 15:32) I think the six hundred thousand probably refers to young children, meaning the total population was many millions. And that's not to mention **much cattle**; if Jonah was upset about a plant dying, then he should have at least been upset about innocent cattle being killed. Do we have a forgiving attitude, wanting people to repent so we can throw a party? Or do we *not* want real repentance and reconciliation?

As an aside, today our culture often places the value of plants and animals above that of people. Human beings are much more valuable (Matthew 10:31, I Corinthians 9:9-10). Many people today will become upset at the loss of plants or animals, but do they become upset at the loss of *souls*? We need to make sure we place first things first; but bitterness causes us to misplace our priorities.

Jonah may be the only book that ends in a question, and we will never quite know how this story ends until we get to heaven. Bitterness leaves an unresolved, messy feeling in the air. Let's try to avoid this trap of bitterness. Let's get *excited* thinking about the possibility of our enemies coming to Jesus Christ. Let's have our "party gear" ready to go, so to speak, in hopes that we can be reconciled through Jesus Christ and celebrate; and as far as heaven goes, we should have an attitude of, "The more, the merrier" for all who sincerely come to Jesus. After all, we who are Christians were lost sinners once too, deserving of the same punishment (Titus 3:2-3).