

## “Ring of Fire”

*Jonah: Renegade Prophet, Pt 7*

The story, which we’ve been looking at since the first of the year, and will bring to a close *next week*, is that Jonah was called to go to Nineveh to preach, and after a *lot* of detours, he did. And when he got there, finally, and began to preach, we’re told that Nineveh - the great capital of Assyria - the populace in totality repented and turned from their violence and their evil ways. Now that is a *marvelous* thing, and that is what every newspaper in every modern city is calling out for. Sacred or secular, that’s *everybody’s* goal for human society.

So when Jonah experienced the pinnacle of his career in Nineveh, we would expect great joy in Jonah’s heart. But surprise, in **Jonah 4:1**, we read, “*But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry.*” Now why? And we’ve been looking at this from different perspectives for the last few weeks, but the bottom line is Jonah can’t figure out God’s love.

That’s what the whole chapter 4 is about it. Chapter 4 is *all about* God’s love. In the very beginning Jonah says, “I knew you were a God of love.” And what he means is, “God, I cannot figure your love out. I can’t figure it out. This city is a violent city. This city has inflicted great pain on the whole world. It has laid waste to entire regions. It has committed genocide

against entire populations. And then you *forgive* them. I don’t understand your love.”

And in response, essentially, God comes back, as we will see here, and says, “Jonah, I don’t understand *your* love.” So this is all about love. And I would like to propose to you this morning, that Jonah represents *us* in this way. Jonah, like we do, believes in love *in general*, but when it comes right down to it has a fatally inadequate understanding of how love *actually* operates, and in particular, how God’s love actually operates. And in the same way, my thesis this morning is that many, maybe most, of our own struggles and collapses - just like Jonah here - are due to our own inadequate understanding of how God’s love really, *really* operates.

And I’m asking that many of you would be open today to this possibility, that the struggles you’re having *now*, right now in your life, this week, yesterday, today might be due to the *very* same problem that Jonah has. And that is, “I can’t figure out God’s love. I don’t see *how* it really operates. It doesn’t make *sense* to me.” If it’s possible that you stand now where Jonah stood then, then the message of the rest of this chapter is critical because the whole point of the rest of the chapter is God coming to Jonah and saying, “Jonah, you asked a question. I’m going to give you an answer.”

You see, God's love, like God, is a fire. The Bible tells us God is a consuming fire and, therefore, His love is a fire. The Apostle John said "Love is a burning thing, and it makes a fiery ring." – well, technically that was the Apostle Johnny. But fire is a strange thing – a nuanced thing. The heat of fire is, on the one hand, life-giving, but on the other hand, dangerous, consuming, burning, and purifying. Fire will heat your house, but it will also burn down your house. Fire will save your life, but it will also take your life. If you don't understand that tension, you won't understand fire. And in the same way Jonah can't understand the love of God.

He doesn't understand that, on the one hand, God's love is wonderfully warming, and on the other hand, is dangerous and painful, because God's love is *also* life-giving and warming and at the same time refining and purifying. Or, to put it another way, God's love is more free than Jonah believes - and we believe - and more expensive, at the same time.

God's love is more free than Jonah believes because it reaches out and envelops and heals the most wretched and most hopeless people and conditions. But on the other hand, it's more expensive, because it is a jealous love. It's more jealous for our health and for our perfection and for our purity than we are for ourselves.

See, God's love is not at all like the sickly, sentimental thing that human love often is. It's actually a matter of extremes. And let's take a look at those two extremes, those two things that God is trying to get across to Jonah that he misses. Let's do it in this order. First, God's love is a refining fire. It is life-purifying. Secondly, God's love is a seeking fire, a seeking love. It's life-giving and purifying. So let's take a look at the first.

**God's love is a Refining Fire.** Life-purifying, refining. God's love, if it ever comes to rest on you it will not let you alone. You want God's love? You *really* want God's love? God's love is a fire, and it will not give you warmth and life without at the same time refining and purifying you. If it rests on you, it will not let you alone.

We learn this in a text from this little word "provide" that shows up three times in chapter four. Let's take a look at it. Now, remember the backstory. Jonah preaches, Nineveh repents, Jonah gets mad and sulks off out of the city and sits down in the middle of the day to watch and see if God will destroy his enemies. And then, **v.6-8**, "*Then the Lord God **provided** a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine.*"

7 But at dawn the next day God **provided** a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God **provided** a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

The word "provide" is another word for "appoint" or "commission". We're told, first of all, God appointed a comfort. Then, once he made Jonah pretty happy – we're Texans, we know how wonderful a fast-growing shade tree can be – but not only does God first commission a comfort, but then, He also commissions an agricultural disaster and then a nasty weather pattern to bring *discomfort* into Jonah's life.

Now, in the second point we can talk about *why* God did that. He did this to teach Jonah a lesson. And we'll get to the lesson later. But first I think it's important for us to not notice so much the point of the lesson but the *method* of the lesson. Why does God do such a thing? Is it true that God brings - commissions, appoints, arranges for - troubles, discomforts, and disasters into people's lives as a way of purifying them? Is that what this teaches? Yes.

Let me put it in a biblical context for us for a second. The Bible teaches that evil and death were not part of God's original creative design. This is not the way

the world was supposed to be. God made the word for *shalom* – the Hebrew concept of peace. Sin is a violation of *shalom*. Evil, disasters, troubles, and death that are in this world are the result and the direct consequence of our sin. Now that may sound abstract, but let me make it more concrete.

Imagine an *extremely* well coached team – and I'll let you imagine if it's a sports team or a ballet troupe, or whatever. Doesn't matter. But just the best of the best in whatever field – and orchestra perhaps. Now imagine the most incompetent member of that team – the one they succeed *in spite* of. Imagine that suddenly they strike it rich. An inheritance, a lottery, but suddenly they come into an incredible fortune.

And they decide to buy the team and make *themselves* the head. But what happens? Pretty soon that wonderful team is a loser. It's a wreck. It's a mess. It's a disaster area because the wrong person is in charge. Some of you are imagining the Dallas Cowboys – an understandable link, but not fully necessary. And Genesis tells us that when we, human beings, decided to be our own masters, when we decided to run our lives in the world without submission to God, we lost *shalom* – God's perfect plan for the world.

And that decision, by the way, is a decision that most human beings reaffirm every day that they live. That because of that, the world is a disaster area, *literally*. Because of that, the world doesn't operate properly. Death and disease and natural disaster and injustice and violence, all the things that create problems for us in our lives are the consequences of that decision, the *wrong* person in charge, somebody who bought the team who doesn't know what he or she is doing.

Therefore, here we have all this trouble that swirls around us that's part of our life in this world. Paul says in Romans that the whole of creation is groaning in pain. Now, often the Bible – especially the old KJV – talks about a hedge. Your grandmother ever pray “a hedge of protection” over you? A hedge was a large bramble of bushes or something that you planted around a garden to keep the wild things out. A hedge allows you to have a little piece of Eden in the wilderness.

And so when God puts His love on you, He puts a hedge around you. And what that means is that God monitors the flow of the pain and trouble into your life. God didn't create the nasty wilderness surrounding your hedge. It's not the way God set things up.

But now that we're here, when God puts His love on you we are told in a number of passages, like **Romans 8:28**, “*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*” The principle is that even in the wild chaos – that God did not will – still, He monitors the flow of pains and troubles in your life. The timing of them, the proportion of them, the nature of them are all according to His appointment, His provision.

He *provided* the vine. He *provided* the worm. He *provided* the scorching east wind. The word “providence” comes from the word provide. God's providence - it's an old theological word that means the way in which God orders our lives. It comes from that word. Why does God allow that to come in at all? Why let the wild things through the hedge? And the answer is because of God's love. *What?* God using *troubles*, appointing troubles, commissioning worms in our lives, authorizing scorching east winds, providing circumstances like that and discomforts and disasters...*out of love?* Yes.

Don't be startled, you do the same thing. If you've ever loved somebody who was in a drunken state and you wanted to save his or her life, you know what you do? You can't reason with them. You can't have a decent conversation with them. You have to do things they won't understand and will make them exceedingly mad and displeased, just like Jonah. You know what happens, you say, “I'm sorry. You can't drive home.”

What do they say? They say, “Well, I see that everything you’re doing is for my good. I can tell that I can’t walk a straight line. Thank you for your concern.” Is that what they say? They say, “Give me those keys, you thief! That’s my car! Who do you think you are?” They might try to hit you. Their aim isn’t very good. But if the purpose of your love is ever realized - in other words, if they survive the night and sober up - someday they’ll come to you and they’ll say, “If you hadn’t done that, I don’t know where I’d be.”

A milder example is parents. The definition of a child is somebody who is mildly inebriated until they turn a certain age. A good parent is constantly doing to their children what God did to Jonah, constantly getting them exceedingly angry. If you just want to live for the present – in other words, if you’re a selfish parent and you just don’t want your kids mad at you - if you want to live for the present, then you can let them always have their way and just figure that later on they’ll be selfish, undisciplined, and maladjusted adults.

*Or* you can decide, “I’m going to give my love a *future* orientation instead of a *present* orientation. I will not mind the fact that they’re going to be mad at me *today*, because I’m thinking about the future. My love has a progressive orientation. It has a future. I see where I want my child to be and the love I want to have with my child *then*, and so I don’t give in right now to being present-oriented.”

And so God does the same thing with us. He looks at you and He looks at me and He says, “I have a desire. Someday I want you to become the person that you, in your deepest innermost self, *want* to be too - that you most desperately want to be. You want to be a person of strength. You want to be a person of generosity, of integrity, of freedom, of conviction, of compassion. I want to see those things burning in you someday like the sun in full strength, and therefore, I’m going to make your life rough right now.” That is what you do to a drunk. That is what you do to a child.

And you say, “Wait a minute. What would that have to do with me? Why would God do that to me?” Because you are not so far in your natural human state from being a drunk or a child *spiritually*, not at all. And so what God does is He tries to wreck your vines. What are your vines? They are your earthly life rafts. They are the things that you rest in. They are image or they’re material goods or they’re relationships or they’re accomplishments. In other words, they are idols. These are things that if you really rest in them, if you really say, “These are the things that give me my happiness,” you’ll be like a little child and you’ll *never* reach maturity. Because they are a poor substitute for God.

And so by allowing trouble to come into your life, to shake your idols, God is trying to show you something. You see, you say, “Why is God allowing this trial? Why do I have this physical trouble? Why do I have this relational trouble? Why do I have this financial trouble?”

And what God is saying is, “Do you realize if you want to be the person that you most want to be, I have to show you that if you rest in these things, if you make these things your happiness, if you get your identify out of them, you will always be living on the edge of emotional disaster. You will *always* be a shallow person. Don’t you want to be a person who is not subject to mood swings, who can take criticism and disappointment? Don’t you want to be a humble, yet confident person who has a source of joy, whom circumstances of the world cannot mess with? Don’t you want to be a person like that? Then you have to let Me draw you near to Me like this.”

And someday you will sit down with your Heavenly Father and say, “If you hadn’t done that to me, I don’t know where I would be today.” *Someday*...but what about now? Listen, somebody out there is saying, “Wait a minute. Wait a minute. This is a *strange* teaching I’m hearing. I thought God was a God of love. This is not how I think of love.” And you’re standing in Jonah’s shoes right now and you’re in

great danger. Would you please stretch to understand this? You must! If you don’t know the refining love of God, you cannot live in the real world.

You’ll have to deny the hardness of life, or you’ll have to deny at least it can happen to you...until it catches up with you, and then you’re going to have to dehumanize yourself a bit in order to survive emotionally. You see, if you know God’s love as refining love, if you realize there is love there but it’s refining love, you won’t be a cynic or a romantic, and those are the only two alternatives to being a Christian.

Because a cynic has to dehumanize him or herself. A cynic has to say, “Yeah, well, it’s not that important to me anyway. Life sucks, but I don’t really care. Sure I don’t have a date, but Valentine’s is stupid anyway. Just corporate exploitation.” That’s the cynic. Do you know what happens to the romantic? The romantic is saying, “The world shouldn’t be *like* this. It’s not supposed to *be* this way. It *can’t* be this way.”

And a Christian says, “I don’t have to deny my pain or hate in it. My heavenly Father is controlling this situation, and I’m going to find out what He wants to teach me through the pain.” You can be a Christian, you can be a cynic, you can be a romantic. You give me another alternative. I don’t know of any.

Now, I have to move on – we’ve got a second point still! But it’s so important to drive this in. We don’t have a good theology of suffering in the American church and it’s causing us so many problems. We’re so spiritually entitled. “Leave my vine alone!” When we didn’t even make the vine. Now, in the old King James Bible, it doesn’t call this a vine. Do you know what it says grew over Jonah? It calls it a gourd.

When John Newton – who wrote *Amazing Grace* - wrote another hymn about the suffering Christians go through, he refers to the Jonah story. It’s all based on chapter four. He starts off by saying:

I asked the Lord that I might grow  
In faith, and love, and every grace;  
Might more of His salvation know,  
And seek, more earnestly, His face.

Then he goes through a couple of stanzas, showing you that when he told God, “I want to be like you, I want to grow in freedom and grace,” instead of good things, *bad* things started happening to him, and he says:

Yea more, with His own hand He seemed  
Intent to aggravate my woe;  
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,  
Blasted my **gourds**, and laid me low.

Lord, why is this, I trembling cried,

Wilt thou pursue **thy worm** to death?  
‘Tis in this way, the Lord replied,  
I *answer* prayer for grace and faith.

These inward trials I employ,  
From self, and pride, to set thee free;  
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,  
That thou may’st find thy all in Me.

Sometimes poetry shows us what prose can’t. That’s why it’s important on a Sunday that we sing *and* we listen to a sermon. We need both for transformation to occur. Now, maybe you’re starting to get this breakthrough – you’re understanding *why* these things have come into your life – but you’re saying still, I don’t see how in the world I can possibly, right now, trust and obey God in this trial I’m going through. You say, “You’re telling me *that* I must do it, but you’re not telling me *how* to do it.”

Fair enough, let me give you the only “how” I know. It’s always the same. You look at Jesus. You look at Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus Christ died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins. On the cross God was able, on the one hand, to show His anger on sin, but on the other hand, to not show His anger to us. He was able to punish sin and save sinners at the same time. What incredible cosmic wisdom!

But do you think on the day that Jesus Christ died that his loved ones and his followers stood around the cross and said, “Ah, there is the most wonderful example of the wisdom of God in history?” Do you think so? Do you think *they* saw, at *that* moment, the cross to be what we know it *now* to be? No. Have you *read* the gospels? What they said – which is what we say - is, “I don’t see what good God could *possibly* bring out of this.”

And so they turned their backs on the greatest act of redemption and love and grace and wisdom in history, and they said, “I don’t see what God could do with this,” because it didn’t fit into their tidy little minds. It didn’t fit into their tidy little idea about how God should be dealing with them. And is it possible that right now *you* are looking at God in that way? And because you don’t see what’s going on, because you can’t see His cosmic wisdom, you deny it’s there, because you can’t understand it. Are you going to make the same mistake?

Do you really need a degree in medicine before you go have surgery? I mean, as you’re lying there on the table, every time the doctor picks up an instrument, do you say, “Why are you going to use that? I want to know what that is. I want you to tell me *why*. You have *no right* to use that on me until you explain fully what you’re doing.” At a certain point the doctor would say, “Until you are willing to take the role of the patient, I cannot assume in your life the role of a doctor.”

Look at the wisdom of God on the cross. Look at that and recognize there is a whole book written to explain what God was doing there. But you don’t have a book right now for your particular cross. It doesn’t mean there’s not a reason, a plan, a purpose. So look at the wisdom of God in Christ on the cross, and also look and see how Jesus Christ bore his troubles on the cross. And there’s your model. Look at him.

When all the powers of hell, and even the wrath of his own Father against the violation of shalom. were arrayed against him - now *that’s* trouble - he took it. Do you know why? He took it for us. What was his secret? He took it out of love for us. And now he comes to you and he says, “I died in order to lose my glory. I suffered to lose my glory. You’re just suffering to give up your idols, the things that keep you from me. I suffered to *lose* my father. You’re suffering to *gain* Him, to get near to Him. Trust me. Obey me.”

And my friends, the day that you finally say to Jesus Christ, “All right, Lord, I surrender to your leadership in all things.” you know what you’re saying? You’re saying, number one, “I promise to trust you and not be bitter any more,” and number two, “I promise to look at myself and say, ‘Lord, what do *you* want to change in *me*?’ instead of me looking at you, saying, ‘Here is what *I* want to change in *you*.’” And the day that you say, “All right, Lord I’m yours,” the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ leaps at your appreciation of what he did for you.

Now there's another point, but it's briefer. It better be! **God's love is a Seeking Fire.** Fire helps you find hidden things in the dark. Do you know God's love is refining love? That's step one, but you also have to remember that God's love is accepting love. It's seeking love. It's life-giving love. And we can see it right smack dab in the center of the passage, where here is God who clearly has the right to say by now, "Jonah, I've had it with you. Again and again and again through your life I have put up with you and I have dealt with you and I have reclaimed you, and I've had it. This is it. This is the last straw." Instead, here is God - can't you almost see Him kneeling down and saying, **v.9**, "*But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?"*" It's like God is reasoning with a child throwing a tantrum.

Here is God in the most gentle way giving to Jonah the thing that Jonah did not want God giving to the Ninevites, and that is patience, acceptance, and forgiveness. Jonah's behavior merits God's rejection. Instead, what does he get from God? Do you know what God is saying to him, in a sense, and he's saying to us? He says, "Jonah, look at yourself. I love the Ninevites *in spite* of their violence. I love you in spite of your arrogance. What's the big difference?"

Do you have any people in your life who are much more morally unworthy than you but are living a heck of a lot nicer lives than you? That is what Jonah is seeing with the Ninevites. What God is saying to Jonah, God is saying to you. See, God is coming to Jonah and saying, "Would you stop looking at other people? I love them in spite of their violence. I love you in spite of your arrogance. What's the difference? Jonah, humble yourself and you'll be so much happier."

This is the human condition, we get our eyes on everybody else. There's a passage at the very end of the gospel of John that I love so much – I am so glad John included this in book – because nobody else did. And he tells the story of how Jesus restores Peter – who you may remember denied Jesus in his hour of need, real betrayal – and Jesus so beautifully restores him to the disciples.

And then – I so love this – Peter *immediately* turns around and sees John and say, "Well, what about him?" And I think Jesus laughed. The way parents laugh sometimes when their children are bad just because they can't help themselves. And Jesus said "Peter, what does it matter to *you* what I do with *him*?" You follow me and don't worry about everybody else." And if you've ever heard a sermon and your first thought is, "Oh so-and-so needs to hear this!" You're in the same boat. It's the human condition.

Jesus says to you, “Just look at yourself and realize I love you *in spite* of your pride, in spite of your self-centeredness. The reason you’re so angry and displeased – like Jonah - is because you won’t humble yourself and see the fact that my mercy in your life is completely unmerited and undeserved, that everything you ever enjoyed as better than hell in this life is sheer mercy.” It’s the same as it’s always been, “Humble yourself, Jonah, and you’ll be so much happier.”

And there’s another way that God shows Jonah the extent of His seeking fire love. After the word “provide”, there’s another key word in our text today. Look at what God says immediately after Jonah complains that the withered vine has made him angry enough to die. **V.10-11**, “*But the Lord said, “You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. 11 But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be **concerned** about that great city?”*”

God says, “Jonah, you were upset about the vine and here you want me to nuke 120,000 people. And you’re ready to cheer from the sidelines as I do it.” He says, “Jonah, you’re concerned about the vine. I’m concerned about the people.” The word “concerned” is a very weak way to translate a Hebrew word that means “to grieve or mourn over.”

And what God is saying to Jonah - and God is saying to all of us – is, “Look at what *you* weep over and look what *I* weep over. Look at what you love and look at what I love. Your love flows *inward*. You are constantly worried about yourself. You’re full of self-absorption. You’re always weeping over your own troubles. You’re always weeping over your own problems. You’re always saying, ‘Poor me.’ But My love flows *outward* to the unfamiliar, to the unwashed, to the undeserving. Jonah, who are you living for? Whose *glory* are you really living for? Whose glory are you absorbed in? Don’t you see it’s yourself?”

When God talks about the vine, what He’s trying to say is, “This is a familiar, comfortable thing. Don’t you see how perverted your heart is, Jonah? Think about it.” Remember that china plate, when it broke and you realized your grandmother gave it to your mother, who gave it to you? Remember that baseball glove that was your dad’s and he’d play catch with you and now you were going to use it to play with your son, but the new puppy chewed it up. Do you remember how you felt? Remember how you felt like crying? Maybe you did cry.

We can get that attached to inanimate objects. And what God is saying is, “You’re more concerned about your garden than about people. You’re more concerned about a big pimple on your nose on Sunday morning than you are about perishing people. You weep over things like this. You weep for yourself. But when is the last time you’ve wept for people who haven’t got any food, or worse than that, haven’t got any God?”

“Jonah,” God says, “Who are you living *for*? Don’t you see that if you would humble yourself you would finally be happy? Don’t you see that your love is just a kind of self-pity turned inward? It’s love turned inward. Jonah, recognize that My love to you is completely undeserved. Rejoice in that. Stop comparing yourself to everybody else. Repent and let your love flow outward...the way My love flows outward.”

Now, here’s the conclusion of it all. Basically, God is coming to us all at the end of the book and speaking to us. And you know how you know that? The weirdest thing about this book...this book is a strange book because Jonah is given a job, and then he falls down, and God brings him back, then he falls down and God brings him back, and he falls down and God brings him back, and he falls down, and here we have the very end, and God is asking Jonah the final

question, “Will you repent? Will you see that your life is completely wrapped up in yourself? You’ve really been worshipping yourself. When are you going to finally serve Me and live for My glory?” And the book ends.

Does that make any sense? This is the climax. Will Jonah come through? What will happen? And the book ends. The only book of the Bible to end with a question mark. This is the oddest thing. It’s one of the reasons I believe the Bible was not merely written by human beings, because who could have thought things like this up? You know why it ends the way it ends? Because *you* are Jonah. Because I am Jonah. It’s like this last question is a spear being hurled at Jonah, and suddenly Jonah gets out of the way and it’s coming right at *us*.

And here’s the question. There may be some folks here who are beginning to realize something. You’re religious, you may be very moral, you may be professing Christians, but I hope you see now your real religion is you live for yourself, because you always preserve for yourself the right to decide whether God’s will fits into your tidy understanding of how your life ought to go. And because you feel that way, there is a lot of misery in your life.

You do not yet know God's love as a *fire*. You may believe in it in a general way, but you don't know it as a fire. If you knew it as a fire, first of all, you would give yourself up. You'd say, "I live for God," because a fire is warming, and therefore, you would know it's free. Therefore, you'd know that you're unworthy and you need His forgiveness. On the other hand, a fire is refining, and therefore, you'd be willing to forsake all your sins and forsake living for anything else and live for God.

You've heard of Blaise Pascal? He was an incredibly influential scientist – mathematician and physicist - a great philosopher, maybe the greatest mind of the seventeenth century. He was also a dedicated Catholic and wrote some of the greatest defenses of the faith in his time. But he wasn't always a Christian. In his early 30's he had an encounter with God that changed his life forever.

And when he died, they found something sewed into his jacket – it was a page from a journal. He'd been carrying it around with him ever since the night of his encounter with God. It said this, "The year of grace 1654...From about half-past ten in the evening until about half-past midnight. FIRE." One word, one line, capital letters. "FIRE. God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and the learned...He can be found only in the ways taught in

the Gospel ... Oh righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee. Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy." Fire! What happened to this philosopher?

One day he came to know the *real* God. He experienced God's love as a fire. His god had been an abstraction and suddenly became a reality, and I can tell you that the only way that finally happened to him was the day that he stood in Jonah's shoes and heard God say, "Who are you really living for? Whose glory are you really living for? *Humble* yourself, Jonah, and you'll be so happy. Take your hands off your life. Give yourself to me." And when Pascal did that, he knew *fire*, not the god of the philosophers, not the god of the learned, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy." Humble yourself, and see how happy you will be.

And there are probably some people here in the room who say, "Look, I know God personally. I understand that, but I'm as cold as Jonah. I'm as bitter as Jonah." Then will you hear the word of God? Turn your love back outward. Right now, unpack your self-pity and start to weep over those things God weeps over and rejoice over the things God rejoices over.

Who do you despise? Just know that God does not despise them with you. He loves them. And if you love Him, you'll love *them* too. We'll finish up next week by examining in some detail that surprising love of God – *who* He loves. But today, say what Jonah should have said, say, “Lord, I’m a Jonah. I heard of you with my ears but now I see you now with my eyes, and I repent in dust and ashes. Your fire, come in, come in and purify my cold heart.”

Let’s pray...