

We must guard against this temptation to sit around and do nothing as Jonah did. Two times in Jonah 4:5, the text says, "Jonah sat down." Have you ever thought about how much of our spiritual lives can be taken up by sitting down? We sit in worship services. We sit in small group Bible studies. We sit in committee meetings. We sit down at meals at the church.

If we're not careful, much of what we do in church will be little more than sitting.

Poem:

"He wasn't much for stirring about, it wasn't his desire. No matter what others did, he was sitting by the fire.

The same old story day by day, he never seemed to tire. While others worked for their church, he was sitting by the fire.

At last he died as all must do, they say he went up higher. But if he's doing what he used to do, he's sitting by the fire."

Are you sitting or are you serving?

When you allow resentment to set in, it will diminish your productivity so that you end up sitting rather than serving.

IV.) Fourth resentment will distort your perspective.

Jonah was complaining about a vine and couldn't have cared less about 120,000 people who had repented of their sin. For Jonah to complain about a vine at a time like this was crazy. Jonah lost his perspective. That's what resentment does.

It can cause us to lose our perspective and we end up focusing on the wrong things.

Up to now, we have been descriptive. We've been describing the destructive nature of resentment and how it causes us to turn inward. Let's get prescriptive. Let's prescribe some ways to overcome the dark side of resentment. We need to see God's

response to resentment. How did God respond to Jonah's resentment? And how does God desire us to respond to resentment?

a. **God responds with Patience**

God responds to our resentment with patience. After Jonah acted like he did, telling God he wished that he were dead, God patiently responded with a question in verse 4. "Jonah, do you have a right to be angry?" We often hear the phrase, "The patience of Job," but here we see the patience of God. If I had been God, I may have zapped Jonah with a lightning bolt right there on the spot.

But instead of zapping Jonah, God patiently worked in Jonah's life to change his attitude and to try and bring him back to Himself. Our Heavenly Father responds to our resentment with patience. Jonah 4:2, Jonah says, "God is slow to anger." There is a little bit of Jonah in all of us. All of us have said things and done things that if God wanted to destroy us, He could have. But instead, He responds to us with patience.

When you're ready to become angry, bitter, and resentful, and you're ready to write someone off, and you don't want to be patient with them, remember, God is patient with you. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "God is patient toward you, not wishing that anyone would perish, but that all people would come to repentance."

b. **God responds with protection**. God responds to our resentment with protection.

He provided a vine to give shelter to Jonah and protection from the sun. God's intention with the vine was to comfort His prophet. God chose to use the protection of the vine to teach Jonah and us a valuable lesson. Soon the vine dies, but God does not. In Jonah's moment of need, he looked to the vine for comfort instead of his God. How much better would it have been if Jonah had fixed his attention on the Lord God?

But how many of us, in a moment of need, have been like Jonah and we looked elsewhere? We look to other blessings rather than looking to the one God who supplies the blessings. There is even a sense in which the worm was there for Jonah's protection. Jonah needed the worm so that he might start looking to God and not to the vine. Thank God for the vine, but thank God for the worm. Although we may not realize it, God continues to protect us from ourselves by often removing the vines from our lives when He sees they are occupying the center of our attention.

The very thing you may have considered your disappointment or a hardship in life, the very thing that you may consider to be your worm may be there from God's protecting hand.

- c. **God responds with pardon.** God pardons and extends His grace to us. God came down and reasoned with Jonah. God basically told Jonah, "You have forgotten how I dealt with you. I could have killed you when you were on your way to Tarshish, but I did not. I did not have to prepare fish to protect you when you were thrown into the Mediterranean Sea, but I responded to you with patience and protection, and now with pardon. Should I respond differently to those people in Nineveh?" God was revealing to Jonah that since He was good to him when he did not deserve it, why shouldn't God be good and compassionate to others who did not deserve it as well?

As we come to the end of the book of Jonah, the story ends without our ever knowing what happened. Did Jonah live the rest of his life with a spirit of resentment? Did he turn back to God? We don't know how the story ends. But the good news of the gospel is that you can write a new chapter in your life. You can determine the ending of your story. You can lay down that spirit of anger and bitterness and resentfulness, and with God's help, write your own ending to your story.