

## “This Is Not How I Wanted Things To Turn Out”

(Second in a series)

by Heath Rogers

Suicide is an incredible tragedy that leaves many people asking “Why?” We are considering some possible reasons why some people make this choice. This week we will consider the frustration of unfulfilled hopes and dreams.

God commanded Jonah to go and cry out against the city of Nineveh. The people of Nineveh were enemies of Israel. At first, Jonah was so opposed to the idea of God extending mercy to these people that he fled, but after spending three days in the belly of a great fish, Jonah changed his mind and, reluctantly, he did as he was told.

The entire city repented and God’s wrath was suspended. Everyone was happy – except Jonah.

*“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 lovingkindness, 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!’”*  
(Jonah 4:1-3).

Jonah knew that God was merciful. He believed that the people of Nineveh were unworthy of such compassion and mercy, and he wanted the city to be destroyed. Jonah was angry with God for sparing the city. If we could have asked him, Jonah probably would have said that he felt betrayed by God. This is not how Jonah wanted things to turn out. In his opinion, it was better for him to die than to live with the reality that God had extended mercy to his enemies.

There are some important lessons that we need to learn from Jonah’s response. First, things in life do not always turn out the way that we have planned. There is nothing wrong with us having our opinions and making plans, but we must realize that life does not revolve around us. There are many things in life that are out of our control, and it is important that we learn to accept these situations.

Second, please notice that Jonah made these statements while he was disappointed and angry. Decisions that are made when one is in a highly emotional state are often regretted (and when drugs and alcohol are involved, one’s judgment is even more clouded and impaired). Some decisions, like suicide, have permanent consequences. There is nothing wrong with getting angry and disappointed, but we must learn not to make rash decisions while we are in such a state.

Third, consider Jonah’s lack of respect for human life. He was angry because God had spared an entire city full of people – many of whom were innocent (4:11). Human life is precious and sacred (Gen. 1:26-27), but not everyone sees it as such. Our society grants abortion on demand. Those who argue in favor of abortion insist that it is a *choice*. Those who commit suicide are only taking this *choice* and applying it to themselves instead of to their unborn children.

Finally, please notice that even in his distraught state, Jonah understood that he did not have the right to take his own life. His request was that God take his life from him. Life belongs to God, and God tells us to **choose life** (Deut. 30:19).