

The Deeper Death

by Warren Wiersbe

God disciplines us because he loves us and wants to perfect us and bring us to maturity, and we should submit to his discipline and not resist or fight it.

Duration: 43:08

Scripture: Psalm 119:11, Jonah 4:2-3, Jonah 4:9, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 12:3-4

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Gods Discipline"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of prayer and its role in testing one's character. He emphasizes that true prayer is not just reciting pre-recorded prayers, but rather praying in desperate situations, like Jonah and Peter did. The preacher then highlights the four stages of Jonah's experience with the Lord: disobedience, discipline, dedication, and finally, deliverance. He emphasizes that Jonah lost his testimony and almost lost his life due to his disobedience, but through God's grace and discipline, Jonah eventually dedicated himself to God's will.

Transcript

We open the word to Jonah, chapter 2. At the end of chapter 1, Jonah has been swallowed by the prepared great fish and has been in the innards of that fish three days and three nights. It's tragic when there are those who fuss and fight over a simple miracle like this and miss the whole message of the book. Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly and said, I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me.

Out of the belly of Sheol, that's the place of the dead, cried I, and thou heardest my voice, for thou hast cast me into the deep. In the midst of the seas and the floods compassed me about, all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight.

Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul, the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains, the earth with its bars was about me forever.

Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came in unto thee into thine holy temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy, but I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving.

I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord. And the Lord spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

We have no problem with this miracle because Jesus had no problem with it. If you have any argument with Jonah about this particular miracle, your argument is not with Jonah, your argument is with Jesus because he used this as an illustration, a type of his own burial and resurrection. If you want to know what a person is like, I mean really know that person.

There are several tests that you can use. One is to notice what makes that person laugh. You reveal character considerably by what you laugh at.

Or what you weep over. Find out what makes a person weep. That will help you to find out something about his character.

Or what gets him excited. What does he really get excited about? Or what will he really sacrifice for? To what extent will he toil and work for something? This helps to indicate what his values are, what his character is. What price will he pay to have his own way? It's a good test.

But one of the best tests is prayer. I don't mean the pious public prayers that all of us have recorded on cassettes somewhere in our system. And when the right button is pushed, out comes the regular prayer.

I don't mean that kind of prayer. We all have those. I mean the kind of prayer when you find yourself in the kind of situation Jonah was in.

The kind of prayer Peter prayed when he found himself sinking. What do we pray about when we really have to pray? What do we pray about when we find everything around us falling apart? That tells character. Then Jonah prayed.

When do you pray? When do I pray? Now this was a very costly experience for Jonah. It wasn't an easy experience. I want us tonight to notice the four stages in Jonah's experience with the Lord.

Because perhaps somebody here tonight is in one of these stages. If you aren't, just file them away because someday you may find yourself there. Stage number one, disobedience.

Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God, not when he was at home contemplating his ministry to Nineveh. Not when he was heading down toward the port waiting for his ship. Not when he was on board the ship.

When did Jonah pray? When he was in trouble. Disobedience. Now it's a remarkable thing that Jonah should disobey the Lord.

Jonah was a Jew and the Jews owed a lot to the Lord. He had called them, he had saved them, he had given them his covenant, he had given them his word, he had given them the priesthood, he'd given them the temple, he'd given them the sacrifices, he'd given them the prophets and the promises. As a Jew he should have fallen before God and said, oh God, whatever you want me to do, I'll do it.

But he disobeyed. He had good theology. Over in chapter four he tells us what God is like.

Verse two, I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. He had good theology. He could have passed a theology course in the Bible

Institute.

Is it possible to have good theology and be disobedient? Yes. Here in chapter two we have Jonah quoting the scriptures. Now Bible students have different ways of looking at this, but I sat down and tried to find where these quotations were, and I find that he quotes seven statements from six different Psalms.

Jonah could quote the word of God, but my Bible says thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee. It's not enough just to memorize the scripture. Chapter two, Jonah is just simply reeling out one verse after another.

Of course he'd probably met some navigators on board the ship. He had memorized all this scripture, but it didn't stop him from disobeying God. In fact, it made his disobedience a lot more tragic because he was sinning against a flood of light.

You would expect Jonah to obey God, but he didn't obey God. Now his prayer tells us why he was disobedient. Verse seven, when my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord.

He forgot the Lord. That's where his trouble started. He had good theology, he had memorized scripture, he was called to be a preacher, he was a covenant Jew, but he forgot the Lord.

What does it mean to forget the Lord? It means you don't bring him into the circumstances of life. When his calling came, he forgot the Lord. Then came the word of the Lord to Jonah saying, arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it.

But he forgot the Lord. And when he packed his bags and headed down to the pier, he forgot the Lord. And when he got on board that ship, he forgot the Lord.

He forgot God's grace and God's love and God's power and God's mercy. He forgot the Lord. When you start leaving God out of the decisions of life, we're heading for trouble.

He forgot the Lord. He neglected prayer. Look at verse seven.

And my prayer came in unto thee. Why didn't you pray sooner? First, we start forgetting the Lord. Then we start neglecting prayer.

When the word of the Lord came to Jonah, Jonah didn't say, oh, God, let me pray about this. I know you want me to go. I know the best thing is for me to go.

I don't want to go. Now, Lord, help me. F.B. Meyer in one of his books, he's written a shelf of them, tells of an experience in his life like this where God called him to do something.

And he said, Lord, I can't do it. I don't want to do it. He said, Lord, I'm going to be honest with you because you know my heart.

I'm not going to pray some pious, hypocritical prayer. You know my heart. I'm not willing, but Lord, I'm willing to be made willing.

I'm willing to be made willing. And Meyer said that was a turning point in my life where God said, all right, I'm glad you're honest with me. I will work to make you willing to be willing.

Ever had to pray like that? You see, God doesn't want our service against our will. My Bible says doing the will of God from the heart. But Jonah's heart wasn't in it.

And Jonah stubbornly rejected God's will. He neglected prayer. I'll tell you, friends, when you neglect prayer, you're going to do what Jonah did.

Verse seven, he fainted. Men ought always to pray and not to faint. But he tells us in verse eight another reason why he disobeyed God.

First, he forgot the Lord. Secondly, he neglected prayer. Thirdly, he believed lies.

They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. He believed lies. He believed, for example, that the will of God was something you could just accept or reject.

He believed that the word of God was something you just accept or reject. Now, the word of the Lord came to Jonah saying, well, I don't want it. Now, if you believe that you believe a lie.

The will of God is not something for me to accept or reject. The will of God is something for me to obey. There are no options.

When you sit down at the Lord's table, he doesn't hand you a menu and say, no, it's a la carte. He hands you the dinner and says, this is it. I've prepared this especially for you.

It's the best thing for you. But Jonah, you see, believe lies. They that observe lying vanities.

The word vanities means emptiness. The Hebrew word vanity means what is left when you break a soap bubble. And instead of Jonah getting his hand on true realities, he got his hand on lying vanities.

Lots of Christians believe lies. They believe, well, I can sin and get away with it. They believe, well, I can change God's mind.

They believe, well, I'll never get caught. And Jonah believed lies like this and it got him into trouble. Now, if you'll turn back to chapter one, you'll see all that Jonah lost because he disobeyed God.

I say it to you with all the simplicity and yet all of the heart that I can muster. When we disobey God, we lose. Nobody ever gained by disobeying God.

What did he lose? He lost God's voice. In verse two, God spoke to Jonah, but in verse four, God didn't speak to Jonah in a voice. He spoke to him in the wind and the storm.

Watch out when God can't talk to you anymore. When we start disobeying God, we don't hear his voice. He has to shout at us with a storm and with wind.

In fact, God spoke to Jonah down in verse six through the voice of a pagan ship captain. It's a terrible thing when God has to speak to his children through the lips of the unsaved. He lost God's voice.

He lost his spiritual energy. Verse five, he was fast asleep in the midst of the storm. Lots of Christians are sleepwalking.

Over and over again in his epistles, Paul makes statements like, awake thou that sleepest and Christ shall give you light. We are the children of the day. We are not children of the night.

Therefore, let us not sleep as in the night. Wake up. He lost his spiritual energy.

There are a lot of Christians today who are just anemic. They can't get excited about salvation. They can't get excited about sin.

They're just anemic. They need a shot of heavenly geritol. He lost his testimony.

Verses seven through ten, he had to confess to these pagan sailors that he was a runaway preacher who had resigned his calling and he was trying to go on his own. He lost his testimony. He couldn't talk to him.

He almost lost his life. If it hadn't been for the grace and the mercy of God, he would have. Disobedience, that's stage one.

Stage two, discipline. What did God do to Jonah? Did God give up on Jonah? No. Did God tell the great fish to digest, don't Jonah? No.

I have said often, let me repeat it, God is as concerned about the worker as he is the work. Last week in the first message in this series, I said to you that Jonah needed Nineveh as much as Nineveh needed Jonah. Whatever God calls you to do is there to bring out of us what God wants to bring out.

When we are in the will of God, it brings the best out of us. When we're out of the will of God, it brings the worst out of us. That's why when husbands and fathers are out of the will of God, the home is a hell on earth.

That's why when wives and mothers are out of the will of God, the children want to leave home. That's why when children are out of the will of God, there's trouble at home. That's why when church members are out of the will of God, there are problems in churches.

Wherever in the Bible you find a believer out of the will of God, you find trouble. Discipline. What did God do? He disciplined Jonah.

He chastened him. Now, the greatest chapter in the Bible on chastening is Hebrews chapter 12. I'm gonna ask you to turn there.

I will not deal with the entire chapter. Hebrews chapter 12 verse 3. For consider him, Jesus, that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin.

He's saying to these people, I don't know how much trouble you're going through, but you've never gone through what Jesus went through for you. He, in his battle against sin, ended up giving his life. You haven't gotten that far yet.

And you have forgotten the exhortation, the encouragement, which speaketh unto you as unto sons, my son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord. And that word chastening is the word discipline or child training or instruction or education. For a child immature to become a son mature involves discipline.

You permit a child to do whatever he wants to do when he wants to do it and you're raising a monster. That's why the society is in the mess it's in today. God doesn't do that with his children.

God will not have any spoiled brats in his family. That's why he has discipline. My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of him for whom the Lord loveth.

He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. I've heard parents say, oh I could never spank my child I love him too much. And my answer to that is oh no it's not that you love the child you love yourself too much.

It hurts the parent more to discipline the child than it hurts the child. I didn't believe that when my parents told me that. I thought they were lying but I've learned it's true.

God does not chasten us because he hates us. He chastens us because he loves us. If ye endure chastening God deals with you as with mature sons.

For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement of which all sons are partakers then are you illegitimate children and not sons. I've never spanked the neighbor's children. I felt like it but I've never done it.

They aren't my kids. And if somebody professes to be a Christian and lives in disobedience to God's will repeatedly arrogantly willingly and no chastening comes he is not saved. Did you get that? We have a lot of people that say oh yeah I'm saved I'm saved and they're living in sin but nothing's ever happened.

They've never had any chastisement. And my Bible says look if this happens you just write it down and remember it you're not God's child because if you're God's child he chastens you. When Abraham went down to Egypt God loved Abraham too much to let him disobey and he spanked him.

When Jacob started scheming and running away God loved him too much and God spanked him. When David disobeyed God, David who wrote the Psalms, God says I love you too much to let you do it your own way and he spanked him he paid for it. Now there's a difference between chastening and punishment.

A judge punishes a criminal to uphold the law but I'm not under law I'm under grace. Therefore my father chastens me to prove his love. The judge doesn't love the criminal the judge has to punish the criminal to uphold the law but God doesn't look upon his sinning children as criminals they're still God's children.

He looks upon them as children who need instruction and correction therefore he chastens. If you endure chastening aha that's the secret. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh earthly fathers human fathers who corrected us and we gave them reverence.

Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the father of spirits and live? The suggestion there is if we are not in subjection we may not live. There is a sin unto death for they our earthly fathers verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure that doesn't mean they enjoyed it it means as it seemed good to them but he God chastens us for our profit that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous we can all say amen to that but grievous we can say amen to that.

God has taken me out to the woodshed I've known the chastening hand of God you have too. Why nevertheless afterward it the chastening yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised by it. Now the writer is telling us that God disciplines and because he loves us God disciplines us because he wants to perfect us he wants us to grow in holiness afterward comes the fruit of holiness

God disciplines us to remind us of his word and you know there's another reason why God disciplines us this is one reason why he disciplined Jonah.

Now you just listen closely God disciplines us to remind us of what it's like not to be a Christian. He's saying all right you don't want to do my will you want to go your own way fine find out what it's like not to have me taking care of you. I learned this from Phil Lassie Phil and I are working together on a book on Jonah and God teaches him some things and God's taught me some things we're putting them together and he said to me you know he said I really believe that God put Jonah down in the depths and many people believe Jonah really died he actually died his soul went to Sheol the realm of the dead and God raised him from the dead.

Phil said I really believe God put Jonah down there to let him know what it was like to be lost. Jonah wouldn't go to those Ninevites and God said okay Jonah I want to remind you of what it's like to be lost down down down in prison in the realm of the dead darkness and death and despair and hopelessness Jonah that's the way it is in Nineveh. So God chastened Jonah.

God disciplined him. Now God disciplines us in different ways. Verse 5 of Hebrews 12 he can rebuke us.

Sometimes God disciplines me by rebuke. He rebukes me from the word. He rebukes me by a preacher or a song.

He rebukes me by a Christian. Sometimes God rebukes. If we won't listen to the rebuke then God has to start spanking.

He starts scourging. Talks about that in verse 6. He scourges every son that he receives. What should our response be to God's chastening? Well you get the impression that for three days and three nights Jonah just resisted.

Just gonna have his own way. Then he woke up and said hey I'm alive. Man I'm alive.

I'm still in this great fish but I'm alive. I'm indigestible. And then thanksgiving flooded his soul and his prayer is really a prayer of thanksgiving to God for keeping him alive in such a difficult situation.

Now what should our response be to the chastening and the discipline of God? Well there's several responses possible here. We can respond by despising it. Down in verse 5. My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord.

I've seen saints do that. They get angry at God and get bitter and they despise it. Or we can resist it.

Fight it. Or we can faint under it. Now those are all wrong.

God doesn't want us to faint and God doesn't want us to fight. God doesn't want us to fume. God wants us to submit.

The whole purpose of discipline is to break the will. If we parents do not break the will of a child, we'll never make the will of a child. Now I'm not talking about annihilating his will.

I'm not talking about making him a non-entity, some kind of a puppet. No. But if a child's will is not broken, that child will never grow up to be a mature adult.

Just like a colt. A colt has to be broken. Power has to be under control.

The Greek word for meekness, blessed are the meek, that Greek word means power under control. It's the word that was used for a horse that had been broken. A horse is useless until it's broken.

Unless you kill it and make glue out of it. Now you see, God had Jonah's mind. Jonah knew what he was supposed to do.

But God didn't have Jonah's will. And until he got Jonah's will, he couldn't control Jonah's body and get him off to Nineveh. And so in chapter 2, he broke Jonah's will.

Which leads us to the third stage in Jonah's experience. He didn't resist. He didn't fight.

He didn't argue. He submitted. His third stage was dedication.

He went from discipline to dedication. Notice what he says in verse 9. I will. I will.

Now you should have said that back in chapter 1. This book ought to read like this. And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it. And Jonah said, I will.

But it doesn't read like that. By the way, does your story read like that? In between the call and the recall, you've got storms and danger. He could have had a crown on his head as a soul winner.

Instead, he had weeds around his head. Could have been walking in the light. Here he was in the darkness.

Could have been out catching fish. And here he had a fish catching him. The whole problem, his will.

So he moved to stage 3, dedication. He dedicated himself again to God. I remembered the Lord and I prayed.

I will sacrifice with the voice of thanksgiving. Now Lord, you don't want me to come and bring a lamb or a goat or anything. You want to hear my voice from my heart saying I will.

Okay, here it is. I will. I will pay that which I have vowed.

Salvation is of the Lord. Now twice here, he talks about the temple. Verse 4. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight.

Well, quit complaining. That's what you wanted. He got exactly what he wanted.

The word of the Lord came to Jonah and Jonah said, no, I'm not going to go. And he arose to flee from the presence of the Lord. And that's exactly what he got.

Boy, that just says something to me about backslidden people. They don't want God. They don't want God's will.

They don't want God to do anything. And then when they get in a mess, they say, oh, I don't have the Lord. That's what you wanted.

I am cast out of eyesight yet. I will look, that's where it all starts. I will look again toward thy holy temple.

Now, that's the Old Testament version of 1 John 1:9. When Solomon dedicated the temple, he said something like this. Now, Lord Jehovah, when your people are out away from this place and they get into trouble, they're overcome by their enemies or there's some problem. If they look toward your temple and pray in your name, hear them and forgive them.

That's what Jonah did. Now there was no problem looking toward the temple. He knew where it was up, up.

He didn't have a roadmap. He didn't have an atlas or a compass. He said out there someplace is God's temple.

God's going to hear me. I'm going to cry out to God. I'm going to look toward his temple.

He says this, uh, up in verse seven, my prayer came in under the, into thy holy temple. This is the Old Testament version of 1 John 1:9. If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That's where dedication starts.

I will look, then I will sacrifice from the lips. I will pay what I have vowed. I'll do what I've told you I do.

Dear God, forgive me for going on a detour. I'm coming back now. Here I am.

I'm glad that our God is the kind of a God who gives us another chance. The saints won't give you another chance. You fall on your face.

The saints will remember that forever. They'll take Polaroid pictures of it and put it in their album. The saints cannot forget that you make a mistake.

The saints cannot forget. That's why David said, let me fall into the hands of the Lord, greater his mercies. Let me not fall into the hands of men.

People who can't remember Bible verses, remember the sins of the saints. And they work for the devil. Who's the accuser of the brethren has the best record of anybody when it comes to what we've all done wrong.

I'm glad that our God isn't like that. I'm glad our God is a God of forgiveness. It's a good thing that God was this way.

Jonah knew it. I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, great kindness, repentancy of the evil. He was glad to get this for himself, didn't want it for anybody else.

And so Jonah came to the third stage, which was dedication. Let me remind you that the victorious Christian life is a series of new beginnings. You will never make a decision in your life that will keep you going forever.

Now, your decision to trust Christ that saves you forever. You say, well, oh, I was in a meeting and I had a step of dedication and that's going to last me. Oh, no, it's not.

No, it's not. I don't know of one verse in the Bible that says you can take one step of commitment and that's it for the rest of your life. The victorious Christian life is a series of new beginnings.

It was so with Abraham. It was so with Jacob. It was so with David.

It was so with Jonah. It does not mean that our previous commitments were false. It just means you don't stay in the same plateau.

You keep moving, which leads us to our fourth stage, deliverance, disobedience, discipline, dedication, deliverance. God forgave him. The Lord didn't speak to Jonah.

He first spoke to the fish and said to the fish, all right, you can get rid of him now. You've done your work. God changes circumstances when character changes until Jonah came to the place where his character was what God wanted it to be.

And he still had some growing to do until he came to that place. He needed the fish. Sometimes we say to God, oh God, how long are you going to keep sandpapering? Dear Lord, how long are you going to keep filing on me? And God's answer is always the same till the job gets done.

But isn't that enough? No, no, there's still some areas that need to be straightened out. God spoke to the fish and the fish obeyed. Everything in this book obeys God except Jonah.

The fish does and the wind does and the storm and the worm, but not the preacher. And it vomited out Jonah on the dry land. Jonah did not even get muddy and he came out and I'm sure he looked a lot different from the way he went in.

I'm convinced, although I cannot prove it, this is simply a supposition, but I'm convinced that God permitted those gastric juices to work on Jonah so that when he came out, he looked weird. He had had a real gut level experience. And when Jonah walked into Nineveh, he didn't look like the last preacher that came to town.

And you should understand that news travels rapidly in oriental countries. And I'm sure that the men on board that ship were already spreading the word. Boy, when that storm ended, they went back to port.

They didn't go to Tarshish. When Jonah got to Nineveh, he looked like a walking miracle. That's what happens when you have death, burial, and resurrection.

You're a walking miracle. Lazarus was a walking miracle. People, you know, Lazarus doesn't say one word in the Bible.

Did you know that? Lazarus does not say one word. Of course, he had two sisters, didn't have much chance to say very much. Lazarus does not say one word in the Bible.

And yet people, people looked at Lazarus and got saved. They looked at Lazarus and got saved because they'd seen him dead. They'd been to the funeral.

And here he comes walking. What was it that won them to Jesus? A miracle, death, burial, and resurrection. Why was it Jonah was able to do such a mighty piece of work in Nineveh? Was it only his message? No.

He was a walking miracle. He had been delivered from death. He was a new man.

And you could see the difference. That's what we need today. It's good for us to pass out tracts.

It's good for us to give our verbal witness. These are all important. But my Bible says, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so you also should walk in newness of life.

You know what people need to see today in our churches? Not just church members. Walking miracles. That was the secret of Mr. Moody's ministry.

He always had a congregation of people who had been resurrected from the dead. And folks would come and say, well, what's going on down there? Well, here's a man who used to be a drunkard and look, today he's a new man. Here's a woman who used to be a streetwalker.

Look, she's a new woman. Here's what God's doing for people. Deliverance.

God forgave him and God delivered him. God resurrected him. I'm convinced, I will not make it a test of anything, but I'm convinced that Jonah died and God raised him from the dead.

A beautiful picture of our Lord Jesus Christ with some contrasts. Jonah died unwillingly. Jesus died willingly.

Jonah died for his own sins. Jesus died for the sins of the world. Jonah died because he was disobedient.

Jesus died because he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. But both of them had one thing in common beside the three days and the three nights. Both Jesus and Jonah were raised from the dead that the message might go out to others.

And our Lord, when he met with his disciples, didn't say to them, I've been raised from the dead. Now let's just sit down and enjoy this. He said, you take this message of my death and resurrection and you spread it abroad.

That's what Jonah did. As we're going to see in chapter three, he was delivered because he submitted himself in dedication, but it took discipline to bring him to dedication. But that discipline was caused because of his disobedience.

Had he never disobeyed God, he would never have had to go through the discipline. But had he not gone through the discipline, he would never have dedicated himself. But when he did dedicate himself, then he was delivered and his ministry was picked up once again.

You can't have a deeper life without a deeper death. When Jonah died, he had to die to himself, die to himself. He didn't do it by signing a card, even praying a prayer.

He went through an experience of mortification, humiliation. He went through an experience of death and burial. And then God raised him.

Now God is not likely to send some great fish to swallow us up, but God can send great experiences to swallow us up. Have you felt all the waves and the billows of God in your life? Jesus did. I have a baptism to be baptized with, said Jesus, and how I am constrained until it be completed.

Our friend Jonah knew who had caused all of this. God. He didn't say those sailors threw me overboard.

Thy hand has done this. If he had just submitted sooner, if he just submitted sooner, I have told this story here before. Some of you haven't heard it.

If you have, it bears repeating about the former president of the Moody Bible Institute, Dr. William Culbertson. He was sitting in the old sweet shop that's not there anymore, having a cup of coffee or something with some of the men at the institute. And a student came running in all aglow.

And he said, Dr. Culbertson, Dr. Culbertson, I've got marvelous news. I have been wrestling with the Lord since 10 o'clock last night, all night long. I've been wrestling with the Lord and I've gotten the victory.

In his own quiet way, Dr. Culbertson said, God bless you. God bless you. And the boy went away.

And Dr. Culbertson turned to the other men and said, it's really too bad. He could have gotten the victory at 10 o'clock last night and had a good night's sleep. You know, we think we're so super spiritual because we fight God.

Jacob didn't prove himself to be a great man by wrestling with God. He proved himself to be a weakling. Why fight God? Surrender.

If only Jonah in chapter one would have said, I will, I will. But he had to learn the hard way. Don't learn the hard way.

There's an easier way. Just say, I will. Gracious Father, perhaps there are some of us here tonight who are fighting and resisting, despising.

You are chastening, you are dealing with us, and yet we resist, we fight. Forgive us. Perhaps someone here tonight has never been born again, has never experienced this wonderful salvation in Christ.

May that one come and trust the Savior tonight. Father, for that one believer who may be here resisting your will, may that one surrender tonight. Lord, may many of us tonight in our hearts, if not with our lips, say, Lord, I will.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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