

Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet - 22

Introduction: Jonah is being taught by God concerning his anger toward the Ninevites and the Lord's will. The book ends with a question that is instructive for us.

Text: Jonah 4:1-11

John Philips - "Sick of the sight of sackcloth, the sullen prophet turned his back on Nineveh and went to the east side of the city. There he made a shack in which to wait for events to unfold. He thought perhaps the desired judgment might yet fall."

This of course is the scene we see unfold. **God has mercy and compassion on Jonah** and sets out to do to Him as He does with us; **God teaches us His ways. When we come to the Word of God, we are being instructed about our all-wise God.** He is revealing to us His ways and who He is. He is also revealing to us the truth about ourselves.

The Bible tells us that God prepared a gourd, a worm, and a vehement east wind. Jonah rejoiced for the gourd. But as we look at the rest of the 'prepared things,' does Jonah see them as a blessing? In truth, they are all meant for the good of Jonah.

God's work in our lives according to **Romans 8:28-29** is to bring about good in our lives. That good is to conform us to the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Bible calls this godliness. How is it that we are to be like God? The answer is found as we look to the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. (**Hebrews 12:2**)

C. Jonah's Instruction v4-11

1. The Questions v4, 9
2. The Object Lessons v5,6-10
3. The Conclusion v10,11

The first question was asked before Jonah had left the city. It is found in **verse number 4**. The Lord asks Jonah, "Doest thou well to be angry?" Then we read about this first object lesson. God commands and appoints a gourd to shade Jonah on the east side of the city.

*v6 "And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to **deliver him from his grief.**"*

God wants us to know specifically that the purpose of this gourd was to deliver Jonah from his grief.

We see Jonah's reaction to this blessing. In **verse 6**, Jonah was "*exceeding glad of the gourd.*"

What makes you rejoice with great joy? The answer to this question will reveal to us where our affections are. Jonah's affections were skewed. We are told in the Word of God where our affections are to be.

Colossians 3:1-2 "*If ye then be risen with, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*"

We are to actively engage in spiritual work. We are to **seek** those things which are above...to purpose by an act of will.

We are to **set** our affections on things above... to have our minds and thoughts be concerned with Christ and His things.

How are we to deal with this life, when great difficulties come? How are we to learn what God is teaching us in this life?

Turn to **I Samuel chapter 30**.

Here we read of David returning to the Philistine city of Ziklag. This city was where David at the time lived while sojourning in the country of Philistia. This was before David's reception as the rightful King of Israel. David was in exile in this place. He was given a city by the Philistine king Achish. (**I Samuel 27:6**) David and His men had gone to Jezreel but had been sent back by King Achish to Ziklag. When they arrived back at Ziklag they discovered while they were away that the Amalekites had come and taken the city, burned it with fire, and taken the people of the city captive.

The Bible says in **verse 4**, "*Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.*"

The Bible goes on and tells us in **verse 6**, "*And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters:*"

I want you to notice this small phrase at the end of **verse 6**, for it reveals to us where ultimately David's affections resided. "...**but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.**"

We could say it this way, despite the circumstances that were presented to David, despite His experience at this moment; this great loss, even though all seemed to be doomed; David purposed to look to the LORD and the things above. His affections were not misplaced. He **set** his affections on the LORD and He actively **sought** the LORD.

Going back to our text we see that Jonah's affections were on the wrong things. Jonah saw that the gourd provided Him shade, but **later Jonah would understand the greater purpose that God was teaching Him.** And so, we now see that this blessing of the gourd is taken away.

The Bible tells us in **verse 7**, *"But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered."*

Why would the Lord do such a thing? That which Jonah had rejoiced with exceeding joy was now gone. I am reminded of Abraham's great trial of faith being called upon by God to make sure His affections were in the right place.

For God told Abraham, *"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."* (**Genesis 20:2**)

Can we imagine such a thing, that God would ask you or me to sacrifice a son or a daughter? Let me ask this morning, Would that be a blessing to you?

The Bible tells us that God prepares another stage for this object lesson before explaining the truth Jonah needed to hear. The Lord prepares and sends a vehement east wind. This wind has been described as a sirocco which is a pernicious wind that blows called the Syrian wind. It is said to resemble the steam from the mouth of an oven.

"The change to summer had been rapid as that which ushered in the spring. The verdure (greenness or freshness of vegetation) The verdure of the plain had perished almost in a day. Hot winds, coming from the desert, had burned up and carried away the shrubs. The heat was now almost intolerable. Violent whirlwinds occasionally swept over the face of the country."

God asks Jonah now the second question in **verse 9** following the gourd, the worm, and the wind, *"And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death."*

This is the sad state of one who resists being taught by God.

John Butler - *"Sin does not have to have reasons or facts to argue. It simply argues because it is sin. You can explain ever so carefully to folk the peril of their ways, show them many Scriptures to prove their way is not the will of God; yet they will belligerently argue with you and continue to justify their evil way though it makes no sense at all. It is the willfulness of evil. Peter spoke of this when he said unbelievers "willingly are ignorant" (2 Peter 3:5) of the spiritual truths."*

By His Word, He reveals to us the thoughts and intents of the heart. (**Hebrews 4:12**)

God contrasts Jonah's ways and His ways.

"Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

Notice the contrast:

1. Jonah pitied that which he had not laboured. *"...for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow..."*
2. God pitied this city of which He had labored.
 1. Jonah pitied that which was only temporal. A temporary gourd which came up in a night and perished in a night. *"...which came up in a night, and perished in a night..."*
 2. God pitied a city that was of great antiquity.
 1. Jonah pitied that which has no soul.
 2. God showed mercy and grace to a city full of precious souls. *"And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"*

And you and I are caused by this to ask ourselves the question, **What is it that you and I value the most?**

Do we have misplaced affection and priorities?

What is it that matters the most to us?

In summarizing the book of Jonah:

We see man's selfishness and pride. Jonah shows us the struggle of a rebellious man with the will of God.

We see God's priority toward every soul.

We see God's priority of preaching the Gospel, that men might be saved and that He might receive honor and glory.

Are we doing what God has called us to do? Or are we like Jonah fighting against His will and design for our lives?