6-30-1940

Bible School lesson on "Jonah: The Outreach of God's Love"

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A. JONAH THE PROPHET: — Was there such a man?

I. The natural and first question
   1. People who raise the question — mainly
   2. Evidence that there was:
      (1) Matt. 12:38-41; Luke 11:29, 30:
         a. "Then certain Scribes answered and said, Master, we would see a sign of thee. Then he answered and said, And evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: for as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth".
         (2) Believing the story of Jonah is believing Jesus. Denying the story of Jonah is doubting the Lord.

II. Time: — About the time of Jeroboam II, B.C. 800.
   1. II Kings 14:25
   2. Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1 and Jonah 1:1

III. Jonah's characteristics: — Pronounced prejudices.
   1. On first commission — "He went out from the presence of the Lord".
      (1) He walked out on God
      (2) He struck, or resigned, because of his assignment
   2. His second commission:
      (1) Ninevah repented — "Is not this what I told thee? In other words, I told you so".
      (2) The strangeness in Jonah's course — Repeat the story and explain him on the grounds of the Jewish misconception of their place and standing before God, "As a chosen people".
      (1) What Israel thought it meant:
         a. God had little or no interest in others
         b. Israel was better than others
      (2) What God meant by choosing Israel:
         a. As a chosen people, Israel held a sacred trust
            (a) To exemplify how to live — man to man and man to God.
            (b) To interpret rightly and wait patiently for the Messiah.
            (c) To be prepared in mind and heart for the Messiah's reign.
      (3) But Israel developed a non-service, self-righteous national heart.
         a. Imposed burdens they would not lift.
         b. Hence, "We forbid him".
         c. Did not know that Gentiles who did from natural the will of God would be blessed.
         d. Jonah was under the average Jewish belief.
Bible School Lesson-2

3. GOD'S YEARNING FOR NINEVAH

I. Who they were.
   1. Gen. 10:11 - Descendants of Ham
   2. The city was built by Nimrod
   3. The city:
      (1) Incircling wall of about 8 miles in length.
      (2) Possibly a population of 175,000 people
      (3) Josh. 3:3 - "And exceeding great city", requiring three days to traverse it, hence much of the population must have been outside the city wall.
      (4) Its palaces: - Those interested should read an encyclopaedia or Bible dictionary.
      (5) God's chief concern: - Not Nineveh's temples, or palaces, but its peoples.

C. CERTAIN LESSONS FROM THIS BOOK: - We have seen that God had one idea and Jonah had another; we have observed the tragedies which developed. What lessons can we gain from these records?

I. The frailties of human nature - The nature we have.
   1. We become honestly mistaken at times.
   2. We are prejudicially, self-blinded at times.
   3. We are rebellious quitters at times:
      (1) 4:1-4, "It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed unto Jehovah, and said, I pray thee, O Jehovah, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore, now, O Jehovah, take, I beseech thee, my life from thee; for it is better for me to die than to live".
      (2) Jonah's meaning: - "I had rather be dead than to see those people have your mercy".
      (3) God's lesson from the gourd vine:
         a. Jonah went outside the city, built a booth
         b. God made a gourd vine grow for his shelter,
         c. God made a worm cut it down, Jonah's heat,
         d. Jonah's rebuke to God for killing a gourd,
         e. God's rebuke to Jonah for unkindness to Ninevites.
      (4) In keeping with his opportunities, Jonah was worse than the Ninevites, whose sins went up before the Lord.
      (5) "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment and condemn this generation, for they repented at Jonah's preaching, and a greater than Jonah is here".
II. God's love in contrast with human prejudice.
1. Never deals wholly by how people have treated him.
2. He deals on the basis of their needs and desires:
   (1) Nineveh called a fast, repented, and God forgave.
3. We are commanded to be as God was, and is.

III. God's use of all resources in accomplishing his will
1. 1:4 - "Jehovah sent a great wind upon the sea".
   (1) His natural laws send winds—mighty winds,
   (2) He automatically touched his laws and sent one:
      a. Sailors spontaneously recognized his touch,
      b. They were convinced this stroke was punitive—"Come, let us cast lots and see who has sinned".
2. Other uses of the wind for his will:
   (1) Red Sea
   (2) Storms on Galilee—Two
      a. Once when Jesus was asleep
      b. Once when the disciples were in mid-sea.
3. 1:17 - "Jehovah prepared a great fish" (people).
   (1) Not a whale—Likely a shark. Sharks have swallowed Jesus approved the record—already observed this.
4. 4:6 - "God prepared a gourd".
5. 4:7 - "God prepared a worm". 6. "God spoke to the fish—

   Conclusion:  (vomited Jonah up). Speaks to conditions.
   (1) God uses nature and nations to accomplish his will
      a. May learn he is uses Godless nations now to punish those who merely pretend to love him.

IV. Evil must be expunged in order to have God's mercy.
1. Sailors tried to row to land to save Jonah; failed.
2. Only throwing Jonah overboard was sufficient.
   (1) Jonah's vindication of God's justice, 1:12
   (2) Legitimate punishment has two purposes:
      a. Recognition of God's standards of faith
      b. Reformation of evildoers—If Jonah had escaped.
3. Other passages:
   (1) I Cor. 5—an evildoer ("Turn him over to Satan")
   (2) "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump".
   (3) "Them that sin reprove in the sight of all that all may learn to fear".
BIBLE LESSON, JUNE 30, 1940-"Jonah: The outreach of God's

Lesson for tomorrow is the amazing story titled "Jonah; The outreach of God's Love." Hardly could one find a lesson with more gripping facts in it, or one with more practical truths. But in the outset, there comes up the old question: Is the story of Jonah a religious myth or does it relate the facts about a real man by the name of Jonah? No answer can be given that will satisfy those who have made up their minds they will not believe, but for all who merely want to settle an honest question it is enough to say that Jesus, in the Matthew 12:38-41, had this written, "Then certain Scribes answered and said, Master, we would see a sign of thee. But he answered and said, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall be no sign given unto it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Believing the story of Jonah is believing what Jesus said. Doubting the story of Jonah is doubting the Lord's word.

The prophet Jonah likely lived about 800 B.C. during the reign of Jeroboam II. Reference is made to him in 1 Kings 14:25, Hosea 1:1, Amos 1:1, and in addition to his record of himself in the present lesson.

Jonah possessed certain very definite characteristics. No one of them was more pronounced than his personal prejudices. If he disliked people he did not want them to have comforts or blessings. When God gave him his first commission to Nineveh, it is said "He went out from the presence of the Lord" and started to Tarshish. That means that he walked out on God; he struck because he did not like his assignment. If he had been a modern preacher it would have been said, "He resigned" and went to another state. And then, after his experience in the great fish, he received a second commission. This time he went, but still he had his prejudices. His preaching brought repentance, but not because Jonah wanted it to do so. When the king of Nineveh called for a fast and all his town repented, God forgave them, but Jonah left town and went out behimself. Sitting somewhere looking back over Nineveh he said to God, "That is what I told thee while I was yet in my country". Jonah really to say, "God, I told you in the first place that they would repent. I didn't want them to do it; so I tried to go to Tarshish".

At first, it appears a strange course on Jonah's part. It was strange, but is understood in the light of the nation's heart at that time. Hundreds of years earlier God had chosen Israel as his special people, but not for the reason or the purpose Israel thought. They decided he chose them because they were better than others, and because God just wanted to do more for them than for others. But God chose them for other reasons, primarily--(OVER)
He wanted to trust them with some sacred responsibilities. Through them he wanted to exemplify how men should live-man to man and man to God. He wanted them to interpret rightly the Messiah of the whole world, and to set the good example of waiting patiently for him. He expected them to be prepared in mind and heart for that Messiah's reign. But Israel developed a non-service, self-righteous national heart. They imposed burdens on others which they would not bear; they felt that nobody had the right to help God do things but them, consequently the Lord's apostles once told him, "We saw a man casting out demons over yonder a while ago and we forbid him because he is not with us"; They did not know the truth in in Paul's letter to the Roman Christians, where he said that Gentiles who had not the law but did by nature the things in the law became a law unto themselves and would receive God's favors. Jonah, in his attitude toward Nineveh, a gentile city, was under that sort of impression. He not only felt they weren't intended as objects of God's favor, but out of that belief he built up a personal prejudice which made him walk out on God under an assignment to preach to them. Prejudice indeed leads men to do very strange things.

Over in bold outlines against that prejudiced view stands the compassionate love of God. They had not sinned against Jonah, yet he said he had rather be dead then have them saved. They had sinned against God, yet he was supremely desirous for them to be saved. The city itself was built by Nimrod, a descendant of wicked Ham, (Genesis 10) III. Through the years it developed a defense wall about eight miles in length and a massive population of several hundred thousand people. Its various kings added temples and castles to adorn its architecture. Inside and outside its walls lived a people whose sins went up daily before God, because their wickedness was great. But these did not change his desire for them to be saved. He was not interested in their national defense but in their soul defense. He cared nothing for their lovely temples, but he cared much for the temples in their hearts. It was out of that concern that he commission Jonah to evangelize over there. From the dawn of creation, he has had one pulse for mankind. That is for our good here and our salvation hereafter. Nothing ever blinds his impulses or diverts his interests from that ONE. His laws are given for that purpose, his punishments administered and his inducements offered for the same reasons. Neither length, nor breadth nor height, nor depth can alter that one interest or separate God from his effort to that end.

We now have gone over this Divine story in a general manner. But there are certain definite lessons for us to get, which we can use for ourselves.

The first lesson is, The frailties of human nature.
We sometimes become honestly mistaken about things. At other times, we are prejudiced and self-blinded about things. And then, sometimes the Lord's helpers walk out on him, as Jonah did for a time. It is said that a man once expressed the desire to kill a deer. His friend promised to see that he did. Then the man said, "I have not gun." Assured that the gun would be supplied, he replied, "Well, I couldn't shoot it." Assured, again, that the friend would show him how to shoot the gun, he said, "Ah well, I couldn't hit the deer." Persuaded that he could, the two went to the woods. The deer was pointed out to him and loaded, then he said, "I don't see any deer", and he was right, for he had his eyes shut. Sometimes human beings become so determined that things are a certain way, or should be, that they shut their eyes of understanding. The said of that nation of Israel, "Their eyes they have closed, their ears they have stopped, lest they should see with their eyes, see with their ears and understand with their hearts, and turn and I should heal them." It is a very strange quirk of nature that makes people do that way, but likely you know somebody right now who for very good reason "Do not see any deer". Is that right? And the stranger thing still is the dogged determination that we put into our feelings sometimes. We have seen from the first of chapter four in Jonah that he told God he had rather be dead than see Ninevah repent and live.

It is an amusing, yet most serious, manner that God employs to teach Jonah. First, he sent a storm, then he made a fish swallow him, then he taught him with a gourd vine. Remember it? Well, after Ninevah had repented, Jonah went out by himself and built a booth to pout in. God make a gourd grow up over him for a shade, and Jonah was pleased. Then God told a worm to eat it down, and of course he did. Jonah could not afford to complain about the lack of comfort to himself, for God had given him the shade, so he trumped up a pretext, as chronic complainers often do. He rebuked God for his lack of mercy in killing a poor helpless gourd vine. Again, he said he was so mad he was about dead and declared he had rather die than to live under such conditions. But God told him, "Thou hast had regard for the gourd which thou didst not cause to grow, and for which thou hast not labored, neither madst to gow; which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should no I have regard for Ninevah?" The fickleness and the frailties of human nature are interesting, amusing and often tragic.

To impress the seriousness of this lesson, a thousand years later, Jesus said to some religious people, "The men of Ninevah shall rise up in the judgment against this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and a greater than Jonah is here".
The second practical lesson for us is that God never deals with people on the basis of how they have treated him. He treats them according to their needs and the possibility of improving them. It should not need to be said that we, his children, are expected to treat one another the same way.

A third practical observation is God's use of all resources in accomplishing his purposes. Chapter one, verse four, says, "Jehovah sent a great wind upon the sea". God has laws which stir up winds, and often great winds, but this expression means that he touched that law and spontaneously brought on the winds which physical appearances did not predict ahead of time. The sailors recognized the unusual features involved and were convinced of some superwind. They also knew the manifestation was punitive in purpose, for they suggested that lots be cast to find who was guilty. It might be observed in passing this point that the same God who touched his laws then touches them now. He is not asleep nor resting. His hand is at work against the hypocrisies of his people, and he does not approve sin now any more than he did then. There are many cases on record where he used the physical elements for special purposes. The wind was employed in the Red Sea when Israel left Egypt. It was used when the disciples went across Lake Galilee and Jesus came walking on the water.

A second mentioned agency in the present lesson is named in 1:17—"Jehovah prepared a great fish", in 4:6, "He prepared a gourd", and in 4:7 he "made a worm" to cut the gourd down. Let it not be forgotten that God also has used Godless nations in past years to punish his vaunted, self-righteous people. I am thinking that we may learn in much sorrow that he is now using peoples who hate him to teach others who profess to love him. And be it remembered that the Americas do not hold his guarantee of exemption. It remains yet to be seen if we shall be able, by his grace, to escape.

And the final lesson to be drawn for us is that evil must be expunged from the group before the Father's blessings can be received.

The sailors on Jonah's ship tried even after the lots fell on him to row the boat ashore but failed. They said that innocent blood would be on them if they threw him overboard but the storm increased its fury until Jonah was cast off. We are not to think that the point was swallowed up with that occasion, either. Jonah, as a principle of God, justified his course when he told the sailors, "I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you", and he required that they cast him overboard. Re-recognized the course as justification of God's righteous dealings. And it represents
his course on many other occasions. Punishment has, or should have, always two legitimate aims. First, it should be administered in recognition of God's standards of dealing. Secondly, it should be administered as to bring the reformation of the offender. Punishment as personal revenge is forbidden in the Bible. Jonah was punished as a vindication of God's justice and for his own reformation. Other examples of similar things are many.

In the fifth chapter of First Corinthians we are given a case of church discipline. A man had been retained in the membership for some unnamed reason, though he was very corrupt. The instruction of Paul was, "Turn him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of judgment", and then he further said that a little leaven will leaven the entire lump. Another case is where Paul said, "Evil companions corrupt good manners, following which is the requirement to refrain from all connections with such persons in the Lord. And again, Paul said to Timothy, "Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that all may learn to fear".

In closing this discussion, let it be made clear that religious discipline must be from pure, sincere motives if we would avoid sin ourselves. For, even God's commanded course, done for personal revenge, is a sin in those who pursue it. Only from the sincere desire to help society on the one hand and help the offender on the other can we justifiably carry out a course of punishment.

Tomorrow morning at the central church of Christ, 145 5th Avenue North, Mr. A. M. Burton will speak and tomorrow evening at 5:45 my subject will be "Personal Religion". Former members of Central church are invited to return for a visit tomorrow and hear Brother Burton. And now for the central church we bid you Good By, as the singers render the closing hymn.

Russell Street 7:45 P.M.
Sunday Morning June 30, 1940 - Brother Burton preached.