

I Love to Tell the Story

The Book of Jonah

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Jared K. Hardie, public relations officer for the Jehovah's Witnesses, said in the *Dallas Times Herald*, 7/1/79, "Our religion is not just a formality. Our whole lifestyle revolves around our obligation to follow the command of Jesus. We have five hours of meetings each week in addition to our personal study."
 - 1. Can we say that our whole lifestyle revolves around our obligation to follow the command of Jesus?
 - a. How many of us still participate in the visitation program?
 - b. How many have we invited to our meeting in a couple weeks?
 - 2. We often sing, "I love to tell the story of unseen things above, Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love."
 - a. But, do we really mean it?
 - b. Some do not love telling the story—to them telling the story is just a bother.
- B. This morning, we want to examine a character who did not want to tell the story—Jonah.
 - 1. In fact, Jonah did everything he could to keep from telling the story.
 - 2. In so doing, Jonah provides us an example—both positive & negative—of how we can respond to the lost.

II. WE CAN RUN FROM THEM, 1:1-3.

- A. Jonah ran away from his responsibility.
 - 1. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, vv 1-2.
 - a. Jonah was to cry against that city—in other words, Jonah was to preach against the city.
 - b. Jonah was to cry against that city, for their wickedness had come before God.
 - 1) In other words, God knew how wicked & sinful Nineveh was.
 - 2) Nineveh was an extremely wicked city—they would burn cities for no reason, they would burn children alive in front of their parents, they would behead people, and they would chop off the hands of their captured enemies.
 - 3) If God knew how wicked the Nineveites were, he still knows how wicked people are.
 - a) We cannot hide our sins from God, for he knows our wickedness.
 - b) In fact, Jonah tried to hide from God by fleeing to Tarshish, but God will know where Jonah was & what Jonah was doing.
 - 2. Jonah attempted to flee from God's presence, v 3.
 - a. The Israelites believed that God only dwelt in Israel; Jonah thought that if he could get away from Israel he could get away from God.
 - b. He wanted to flee to Tarshish.
 - 1) There were many port cities called Tarshish in the ancient world.
 - 2) But, since Jonah wanted to flee from God, this Tarshish is probably the one in ancient Spain, which was as far as ships traveled in that era, the end of the known world.
- B. Are we running from our responsibility?
 - 1. God has instructed us to go & share the gospel (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15).

2. There are many excuses we make for running away:
 - a. "I don't have enough time."
 - b. "I don't know how."
 - c. "We've got elders & a preacher."
3. Illustration about Robert Devereux, the second earl of Essex, *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations*, #11981.
4. Are we doing what God has told us or are we running away?

III. WE CAN RUN TO THEM, 3:1-5.

- A. Jonah went to Nineveh.
 1. God told Jonah a second time to go to Nineveh & preach what God had told him.
 2. Jonah did according to God's word, vv 3-4.
 - a. Jonah went to Nineveh.
 - b. He went the first day's journey & proclaimed, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"
 3. When Jonah proclaimed what God wanted him to preach, the people repented, v 5.
- B. Are we going to the lost?
 1. Christians in the first century went (Acts 8:4).
 - a. These Christians went everywhere preaching the word—they didn't wait on others to do it for them.
 - b. They knew that they, like Jonah, had been commissioned from God for this work.
 2. The Christians in the first century brought people to Christ (Acts 8:5-6).
 - a. The multitudes in Samaria heeded the things preached by Philip.
 - b. If we proclaim the Word of God, individuals will heed what we say.
 3. Illustration about Dr. John Timothy Stone sharing the Gospel with a friend while they traded stamps, *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations*, #12003.
 - a. This boy ran to his lost friend, shared with him the Gospel, & baptized him into Christ.
 - b. Why do't we do the same?

IV. WE CAN RUN AGAINST THEM, 4:1-3.

- A. When God saw the Ninevites' repentance, he turned from his punishment (3:10).
 1. God is a forgiving God (Mic 7:18).
 2. When people today repent, God still forgives.
 - a. If you will repent, God will forgive you just as he did the Ninevites.
 - b. Do you need to repent & receive God's forgiveness?
- B. This greatly angered Jonah, 4:1-3.
 1. Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh, because he knew God would turn from his anger, v 2.
 - a. The Ninevites were great enemies of Israel.
 - 1) The Assyrians were responsible for many of Israel's great disasters.
 - 2) During the 8th & 7th centuries BC, the Assyrians invaded Palestine over & over.
 - b. Thus, Jonah wanted the Ninevites destroyed, not spared.
 2. Jonah pleaded with God just to take his life, 3.
 3. Jonah even sat outside the city to see if God would bring disaster upon it.
- C. We can wait for God to bring disaster upon the wicked.
 1. We can plead with God to go ahead & destroy the wicked.
 2. Or, we can go to them with the Gospel.
 - a. Jesus taught us to love our enemies (Mt 5:44).

- b. if we love our enemies, we will share the Gospel with them.
- c. If our enemies obey the Gospel, they will become brothers instead of enemies.

V. CONCLUSION.

- A. Illustration about the preacher's visiting a man who said that he would never attend a church where his neighbor went, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, p 402. There are two lessons we can learn from this:
 - 1. We need to live in such a way as to bring glory & honor to the gospel, not disrepute.
 - 2. We cannot be a good neighbor without sharing Jesus with our neighbors.
- B. Jonah would have done anything in his power to keep from telling the story.
 - 1. If Jonah were here today, he would be the one objecting to every good work.
 - 2. If Jonah were here today, he would be trying to stop evangelistic zeal.
- C. Yet, Christ has told us to tell the story.
- D. Are you telling the story?