

BY PASTOR WALE AFELUMO

JONAH'S JOURNEY: THE HEART

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCE

Jonah 4:1-11

ADDITIONAL STUDY

Proverbs 4:23, Psalms 51:1-17,
& Matthew 5:8,

PRAYER

Dear Father, I see where I have erred, show me the lessons in my trials and lead me to repentance. Let me find my way again. My desire is to do your bidding. I say yes Lord! Amen.

So, why can't I likewise change what I feel about Nineveh from anger to pleasure, this big city of more than a hundred and twenty thousand childlike people who don't yet know right from wrong, to say nothing of all the innocent animals?" Jonah 4:11

Our hearts are like soil samples in God's hand. He plants His seed and the condition of our heart determines the outcome. The heart is what you actually need for your mission or your call in life. Having looked at the story of Jonah and all the struggles he went through we will find that the one thing God had a problem with was the condition of Jonah's heart.

We see a play of hearts in Jonah's journey with God:

God caused a plant to give Jonah shade in the heat of the sun and by morning a worm had destroyed the plant and Jonah was furious. Whilst God did not want 120,000 people to perish, neither did He wish destruction for even the innocent animals in Nineveh, Jonah was sulking over the withering of a plant he didn't even plant nor tend. Sometimes, we get bitter over mundane things, blaming God for what we don't have when in fact God would rather have us think about ways to reach out to the people around us.

Jonah didn't have the heart God needed to carry out His plan for Nineveh. He turned around and ran away. In fact, Jonah was the only pastor who was not happy that his congregation had an opportunity to surrender their lives to God. He was the evangelist sent to a people but would rather that they perish in their sins. He would rather give a penalty not caution. To him, let the wicked perish, they do not deserve to live neither do they deserve mercy.

Consider the hearts of the men aboard the Tarshish-bound ship Jonah tried to escape on. Although they didn't believe in God but served other gods, after some questions, and Jonah explained to them that he was the reason for the storm, he asked them to throw him overboard. However, these heathen (unbelievers) would not, they were willing to risk their lives for Jonah. They were concerned about Jonah's 'one' life. Their attitude was marked by compassion!

Then the most amazing thing happened; when they saw they had no choice, the men prayed to God! It wasn't long ago they knew about Jonah's God, and within a moment or two, were now praying to Him. They begged God to be merciful to them and to Jonah. There are people around us who may not know God yet their lives mirror the examples that are required of us; like compassion, being considerate, and showing mercy.

In spite of it all, here was Jonah, ready to leave a whole nation to destruction. His heart was hardened and unyielding. However, God spoke to Jonah through the compassion of those heathen men, Jonah, this is the heart I want you to have towards the people of Nineveh."

What lessons do we learn from this?

The heart of God is full of compassion.

Our walk with God requires a tender heart; anybody who will do anything for God must have the heart for the city, mission or people group they have been called to. And the best way to achieve that is to first ask; 'What is the heart of God for these people?'

God always responds to the right heart. And it is His desire that when we come to Him that we come with a broken and a contrite heart willing to say 'Yes LORD!' Looking at the life of Jonah we agree that it is good to desire the call of God, and desire His backing after our obedience to the call but what is even better is to desire the right heart for the call.

CONTACTS

PHONE: +234 9082222222
EMAIL: INFO@INSPIRED2GO.ORG

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