

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

A FISH, A GOURD, A WORM, AND A WIND

A Psalm of David. The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. (Psalms 24:1)

One of the most entertaining and gripping stories in all of the Bible is found in the book of Jonah. Very few people have never heard of the account of Jonah and his encounter with this big fish. Even most children are acquainted with it in one form or another. It is a story which contains drama, suspense, horror, sorrow, happiness, and a big dose of humor unless you happened to be Jonah. Although perhaps in his later years as he recounted this harrowing experience, even he too could laugh at himself.

GOD's hand is not shortened (i.e.; in any way hindered)(see Isa.50:2; 59:1) to accomplish HIS purposes in the earth. Men are often lifted up in pride, either thinking that they can accomplish things without HIS help or that they can somehow escape from the necessity of doing HIS will. Jonah fell into the latter category first and the first category last. But when all was said and done Jonah learned the hard way, just as Nebuchadnezzar before him, that "*all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and HE doeth according to HIS will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay HIS hand, or say unto HIM, What doest thou?*" (Dan 4:35) Now while Jonah learned this lesson, he missed the blessing that he could have enjoyed had he realized the privilege that is given to the people of GOD to be chosen to accomplish HIS purposes in the earth. HE will not fail to accomplish that purpose whether we enjoy the journey or not. "*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*" (Heb 12:28)

GOD not only intends to accomplish HIS purpose in the earth of bringing the message[gospel] to Ninevah[sinners] but HE intends to mold and shape those whom HE has called and bring them into conformity with CHRIST. We see a picture of this in HIS dealings with Jonah.

He prepared a fish. (see Jon.1:17) Before Jonah was born the LORD had already selected and equipped a fish to swallow Jonah. The egg from which this fish was hatched was laid in exactly in the spot marked out for it by GOD Almighty. This fish grew to the exact size it needed to be to swallow and (I might add) to vomit him up. When Jonah was cast overboard this fish was in the exact spot it needed to be to swallow Jonah. Now while it is easy to see that this fish was prepared to swallow Jonah, we must also notice that this fish was there to save Jonah's life. He was cast overboard in the midst of a howling tempest and most surely would have drowned were it not for the fact that the LORD "prepared a fish". The LORD will always deliver HIS people but sometimes HE will place them in the midst of affliction and the "belly of hell" (see Jon. 2:2-7), so that they may learn that "salvation is of the LORD". (Jon.2:9). "*I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill.*" (Psalms 3:4).

HE prepared a gourd. (see Jon.4:6) When Jonah was overtaken with grief the LORD moved quickly to comfort him by causing this vine to grow over him and cover him with shade. The LORD will always bring comfort to HIS people when comfort is what they need. Sometimes we cry out for consolation, when we really need correction. The LORD chastens those HE loves. (see Heb.12:6) The LORD will not allow us to be tried above what we are able to take(see I Cor. 10:13) but will provide the needed relief at the proper time.

HE prepared a worm. (see Jon. 4:7) Often in the midst of enjoying the blessings which GOD brings our way we begin to forget from whom those blessings flow. We sometimes begin to take them for granted and become angry at the LORD because they have begun to "wither". We must be reminded that the same ONE who prepared the worm also prepared the gourd. GOD intends to bless HIS people but HE also intends that HIS people be thankful. HE would have us to trust HIM in the night as well as the day. Paul said, *"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."* (Phil 4:11).

HE prepared a wind. (see Jon. 4:8) Sometimes when it seems that things could not be worse, our troubles increase. These things are not brought upon us to destroy us, but that we might look to HIM who is able to lift us up out of the miry clay and set our feet upon a solid rock (Ps.40:2) HE could not lift us up out of the pit, were HE not in the pit with us. *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."* (Heb 4:15-16)

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