

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

SENT

And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

Matthew 20:2

Of all of the accounts in the scriptures, (the life of CHRIST excepted) there is none in which the accomplishment of the absolute will of the LORD is demonstrated more clearly than in the narrative concerning the prophet, Jonah. We know very little about the man, whom the scriptures simply describe as “*the son of Amittai*”. He is mentioned in II Kings 14:25, as one who prophesied in the days of King Jereboam. Yet there is probably not another prophet so widely known by name, outside of Elijah, than Jonah. He did indeed have a singular experience which is not duplicated anywhere else in the scriptures or for that matter in reliable history.

This account has many different elements from drama, humor, mystery, and the demonstration of GOD’s determinate purpose which cannot be overturned. Jonah believed in the power of his own free will. So much so that when the LORD commanded him to go to Nineveh and preach, he, acting according to his corrupt nature, bought a ticket on a ship going the opposite way to Tarshish. Some “scholars” tell us that Tarshish was on the southern coast of Spain and others say that it was off the coast of Crete. We really cannot definitively state its exact location, but we can say that it was opposite to the direction which the LORD had instructed Jonah to go. Jonah was certain that he would escape from going to Nineveh by his choice of travel arrangements, having full confidence in his own ability to circumvent the will of GOD.

Little did he know that he was actually traveling in the exact path which the LORD had marked out for him, nor did he know the mode of transportation which would ultimately take him to the city which the LORD had appointed for him to go. Not long after he paid the fare to Tarshish and settled in for a comfortable voyage falling fast asleep, the LORD sent a tempest which threatened to destroy the vessel he was riding in. The men in the ship, according to their superstition, cast lots to see which one among them was the “cause” of this tempest. “*The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.*” (Pro 16:33) Lo and behold the lot fell upon Jonah, even as he suspected. Demonstrating his faith in the LORD, (see Jon. 1:9-12) he resigned himself to be cast overboard, confessing with Job, “*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.*” (Job 13:15)

I am sure that he was certain that he would drown in those storm tossed waters, yet he confessed that his hope was in the ONE who sent the tempest. Amazingly (as men would describe it), a huge fish was in the right place at the right time to swallow him. His salvation from drowning was not at all what he pictured and the horrors that gripped him in this designed life preserver could not have been anticipated. Yet “*the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*” (Jon 1:17) He could not have known what we can clearly see now, since we know the outcome of his situation.

Many free will advocates will opine that Jonah could have gone directly to Nineveh and avoided this trial, yet it was necessary that he be in that fish, because it was necessary that he might be used as an illustration of the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead. “*For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*” (Mat 12:40) As a child of GOD, it was necessary that he be brought to the end of himself, confessing, “*Salvation is of the LORD.*” (Jon. 2:9) It was necessary that he go to Nineveh and preach repentance, so that the LORD might use their repentance in

judgement against the generation of the Jews who denied HIS LORDSHIP. *"The men of Nineve(h) shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."* (Luke 11:32) So we see Jonah as one who is an illustration of one who was "sent" by the LORD.

We read in Paul's epistle to the Romans of those whom the LORD will send, to bring the glad tidings of the gospel to those HE has predestined to receive it. *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Rom 10:13-15) We see this manifested as Paul and Barnabas were "sent" to preach to the Gentiles in Antioch. *"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."* (Acts 13:48)

We see another illustration of this "sending" as the Ethiopian Eunuch rode along in his chariot pondering the Word of GOD. *"And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert."* (Acts 8:26) Philip knew the direction he was to go but he had little idea to whom he was sent until the LORD pointed him out. When the LORD awakens a man to seek the TRUTH of GOD, HE will send a "messenger" with the gospel and upon hearing CHRIST and HIM crucified, that man will believe. Paul pointed out that the eloquence and wisdom of men does not confer any power upon that gospel, but the power is of GOD. *"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."* (1Cor 2:1-4)

Those whom the LORD sends are sinners just like those to whom they are sent. *"We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein."* (Acts 14:15) Let none be lifted up with pride. *"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."* (1Cor 10:12)

For this reason, the men whom the LORD sends are often "ignorant and unlearned men". (see Acts 4:13) *"And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."* (1Cor 8:2) *"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."* (1Cor 13:2)

The LORD sends men to preach in order to confound some men as well as to illuminate others. *"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"* (2Cor 2:15-16) *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* (1Cor 1:18)

Those whom the LORD sends have but one message. *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."* (Gal 6:14) *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."* (1Pet 3:18) *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* (1Tim 2:5)

Those whom the LORD sends must do HIS bidding; they are not free to do otherwise. *"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"* (1Cor 9:16) They are not chosen by men for this task but rather compelled by the SPIRIT. No one can prevent that which the LORD is pleased to ordain to occur. *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."* (Isa 55:11) *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."* (John 10:27-28) Have you heard HIS WORD?

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