

The Old Paths

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“Worrying About The Gourd”

Jarrod Jacobs

Many people, I am sure, have heard the account of Jonah and his dealings with God and the people of Nineveh. This short book teaches us much. One lesson we can learn from Jonah is that sometimes we can be guilty of worrying about the wrong things. If we remember the account, after Jonah is convinced to go to the Ninevites (ch. 2), and he preaches God’s word to them (3:4), the people repent in sackcloth and ashes “*from the greatest of them to the least of them*” (3:5-9). Based upon their repentance, God changes His mind, and spares them from the destruction which Jonah foretold (3:10).

Upon his knowing that God had spared the city, Jonah was angry with this, and went out on the east side of the city and pouted, for lack of a better word, waiting to see if God might change His mind. (4:1-5). About this time, God “*prepared a gourd*” which shaded Jonah, and kept the sun off of him (4:6). Yet, the next day, God killed the gourd, and it withered away, leaving Jonah to endure the heat and wind with no shade (4:8). In his anger, Jonah cries out that it was better for him to die than to live. With these words, God answers Jonah saying, “*Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein*

are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?” (Jonah 4:10-11).

It is apparent that Jonah was more worried about the gourd (vine/plant) that had shaded him for a day than he was the condition of those souls in Nineveh! Therefore, God chastises Jonah, reminding him of what was most important in the last two verses of the book. Unfortunately, all of us can be guilty of getting our priorities messed up from time to time. Often, what we think is something of great importance, is really not worth much; while that which we have neglected or ignored is actually of the greatest importance. The day that Jonah pouted outside of Nineveh, that gourd served a purpose, but it was not something that deserved preeminence in Jonah’s mind. The most important thing at the time was the repentance of the Ninevites and their interest in making things right with God (3:5-9). Jonah missed the point, and unfortunately, there are many brethren who miss the point, too!

Could I be guilty of worrying about the gourd, like Jonah? This is possible, and it happens when ...

1) I worry about what my friends from the community might think of the preaching on a particular Lord’s day, rather than being thankful that they had the privilege to hear the gospel preached in its purity and simplicity (II Tim. 4:2; Acts 20:27).

2) I am more worried about a sermon “going long,” than whether or not the sermon taught the truth. (I Pet.

4:11; Acts 20:7)

3) I worry about whether or not this church is “accepted” in the community instead of worrying about whether or not this church is acceptable to Christ. We belong to Him, you know (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 12:1).

4) I worry about whether the singing today was “off-key,” too low, too high, etc., and forget that we’re supposed to be singing from the heart, to the Lord, in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

5) I worry about what people might say when I dress modestly, instead of being concerned for their soul, and realize that one’s dress is a reflection of one’s mindset (I Tim. 2:9-10; I Pet. 3:1-6; Titus 2:14; I Pet. 2:9).

6. I worry that people will think me strange, or a “fanatic” for faithfully attending the worship services, instead of forthrightly telling my friends and others where I will be when God’s people meet, and encouraging them to come with me (Heb. 10:25; II Cor. 6:17).

Conclusion

Could it be that we’re not so different from Jonah after all? He was sorry that God did not exact His wrath on thousands of people, instead of being happy that God’s mercy and longsuffering allowed them to live another day. Then, he was upset about the loss of the gourd/vine, rather than being thankful to God for the use he made of it while it lived! Is it any wonder why Jeremiah said, “*It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*” (Jer. 10:23)? Sometimes we’re too busy being worried about the gourd to appreciate what is really important! How tragic. May God forgive us!

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk

“IF YOU WANT TO PREACH...” Jarrod Jacobs

How blessed we are at Southside to have so many men (young and old) willing to take their turn in presenting lessons from God’s word. In many places, you do not find such attitudes, but we have them here, and ought to thank God for this blessing. Perhaps there are still others we could encourage to take their turn in presenting God’s word in a public manner? This short article is intended to exhort men to do just that, as well as encourage those who are presently willing to preach to continue in this good work. If one wants to preach, he must....

Fill His Mind With God’s Word

Perhaps we have all heard the anecdote about the young preacher who asks the old preacher for a good sermon book. In honoring the request, the old preacher gives him a Bible! Whether or not this actually happened in real-life, the sentiment is still true. If one wishes to stand before a group and “preach the word” (II Tim. 4:2), he must know God’s word. He must read and study the Bible, and spend time in such efforts if he is ever going to preach (II Tim. 2:15; Eph. 3:4; I Tim. 4:16). A. J. McCarty once told a young man who asked him how to preach: “Young man, get brimful and running over with the word of God and it will come out!”

One cannot teach what he does not know! Therefore, if one is going to teach on a Bible subject, find out all the Bible says about it, and then preach it!

Practice It

One will never be the kind of Christian he ought to be until he is

ready to PRACTICE what he preaches! The Bible says that our Lord first practiced and then taught the truth (Acts 1:1). He was not hypocritical when it came to preaching, but He lived the words He was teaching and preaching.

“Practicing” comes because we believe what we are saying. One can say anything, but until he is ready to practice it, we don’t know whether he believes it or not (Rom. 10:16).

Could not this be said of such people as: Demas, Diotrephes, and countless other unnamed people, known to God, who left Him when they saw something “better” on the other side of the fence? They may have taught the truth for a while, but they themselves did not believe it, and therefore they turned their allegiance away from God and on to something/someone else. There are far too many Christians who have ruined their influence for good because they were not living what they were teaching. This is simply because they did not believe what they were saying. This is tragic!

Conclusion

Therefore, friend, if you want to preach, you need to know God’s word, believe it, and practice it yourself! Speech quality, intonation, and similar skills can be honed and strengthened with time and practice. But, if one is not willing to learn and live the principles laid down by God in His word, then this man, while

perhaps an orator, is not a preacher. This one is a hypocrite, and one who will eventually turn his back on God if he does not repent.

Brethren, let us be on our guard, examining ourselves first (II Cor. 13:5) to make sure that we are what we ought to be in order to appropriately instruct others in the ways of the Lord. The Bible says that the qualifications for a teacher include his being faithful and able (II Tim. 2:2), and this is still needed today. If I can encourage you in this work of preaching (Col. 1:28-29), I want to do so, and I’d be glad to help. Let us all strive to believe what we hear in God’s word, let it dwell within us richly, and then let us be practicing it in the hopes of bringing lost souls to Christ!

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• Thank you to all those who •
• helped make this past gospel •
• meeting a success. We appreciate all •
• that has been done through: •
• invitations, your attendance, prayers •
• on behalf of the meeting, kind words •
• said, homes opened for meals, and •
• other ways in which you took part. It •
• is wonderful to have this association •
• and kinship in the Lord. God bless •
• every one here! •
• -Jarrod •
• •

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