

Index of Articles

	Page
Jude, pt. 4	1
Altars of the Bible, pt. 4	3
Psalms 22, pt. 2	4
Jonah, pt 14	6
The Lord my Helper	8

Jude, pt. 4

Caution and Counsel
Joel Portman

Michael's conduct when contending with the devil is intended as a deliberate rebuke to those who "despise dominion and speak evil of dignities," (v. 8). He demonstrates the restraint that one should have that expresses personal submission to the authority of God alone. "In passing, let us learn from this not to do ourselves what even Michael shrank from doing. How often we may hear people speak of Satan in a very light and mocking way, and we may have done it ourselves. Let us not do it again. Satan is a spirit being, who once held a leading place, if not the leading place, in the angelic hierarchy. Though fallen he still wields immense power, which we cannot afford to despise. Yet, under the sheltering power of our Lord, we need not fear him," (F. B Hole, "Jude").

The actual event or the reason for this contention is not revealed to us, and there are many attempts to explain it. The most likely is that Satan wanted the body so that it could become the object of veneration, such as has been done with the bones of supposed saints, but all is conjecture. If so, though, it would have served his further purpose to attempt to corrupt the people of Israel and would be in line with his continual attacks on that nation. We see him in the same posture in Zechariah 3, and again the response to his accusations is, "The Lord rebuke thee." We learn from Michael's name ("who is like God") that he held the highest reverence for God, while Satan is the adversary of God at all times. Even though Michael held superiority to Satan at this point and was doing God's will, yet he refrained from railing at the devil. This is, no doubt, the contrast to what these men were doing in railing at dignities. It is also a lesson for us that, even when doing the will of God, that we recognize the need for restraint in language. We note with interest that it is Michael and his angels who will finally fight with Satan and his angels, and will thrust Satan and his angels from heaven, casting them

down to the earth (Revelation 12:7-9). The result will be that he will go to make war against the woman, the nation of Israel particularly (Revelation 12:13). However, God will protect her in that day from the dragon's wrath.

Characteristics of Apostates

Verse 10 follows on the heels of that example of restraint by saying that these libertines conduct themselves in a manner that is completely opposite of Michael's. They conduct themselves like irrational animals. "Speak evil of" is "blaspheme", to slander or defame those things which should be held in respect. Their inward attitude is reflected by the words they utter (Matthew 15:11, 18). What one says expresses the condition of their heart, and this is the case with these. Thus the tongue is "a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James 3:5). Jude says that the things that they know comprise the area in which they corrupt themselves, whereas the things of which they are ignorant are blasphemed. Is this not true of mankind in general, especially in our day? Men scoff at eternal, spiritual, divine things and defile their lives by licentious living in the things that they know. Romans 1 traces the gradual, inevitable descent of man into this abyss, so that, having despised and rejected the knowledge of God, his inevitable decline is into gross immorality. This is the world that Jude was warning them about, and it is the world in which we live today.

An example of this extreme departure in the professing church was recently reported. The National Cathedral in Washington, D. C., is now being used for the promotion of same-sex marriages, and for activities such as yoga sessions, practicing tai chi, and alternative religions where people can get together, not to learn about God, but

All issues of "Truths for our Day" are available by clicking on the link below. This will take you to the index:

[Truths For Our Day](#)

We encourage you to reprint any issue of "Truths for our Day" that you desire, either for yourself or to pass on to other believers. Nothing is copyrighted, but we do request that you copy the entirety of the articles and reprint them as they have appeared for accuracy, and that you give recognition to the author of each article.

We also hope you will let others know about "Truths for our Day" and encourage them to subscribe as well. They can do so by simply sending an e-mail to truthsforourday@gmail.com Thank you!

rather to have a discussion of how to experience “the divine together in our own way.” This may represent an extreme example of the conditions about which Jude warns and we may ask what this has to do with us? It is because this is the religious milieu in which we live and are called to bear witness, “in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life. . .” (Philippians 2:15-16). Undiscerning Christians can easily be trapped and influenced by the gradual degeneration of this nature in doctrine and practice so that what is the world’s “norm” can easily creep into assemblies as well.

Despising Divine authority inevitably results in careless, irreverential practices, which lead into unrestrained living. It is striking how many times we are warned about this danger in God’s Word. Such warnings are especially prevalent in second epistles that deal with last days. Peter speaks of believers who have “escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust,” (2 Peter 1:4) and tells us that in view of God’s coming judgment on the ungodly world, “what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,” (2 Peter 3:11). References could be multiplied, but we can see that the preserving factor that is essential is devotion to Christ and the fear of the Lord. Paul also warns the saints in 2 Timothy 3, as we see his depiction of such conditions in the last days. He offers the same preservation as does Jude, which is to continue in the things that he had learned and had seen in practice in the lives of others. So that in this verse, Jude teaches that men who have lost their reverence for divine things sink to the level of brute beasts in their behavior.

“Woe” of God’s Judgment

Many prophets uttered their expressions of woe to the people when they had sinned and departed grievously from the Lord. Its occurrence in both the Old Testament and the New indicates that it is an expression of deep grief and despair along with denunciation. It would seem that its use by the prophets indicates their anticipation of certain judgment mingled with their genuine sorrow to see it approaching. The word shows us the faithfulness of God’s prophets when called upon to deliver a message of denunciation against sin. It also demonstrates that prophets personally felt and were moved by the realization of what was soon to occur. One cannot, nor should, separate the prophets from their personal sensitivity to their message and its terrible implications. These men were, as Elijah, “subject to like passions as we are. . .” (James 5:17) and were not stolid messengers of God without personal feelings about the solemn results of their messages. Jeremiah is known as the “weeping prophet,” because of his deep sensitivity to the terrible consequences that were coming on the people as a result of what he prophesied to them. This should also characterize those of any period who deliver a message

from God to the people. Negative ministry is necessary at times and should not be despised, but it should also be spoken with love for those to whom it is being expressed (Ephesians 4:15). It is said of George Whitefield, that he often preached the warning message of the gospel with tears as he was aware of the dangerous position of the lost. (Robert Murray M’Cheyne). The Lord Himself wept over the city of Jerusalem as He pronounced its doom in Luke 19:41, so we have the perfect example in His loving attitude and invitation to the condemned city. We should be marked by the same faithfulness and tenderness when speaking of those who are lost, even when they are marked by rejection of the truth, such as these were.

Alford points out that their departure is more serious because, as Jude says, they have determined to follow examples of ungodly men from the past, men who were marked by apostasy and subsequently were destroyed. Different suggestions have been made about these three examples, but it seems clear that Jude includes Cain, because even as he demonstrated unbelief by intruding into spiritual acts, so were these marked by the same characteristic. Cain knew the pattern that God had set, yet though Abel offered his sacrifice “by faith,” Cain chose to reject that means of approach and come before God with a gift offering that wasn’t what God had desired. It is also true that his offering lacked the essential blood of sacrifice (though not mentioned), and this seems to indicate that these men were of the same vein, failing to realize the essentiality of the sacrificial work of Christ to provide approach unto God. Religious men, through unbelief in God’s Word, fail to realize that His work is the only means for men to come to God. As a result, they substitute what is suitable to them in its place, whether religious ceremony, works, or other activities, and are rejected the same as he was. Theirs is a False Religion that is against the Way of Christ. Cain is also mentioned as a warning in 1 John 3:12.

In referring to the “way of Balaam,” Jude is speaking of an example of an unbeliever seeking to function in a prophetic role. He is referred to three times in the New Testament: in 2 Peter 2:15, we read of the “way of Balaam,” which is the course of his greedy life as he lived to make financial gain of the prophetic office. Here we read of the “error of Balaam,” which seems to be that he assumed that God would have to curse such a sinful people. His error also was that he presumed to function as one who represented God before people, yet lived an ungodly life. This was true of these Jude writes about. In Revelation 2:14, we are reminded of the “doctrine of Balaam,” which was to seek to bring God’s judgment on Israel by causing them to intermingle with the ungodly and thus to sin. These men were of the same nature, and like Balaam, who perished with the enemies of Jehovah, these would also.

The climax of their unbelieving course would be reached in acts like Korah, who rose in rebellion against

divinely instituted authority in Israel and led others with him to disrupt the harmony of the camp. These, in like manner, were characterized by rejecting the Authority of Christ, and by seeking to seduce others to follow them as well. The unbelief of these men would eventually result in their open defiance of the authority of Christ, and thus they would cause ruin to themselves, and also to those who followed them.

Graphic Description of Apostates

Like James, Jude's epistle is marked by vivid and forceful descriptive language. In verse 12-13, he uses eight pictorial illustrations from nature to tell us something about their deeds and their awful effects on the saints. He speaks of

1.Their Danger. They, like reefs, are hidden and harmful. He is speaking of that which is under the surface, uncharted, so unknown. These, mixing with the saints, could cause shipwreck by their subtle influence.

2.Their Dissoluteness. They are like selfish shepherds, who "feed, or shepherd" themselves without fear. At their feasts and gatherings, they would cause most harm.

3.Their Dryness. They give no spiritual refreshment, as clouds from which one would expect moisture, but despite appearance, they can give nothing to meet the need.

4.Their Deadness. Like autumn trees with no fruit, useless to function for good. These have no ability to feed or satisfy needs of the soul of believers.

5.Their Destitution. They are twice-dead, first because they were unregenerate, and also because they were apostate.

6.Their Distress. Constantly agitated, restless like the waves of the sea. Every movement was only bringing up refuse of ungodliness and shameful things

7.Their Direction. Like stars out of their courses, no purpose or pathway defined. They may appear briefly, and then go into darkness.

8.Their Destiny. Eternal judgment in the blackness of eternal suffering is their destiny and they deserve to be there.

What a description of the complete depravity of the condition of these, who even as they were masquerading as godly men among the saints, were doomed as a result of their determined rejection of God, His Word and His Son.

These men were a complete contrast with the saints, as Jude has addressed them already in the epistle. And such they should be, for Jude is writing to preserve and strengthen the ones who were "beloved" of God and faithful to Him who had saved them. May we also display a like expression of exercise to remain faithful to our blessed Lord during His absence, serving in view of the moment of His return so as to be found faithful whenever He appears.

(continued)

What is it to obey the Gospel, but to believe the Gospel? Unbelief says, "I will not receive Christ as a gift from God." Faith, on the contrary, says, "I want Christ in His fullness; my pinching poverty makes me glad of so rich and all-sufficient a Savior."

R. C. Chapman

Altars of the Bible, pt. 4

The Spiritual Altar

Alcimedez Velasco

Translated from "La Sana Doctrina," #295

The portion that we desire to look at in this study related to the Altar is found in Hebrews 13:9-16. In this passage the Levitical sacrifices are contrasted with the perfect expiation that we have in Christ when He laid down His life at the "altar of the cross." In the middle of the ceremonial context of the passage, the author of the epistle declares emphatically, "We have an altar . . . (Hebrews 13:9), and we will consider some of the points with respect to:

1. The Heavenly Provision

All of that ritual was only a shadow of that which was to come. In the coming of the Lord to give His life for us, we have a reality to which that was pointing. He is the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world. This has been clearly identified to us as the altar. Hebrews 13:13 shows, "Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." We go forth to Him, to His rejected Person, in the place where He went forth to bearing His cross. The word that is translated "altar," literally means, "place of sacrifice," but here the language is figurative; it means the place where the victim was offered, in place of the sacrifice itself. This rhetorical figure is known as a synecdoche. For example, the Lord said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood that is shed for you," (Luke 22:20). Here He uses the vessel for its contents.

The author emphasizes, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." In order to enjoy the blessing of redemption that the death of Christ brings, one has to completely leave that past system. Those who continue to seek salvation by observing the deeds of the law are doing something that is contrary to the grace that brings salvation.

Sadly, some of those Hebrews that had left that sensory worship to follow the spiritual and heavenly reality,

under strong pressure were returning again to Judaism. To those, the author says, “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.” (Hebrews 13:9) “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,” (Romans 14:17).

2. Spiritual and Moral Separation

In this context, the author employs figures from the Old Testament in order to illustrate the position that one occupies who identifies himself with Christ in the outside place.

The first illustration is taken from the Day of Atonement and the offering for sin outside the camp. In the ritual of that day we read, “And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.” (Leviticus 16:27). In his argument, the author utilizes these lessons in order to enforce the necessity of going forth unto Him without the camp; already in verses 11 to 13 of this chapter, we are exhorted to identify ourselves with the Lord and His expiatory sacrifice.

The second illustration is found in Exodus 33:7, where we read, “ And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation.” The context of the passage in the golden calf and their idolatry. Moses had gone up the mount to receive the Law of God. The people, seeing that Moses delayed to return, said, “Up, make us gods, which shall go before us. . .” Aaron made the calf, built an altar, and proclaimed a feast unto the Lord. In this system that Aaron created, there wasn’t a sin offering. They rejoiced carnally with that ritual. This would equal the religious world in our day; those sacrifices speak of the cross in one sense; the feast would be somewhat like the distorted Supper; their careless enjoyment is like the music of the denominational world, but it all lacks the reality of the sin offering.

God said to Moses, “. . . Thy people. . . have corrupted themselves,” (Exodus 32:7). Moses also was very clear with respect to that deception: He put himself at the entrance of the camp and said, “Who is on the LORD’S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him,” (Exodus 32:26). The message for us today is that we should separate ourselves from every religious corruption and identify ourselves with Him outside the camp.

The third illustration that corresponds with going out to Him, outside the camp bearing His reproach, is exemplified by David in his rejection. Being the true, anointed king, Saul persecuted him. The Bible says, “David

therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father’s house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him;” (1 Samuel 22:1-2).

David in the cave with his men is a figure of what is an assembly. The cave has no attraction to the flesh. Those men were the off-scouring of the earth. They illustrate a man in his sins; like those men, we come to our heavenly David for salvation. The great thing of that place was that David was there as their captain.

David had a dear friend who was called Jonathon, but he never took part in that rejection in Adullam. The soul of Jonathan remained attached to the soul of David. He recognized him as the anointed king, made a covenant with him, but wasn’t identified with his friend in that place.

Many in our day are like Jonathan; they are surely saved, but they fear to pay the price. How sad it is that they deprive themselves now of the joy of knowing that they are in the correct place! And later at the Judgment Seat of Christ not to receive the complete reward! Jonathan could have avoided his tragic death in Mount Gilboa if he had stayed with David in Adullam.

The fourth illustration is linked with the previous one, and you need to see it joined with verse 14 of Hebrews 13. “For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” This emphasizes the recompense that those receive who identify themselves with Him in His rejection. The men of David in Adullam no had a permanent city, but when David reigned in Hebron, they shared with him in the glory of his reign. It is written, “And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron,” (2 Samuel 2:3). This is a lesson for us; “If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him,” (2 Timothy 2:12).

3. The Priestly Practice

Verse 10 speaks of those that serve the ritual altar. This portion deals with the double aspect of the service of a believer as priest, occupying himself with Christ, our spiritual altar. The holy priesthood enters into the sanctuary to worship, and the royal priesthood goes forth to men in testimony. The apostle Peter deals with the first priesthood: “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:4-5). This portion we are studying says, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name,” (Hebrews 13:15).

But the passage deals with the royal priesthood, in a very practical ministry, offering outside the camp. “ But

to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased,” (Hebrews 13:15). Oh, that we might serve the Lord, exercising ourselves in view of this double purpose!

He who most walks in fellowship with God has the deepest and truest apprehension of Christ. Such a one will love to consider how He who was in the form of God, emptied Himself of His state of pure equality with God; how the Word made flesh, at every step of His humiliation, above all on the Cross, made manifest His glory. Of all the works of God, redemption is the greatest. It is only in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that the perfections of God are fully manifested; and of that Cross we can have no true understanding, save by the Holy Scriptures and by the Holy Spirit of God.

R. C. Chapman

The Gospel According to David, Psalm 22, pt. 2

Robert Surgenor

Why is it that we see so little weeping at the Lord's supper? Could it be because we have not entered very deeply into the sufferings of our blessed Lord?

When people are dying, their minds very often become confused and clouded. Not so with the Lord, for He was never a dying man when on the cross. His life was not slowly ebbing away, as with us poor mortals. No! No! He was fully aware of everything when paying our great debt of sin. As stated before, I believe that He was rehearsing this very Psalm in His mind while nailed to the cross. True Christ died, but He was never in a state of dying. Consider His words to Pilate; “I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (Jn 10:17-18). Our Lord had full control on the cross, blessed be His name.

Acknowledgement of God's holiness, and the previous deliverances of Israel - vs 3-5

“But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were deliv-

ered: they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded.”

The Son is presenting to His God the fact that when Israel cried unto Him, He heard. Six times over in the Book of Judges you will read of Israel crying unto the Lord for deliverance, and in every instance God responded to their cry by bringing deliverance. That is why Israel praised God, it was because He heard them and delivered them. Is that not why we praise God? We praise Him for our great deliverance, through the work of His Son on the cross, but Jesus found no deliverance as our sins were being dealt with in His own body. As verse two indicates, His cry for help was unceasing, for that is the meaning of those words, “I cry in the daytime...and in the night season.” Yet, at that point, no answer. The heavens were silent! Some have thought that perhaps the “night season,” also embraced the dark hours as He lay prostrate on the ground in Gethsemane.

Man's estimation of Him - vs. 6

“But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”

The word “worm” is *elwt towla*. It is translated “scarlet” 34 times, “worm” 8 times, and then “crimson” once, in Isaiah 1:18. The means of procuring scarlet dye was procured from the dead body of the little *towla* moth after it died, thus the words “scarlet,” and “crimson” are associated with it.

Before laying its eggs, this little creature would attach itself to the bark of a tree. It would then lay its eggs and die. The body of the dead moth would protect the eggs in their primary development of growth, until they were able to move out on their own. Later, dye-makers would collect the dead bodies of these worms to extract the red substance they contained, to produce scarlet dye for fabrics.

Like the offspring of the *towla* moth, protected beneath the dead body of the one that gave them life, so we, through the death of our Lord are eternally protected through His death for us at Calvary.

He was “a reproach of men.” That is, mankind taunted and scorned Him. This was especially seen in the religious leaders of Israel, the people He came to save. They hated Him without a cause, ridiculing Him and blaspheming His name. He was “despised of the people.” They held Him in utter contempt. He was despicable in their eyes. He moved about doing good and healing those that were oppressed of the devil, yet they looked upon Him as vile and worthless. Can you picture the heart of our Lord over the attitude of people that He loved? If ever the longsuffering of God was displayed, it was seen in the lovely Man of Calvary. As the scripture states in First Corinthians 13:4-5,7; “Charity suffereth long, and is kind;...is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;...beareth all things,...endureth all things.” If charity (love) was ever personified in its fullest degree, it was in our blessed Lord. If the Spirit of Christ fully dwells in us, we will find no problem fulfilling

the following injunction; “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). Christ was so different from others, and so shall we be if we are imitators of Him.

Unspoken Contempt - vs 7

“All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,”

They had Him in derision. He was laughed at, abused and scorned. This was demonstrated by the shooting out of their lower lip and wagging their heads. Jews were very apt at this behavior. It seems that they were actually skilled in it. It was prophetically said of Him; “Reproach hath broken My heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none” (Psalm 69:20).

“Oh so lonely, broken hearted,
View Him on that cruel tree.
Can thine eye remain unmelted,
Seeing that it was for thee?”

This reveals that the Man of sorrows had human feelings like the rest of us. He was not only God, but He was also truly human. He hungered, thirsted, was weary, needing sleep, and He had a very tender heart. His impeccable humanity has fitted Him for His priesthood, for being here amongst men He knew what it was to be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” being “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Spoken Ridicule - vs. 8

“He trusted on the LORD that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.”

It is amazing, that over 1,000 years later, the same actions, and almost the same words were uttered at Calvary. “And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads ... The chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth” (Matthew 27:39, 41–44).

“Jesus bruised and put to shame,
Tells us all Jehovah’s name.
God is love we surely know,
By the Saviour’s depth of woe.”

They were finding fault with Jesus, for they thought that if God so delighted in Him, as He claimed, why then was He in such a helpless and forsaken state. Surely if He was the beloved One of God, then the God and

Father of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would certainly intervene and rescue Him from the tree. The fact that God had forsaken Him conveyed to their darkened minds that Jesus was an impostor.

His Total Awareness and Dependence on God – vs. 9–10

“But Thou art He that took Me out of the womb: thou didst make Me hope when I was upon My mother’s breasts. I was cast upon Thee from the womb: thou art My God from My mother’s belly.”

Begotten of the Holy Ghost, our Lord was carefully watched over by His God when brought forth by Mary. Even though Joseph and Mary were poor and far away from friends and home, the cherishing hand of God was seen in the safe delivery of the mother, and the happy birth of the child. Christ brings this before His God at the point of His intense sufferings. He thinks upon the mercies of God in His infancy, and His younger years. From the day of His birth, the Lord was well aware of who He was, and His eternal relationship with His Father. I once read a book by theologians discussing when they thought that Jesus realized that He was the Messiah. Such foolishness! Such utter ignorance! He never had to “learn” who He was. He was always well aware of His Godhead.

Truly, there was a special providence which preserved our Lord's infant days from the fury of Herod, the dangers of traveling, and the ills of poverty, and the Saviour was fully aware of God's actions for His safety.

When the Lord was assailed with the bitter taunts of His enemies, the only effect that it had was to lead Him to make a direct appeal to His Father. That appeal could be paraphrased in these words. "I am now brought as a man to My last extremity. It is said that God disowns me; but it cannot be so. My first moment of existence He tenderly cared for. When I could not even ask for, or think of His kindness, He bestowed it upon me. If, of His mere good pleasure He brought me into life at first, He will surely not forsake Me when I am departing out of it. In opposition, therefore, to all their taunts, I can and I will appeal to Himself. Mine enemies declare, O God, that Thou hast cast Me off, but Thou art He that took Me out of the womb. They affirm that I do not, and need not trust in Thee; but Thou didst make Me hope (or, kept Me in safety) when I was upon My mother's breasts. They insinuate that Thou wilt not acknowledge Me as Thy Son; but I was cast upon Thee from the womb; thou art My God from My mother's belly" (John Stevenson).

(continued)

Men often attempt by the light of reason to discover the mysteries of eternity. They might as well hold up a candle to the stars.

Jonah, Part 14

Steve Walvatne

The Madness

“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry... Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?” (4:1, 4).

Nothing in Jonah 3 prepared us for chapter 4. At its conclusion everything seemed right. Jonah obediently warned Nineveh and the entire city was spared, illustrating how “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy” (Psalm 147:11).

But alas! the high note closing chapter 3, isn’t the final note in Jonah’s prophecy. There remains one more refrain and we’re startled not only at its story, but at the abrupt way in which it closes. We go from mercy to madness in a moment, revealing how foul and fickle flesh can be, even in a prophet. Men would hide what’s here; the Lord, however, exposes it for our learning (Romans 15:4). We’ll consider verses 1-4 under the following headings,

1. Jonah’s Passion: Verse 1
2. Jonah’s Prayer: Verse 2
3. Jonah’s Plea: Verse 3
4. Jehovah’s Probe: Verse 4

Jonah’s Passion

“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.” Nineveh’s forty-day grace period ended with Jonah watching for signs of the Assyrian capital’s demise. But there were none – no smoke, no tremors, no shrieks. All remained as before and this “displeased Jonah exceedingly.” His displeasure turned to rage – “he was very angry” – causing words to be said and deeds to be done that might otherwise have been avoided. And, as so often happens when passions flare, the prophet’s temper was kindled against the God that so graciously had called and fitted him for service.

But why would a preacher erupt when the sinners he warned turned to God? Why the “displeasure” or “vexation”? We couldn’t detect it from his preaching in chapter 3, yet deep down, he must have harbored some ill feeling that only surfaced when mercy was granted the Ninevites. That lingering resentment had to be judged if Jonah would serve righteously. Its painful disclosure is recorded, not to humiliate the prophet, but serve as a warning. Explanations for Jonah’s anger generally fit into one of the following three categories or into a combination of the three:

- (1) DEVOTIONAL REASONS,
- (2) PERSONAL REASONS, or
- (3) NATIONAL REASONS.

Devotional Reasons

This explanation alleges that Jonah’s passion sprang from devotion to God – that he feared Jehovah’s name would be ridiculed and dishonored once others discovered His pronouncement hadn’t materialized. Hugh Martin espoused this view, saying, “It was not [Jonah’s] own honor merely, nor chiefly, nor indeed at all, that Jonah cared for...but the contempt likely to fall on himself as a prophet, he saw would fall on the honor of the Lord who had sent him...” (The Prophet Jonah: His Character and Mission to Nineveh). John Calvin, likewise believed, “that a concern for the glory of God held the first place in [Jonah’s] soul...Jonah...could not bear that the name of God should be exposed to the reproaches of the Gentiles...” (Calvin’s Commentaries: vol. 14).

Personal Reasons

The thought here is that Jonah was angered out of a fear that his own reputation would be damaged since the warning of judgment wasn’t fulfilled. W.W. Fereday marveled that Jonah “would have preferred the whole population of a vast city to perish than that his own reputation as a prophet should suffer” (Jonah and Balaam). And J.R. Stevenson believed, “Had God kept His word and destroyed the city, [Jonah] would have loomed as a great national hero, but now, how would he ever dare to lift his head again?” (Jonah). Oh wicked pride! How it’s contaminated the most sacred of duties and stymied the best of men! Only God’s Perfect Servant was uninfluenced by it, for He was impeccable. “Not my will, but Thine, be done” (Luke 22:42), was His unwavering motive.

National Reasons

This last explanation insists Jonah was angry on behalf of Israel. Two thoughts prevail here. Some think Jonah was incensed that Israel’s sworn enemy was spared. “He is angry, not at the baffling of his word, but at God’s forbearance with the foes and tyrants of Israel” (G.A. Smith: The Expositor’s Bible, The Minor Prophets). Said Albert Barnes, “It seems more likely that it was mistaken patriotism, which idolized the wellbeing of his own and God’s people, and desired that its enemy, the appointed instrument of its chastisement, should be itself destroyed” (Barnes Notes on the Old Testament). Others, however, feel Jonah flared because his erring brethren had missed a valuable lesson regarding God’s hatred of sin. Patrick Fairbairn believed Jonah thought “that at last he was to obtain that very example of severity which he had conceived to be so needful...and that, from witnessing this awful display of judgment, he would go back to resume his labors among his own people, with such an argument as he never had before...to persuade their return from sin to the love and service of God” (Jonah: His Life, Character, and Mission). “In a paradoxical way,” mused Jim Flanigan, “the success

of his mission had really been a failure as far as he was concerned” (What the Bible Teaches: Jonah).

Whichever explanation is most accurate, Jonah may have preached wholeheartedly at Nineveh expecting a remnant to be saved, not the entire city. That kind of result would have paralleled the flood where eight were saved, or Sodom and Gomorrah where three were saved, or Jericho where Rahab and all in her house were saved.

Jonah’s Prayer

“And he prayed unto the Lord...” This is Jonah’s second and last recorded prayer. The contrast between the two couldn’t be starker. “He prayed his best prayer in the worst place, the fish’s belly, and he prayed his worst prayer in the best place, at Nineveh where God was working...” (Warren Wiersbe: The Bible Exposition Commentary). In this last prayer, Jonah did take his problem to the Lord, but the spirit in which he prayed was anything but commendable. In chapter 1 he testified to the mariners that “I fear the Lord” (v.9), but there is little evidence of that here. In his outrage, the prophet failed to appreciate the One in whose presence he had entered. “Be not rash with thy mouth,” warned the Preacher in Ecclesiastes 5:2, “and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.”

Jonah’s words were tinged with arrogance. “Ten times (nine in the Hebrew text) in his short prayer” he referred to himself – “I,” “my,” “I,” “my,” “I,” “I,” “I,” “my,” “me,” and “me” (John Butler: Jonah, The Parochial Prophet). And worse than that, he brazenly questioned God as though he knew better: “Was not this my saying when I was yet in my country?” Then, trying to take the high-road, he dares to mention a low-road moment in his life: “Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish.” He spoke as if his defection was somehow honorable. What foolishness!

The prophet continued by mentioning five attributes of Jehovah, which like his first prayer, revealed a working knowledge of Scripture (Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8). Ordinarily, his list would have elicited praise, but Jonah had no such intent. In his madness, these attributes became weaknesses that had caused Jehovah to grant Nineveh mercy. He said, (1) “Thou art a gracious God” – One that shows favor to an inferior; (2) “Merciful” – compassionate; (3) “Slow to anger” – longsuffering, forbearing; (4) “Of great kindness” – abundantly kind and faithful; and who (5) “Repentest Thee of the evil” – readily relents from intended distress. It is sad to find a prophet enumerating these virtues as an indictment against God. It shows once again, how rage can affect clear thinking.

Jonah’s Plea

“Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.” Was this a ploy by Jonah to force God’s hand into choosing between his life

and the lives of those in Nineveh? It’s possible, since stunts like that commonly accompany anger. But it’s also possible that indignation had blinded his spiritual vision (2 Peter 1:9). Jonah’s plea, nevertheless, was so preposterous that the Lord refused to respond.

Elijah too sought death (1 Kings 19:4-5), and while his request was also misguided, it did at least emanate from a personal sense of failure. “But Jonah,” said Matthew Henry, “labors to good purpose, saves a great city from ruin, and yet wishes he may die, as if having done much good, he were afraid of living to do more; he sees the travail of his soul and is dissatisfied” (Commentary on the Whole Bible). “Not so long before, he had rejoiced in deliverance from death,” wrote Frederick Tatford. “Now, like a spoiled child, unable to get what it wants, his desire was to be done with the whole thing” (Jonah: The Prophet Who Deserted).

Still, as inexcusable as Jonah’s actions were, we have to admire the honesty with which he pens this account through inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Hindsight it’s said, is 20/20, and Jonah doubtless cringed when recalling this event. What if we were told to write our story? What would it tell? Have we ever asked amiss? (Jas. 4:3). Have we ever prayed in anger? These questions deserve solemn reflection and self-judgment. Said David, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psalm 55:22).

Also, it’s worth stating that Jonah never attempted to take his own life. Even on the boat when he was to blame for the violent waters, he waited until mariners finally relented and threw him into the sea. He understood the sanctity of life, that each individual is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). As bad as his actions were, when it came to life and death, he submitted to the will of God each time. The Bible records seven suicides (Judges 9:54; 16:30; 1 Samuel 31:4-5; 2 Sam. 17:23; 1 Kings 16:18; Matthew 27:5) and each one is associated with egregious disobedience or deceit. The taking of one’s life is never envisioned in Scripture. The maxim of every believer should be,

Our times are in Thine hand;
Father, we wish them there!
Our life, our souls, our all we leave
Entirely to Thy care.

-William Lloyd

Jehovah’s Probe

In His infinite wisdom, the Lord got to the heart of things by asking Jonah one question: “Dost thou well to be angry?” He, of course, knew Jonah, but Jonah didn’t know himself. Thus, He probed the prophet – not sharply or disdainfully after the manner of Jonah – but graciously, that Jonah might realize the folly of his way.

This is often God’s method in Scripture. To Elijah He asked simply, ““What doest thou here, Elijah? (1 Kings

19:9, 13), forcing the fearful prophet to reevaluate his movements. To the curious woman at Samaria's well, He said, "Go, call thy husband," a statement that pierced her veneer and led to salvation (John 4:16). To the rich young ruler seeking eternal life, He said, "Sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven," a statement that tested the man's sincerity and led to his sorrowful departure (Luke 18:18-23).

Jonah offered no response to Jehovah's probing. For the moment at least, his mouth was stopped. What could he say? If his attitude was wrong, then other things were wrong. What he didn't know then, but must have known later, was that God's probing was a blessing in disguise. Like an initial burst of fire retardant, it was meant to dampen his rage. But more would be needed. Much more. We'll look at that in our next paper.

(continued)

Members of Christ

Thou hast no tongue, O Christ, as once of old,
To tell the story of Thy love Divine,
The story still as strange, as sweet, as true;
But there's no tongue to tell it out but mine.

Thou hast no hands, O Christ, as once of old,
To feed the multitudes with bread Divine;
Thou hast the Living Bread, enough for all;
But there's no hand to give it out but mine.

Thou hast no feet, O Christ, as once of old,
To go where Thy lost sheep in desert pine;
Thy love is still as deep, as strong, as kind;
But now Thou hast no feet to go but mine.

And shall I use these ransomed powers of mine
For things that only minister to me?
Lord! Take my tongue, my hands, my feet, my
all;
And let them live, and give, and go for Thee!

Anonymous.

The Lord my Helper

William Williams, of Venezuela (deceased)

Whether in the old or new testament, it is very noticeable that the moment a living faith was exercised in the living God, a triune foe was aroused, a fight was begun which knew no respite nor truce until the line was crossed: and in the old dispensation the warring patriarch was "gathered to his fathers" or in the brighter light of the new "present with the Lord" rewarded the victorious saint.

In the old regime, we have the real, literal warring against the world, the flesh and the devil, while in the new, the fight is none the less real, but it is more moral and spiritual. The world to the Old Testament saint was Egypt with its Hagers, cattle, lice and love: to the new it is that subtle influence all around us where pleasure, ease, money and mirth would make us forget heaven and home, Christ and the crowning day.

In like manner the flesh, during the dispensation of shadows of good things to come, harassed the people of God in a more material sense than in this day of a full orb'd revelation, where we can discover its subtle workings in a more intelligent way, having to cleanse ourselves from its filth, not merely in what is generally accepted as its outward manifestations; but in its spiritual insinuations as well: "having therefore these promises dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Then from Genesis to Malachi we have the devil dogging the steps of the people of God. But he could only act on what they knew, and as an earthly people he sought to hinder God's mind and purpose toward them. But to us on whom "the true light now shineth" his opposition is never, perhaps, more difficult and dreadful than when he plays the role of an "angel of light."

Thus a great part of the experience of the people of God is in warning and wrestling with this three-fold foe. This is why, in the Psalms, for example, which is the Book of experience, we have so much taken up with fighting and kindred expressions such as Rock, Shield, Sun, Strong, Tower, Keeper, Deliverer, Helper, etc., and this is why this wonderful Book of Psalms has so appealed and comforted God's people in all ages, because herein they find, when harassed and ready to faint because of the persistent attacks of the world, flesh and devil, God-breathed words expressing their very condition, and then a little word just fitting in and coming from Himself, so that we have to underline it and say with the inspired writer: "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them." (Psalm 139:17).

In looking over my beloved Newberry of 18 years use I see more underlined texts in the Psalms than in any other book. Those who leave friends, home and comfort to carry the gospel to foreign lands usually find this Book of

Psalms a special guide and comfort. One of the hardest trials of the young missionary is usually the experience he has to undergo so that he may get his eyes off men and means and look only to the Lord. He usually gets a good send off and many tears may fall as 200 or 300 of the Lord's people sing with feeling: "God be with you till we meet again" and the train slowly hauls out and his heart is full of love and gratitude to the Lord and to His people for all the gifts and love tokens of which he has been the recipient and he thinks that it will not be so hard to trust the Lord after all for have they not sung:

"Loved when we leave our native soil
In Romish lands to live and toil."

But as he settles down to the stern reality in the new field, battling with a new tongue, new food, new circumstances he naturally looks to those who sent him off with so much zest and song to remember him. But months roll slowly past, then years come and go and a strange feeling begins to impress him, that men have failed him, and in bitterness of spirit he changes the little verse to:

"Forgotten when we leave our native soil
In Romish lands to live and toil."

In deep agony of soul he is driven to God and in the Psalms he finds the very words to suit his need and he learns little by little not to look to the mail but to the living God, not to count on man but on Him who said: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And as he learns to look alone to the Lord he finds that:

"While all things change, Thou changest not,
Forgetting ne'er, though oft forgot;
Thy love, immutably the same,
Displays the glory of Thy Name."

The servant of the Lord who has thus learned God's care and faithfulness, will be the last man to make known his need to men, or go around finding fault with the assemblies for not having fellowship with him.

Let us notice three expressions we get in this precious Book of Psalms:

"Because Thou hast been my Helper, therefore
in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice." 63:7.
"Behold God is mine Helper." 54:4.
"And the Lord shall help them and deliver
them." 37:40.

The setting of this Psalm is very precious, 1 Samuel 23:14-16. Here we have Saul insidiously pursuing David. He was greatly exposed; but he had one sweet comfort: "Thou hast been my Helper." He would look back to his shepherd days and would remember the bear and the lion; then he would recollect that God's help with these wild beasts had given him faith to say when facing

the gigantic Philistine: "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." 1 Samuel 17:37. Then he would remember that God had delivered him from Goliath in spite of the odds against him and now harassed by Saul he could look back on experience, personal and real and say: "Because Thou hast been my Helper, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice."

Have we not all had our lions, bears and Philistines to encounter? And has not God given us deliverance from them? Let us look back then over our personal experience and let us remember God's deliverance when any of our three fold foes are pressing us hard and let us say with David: "Because Thou hast been my Helper, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice."

1. "Behold God is mine Helper." Here we have the present tense, and a blessed present reality. This is what distinguishes the living God from the gods and idols of the nations. He is a present, personal Helper. He was before His people at the Red Sea, He was beside His servants in the fiery furnace, He was round about Daniel in the den. He sat with Mary, walked with Cleophas, and stood with Paul. He wept with Martha and Mary, dried Mary Magdalene's tears, looked on erring Peter and welcomed home Stephen. Oh what a sympathizer, what a Burden-bearer, what a very present Help in trouble. "Behold God is my helper," and we may well add the New Testament corollary, "I will not fear what man shall do unto me," (Hebrews 13:6).

2. "And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them." This looks on to the future and reminds us of the lines:

"His love in the past forbids me to think
He will leave me at last in trouble to sink."

How many of God's dear people are over anxious about the future. They feel that God is going to fail them, that they are going to die a pauper's death or that some evil is going to cross their path. We remember a Brother who came to us and said that he was thinking of getting married, as he would like to have someone to care for him on his sick bed. We asked him if that was all the faith he had in God, reminding him that He has promised that "goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives," and that likely he would have to wait on his wife when she was sick. Not long after they were married, his wife developed tubercular trouble and lingered for over a year and he had to attend her and at last close her eyes in death.

Nothing dishonors our gracious, faithful Father and God like fretting and fear as to the future. "Thou hast been my helper," "He is my helper," "He shall be my helper." Let us then by His grace look back with gratitude, look up with confidence, and look on with hope until the day dawn and the shadows flee away.