

Jonah and David

We have seen a great contrast between the hearts of Saul and David concerning the treatment of one's enemies. In a similar way, we can contrast the heart of David with that of the prophet Jonah. Far from being a man after God's own heart, Jonah was selfish, nationalistic, and physically minded. We can see how he responded to the will of God by reading from Jonah 1:1-4, 15, and 17: "The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: 'Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.' But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up... Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm... But the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights." Here is a man who ran from the responsibility that God had given him. His heart is totally out of line with God's; it is looking in the exact opposite direction. He doesn't really care what God wants; he wants everything to go his way. Being trapped for three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish made him change at least his outward actions. In Jonah 2:1, 10, 3:1-3, and 10 we read, "From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God... And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city and so large that it required days to see it. When God saw how the people of Nineveh humbled themselves and turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. Here God's purpose is finally fulfilled. But what is Jonah's attitude now? Jonah 4:1-5 reads: "But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." But the LORD replied, "Have you any right to be angry?" Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city." Jonah still wants them to be destroyed. He still hates his enemies and does not want them to have a chance to be saved. What a difference between his attitude and David's!

Love for our enemies is one of the hardest things to keep in our hearts. We read in Zechariah 7:10, "In your hearts do not think evil of each other." Then Phillipians 2:3 tells us to "in humility consider others better than yourselves." Impossible, we say. Yet God has instructed us to do it. We will have to have a drastic change in our attitude toward those who we think are beneath us in some respect or who have wronged us in some way. This is the attitude that could give us, as with David, the reputation: a man after God's own heart. Truly our great example Christ showed us the way when he said, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do" to those of us who were causing his death. And he did this while "we were yet enemies."

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