

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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August 12, 2018

Volume 38, # 33

“I WILL NOT GO TO NINEVEH”

Most readers will recognize the above line as coming from the book of Jonah. When one hears the name Jonah, they think of the sea creature. While the sea creature was part of the story's narrative, the lessons we can learn are far more important. Why don't we concentrate on Jonah's goal of escaping from the presence of the Lord in the first place (Jonah 1:3)?

Was Jonah ignorant of the omnipotence of the Lord? Certainly not. In verse 9 of chapter 1, Jonah tells the mariners that it was God of Heaven who made the sea and the land. Did Jonah really believe he could escape the Lord by running away? Again, no. For 3 verses later in verse 12 he tells the men that it is because of him the storm has come upon them. Even while inside the sea creature Jonah believed the Lord could save him (Chapter 2).

When the Ninevites repented and were saved, Jonah bursts out in anger. In chapter 4 verse 2 and 3, he sounds like the worst sort of spoiled, impudent child. License permitting, in today's argot it would sound something like this: "See, see! I knew from the start you would let them live because of your loving forgiveness!"

And Jonah wasn't done! In 4:5, he waits to see the city get what it deserves. And when by verse 8 he's lost his shade and is close to fainting, he foolishly asks the Lord to take his life.

The lesson I would like us to draw from this is to ask ourselves, "How many times today have I told the Lord, 'I will not go to Nineveh!'" If you say you never have, think again.

Every time you refuse to follow Christ's examples and words, that is what you are telling Him! You are making what I sometimes have to tell my grandson Paul, is a bad choice. Choices are, In fact, what you must deal with for the remainder of your life. They count

for your soul and the souls of all who count on you to set a good example, to help them, to give them the belief that they, too, can choose God over Satan.

And when you say you won't go to Nineveh, you say to God: "It's not what you wish that's important to me; it's what I want!" This hard-headed attitude of Jonah's comes to a head in verse 9 of chapter 4 when God asks him if he (Jonah) was angry about the bush. Jonah replies that not only is he, angry, but ". . . angry enough to die."

Isn't it amazing how angry we can get?! We "see red," "get steamed up;" we strike out at whoever is near. Even our pets, even inanimate object catch a physical reaction to our ire. Yes, Jonah was "bull-headed." But when we turn down God in favor of our own desires, we are being just as stubborn. It is time to take control of our impulses and do God's will. You are only one person. That beautiful world out there like Nineveh is full of thousands of people (Jonah 4:11). If nothing else, think of the people immediately around you! Choose to obey the word of God.

- Larry Purkey

Handling the Word of God

At the close of John's Revelation letter, we find this admonition: "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book." (Rev. 22:18-19). This writing is to be accepted and regarded as Scripture; it is prophecy. It is not to be tampered with by changing it in any way, by adding to it, or by taking away from it. It must not be altered or perverted in any way, but it must be faithfully preserved and handed down from generation to generation with no loss of the original words. "If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book." The plagues, symbolized by the trumpets, the bowls, and the lake of fire, will be added to the one who adds words. "If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city." His name will be blotted out of the Lamb's book of life.

Since the time these words were recorded, all of the inspired writings, the complete revelation from God to man, has been compiled in a "book." For that reason, many have applied these two verses to the entire Bible. But here, the Lord is speaking through John about this particular writing, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God

and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.” (Rev. 1:1-3). Revelation 22:18-19 refers to the book of Revelation. However, the *principle* applies to all of sacred Scripture.

God’s revelation to man, the Bible, must be handled in the right way, with accuracy. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15).

One must never add to God’s word, and one must never take away from God’s word. “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.” (Deut. 4:2). “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.” (Deut. 12:32). “Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.” (Prov. 30:5-6).

One must never stop short of God’s word, and one must never go beyond God’s word. “Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, ‘Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of the LORD my God.’” (Num. 22:18. Note the ASV, “... I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah my God, to do less or more.”). “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.” (1 Cor. 4:6). “Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 9).

One must never veer to the left or to the right of God’s word. “So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left.” (Deut. 5:32). “Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.” (Josh. 1:7). “Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left,” (Josh. 23:6).

These passages teach that there is only one way to keep the commandments of God, and that is to do exactly as God has said, without addition or subtraction, without stopping short or going beyond, without veering to the left or right, without corrupting, perverting or changing in any way. In Jesus’ day, religious leaders had “invalidated the word of God”

by adding their man-made traditions to it (Matt. 15:6). Paul rebuked some of the Galatian Christians for “deserting” Christ “for a different gospel.” Some wanted to “distort the gospel of Christ.” This condemnation was attached to those actions: “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!” (See Gal. 1:6-9). One must never do anything contrary to God’s word (Num. 24:13). One who does so acts according to his “own mind” (Num. 24:13, ASV – “I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah, to do either good or bad of mine own mind”). Man cannot direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23) and expect to meet with God’s approval. When one adds to or diminishes from what God has commanded, and then proceeds to obey the modified version, he has failed to obey God; he has done as he pleases (cf. 1 Sam. 15:1-23). Those who will not endure sound doctrine are those who turn their ears away from truth (2 Tim. 4:3-4). We must “retain the standard of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13).

One must give the greatest attention to cultivating the deepest reverence for God and His word, never being presumptuous, careless or flippant toward either.

- Gary Smalley

- > “It is hard to sell a product you do not use and a religion you do not live!”
 - > “Happiness is like your shadow. Run after it and you will never catch it, but keep your face to the Son and it will follow you!”
 - > “He who lives content with little possesses everything!”
 - > “God without man is still God. Man without God is nothing!”
 - > “One thing I know: The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve!” - Albert Schweitzer
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: “*Giving Gifts!*” (Matt. 7:11); Sunday evening: “*Love’s Extravagance!*” (John 12:1-11).