

The Temptation of Thinking that Gods Ways are Foolish
(The War within the Heart of Jonah)
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Introduction: Have you ever questioned if God's ways are best?

- A. This should be a natural part of our spiritual growth! **(1 Cor 1:26-27)**
 - 1. God tells us that our ways and His ways are often in conflict! **(Isa 55:8-9)**
 - 2. What should we do when these doubts arise? This is a crucial decision.
 - 3. If we have been building a love for God then we take these doubts to Him. We are willing to humbly open our hearts and be tested. **(Hab 1:2-4; 2:1)**
- B. Jonah was a prophet of God that had allowed his heart to become divided!
 - 1. He had once been changed and humbled by the grace and mercy of God. He knew the character of God! **(Jonah 4:2; Ex 34:6-7)**
 - 2. How could anyone so changed by this mercy later consider this same mercy an offence to their very identity? He had allowed his heart to drift.

I. The drifting and poisoning of Jonah's Heart

- A. Israel was often warned about this danger. **(Deut 8:11-15)**
 - 1. At this time Israel was prosperous and full of national pride (wealth, armies, land) **(Jer 9:23-24)**
 - 2. They thought they were protected by God even when their hearts were just like the Gentile nations they looked down on! **(Jer 9:25-26)**
 - 3. It is a great temptation to have your very identity tied up in these things.
- B. He thought He could do a better job of ruling the nations than God! **(Jonah 1:1-2)**
 - 1. He did not want Nineveh to be persuaded, he wanted them destroyed. **(Lk 9:54)**
 - 2. If I had lived at that time, I would have been greatly tempted to agree with Jonah. The atrocities and evil of the Assyrians were shocking.
 - 3. At some point in Jonah's spiritual development he began to think that his thoughts must be God's thoughts.
 - 4. He has now assumed a burden that was not his to assume!
 - 5. God rules in the kingdoms of men and disposes of them according to his divine standard **(Psa 22:28; Prov 14:34; Dan 2:21; 4:17)**
 - 6. Those who think that nations stand or fall because of a "strong national defense" are woefully ignorant of biblical principles.
- C. Jonah still knew many good things about God.
 - 1. He knew the power of His word. **(Isa 55:10-11)**
 - 2. He knew the mercy God extends towards those that repent.
 - 3. Sadly, his worldly identity was in emotional opposition to these truths.
- D. Jonah chose to irrationally run from God. **(Jonah 1:3-4)**
 - 1. Run from God? Jonah knew better, but a heart compromised and dominated by worldly emotion will commonly do irrational things. **(Ps 139:7-11)**
 - 2. God is about to powerfully demonstrate this to him.

II. Jonah's terrifying path to repentance

- A. Worldliness is quickly exposed when facing the terror of death and darkness.
 - 1. One of the best things that can happen to us is to face our worst fears.
 - 2. We can easily push away God and His ways through worldly distractions.
 - 3. The choice to turn to God is still an individual one. **(Rev 9:6, 20-21)**
- B. Jonah still maintained a heart of integrity by openly taking responsibility for his actions and thus he spared others. **(Jonah 1:9, 11)**
 - 1. The seed planted in the heart remains and will become the basis for repentance.
 - 2. What a sad place for Jonah. He was ready to face God unprepared. Why???
- C. Jonah now faced a dark, isolated life. It was a taste of hell. **(Jonah 1:17; 2 Pt 2:17)**
 - 1. Darkness, isolation and time are truly terrifying, especially when you know you are in rebellion against God.
 - 2. We see in our time the terrible acceleration into sin and darkness.
 - 3. It is both a sad and a merciful thing when God "gives them up" to the fruits of their thoughts. **(Rom 1:24, 26-27, 28)**
- D. What does repentance look and sound like? **(Jonah 2:2-9)**
 - 1. Repentance is a change of will.
 - 2. Repentance always is followed by action! Jonah now obeys God! **(Jonah 3:1-5)**

III. Jonah's Repentance was only a first step in an ongoing battle for his heart

- A. He did the specific thing that God asked. Still, there had been a lot of wrong thinking that still was there. These thoughts had to be cast out one by one. **(Rom 8:5-8)**
 - 1. What lazy habits had he formed to allow his heart to drift?
 - 2. He now had to learn to fight and discipline his thinking.
(1 Pt 1:13-14; 1 Tim 6:11-12)
- B. When Satan has spent years in building a system of deception, even after an initial repentance, there still is a real war to keep fighting over time.
 - 1. Consider the pitiful, irrational actions of Jonah because the grace of God had prevailed. **(Jonah 4:3-4)**
 - 2. God asks Jonah to reason! Because of his past, this is very difficult.
- C. Jonah fell to a national political ideology. What kind of thinking is this? Consider the teachings of Jesus. **(Lk 12:1-3; Mk 8:15)**
 - 1. The "the leaven of Herod" is deception from a political system of thinking.
 - 2. A philosophy founded on anger and accusations is common to political thought.
 - 3. Unjust accusations based on group identity are commonly practiced. **(Jude 9)**
 - 4. When love, justice and mercy are cast out, you can believe anything!
(Mt 23:23; 2 Thess 2:11)
- D. Jonah still had a self-centered darkness that he needed to reason his way out of.
 - 1. Jonah thought more of a plant than a whole city of people. **(Jonah 4:6-8)**
 - 2. When you learn to live in a self-centered world where you throw-away people, it will be a long process to change your thinking.
 - 3. Our God begins to patiently work with Jonah. **(Jonah 4:9-11)**

Conclusion: May we daily keep our hearts renewed in the words of God.