

THE RESTLESS PROPHET








Lesson 12 for September 18, 2021

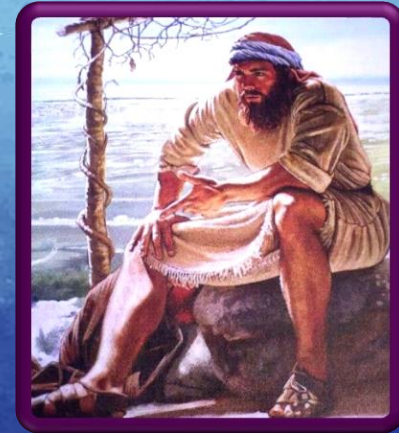
It's impossible to fully rest in Christ if you know you're doing something against His will.

Prophet Jonah alternated rest and anxiety. He was enjoying rest in God until he was called to preach to his enemies.

He didn't find rest by running away, but a deep abyss. Once he fulfilled his mission, he still couldn't find rest. He even got angry when an insignificant plant withered. Did Jonah find rest eventually?



-  Restlessly running away
-  Resting in the depths
-  Delivering rest
-  Not finding rest
-  Finding rest



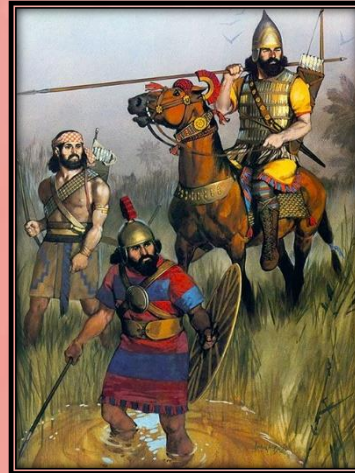
RESTLESSLY RUNNING AWAY

"But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." (Jonah 1:3)

Jonah lived in Gath-hepher. He was a successful prophet during Jeroboam II reign (2K. 14:25). He knew God and rested in Him.

God requested him to deliver a message to Nineveh. Jonah chose to run away and to seek rest in the hold of a sinking boat.

Jonah knew about the cruelty of the Ninevites (an Assyrian city). They had carried out several raids into Israelite territory.



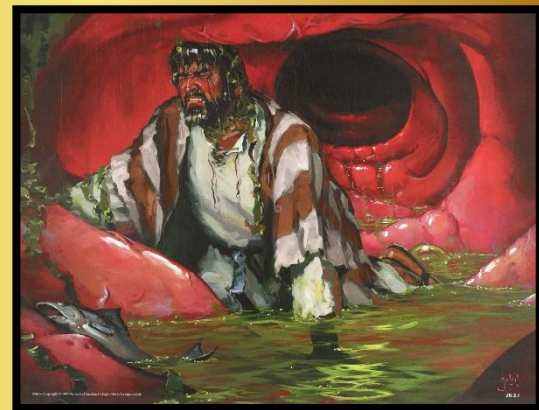
He panicked. How could he preach to his enemies? Wouldn't they react violently? And what if God forgive the Ninevites? He would look like a lying prophet!

RESTING IN THE DEPTHS

"In trouble, deep trouble, I prayed to God. He answered me. From the belly of the grave I cried, 'Help!' You heard my cry." (Jonah 2:2 MSG)



God sent a giant fish to save Jonah from death. Finally, he found the rest he was longing for. His prayer reflects his feelings in that moment (Jonah 2).



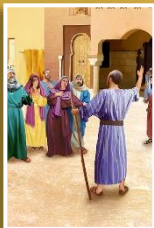
He thanked God for listening to his distressed cry (v. 2)



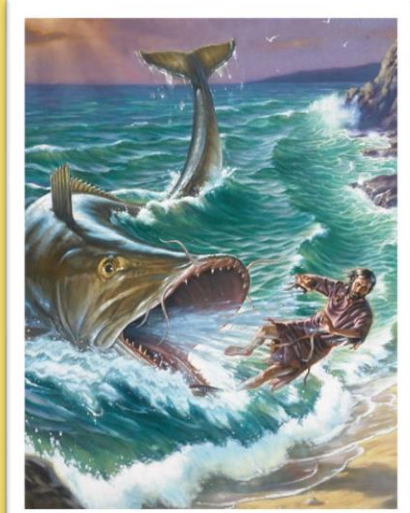
God saved his life when death was certain. This gave him hope that he would see the Temple again (v. 3-6)



He was sure that God was listening to his prayer in His Heavenly Temple (v. 7)



He acknowledged that doing God's will is the only safe way (v. 8-9)

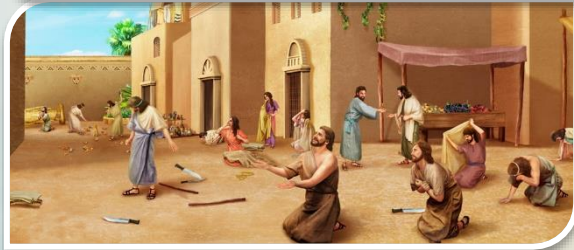


DELIVERING REST

“So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.” (Jonah 3:5)



For Israelites, Nineveh (663 hectares, 1638 acres) could be considered “an exceedingly great city” (Jonah 3:3) when compared to Samaria (8 hectares, 20 acres).



It took three days to do the city on foot. However, one day of Jonah’s preaching about the destruction to come was enough to move the Ninevites to collective repentance.

The Holy Spirit arduously worked the Ninevites’ hearts. Even the king covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes to show his repentance: “Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?” (Jonah 3:9)

The Ninevites found rest in God’s mercy.





NOT FINDING REST

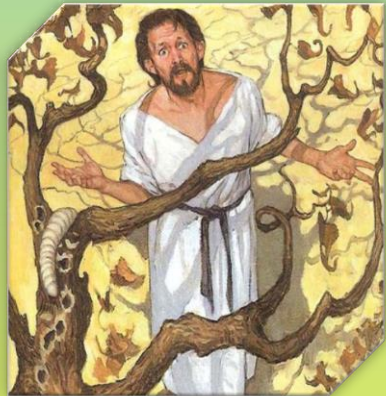
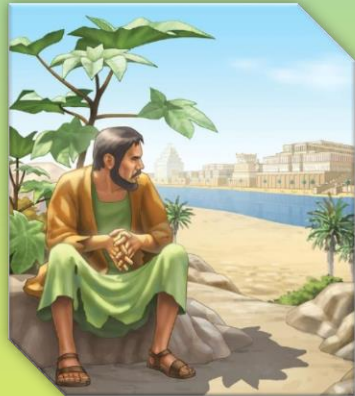
“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry.” (Jonah 4:1)

Jonah knew God and His mercy. He was sure God had forgiven Nineveh even before the 40-day period ended (Jonah 4:2, 5). Then he would look like a false prophet!



God patiently warned Jonah that getting angry was not right (Jonah 4:4). Then He used a practical example to teach him how mercy works.

God gave Jonah a beautiful plant so he could sit in the shade. However, God made it wither during the night. Jonah got so angry that he wanted to die.



“You have been concerned about this plant [...] And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people?” (Jonah 4:10-11 NIV)





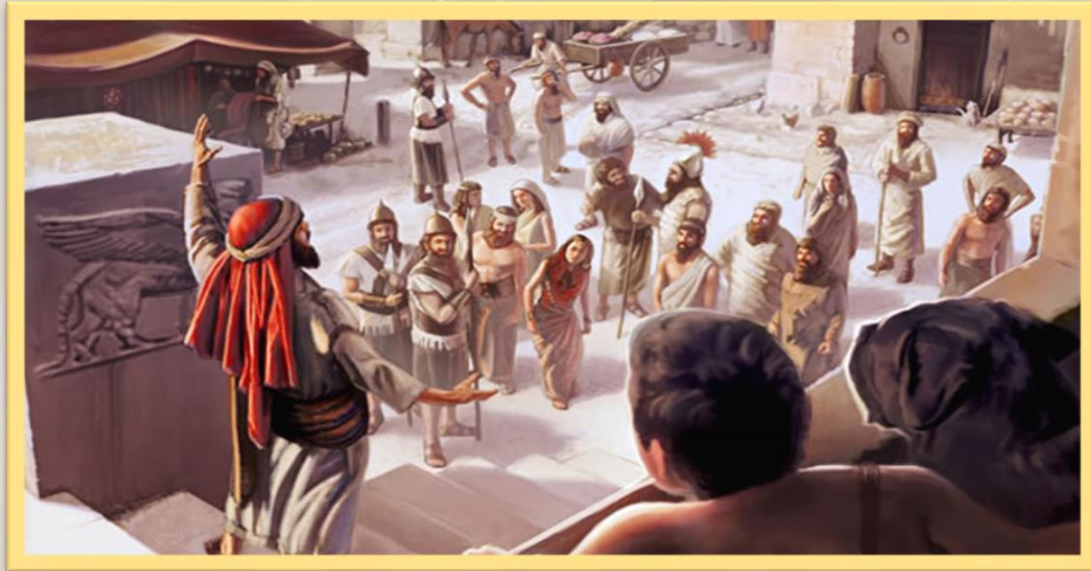
FINDING REST

“keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” (Jude 21)

The Ninevites needed someone to warn them about their wrongdoing. God sent a prophet who *NEEDED* to love the Ninevites!

Maybe Jonah didn't know that he was not ready to have a Ninevite neighbor in Heaven. He needed to learn to love like God does.

If the tradition is right, Jonah learnt the lesson and spent the rest of his life caring for the Ninevites.



On the other hand, the king [Adad-nirari III (810-782 BC)] introduced monotheism into Nineveh. The love of God triumphed both in Nineveh and in Jonah's heart!

“In the charge given him, Jonah had been entrusted with a heavy responsibility; yet He who had bidden him go was able to sustain His servant and grant him success. Had the prophet obeyed unquestioningly, he would have been spared many bitter experiences, and would have been blessed abundantly. Yet in the hour of Jonah’s despair the Lord did not desert him. Through a series of trials and strange providences, the prophet’s confidence in God and in His infinite power to save was to be revived.”

E. G. W. (Prophets and Kings, cp. 22, p. 266)