

God's Love Preserved Jonah

Key Verse: *"I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD."*
—Jonah 2:9

Selected Scripture:
Jonah 2:1-10

IN TODAY'S LESSON, AS

chapter 2 commences, although Jonah is in the belly of the fish, he is conscious and begins to pray to the Lord. His expressions are closely related to those of the Psalmist David, and suggest Jonah's familiarity with the Scriptures. (Ps. 42:7; 18:6) Additionally, the words of Jonah's prayer give evidence that his petitions were answered affirmatively by God.—Jon. 2:1,2

"Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God."—vss. 3-6

The foregoing passage contains several lessons for consideration. Jonah realized that although those of the ship's crew were the instruments used to cast him overboard, it was at God's direction they were motivated

to do this. Now, though entombed in the belly of the fish, he was in a protective environment because he did not drown. Jonah's greatest concern was not the calamity he was experiencing, but rather the feeling of being separated from God. Nevertheless, he did not consider himself to be in a hopeless situation. In anticipation that his prayers would be looked upon favorably, he trusted that he would once more view the Temple in Jerusalem.

In verse 7, we note that when Jonah realized he could not deliver himself from his present condition in the belly of the fish, he turned to the Lord in prayer. He also acknowledged that his resistance to God by running from the command to go to Nineveh was like being an idolater, saying, "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness." (vs. 8, *New American Standard Bible*) Thus, Jonah recognized that by his disobedient course he was substituting his own judgment for the will of God.

On the principle that "all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition," there are lessons from Jonah's experience that we, as followers of Christ, can learn and apply in our lives today. (I Cor. 10:11) One of the most important is that of obedience to God's instructions, as opposed to following self-will. The Heavenly Father does not communicate directly with us in an audible manner or through angelic messengers as in ages past. However, through obedience to the principles outlined in the Bible as expressed by Christ and the apostles, we can be assured of divine favor and blessing, thereby reducing the need for chastisements to be administered because of waywardness on our part.

Our Key Verse relates Jonah's penitent gratitude for God's mercy and his vow to follow divine instructions in the future as directed. Jonah is then delivered from the belly of the fish onto dry land, and prepares to follow his initial commission to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh.—Jon. 2:10 ■