

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XIII

October 10, 2004

No. 41

“Forsaking Our Mercy”

Jerry Fite

In Jonah’s prayer he affirms, “*They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy*” (Jonah 2:8).

Idolatry is described in Scripture as lying vanities. “...*Our fathers have inherited nought but lies, even vanity and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make unto himself gods, which yet are no gods?*” (Jer 16:19-20). Idols are vain for they are powerless to act on their own, much less deliver their worshippers from trouble. When the moment of truth comes, as it did for the worshippers of Baal, there is “*neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded*” (I Kings 18:29). When Jehovah delivered Jonah, the prophet understood and gladly confessed, “*Salvation is of Jehovah*” (Jonah 2:9).

The objects of our covetousness are our idols (Col. 3:5). Many worship daily at the feet of money, power and fame. But they are lying vanities. Money cannot purchase freedom from the guilt of sin, nor offer a reprieve on the Judgment Day. It cannot buy off the day of our death. Fame is fickle. Power is relative. Jehovah

is absolute, faithful and able to free us from sin and satisfy our spiritual and physical needs.

Jonah reminds us that necessary cause and effect relationships exist in the spiritual realm as they do in the physical. However, many never reflect on what Jonah sees. They see serving Jehovah as a cause effecting self-denial and a rather restrictive life as one allows God to rule over all their affairs. As Jonah learned, duties before Jehovah must be completed. You cannot run away from them with impunity. Today, there are “musts” and “cannots” in serving God in Christ. So, many turn away from this life authored by God. All they can see is forsaking pleasures. But they are not running away from an impossible life style, they are forsaking mercy. This is a necessary consequence of regarding our lying vanities.

God’s mercy is a synonym for God’s favor. Along with the words, “kindness” and “love”, “mercy” describes God’s grace for man manifested in Christ (Titus 3:4-7). Jonah knew that God was “*gracious*”, “*merciful*”, and “*abundant in loving-kindness*” (Jonah 4:2). Jonah

learned that God’s mercy is there for us when we come to our senses and turn from our rebellion.

Following after our vain wisdom, we forsake our “own” mercy. Mercy is personal. It is one thing to speak of mercy given to people in general, and quite another to speak of mercy given to “me”. David recognized God to be “*merciful and gracious*”, and cries out, “*oh turn unto me, and have mercy on me...*” (Psalms 88:15, 16). It is comforting to know that God gives mercy individually.

Dear reader, we encourage you to trust and obey God. Jesus is not trying to make your life difficult when he pleads, “*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden... Take my yoke upon you and learn of me*”, but is revealing how He can “*give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28-29). Paul, the chief of sinners, found mercy in coming to Christ (I Tim. 1:16). Jonah was delivered from death by God’s mercy. Don’t ignore God. To forsake God and Christ, is to forsake your own personal mercy.