

JONAH: RUNAWAY PROPHET

GOD PREPARED

Thursday, July 16

Reading: Jonah 4:5-9

Jonah 4:6 *Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant.*

Every wonder why good and bad things happen to people? God's object lesson to Jonah helps us understand how God works in our circumstances. Jonah had built a makeshift shelter as he waited to see what would happen to Nineveh. God, in His grace, made a large leafy plant to grow over Jonah to better protect him from the blazing sun. Jonah rejoices over this plant, even as he is extremely unhappy over God's forgiveness of the people of Nineveh. Jonah probably thought, "Finally! Something is going right!" Next, a worm comes and destroys this plant! It withers away just as the hot east wind begins to heat up the day, so much so that Jonah begins to feel sick from sunstroke. Again, Jonah pleads for death!

As we read this story, the author wants us to see something. The word "provided" in the NIV literally means to prepare. This is not the first time we have seen this word. In Jonah 1:17, God had prepared a fish to rescue Jonah. The same word is used here for God preparing the leafy plant. Then God prepared the worm to destroy the plant and prepared the east wind to beat down on the prophet. The repeated use of this word reminds us that God prepares good times and trials in our life to teach us and bring us closer to Him.

I am not saying that all the bad things to happen to us come from God. Sometimes they are the result of our own disobedience or the consequences of living in a sin-cursed world. But God wants to use every circumstance to grow our faith and teach us to trust Him more. God wanted to teach Jonah about His goodness, first by rescuing him from drowning in sea and then by providing shade in the desert heat. But Jonah was so immersed in his hatred and anger that he completely misses the point!

How about you? Can you see God in the midst of your struggles?

When was the last time you learned a lesson because of times of trial?

How can you see God working in your good times and difficult times?

Are you so caught up in your selfish desires and demands that you miss God's message to help you grow?