

Articles and Sermons :: God in Everything-Mackintosh

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God in Everything

by C. H. Mackintosh

But as the ship was sailing along, suddenly the Lord flung a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to send them to the bottom!

Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights!

And the Lord God prepared a gourd to grow there, and soon it spread its broad leaves over Jonah's head, shading him from the sun. This eased some of his discomfort, and Jonah was very grateful for the gourd. But God also prepared a worm! The next morning at dawn the worm ate through the stem of the plant, so that it soon died and withered away. And as the sun grew hot, God sent a scorching east wind to blow on Jonah. The sun beat down on his head until he grew faint and wished to die. "Death is certainly better than this!" he exclaimed. Jonah 1:4, 17; 4:6-8

Nothing so much helps the Christian to endure the trials of his path as the habit of seeing God in everything. There is no circumstance, be it ever so trivial or ever so commonplace, which may not be regarded as a messenger from God, if only the ear be circumcised to hear, and the mind spiritual to understand the message. If we lose sight of this valuable truth, life, in many instances at least, will be but a dull monotony, presenting nothing beyond the most ordinary circumstances. On the other hand, if we could but remember, as we start each day on our course, that the hand of our Father can be traced in every scene—if we could see in the smallest, as well as in the most weighty circumstances, traces of the divine presence—how full of deep interest would each day's history be found!

The Book of Jonah illustrates this truth in a very marked way. There we learn, what we need so much to remember, that there is nothing ordinary to the Christian; everything is extraordinary. The most commonplace things, the simplest circumstances, exhibit in the history of Jonah, the evidences of divine intervention. To see this instructive feature, it is not needful to enter upon the detailed exposition of the Book of Jonah, we only need to notice one expression, which occurs in it again and again, namely, "the Lord prepared".

In chapter one the Lord sends out a wind into the sea, and this wind had in it a solemn voice for the prophet's ear, had he been wakeful to hear it. Jonah was the one who needed to be taught; for him the messenger was sent forth. The poor pagan mariners, no doubt, had often encountered a storm; to them it was nothing new, nothing special, nothing but what fell to the common lot of seamen; yet it was special and extraordinary for one individual on board, though that one was asleep in the sides of the ship. In vain did the sailors seek to counteract the storm; nothing would avail until the Lord's message had reached the ears of him to whom it was sent.

Following Jonah a little further, we perceive another instance of what we may term, 'seeing God in everything'. He is brought into new circumstances, yet he is not beyond the reach of the messengers of God. The Christian can never find himself in a position in which his Father's voice cannot reach his ear, or his Father's hand meet his view, for His voice can be heard, His hand seen, in everything. Thus when Jonah had been cast forth into the sea, "the Lord prepared a great fish." Here, too, we see that there is nothing ordinary to the child of God. A great fish was nothing uncommon; there are many such in the sea; yet did the Lord prepare one for Jonah, in order that it might be the messenger of God to his soul.

Again, in chapter four, we find the prophet sitting on the east side of the city of Nineveh, in sullenness and impatience, grieved because the city had not been overthrown, and entreating the Lord to take away his life. He would seem to have forgotten the lesson learned during his three days' sojourn in the sea, and he therefore needed a fresh message from God—"And the Lord prepared a gourd." This is very instructive. There was surely nothing uncommon in the mere circumstance of a gourd; other men might see a thousand gourds, and, moreover, might sit beneath their shade, and yet see nothing extraordinary in them. But Jonah's gourd exhibited traces of the hand of God, and forms a link—an important link—in the chain of circumstances through which, according to the design of God, the prophet was passing. The gourd now, like the great fish before, though very different in its kind, was the messenger of God to his soul. "So Jonah was exceedingly

ding glad for the gourd." He had before longed to depart, but his longing was more the result of impatience and chagrin, than of holy desire to depart and be at rest forever. It was the painfulness of the present, rather than the happiness of the future—which made him wish to be gone.

This is often the case. We are frequently anxious to get away from present pressure; but if the pressure were removed, the longing would cease. If we longed for the coming of Jesus, and the glory of His blessed presence, circumstances would make no difference—we would then long as ardently to get away from those times of pressure and sorrow. Jonah while he sat beneath the shadow of the gourd, thought not of departing, and the very fact of his being "exceeding glad for the gourd" proved how much he needed that special messenger from the Lord; it served to make manifest the true condition of his soul, when he uttered the words, "Take, I beseech You, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live!" The Lord can make even a gourd the instrument for developing the secrets of the human heart. Truly the Christian can say, God is in everything. The tempest roars, and the voice of God is heard, a gourd springs up in silence, and the hand of God is seen. Yet the gourd was but a link in the chain; for "the Lord prepared a worm, and this worm, trifling as it was when viewed in the light of an instrument, was, nevertheless, as much the divine agent as was the "great wind," or the "great fish." A worm, when used by God, can do wonders; it withered Jonah's gourd, and taught him, as it teaches us, a solemn lesson. True, it was only an insignificant agent, the efficacy of which depended upon its conjunction with others; but this only illustrates the more strikingly the greatness of our Father's mind. He can prepare a worm, and He can prepare a vehement east wind, and make them both, though so unlike, conducive to His great designs.

In a word, the spiritual mind sees God in everything. The worm, the whale, and the tempest, all are instruments in His hand. The most insignificant, as well as the most splendid agents, further His ends. The east wind would not have proved effectual, though it had been ever so vehement, had not the worm first done its appointed work. How striking is all this! Who would have thought that a worm and a scorching east wind could be joint agents in doing a work of God? Yet so it was! Great and small are only terms in use among men, and cannot apply to Him "who stoops down to behold the things that are in heaven," as well as "the things that are on earth." They are all alike to Him "who sits on the circle of the earth." Jehovah can count the number of the stars, and while He does so, He can take knowledge of a falling sparrow. He can make the whirlwind His chariot, and a broken heart His dwelling place. Nothing is great or small with God.

The believer, therefore, must not look upon anything as ordinary, for God is in everything. True, he may have to pass through the same circumstances—to meet the same trials—to encounter the same reverses as other men; but he must not meet them in the same way, nor interpret them on the same principle; nor do they convey the same report to his ear. He should hear the voice of God, and heed His message, in the most trifling as well as in the most momentous occurrence of the day. The disobedience of a child, or the loss of an estate, or the death of a friend, should all be regarded as divine messengers to his soul.

So also, when we look around in the world, we should see God is in everything. The overturning of thrones, the crashing of empires, the famine, the pestilence, and every event that occurs among nations, exhibit traces of the hand of God, and utter a voice for the ear of man. The devil will seek to rob the Christian of the real sweetness of this thought; he will tempt him to think that, at least, the commonplace circumstances of every-day life exhibit nothing extraordinary, but only such as happen to other men. But we must not yield to him in this. We must start on our course every morning, with this truth vividly impressed on our mind—God is in everything! The sun that rolls along the heavens in splendid brilliancy, and the worm that crawls along the path, have both alike been prepared of God, and, moreover, could both alike cooperate in the development of His unsearchable designs.

I would observe, in conclusion, that the only one who walked in the abiding remembrance of the above precious and important truth, was our blessed Master. He saw the Father's hand and heard the Father's voice in everything. This appears preeminently in the season of the deepest sorrow. He came forth from the garden of Gethsemane with those memorable words, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" thus recognizing in the fullest manner, that God is in everything.