

Jonah 4:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

Analysis

And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. The third "prepared" thing—vayehi kizroach hashamesh vayeman Elohim ruach qadim charishit vattak hashamesh al-rosh Yonah vayit'allaf vayish'al et-nafsho lamut. The "vehement east wind" (ruach qadim charishit, רוח קדים חרישת) describes scorching sirocco winds from Arabian desert—hot, dry, oppressive. Combined with direct sun "beating" (nakah, same verb as worm "smote"), Jonah suffers intensely.

"He fainted" (yit'allaf, יִתְעַלֵּף) means to cover oneself, faint, or grow weak—possibly heat stroke. Once again, Jonah "wished to die" (same phrase as 4:3)—his second death wish in the chapter. The repetition "it is better for me to die than to live" echoes verse 3 verbatim, showing Jonah has learned nothing. God provided the fish, the plant, now discomfort—all to teach, yet Jonah remains unteachable. His melodramatic death wish over lost shade contrasts his silence over 120,000 souls.

This verse demonstrates that external circumstances don't change internal attitudes—only God's grace does. Jonah experienced miraculous deliverance (fish), successful ministry (Nineveh repented), divine provision (plant), yet remains miserable because his heart is wrong. The gospel teaches that true transformation requires new birth (John 3:3), new heart (Ezekiel 36:26), Spirit's indwelling

(Romans 8:9)—not merely better circumstances. Jonah had right theology (4:2) but wrong affections. Knowledge without love produces pride (1 Corinthians 8:1).

Historical Context

The east wind (qadim) from Arabian desert brought scorching heat to Mesopotamia. Sirocco winds could exceed 110°F (43°C) with extremely low humidity, creating dangerous conditions. Hosea 13:15 uses east wind as metaphor for Assyrian invasion. Jonah's physical suffering mirrors his spiritual state—both reflect being under divine discipline. Ancient Near Eastern literature frequently connected environmental conditions with divine mood or judgment. The combination of sun and wind intensified Jonah's misery, creating teachable moment—though Jonah proves resistant student.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Jonah's repeated death wish reveal that changed circumstances don't produce changed hearts—only God's grace does?
2. What does Jonah's melodrama over lost shade versus silence over saved souls expose about human self-centeredness?
3. In what ways can we have correct theology yet wrong affections, and how does the gospel address this disconnect?

Interlinear Text

רַם אֱלֹהִים יְמִינָה יְהִי
H1961 did arise And it came to pass when the sun prepared
H2224 H8121 H4487 H430 H7307

רַאשׁ עַל קָדִים יְמִינָה יְהִי
east a vehement beat And it came to pass when the sun upon the head
H6921 H2759 H5221 H8121 H5921 H7218

וְיַגְהֵה יְמִינָה וְיַתְעַלֵּךְ וְיַשְׁאֵל אַתָּה נִפְשֹׁת לִמְמֹת וְיֹאמֶר
of Jonah that he fainted and wished in himself to die and said
H3124 H5968 H7592 H853 H5315 H4191 H559

מִתְּחִי מֹתָה טָבַב
It is better for me to die than to live
H2896 H4194 H2416

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 121:6 (Parallel theme): The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

Jonah 4:3 (Parallel theme): Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

Revelation 3:19 (Parallel theme): As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Isaiah 49:10 (Parallel theme): They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

Ezekiel 19:12 (Parallel theme): But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them.