A FAILED MISSIONARY?

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I preached on Jonah 4 yesterday. I was really struck by how Jonah seemed to be totally untouched by his experience of preaching to the people of Nineveh. If you put his initial running away and the incident of the whale on one side for a moment, Jonah seems to have been an incredibly succesful missionary. He preached on sermon and a whole city/nation turned to God. Even the most grandiose televangelist can't claim that sort of success rate.

Jonah was used by God and he clearly understood something of God's nature:

> *I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. (4:2)*

but he was entirely untouched by his experiences and his understanding. Jonah seems to have had no fellow feeling for the Ninevites as people in need of salvation and he saw God's grace as something to get angry about, rather than something to rejoice in. Jonah allowed God to work through him, but not in him? This wasn't part of my original sermon, but it strikes me as being of vital importance.

And what about me (or you)?

We often say that the most important thing about mission work is what God does in the heart of the missionary. You can do great things for God, but if you are not changed yourself, then you have not acheived much. Paul says a similar thing when talking about love - to paraphrase - if I become a martyr for the faith, but I don't love my brother, I'm wasting my time. Judged by these standards, Jonah who lead a whole people to faith, was a failed missionary. Food for thought.

ps. The sermon, itself, should appear at Bible Today sometime soon.