

Jonah 2:1-10

A resistant and rebellious Jonah was the primary subject matter at hand in our last gathering. He refused to deliver the message of repentance to the Gentile city of Nineveh on behalf of the Lord who isn't willing that *any* should perish but that all should come to repentance. God wanted to give Nineveh the opportunity to repent prior to judgment, Jonah would rather that Nineveh just go ahead and be judged. They were a wicked and merciless people militarily speaking, they showed little to no respect for the lives of those whom they were conquering, they terrorized and tortured the people whom they came against in a brutally unrelenting fashion and so Jonah had the mindset of "Go ahead and judge them."

So rather than heading east toward the city of Nineveh Jonah went ahead, handed in his resignation and headed west. He went to the port city of Joppa, found a boat headed for Tarshish, paid the fare, got on board and sailed off into the sunset. The "problem" Jonah would find himself faced with is the fact that whom the Lord loves He chastens. God's not content to simply let His children come and go as they please doing what they want when they want no differently than you or I wouldn't let our children get away with blatant disobedience. We will pursue them and if necessary discipline them in order to encourage their obedience. Even so God pursued Jonah brought about circumstances that would *not destroy* Jonah, but rather they would *develop* Jonah into an obedient child, that God might use him according to His plan and the propelling of His purpose for his life.

You recall the situation. A Storm broke loose on the Mediterranean Sea of *supernatural* proportions. The bottom line being that unless something happened that ship would be torn apart and everyone on it would perish. So they all started crying out to their gods, the captain found Jonah and rebuked him for sleeping when he should've been praying, they casts lots to find out who'd done what in order to bring this situation upon them and of course the lot fell on Jonah. After confessing the whole thing to them they started freaking out, "You're a what!? A disobedient prophet of the God who created both the dry land *and the sea!* What do we need to do to you in order calm the sea?" Jonah said, "Listen, just pick me up and cast me into the sea and you'll be spared." They didn't like that option, didn't want to be guilty of murdering a man, much less a man who was a prophet of God. But the storm kept growing more and more tempestuous until finally losing all hope of survival they cried out to God that He wouldn't hold them accountable for Jonah's life since He was the One who brought them to the point of despair and they picked Jonah up and cast him into the sea. Immediately the sea ceased raging making it even more obvious that it wasn't a "happenstance" storm and those men got right with God. Now look at Vs 17 of Ch 1.

Vs 17

As we mentioned last week one of the things that is definitely on display throughout the book of Jonah is the sovereignty of God. The wind, the waves, the sea and everything in it is subject to the Lord, the only aspect of God's creation that offers resistance to God is man. As for the rest of it God merely speaks the word and obedience is immediate.

Now there have been those (no small # of them actually) who have sought over the years to discredit the book of Jonah because of what we just read. That Jonah was swallowed by a great fish and spent 3 days and 3 nights in its stomach before feeling the urge to regurge and coughing Jonah back up on the shore alive.

Of course since then there have been documented cases of people who've been swallowed by certain species of fish and lived to tell the story after the fish was captured and killed. There have been studies that show the dimensions of the sperm whales stomach chamber that display ample room for a man to survive in it for a period of time but really in my mind trying to figure out what kind of fish swallowed him and if it were something that could physiologically transpire is fairly futile in the 1st place, why?

Because if you can get passed the 1st V^s of the bible, this becomes no problem. "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" Gen 1:1 If you can believe that, then there's no problem with the fact that God prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. Was it a whale? Possibly, but the bible never declares that; the bible simply declares that it was a great fish that God prepared (or provided/appointed) for the occasion. (It's our pride that creates the problem of unbelief, as if we know it all, Job 38).

Now when it comes to God's provision for our lives, how many of us have the tendency to think along these lines? Not me; when I think of God's provision I generally think of things that will cater to the pleasure or comfort side of life. I don't generally think of something hot (at least 98.6 degrees if it were a whale, being a mammal, and as they say it's not the heat so much as the humidity that gets ya), something nasty smelling (what do you think it smells like inside a fishes stomach? I can tell you what the inside of a deer's stomach smells like and it'll tickle your gag muscle guaranteed). You don't generally think of something pitch black and conducive to terror, a chamber in which other living things are swimming up against you and stomach acids are irritating you. Yet God will provide for us what we need, not what we want, what we need. I'm sure that Jonah would've preferred to have been transported like Philip, just beamed (basically) back to the shoreline. God didn't have that for him; He had a different mode of transportation for Jonah. Here's the deal, God's provision for our lives won't always take on the appearance that we think might think it would, or even should. But God will be faithful to provide us with what we need to accomplish His objective be it in blessing or in discipline.

It's easy for us to get lost in the intrigue of the fish. G. Campbell Morgan rightly observed that "men have been looking so hard at the great fish that they have failed to see the great God" which is the primary objective of the book. As we mentioned last week the chief player in the book isn't Jonah, or the fish, or Nineveh it's God; His power, His patience, His mercy and His sovereignty.

Beyond all of that if you're going to believe in Jesus than you *have* to believe the historical, factual account of Jonah. Why is that? Because Jesus pointed to Jonah and his being in the belly of the great fish for 3 days and 3 nights as the foreshadowing in the O.T. of the fulfillment of His resurrection. Jesus placed His stamp of approval upon the record of Jonah as being a factual, historical event. We read in Matt Ch 12, "*Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.' But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.'*" Matt 12:38-41 So if you give credibility to Jesus you have to give credibility to Jonah because Jesus believed it and He's either sharing the truth or He's not and if He's not that no longer allows Him to be the sinless Son of God. The fact of Jonah is just that, it's a fact.

Now as for him being in the belly of the great fish for 3 days and 3 nights we know that we don't have to receive that as a literal 72 hour period.

The Jews reckoned any part of a day as the whole day. Jesus was crucified on Friday; He died around 3:00 p.m. According to the Jewish way of reckoning in that day that was day 1. When the sun went down around 6:00 p.m. that was day 2, when the sun went down on Saturday that was day 3, so by the time the sun was up Sunday morning Jesus had risen. So to here with Jonah, it may not have been 72 hours, it really only demands a full 24 hours along with any part of the day on either side. However no matter how you look at it, it wasn't a pleasant experience. I wouldn't volunteer for even 1 hour in the stomach of a fish! Be that as it may Vs 1 of Ch 2 begins...

Vs 1

Remember back in Vs 6 of Ch 1 when the captain of the ship exhorted Jonah to pray? We don't know if he did or not, what we do know is that if he did it wasn't a sincere prayer of repentance or else Jonah wouldn't have found himself in the situation he's in now. However *now* Jonah prays, I bet he did! Don't think that God doesn't know how to get our attention, if we won't respond under one measure than things can get progressively worse until we will. And God is concerned enough for our eternal well being that He'll allow our temporal world to get shook up, or brought down, or in this case swallowed up... Of course what's staggering to us is that he so despaired of life, he was so stubborn, so resistant and rebellious that he waited 3 days!

I'd have been in such a panic induced state that I'd have been crying out to God *immediately*, but it would *appear* that Jonah didn't do that. I don't know, maybe he felt so distant from God after what he'd done that this was just his punishment, maybe he felt like he'd sinned so bad that he *couldn't* cry out to God, that God wasn't interested anymore. Maybe he was simply in a state of shock and it took him sometime to begin to process what had happened, what was going on, he wasn't thinking clearly or something...

Now to be fair to the text I should say that we can't press that issue too hard because the word translated "Then" could be translated "And" or some versions simply say, "From inside the fish Jonah prayed..." So it is possible that Jonah was praying the whole time (which would stand to reason and would be the natural response (I would think) of the most vile heathen, not to mention a believer) but equally plausible is that Jonah consigned himself to his fate for 3 days before finally crying out.

Either way the point remains that Jonah came to a place whereby (like the prodigal) he began to turn his thoughts toward the Lord once again. There in Luke 15 we read of the prodigal son who'd gone astray, went his own way, exhausted all his resources and found himself wishing he could eat as good as the slop that was given the pigs. But we read that *when he came to himself* he turned his thoughts toward his father once again and decided he would humble himself and return home.

When we read here that Jonah *prayed* that's equivalent to telling us that he *repented*. It's interesting to me the light that the word of God casts on prayer and how closely tied to a relationship with God prayer is. You meet someone who has a strong and vibrant relationship with the Lord, God is using them, moving through them and I'll guarantee you that you've met someone who spends time *with* the Lord in prayer *before* the Lord. Prayer and a relationship with the Lord are like "hand in glove" they go together; really they're beyond that because they're inseparable, prayer is the life blood to the believer, over and over again throughout the scriptures we're exhorted to be a people of prayer. To pray with out ceasing, to look *to* the Lord, to call *upon* the Lord, to stand in the gap on behalf of others *before* the Lord; if you want an intimate relationship *with* the Lord, then you *will* spend time in prayer *before* the Lord.

Prayer is also one of the fingerprints that someone has been legitimately born again. Now I'm not saying that everyone that prays is born again, or that an unbeliever can't/won't pray, unbelievers pray all the time. But there's a very different and distinct dynamic that will separate the prayer of a believer Vs an unbeliever. There's an intimacy there, earmarks of a relationship that are woven throughout the prayer.

Remember the testimony of Paul the apostle? Before he was Paul the apostle he was Saul the Pharisee, now do you think that as a Pharisee he prayed? Absolutely he did, "religiously." However when he met Christ something changed. He wasn't going through the motions or reciting various lines that he'd memorized, he began to seek the Lord from the heart. Remember God called Ananias to go and minister to him, Ananias was skeptical (understandably so). But God encouraged Ananias to go and assured him of his safety how? How did He reveal to Ananias that Saul was the real deal that he wasn't putting up a façade to entrap one more Christian? By making him aware of the fact that he was *praying*. We read, "*So the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.'*" Acts 9:11 He let Ananias know that he (Paul) was a chosen vessel of His who would suffer for His sake.

Conversely you meet someone who's walking in rebellion to God, or who is backslidden, or someone who just doesn't have a very solid or vibrant relationship with the Lord, and you've met someone who has little to no prayer life. They just don't spend time with the Lord to any real degree, seeking *after* Him, wanting to hear *from* Him; perhaps they're thankful *for* Him, but they're not really seeking to grow in their relationship *with* Him.

Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly...doesn't that blow your mind? It doesn't matter where you are, or what you've done, perhaps the jam you find yourself in, even in the depths of the sea in the belly of a fish; when you cry out to God He will hear you. You can't build walls thick enough to sound proof them from prayer, God will always hear the prayer of the person who is truly crying out to Him.

Vs2

Now there are 2 schools of thought here. 1 is that Jonah died and in order to underscore that people will point out that Jonah used words like "Sheol" (the place of the dead), phrases like, "the earth with its bars closed behind me *forever*" and "my soul fainted" saying that speaks of death. Then they add to that that since Jesus pointed to Jonah with regard to His own death and resurrection that Jonah died as well and the Lord raised him from the dead. I'm not going to deny that God could've done that, however it's not necessary in order for Jonah to fulfill the type and Jesus never said that Jonah died, only that he was in the belly of the fish 3 days 3 nights and that *He* would be in the heart of the earth in like manner. But even as Jonah "surfaced" alive after 3 days, He would as well. So you're free to speculate whether or not you think Jonah was alive or dead, the focus however is to remain on the goodness and mercy of God.

Think about this, He's the One who "afflicted" Jonah so that he *would* cry out, He could've justifiably just left him to the ramifications of his own ways, but He didn't do that, He pursued Him, in His goodness He even *afflicted* him so that now Jonah is willing to call *upon* Him. Did God violate Jonah's free will here? No, He just put Jonah in a position whereby he became *willing* to do the right thing. This is the balance between God's sovereignty and man's freewill. God didn't force Jonah to cry out to Him, but He knew what would cause him to become willing didn't He? The bible teaches us that God would prefer to lead us by His eye, but if He needs to He'll get out the bit and the bridle.

The psalmist said, "*Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.*" Ps 119:67 How many of us have had to learn that same principle, we can learn the ez way or the hard way, but one way or another God will teach us to walk in obedience.

Notice that Jonah didn't cry out because of his *comforts* but because of his afflictions. God will at times allow or even ordain affliction because it brings back to that place of crying *out* to Him and depending *upon* Him.

“And He answered me” “Been waiting to hear from you Jonah I’m glad you finally called.” God wants to hear from us, He desires a relationship with us, and when we cry out from that “deep place”, that is the deep recess of our own being He will hear, and He will answer.

Interesting isn’t it? In the belly of the fish Jonah found himself much like the Ninevites, helpless and hopeless apart from God’s saving grace. He appreciated the fact that he could call upon God and find the hope of salvation in Him, he wanted to withhold that option from others...

As you study this prayer it becomes apparent that Jonah was a man who knew the word and had committed it to his heart, you see phrases from the psalms incorporated throughout his prayer. And you know that he was speaking from the memory of his heart because this wasn’t like Pinocchio, Geppetto wasn’t there and there was no candle light to read from. How important it is to have a working knowledge of the word of God tucked away in our heart so that we can call upon it and draw strength from it in time of need.

Vs3

Wait, I thought the sailors cast him into the sea? Instrumentally; yes, in reality Jonah acknowledges that it was God who was orchestrating the events, seeking to bring him to that place of brokenness. Jonah is responding appropriately to God’s discipline. It’s true that none of us enjoy it in the moment, but the bible teaches us that afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness by those who’ve been trained by it.

How you and I respond to God’s discipline will determine how much benefit we receive from it. Hebrews teaches us a # of options that can be taken concerning God’s discipline. We can despise it, we can be discouraged by it, we can resist it and invite stronger discipline or possibly even death, or we can submit *to* it and mature *through* it. But discipline to the believer is like exercise to the athlete; it’s what enables us to run with endurance the race that is set before us that we might reach the goal and finish well.

Vs4

Question: had Jonah been cast out of God’s sight? No, God had His eye on Jonah the whole time. God will *never* leave you nor forsake you; oh there are times we *feel* alone, but by *faith* we know we’re not. Now I might by my sin separate myself from God but God will never leave me nor cast me out of His sight. Remember what Jesus said? “*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*” John 6:37

But Jonah understood something, and it’s something we all do well to understand and that is this. That God is merciful and compassionate; Jonah *knew* that he could turn toward God and repent in the sight of God and that God would forgive him and restore him. “I will look again toward Your holy temple” Like the prodigal pulling his head out of the pig slop thinking, “What am I doing...” He knew that God would be waiting for him and willing to receive and restore him if he would just turn once again toward Him. The same is true for you and it’s true for me.

Vs5-6

We kind of get the picture of Jonah sinking deeper and deeper into the sea, the seaweed entangling him, his life draining from him and then he's snatched up and preserved alive by this great fish.

He finds himself in the fish's stomach pulling seaweed off his face trying to come to grips with where he's at and what's just happened. He begins to consign himself to his fate but as he turns to the Lord somehow he senses from the Lord that God has heard Him and will cause him to "rise" again. This is really an incredible picture of faith here, he's not saying these things in retrospect (he wrote them in retrospect) he's saying these things while he's still in the fishes stomach. He didn't wait until he was on the shore to speak of God's salvation, evidently at some point rather than seeing that fish as his end he realized it was the means that God employed to save him.

God is in the business of bringing up lives from the pit. We who were dead in sin and trespasses He has made alive, He's lifted us up out of the pit of destruction and despair.

Vs7-8

"Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy." The KJV says that those who regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy, the point being that mercy comes from the Lord. When we pursue our own way as opposed to the will and the way of God we are stepping willfully into a path that invites discipline. Jonah is realizing that he thought that it would be better to go the other way, that anything would be better than going to Nineveh. He'd rather face whatever may come his way as opposed to being an instrument extending the opportunity to repent to a people in need of God. Yet now he sees that abandoning God's will invites discipline, harsh discipline in some cases, he'd forsaken his own mercy. God's will for you is the best possible plan you could pursue. Anything outside of that is dangerous at best, pursuing anything other than God's plan will not profit you or be better for you. Those who regard worthless idols (anything other than the Lord) forsake their own mercy.

Again Jonah was thankful for God's mercy, God's salvation, but he didn't want to see that same opportunity extended to the Ninevites. Why is it that I deserve God's mercy but I'm not sure if you do? If you're morally corrupt I'm pretty sure you don't... But no matter where *I* go or whatever *I* do I want to be able to call upon God and receive the *mercy* of God. Mercy for me, judgment for you.

Vs9

I'm not sure what all Jonah vowed but 1 thing we can probably be fairly certain of is that he vowed that he would go to Nineveh if that's what God wanted. He didn't want to initially, but he came around eventually and discovered that simple obedience is the best choice. There was a reason he didn't want to go, the people were wicked and ruthless, God was merciful and compassionate, he didn't like that combination. What's your reason? Jesus told us to "go" as well, into all the nations, starting right where we are, our work place, our classmates, our friends who need Jesus, are you going *to* them, sharing the love of God and the opportunity to repent *with* them? Or are you resisting?

Vs 9 contains what we might consider to be the culmination, the chief revelation of this book, "Salvation is of the Lord." Maybe Jonah thought that salvation was of a nation, the nation of Israel, Israel couldn't save him now. Maybe he thought it was from a certain group of people, the Jews couldn't help him here. Salvation is of the Lord, it's never about what we do, it's about what He's done for us; He's the One who saves us.

Vs10

How humiliating, removing yourself from the stomach contents, you're vomit...Again he'd have probably liked to have been transported miraculously, God was causing him to move in humility.

We often think of Jonah being thrown up onto the shores of Nineveh and this wreck of a man came into town all bleached out from the acid in the fishes stomach, hair falling out, crying out for them to repent, the horrific sight stirring them all the more. The problem is that Nineveh was more than a few hundred miles from the coast, Jonah had a little time to get cleaned up and think about things along his journey.

Here's what I want you to see and we're done. This whole time that Jonah felt forsaken, forgotten, blinded and in the dark, his back was up against the stomach wall...For 3 days and nights as far as he knew his life was going nowhere, maybe he was sea sick, fading in and out of consciousness, his life was a mess. But in reality what was happening? The fish was moving, where was it going? It was taking Jonah from somewhere out in the Mediterranean Sea exactly to where God wanted him to be. There was no way for Jonah to know that but then seemingly suddenly and out of nowhere Jonah found himself becoming projectile vomit and as he pulled himself together there he was on the shores of Assyria.

Here's what I'm saying; maybe you're in a mess, feel like you're going nowhere. Call *upon* the Lord, cry out *to* the Lord, suddenly you'll find yourself right where you need to be. As far as you can see nothing maybe happening, what you don't know is that things are moving, God is orchestrating His plan for you personally and you'll find yourself where you need to be when you humble yourself before Him, and cry out to Him, He'll do the work because *salvation* is of the Lord.

Prayer Points:

Father thank You that You orchestrate events that keep us humble before You and constantly crying out in dependence upon You. Though they're not pleasant at the time we're thankful for the peaceable fruit of righteousness they produce. We thank You that You're always willing to turn your ear toward us and tune it *to* us and hear our voice, You've brought our lives up from the pit, may we never forsake our own Mercy, and may we offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Father we acknowledge once again "Salvation is of the Lord," it's never about us and what we do it's always been about You and what You've done for us. We praise You for it and ascribe glory to Your name...