

Prayers from the Deep (Part 2) Jonah 1:17 – 2:10

In our last study we began the most familiar portion within the book of Jonah – his being swallowed by the great fish. Again, I want to emphasize the dominant theme conveyed throughout the book – the absolute sovereignty of God in all His dealings, particularly with mankind. His sovereignty is affirmed in [Jonah 1:17 – Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.](#)

Jonah had not fallen on a bad situation, being thrown over-board by the mariners on the boat. It was not a mere coincidence that he was swallowed by a great fish. All of this was divinely orchestrated by the sovereign God. He had a plan and purpose for Jonah regarding Nineveh, and God fully intended for Jonah to preach a message of repentance there.

Disobedience doesn't provide a means of escape from God's plans for our lives, but it often makes the inevitable much more difficult than it should have been. When God speaks, and we are certain of His desire for our lives, submission is always the best course of action.

Coming to himself within the belly of the whale, Jonah uttered a heart-felt prayer unto the Lord. We began to consider that prayer in our last study, and I hope to conclude it today. We have begun to discuss the [aspects](#) of Jonah's prayer, as we considered: [Prayers from the Deep](#). In our last study, we considered:

I. The Necessity for Prayer (1:17-2:1)

A. The Situation – This was a most difficult situation.

B. The Duration – Jonah was confined in the whale for three days and nights.

II. The Sincerity in Prayer (2-4)

A. The Affliction (2) – Affliction in sheol, "*the world of the dead, the grave.*"

B. The Confirmation (2) – Twice Jonah declared God heard his cries.

C. The Desperation (3) – He was in an inhospitable environment, in need of help.

D. The Conviction (4) – The turning point; he decided to seek the Lord.

III. The Reliability of Prayer (5-7) – When Jonah reached the end of himself, he realized prayer unto the Lord was his only hope. Jonah was a man of faith, having known the power of prayer through previous experiences. In his time of need, he knew God would hear. Consider:

A. The Desperation (5-6a) – *The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.* ^[6a] *I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever.* Jonah again realized and repeated the desperate situation in which he found himself. He cried out unto the Lord with a graphic description of his feelings. The waters had compassed him about. In fact, he felt as if they had penetrated the flesh and had reached his soul. Jonah had been soaked to the bone and beyond. He found himself covered in seaweed, trapped by the bars of the deep. Jonah even sensed the depths to which the great fish had descended. Clearly, Jonah realized he was in desperate need of the Lord's help if he were to survive this frightful and uncertain encounter.

- These are difficult situations to find ourselves. We have never been to the depths of the sea, in the belly of a whale, covered in seaweed; but we have faced desperate situations. We too have dealt with despair and grief that literally gripped our soul. We were unable to do anything about the situation, and unable to escape. We too felt trapped by the situation, literally at the mercy of the Lord to provide when we were unable.

B. The Restoration (6b) – *yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.* Can you imagine how Jonah must have felt as time continued to pass within the belly of the beast? There would have been no light within, and surely the hours seemed like days. At some point in his horrific ordeal, Jonah became aware that God had spared his life. He was in a very desperate situation, but he knew he had not been forsaken. Jonah praised the Lord for delivering him from corruption. Here the word translated corruption is again the Hebrew word sheol, speaking of *the place of the dead, the grave, the under-world*. Jonah had stood at the gates of death, and yet God in His mercy had spared his life.

- There is so much that we can glean from this truth. While we were yet in our sin, separated from God and dead spiritually, He delivered us from condemnation and eternal death through salvation in Christ. *Psalm 40:1-2 – I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.* ^[2] *He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.* Aren't you thankful for mercy and grace, that which delivers from death and eternal suffering? He would have been just to have left us in our sin, but His great love compelled Him to provide a means of reconciliation through the sacrifice of His Son!

- I also thought of the times of disobedience and rebellion following salvation – those times when we chose to follow our own path instead of submission to the Lord and His will for our lives. He had every right to allow us to continue a path that would lead to suffering and destruction, but often He intervenes, bringing us lovingly back into the fold. We serve a holy and righteous God who will never condone or fellowship with sin, and yet He is gracious and patient with us when we stray from Him!

C. The Conviction (7a) – [When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD](#). Jonah revealed a heart of conviction and repentance toward the Lord. He began to consider all that God was and what He had done for him. Such thoughts brought Jonah to grieve over his rebellion, sensing he had disappointed the Lord and hindered fellowship with Him.

- God is faithful to chasten His own, and I am thankful He does. It would be sad and quite difficult if the Lord allowed us to have our own way, never convicting our sin through the Spirit. If you belong to Christ, and fall in sin, conviction is sure. When it comes, we will be broken in spirit and humbled before the Lord. That is the moment to confess your sin and return unto the Lord.

D. The Reception (7b) – [and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple](#). Isn't that amazing when we pause to consider the depth of these words? Clearly, Jonah had rebelled against God, even trying to flee from His presence. He wanted nothing to do with the Lord or His will. It is undeniable that Jonah is dealing with the consequences of his sin. In his moment of desperation, he cried out unto the Lord – and his prayer came into the holy temple! God heard his prayer!

- This should in no way encourage one to disobey God, but it does offer great comfort. We continue to battle the flesh daily. At times we will fail and miss the mark. In those times, we are assured the Lord will hear our cries for help, if they are offered from a repentant heart desiring restoration. Oh, what a gracious, loving Lord we serve! [Psalm 51:10-12 – Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.](#) ^[11] [Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.](#) ^[12] [Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.](#)

IV. The Efficiency of Prayer (8-10) – Jonah's prayers were not offered in vain, nor were they left unheard and unanswered. God heard and moved in his situation. Consider:

A. The Observation (8) – [They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy](#). Jonah knew he had sinned and he wasn't going to deny it. He thought he could choose his own path and go his own way, regardless of the desires of God. He had lived according to his own desires, and soon realized the heartache and difficulty it brings. There is no peace and security apart from the Lord. Jonah had realized the error of his ways and sought restoration.

- Sadly, many believers are aware of this truth, but continue stubbornly down their own path. The ways of the world and the flesh may bring temporary satisfaction, but they cannot bring peace within the soul. Those who are in Christ will be miserable apart from fellowship with Him!

B. The Dedication (9a-b) – *But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed.* It is unfortunate that it took this ordeal for Jonah to return unto the Lord, but through his trial, he promised to serve the Lord according to His desires. He offered the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving from within the belly of the great fish, while promising to serve at the Lord's leisure.

- I don't believe the Lord enjoys having to chasten us, but He will when it is necessary. I don't want to be like Jonah, having to be brought low in order to submit to His will for my life. I have learned this much though – His way is always best; and even in the valley, God is good! He is always worthy of our praise and submission.

C. The Verification (9c) – *Salvation is of the LORD.* Jonah admitted a foundational truth – the LORD is the author of salvation. He had provided salvation for him, both spiritually and physically. Such a one as He was worthy of praise and commitment. It appears Jonah may have begun to realize that God also had a plan for Nineveh. Although it was hard for Jonah to fathom, the Lord shows mercy on those whom He chooses. That is not for man to deny or try to hinder.

- What a treasure we find within the account of Jonah and the whale. *Salvation is of the LORD.* He graciously provided our salvation, and He continues to draw people unto Himself in order to save them. We are entrusted with the Gospel, commanded to proclaim its great truth while making disciples. We have the Good News this world desperately needs!

D. The Provision (10) – *And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.* Again, we see the sovereign hand of God at work in Jonah's life. He prepared the great fish to swallow Jonah, and He spoke to it to vomit him out on dry land. Some may miss it, but I see matchless grace at work in Jonah's life. God could have spared him, but forced him to swim to shore. He had a plan for Jonah and took great care of him, even when it appeared hopeless.

- We do not live by chance, and our lives are not dictated by circumstance. We are kept by the sovereign hand of God. We are secure within His mighty grip. He will provide for us according to His divine will. There is no need to fear as long as we are walking with the Lord!

Conclusion: This has been an encouraging passage. While it deals with a most difficult situation, we discover that God is always in control. We have nothing to fear; we are kept by His grace. We must ensure that we walk according to His plan for our lives. Unrepentant disobedience will result in chastening. If you are apart from the Lord and His will, repent and return unto Him. If you are yet unsaved, respond to His offer of grace through faith and repentance of sin.