

## **“The Praying Prophet” Jonah 2, Sermon Notes**

**Pastor Marc Wragg**

**Saving Grace Bible Church**

**September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**Evening Worship Service**

Major Lesson: God’s righteous judgment starts with His people, and His people respond with prayerful adoration

“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, 2 and he said, "I called out of my distress to the LORD, And He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice. 3 "For You had cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the current engulfed me. All Your breakers and billows passed over me. 4 "So I said, 'I have been expelled from Your sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.' 5 "Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, Weeds were wrapped around my head. 6 "I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, But You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. 7 "While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, And my prayer came to You, Into Your holy temple. 8 "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness, 9 But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD." 10 Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land." (Jonah 2:1-10 NAU)

### Introduction

This was a miraculous event

- We should understand this
- This was a supernatural event
- Notice what the text says

“And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.” (Jonah 1:17 NAU)

- Appointed. Some translations render it: Prepared

Many have tried to explain how this worked:

- James Bartley – some evangelicals talked about this story
- Whaling out near the Falkland Islands
- Guy fell out of a boat
- His friends then caught the fish and cut it open and James fell out
- But this was an urban legend and was disproved in the early 90’s
- Urban Legend
- But here we have a fish prepared by God for this event
- This is a supernatural work

- Like Jesus walking on water
- Elisha making an ax head float
- Feeding of the 5000
- This is a supernatural event
- We do not need to figure out how he lived in there
- Or what kind of fish this was

4x God's prepared

1:17 – great fish – one-of-a-kind miracle fashioned by God for this very event. - Whale

4:6-8 prepared a plant, a worm, and a wind to destroy the plant – Weed, Worm, Wind

What we see here again is the sovereign work of God in providing a divine interruption over nature. We do not need natural explanation.

We do not need to figure out what kind of fish it was

- Whale
- Shark
- A Tuna

Some believed that Jonah died in the fish and then came alive. He had a resurrection experience.

Matt 12:39-41

J Vernon Mcgee taught this

How can we be certain he was not dead?

- He prayed, he talked about what was happening while in the fish
- If you find yourself in the belly of a fish, I am certain you are going to have a great prayer life
- He was alive and fully aware of what was going on around him

This chapter is a prayer from a man who is trapped, facing death, and assuming that God was going to take his life

(Let us look at the all expenses paid dream vacation in the belly of a fish)

- (Bring your night light) Deepest darkness
- (hope you are not claustrophobic – fear of being in tight spaces) Constricted by the belly of a fish
- Cold-blooded fish – (Bring a jacket)
- If it was a mammal like a whale, then it would be warm (bring shorts)
- Stomach is made to constrict and tighten around whatever is in there (leave the sunscreen at home, you will not need it)
- Old fish, shortness of fresh air (bring some air freshener)

- Vile taste of sea water and stomach acids (bring your own bottled water)
- And the pressure from the descent into the bottom of the sea. The deeper the fish goes the greater the pressure becomes, and the more intense the experience for Jonah
- Fear as days went by in total darkness with no chance of being rescued (bring a flashlight and some batteries it is going to be dark for some time)
- What kinds of sounds would be heard?
- Total darkness and total silence
- Even here we can hear white noise made by lights, electricity, air conditioners, fans etc
- Not so in the whale
- Totally eerily silent (bring your favorite music player)
- Have you ever been in your house when you lose power? Everything goes silent.

The result of this discipline from God was causing Jonah to turn to God in humble brokenness

This is judgment

Humanly this is a disaster

- Thrown overboard
- Eaten by a fish
- Sunk to the bottom of the sea

God's perspective

- Saved the crew
- Saved the boat
- Rescued Jonah and delivered him to do what God called him to do

This was a display of Divine Mercy

Time of great prayer

What would you do after you stopped freaking out?

- Jonah prayed the Scriptures
- He was praying through the Psalms

Vs 2 – Psalm 120:1

Vs 3 – Psa 88:6-7

Vs 4 – Ps 31:22

Vs 5 – Ps 69:1,2

Vs 6 – ps 18:5

Jonah let the Word of God fill his mind and heart and in the day of trial, the day of distress, Jonah's mind was flooded with the truth and he responded by praying to God

4 Aspects of Jonah's prayer which are typical in all great prayers. If you are going to pray well to God, these qualities must be yours

1-3 The Passion of Prayer

3-6 The Plainness of prayer

6-9 The Praise in Prayer

9-10 The Penitence of Prayer

1-3 The Passion of Prayer

"Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, 2 and he said, "I called out of my distress to the LORD, And He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice. 3 "For You had cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the current engulfed me. All Your breakers and billows passed over me." (Jonah 2:1-3 NAU)

- Not measured in volume of the voice
- It is not measured by speed
- How much pours straight from the heart
- Prayer from deep within

This had to be the deepest (literally) and most honest prayer a man could make

- To Jonah, his life was over
- As he said, he was in the belly of sheol – hell vs 2
- He was in the heart of the sea

Godly prayer is filled with honest evaluation and heartfelt expression to God

- Passionate because he is spilling his heart
- "I cried for help"

3-6 The Plainness of prayer

"For You had cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the current engulfed me. All Your breakers and billows passed over me. 4 "So I said, 'I have been expelled from Your sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.' 5 "Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, Weeds were wrapped around my head. 6 "I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, But You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God." (Jonah 2:3-6 NAU)

- He gets right to the point without being verbose
- Vs 5 the weeds were wrapped around his head
- Dark wet place being choked by seaweed
- Maybe other living creatures in the fish
- He was in the dark, pulling things off of himself
- Away from his head, stuck and not knowing what was around his head
- Short prayer adds to this brevity
- Prayer does not have to be long – No one is asking you to pray for days
- He was in the belly of a fish for three long days

1:17-2:1

- That is 72 hours. 4320 minutes, this chapter could be read in about 1 and half minutes
- Let us say you are a poor reader, so we have 3 mins. Still this is a short, plain, precise prayer to God

Many pray long verbose prayers

- They pray so long, even they forget what they said
- Not Jonah though. He prays plainly to God

This is the best prayer closet in the whole world

Nobody is going to hear him here or praise him for a great prayer

6-9 The Praise in Prayer

"I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, But You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. 7 "While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, And my prayer came to You, Into Your holy temple. 8 "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness, 9 But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD." (Jonah 2:6-9 NAU)

- There is not one single petition in this whole prayer
- This is simple prayer of praise
- Jonah could have sought relief
- God clearly gave Jonah great faith to get through this event
- Jonah had to think at this moment that God had a greater plan because he was not dead yet

When God wants to bless us with His grace, it sometimes feels to us as anything but kindness

- Sometimes God's grace comes disguised
- Think of Joseph being sold by his brothers
- Or Potiphar's wife who tried to trap Jacob and he was sent to jail
- Then he was forgotten while in jail

Yet Jacob had a vision from God which told him that he was going to be exalted above his brothers

- Here he was in jail
- But God did fulfill His promise and deliver Joseph
- God used Joseph to deliver his brothers and family from a famine
- Joseph received God's protection

Yet, just like Jonah, God's grace came wrapped in a difficult providence

- Why?
- We want God's grace to be wrapped in a brand new car
- We want God's grace to be wrapped in a winning lottery ticket
- We want God's grace to be wrapped in new clothes or new video games
- We never expect that God's grace will come wrapped in something difficult, like being sold by your brothers into slavery or being eaten by a giant fish but both were acts of grace

God will often disguise His grace to cause our faith to increase

"I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, But You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God." (Jonah 2:6 NAU)

"While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, And my prayer came to You, Into Your holy temple.  
8 "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness," (Jonah 2:7-8 NAU)

"But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD." (Jonah 2:9 NAU)

- This prayer came before any offering of deliverance
- Before he was out
- It was after 3 days of being in the fish
- Notice vs 1

"And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights." (Jonah 1:17 NAU)

"Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish," (Jonah 2:1 NAU)

When he was at the end of his time and hopeless to get out, then he turned to God

The point is that when we get into difficulties, we are immediately asking God to do something

- Jonah had none of that
- Jonah praised God
- Maybe he assumed he was dead already
- Then assumed it was coming

- Finally thought: OK, God has a greater plan
- The lesson – take the time to praise God even in the darkest moments because you might just be in the middle of gracious work of God which will become evident later

#### 9-10 The Penitence of Prayer

“But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD.” 10 Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.” (Jonah 2:9-10 NAU)

- He affirms his need for the temple and the need for payment for sin
- You have brought up my life from corruption
- Past tense

"I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, But You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God." (Jonah 2:6 NAU)

- He knew: if God had not killed me by now then He was giving me a chance to live, and now that I see my sin and seek forgiveness, then God was going to deliver me

Praise which is filled with faith. Giving honor to God before God delivered them.

- The faith he has to see God deliver him
- Faith to see that God was going to protect even in the deep
- Faith to see the grace of God in the midst of the storm
- The purest praise comes by faith when we praise God even before He delivers us

You see, Jonah was praising God and repentant BEFORE God delivered him. This was his prayer while in the stomach of a large fish. Not exactly safety here.

This is faith – But notice what the Hebrew writer says about faith:

“And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; 36 and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. 39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,” (Hebrews 11:32-39 NAU)

- The purest praise comes by faith when we praise God even before He delivers us

- Or as Hebrews says here, even before our life ends, because the promise is yet to come in our lifetime and yet we praise Him

This kind of faith and praise comes from a proper understanding of God's control over everything. God works and directs everything and His will cannot be thwarted by His enemies or the rebellion of His people.

- God is going to accomplish everything He desires
- His purposes are always good and the sooner we realize this the better off we will be

The praise which comes in the darkness is the prayer God records here

I am sure Jonah prayed after he was delivered, but that prayer is not recorded

Judgment often comes down harder on God's people than on the wicked

- At least God's temporal judgment
- God does this to teach us
- Often times our own disobedience is judged by God harsher than the outright disobedience of the wicked

Conclusion

Our prayers should be honest heartfelt, passionate prayers which express our heart to God

- God knows your situation better than you do
- You can be honest and clear with God
- You do not need to be flowery with your language

Our prayers do not need to be long to be heard by God

Our prayers should be filled with faith

- Do not doubt, for the one who doubts is cast here and there
- God will not honor the prayer given in doubt

Our prayers should be penitent

- God forgive us as we forgive our debtors

**Saving Grace Bible Church ©015. All rights reserved.  
www.SavingGraceBibleChurch.org**