



The Prophet Prays

Jonah 2:1-10
January 21, 2024

Now in the belly of the fish, the prophet turns his eyes upwards and inwards, praying to God for help. Jonah acknowledges his dire situation, expressing gratitude for God's mercy. He vows to fulfill his promises and praises God as his salvation. In response to Jonah's repentance, the fish vomits him onto dry land, marking a miraculous turn of events.

Jonah 2:1-10¹

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, ² saying,

- "I called out to the LORD, out of my distress,
and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you heard my voice.
³ For you cast me into the deep,
into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;
all your waves and your billows
passed over me.
⁴ Then I said, 'I am driven away
from your sight;
yet I shall again look
upon your holy temple.'
⁵ The waters closed in over me to take
my life;
the deep surrounded me;
weeds were wrapped about my head
⁶ at the roots of the mountains.
I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me forever;
yet you brought up my life from the pit,
O LORD my God.
⁷ When my life was fainting away,
I remembered the LORD,
and my prayer came to you,
into your holy temple.
⁸ Those who pay regard to vain idols
forsake their hope of steadfast love.
⁹ But I with the voice of thanksgiving
will sacrifice to you;
what I have vowed I will pay.
Salvation belongs to the LORD!"
¹⁰ And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it
vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

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Opening Questions

- Pray for insight and understanding into the text (Psalm 119:18)
- Take the time to highlight key phrases from the text. Look for repeated wording, contrasts, similarities and things that are emphasized.
- Highlight key words or actions in which you see the characters engaged.
- In one clear sentence summarize the passage and write your sentence below.

Bible Study

1. After reading over Jonah's prayer, do you think he has experienced a change of heart between chapter 1 and chapter 2?
2. What evidence do you see in this prayer that Jonah is repentant? What evidence do you see that he remains self-righteousness?
3. Consider the weight of verse 1. What does God's willingness to hear and answer Jonah's prayer after his overt disobedience tell you about God's character?
4. In moments of distress, is your first inclination to pray? Why or why not? What about when your distress is the result of personal sin and disobedience?
5. Jonah's mention of "vain idols" in verse 8 is likely a reference to the pagan gods of the mariners (see 1:5). What vain idols might Jonah have been regarding when he chose to disobey God's command and run from Him?
6. Jonah's rescue reminds him of the steadfast love of the Lord which cannot be received from vain idols. What does it mean to "pay regard" to vain idols?
7. In verse 9, Jonah expresses thanksgiving to God for saving him while he was drowning in "the heart of the seas" (verse 3). As believers in Jesus Christ, we have been saved from sin and death. Does your life demonstrate thankfulness to God for your salvation? Take a moment to thank God for saving you.
8. Whether drowning in the sea or imprisoned in the belly of the fish, Jonah was completely incapable of saving himself or compensating for his disobedience. How do his circumstances compare with our previous state as unbelievers (see Ephesians 2:1-3)?
9. In verses 6 and 9, Jonah identifies that his salvation was work of God alone. Compare this with Ephesians 2:4-9 and Romans 5:8. Do you understand your salvation to be entirely God's work? How might you be tempted to think that you contribute your own salvation?
10. Compare 2:10 with 1:17. What do these verses reveal about God's sovereignty over Jonah's circumstances?

Diving Deeper

1. Jonah's prayer contains many of the phrases in David's psalms of lament and deliverance.
 - a. Read Psalm 5, 31, and 69. How do David's circumstances differ from Jonah's?

 - b. In what ways are Jonah and David's prayers similar and dissimilar?

2. Consider that Jonah cries out God in the midst of his sin, while drowning in the sea, and within the belly of the fish.
 - a. Have you ever found yourself in a place where you thought God was unable or unwilling to hear your prayer?

 - b. Read 1 John 1:9 and 1 John 5:14-15. What do these verses promise?

3. In what ways does paying regard to idols leads us to forsake our hope of steadfast love (verse 8)? What vain idols are you "paying regard" to and how might these be hindering you from enjoying God's steadfast love?