



“God Delivered Jonah”

Review

Jonah teaches us both about God and ourselves. We learn about the love of God, the sovereignty of God, the forgiveness of God, the persistence of God. We learn about people; their disobedience, their repentance, their fears and prejudices, their self-centeredness and yet God’s willingness to utilize them in His eternal purposes. As we have been doing the past two weeks I will direct us through the text and then suggest any possible pertinent principles to ponder.

- I. God called Jonah – Jonah ran from God**
 - A. God called Jonah**
 - B. Jonah refused God’s call**
- II. God disciplined Jonah**
 - A. God hurled a great storm**
 - B. The sailors responded to the storm**
 - C. Jonah slept through the storm**
 - D. God exposed Jonah’s rebellion**
 - E. The pagan sailors double their efforts to save Jonah**
 - F. The pagan sailors begged for mercy**
 - G. The pagan sailors hurled Jonah overboard**
 - H. God calmed the storm**
 - I. The pagan sailors became worshiping sailors**
 - J. God appointed a great fish**

Last week, we left Jonah in the belly of a great fish. Today, we observe the working of God in Jonah’s heart.

III. God delivered Jonah - Jonah ran to God in prayer

This is a 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea story. It is too bad we get so obsessed with what was going on inside the fish we miss what was going on inside Jonah. Many have taken pains to explain the possibility of surviving such an ordeal. I prefer to focus on Jonah. We know he experience the trauma of being thrown into a violent storm. We don’t know how long before the fish taxi arrived. The internal environment would not have been pleasant. It was probably dark and hot.

A. Jonah prayed to God **1. Jonah’s prayer**

Whereas Jonah utter NO prayer in chapter one, all but the first and last verse of chapter two is a prayer of Jonah.

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, 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.

Jonah 2:1-2

Psalm 120:1: "In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me", and like Psalm 18:6: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears".

The bulk of chapter two appears in poetic form. The prophets often wrote in poetic form. Poetry seemed the best format to express the emotion associated with their proclamations. It is intended to express passion and generate word pictures. Hebrew poetry differs from our English poetry. Whereas we generally rhyme words, the Hebrews rhymed thoughts. Much of the prophetic writings appear in this form as well as what we call the poetic

books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. The obvious use of phrases from the Psalms demonstrates Jonah's familiarity with the Scriptures to the point where they easily pour out of his troubled soul. Both Hebrew and English seek to stimulate the mind to better experience truth through use of expressive language. This prayer follows a common pattern of the times.

- Introductory statement of answered prayer vs 2
- Expression of personal crisis vs 3-6a
- Divine rescue vs 6b-8
- Vow of praise vs 9

One of the most common poetic devices is called synonymous parallelism where the second line of the poem repeats the sentiment of the first in different words.

*I called out of my distress to the LORD, and He answered me.
I cried for help from the depth of Sheol (place of the dead); You heard my voice.*

Jonah knew he was near death. The foundational sentiment is that Jonah cried and God answered. The second line personalized the experience. He shifted from "He" to "You".

There are some elements to honest prayer to be learned. Jonah gets real. He is not in denial. He doesn't blame God or others. He honestly evaluates the source of his trouble; himself.

God sometimes permits life-threatening peril to prompt life-changing prayer.

Don't wait for things to get bad before you pray.

Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word; It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes; I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Psalm 119:67, 71, 75

2. Jonah's predicament

The next section expresses how Jonah felt and what he experienced.

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.

Into the deep and into the heart of the seas are synonymous.

The current engulfed me and breakers and billows passed over me are synonymous.

To the Israelite, the untameable sea was a picture of chaos, the enemy of all settled order. Yahweh's control of the sea was thus a picture of his control of chaos, and hence of everything. The great fish itself was probably a picture to Jonah of "Leviathan", the sea-monster and lord of chaos, but even he meekly serves Yahweh as the need arises (1:17; 2:10). Complete Biblical Library Commentary

Similar sentiment was expressed in the Psalms.

Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me. Psa 42:7

Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul ... I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. Psalm 69:1-2:

He recorded how he was surrounded by water. Jonah recognized that God caused this dilemma. **You** cast me. **Your** breakers and billows passed over me.

God strategically uses trouble in our life to change our life.

He either specifically orchestrates or allows trials for His purposes. Our response should be, “What do you want me to learn from this struggle?” What are you doing? We may not get a direct answer in this life but it doesn’t hurt to ask.

Of course, the oft quoted passage clearly applies.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

Jonah initially experienced feelings of rejection.

So I said, 'I have been expelled from Your sight.

My life is over. God left me. God rejected me for my disobedience. I have been banished from God’s presence.

David expressed a similar feeling in Psalm 31:22.

I had said in my alarm, “I am cut off from your sight.” But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cried to you for help. Psalm 31:22

It didn’t seem to bother Jonah to reject God but God rejecting him was different.

Interesting that he wanted to run from God’s presence but is now upset that he might be out banished from God’s “sight” (presence). The sentiment that flows from Jonah’s prayer is not fear of death but separation from God’s presence and favor. Clearly, Jonah’s present predicament had nothing to do with God rejecting Jonah but Jonah rejecting God.

Don’t equate trials and discipline with God’s rejection.

We learned last week that the opposite is true. God disciplines those He loves.

Keep focused on God’s unconditional love. It appears that Jonah still held on to the hope of restored relationship with God. Perhaps he reasoned that because he survived drowning, God would preserve him.

Nevertheless, I will look again toward Your holy temple.'

Jonah expressed the hope that his prayers would be heard by God. He looks forward to the restoration of his prayer life disrupted by his disobedience. Now in complete darkness Jonah looks forward to seeing the temple.

Hebrew poetry often sandwiches expressions of faith between descriptions of despair. (*New American Commentary*)

I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple" (Ps 18:6).

Never lose hope of restored relationship with God.

God has promised never to leave us or forsake us.

Jonah detailed his frightening encounter with drowning in the sea. Again, he used synonymous parallelism

Water encompassed me to the point of death.

The great deep engulfed me,

Perhaps this described his sinking down into the sea.

Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. Psalm 69:1-3

Then he added...

Weeds were wrapped around my head.

Seaweed wrapped around his neck.

I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever Jonah 2:3-6

This expressed the hopelessness Jonah felt. He was done for. They believed the roots of the mountains extended deep into the Mediterranean Sea. The earth here would be interpreted as the grave or even the ocean floor from which there seemed no escape. The Hebrews views the underworld as a locked place of no return.

but You have brought up my life from Sheol, O LORD my God
“But God”! Here is another divine intervention in the life of a child of God. Jonah’s use of the term “Sheol” indicates the place of the dead. He thought he was done for.
In fact, the language seems to indicate that he expected to be banished from God’s presence in the place of the dead.

who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, Psalm 103:4

We observe a noticeable shift in Jonah’s perception. In verse 6 of chapter one, Jonah referred to God as “THE God of heaven.” Here he addressed God as “O LORD MY God.”

No situation is beyond God’s intervention.

Entrust your soul to a Faithful Creator.

3. Jonah’s perception change

While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, 2:7

I was close to dying. Just as I was about to pass out from lack of oxygen, You rescued me. Jonah remembered. This term indicated a focus of attention on something. Jonah transitioned from avoiding God to a deliberate focus of attention on God. Restoration of relationship involves perception change. Whereas we held a faulty view of God, we need a renewed perception of God.

So many passages speak of remembering truth as the key to renewal.

These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival. Psalm 42:4

My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. Psalm 42:6

But this I (Jeremiah) call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lam 3:21-23

Jonah expressed confidence that Lord heard him.

and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple.

In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears. Psalm 18:6

In the dark times, return to basic truths.

Woe to the person who needs to learn basic principles in times of darkness.

4. Jonah’s promise

Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness, but I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Jonah 2:8-9

Jonah recognized the futility of running from God or embracing other pursuits demonstrating faithlessness to God. He promised to thank God in his current circumstance and vowed to do what he promised to do; serve and obey God.

I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. Psalm 116:17-18

Always do what you promise

When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Ecclesiastes 5:4-5

5. Jonah's proclamation

Salvation is from the LORD.

This is the key phrase of the book.

God saved the sailors in chapter 1.

God saved Jonah in chapter 2.

God saved the Ninevites in chapter 3.

God expresses His heart of mercy in chapter 4.

Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! Selah Psalm 3:8

Jonah declared this truth even before his actual deliverance. This truth was a cause of celebration and thanksgiving for Jonah but later becomes a cause for complaint and anger when applied to the Ninevites.

God is the only source of salvation

I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior. Isaiah 43:11

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

Come to Him today for salvation.

B. God delivered Jonah

Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land. Jonah 2:10

"Then" supposes a period of time. As indicated earlier, Jonah was in the fish's belly three days and three nights. Why so long? Did it take Jonah a long time to pray? Did God delay His answer to Jonah's prayer for deliverance? Did God delay to later use this event as an illustration of the resurrection of Jesus?

Sometimes God delays answering prayer for a greater purpose.

The fish exhibited no hesitation to obey God's command. Again, a great contrast to Jonah. The prompt obedience of the fish assumes that God had also directed the movements of the fish prior to the command to spit Jonah out. The fish was probably glad to be rid of this undigested blob in its stomach.

God controls even the most frightening aspects of nature.

There are many lessons to ponder in this chapter. Those feeling distant from God.

Those under severe stress and trial. Those who feel like they are sinking into the depths of chaos. Those in need of salvation. Those who need a perspective adjustment.

Stop running from God but run to God.

Cry out to Him in your need – He hears.

Wait on Him – He cares.

Trust Him – A great fish is on the way.

Thank Him – He is the only source of salvation

Serve Him – He has a purpose for you.