

## 9-22-24 Jonah

### Week 2

**Text: Jonah 1:17–2:10**

**Topic:** Prayer, Salvation, Listening, Obeying

**Big Idea of the Message:** When Jonah literally hits rock bottom, God rescues him and redirects his thoughts and actions.

**Application Point:** God can hear your prayer, save you, and create space for you to listen to and obey him, even when you are at your lowest point.

1. God's direction for you is most likely a direction you don't or won't want to go.
2. God doesn't run away from runaways.
3. God's people's disobedience can cause collateral damage to others.
4. How God's people respond to correction will affect others.

When we do our own thing, this will only lead to death and destruction, for we read in **Proverbs 14:12**, “**There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.**” Acting apart from the will of God is what the Bible calls sin, and **Romans 6:23** tells us, “**The wages of sin is death,**” meaning spiritual death. As we will see, because Jonah ran from the Lord and entered a downward spiral, he was going to have a brush with death.

You would think that things couldn't get any worse for Jonah, with the storm and being tossed overboard, but next we see that Moby Dick came along and gobbled him up. We read here that a great fish swallowed Jonah. This great fish swallowing Jonah was not God's punishment; it was His provision to save Jonah from drowning (and his uber). After Jonah's deliberate running and outright disobedience, God had compassion on him and spared his miserable life. The Lord revealed here that He is indeed “a God of second chances.”

Jonah was given a job to do by God and he decided he was going to try to run from God. How many times have we done the same? How many people do you know who are running from God?

Today, we are going to talk about the heart. When you look at the story of Jonah, it really comes down to the heart. Jonah made some bad decisions because Jonah had a heart problem.

When we make decisions in life, our decisions spring from our heart. When this happens, what does it take to get a person back on the right track? Sometimes it will take something drastic to happen in their life, they may need to be swallowed by a great fish.

#### **1. A stubborn heart prolongs our problems.**

- **Read Jonah 1:17.**
- How long was Jonah in the belly of the fish? (3 days and 3 nights)
- **Read Jonah 2:1. “Then”**
- It is good to notice that Jonah was in the stomach of the fish for three days before he decided that it was about time to turn back to his Lord.

- It took three days of climbing stomach walls. It took seaweed constantly tripping him up and wrapping around his head.
- It took a sense of complete failure and helplessness, before he finally said yes.
- According to **verse 2**, why did he finally call out to the Lord? **“...because of my affliction...”**  
I want to be of encouragement to you today, I don’t know any one of you that is this stubborn.
- In **verse 2** we read that Jonah was in the belly of sheol. Sheol is the Hebrew word for the “grave.” Jonah realized that his path of disobedience was leading him toward death and destruction; he was on his way to a spiritual grave.
- **Read verses 4-5.**
- Jonah with his stubborn heart sat in the belly of the fish. Day one. What was he thinking? Day two, what was he thinking? Day three. I wonder at what point in the day he decided to have a change of heart.
- I wonder if Jonah sat there with a scowl on his face arms crossed.
- Do you realize the state of your heart is a choice you make! Jonah chose to have a stubborn heart.
- Do you remember a time in which your own stubbornness caused your ordeal to last longer?
- It is easy to look at Jonah and pick on him for his stubborn heart, but I know I better look in the mirror before I get too high and mighty.
- Jonah could have completely avoided this ordeal had he just followed what his loving God called him to do. It is easy to look from the outside and say that Jonah’s situation looked bad.
- Our situations can look bad to other people, but until we realize how bad things are, we will not turn to God. After three days it was time for Jonah to turn to God.
- In what ways are you stubborn in your spiritual life? (serving, worship in being present and giving)
- In what areas, what sin has got a grip on your life?
- What will it take to get your attention? How long will you sit in stomach bile refusing to give in?
- This leads us to Jonah’s next state of heart.

## **2. A painful heart can cause us to examine our circumstances.**

- When we are on the run from God, it usually takes something drastic to get our attention.
- **Verse 2, “I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction and He answered me.”**

*C. S. Lewis said, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks into our conscience, but shouts in our pain.” There are times God wants to show us dreams, but cannot, because our eyes are filled with our own dreams.*

- There are times God wants to place something in our hands, but they are full (Jesus had to open His hands to receive the nails).
- Pain comes and shouts to us: “Hey, remember your God,” or, “Hey, that’s the wrong way.”

- Pain helps us see the need to pray and to evaluate our situation from God’s perspective. Jonah was in a very painful place when He finally began to pray, crying out in **verse 3**, “**You cast me into the deep...**” Who threw him overboard, anyway?
- The sailors, right? Yes, but ultimately Jonah sees God behind his circumstances. That’s looking at life from God’s point of view.
- Jonah was driven to his knees, why? Trials dispel the notion that all is well.
- Sometimes we live in a dream world, unaware of where our life is going, or what we are doing to others. We may even think it doesn’t matter what we do, because there doesn’t seem to be any consequences to our sins. Pain and trials dispel that notion and gets our attention.

*Warren Wiersbe says concerning Jonah’s prayer. “His prayer was born out of affliction, not affection. He cried out to God because he was in danger, not because he delighted in the Lord.*

- But better that he should pray compelled by any motive than not to pray at all.
- It’s doubtful whether any believer always prays with pure and holy motives, for our desires and God’s directions sometimes conflict.
- However, although he prayed, Jonah still wasn’t happy with the will of God.
- In **chapter 1**, he disagreed with the will of God and rebelled against it, but now he wants God’s will simply because it’s the only way out of his dangerous plight.
- Like many today, Jonah saw the will of God as something to turn to in an emergency, not something to live by every day of one’s life.
- Have you ever looked at other people and wondered what they are waiting for?
- It seemed to take Jonah a long time to come around.
- Jonah starts to feel the despair of running from God.
- **Read verses 3-6.**
- Jonah feels alone. **Verse 4.**
- Jonah feels helpless and broken.
- Sometimes we must feel broken, lonely and helpless before we will reach back out to God.
- Life is falling apart around Jonah, and he knows that God is his only hope.
- A person who is running from God will not return in most cases until they are broken.
- Jonah was being disciplined by God for his messed-up heart.
- How do you respond to discipline?
- Despise it? Jonah did for the first three days.
- Refuse to confess and repent?
- Give up?
- How we respond to discipline determines how much benefit we receive from it.

**Read Hebrews 12:5-11. And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, “My child, don’t make light of the Lord’s discipline, and don’t give up when he corrects you. 6 For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.” 7 As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? 8 If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are**

**not really his children at all. 9 Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? 10 For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. 11 No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. NLT**

- We have several options: we can despise God's discipline and fight (v. 5); we can be discouraged and faint (v. 5); we can resist discipline and invite stronger discipline, possibly even death (v. 9); or we can submit to the Father and mature in faith and love (v. 7).
- Discipline is to the believer what exercise and training are to the athlete; it enables us to run the race with endurance and reach the assigned goal.
- Endure the trial, confess our sin (if we are the cause), trust God to work everything out for His glory. Jonah finally submits, prays, repents and trusts God who forgave him.
- Jonah's trial made him finally recognize God.
- **Read verses 7-8.**
- The purpose of the discipline was to get Jonah's attention.
- Jonah felt that he lost the presence of the Lord. (which he did, by his own disobedience)
- Jonah was ready to be back in the presence of the Lord again!
- Trials and pain shatter the illusion that what we have is our own, and that we can cling to whatever and whoever we like.
- God's resources and our idols cannot be held simultaneously. "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs." We forget where our resources come from until they are taken away or put in jeopardy.
- If we are not careful and intentional we can take God's grace for granted. In pain, however, we realize we have been forfeiting the grace He has for us because of our devotion to idols.
- How many times do we live out our lives putting everything ahead of God? Jonah during his trial sees what is truly important in life, as Solomon does at the end of the book of Ecclesiastes.
- Are you experiencing some painful situations? Could God be trying to correct you? Or get your attention.
- Remember, if you are one of His children, embrace correction and don't despise it, learn from it and allow it to get you back to where you are meant to be. (Isn't that what we hope for when we correct our children?)
- Let us look at the final state of Jonah's heart.

### **3. A thankful heart can lead to a change of circumstances.**

- **Read verses 9-10.**
- Pain opens our eyes to the need to thank the Lord for who He is and what He has done. We forget who gave us what we have, and pain reminds us to give thanks, to praise Him. This prayer contained in **Jonah 2** is really a prayer of thanksgiving.
- Such insightful perspective and wisdom in trials comes only through the light of prayer.
- Sometimes it's difficult to see God's hand stirring the storm.

- Certainly, at times we are thrown overboard and fail to recognize that He is doing the tossing.
- There are times, too, when we are swallowed by monstrous circumstances and held captive (**Jonah 2:6**), failing to understand that the great fish/whale was “appointed” by God.
- Prayer is what gives us three-dimensional perspective to see God at work in our lives, and the strength to obey the Lord’s command.
- Pain is designed to turn us from our sin, and repentance is the proof that we have responded properly to God’s work in our lives.
- Look at **verse 9**. Jonah now promises he will do God’s will and go to Nineveh.
- A word of caution regarding prayers made in distress. Don’t promise what you do not plan to do!

## Conclusion

The life of Jonah shows us how bad we sometimes let things get before we wake up and listen to God.

God sees that Jonah wanted to repent, so God ended His ordeal in the belly of the fish.

Jonah’s ordeal is over, or is it?

Next week we will look at **Jonah 3**.

What do you do when you are in the belly of a fish?

- Curse God?
- Run further?
- Fix it yourself?
- Run to God?

Jonah finally realized that he needed God, when will you?

Today we give you the opportunity to come forward and accept Jesus. Are you in the belly of the fish today? Come to Jesus and let Him rescue you.

**Sought after (Isa. 62:12) Precious in his sight (Isa. 43:4) A new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) Not condemned (Rom. 8:1) Forgiven (Col. 1:14) Loved (1 John 3:1) Accepted (Rom. 15:7) A child of God (John 1:12) Jesus’ friend (John 15:14) Free (John 8:36) The temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19) God’s treasured possession (Deut. 7:6) Complete in Christ (Col. 2:10 NLT) Chosen (Col. 3:12) Called (2 Tim. 1:9) An ambassador of the Most High God (2 Cor. 5:20) God’s masterpiece (Eph. 2:10 NLT) Able to do all things through Christ, who gives you strength (Phil. 4:13) More than a conqueror through Jesus, who loves you (Rom. 8:37)**