

Running to God – Praying

Jonah 2

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • March 31, In the year of our Lord Christ, 2024

Scripture Reader and Reading: Glen Peugh – Psalm 42.6–7

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Larry Amberg – Songs on Prayer

Prelude:

I. When the word of the Lord first came to Jonah to go preach to Nineveh,

- A. instead of running away from God,
- B. what should the prophet have done?
 - 1. That's easy.
 - 2. He should have done what God said to do.
 - a) Jonah will do it later anyway.
 - b) He could have avoided so much trouble.

II. Why do we do that?

- A. We know what God's word says, but
- B. are we kind of hoping
 - 1. that it will go away, or
 - 2. that he will forget about it, or
 - 3. that he will not bring it up at the Judgment?

III. However, we cause ourselves a lot of trouble in the process,

- A. just like Jonah,
- B. who experienced a life-threatening storm, and then
- C. was swallowed by a great fish that God prepared for him.
 - 1. Yet, none of us
 - a) will experience a storm as he did, nor
 - b) shall we have a specially prepared fish swallow us.
 - 2. That might make us think
 - a) that we can get away with disregarding God's commands.

b) If we think that way, we have made a massive mistake.

IV. We might experience what the Jews did in the days of Haggai.

A. They neglected the house of God,

B. putting their own things first.

1. Therefore, they suffered economically: [Give the gist]

7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! 8 Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD. 9 "You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the LORD of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. 10 Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. 11 For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands."

– Haggai 1.7–11

2. Again, we may not suffer in the same way

a) when we fail to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.

b) However, it will be something else.

V. Also, at other times we suffer, and

A. even if it is not because of our sin, yet,

B. we are slow to run to God.

VI. For example, Second Samuel 21 tells of a famine in the days of King David,

A. which lasted for 3 straight years,

B. before David inquired of the Lord about it.

1. David always prayed to God

2. about everything.

a) However, this time it apparently did not occur to him

- b) to ask God why they were having a famine.
 - (1) Perhaps he assumed that it was just the natural order of things.
 - (2) Perhaps he was consumed with all the things of life as we are.
- C. Who knows what the reason was,
 - 1. whether it was a good or a bad reason,
 - 2. the fact is,
 - a) that he delayed for a long time
 - b) before thinking to approach God about it.

VII. This is also our friend Jonah.

- A. He did not wait three years, but
 - 1. when the mariners threw him overboard,
 - 2. he did not run to God in prayer.
- B. When God prepared a great fish to swallow him,
 - 1. as the fish approached him,
 - 2. he did not run to God, crying out for help.
- C. He let the fish swallow him.
 - 1. He remained silent in the dark belly of this fish
 - 2. for three *days* and three *nights*,
 - a) before he finally ran to God for help,
 - b) speaking a beautiful prayer.

VIII. Keep in mind

- A. that the Book of Jonah was not written with chapter and verse divisions.
- B. Notice how the flow of thought continues from 1.17 to 2.1.

Persuasion:

I. Jonah 1.17–2.1–2a • Prayer in the Midst of Trouble

17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was

in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

– Jonah 1.17

1 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. 2 And he said:

**"I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction,
And He answered me."**

– Jonah 2.1–2a

- A. That indicates it was at the end of the three days and three nights,
 - 1. before he finally turned to God.
 - 2. How could that be?
- B. How could he wait that long to pray to God?
 - 1. He could have expressed repentance while still on the ship.
 - 2. The emptiness of the sea would surely drive some to repentance.
 - 3. Being swallowed by a fish would cause me to scream for God's help.
- C. However, sometimes we have to lay in the gutter for a good long time.
 - 1. Sometimes it takes a while to come to our senses.
 - 2. The Prodigal Son in Luke 15 demonstrates that:

14 "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. 15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!'"

– Luke 15.14–17

- a) The famine did not immediately make him think of his home.
- b) Losing all his money did not make him think of his father.

- c) Joining a citizen to feed unclean animals did not wake him up.
 - d) Wanting to eat the food of the swine did not alert him.
 - (1) Then all of it together
 - (2) made him come to himself.
 - (a) How much time transpired, I do not know.
 - (b) How long would we have taken?
- D. Anyway, Jonah said
- 1. that he cried out to God, because
 - 2. of his affliction,
 - a) not because of his disobedience or
 - b) a new found love for the Ninevites.
 - 3. Most of the time we do not see the benefit of suffering.
 - a) However, Jonah shows
 - b) that if we suffer for trying to run away from God,
 - (1) it does have benefit,
 - (2) alerting us to our wrong.
 - (a) Then like Jonah, or like the Prodigal Son,
 - (b) we realize that life away from the Lord
 - i) just gets us into trouble.
 - 4. However, God answered Jonah,
 - a) showing mercy
 - b) even to a stubborn, angry, and willful prophet.

II. Jonah 2.2b–6 • A Recognition of God's Chastisement

- 2b “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 floods surrounded me;
All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.**
- 4 Then I said, I have been cast out of Your sight;
Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.**
- 5 The waters surrounded me, even to my soul;
The deep closed around me;
Weeds were wrapped around my head.**
- 6 I went down to the moorings of the mountains;
The earth with its bars closed behind me forever;
Yet You have brought up my life from the pit,
O LORD, my God."**

– Jonah 2.3–6

A. Notice how Jonah began his prayer.

1. The first thing that he said to God was
2. that God had heard his voice.
 - a) He was in the belly of Sheol,
 - (1) a place where he could see nothing and
 - (2) no one could see him.
 - b) He was in a place
 - (1) where no one could hear him, and
 - (2) he could not hear anyone.
 - c) However,
 - (1) God could see and hear him, and
 - (2) Jonah acknowledged it.
 - (a) When God hears your prayer and rescues you,
 - (b) do not forget to thank him.

B. Then look at the next thing he said.

1. He said in verse 3,
2. that God cast him into the deep.

- a) It was *God's* billows and *God's* waves.
- b) Yet, chapter 1 shows the mariners throwing Jonah overboard.
 - (1) Even as Jonah knew
 - (a) that the Lord his God worked in the storm,
 - (b) so he knew that God worked through the seaman.
 - (2) Likewise, the Lord works through the people of the world
 - (a) for the benefit of Christians.
 - (b) That is why Paul told Timothy:

1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for *all men*...

– 1 Timothy 2.1

- C. Jonah recognized that he had been cast out of the Lord's sight (v 4).
 - 1. Of course, God could see him, but
 - 2. I think he meant that he was out of God's favor.
 - a) He was no longer experiencing the blessings of God, but
 - b) the strong rebukes of the God of heaven.
 - (1) Therefore, Jonah did the only thing that he could do,
 - (2) he looked again toward God's holy temple,
 - (a) meaning that he ran to God for help
 - (b) by praying.
- D. Look at his words to God in verses 5 and 6,
 - 1. where he showed the experience of
 - a) the sea overwhelming him and
 - b) he became entangled in weeds.
 - (1) When I grew up in Southern California,

(2) we often went to the beach.

(a) Of course, I swam in the ocean, and

(b) in some places there would be kelp, seaweed,

i) which wrapped around my legs, and

ii) I hated it. It spooked me.

2. So Jonah said he was sinking,

a) as the ocean closed over him, and

b) he started heading for the bottom, but then

(1) the mercy loving God

(2) saved him by the great fish.

III. Jonah 2.7-9 • He Remembered the Lord

**7 “When my soul fainted within me,
I remembered the LORD;
And my prayer went up to You,
Into Your holy temple.**

**8 Those who regard worthless idols
Forsake their own Mercy.**

**9 But I will sacrifice to You
With the voice of thanksgiving;
I will pay what I have vowed.
Salvation is of the LORD.”**

– Jonah 2.7-9

A. Jonah remembered the Lord when his soul fainted.

1. He was desperate.

2. He saw that he could not save himself.

B. That is when he ran to God in prayer.

C. The reason those who trust in idols forsake their own mercy

1. is that idols cannot show mercy.

2. Therefore, they keep themselves out of the bounds of mercy.
- D. Jonah could only offer the real sacrifice that God wants.
1. Yes, during Jonah's day they had to offer animal sacrifices.
 2. However, even then it was what was in the heart that mattered to God.
- E. The prophet then learned through his suffering
1. that when you make a vow to God,
 2. you absolutely must keep it:
- 2 **Do not be rash with your mouth,
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.
For God is in heaven, and you on earth;
Therefore let your words be few.**
 - 3 **For a dream comes through much activity,
And a fool's voice is known by his many words.**
 - 4 **When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it;
For He has no pleasure in fools.
Pay what you have vowed—**
 - 5 **Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.**

– Ecclesiastes 5.2–5

IV. Jonah 2.10 • Salvation

10 So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

– Jonah 2.10

- A. That must have been a lovely experience!
- B. Even here God showed the prophet mercy
 1. by having the fish bring Jonah to land,
 2. rather than dis-engorging him out at sea,
 - a) where he would have swim a long ways to land,
 - b) after all, he had over 500 miles travel to Nineveh!

C. Jesus himself prophesied

1. that he would have a similar experience to Jonah's:

39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

– Matthew 12.39–40

2. That is one of the reasons we worship the Lord every first day of the week.

Exhortation:

I. Jonah learned

A. that claiming a relationship with God is insufficient.

B. Jonah knew God.

1. He knew that God made the sea and the dry land (1.9).
2. He had also preached God's word faithfully before,
 - a) that is why God used him.
 - b) However, we cannot pick and choose
 - (1) which commands of the Lord we want to obey.
 - (2) I have to backup my belief with obedience.

II. Jesus taught that we have to backup our belief with obedience:

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

– Matthew 7.21

46 "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"

– Luke 6.46