

## **God is Relentless in His Rescue – Jonah 2**

**Read Jonah 1:17** - *And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*

This is where we left off last week; with Jonah, the reluctant prophet of God, having been tossed overboard into the raging seas and eventually swallowed by a giant fish which was the result of his decision to run away from God's command. Jonah was willing to be God's spokesperson when it helped his people, but when God wanted him to deliver a message to his brutal enemies, Jonah lost his willingness to obey; and he ran. But God relentlessly pursued his runaway. In fact, God performed five miracles during His pursuit. First, it was God who "*hurled a great wind upon the sea.*" (Jonah 1:4) It was God who caused the lot to fall on Jonah. (1:7). It was God who ceased the sea "*from its raging.*" (1:15) It was God who "*appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah.*" (1:17) And finally, it was God who preserved Jonah's life for three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish. (1:17) Five supernatural events, from a sovereign God, used to pursue Jonah and offer him a second chance.

When I think about these events, I am reminded of God's precious love for me. I am also reminded that He loves me enough to do whatever it takes to not only pursue me relentlessly, but also to do whatever it takes to rescue me. I would even go as far as to say that God rescues me with relentless mercy and grace. Jonah's story helps us see God's mercy and grace as its best. We can find His mercy and grace in the moments where we least expect it. Or we may be like Jonah and resent God for offering this same mercy and grace to those we may not like or agree with. Jonah would rather see his enemies destroyed as opposed to being forgiven and spared. Jonah, as we read last week, would have rather died than to see the Ninevites spared. Within this story of a vengeful and rotten prophet we find a prayer which gives insight into Jonah's inner struggles at the time and allows us a glimpse of how God can work in our lives. We can rest assured that God knew Jonah's heart in this moment. You can rest assured that He knows your heart as well. Chapter two teaches us about the God whom we pray to and gives us a few reminders about how He works in our Jonah moments.

### **Read Jonah 2**

Here we see Jonah's prayer as he remembered it and recorded it for us. As Jonah is being tossed into the raging sea, and as he begins to sink and gasp for air, and as the darkness closes in around him, and as the seaweed takes hold of him, and as he hits rock bottom and faces certain death; Jonah manages a desperate cry for help. This may sound crazy, but I love how God answered Jonah in his desperation. Did God hear his prayer? Absolutely! Did God answer Jonah? Yes, but probably not the way Jonah thought He should. I'm fairly sure Jonah would have wanted to be rescued in a manner that did not involve being swallowed by a fish. And I'm fairly sure, he would not have asked God to leave him in the belly of said fish for three days and nights. None the less, this is exactly how God chose to rescue Jonah.

What can we learn from Jonah's prayer? Overwhelmed by the aroma from the fish carcasses in the belly of this fish, and despite his disobedience and stubbornness, and despite his obvious disdain for his enemies, Jonah calls out to God for deliverance. What a blessing it must have been to realize that God heard him. When you pray, and I hope you do so regularly, do you believe God hears you? I surely hope so because it's true. Perhaps Jonah trusted the words of the Psalmist who said, *"But I call to God, and the Lord will save me. Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice."* (**Psalm 55:16-17**) Even though the circumstances of his rescue were not ideal, Jonah realized that God had heard his prayers, and he also recognized that God had been in control all along.

Jonah confesses to God, as we see in verse 3, *"You cast me into the deep"* and *"Your breakers and Your waves passed over me."* Just because the situation seems dire doesn't mean that God has forgotten you or that He is asleep at the wheel. Jonah recognized God's Sovereign control even when his safety was compromised. Have no doubt in your mind, God can always be trusted. In the good and the desperate. Consider the lots. Perhaps Jonah trusted the proverb which says, *"The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord."* (**Proverbs 16:33**) God's sovereignty is everlasting and is something in which we should find confidence. Jonah knew that God would not be pleased with his decision to run, but he ran anyway. He also knew, from the belly of a fish, that God was relentless in His use of nature to rescue him from his horrible choice. When you choose to do it your way, and you will, and the situation becomes dire, will you remember the Lord? Will you remember the words of **Proverbs 19:21**? *Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.* And then, will you rely on the sovereignty of God to rescue you from your mess?

That's exactly what Jonah concluded. The evidence is found in his prayer as we have seen here today. Jonah, even though he didn't agree with it, understood that God saved him for a Kingdom purpose. For a divine purpose. Jonah knew that he would once again be able to worship God and pray to God in His holy temple. Instead of honoring Jonah's death wish, God spared his life. Yes, because he had a greater purpose for him, but more importantly, because of His great love for him. Jonah understood that his life had meaning and purpose and from the belly of the fish, he testified to the greatness of God when he shouted, *"Salvation belongs to the Lord!"* (Vs. 9)

Maybe there are some of you here today who feel like you're drowning or like you've hit rock bottom. Maybe you're in a Jonah-like season of rebellion. Some of you have been running from God for a long time. Some of you are filled with such hatred that it's clouded your decision-making abilities. If it's not true in your life now, rest assured, there have been moments where this was true and rest assured, there will be moments in your life where it will be true again. When these moments occur, you may feel exactly how Jonah felt. Desperate, like there is no hope. But, as I shared with you last week and as we learn from Jonah's prayer - with God, there is always hope! Because of His great love for you, God is willing and able to rescue you from *"out of the belly of Sheol"* (Jonah 2:2), just like he did Jonah. If you are here today, and you

know that you need to be rescued from the pits of hell, may I suggest that you trust Jesus to do that for you. He is able and most importantly, He is willing. You see – God is not like us! Jonah’s prayer teaches us that God will hear us, that God cares deeply for us, and that God is more merciful, more patient, and more forgiving than we can ever imagine. Through Christ, who is the better Jonah by the way, we can call out to a Savior, with confidence to know that he will overflow us with mercy and will graciously and relentlessly rescue us, no matter the circumstances, no matter the place, no matter the time. Will you trust Jesus to be that person for you today?