

# Yielding To God • Jonah 2

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *Grab Bag*

1. The Book of Jonah is a virtual grab-bag of inspiring lessons and incredible truths.
2. We're going to look at just one of them this morning.

### B. *Fairy Tale?*

1. Many people today have come to the conclusion that Jonah is merely a fairy tale, and a whale of a tale at that!
2. Their knowledge of the book is limited to the story of Jonah being swallowed by a great fish, and living to tell about it.
3. We'll examine the particulars of the Book of Jonah in our study Wednesday evening –
4. But for now, let me just say this:
  - a. while some may balk at the story of Jonah because it seems extreme –
  - b. why would we find this story hard to believe?
  - c. is not the God of Jonah the same God who spoke and the universe leapt into being?
  - d. If He could create space and the stars; the planets, the land and oceans –
  - e. certainly He could make a fish in one of those oceans that could swallow a man and then deposit him safely on shore 3 days later.
5. Accepting the historical accuracy of Jonah is not a question of how gullible we are but how big our God is.
6. But that is not what I want to look at today.
7. Let me set the scene for Chapter 2

## II. TEXT

### A. *Set The Scene*

1. Jonah lived during a period of peace and prosperity in Israel.
2. The nations surrounding her were in decline due to their own internal squabbles.
3. Not long before Jonah's time, the nation of Assyria, which lies to the NE, had threatened Israel's borders.
4. So there's a history of hostility between Assyria and Israel – they are enemies.
5. One day, the Jewish prophet Jonah receives a word from God
  - a. he's to go to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria
  - b. and warn them of God's judgment because of their great wickedness
6. As a prophet, Jonah knows that God sends a warning of judgment so that people will repent of their evil and turn to God.
  - a. Jonah doesn't want Nineveh to repent
  - b. they are the enemy of his nation

- c. he wants them to be judged
- 7. God told Jonah to get up and go – Jonah got up and went all right – in the exact OPPOSITE direction
  - a. Nineveh was to the NE,
  - b. Jonah went SW to Joppa
  - c. boarded a ship and set sail for Tarshish, which was at the farthest extent of their navigational experience, and as far from Nineveh as was thought possible at that time.
  - d. this is like you living in Chicago and God telling you to move to New York; so you move all right, but to Sydney, Australia!
- 8. Jonah is in flagrant rebellion against God
- 9. And you know how the story goes
  - a. while at sea, a storm whips the ship around
  - b. the sailors discover Jonah is the cause of the storm and hoist him over the side --
  - c. where a specially prepared fish swallows the reluctant prophet and heads back to shore in history's first submarine voyage
- 10. Let's pick it up with the last verse of chapter 1 – v. 17

**B. 1:17-2:1**

- 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.**
- 1 **Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly.**
- 1. As I mentioned earlier, we'll dig in to the particulars of this in greater depth Wednesday evening
- 2. For now, I want to ask you to note *when* Jonah offered this prayer
  - a. it says he was in the fish's belly 3 days
  - b. THEN he prayed
- 3. I don't know about you, but if it was me, as soon as I was thrown over the side of the ship and found myself treading water I would have been repenting!
- 4. No, when those sailors picked me up and began carrying me to the side, I would have cried out in repentance!
- 5. Jonah's rebellion is so deep and so bitter, it takes 3 days of sitting in a fish's belly to bring him to repentance
- 6. Let's read on

**C. Vs. 2-10**

- 2 **And he said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, 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 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.

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.”

1. Get the picture –
  - a. it’s utterly dark and the space is tight
  - b. there is just enough air for him to breath
  - c. and around him he can feel the contents of the sea swirling inside the fish’s stomach
  - d. he feels very much as though he’s been buried alive and he thinks that his life is over
  - e. but then he realizes that he’s not dead and that with God, nothing is impossible
  - f. so he calls out to the Lord in genuine repentance
    - 1) he realizes he’s been a fool to think he could resist God
    - 2) in his present state he cannot go to the temple and offer a sacrifice of atonement
    - 3) but he can turn his heart back to the temple and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving
    - 4) he had made a vow to the Lord years before that He would serve God
    - 5) and though he’s broken that commitment by running away from the mission God had given him – now he surrenders, and entrusts himself into God’s hands, COMPLETELY.
2. And now that he’s come to this place of complete surrender . . .

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

#### **D. A Lesson From Jonah**

1. The lesson we can learn from Jonah in this is this –
2. Our God is the God of the Second Chance
3. He never gives up on us
4. Just as He loved the Ninevites and sent Jonah to warn them so they might repent and avoid His judgment – He loved Jonah and was not going to give up on him.
5. Jonah’s rebellion against the call of God was *dramatic*
  - a. rarely in scripture do we see this kind of settled determination to resist God
  - b. and yet, God went after him and brought him to *precisely the place* he had to be brought to so that he would come to his senses and repent
6. Chances are good that there are some Jonah’s sitting here this morning, and they are in a season of life that is a proverbial “belly of the fish.”
7. God has placed a call on your life, or there has been some task He’s called you to perform, but you’ve balked, you’ve resisted, you’ve rebelled.

- a. maybe God has called you to enter the ministry or the mission field,
  - b. but you've gone the other direction and boarded a ship headed for earthly wealth rather than spiritual treasure
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- c. maybe God has told you to go to someone and seek reconciliation,
  - d. but you've climbed aboard a boat of bitterness and resentment rather than forgiveness
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- e. it may simply be that God has called you to go deeper with Him, to cast off the spiritual laziness and apathy that has marked your life recently and pursue Him passionately,
  - f. but you've turned a deaf ear to the urging of the Spirit and the lethargy has only increased.
8. Romans 11:29 tells us that the calling of God is *irrevocable*.
    - a. if He has called you, He keeps calling you till you respond
    - b. if you resist Him and try to avoid His calling, He will keep hedging you in
    - c. He will go after you as he went after Jonah
    - d. and He will do *whatever He has to* to bring you to the place of surrender
    - e. the hardness of your heart will determine the extent of His action to break you
  9. But friend, that breaking is not a breaking that ruins or destroys us
    - a. it is the cracking of the sinful willfulness that marks the old man
    - b. the shell of the egg must break for the chick to emerge
    - c. the shell of the cocoon must break for the butterfly to come forth
    - d. and our self-centered will must break for the fullness of life God intends for us to emerge
  10. It took 3 days before Jonah surrendered!
    - a. think of it – 3 days of sea slime and darkness
    - b. I'm sure it didn't smell too good in there as well
    - c. 3 days of resistance to God and sitting in a living hell
  11. Some of us have been going through a similar situation
    - a. it seems dark and a lot of bad stuff is swirling around us
    - b. it may be that your marriage is seriously troubled
    - c. maybe your finances stink
    - d. you may be experiencing one health problem after another
  12. If you find yourself in the belly of trouble today – let me ask you this – has God called you to something but you've rebelled?
    - a. has He spoken to you about something, but you've resisted
    - b. if so, then your current distress is more than likely His hedge to bring you to the place of surrender
    - c. will you wait 3 days, 3 weeks, 3 months, 3 years?
    - d. for some of you, it's been even longer than that
    - e. do you think you can out-wait God?
    - f. can you outlast the Ancient of Days?

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *Relentless*

1. Romans 2:4 says

**Do you despise the riches of [God's] goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**

2. This verse seems difficult to square with Jonah's example

3. How was God's *goodness* demonstrated in Jonah's being swallowed by the fish?

4. That sounds like a major trial – not something we would count as good.

5. The answer is found in v. 2 . . .

**[Jonah] said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, *And You heard my voice.***

6. Jonah admits that it was because of his affliction that he cried out to God and repented of his rebellion

7. God brought him to the end of himself so that he would have to look to the Lord.

8. Friend, the Lord loves you and wants to bless you.

a. He knows what's best for you –

b. better than YOU, He knows what you need and what's best

c. and He will keep working through the circumstances of your life to bring you to the place of *surrender*

9. Little 8 year old Sally was at Disneyland with her parents

a. as soon as they got in to the park, she saw one of those large helium balloons and began telling her dad she wanted one

b. but he told her to wait

c. she put up a fuss, stopped in her tracks and began stomping her feet

d. when she began to sob uncontrollably, just to silence her, her dad bought her a balloon.

e. content with her prize and getting her way, they proceeded down Main Street toward the center of the Park

f. arriving at the Matterhorn, she said she wanted to ride

g. but the balloon was too big to fit in the car with them

h. in fact, the balloon was too big to go on ANY of the rides – that's why her father had said no to her first request

i. so Sally and her parents ended up just walking around Disneyland watching everyone else having a good time

j. Sally had her balloon, but she also had a boring day in the Magic Kingdom

10. All too often we're like Sally; petulant little children who think we know what we want

a. we demand our way and resist the counsel and call of God

b. He knows far better than we how life works and where it's headed

c. but we see some *helium balloon* of this or that and demand it

d. God says, "No" because He knows it will keep us from enjoying the abundance of His Kingdom

e. off we go into our little tirade of rebellion – pretending we are wiser than God

11. Unlike Sally's father, God never gives in to our immature and petty demands.

12. Instead, He brings all His goodness to bear and uses whatever means are necessary to bring us to the realization He does know best and that He is *relentless* in His love and desire to bless us.
13. Simply put, and here's what this passage of Jonah teaches us - Our God is *relentless*
  - a. His *love* is relentless
  - b. His desire to *bless* is relentless
14. God will apply whatever means are necessary to bring you to the place of surrender.
15. He will *break* you of *self* that He may *heal* you in *Christ*.

### **B. Surrender**

1. *Because* God is relentless – there is only one appropriate response
2. To yield, to surrender ourselves to Him.
3. If you're in the "belly of trouble" today, and you're there because you've been resisting God → surrender.
4. Let go of the balloon that keeps you from enjoying all the wonder of Walking with God.