

Jonah 2  
 "Praying in the Dark"  
 Preached at Calvary Rio Rancho  
 Refuel devotional  
 By Aaron R. Fore

## **TURN IN YOUR BIBLES: Jonah Chapter 2**

### **BACKGROUND:**

Jonah was a prophet of the Lord who was commanded by God to go and preach against the pagan city of Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. Jonah ignored God and took a boat ride in the opposite direction thinking he could escape the presence of the Lord. God disciplined Jonah to get his attention by sending a great storm which resulted in him being thrown from the ship and the Lord sent a large fish to swallow Jonah.

- I find it very interesting that Jonah would rather die than go preach to Nineveh. "toss me overboard" he had told the crew. Which there's not much hope, even for the best of swimmers, to survive out at sea in the middle of nowhere.
- But instead of dying, God has a big fish swallow Jonah.

I love the Lord's heart for His disobedient servant. God could have killed Jonah at any time during this process and Jonah would have deserved it. But instead God pulls Jonah from one bad situation (a storm at sea) into a worse one (the belly of a fish). Stinky, smelly, dark, and a confined space.

- Q: Why did the Lord do this?
- A: Because the Lord loves His servants and when our hearts are not right with Him, that matters to Him.
  - [The Lord cares just as much about the minister as He does about the ministry.](#)

Here in Chapter 2 we see Jonah finally calling out to the Lord.

The title of today's message is **"Praying in the Dark"**

### **OUTLINE:**

- V. 1-2 - Prayer is where we acknowledge God**
- V. 3-6 - Prayer is where we come to the end of ourselves**
- V. 7-8 - Prayer is where help is found**
- V. 9 - Prayer is where we align our will with God's**
- V. 10 - Prayer is where we experience true deliverance**

**V. 1-2 - Prayer is where WE ACKNOWLEDGE GOD**

Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly. <sup>2</sup> 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.**

**V. 1 -**

**"What"** did Jonah do when he was in the belly of the fish? He prayed (V. 1)

**"Why"** did Jonah cry out to the Lord? Because of His affliction. (V. 2)

- We learned from Chapter 1 that the Lord disciplines us to get our attention and that is exactly what is happening with Jonah here.

**God's heart behind Discipline is to cause Conviction and that conviction to cause Repentance.**

- But it all starts with acknowledging God.

**Prayer is where WE ACKNOWLEDGE GOD**

When we pray we acknowledge that God is our source of hope, comfort, joy, peace, and help. He's everything.

**APPLICATION**

When God asks us to do hard things we don't understand, we can have the tendency to run from Him instead of being obedient to Him. What we need to do is talk to the Lord because He is our greatest resource and help.

Q: When Jonah finally acknowledges the Lord, what does the Lord do?

A: V. 2 - ...**And He answered me.**

- To me there is something absolutely amazing about this.
  - Jonah had disobeyed the Lord.
  - God had tried to get his attention by sending a storm
  - and then God sent a fish to swallow him
    - finally, when Jonah acknowledges the Lord, the Lord answers him!

**APPLICATION**

This is the heart of God toward his children. He wants to have a relationship with us – even when we are being disobedient.

- I think sometimes we are fearful to talk to God because we think God doesn't want to hear from us or talk to us. But nothing could be further from the truth.

"Oh, if we only realized the fullness of God's grace, that is ours for the asking, its height and depth and length and breadth, I am sure that we would spend more time in prayer."<sup>1</sup>

**-R.A. Torrey**

Jonah goes on in verse 2:

"Out of the belly of Sheol I cried,  
And **You heard my voice.**

- "Sheol" – the grave or the place of the dead.

When you think about Jonah's situation, you could see why he described his experience like this.

- He was in the belly of a fish.
- He was basically in a living coffin - instead of being made out of wood, he was encased in the flesh of a fish.

But the Lord heard his voice.

**Psalm 139:7-9 (NKJV) (David said)**

<sup>7</sup> Where can I go from Your Spirit?

Or where can I flee from Your presence?

<sup>8</sup> If I ascend into heaven, You are there;

If I make my bed in hell (Sheol), behold, You are there.<sup>2</sup>

### **APPLICATION**

You may feel that you are somehow too far away from God for Him to hear you or you may feel that God that because you under God's discipline that He won't want to hear you, but He does. The first step is simply to acknowledge Him.

**Prayer is where WE ACKNOWLEDGE GOD** (V. 1-2)

**V. 3-6 - Prayer is where we COME TO THE END OF OURSELVES**

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight;

<sup>1</sup> Torrey, R.A. *How to Pray*. 2004. Hendrickson Publishers. Pg. 8.

<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ps 139:7-9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.'

<sup>5</sup> The waters surrounded me, *even* to my soul;  
The deep closed around me;  
Weeds were wrapped around my head.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

Here Jonah recognizes that God, in his infinite wisdom, is disciplining Jonah for his disobedience and he finally gives in and calls out to the Lord.

### **Hebrews 12:10-11 (NKJV)**

Tells us that God disciplines us *...for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.* <sup>11</sup> Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.<sup>3</sup>

- God's discipline always has a purpose and that is to train us to yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

God's heart in discipline is that we would come to Him.

**ILLUSTRATION** – As hard as it was raising my children through the toddler stages of their lives. There were some precious teachable and humorous moments that I really enjoyed as a father. There were several occasions in that stage when my kids would want to do things on their own, their own way, and without my help. On one such occasion, one of my children refused my help in getting undressed from their day clothes into their pajamas. They had gotten everything off except their shirt which they could get off their own big head. Finally, after trying in frustration, they finally asked, "Daddy, can you help me please?" And I was happy to do so.

### **Prayer is where we COME TO THE END OF OURSELVES**

- It's when we come to our heavenly Father and ask Him, "Daddy, help me please?"
- It's the acknowledgement that we can't do this on our own (even though we have tried and failed).
- It's the humbling and sobering reminder that:

As Jesus said in John 15:5:

<sup>5</sup> "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Heb 12:10–11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Jn 15:5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God's discipline on Jonah's life had brought him to the end of himself:

V. 5-6 –

<sup>5</sup> The waters surrounded me, *even* to my soul;

The deep closed around me;

Weeds were wrapped around my head.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

As Jonah comes to the end of himself and realizes his desperate need for the Lord, he comes to have a heart of repentance:

V. 4 – <sup>4</sup> Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight;

Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.'

Jonah may have felt that the Lord cast him out, but that is not true:

**John 6:37 (NKJV)** - <sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.<sup>5</sup>

## **2 Chronicles 6:36-39 (NKJV) (when Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple)**

<sup>36</sup> "When they sin against You (for *there is* no one who does not sin), and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to a land far or near; <sup>37</sup> yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, and have committed wickedness'; <sup>38</sup> and *when* they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, where they have been carried captive, and pray toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, **and toward the temple** which I have built for Your name: <sup>39</sup> then hear from heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive Your people who have sinned against You.<sup>6</sup>

## **Prayer is where we COME TO THE END OF OURSELVES**

### **V. 7-8 - Prayer is where HELP IS FOUND**

<sup>7</sup> "When my soul fainted within me,

I remembered the Lord;

And my prayer went *up* to You,

<sup>5</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Jn 6:37). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (2 Ch 6:36-39). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Into Your holy temple.

<sup>8</sup> “Those who regard worthless idols  
Forsake their own Mercy.

V. 7 – “When my soul fainted within me”

That same Hebrew word translated “fainted” here was used by the psalmist in  
**Psalm 142:3** – “When my spirit was overwhelmed within me...”<sup>7</sup>

NASB –

7 “While I was fainting away,  
I remembered the Lord,  
And my prayer came to You,  
Into Your holy temple.”<sup>8</sup>

NLT –

<sup>7</sup> As my life was slipping away,  
I remembered the Lord.  
And my earnest prayer went out to you  
in your holy Temple. <sup>9</sup>

## APPLICATION

The shadow of death makes people think about their life. What are those things that are important.

As Jonah was feeling that his life was ebbing away, his thoughts turned to Yahweh (cf. Ps. 107:5; 142:3).<sup>10</sup>

In Jonah’s case, he remembered the most important thing:

V. 7 - I remembered the Lord;  
And my prayer went up to You,  
Into Your holy temple.

And what important fact did Jonah recall as he remembered the Lord and cried out to Him:

V. 8 - <sup>8</sup> “Those who regard worthless idols  
Forsake their own Mercy.

- As I read this, it’s easy for me to think of Jonah chapter 1 when the storm comes and all the unbelievers in the boat call out to their false gods and things only get worse for them. There was no answer for them. There was

<sup>7</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ps 142:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>8</sup> [New American Standard Bible: 1995 update](#). (1995). (Jon 2:7). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

<sup>9</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Jon 2:7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>10</sup> Constable, T. (2003). [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Jon 2:7). Galaxie Software.

no help. Because they weren't praying to the one and only true God - they were forsaking their own mercy.

- But I wonder if Jonah isn't reflecting on his own heart condition here. Could he be speaking from personal experience based on what he just went through in the depths of his own soul? He had trusted in the idols of his own desires, of his own selfishness and self-seeking.

"idols" – literally "empty vanities". Why are they empty and why if we trust in them do we forsake our own mercy?

Because there is only one place to find mercy and that is from God.

- Empty vanities are things that we put in God's rightful place in our life.

### **Prayer is where HELP IS FOUND**

When we fail to pray, we forsake our own mercy. We need to go to the fountain of mercy Himself and that is the Lord.

### **V. 9 - Prayer is where WE ALIGN OUR WILL WITH GOD'S**

<sup>9</sup> But I will sacrifice to You  
With the voice of thanksgiving;  
I will pay what I have vowed.  
Salvation *is* of the Lord."

"Prayer in the time of trouble tends to bring the spirit into perfect subjection to the will of God, to cause the will to be conformed to God's will, saves from all murmurings over our lot, and delivers from everything like a rebellious heart or a spirit critical of the Lord."<sup>11</sup>

**-E.M. Bounds**

Prayer gets our hearts right with the Lord.

### **Prayer is where WE ALIGN OUR WILL WITH GOD'S**

V. 9 – "I will pay what I have vowed"

- Jonah was a prophet of God.
- He was the Lord's servant.
- The Lord's man.
- He had an obligation to do what the Lord had called him to do.

### **Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Bounds, E.M. *The Essentials of Prayer*. 2006. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. pg. 38.

<sup>12</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ga 2:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**APPLICATION**

I think we often forget that our life is not our own.

When we give our life to God by trusting in the sacrifice of Jesus, our sins are forgiven. And they were forgiven at the great expense of the life of Jesus. Our reasonable duty is to do whatever God calls us to.

**1 Corinthians 6:20 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.<sup>13</sup>

**V. 10 – Prayer is where WE EXPERIENCE TRUE DELIVERANCE**

<sup>10</sup> So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.<sup>14</sup>

God gave Jonah a second chance and through it got to see God's deliverance.

**APPLICATION**

- Whether it's a marriage that's facing difficulties
- A troubled teen facing temptation
- Or a person trying to find the meaning of life
- Or a prophet being disciplined by the Lord.

Help is found in one place and that place is prayer – talking to the God of the universe.

**1 Peter 5:6-7 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, <sup>7</sup> casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.<sup>15</sup>

Talk to God, He's waiting to hear from you.

**PRAY**

<sup>13</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (1 Co 6:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>14</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Jon 2:1-10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>15</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (1 Pe 5:6-7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**EXTRA NOTES:****OUTLINE:**

**“What”** did Jonah do when he was in the belly of the fish? He prayed (V. 1)

**“Why”** did Jonah cry out to the Lord? Because of His affliction. (V. 2)

**V. 3- Discipline****V. 4-7 – Conviction****V. 8-10 – Repentance**

V. 1-6 appear to be Jonah’s thanksgiving for the Lord rescuing him from drowning.

**V. 1 –**

“Jonah prayed” – this was the first time we see Jonah praying.

- When God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, Jonah didn’t talk to God about what was on his heart, he disobeyed and took a boat ride in the opposite direction.
- When the storm was raging on the sea, the pagan men on the boat cried out to their God, but Jonah didn’t cry out to his.
- When Jonah refused to pray to his God and was finally cast into the sea, when the storm immediately ceased, the pagans prayed to Jonah’s God.
- It’s not until Jonah is swallowed up by the fish that we see him pray the Lord.

Jonah had been upset with the Lord for asking him to go to Nineveh. So much so that he was willing to even pray to Him.

Although Jonah prays from inside the fish it is not his first prayer. His first prayer came as he was tossed into the water. He had gone down to Joppa, down to the ship, down into its hold, and then finally he sank down and down in the sea. It was not the horror of drowning that terrified him, but the thought of being abandoned by the Lord in death. Despite his long and determined flight from the presence of God, the prospect of ending his life outside the presence of God, and then for ever, are too terrifying for words. And so, as the final seconds of his fragile life approached, he cried out in immense distress to the Lord, *his* God (despite Jonah’s disobedience he had never stopped looking upon the Lord as his God). In the desperation of that cry the Lord answered and rescued him. The Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah (1:17). Suddenly Jonah is snatched violently and thrown headlong into a hot and constricted mass of rotting vegetable matter. Through the utter confusion of what is happening to him, he eventually comes round and realizes that he can breathe—after a fashion. And then it dawns on him what has happened. The Lord has answered his prayer for deliverance! So now, from inside the fish, Jonah reflects on what has just happened to him. His prayer is one of thankfulness and hope. It is also full of description as he recalls the extremity of his plight. From the depths he had cried and from the depths he had

been heard. Quite rightly, he does not blame the sailors for throwing him into the water but sees that the Lord has been behind all of it ('You hurled me into the deep', v. 3). Jonah acknowledges that he had been sinking down—a process that had begun before he even got to Joppa in 1:3. The self-induced downward slide had brought him to the very gateway of death. He describes himself as being at the depths of the grave, but the Lord his God had brought his 'life up from the pit' (v. 6).<sup>16</sup>

## V. 2 –

No matter how you feel when you are going through hard things, especially the discipline of the Lord, don't let anything keep you from talking to God.

Being willing to die by drowning was one thing (v. 1:12), but death by gradual digestion was something Jonah had not anticipated.<sup>17</sup>

### -Tom Constable

## V. 3 –

V. 3 –

"You cast me into the deep"

"all Your billows and waves passed over me"

In a very real and literal sense this is true.

- It was God who sent the storm because of Jonah's disobedience.
- It was God who sent the fish to swallow Jonah once he was tossed into the sea.

Q: Why did God send these things?

A: To discipline Jonah. To get his attention. To bring him to the end of himself – the end of his selfishness.

## V. 4 –

"Cast out of Your sight"

Scriptural use speaks of someone who has done wrong. The Lord is near the righteous, but He is far from the wicked.

- Could this be talking about being set aside for ministry? That he is being shelved for kingdom purpose because of his disobedience?

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<sup>16</sup> Mackrell, P. (2007). [Opening up Jonah](#) (pp. 53–55). Leominster: Day One Publications.

<sup>17</sup> Constable, T. (2003). [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Jon 2:1). Galaxie Software.

**V. 8 –**

“As in 1:6, prayer is presented as the key to the salvation of the one who would otherwise have perished.”<sup>18</sup>

**V. 9 –**

When we pray, the Lord changes our hearts. We see that so often in the Psalms where the psalmist cries out to the Lord and it almost starts off as being a very critical prayer or a complaint, but then there’s a softening that often happens as they are reminded of who the Lord then there’s often a praise and a fresh confident trust in the Lord as the psalm closes.

**V. 10 –**

God restored Jonah to life so he would be God’s instrument in providing salvation to a large Gentile (and indirectly Jewish) population under God’s judgment for their sins. He raised Jesus to life so He would be God’s instrument in providing salvation for an even larger population of Gentiles and Jew under God’s judgment for their sins.<sup>19</sup> – **Tom Constable**

**Ch. 1: The Sailors****Ch. 2: The Prophet**

1:4	Crisis on the sea	2:3–6a	Crisis in the sea
1:14	Prayer to Yahweh	2:2, 7	Prayer to Yahweh
1:15b	Deliverance from the storm	2:6b	Deliverance from drowning
1:16	Sacrifice and vows offered to God	2:9	Sacrifice and vows offered to God <sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Constable, T. (2003). [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Jon 2:7). Galaxie Software.

<sup>19</sup> Constable, T. (2003). [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Jon 1:17). Galaxie Software.

<sup>20</sup> Constable, T. (2003). [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Jon 2:1). Galaxie Software.