

## Jonah's Prayer of Faith and Thanksgiving

Jonah 2:7-10 ESV

Lord's Day – February 12, 2023

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Hear the Word of God from Jonah 2:7-10 – ESV

*<sup>7</sup>When my life was fainting away, I remembered Yahweh, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.*

*<sup>8</sup>Those who pay regard to vain idols, forsake their hope of steadfast love. <sup>9</sup>But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Yahweh. <sup>10</sup>And Yahweh spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.*

So far in the study of the book of Jonah (fifth of the twelve books of the minor prophets) we have observed, Jonah's understanding of his God, Yahweh. We see Jonah as a 'self-centered' man of God and a 'dis-obedient' servant of God, who cared least for others. Even in times of distress, though he himself was present, along with the other pagan sailors, amid eminent danger when the sea hurled, the storm raged and threatened their very lives, Jonah neither took responsibility for his disobedience nor he cared for others. We see pagan sailors, not Jonah who are concerned that people not perish.

Instead of Jonah crying out to God in repentance that would have changed the course of the events, he suggests the pagan sailors to commit an offense, by hurling him into the sea for it will quiet down for them. But the sailors cried out to "*Yahweh, the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land*" and pleaded God that they would not perish for this man's life and that the innocent blood will not be laid on them. And thus, we see the sailor's 'confession of faith' in the absolute sovereignty of God. The sailors actions are in harmony with God's sovereign plan, whereas Jonah's actions are contrary.

Last week's sermon titled 'Jonah's Prayer' from the first six verses of chapter two we have we heard (1) God's sovereign plan is better than our expectation; (2) When in distress – pray; and (3) God's discipline is for our restoration, not condemnation. I'm certain that the spirit of God in the preaching of his word, has prompted you to re-evaluate the 'state of your heart' in your understanding of the Sovereign God, that reflects in your 'devotion', in your 'conduct' and in your 'prayer lives'.

In all through this God continues to be God, there is no variation in him. He is Holy and Just, loving, and gracious and forgiving, is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (lovingkindness/mercy) and faithfulness. He continues to bestow his saving grace on whom he willed to save and when his children stray, in love he disciplines to restore and redeem them. (Though I must confess, it is so hard for some of us to understand the loving discipline part of God as our perfect heavenly father, as we have distanced ourselves with the concept of discipline based on our past sinful experiences and sin).

Nevertheless, we know that God hears his children's distress cry even when they stray away from him. God heard the pagan sailors when they called out to him, and he heard Jonah's prayer out from the belly of the fish and rescued them both to safety. God bestowed his saving grace to the sailors and restored Jonah's life. God continues to be at work as he always been in accomplishing his purposes and plan and glorifying his name. The LORD (Yahweh) is a God of boundless compassion not just for Jonah and Israelites but also for the pagan sailors and Ninevites and extended to "us" as well.

I have divided for my own benefit the prayer of Jonah into sections with several elements associated with prayer.

- **Supplication with Confession and Praise:** verses two through six
- **Faith** — { **Assurance:** verse seven (that his prayer made its way to Yahweh (reached his ears), this is only possible through confession and repentance)  
**Conviction:** verse eight (do not trust in vain idols; do not forfeit steadfast love)
- **Thanksgiving:** verse nine (being grateful → sacrifice and vows)
- **God Speaks:** verse ten (Yahweh answers)

Fourth observation – Remember Yahweh, your only assurance

Verse <sup>7</sup>*When my life was fainting away, I **remembered the LORD**, and my prayer **came to you**, into your holy temple.*

The context indicates that Jonah's prayer was answered (as we see in end of verse six '*you brought me up my life from the pit, O LORD my God*'), and the importance and effectiveness of a prayer are again emphasized. This verse reveals the assurance of the effectiveness of a prayer, made by those who remember Yahweh, will reach His ears. And we know, when a sincere prayer reaches God's ears, he will act and will not delay.

The word for 'fainting away' is translated as turned over, overwhelm, faint, feeble, cover, and hide.

Overwhelmed is used five times in Psalms, out of sixteen times in OT and is always used in times of being lonely, trouble, danger, fear, and affliction.

Psalm 61 <sup>2</sup>*From the end of the earth will I cry to you, when my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to a rock that is higher than I.*

Here in Jonah's situation, we know the flood surrounded him, the large sea waves passed over him, he was driven away or turned away, the waters covered over, the deep surrounded him, weeds wrapped around his head and the bars (gates of Sheol) closed upon him. Jonah's situation is so overwhelming that its dire, there is no way out, at that moment it seemed hopeless. It is in this degree of being overwhelmed, (who did Jonah remember?) Jonah remembered The LORD (Yahweh), his God.

Verse seven of Jonah's prayer is combination of *Psalm 18* <sup>6</sup>*In my distress I called upon the LORD, to my God I cried for help. From his holy temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears*" and *Psalm 120* <sup>1</sup>*In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me*".

In overwhelming times such as Jonah's, who do you remember? Do you remember Yahweh? or Do you remember others? Your answer depends on whom you trust most.

What a relief it is JUST to remember the LORD, during the most troubled and dreadful times and to know your prayer reaches his ears. Remembering Yahweh is the confident expression of one's faith and trust in the Sovereign God, who works out all things (including the distress times and through the loss) for good to those who love God and are called according to his purposes. *1 Peter 5* <sup>7</sup>*Casting all your anxieties (burdens) upon him, for he cares for you.*

Verse <sup>7b</sup>*and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple*".

In the most overwhelming time of Jonah's life (what preceded this dreadful time is his disobedience), he turned his thought to the Holy temple, the sanctuary where God's presence is most assured. You can see the reference of God's presence is in His holy temple through the OT scriptures. *Psalm 11* <sup>4</sup>*The Lord is in His holy temple*" and in *2 Chronicles 30* <sup>27</sup>*...and God heard their voice, and their prayer came into His holy dwelling place in heaven*".

As we have studied through the Gospel of John we know from chapter 1 verse <sup>14</sup>*"And the Word became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us"* that is among his people; and not only that in chapter fourteen Jesus says, to those who believe in him, and who love him, are those who keep his commandments, Jesus says in verse <sup>17</sup>*"even the Spirit of truth who dwells in you and will be in you"* and to the same group of people who love Jesus and keep his commandments he again says in verse <sup>23</sup>*"we will come to him and make our home with him"* and in *Matthew 28* <sup>20</sup>*"Behold, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age"*.

Having this great assurance of the Triune God's presence dwelling in you and with you (in those who believe in God, love him, and obey his commandments), should you not remember Yahweh in times of trouble and distress? Should you not rely on and trust, Yahweh? Remember Yahweh, your only Blessed Assurance.

Fifth observation: Remember Yahweh your only source of steadfast love/loving-kindness/mercy/grace.

<sup>8</sup>*Those who pay regard to vain (worthless, emptiness, hopeless) idols, forsake (forfeit) their hope of steadfast love.*

The first part of verse eight at first refers to the pagan sailors who prayed each to their own God chapter 1 verse five, but it is also a message for Jonah's idolatrous fellow Israelites. In other words, Jonah is recalling the ineffectiveness of the sailor's prayers to their gods, in contrast to the effectiveness of his prayer to Yahweh, his God, even from the belly of the fish. Ironically the prayers of the pagan sailors in verse fourteen were heard by God and they experienced God's steadfast love, God's loving kindness, and God's mercy and they were saved.

Verse <sup>8b</sup> *"forsake (forfeit) their **hope** of steadfast love"*.

This does not refer to the sailors acts of mercy they have shown to others, but it refers to the source of their hope of steadfast love that is due to them from Yahweh. Those who put their hope in vain idols, forfeit the source of hope of steadfast love that is theirs. It is to say, 'they have turned their backs on all the mercies waiting for them from the LORD'. On the other hand, Jonah is also warning his fellow idolatrous Israelites by saying, do not regard vain idols, and forfeit their source of the hope of steadfast love.

This verse reveals Jonah's conviction. After his Gods loving discipline that worked out needed restoration to bring back his soul from fleeing away 'from God and redeeming' (rescue) his life 'from the pit', he now does the work of a prophet – a spokesperson for God, by professing his conviction. Remember (Yahweh) your only source of hope, mercy, grace, and steadfast love.

I think there is more to this verse for our edification. We know an idol is a carved image – they have eyes but cannot see, they have ears but cannot hear, they have mouths but cannot speak – in the day of distress, your cry to those idols results in nothing. We also know an idol is something that is more desired, more loved, more wanted and more treasured than God himself. That could be anything which takes the place reserved for God and him alone. Whatever your life, your heart, your mind is consumed with, becomes an idol.

Tim Keller in his book 'Counterfeit Gods' goes beyond the superficial expressions of idolatry to the root issues of the heart. Our hearts are idol-making factories that make good gifts from God ultimate in our lives, thereby replacing God in our affections. He writes "What is an idol? It is anything that is more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you, what only God can give". And he defines "A counterfeit god is anything so essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living".

You may be asking what's the point in defining an idol and counterfeit gods? Examine yourself, if there are idols in your heart and that they have become ultimate for you, and that you are trusting in them? If there are idols as God convicts you, be sure to run to him, for he redeems you and restores your soul.

Jonah's conviction here is by experience when he says or rather warns, do not pay regard to all those false idols of your heart. They are worthless, hopeless, and empty. You forfeit your only source of steadfast love, lovingkindness, and mercy of Yahweh, the only God, who alone knows you, sees you, hears your cry for mercy and rescues and redeems you and brings you to safety.

Let us remind ourselves, not to turn our hearts to the good gifts and make them ultimate in our lives; but let us fix/arrest our gaze on to the good gifts giver, who gave his one and only son Jesus Christ, who was crushed and was humiliated beyond degree and endured the excruciating pain, until the payment for your sin and mine is fully paid and died on the cruel cross. He was then buried and as he said, on the third day he rose from the dead, resurrected to life, and ascended to heaven and is interceding for you and me. Remember Yahweh, your only and true source of hope of steadfast love, mercy, and loving-kindness and resurrection. Do you have this hope?

Sixth observation: Remember Yahweh, your Thanksgiving and Salvation

<sup>9</sup>*But I with the voice of **thanksgiving** will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. **Salvation** belongs to the LORD! (Yahweh).*

This verse picks up the thought at the end of the previous chapter in verse sixteen, where the pagan sailors offer sacrifices and make vows. It is worth noting, what started as a general fear in chapter one verse five, grew into an intense fear in verse ten, and matured into the fear, that is the reverent worship of the LORD. The exact response expected from the people who fear the LORD.

And now Jonah in his prayer says, '*But I*' – these words suggest Jonah's continued confession. He is essentially saying, "in contrast to my former self, along with those of whom I then was one, but now having learned a new lesson of trust in God, I will humbly claim my steadfast love and express my gratefulness to Yahweh, who is my Hope, my Mercy, and I will sacrifice to God, and I will pay what I have vowed to my God, Yahweh. '*But I*' also suggests, who else would know better than the idolaters, and who have learned a lesson of dependence on God, would offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving with the voice that is suitable for thanksgiving.

Continuing in verse nine "*with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay*". Jonah's prayer is drawing the contrast between the 'call out of his distress' and 'cry out of the belly of Sheol' in verse one, with the apt and acceptable 'voice of thanksgiving'. The distress call and cries are now turned into voice of thanksgiving. The '*voice of thanksgiving*' is a grateful response that flows from those who have experienced Yahweh's lovingkindness that leads them to repentance and life eternal. It's the expected rightful response from those who run to God with a penitent heart and receive forgiveness and out flows the gratefulness

that is due to Yahweh. ‘Voice of thanksgiving’ is generally expressed through a song or a prayer or a testimony about God’s mercy and grace and steadfast love after coming clean before God.

- *Psalm 26* <sup>6</sup> “I shall wash my hands in innocence, So I will go around your altar, O Yahweh, <sup>7</sup>In order to proclaim with the ‘voice of thanksgiving’ and to ‘recount’ all Your wondrous deeds.” and
- *Psalm 116* <sup>12</sup> “What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me? <sup>13</sup> I will lift up the cup of salvation and ‘call’ on the name of the Lord, <sup>14</sup> I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people” and
- *Psalm 30* <sup>11</sup> “You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, <sup>12</sup>that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!”

Sometimes Gods answer to our call, to our cry to our prayers, is to allow us to go through the tough times, challenging times, troubled times; but he promises his assurance of his presence with you, and that you hold on to your only source of hope from where you salvation comes and even before He brings you out of the distress you will praise Yahweh with thankful and grateful heart.

Finally, Jonah seems to have understood. He humbles himself and admits, by saying, Jonah quotes from *Psalm 3* <sup>8</sup>” *Salvation belongs to the LORD!*” Salvation is of the LORD! Not of man. Not according to our wish, thoughts, and plans, but according to God and God alone. He is the giver of Salvation. He gives to whom he willed. Salvation is for all who believes that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

You see Jonah’s prayer is not a request to be saved from the fish but is thanksgiving for being saved by the fish. Did you get this yet? It is then he understood Salvation belongs to the LORD. God saves the humble, who cry out to Him not only rescuing from the eminent danger, but He also saves their soul from the corruption of sin and death and decay. The truth is God calls the weakest, the low and despised and the foolish in the world and fills them with treasure in the earthen vessels (jars of clay) and accomplishes his purposes of Salvation, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not of man. Remember Yahweh, your Thanksgiving and Salvation.

Seventh observation: Remember Yahweh, who speaks

<sup>10</sup>*And the LORD (Yahweh) **spoke** to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.*

We know our God speaks. From the first book of the Bible, we read he spoke, and everything came into existence according to his plan, to accomplish his purposes for the praise of his glorious name. We also read in *Hebrews 1* <sup>1</sup> “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he

*created the world. <sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power”.*

If need be, God will appoint or employ all his creation to bring back his strayed children to his fold and he does it all in love as he cares to restore his children into his image, more Christlike.

*Romans 8 <sup>31</sup> “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?*

May the good Lord, help us to remember Yahweh our only Assurance, our only source of Hope and our only source of Thanksgiving and Salvation, so to live a life that reflects Christ.

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### -----Feb/15/23 - Discipleship Questions-----

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**SERMON TITLE:** Jonah’s Prayer of Faith and Thanksgiving – Jonah 2:7-10 ESV

**HEAD:** These questions help you examine the truth of God’s Word.

In the light of Sunday’s sermon, while in the belly of the fish, Jonah remembered to look to the Temple of God.

1. What prompted Jonah to pray this way? “With faith and thanksgiving”. What prompted Jonah to pray this way? “With faith and thanksgiving”. *Psalm 11:4; 2 Chronicles 30:27; Isaiah 43:1-3; John 14:17, 23.* (Feel free to share other references).

**HEART:** These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

We often think of idols as carved images, and they can be, but idols can also be anything that your life, heart, and mind is consumed with than the Sovereign God.

2. What appears to be Jonah’s “idol” that he followed, now seems to have repented in Jonah 2:8? Jonah 1:3, 5, 12.
3. What are some idols (things other than God) have you clung to that have hindered your walk with Jesus and why is this similar to idolatry? *Exodus 20:4-6; Micah 5:13; Acts 17:16.*
4. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

**HANDS/HABITS:** These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

5. Jonah’s thanksgiving confession in 2:9 and Psalm 3:8 “*Salvation belongs to the LORD!*”. Knowing and believing-in this truth, how does your worship to Yahweh reflect going forward than before? (‘Calls and cries of distress’ turned to ‘voice of thanksgiving’ (praise, song, confession, submission, and surrender in obedience)? *Acts 16:25, Psalm 26:6-7, and 34:1.* (Jonah’s prayer is not a request to be saved from the fish, but thanksgiving for being saved by the fish).