

Jonah 2 8/9/10

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to Jonah chapter 2. I'm reading verse 8, 8, 9, and 10. Jonah 2 at verse 8.

Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I with a voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you what I have vowed I will pay.

Salvation belongs to the Lord. And the Lord spoke to the fish and had vomited Jonah out upon the dry land. We've been looking at this runaway prophet Jonah and the turbulent terrible times that he's been having as he's been trying to run away from God.

Where he refused to go and to deliver the message that had been given to him to go to that great city Nineveh. And Jonah's life, as we know, has been absolutely momentous because he's been trying to do the impossible.

He's been trying to run away from God. And, you know, when you think about it, you cannot think of anything more stupid in the whole wide world, more dangerous, more awful than to try and run away from God.

[1 : 17] But it's attempting the impossible. And, you know, the wonderful thing about this, and it's what we see so often in the Word of God, is God's mercy. Because although Jonah ran away from God, God wasn't finished with Jonah.

Jonah, God ran after Jonah just as he came after Adam in the garden. Remember how Adam ran away from God or tried to. And God calls out to Adam, Adam, where are you?

And here again we find, although Jonah is trying to run from the Lord, the Lord deals with Jonah.

And as we saw, we were looking at how he appointed this great fish to swallow up Jonah.

And I think the word of warning always is there. There might not be, if we try and run away from God, there might not be. How awful it might appear, a great fish, there might not be something to swallow us and give us a second opportunity.

Because that is certainly what Jonah was given. And, of course, we saw, we were looking last week at Jonah's prayer. And I'm sure we've all prayed in strange places.

[2 : 28] Because although there are certain places that we're familiar in our own home or here in church, there are certain places that we associate with prayer. I'm sure we have all prayed in strange places.

I would imagine every person who has ever flown in a plane has prayed. Well, everybody in here, I'm sure. Because I certainly am a comfortable flyer.

And I don't know many people who are 100% comfortable. And we often, when we're entering into places of maybe we're going out of our comfort zone a wee bit, we will pray.

So we pray in the sky. We might pray in the seas. We pray in various places. But I can't imagine that there were too many people who have prayed in the belly of a great fish or a whale.

But certainly that was where Jonah prayed. And he prayed one of the great prayers, really, that we have recorded in the Scripture. And we saw last week that the great turning point in Jonah's life was in verse 4.

[3 : 33] Because on the one hand, he was making this fearful, he had come to this fearful conclusion, I am driven away from your sight. You know, that is the most awful thought for any person who has known the presence of God.

To come to this place and say, I am driven away from your sight. That has almost got the idea that I have been driven away from every flicker of your grace and your mercy and your love and your goodness.

It's as if God is abandoned and God would have been right to abandon Jonah because that was what he was choosing, was to run away from God. But the wonderful thing is that Jonah didn't stop there.

And you know, may I say that in a sense, that very picture of running away from every flicker of God's grace and mercy and goodness and help and support is really a picture of hell. Although we can never say that hell is out of God's sight, but it's a place that is away from his favor, his mercy, his grace and so on.

[4 : 51] But we saw the turning point is in this very verse because although Jonah first says, I'm driven away from your sight, yet despite the awful predicament that I am in, I shall look again upon your holy temple.

In other words, Jonah was saying, the situation is grim, but I know that there's only one place in the whole universe that I can turn to.

And that is where the mercy seat is, to the holy temple where it was God's place on this earth, where he had promised to presence himself.

It was a place where sacrifice was made for sin. And that's where Jonah was turning in his heart. There in the dark, slimy dungeon of the whale's belly.

And all to all intents and purposes, not just doomed to death, but doomed in that he was away from the favor of God. And yet he says, I'm going to turn to the Lord.

[5 : 53] Despite how things are, despite how grim the situation is, Lord, he's really saying, Lord, have mercy on me.

The Lord heard us cry. And maybe for some in here today, you are in a dark place.

And maybe you feel that the Lord has abandoned you and is done with you. You think back to other days and there was vibrancy and you felt close to the Lord.

And sometimes you've come to the conclusion the way things are. Has God forgotten all about me? As the psalmist said, has God forgotten to be gracious?

That's the way you feel. Well, could I suggest that we adopt what Jonah did and turn again to the place where you first found the peace of God.

[6 : 55] Turn again to Jesus. And I know that I'm talking here to those who are already united to Jesus, but are in a dark place. Please go back to where you first discovered the light and the peace and the joy of the Lord.

Because he's unchanging in his ways and in his passion. You see, this is the only way where we can get it right. You get to the example. Take the example of two.

Remember two of the disciples. Look at Judas. Judas looked at the mess that he made in his life.

And he fell into utter despair. And he took his own life. Never looked any further or beyond the mess that he had made in his life.

And he fell into utter despair. Then you look at Peter. And Peter looks into his own heart and into his life. And he also is in utter despair.

[7 : 58] Because of what he did to his Lord and Savior Jesus. But the difference was that Peter didn't just look into his heart.

But he looked back to the Jesus who had looked on him. And Peter once again had a future and a hope. And that is why it is so important that we don't wallow in the despair that sin can bring.

The captivity that sin can bring us into. Because Satan wants to bring us into despair. He wants to rob us of any joy. Of any light.

Of any life. Of any fruit that we have. And if we are just looking in and looking at this. We are not going to progress. We are not going to enjoy. The favors and the blessing.

And the life and the light that God has for us. So Jonah is a great example of turning away. And looking to the Lord.

[9 : 01] And then Jonah says. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. And again this can be translated in A.V. It talks about those that observe lying vanities.

And to a certain extent observing lying vanities and idols really come up to the same thing. Those who pay regard to vain idols.

Now as you and I know. Idols are far more than simply making some card image. Or making some object. Or even as people sometimes would worship the sun and the moon.

There are people who worship all kinds of things. And we would say to them. Oh that is daft. But you know we can be guilty of idolatry. Anything that we put in place of the Lord.

Anything that our heart goes out to more than to the Lord. Becomes an idol. And I have a feeling that in Jonah's life. Something that had a higher place in his heart.

[10:03] Than even his love to the Lord. Was his patriotic zeal to his own people. To his own country. He was a real nationalist. Now we spoke about that before.

That is why he didn't want to go to Assyria. That awful nation. That cruel nation. That used to skin people alive. And boil people alive. And he was saying.

Why is the Lord sending me to them? Because he was afraid. That they would hear the message. And repent. And the Lord would deal graciously with him.

And then they would come in. And obliterate Israel. And so the nationalistic fervor of Jonah. Was greater than his love to the Lord.

Which would have brought obedience to God's message. Now don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that it's wrong to be patriotic. We should all be patriotic. To our own people and to our own nation.

[11:00] Of course we should. And there should be a loyalty. But not over and above. Our love for the Lord. Anything that we give our heart to.

More than to the Lord. Is danger of becoming an idol. Within things that are absolutely right. And proper and legitimate. And that is probably often the case. Where we set things above our love for the Lord.

So we've always got to be careful with these things. And so Jonah of course. What Jonah did was he thought he was wiser than God. And he didn't like the course of action that God was giving to him.

So he said I'm going to do my own thing. Have you ever done that? I'm sure we all have. Where we find that what the Lord is saying to us. As he's challenging us in the word.

Is something and we don't like it. And we say actually I prefer. I would prefer to do it another way. I prefer another course of action. And the thing is.

[12:04] If we go that way. We will find ourselves. The same thing will happen to us. As happened to Jonah. You'll notice. When Jonah tried to go away from the Lord. Everything that happened.

It was downward. Jonah went in a downward spiral. From the moment he began to disobey God. He went down to Joppa. He went down.

The actual language where he went into the boat is. He went down as it were into the cabin in the boat. He ended up going down into the storm. Down into the ocean.

And then down into the belly of the whale. It was a downward spiral. Down, down, down, down, down. And that's always what happens. When we try.

And run away from God. And where we observe. The idols. Or where we look at the lying vanities. And again. If we were to look at that expression of lying vanities.

[13:01] Or as translated idols. But if we think even of lying vanities. What Jonah is saying here. Those who pay regard to. Suppose we take that translation to lying vanities.

Forsake their hope of steadfast love. Jonah had a choice. As he was down there in the belly of the whale. He was either to look at the situation he was in.

And accept it as the end. And the abandonment and forsakenness of God. Or else he was going to look again to the Lord.

And he refused to look at the situation. Because he turned to look at the Lord. And as I said before. Please don't listen just to your heart.

You know I hear people sometimes saying. Oh they say. You know my heart guides me through life. Well I would say to you. With all due respect. That is the most dangerous guide you can have.

[14:02] Because do you know what the Bible tells us. We're not talking about the physical tick tick heart within us. We're talking about our inner being. Our soul. The depth of our whole spiritual being.

Do you know what the Bible says about our heart. If your heart is your guide. Listen to what the Bible says. The heart is deceitful. Above all things. And desperately wicked.

So is that going to be your guide? I'm going to follow my heart. I'm going to follow that thing. Which is deceitful above all things.

And desperately wicked. That is the road to disaster. And that is why the only way. Is to follow the word.

Remember what it says. The word of God is the only rule to direct us. How we may glorify and enjoy. And you know people say. I don't enjoy God.

[14:59] I used to. But you know. See glorify and enjoy come together. And glorify comes first. And then they enjoy. And if our aim. And if it is our desire. And if it is our prayer and life to glorify

God.

I guarantee you. If that is the course we're on. The enjoying of God will come with it. The two come together. You glorify God in your life. And as you seek to glorify him.

You will enjoy him. Fulfilling the purpose for which we were made. And so we find Jonah. And he's down here in the belly.

And he says. Those who pay regard to vain idols. Forsake their hope of steadfast love. Do you know. I think this is Jonah. I wish Jonah had remembered this moment.

When he went to Nineveh. Because at this moment. Jonah has captured something. Of the missionary evangelistic zeal. That should have been with him. When he later went to Nineveh.

[15:58] Because at that moment. He is seeing the utter hopelessness. Of idolatry. He is seeing it as something. That any person who follows it. Is actually forsaking.

They themselves. Are forsaking God's mercy. And you know. Nobody wants to forsake God's mercy. Surely. And that's what he's seeing.

Of forsaking. Their hope of steadfast love. So as Jonah's. Looking at what idolatry is. And he's. I think maybe at that moment.

He's thinking about Nineveh. He certainly would be thinking. About the sailors back on the boat. And he realizes. That idolatry is just. It's utter rubbish.

It's the most stupid thing. In the whole universe. And that the only. Only hope is God's mercy. That's why I'm saying. At that moment.

[16:56] Jonah has something there. About that. Missionary zeal. Which. Unfortunately. He lost. But. We notice. Move to version nine. Notice something wonderful here. Here's Jonah.

Right. And he's down here. In the belly. This dark. Slimy. Smelly. Belly. Of this great fish. Nothing. Has changed.

Right. He's still there. Nothing. Has changed. But we find. In verse nine. He says. But I. With a voice. Of thanksgiving.

Will sacrifice. To you. I think. This is one of the great displays. Of faith. In the Bible. Jonah. Hasn't been given any.

Ray of hope. Jonah. Hasn't had. A light. God. Hasn't caused some light. To go on. In the belly. Of the whale. Hasn't. Things haven't changed.

[17:52] And the smell. Taken away. And all the acid. And everything like that. I would imagine. When Jonah. Eventually. Came out. He would have been. Some state. Nothing. Has changed. Outwardly.

Where the great. Change. Is inwardly. In Jonah. Not long ago. We were looking at Jonah. He was so backslidden. That the heathen sailors.

Had to come to him. Shake him. And say. Waken man. And start praying. That's how far he was away. That the heathen. Had to ask him to pray.

And now we find him. In this dungeon. As it were. And he started. Praising God. You see. God's working. God has been at work. In the heart.

Of this prophet. So there's this incredible. Transformation. And my friends. I think Jonah. Is here. A great example. To us.

[18:49] With a voice. Of thanksgiving. He's going to. I will. With a voice. Of thanksgiving. Will sacrifice. To you. Now notice. The two words. There. Thanksgiving.

And sacrifice. What is sacrifice? Sacrifice. Is something. That costs us. Whether it's financially. Or physically. Or emotionally. Or whatever. To sacrifice. To give sacrificially. Means it's something. That's going to cost you.

And here. That's. That's. Kind of get an idea. That. The situation. The surroundings. Everything. Goes against.

The whole idea. Of thanksgiving. You say. To your shirt. Jonah. What have you got. To thank God for. Down in there. But. You see.

[19:44] The thing is. God has worked. In Jonah. And Jonah. At this moment. Is not looking. To his circumstances. He's not. Feeling. I don't know. What goes on. In the belly of a whale. But.

I would not like. To be there. He's not. All he can think of is. God is great. God is majestic. I am going to. Praise God.

For he is good. And that's what the. You know. The word of God. Often tells us that. Psalm 107. If we had sung it. In the. In the Scottish Psalter. It talks. More.

It comes out. More with the. Sacrifice of thanksgiving. Hebrews talks about. Offering the sacrifice. Of praise to God. Continually. May I say to. All of us today. Don't wait. Until things are brilliant. Before you praise God. It's very easy to. Praise God. When everything's going great.

[20 : 43] Can be a lot harder. To praise God. When everything's going against you. But you know. In an amazing way. When we do.

God responds. To praise. In a way. Almost in a way. That he doesn't respond. To anything else. In fact. I might be wrong. In saying that. But. I read.

A. Statement. Somewhere. I think I've said it before. Praise. Changes. Things. And that was true. For Jonah. When he began to praise. And thank God. Notice what happens. Verse 10. And the Lord.

Spoke to the fish. And it vomited Jonah. Out. Upon the dry land. It was after. He began to praise. And thank God.

[21 : 42] The God. Who had appointed. This fish. To come along. Appointed this fish. To swallow Jonah. Has now appointed. And commanded. That the fish.

Would vomit Jonah. Out. On. To the dry land. And so. I believe that. As I said. That God responds. As we've often looked at. Examples of praise. Three. Three biblical examples. See the effect of praise. Remember when. God told. Joshua.

To lead Israel. Round the walls of Jericho. And for seven days. They traveled around. These.

Walked around. These walls. And then the seventh day. They were. To. To.

Give this cry. And this shout. I would imagine. It'd be very easy. To say. Lord. Lord. Give a. Give a wee. Sort of. Give us a sign.

[22 : 36] Before. May some of the. The. The. The. Stones. Begin to. Fall out of the wall. May things loosen up. A wee bit. Sort of.

May the walls. Teeter and shake a little. And then. We'll give the cry. No. Everything remained. The same. Everything remained. The same. By. Faith.

We're told. And it was this. Cry. Of. Victory. Of. Trust in the Lord. The walls. Came down. Of course. It was the Lord. Who caused the walls. Walls to fall. But it was. We're told in Hebrews. It was by faith. The faith. Of. Praise. And triumph. And victory.

That shout. A second example. We see is in 2nd Chronicles. Remember how Jehoshaphat. Was invaded by. It was a. It was a. Like allied armies.

[23 : 29] Came up against him. Jehoshaphat. Was distraught. Because he knew he had. No power or might. Against this great army. And we find Jehoshaphat.

Falling before the Lord. Pleading before the Lord. Jehoshaphat. Was a good king. Oh Lord. Help us. And you can read all about. That. And the message came to Jehoshaphat.

Similar words to. That came to Moses. Stand still. And see the salvation of the Lord. And we find Jehoshaphat's. Faith soaring. Do you know.

Do you know. How much it soared. That he gathered his army. But it wasn't his army. He sent out. Against this. Massive. There were three.

At least three nations. Had come up against him. Three forces. He got the temple choir. And he put them out at the front. And they walked out singing.

[24 : 28] Praise to the Lord. His mercy endures forever. Was that not the sacrifice of praise? When he had all these soldiers.

Stamping their spears on the ground. And yelling and shouting. And ready to charge. And it's your temple choir. You're sending out to sing. About God's mercy.

Singing praise to him. But you know what happened. The three allied armies. Began to fight. I don't know what happened. But God was in control.

They began to fight one another. And instead of coming to fight Judah. Mayhem broke out. And they all began to kill each other. And Judah just stood and watched.

Until they had virtually destroyed one another. And Judah were given this incredible loot. All the booty. All the spoil of war. God responds.

[25 : 28] To praise. Particularly when that praise comes. As it were. By way of sacrifice. Where it's faith in action. Paul and Silas. Last example.

You remember them. They're in the dungeon. They're in the inner prison. The maximum security wing. Of that prison in Philippi. And they've been bruised and battered.

In fact their backs are open. Bleeding. If we were to run to A&E.; With that state. People would say. Where on earth have you been?

That's a worse doing. I've ever seen anybody get. And they were there. Down in the darkness. With their feet fast in the stocks. And they had gone to Philippi.

In response to the Lord's command. Do we find Paul and Silas. This is just so unfair. I was doing what the Lord asked.

[26 : 24] And look at us. No. It tells us. The other prisoners heard them. Singing. Praise to the Lord. Then it tells us.

Great earthquake came. And shook the foundation of the prison. So that the doors opened. And we know the rest.

The conversion of the Philippian jailer. What must I do to be saved? And of course. Paul and Silas were delivered from the prison. You see. God's people.

In the furnace. In the fear. In the darkness. Praising and thanking God. God responds. And he delivers. He's the unchanging God.

And maybe today. You're in darkness. Maybe you're in fear. Try praising God. You might say to yourself.

[27 : 23] If you knew. Where I was today. You would. Would not be asking me. To praise God. You would not be asking me.

To thank God. It goes against the grain. Because. That is the most difficult thing. You could ask me to do. Well remember. The word is sacrifice.

The sacrifice. Of praise. Try it. If you're here. And you're not a believer. Let me say to you. A. Thank the Lord.

For sending his son. Jesus Christ. Into the world. To save sinners. Because you can put your hand up. And say. Hey. I'm a sinner. So it's for the likes of me. He came.

Yeah. Thank the Lord. That. You are. Where he has put you. Where the gospel is preached. Where you have a Christian heritage.

[28 : 18] Where you're coming. Under the gospel. So many people. Have no idea. But there's. So many people. Don't even. They're not interested. You're here. What a reason. To thank God.

And then say to the Lord. Lord. Take me further. Come into my heart. I'm hearing all this about. Living a life to your glory.

Please Lord. Help me so to do. And ask the Lord to come in. To your heart. So that you will live. A God glorifying. Life.

To him. Let us pray. O Lord our God. We pray to help us today. Help us to live by faith. Help us to look to the cross.

Help us to believe in Jesus. We pray to guide us throughout this day. Take us to our homes safely. And lead us in the way that we should go. Watch over us all.

[29 : 15] And all whom we love. And have mercy upon us. For giving us our sin. In Jesus name. Amen.