

Jonah Ch 1 v17 / ch2 v 11

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[0 : 00] of Jonah. Jonah chapter 1 and verse 17 we read there. And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying, then we look to verse 4. Then I said, I am driven away from your sight, yet I shall again look upon your holy temple. Last time we saw the sailors were trying furiously to row to land because they did not want to do the thing that Jonah asked them to do, which was to throw him overboard.

Remember how Jonah had confessed that he had done wrong. He told them, he told them, I don't know how long it took him, but he preached to a certain extent. He gave them his life story, or at least he gave them the relevant part of his life story. He told them that he was a prophet of God. He told them he was running away. And he pointed them to everything that was round, round and about, the raging sea and the sky and everything, the darkened, blackened sky. You know, Jonah is an extreme kind of character because his pulpit was a bouncing deck of a ship. He preached in the strangest place and he prayed from the strangest place.

We shall see that in a moment. He prayed from the belly of this great fish. And we find that Jonah is making a confession. It was rather late to a certain extent, but he makes a great confession. And he tells these men what he was doing and what had happened.

And the great thing, if you remember, was that Jonah condemned himself. He, as it were, agreed with God's judgment. And that's repentance. You know, people wonder, what really is repentance?

[2 : 21] In a sense, it's saying or agreeing with God. It's saying the same thing as God. It's agreeing with God's judgment, with God's verdict, with God's assessment of how we are.

It's not an easy thing sometimes to do. But that is repentance, where we come to agree with what God is saying of us, what God is speaking about and challenging us regarding our sin.

We're told, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. A lot of people don't like to hear that and they say, I don't. I don't. You mean I'm a sinner? Okay, I'm not perfect.

But people don't like to be told they're sinners because we're proud. And if we're told we're sinners straight away, we see the imperfection. And we're told we're imperfect. But repentance is agreeing with God's verdict and saying, yeah, Lord, I am. I have sinned. And we come to the Lord seeking for forgiveness, genuinely so, asking the Lord for, genuinely coming, asking for pardon and for forgiveness. Then we saw a strange situation because we've got to remember that Jonah was on the run from God because he didn't want to go to Nineveh. And he didn't want to go to Nineveh to preach to that city. Remember why? He didn't want them to turn to the Lord and repent. Jonah wanted that the Assyrians of this great city would be destroyed by God. And so he didn't want to go. It's an extraordinary thing because here is this believer acting in a terrible way where he's wanting the judgment on the wrath of

God to come down in a city. And God is saying to Jonah, will you go and preach against this city? And Jonah rightly knew his God and knew that the Lord, through Jonah's preaching, would deal with that city, that that city would in all likelihood repent and God would forgive them and turn from the fusioners of his anger, which is exactly what happened. And so Jonah didn't want to go. Because remember, we looked and we saw that he was a proud, nationalistic Jew. And he didn't want, because the Assyrians were that fearsome nation, unbelievably cruel, some of the things that they did to those who capture you can read that from history. So he didn't want to go. But God was going to deal with Jonah, and God was going to have that message proclaimed. And so we find this strange situation that on the boat, you have these heathen sailors trying with all their might to save Jonah's life. They didn't want him to go into the water. And Jonah, the believer, is running away from God because he doesn't want to deliver God's message, because he doesn't want people saved. It's really quite extraordinary.

[5 : 44] It's turned everything on its head. The unbelievers with hearts of compassion and care and feeling, and the believer void of compassion and care. It's really an awful situation.

But you know, sadly, there are times when the world, when the non-Christian will show greater heart, greater respect, greater compassion than the believer. And that shouldn't be. Because one of the great hallmarks of Christ's life as he lived it in this world, we're told, he was moved with compassion.

In other words, compassion was at the very heart of Christ's life in his dealings with people. And if the image of Christ is being renewed in his people, then compassion has to be something that is evident within the life. So God has a lot of work to do with his prophet Jonah. So we find that here's Jonah. And the time has come, remember, we saw also that, that they eventually, they took him and they threw him into the water. And it had to be that way. It was a God-appointed way. There was to be no other way for the sea to calm. And as we know, there is no other way of us experiencing God's peace in our heart, but by going in the God-appointed way, that is, seeking the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we find here that the storm, the storm has calmed. And it was a frightening experience.

But the wonderful thing we see here is that God hasn't finished with Jonah. God is going to get Jonah to proclaim that message, come what may. And so we find that the Lord appointed, if you have any SV, you'll see a wee two there, and it says down at the bottom, or had appointed. Another translation is God had prepared. It depends on which version you're looking at. But it all means the same thing, whether it is had appointed, or whether it is prepared. The wonderful thing is here we see the rule, control, dominion of God over all things, of the birds of the air and of the fish of the sea.

He rules and overrules everything. And he's appointed, he's prepared, he has directed this huge monster of the ocean. And there's great fish. We're told in the New Testament, it's referred to as being a whale. So we understand that that's what it was. This great fish came and gobbled up Jonah.

[8 : 50] Must have been quite an extraordinary, extraordinary thing. You know, there's a lot of people who who don't accept that God controls everything. There's a lot of people who actually believe that God is, they believe in God as a creator God. They say that the way that they look at life, they say, well, we just cannot accept this big bang, can't accept that just this world of extraordinary order has come about without a higher power bringing into being and creating. So there's a lot of people will agree with that. But the idea of God is that he has created to a certain extent, and then it's like winding up a clock, and then left it just to tick away. And that's the way that God has worked with this world. Like he made the world, and it's like it's a clock, he wound it up, and then that's it.

And that he has no more government or control or rule or anything. He's just left everything as it is. But the Word of God makes it very clear to us that with regard to ourselves, we live and we move and we have our being in him. We're told that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge.

That he is doing according to his will with the armies of heaven and with the inhabitants of the earth. In other words, everything, he has dominion over everything in the land, in the sea, and in the air. Everything counts the number of the stars. He names them one by one. Everything is under his authority and under his control. And that is something that we have to lay hold upon.

That doesn't mean that we're going to understand everything. Because again, the Word tells us that God's ways, just as the heavens are high above the earth, so are God's ways. God's thoughts are higher than our ways and thoughts. Because loads of things happen in our lives and in the lives of others that we don't understand. And lots of people have the questions, how come, why? Why does God allow?

Why is there this? Why is there that? Well, we're not going down this road just now, but we've always got to remember that the world that God made initially was a perfect world. It was a beautiful world. God's initial purpose for this world was one of harmony, glory, peace, togetherness, life, love. And at the very beginning, as God made this world in a world of peace and harmony, it was a world without death, without sorrow, without breakup, without anything of these things.

[11 : 50] And it was because of the entrance of sin. God said, the day you eat, you will surely die. You're going to break and spoil and ruin and mar everything. Not just for yourself, but for the whole world so that the very creation, we're told, is groaning. That's why there's all these volcanoes and earthquakes and natural disruptions, because sin has affected the whole universe.

And yet, in it all, in all the sorrows and in the pains, God is still working. And particularly, he's working for his people. And he will bring good. Not that there's good in the pain or in the sorrow, but he is able and will bring good to you out of it. And that is a mystery. It's not what happened is good. That's not what we're saying. But the Lord will work everything together for good. He will, his ultimate purpose will bring good into your life, even despite the pain and the sorrow. That's what he has promised to do. And so God orders that this great fish would swallow up Jonah. And of course, Jonah's in this fish. And Jonah, in fact, we know that what happened to Jonah, it was twofold. One, it happened for his own good. But secondly, it happened for our good. You see, God was working in Jonah's life. We'll look at that in a moment. But he was also working with Jonah, because Jonah was actually going to become a sign to somebody far greater. And we've got to remember that God will sometimes touch us in order to touch somebody else. That might be difficult for us to understand, but it happens. Lazarus died. Remember Lazarus? He became ill and died. And through all that happened, Mary's faith was so strengthened, Martha's faith was strengthened, and many Jews came to believe believe in Jesus over what happened. Now, this happens so often. God sometimes will put his finger on you.

And yes, he's working in you, but he's also going to work in other people through you. And that's part of what's happening here with Jonah, because Jonah is a sign, as we said, to somebody greater. He is a sign with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ. You remember when Jesus came into this world, and as he ministered in this world, many of the religious people couldn't cope with Jesus, because he was radical. He was revolutionary in his day. He didn't follow the hundreds of laws. Remember, the Jews had made, they had built law upon law upon law upon law upon the law of God, so that it became, it was actually, they had made an intolerable burden for the people. The people who had bowed down with all the weight. It had become the most legalistic life. Jesus came and he broke that. We might find it quite hard to understand where we live in the liberty and the freedom of the gospel. But Jesus came to bring that in. And the people of the day, those who were bound in all their legalism and in their straitjackets, they couldn't cope with him not paying regard to their laws. He, of course, was paying regard to the law of God, but not to that.

All the man-made laws they had built on top of. And so one day they came to Jesus, and they were saying, by what authority are you doing and teaching all this way? And remember what Jesus said to them.

They said to him, give us a sign, give us a sign. And Jesus said to them that he would give them no sign other. No sign will be given but the sign of the prophet Jonah. As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The Lord is pointing to what happened to Jonah. Remember what happened to Jonah? Jonah went to it. Now, Jonah didn't die. There are some people who believe that Jonah died in the whale's belly and that he was, the Lord raised him up again. I don't believe that. I believe he remained alive all that time in the belly of the fish. But to all appearances, Jonah went the way of death.

[16 : 51] As he sailors threw him overboard, it was to his death. But as Jonah hit into the water and went down into the water to all appearances to death, the calm brought, the calm came. And so it is with Jesus that Jesus went the way of death in order to bring calmness and peace and salvation into our lives.

Jonah remained for three days and three nights in the grip of death. So did Jesus. And Jonah returned, remember, on the third day into the land of the living. We'll see that next time, how the fish vomited Jonah out onto dry land. And on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead.

Jonah was a sign of the resurrection power of God. He was all but dead, lying at the bottom, almost to the bottom of the ocean in this fish. And yet he comes back and he brings the message of God to the city and the city respond to it. Jesus rose from the dead. And as he did so, he was proof of God's raising power. And he also, when he went back to heaven, sent the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit has come with this great message of faith and repentance. And that, of course, is where we are today and where we are believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. So Jonah is this sign. But God is dealing with Jonah.

Because let's go back to Jonah for a moment. Jonah, remember, is in a bad place. He's a believer, but he's in a bad place. Because if we put him back on the boat, let's go back onto the boat with Jonah for a moment. Everybody in that boat was in absolute terror. Verse 5, then the mariners were afraid and each cried out to his God. They were heathens. But see what they had to do in verse 6. So the captain came and said to him, what do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your God. Jonah, remember, had to be asked by the heathen people to pray. Where was Jonah at this moment? Well, I think Jonah was in a bad way. He was kind of in a backslidden, a chosen backslidden condition. Because Jonah, you try and put yourself in Jonah's situation. God had spoken to Jonah. Remember, we saw it before God had used Jonah previously in other ministries. But he had now given him this new mission.

Right, Jonah, go to Nineveh. This is what you're going to do. And Jonah runs away. And everything to begin with went great, but then everything went absolutely pear-shaped. And the world that he was living in was coming to an end, as he knew it. Is Jonah praying? No. What's Jonah doing? Have you ever been in that state, or in that condition, or in that place, where you've drifted from the Lord?

[20 : 24] You've gone down your own chosen path, as it were, and somehow you're determined just to keep going in it. And everything around you is going way off. And you know that you're in this storm. And you know it's of your own doing. But you still can't pray. Because your heart has become hard. And you're saying to yourself, I'm going to see this through. I'm going to do this my way. It's like you've shut your ears to God. You've shut your heart to God. And you're in this place. It's a bad place. But you know, the thing is, the Lord won't leave you there. Just as he didn't leave Jonah there. That's where Jonah was.

And he had to be, everything was forced out of Jonah. He had to be forced to pray. He had to be forced to make a confession. It was a good confession. But he had to be forced into all these things.

And so we find that the Lord is dealing with Jonah. And the Lord has him in the belly of this. What? I can't imagine the journey of terror that Jonah must have been in. You think of him being thrown into the surging sea. And then plummeting down in it. And then all of a sudden being swallowed up. And arriving into this black, slimy, smelly, dungeon, as it were, in the belly of the fish.

What terror. Can you imagine it? The smell, the darkness, the slime, everything. And I don't know how long he was there or what he was thinking. But God was at work with Jonah.

And we find a twofold, the time is going, twofold reaction from Jonah. And it's all found here in this prayer. Because the great thing is Jonah has begun to pray. This is what it took to get Jonah back on his knees. Back pray. I called out to the Lord, out of my distress. Some distress it was too.

[22 : 42] And Jonah is afraid that he's cast off. For you cast me into the deep. It was by God's authority. Verse four hears the despair. I am driven away from your sight.

That's how Jonah initially felt. That God had driven him away. There's a lot of, we use, there's been used the word hurled. That's what the sailors did. They hurled Jonah into the sea.

Well, Jonah also felt that God had hurled him away as well. That God was finished with him. And you know, for the believer, that's one of the most awful feelings that you can have.

To feel that you've been hurled away, cast away from God's sight. It's an awful place. But you know, there's, I believe it's only somebody who has come to faith, or somebody that the Lord is working in that can experience or feel that.

Because by and large, people don't think like that. Most people who are without the Lord aren't going around today saying, Oh, I fear I've been cast from the presence of the Lord.

[24 : 06] I fear that the Lord is finished with me. They're not thinking like that. But there might very well be one or two believers in here today, and that's how you feel.

You feel that the Lord is finished with you. You fear that you've been cast off. Jonah felt it. There were moments when David felt it.

Paul himself even said, One of his fears is that he would preach to others, and that he himself would be a castaway.

Even the great apostle. And so, although the Lord has assured us that he will never leave us, nor forsake us, there are still times when the believer will feel that they've been cast off.

But they haven't. Sometimes the Lord will, Why does the Lord allow these things? Why does this happen? Well, sometimes it happens because of the very reason it happened to Jonah.

[25 : 10] Because of our disobedience. And if we're going down a disobedient road, if we are walking away from the Lord, then we're not going to be enjoying the intimate, or aware of the intimate ministry of the Spirit.

Because as we know, the Holy Spirit ministers with our spirit, that we are the sons of God. So if we are grieving, if our walk is one that's grieving the Spirit, then we're not going to enjoy the Spirit's ministry of assurance.

That sense of witness isn't going to be there the way it was. It'll come back, but in this time, it's not there. Again, as we said, sometimes the Lord tests us, so that we'll come to a greater level of dependence upon him.

Sometimes it's because of our lack of watchfulness. And there are various reasons. But this is what I love about Jonah. Jonah, there's the despair. I'm driven away from your sight.

Yet, I shall look again upon your holy temple. That's what Jonah says. I will look again upon your holy temple.

[26 : 20] Here's hopelessness and hope. The despair and the sense of discovery. They're both going hand in hand.

The sense of being cast off, but do you know what I'm going to do, Jonah says? I know my God. And I'm going to turn and I'm going to look to your holy temple.

What was Jonah meaning by that? What was in the temple? Temple was a place of sacrifice, the place of offering. It was a place where the mercy seat was. It was a place where the presence of God was.

Jonah says, Hey, that's where I'm going. That's where I'm turning. Because I know my God. And he has promised never to leave me, nor forsake me.

So Jonah, as he prays, he is turning from the despair, turning from the hopelessness to regaining hope.

[27 : 23] And he does it by looking to the Lord. Could I say to anybody in here today who might be, who you may to a certain degree be where Jonah was.

And you're saying to yourself, things are not the way they were. I feel so far away. Go to where you first found peace.

Go to where you first got that sense of belonging. That sense of being one with the Lord. That sense of welcome.

That sense of where the guilt was removed. that sense of liberty and freedom. You see, it all came back for Jonah.

And it'll come back for you as well. If you will go back and turn again to look to the Lord. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we pray that we may learn some of the lessons from the deep.

[28 : 29] And that we may realize that your people are often put through strange, difficult, sore trials. Yes, for their own good, but also for the good of others.

Lord, we pray for those whose journey, even those in here, whose journey has been in the deep. And they have gone into deep waters and into sore affliction.

O Lord, may they discover the balm and the love and the care and the joy of the Lord being their strength. Uphold them and keep them, we pray.

Watch over us all and do us all good and cleanse us from our sin, taking us all home in safety. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. We'll conclude singing in Psalm 130 from the Scottish Psalter, the whole psalm.

Psalm 130. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried. My voice, Lord, do thou hear. Unto my supplications, voice, give an attentive ear.

[29 : 33] It's from the Scottish Psalter on page 421. Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgivenesses that feared thou mayest be.

I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope is in his word, more than they that for morning watch, my soul waits for the Lord. The whole psalm, Lord, from the depths to thee I cried.

Lord, from the depths to thee I cried, my voice for to thou hear, O Lord and through the SC dialed of the sj Ezra as the hu of the Emmanuel Planner of the Mediterranean as the possible of the heavens for the altar of the providence and has the of the heaven that false and the Simon and the Son who shall stand THE END

I pray for all my soul doth wait.

I hope this in his word, for the day that for morning watch, my soul waits for the Lord.

[31 : 55] I say for none, they love to watch, the morning light to see.

Let Israel open the Lord, for with him mercy's free.

I'm a plentiful redemption. His effort found within, and from all his iniquities, he Israel shall redeem.

Amen. Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you, now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.