

"17 And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up 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 belly of the fish, 2 saying, "I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, 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 flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. 4 Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.' 5 The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head 6 at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. 7 When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. 8 Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. 9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!" 10 And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land" (Jonah 1:17-2:10).

1. THE LORD the ONLY SAVIOUR

"And **the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah**. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (vs.17).

"yet **you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God**" (vs.6).

"**Salvation belongs to the LORD!**" (vs.9).

"And **the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land**" (vs.10).

(vs.17) - The LORD appointed the fish to swallow Jonah – the text indicates that it was when Jonah was in the belly of the fish that he prayed. "Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God **from the belly of the fish**" (vs.1).

It was not because of Jonah's prayer that the LORD commissioned a fish to swallow him.

Is this not ironic? The LORD appoints a fish or commissions a fish and it saves Jonah.

The LORD, according to His Sovereign plans and purposes determined to save Jonah from death and ensure that through him His message would be carried to Nineveh.

Illustration:

Remember how the LORD used a donkey to save Balaam.

"32 And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. 33 The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live"" (**Num.23:32-33**).

"... but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness" (**2 Pet.2:16**).

(Vs.8-9) - Salvation belongs to the LORD (vs.9) – "Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love" (vs.8).

The question is, "Who do we trust in?"

Vain idols can never deliver or save because they are idols and not the true God.

Idol – this is something that is put in place of the true God. In other words, it is not God. It is simply something that is depended upon but something that can never ultimately save.

What do we trust in? Our health, our livelihood or career, our bank balance, our family heritage, our contacts (who you know), our reputation, our intelligence, our successes,...etc.

Application:

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man

give in return for his soul?" (Matt.16:26).

(Vs.6) - Jonah declares: "yet YOU brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God."

(Vs.10) - "And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land."

Jonah had no doubt as to WHOM it was who saved him.

Jonah was not in awe of the fish, he was not preoccupied with this most unusual sea creature that swallowed him whole and in which he survived for three days until it spat him out onto dry land.

"... for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster" (**Jonah 4:2**).

Jonah is the LORD's servant, he had already been a recipient of the LORD's grace & mercy.

BUT essentially through this rebellion he is demonstrating that he was somehow deserving of the LORD's favour and not the Ninevites.

BUT Israel had been warned about becoming proud & conceited, presuming grace.

We read in Deuteronomy chapter 8:

"17 Beware lest you say in your heart, '**My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.**' 18 You shall remember the LORD your God, for **it is he who gives you power to get wealth**, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. 19 And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. 20 Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God" (**Deut.8:17-20**).

Look at Deuteronomy chapter 9:

"3 Know therefore today that He who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the LORD has promised you. 4 "Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, '**It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,**' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. 5 **Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land**, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 6 "**Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.** 7 Remember and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, **you have been rebellious against the LORD**" (**Deut.9:3-7**).

"Furthermore, the LORD said to me, 'I have seen this people, and behold, **it is a stubborn people**'" (**Deut.9:13**).

"You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you" (Deut.9:24).

May we be reminded from Scripture this morning:

"8 For **by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (**Eph.2:8-10**).

"For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (**1 Cor.4:7**).

It is alone because of JESUS the TRUE GLORIOUS SAVIOUR who spent three days and three nights in the grave. He had taken the punishment due us on the cross.

2. Jonah's PRAYER

"1 Then **Jonah prayed to the LORD his God** from the belly of the fish, 2 saying, "**I called out to the LORD**, out of my distress, and He answered me; out of the belly of Sheol **I cried**, and you heard my voice" (vs.1-2).

"I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple" (vs.7).

Until this point we do not read of Jonah praying at all. He is simply defiant in his rebellion and he flees from the LORD's commission.

Application:

Is it any different to our practice? We pray occasionally or sporadically, and then we face a crisis in life and suddenly know where to find the LORD.

Then our attitude is one of expecting the LORD to literally jump for us and do exactly what we request.

And my prayer came to you, into you holy temple (vs.7).

Notice that Jonah knows exactly what the Scriptures taught concerning Israel at prayer.

"And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive" (**1 Kings 8:30**).

Listen to the plea of your servant ... when they pray toward this place ... and when you hear forgive – submission and confession is therefore part of praying toward the temple.

2.1 Jonah's prayer in CRISIS

Well, "... Jonah prayed to the LORD his God **from the belly of the fish**..." (vs.1).

He "... called out to the LORD, **out of my (his) distress**, ..." (vs.2).

It was "... **out of the belly of Sheol I (he) cried**, ..." (vs.2).

It was when the "... **waters closed in over me (him) to take my (his) life**..." (vs.5).

It was when he "... **went down to the land whose bars closed upon me (him) forever ... from the pit**" (vs.6).

It was when his "... **life was fainting away**, I (he) remembered the LORD," (vs.7).

Jonah's situation was hopeless – he was in the realm of the dead – death was inevitable.

Application:

Is this not what the LORD does? When in rebellion we defy the LORD or when we with proud arrogance strut as though we are the centre of our universe?

When we are in rebellion we are essentially saying He is not God and we are. We are determined to follow our own way we are saying, 'We know what is best and God does not.'

This is when the LORD takes us to the end of ourselves, this is when He takes us to the end of our resources where out of utter desperation we can alone call out to Him.

Examples:

Nebuchadnezzar's PRIDE: "31 While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, 32 and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will"" (**Dan.4:31-32**).

The Prodigals DEFIANCE/REBELLION: "14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants"' (Lk.15:14-19).

2.2 Jonah's prayer of CONVICTION

"3 For **YOU cast me into the deep**, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; **all YOUR waves and your billows passed over me**. 4 Then I said, '**I am driven away from YOUR sight**;'..." (vs.3-4).

(vs.4) I am driven away from YOUR presence - When we persist in our rebellion against the LORD we read that He gives us what we so desperately pursue.

Sovereignty of God: NO random series of events.

Jonah's circumstances were initiated by the LORD. This was no case of random chance. This was no accident that these events played themselves out in Jonah's experience.

Friends, we need to recognize that there is no random series of events that simply occur in our lives.

"28 And we know that for those who love God **all things work together for good**, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified" (**Rom.8:28-30**).

"8 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" 9 Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? 10 Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." 12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD" (**Job 1:8-12**).

"And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong" (**Job 1:22**).

2.3 Jonah's prayer of COMMITMENT

"9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!" (vs.9).

LORD I will serve you faithfully, I am committed to you as you have required with sacrifice or offering and with a promise.

Notice the similarity between Jonah's commitment and the sailor's commitment.

"Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows" (Jonah 1:16).

Doesn't it sound familiar? LORD I will serve you faithfully, LORD I will do anything for you ... just say the word and I will go to India ... etc.

2.4 Jonah's prayer ANSWERED

"2 saying, "I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and He answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice" (**vs.2**).

Jonah no doubt must have prayed while in the belly of the fish. "Oh LORD please save me?" And yes, the LORD saved him because it was what the LORD had originally required of Jonah to do. **Jonah prayed in line with the LORD's will.**

Jonah's will had to be brought into submission to the will of the LORD, which is basically saying what the LORD desires and not what we desire.

Is this not what these extreme circumstances ultimately brought about?

"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (**Matt.26:39**).

We need to know God's revealed will and pray according to it.