

The Mission and Call of God For His People: Jonah 2

Preached by Pastor Michael Gunn @ Harambee Church on August 16th, 2009

Intro

Last week we introduced Jonah as a narrative of God's grace and mercy toward the people He has called. The Ninevehites were wicked people and totally undeserving of God's grace, but God's compassion went out to the brokenness of these people and sent his servant (Jonah) to go and preach in that "Great City." We also saw Jonah who justified direct disobedience on behalf of his nationalistic racism and hatred of the people in Nineveh. What's great about this story and the stories in the bible is the fact that God remains faithful even when His people aren't. Jonah never really deals with his bitterness and racism in this story, but God's plans are not thwarted. Jonah definitely had his choices, but he ended up doing God's will and completed the purposes of God in His mission to the world. This passage demonstrates God's desire to bless all nations, and not just one people group or nation.

This week, we have a prayer of hope; a hope that God can deliver us from the grave.

From the Head

AS stated last week, we can get caught up in the fact that modern men don't believe in human swallowing fish, but if we did, we'd miss an amazing OT narrative reminding us of God's mercy and grace, as well as His call for His people to carry out His mission here on earth. It's a miracle, because it can't happen naturally. There are many more miracles in this story beside that one. There is the miracle of the pagan sailors coming to Yahweh, and the Ninevehites repenting to name a couple.

This is an interesting piece that needs to be viewed from at least two perspectives, the **immediate** and the **eschatological** (Future).

The Immediate Perspective

The immediate perspective is a true story of Jonah the prophet crying out to his God as the only known source of Hope he had. Our sins and rebellion often place us in the bowels of God's disciplinary action (See **Hebrews 12:4ff**). It seems obvious that Jonah is a type of Israel, and in that way a type of the church. Jonah, like Israel was chosen by God to be His people and His witness (**Deuteronomy 14:2; Ezekiel 20:5** cf. **Matthew 29:19-20; Acts 1:8**). Jonah and Israel was disobedient to the call and will of God (**Exodus 32:1-4; Judges 2:11-19; Ezekiel 6:1-5**), etc. We are hard-necked people and even though the biblical call for us to turn to Him in humility and repentance for our salvation and then rearrange our lives to do His will, we refuse. We are no different than Jonah who tried to flee God's presence only to realize that God is sovereign, and His will, will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

One of the **first perspectives** you learn from Jonah's prayer is how well he knew scripture. Almost every word comes from Psalms or Lamentations. In the time of his distress He turned to the word he knew well as a source of comfort and hope.

More specifically though, He "Called out to the Lord" since "salvation belongs to the Lord" (**vv. 2:2, 7, 9**). I don't think we can skirt the fact that these verses begin and end this prayer. In our self-centeredness we reject God, but in reality there is no other choice but to come back to Him for the hope of salvation. There is no other name or way or set of precepts we can do to be saved, we are saved by the Lord. What's interesting is that in spite of Jonah's disobedience in Chapter one, the pagan sailors seem to have recognized this reality too (**Jonah 1:14-15**). Jonah reflects in the fact that any prayer to idols are *"Vain"* and they *"Forsake their hope of steadfast love"* (**Jonah 2:8**).

Another perspective is the fact that in spite our disobedience, God is faithful, and sovereign over the circumstances in our lives. In times of distress, we can either move away from God or toward Him. Jonah paraphrases **Psalms 3:4; 120:1**, when he says *"and He answered me, and you heard my voice"* (**Jonah 2:2**).

Another perspective is the acknowledgment of God's sovereignty in our adverse circumstances. Jonah recognizes that his circumstance is brutal, but it is God who *"Cast me into the deep."*

Another perspective is that often, when we are running away, He appears absent (Jonah 2:4a), but even in Jonah's predicament He is not only present, but actively present, and Jonah acknowledges this (**Jonah 2:4b**), as he seeks for that "Hidden" God, only to be delivered by His God (**Jonah 2:6**).

The Eschatological Perspective

Eschatological means "Future or End." There is a larger picture happening here. The prophets wrote not with two meanings in mind, but with a series of literal fulfillments until the climax of their prophecy was fulfilled as originally intended.

Jesus spoke of the prophets speaking about Him, and **Matthew 12:39-40** reminds us that Jonah was a "Sign" of what would happen to Jesus. Last week we looked at the paradox of Jonah in his disobedience and deserving of judgment being a sign of Christ's judgment on the cross on our behalf. In our passage today, we see a similar admittance of guilt, and a repentant return to the Lord. Again Jonah is describing one who went to their grave and who was resurrected from the "Pit." The language in this passage is one of death. The idea of being cast into *"the deep"* and having a *"flood"* about him are synonymous with Jewish metaphor for death. In Jewish thought the dead were surrounded by the river called "Torrent of destruction" (See **Psalms 18:4; 2 Samuel 22:5**); and references to the *"Roots of the mountains"* and *"Bars"* of the land (**v.6**) are references to "Sheol," which is in the mountains and closed off by a gate (See **Isaiah 38:10; Job 38:17**). Being *"Driven away from your sight"* is another key phrase depicting the fact that death is what is being described.

This may be hard to

...to the Heart