

Subject: *Praying to the Lord*
Scripture: *Jonah 2:1-10*

Jonah is the running prophet. Jonah is the only prophet of God in the Bible who refused God's assignment. In the first chapter he runs from God and His commission to preach to the wicked city of Nineveh. In the second chapter he runs to God in prayer. This chapter teaches us how to pray in a crisis.

1. JONAH'S PRAYER OF DESPERATION (vs. 1-7)

Verses 1 and 2 tell us when Jonah prayed, to whom he prayed, where he prayed, and why he prayed. Jonah reminds us that we can pray anytime, anywhere, about anything.

Psalms 55:17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

A. Jonah had a serious problem

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (review chapter 1)

Jonah cried out to God because of his affliction and God heard him (2 times). Affliction can be a good thing if it drives us to God.

Psalms 119:67 Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

Psalms 119:71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

B. Jonah was in a strange place

This was a strange place to have a prayer meeting. In the Bible we find people who prayed at the altar, by the ark of the covenant, in battle, in bed, in captivity, in a cave, in a chamber, in a city, in the country, in the closet, on the cross, in a dungeon, in a garden, in a house, on a housetop, in a mountain, in a palace, in a prison, by the riverside, at sea, by the seashore, in the sanctuary, in a solitary place, in the street, under a tree, in an upper room, by a well, in a wilderness, and in a fish's belly. You can pray anywhere.

C. Jonah offered a sincere prayer

It wasn't a long or fancy prayer. The best way to measure prayer is not length, but depth. Jonah was in a hopeless situation, but he knew he could pray. It was like a 9-1-1 call to God. We usually do our best praying when we have to pray. In verse 3, Jonah said that God cast him into the sea. Actually, the sailors on the ship threw Jonah overboard, but Jonah was certain that the Lord was involved. Jonah understood that God was in control (vs. 3, thy billows...thy waves).

Many times we tend to blame other people for our troubles and circumstances. We need to quit blaming people and realize that God is at work in our lives. It may be that God has caused or allowed some bad things to bring us back into His will.

Jonah meant business. God does business with people who mean business.

D. Jonah offered a scriptural prayer

Jonah remembered God's Word and used it as a prayer guide.

- Jonah said, *I cried by reason of my afflictions unto the LORD.*
Psalms 120:1 *In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.*
- Jonah said, *Out of the belly of hell cried I...*
Psalms 18:5 *The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.*
- Jonah said, *All thy billows and thy waves passed over me...*
Psalms 42:7 *Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*
- Jonah said, *I am cast out of thy sight...*
Psalms 31:22 *For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.*
- Jonah said, *yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption...*
Psalms 16:10 *For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*
- Jonah directed his prayer to the temple in Jerusalem (vs. 4, 7).
1 Kings 8:38-39 *What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;)*

There is no better way to pray than to use God's own words. When Jesus was dying on the cross He quoted Scripture.

2. JONAH'S PROMISE OF DEDICATION (vs. 8-9)

There is not an ounce of pride in Jonah's words. The theme of his prayer is "Salvation is of the LORD" (vs. 9). In Psalm 3:8 David said, "Salvation belongeth unto the LORD." This is the theme of the entire Bible. God plans our salvation, pays for our salvation, opens our heart to salvation, and completes our salvation. Salvation is His work all the from start to finish.

A. Jonah called on the one true God

When the violent storm came in chapter 1, Jonah heard the sailors call upon their false gods. Anybody who worships, trusts, serves, or prays to any other god except the true and living God is just wasting time.

Listen to vs. 8 in these modern translations:

(NIV) Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.

(NLT) Those who worship false gods turn their backs on all God's mercies.

B. Jonah made a vow to the one true God

He must have promised to obey God and preach to Nineveh (vs. 9). Making a promise to God is a serious thing. Have you ever made God a promise? Have you kept it?

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5⁴ *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.*⁵ *Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.*

3. GOD'S PLAN OF RESTORATION (vs. 10)

At the end of chapter 1, we read that the Lord prepared a great fish (1:17). Now He spoke to the fish. The fish vomited Jonah out on the dry land instead of leaving him to drown in the sea. Can you imagine how Jonah must have looked and smelled? But he was still alive and God could still use him.

Whatever you're going through, God can meet your needs. If you will only pray and mean business with Him, He will mean business with you. He will restore you and use you for His glory.

God will make a way, when there seems to be no way.

He works in ways we cannot see; He will make a way for me.

He will be my guide; hold me closely to His side.

With love and strength for each new day,

He will make a way; He will make a way.

Jonah is a lot more than the story of a man and a great fish. It is the story of a man and a great God. It is the story of God's grace, His love, His power, His providence, His presence, and His patience.

Do you know somebody who is running from the Lord? Pray that they will stop running and start calling on the Lord. That somebody could be you.

Romans 10:13 *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*