

THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

THE MINOR PROPHETS:

THE PROPHECY OF JONAH, PART 2

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Obedience to God is possible for sinful people because God gives us the grace to obey and to respond rightly to his will. But what happens when God's people reject his grace and resist his will? Have you ever run from God? Have you ever not liked his will, and thought that what he was calling you to do would be virtually impossible for you to perform? Have you ever felt angry with God?

The Prophet Jonah felt this way. In fact, when he was called by God to preach salvation through repentance to the City of Nineveh, he responded by "running from the presence of the LORD" (we are told this two times in 1:3 as part of our introduction and also in 1:10; cf. Genesis 3:8; 4:16). Jonah runs away from the presence of the LORD like Adam and Cain before him!

In our story, unlike Elijah or Elisha the prophet Jonah is not a hero, but rather an anti-hero. Professor Gerhard von Rad wrote: "God is here glorified not through his ambassador, but in spite of his ambassador's complete refusal" (Quoted in Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, NICOT, pg. 175). Jonah is a prophet we can all sympathize with (if we are honest before God), but one that we cannot easily respect and/or follow. At the end of the story, Jonah is revealed as the self-centered, self-righteous fool before God (as we are many times when we question God's will).

As Herman Melville wrote in his classic *Moby Dick*: "Heaven have mercy on us all—Presbyterians and pagans alike—for we are all somehow dreadfully cracked about the head, and sadly need mending."

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai... (v. 1a)

Jonah's book is historical and is accepted by our Lord Jesus as a historical account of an historical person and historical event (see 2 Kings 14:25). ***What is the genre of the Book of Jonah? (1)*** the genre of the Book of Jonah is ***prophetic didactic history***. The prophecy opens with a similar phrase used with other prophets ("...the word of the LORD came to..."; cf. 1 Kings 17:5, 8; Jer. 1:4; Haggai 1:3).

Jonah's name means "dove" (*Yonah ben Amittay* means "Dove, son of truth") is called to preach by God: ***Arise, go to Nineveh that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me... (v. 2)***. God here commands Jonah with "Arise!" or "Up on your feet" as we might say, and rather than showing his utmost for His Highest, Jonah disobeys the LORD.

Jonah is told to go to the city of Nineveh which was the capital of Assyria before its destruction in 612 B.C. by the Medes (the city is called *gadol* or "great"). Nineveh was

one of the greatest and oldest cities of the ancient world (Gen. 10:11-12), surviving for over a thousand years. Nineveh was located six hundred miles northeast of Israel (near present day Al-Mawsil or 'Mosul' in northern Iraq). As we learned in our last sermon, Nineveh became the chief royal city of the Assyrian Empire during Sennacherib's reign from 704-681 B.C (Incidentally, Sennacherib referred to himself as "the great king" and thought of himself as a divine king in his conquest of the world).

Nineveh had connotations to an Israelite (like Babylon as in "Babylon the Great" in the Book of Revelation) of being a place of ungodliness and evil in the ancient world (cf. Zephaniah 2:13; Nahum). Professor Allen writes that in the minds of the listening circle Nineveh stood for the essence of human self-exaltation and anti-God power (NICOT, pg. 203).

What does the city of Nineveh represent to Jonah and the Israelites? (2) Nineveh is not only the capital and seat of power for Israel's enemies the Assyrians, but the city represents the nations of Gentiles who are far from the covenant promises made to Abraham (as in the other prophets as well such as Babylon, Cush, et al). God tells Jonah that the evil [h['r'] of Nineveh has come up before him, reminding us that God is sovereign and omnipresent; all the world is accountable before God for the way they live.

The evil ways of the people of Nineveh have literally been "before God's face". As we have learned in the other *Minor Prophets* all nations are accountable before God. Nineveh like her sisters Sodom and Gomorrah has become a wicked place worthy of God's destruction, but because of God's grace also a recipient of His mercy and compassion for those who believe.

Since the middle of the ninth century Israel had been forced to pay tribute as a vassal of the Assyrian king, so Jonah would have had knowledge of this great city. This was a land that would have caused the average Israelite to fear in terror because of her great power.

We should be reminded of the fact that Jonah represented all of Israel. ***How does Jonah represent Israel/the Church? (3)*** Edmund Clowney wrote: "Jonah as the individual servant of the Lord represents the whole nation called to be God's servant" (*Preaching and Biblical Theology*, pg. 98).

Because the purpose of the Book of Jonah is to didactically teach Israel about God and her relationship to God, it is important to understand Jonah (as the other Minor Prophets) against the "back-story" of God's covenant promises to Abraham. The Bible teaches that God's covenant of grace with Abraham included all who believe his promises throughout the world (Israel *and the nations* were included in this covenant of grace!):

^{ESV} Genesis 12:1-3: Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

ESV Genesis 18:18 seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

ESV Genesis 22:18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

As representative of Israel, Jonah was called to bless the nations of the earth as he preaches to them the grace and gospel that Father Abraham believed! Rather than preaching, Jonah rose (but not to Nineveh) and headed in the wrong direction! In disobedience to God's Word, Jonah fled to Tarshish **from the presence of the LORD (v. 3)**. Like Israel who believed that God's covenant to them was taken for granted, Jonah seems glad to be the recipients of covenant privileges, but not so willing to make these known to other nations through preaching the gospel of God's promises to Abraham.

We should be reminded (as we have learned from our previous studies) that Israel was called to be a visible manifestation of God's Kingdom in the midst of the wickedness and sin of men. Israel was shown grace by God (not because she was great and sinless) but because God chose her to make know his character and his will to the nations.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8: "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Israel's mission was an evangelistic one as she was called to be a "light to the nations" (Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 60:1; cf. Rev. 21:24).

The Bible tells us that Jonah fled from the presence of the LORD like Cain before him. Jonah associates God's Word with his presence (as he should- -as we should!):

ESV Genesis 4:16 Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

As Israel failed to be a light to the nations, so Jonah also is not faithful to the call. Where we would expect a prophet called by God to "get up and go" in obedience to God, Jonah "gets up and flees (v. 3).

During the time of Jonah's preaching God had already sent other (more faithful!) prophets to the Gentiles to fulfill Israel's evangelistic mission. Elijah had blessed a Gentile widow in Zarephath (1 Kings 17) and Elisha made known the blessings of God to Naaman the Syrian general (Israel's enemy, 2 Kings 5; cf. Luke 4:27-29). It was a known fact that God's sovereignty reigned outside the border of national Israel (Estelle, pg. 24). Even when our Lord points this fact out to the Israelite people, the people during Jesus' time are still resentful as was Jonah:

ESV Luke 4:27-29: And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." ²⁸ When they heard these things, all in the synagogue

were filled with wrath. ²⁹ *And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff.*

Nineveh's repentance would be the eschatological reminder that "all nations would be blessed through Abraham" that Abraham would be indeed the "father of many nations" and God was a God not only of Jews, but also of the Gentiles. Our Lord Jesus would use Nineveh and her repentance and reception of God's mercy as a rebuke against Israel (Matt. 12:41):

ESV Matthew 12:41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Why does Jonah head toward Tarshish? (4a) As Jonah went down to Joppa (modern-day Jaffa a port city near modern Tel Aviv), he found a ship headed for Tarshish; he was going away **from the presence of the LORD (v. 3)**. Instead of obeying God, Jonah headed for Tarshish (v. 3). The city of Tarshish was located in the western Mediterranean (at the other end of the world from Nineveh). Tarshish ships were known in this time as long-distance "cruises" to the western Mediterranean sea (like our modern ocean liners who travel a great distance). Jonah knew that he could put a few miles between God's destination for him and his destination to get away from God and His Word. Jonah is going the opposite direction from Nineveh!

Why does Jonah go down? (4b) Jonah not only went the opposite direction from Nineveh, he goes "down", the spiritually opposite direction from God himself! Jonah goes down to Joppa, and went down into the ship (the Hebrew verb for "go down" or "went down" is *yada* dry) and Jonah is going down geographically-topically, but also spiritually as he runs from God and His Word to Him (cf. 1:5, 2:6). Jonah continued to *yada* (to go down) away from God and His presence throughout the first act or first two chapters..

Why does Jonah flee from God? We are to be kept in suspense, but here is a bit of a "spoiler". As Jonah will confess later, the reason for his going down or "yada-ing" away from the presence of the LORD is that he knew God would have mercy and compassion on Nineveh and he did not want that:

ESV Jonah 4:2 And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.

As Jonah represented Israel at one point in redemptive-history, we should not overlook the fact that Jonah also represents all of God's people in His Church. We are all "prone to wander" and to "go down" away from the presence of the LORD and inclined to do much evil, and to keep our hearts from the presence of God so that we might remain unaccountable and in charge of our own direction and destiny. As Abraham Kuyper, Reformed theologian, journalist, teacher and one time Prime Minister of the Netherlands, wrote about *Christians*:

“Our heart is continually inclined to rebel against the Lord our God. So ready to rebel, that O, so gladly, were it but for a single day, we would take from His hands the reins of his supreme rule, imagining that we would manage things far better and direct them far more effectively than God” (Quoted in Estelle, pg. 37).

We have all not yet truly learned to “trust and obey” - - understanding that it is the only way to be happy in Jesus! Isn’t Jonah a bit like you and me?! Thanks be to God for his faithfulness and commitment to Jonah- -and to us. This is also the story of Jonah in the midst of his disobedience and faithfulness- -God is faithful and pursues his wandering prophet-son.

The LORD uses his creation to serve him as Sovereign Creator to accomplish his will. The beginning of verse 4 begins: “But the LORD...” [hw"©hyw:)] showing that in response to what Jonah has done, God is immediately and sovereignly acting in pursuing Jonah. The LORD *hurled a great wind (a gale) upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up (v. 4).*

The sea was not a place of safety for an Israelite; the sea would have made the average Israelite fear (remember the crossing of the Red Sea?). Israelites were land lubbers who had little experience of the sea, and so for Jonah to flee from God on a ship with the realization of the life-threatening dangers of the sea shows how much he desired to escape God’s will. In Ezekiel’s prophecy we read about the frightening knowledge the Israelites had about the ships of Tarshish and specifically life on the high seas:

^{ESV} Ezekiel 27:25-27, 34: The ships of Tarshish traveled for you with your merchandise. So you were filled and heavily laden in the heart of the seas. ²⁶ "Your rowers have brought you out into the high seas. The east wind has wrecked you in the heart of the seas. ²⁷ Your riches, your wares, your merchandise, your mariners and your pilots, your caulkers, your dealers in merchandise, and all your men of war who are in you, with all your crew that is in your midst, sink into the heart of the seas on the day of your fall. ²⁸ At the sound of the cry of your pilots the countryside shakes.... Now you are wrecked by the seas, in the depths of the waters; your merchandise and all your crew in your midst have sunk with you.

How far can Jonah run from God’s presence? (5) He is headed west toward the “end of the earth”, he has gone as far down as possible, and he will keep running from God until he feels he is a safe distance from his sovereign power and will. But the Psalmist reminds us:

^{ESV} Psalm 139:7-9: Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea...

In response to this great storm that caused fear in experienced seamen, the ungodly pagan mariners cried out to their individual gods for help. Their great fear causes them to be religious and pray because they are reminded of their helplessness against the forces of nature (and will realize that they are no match for the forces of nature under God’s sovereign authority and command!) God had *hurled* the storm at the ship, we are told in v. 4a (the ship was “breaking up” and an imminent breach of the hull was extremely possible). These seamen had seen many storms, but this storm was different and it

caused them great fear. The pagan men seem very aware that this extraordinary, unique tempest is nothing less than a supernatural manifestation of wrath and thus they pray for help in their fear (v. 5; cf. Jer. 23:19-20).

The polytheistic pagan mariners sought to save the ship and their lives by throwing cargo overboard (v. 5a). The seasoned mariners realized that this was more than a normal storm that they had experienced in their many sailing expeditions. While they “get religion” Jonah has gone below to sleep rather than to seek the LORD while he may be found that he might be saved (that “THEY” might be saved). This reveals how self-centered a person can be even toward fellow men when there is danger and one is running from God- -Nothing, absolutely nothing, will cause them to seek God- -but again, God in his grace will pursue them as he is covenantally committed to his children!

Rather than respond to the storm, and rather than helping the fellowship shipmen, Jonah had gone down further into the belly of the ship, into the *inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep* (v. 5). Jonah had “yada-ed” again and went down to the lower deck. Jonah is taking a nap to avoid thinking about this whole situation and going as far as he possibly can to flee God’s presence and Word –even to “dreamland” where there is no reality to face.

How does the captain of the ship [or “shipmaster” lbexO] fulfill a prophetic task as God’s voice in chapter 1:6? (6) The captain comes down and cries out to Jonah: ***“What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god? Perhaps the god will give a thought to us that we may not perish.*** The captain of the ship comes in and gives the same command that God did just a few days before: ***“Arise”*** (v. 6; 1:2) and says in modern vernacular: “What’s the matter with you?!” (*mah-lleka* in Hebrew) Ironically, Jonah is commanded to arise and to pray by the captain of the ship (God still speaks through a common pagan even if His own prophet will not speak)! A pagan tells an Israelite to seek the LORD while he may be found! The other gods had not been able to calm the storm, perhaps Jonah’s God can?!

God was using the storm and the captain’s alarm to get Jonah’s attention (as we say in modern language). The storm and the captain were used as God’s “wake-up call” to bring Jonah to his knees in repentance. At this point, Jonah is in need of discipline from the LORD, but the LORD continues to show his grace, mercy and compassion on this disobedient son by continuing to speak to the one with the stiff-neck who does not listen and obey. As Professor Fretheim pointed out: “Jonah may deserve simple punishment for what he has done. But simple justice is not God’s way. His love drives him beyond justice” (*Message of Jonah*, pg. 82).

We notice something in Jonah that is typical. When men run from God and obedience to His Word, they have no desire to pray to him and seek him (knowing that they first must repent- -and are not ready to do so). Yet we see God, the LORD of heaven and earth, who will graciously seek us out, bring circumstances into our lives so that we might be humbled and without any strength or ability to perform, so that we might return to the LORD, be healed, and renewed.

Through the casting of lots they realize that Jonah is the reason why the evil storm and tempest have come upon their boat and threatened their lives (vv. 7-8). Casting of lots (or using two-colored stones to know yes and no answers to questions) was a normal practice of seeking providential guidance in the ancient Near East- -not merely was it a practice in Israel (Josh. 7:16-21; 1 Sam. 14:40-42; Prov. 16:33). The belief was that the lot cast would reveal the person or decision according to the will of the gods (or in the case of Israel, the living God):

^{ESV} Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

The mariners desire from Jonah to know his occupation, where is he is from, and who he is (v. 8). ***How does Jonah describe God in chapter 1:8? (7)***

Jonah answers piously: ***“I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”*** Jonah has a theology of God as Sovereign Creator and he knows his *Book of Genesis*, but he does not have the faith to believe *in this God who he knows theologically can save*. Jonah knows that God has created all things (“...who made the sea and dry land” is a *merism* or literary device used of two things to sum up one thing; here the *merism* is to communicate that God is Creator of all things (sea and dry land = “all things”).

Jonah says specifically in his confession before the mariners that he fears YHWH (the LORD) which is the covenantal name revealed by God His people (cf. Exodus 3:14-18). Jonah can confess *about God* but he cannot *trust God’s will for himself*. The phrase “God of heaven” was also covenantal language used by Abraham the patriarch again tying our story to the Books of Moses:

^{ESV} Genesis 24:3, 7: ...That I may make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell....The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your offspring I will give this land,' he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.

It is interesting to note that Jonah is revealing in his actions the typical behavior of those who know the Lord. Many times we know theologically about God: He is gracious; he is kind; he is merciful; he is sovereign; he is good; he is Creator and covenant LORD of heaven and earth, etc. But our actions and disobedience betray our confession. We have a “head-knowledge” as we might say, but not a “heart knowledge” that can trust and obey, and walk by faith rather than by sight. We should be reminded that God has revealed himself to us not merely so we can revel in theological games and have insight into all things concerning systematic theology, but so that we might know him and trust him:

^{ESV} Hebrews 11:1-3, 6: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.² For by it the people of old received their commendation.³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible....⁶ And

without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

The mariners were extremely frightened because they realized that Jonah had disobeyed this Great God of Heaven and Earth and *was fleeing from the presence of the LORD* (v. 10b). They cry out to Jonah: *“Whatever have you done!?”* (v. 10a).

While the storm grows more and more tempestuous (v. 11b), the mariners seek to know what to do to Jonah so that they all might be saved (they realize there are consequences to our sins and actions against God- -and someone must suffer for the others).

The mariners ask Jonah: *“What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet for us?”* (v. 11) (the sea grows more and more tempestuous and violent!).

Jonah tells them to throw him overboard, realizing that he must suffer and that he must be thrown out of the ship of safety in order to save the men (v. 12)- -and the sea grew more and more tempestuous (v. 13). As the waters are raging around the men, and they are having to scream above the mighty waters to communicate to one another, God is communicating to these men *through the mighty waters and the pagan sailors to extend a hand to Jonah if he will only turn to him for help*. For Jonah, death by drowning is better than facing God’s will for his life.

Although God has set the “life” of obedience before Jonah, Jonah has chosen disobedience and “death”; we should be reminded of the words of Moses to the Israelites in the Book of Deuteronomy:

^{ESV} Deuteronomy 30:15, 19-20: “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil...I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

As Moses said many years ago, heaven and earth is witnessing against Jonah’s disobedience and he has chosen the way of disobedience and death.

The unbelieving, pagan mariners reveal themselves in verse 13 as those who are unwilling to kill God’s prophetic messenger. They would rather row back to shore than to stay put where they are in the midst of a storm. Experienced seamen understand that a boat is better off in the sea in the midst of this kind of storm rather than tied at port. Yet these men seek to get to dry land rather than throwing Jonah overboard. This may also be a critique and contrast to Israel who had the reputation of persecuting and killing the prophets (cf. Luke 13:34ff; Matthew 23).

The unbelieving, pagan mariners who each boarded the boat polytheists with perhaps one god apiece, now call out to the one living and true God together in v. 14: *“O LORD, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you O LORD, have done as it pleased you”* (v. 15). The pagan mariners realize that God, particularly

Jonah's God, the One he confessed as Creator and LORD of heaven, this God had sent the storm according to his will:

ESV Psalm 115:2 Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?"³ Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

ESV Psalm 135:6 Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.

The sailors were not turned from their idols and polytheistic ways through a lengthy sermon or from an intensive Bible study. Rather, through circumstances sent by God, and the confession of faith that Jonah had made (1:9) about who the true God is as covenant Creator and LORD, these men put their faith in him because God had shown them His grace. In spite of Jonah's unwillingness to fulfill his role as preacher-prophet, God still used him to make his Word known and to bring the nations to repentance.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. Because of God's grace the pagan mariners who set sail as idolaters repent and find the fear of the LORD, offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows by faith alone (v. 16). This is a pagan and Gentile foretaste of Nineveh's repentance that will come after Jonah preaches to them later in the book.

In contrast to Jonah, these men do not first confess with their mouth their mere theology about God (as Jonah), but they put their faith in him to save them, showing that they believe the theology about God that Jonah has made known to them. The repentant sailors show forth their faith through their works of grace in response to God's salvation. ***How do the repentant mariner-sailors begin to sing the Psalms with Israel? (8)*** Jonah will sing a Psalm of salvation and thanksgiving in chapter 2, but here in chapter 1, the repentant sailors show that they have been recipients of God's grace by calling upon His Great Name in times of trouble; they begin to sing with the Psalmists:

I love you, O LORD, my strength.² The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.³ I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.⁴ The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me;⁵ the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.⁶ In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears. – Psalm 18:1-6.

ESV Psalm 145:18 The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.¹⁹ He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.

ESV Psalm 116:17-18: I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD.¹⁸ I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people...

How is Jonah saved in or through death? (9) Chapter one ends with Jonah being swallowed by a great fish (or "whale" as some say - - but literally from Hebrew it should be translated a "great fish" *dag gadol*) that the LORD ***appointed as Sovereign Creator using his creation again to serve him*** (v. 17a).

Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights (v. 17b). The place of death, the “underworld”, the watery grave beneath the raging sea was to be the end of Jonah. Ironically, he has now “gone down” or *yada-ed* about as far as is humanly possible to the farthest place (in human terms) away from the God in heaven. Yet the place of death becomes the place of salvation for Jonah. God will use his creation, a great fish or *dag gadol* to rescue (“save”) Jonah, and Jonah’s death will be swallowed literally by victory.

How was Jesus Christ similar to and yet unlike Jonah? (10)

In choosing death and sacrifice, Jonah found salvation and life because of God’s sovereign power and grace.

When the storms were threatening the lives of the pagan mariners, Jonah realized the need for him to become the scapegoat. Jonah realized that through his own death, the other men would live. Jonah realized that in order for the other men to be saved, he must experience suffering and death.

Jonah could save the sailors lives, but he could not grant to them eternal life with the Father and become the scapegoat on their behalf for their sins; Jonah too was a sinner. What Jonah could not do in the salvation of these men, God did; what Jonah could not accomplish in reconciling these men to God, Christ did. Jonah could save them from drowning in the sea but he could not save them from their sins. Only through Christ’s death can men be saved.

Jesus Christ accepted the full condemnation of God in our place. Jesus Christ willingly became the scapegoat, the one God cursed and killed so that we might have life. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, all those whom he loves, are saved, reconciled to God and given life eternal. As Jonah deserved the punishment of God because of his blatant sin and rebellion against God, so Jesus (although sinless) deserved God’s punishment as the One who God placed our sins upon so that we might be saved, reconciled and righteous before God:

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. – 2 Corinthians 5:21

Jesus Christ gave his life as a ransom for many- -willingly- -because of the love of God for his people. In Christ, we find the seeking, searching, pursuant God of love who finds his sheep and places them on his neck and carries them home to be in the presence of the Father.

^{ESV} 1 Timothy 2:5-6: For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

While Jonah was reticent and apprehensive about preaching to the Gentiles the message of the gospel of grace, there would be One who would come willingly from God’s right hand to take the ministry of preaching and making known the Kingdom to the Gentiles (where Israel and Jonah had failed).

Jesus Christ said willingly “Here I am”- -I will preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, and I will make known that in me there is life and salvation:

ESV Hebrews 2:10-13: For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.¹¹ For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,¹² saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."¹³ And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."

ESV Galatians 3:26-29: for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Unlike Jonah, Jesus Christ willingly accomplished the call and commission of God by accomplishing all the work he was sent to do:

ESV John 17:4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

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