

Remnant Life Church
July 13, 2025
Jonah – Part 2
Running Back to God
Jonah 1:17 – 2:1-10

The story of Jonah is a very familiar and very compelling one.

- In our time together last week, we sought to understand why Jonah fled when God told him to go and preach to the city of Nineveh the capitol of the Assyrian nation
- We discovered two things about the man
 - First, Jonah was certainly a prophet of God
 - We read in **II Kings 14:25** that God spoke through Jonah to the king and God's word came to pass
 - But second, he is also a devout nationalist
 - He is a man wholly and fully committed to preserving and guarding the people of God
 - And that love and protection of God did not extend to their enemies
 - And the Assyrians were thorn in the lives of the Israelites for a long time
 - He might be considered a fore-runner of the Zealots of Jesus' time
 - The Zealots were Jewish insurrectionists who considered themselves to be freedom-fighters
 - Their sole purpose and goal was to end the century-long Roman occupation of the Jewish homeland
 - They would do this by any means necessary even to the point of violence
 - And it was even one of these men who Jesus called to follow Him as one of the twelve - Simon
 - Now Jonah was not about to pick a fight with the Assyrians, but he also had no interest in being an instrument of God so that they could be saved from the terrible judgment of God
 - One he believed they certainly deserved
- And so he ran
 - On to a ship headed in the opposite direction
 - But you cannot run from God
 - And Jonah, along with the sailors on the ship, quickly realized that God will use whatever is necessary to fulfill His will – even the miraculous
- Jonah, as you know, is eventually tossed into the sea
 - And when that happens it begins a string of miracles by the hand of God that follow Jonah through to the completion of the account
 - And the first of these miracles is what brings Jonah running back to God

Let's begin with the last verse of the first chapter of Jonah

Jonah 1:17 – *Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*

- The important thing to understand about the first half of this verse is the subject is not the fish, it is the Lord.
 - The point the author was stressing was not the appearance of the fish
 - But that God provided a way for Jonah to be rescued and delivered
 - But this presents the struggle for many who read Jonah's story
 - There are certainly countless amateur ichthyologists who present extensive research materials that prove there are creatures who swim in the ocean with stomachs large enough to swallow a man whole and that he could, in just the right circumstances, survive the ordeal for several days.
 - On the other hand, there are also a substantial segment of biblical scholars who begin with the assumption that no one can survive in the belly of a living creature for that amount of time
 - This segment are on the side of explaining the story as being a parable or allegorical in nature and intent
 - But what is most unfortunate regarding this debate is that God's deliverance of both Jonah and the people of Nineveh become secondary to determining the mathematical probability of inter-whale survival.
 - And what I will always come back to as the basis of the physical truth of this account is that God, the creator of all life, established the laws and order of nature, and He can supersede them at His pleasure and for His purpose.
 - Would it have been less of a miracle if God had given Jonah the ability to swim back to shore?
 - It would certainly have been on par with the supernatural strength God gave Sampson
 - Whatever the means God chose, the point being made is that God delivered Jonah
 - But as always, God is doing much more than what we see or understand
 - The miracle of Jonah's rescue was not only to save the prophet from drowning in the sea
 - But to save the people of Nineveh from drowning in their sin
 - In both cases, God brought life where there would have been death
- In the same way, God's work in your life, perhaps a miracle perhaps not, always contains a great purpose
 - If God rescues you from a tragic or intense time in your life, be prepared to share that experience with others to encourage and point them to Jesus
 - And if God sustains you while you walk through the entirety of that difficult time, be prepared to demonstrate what it means to hold to Him and continue to believe in and embrace His plan for your life
- Jonah gets three days of isolation to think about what is most important and, at least for a time, his heart gets right before God

READ – Jonah 2:1-10

- Jonah had been running from God, now he is running back to Him in prayer
 - His prayer is very Psalm-like in its tone and content

- David certainly poured out his heart to God in his times of desperation and we see that echoed in the prayer of Jonah
 - As a matter of fact, no less than 8 times in these 9 verses can you match what Jonah is saying to a Psalm of David
 - Jonah, like David, is rediscovering the omnipresence of God to be with him in every circumstance and the fullness of His grace for those who turn to Him in their deepest despair
 - Perhaps Jonah's greatest discovery, and a lesson of great significance for each of us, is that the God he was trying desperately to get away from is his only hope
- And one of the indications that Jonah is truly learning the lesson he needed to understand is this prayer is not only a prayer crying for deliverance but a prayer of thanksgiving
 - What can we learn from Jonah's prayer?
 - First, we see how to pray in the midst of our failures
 - Jonah was in the belly of that fish for one reason – his own decisions
 - His distress, as is so often the case in our own, are the results of our own disobedience
 - And because of that, we often hesitate to go to God in the middle of a self-imposed problem because we feel we have no right to call on Him
 - Or if we did, we don't think He will not listen
 - We said last week that the story of Jonah is both a comedy and a tragedy when you consider how Jonah handled himself
 - Well, if this stubborn, self-centered man can call out to God, certainly we can as well
 - God will meet us even in the midst of the consequences of our own actions
 - The second thing we can learn from Jonah's prayer is the importance of thanking God for confronting us with our sin
 - That might be something you have never considered before
 - The storm on the sea revealed Jonah's sin to all those on the ship
 - The people there needed to see it and Jonah needed to be convinced that he could not run from God
 - It should be a comfort to us to know that God will not let us continue forever in our own forms of rebellion
 - What a tragedy and sense of hopelessness we would be left with if God did not care enough to lovingly arrest us when we tried to run from Him
 - And as the prophet **Amos** said to the people in the 5th chapter of his book
 - Just as God was tracking His people through all of their difficult encounters
 - There is no place they could hide from Him

- The story of Jonah reenforces that same truth for us today
- Make no mistake, God gave Jonah a stern lesson to remember
 - Listen again to what Jonah says while in the belly of the fish
 - *2:5-7 The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, LORD my God, brought my life up from the pit. "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.*
 - I believe that when Jonah is praying this he is on the verge of drowning
 - He is at a point of crisis with his very life
 - Yet he is still thanking God
 - And it was these two things he came to recognize that saved Jonah's life
 - First, when he fully surrendering himself to God and realized that what God wanted to accomplish was more important than his own desires
 - And second, with the final words of his prayer, *Salvation is of the Lord...(2:9)*
 - He recognizes the power of God to save both himself and the Assyrians
 - It was then that God intervened and saved him
- But God still had one more lesson in humility for Jonah to experience
 - Because lest Jonah begins to think that he was once again in control of the situation
 - *Jonah 2:10 - And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.*
 - I truly believe that was God in essence saying to Jonah, "And don't you forget it."
- Jonah ran from God
- He ran back to God
 - But it was going to be on God's terms
 - And God still had a plan for this man who, in this moment, probably looked and smelled as bad as any person who had lived to that point
- Next week we will look at the third part of Jonah's story
 - He will be running with God
 - It will require the power and mercy of God for His message to be delivered to the Assyrians
 - And it will begin with one of my favorite verses in the entire Bible
 - Because it is a pure and clear indication of God's love, mercy and patience for each of us.