

Jonah Running to God

Jonah Chapter 2

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If you have ever dealt with addicts, whether it be alcohol or drugs, you know that very few of them change until they hit rock bottom. As long as there is some way for them to survive in their present condition, most are willing to remain an addict. They refuse all help because they don't think they need help. It is not until they find themselves alone in a gutter with no hope that they are willing to make the necessary sacrifices to change for the better and be lifted above the mire of their addiction.

Jonah was a prophet of God from Gath-hepher, a town of the tribal province of Zebulun, just west of the Sea of Galilee (2 Kings 14:25). Being a Jew and full of prejudice against the Gentiles, and especially Nineveh (an enemy of Israel), Jonah resisted God's command to go and preach to this city. Jonah, like many today, thought he could run away from his responsibilities to the God of Heaven. However, Jonah was not going to be able to shirk the obligations of his office, at least not without severe consequences. In Jonah chapter 2, we find Jonah at rock bottom. In fact, he is so low that he is below sea level in the belly of a great fish that God had prepared for him. As the saying goes, "when you are at rock bottom, there is no way to go but up." Sin seeks relief and God is the only solution.

Jonah certainly must have recognized God's providential protection when he is scooped up by the fish rather than suffering an agonizing death by drowning. Although alive, his condition is still not ideal. Jonah finally comes to his senses and recognizes the seriousness of his disobedience. Then, being repentant, he prays to God who had just spared his life.

God punished Jonah for his rebellion, and we know that God's punishments can be severe. Jonah's pathetic condition is seen in words written for our learning: "*out of the belly of hell I cried,*" "*the floods compassed me about,*" "*I am cast out of thy sight,*" "*waters compassed me about, even to the soul,*" "*the weeds were wrapped about my head,*" "*the earth with her bars was about me for ever,*" "*my soul fainted within me,*" etc. Sin always leaves an ugly wake of destruction in her path. However, this is what it took for Jonah to recognize his almost fatal mistake and his desperate need for God. A voice of wisdom finally emanates from Jonah's mouth in verse 8, "*They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.*" Jonah repents and says to God, "*I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD,*" v. 9. Upon his repentance, God spoke to the fish and the fish vomited Jonah out on the dry land unharmed but a changed man.

This true story of Jonah is one of the most familiar lessons in the Bible. It is taught to the old and the young and every age in between, and for good reason. It reveals to us the true God of Heaven. In this narrative we notice a great deal about God's nature, as well as His dealings with and expectations of mankind.

(continued next week)