



A Systematic Expository Study on the book of JONAH

Study 4: JONAH'S PRAYER OF SUBMISSION AND CONSECRATION Jonah 2:1 –10

After he was thrown into the depth of the sea **"then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God..."** It is unfortunate that he did not pray at the right time. But thank God he eventually prayed. Even when we might have missed praying in the past, if, like Jonah, we will eventually pray, God will definitely answer as He answered the prayer of Jonah. In verse 10 we read **"the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."** In chapter one, we read of Jonah sleeping while the manors prayed unto their gods. He knew that his rebellion and disobedience were responsible for the raging of the storm. But he never prayed. He never called upon the Lord his God. That he now prayed after he had been dropped into the sea shows that he saw what had happened as God's remedial action to bring him back to submission and acceptance of the preaching assignment. Your prayer will depend on how you interpret God's actions in your life. If Jonah had interpreted his experience to mean that God was angry with him and thereafter resigned himself to fate, he most probably, would not have prayed the way he prayed. The controversy that the Lord had with him is that he abandoned the preaching of the gospel to Nineveh. If we have abandoned the commission He gave us – the commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature – by the same token the Lord is not going to be happy with us. But whatever we might have done in the past, if we will accept going back to what He has called us to do, then the Lord will answer our prayers.

HIS COMPLAINT IN DISTRESS

Jonah 2:1,2,3,6; Psalm 55:2,4,5; 142: 1-4; Psalm 116:3,4

"Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly." He addressed the Lord. He knew that this is Jehovah, the covenant-keeping God of Israel, the God of heaven. He referred to Him a number of times as "the Lord" (verse 2) and the "Lord my God" (verse 6). He knew that he was praying to the Lord of heaven. He prayed out of the fish's belly. Imagine the things happening to him at this time. He used a number of words to describe his harrowing experience. He called it "the fish's belly" (verse 1) "mine affliction," (verse 2) "the belly of hell" (verse 2), "the deep" and "the floods" (verse 3). **"And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice."**

You may wonder how he was able to record all these happenings while in the fish's belly. Obviously, he did not write this account while he was in the fish's belly. This account of his prayers and God's answer to them are, evidently, recollections of what took place while in the fish's belly and not on-the-spot accounts of events. He came out of the fish's belly eventually and then recalled and recollected everything that happened while he was there. **"For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about; all thy billows and thy waves passed over me."** Jonah was in affliction, in deep distress. What led to his great distress? (1), It was because he was running away from God. Sometimes the distress and problems we experience could be because we are running away from God, from the assignment He has given us, from His revealed will. (2) Because of his forsaking of the will of God; (3) Because of his refusal to warn the wicked in Nineveh; (4) Because of his unfaithfulness to the call of the prophet-preacher.

When we refuse the assignment that God has given us, distress or problems may come into our lives. When we do not stay at the center of the will of God, there may arise times of distress. But, whatever situation we happen to find ourselves in, we can cry to the Lord as well and the Lord will answer our prayers. Jonah did not pray in time but the good thing is that he eventually prayed.

HIS CONFESSION AND DECISION

Jonah 2:4-6; Isaiah 49:14; Psalm 77:5-9

Jonah made confession before the Lord and took a decision to seek after His face. **"Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."** But does Jonah really have any cause to complain of being cast out of God's sight? Not at all! After all, he asked for it! That was what he wanted - to flee, to run away from the presence of God; to get away from the control and supervision of the Lord. In a way, God granted him exactly what he wanted! It is ironical that when he felt that he had achieved his goal, God abandoned him. There is a big lesson here to learn. When God abandons us to our chosen alternatives to soul-winning and to the work of God, we may get what we are looking for but afterward, we will not be able to bear even our choice. Is there anything that is trying to take you away from the assignment that God has given you? from the Great Commission? from preaching the Word unto the people that the Lord wants to bring unto Himself? If God should abandon you to achieve the other goal you've set for yourself, you may not be able to bear it.

Jonah not only prayed; he testified to God's answer to prayers: **"yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God."** Because he wrote about his experiences after he had been delivered from the belly of the fish, he was able to put his prayers as well as the testimony to their answers together. Here we see that he made his confession. And he made his decision as well. Jonah felt abandoned and forsaken for a short while. Are you in the midst of problems right now? Jonah's experience is an encouragement to keep on praying. The Lord who answered him will also answer your prayers. Jonah's decision to **"look again toward thy holy temple"** shows a sign of repentance and return from his backslidden state. In repentance, (1), Jonah remembered the forgotten call. (2), He repented of his former conduct - his conduct, that is, of running away from the Lord, of abandoning the assignment the Lord has given him. He was now willing to come back and do what he ought to do. (3), He returned to the forsaken commission. It was still the same commission. It did not change at all. Like Jonah, the Lord wants us to repent and return to our forsaken commission. He wants to use us and reward us after using us.

HIS CONSECRATION AND DELIVERANCE

Jonah 2:7-9; Lamentations 3:21-24; Romans 12:1,2; Jonah 2:9; 1 Kings 22:14; 1 Samuel 12:23; Numbers 22:38; Jeremiah 42:4

After Jonah had prayed unto the Lord, making his confession, the Lord spake unto the fish and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. The Lord is ever merciful. No matter how far we might have gone from the presence of the Lord, **"his compassions fail not."** We can hope in the mercies of the Lord. Having experienced the mercy of the Lord, Jonah was willing to pay his vows, to consecrate everything about his life and ambition to the Lord. **"I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving,"** he says, **"I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."** By the mention of the vow, Jonah, meant, of course, the vow of the preaching prophet or the prophet-preacher; the kind of vows made by Micaiah, Samuel, Balaam and Jeremiah at various times of their lives. The vow of the prophet-preacher? It is the kind of vow that every believer, Christian worker and soul-winner is called to. (1) To speak all that the Lord will speak unto us. (2) To teach the good and the right way. (3) To speak only the word the Lord shall put in our mouth. (4) To keep nothing back, to declare the whole counsel of the Lord, without minding whose ox is gored.

It is interesting to note that the fish vomited Jonah at the very spot where he will commence the work the Lord has given him. When the Lord answers our prayers, He makes the answer to come in a way and at a time that it will help us to continue the work He has given to us to do. If we will remember the forgotten call, repent of our former conduct and return to the forsaken commission, if we will return to what the Lord has called us to do, He will take away all our problems and answer our prayers.

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