

JONAH: THE WRONG-WAY PROPHET (Part 5)

“Running TO God – God’s Praying Prophet in Repentance (Jonah 2)

INTRO: Begin with a promise (Psa. 145:18-19). When last left Mr. Jonah he was in a “whale” of circumstance. Because of his rebellion God chastened him to bring him to repentance and restoration (Heb. 12:10-11). God used a great storm and huge fish to get Jonah’s attention. He had slept through a hurricane. He didn’t repent when the lot exposed him. Now, from a fish’s mouth (belly) he finally comes to his senses (Lk. 15:17) and prays repentantly to God. Repentance matters... God always has a way to melt our stubborn heart. Read 1:17 then Ch. 2... It can easily be prayed in less than 60 seconds! Let’s look at the *elements* in Jonah’s prayer of repentance, which brought him back to God and made him usable again.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF JONAH’S PRAYER OF REPENTANCE (vv.1-6a)

What led Jonah to finally repent? It was not the storm, nor the lot, nor the captain’s confrontation. Two circumstances brought repentance about:

- A. *PERSONAL DISTRESS* - Jonah’s personal circumstances got his attention. He was “inside the fish” (1); “in distress” (2). *Distress* means to bind, restrict, or cramp. More in vv.3,5,6a. Personal distress from overwhelming circumstances of life can break us and bring us to repentance.
- B. *SPIRITUAL DESPAIR* (vv.4a, 6a) - This is worse. He felt abandoned by God. Same as Jesus (Matt. 27:46). He was in spiritual depression, thinking God had forsaken him and no longer cared for him. He was spiritually empty, feeling void of God’s presence in his life. Ex: David, Elijah, Jeremiah, Jesus.
- C. These circumstances brought him to his last resource - PRAYER. Ever notice how quick we pray when trouble comes? The greater the trouble the deeper the prayer. Inside that fish, Jonah rediscovered prayer (8 of 10 verses to prayer). Perhaps most unique prayer closet in human history - a prayer of desperation. It has intensity & agony. This instructs us we can pray, repent, and return to God anywhere and anytime. We can do so with total confidence that no matter how slimy and suffocating the circumstances God will hear and respond (v.7). Make prayer your first choice and not last chance.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS PRAYER OF REPENTANCE (vv.6b-8).

- A. The *CONFIDENCE* that God is involved in our circumstances. Jonah was convicted & convinced that God alone had caused his circumstances (because of Jonah’s sin). Notice wording in v.3 (“*you* hurled me...*your* waves and breakers...”). Repentance recognizes God is the sovereign Lord who is in control. He remembered the Lord (v.7). He didn’t get what he wanted but what he needed – God.
- B. Next, honest *CONFESSION* of your sins (v.8). Jonah had turned his back on God to become his own god. He put himself in God’s place. Everything God

said, Jonah did the opposite. Verse presents timeless truth. Our *worthless idols* are more sophisticated than the past, but just as offensive to God (1 Jn. 5:21). They exact of high price. Whenever we bow before our idols of pleasure, power, possessions, position, etc., we *forfeit the grace that could be ours!* God hates idolatry (Exo. 20).

- C. Next, again *CONFIDENCE* that God will hear, respond, and deliver. Jonah knew returning to God was his only hope (vv.2, 4b, 6b, 7b). Loss of hope is an extreme condition. At the end of his rope, Jonah was confident God would deliver. He was helpless but not hopeless. Notice, at first that the more he prayed, the worse things got (vv.5-6). Now, Jonah’s faith is renewed.
- D. Finally, repentance requires a *CONNECTION* to the Word. Jonah’s prayer contains at least 6 quotes from Psalms. See Psalm 119:67,71 for connection between affliction & Word. Pray God’s Word.
- E. *Summary* - Jonah met conditions of repentance - submission, humility, dependence, brokenness, confession, at the end of self he rediscovered God. He’s prayed. God’s heard, but no miracle!

III. THE COMMITMENT OF JONAH’S REPENTANCE (v.9)

- A. (v.9a) A *Prayer of Thanksgiving* - “Sacrifice” here refers to public ritual of worship. Made a public commitment. Sacrifice handles past sins. He gave thanks *before* God delivered him.
- B. (v.9b) A *Promise of Rededication* - vows to obey. “I’ll do better, Lord!” A vow is a promise for the future.
- C. (v.9c) A *Recognition of Sovereignty* - “I’ll trust and wait on you, Lord.” All prior to God’s Provision!

IV. THE CONSEQUENCE OF JONAH’S PRAYER OF REPENTANCE (v.10) - Jonah received freedom and deliverance. God cleansed him and gave him another chance (3:1). On God’s timing. When it’s not God’s time you can’t force it, when it is you can’t stop it! Both amazing and gross! Out of the belly of a fish, the chastening hand of a loving heavenly Father, Jonah arose a new man. He now had a testimony to tell to the nations. Lesson? God hears our prayers (Jam. 5:13). John Piper

CONC: This same Jonah who for years had run with God as a successful prophet, then ran from God’s will, now runs to God in prayerful repentance. Notice, his prayer contains no plea or petition for deliverance (undeserved), but is a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s deliverance. The demons will tell you you’ve gone too far and can’t come home - a lie! To this point seven (7) miracles have occurred in this short story. Perhaps, the greatest to this point is the tender melting of Jonah’s rebel heart by the marvelous, matchless grace of God (v.8). It’s always good to run to God and His outrageous grace (Lk. 15:18-24). Getting right with God is always worth celebrating!