

Remnant Life Church
July 17, 2016
Sunday School Stories Retold:
Jonah – A Prayer of Faith
Jonah 2

Review:

- Jonah is a prophet to Israel (the northern Kingdom) in the time of Jeroboam II
- He is prophesying in a time and place that would be difficult to work in
 - Every one of the 19 northern kings of Israel from Jeroboam I till the final one Hoshea over a span of 210 years disobeyed and turned their backs on God
 - Prophets were often called to be the voice of God warning the people about their sins and the consequences that would come if they did not turn their hearts
 - Jonah had great job security!
- God tells him to go to Ninevah
- Jonah runs from the call of God
- The storm comes; the sailors; Jonah into the sea; God saves his life by sending the fish
- 3 days and 3 nights alone with God – the one he tried to run away from

Jonah's Prayer – **READ Jonah 2**

- The structure of the book is a narrative of Jonah's experience that brackets a psalm of prayer
 - A psalm is song or a poem used in worship
 - Jonah's prayer is in the form of a psalm because it draws so heavily from the Psalm's of David
- Understand – The primary reason Jonah prays is because there is absolutely **NOTHING ELSE HE CAN DO!**
 - Abraham Lincoln said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go."
- Jonah knows that he is in deep trouble
- Commentaries that this is a prayer of thanksgiving not of desperation – I don't agree
 - Just a short time again he had resigned himself to the fact that he was going to pay the penalty for sin against God – death
 - The OT prophets (like Jonah) preached and observed severe consequences to the disobedience of Israel to God's law
 - Yet in this extreme situation he begins the prayer with a common almost cliché sentence from words he knew by heart
 - *In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. (2:2)*
 - These same almost exact words are found in **Psalms 120:1; 118:5 and 86:7**
 - Jonah knew the writings of both David and Solomon – he had probably preached them many times
 - We learn that in the times of difficulty, whether great or small, familiar words that come to our mind and heart are sufficient to cry out to God
 - The excuses "I can't pray, I don't know what to say"

- Just talk to Him in plain, everyday words (not KJ English)
 - But Jonah prays most of this prayer in the past tense as if he is saying that it all already happened including his salvation from the situation
 - Once he realized that he was not going to drown (at least not right away) his heart quickly changed
 - He became the prophet of God again speaking confidently the ways of the Lord
 - He speaks of the end of the story (*I will sacrifice...*) as it has already happened
 - He speaks of a future redemption as something accomplished in the present – WHY?
 - Because Jonah is a man of faith once again!
 - Sin always desires to change you from who God created and called you to be
 - The greater issue for Jonah is that his prayer comes so late
 - The sailors topside are enjoying the benefits of God's mercy having committed their lives to him and making sacrifices
 - Jonah, with no other options, finally gets around to doing what even the pagan captain early on had asked him to do (1:6)
 - The sailors obeyed the Lord before it was too late – even in the midst of a storm Jonah was not willing to humble himself before God
 - Philip Carey's commentary on Jonah – “Indeed we often pray too late: asleep in spiritual laziness or afraid to face God, we delay our prayers until disaster has already overtaken us and death is no longer something to fear for it has arrived and become our dwelling place. Yet precisely then we discover it is never too late for prayer. We can pray from the valley of the shadow of death (Ps 23:4) just as Jonah prayed from the guts of the fish.”
 - Jonah's prayer tell us that he finally understands what he has done
 - The humility of recognition of sin in our lives must always come before we are forgiven and restored (2 Chron 7:14)
 - *The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me... (2:5)*
 - The waters surrounded me even to my soul...(NKJV)
 - In the original language the word for “soul” is nephesh – same word for neck and life
 - Same as the Hebrew word for heart – physical, emotional, psychological meanings are inseparable
 - Jonah's cry is that the waters rise up to his neck; they will extinguish his life; swallow up his soul
 - The imagery being painted is powerful but not new
- + Again in the Psalms (69:1-2) - *Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.*