

Jonah's Prayer of Thanksgiving

Jonah 2

July 30, 2023

Well, welcome to Grace Church, for those of you who are new, you don't know me, my name is Brett Hastings. I am like Bill, I'm a member here, but I'm also one of the elders who has the privilege of serving this church as the Lord's under shepherd. Last month, we started into a the book of Jonah, we took a brief break to hear from Josh out of the book of James, and it was really the the perfect providence of the Lord to do that because where Josh ended last week, really fits like a glove with what we're going to be talking about today.

So, if you aren't there already, turn in your copy of the word of God to the book of Jonah. And just to recap so we don't have to read all of chapter one, just give you a brief overview. Jonah received a revelation from the Lord, a commission from the Lord to go and preach. Jonah was most likely in the temple when

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Yahweh commissioned him to go to Nineveh, the most wicked people on the face of the planet.

Jonah was to go and preach the judgment of God upon them. Think of it like going or being called to go right after 9/11 to the den of the Taliban to preach The Gospel. Those people, they had acted in horrific ways against the nation of Israel and so it would have been similar for us to do that, we would have struggled with thoughts of they don't deserve mercy, they deserve judgement. And that's how Jonah thought, too, about the people of Nineveh.

But upon the Lord's commissioning of Jonah, Jonah didn't say anything, he just dropped everything, and he bolted the other direction. He took off for the ends of the earth to Tarshish, and he did so by means of a boat that he found at Joppa. The text follows Jonah on this descent from the top of Mount Zion and the presence of the Lord down to Joppa, down into the boat, and then finally, where we will find Jonah today down in the bottom of the ocean.

But Jonah blatantly rebelled against God's direct command, fleeing from his commission, and just to remind you, those of you that may not have been here, 2 Kings 14:25, tells us that Jonah was a true prophet. So, this isn't someone who is a rebellion in the sense of not committing his life to the Lord at all, just someone who struggles to obey the Lord completely, someone that we can identify very well with.

So, we should see Jonah here as a believer who is disobeying the command of the Lord. Thus, Yahweh is disciplining him as a son, but back to Jonah on the boat. Jonah boards the ship sets sail, pretty soon after that, Jonah goes down into the lower deck where all the cargo is stored, and he finds a place to lay down on the backside of all the cargo, and he falls fast asleep.

And while Jonah is peacefully engaged in a deep sleep, the Lord stirs up a violent storm, so violent that even these seasoned sailors, they're terrified. The mariners, they frantically cry out to their gods. They petition all of their gods to save them, but the storm persists. These competent men,

they then realize that they need to start jettisoning the cargo to save the ship and save their lives.

Their gods are not answering them, because they're nothing, there empty, vain, worthless, no gods at all. So, when that doesn't work, they start emptying the cargo hold into the ocean, and when they get to the end of the cargo, they find Jonah fast asleep and they wake him and they shake him and they say, "What are you doing, sleeping?" And they ask, and then they tell him to cry out to his God that Jonah's God might save them.

Well, Jonah refuses to pray, he refuses to pray to his God, who is sovereign over the land and the sea over the entire earth. Jonah refuses to pray because he knows he's in direct rebellion against him. So, then the men cast lots to find out why this is happening to them, and the lot falls to Jonah. And the revelation is made clear, Jonah was fleeing from the sovereign God of the universe.

Jonah was fleeing from the God of the seas by sea, and after expressing their moral outrage and their disdain for

Jonah's foolishness, they asked Jonah what they must do to appease Yahweh. Jonah tells them if you're going to do anything, you have to throw me overboard. But they don't like that option because they don't want to be guilty of murder, so they row hard to get back to shore.

But after rowing hard, they realized there's no escaping this. They realized that throwing Jonah overboard is the only option. And so, if you're there, let's pick it up in chapter one, verse 15. Jonah 1:15. So, "they pick up Jonah, and they hurled him into the sea and the sea ceased from its raging. And then, the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered sacrifices to the Lord and made vows."

So, the scene the, the camera shot, so to speak, is on the boat, and it's on these men who pick up Jonah, and they throw him into the ocean. But the camera it doesn't pan and follow Jonah down into the water right away, we don't get to see what happens to Jonah right away. Instead, the camera, so to speak, stays on the men in the boat, above the water level. The seas

cease from their raging, indicating the truthfulness of all that Jonah told them that Jonah was the one.

He was the cause of all of this turmoil, these men then recognize Jonah's God is the true God. They fear God, they offer worship to him and sacrifices and vows, no doubt celebrating and thankfulness and praise for having been delivered from the storm, awe and wonder at what has just happened to them. Just like the disciples on the boat when Jesus calmed the seas in a moment and their lives being spared, they're in awe.

They're on the boat, worshipping, giving thanks, rejoicing all the while, where is Jonah? Well, Jonah is sinking to the bottom of the ocean. Look back, pick it up in verse 17, "And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah." Now, how many of you, when you read that the great fish swallowed up Jonah, you read that and you exclaim with excitement, "Yes, he's saved." How many of you read it that way? It's kind of like a movie where somebody's falling off a building or something like that and the superhero swoops in at the last second and catches them before hitting the ground.

How many of you think of it that way? Nobody? For myself, before I studied this, I read these verses and I imagined in my mind's eye that the sailor sailors throw Jonah overboard and pretty immediately then the fish just, you know, swallows him up. And because Jonah is kind of cast as the bad guy at this point, I mean, he's unwilling to take mercy to Nineveh, he's willing to let an entire boat of men die instead of repenting, as Jonah gets swallowed by the fish.

I, you know, tend to think, well, he kind of deserves the punishment of getting eaten by a fish. Maybe, you know, after a few days in there, it'll straighten him out. So, which is it? Is the fish an instrument of punishment and discipline, or is the fish a means of salvation? I would say the answer is both, but we're going to discover that more this morning. Jonah's prayer is a prayer of thanksgiving or a psalm of thanksgiving, you might say.

But before we get to the prayer, let's just talk about the narrative, the setting of the scene here and the culmination in

verse 10. Look at verse 17, again, "And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. And then Jonah prayed to the Lord is God from the belly of the fish." And now skip down to verse 10, "And the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land."

Now, I just want to say this at the outset that I am not going to spend much time on the plausibility of Jonah surviving in the stomach of a fish for three days. I'm not going to talk about, as some have, the acidity level of the fish's stomach and whether or not Jonah could survive for three days. I'm not going to try to defend this on its possibility, because the book of Jonah assumes a biblical world view. Which means that if you believe in the very first ver, verse of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Then what is it for this God to send a fish to swallow Jonah and preserve him alive for three days? If God can create the heavens and the earth and the sea, as Jonah has declared in this book already, is it too hard for God to sustain Jonah alive

in an otherwise unsurvivable environment? This is no different than the Lord sustaining Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego alive in the fire in the book of Daniel. It's a miracle, and the Scriptures presuppose God who is powerful enough to do anything, and bring things about that would otherwise never be possible in the natural world.

So, in short, Jonah's survival inside the fish is a miracle, it is not naturally explainable, naturally possible. But this narrative that we have read verses 17 and verse 1 in chapter 2 and then verse 10. This is a short narrative but couched within this narrative is a very powerful song, very powerful prayer of Jonah where he thanks Yahweh for saving him. Now keep in mind look at verse 1, Jonah is praying this prayer of thanksgiving from the belly of the fish.

This isn't after Jonah gets out, Jonah is in the belly of the fish, and he is giving thanks to Yahweh for saving him and the salvation that Jonah gives thanks for is a past reality. The past event was a fish that Yahweh prepared and ordained to save Jonah from drowning in the depths of the sea. The word

translated here as appointed, it's used four times in this book, and it always points to the power of Yahweh to accomplish his will.

Jonah knows Yahweh prepared the fish ahead of time to providentially deliver him from death. Deliverance in the form of being swallowed by a fish and then remaining there for three days and three nights. Why three days and three nights? Well, big picture, Jesus was going to point back to this as a sign of his own death and resurrection. And maybe after all this if I have time, I'll maybe preach on, on that that Jesus this is a sign of Jesus resurrection if it would be helpful. But more immediately, it was three days and nights in the belly of fish that Jonah needed to be trained in humility and submission.

He needed some time to think about his situation, he had repented already, as we will see, but he needed time to think and reflect on life, on God, on God's good gifts. That is, he needed some time to learn to be thankful for the fish that had eaten him. And I think we should read these verses as they are presented, that Jonah was in the fish for three days, and on the

third day he prayed the prayer, and pretty soon after he prayed, he was vomited back up onto dry land.

But that's the narrative, let's get to the verses that are couched inside that narrative. That brings us to verse 2, the psalm of thanksgiving from Jonah, which is it's really saturated with bits and pieces from other psalms, which indicate that Jonah was a godly man familiar with Scripture. Though we find him immature, he knew scripture, he knew who God was, but let's read verses 2 through 9. Now, this song of thanksgiving, Jonah says, "I called out to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me out of the belly of Sheol, I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me, all your waves and your billows passed over me. And then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.' The waters closed in over me to take my life the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head, at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, Oh Lord, my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord and my prayer came to you into your temple. Those who pay regard to vain idols

forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I with the voice of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you what I have vowed I will pay, salvation belongs to the Lord.”

What we are going to learn from this song or this prayer, this psalm of thanksgiving, it will greatly help us as we go through difficult trials. Whether they are trials that the Lord gives us to correct us and turn us from our wayward ways like Jonah, or just trials that he has given us to perfect us and make us more like Christ. The principles that we learn in here they apply to any trial that the Lord sees fit to give us as good and perfect gifts to us.

So, our outline is three imperatives to remind us to renew our minds with these truths. So point number one: Trust in Yahweh's sovereignty. Find that in verses 2 through 4. Number two: Rejoice in Yahweh's deliverance, verses 5 to 7, and hope in Yahweh's restoration, 8 to 9. So, trust in Yahweh's sovereignty, rejoice in Yahweh's deliverance, and hope in Yahweh's restoration.

And just to give you some reasoning why those verses are broken up the way they are, is because at the end of each of those sections there is hope expressed by Jonah regarding the temple and the presence of the Lord that he longs to return to. So, the end of that first section in verse 4, he says, I said, "I am driven away from your sight, yet I shall again look upon your holy temple," that ends the first section.

And in verse 7, you can see that again, "When my life was fainting away, I remember the Lord and my prayer came to you into your temple." That's the end of the second section, and then finally, in verse 9, there is an implied returning to the temple, where he will, with the voice of thanksgiving, sacrifice to the Lord. So those are the three sections. For Jonah as he is writing this psalm, he knows the end of every scenario leads him to the presence of the Lord, whether in death or life, returning to the physical temple.

And we, we should walk away with that same hope, with great thanksgiving, that regardless of the endings that might happen in our life, they all lead to the presence of the Lord if we are

his. But coming to the text, the first thing that Jonah does to instruct his own heart, to where that hope is. Jonah trusts in Yahweh's sovereignty, point one, trust in Yahweh's sovereignty, look at verses 2 to 4 again.

"I called out to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me." The psalm begins with a past, completed action, he called out to the Lord. So, this is a reference to a different prayer than the one that he is writing right here.

He is looking back to a previous moment when he says, "I called out to the Lord, and he answered me," Jonah declares. He's still in the fish, he declares that the Lord has answered his prayer. Yahweh has heard Jonah and acted and answered his prayer. But Jonah is still inside the fish, so how did the Lord answer Jonah? The only answer is the fish swallowing, Jonah was his answer to prayer. The Lord answered Jonah out of his

distress, this word for distress, it can also be translated as anxiety.

What was this distress and anxiety? Look at verse 3, "For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the sea, and the floods surrounded me, and all your waves and your billows passed over me." He's under the ocean with waves crashing upon his head, imagine yourself on a ship. You've been thrown overboard in the middle of hurricane like winds, and you begin to sink, probably because you don't know how to swim. Imagine the anxiety you would feel sinking down into the depths of the ocean.

When I lived in Haiti, there was a, a pool, small pool, but it had a deep end of the pool on it. And one day one of the workers, sons, they came to the pool to swim. He had never learned to swim in deep water to befo, before, though. He lived a mile from the ocean, never learned to swim. He's probably 10 to 12 years old, a good-sized kid. He saw one of the other little kids who knew how to swim dive into the deep part of the pool and come up on the other side. So, he asked me, he said, "Can I do that?" And I was over there, right, right by the deep

end. I said, "Sure you can try it." So, he jumped in, not having any idea how to swim, sank like a rock to the bottom.

He sat motionless, staring up at me with this look of terror in his eyes. He had never been in deep water, no training to swim whatsoever. Apparently, you know, this is a learned, you just don't naturally do that underwater. So, I went down, put my hand out, grabbed him. He grabbed hold of me, wrapped himself around me so tightly I thought I was going to drown. Finally, got him to the edge of the pool, he got out. Didn't really want to have anything to do with the deep end of the pool anymore. But I'll never forget the look of panic on his face as he stared up at me and then latched on to me. That was just seconds in a 10-foot-deep pool with someone close by.

Imagine Jonah thrown off of a ship in the middle of hurricane like storm, hits the water begins to sink. Doesn't know to hold his breath, to keep himself buoyant. He might have screamed on the way in the water, which meant his lungs were empty and he was going to sink even faster. So, I think when Jonah here says, "I cried to the Lord out of my distress," I

think that's a bit of an understatement. Now, this is Jonah's reflection on the event, this isn't necessarily what he was thinking in the moment, but look at verse 3, he says, "For you," speaking to the Lord, "you cast me into the deep," he's speaking to Yahweh.

First of all, it was the sailors who threw him overboard, right? Moreover, why was Jonah there to begin with? It was because of his own rebellion; how can Jonah say it was the Lord? Well, one commentator notes that this is Jonah's personal interpretation of the events of chapter 1, and it is a theological interpretation. Jonah knows that Yahweh is sovereign and brought him to this very point. Yahweh was the ultimate cause, not the instrumental cause who threw him over the boat, but he is the ultimate cause of him being hurled into the ocean, to teach him this very lesson, to trust the Lord with his life. It was Yahweh who had hurled him into the heart of the sea. Look at verse 3, the third line, "The floods surrounded me, all your waves and your billows passed over me." Recognizes that the Lord is sovereign over those things, they are the Lord's waves, that crash upon him.

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It is as Jonah is sinking into the heart of the sea, the remarkable thought enters his mind. Look at verse 4, "The waters." Sorry, that's verse 5, go to verse 4 then, I said, "I am driven away from your sight, yet I shall again look upon your holy temple." I don't know if I was drowning, I don't know what I would be thinking, but I don't think it would be, boy, I can't wait to get back to church. It's not an exact parallel to what Jonah is saying here, but the temple was the heart of worship it represented the presence of God.

Jonah was longing to go back to the place that he had fled from, back to the place where he enjoyed the presence of the Lord. But what is remarkable is that Jonah trusts that he will return to look upon the temple, he's in the middle of sinking to the bottom of the ocean, and he has confidence that he's going to return to the temple to see it again.

How does he have such confidence? Well, Jonah knows at this point, that if God really wanted him to go to Nineveh, there was nothing that was going to keep Yahweh from getting him there. Even if Jonah was presently sinking to the bottom of the ocean,

he knew God's got something for me to do. Jonah trusted so much in the sovereignty of God that, he knew he would one day look upon the temple again, because God was getting him out of this. Now unless the Lord visits us and gives us a direct commission, which he won't because our commission is in Matthew 28. But unless we have a personal commission from the Lord like Jonah, we can't have the same confidence. We trust that the Lord has numbered our days, and we know not when our work here is done.

But Jonah knew his work wasn't done yet, thus he trusted that the sovereign God of the universe was somehow going to get him out of the bottom of the ocean, so he could do what God had commanded him to do. And what we should take away from this, beloved, is in the title of our point number one, trust in the sovereignty of God like Jonah did. No matter what you are going through, renew your mind with the truth, that our sovereign God has put all these things in your life for a reason. Just as he cast Jonah overboard, he's put you right where you are for a reason.

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You can trust, like Jonah did, that this sovereign God is in control of all things, and if he wants to get you out of the trial that you're in, there is nothing beyond his power to do so. You're not going to die a second too early or a second too late, but we don't know when our work is done, so we trust that the sovereign Lord will bring our time to an end when He has ordained, and nothing can change that.

So again, trust, beloved, that even if you are in the bottom of the ocean, your God is sovereign over your situation. He is a good God who works all things together for the good of those who love Him to conform you to the image of Christ. Don't fret, renew your mind in the midst of your distress with the truth of God being a good God, in control of all things, working all things together for His good ends. Should this be near the end of your time on the earth, if you are His, you can rest in the fact that this sovereign God will bring you home to His heavenly temple into His presence where you will enjoy Him forever.

There's no bad outcome for those who are His, and we don't have the hope that Jonah did that we will survive this particular trial that we might be in, but we do have further revelation that gives us hope of eternal life no matter what happens on this earth.

So, beloved, when you are going through hard times, renew your mind and trust in the sovereignty of God that he is good and he is working for good for the those who love him, even if it doesn't feel like it in your life right now, he is. And if you're in the midst of trials, particularly difficult trials, you have to renew your mind with this truth almost minute by minute, second by second, you can't just hear it once for me and be good for the rest of your life. You must renew your mind with it constantly as new fears creep in, new what ifs. You must renew your mind with these truths, constantly remembering that compared to the eternal glory that awaits us, these are "light and momentary afflictions."

Though right now they feel like the world is weighing on us, they don't feel light and momentary. They feel like they've

been going on forever, in light of eternity they are light and momentary. So, beloved, trust in your sovereign God, no matter what is going on in life, it is He who holds your life in His hands. So, we see first that Jonah trusted in Yahweh's sovereignty even as he was sinking to the bottom of the ocean, was this source of hope for him. Let us renew our minds with these same truths that we might trust in the sovereignty of God.

As we move on to verses 5 and 7, we see another truth to renew our minds within the midst of trials, and let's point to rejoice in Yahweh's deliverance, rejoice in Yahweh's deliverance. Look at verses 5 through 7, "The waters closed in over me to take my life. The deep surrounded me, weeds were wrapped about my head, and at the roots of the mountains I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever. Yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord and my prayer came to you into your holy temple."

So, in this second stanza, Jonah returns to recounting his hopeless plight that he was in, and Jonah, in beautiful poetry

describes himself sinking to the bottom of the ocean. Look again at verse 5, "The waters closed in over me to take my life, the deep surrounded me, weeds wrapped around my head." While this is poetry, I don't think we should discount that Jonah could still be describing what literally happened to him sinking down to the bottom of the ocean. Jonah describes sinking down to where there was plant life on the sea floor. The word there for weeds is a word that refers to plants that are growing up from the sea floor, not just seaweed floating through the water.

The water's closing in over him, language of entrapment, he was sinking down, and the weight was pressing down on him, and the weeds are wrapping around his head almost as if they're pulling him downward. And he goes on further to describe hitting the bottom of the ocean when he says, in verse 6, "At the roots of the mountain I went down to the land." Jonah hits rock bottom, literally at the bottom of the Mediterranean ocean, down to the roots of the mountain, "to the land whose bars closed upon me forever," he says. Here, Jonah describes his hopeless, helpless situation apart from God.

That is, he is oppressed by the waters above held down, he feels the weight of all the water squeezing him at this point, the sand as if their bars to a jail cell, maybe feet sinking into them, feeling like they're holding him down. And the hopelessness is described in the word forever. In other words, humanly speaking, there's no hope for Jonah, his time is short, he feels as if he'll be there forever. He feels as if this is his watery grave, and we've talked about this, mentioned it already, but this is the end of the descent for Jonah. He went down from the heights of the temple in Jerusalem in the very presence of God, down into the boat, and now down into the very bottom of the sea.

There's no further place to descend from the presence of the Lord, he can't fall any farther. This is the end of the road for Jonah. The waters have closed over him forever, it's over there. Jonah stands on the sea floor, wrapped in weeds, sand between his toes, he's done at least that's how he feels.

Now, before we move on, I just want to answer the question, is this just a poetic description or does it describe what

actually happened? I mean, how is it that Jonah could be standing on the sea floor if, if he could survive, could he even sink that fast to get to the bottom of the sea floor?

I mean, the Mediterranean, it's 10,000 feet deep at certain points, could this even be literally possible, or is it just poetic language? Well, I think it was possible, if they left Joppa and they went due west because they were sailing west, they would have gone just north of Egypt. And for a length of 150 miles across the coast of Egypt, there is a shallow shelf that juts out from the Nile Delta. There's a shallow shelf that juts out into the ocean about 30 miles for 150 miles of the coast. So that's around 5000 square miles of area that are fairly shallow that Jonah could have sank to the bottom of the. The depth on that varies from 30 feet to 150 feet for that 5000 square mile area and it just happened to be in the direct route that they were taking.

So, I don't think Jonah was just poetically describing how he felt, though it is that, but I think he really sank to the sea floor. But at this point, Jonah is standing on the sea

floor, on the sand, the sandbar, weeds wrapped around him, the waters of death pressing down on him, it's the end, it's a humanly hopeless situation. But God, one of the many glorious but God verses in the bible, look at verse 6, the end of verse 6, "Yet you," says the ESV, but it could just be easily. "But you, God brought my life from the pit, oh Lord, my God." So, this whole scenario, this situation of death, was Jonah being at the bottom of the ocean, and now he recounts how God brought him up from the brink of death.

How? Well, the only possible answer is the fish, the fish swallowed him and saved him from death. The word for pit there it's a word that often refers to a grave or a trap that takes one's life. But here, Jonah recounts, this is the moment that God saved him. Just like if Jonah was falling off of a building and the Lord swooped in to save him right before he hit the ground. So, the Lord prepared the fish and sent the fish to save him right before the point of death. He was on the brink of death, but God swooped in and saved him. And this whole psalm is thanking Yahweh for saving him from death. And mind you, he's thanking and rejoicing the Lord while he is still sitting in the disgusting stomach of a fish, and he's thanking God.

Do you think you could thank God in your bad circumstances? I think so, but there's actually more detail here about the moment before he was swallowed by the fish. Look at verse 7 with me, "When my life was fainting away." Here we have the detail, that it was in the very moments when Jonah's life was fainting away that he prayed. Jonah refused to repent aboard the ship and opted instead to be thrown overboard. And it wasn't until the very point of his life fainting away, that he repented, it's one stubborn dude. Well, after being thrown overboard, Jonah apparently didn't know how to swim because he's standing on the bottom of the sea floor, sinking like my friend who had no experience swimming.

But as he would be sinking, he'd be holding his breath. He would have felt the pressure increasing upon him as he sank the increasing pressure on the eardrums, as he would not have known how to equalize the pressure. He would have held his breath, and after about 30 seconds he would have felt a burning sensation begin in his chest. Most people who aren't trained to hold their breath can do so for about 30 seconds comfortably. But as Jonah continued to hold his breath, the building up of carbon dioxide

would lead to the acidification of his blood, and this would manifest in an increasing chest pain and the burning of the lungs.

And it would steadily increase as he sank to the bottom of the sea. And Jonah would fight the urge to take a breath as the pressure increased and the burning increased in his lungs. And Jonah would be able to voluntarily hold his breath for about 100 seconds, but eventually physiology would take over. Jonah would eventually, involuntarily forced by his own body, take a breath underwater. And when this first reflexive breath is taken, Jonah is still conscious. This sharp spasmodic breath, it would suck water into the mouth as that foreign fluid goes into the lungs, it would burn greatly. Just imagine the feeling you get when it goes into your sinuses, even worse, into the lungs, as they fill with water, the water hits all your airways.

Within several seconds of this final period of agony, brain function begins to shut down with a typical sensation of blacking out paired with the knowledge of imminent death. It's this moment when Jonah's life is fainting away, he's beginning

to pass out when his lungs are full of water, seconds before death, Jonah remembers the Lord. This word for remember often implies repentance, and that's obvious with what we see here. He repents of going his own way, and he prays to God from the depth of the ocean. What he refused to do on the boat, he does as his life is fainting away, but with his lungs full of water, no way to actually get a verbal prayer out.

Jonah prays from his heart, his cry of repentance and submission to Yahweh reaches the temple into the very presence of Yahweh. And immediately before Jonah passes out, the Lord swoops in and saves him, and he's swallowed by the fish seconds before death. Jonah recounts this is the moment of salvation that he is thankful for, and he is going to rejoice in it. He's re, composing this song while he's still in the fish's stomach, thanking the Lord for saving his life. He's rejoicing in the deliverance that the Lord has already provided him. Now, if you're like me, you're wondering, how is the inside of a fish any more survivable than the bottom of the ocean?

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Unless, because of Disney's Pinocchio, you're still under the illusion that if you get swallowed by a fish or a whale, you end up in a room this size. We all know that's not the case, though, in reality, how is the inside of a fish any more survivable than the bottom of the ocean? In reality it isn't, but it might have appeared so to Jonah. Jonah wasn't a modern biologist, he has no idea how the insides of anybody works, but it might have appeared to Jonah that he was in a more livable state. He didn't know that the fish's stomach acid would normally begin to eat through his flesh in a matter, matter of minutes. So, through God's sustaining Jonah, from Jonah's perspective, he was safe, and after doing some research, Jonah was possibly in a state where he was able to expel the water from his lungs and be under the impression that he was in a fairly survivable state.

Some sharks, a couple commentators, Keil and Delitzsch, proposed in their commentary that it was actually a great white shark that swallowed Jonah. But some sharks gulp down air into their stomachs to help them float, and so while it wouldn't be a massive cavern, there could have still been a pocket of air in the stomach. That Jonah would have been able to expel the water

from his lungs and fill them with air and be in a relatively, you know, as comfortable as you could get inside of a fish's stomach. But in reality, we know it's no less of a miracle that the Lord sustained him inside the fish than it would have been if the Lord sustained him at the bottom of the ocean. But for Jonah, he was saved from a watery grave scooped up by a fish, where he was able to expel the water from his lungs and be in a seemingly relatively safe state inside the stomach of the fish.

But had the Lord not miraculously sustained him, he would have died. For many fish, the acid in their stomach can even eat through metal, Jonah had no chance of surviving apart from Yahweh sustaining him miraculously. Thus, Jonah, after three days he comes to the full realization of the blessing that the fish was. It might have taken him three days to be thankful for the fish for the disgusting environment that the Lord used to deliver him from his watery grave. And while we might see the trial of being inside of a fish pretty miserable and something horrendous and appalling and disgusting, Jonah came to see it.

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To put it in the words of James Last week, Jonah came to see the fish as a good and perfect gift from the loving father. Though it was the current trial he was in the middle of, he came to thank the Lord for it as a good and perfect gift. Now there's something vital that we need to reflect on and take away from this, and that is when we are going through trials maybe not as bad as being stuck in the stomach of a fish, but relatively bad to us. We need to, like Jonah, think back and renew our minds by rejoicing in the deliverance that the Lord has already provided to us. You can reflect on all the times that the Lord has sustained you in the past, yes, but more than that, you can always rejoice in the past salvation that the Lord has accomplished in you by setting you free from the power of sin and bringing you into his family by punishing His son on the cross instead of you, no matter what's going on in your life, you can rejoice in that.

We can always look back to our salvation, escaping the pit of hell, and rejoice no matter what is going on in this life. That is an immutable reality because we are united to Christ, and like Jonah, we should draw a line of continuity between the initial salvation and our hard circumstances now. Christ

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promised us that he was saving people into a life of trials and persecutions, just as Jonah was saved into a horrible situation. That's what Jesus promised us, and we like Jonah, we should rejoice at that initial salvation and thank God for it, even if it has brought other trials upon us. Now Jonah, he couldn't blame anyone but himself, because this was brought on by his disobedience. And as I've said in previous sermons in here, we don't have direct revelation to know if the trials in our lives are due to our sin or just because the Lord is perfecting us.

So, we just trust that it is the good hand of the Lord when we have trials in our life, that our Father is shaping us into the image of his Son, that is what trials do. Thus, if they shape us into Christ, as Josh mentioned last week, they are good and perfect gifts working to perfect us. So, beloved, as you go through trials, renew your minds with this truth as you endure, endure trials, remember your salvation, rejoice in it, thank God that he is trying to make you more like His Son by squeezing you with these trials. Renew your mind by rejoicing in your salvation regardless of the difficult circumstances you find yourself in now. But that's not all, not only do we trust in Yahweh's sovereignty, not only do we rejoice in Yahweh's

deliverance, but we also point three hope in Yahweh's restoration.

Look at verses 8 and 9 with me, "Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I, with a voice of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you what I have vowed I will pay, salvation belongs to the Lord." There is a hope of full restoration that Jonah has here and again. This section ends with the implication that Jonah will return to the temple to offer sacrifices. Jonah has repented, and he has this hope of complete restoration to Yahweh that it will be a physical return to the temple to offer sacrifices to him.

Verse 8, "Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love." Verse 8 has stumped a lot of commentators, some say it's just totally out of place, somebody put it in there later and it shouldn't be there. Other commentators say Jonah is actually proud here, and he's criticizing the pagan sailors from the last chapter who are idolaters while showing himself as pious. And others say that this psalm, what's totally absent, is any confession from Jonah

about wrongdoing. But I think the answer to all of those things is here in verse 8, verse 8 is an implied confession, and the explicit repentance of wanting to go back to Jerusalem, to repent is literally to turn the other way. Jonah had repented in his heart while he wanted to run away from the Lord's presence at the temple. Now he wants to return to it.

Though he had hit the bottom of the ocean, and he couldn't have run any further, he repented, and he wanted nothing more than to go back to the temple from whence he ran. And in verse 8 Jonah is saying idolatry is wickedness, but at the same time he is implying that he was guilty of this. One commentator says the worship of an idol or anything that takes the place of Yahweh is a deliberate act in which one turns from Yahweh to a false and worthless idol. Jonah had done this; he had substituted his will and his desire for Yahweh's. Thus he, like other idolaters, had forsaken Yahweh, the God of mercy.

So, within this verse is an implied confession, Jonah understood he had done this. He had gone his own way, he had followed his own will, his own desires against what the Lord had

commanded him. But he has repented of his autonomy, he has repented of refusing to go to Nineveh, his heart has turned back toward Yahweh, and desires to enter once again into his presence. So, verse 8 is a confession of the sin of idolatry, which Jonah is obviously guilty of. So, it's an implied confession, and Jonah states his foolishness in going his own way, turning his back on Yahweh, forsaking the loyal love of the Lord and his change of heart is demonstrated in his thankfulness.

Beloved, thankfulness is one of the biggest indicators of genuine repentance. If you can be thankful for the horrible circumstances, you are in as a result of your own sin, knowing you deserve it, and far worse yet, desiring full restoration, that is one of the key indicators of true repentance. Second Corinthians 7:10 tells us that true repentance is repentance without regret. Jonah does not regret in the sense that he is having a pity party for himself. He is thankful that in his rebellion the Lord turned him back, no matter the cost.

Even if he has to spend a week, a month, a year in the stomach of a fish, he is thankful that the Lord turned him back from his rebellion. The Lord has turned him back and spared him from death. It's a demonstration of genuine repentance when we do the same, we are thankful for the even the difficult circumstances we find ourselves in because the Lord used those to turn us back to him, And Jonah is hopeful, he's confident that he will be physically restored to the temple, where he can sacrifice to the Lord, in the Lord's presence that he once enjoyed so much. He has confidence that he will return to praise and worship in the congregation of the people at the temple.

He has the future hope that he will be set free even from the vessel of the fish that saved him and returned to the presence of the Lord, and how can he be confident of this? Well, because of what He's about to say, and because of what he's already said, "Salvation belongs to Yahweh." This is just a furtherance of the theology that's already stated. Salvation is Yahweh's, Yahweh is sovereign, there is nothing this sovereign God cannot do, even saving one of his prophets from the bottom of the ocean. Jonah had the hope that this sovereign God was going to, in the end bring him home into the presence of the

Lord. And beloved, when we are in trials, whether they are because of our own disobedience or just trials the Lord is giving us to make us more like Christ, we have this same hope.

Turn with me, just as we close to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, 2 Corinthians chapter 4. This passage has a lot of the same themes that we've covered today, and I just want to encourage you with these as we close. Travis did a short series on chapter 4 of 2 Corinthians, I would encourage you to go listen to that to that on our website, but just want to read these verses and be encouraged by them today. 2 Corinthians chapter 4, we will begin in verse 7. I'll read through 18.

"But we have this treasure," that is the gospel, "in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed, always carrying in the body of death the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifest in our bodies. For we who live are always being

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given over to death, for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifest in our moral flesh.

"So, death is at work in us, but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith according to that which has been written, 'I believe, and so I spoke,' we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence. For it is all your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people, that may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God.

"So, we do not lose heart, though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."

Like a diamond being formed, pressed with the pressure in the heat, the extreme pressure, that's what trials do for us.

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It's no fun right now, but it's producing for us an eternal weight of glory, and we will be set free one day from these jars of clay, from the effects of sin on our bodies and this life and this world. And he who raised Jonah from the depths of the sea and Jesus from the grave has this same sovereign God who will raise us into his glorious presence, where there will be no more pain, no more tears, only endless joy.

This is our hope, beloved. As Jonah looked ahead to his hope of full restoration physically at the temple. This is what we look forward to as well glorification, perfection in the presence of the Lord when He takes us home. When Jonah finished his psalm of thanksgiving, the fish vomited him up on dry land. And that's where we'll leave Jonah for today, but I want to remind you and encourage you, beloved, especially those I know many of you are going through very difficult trials. Renew your minds with the truths from this chapter.

Trust in Yahweh's sovereignty. No matter what you have going on in life, Yahweh holds you in his hands. It is his good hand that carries you and sustains you, trust Him, seek his face

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in prayer, cry out to him for strength to endure. We are weak and frail, about to be broken to pieces, but he is strong, trust him, beloved. Renew your mind with the truth, of your salvation rejoice in his salvation. You have been saved from an eternal wrath in hell, and the Lord is carrying you and sustaining you, delivering you to eventual glory by means of perfecting you through trials.

Rejoice in them with the end hope in mind. Hope in Yahweh's restoration that one day he will bring you into His perfect presence for perfect worship, and he will make all things new, all things right. Let us remind ourselves of these truths often, brothers and sisters, let's pray.

O merciful Father, we are weak and frail human beings, and we are so often overwhelmed. Our souls are overcome by the trials that you have given us. Help us to stand on you, our rock, help us to renew our minds with these truths, moment by moment, hour by hour, minute by minute, second by second, when we must. That we would not distrust you, but that even in the worst of circumstances, like Jonah, we trust in your

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sovereignty, we rejoice in your salvation, and we continue to hope in our future glorification with you and resting with you in eternal bliss. Work this into our hearts and minds, Lord we pray. Amen.