



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
SERIES: JONAH AND OUR MISSIONARY GOD
TITLE: "SURPRISED BY GRACE"
SCRIPTURE: JONAH 1:17-2:10
DATE: JULY 20, 2025

MAIN POINT

Jonah is grateful for God's grace in rescuing him in spite of his earlier disobedience.

INTRODUCTION

Jonah is attempting to flee the presence of God in Jonah chapter 1. This is because he is avoiding God's calling to be a missionary to the people of Nineveh. Jonah attempts to travel in the opposite direction by boarding a ship to Tarshish, assumed to be somewhere in the Mediterranean, as opposed to Nineveh, located in modern day Iraq. God corrects this disobedience with a great storm threatening to capsize the ship. After casting lots to determine the responsible individual, Jonah is thrown into the sea.

Summary or Explanation

We do not know how long Jonah is in the water before God appoints a “great fish” to swallow Jonah, where he remains for three days and nights. There is no further description of the “great fish” but it is thought to most likely be a whale of some sort large enough to hold an adult human for that length of time.

Once inside the fish, Jonah begins to pray to God with deep gratitude for being rescued from what he thought was certain death. He acknowledges crying out to God in great distress from fear of death and drowning and that God heard him and answered him. Jonah references being “in the belly of Sheol” which is the Hebrew term for land of the dead. This shows he indeed felt he was going to die and his very life needed rescuing.

In Jonah 2:3, Jonah attributes his situation to God punishing him for his disobedience and thus being thrown into the sea. He also references that the storm and the waves belong to God even as they overwhelmed him in the water. This shows his acknowledgement of God’s sovereignty over all creation. Verse 4 again references a punishment in that Jonah was driven away from the sight of God, but there is grace that even still he looks “upon your holy temple.” It was common practice in this day for individuals to face the direction of the temple in Jerusalem when they prayed. Jonah is referencing his ability to still communicate and pray to God even in the current situation.

Verses 5 and 6 provide further insight into Jonah’s mindset that he truly felt he was going to die. The waters had closed in over him and as he sinks, he describes weeds tangling around him down to the depths. So far down he feels “at the roots of the mountains” and down to the very gates of death that would close upon him forever. But, at the end of verse 6 there is deep gratitude that yet while Jonah is in this situation, God’s grace is so good to bring his life back from the pit. At acknowledging this, Jonah cries out in the middle of the prayer, “Oh Lord my God.”

Verse 7 to the end of the chapter change tone from describing Jonah’s despair at his fear of death and the current situation to joy and praise for God’s grace in his rescue. Jonah remembers God in what he felt was the end of his life and cries out to God “in his holy temple.” This is again recognizing God’s position of holiness, sovereignty, and ultimate power. Verse 8 shows there is no comparison to those to worship and rely upon false idols and those who worship our God. This is likely a reference back to the sailors on the ship praying to each of their gods for protection from the storm, but only our God controlled the situation. Not only this, but also provided rescue for Jonah the disobeying individual. Verse 9 concludes Jonah’s prayer with thanksgiving and gratefulness. He promises to worship God through sacrifice and commits to fulfilling what he has promised to pay. This is likely a direct reference to

committing to go to Nineveh. Jonah ends with a joyous triumph that salvation belongs to God.

At the end of the three days and nights God causes the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land now a man changed by the depth of God's grace.

Discussion Questions:

- What kind of fish do you think God sent for Jonah?
- Why do you think God continued to pursue Jonah for the work to be done in Nineveh even after his disobedience?
- What do you think would have happened if Jonah still wasn't obedient in going to Nineveh?
- Do you feel like God hears your prayers and answers you in your moments of distress? What about if you have been disobedient?
- Would you expect disobedience to limit God's grace?
- Has there been a time in your life where God has "cast you into the deep?"
- Why do you think God extends so much grace to us even in spite of our sin?
- Have you had a moment in your life where God has rescued you? How did you react?

Conclusions or Application

GOD'S GRACE ABOUNDS IN SPITE OF OUR SIN
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God's grace for us is in many ways incomprehensible, but can reasonably be understood as the deep unqualified love of a parent to a child. We love our children deeply and acknowledge that while they may not be perfect, we are committed to loving and supporting them no strings attached. Sometimes, out of this love, the children do require correcting, but this comes from the parental desire to guide them. Thus it was with Jonah. A behavioral correction was needed that ultimately led to a heart correction and a better understanding of God's love. In Jonah's most vulnerable moment, with the thought of drowning very present, he calls out to God for rescue. And the beautiful thing is that God hears him and provides! In spite of earlier disobedience, God still saves Jonah. It would be a very human understanding to think Jonah had sealed his fate by trying to escape God's presence and why would God come to his rescue when he was actively trying to flee. But thankfully that is not our God. We cannot outrun His immeasurable grace and love. This applies to us today in the New Testament church as well with Paul writing in *Romans 5:8* "*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" Just as God saved Jonah in his disobedience, so Christ provided salvation to everyone even though we are sinners.

GOD HEARS US EVEN IN THE DEPTHS

There are times when we feel distant from God and as if He doesn't hear our prayers at all. Whether through our own doing and disobedience or if we are going through a quiet period with God, it can feel very isolating. God's response to Jonah should help dispel these fears and offer great encouragement that He does indeed hear us even when we feel distant. Even as Jonah sank into the sea, he calls out to God in distress. Jonah's prayer even references being driven from the very sight of God and yet Jonah still looks to God. Possibly to the very brink of death and with great fear, there is no doubt Jonah would have felt extremely distant from God. But when he prays, God comes to the rescue. We should understand that God is not on our timetable and that the answered prayer or rescue could be uncomfortable or not in the way we would have thought. The promise we can hold on to is that He does hear us and He is for us. He will not forsake us in our need.