

Brad Harbaugh • North Carolina • 2600 Fairview Rd • Raleigh, NC • 27612 • 919-649-5208 • brad.harbaugh@capitolcom.org

Jonah's repentance declared "Salvation is from the Lord". Only God can forgive sin, (Isaiah 53, Mark 2:7, Ephesians 4:32) and the Lord did forgive Jonah's sin of blatant rebellion against a clear command of the Lord. The proof of the Lord's forgiveness was "a fresh start". Starting over and a clean slate bring hope because all of us fail. "To err is human, to forgive Divine." The Lord is able to change lives and our world. How did that happen to Jonah? How does that happen today? Let's look at the text of Jonah.

Jonah 2:10 (NASB95)

10 Then the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

1. **The Lord is able to act beyond our imagination.**

The Lord's command in verse 10 goes beyond our natural laws. This is a miracle. God is at work behind the scenes of nature. The Lord commanding the fish to swallow Jonah is the seventh miracle recorded so far in the book of Jonah. Here is the list:

God caused a violent storm (1:4), had the lot fall on Jonah (1:7), calmed the sea when Jonah was thrown overboard (1:15), commanded the fish to swallow Jonah (1:17), had the fish transport him safely, had the fish throw Jonah up on dry land, and perhaps greatest of all, melted the disobedient prophet's heart (evidenced by his thanksgiving prayer in chap. 2)¹.

Explain your thoughts as you ponder the Lord's work behind the scene.

'Miracle' is an overused and misunderstood word today. Here is a simple Biblical definition of a miracle.

A miracle is an interference with nature by a supernatural power. A miracle is something outside our box invading our little box, something outside our world coming into our world and making waves and ripples. Miracles are events in the external world wrought by the power of God. A miracle is God stepping into the universe, setting aside the normal laws of nature to do a supernatural act. The Bible describes miracles usually, especially in the New Testament, in three terms: signs, wonders and mighty works.²

Notice the fish vomits Jonah up sequentially after Jonah repents. How amazing is the work of God to command the fish, but how much more amazing is the Lord forgiving his rebellious prophet?

How did the rebellious prophet change?

Continue reading to see the greatest of all miracles.

2. **The Lord is able to change a person's heart**

Jonah did not ask God for a miracle, he asked God for forgiveness. He didn't ask God to change his circumstances.

Salvation is not seeking to be rescued from our circumstances; it is seeking to be right with God.

This was a change of heart for Jonah. He rebelled and arose to flee from God's presence and was obstinate against following the Lord. So how did God work in bringing repentance? The text brings out the process.

A. **The Lord used difficulty to slow his prophet down.**

The text demonstrates that the Lord gave many opportunities to Jonah to turn back to Him. The storm, the pagan sailors confronting him and asking him why he was responsible for the storm, and the storm not letting up, were all God's mercy not punishment. The Lord was being a good and wise Father helping his child see the error of his way. Each miracle either brought Jonah (or the sailors) to places of decision. Jonah could have turned back and settled things with the Lord at any point. What did Jonah do? *Jonah turned away from the Lord in every situation holding onto his plan, his pride, his prejudice and his life direction. So what changed Jonah? The text gives a few clues.*

B. **Jonah's saw the cost of serving false gods.**

Jonah 2:8 "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs."

The subject of this sentence is the entire first line. It is translated from the Hebrew, "those who guard/serve vanities of worthlessness."³ Is Jonah pointing to the pagan sailors or speaking of himself? I think the latter (vs. 9 but I). Jonah was serving vanities of worthlessness. "Fleeing from the presence of the Lord" is a worthless mission statement. Yet, Jonah tenaciously held onto 'his own way'. In the depths on day three, Jonah realized how foolish this direction was and the cost it brought. A wise king stated "there is a way that seems right to a man but the end thereof is death" (Proverbs 14:12) Jonah sees the end of his plan.

C. **Jonah saw the goodness of the Lord**

He summarizes the contrast to serving worthless idols with the phrase "forfeits the grace that could be theirs". **You see Jonah had tasted that goodness of grace and it did not compare with the taste of following worthless idols, (his own way). Jonah tasted the goodness of the Lord as he gave himself to Lord and served him prior to this assignment. The taste of the goodness of the Lord is a motivation that the Apostle Peter pointed to in his call to new believers in Christ to grow in their faith.**

¹ Hannah, J. D. (1985). Jonah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1468). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² MacArthur, John <https://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/1346/the-bible-verifiable-by-miracles> viewed 7/23/16 10 am

³ Smith, B. K., & Page, F. S. (1995). *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah* (Vol. 19B, p. 251). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

I Peter 2:3 tells the new believer...“to grow in salvation, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” *The taste of God’s goodness found in the standing of grace (Romans 5:1) is the greatest taste ever in a person’s life!*

D. Jonah moved beyond analyzing to make a decision.

Jonah 2:9 “But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good, salvation comes from the Lord.”

‘But I’ – This is Jonah, and clarifies that the subject of the previous verse is not predominantly the pagan sailors.

‘With a song of thanksgiving’ – In context, Jonah is singing “Amazing Grace”. He is thankful for God’s grace allowing him to have the opportunity to be at peace with the Lord. He is singing in the belly of the great fish. (Wouldn’t you like to see this on videocam?) The song Jonah sings is his decision of his heart to turn back to the Lord. He turns around, makes a ‘u-turn’ in his heart and chooses to follow the Lord. *This is repentance. It is letting go of what we are holding onto and turning to follow the Lord.* True repentance is more than just knowing what to do, it is acting on it. Jonah moved beyond analyzing to make a decision of faith.

E. Jonah made a heart decision to trust God

Please notice that Jonah does not have the ability to ‘clean himself up and change his life direction’ to be forgiven, He just turns away from trusting himself and makes a heart decision choosing to trust the Lord. He affirmed, vs.9, “salvation is from the Lord”. See from this statement that salvation does not come from within us, it comes from the Lord. The Bible teaches that man cannot save himself that heaven/salvation is *the gift of God’s grace.*

God’s grace is a gift to be received not something to be earned or worked for, “for what does the Scripture say?

‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness,’ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” (Romans 4:3-4).

A gift can be given because someone else paid for it. The Lord paid for our salvation, “the wage of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” Romans 6:23.

Old Testament people looked forward to a coming Messiah/Savior/King and put their faith in the promises of the Word of God,(i.e. Isaiah 53), that prophesied of a Savior-Redeemer who would pay for sin. When John the Baptizer saw Jesus of Galilee he proclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” Jesus not only paid for sin, but fulfilled the law by living a sinless life. (Hebrews 4:15) This is hope because no other person in history has ever kept the Law of God. Romans 3:23 ‘for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.’ God the Son lived a perfect life and paid our debt of sin on the cross. This is the gift of salvation. This is the good news! Today, by faith alone, putting your

trust in Jesus Christ alone, believing that Jesus Christ, God the Son, died for you in your place to pay for your sin and that He arose from the grave a person is saved by God’s grace alone. This response requires acknowledging what Jonah said, “Salvation is of the Lord”. There is no other Savior. Only the eternal God can pay for an eternal debt of sin. Jesus, being eternal God, stepped in for you. This is God’s love for you. Jesus Christ made the way of forgiveness and salvation possible to all, no matter how ungodly, because salvation is a gift to anyone who believes. Jesus was most critical of the religious because self-righteousness blinds people to the need of a Savior. It is not your goodness outweighing your bad that gets you to heaven, it is God’s goodness. God’s goodness is the performance of Jesus Christ in your place. His goodness is a gift to receive that will be put on your account at the moment of trust. This is the wonderful gift of salvation - forgiveness of all your sin past, present and future; His righteousness on your account (Romans 4:18-5:2). It is good news, not good advice. Salvation is of the Lord. You are as helpless as Jonah was in the belly of the big fish. You need a Savior and there is only one that is both willing and able. As Jonah made a heart decision, you also today can...

Romans 10:9, 10 (NASB95)

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Here is a heart response prayer based on God’s word.

Dear Heavenly Father, I confess to you I am a sinner and cannot save myself, I put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, I turn from my sin to follow the Lord Jesus Christ as the leader of my life. Forgive me and come into my life and be my Lord and Savior. Thank you. In the Name of the Lord Christ Amen.

If you made this decision, share it. If you desire, email me (see front header) to receive a free follow up book to help you grow in Christ.

Conclusion:

Jonah’s heart decision was the innermost part of him making a volitional decision to trust the word of the Lord. Jonah trusted that God would forgive him and restore his fellowship with the Lord.

What a song Jonah must have had in his heart riding in God’s submarine! It was the song of being at peace with God!

Then God did the unimaginable, he commanded the fish ☺

YOU ARE WELCOME ...

STAFF/INTERN BIBLE STUDY

MONDAY AUGUST 1 NOON IN THE CHAPEL