

# God Hears, Disciplines and Saves

Christopher Patton

July 25, 2021

Jonah 1:17-2:10

*Jonah 1:17*

*A Great Fish Swallows Jonah*

*[17] 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. (ESV)*

*Jonah 2*

*Jonah's Prayer*

*[1] Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, [2] saying,*

*"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.*

*[3] 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.*

*[4] Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.'*

*[5] The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head*

*[6] 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.*

*[7] When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.*

*[8] Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.*

*[9] But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!" [10] And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land. (ESV)*

Three timeless principles drawn from Jonah's prayer, regarding how God relates to us, His people:

## I. God hears

*[1] Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, [2] saying, "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**. (ESV)*

- When we find ourselves in great distress, even when that distress is the direct result of our own sin the best thing that we can do is to cry out to the Lord.
- If someone has disobeyed God in some way and indulged some sin, the best thing they can do is to cry out to the Lord.
- God stands ready and eager to rescue and invites anyone who has wandered from him to repent, receive His forgiveness, turn from their sin and experience the joy of walking again in obedience to the Savior.
- There are other situations, where trials come and as far as we can tell those trials are not a direct consequence of a specific sin committed.
  - Even so, we feel as though we are drowning and feel desperate.
- The right response of God's people when they are in distress, in any situation, is to call upon the name of the Lord our God
- Jonah probably never could have ever imagined God would rescue him by means of a large aquatic beast swallowing Him.
- Likewise, we need to be prepared, when we cry out to God for rescue, the rescue God sends our way may look different than what we could have ever imagined.
- God is not only in the business of rescuing us from the physical situations and circumstances that cause us trouble.
- While he does at times rescue us from those things, what God is most interested in is, by the power of the Holy Spirit rescuing us from ourselves.
  - From our pride, lack of love for others, selfishness, sins and habits that cling so closely to us.

## II. God disciplines

*Jonah 2:3*

*[3] 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. (ESV)*

- Technically speaking who threw Jonah overboard? It was the sailors.
- Notice that Jonah does not identify them as the ones who threw him overboard.

- He says instead that it was God who did this.
- Jonah realized God was disciplining Him. He understood that God was displeased with him and that all that had happened up until the point where Jonah found himself in the belly of the fish, was nothing less than God, God Himself seeking to get his attention, God causing him to repent and to change direction and change course.

*Hebrews 12:5–6, 11*

*[5] And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him [6] For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”*

*[11] For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (ESV)*

- While not all suffering that we face, is God in some way seeking to discipline us for a specific sin we have committed, we do well to think more often as Christians about this topic of the discipline of the Lord.
- Since God loves us, should we not expect at times God may allow trials of various kinds to come into our lives in order to help us to repent of various sins that in His kindness He wants to help us to see more clearly and repent of?
- Jerry Bridges reflecting on Hebrews 11 says that in a sense, we should receive all adversity in life as loving discipline from God. That again doesn't mean all adversity is a discipline for a specific sin; it just means that no adversity we face is senseless; it all has purpose and God frequently employs adversity as His tool to make us more like Christ.

### III. God saves

*“[6] you brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God”*

*[9] But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!” (ESV)*

- In the belly of the fish, Jonah recognized God had done something amazing for him.
- He realized that but for the mercy of God He would have been dead.
- More significantly, Jonah's heart had miraculously turned back to the Lord.
- Anytime a wandering soul returns to the Lord, that is rescue, that is salvation.
- This is key: Jonah hadn't been spit out of the fish's mouth yet and He was already in v9 thanking God for salvation (see Keller, “The Prodigal Prophet”)! Why? Because God had done a work in his heart.
- As amazing as this rescue was - as Christians we've experienced a far greater rescue. We've received far greater mercy.

- Through Jesus substitutionary death on the Cross, we've been rescued from, the floodwaters of God's wrath and his punishment for our sin.
- In our lost state, God came after us and saved us (Eph 2:1-10).
- Explain parallels between Jonah and Christ.

## Questions for Discussion/Application

- Re-read the text, Jonah 1:17-2:10. What initial observations and insights do you have from reading this text?
- Re-read verses 1-2. What lessons can we learn from the fact that in his desperation, even though he had wandered from God, Jonah still called out to the Lord?
- What situations have you faced in your life, where as you look back on them you say with Jonah, "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" ?
- Re-read Jonah 2:3 and Hebrews 12:5-6, 11. How should we understand the discipline of the Lord? How is God's discipline different than punishment?
- Has there ever been a time when you experienced the discipline of the Lord in a way that ended up producing fruit in your life that you would feel comfortable sharing with the group?
- In what ways does the story of Jonah point to our salvation in Christ?
- Consider taking time to pray, focusing prayers on gratitude for the salvation we have received.