

# Trouble, Trust, and Triumph: Facing our troubles, trusting in God's sovereignty, and rejoicing in our triumphs

## *Learning from Jonah*

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## Trouble, Trust, and Triumph: Facing our troubles, trusting in God's sovereignty, and rejoicing in our triumphs -- *Learning from Jonah*

### Lesson: God is the Perfect Heavenly Father

#### Opening Questions

1. Have you ever been in a boat on the ocean?
2. Have you ever experienced a severe and dangerous storm?

#### Introduction

The book of Jonah is written by Jonah, a prophet of God from Israel, in the eight century B.C. God asked Jonah to bring a message to the people of Nineveh, a very wicked city and the capital city of the Assyrian Empire which threatened (and eventually conquered) Israel. Jonah hated the Assyrians and did not want to bring God's message to them.



#### To think about:

We may not like people from other countries we have war with. We have prejudices, but God does not. God has created and loves all his people in all nations. Why does Jesus say that he will call all his people in all nations and gather them to himself, and they will listen to his voice in their hearts (John 10:16)?

#### From the Bible: Read Jonah 1 and 2



#### Discussion Questions

1. What did God ask Jonah to do, and how did Jonah respond (1:1-3)?
2. What did God do when Jonah was in the ship, and how did this impact the mariners (v.4-5)? What did the captain do and say to Jonah (v.6)?
3. What did the sailors do, and what did Jonah tell them about him and his God (v.7-10)?
4. What did the sailors try to do first, and what did they finally do (v.11-15)? What happened immediately to the sea, and how did this impact them (v.15-16)?
5. How did God save Jonah from drowning in the ocean (v.17)?
6. What do you see in Jonah's prayer (2:1-9)? What did God do for Jonah (v.10)?



#### Read Jonah 3 and 4

7. What message did Jonah bring to the people of Nineveh from God, and how did they respond (3:1-5)?
8. How did the king react after he heard Jonah's message (v.6-9)?
9. God did not bring the punishment to Nineveh because the people repented (v.10). Why did this make Johan angry, and what did he say to God (4:1-3)? What was God's answer to him (v.4)? What do you think about God's response to Jonah?
10. What did Jonah do to calm himself down (v.5)? What did God do for him (v.6)?
11. What happened to Jonah the next day, and what did he tell God (v.7-8)?
12. Analyze the conversation between God and Jonah. What did God want Jonah to learn (v.9-11)? What do you think about God's way of handling and teaching Jonah?
13. Jonah learned much from God and wrote his story for us to read and learn. What do you think Jonah wants us to learn from his story with God?
14. Consider Jesus's life purpose, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Jesus sacrificed himself and died for us so that we can live and be saved by God. How does Jonah point to Jesus? How is Jesus *the true and better Jonah*?

#### Notes

##### Sovereignty:

supreme power or authority.  
God is in control over all things.

##### Prophet:

a messenger of God proclaiming the will of God.

##### Prejudice:

preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience; bias; discrimination.

##### The Son of Man:

Jesus' favorite title to emphasize his humanity and heavenly kingship.

## Jonah

### Chapter 1

#### Jonah Flees the Presence of the Lord

<sup>1</sup> Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”

<sup>3</sup> But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. <sup>5</sup> Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. <sup>6</sup> So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

#### Jonah Is Thrown into the Sea and a Great Fish Swallows Jonah

<sup>7</sup> And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. <sup>8</sup> Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” <sup>9</sup> And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” <sup>10</sup> Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

<sup>11</sup> Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. <sup>12</sup> He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.” <sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. <sup>14</sup> Therefore they called out to the LORD, “O LORD, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.”

<sup>15</sup> So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. <sup>16</sup> Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. <sup>17</sup> 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.

### Chapter 2 – Jonah's Prayer

<sup>1</sup> Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Then I said, ‘I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.’ <sup>5</sup> The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. <sup>8</sup> Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. <sup>9</sup> But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!” <sup>10</sup> And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

## Notes

**Nineveh:** the capital city of the Assyrian Empire. It is in present-day Iraq.

**Flee:** to run away.

**Tarshish:** a town in present-day Spain.

**Joppa:** a town in southern Israel.

**Hurl:** to throw.

**Tempest:** storm.

**Mariner:** a sailor

**Perish:** to die.

**Cast lots:** to decide something by throwing or drawing objects.

**Cease:** to stop.

**Sheol:** death; grave.

**Billow:** a swelling or heap of water.

**Idol:** an image or representation of a god used as an object of worship.

**Steadfast:** faithful.

**Salvation:** deliverance from evil and sin.

**Salvation belongs to the LORD:** points to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In Christ, we are saved by God from evil and sin.

## Chapter 3

### Jonah Goes to Nineveh

<sup>1</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup> So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. <sup>4</sup> Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup> And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

### The People of Nineveh Repent

<sup>6</sup> The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup> And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, <sup>8</sup> but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

## Chapter 4

### Jonah's Anger and the LORD's Compassion

<sup>1</sup> But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. <sup>2</sup> And he prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. <sup>3</sup> Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

<sup>4</sup> And the LORD said, “Do you do well to be angry?”

<sup>5</sup> Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. <sup>6</sup> Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. <sup>7</sup> But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup> When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>9</sup> But God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry for the plant?” And he said, “Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.” <sup>10</sup> And the LORD said, “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. <sup>11</sup> And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”

## Notes

**Sackcloth:** a rough fabric worn as a sign of mourning.

**Repent:** to regret of our wrongdoing and to turn to God.

**Relent:** to give in or let up; to soften in feeling.

**Do you do well to be angry:** “Is this the right response?” or “Is it right for you to be angry?”

**Booth:** a stall or compartment.

**Wither:** to become dry and decay.

**Scorching:** very hot, severe.

## Resources

*The ESV Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.

*Serendipity Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.

*Life Application Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publisher, Inc., 1991.