



Sunday, July 19, 2020
Pastor Don Denyes

Intro to Jonah 2:1-10

As many of you know, J.I. Packer passed away over the weekend. He has had such a profound impact on evangelicalism that you have likely been influenced by him even if you have never read a word he wrote. One quote was posted recently that echoes from our passage, though I doubt he had it in mind when he said this. He said, “All Christians believe in divine sovereignty. On our feet, we may have disagreements about it, but on our knees, we are all agreed.”

Jonah had a poor functional understanding of God’s sovereignty when he boarded the boat to Tarshish to get “away from the presence of the LORD.” But once he was in the belly of the fish, God pulled back the curtain in his heart and he understood, at least through a glass dimly, that God is sovereign over all creation. Indeed, He is the God who answers us “out of the belly of Sheol” (v. 2). So, in Jonah’s time of greatest distress, he called to the LORD, and by the end of his prayer, he can confidently acknowledge that “salvation belongs to the LORD” (v. 9). May we experience that same confidence and faith in our lives!

Context

This poem is a central feature of the book. Aside from the beginning of chapter 4, it is perhaps the most profound theological statement of the book. The poetic genre actually provides a helpful way for Jonah to evoke in the reader or listener, using vivid imagery, the distress he experienced. The immediate context is simple enough: Jonah had been tossed overboard for disobedience in chapter 1, by chapter 3, Jonah has learned his lesson (at least partially) and is on his way to Nineveh. But more significantly, as Pastor Don noted in the sermon, this chapter points to Jesus. As Jonah spent three days in the belly of the fish, so Jesus would spend three days in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:39-41).

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Jonah 2:1-10

“In the Belly of the Fish”

Jonah 2

God’s Chastening Hand

- Horrible distress
- Imminent danger
- Possible death?

God’s Listening Ear

- Prayer born out of affliction
- Prayer based on the Scriptures

God’s Gracious Heart

- New perspective toward his enemies
- New commitment toward his vows

Discuss

- 1) Are you more likely to pray when you are in distress or when life is going well? Why do you think that is?
- 2) When you pray, are your prayers more centered around God and His actions or you and your circumstances? How can you cultivate a more God-centered approach?
- 3) When you think about God's sovereignty, what comes to mind?
- 4) The LORD, in His sovereignty, appointed the fish to swallow up Jonah and spoke to the fish so that it spat him out. What does that teach us about God's character? How have you experienced a similar dynamic in your relationship to Him?
- 5) How does God use our suffering to create in us a new perspective on our enemies?