

Living on a Prayer - A Prayer from the Belly of a Fish

Introduction

Humbled for disobeying and running from God, Jonah is swallowed by a large fish and left in isolation. When Jonah stops running, forced to be still and humbled, he comes before the Lord in prayer. Jonah cries out to God, acknowledging his sin and turning his heart and eyes to God once again, “when my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.” (Jonah 2:7) Through Jonah’s prayer and eventual journey to Nineveh we learn that God’s grace is greater than our sin. No matter how far we stray or how hard we run from God, God will never give up on us. In every circumstance, God calls us to turn to Him in prayer, to cry out to Him in our distress, and when words fail us, to trust that His Spirit is interceding for us. God is relentlessly working for our good, bringing us back to Him.

Read Your Bible

- Jonah 1-4; Jonah’s prayer 2:1-10
- Romans 8:22-28
- John 16:32-33

Apply God’s Word to Your Life:

1. What does God ask Jonah to do?
2. Why does Jonah flee from God, and what task is he given?
3. When did you refuse to do something that you ought to, and why?
4. What phrases or words stand out to you in Jonah’s prayer (2:1-10)?
5. What happens after Jonah completes his task in Ninevah?
6. What surprises or captivates you most about this story?
7. Read Romans 8:22-28. Considering Jonah’s story and prayer, what does it mean that “God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose”?
8. What may be something difficult God is asking (or has asked) you to do and to turn to Him in prayer?

Reflecting on the text:

1. What have you learned about God?
2. What have you learned about the world?
3. What have you learned about yourself?

Pray

Almighty God, we thank you for your mercy and love, which are greater than our sin. Even as we turn from you like Jonah and Ninevah, you never give up on us and are always faithful. You constantly call us back to you and pour out your grace. Stir in us a willing spirit to continually turn to you in prayer. May we put our hope and trust in you. For you alone are Holy, faithful, and true and have the power to deliver us. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.