



ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Week #7; September 7, 2025



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Review:

- In last week's lesson, which was titled, 'A Prayer from a Deep Place,' we looked at Jonah's heartfelt cry to God from inside the belly of the 'great fish.'
- That lesson covered most of **Jonah Ch. 2**. We noted that this prayer was a point where Jonah's pattern of running and rebellion stopped.
- His compromised faith that he had displayed up to this point was done. His bad attitudes ceased. His selfishness had reached an end point.
- Crises have a way of doing that. They strip away our facades of independence and arrogance. They evaporate our pride.
- Jonah prays a marvelous prayer of faith from inside the 'great fish,' and this prayer sets an amazing example for you and me.
- We saw how Jonah's prayer underscored **FOUR** things **Jonah knows**. These things are evident in the words of his prayer:
 - First, Jonah knows God is near.
 - Second, Jonah knows God is sovereign.
 - Third, Jonah knows God will restore him.
 - Fourth, Jonah knows God is a God of grace
- We looked at the various ways these four truths are emphasized in Jonah's prayer.
- We wrapped up with a bit of self-reflection. We looked at how we all need a 'great fish' experience on occasion to force us to rely on the character and grace of God.
- We all have our 'Ninevehs,' and they're usually not places, but certain situations – and maybe certain relationships.
- They are areas, things, duties, and people in our life that we would rather avoid. We have excuses for sidestepping and running away from every one of those.
- We come up with short-sighted self-defense mechanism to avoid God and outrun the duties and responsibilities that God places before us. We are just like Jonah.

NOTE: This week, I want to pick up more or less where we left off last week. That is **vs. 9 of Jonah Ch. 1**, and I want to read through **Chapter 2, and the first part of vs. 3**.

This is primarily a brief narrative portion of this entire story. Apart from **Ch. 1, vs. 9**, our text today is mostly about facts and things that add to the whole picture.

I want to break this lesson down to a four-point outline. Each point emphasizes a word that begins with the letter 'C,' and each point has something to say about Jonah. Here it is:

1. The confidence in Jonah
2. The commitment of Jonah
3. The command to Jonah
4. The compliance of Jonah

NOTE: Let's begin with 'The confidence in Jonah' and we find this in the first part of **Ch. 1:9**

A. THE CONFIDENCE IN JONAH

1. Jonah, as we've seen, has been a man filled with selfishness, rebellion, prejudice, insecurity, and disobedience.
 - That's been his modus operandi till now. He's been running from God, and these evasive qualities have been on repeated display.
 - It's these things that have brought Jonah to this low point of now being in the belly of the 'great fish.'
2. But in **vs. 9**, we see two very different words that describe Jonah. The first is the word 'thanksgiving,' and the second is the word 'vowed.'
 - Together these two words show renewed confidence – and a renewed purpose - in Jonah. Let's look at what's underneath these two words that now describe him:
 - **FIRST**, his confidence is expressed in his attitude of thanksgiving.
 - There is a very important connection between Godly 'confidence' and 'thanksgiving.' (NOTE: Thankfulness is a prominent theme throughout the Scriptures).
 - We've noted that Jonah was very familiar with the **Psalms**, and we've seen before that he prayed from the **Psalms** while he was within the 'great fish.'
 - And it's now, under this extraordinary and unusual trial, that Jonah expresses this new confidence - - this new attitude of thanksgiving.
 - As it is with various other parts of **Psalms**, portions of **Psalms Ch. 30** are reminiscent of Jonah's marvelous prayer here.
 - In **Psalms Ch. 30** we read, *"I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths....O Lord my God, I called to you for help....O Lord, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit... (and so on)."*
 - King David says in this passage – while he is ALSO under severe trial - that he will 'exalt' the Lord. This is a statement of thanksgiving.

- In **1 Thess. 5:16-18**, it says, “*Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.*”
- It’s easy to overlook a key word here. It says, we need to give thanks in **all** circumstances.
- Thankfulness, for the faithful believer, should not be conditional. Thankfulness should instead be a routine way of life.
- It should be our norm. Thankfulness should naturally and always flow from our hearts and mouths and in **all** circumstances.
- How can we understand this? Jonah is thankful because he has a proper view of God - - and so he also has a proper view of himself and his destiny.
- Notice the outline of Jonah’s prayer – I want you to see the spiritual process by which Jonah comes to this incredible position of confidence and thanksgiving:
 - He knows God is near to him, despite the multiple bad choices that he has made (**vs. 2**).
 - He knows God listens to him and hears him (**vs. 2, and in vs. 7**).
 - He knows God is sovereign and He is always in control (**vs. 3**).
 - He knows his ultimate destiny is to be with God (**vss. 4, 7, and 9**)
 - He knows God is infinitely greater than his personal trials and great challenges (**vss. 5-6**).
 - Jonah properly concludes with the right perspective. He is confident.
 - Because he is confident in WHO the Lord is and WHAT his ultimate destiny in God is, Jonah knows he can – and he needs to be - thankful.

And **SECOND**, Jonah vows. He says in **vs. 9**, “*What I have vowed, I will make good.*” This is another expression of Jonah’s confidence, and it leads into the second element of our four-point outline. It is this:

B. THE COMMITMENT OF JONAH

1. Jonah (and I think it’s clear from the larger context) finally decides to do the right thing.
 - He’s made a lot of bad decisions, but he now makes a commitment to a proper course of action.
 - He vows to accomplish what God originally commanded him to do back in **Ch. 1:2**.
 - The Bible has some rather direct things to say about ‘vows.’ There are roughly 30 Biblical references to vows, and most of these are found in the OT.

- Let's review a few vow-related matters:
 - By way of background, the issue of vows largely emerges with the onset of the Jewish nation.
 - There were dire consequences for the Israelites who broke vows, especially vows they made to God.
 - There are several references in **Leviticus** and **Numbers** to vows – especially regarding offerings and sacrifices (it's interesting to note that Jonah mentions making sacrifice to the Lord in the immediate context of making his own vow).
 - One of the most important issues concerning vows is we should not make them lightly. In **Deut. 23:21-23** it says:

“If you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the Lord your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth.”

- This instruction was to the Israelites, but the principle that vows should not be made lightly – or disregarded lightly – is reinforced for you and me.
- It's easy to make 'foxhole' prayers and vows when we are under trial. We tend to quickly make vows when we feel pressure (“*God, if you just get me out of this mess, then I'll do XYZ.*”)
- But the overarching and solemn Scriptural principle is this: our casual vows show our casual view of God.
- The two are directly connected – and so we should not make our vows lightly.
- In **Psalms 50:14**, it says, “*Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High.*”
- Here, the issue of thanksgiving comes up once more. Our vows and our commitments to God should be a willful choice based upon a conscious attitude of thanksgiving.
- IF we are truly thankful, IF we are filled with enduring gratitude, and IF we see the abundant generosity, grace, and mercy of God as we ought to, then our vows are a rational outpouring, and we should have no issue carrying them out.
- It's when we have a wrong view of God, it's when we are casual with Him, and it's when we do NOT have a proper spirit of thanksgiving - that's when we tend to compromise on our commitments to God.
- I could say much more about vows and commitments to God, but let me offer one more insight, and it comes from **Matt. 5:33-37** where Jesus is speaking. He said:

“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.”

- This passage is from Jesus’ ‘Sermon on the Mount’ and it’s worth a whole lesson, but here are a few high points for today’s purposes:
 - Two-faced oaths are made by people who are not afraid to break them. This is an intentional issue, and it happens all the time. That’s the carnal element Jesus refers to here.
 - Oaths, vows, and commitments to God should not be made and weighed on some type of “personal sincerity scale.”
 - They are black and white matters. They are meant to be carried out.
 - And so - Jesus says to simply say “Yes” or “No” and mean it. Say what you mean and mean what you say.
 - Stating a meaningless vow or commitment is not any sort of quick ‘get out of jail’ card. It’s not meant to create any sort of opportunistic latitudes.
 - The big issue here is your word should be your promise. Be reliable. It’s a mark of spiritual maturity.
 - Follow through. Jesus says that we should say what we mean and stick by it.
 - When Jesus said we should not take an oath at all, He meant it’s better to not commit than to break that commitment.
 - We should be sober-minded and not wade casually and callously into our vows and commitments.
 - It is our sinful nature that persuades us to not keep our promises – not just to God, but to others.
 - This entire matter is a commentary on the condition of our hearts, and so that’s the primary focus of Jesus’ words.
- But Jonah makes a commitment here in **Ch. 2:9**. He makes a vow. He vows to ‘*make good*’ on what God commanded him to do.
 - Yes, I suppose (at one level) you could call it a ‘foxhole prayer.’ But, as the story shows, he followed through – and so Jonah’s words were sincere.
 - His commitment was genuine, and God knew that. He saw Jonah’s heart. God knew Jonah meant what he said.

That leads to **vs. 10** where we read how Jonah got barfed on the beach. Let me make a few side comments about this, and then we’ll get back to our outline:

- a. **First**, I think an element of Jonah's vow stemmed in part from how God preserved him in the 'great fish.'
- Remember, back in an earlier lesson, I suggested that Jonah might have felt that God's command to go to Nineveh was essentially a 'death sentence.'
 - Jonah had good reason to feel this way. Nineveh was renowned – as we learned – for its extreme brutality. It was famous for its tortures and killings.
 - Jonah – at some level, *probably* – figured that going to Nineveh and doing what God commanded him to do amounted to nothing more than 'martyrdom.'
 - I believe that's partly why Jonah instructed the sailors to toss him overboard. I don't think it's unreasonable to conclude Jonah felt he was dead either way.
 - But something happened inside the 'great fish.' Jonah lived. He survived. He knew he should not have lived, and he recognized that God preserved him.
 - I think this contributed to his confidence and to his personal vows. I think Jonah knew God could preserve him in Nineveh too!
- b. **Second**, we need to see God's miraculous hand in this situation once more.
- We noted that there are several places in the book of Jonah where we read '*God appointed*,' '*God provided*,' '*God sent*,' and so on. In each of those cases God supernaturally intervened on normal physical processes.
 - In each of those cases – and there are more upcoming – God intervenes on normal events to produce a supernatural event, a miracle. The sailors knew this about the storm.
 - But here, even though the same Hebrew word is NOT used, I think it's best to see that God supernaturally intercedes another time.
 - "*The Lord commanded the great fish*,' and the fish vomited up Jonah onto dry land. This event is beyond normal likelihoods - - we are best to see this as another miracle of God.
 - Just where did the great fish puke Jonah up? We don't know. We can assume it was the western shore of Israel, but that's just a guess.
 - Personally, I think Jonah came out of the 'great fish' not looking the same way he went in. He probably smelled different too....
 - I think chances are good he was bleached and mottled from the acids of the great fish's stomach. His hair may have been patchy. He may have been a very unusual and startling sight.
 - Perhaps this new visual of Jonah was something that impacted the Ninevites when he went to preach to them a few verses later - - a sort of 'affirmation' that he was sent from God. Again, we don't know, but it's not beyond reason.
 - And now we come to the third point of our outline....

C. THE COMMAND TO JONAH

Note: We read in **Ch. 2, vss. 1-2** virtually the same words we read in **Ch. 1:2**. God commands Jonah, once more, to go to Nineveh and preach.

1. But this second time around, Jonah is different. He's been through a few things between Point A and Point B. He's wiser, and he's more receptive.

- Jonah is different, but God's command is the same.
- God didn't change the plans just because Jonah had changed. That's important. Sometimes we can feel a tendency to expect God to be different just because we are different or because we've grown.
- God is not like us. He never changes. This is something that in theological terms is called 'God's immutability.'
- It's a fancy-sounding term that means God's character, nature, and purposes are eternal and unchanging.
- We should take comfort in this. This truth provides a constant and reliable foundation for believers.
- The Bible teaches that God's love, faithfulness, and promises remain steadfast - - and this gives us security and hope.
- But it also means that while our own character and will is often fickle, God's is not. And so, God's command to Jonah is the same now as it was before: 'Go to Nineveh and preach.'
- But this second time, God gives Jonah one more additional element of information. He tells Jonah, '*Proclaim to Nineveh the message I give you.*'
- This is a detail that is missing the first time God gives Jonah this command. I take it as being God's way of giving an additional assurance to Jonah.
- God says, in effect, '*Don't worry about what to say. I'll let you know that.*'
- In a roundabout way, God is letting Jonah know he'll be alive to preach, he'll be getting a direct download from God, and God will continue to be with him.
- Jonah has gotten downloads from God before. He's prophesied unlikely things in times past, and God came through on all that. I'm sure Jonah felt a bit more reassured.
- I imagine none of this was lost on Jonah, and so he's on the road again. And it's here we unpack the fourth and final point of our outline....

D. THE COMPLIANCE OF JONAH

Note: We see this in the first part of **Ch. 2:3** where it says, "*Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh.*"

1. It's the first time we read these two words together, "*Jonah obeyed.*"
2. We've seen the opposite till now:
 - '*Jonah ran away*' (**Ch. 1:3**)
 - '*He went aboard*' (*this means he went and did his own thing*) (**Ch. 1:3**)
 - '*He fled*' (**Ch. 1:3**)
 - '*He lay down and slept*' (**Ch. 1:5**)
 - *But now we read in Ch. 2:3, 'he obeyed'*
3. This is a big deal. Over and over, the Bible teaches that our obedience to God is of paramount importance.
 - It proves our love for God (**Cf. 1 John 5:2**)
 - It opens God's channels of blessing to us (**Cf. John 13:17**)

- It assures us that we truly know God and are in a right relationship with Him (**1 John 2:3**)
 - It causes others to give glory to God (**Cf. Matt. 5:16**)
 - And so on.... the Bible is generously sprinkled with reminders of the importance of our obedience.
4. Jonah had plenty of opportunity to rethink his obedience. He had plenty of opportunities to do a U-turn, but he did not.
- Most estimates are that Nineveh was probably 600-700 miles inland from where the great fish 'ralphed' Jonah onto the sand.
 - Presumably, Jonah walked there. Maybe he bought a used camel with low mileage. We're not told.
 - But however you slice this one, Jonah had a long journey in front of him. It likely took multiple weeks to make the trip to Nineveh. He had a lot of time to reflect.
 - But Jonah persevered. He followed through on his vow. There is no indication he hesitated or waffled anymore. He obeyed - - and that's the pivotal point.

Let's wrap up with a couple of concluding thoughts:

1. First, our confidence should be based on who God is and not what we are facing.

- Jonah's example inside the 'great fish' is an extraordinary display of faith in the reality of who he knew God to be.
- Jonah's challenge – and the time he spent - in the 'great fish' was unique in human history. It was fearful and surreal.
- Yet it was in that darkest and most uncomfortable and scary of places, that Jonah came face to face with the truth about God.
- The things he had callously dismissed before, he came to grips with once again:
 - God is near
 - God is everywhere
 - One cannot escape God
 - God is listening
 - God is sovereign
 - God is miraculous
 - God has abundant grace
 - God is a God of salvation
 - (and so on...)
- Jonah became convinced of these attributes, and it gave him confidence.
- When we lack confidence in God, when we think our personal challenges are bigger than God's greatness, and when we think God has forgotten us in our trials, that's when we start to flounder, fall, fail, and flail.
- That's when we lose confidence. The Bible instructs us to have '*no confidence in the flesh*' (**Cf. Philippians 3:3**).
- We should have no confidence in anything or anyone outside of God.

- When we place our full confidence in God, and when we trust in His divinely inspired Word, our lives and our perspective take on a new stability and poise. A true confidence is nothing less than a confidence in God's character.

2. Second, our obedience is a primary display of the integrity of our faith.

- One of the great litmus tests of the integrity of our faith is our obedience. We are to remain in a constant state of obedience to God.
- Even when hardships and challenges come, we are called to obey and endure (**Cf. James 1:2**).
- The Christian life requires the act of constant obedience. It shows we love God, and it shows (as we noted before) that our faith is the real deal.
- This does not mean that we won't faceplant from time to time, but it does mean that - like Jonah - we need to regain a proper view of God when we do fail.
- We need to return to full obedience.

NEXT TIME: "A Blunt Message from God" (Jonah preaches the uncomfortable truth)



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Solid Bread Community was started with a passion to teach the truth of God's Word – every part of it, as it was divinely inspired to be understood.

The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don't pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

Second, don't teach what is NOT there. Don't force a passage to mean something it really doesn't.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.

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