

account of phrases like these that many believe Jonah actually sank to the very bottom where the fish swallowed him.

- b. As compassed by floods. The phrase used here speaks of the currents or floods of the ocean which surrounded him. No escape was possible. He knew the dregs of God's movement with him.
- c. As passed by billows and waves. The "billows" are the waves which break at the shore or in the midst of the sea. The word "waves" speaks of the fountains and springs which wall up the waters. It was into a terrible tempestuous sea that Jonah was cast! Out of all this, the prayer which he presented to God delivered him (Jonah 2:10).

Conclusion God has spoken to your heart. You know you should give your soul to prayer. Make certain that the prayer of your heart is in keeping with the gravity of your need. Pray IN your need; don't wait for deliverance to pray. Pray with a sincere spirit of that God knows you are willing to pay the price of "crying!" You will experience the power of God moving into your deep need and drawing you out! Oh, believer friend, lift your heart to God in prayer. He will hear! Amen.

BOOK OF JONAH  
"Prayer from a Fish"  
Jonah 2:1-3

Introduction

1. God works in mysterious ways in order to bring about His ultimate glory. For Jonah this meant the three days and three nights in the belly of a fish (Jonah 1:17).
2. Taking the last verse of chapter one as the first of chapter two, the opening words set the stage for what follows. Jonah did not die in the fish! Jonah did not get mauled and stricken there. God spared him and in this tremendous gracious act elicited prayer from the heart of his fleeing servant.
3. Prayer is important no matter how it is provoked. It should be studied, particularly when it is found in the Word of God, and examined to such a point that one learns some of the elements of Bible prayers. Take Jonah's prayer as an example of the kind of praying which pleases the heart of God. There are strategic sections to it:-

1. The PLACE of prayer v. 1.

Daniel prayed in a lion's den (Dan. 6); Stephen prayed whilst he was being stoned (Acts 7); Paul prayed in a jail (Acts 16). The great dictum of Luke 18:1 bears upon the truth here: men ought always to pray! There are no space limitations to prayer.

But note that in this place of prayer for Jonah, three items are worthy of mention:

- a. Jonah--prayed. Up till now there is no mention of prayer by Jonah in the book. But in the tight situation he found himself, he lifted his heart to God. It was a big "then" which came into his life! Let us not weary with people who are often "forced" to pray. It may be that God is wrestling with them like Jonah. The verb for "pray" is of uncertain origin, but it may well mean to

"roll," hence the same idea as is found in the N.T. of "rolling one's burdens upon the Lord" (1 Pet. 5:7). One can well imagine the content of this prayer, but one may also be assured that prayer of any sort is pleasing to God (be it thanks, praise, request, or confession).

b. God--his. The word for "Lord" is "Jehovah" in the original Hebrew. This name has usually been taken to mean the "covenant keeping God" (as based upon the experience of Moses in Exodus 3:14). This is followed by the phrase "his God." Whether we like it or not, a fleeing prophet still claims Jehovah as "his." There was yet that blessed tie with God of Heaven on a personal level (cf. Luke 15:11 ff.). This is the magnitude of God's infinite grace. It teaches the eternality of the relationship which God establishes with those who are His own!

c. Fish--belly. The miracle of the Jonah experience will never really be fathomed. But here is a man who dwelt inside one of God's sea monsters for three successive days and nights and did so in a fashion which enabled him to pray! The word "belly" is the inmost part, apparently the stomach. Only a miracle--working God could perform this!

## 2. The PRICE of prayer. v. 2.

Two major factors are listed here. They concern the attitude in which Jonah's heart was when he talked with God. Mark these as examples of the sort of prayer spirit which God honors.

a. Cried--affliction. The verb for "cry out like a trumpet." It is also used of a cock crowing. Therefore, it is a strong cry for help! The noun "affliction" means literally "distress or strait." It was the pinch that Jonah was in which made him cry aloud unto God. The name of God which is used is "Jehovah" and thus it appears that Jonah was actually pleading with a God who keeps covenant with His servants--albeit in this case His servant was not living

up to his side of the bargain! It is important again to note that the cry of Jonah was "by reason of" the afflictions. God had brought the situation which in itself caused Jonah to petition God. What further proof need we of Romans 8:28!

b. Cried--hell. The verb for "cry" here means to be rich or opulent. It suggests a powerful cry for help and expresses the feelings of one who implores aid (cf. Psa. 18:42; 30:3; 72:12; 88:14). The word for "hell" is "sheol" and here means the belly of the fish. It is the pit in which he now finds himself. He felt he had gone to the depths and could not possibly be extricated.

### NOTE

For both of the "cries" listed above, the Bible notes amazing response. Two distinct verbs are employed to mark the "hearing" of the Lord. The second one varies from the verb to cry only a kindred letter: Shivati and Shamata. It is just that close for Him to hear when we cry! Hallelujah. But this is the price which must be paid if the voice is to reach heaven!

## 3. The POWER of prayer. v. 3.

Some often feel that there situation is beyond the power of God. They feel He could not possibly intervene in their behalf. Perhaps this is one of the big reasons for the Book of Jonah. Consider the power of Jonah's prayer to extricate him from a fearful bondage. It is described:-

a. As cast into the seas. The common verb for "cast" is used here. Two prepositional phrases indicate the force of that experience of being "thrown" by God. The first one notes that Jonah landed into the "eddying depth" which is where Pharaoh's army landed and sank like a stone (cf. Ex. 15:5, 10). This terrible depth is forcefully described further as the "heart of the seas." It is on