

NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH PREP SCHOOL LESSON

Jonah Part 2

When we ended our last lesson, at the end of Jonah chapter 1, Jonah had been thrown over the side of the ship in order to stop the storm God sent and then was swallowed by a big fish.

Jonah 1:17 *“Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”*

Wow! Can you imagine just how HUGE the fish must have been to swallow him whole? Can you imagine how very dark and very, very smelly it must have been inside of its tummy? EEUUUU! Now, we know that Jonah was being disciplined for his disobedience, but even when God disciplines His children, He is still showing love and grace. See, Jonah could have easily drowned in the middle of the ocean, but God sent the big fish to save him.

He clearly did not want Jonah to die just yet! Who would have ever thought that being swallowed whole would be a grace gift from God? We must always remember, though, that God knows everything and is a billion times a billion plus infinity smarter than we are. So though we will not always understand why He does what He does, we can trust that whatever He says and does is 100% right!

Isaiah 55:8-9 *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’”*

Has God ever caused you be alone for a time? Like, all of a sudden, you noticed that none of your friends were available to hang out and maybe even your siblings were too busy to play with you? A lot of times God does this for us when we are not spending enough time with Him, when He needs to talk to us, or when He needs us all alone so He can get us back on the right path. This is what He did with Jonah. He had given Jonah a very important job- to warn other people about His coming discipline- and Jonah chose to disobey. This time in the fish’s stomach was not only how God saved Jonah from drowning, but also how he got him all alone. Here he would have nothing else to do but think about his sin of disobedience and how his thinking was all wrong. So, how did Jonah respond to the grace of God which saved him from drowning? How did he spend his time in the fish’s belly? Jonah did exactly what God wanted him to- he prayed with repentance and gratitude. Here is Jonah’s prayer:

Jonah 2:1-9 *“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, and he said, ‘I called out of my distress to the LORD, and He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice. For You had cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current engulfed me. All Your breakers and*



billows passed over me. So I said, "I have been expelled from Your sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple". Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, weeds were wrapped around my head. I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into Your holy temple. Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness, but I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD."

Jonah understood this was his discipline for disobeying and was grateful to have been saved by God. As a result, he promises to do what the Lord commanded. Remember, God does not expect sinless perfection from His children. He knows that we are imperfect, that we will all disobey His commands, and that we will continue to sin until the day we die. So, what exactly does He expect? He expects us to admit when we do something wrong and not try to hide it from Him (that is pretty silly as He sees and knows everything). He expects that, as with any child who disobeys their parents, we regret our disobedience, that we want to obey Him and are sorry when we do not. He expects us to remember the pain of discipline and allow it to become part of our motivation to avoid sin.

Revelation 3:19 "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent."

Psalms 32:1-4 "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer."

So far we have learned how important it is to obey God- not only to avoid discipline, but to show our love for Him and others. We have seen the importance of repenting from our sin- admitting that we have sinned and desiring to avoid it in the future. We have seen that we cannot run or hide from God since He is everywhere and He knows everything. We also have been shown a beautiful example of God's grace, in that when He disciplines us, He is also saving us from ourselves- saving us from continued sinning. What a loving, compassionate, patient, and faithful God He is!

Lamentations 3:22-23 "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."