

Jonah 2

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[0:00] Please do turn back in your Bible to Jonah chapter 2, page 774, Jonah chapter 2.!

Now we've come to the thing that everyone remembers about Jonah, the big fish.! But as we read this passage, the fish isn't the focus here, is it?

It's mentioned once at the end of chapter 1, and then a couple of times, and then a couple of times in chapter 2, but the fish isn't the focus. It's what's going on inside the fish.

In fact, it's what's being said inside this fish. A prayer. It's the cry of Jonah to God. And as we read this, did you notice how heavy these words are?

The distress. The deep. The flood. Sinking down to the bottom of the pit. This isn't just a quick, light prayer to God.

[1:09] This is a heavy prayer from a very dark place. This is a cry from a man who has ruined his life.

A man who has made all the wrong choices, who has made disastrous decisions, whose life choices, one after another, has led him here to this dark and hopeless place.

And now his life is falling apart. He's at the lowest of lows. Everything has gone wrong. Nothing is right in his life. And he's even on the brink of death.

You could say Jonah is just one step away from hell. And you might be feeling like this today. This despair.

This hopelessness. You might be feeling like you've ruined your life and it's falling to pieces. Well, if that is you, you're not alone.

[2:10] This is not unique to Jonah. Jonah is capturing something how we all can feel. And why has all this come upon Jonah? Jonah has run from God.

He's run from God and now he's feeling the effects. When you run from God, you run into judgment. And this is how it feels.

He's run from the goodness and favor and comfort and life of God. And now he's in the midst of death. He's crying out from the midst of judgment.

These are the words coming up from the heart of darkness itself. Jonah has led himself here. He's run to this place.

And now he's discovered the reality of what it means to run from God. The reality of actually being away from God. Being away from God is not a liberating place.

[3:12] It's not a place of freedom. No, being away from God is a dark place. And this is the first point to see today.

Being away from God is a dark place. Jonah has been running from God. And now Jonah is getting exactly what he wants. Look at verse 4.

Then I said, I am driven away from your sight. Now we can never actually be out of God's sight. God sees everyone at all times.

We can't actually hide from God. But what Jonah means here is, I've been driven from your kindness. From the goodness of God.

God's face and his kindness are linked in the Bible. What do we often hear at the end of a Sunday service? The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.

[4:15] The Lord lift up his countenance, his face upon you and give you peace. When God's face shines on you, when you're in his sight, you're in his grace.

In his peace, in his favour. And so when you're driven from God's sight, he still sees you, but his favour is gone.

You get to experience what life is actually like when God takes away all his goodness. And that's what Jonah is experiencing right now.

And look what it's like. Look how this prayer opens. Verse 2. Life without God is utter distress. It does something to your soul. It puts your soul in agony. Your life falls into despair. And so all this language Jonah is using, this isn't just describing him sinking into the sea.

[5:26] Yes, he's been thrown overboard and he started to drown before the fish swallowed him. But he's not just talking about his sinking body. He's talking about his sinking soul.

Being away from God is a dark place for your body and your soul. Look how Jonah is feeling. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried. Sheol is the place of death. He's crying out from a place of death. There's no enjoyment of life in him. He's on the brink of dying. He's staring into the dark abyss. And look at verse 5.

He's trapped.

[6:27] the water's pressing down on him bars closed up over him he's caged in the deep wrapped with seaweed dragged to the bottom no escape he's run from gods and now he's drowning suffocating trapped it's been a slow descent into the depths down into death down into the heart of darkness and this is where he ran to and he's ruined his life everything seems hopeless he's become an utter mess all his decisions have brought him here to this point he ran from god and this is where he ended up he's made his bed and now he has to lie in it and he's in utter distress and this is where running from god will lead you this is the reality we can't ignore being away from god is a dark place and this is why the world is so dark this is why everything feels so hopeless right now we look around and it's darkness everywhere isn't it you look around it's a society at war with each other you open up twitter and it's endless fighting you go to the shops and you see rising food prices and and the cost of living you look and see the teenage mental health crisis you see the corruption of our leaders you look overseas at the war and then another war you see the flooding the earthquakes the tragedies you see a world in distress a world descending into darkness down and down into the depths closing in and trapping you and it feels like we're all drowning this world this world ran from god and now it's getting what it wants you want to be away from god this is what you get look around at the world this is what happens when god removes his favor when we're driven away from his sight being away from god is a dark place and we're living in it right now and maybe you don't even need to look at the world to know that maybe you're feeling this in your life right now maybe like jonah you feel like you've ruined your life you've made a disaster for yourself you look back on the past and you see all the decisions you've made but all the wrong choices all the foolish things you've done and it's brought you here to today and you think i've ruined my life it's all over i'm trapped now i can't escape my past i'm entangled in where i've run to and now i'm just sinking and it feels hopeless my life is fainting away and now you find yourself in a very dark place physically mentally spiritually and you hear jonah's cry and you think that's me well this passage is here to help you this passage is here to first help you understand what's going on in your life god gives meaning to everything to the good and to the bad and so we can't truly understand our distress and our darkness without god and so jonah helps us realize what's going on and it's sobering to hear if you feel like you've run from god

and you've ruined your life what you're experiencing right now this is not just the effects of making bad choices you're experiencing the effects of running away from god of being driven from his sight from his favor the sinful decisions we make in life and the disasters that follow and the darkness

where it leads us all that is not just a hiccup in life they're not just unfortunate circumstances that we happen to fall into all those moments are us running away from god and when we do we feel its effects we feel the darkness because being away from god is a dark place but did you notice all this distress in jonah's life is not only his own doing did you notice it's actually from the lord the lord has thrown jonah into this distress and this is the second thing we need to see today the lord throws us into distress the lord throws us into distress so don't miss god's involvement in all this end of chapter one the lord appointed the fish chapter two verse two for you cast me into the deep all your waves and your billows passed over me and think back to chapter one where did this whole storm come from the lord hurled a great wind on jonah so who brought this disaster on jonah well in one sense jonah did jonah ran and this is where he ran to he brought this on himself but who really brought this on jonah god this distress this darkness this ruined life this is not just random this is not just the way things are no it is all from god now this isn't easy to hear and we will see what this does and doesn't mean in a moment but but this is what we need to hear it's what the book of jonah is clear about the distress falling on jonah's life the judgment he has run into it's from god god is in control of it god has ordained it it's all part of god's plan the lord throws us into distress and this is clear in the book of jonah and this is clear in the whole bible in isaiah 45 listen to how god describes himself it's striking listen to this god says i form light and i create darkness i make well-being and create calamity i am the lord who does all these things or think about job when job's life falls apart what does job confess the lord gave and the lord has taken away blessed be the name of the lord god is the one who brings his judgment on the world that runs from him and so just like jonah when we run from god and fall into sin and we have to live with the consequences of our sin that is from god

god is the one who throws us into distress now let's also be clear here god is not the author of sin god does not sin when he does this god cannot sin no distress and calamity and darkness that is god's righteous and wise judgment on the world judgment on sin when we run away from god when we're away from his presence and we've run into darkness and distress we need to know that is from god now this isn't easy to hear we might not like this at first but we need to be humble here because we really need to see why god throws us into distress the lord throws us into distress for a purpose in fact it's for an incredibly merciful purpose suffering is god's megaphone in our life that he uses to call us back to him it's what he did in jonah's life and it's what he's doing in your life suffering is god's megaphone and this is my final point today suffering is god's megaphone suffering is god's megaphone so listen to c.s lewis here c.s lewis wrote this and it really captures what's going on in jonah he writes we can ignore even pleasure but pain insists upon being attended to god whispers to us in our pleasures speaks in our conscience but shouts in our pains it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world do you hear what he's saying suffering is god's megaphone in our lives to rouse us to wake us up when we're running away from god and we encounter the effects of that the suffering the distress when our lives start falling apart that is god stopping us in our tracks and calling us to turn back to him and we can see this in jonah as he runs from god in the opposite direction all this distress and darkness is god's megaphone in his life blaring into his life because look how he responds to it verse 2 i called out to the lord out of my distress and he answered me and look at verse 7 when my life was fainting away i remembered the lord and my prayer came to you into your holy temple from his distress jonah heard god calling he heard the megaphone and jonah called back that's what this prayer is in fact this prayer wouldn't exist if god never threw him into distress in the first place just think imagine jonah ran away from god toward tarshish in the opposite direction and imagine god never did anything imagine that he just let jonah run in fact imagine god rewarded jonah jonah got on the ship and it was blue skies and warm and easy sailing he got to tarshish bought a house found a wife had a great life forgetting about god he was healthy earned loads then he grew old and he died with a smile on his face what if god never did anything jonah would have had an easy life but his next life would be very dark he would come face to face with the one he's been running from the whole time but that doesn't happen in his ruined life this darkness this distress what is happening he hears god's megaphone he hears the call of god and it wakes him up it stops him in his tracks and this is god's mercy god doesn't let him run god doesn't give him the easy life the lord is so merciful he blares his megaphone into jonah's life and jonah hears it he hears god's mercy in his need he realises i can't run i see what my life has become without god this mess this disaster and i can't run he realises this which makes him see the one who can save him look what he cries at the end of this prayer salvation belongs to the lord lord in my ruined life i can only come to you you're my only hope salvation belongs to the lord what has happened here the lord has

brought him back and it wouldn't have happened without this distress this has all been god's mercy and this goes for all of us whatever darkness or despair or distress you are going through that is god's megaphone in his in your life calling you to turn to god and cling to him cry out to him if you have been running away from god and you look at your life and it's a disaster you think i've ruined my life i've made a mess there's no hope if you're thinking that that means there is hope because what you're hearing is god's megaphone god is not distant right now in your life he's in your life right now and he's calling you calling you to come back maybe you've been running your whole life or maybe you grew up as a christian and then you started running wherever you are god is calling you back from darkness and he's warning you of a worse darkness to come god is so merciful he's not letting you be satisfied with your life and it may be hard to hear but you need to realise that is god's mercy in your life and so now is the time be like jonah and cry out to god cry to him to save you pray to god to take your soul out of darkness and when you do he will always hear you he will answer you and he will save you i called out to the lord out of my distress and he answered me out of the belly of sheol i cried and you heard my voice the lord hears the cries of a ruined life and he answers with even more mercy he answers by forgiving all your sins the mess you made the sins you've committed all that running from god when you cry out to him he forgives it all all your past he will show you mercy now that won't mean all your problems will disappear but it means he will save you from a worse darkness if you turn to god now your running will end and you will be back with your god your soul will be safe forever now there might there may be quite a few people here thinking but hold on i haven't been like jonah i haven't run from god i'm not living in the consequences of my own sin i've been faithful to him i've done what he's told me but i'm still suffering i'm still going through so much look at my life i haven't run from god but i'm still in a dark place well if that's you again this won't be easy to hear but it's what we need to hear the suffering you are going through is still god's megaphone in your life god doesn't punish his children he doesn't bring judgment on the people he saved but he always shows us mercy and that mercy can at times come in the form of suffering mercy can come as darkness and distress in our lives and god brings that into our lives for a really wise and merciful purpose so that we would cling to him all the more so that we would remember him we would remember he is there and we would cry out to him so that we would rely on him all the more so that we would not be content with the comfort of this life so that we would not look to anything else to strengthen us or save us but so that we would look to our merciful god and say salvation belongs to the lord and the lord alone you are my only hope in this life lord lord my body is in pain and my heart is broken but you are the one who saves you are the lord who will one day bring me out of this the lord is refining you it may feel like you're being punished or like that god has left you but please say that is not the case god is in your life right now his mercy is in your life and it takes great faith to see that your suffering is god's megaphone and he's calling you to long for the lord's salvation he's calling you to hope for the day when he will bring you out of this pit he's calling you to hope for the resurrection look how jonah 2 ends and the lord spoke to the fish and it vomited jonah out upon the dry land he was on the brink of death crushed under the ocean in the heart of darkness and god placed him back on dry land he felt the fresh air in his lungs again he felt the stability of dry land again he was given a new start he was given a new life

[26:34] i went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever yet you brought up my life from the pit and that is what will happen to everyone who calls out to the lord in their distress you will one day be brought up from the dark pit of this world the dark pit of your life you will be given a new start a new life and we know that we know that that is coming because it happened to the lord jesus jesus was in the belly of the earth three days in the belly of death but death could not hold him death spat him back out into new life a new beginning he was brought up from the pit of darkness and so for everyone who believes in him you will follow that same path if you've made a disaster of your life you can have an actual new beginning and it comes at the resurrection if you are suffering in your body it will one day be restored if death and loss has sent you into a dark place the light of a new day is coming and god's megaphone is calling to you now hope in that hope in jesus brothers and sisters the sufferings of your life are not random our god has not abandoned us no in your life right now he is calling you to keep going to keep relying on

him and to hope in the resurrection hope in that day the day that you will finally be brought up from this pit and so we have a really big decision to make with our suffering it is always god's megaphone but the question is what will you do with it will you let it drive you from god or will you use it to cling to him all the more to cry to him because he's calling you his mercy is in your life right now for everyone whose life is ruined who is in the heart of darkness there is a hope there is a salvation for you salvation belongs to the lord let me pray