
Main Point: Futility

Life lived without God is a life opposed to God, and it is a futile life.

Supplemental Scripture: Isaiah 44:6-20

Study Introduction

The Gospel is how Christ has saved us from our sin. Coming to be obedient to all that the Father has commanded, dying in our place, and then being raised from the dead to new life. However, the Gospel is something that God had in mind from the very beginning. Scholars call Genesis 3:15 the “protoevangelium,” that is greek for the first Gospel. It is where God made clear his intent to redeem sinful humans for his glory and their good. Aspects of this story can be seen through all of the Old Testament. Over the next six studies we will look deeper into Jonah, while at the same time looking at other stories from Scripture either comparing to our contrasting with Jonah and his tale of disobedience to and exasperation with God, and how we see ourselves in that same position with the Lord of all.

Study Questions

Pre-study:

1. Did you ever not get something you really put effort and hope into getting? (For example: not make a team, not get a promotion you thought you were getting, or get turned down for a date) What did that feel like?
 2. Why do you think those moments linger with us throughout life?
- Today, we’re looking into the first half of Jonah’s prayer in chapter 2. We’ll see what it took for Jonah to come to a place where he could finally obey God.

Read: Jonah 2:1-10

3. What resonated with you from the chapter?
4. Have you understood these three things: the futility of life without God, the emptiness of idols, and that salvation belongs to God?
5. What did this faith journey look like in your life?
6. If you have not yet come to faith, could you describe your spiritual journey to this point or perhaps share what you have seen in someone else’s life that has made the Christian walk attractive to you.

The first major concept in Jonah’s prayer of repentance is the futility of life without God. Repentance always begins in a note of despair. As Jonah learned, though, it is better to be united with God even in the belly of a fish than to be on dry land without Him. The second major realization in Jonah’s prayer is the emptiness of idols. When you turn to an idol, you forfeit the grace that could be yours. The third major realization in Jonah’s prayer is salvation belongs to the Lord. Understanding Jesus was cast into the sea of God’s wrath for us gives us the motivation for the new kind of obedience.

Parallels in Isaiah 44:6-23

The Book of Isaiah is one of the longest in the Bible and is almost entirely filled with God's admonitions to His people. While some passages are a little complex at first read, others are straightforward and almost satirical in tone. Isaiah 44:6-20 is one of the plainest explanations of idolatry we will find anywhere in the Bible. Considering this passage will help you fully understand the futility of Jonah's flight, the emptiness of idols, and his confession that salvation belongs to the Lord.

Read: Jonah 2:1-10 and Isaiah 44:6-8

7. Focus in on Isaiah 44:6-8. Summarize the message of these verses into one short thought. This is perhaps the most central teaching of Scripture. Jonah's prayer acknowledges God's sovereignty over creation. Yet it took Jonah three days in a fish belly to get to this point.

8. Why is such a simple teaching — repeated so often — so hard for us to live by?

Read: Isaiah 44:9-20

9. Look specifically at the illustrations of the carpenter and the ironsmith. In these illustrations, what do you think the characters and their crafts represent?

10. Relying on verses 17-20 to guide you, what is the simple irony God is communicating in these illustrations?

11. What danger are both Isaiah and Jonah saying comes with idol worship?

12. For most of us, we aren't bowing down to blocks of wood. But we do sacrifice time, money, and energy to the things we value. What are common idols among your circles of friends and family?

13. How do verses 21-23 of Isaiah 44 and verses 6-9 of Jonah 2 call you back from times of idol worship?

Application

1. Think back to when you decided to follow Christ. How did you come to realize the dangers of life apart from Christ? Who helped you take the step to follow Christ?

2. We never grow beyond this message of salvation, only deeper into it. In what ways does this message give you a fresh hope today?

3. What is one achievable action step you can take this week in response to what we've discussed in this group?

Prayer

- Pray for God to rid your life and the lives of those in your group of idols that are drawing you away from Him.
- Ask the Lord to give those who are struggling with sin a repentant heart.
- Pray for victory.
- Praise God for the grace He has extended us in Christ.