

JONAH: RUNAWAY PROPHET
HALF-HEARTED REPENTANCE

Thursday, July 9
Reading: Jonah 2:7-9

Jonah 2:9 *But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to You. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the LORD.'* "

We now come to the climax of Jonah's prayer! He has cried out over his experience in the sea and in the great fish. He has expressed his confidence that God hears him and he will again worship in God's temple. Now the prophet confesses his total dependence on God. "I remembered the LORD." This word "remember" means to recall, to think about, to acknowledge. The Psalms are full of examples of this word. Perhaps Jonah was thinking about Psalm 42:

These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng.
Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope
in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God (Psalm 42:4-5).

Jonah next compares himself to the pagan idolaters. They cling to their worthless idols. This word means vain, empty, and meaninglessness. They cannot save! These pagans turn their backs on God's love and mercy. The Hebrew word here is *hesed*. This powerful word cannot be translated by a single word. It carries the ideas of mercy, love, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and truth. It is the major word to describe the character of God (see Psalm 136). There is no salvation for those who reject God!

In contrast, Jonah proclaims that he will worship the Lord with grateful praise and sacrifices. True worship involves both inward and outward actions. Though he had tried to escape God's call, Jonah is now ready to fulfill his vow to obey the Lord. He has realized that "Salvation comes from the Lord."

Interestingly, Jonah and the sailors both followed the same pattern. They offered sacrifices to the LORD and made vows. God wanted Jonah to realize that he was no better than the Gentile mariners. He did not deserve rescue any more than they. His salvation was because of the mercy of God as well. As one commentator put it:

"Here, as elsewhere, the ancient scriptures seek to remove the blinkers from our eyes, the constraints that would force God into the strait-jacket of our own prejudices and predilection. The ancient message was to inform the Jews that their God could not be confined to Israel; He was God also of the gentiles...His compassion extends to all mankind."¹

But as we continue the story, we will discover that Jonah's repentance was half-hearted. He was now willing to go and proclaim God's message, but his attitude will show the defiance still in his heart. He is still clinging to his own "worthless idol" – holding on to his desire see the wicked punished rather than God's desire to see them repent.

Do your desires always align with God's desires? Why or why not?

Meditate on these words from Psalm 32:8-10 where God says:

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with My loving eye on you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love (*hesed*) surrounds the one who trusts in Him.

¹ Peter Craigie. The Daily Study Bible: The Twelve Prophets vol 1, p. 227-228