The Book of Jonah: The Truth behind the Legend (2)

It Serves Him Right, but God Is Short of Spite

Structure

	Ch 1-2 God Saved a Disobedient Hebrew Servant	Ch 3-4 God Saved a Depraved Gentile Nation
Sin & Punishment	Jonah Was Disobedient (1:1-3) Gentiles Obeyed God (1:4-16) Jonah Brought the Trouble (1:4-5) Gentile Prayed Wrongly (1:6-8) Jonah Was the Trouble (1:9-12) Gentiles Prayed Rightly (1:13-16)	Jonah Was Obedient (3:1-4) Gentile Repented (3:5-9) They Believed in God (3:5a) They Humbled Themselves (3:5b-8a) They Hoped on God (3:8b-9)
Grace & Understanding	Jonah Was Saved (1:17 –2:10) God Gave Grace (1:17) Jonah Praised (2:1-9) God Commissioned (2:10)	Jonah Was Rebuked (3:10–4:11) God Gave Grace (3:10) Jonah Complained (4:1-3) God Explained (4:4-11)

Background

- God Commanded Jonah to Prophesy against Nineveh (Assyria, East of Israel)
- Jonah Made up His Mind to Disobey God, and Boarded a Ship to Tarshish (West of Israel)
- God Sent a Storm to Punish Jonah, with the Gentile Sailors as Innocent Victims.
- They Showed More Fear of God than Jonah Did, and Reluctantly Threw Him Overboard.
- Jonah Went Down to the Gate of Hades, because He Was Wrong in Disobedience.

God Gave Undeserved Grace (1:17)

- Implied: Jonah Was Almost Drowned and Lost His Consciousness. When He Woke up, He Was in the Belly of a Great Fish.
- Nature: It Was Not a Part of the Punishment, but a Stage of God's Special Rescue Mission.
- Historicity: Jesus Did Doubt It (Matt 12:39-40).
- Fish (Hb: dαg) = (Gk: keitos) Sea Monster, Maybe a Sperm Whale (A Sailor Survived in 19th cen.)
- 3 Days & 3 Nights: Time to Travel between the World of the Living and of the Dead (Sumerian).

Jonah Gave Obligated Praise (2:1-9)

Jonah's Psalm of Praise (vv.2-9)

I. Summary of Answered Prayer (vv.2-4)	II. Report of Crisis and Rescue (vv. 5-7)	III. Declaration of Faith and Vow of Praise (vv.8-9)
Call of Distress (vv.2-3)	Nearness of Death (vv.5-6a)	Faith in Grace (v.8)
Desire to Worship (v.4)	Effectiveness of Prayer (vv.6b-7)	Vow of Praise (v.9)

God Was Graceful to Jonah (2:1-4)

- "Jonah Prayed to Yahweh His God from the Stomach of the Fish" (2:1)
 - God Already Partially Rescued Jonah from the Sea
 - God's Delivery Was due to His Sovereign Grace.
 - God Forgave Jonah's Sin of Open Rebellion, Which Deserved Death.
 - God's Delivery May Take Stages/Steps.
 - Jonah Was Praying for Further/Complete Delivery
 - God Desires That We Respond to His Grace.
 - Being in the Belly of the Whale Is on the Way up; but Further Lifting Demands Proper Response.

God Was Graceful to Jonah (2:1-4)

- Jonah Was Nearly Drowned in the Sea (v.3)
 - God (thru the Gentile Sailors) Threw Jonah in the Sea, and Let the Current Overwhelm Him.
 - God Made the Breakers and Billows to Cover Him.
- Jonah Prayed due to Distress, Not Love (v.2)
 - He Made an Instant Prayer "from Sheol's Belly" before Loosing His Consciousness (v.2).
 - God Heard His Prayers w/o Many Words or Long Time (v.2).

God Was Graceful to Jonah (2:1-4)

- Jonah Recognized His Status as a Sinner (v.4a)
 - He Banished God by Disobeying God's Will.
 - Now God Banished Him (Disciplining; cf. Heb 12:5-11), and He Wanted God's Will to Rescue Him.
 - Jonah Grew a Hardened Heart toward Sinners, but now He Wanted God's Warm Heart toward Him, a Sinner.
- He Requested to Worship God again at His Holy Temple (v.4b)
 - God Always Has a Warm Heart toward His Chosen People.
 - God Responded to the Instantaneous Prayer of Jonah, and Already Sent the Fish to Rescue Him.

Jonah Responded on Time (2:5-7)

- Jonah Was Surely Dying by Drowning (vv.5-6)
 - Water Was Over His Neck; Seaweed Wrapped His Head (v.5).
 - He Was at the Base of Mountains (under the Sea).
 - The Gate of Hades Closed Behind Him (v.6).
- Jonah Remembered to Call on God Right before Losing Consciousness (v.7)
 - God Heard the Words from Jonah's Heart.
 - God Lifted Jonah Out of the Pit/Abyss.

Jonah Made Further Request (2:8-9)

- Jonah Declared His Faith in the True God, by Denouncing the Idolaters (v.8a).
- He Promised to Respond to God's Grace by Spurning the Idolaters Forgetting It (v.8b).
- He Requested Full Delivery, and Promised to Praise God and Make Further Obligated Sacrifices (v.9).
- He Was Actually Following What the Gentile Sailors' Actions.

God Gave Second Chance (2:10)

- "Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land."
 - God Is the Sovereign Ruler of All Creation.
 - Even the Fish Obeyed God's Command.
 - Jonah Was Given a Second Chance to Obey God's Command, and Go to Proclaim God's Word to the Gentiles.

Lessons and Applications

- God Loves Sinners from All Nations and Will Rescue according to His Sovereign Will.
- God Rescues His Disobedient Servants if They Recognized God's Sovereignty and Obey.
- We Cannot Consistently Have a Cold Heart to Other Sinners and Request God to Rescue Us from the Consequences of Our Sins.
- God's Delivery May Take Stages; and We Should Praise, Rather Than Complain, When We Are in the Belly of a Whale.