

TELLING FISH STORIES



JONAH 2: 1-10

WAVES OF REVIVAL

THE BOOK OF JONAH

by Lenya Heitzig

MEMORY VERSE

“When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. “Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God’s love for them. 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.’”

—Jonah 2: 7-9

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DAY ONE: PRAYER IS THE ONLY OPTION

Our family recently spent time in Michigan nestled on the shores of Hamlin Lake where we kayaked, pontooned, and fished. Cousin George knew the waters and the fish in those parts. He'd come each day to bait the hooks based on what the fish were biting and tell us what the peak nibbling times that day were. Turns out they love worms, and we could walk down the street to get 'em fresh daily.

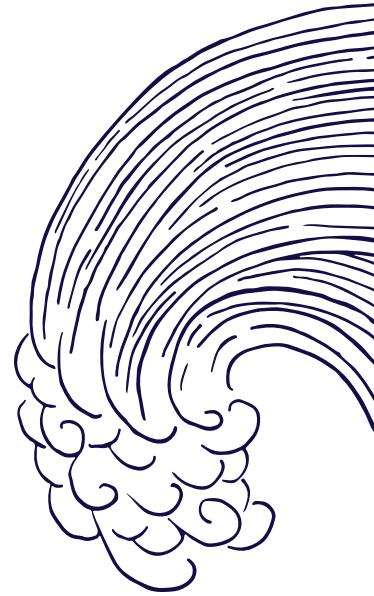
Of course, when a family of 8-10 are fishing you can expect some healthy competition about who caught the biggest fish. Wouldn't you know it? Kaydence, the youngest girl, caught the biggest fish—a wide mouth bass. We hoot and holler as she reeled it in. We're a catch and release family so we let the poor fella go.

This week we study one of the greatest fish stories of all time—Jonah being swallowed by a great fish. It's hard to believe, isn't it? Did you know it's happened again since the Old Testament times? In the late 1900's, James Bartley is said to have been swallowed whole by a huge sperm whale. As a matter of fact, he was recovered still living in the stomach of the whale days later after some whalers harpooned the beast. Prepare your heart as we dive into Jonah 2.

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish’s belly. And he said: ‘I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. ‘Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice’” (Jonah 2:1-2).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Describe what Jonah finally did. What are your thoughts about the timing of his prayer?
2. Where did the prophet make his prayer? Do you think the place of prayer prevented God from hearing it?
3. Explain what motivates Jonah’s prayer.
4. How does Jonah describe the belly of the whale?
5. Describe the tone of his prayer based on the way it is described.

Affliction is a Biblical word that describes any circumstance or struggle that brings suffering or pain to the one under its grip. There are two kinds of affliction. 1) It comes from God’s judgment on our sin. 2) It is felt when God uses the suffering to purify the believer to make them more like the Savior.

Sheol in Hebrew describes the place of the dead. In Greek it depicts the unseen world. Nelson’s Bible Dictionary says that Sheol “was regarded as an underground region, shadowy and gloomy, where disembodied souls had a conscious but dull and inactive existence.”

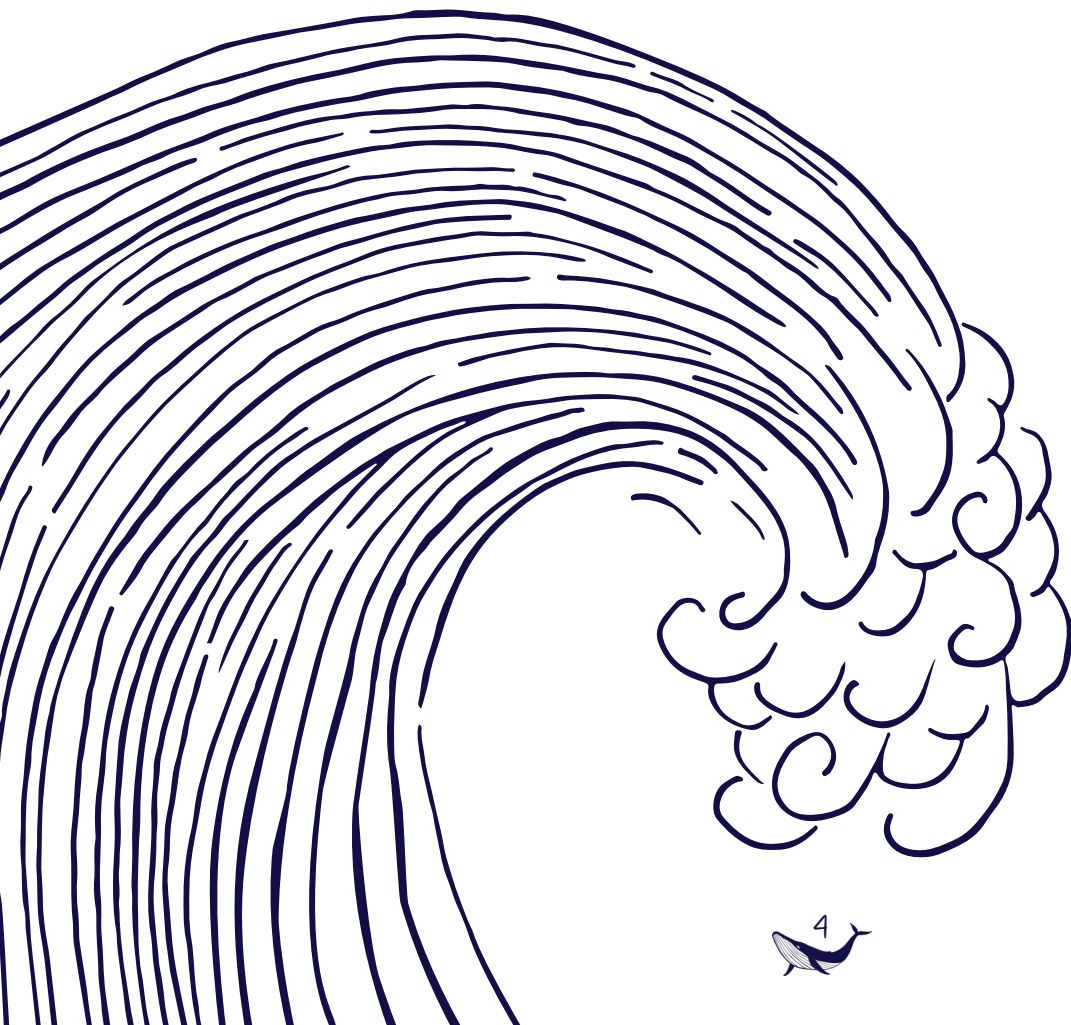
PERSONAL APPLICATION:

6. Describe your prayer life. How often do you pray? What do you pray about? What is the timing of your prayer requests? How could you improve your prayer life?
7. Journal about one of the most unusually places you have prayed and how God answered that prayer.

Prayer *God hears your prayer whether we whisper, say them out loud, or hide them in our hearts. He also listens to your prayers no matter where you may be. David talked to God in a cave hiding from Saul. God tuned into Daniel in the Lion's den. He's there. He cares. He hears your prayers.*

"Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference."

— Max Lucado



DAY TWO: HIDING FROM YOUR PROBLEMS

Being lost at sea is not a joke. Lifelong sailor, Kevin Hyde knows that from experience. On December 3, 2022, he took a friend, Joe DiTommaso, and his poodle Minnie for a trip from North Carolina to Florida aboard his sailboat, the *Atrevida II*.

Unexpectedly, out of the clear blue skies, came the worst storm either man hand encountered. “I’ve never heard winds so bad in my whole life! Sounded like the devil was out there,” said DiTommaso. In no time at all their 50-foot mast toppled and the captain lost control of the ship.

No mast. No power. No radio. No food. And barely any water. “We were just being pushed out to sea farther and farther,” said Hyde. “It’s like finding a needle in a haystack in this situation, the waves were bigger than my boat.” But somehow, a crew from an international cargo ship traveling from Amsterdam to New York spotted the group and rescued them using a cargo net. The captain of the *Silver Muna*, an oiler tanker called it divine intervention. “God sent me to save them,” said Captain Neeraj Chaudhary.

Without a distress signal the second officer just noticed something when he looked out at the sea. Hyde said the vessel was “probably the last ship that would have been able to find them.” God has been in the rescue operation business for a long time. Whether Jonah on his way to Nineveh, Paul on his way to Malta, or Kevin Hyde on his way to Florida with a friend.

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Then I said, ‘I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple’” (Jonah 2:3-4).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. List those who could be responsible for Jonah’s situation. Who does the text say is responsible?
2. What two phrases in verse 3 describe Jonah’s location?
3. Describe the condition of the sea. What words are used in today’s text?
4. Explain how Jonah felt about God’s treatment.
5. Despite Jonah’s thoughts and feelings, what decision does he make?

Sovereignty of God Jonah was at fault for his journey into the deep. However, the mariners actually threw him overboard. Finally, it was God who orchestrated the circumstances. Because God is sovereign, we know that anything that comes our way must be part of His plan. Sovereignty proposes

Cast Out from God’s presence implies excruciating rejection. Since God is light to be separated from Him is to be in utter darkness. When David sinned with Bath Sheba he begged God not to forsake him. “Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation” (Psalm 51:11-12).

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

6. Read the following verse, then answer the questions below: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Peter 1:6-8).
- Explain what Peter says should make the believer rejoice.
 - How long does the suffering last and how does that change your perspective about trial?
 - List the purpose for “all kinds of trials.”
 - List some of the trials you have suffered. How has Jesus used them to make you more valuable?

Passed Over *None of our trials come to stay. This phrase, “it came to pass,” is used 177 times in the Bible. It’s wonderful to think that our trials don’t come to stay, but that “they came to pass.” Paul said, “Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Pain has a purpose.*

“Although the sovereignty of God is universal and absolute, it is not the sovereignty of blind power. It is coupled with infinite wisdom, holiness and love. And this doctrine, when properly understood, is a most comforting and reassuring one. Who would not prefer to have his affairs in the hands of a God of infinite power, wisdom, holiness and love, rather than to have them left to fate, or chance, or irrevocable natural law, or to short-sighted and perverted self? Those who reject God’s sovereignty should consider what alternatives they have left.”

—Lorraine Boettner

DAY THREE: WHEN GOD BREAKS THROUGH

Jonah sank to “the mooring of the mountains” after being thrown overboard. Experts say it’s hard to make an exact interpretation of this phrase but believe it refers to the foundations of the mountains on the ocean’s floor. If you think mountains on the earth are scary, I can’t imagine exploring the mountains at the bottom of the sea.

A very fit and experienced 40-year-old cave explorer lost his footing and became trapped while exploring one of the United Kingdom’s deepest caves measured at over 985 feet deep. The explorer suffered a broken jaw, leg, and spinal injuries. He was trapped for over two days. In the end it took more than 240 rescuers to retrieve him from the dark abyss. The team created a human chain to extract the unlucky explorer. The system of caves known as Ogof Ffynnon Ddu is part of the Brecon Beacons stretching over 30 miles.

Our cave explorer wasn’t in a dangerous part of the cave. His foot simply slipped and he tumbled into dangerous depth. Jonah slipped, too. But it wasn’t his foot, it was his faith. He turned off course and found himself in deep trouble. God was the only one who could coordinate a rescue operation for Jonah. “For you, LORD, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living” (Ps. 116:8-9).

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God” (Jonah 2:5-6).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. To what depths did the water surround Jonah and what does it tell you about the condition of his faith?
2. Do you think the weeds were literal or figurative? Why?
3. In your own words, explain how far the prophet fell.
4. What makes you think the prophet thought there was no future after this experience?
5. Despite Jonah's thoughts and feeling what was God doing instead?

Weed Control *Jonah said that weeds were wrapped around his head. Sometimes things can have two meanings. No doubt there were weeds in the water that surrounded his head literally. But it's also true that negative thoughts can fill our minds with weeds of doubt and fear. "Be transformed by the renewing your mind" (Romans 12:2).*

Final Say *Jonah thought that this was the end of his life. He would be outcast forever. But God had different plans. He was just moments away from rescue. One minute he's pulled down by weeds and the next God pulled him up from the pit. "For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).*



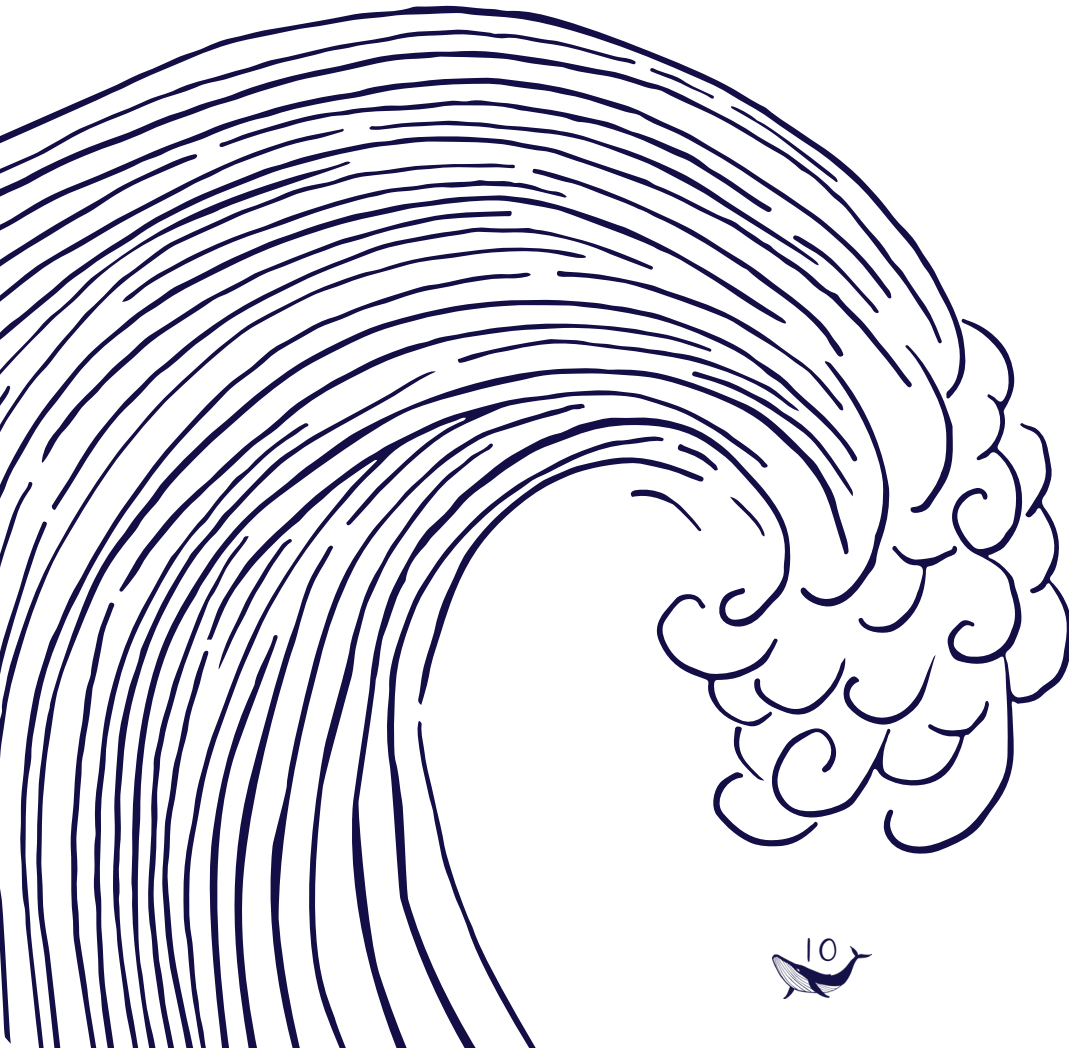
PERSONAL APPLICATION:

6. Read the following verse, then answer the questions below: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).
- Describe the difference between spiritual weapon and earthly weapons.
 - List the things that God’s weapons can abolish.
 - Write a prayer utilizing God’s mighty arsenal to conquer thoughts, feelings, or doubts in your mind.

Stronghold can describe a mighty fortress or a hiding place. Consider this in terms of the lies we tell ourselves. They are embedded inside the hiding places of our minds. To rid ourselves of them we must first, discover them, then expose them to the light of God’s Word, and finally pray God replaces them with the truth.

“POSITIVE: The positive thinker sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible.”

– Winston Churchill



DAY FOUR: WHEN YOUR SOUL FAINTS

On a recent vacation my whole family wanted me to ride an electric scooter through the streets of Paris at rush hour. It's basically a standup skate board that travels 15-30 miles an hour. I have never ridden a skate board and often wipe out on bicycles. "It's a bad idea," I told them.

"It's really easy, and the kids are tired of walking," Nathan assured.

"You'll get the hang of it quickly," Janae chimed in.

I was outnumbered and climbed aboard. Terrified, I kept ringing my little bell at every intersection, blurting out, "Look out! It's my first time."

Trying to navigate cars, bicycles, and pedestrians who wandered aimlessly this way and that.

A group of gals pivoted abruptly in front of me. I swerved right and lost control as I slammed into a wall at a high rate of speed. My sunglasses flew off my head, my vision went blurry, and everything seemed to swirl. Somehow, Janae leaped off her scooter, slammed me against the wall, and squeezed a gaping wound on my eyebrow as she eased me to the ground as I fainted. Crowds gathered and an ambulance came screaming down the street. It was humiliating.

Today, we'll see Jonah's soul faint. He's breathless, lost his spiritual vision, and his heart racing. Oh that he would take the prophet Isaiah's advice, "Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:31).



REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went up to You, Into Your holy temple. Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy” (Jonah 2:7-8).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. How does Jonah describe the condition of his soul? Describe what you think this felt like.
2. Explain what rouses him from his fainting spell.
3. What does the prophet do once he's revived?
4. Describe how far the prophet's prayer reached.
5. In your own words, explain the warning Jonah gives to others.

Faint describes feeling feeble or overwhelmed. It can also be translated to swoon. Moderns say that it is to feel dizzy, be short of breath, or to lose consciousness. “From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Psalm 61:2).

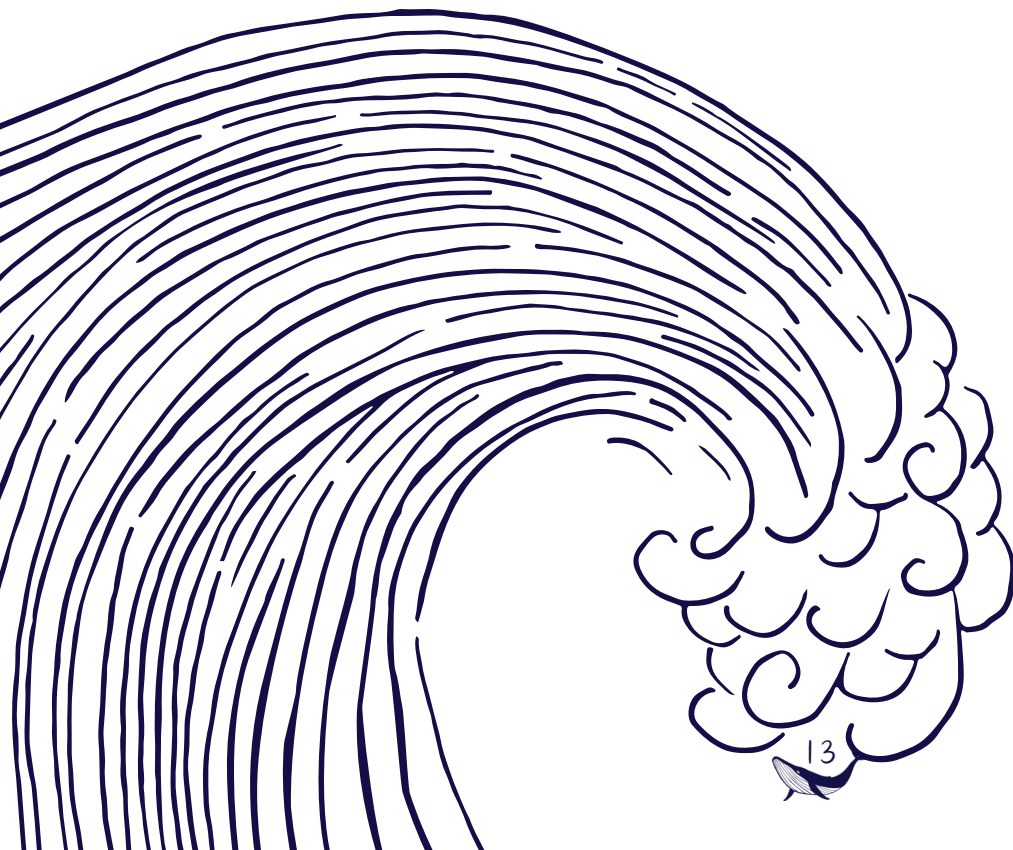
Idol “Perhaps the best definition of an idol is something we ourselves make into a god. It does not have to be a statue or a tree. It can be anything that stands between us and God or something we substitute for God.”
Jonah was his own idol by putting himself above God.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

- Using the word FAIN**T** as an acrostic describe some of the symptoms you have felt when you've been disobedient to God.
F (example: fearful)
A
I
N
T
- Jonah realizes that he has served "worthless idols" even though he was called by God. List some of the idols people serve today. Circle the ones you have worshipped at one time or another.

“When anything in life is an absolute requirement for your happiness and selfworth, it is essentially an ‘idol,’ something you are actually worshiping. When such a thing is threatened, your anger is absolute. Your anger is actually the way the idol keeps you in its service, in its chains. Therefore if you find that, despite all the efforts to forgive, your anger and bitterness cannot subside, you may need to look deeper and ask, ‘What am I defending? What is so important that I cannot live without?’ It may be that, until some inordinate desire is identified and confronted, you will not be able to master your anger.”

—Tim Keller



DAY FIVE: WHEN YOU FINALLY SURRENDER

A tug of war is a contest with two people or teams pulling on opposite ends of a rope until one drags the other over a central line. Mud is often mixed in the middle. That's where we get the saying, "dragged through the mud." Sometimes the battle is evenly matched factions like Apple versus Microsoft or Democrats and Republicans. Both sides are striving to obtain the same thing like market share or control of the government.

It's crazy to see someone in a tug of war with God like Pharaoh resisting Moses who represented the Lord to the Egyptian Ruler. The stubborn Sovereign endured nine plagues before he finally surrendered to God's will. Even then, as the children of Israel were allowed to leave the slavery of Egypt the Pharaoh pick up the rope again chasing them on his chariots to the Red Sea. Ultimately, he was dragged through the mud as the sea that had parted for the Israelites to walk though resurged to swallow up Pharaoh and his armies.

It's been harrowing to watch Jonah in a tug of war with God as he refused to obey His command, and risk the lives of others in the process. In today's text, at last, we see Jonah let go of the rope. We'll see him change from sarcasm to sacrifice. He'll offer up the fruit of repentance through thanksgiving and pay God what he owed Him—obedience to keep his vow. Now we'll see how God blesses the person who is on the same team.

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.” So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land” (Jonah 2:9-10).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Yesterday, we saw Jonah repent of idol worship. What spiritual rite does he make today?
2. Describe how Jonah makes his sacrifice.
3. What phrase makes you think Jonah will finally obey God's command?
4. Who does Jonah give credit for his deliverance?
5. Describe what you think God told the great fish to do.

Sacrifice describes a gift, a tribute, or an offering made to God. It includes something “brought near” to God as a symbol of communion or covenant. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

Vows made to God were to be voluntary, but after being made were binding. A vow is sacred promise or pledge that a person agrees to complete or a specific way to behave. “When you make a vow to the Lord your God you must not delay in fulfilling it, for otherwise he will surely hold you accountable as a sinner” (Deuteronomy 23:21-23).

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

6. Today we learned that a sacrifice was either a gift, a tribute, or an offering made to God. Have you ever made sacrifices to God? Is He calling you to make a new one today? Write a prayer to God offering Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving.
7. Jonah declared that “salvation is of the Lord.” Take time to journal about how you came to salvation in Christ.

Thanksgiving comes from the Hebrew word, “*towdah*.” Biblically it means devotion, praise, sacrifice, or an offering. Thanksgiving is to glorify God as an act of worship. “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name” (Psalm 100:4)

“It is altogether doubtful whether any man can be saved who comes to Christ for His help with no intention to obey Him.”

—A. W. Tozer

