

Jonah Chapter 2

Have you ever been in a position where you had to wait for something? I mean really wait... Sometimes you want something so bad you can almost taste it. Other times you have to endure a condition for a long long time, until you finally say “how long?” or “enough!” or just “come ON!” other times we are faced with a chronic condition that never goes away. Some are so trying we contemplate ending it all. Others we numb so we don't have to feel it anymore. OR, as my grandmother used to say, “It's always something”

And when you think about Jonah, you think “3 days?” I can put up with anything for 3 days....

Well, Jonah didn't suffer in his condition long, but at the time, he didn't know how long. I'm sure he expected to die a few minutes after his shipmates threw him overboard. I'm fairly certain he did not expect to be swallowed by a fish! And I am positive that, once in the fish, he did not know how long it was going to take until he was digested, or what he would feel along the way.... Was he alive? Or dead. One swallow of water by the fish and he'd drown. A few days of digestion and, well..., if you've ever caught a shark and cut open a full belly.... Well....

Which raises the question ...

How would you feel if YOU were swallowed by a fish?

Would you be sad? Angry? Distressed? Hopeless? Or would you want to simply die, like Jonah did when he told his shipmates to throw him overboard?

For Jonah, he for certain went through all of these feelings while inside the fish. He had 3 whole days to think about his fate.

Jonah Chapter 2 gives us 9 verses Which gave me cause to think -- I wonder what he did with the other 71 hours and 50 minutes.....

Personally, I think he went back over the same thoughts many times in those 72 hours.

So, for the moment, lets go through these verses like Jonah probably did in his first several hours.....

I would think, at least initially, he was in an attitude of what I would describe as 'Grief'. "I'm doomed! I'm not going to get out of here. It's hopeless!, and in a little bit if DENIAL? No, this cannot be happening to me....

"From inside the fish Jonah prayed.... He said:

"In my distress I called -

From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help,

AND SO WHAT DID HE SAY WHEN HE FIRST CALLED?

You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas,

and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.

THAT CERTAINLY DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A CALL TO ME. IT SOUNDS MORE LIKE ANGER, OR BLAME. "You hurled me, your waves swept over me."

But even as he said this, he probably sank into a Depression.....

4 I said, 'I have been banished from your sight;

5 The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me;

AND THEN MY FAVORITE LINE OF THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE

"seaweed was wrapped around my head."

SO THINK ABOUT THIS, HE'S GOT SEAWEED AROUND HIS HEAD, AND HE'S INSIDE A FISH.... FOR 3 DAYS.... AND HE PROBABLY DOESN'T HAVE A WATCH. HE HAS NO IDEA WHAT TIME IT IS. HE CERTAINLY DOESN'T THINK HE'S GOING TO GET RESCUED.

He descends into hopelessness....

"To the roots of the mountains I sank down;

the earth beneath barred me in forever.

YOU REALIZE OF COURSE THAT THE ONLY WAY WE KNOW WHAT REALLY HAPPENED DOWN THERE WAS BECAUSE JONAH SURVIVED TO TELL THE STORY. AND WE HAVE 2700 YEARS OF HINDSIGHT TO DWELL ON WHAT WE WOULD DO IN THAT SITUATION. I MEAN, THIS IS NOT LIKE SURVIVOR WHEN SOMEONE IS IN DISTRESS AND THERE'S A CAMERA MAN RIGHT THERE WITH HIM WITH A CAMERA STUCK IN HIS FACE.

THIS WAS TRULY HOPELESS

WHICH IS WHY THE NEXT GO 'ROUND OF THIS IS EVEN MORE REMARKABLE.

IMAGINE BEING SLOWLY, AND PAINFULLY DIGESTED WHILE INSIDE A FISH, FOR 3 DAYS...

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE FOR JONAH TO GET TO THE NEXT STAGE....

7 "When my life was ebbing away.....

I remembered you, Lord,

- AND HOW DID HE REMEMBER HIM? THE FIRST COUPLE OF TIMES HE PROBABLY JUST WANTED TO DIE, the next couple times he wanted to be angry
- SEVERAL TIMES HE PROBABLY WANTED TO SHAKE HIS FIST AT GOD

- ‘and as his life was ebbing away.... as he was losing consciousness.... as the darkness got just a little bit darker..... “HE REMEMBERED”

So let’s go back around with Jonah on the 30, 000th go ‘round of his grief and despair. Because, all this time, the Lord had Jonah right where he needed to be. All God was doing was giving time to get Jonah’s attention, to re-adjust his vision, so to speak, to get him to “repent”

And what does repent me? It means a “change of mind”. It means to acknowledge where you are, but then change your perspective which results in a change of direction..... It also makes a big difference as to what you change your mind TO.... Who you change your mind is just as important as changing it in the first place.....

AND whether someone is watching, or not, or there is HOPE, or not,

As Weldon said in the last two weeks “The entire theme of this book is centered around God’s heart for those who are lost and our response to his call on our lives.

Jonah was lost, he had no hope, but look what happened when he looked up....

Let’s read through this again.....

"From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. 2 He said:

"In my distress I called to the Lord,

And "lo and behold" he answered me!

From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help,

and you listened to my cry.

AND I THINK THE ATTITUDE IN THE NEXT PART WAS A LITTLE DIFFERENT THIS TIME.

3 You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas,
and the currents swirled about me;

all your waves and breakers swept over me.

AT THIS POINT IT WAS PROBABLY A SIMPLE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT. I AM IN DEEP DO-DO, BUT, WELL, I KIND OF PUT MYSELF HERE.

4 I said, 'I have been banished from your sight;
yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'

IT WAS A WHOLE CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE

Of course, nothing had really changed --- The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. AND JONAH CONTINUED TO SINK.

BUT IN HIS CHANGE OF HEART, CAME A CHANGE OF DIRECTION.

6 To the roots of the mountains I sank down;
the earth beneath barred me in forever.

But you, Lord my God,
brought my life up from the pit.

7 “When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord,
and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.

AND WITH THE CHANGE OF DIRECTION CAME A
CHANGE OF PURPOSE

8 “Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God’s
love for them.

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.’”

AND THEN WHAT? HOW LONG DID IT TAKE? HOW
LONG DID HE STAY IN THERE? HOW OFTEN DID HE
WRESTLE BETWEEN THE GRIEF AND REPENTANCE?

But the Lord apparently heard him. And certainly the Lord was
not done with him

“And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.”

CONCLUSION:

I often am amazed at how God treats us as humans. We can mess up so many times. We can make mistakes. We can fail, we can live for years making poor decisions. And many times our sins find us out. Many times people get swallowed up and do not survive.

.... And then there are others and other times. Ones who come to know Jesus and instantly their lives are changes. Or others, like most of us, who climb up off the beach with seaweed around our heads only to hear the Lord tell us he's got more for us to do....

Life isn't easy. We don't know how long we have. We don't know how long good times last, or bad times, or illness or disease. We don't know how long we have to wallow in grief before we see daylight or how long after we repent do we see the new direction.... We don't know how long we have to go back and forth between the two....

Remember this, Jonah went through all of this with no hope that any of it would do any good. As far as the world was concerned he was fish food. As far as he was concerned, he wasn't getting out of this predicament. We hold out for

miracles because of stories like the fish spitting out Jonah, but Jonah certainly had no hope of that at the time.

But God still had work for Jonah. As one of our missionaries, Jeff, Singfeld said here a few years ago -- We're meant to be on this earth for as long as God has something for us to do on this earth.