

# **WITH PROMISES**

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## **Jonah 1:17–2:9**

### **Introduction**

The runaway prophet hits the water, and the storm has stopped, but something is about to take place that Jesus will speak of later. Jonah is about to encounter something unimaginable. A watery grave would not be the end of this prophet. He would soon find out that the God who made the world and everything in it is sovereign over more than the weather. Jonah's head was filled with the correct doctrine, but his words were empty.

There in the water, the fugitive prophet will soon find himself confined in a most unusual prison. Most people think of this part of the narrative when it comes to the account of Jonah and his ministry. Imaginations and speculations run wild. What was it like spending the three days and nights he spent inside a great fish? Why did God use this severe mercy?

The fish only occupies a tiny fraction of this narrative, but the miracle is unforgettable. Instead of being preoccupied with the supernatural, our attention should be on the creator God who reigns over the universe. As Thomas Carlisle wrote, "I was so obsessed with what was going on inside the whale that I missed seeing the drama inside Jonah."

What are you supposed to do when you are trapped in the darkness? Will God listen to the prayers of those who have run away? How should we pray when we feel far from God? In the darkness, remember that Jesus will meet you WITH PROMISES of rescue and salvation.

### **Outline**

**God is always moving no matter where you are going.**

**Grace can be found in the dark.**

**There is only one way to look when you are at the bottom.**

**Only God can satisfy and save your soul.**

### **Application**

**God hears prayers in the darkness.**

**Trust what you know when you're in the dark.**

**Run to Jesus no matter where you are; he's already headed your way.**

## Questions

1. Keller says, "An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, 'If I have that, then I'll feel my life has meaning, then I'll know I have value, then I'll feel significant and secure' " (Counterfeit Gods, xviii). What are some things in life from which you might be drawing an inordinate amount of self-worth, personal value, or even a sense of security?
2. What are some ways in which people can mask totally depraved lives and fool themselves about their own ability to handle life apart from God's help? What are some dreadful things the Lord uses to awaken people to the truth about the desperation of their situations and their need for Him?
3. "Often it is difficult for us to visualize our loving, good, and kind Lord as one full of this much fury! Yet this rebellious servant experiences the loving discipline of a Father who does not wish for His children to err or stray." How does this statement compare with your view of your heavenly Father? Share a time when you have looked at a difficulty in life as a sovereign act of loving, Fatherly discipline.
4. Why can Jonah expect to see the Lord in His temple after such great disobedience? How does this reveal the majesty of God and the glory of Christ?
5. How does Jonah compare to Christ in this chapter? What might this comparison reveal about how we should read the storyline of Scripture?
6. How has your own thanksgiving for your salvation led to greater proclamation of the gospel to unbelievers? What might this say about the value you place on being rescued from sin? What might this also reveal about your understanding of your true situation prior to your salvation?
7. There are many people in the world worshiping false gods, even erecting physical objects as idols of worship. What might Jonah 2 be saying about how we should proclaim the gospel to such people? What is the message we must commend, and what are messages we must tell them to reject?
8. Do you think it is right for the gospel message to be so exclusive? In light of the work of Christ, what makes exclusivity—"Salvation is from the Lord"—just and holy? How does Romans explain the justice of God in the salvation of people (Rom 3:21–26)?