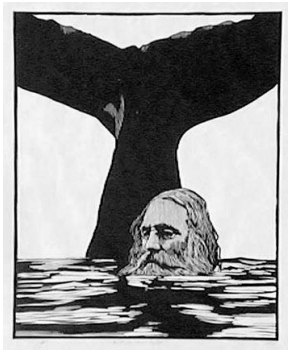

Jonah 2
"When You Hit Bottom"

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God called Jonah to preach to the people of Ninevah, who were extremely cruel and vicious. When they captured prisoners in battle, they would cut off their heads, or their hands, tongues, or poke out their eyes. They would either die or be permanently disfigured. Jonah knew this, so he decided to run the other way.

He boarded a boat for Tarshish, which was in Spain. God intervened and sent a terrible storm to rock the boat. The sailors on board threw Jonah overboard, where he was swallowed by a whale.

Jonah is mentioned in one other book of the Old Testament, in 2 Kings 14:25 where it says he grew up Gath-hepher, which was a town 3 miles from Nazareth.

Nazareth, of course, was where Jesus later grew up. As we will later see, Jonah was a "type" of Jesus, who was a picture of Him being in the grave for 3 days and nights.

Jonah was swallowed by "a great fish" which was probably a blue whale, the largest animal on the planet. The largest blue whale on record was 110 feet long with a 12-foot wide mouth. In one case, a 15-foot shark was found in the stomach of a blue whale.

Obviously, this book of the Bible was written after all this happened. Jonah wasn't inside the whale writing his story on a scroll. So it is written past tense and it describes what it was like as he was descending down. Read Jonah 2:3-6.

Have you ever come close to drowning? You go swimming in rough waters and get pulled under. When you come up for air another wave hits you and you swallow water. Imagine Jonah holding his breath as he is sinking further down.

Jonah 2:6 says, "I descended to the roots of the mountains." To say it another way, **Jonah hit bottom**. You can't go any lower than that.

Maybe you've hit bottom in your life. You're at the end of your rope and you don't know what to do. What do you do when you've hit bottom? Jonah shows us three things to do when we hit bottom.

1. When you've hit bottom, pray to God out of desperation.

Jonah 2:1-2--Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the stomach of the fish, "I <u>called out of my distress</u> to the Lord and He answered me."

In Jonah chapter 1, he's the **prodigal** prophet.

Now in Jonah chapter 2, he's the **praying** prophet.

I don't think there's any question that this was the most desperate prayer Jonah had ever prayed. And God heard his cry for help and answered him. No matter far you are from God, if you will call out in desperation, He will hear your prayers.

Three ministers were talking about the most effective ways to pray. As they were talking, a telephone repairman was working on the phone system in the background. One minister said that the key to answered prayer is to hold your hands together and point them upward as a form of symbolic worship.

The second said, "No, the most effective position for prayer is to be on your knees as an act of humility. The third minister said, "No, the correct position for prayer is to pray while stretched out flat on your face.

The phone man interrupted and said, "I found that the most powerful position to pray was when I was dangling upside down by my feet from a power pole 50 feet above the ground!"

The telephone repairman was right. The most effective prayer is when we cry out in desperation. The most powerful prayer Jonah ever prayed was in the belly of the whale. He was in the most hopeless situation of his life.

When things are going well, we aren't serious about praying because we think there's no need to pray. But as soon as something goes wrong, we pray, "God, I'm in deep water. I can't make it without you! You've got to help me!"

Jonah said, "I called out in my distress to the Lord and answered me."

Remember when Jesus was walking through a crowd, many people were touching Him. One woman in the crowd had been hemorrhaging for 12 years and the doctors were unable to help her. In desperation she touched the hem of Jesus' garment—and power went out of Him and healed her. He turned around and said, "Who touched Me?" Of course, Jesus knew who it was but He wanted them to know this woman's touch was different than the others.

Desperate people have the ability to get God's attention when they cry out. Sometimes we have to hit bottom before our prayers get answered.

In verse 2, Jonah called out to the Lord from the belly of the whale, so obviously he was alive at this time. But then it goes on to say he cried out to God from Sheol.

There are two views about what happened to Jonah. One is God supernaturally kept him alive for three days and nights. God would have to supply enough oxygen inside the whale for that to happen. The other view is that Jonah died and God supernaturally brought him back to life three days and nights later.

Here are **Four Proofs that Jonah died inside the whale.**

1. He calls out from Sheol. In the Old Testament, this is the place in the afterlife where people's souls went. It had two compartments—hell for lost people and paradise for saved people.
2. In verse 7 he says, "While I was fainting away" indicating he was about to die.
3. In verse 6, he says, "You have brought up my life from the pit." This implies that he was brought back to life.
4. Jonah was a foreshadowing of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus 800 years before He died on the Cross. This shows that God is in control of what happens on earth. Jesus said in Matt. 12:40, "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Jonah could have been inside the whale 2 days and nights, but then he couldn't be used as an example of Jesus. But God knew ahead of time that Jonah would be

swallowed by the whale—and He made sure he would be inside exactly 3 days and 3 nights, so that this would be a prophecy of Jesus being in the grave 3 days and nights.

What's interesting is that **Jonah's prayer in chapter 2 comes from the book of Psalms**. Obviously, he had memorized many of the Psalms because he's quoting from all over the book.

Verse 2 is from Psalm 18
Verse 3 is from Psalm 42.
Verse 4 is from Psalm 5.
Verse 5 is from Psalm 69.
Verse 6 is from Psalm 30.

Jonah prays the Psalms because he had studied the Scriptures and memorized them. The Psalms were a book of prayers and songs. The Jews knew the importance of training their children in the Scriptures beginning at a young age. Parents, are you bringing up your children to learn the Scriptures? It will make a huge difference in how they turn out as they grow up. Jonah could pray the Psalms because he was taught them as a child.

2. When you've hit bottom, put your hope in God.

Psalm 42:15 "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God."

Hope means you expect something good to happen. There's a story about two psychiatrists talking. One asked the other, "What was your most difficult case?"

The other psychiatrist said, "I had a patient who lived in a pure fantasy world. He believed that an uncle in South Africa was going to die and leave him a fortune. Every day, all day long, he would wait expect that letter to arrive, telling him he was inherited a fortune. He never went out. He never did anything but sit around and wait for this fantasy letter from a fantasy uncle. I counseled this man for eight years."

The other guy said, "Were you ever able to help him?"

"I counseling him for eight long years and finally got him out of his fantasy world—and then that stupid letter arrived!"

Don't let people talk you out of hoping for something good. When things look hopeless, that's when you need to have hope in God.

Here's Jonah's situation:

- He's in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea.
- He's inside a whale and in complete darkness.
- He has no idea of what will happen to him.
- He has no clue that the whale is taking him back to Israel.
- He doesn't know that the whale will spit him out on dry land.

If you were in that situation, would you have hope? Does your situation look *that* hopeless?

But Jonah makes **an amazing declaration** in verse 4, "Nevertheless, I will look again toward Your holy temple."

Think about it. He prayed that in total darkness inside of a whale. That's a statement of hope. He found hope in a hopeless situation!

Jonah was trapped underwater and about to die. Yet he had hope that somehow, in some way, God would get him out of his problem because he said, "I *will* look again toward Your holy temple."

Maybe you are in a hopeless situation. Cry out to God and make a declaration by faith of something incredible that God is going to do. It may look impossible, but put your complete hope in God and trust Him just like Jonah trusted Him.

3. When you've hit bottom, make a commitment to do God's will.

Jonah 2:9 "But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay."

Commitment is a decision in your heart to begin a task and bring it to completion.

I love the joke about the two men who were shipwrecked on a deserted island. One man prayed, "Lord, if you will just get me off this island, I promise I'll go to church every Sunday."

A little while later he says, "Lord, if you will get me off this island, I'll give you 20% of my income."

A little while later, "Lord, if you will get me off this island…"

The other guy interrupted and said, "Hold it, don't make more commitments. I think I see a boat!"

Not only does Jonah say that he will look again to the temple, but he also declares that he is going to pay his vows. Apparently Jonah had made some promises to God that he hadn't fulfilled.

Many times when we've hit bottom, we get serious with God and make a greater commitment to do His will. When everything is going great, we usually don't have time for God. He's number 23 on our list of priorities. Jonah wasn't committed to doing God's will at first, but after spending a three days inside the belly of a whale, his priorities changed. He says, "That which I have vowed, I will pay."

Let me ask you, what have you vowed to God that you're not doing? Are you fulfilling your vows to **your spouse**? Are you paying your vows to the **bill collectors**? Are you paying your vows to **God**? Jonah was committed to fulfilling his vows after hitting bottom.

Jonah 2:10 "Then the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land."

When they threw him overboard, he must have been a long way from Joppa because it was a three day and three night trip back by way of whale. When the whale reached the shores of Israel, he vomited the prophet onto the land. So the whale probably beached itself like they often do and then spit him out.

Many scholars believe that Jonah was brought back to Joppa. Just like in Monopoly: "Return to GO". God is about to give him another chance. And when you've hit bottom, He will give you another chance too.