

Jonah Discussion 2

Gutsy Prayer

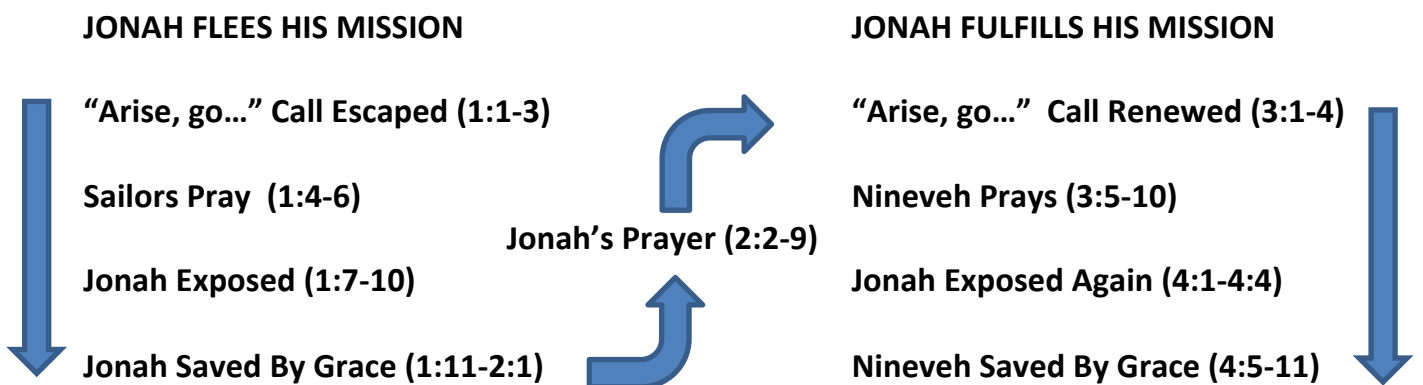
THE GUTS OF JONAH?

You need a Bible for this discussion. Please ensure that before you start you have thoughtfully read Jonah chapters 1 and 2. But it would be helpful to have read the entire short book.

Discuss:

- What *for you* personally, feels like the heart of the book of Jonah?
- What are some of the main themes you have seen so far?
- What have you enjoyed in the story of Jonah?

The book of Jonah is unusual. Most prophetic books are mainly the Word of God spoken through the prophet. But this book is a short story - quite out of place in the prophets. This book has exactly 48 verses. 40 of the are 'narrative' or telling the story. The other 8 are the prayer and it is almost in the exact middle (there are 18 verses before the prayer and 22 after). The book of Jonah has two 'cycles' in the story and the prayer links them together...



Discuss:

- Why would the story of Jonah centre on a prayer?
- How does this prayer conclude what went before and introduce what is coming?

JONAH'S GUTSY PRAYER

Read the 'Prayer of Jonah' together. Then be quiet and just chew over it in your head for a bit.

- What part of this prayer do you like best?
- What part of this prayer means the most to you?

WHAT DO GUTSY PRAYERS LOOK LIKE?

Here follow three aspects of Jonah's prayer that I call gutsy. Look at them either one-by-one together, or just read them quietly for a moment and go to the discussion at the end..

1. GUTSY PRAYERS LOOK BACKWARDS FROM THE END

Past, present, and future walk into a bar... it's tense! Now notice something strange in this prayer - the tense of the verbs (past, present, or future). He prays with the words like "I called, he answered, I cried, you heart. All these are words for past actions as if they already happened! Jonah's prayer literally looks backward from the end. As if God has already heard him, seen him, rescued him. This is called "prolepsis". So often Biblical prayer is like this - speaking from destruction and death as if they were already a thing of the past! (This thought from Cary, Phillip. Jonah. p. 85)

When we start our prayer 'backwards' first remembering heaven, the resurrection, salvation, that these are already achieved realities, then we get perspective!

2. GUTSY PRAYERS ARE NOT VERY ORIGINAL

If you've read the the book of Psalms, then you probably won't find Jonah's prayer very original. In fact, there's basically no new line in the entire prayer. Everything in this prayer can be found in a Psalms earlier in the Bible.

Jonah 2:2a = Psalm 3:4; Psalm 120:1

Jonah 2:2b = Psalm 18:4-5; Psalm 30:3

Jonah 2:3a = Psalm 88:6-7

Jonah 2:3b = Psalm 42:7

Jonah 2:4a = Psalm 31:22

Jonah 2:4b = Psalm 5:7

Jonah 2:5a = Psalm 69:1-2

Jonah 2:6b = Psalm 49:15; Psalm 56:13; Psalm 103:4

Jonah 2:7a = Psalm 107:5; Psalm 142:3

Jonah 2:8a = Psalm 31:6

Jonah 2:9a = Psalm 50:14; Psalm 69:30; Psalm 107:22

Jonah 2:9c = Psalm 3:8; Psalm 37:39

Because when we don't know how to pray we need a path. Learn to pray by praying the Psalms. Then when you end up in the belly of the beast you will have the words.

3. ONLY FAILURES CAN PRAY GUTSY PRAYERS

Compare Jonah to the pagan sailors by filling in the table.

THE "PAGAN" SAILORS	THE "BELIEVER" JONAH
Prayed	
Active to save ship & selves	
Had compassion on Jonah	
Tried to save Jonah	
Wanted to live	
Obedient to what they knew	
Worshipped God	
Shuddered at Jonah's sin	
Growing fear of God	

Until we come to God, NOT in power and success, but in humility and willing for God to kill our old selfish self, we can never pray gutsy prayers! People who think they're powerhouses of faith never get down to pray real gutsy prayers. Because the heart of a gutsy prayer, is not depending on me but depending on God.

Discuss the three aspects of gutsy prayer:

- Which of these three is most important for you at the moment? (And why?)
- Which of these four has been helpful for you in a hard time?

FINISH WITH PRAYER FOR THOSE HAVING HARD TIMES