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## Draw Nigh Unto Me .... Part 78

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Defaced - Week 70

God's Coming Spiritual Revolution - Part 17

So how do spiritual longings retard the growth of Spiritual Desire? (continued)

### Jonah and the Art of Being Broken

by Irene Sun

Ref: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jonah-art-of-being-broken/>

We teach our children many things.

We teach them to be strong, brave, and swift, yet patient, kind, and gentle.

Rarely do we teach them how to be broken.

Yet brokenness before the Lord is the fount of these very blessings.

Courage and meekness flow most generously from a broken and contrite heart.

A few years ago, I was a zealous collector of Jonah picture books from libraries all over Illinois.

The obsession began when I was searching for a faithful rendition for my children.

Among the few dozen books I acquired, nearly all of them claimed that Jonah prayed for forgiveness in the belly of the fish.

I found this interpretation a little unsettling.

In my readings of chapter two, taught by a few professors at my seminary, Jonah did not repent.

He did not even acknowledge that he had done anything wrong.

My obsession with picture books soon turned into an obsession with the book of Jonah.

I had the most difficult time understanding Jonah's prayer.

What am I missing?

Why do I not see words related to sin and repentance in his prayer?

Jonah was using verses and phrases from the Psalms.

Yet somehow his prayer had a different flavour.

After much wrestling, I discovered where I had gone wrong.

In order to understand Jonah's prayer, I must first understand the meaning of repentance.

Specifically, how repentance must arise from a broken and contrite heart.

But Jonah's heart was yet to be broken.

At the end of chapter one, Yahweh commanded a fish to swallow Jonah and delivered him from death.

### This came

after Jonah disregarded Yahweh's instruction to go to Nineveh, after he refused to pray when the sailors cried out to their gods, after he chose death over repentance, after he asked the sailors to commit murder by throwing him overboard.

In other words, God's rescue was pure mercy.

The only thing Jonah deserved was judgment, yet Yahweh saved his life.

In the belly of the fish, Jonah prayed to Yahweh, his God.

### Woe Is Me

Jonah began his prayer by quoting the first verse of **Psalm 120**, which reads, "To Yahweh in my distress I called."

Jonah, however, changed the order of the words.

He prayed,

"I called from my distress to Yahweh" (**Jonah 2:2**).

### Jonah 2:2 KJV

2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

He moved Yahweh's name to the end of the phrase and his own action to the front.

Jonah was focused on himself and what he was doing.

A subtle change, but it initiates the tone and pattern for the rest of the chapter.

In Jonah's eyes, he was the one who approached Yahweh.

Jonah emphasized his "call," his "cry," and his "voice."

He believed that Yahweh had heard and answered him, and he was right.

Yet Jonah had neither answered nor heeded Yahweh's words when he was commanded to go to Nineveh.

The longest portion of Jonah's prayer was about his woes.

He told his story from bits and pieces of David's psalms of deliverance and laments (Psalms 5, 31, and 69).

These were David's prayers during seasons when he was pursued by his enemies.

But in his recitation, Jonah omitted the praises of Yahweh's steadfast love—the essential theme in these psalms.

Jonah accused God of throwing him into the deep.

But had not Jonah asked the sailors to cast him overboard?

Was he blaming God when he claimed that God's waves and God's billows passed over him?

He felt that he was "driven away" from God's sight.

But was not Jonah the one who ran "from the presence of Yahweh"?

### Jonah 1:2-3 KJV

2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

### Great Is My Faithfulness

Jonah concluded his woes with Yahweh's deliverance (2:6).

Jonah 2:6 KJV

6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

But he credited himself for God's rescue: "I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple" (2:7)

### Jonah 2:7 KJV

7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

Jonah set himself apart from idol worshipers, those who forsook "their hope of steadfast love."

In a way, he was right—the sailors were unlike Jonah.

In chapter one, they prayed and worshipped Yahweh and made sacrifices on their wrecked, emptied ship.

Here, in the belly of the fish, Jonah promised that he would offer sacrifices.

### Jonah 2:2-9 KJV

2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

Yet he continued to resist the command to go to Nineveh, because the Word of Yahweh had to come to Jonah—a second time (3:1).

### Jonah 3:1 KJV

1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

Jonah's prayer ended the same way it began.

Yahweh's name was the last word of Jonah's prayer.

Jonah's prayer captured what was true in his life: Jonah came first, Yahweh last.

God commanded the fish to vomit Jonah out.

The author could have used many other words.

The fish could have "spit out" Jonah, or Jonah could have "come out" of the fish, but "vomited" was deliberately chosen as the response of Yahweh.

### Great Teacher

Yahweh gave us a great teacher in Jonah.

Jonah's unbrokenness evokes yet another psalm by David: **Psalm 51**.

Jonah 2 and Psalm 51 are two sides of the same coin.

Jonah helped us see our need to repent; David gave us the words to repent.

In Jonah's prayer, we smell the stench of a self-righteous prayer; we feel the vileness of ingratitude.

In David's prayer, we find solace in his grief. David was shattered by the evil he had done, and he pleaded before God for mercy and a new heart.

Together, Jonah and David compelled sinners to come.

On our knees with our faces to the ground, this is our proper place.

Here we are safe; here we receive true comfort.

By using themselves as wretched examples, they helped us see the wickedness of our hearts.

In making known their failures and utter unworthiness, they made known the steadfast love and faithfulness of Yahweh.

Guilt and remorse are weighty things, but they are not enough to break the prideful heart.

We are broken only by the steadfast love of Yahweh and the weight of his glory.

The broken and contrite heart is the work of the Holy Spirit.

For his prophet Jonah, Yahweh's mercy came crashing in by means of a fierce storm, a ravenous fish, and the fish's vomit—grace upon grace upon grace.

Therefore, as we teach our children about courage and meekness, we begin by teaching them about God.

We show them how to be broken by being broken.

Yahweh remembers his children.

He rescues sinners not because we said a prayer or quoted a few Bible verses.

He saves us because of his steadfast love and abundant mercy.

Yahweh delights not in empty promises of sacrifices, but in truth in the inward being.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; he will not despise a broken and a contrite heart.

Love,  
Mwesigwa

[Defaced - Week 71 follows next week]

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