

# THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Exercising The Mind || Igniting The Heart || Preparing The Hands

A free quarterly paper for rural pastors.

Vol.3. Issue 2 (April-June 2023)

Editor: Aaron Dunlop



## IN THIS ISSUE:

**Editorial:** Mining for Unsearchable Riches

## Preacher's Workshop on Jonah 2

- Preparing to Preach on Jonah 2 ...8
- Jonah in the Whale ...11
- Step by Step ...20
- Preacher's Workshop ...30

## Practical and Pastoral Theology

- What Jonah Teaches Us About Prayer ...34
- Jonah, Jesus and the Resurrection ...38
- Calvin on Piety ...42
- Accountable Authority ...45
- Church History: Loving the Lost ...48
- Devotional: Prayer in Distress ...53

Editor: Aaron Dunlop; Contributors: Pastor Mark Rutuna (Uganda), Dr. Joel Beeke (USA), Rev. Jonathan BartleJ (USA), Pastor Tonny Karwa (Kenya), Dr. Michael Haykin (Canada), Rev. Reggie Kimbro (USA). All articles by the editor, unless otherwise stated. || Proofreading: Odelia Chan; Layout & Design: Rev. Calvin Goligher (USA)

## WELCOME TO THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Welcome to this issue of The Pastor's Study. We are thankful that the magazine is now going out across Uganda as well as Kenya. Pray with us for the extension of this worthwhile ministry. In this magazine, we are seeking to help pastors with subjects that are essential for a broad, instructive and effective teaching ministry. These include: practical and pastoral theology, church history and devotional reading, as well as biblical exposition.

After the editorial (page 5), we launch straight into Jonah chapter 2, with an example of how to preach from this chapter (page 8). The feature article is a commentary on the chapter, which appears on pages 11-19. In this issue we have extended the “step by step” section to

include some thoughts on how to preach Christ from the chapter (pages 20-29). We have articles on what Jonah teaches us about prayer, by Dr. Charles Barrett (pages 34-37), Jonah and the resurrection (pages 38-41), and a devotional on page 53 by pastor Wesley Tyler (page 53-55).

From some of our usual contributors also, Dr. Joel Beeke writes on the relationship between God's Word and our holiness (page 42-44), and for our history column, Dr. Michael Haykin writes on loving the lost (pages 48-52). A new contributor from Uganda, pastor John Paul Stepanian, writes on an important subject for pastors: how we exercise our authority as pastors (page 45-47).

Sincerely, Aaron Dunlop

# EDITORIAL: MINING FOR UNSEARCHABLE RICHES

Pastor Aaron Dunlop

Being a pastor is not easy. It takes many skills and lots of hard work to preach the Gospel, teach the Scriptures, and lead the Church effectively.

Before we talk about how to preach, there is a deeper question: What is preaching and why is it so important? Think of the time, energy, and money that preachers spend in colleges and libraries to develop the skill of preaching. Why do we do this?

We preach because God has spoken to us in his Word. But the Bible is no ordinary book; it is the living Word of the living God to living souls. It is deep and difficult, but it is also rich and rewarding.

The preacher is a miner. He works hard to dig into the Word, and returns from the study carrying the “burden of the Lord.” He wrestles with words (Ecclesiastes 12:10) in order to clearly explain the mind of God, revealed on the pages of Scripture.

Each week, the preacher works to bring people into the mine of the “unsearchable riches of Christ.” He wants them to recognise the depth of divine wisdom and breadth of its application. He wants to draw them in with curiosity and delight, so that they will investigate the Word for themselves like the Bereans (Acts 17:11). He also wants potential preachers in his congregation to get a hunger for biblical knowledge, and a passion to preach and apply the Scriptures to the hearts of God’s people.

While the preacher must work hard in digging down into the mine of God’s Word, he also realizes that he is just the messenger, and that the effective application of power of the Word

is by the Holy Spirit. And so he prays for the power of the Holy Spirit to bless the Word to his hearers.

**Aaron Dunlop** was a pastor for several years in Canada before ministering in Kenya. Aaron is the director of The Krapf Project and now lives in the UK with his wife and five children. He blogs at [thinkGOSPEL.com](http://thinkGOSPEL.com).

# PREPARING TO PREACH FROM JONAH'S PRAYER

Pastor Aaron Dunlop

As you come to preach on Jonah 2, there are two things we can observe before we begin to form a sermon. First, the context of Jonah's prayer—from the belly of the great fish (1:17-2:1). Secondly, the content of Jonah's prayer. There are no petitions—this section of the prayer is a psalm of praise, a response to the assurance of an answer.

How could this man, or any man or woman, praise from such a deep place of affliction?

Between Jonah's call out of distress (verse 2), and the answer from the Lord (verse 10), Jonah had been given a peace that surpasses understanding (Philippians 4:7). But where did this peace come from? It came from the assurance that "salvation belongs to the Lord" (verse 9).



These words in verse 9 are not only the climax of Jonah's prayer, they are also the theme of the book. Whether the deliverance of Jonah from the deep (which Jonah wanted), or the conversion of the Ninevites from eternal destruction (which Jonah did not want) – "salvation is of the Lord."

This is a very powerful statement that Jonah made. The theme of God's salvation and illustrations of it can be found all through the Bible.

1. God's initiative in Salvation. Men run from God and rebel against him, but God pursues men (Jonah 1:1-2; Genesis 3:8; Ephesians 2:4)
2. God's mercy in Salvation (Jonah 4:11).
3. God's resolve in Salvation (Jonah 3:1; Luke 9:51).
4. God's choice in Salvation (Jonah 4:11; Romans 9:1-29).

This truth, that salvation belongs to the Lord, demands something of us as pastors.

First, we must believe it and preach it with absolute confidence.

Secondly, we must live as though we believe it, taking every opportunity to press the gospel home to our hearers. While Jonah made the statement, it is clear that he did not always live it (4:3).

Thirdly, preach it with joy, excitement and passion, (Jonah refused to preach it 4:11).

# JONAH IN THE WHALE

Pastor Aaron Dunlop

Jonah was God's prodigal prophet who wasted his gifting and calling and refused to take the good news to the Ninevites. God allowed Jonah to run, and even to find a ship going in the direction he wanted to go (1:3). Once on the ship however, God no longer accommodated Jonah's plan. In the providence of God, Jonah was in the place where God chose to teach him—on a ship.

God interrupted Jonah by "throwing" (he "hurled," or "cast down") a storm at the sea. Even with this, Jonah was still defiant and did not yield to God, only praying when the sailors asked him to pray (1:6). Even when he admitted that the storm was from God (1:12) Jonah still resisted and would rather suffer death by drowning than go preach in Nineveh.

It seemed that the story had drawn to a close when Jonah was 5 thrown overboard—Jonah the trouble-maker was out of sight, the sea was calm and the sailors, thankful for deliverance worshiped God (verses 15-16).

But the story of Jonah's ministry to Nineveh is really just beginning. Like the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-29), Jonah came to himself. His stubborn will reached breaking point when he came face to face with death sinking into the sea. Only then did Jonah pray—when he was “fainting away”—and God “answered” and sent a fish to deliver him (verses 2, 7).

### **The cry from the belly of Sheol (verses 1-7)**

Jonah's prayer continued after the fish had swallowed him (verse 1). He was in the belly of the fish, but for Jonah, it was “the belly of Sheol” (verse 2). It was a place of intense mental suffering and soul searching as he wrestled with two realities.

First, the seriousness of his situation. The fact that Jonah prayed shows that he was not dead. This is also clear from the description of the weeds around his head (verse 5), the consciousness of being sub-marine (verses 3, 6), and in a fish (verse 2). Yet his situation is so extreme that it was as though he had been cast into hell. He was “distressed” (verse 2), “cast into the deep,” (verse 3), “driven away” (verse 4), and the threat on his physical life was very real (verse 5).

Jonah found himself at the doors of death and it felt like the gates of hell itself—the chaos (weeds wrapped about his head, verse 5), the waves of the sea (verse 3, Isaiah 57:20), driven from God’s sight (verse 4). Very vividly in his mind, those mountains which he had seen along the shore seemed to be closing in on him like a net (Psalm 35:7) and Jonah was overwhelmed with a sense that there would be no escape, this could be “forever” (verse 6).

The second reality that Jonah wrestled with was the consciousness that God had put him in this place. God had brought Jonah down from his vanity (verse 8), God had cast him into the deep and it was God's waves and billows that went over him (verse 3).

From the belly of Sheol, Jonah remembered God (verse 7). Specifically, he remembered God's steadfast love for his people (verse 8). He had learned this from the Scriptures, and he draws heavily from the Psalms in his prayer (See Preacher's workshop, Page 10).

It was this knowledge of God's love, which he had gained from the Scriptures, that gave Jonah hope.

Although, at this point he had fallen into disobedience, Jonah had prepared himself for the "evil day" (Ecclesiastes 12:1), and he knew that in God's mercy he would see the temple in Jerusalem again and worship there (verses 4, 7).

This prayer then, is a prayer of faith and identifies more closely with the psalms of praise that Jonah has been quoting from. There is not a single petition in this part of Jonah's prayer. This is not unusual because prayer includes both petition and thanksgiving (see also Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-11).

Still in the belly of the fish, God gave Jonah a peace that surpasses all understanding, and although his circumstances had not changed (still in the fish, verse 1), Jonah's prayer moved from petition to thanksgiving, illustrating Paul's words in Philippians 4:6-7.

### **Salvation belongs to the Lord (verses 8-9)**

At the end of this psalm of praise, Jonah gives us a testimony of his deliverance and a declaration of faith in God. God had met him in the depths, and Jonah came out of this experience realizing two things. God gave Jonah a peace that surpasses all understanding.

First, he admitted that his experience was indeed the chastising hand of God. He had made an idol of his national prejudice against the Gentiles and forsaken God (verse 8). There is no help from God for those who forsake him, and in running from God Jonah ran into the arms of death and despair—forsake God and you forsake hope.

Second, Jonah acknowledged that salvation belongs to the Lord (verse 9). God is in control, whether the deliverance of Jonah from the deep (which Jonah wanted), or the conversion of the Ninevites from eternal destruction (which Jonah did not want). Jonah finally acknowledged that salvation belongs to the Lord. He praised God that he had heard and answered him (verse 2) and for bringing him up from the pit (verse 6), and Jonah purposed to pay the vows (verse 9).

### **Vomited Out (verse 10)**

The vomiting fish brings Jonah back to dry land. He had sunk down into the dark night of



the soul. Like Jacob wrestling with God (Genesis 32:22-32), or Joshua mourning after the defeat at Ai (Joshua 7:1-7), or Job vexed with the calamities of life, or like the Psalmist who was brought “very low” (for example Psalm 79:8), the story of Jonah tells us to cry out to God. He will hear because of his “steadfast love” (verse 8), and he will show us a way forward (3:1).

# POINTS FOR PREACHERS

## Lessons learned in affliction

1. He learned to pray (verse 1)
2. He learned to trust (verse 4)
3. He learned to praise (verse 4)
4. He learned about death
5. He learned about resurrection hope (vs 6)
6. He learned about God's mercy and sovereignty (verses 8-9)
7. He learned how to use God's Word (Jonah quotes more than 10 times from the Psalms)

## What Jonah Should Have Learned

Jonah's experience in the "belly of Sheol," (Jonah 2:2) should have taught him compassion for the ungodly, who would experience death apart from God's grace. He knew better than anyone the terror of death under God's judgement, and yet he did not wish to help sinners who would meet that fate.

# The Sign of Jonah

1. A sign of Jesus's willingness to save sinners (by contrast with Jonah's unwillingness)
2. A sign of Jesus's humiliation down to death
3. A sign of Jesus's resurrection
4. A sign of God's grace to the Gentiles
5. A sign of Jesus's care for suffering saints

# JONAH 2, STEP BY STEP

Pastor Aaron Dunlop

## **Set the boundaries of your text**

We will include chapter 1 verse 17 because it lets us know that Jonah's prayer came from the depths of the sea, in a fish appointed by God. You will see the connection in the prayer, for Jonah came to recognise that he was there by God's appointment: "your waves...your billows" (Jonah 2:3).

## **Take time to read**

It is not a waste of time to read the story multiple times. It will help you identify themes, repeated words or ideas, and get familiar with it for smooth pulpit reading. It is also a good idea to read the story in different translations—English, Swahili or another language. You will also find it helpful to read the passage aloud in your study or outside.

## **Do the work of exegesis**

Exegesis simply means to “bring out” the meaning of the text. This is where you get into the details, the verbs, the nouns, the contrasts, repeated words, and connections with other Scriptures. You can also look for theological reflections, pathways to Jesus, and other points of application to jot down. You will find gospel application especially in the last line of the prayer (verse 9).

## **Find the meaning of the text**

The first two verses in our section (1:17-2:1), and the last verse (2:10), are part of the story-line. All the other verses (2:2-9) are in poetry. This is the prayer. List the things that the Lord has done to distress Jonah (verses 3-7), what the Lord has done for him (verses 2, 6), and what Jonah will do when he is delivered (verses 4, 7, 9).

You can look for other themes and lists to build up a clear picture of the text. Think of the image of water (verses 3 and 5), and think of

Psalms that use the same imagery to speak of being in distress (eg. Psalm 18:16; 32:6; 46:3; 66:12; 69:14; 78:13, etc.).

## **Develop an outline**

You will find it easier to break the text into manageable sections. This is a prayer, rather than a story, so you might think of themes rather than events. Jonah cried out to God because of his circumstances. You will find it helpful to make a list of his complaints, his statements about God, or any other theme in the prayer.

## **Make connections**

We have already seen this in getting the meaning of the text above, but remember to think of the big picture. This is a prayer, or a Psalm, so you will be able to connect it with other Psalms, and illustrate this prayer from many other stories in the Bible. Think of men and women in the Bible who experienced distress and it will help you to understand better what Jonah was going through.

## **Time to get to the sermon**

Now you can pick up on different themes, teaching or devotional ideas that you've found in the text. You could develop a series of sermons on this prayer and praise of Jonah.

The first step in writing a sermon is to get a main theme that you have identified in the text and develop that theme. Take the theme of "trouble," for example (verse 2), and see what the text says about that theme. For example: God brought Jonah into trouble (verse 3), God was with Jonah in trouble (verse 6), and God brought Jonah out of trouble (verse 10).

## **Finding Christ in the text**

In every sermon you will want to find a path out of the text to Christ.

The Lord Jesus himself, after his resurrection, opened up from all the Scriptures, the "things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

After Pentecost also, Jesus was the theme of the apostles' preaching. Notice how Peter, preached Christ from the Old Testament (Acts 2:14-36, 3:11-18), Stephen (Acts 7:2-53), and Paul also (Acts 17:22-34). Paul specifically tells us that he was determined in the ministry to "preach Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). We are missing the point of preaching, if we do not find a path to Christ.

So we have to ask the question, what does Jonah 2 teach us about Jesus? Jesus identified himself particularly with the experience of Jonah in the belly of the whale, so whatever lessons we find in Jonah, we know that he is teaching us about the resurrection of Jesus and of our resurrection. Jonah said by faith "yet you brought up my life from the pit" (Jonah 2:6).

Jonah 2 teaches us also about Jesus' humiliation. Jonah's prayer is like one of the psalms—it is a song of praise to the Lord. It is in the Psalms, and in Jonah's prayer, where the



writers are crying out to God in distress, that Christ identifies most closely with humanity. The Messiah identified with us in the suffering and struggles of humanity, tempted as we are, yet without sin.

# **PREACHING NOTES** (Points for explanation and application)

## **Resurrection theology**

Jonah's "resurrection" from the stomach of the whale, shows us God's power to bring us out of death and the grave. Whether buried respectfully in a coffin, gnawed on in a watery grave, or devoured and digested in the stomach of a wild animal, God will redeem both body and soul.

## **Salvation belongs to the Lord:**

- God's initiative (1:1)
- God's mercy (4:11; Ephesians 2:4)
- God's resolve (3:1; Luke 9:51)
- God's choice (4:11; Romans 9:1-29)

## **Out of darkness, light**

The darkest place for Jonah, the belly of Sheol, was a place of learning, and came to be a place of praise (verse 9).

## Jonah's testimony

- How Jonah felt – distressed (verse 2)
- How Jonah endured – Prayer and the Word (at least ten times in eight verses Jonah quotes from the Psalms)
- How Jonah rested – (compare verses 2 and 9). Jonah came to a peace that surpassed his understanding. He rested in the purpose of God (“you cast me” in verse 3, “you brought up” in verse 6), and he rested in the hope of God’s love (verse 8).

## EXEGETICAL NOTES (Notes on the text, words, and grammar)

**1:17** “Appointed”, “prepare,” “assign,” “designate” or “employ.” This word is repeated four times in the story of Jonah and speaks of “the ruling of divine providence” (Orelli). God exercises this power over whales under the sea (1:17), over worms and plants on the ground (4:6-7), and over the winds in the sky (4:8).

**1:17** “swallowed” usually has a negative meaning in the Bible (Isaiah 28:4, Numbers 16:31-34, Proverbs 1:12). Here there is also a positive meaning. Being swallowed by the fish means deliverance from the depths of the sea. God has delivered Jonah from death.

**2:2** “Sheol” is the place of the dead, the grave. It does not necessarily mean hell. Here it can’t mean “hell,” for Jonah is a believer and a prophet. Jonah uses the word here to highlight the fact that his experience was so extreme that it was like death. It was as if he were dead.

## **Jonah's use of the Psalms:**

Verse 2 - Psalm 18:6

Verse 3 - Psalm 42:7

Verse 4 - Psalm 31:22

Verse 5 - Psalm 40:12, 69:1

Verse 6 - Psalm 9:15; 30:9; 35:7

Verse 7 - Psalm 107:5; 142:3

# PREACHER'S WORKSHOP: QUESTIONS

Here are some questions you should ask as you prepare your sermon. They will help you focus on the most important matters. You might choose to mention these questions in your sermon, or you might not. Some suggested answers are provided.

1. What does the story teach about God? God is sovereign and merciful. That is why we can pray to him no matter what situation we are in.
2. What does the story teach us about ourselves? The wages of our sin is death (Romans 6:23). We learn best by being humbled through affliction.
3. What does the story teach about Christ? Christ is the true prophet who not only preaches the Gospel, but brings salvation by his death and resurrection.

4. What does this story tell us to do? It warns us not to sin, lest God correct us through affliction. It assures us that even in suffering, and even in sin, God will hear prayers offered in faith. What would you add to these questions and answers?

## **PREACHER'S WORKSHOP: APPLICATIONS**

Application is an important part of every sermon. Show your hearers how the Bible's teaching affects them personally. Show them what God wants them to do and how God wants them to change. Apply your sermon specifically to different kinds of people. Here is an example:

### **The Lost**

You are not too far gone to be saved. Jonah was saved from the belly of a whale, and so you can be saved in your situation.

### **The Rebellious**

We cannot run from God or hide from him. Rebellion against God will cost us dearly. Think Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16:1).

### **The Weak**

God does not demand perfection from his people. Our sins and errors do not spell the end of our relationship to him. He hears us not



because of our perfection, but because of our sincere faith in Christ.

## **The Wandering**

A little straying from God's will seems like no big deal. It may even seem wise, when God's commands are hard to understand. We may assure ourselves that God will never leave or forsake us, however far we stray. But before we stray, we should remember how severe may be God's means of restoring us.

# WHAT JONAH TEACHES US ABOUT PRAYER

Dr. Charles Barrett

God has ordained various methods of dispensing his grace (what theologians call the “means of grace”) to draw his children into deeper communion with him. Primary among these “means of grace” are God’s Word and prayer. God speaks to his people in his Word and His people speak to Him in prayer, and through these God changes us and transforms us into the image of Jesus Christ.

God not only speaks to us through his Word; he also instructs how we are to speak to Him in prayer. Jonah’s prayer is filled with clear and surprising lessons. Clear, because it is filled with Scripture and a knowledge of God, and surprising because of the situation from which he prays.

**God hears your prayers from the deep (verses 1-2)**

Jonah stubbornly refused to follow the Lord's call. He was filled with prejudice toward the Ninevites, he rushed in disobedience away from God, and found himself in the middle of a raging storm and was thrown into the deep (1:15). God, however, appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah expected that the belly of that great fish would be his grave (verse 2). It was from there that he cried out to God.

Oftentimes we find ourselves in circumstances as bad as Jonah, sometimes of our own making, just like Jonah. Yet, no matter where we are, we can cry out to God in our distress (verse 2). Far away from Jerusalem and the temple where God promised to dwell, Jonah knew where to find the Lord. He prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish (verse 1).

### **God's sovereign mercy gives us confidence in prayer (verses 3-8)**

Though Jonah knew that he was in the belly of

a fish because of his own rebellion, he knew also that he was there because of God's sovereignty (verse 3). These were God's sovereign chastising billows and waves. Jonah's prayer, however, does not center only upon God's sovereign discipline, but also on God's sovereign mercy.

It was from that place of discipline that Jonah appealed to God's mercy, grace, and promise of forgiveness. In his prayer he looked again to God's holy temple (verses 4 and 7). But what direction was he facing to the temple? Jonah looked 12 beyond the physical temple in Jerusalem to the reality signified by the temple, the true presence of God in prayer.

Jonah looked to the God who is sovereign in judgement and in mercy. Jonah knew where to look to find forgiveness (Deuteronomy 30:1-3; 2 Chronicles 7:11-16). His appeal to God's grace and mercy was not based in his past obedience or in his status as God's prophet, but only in the confidence that God is

sovereign and merciful and faithful to His promise to hear the prayers and confessions of His people.

## **God's gracious deliverance shapes our thanksgiving (verse 9)**

Jonah came to realise that the fish he once thought would be his grave was really his deliverance, and he cried out with thanksgiving and praise (verse 9). Salvation is not found in self nor obtained by works. Jonah's prayer moved from desperate cry, to confession, to praise and thanksgiving. God heard Jonah's prayer and delivered the prophet. God spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah upon the dry land (verse 10). God truly hears and answers the prayers of His people causing us to praise and worship Him.

***Charles M. Barrett*** serves as Associate Pastor at Wayside Presbyterian Church in Signal Mountain, Tennessee, USA.

# JONAH, JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION

Pastor Aaron Dunlop

Jonah's ministry was characterized by disobedience, reluctance and complaint. He is unique among the prophets of Israel, but not just for this.

It is also true, in the grace and providence of God, that Jonah's life and ministry, among the prophets of Israel, is the most closely connected with the life and ministry of Jesus—in his native region of Galilee, his mission and in his experience as a prophet.

First, Jonah was from Galilee, a rural place despised by the Jewish elite in the days of Jesus. The Pharisees, blinded by contempt for Jesus, said that none of the prophets had come from Galilee (John 7:52). But they were wrong. Jonah came from Galilee (2 Kings 14:25).

Second, Jesus and Jonah were alike in their mission to the Gentiles. Jonah was unique in this also, as the only prophet in Israel sent to the Gentiles. The prophets spoke of Jesus as a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:1; Luke 2:32), and Paul and Barnabas later picked up on this phrase, as they, and preachers of the gospel today continue the work of the Lord Jesus 14 here on earth (Acts 13:47).

Third, Jonah was the only prophet with whom Jesus identified directly. Jesus compared the experience of Jonah in the whale, with his experience in the tomb (Matthew 12:40; Luke 11:30). Jonah was in the belly of the whale as a dead man.

Not only was he entombed behind the rib-cage of the great fish, but he was down “deep”—at the roots of the mountains (Jonah 2:2, 5, 6). His recovery from the belly of the fish was like a resurrection, which Jesus identified with when he spoke of his own resurrection to the unbelieving Jews (Matthew 12:40).

The Jews were disputing with Jesus and had asked him for a sign. Jesus told them that they would not be given a sign except the “sign of the prophet Jonah” (Matthew 12:39). A sign shows us something, makes something clear, or points us in a certain direction.

But in what way was Jonah’s experience in the belly of the fish a sign?

The sign of Jonah was a sign to the unbelieving Jews that Jesus would rise again from the dead. The people in Jesus’ day were looking for a miraculous sign, and Jesus pointed them to the writings of their own prophet Jonah. He would later tell them, “they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them” (Luke 16:29).

The sign of Jonah is a sign to the world, which showed the extent of God’s determination to bring the gospel to the gentiles. God’s determination overcame the reluctance of Jonah, by casting Jonah into the depths.



Jesus came willingly (unlike Jonah), but just as Jonah was exiled to the depths, Jesus descended into the underworld, (Ephesians 4:8-9), exiled from the father. Like Jonah, he rose up out of the grave, to take the gospel to the Gentiles, through his commissioned disciples (Matthew 28:18-20).

The sign of Jonah is a sign to suffering saints, pointing us to our hope in the resurrection, even in the darkest moments. The Holy Spirit tells us that Jonah prayed “from the belly of the fish.” His prayer points us to the divine power to bring us unharmed out of death and from the jaws of the grave.

Whether buried respectfully in a coffin, gnawed on by fish in the sea, or devoured and digested in the stomach of a wild animal, God will redeem us both body and soul (1 Corinthians 15:42).

# CALVIN ON SEEKING HOLINESS THROUGH GOD'S WORD

Dr. Joel Beeke

The Word of God is central to the development of holiness in the Christian. John Calvin, the French Reformer, explained it in our relationship with Christ.

True religion is a conversation between God and man. The part of the conversation that God initiates is revelation (in his Word). In this, God comes down to meet us, addresses us and makes himself known to us in the preaching of the Word.

The other part of the conversation is man's response to God's revelation. This response, which includes trust, adoration, and godly fear, is what Calvin calls *pietas* (devotion). The preaching of the Word saves us and preserves us as the Spirit enables us to receive the blood of Christ and respond to him in love. By the

preaching of men, Calvin says, “the renewal of the saints is accomplished and the body of Christ is edified.”

The preaching of the Word is our spiritual food and our medicine for spiritual health, Calvin says. With the Spirit’s blessing, ministers are spiritual physicians who apply the Word to our souls as earthly physicians apply medicine to our 16 bodies. With the Word these spiritual doctors diagnose, prescribe for, and cure spiritual diseases in those plagued by sin and death.

The preached Word is used as an instrument to heal, cleanse, and make fruitful our diseased souls. The Spirit, or the “internal minister,” promotes holiness by using the “external minister” to preach the Word. The Holy Spirit not only uses the gospel to work faith in the souls, but he also uses the law (the 10 Commandments).

The law promotes holiness in three ways:

1. It restrains sin and promotes righteousness.
2. It disciplines, educates, convicts, and drives us outside of ourselves to Jesus Christ.
3. It becomes the rule of life for the believer.

**Joel R. Beeke** is a minister of the Heritage Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan (USA), and President of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, where he is also the professor of Systematic Theology and Homiletics. He is the author of many books and articles.

# ACCOUNTABLE AUTHORITY

Pastor John Paul Stepanian

Authority can be abused, and it is often very wickedly abused. However, authority has been ordained by God. God shows grace to humanity in general, for the good of all people.

Theologians call this “common grace,” and part of this common grace is God-given authority. God has established human authority in different forms; parents, for example (Proverbs 1:8), or civil leaders (Romans 13:1), or pastors (Hebrews 13:17).

Consider Ephesians 6:9. The apostle Paul is addressing the subject of the duties of servant to masters and master to servants. The lessons taught here provide insights that apply broadly to the subject of authority.

“Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their

Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.”

First, the apostle says: “do the same to them.” This requires that masters function in the same way as the servants. Bondservants are to be respectfully obedient, not motivated by pleasing man, but God who 17 rewards good work. Paul repeatedly emphasizes the motive: “with a sincere heart,” “from the heart,” “as to the Lord” (Ephesians 6:5-8). Your motives when exercising authority matter to God.

Secondly, Paul says, “stop your threatening.” Paul commands against threatening as an abuse of authority. We use threats because they work! But is this how we should motivate those under our authority? God cares about how we use the authority he has given us. We should use warnings rather than threats (Titus 3:10, Colossians 1:28).

Thirdly, Paul says: “knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven.”

Leaders are accountable to God who is in heaven. Jesus condemns the abuse of authority in the strongest terms (Matthew 18:6), but the Bible also shows that the wise and loving use of authority yields great blessings, and brings glory to God!

***John Paul Stepanian*** serves as an elder at Community Bible Church of Kubamitwe and as the Acting Principal of Shepherds Training College in Luweero, Uganda.

# LOVING THE LOST

Dr. Michael Haykin

When Jonathan Edwards, who has been described as “America’s Augustine,” left his pastoral charge in Northampton, Massachusetts (USA), in 1750, he received a number of “attractive” ministry offers, including the presidency of a theological college in Scotland. He chose instead to go with his family to a small out-of-the-way frontier village by the name of Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Why did Edwards make this unusual choice?

Some have supposed that Edwards settled in Stockbridge because the ministry among a smaller congregation would be less, and he could then devote himself to his study and writing.

Samuel Hopkins seems to think this, and states that God gave Edwards “a quiet retreat” at



Stockbridge where he could pursue his writing. This view has been furthered by the belief that Edwards simply preached rehashed sermons from his Northampton years.

An initial clue as to why Edwards came to Stockbridge is found in the location of his home in Stockbridge. Edwards purposely located it among the native Mahican Indians 18 of the town. Edwards was making a clear statement—that he had genuinely come to minister to these people.

Edwards' large correspondence from this period of his life also reveals that his pre-eminent goal was to reach the Native Americans with the life-giving gospel. And his sermons from this period show that the majority of them were not simply repeats of sermons that he had preached in Northampton.

These were brand-new sermons constructed with careful attention to the audience to whom they were to be preached.

Edwards had a great desire to see the world-wide advance of the kingdom of Christ and he was convinced that the conversion of the peoples of North America had a place in this advance. The life of David Brainerd and his work among Edwards was a missionary preacher who spoke plainly and effectively. 19 the first peoples of America influenced Edwards' thinking in this regard as he edited and published Brainerd's life and diary.

Edwards had maintained an interest in the success of the Stockbridge mission over the years and had persuaded his Northampton congregation to heavily invest in the work during the 1740s.

This focus of Edwards' Stockbridge years, though, has not been appreciated until very recently. This is clear from the fact that up until

1999 not one of the sermons that he preached to the Stockbridge Indians had been published.

A number of these sermons are now available in a volume of Edwards' sermons covering the years 1743 to 1758, volume 25 in the multi-volume critical edition of Edwards' works published by Yale University Press.

They reveal Edwards as a missionary preacher who was able to communicate plainly and effectively in his new evangelistic sphere.

**Michael A. G. Haykin** is the author of many books and articles. He is the Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Kentucky, USA) and the Director of The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies.

# KEEP LEARNING EVERY DAY

Join almost 500 pastors on our WhatsApp Group. +(44) (0) 7394-526-730

Read along with pastors from:

- Kenya (+254)
- Uganda (+256)
- Tanzania (+255)
- Zambia (+260)
- Rwanda (+250)
- Mozambique (+258)

Grow in Your Ministry:

- Receive a daily commentary on a portion of the Bible
- Every commentary includes personal application
- Practice reading commentaries
- Learn to think through difficult passages
- Learn to explain and apply the stories of the Bible.

# PRAYER IN DISTRESS

Pastor Wesley Tyler

“I called out of my distress to the Lord, and He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice.” (Jonah 2:2)

As a prophet of God it is surprising that Jonah was not a praying man. In fact, we only find Jonah praying when he is in trouble. He did not pray when he fled from Joppa, nor did he pray when he was on the ship. Rather, the prophet of God is found disobeying and attempting to flee “the presence of the Lord” (1:3).

However, the Lord, so rich in His lovingkindness, knows how to get the attention of his people even if that means they must be brought low. It is in this context that we find one of the greatest prayers recorded in the Scripture—from the belly of a fish.

Once Jonah was removed from the light and entered his dark descent, he was brought very low and was humbled. Then, he became a man of prayer. It was out of “affliction...out of the belly of Sheol” that he called on the Lord for help (2:2). He “remembered the Lord” and he said, “my prayer came to you” (2:7).

Perhaps you find yourself at a depth you never thought you would sink to. Perhaps you have wandered away from the Lord or even considered going the other direction from where God would have you to go.

What should you do? Pray! Repent! Look back to the Light! Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, and he who follows him will not walk in darkness, but will indeed have the Light of life (John 8:12).

Look up, from the depths, to the cross, where Christ paid our debt in full. “A broken and contrite heart, these, O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

**Wesley Tyler** is pastor of Grace Covenant Church,  
Litchfield, NH. in America.