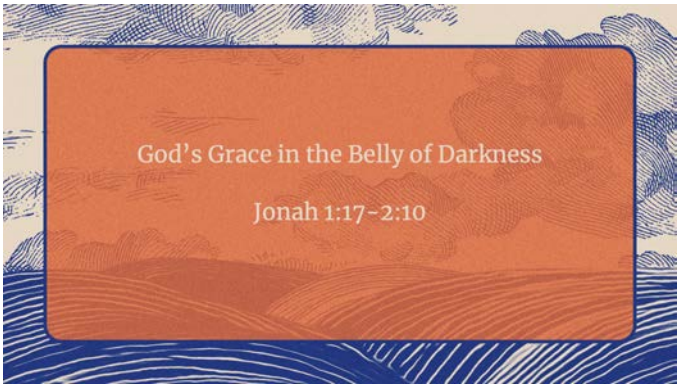
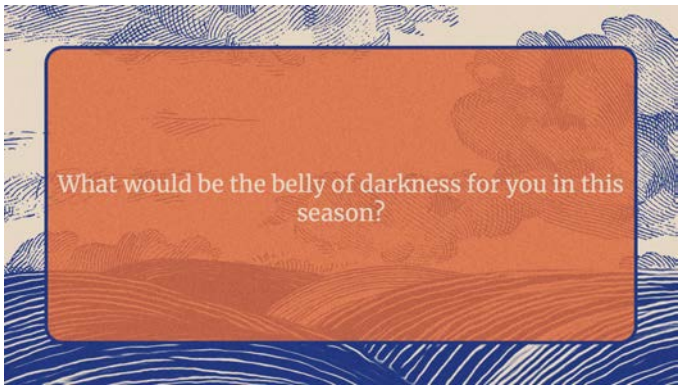
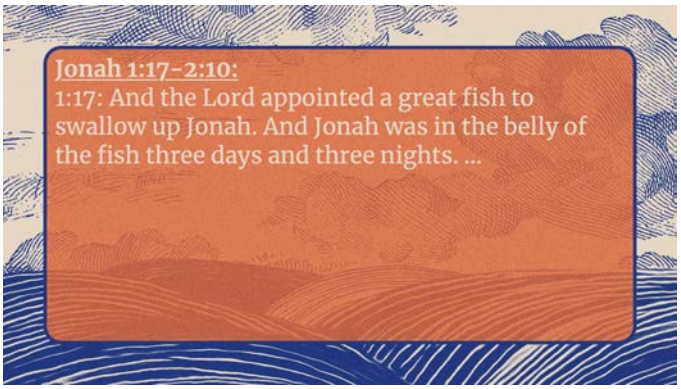
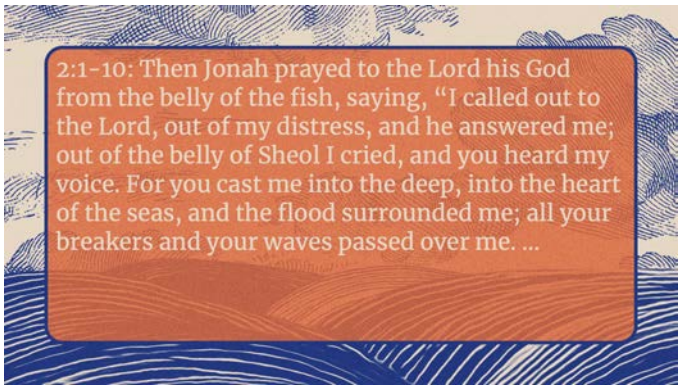
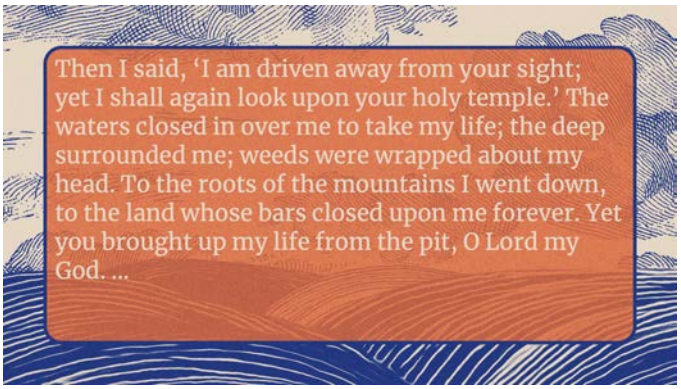

JONAH
God's Pursuing Grace


God's Grace in the Belly of Darkness
Jonah 1:17-2:10


What would be the belly of darkness for you in this season?


Jonah 1:17-2:10:
1:17: And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. ...


2:1-10: Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying, "I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your breakers and your waves passed over me. ...


Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.' The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head. To the roots of the mountains I went down, to the land whose bars closed upon me forever. Yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. ...

When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord!" And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land. - Jonah 1:17-2:10

God's Grace in the Belly of Darkness

4 Thoughts...

In the Belly of Darkness...

1. God's grace can meet you there (1:17)

Verse 17: And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

It is in the belly of darkness that Jonah experienced God's grace, and that's often the case for us too.

Why is that?

It is in the belly of darkness that we come to the end of ourselves and learn to rely upon God alone.

Tim Keller: *"It is only when you reach the very bottom, when everything falls apart, when all your schemes and resources are broken and exhausted, that you are finally open to learning to completely depend on God..."*

"...If Jonah was to begin finally to ascend, both in the water and in faith, he had to be brought to the very end of himself. The way up was, first of all, down. The usual place to learn the greatest secrets of God's grace is at the bottom." - Tim Keller

What are some of those secrets of God's grace?

1) At the bottom is where we existentially realize we desperately need God's grace.

What are some of those secrets of God's grace?

1) At the bottom is where we existentially realize we desperately need God's grace.

2) At the bottom is where we realize there is no depth to which we fall that God's grace cannot reach.

One more thought...

While God's grace is often found at the bottom in the belly of darkness, that doesn't dismiss the fear, pain, and trouble you are experiencing.

In the Belly of Darkness...

1. God's grace can meet you there (1:17)

2. God's grace can comfort you there (2:1-6)

3 things we learn from Jonah's prayer about experiencing the comfort God's grace in the belly of darkness:

1. In your fear, call out to the Lord who hears you! (1-2)

Jonah 2:1-2: Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying,
"I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.

Application/Takeaways:

a. Call out to God!

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b. Transformative grace comes about when you rely not on yourself but on the Lord alone.

Where have you been trying to manage your way out of trouble instead of bringing yourself honestly before God?

Application/Takeaways:

a. Call out to God!

b. Transformative grace comes about when you rely not on yourself but on the Lord alone.

c. "He answered me." "You heard my voice."

RC Sproul: *"Prayer is not simply a soliloquy, a mere exercise in therapeutic self-analysis, or a religious recitation. Prayer is discourse with the personal God Himself."*

Charles Spurgeon: *"If God did not mean to hear us, he would not bid us to pray."*

3 things we learn from Jonah's prayer about experiencing the comfort of God's grace in the belly of darkness:

1. In your fear, call out to the Lord who hears you! (1-2)

2. *When you've blown it, there is hope. (3-4)*

Verses 3-4: For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your breakers and your waves passed over me. Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.'

Application/Takeaways:

a. Transforming grace comes about when you acknowledge your sin before God.

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b. "I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple."

3 things we learn from Jonah's prayer about experiencing the comfort of God's grace in the belly of darkness:

1. In your fear, call out to the Lord who hears you! (1-2)

2. When you've blown it, there is hope. (3-4)

3. When you think this is the end, death will not have the final word. (5-6)

Verses 5-6: The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head. To the roots of the mountains I went down, to the land whose bars closed upon me forever. Yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God.

Application/Takeaways:

a. Transforming grace comes about when you realize you cannot save yourself from descending, and only God in his grace can lift you up.

Perhaps you are thinking...

"This sounds amazing that God listens to us, that He will draw near to us and not forever cast us off, that He will lift us up from the pit! How can I know that to be true?"

In the Belly of Darkness...

1. God's grace can meet you there (1:17)

2. God's grace can comfort you there (2:1-6)

3. God's grace can assure you there (2:7-8)

Verses 7-8: When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.

How can we know that God is steadfast in his love, that He will not abandon those who belong to him?

We look to Jesus Christ. In the gospel, we see in Jesus - the true and greater Jonah - the full demonstration of proof of God's steadfast love for us!

Jesus is the true and greater Jonah:

a) Jonah is the runaway disobedient prophet who descends into the depths because of his disobedience. *Jesus is the obedient Son who runs towards us, willingly descending to death to save disobedient people.*

Jesus is the true and greater Jonah:

b) Jonah deserves judgment for his sin. *Jesus bears the judgment for sinners.*

Jesus is the true and greater Jonah:

c) Jonah is brought up from the depths by God's intervention. *Jesus is brought up from the depths by God's resurrection power, rising from the dead in victory over sin and death!*

Jesus is the true and greater Jonah:

d) God sends the fish to swallow Jonah and preserve his life. *God sends the great fish to swallow Jesus and bring us eternal life!*

Why is this so significant and important?

Charles Spurgeon: *"My hope lives not because I am not a sinner, but because I am a sinner for whom Christ died; my trust is not that I am holy, but that being unholy, HE is my righteousness. My faith rests not upon what I am or shall be or feel or know, but in what Christ is, in what He has done, and in what He is now doing for me. Hallelujah!"*

In the Belly of Darkness...

1. God's grace can meet you there (1:17)

2. God's grace can comfort you there (2:1-6)

3. God's grace can assure you there (2:7-8)

4. God's grace can transform you there (2:9)

Verse 9: But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord!

The result of God's steadfast love?

1) There is thanksgiving!

"But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you..."

The result of God's steadfast love?

1) There is thanksgiving!

2) There is conviction and commitment.

"What I have vowed I will pay."

The one who loved Mom most and cared for her with all his heart and might was my dad. Dad served her in the most Christlike way, the most beautiful and humbling example of kindness, love, and patience I have ever seen. He cherished her to the very end. All the workers at the memory care were moved and in awe of his faithful love, sacrifice, and tenderness to Mom.

Even when Mom could not remember Dad as her husband toward the end, she would perk up and smile when she saw him and heard his voice. In the midst of not knowing who the people around her were, she knew deep in her heart, even when her memory failed her, that there was this one person who deeply loved her and served her. She was known and seen.

The result of God's steadfast love?

1) There is thanksgiving!

2) There is conviction and commitment.

3) There is confession: "Salvation belongs to the Lord!"

One final verse (10):

And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

a. In a sense, God's rescue and deliverance is the beginning, not the end.

b. Experiencing God's grace is still a process.

Close:

God's Grace in the Belly of Darkness

