

WEEKLY REFLECTION

While Jonah remains in fishy captivity, he finally prays to God from the belly of the fish. His prayer seems to reveal genuine heart change and repentance. But a closer look at the contents of his prayer shows otherwise, and teaches us two things as well: that the life of sin is a life of downwards dissent and of delusion.

Jonah's seemingly neutral decision to head towards Joppa was not neutral at all. He was choosing to run away from God, as far away as possible to the other side of the world as he knew it. Any single and seemingly neutral decision that leads us away from God is not neutral at all: the life of sin is a slippery slope that can take us from Joppa to the belly of Sheol (v.2), the very belly of hell itself.

Moreover, Jonah's sin seems to have twisted his narrative. Whether these are genuine delusions from the heart of the prophet, or lip service compiled from Jonah's knowledge of the psalms as he cobbles together a prayer is unknown. What is known is that Jonah did not call out to the Lord as he claims in v. 2, and neither was he driven away from the Lord's sight in v. 4. He himself made the decision to run away.

At the end of Jonah 2, the Lord asks the fish to vomit Jonah out upon the dry land (v.10). It seems as though God is so repulsed and disgusted by Jonah's self-righteousness that there is no other way for the fish to spit him out, other than violent regurgitation. But even despite God's disgust for the condition of Jonah's heart, He is still trying to save him. He is still trying to save the Assyrians in the evil city of Nineveh.

Even though sin has blinded Jonah to the condition of his own heart, he does get one thing right in his prayer: that salvation belongs to the Lord (v.9b). Church, will you listen, and will you respond to the salvation that can only be found in God?

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

Jonah's seemingly neutral decision to head towards Joppa was not neutral at all, primarily because he was actively running away from God. In the end, it was a decision that landed him in the belly of Sheol, in the belly of hell.

It might seem like an exaggeration, but the life of sin is one that can slowly creep up on us, and it is a slippery slope that leads downwards and to dissent.

Are there any seemingly neutral and small decisions you can see in your life that are contributing to distance from God?

QUESTION TWO:

Go through Jonah's prayer as recorded in Jonah 2.

Are there any aspects of the prayer that either strike or surprise you?

What are some of the things that Jonah prayed about?

What was Jonah's perspective of the Lord in this prayer?

What was his heart attitude towards the Lord?

What are some of the things that you can learn from Jonah's prayer?

QUESTION THREE:

It was mentioned on Sunday that you can learn how close a person is with God, or what the things on their heart are by listening to the contents of their prayer.

If you were to self-audit your own prayers, how close do you think you are with God at present moment? What are some of the things on your heart? What do your prayers reveal about your view of God, and your heart attitude towards Him?

Break up into smaller groups to share your answers to these questions, and pray for each other to end.