

Chapter Nine

JONAH'S PRAYER: FAITH VS. SENSES

We will read the entire second chapter in its entirety, as we look at the subject "Jonah's Prayer, His Faith vs. His Senses."

Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly. And he said: "I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, 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 floods surrounded me; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Then I said, I have been cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy temple. The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me forever; yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple. Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy. But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

In the last lesson we looked at Jonah's prayer in the belly of the fish. We first examined it from the standpoint of its origin, its development, and then its consummation. Then we re-examined it from the perspective of the influence of the Psalms upon the composition of his prayer. There are no less than eighteen references from the Psalms found in Jonah's prayer. We can thus appreciate the value of having God's word committed to memory to recall in times of need.

Now we will re-examine the prayer a third time from the viewpoint of the battle which we experience in our human natures as we look at the reality that is conveyed to us by our senses vs. the reality that is conveyed to us by true faith. First, we will both define and illustrate what we mean as the difference between our faith and our senses. The word "sense" is defined by Noah Webster in his original dictionary. Incidentally, Noah Webster was a Christian, and all of his Christian overtones have been edited from the modern Webster's dictionary. Here is how he defines the word, "sense."

The faculty of the soul by which it perceives external objects by means of impressions made on certain organs of the body. Sense is a brace, a support of perception. The five senses are sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. A sensation is a perception produced by the senses.

Each of our five senses gives us different perceptions of reality as we come in contact with the physical world that we live in. Mr. Webster also defines "faith" in this manner:

It is a belief, the assent to the truth of what is declared by another, resting on his authority and veracity without any evidence.

In other words, faith takes somebody at his word and without any evidence, it simply trusts the individual who is saying it. The Bible's definition is the same as Mr. Webster's. Hebrews 11:1 says, **"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."** Faith takes God at His word and believes that He can be trusted even when there is no evidence being conveyed to us through our senses. Faith trusts God. Have faith in God, not just what your senses are telling you is real.

Now let us see how the definitions of "faith" and "senses" are illustrated in the life of Abraham who is promised by God that he would be a father, even in his old age, and his wife past child-bearing. In Romans 4:18-21 speaking of Abraham, we read:

Who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

I will paraphrase this verse like this, "Who, against his natural senses, by faith he believed." He had hope. What is this text talking about? It is talking about Abraham who is promised by God that he is going to be a father and yet his wife is past child bearing, and Abraham is having difficulties as well. He questions, how can he or his wife, Sarah, produce a child? Abraham believed God even when there was absolutely no evidence coming to him through his natural senses to assure him he was ever going to be a father, or that Sarah was going to be a mother. Abraham was experiencing another realm of reality in contrast to what his senses were telling him.

Now we have given you a biblical definition and illustration of faith and senses, let me give you one in the humorous area. I have always enjoyed the characters of Charlie Brown and Lucy in the cartoon strip, "*Peanuts*," created by Charles Schulz. If there was ever an eternal optimist, it was Charlie Brown. He was always determined to kick that football. Lucy always held the football, and every time that Charlie ran to kick, she always pulled it away, and Charlie fell flat on his back. No matter how many times Lucy promised, "I won't do it, I won't do it," everything in Charlie Brown's natural senses tells him that Lucy is going to do it again. However he wants to believe her so much that he is forever one more time convinced that she is going to be true to her word and hold the football so that when he runs up and kicks, he will be able to kick that ball through the goal post. Every time she deceives him. Charlie's natural senses tell him this isn't going to work, but he has

faith in Lucy that she is going to do it. I say again, he is an eternal optimist. As far as I know, Charles Schulz never allowed Charlie to fulfill his one desire in life, and that was to kick the football through the goal post. This is a great illustration of the difference between what sense tells us and what faith tells us.

Now let us look at the conflict between faith and our natural senses. As we have seen, our senses define for us the realities in the world around us. The Christian Scientists say there is no such thing as reality, but that it is all only in our mind. We do not believe that, we face reality each day. Our senses convey to the soul the reality they perceive to be occurring in our external circumstances and environment. If these circumstances in our environment are positive, then the soul feels warm, encouraged, hopeful, upbeat, and we are happy. If these circumstances in our environment are negative, then the soul feels cold, discouraged, depressed and sad. Sometimes medication and drugs can deaden and reduce the pain which is felt by both soul and body as it is fed reality from one's outward circumstances in life. That is, if you are in happy circumstances, you will feel upbeat because that is what your senses are conveying to you. If you are in sad circumstances, then your senses will convey that to you, and it will affect your inner man as reality. But there is another realm of reality which is defined by our faith. Faith is taking God's Word as reality and viewing our circumstances as ordained and controlled by God which gives us the peace in knowing that God is greater and more powerful than our circumstances. The practical benefit of this has been caught by the songwriter, Horatio G. Spafford, in the words of his song, "It is Well With My Soul" - "When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot Thou hast taught me to say, 'It is well, it is well with my soul.'" Whether our senses convey peaceful or sorrowful circumstances to our soul, our faith assures us that it is God who has ordained the circumstances and is in control of them. This is seen in the contrast between faith and the senses in II Corinthians 5:7 where it reads: "**We walk by faith, not by sight**" (or senses). The Christian life is to be lived by faith, trusting in God where reality lies, rather than defining reality by what our senses are conveying to our emotions. This faith versus senses is also seen in II Corinthians 4:6-9. This is a marvelous section of scripture which illustrates the contrast between sense and faith in the life of a believer.

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

Now watch carefully in these next verses. I am going to do some inserting of our subject in this text.

We are hard-pressed on every side, (that is what our senses convey to us) **yet not crushed** (that is where our faith comes in); **we are perplexed** (what our senses are conveying to us), **but not in despair** (because of our faith); **persecuted** (what our senses are telling us), **but not forsaken** (faith stands up and props us against the senses); **struck down** (by our senses), **but not destroyed** (because of faith).

Then we read on in verse 16:

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing (That is, the man who lives by senses), **yet the inward man** (the man of faith) **is being renewed day by day.**

Do you see the difference here? Look at verse 18:

While we do not look at the things which are seen, (that which the temporal senses convey to us are reality), **but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal** (and they are seen by faith).

This is a marvelous passage of scripture which shows the difference between what our five senses convey to us and how faith keeps us from being destroyed by the reality of discouraging and depressing circumstances conveyed to us by our senses.

It is the very design of God in testing our faith by exposing us to circumstances that would appear to extinguish all hope. That is what He did with Abraham. God tried Abraham's faith by placing him in a set of circumstances where there was absolutely no hope of ever having a child, and then later telling him to offer that child as a sacrifice. If you are a Christian, your faith will be tested and tried by circumstances wherein your natural senses can find hope and comfort. This will require that we draw our strength and support from faith and not from the reasoning of our senses. II Corinthians 1:9 tells us, **"Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead."** When this is grasped, then I John 5:4 becomes real: **". . .this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith."** It is our faith that overcomes the natural world of senses? We may be cast down but we are not in despair. Thus, faith is enabled to triumph over the senses.

Now let us apply this definition and illustration and the conflict between our faith and what we have learned from natural senses as we re-examine Jonah's prayer in the belly of the

fish. Jonah's natural senses were operating in opposition to his faith. This whole episode reveals the action and the reaction that is transpiring in Jonah's soul. Everything which his five natural senses were conveying to his inner person was prompting him to nothing but despair. Do you think he smelled anything positive in the garbage disposal of that fish's stomach? Do you think he could hear, see or touch that which would convey any hope to Jonah? Jonah's natural senses produced nothing whatsoever except despair, gloom and doom. But in contrast and set in opposition to that, Jonah's faith was pleading for hope and gaining victory.

In examining this marvelous principle in operation as illustrated in Jonah's life, let us first of all view his position from the side of sense and then secondly from the side of faith.

First, let us look at what natural senses were telling him. As Jonah looked around, he was surrounded by all adverse circumstances. He was praying from the fish's belly. I personally cannot imagine being in a more dreadful condition than this. Can you even begin to try to identify with the reality of this man's situation? I have tried and tried during the ten weeks that I have been in this study, and I still cannot visualize the reality of what it must have been like to be in that fish's belly. Who could imagine the terrors of this horrible grave in the depths of the ocean? It must have done nothing but produce utter despair and hopelessness. In his commentary, *The Prophet Jonah*, Hugh Martin describes the situation in which Jonah finds himself.

He calls it generally one of affliction, I cried by reason of mine affliction and then to specify the affliction and to indicate its absolute extremity he uses unparalleled language like this, out of the belly of hell or the grave cried I. Then entering more minutely on the description of his awful position he says, thou hast cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas and the floods compassed me about. All of thy billows and waves passed over me. Nor does he stop at general expressions of the fact that he is submerged in the mighty deep. His descriptions become so particular as almost to fill us with horror as we read them, the waters compassed me about even to the soul. The depth closed round about me, the sea weeds were wrapped about my head. Nor has he rest in his living grave. I went down to the bottom of the mountains and nowhere in all this matchless, monstrous journeying is any path of escape discovered. All doors of hope are barred, the earth with her bars is about me forever.

That is a pretty bad set of circumstances. Do you think things could get any more complicated? Yes they could. Jonah not only saw adverse circumstances all around him, but also he saw a frowning God above him and over him. He said, "**You cast me into the deep.**" What complicated Jonah's situation is just not that his circumstances are despairing and desperate, but that it was the hand of a displeased God who had placed him

in these circumstances. This increased the pain of the episode a hundredfold. Remember the story of the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. They knew that God would protect them, didn't they? What about Daniel in the lions' den. Daniel knew God was there with him. However, Jonah knew he had sinned and could not look up and see anything but a frowning God over him. Have you ever tried to talk to someone who is angry with you, let alone ask a favor out of him? Suppose someone got real upset with you and burned your house down with all your belongings. You arrive on the scene and see the person standing by the ruins of your house with a smoking match in one hand and a gas can in the other with an angry look on his face. Do you think you would be motivated to approach him and ask if he could loan you some clothes to wear? Or do you think you might be inclined to go to somebody else more friendly to you and ask for some clothes to wear? Do you see what I am saying? Jonah knew it was God's hand that was upon him. It is hard to try praying to a God who is frowning on you.

In verses 3 and 4 Jonah says, **"For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight.'"** The waves were in and of themselves terrible, but what aggravated the situation was that they were God's waves of chastisement. Do you think you could pray if you were Jonah? David said in Psalm 39:9-10: **"I was mute, I did not open my mouth, because it was You who did it. Remove Your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand."** It is hard to pray when you are in difficult situations, and you know that God placed you in those situations because of your sin. The very fact that Jonah prays at all, is evidence that there is something supernatural taking place. This fact is just as miraculous as it is that Jonah is preserved alive in the great fish. There are a lot of miracles here in the Book of Jonah. Jonah knew that God had caught up with him in his flight, that God had marked him out as the guilty person to all onlookers, and that God had sentenced him to death in the seas. Now in a living grave it appeared that God was going to torture him with a slow, agonizing death. He could have drowned in five minutes in the sea. Jonah's thoughts are that God had put him in this fish, and he is going to be consumed alive by the fish's digestive system. Can things get any worse? Yes they can.

Not only did Jonah see adverse circumstances all around him, and not only did he see a frowning God over him, but thirdly, Jonah looked inward and saw his spirit was totally despondent and depressed. He was cast down. He says in verse 4, **"I have been cast out of Your sight."** Also, in verse 7 he said, **"My soul fainted within me."** These two expressions are used to describe the emotional and the psychological condition of Jonah's soul. Look at the first expression, **"I have been cast out of Your sight."** Only those of you who know God in a saving way, will be able to relate to what I am about to describe.

There is no more terrible feeling for an awakened soul to experience than to feel he or she has been given up by God. I worded that carefully, I said an "awakened" soul who has been awakened to its need of God. It is one thing to be cast away from the sunlight in the darkness of the sea. It would be awful to be cast into the cold waves of the sea. It would be terrifying to be cast into the digestive system of the sea monster. But even if in these experiences, one is still able to believe that God can be merciful to him, he can hope for God's ultimate deliverance. But if one ever concludes that God has abandoned him because of his sins, then all hope is gone, and an infinite darkness begins to settle down upon the soul. Now listen carefully. When all hope is gone, the soul begins to feel what the wicked will feel in hell, total abandonment from the creation and the Creator. That is what is going to make hell to be hell. My hearer if you are without Jesus Christ, don't think you will be laughing and cutting up in hell because you have a lot of fiends there. Everything that gives you stability in this life will be cut off. You will experience total abandonment, and this is what Jonah is beginning to feel. He says it is like being in the belly of hell itself. If you do a word study in the Bible of the phrase, "to be cast out" you will find it means to be cut off from a necessary connection to sustain life. Compare Jesus' words in Matthew 18:8 where He says, **"If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you."** What does my hand depend upon in its connection to the body? If you cut the hand off, it is severed, and it has no hope apart from its connection to the body. Jesus goes on to say, **"It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire."** Just as the hand must be connected in order to have stability and life, so the soul of man must be connected to its Creator in order to be sustained by God. If there is no connection, it is totally "cast out" and has nothing to look to for support. One drop of water won't satisfy the natural senses, because there will not be even one drop of water available there. Individuals in hell are cut off forever from any form of support to stabilize their souls. What then is the only thing that can sustain and support the needy soul of man? What is the only thing that can support your soul today? Our Lord Jesus Christ said: **"the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."** (John 6:37). To be cast out is to be utterly abandoned by God. Here is the stabilizing thing, Jesus said "whoever comes to Him, he will never be cut off or cast out." Through his natural senses, Jonah is thinking, "I have been cast out of His sight, I have been abandoned by God." If you are a true believer, you have been awakened to your need of Christ. If you ever reach the place where you think God has abandoned you, sit down and read these promises in the Scriptures. It is not God's word that is telling you that God has abandoned you, that is what your natural senses are conveying to you. Say to yourself, "I will listen to God's promises in God's word that if I have come to Him, He will never cast me out. I will not listen to what the senses are telling me." I say there is no greater state of despondency than for a believer to conclude he has been cut off by God on account of his sin.

Jonah's second statement was, **"my soul fainted within me."** Literally, the Hebrew terminology is this, "my soul folded in on me." Have you ever built a little castle with a deck of cards, and then they all folded in and collapsed? They lost their support, and the little castle fell in. Jonah is saying, "I could find nothing to prop up my soul, and it gave way to depression and despondency." Do not think if you are in that category, or you have been exposed to it, that you are the only the Christian who has ever felt that way. The great Apostle Paul, says in II Corinthians 7:5: **"For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears."** He said that fightings on the outside were conveying fears to the inside. Such is the situation which Jonah had to fight, the good fight of faith. Jonah saw nothing but impossible circumstances when he looked about him. He looked above and saw nothing but a frowning God. He looked within himself and saw nothing but a despondent and broken spirit. He had no evidence from any sensual source that would give him hope.

Now let us look at the other side of Jonah's being, the side of faith. No matter how tossed and afflicted we are, the Bible tells us we ought to pray. In fact, it is in such a time of crisis, for faith to act and to call upon God. Our Lord said that **"men always ought to pray and not lose heart."** (Luke 18:1). If ever there was a time to lose heart, Jonah was certainly experiencing it. Then it is time for Jonah to pray. It is time to stop looking to the circumstances in the world around you, the God above you, and your spirit within you, and pray. **"Men ought always to pray."** Ah, but you say, pastor, "where does faith come from, do I just say so many Hail Marys and repeat 'I will, I will, I can do it?'" Shall I pull out my Dale Carnegie course about *How to Have Positive Thinking, Win Friends and Influence People*, to get this faith going." Where does faith come from when all your soul around you has given way? It certainly does not come from our natural makeup, but it is the supernatural faith spoken of in Ephesians 2:8 **"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,"** Faith is a miracle. I know that my view in this is not a majority view, so I will let you know that is the case, so that you won't think I am trying to pull the wool over your eyes. That is not what the majority of Christian teachers are saying today. They give you the idea that you can just conjure up faith, and that faith can move mountains and do all of these things if you just believe hard enough. Therefore, the majority vies is teaching you to have faith in your faith. I don't think that is what Jonah needed at this time. He didn't have any faith within himself to get a hold of himself. No, faith is a miraculous gift of God. It was the only thing that kept him from throwing in the towel. This is because faith operates in another realm of reality. The soul is enabled to see the word of God, and the God of the word, as a greater power than what the natural senses can tell us. If you don't think those senses can affect you, just experience a discouraging circumstance, and you will see the power.

However, faith has a greater power than your senses.

The turning point for Jonah seems to have occurred in Jonah 2:4, "**Then I said, I have been cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.**" As Jonah begins to reflect upon life's realities in the light of God's purposes, His being and His promises, in verse 7 he says, "**When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord.**" What did Jonah see through faith? Let us look at those same three things which his senses saw. Let us look at those adverse circumstances which were around him. What did Jonah's face see? He saw that all of those circumstances were under the design and control of the sovereign God of heaven and earth. For he said, "I believe in the God of heaven and earth, who I trust." Jonah saw each event in his life as a circumstantial happening preordained by God for his own personal life. Don't let that go in one ear and out the other, or just block it out as if you never heard it. Let me state it again, Jonah saw each event in his life as a circumstantial happening preordained by God for his own personal life. He saw that a God who was big enough to control the means to put him in the whale's belly, was a God big enough to get him out of the whale's belly. If you don't have a God that is that big, you will never have a big faith, because that is what increases faith, to see the bigness of God -- not the circumstances you are in, but the bigness of God. The bigger you see God, the more your faith grows. It is no wonder that people have struggles with faith when a tiny limited God is being preached in today's pulpits. If God is handicapped, side swiped and held bound where He can't do what He desires to do, your faith cannot be strong, but must, of necessity, be weak.

Job understood this truth when he said in Job 23:13-14: "**But He is unique, and who can make Him change? And whatever His soul desires, that He does. For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such things are with Him.**" Do you believe that what is happening in your life today has been pre-appointed by God? Jonah, do you believe that you are in the midst of the whale's belly by God's appointment, and that God has many more things appointed for you? The believer sees the sun come up and go down by the appointment of God. The believer sees the pleasant times come and go appointed by God. The believer sees the sorrow for times come and go by the same appointing God. The believer then begins to see that the wisdom and power of God is weaving together a pattern for the believer's own personal life that gives purpose and meaning to life. He is learning that God is working all things together for his good and to them that love God who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28) All things are being woven together by the Divine Architect and working for Jonah's good and God's glory. This enables believers to face whatever reality life's circumstances throw at them with a greater reality so they can say with Paul in I Corinthians 15:55-58, "**O death, (that is a sensual reality) where is your sting? O grave, (that is a sensual reality) where is**

your victory. The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." When you leave this world, you should be able to know that what you accomplished in this life was for the glory of God. Then you must see by faith that God is weaving together every circumstance in your life for your good and for His glory.

Through faith, Jonah saw that God's purpose for his life was greater than his individual circumstances in life. Through faith, Jonah not only saw that God was bigger than his circumstances, but he also saw something else. He saw that the frowning God who was over him, could be appeased by means of a substitutionary blood sacrifice. Jonah saw the certainty of God's accessibility through propitiatory forgiveness. You will see that from the text in verses 4 and 7. In verse 4 Jonah states, ***"I will look again toward Your holy temple."*** Then in verse 7, ***"My prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple."*** What was there about the temple that gave Jonah courage and hope to approach a frowning God? Inside that temple was a compartment known as the Holy of Holies. There was a vessel known as the Ark of the Covenant, a hollow box. Inside that hollow box there were the tablets containing the ten commandments of God's broken law. On top of this box there was a mercy seat where the blood of an innocent victim was sprinkled. Angel figurines overshadowed the sides of the mercy seat looking down upon it and over them hovered the Shekinah Glory of God. Jonah knew that as the guilty sinner stood in the presence of a holy God, he stood there with the broken law in his hands. He also knew that the sinner could rightly expect nothing but the frowning justice of that holy God. But as the sinner looked upward toward the top of that holy room, to his amazement, his soul was flooded with the smile of a loving Father saying, ***"when I see the blood, I will pass over you."*** (Exodus 12:13). The Father looks down on the sprinkled blood on the mercy seat where the broken commandments of God, representing disobedience, were under the lid. How can the disobedient sinner approach a frowning God? The only means was through a substitutionary sacrifice - a righteous victim taking the place of the guilty individual. That is the gospel, that is substitution. That is your only hope, whether you are a lost person or a backslidden Christian. That is your only hope of being able to approach a displeased God, through the sacrificial life of an innocent victim. Then the sinner can say with the songwriter, ***"I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how He could love me, a sinner, condemned, unclean."*** If you know He can, you have heard and understand the gospel. It is through a substitutionary victim. It is not by works of righteousness which you do, it is not by your penitence, it is not by your faith. It is by the merits of someone else on your behalf.

Jonah look, there is a way that you can approach an offended God. Through the temple, the mechanism that God has set forth for sinners. Jesus Christ is the believer's temple today wherein He sits on a throne of sovereign grace. Therein we learn what John meant when he stated in I John 2:1-2, **"If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."** Among many ramifications, this verse means that God has revealed Himself to sinful men to be a God who is predisposed to show mercy rather than wrath. You will not approach a God, if you are convinced He is angry with you. You will only approach God if you have any hope there is favor there.

God describes Himself in Isa. 30:18, **"Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him."** In other words, we must approach God in the way He has ordained. If you are a sinner, and you approach this holy God through the gospel of Jesus Christ, He will be merciful to you. I am authorized by the Word of God to state to you that whosoever comes to God by the way set forth by Jesus Christ, will in no wise be cast out. "Ah," but you say "I may not be elect." Listen, by coming to the Savior, you will discover your calling and election. Do not look within to your own merits, but what God is toward you in Christ Jesus. He is predisposed to show mercy and He can do so because a sacrifice has been put in place. This revelation, that God is enabled to show mercy and grace to sinning creatures, is designed to encourage these very creatures to **"come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."** (Hebrews 4:16). This, my beloved, is what Jonah did. He found comfort for his guilty soul.

Thirdly, and lastly, we saw that through faith Jonah saw that God was bigger than his circumstances. Also by faith he saw how one can be reconciled to a frowning God through a substitutionary sacrifice. Jonah looked within and saw the promise of God for future deliverance. He found his inward spirit renewed with joy, praise and thanksgiving. This is seen in verse 6, **"Yet You have brought up my life from the pit."** Also in verse 9, **"But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving."** Notice that while deliverance had not yet come to Jonah, his faith talks as if it had already happened. He said, **"You have brought up my life from the pit (corruption)."** **"I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving."** This enabled Jonah's spirit to be able to experience present joy and thanksgiving in anticipation of the future deliverance that was coming. In other words, Jonah's faith was presently conveying to him the joys and encouragement which his natural senses would soon convey to him when he would be once again placed on dry land. O noble faith, only you can bring present joy in the midst of present afflictions. Only faith can rejoice ahead of time. This is the essence of living the life of faith.

Living the life of faith is an exposure to a region of reality which the natural senses cannot reveal. It is a belief that no matter how pressing our outward circumstances may be, God will sooner or later deliver us from those pressing circumstances. May I say to you by the authority of God's word, I do not care what set of circumstances you are in today, God has promised that things will get better. He is going to deliver you from every circumstance that is pressing in on your soul. He said He would deliver you, and He is going to do it. Can you rejoice a little bit ahead of time? Can you sing and praise God today for what is coming? When the deliverance comes, then we no longer walk by faith, but we enjoy the comfort which sight conveys to the soul. On a beautiful sunny day, you may think you have great faith. That is not faith, it is just what your natural senses are conveying because it is a positive circumstance. However, if the day gets cloudy, that is when you need faith conveying reality to your soul. That is why when things are going well, Christians are happy and upbeat, but when things do not go so well, they experience doubts and fears. They are not living by faith. Paul describes this perpetual hope which faith gives to the soul in II Corinthians 1:8-10.

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.

Notice the difference in the past deliverance, the present deliverance and the future deliverance in the promises of God. He has promised you that if you are a believer in Christ, things are going to come about one day where you will never be oppressed again. It may be in this life by removing you out of a horrible circumstance like He when He gave back to Job double everything that he had before, or it may be in the world to come. Things are going to get better for the believer, and the believer believes that. Paul cries out in Romans 7:24: ***"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"*** Did you notice that he said, ***"Who shall deliver me?"*** The deliverance is future and yet to come, but it is on the way. It is sure and certain. In the following verse 25, Paul says, ***"I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*** He did not say, "I will thank God when the deliverance comes." He said "I will thank him now and rejoice for the future deliverance that is to come."

As we conclude this lesson, here are some pointed statements to consider. If you cannot praise God until your deliverance comes, you are not living the life of faith. If you cannot praise God today until God turns your sorrow into a sunny day, you are not living by faith, you are living by sight and your natural senses. If you can only rejoice during pleasant

circumstances, you are not living by faith, because in pleasant circumstances, it is your senses which are conveying comforting reality to your soul. Salvation is of the Lord, and faith tells you that until you experience it by sight. Jonah believed that it would not be long until his trial would soon be past and his feet would be on solid dry land once again. What about you? Can you sing:

Have faith in God, when your pathway is lonely, He sees and knows all the way you have trod; Never alone are the least of His children; have faith in God, have faith in God. Have faith in God, He's on the throne; Have faith in God He watches o'er His own; He cannot fail, He must prevail. Have faith in God, have faith in God. (B. B. McKinney, 1934)

O noble faith, you are not of yourself; you are of the gift of God. **"So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land."** Are you living by faith, or are you just living by what your natural senses are continually conveying to you? When things are upbeat, you are upbeat; when things are downbeat, you are downbeat. Or do you possess a supernatural faith that in spite of when everything around you seems to be giving way, you can sing, *"my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus Christ and His righteousness. All other ground is sinking sand."* Let us pray.