

Week 3

# SUBMITTING TO GOD'S WILL

---

Jonah 2:1-10

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

.....  
(Jonah 2:9, ESV)  
.....

## Introduction

It always sounds strange when people say something like, "I'm going to turn over control to the Lord." Though what they typically mean is that they are going to stop viewing themselves as ultimately in charge of their lives, the statement actually makes it sound as though God's authority over their lives was somehow previously held hostage until the person "surrendered control." But the reality is that God is in control as a sovereign King who "does all that he pleases" (Psalm 115:3), whether we acknowledge it or not.

Nonetheless, there is great joy and comfort for the person who gladly submits to God's Lordship over his or her life. It's at this very point that we find Jonah. Having defiantly rebelled against the Lord, foolishly seeking to escape his presence, and stubbornly resisting God's discipline, he now submits to God's will and direction for his life.

May we also have hearts and lives that joyfully submit to the God who is always in charge.

## Investigation

Read Jonah 2:1-10

1. How would you summarize the theme of these verses?
2. Even though it was the sailors who threw Jonah overboard (1:15), he says that God is the one who "cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas" (2:3). Why does Jonah attribute this to God?
3. What was God's role in Jonah's deliverance? What was Jonah's role?
4. What does it mean that "Salvation belongs to the Lord" (2:9)?

## Implication

1. It seems that, like Jonah, many people don't turn to the Lord until their life circumstances are falling apart. Why do you think this is?
  
2. Jonah knew that he was under the Lord's discipline as a result of his rebellion, and that he deserved it. Why is the Lord's discipline a beneficial thing for the people of God?
  
3. Jonah makes it clear that God is responsible for his salvation (2:6, 9). Why is this an important reality to embrace?
  
4. What are the areas of your life right now where, like Jonah, you have been resisting God's will? What will you do about them?

## Other Issues

### What's the difference between the Lord's discipline and judgment?

We experience some of God's discipline as the direct result of our sin, but the punishment is corrective, not judgmental. It is punishment, to be sure, but not of the sort that unbelievers receive.

Because of his lust for Bathsheba and the resulting adultery and murder, God severely punished David. Most other kings of that day did this sort of thing, and worse, as a matter of course. It was considered to be a king's prerogative. But, no matter what any culture tolerates, none of God's people has a prerogative to sin, not even His own anointed king who was a "man after God's own heart." In fact, those who are especially blessed and enlightened by God have less justification for sinning. Consequently, God disciplined David, not out of wrath but out of love. David's sin did not cost him his salvation, but it cost him dearly in the loss of an infant son by Bathsheba and in countless heartaches from several of his other sons. He went through years of anguish that otherwise he never would have experienced. Through the prophet Nathan, God told David that because of this sin (really a series of sins), "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife" (2 Sam. 12:10). It may be that even his being forbidden to build the Temple was at least an indirect result of this sin, since it was because of his warfare that God denied him the privilege (1 Chron. 22:8). Yet David was a better man because of God's discipline. God had a purpose in the discipline—to draw His servant closer to Himself, to convince him not to sin again, and to help him grow and mature.

When we discipline our children, even for something serious, we do not put them out of the family. We discipline them to correct their behavior, not to disown them. Neither does God put us out of His family when He disciplines us, His children. He wants to draw us deeper into the fellowship of His family. It is often as hard for us to see the good in God's chastening us as it is for our children to see the good in our chastening them. But we know that, because He is our loving heavenly Father, He will not do anything to harm us. His discipline may hurt, but it will not harm. It is the best thing the Lord can do for us when we sin. It restrains us from repeating the sin.

God says that when His children "forsake My law, and do not walk in My judgments, if they violate My statutes, and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes" (Ps. 89:30-32). But the other side of the promise of punishment is the promise of faithfulness to His covenant. "But I will not break off My loving kindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips" (v. 33-34). When God chastises, He is not rejecting but correcting.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>John MacArthur, *Hebrews* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1983). 385.