

Up from the Sea

Scripture

“Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. 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.” (Jonah 1:17-2:9 NKJV)

Commentary

While rebellion brings the chastening hand of God, repentance brings mercy. It took a while, but Jonah repented of his rebellion. Perhaps he was more stubborn than most, or maybe it just took him some time to reason that since he was still alive in the belly of that fish, God still had a plan for his life.

Whatever the case, Jonah eventually cries out to God for mercy, and the Lord answered him. Chastening always has a purpose, and the purpose is not to punish but to correct. We correct our children because we know it is for their own good. In fact, it is not something that I want to do. It grieves me when I have to correct my son. The temptation is not to over correct, but to not correct at all. Thankfully, God is faithful to correct perfectly.

Think about that the next time you find yourself in the belly of a great fish.

“. . . have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected [us], and we paid [them] respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened [us] as seemed [best] to them, but He for [our] profit, that [we] may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be [dislocated], but rather be healed.” (Hebrews 12:5-13 NKJV)