

Shepherds, Goats, Monsoon Rains, & Me Jonah 2

What do shepherds, goats, and monsoon rains have to do with me you ask? It all began two years ago. Gina and I had been asked to join a group going to Ethiopia to work in various ministries. I was going to teach an overview course on Bible Doctrine.

Over the next several weeks, our team leader continuously reminded us, “Prepare for rain!” It had been 70 and sunny almost everyday. My hiking boots and rain jacket were collecting dust. “What rain?” I thought to myself, “Sixteen years in the country ... he sure hasn’t learned much.” Little did I know.

It felt like just another day as I gathered my things for class before my thirty minute walk to class. As I left the house, I paused and thought, “Should I take my umbrella?” After all, there was a cloud in the sky. Reluctantly, I grabbed an umbrella. As I walked down the dirt highway reminiscent of *Mad Max*, the weather took a turn for the worse. “Should I take a taxi?” I wondered, “Nah! What is the chance that it’s really going to rain today?” Oh silly me!

As I rounded the last corner, it began to rain. I thought to myself, “Well, good thing I brought my umbrella.” The wind had been gusting swiftly up until this point, and what began as a sprinkle turned into monsoon rains unseen since the days of Noah's Ark. The torrential rains would have been fine if there weren't hurricane force winds and hail.

Just then I spotted two shepherds. Not German Shepherds, real shepherd shepherds (yes there are real shepherds walking the streets of Addis Ababa), with their goats, running towards a pretty tall fence on top of a hill. At this point, my umbrella had turned into a pick-up sticks game gone awry. “Why not,” I thought to myself. “What do I have to lose?” So, I followed them and stood next to the fence sporting, by then, a broken umbrella, which I was wearing on my head like a wet blanket, khakis and a button down shirt completely soaked, and carrying a backpack with a laptop computer. Next to me were two shepherds and about four goats—Twenty-first century meets fourth century B.C. I couldn't help but wonder what they were thinking. I must have looked unusually odd and out of place. Ironically, the guy with the degrees and a laptop was learning how to stay dry from goat herders—a little lesson in humility. Time to listen to the guy with experience!

Think about a time when you thought that you knew better and completely ignored good advice only to find out that you had created quite a mess for yourself. Have you ever experienced this?

Have you ever ignored God or godly advice only to awaken to a spiritual monsoon?

We pay an incredible price for disobedience. This is the lesson that Jonah & Israel were supposed to learn. In Chapter 1, God told Jonah to go to the Ninevites—a blood thirsty, vile people. They would skin people alive, cut off body parts, and parade them through the streets as evidence of their power. Jonah didn't want to go preach there. Talk about an unforgiving audience! They didn't deserve God's grace! Because of his Zionism and disgust of the Assyrians, Jonah fled. He went **down** to Joppa, **down** into the boat, **down** into the sea, and **down** into the belly of the fish. This is present in chapter 2 as well: v2 **depths** of the grave, v3 hurled into the **deep**, v5 **deep** surrounded him, and v6 sank **down**. Where else could he go but up? So, what does Jonah do? He prays, like any good Israelite.

From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God. ² He said:

"In my distress I called to the LORD,
and he answered me.
From the *depths of the grave* I called for help,
and you listened to my cry.

³ You *hurled me into the deep*,
into the very *heart of the seas*,
and the *currents swirled about me*;
all your *waves and breakers*
swept over me.

⁴ I said, 'I have been *banished*
from your sight;
yet I will look again
toward your holy temple.'

Think of a time that you were running from God. What was your prayer life like?

- Call (v2) & look (v4) - This is the first time Jonah has prayed to God. Until now, he has been fleeing from God. The prospect of being digested by a fish might have brought him to repentance.
- Look (nabat) = Num 21:9 – God had just delivered them from the Canaanites and they start complaining about no bread! So, God sends serpents to kill them. Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. All bitten needed to look at it to live.
- Jonah knows that salvation can only be found in Yahweh.

Why does it often take desperate circumstances for God to really get our attention?

⁵ The engulfing waters *threatened me*,
the deep *surrounded me*;
seaweed was *wrapped around my head*.

⁶ To the roots of the mountains I *sank down*;
the earth beneath *barred me in* forever.
But you brought my life up from the pit,
O LORD my God.

⁷ "***When my life was ebbing away,***
I remembered you, LORD,
and my prayer rose to you,
to your holy temple.

God uses not only catastrophes, but common pressures of life to pull us back into a closer relationship with him. How has God used times of stress to draw you back to him?

⁸ "Those who cling to worthless idols
forfeit the grace that could be theirs.

⁹ But I, with a song of thanksgiving,
will sacrifice to you.
What I have vowed I will make good.
Salvation comes from the LORD."

Do you think Jonah finally got it? Why or why not?

Psalms – praise, remorse, and thanksgiving. This is in the style of *thanksgiving*:

v2 Introduction
vv3-6 Description of distress
v7 Cry for help
vv8-9 Acknowledgment of God's gracious acts.

Parallels with the Psalms

v2	18:6; 120:1	v5	69:1b	v8	31:6
v3	88:6; 42:7b	v6	30:3b	v9	3:8; 26:7;
v4	31:22; 5:7b	v7	143:4		116:17-18

What was Jonah missing?

Why do you think Jonah didn't ask for forgiveness?

Jonah had all of the correct words—he was recalling Scripture in his time of need. Nonetheless, pious words can roll off your tongue without confessing your own sin. It would have been better to pray Ps 32:1-7.

¹⁰ And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

1. Enoch was taken up by God (Gen 5:23-24).
2. A fiery chariot picked up Elijah and whisked him off to heaven (2 Kings 2).
3. Jonah was vomited onto *dry land*.
 - *Vomit*: Deut 28–29 & Lev 18:24-30 – God said that if His people didn't follow Him with their full heart, He would vomit them out of the land.
 - *Dry Land*: Jonah said that he was a Hebrew and worshipped the God who created the sea and *dry land*.

Application

1. If we are going to grow spiritually, we must confess sin—not just empty, pious words.

1 Sam 16:7 – “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Based on Jonah's experience of God's faithfulness, how might you pray for someone you love who is running from God?

Is there an area of the Christian life that we are running from God in?

2. We need to believe that if God's grace is big enough for us, it's big enough for even the vilest offenders.