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“*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see!*

*LSB 744 v. 1*”

## THE ORIGIN OF STORMS

Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said... “Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt?’” (Job 38:8-11)

With these words, God identified Himself not only as the Creator of the sea, but also as the ONE who controls the sea.

## THE STORM CONTINUES TO ROCK JONAH'S SHIP – JONAH 1:11

God had not yet called to the proud waves, assaulting Jonah's ship, to halt. In fact, we are told that the sea was getting rougher and rougher. The storm was gaining hurricane strength.

The psalmist accurately described their condition with these words. "He spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunkards; they were at their wits' end." (Psalm 107:25-27)

All of the sailors' prayers to their false gods availed nothing. The same is true today. Prayer rugs are regularly unrolled and used to pray to false gods in many parts of the world, and on our own soil. The people using them are sincere and dedicated in their devotion to their gods. But sadly, all of their misdirected sincerity and devotion accomplishes nothing. There is only ONE God who hears and answers prayer: the Lord God Almighty, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### **THE SAILORS SEEK ADVICE FROM JONAH**

In desperation the sailors turned to Jonah for advice. He had claimed that his God created the sea. He had also revealed that he was running away from his God, so he was the logical person to ask, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?"

### **JONAH'S ANSWER – JONAH 1:12-13**

Since Jonah was a chosen prophet of the Lord God, he undoubtedly had confessed his sin to God and he knew that he was forgiven and purified from all of his unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). So he did not try to defend himself to the sailors. It was his sin that had brought them into harm's way and he was now willing to save them from their impending destruction.

Jonah asked to be thrown into the churning, wind tossed waves so that the sea might become calm. He was willing to lose his life to save their lives. Jesus would one day say, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13)

The same Jonah who had fled from God's call to save a pagan city, was now willing to lay down his life for a boatload of pagan sailors.

But the sailors bent their backs and rowed more feverishly than before, trying to reach the shore. They did not want to kill Jonah. But all of their well meaning "self help" availed nothing. They could not save themselves, nor could they save Jonah.

The same principle is true theologically today. We cannot save ourselves, nor can we save others. But we can direct them to our Savior Who gave His life to save them. He is the Lord of heaven and earth and He alone controls the storms in our lives, and brings us through them and finally to our long awaited home in heaven.

## **THE SAILORS FOLLOW JONAH'S DIRECTION – JONAH**

### **1:14-15**

Jonah's suggestion was finally embraced by the sailors as a last resort. But before they threw Jonah into the deep, we are told, "they cried to the Lord," not to their false gods. They were finally tapping into the only true power source.

The sailors' prayer is recorded for us to read. "Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased."

The distressed sailors had no knowledge of God's recorded Word. But God heard their desperate cry for help. These heathen sailors had acknowledged Jonah's God as the sovereign "I AM." Then they threw Jonah into the wild, churning sea — and the raging sea became calm.

God's Word speaks about the very thing the sailors had just witnessed. "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, He brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed." (Psalm 107:28-29)

## **THE SAILORS' RESPONSE – JONAH 1:16**

The sailors had never experienced the miracle working power of the Lord God Almighty. They made their living working on the sea. Now they had witnessed the hand of the Creator and Sustainer of the sea.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech... There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard." (Psalm 19:1-3 KJV) The pagan sailors had daily seen God's glory and God's handiwork. His voice was daily heard by them. Now they had experienced His power.

The sailors responded by offering a sacrifice to Him. They also made vows to Him. They *embraced* Jonah's God.

Jonah's willingness to be thrown into the sea resulted not only in the conversion of a boatload of heathen sailors, but it also served as a mighty "wake-up" call to Jonah, God's faltering prophet.

## **JESUS, THE VERY SON OF GOD**

When God became flesh and dwelt among us, He had encounters with the very sea which He had created. Matthew tells of one such event.

"Suddenly a fierce storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke Him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We're going to drown!' ... He got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey Him!'" (Matthew 8:24-27)

The same Lord was in both storms. The same Lord calmed both storms. The sailors were amazed. The disciples were amazed. Are you amazed?

*Jonah, now you hear Him.*

*Jonah, now you care.*

*Your own soul is crying*

*Far beneath the sea.*

## **CONCLUSION**

"Amazing grace" had saved the pagan sailors aboard Jonah's ship. Hundreds of years later another sailor, who had spent much of his life as a pagan, would write:

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I  
once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see!*

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John Newton, who wrote "Amazing Grace," was an infidel slave trader. The captain of the slave boat Newton worked aboard referred to Newton as a "Jonah." Troubled seas appeared to follow him.

It was during one such encounter with a violent storm, believing the ship was sinking, that Newton cried out, "If nothing can be done, may the Lord have mercy on us."

This was the beginning of the transformation of Newton's life. The "Jonah" had called out to the Lord.

Newton would later write, "I, who was a slave of every evil, have been changed to stand as a monument of God's almighty power."

Most likely the pagan sailors aboard Jonah's ship sang their own rendition of "Amazing Grace" when they were saved from the stormy sea. They offered "to God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that openly profess His name." (Hebrews 13:15)

*They were lost but now were found by God*

They, like Newton, would never be the same after their encounter with the Almighty.

*Heavenly Father,*

*You provided a great fish to save Jonah's life.*

*But more importantly, You provided a great Savior, Your Son Jesus,*

*To save Jonah's spiritual life and our spiritual lives.*

*We thank and praise You, our Lord and Redeemer.*

*Amen*

Jonah 1:17

1. Describe the largest fish you have ever seen. Did it look capable of swallowing a person?
2. How did the fish come into being (Genesis 1:20-21) Who was placed over the fish? (Gen. 1:26)
3. Who provided just the right fish for Jonah? (Jonah 1:17)
4. How many days was Jonah in the great fish?
5. Using your imagination, try to describe how Jonah felt while inside the great fish.

6. Who verified the account of Jonah being in the great fish? (Matt.12:40)  
What comparison did He draw and then relate to Himself?
  
7. We know that death is an inevitable fact of life for each of us, unless the Lord returns first. What comfort does the Apostle Paul hold out to each of us? (1 Corinthians 15:20-23) Whose likeness will we then bear? (1 Corinthians 15:49)

Jonah 2:1-10

8. What does the psalmist tell us in Psalm 46:1-3? Where was Jonah when he decided to pray to the Lord? Relate Psalm 46:1-3 to Jonah's prayer.
  
9. When does the Lord say we should pray to Him? (Ps. 50:15; Philippians 4:6)
  
10. Is it ever possible to pray too much? (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
  
11. How does Jonah describe his situation in v. 2? Have you ever had feelings similar to Jonah's Explain.
  
12. Who does Jonah point to as causing his present troubled situation?(v.3)  
How could Jonah have avoided his present situation?

13. Which words of Jonah speak of utter despair? (v.4a) Compare Jonah's words with those of Jesus'. (Mark 15:34) How does Jonah temper his words with a glimmer of hope? (v.4b)
  
14. What did David pray in Ps.25:17-18? Have you ever prayed a similar prayer?
  
15. How does Jonah describe his underwater experience in v. 5-6a? Compare Jonah's underwater description with the words of David in Ps. 69:1-3. Do you think David was actually in water, or was he using water as a metaphor? Explain. Share a time when you felt as David in Ps. 69:1-3.
  
16. When had Jonah turned to the Lord in prayer? (v. 7a)
  
17. How does Jonah acknowledge God in v. 6b?
  
18. What do we forfeit when we cling to worthless idols?(v. 8) How important is it to worship the true God, our Lord Jesus Christ? (Acts 4:12)
  
19. How does Jonah end his prayer to the Lord? (v. 9) Compare Jonah's words with those in Ps. 107:22.

20. Who rescued Jonah from the great fish and how did he do it? Relate Isaiah 55:11 to Jonah and also to your own. life.