

Monday, February 20 – Read Jonah 1:17. Many have tried to dismiss this miraculous event as fiction, but the Bible does not describe it as a dream or a legend. We should not explain away this miracle as if we could pick and choose which miracles in the Bible we believe and which ones we don't. That kind of attitude would allow us to question any part of the Bible and cause us to lose our trust in the Bible as God's true and reliable word. Think about the supernatural things we read about in the Bible: Jonah surviving inside of a whale for three days, the Red Sea parting for the Israelites to cross, the walls of Jericho falling down after Joshua and the Israelites marched around it, a few loaves and fish multiplying to feed five thousand people, Jesus walking on water, a storm suddenly stopping at Jesus' command, and Lazarus' resurrection from the dead. Do you believe these things actually happened? If we believe all these other things (and many more) are possible, couldn't God have worked Jonah's survival out as well? Take a moment to thank God things we can't humanly explain are possible because He is God!

Tuesday, February 21 – Read Jonah 2:1-9. This is a prayer of thanksgiving, not a prayer for deliverance. Jonah was simply thankful that he had not drowned. He was delivered in a most spectacular way and was overwhelmed that he had escaped certain death. Even from inside the fish, Jonah's prayer was heard by God. We can pray anywhere and at any time, and God will hear us. Your sin is never too great, your predicament never too difficult, for God. Have you made it a practice to thank God even in the midst of trouble? What do you think would happen if you made this a habit in your prayer life? Take note of how Jonah handled his situation and seek to change your approach toward God when bad things happen.

Wednesday, February 22 – Read Jonah 2:4. When we read these amazing words we see that Jonah has hope. Hope is one of the most powerful agents we have in difficult times. It can be simply defined as the *anticipation of a future good that do not now experience*. Hope helps us hold on and not give in to despair, even if we don't see the positive evidence we desire to see. Hope motivates, inspires, and focuses us in our work and efforts. The value of hope can't be overestimated. With hope, we endure the now in the anticipation of a better future. In the midst of being somewhere inside the fish – alive – Jonah had hope. He had survived drowning and survived being swallowed whole. There wasn't a whole lot to be positive about except that he was still breathing. He believed in that future good of worshipping God. What do you anticipate that is good in the future?

Thursday, February 23 – Read Jonah 2:9. Obviously Jonah was not in a position to bargain with God. Instead, he simply thanked God for saving his life. Our troubles should cause us to cling tightly to God, not attempt to bargain our way out of the pain. We can thank and praise God for what he has already done for us, and for his love and mercy. It took a miracle of deliverance to get Jonah to do as God had commanded. As a prophet, Jonah was obligated to obey God's word, but he had tried to escape his responsibilities. At this time, he pledged to keep his vows. Jonah's story began with a tragedy, but a great tragedy would have happened if God had allowed him to keep running. When you know God wants you to do something, don't run. God may not stop you as he did Jonah.

Friday, February 24 – Read Jeremiah 29:11. It is always good to read and remember this verse. God loves you and wants to help you, but He will do it His way and in His time. God's best for you can mean a lot of things. The payoff may be today, or it may be at another time through another avenue you haven't thought of but that He provide. It may be that He creates a life full of meaning and purpose for you. It may be something He is doing internally in your soul and character. Or it may be something you won't find out about on this side of heaven. Hope in God always, ultimately, need to be the assured hope that God's love will move Him to do what is best for you.