

Romans 7: 14-25a with the Story of Jonah and Psalm 103 5th July 2026

Pray: Lord Jesus, lead and guide us by your Holy Spirit as we look at your word this morning. Amen.

What do you wish you did but you don't do? Be more patient, forgiving, loving. And what do you do that you hate or wish you didn't do? Habits, addictions, get angry.

If you were here last week, you will remember that Marinus began his sermon on Romans 6 talking about things he did in his marriage that he wished he didn't do. Those of us who are married can probably all relate to saying or doing things we wish we hadn't said or done. And that can be the same in all relationships.

Relationships are hard sometimes and we can get frustrated and angry and lash out when we don't mean to or perhaps ignore and not listen to someone as they talk to us.

And what about children, often doing things they've been told not to, because it's in their nature to test boundaries. I remember our 4yr old daughter sitting at the dinner table when Michael put a very hot plate of food on the table and said don't touch, it is hot. What did she do...she reached out and touched it and burnt her fingers!

We are not perfect human beings and if we don't continually align ourselves with Christ – following him and growing in righteousness (that is a right way of living, God's way), then we can end up following our own human sinful nature.

But thanks be to God, as Paul says in Romans 7, we are rescued from sin, from our human nature – through Jesus Christ our Lord!

And when we don't act right and turn away from Jesus, we are not given what we deserve, rather we are offered his gift of grace.

While we might get frustrated and angry and find it hard to forgive when people don't do what we want or expect them to – what does God do? He shows compassion and mercy, just as we read in Psalm 103 and sang in our opening hymn Praise my Soul the King of heaven. He knows our feeble frame and rescues us from all our foes.

His mercies are new every morning, however, as Paul says in Romans 6:1, it does not mean we should go on sinning so that grace may increase – no we should live as dead to sin, living new life in Jesus.

While we might struggle to listen and forgive when someone comes to us, God always listens when we pray and when we truly repent – he forgives us, he gives us another chance to pick ourselves up and keep walking with him.

With the Whale Festival on in Phillip Island this week, my mind turned to the story of Jonah. (What a great time we had yesterday with young people coming to hear the story, doing some colouring, origami and other things as part of the festival).

The story of Jonah is not so much about the big fish or whale, but it is a great illustration of God's patience, compassion and grace. Grace that is shown to people, including Jonah, who have followed their own sinful desires, who are slaves to sin as Paul may put it.

I'm going to read a slightly abridged version of the story from this Lion Children's Bible, but I encourage you to go home and read the 4 chapters.

So, sit back and get comfortable as I read, and listen to the amazing love of God for his people in this story.

(Read story)

At the very beginning we read that God spoke to Jonah and asked him to go to Ninevah and give them a message that they were going to be destroyed. While having heard clearly from God, Jonah chooses not to do what God has asked. He doesn't want to look 'silly' when God doesn't follow through on destroying the people because of his great love for them. And so he tries to flee from God.

But we can never run away from God, he knows where we are all the time.

As the story goes, Jonah ends up in the belly of a big fish, which has generally been interpreted to be a whale.

While inside, Jonah reflects on his actions, and calls out a prayer of repentance to God, and God hears and forgives and the fish vomits (as it says in the NIV) him onto dry land.

Jonah did not find life when he disobeyed God, rather he went on a downward spiral, he went down to Joppa, he went down in the waves, he went down in the belly of the fish, he went down towards death. But God brought him up and out from the pit as Jonah called out to him, remembering that salvation comes from the Lord.

Then Jonah obeyed God and went and gave the people in Ninevah God's message. And Jonah was absolutely right; they were not destroyed. God gave them a second chance after they repented from their wicked ways, called out to him and turned their lives around. We don't know what their wickedness was, maybe sexual, greed, abuse of power.

Like Jonah who was rescued from the whale, and the people of Ninevah, we are rescued from sin and destruction.

God spoke through other prophets like Isaiah and Ezekiel, but people continued to follow their own desires, other gods and idols. God also spoke through the prophets of his plan

to send his one and only son Jesus to die in our place, that we might be forgiven and rescued for all eternity. Thanks be to God that he loved us that much.

However, as Paul says in his letter to the Romans, our sinful nature will continue to pull us away from whole heartedly following Jesus and living right lives. This war in our flesh, our human nature will continue until our death or until Christ returns. For we live in what we call the “now and not yet”.

Paul is also right when he says we can give thanks to God for Jesus who delivers us from sin and death. He *has* won the victory for us, and we can live in that victory now as we allow Jesus to rule and reign in our lives.

And when we muck up, as we will, when we try and run away from God, and then truly repent, like Jonah and the people of Ninevah – he will forgive and give us another chance, time and time again. For he is gracious and full of compassion.

As we heard in the story of Jonah, God doesn’t want us to perish – his desire is for all to come to him and live. (We read that in 2 Peter also) That’s why he sent Jonah...That’s why he sent Isaiah...That’s why he sent Jesus...That’s why he sends us out to tell others of his grace and mercy.

Jonah still got grumpy with God when he didn’t destroy the people, and he was angry when the plant that was giving him shade died. And so God reminds him what it means to love and care for the world, people, animals and plants he created and gives life to. God longs for all to live and flourish. To know true freedom as we live the abundant lives we were created for. Think back to the beginning of Genesis, Adam and Eve were living free lives, in community with God and nature, until in disobedience they turned away from God and gave into temptation. Then instead of joy and freedom, they felt shame.

God does not leave us on our own, to struggle and fight our human nature. When we surrender to Christ we will be filled with his Spirit. Next week in Romans 8 we will hear Paul talk about the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, walks with us and leads us.

But as we finish today let’s reflect on the message of Romans 7 and the story of Jonah.

What are those things we do that we wish we didn’t?

What do we need to repent of, turn away from and change in our lives?

When do we try to run away from God, not listening to him, not praying?

When do we judge others – not thinking they deserve compassion and forgiveness like Jonah thought of the people of Ninevah?

As we say sorry to God, remember the words from Psalm 103, that the Lord is compassionate and gracious, abounding in love, for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.

Love so great he sent his one and only Son Jesus to rescue us from the pit – thanks be to God!

Let's take a moment of reflection now and then together make our confession...

Confession

Come, Holy Spirit of God,
and search our hearts with the light of Christ.

Come, let us return to the Lord saying:
**Lord our God,
in our sin we have avoided your call.
Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.
Have mercy on us;
deliver us from judgement;
bind up our wounds and revive us;
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

God who has called us is faithful,
and will not remember our sins.
Your sins are forgiven, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Live by the Spirit's transforming power,
and forgive as you have been forgiven. **Amen.**