

Jonah 1:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

Analysis

Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. Having exhausted human effort (verse 13), the sailors turn to Jonah's God in desperate prayer. "They cried unto the LORD" (vayiqre'u el-YHWH, וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים) marks a theological turning point—these polytheists now address Yahweh specifically, not "every man unto his god" (1:5). They've recognized that Jonah's God controls this storm.

The double plea "we beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee" (anna YHWH... anna, אָנָּנוּ יְהֹוָה... אָנָּנוּ) uses the particle anna (אָנָּה), an urgent appeal meaning "please, we pray." The repetition intensifies desperation. Their first request: "let us not perish for this man's life" (al-na novdah benefesh ha'ish hazeh, אֲלֹא נָכַד בְּנֶשׁ הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה—don't destroy us for executing this man. They fear being guilty of murder.

"Lay not upon us innocent blood" (ve'al-titten aleynu dam naqi, וְאַל-תִּתְן עَلَيָנוּ דָם נָקִיָּה) reveals their moral sensitivity. Though Jonah confessed guilt (1:12) and the lots proved divine verdict (1:7), they still fear bloodguilt. The phrase "innocent blood" (dam naqi) appears throughout Scripture regarding wrongful killing (Deuteronomy 19:10, Jeremiah 26:15). These pagans understand concepts of

justice and divine retribution better than many who claim covenant relationship with God.

Their prayer concludes with theological submission: "for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee" (ki-attah YHWH ka'asher chafatzta asita, פִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר חִפְצָתָּה). This acknowledges God's absolute sovereignty—He does whatever He wills (Psalm 115:3, 135:6). They recognize they're not victims of fate but instruments in Yahweh's purposes. This confession surpasses many believers' understanding of providence.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cultures took bloodguilt seriously, believing unjust killing brought divine curse on individuals and communities (Genesis 4:10-11, 2 Samuel 21:1-14). The sailors' concern for "innocent blood" reflects universal moral law written on human hearts (Romans 2:14-15). Their prayer to Yahweh, using His covenant name (LORD/YHWH), shows they've moved from polytheistic hedging to direct address of Israel's God. This anticipates Gentile conversion throughout Scripture—Rahab, Ruth, Naaman, the Ninevites, and ultimately the church's mission to all nations.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does the sailors' theological progression teach about how God draws people to Himself?
2. How do these pagans' moral sensitivity and concern for justice challenge nominally Christian attitudes?
3. What does their acknowledgment of God's sovereignty ("as it pleased thee") reveal about submitting to divine providence even in crisis?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּקְרָא וְ	אָל	יְהִי הָאָלֹהִים	אָל	יְהִי הָאָלֹהִים	אָל
Wherefore they cried	H413	O LORD	and said	We beseech thee	O LORD
H7121	H3068	H559	H577	H3068	H408
בְּאָבֶד הַ	נַאֲבֶד הַ	בְּנֵי פְּשָׁ	בְּנֵי שָׁ	בְּנֵי הַ	בְּאָבֶד
H4994	we beseech thee let us not perish	H6	life	for this man's	H2088
H5315	H376	H376	H408		
וְ	עַל יְמֵינוּ	בְּ	בְּ	אַתָּה קִ	כִּאֵשׁ רְ
and lay	H5921	blood	not upon us	innocent	O LORD
H5414	H1818	H5355	H3588	H859	H834
עָשִׂיתָ	חָפַצְתָּ				
as it pleased	hast done				
H2654	H6213				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 115:3 (Parallel theme): But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

Psalms 135:6 (References Lord): Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

Deuteronomy 21:8 (Blood): Be merciful, O LORD, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them.

Psalms 107:28 (References Lord): Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

Ephesians 1:11 (Parallel theme): In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Matthew 11:26 (Parallel theme): Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Jonah 1:16 (References Lord): Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

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