

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, וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל־יְהוָה) 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, אָנָּה יְהוָה ...אָנָּה יְהוָה) 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, אַל־נָא נֹוּדָה בְּנֶפֶשׁ 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־תִּתֵּן עָלֵינוּ דָם נָקִי) 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, כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר חָפְצְתָּ אֲשִׁיתָ). 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

וַיִּקְרָא ו אֵל יְהוָה ו וַיֹּאמֶר ו אָנֹכִי אֵל יְהוָה
Wherefore they cried H413 O LORD and said We beseech thee O LORD H408
H7121 H3068 H559 H577 H3068

נָא נֹאבְדָה בְּנֵי פֶשַׁע הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה וְאֵל
H4994 we beseech thee let us not perish life for this man's H2088 H408
H6 H5315 H376

וְעַל יְנוּתִי וְדַם נָקִי יֵאָכֵל אַתָּה ה' וְאֵשׁ רַבָּא
and lay H5921 blood not upon us innocent H3588 H859 O LORD H834
H5414 H1818 H5355 H3068

עָשִׂיתָ: חָפְצָה
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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