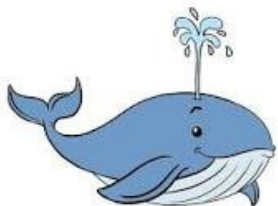
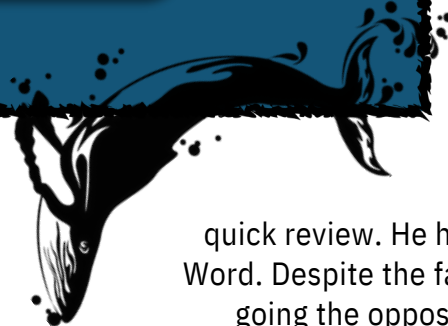


## Ransom Notes



### “Down” and “Dark”



Suddenly our run-away found himself in total darkness. A quick review. He had been told to go to a different town and give the citizens the Word. Despite the fact that the order came from above, Mr. J hopped on a ship going the opposite direction. You probably even recognize Mr. J. His full name was Jonah and instead of going to the incredibly wicked city of Nineveh as ordered by God, he bought a boat ticket to Tarshish and his life was changed forever.

Shortly after boarding, while Mr. J was taking a nap, God caused a violent storm to disturb his snoozing. The crew was afraid and began tossing the cargo DOWN into the sea, hoping to save the ship. The captain awakened the nap taker, the crew cast lots to find out who was responsible for this wild storm, and the lot fell on Jonah. After a bit of information sharing, Mr. J instructed the crew to do the unthinkable — just toss me DOWN into the waves.

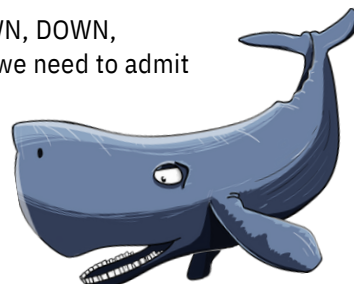
Imagine, would you have been able to acknowledge you were to blame and then tell the nervous men to flip you over into the breaking waves? First of all, it is never easy to admit you are to blame for whatever problem or tragedy. Second, I can barely swim in the shallow water by a beach, but certainly not in the stormy Mediterranean Sea.

To voluntarily go DOWN over board in order to save the lives of others is most remarkable. Then, I remember someone else who voluntarily allowed an angry crowd to fasten his body on a cross in order to save many. He also was Mr J — Jesus. These would be DARK times for both Mr. J’s.

Tossing the runaway into the water was postponed for a while as the frightened sailors attempted to save themselves. Hum! Have you ever heard of anyone, including self perhaps, who has said, “I don’t need God. I’ll just paddle along in my life and all will be safe?” That didn’t ultimately work for Jonah and it won’t work for humans today. Remember what we need to do when in need? Psalm 17:6 shares David’s actions. *“I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.”* DOWN and DARK times, and we must go to the Father. Well, actually, we need to be in communication with the Father in both dark and bright days.

Eventually the stressed boat team cried out to the Lord to save them and threw Jonah overboard. DOWN, DOWN, into the water and the DARKNESS as the Lord calmed the seas. Could that be the answer today for us? Do we need to admit that we also need the Lord’s help? The sailors feared God, offered a sacrifice (Jonah, their passenger), and made vows to the Lord.

Meantime, the guy in the rough seas has housing provided by God — a huge fish\* opened his mouth and gulped deeply. DOWN into the stomach went the man. For three days and nights DARKNESS was everywhere. I’m guessing there were no juicy fish burgers for snacks — probably not even a glass of ice water on which to sip. What would a person do while encased 24-7 in darkness? No handy cell phone-facebook services available to request a search team scamper out with their rescue equipment. Never having ridden inside a large fish, I cannot guarantee what I would do but the smell alone would probably make me nauseous.



Jonah undoubtedly figured out why he was in water over his head — he had not obeyed God’s orders to GO. Maybe he made of list of twenty-seven good things that had happened in his life or planned his own funeral service. I might have whistled a happy tune. Realistically, though, he must have thought what change in plans he would make in the event he actually ever escaped this DARK world, DOWN under. The scriptures do tell us that, *“From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God” (Jonah 2:1)*. He acknowledged he was in distress and, *“I called for help” (2:2)*.

We, too, when we feel darkness has overtaken our world, must go to the Father for help, but we have to also acknowledge we are distressed and want to extend our heart and hand for help to the Master who rules over the seas as well as over our lives.



There is a joyful ending to this DARK ride. Jonah 2:6, 9 tells us, *“But you Lord my God, brought my life up from the pit. . . . But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, ‘Salvation comes from the Lord.’”*

Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord.

May each of us also remember to obey the Word of the Lord and pray, even when tragedy, darkness, or depression overwhelms our life and soul.

\* Probably not a whale, but another type large sea reptile leviathan, such as a KETOS.π