

## A Study of Book of Jonah

### Sermon # 4

#### “The God of the Second Chance”

#### Jonah 3:1-4

The last time we were with Jonah he was deep in prayer deep in the fish's belly. In that prayer he finally got things right with God. It is almost as if we can hear the prayer of repentant Jonah, “Alright who am I fooling? You and You alone are God. My fight with you is fruitless. My stubbornness has become an idol I've clung to, separating me from your grace. You alone have the power to save even me, O Lord. Here I sit with no power to redeem myself. Only You can do it. I was foolish to withhold my obedience from You; instead I should be offering You a song of thanksgiving for the privilege of being able to serve You.” [Michelle McKinney Hammond. His Love Always Finds Me. (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1999) pp. 79-80]

The last thing that happened was the Jonah was vomited up on dry land (2:10).

Now what is Jonah to do? Does God ever stoop to use those who have rejected his calling, turned a deaf ear to His word or pursued a course of their own choosing?

Have you ever longed for an opportunity to undo some of the mistakes you have made in your life? We have all made mistakes in our finances, our careers, our parenting, our marriages... which lead us to wish we could have one more chance, an opportunity to begin again. Louisa Tarkington wrote it for us in a poem entitled “The Land of Begin Again”

*“I wish that I there were some wonderful place called the land of Begin Again, where all our mistakes and all our heartaches and all our poor selfish grief... Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door and never be put on again. I wish that there were some wonderful place called The Land Of Begin Again.”*

Well Jonah's experiences remind us that there is such a place, and we serve God who will use those who repent and turn to Him.

Tonight I want you to see with me Three Things Jonah found out about God...

First, Jonah Found out God Gives *Second Chances* (v. 1)

“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time....”

Jonah found out that God gives second chances.

“On New Year's Day, 1929, Georgia Tech played University of California in the Rose Bowl. In that game a man named Roy Riegels recovered a fumble for California. Somehow, he became confused and started running 65 yards in the wrong direction. One of his teammates, Benny Lom, outdistanced him and downed him just before he scored for the opposing team. When California attempted to punt, Tech blocked the kick and scored a safety which was the ultimate margin of victory.

That strange play came in the first half, and everyone who was watching the game was asking the same question: "What will Coach Nibbs Price do with Roy Riegels in the second half?" The men filed off the field and went into the dressing room. They sat down on the benches and on the floor, all but Riegels. He put his blanket around his shoulders, sat down in a corner, put his face in his hands, and cried like a baby. If you have played football, you know that a coach usually has a great deal to say to his team during half time. That day Coach Price was quiet. No doubt he was trying to decide what to do with Riegels. Then the timekeeper came in and announced that there were three minutes before playing time. Coach Price looked at the team and said simply, "Men the same team that played the first half will start the second." The players got up and started out, all but Riegels. He did not budge. the coach looked back and called to him again; still he didn't move. Coach Price went over to where Riegels sat and said, "Roy, didn't you hear me? The same team that played the first half will start the second." Then Roy Riegels looked up and his cheeks were wet with a strong man's tears. "Coach," he said, "I can't do it to save my life. I've ruined you, I've ruined the University of California, I've ruined myself. I couldn't face that crowd in the stadium to save my life." Then Coach Price reached out and put his hand on Riegel's shoulder and said to him: "Roy, get up and go on back; the game is only half over." And Roy Riegels went back, and those Tech men will tell you that they have never seen a man play football as Roy Riegels played that second half." [Haddon W. Robinson, Christian Medical Society Journal - [www.bible.org/illus/Jonah/4](http://www.bible.org/illus/Jonah/4)]

Our failures can leave us feeling that God could never use us again, that God could never bless us again, and that we are useless in God 's work and to God's plan. But *Jonah found out that God gives second chances and...*

Secondly, *Jonah Found Out God Still Had A Plan For His Life.* (v. 2)

"saying, (2) "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you."

We serve an awesome God! He has plans for each of us and we can't fail enough to ever change those plans. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not harm, to give you a future with hope."

Jonah had failed when he was first called to go to Nineveh, but his failure was only temporary. It has been said that failure is not fatal and does not have to be final. There is a huge difference between "failing" at something and being a failure. And Jonah isn't the only person in the Bible who "failed" God at some point. Let's take a look at some of those others that failed and found that God didn't give up on them.

Abraham: God promised him that his wife, Sarah, would give him a son. But what does Abraham do? He decides to help God out and has a child by his wife's servant. He "failed" to believe God but God didn't give up on him. God made Abraham the "father of many nations".

Jacob: Jacob lied to his father, stole his brother's birthright and blessing. He "failed" to live as God intended him to live, and consented only after God had wrestled him into obedience, yet God gave him the name "Israel", representing God's people.

David: God made David king. As king, David commits adultery with Bathsheba, then has her husband murdered to hide his failing". Yet, David becomes known as "a man after God's own heart".

Peter: Poor old Peter. Peter, the one who swore that he would never deny Jesus, then denies Him not once, not twice, but three times, publicly! Peter “failed” Jesus. Yet Peter goes on to become one of the greatest leaders of the early church.

Paul: Paul, or Saul as he was known earlier, spent his early life persecuting Christians. Then, through what you might call an “eye-opening” experience, Saul, the one who “failed”, became Paul, the greatest missionary in history.

These people I’ve just mentioned, along with many others have “failed” God at some point in their lives. But God DID NOT give up on them. God didn’t give up on them and He won’t give up on you or me. What a comfort to realize that the best of God’s servants have made foolish mistakes, but were used again.

When the word of the Lord came to Jonah “the second time” it came with the same commission he had received the first time. It was God plan for Jonah to go to Nineveh (1:2) it is still God’s plan for Jonah to go to Ninevah. God’s plan for Jonah had not changed, but Jonah did.

The first time the word of the Lord came to Jonah telling him to go to Nineveh, Jonah ran away. This time, having learned his lesson the hard way on the consequences of disobedience; this time he obeyed.

The truth is that the Lord has some things He wants you to do. But do you know that many of the things God intended for you and me to do never get accomplished? Do you know why? Because oftentimes the people God has set apart to accomplish His will have refused to surrender to Him.

Perhaps you are thinking, *“Well I don’t know what God wants me to do.”* That reminds me of a story that Donald Grey Barnhouse told. He said that “on one occasion his daughter had come to him with a request that he had denied. ‘Well then what do you want me to do?’ she had asked. He told her what he wanted her and then went on with his work. She remained standing in front of him.

At length Mrs Barnhouse called to the daughter from another room, ‘Where are you? What are you doing?’ she asked.

The daughter replied, ‘I am waiting for daddy to tell me what he wants me to do.’

At this point Barnhouse raised his head and said to her, ‘Whatever you are doing it is not waiting to find out what I want you to do. I have told you what I want you to do, but you do not like it. You are actually waiting to see if you can get me to change my mind.’

[as quoted by James Montgomery Boice. The Minor Prophets. Chap 32. “Prayer From the Depths.” Jonah 1:17-2:10 Vol I. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) p. 230 ]

But if you’ll be honest with yourself you will realize that you know a lot more than what you are doing. You and I know that God wants us to be witnessing for His Kingdom.

We know that God wants us to love our neighbors as ourselves. We know that that God wants us to be good stewards of our time, money, and talents. And we know when were not doing what God

wants us to do. We need to drop the excuse that we don't know what God's will is for our lives. I believe our problem is that we often do know what God's will is, but we're simply not willing to do it.

*Jonah Found Out God Still Had A Plan For His Life and...*

Third, *Jonah Found Out How Much God Can Do With One Person.* (vv. 3-5)

“So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. (4) And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

Jonah entered the city and began to proclaim the message. “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (v. 4)

In the English Bible it is only eight words, and in the Hebrew it is even shorter only five. This seems hardly impressive. And yet as we will see it has tremendous results.

How can that be possible? First, it seems to me a little more than coincidental that Jonah is sent as a messenger to a city that worships the fish-god Dagon. That the reluctant prophet was swallowed by a great fish and then thrown up on the coast of Phoenicia, perhaps within sight of witnesses who would have conveyed this tale to those in Nineveh. In any other city perhaps those experiences would have had little, if any affect on the reception to his preaching, but can hardly believe this to have been the case in Nineveh!

In fact Jesus said in Matt 12:34 that Jonah was a SIGN to the people of Nineveh. Other men who have survived similar experiences in history had such mottled skin from the digestive juices that they would stand out in any crowd. I think he was rather spectacular to see. A man who has spent three days and three nights in a fish simply cannot come out looking like he did when he went in!

Dr Harry Rimmer told of a man in 1926 who was swallowed by a fish and spend two days inside the fish and lived to tell the story. He was displayed in London as “the Jonah of the twentieth century.” When Dr. Rimmer interviewed him two years after it had happened, this man didn’t have a hair on his body, and his skin was a yellowish-brown color. You see, the gastric juices of the fish had reacted upon the individual as the fish had tried to digest him.

Those chemicals were bound to have an effect upon him, and this is apparently what happened to Jonah also. You can imagine the color of Jonah’s skin, and you can imagine how he must have looked. When he stopped at a corner and the crowd gathered, they would say, “Brother, where have you been?” [J. Vernon McGee. *Thru the Bible Commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson - electronic ed. 1997, c1981.)]

Because Jonah surrendered to go and because Jonah surrendered to speak God used even the terrible experience of his time in the belly of the fish for His glory. And God will do the same thing with our pain. He takes the bad in our life and uses it to His advantage. That is what I believe that Paul means when he says in Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those ? ?who are the called according to *His* purpose.”

I don't know about you but I listen to people who have been through great difficulties when they say that God will help us to endure tough times. Because of Jonah's obedience God's power moved a whole city to repentance.

## Conclusion

Three Things Jonah found out about God...

1. Jonah Found out God Gives Second
2. Jonah Found Out God Still Had A Plan For His Life
3. Jonah Found Out How Much God Can Do With One Person.