

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
May 24, 2020

JONAH AND GOD'S WILL – Part 2

Jonah 3 and 4

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I have four points to my message:

- God gave Jonah a serious second chance.
- Jonah took God's second chance seriously.
- The Ninevites took Jonah's message seriously.
- God had a serious chat with Jonah.

INTRODUCTION: Here's a review from last week's message. Jonah was told by God to go to Nineveh and tell them to repent. Instead, Jonah went in the other direction on a boat toward a city a couple of thousand miles away. He was on his own mission which was running from God. A storm was so rough the men gathered to pray to their gods. Jonah told them the storm was his fault and to throw him overboard. They did and a huge fish swallowed him. While he was in the fish, he repented.

I've thought about Jonah's three-day stay in that fish. Children's books have him inside a huge whale with plenty of room to move around. I don't know what the inside of a whale looks like but it's not a spacious hotel room. You think about what's inside the stomach of any living being - it's full of digestive chemicals that break down food for the body. This fish was large enough to have enough air inside its stomach to help Jonah survive. It must have been large, but I imagine Jonah to have been quite contained and trapped inside its body. This would have been the claustrophobic's worse nightmare. While inside the fish's belly, Jonah prayed. Read Jonah chapter two to learn more.

The fish swam toward Nineveh and puked him up. It's gross but that's what happened. Jonah did not exit that fish in his Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes. He was not dressed for a revival. He did not arrive with fresh-pressed clothing, a Bible, and sermon notes. No, he arrived in a pool of fish upchuck.

I looked up the word translated as “vomit” in the original Hebrew. It’s pronounced “Ko”, and it means exactly what we think it means.

Jonah, smelly, disgusting with filthy clothes, if any at all, was completely stripped of all his pride. He did not look like a bold prophet. And that’s where Chapter three begins.

GOD GAVE JONAH A SERIOUS SECOND CHANCE

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 3:1-2

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: ² “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”

EXPLANATION: God is the God of second chances. To wake us up, God might take our pride and bring us to the point of being willing to do what he wants. In Jonah’s case, he obeyed the second time. But what we see in scripture is that God does indeed give man free will...that’s clear in this story. Jonah could have refused a second time, but he did not. To Jonah, at this point in his life, there were things worse than death. He attempted suicide by having the men throw him overboard and his suicide did not work out like he planned. To Jonah, not obeying God was worse than death itself.

APPLICATION: You may be listening today and thinking that you are too deep into sin for God to give you a second chance. You may be thinking God will not hear your prayer of repentance, but the truth is, he will. Jonah is a prime example. When Jonah was in that fish, he could have gone one way or the other. Had he not repented, he would have probably become nutrition for that fish. But he did repent, and God gave him a second chance. Jonah faced a turning point in his life: repent or die.

Everyone, please listen – if you are at a turning point, repent and choose life. Ask God to forgive your disobedience to him. Ask him to give you a new life, surrender, let go of your pride. Don’t wait until something drastic happens before you get serious about following the Lord.

Aren't you grateful we serve the God of second chances? If we did not, we would all be doomed and already dead. I John 1:9 *But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* What a God we have!

So God gave Jonah a second chance.

JONAH TOOK GOD'S SECOND CHANCE SERIOUSLY

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 3:3-4

Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. ⁴ Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

EXPLANATION: Jonah was on a mission for God now. It was no longer Jonah's mission but God's mission. He realized he was the mouthpiece for God. He realized God had called him, and no one else, to carry his message. There he was...right on the front line. He was in an unfamiliar people and culture, but it did not matter – if he had been dealing with any inhibitions, they were definitely gone now. He was completely over himself and ready to speak. Jonah arrived, probably looking like a ragged, worn-out man with bleached skin and partially digested clothing.

I am sure the sobering thought crossed his mind about what would happen if he disobeyed God a second time. The God of second chances gave him a second chance.

When God gives you a second chance to be obedient, take it seriously! You don't have to tell how you blew it the first time. We don't have any record here that Jonah told everyone what had just happened to him. He didn't tell them he was running from God. He didn't tell them about the boat, his prayer or repentance or about the horrifying fish. That was between him and God. Yes, he had a fish story to tell, but he didn't tell it. Had he told it, it would have been too sensational to believe. People would have declared it fake news spoken by a false prophet. Listen to me here, this is important – earlier in the story, Jonah was focused on his own needs, but after going through what he went through, he was now focused on others' needs. He did not let his past get the best of him. If he thought he was a failure, that did not

become part of the narrative. He was not dwelling on the past, but on the mission at hand.

And then he spoke for God.

- God gave Jonah a serious second chance.
- Jonah took God's second chance seriously, and

THE NINEVITES TOOK JONAH'S MESSAGE SERIOUSLY

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 3:5-10

The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

⁶ When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. ⁷ This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. ⁸ But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. ⁹ Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." ¹⁰ When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

EXPLANATION: Here we have the quintessential story of repentance. After three days of preaching, an entire people group repented, including their king. They all fasted, including their animals. There were no holdouts. I wonder how such repentance affected their economy, their lifestyles?

The known world knew who the God of the Hebrew people was. They feared him. In this day, though, they misunderstood and believed there were different gods for different people. And when Jonah announced a message from the Hebrew God, it sent shivers down their spines. This was the God who did not mess around.

Jonah's message was effective. It was clear enough, precise enough, and strong enough for people to believe it. The city was large, taking three days to walk across it. Think about how many miles a person can walk in a day and multiply by three – it was a massive city. This means that for Jonah's message to spread so quickly,

others had to spread the news. The command to “repent or face your destruction” spread like wildfire.

Jonah met no resistance. He was more effective than if Billy Graham had shown up to preach repentance. The city where Jonah didn’t want to go, ended up being one of the Bible’s most successful stories of national repentance.

When we consider what Jonah had just been through, we realize that he had every reason to be passionate about God’s message. He tasted death in the most awful way...and lived through it. Jonah’s message was effective because God was in it and because Jonah was so stripped of all his personal issues that he delivered a clear, unadulterated message.

- God gave Jonah a serious second chance.
- Jonah took God’s second chance seriously.
- The Ninevites took Jonah seriously.

GOD HAD A SERIOUS CHAT WITH JONAH

The old selfish Jonah came back on the scene. He wasn’t expecting repentance, he expected resistance. It was all too easy. He became angry! He thought this whole ordeal was a waste of time. He gave God his opinion in a prayer.

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 4:1-3

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. ² He prayed to the LORD, “Isn’t this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. ³ Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” This is the second time that Jonah wanted to die.

And here’s the scripture that pops out at me:

⁴ But the LORD replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

Jonah felt justified with his attitude and God questioned him. Jonah missed it completely.

⁵ Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city.

Jonah sat there like he was at a drive-in movie with popcorn eagerly waiting to see the city destroyed. But there was no longer any reason for God to destroy it. Jonah missed the opportunity to be the prophet of the people. He could have stayed and been God's spokesperson for them. But he didn't. Listen to this: in the middle of Jonah's sorry attitude, God provided shade for him.

⁶ Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. ⁷ But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." This is the third time he wanted to die.

⁹ But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead." Again, God asked him if his attitude was right. This is the fourth time he wanted to die.

¹⁰ But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. ¹¹ And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"

Instead of rejoicing at the repentance of 120,000 people, Jonah was worked up over a shade plant.

- What we do know is that God gave Jonah the ability to accomplish his will.
- God brought Jonah to the point of accomplishing his will.
- Jonah was faithful for a while.
- What Jonah did after this, we don't know. The story ends on a cliffhanger.
- It was up to Jonah at that point to repent of his bad attitude once again or continue living in self pity.

The way the story ends reminds me of where you and I are right now. What will we decide? Will we follow God's will for our lives and be glad about it or will be like Jonah, obedient only for a while, and then back to a sorry disposition of self-pity? The choice is ours.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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