

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
Paul Gunn, Pastor

**LESSONS IN CHANGE: JONAH GETS A SECOND CHANCE**

Jonah 1:17, 2:1-10, 3:1-9

September 4, 2022

For public use: See non-copyright comments at the end of the message.

There are three points to today's message:

1. Unpleasant circumstances often lead to extraordinary change.
2. Everybody loves a second-chance story.
3. God does not waste our pain.

**INTRODUCTION:** Today is week 3 in our miniseries on change. We have been examining the changes that took place in the life of Jonah, how he handled those changes, and what we can learn from his story.

- Jonah was a prophet. He delivered messages for God.
- One day God changed Jonah's assignment. Instead of proclaiming a message to the Jewish people or authorities, God told Jonah to take a message to the enemy nation, Nineveh.
- After receiving that assignment, Jonah changed his mind about obeying God. He hopped on a ship and set sail for Tarshish.
- God sent a great storm that threatened to kill Jonah and his shipmates.
- At Jonah's insistence, the sailors threw him overboard, and he was swallowed by a great fish.
- Jonah once again called out to God.

**1- UNPLEASANT CIRCUMSTANCES OFTEN LEAD TO  
EXTRAORDINARY CHANGE**

**SCRIPTURE:** Jonah 1:17, 2:1, 2:10

*Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights... 2:1 From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God... 2:10 And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.*

**EXPLANATION:** When Jonah told the sailors to throw him into the sea, it was his ultimate act of defiance. Jonah was in fact shaking his fist at God. “I’d rather die than repent and obey!” As he sank under the waves and felt his lungs filling with water, his attitude quickly changed and, in his heart, he cried out to God for salvation. God sent a great fish to swallow him, and Jonah worshipped and praised God.

A bit of an aside here. I want you to note Jonah’s moves away from God. How does a person move away from God? One step at a time. I am reminded of James 1:14-15 that describes the process of moving away from God like a gestation period.

*But each one is tempted when by his own evil desires he is lured away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death....*

That’s what Jonah did. When Jonah awoke on the morning that God gave him a task, he did not think I’d rather be thrown off a boat in a storm. No, he went away from God one step at a time.

- He decided not to obey God.
- He decided to travel in the opposite direction.
- Then, he asked to be thrown off the boat in the storm.

It’s hard for us to imagine what it must have been like to spend three days in the belly of a fish. No doubt that in a very short time, the fish’s digestive acids were working, and no doubt it must have burned. Plus the fish was likely eating other things as well. It’s even harder for us to imagine what it must have felt like to be regurgitated. Both would have been extremely unpleasant circumstances, but sometimes God uses unpleasant circumstances to bring about extraordinary change.

### **ILLUSTRATION:**

- If there had never been a flood, we would not know the beauty and promise of the rainbow.
- If Ruth had never lost her husband, she would have never become an ancestor of King David or Jesus Christ.
- If Esther had not been forced to participate in a beauty contest, she would never have become queen or had the opportunity to save her people from extinction.

- If Mary the mother of Jesus had not suffered the pains of labor, she could not have held the infant Savior.
- If Lazarus had not died, Mary and Martha could not have witnessed the power of Jesus when he brought their brother back to life.
- If Jesus had not been crucified, we would not know the joy of the resurrection and our own salvation.
- If Paul was not blinded on the road to Damascus, he would never have seen the true Light, and we would not have most of the New Testament books of the Bible we read today.

**APPLICATION:** When we experience unexpected changes and unpleasant circumstances in our lives, we should always be mindful of what we cannot yet see. Romans 8:28 says, *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”* All things do not feel good. All things are not easy, but for the believer, this is a promise. God will use those hard things to bring about his good purpose.

1. Unpleasant circumstances often lead to extraordinary change.

## **2-EVERYBODY LOVES A SECOND-CHANCE STORY**

**SCRIPTURE:** Jonah 3:1-4

*Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: <sup>2</sup> “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.” <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.”*

**EXPLANATION:** Nineveh is situated on the eastern bank of the Tigris River just across from the modern city of Mosul in Iraq. The size of the ancient city can be determined because the ruins of the city walls still stand. It encompassed an area of 1,640 acres, and, as we will find out in a few minutes, Nineveh housed more than 100,000 people.

God did not give Jonah time to recoup from his arduous journey, but he did give him another chance to obey.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Everyone loves a second-chance story. We want to hear about the hardened criminal who turns his life around. We like to cheer for the comeback team who wins the championship after facing a severe loss. We want to read about the character who finds true love after she's dumped by an unscrupulous boyfriend.

Listen to this story about a boy named Todd. Todd was a young boy who played Little League baseball. By many accounts, he was the best pitcher in the League. He was among a group chosen to represent his division in the area All-Star tournament. However, one of the coaches of the All-Star team happened to be a man who worked out of town and therefore had missed most of the ball season. During the first tournament game, the coach allowed Todd to pitch but, not knowing the boy's abilities, he tried to coach him in a way that didn't work for Todd. When Todd did not perform to his expectations, the coach pulled him and didn't allow him to pitch for the rest of the 15-game tournament. Although the team did well, the experience was unsettling for Todd and his parents because they knew Todd was not given the opportunity to showcase his abilities.

The following year, Todd was again chosen for the All-Star team. In the very first game of the tournament, Todd's team faced the same team they had when Todd had been pulled from the mound the previous year. Todd's new coaches chose him as the starting pitcher. He pitched the entire game and led his team to victory. His teammates carried him off the field on their shoulders.

**APPLICATION:** Todd was given a second chance to redeem himself as a pitcher. Jonah was given a second chance to prove himself to be an obedient servant of the Lord. Sometimes an unexpected change provides us with a much-desired second chance. Second chances are never guaranteed, but if God gives you a second chance to right a previous wrong, by all means don't ignore it. Don't make the same mistake twice. We'll see later that's what Jonah did.

1. Unpleasant circumstances often lead to extraordinary change
2. Everybody loves a second-chance story

### **3-GOD DOES NOT WASTE OUR PAIN**

**SCRIPTURE:** Jonah 3:5-3:9

*The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."*

**EXPLANATION:** Of all the characters in this story, we would expect the Ninevites to be the least likely to change. Do you remember what I told you about them in the first sermon? They were a brutal people. Not only were they known for their cruelty, they took pride in it. Yet, when Jonah preached the message God told him to preach, they turned from their evil ways. Why did they listen to Jonah? Why did they even take him seriously? Well, obviously, God was at work in their hearts. He was also at work in other ways.

As part of the Assyrian empire, the Assyrians worshipped the false god, Dagon. This god appeared like the mythical creatures we know as mermaids—half man and half fish. Now just imagine Jonah, who had spent three days and nights in the belly of a fish, arriving in Nineveh. I imagine no matter how many times Jonah bathed, he probably smelled fishy for a while. There is no way to know for sure, but could it be possible that the people of Nineveh, who worshipped a false fish god, paid a little more attention to Jonah because of his story about why he smelled like fish?

In the same way that God sent the storm to get Jonah's attention, God also sent the fish to rescue him. God could have provided for Jonah's salvation in any number of ways. He could have sent another boat. He could have washed him ashore. He could have raised him up and allowed him to walk on water until he reached dry land. Our God is a creative God, and his ways are not ours, but his choice of transportation was not an accident.

God does not waste our pain. Jonah's choice to run from God was unwise, but God did not waste Jonah's disciplinary experiences. Not only did the storm get Jonah's attention, it also made an impression on the sailors. After the storm, the Bible tells us that they feared the Lord and made sacrifices and vows to him. The fish not only

saved Jonah's life, it also provided a common point of interest with the people to whom Jonah was sent.

3. Unpleasant circumstances often lead to extraordinary change.
4. Everybody loves a second-chance story.
5. God does not waste our pain.

**APPLICATION:** What kind of change are you experiencing in your life today? For young people maybe it's something expected like starting a new school year or celebrating another birthday. Maybe it's a positive change—your child is moving out, and you will have an empty nest...woohoo! Maybe it's a sudden change—your relative is ill, and you know he or she won't be with you much longer. Regardless of whether it's a good event or bad, change is hard. The older we get, the more set in our ways we become. Change is inevitable, but, as believers, we have the promise of God's presence through it all.

**INVITATION:** Romans 8:38-39 says, *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,<sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

If you are struggling through a period of change in your life, why not come to the altar and ask for God's help.

To preachers, teachers, students, and anyone else reading or using this message: I have posted this for all to use as you see fit. There is no need to cite me as the source. You are free to delete sections, add your own, or do whatever you want. There is no copyright. My request is that you do not copyright or sell my work. I am sharing my preaching notes in good faith with you because I know the challenges of putting together a lesson, especially when your week gets consumed with other things. Use it and enjoy!

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.

Find me at [www.thbc.com](http://www.thbc.com). Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn  
Thanks to Jennifer Anderson for her editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn  
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
Nashville, Tennessee  
USA