

SECOND CHANCES (PART 2)

(Check out <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBuGKXHI93I> to see the message)

Last week when we left this story Jonah ran away and was on a boat., **Jonah 1:3-17** Talks about what happen while on the boat, let me summarize it for you. Jonah got in a boat, sailing west to a destination about 2,500 miles away, Tarshish. God basically said, “This assignment is too important. I’m not going to let you run from me,” and God sent this big storm on the boat Jonah was on.

The storm was so big it was about to break up the boat. The captain went down and said, “Jonah, maybe if you pray, you’re a prophet, if you call on the name of your God, maybe He will save us.” But Jonah was a prophet on the run, and he was a prayer-less prophet. He had stopped praying, much like a lot of people who call themselves believers. They claim to believe in God, and yet, have virtually no prayer life, whatsoever. Jonah, the prophet of God, was not in the mood to pray. The storm raged on.

The sailors came in and said, “What’s up, Jonah?” and he said, “Well, I’ve got to admit, it’s my fault. I’m running from God. Throw me overboard and everything will be cool.” The sailors said, “We’re not going to do that.” They tried everything else possible. At the end of the day, they realized, “We have no other choice.” They said, “We’re sorry.”

They threw him over, and the very last verse of **Jonah 1:17** says, **“And the Lord provided a great fish that swallowed Jonah, where he spent three days and three nights in the belly of a fish.”**

That’s where we pick up this story. Fun times, fun times.

Jonah’s Prayer

Jonah, chapter 2, is the prayer of Jonah. It’s a beautiful Hebrew prayer. Some people call it the Psalm of Jonah. Now, as we read this, you have to recognize, this is just a snapshot of what Jonah was praying. You know three days and three nights in the belly of a fish, and he was praying a lot of other prayers like, “Help!” okay? Over and over and over again, and so, this is not the exact prayer.

Jonah 2:1, let’s dig in.

“From inside the fish, Jonah,” finally did what? **“Jonah prayed to the Lord his God.”** 2 1 [a]From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. 2 He said: “In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry. 3 You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. 4 I said, ‘I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.’ 5 The engulfing waters threatened me,[b] the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. 6 To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, Lord my God,

brought my life up from the pit. 7 “When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. 8 “Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God’s love for them. 9 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.’” 10 And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

THE FISH VOMITS HIM UP- did anyone else catch that?!

God said, “I got your attention.”

Key to this prayer: “In my distress I,” did what? He said, “I called on the Lord,” and what did the Lord do? The Lord ...” Pause and think about that for a moment. **“I called on the Lord, and He answered me.”**

Verses 3, 4, 5, and 6, he says, **“O God, you hurled me into the deep.”** Now, technically, it was the sailors who did this. But Jonah very wisely recognized the hand of God behind everything. **“You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers, they swept over me.”** He said, **“I have been banished from Your sight, yet I will look again toward your temple.”**

Verse 5, **“The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed wrapped around my head.**

It almost sounds like an episode of man versus wild. Okay, this dude, he’s in big trouble.

Verse 6, **“To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath me barred me in forever.”** In other words, “There is no physical hope for me. This is game over. Do not pass go. Do not collect \$200. Jonah sees himself as a dead man.”

And then he says, **“But,”** what? Say it aloud. He said, **“But you ...”** say it aloud. He said, **“But you, God, but you brought my life,”** what? **“You brought my life up from the pit.”** Down to the depths of the ocean, down to the depths of despair, down to the depths of a whale’s belly. But now God raises him up!

Some of you right now, you feel like your life is spiraling out of control, going downward, and I’m going to remind you. **Never to forget the “but, God,” moments.**

“But, God, my life was out of control, but God intervened.

My family was in trouble and we thought it was over, but God changed my heart and healed our marriage.

The doctor said there’s no chance. You might as well just go prepare for the end, but God has the final say.”

Don’t forget the **“but, God”** moments. Remember, all things are possible with God. When Jonah was at a point where every physical thing said, “You will never survive this, you are jarred

in forever, but God ... but God ... but the God of the universe. I called on him and he heard my cry and he delivered me up from the pit.” He goes on to say this. He said, verse 7, “When my life was ebbing away,” what did he do? Say it aloud, he said, “I remembered you, O Lord, and my prayer,” did what? “It rose to your holy temple.”

You could read through more verses of this prayer and see. But it ends up saying in verse 10: Then, verse 10 says, “And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.” It’s kind of disgusting, if you ask me, but it is very powerful and it drives home the thought that I hope that will echo in your heart for the rest of your lives. And that is this. Whether you are on top of the world, or whether you are in the depths of Hell, when you call on the Lord, He will answer you.

God gives Jonah a second chance, to do what he was asked to do. We serve a God of second chances.

God gives you a second chance, clears the slate. There are those of you like me, who do not deserve the grace of God. Verse 2, God says: “Go”. “Go, go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim the message I give you.” Verse 3: Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord.”

Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord. In the past, he did not. In our past some of us did not. But this time, immediately, now. **“Yes, God. You tell me to do it, I’ll go. You tell me to speak, I’ll speak. You tell me to give, I’ll give. You tell me to love, I’ll love. You tell me to do whatever, my answer is yes.”**

Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord.

Now, imagine this. Imagine him walking forward and he’s going, “Okay, I’m going to have to preach a message to these people, who are probably going to kill me.” That’s what had to be going through his mind. “They’re mean, they’re violent, and they don’t like my type.”

So, he’s walking through there probably going, “Okay, what kind of sermon am I going to preach that’s going to make them happy?”

Step number one, stop being mean. Ninevite, you are mean.

Step number two, think happy thoughts. Think happy, happy thoughts. Be happy and positive.

Step three, don’t worry.

Then I’ll tell a poem at the end, the funny story off the top, and it will work.” Okay. He didn’t do anything like this.

Walking through Nineveh, you can almost picture, you know, the dust swirling up and the guy coming out of the bar with a gun, you know, and the whole city is full of mean people with tattoos everywhere and all of this kind of stuff, you know. And he’s scared to death, walking in, and he preaches what God tells him to preach.

Scripture says this: “He proclaimed, forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.” Forty more days

This message was short. It was direct, and it was offensive.

This word, when he used it, he used it because God gave it to him. It is the word “hippock”. In forty days you will be hippock, and this word can either mean overturned and destroyed, or it can mean overturned and changed. God said: *“Forty days and you will be either be destroyed or you will be forever changed. What’s it going to be?”* Forty days.

Notice, the time was ticking with the mercy of God. God’s mercy, you need to understand, is a limited time offer. You don’t have forever. You don’t even have a promise of tomorrow. There is no promise you will wake up tomorrow. The mercy of God is a limited time offer. “Forty days and you will be destroyed, or forty days and you will be changed forever. Which will it be?”

Some of you, you may be on day thirty-nine. I’m sorry this isn’t the three steps to happiness, but this may be the one step to repentance you need to hear. Times’s ticking. Tick ... tick ... tick ... tick ... tick ... tick ... tick ... tick ... Forty days, He says. **The mercy of God is a limited time offer. You do not have forever to turn to Him. He preaches this message with boldness and with passion.**

Verse 5 says, “The Ninevites believed God.”

Notice, they didn’t even believe Jonah. They believed God. In fact, if I come down on you a little bit today, I hope that you don’t believe me. Don’t even buy into anything I say, because anything I say, it’s worthless. But what God says, you better listen to. “They believed God, they declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.”

Then look with me at verses 6 through verse 9. “When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, he took off his royal robes, and he covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.”

Now, just for the king, at midday, to leave the throne is a symbol of repentance. Then, for him to take off his royal robes, and the king puts on sackcloth, then he goes down and he covers himself in dust, saying, “I am unworthy. I am a sinner. I need forgiveness from God.”

Then in verse 10: “God saw what they had done, that they had turned away from their evil lives. He did change his mind about them. What he said he would do to them he didn’t do.”

Jonah comes out preaching fire, and the Ninevites, the people who were farthest from God, said, “We are going to turn to God”. There are those of you right now that most people say you are so far from God you’d never come to God. And inside, you know you’re so close.

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, what did He have on them?

He had compassion and He did not bring upon them the destruction that He had threatened.

God gave them a second chance and God will always give you a second chance.

If we repent and we turn to Him, watch as He does more than we could ever imagine.

Maybe you aren't where you need to be today? Maybe you want to cash in on that second chance.

Possible Discussion Questions:

Too often we only pray when things are hard, or when we want something. How can we learn to pray in all situations in our lives?

What has been one of those "But God" moments in your life? How did you say thank you to God for those times?

Recall a time when you were given a second chance from someone you didn't deserve. How did receiving that forgiveness help your relationship? Does something similar occur when we turn to God, and receive forgiveness?