

“Second Chances”
Jonah 3:1
(Preached at Trinity, December 13, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The Book of Jonah opened with God's Divine command upon the prophet Jonah:
Jonah 1:1 NAU - "The word of the LORD came to Jonah"
2. It was a charge for Jonah to rise up and go to Nineveh with a message of God's judgment upon their wickedness.
 - a. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. It had become a symbol representing the forces of evil and it was a real threat upon the security of Israel. Jonah was being charged to go this evil, pagan city of Nineveh and proclaim God's mercy in repentance. Jonah would much rather see Nineveh destroyed.
 - b. God's charge to Jonah wasn't optional. It wasn't open to debate. It was an unconditional charge to go. God's Word is absolute.
"The word of the LORD came to Jonah"
3. As I pointed out earlier, it would have been terrifying to go to such a city alone and preach a message of God's anger and judgment. It was a large city by ancient standards—it would take three days just to travel across the city. The population of Nineveh was estimated at 2 million. Jonah was being told to go to a pagan city and preach to them of an unknown God. One could not imagine a more dangerous mission.
How it rebukes us. We often fear to speak to a single person.
4. But this isn't why Jonah was refusing to go. Jonah could not accept God being compassionate to these heathen people. In this, he reflected the heart of the entire nation. When God rebukes Jonah He is also rebuking the entire nation of Israel.
5. Jonah would have been willing to go to Nineveh to proclaim God's judgment against them if he would be certain that judgment would come. What he couldn't accept was the possibility of their repentance and God's mercy. He was not willing to be the instrument of God's compassion upon these pagan people. So Jonah fled.
"But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."
6. Jonah was guilty of taking God's command and subjecting it to his own reason as to whether or not he would obey.
Jonah fled to Joppa where he boarded a ship and made his escape towards Tarshish which was in the exact opposite direction as Nineveh. Not only did he abandon God's direct command, he also abandoned God's call upon his life as the prophet of God.
7. At the end of **Chapter 1** and carrying over into **Chapter 2** we witnessed the gracious hand of God upon Jonah. Instead of abandoning him to his stubborn resistance and sin God pursued Jonah and rescued him. But what about Jonah's relationship with God? And what about Jonah's office as prophet? Did Jonah's sin mark the end of his usefulness to God? Was it possible for Jonah to have a second chance? Could he be restored.
8. As we enter **Chapter 3** we find the wonderful answer to these questions. We find in the opening verses of this chapter that God is a God of second chances.
Jonah 3:1 NAU - "Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time"

9. This is one of those wonderful verses that God gives in His Word to encourage us. He came to Jonah a second time. Jonah's sin was great, but God's grace is also great. We can always start anew. Not only a second time; God's grace is boundless towards us.
1 John 1:9 NAU - "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
Romans 8:1 NAU - "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
Romans 5:20 KJV - "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"
10. There is a difference, however, between knowing this and receiving it. There are times, that the Christian has a difficult time accepting this. He has sinned and he has confessed his sin. God has forgiven his sin, and yet he still feels condemned. He finds no rest for his soul and his assurance is but a faint glow. The self-condemnation will not go away.
11. Tonight I want to set before you the causes of this terrible malady of self-condemnation and then the cure.

I. The causes of self-condemnation

- A. It could be that the individual has never trusted Christ
1. The Law condemns but offers no power to obey. Breaking God's Law declares our guilt but offers no forgiveness, no peace for our conscience.
 2. Guilt is a terrible curse. It stalks us. Our conscience cannot find rest. Good works might provide temporary relief but they only satisfy our pride, they offer no rest for our soul.
 As long as we look to our own actions as our source of confidence we'll always be found wanting. When can we finally say we've done enough? And what is to be done when we sin and our conscience condemns us?
 3. A man without Christ knows only condemnation.
- B. It could be a fearful heart
1. Some are plagued by fear. What if I've not really trusted Christ? What if I'm not really a Christian. The fear of death and hell haunts them.
 2. Such thoughts are really a mistrust of Christ. They doubt His promises. They doubt His gracious words –
Matthew 11:28-29 NAS - "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls."
John 6:37 NAU - "the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."
 3. They haven't understood the greatness of Christ's love. Can we fear the One who loves us with a boundless, unconditional love?
1 John 4:16-18 NAU - "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."

4. Such fear is really sin that must be confessed and repented of.
1 John 4:18 NAS - "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."

C. It could be some particular sin

1. Perhaps it is a sin of the past. Or perhaps it is a present sin that you hate but it seems to continually beset you. You feel ashamed and condemned and fear you could never be forgiven.
2. Perhaps you are certain other believers would condemn you if they found out. Or perhaps they do know. You're certain you will never escape their scornful looks and judgmental glances. Instead of a gracious balm of healing you find they rub salt into your hurting heart.
3. A word to the body of Christ: Few things are worse than a harsh, graceless, censorious, condemning spirit. It is great sin to always be looking at others with a critical spirit.
 - a. Such people seldom see their own sin – such as this sin of hyper-criticism. Jesus spoke harshly against such.
Matthew 7:3-5 NAU - "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? ⁵ "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."
 - b. Paul condemned such a harsh spirit
Romans 14:4 NAU - "Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls"
 - c. But even if it is a matter of sin there is no grace or love in it, no tears shed, no true concern for the fallen brother or sister.
Galatians 6:1 NAU - "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted."

D. One more cause of self-condemnation – the accusatory attacks of Satan

1. The Greek word for devil is δίαβολος literally means slanderer or accuser. It is the word used for “malicious gossips” in 1 Tim. 3:11
1 Timothy 3:11 NAU - "Women *must* likewise *be* dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things."
Titus 2:3-5 NAU - "Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ⁴ so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ *to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored."
2. Satan at one moment whispers in our ear telling us of our greatness, filling us with pride. The next moment he is telling us how worthless we are. He holds our sin before us and tells us we could never be forgiven.
3. Satan desires to rob us of our joy and strip us of our confidence before Christ.

II. The cure of self-condemnation

A. Remember, God is a God of second-chances

1. This is at the heart of this passage in Jonah
 - a. God came seeking Jonah. While Jonah was fleeing God arrested him with the storm and rescued him with the fish.
 - b. God brought Jonah to repentance and called upon him a second time.
Jonah 3:1 NAU - "Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time"
 - c. It was God who stirred Jonah to obedience
Jonah 3:3 NAU - "So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD"
2. Perhaps you feel you've gone too far. It's too late. God receives all who turn from their sin and follow Christ.
3. For the believer, God has not forsaken you. Like the father in the Parable of the Prodigal son, He receives sinners who humbly return to Him. He doesn't turn away those who cast themselves upon His mercy.
4. God never turns away repenting sinners. Although men may condemn you God is the one before whom you will stand or fall.

B. Remember God's precious promises

1. God's Word is absolute
1 John 1:9 NAU - "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
Psalms 103:11-13 NAU - "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. ¹² As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him."
Jeremiah 31:34 NAU - "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."
Romans 8:1 NAU - "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
Isaiah 43:25 NAU - "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins."
2. To doubt the promises of God is to call Him a liar, a deceiver, or helpless to do what He has promised.
Numbers 23:19 NAU - "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"
Isaiah 46:9-11 NAU - "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; ¹¹ Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned *it*, *surely* I will do it."

- C. Remember the perfection of Christ's life and death as our Mediator
1. There is no rest until we come to the knowledge of the infinite value of Christ. He alone has the power to deal with our sins. His sacrifice alone is sufficient to satisfy God's justice. We must rest in Him alone.
1 John 1:9 NAU - "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 2. The sacrifice of Christ was effectual – we trust in the efficacy of its merit
1689 Confession: "Christ, by his obedience and death did fully discharge the debt of all those that are justified; and did by the sacrifice of himself in the blood of his cross, undergoing in their stead the penalty due unto them, make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in their behalf..."
 3. Doubts often come from a failure to trust fully in the sufficiency of His sacrifice upon the cross. We begin to rest more upon our actions than upon Christ. If we look anywhere else we will never find relief for our sin.
William Cowper –
Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.
 4. As our Mediator Jesus is Prophet, Priest, and King
As our great King He was able to subdue our rebellious hearts. Is He now powerless to preserve and keep us?
- D. Ultimately, it is an issue of sin
1. Do you not know Him? A relationship with Christ is the greatest of treasures. Do you doubt His love for you? Has He given you cause for such doubts?
 2. Will you believe the lies of Satan rather than the Word of God?
 3. Shall you wallow in fear and unbelief when the Holy Spirit is in you with great power?
 4. Shall you not pray, O God, help Thou my unbelief?"

Conclusion:

1. Jonah's sin was grave. He was guilty of desertion. He was guilty of forsaking the Word of God. And yet, God brought him to repentance.
2. The richness of God's grace is not only did God forgive Jonah of his sin, He restored Jonah to a right relationship and He restored Jonah's place of service. Jonah was completely restored.
3. God forgives, restores, renews. He is the God of second chances.
1 John 1:9 KJV - "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."