

**Jonah: Burn
God: Turn or Burn
Jonah's Message Versus God's Grace in the Face of Repentance
Jonah 2:10 – 3:10**

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Jonah, in a fish, somewhere in the Med, repents, sort of and is ready to go where YAHWEH wants him to go.

Is still he a bit self-righteous? Indeed.

Is God really pleased with the prayer, let's be honest, He did have the fish vomit him out onto the beach. What about that word – vomit. By the way, it means that there were other things in the fish's stomach too that came along with Jonah to the beach. In the Bible, it is a strong term that carries some baggage with it.

To be clear, in the Bible, "vomit" is used as a term of revulsion. It is seen used in relation to sin or the results of sin. Looking at the word in the OT it shows up 9 times. We see it used in Leviticus 18 as a warning and as an image of what sin causes.

Leviticus 18:24–30

“Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, **and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.** But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you (for the people of the land, who

were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God.” (ESV)

Clearly the term is used as a picture of God’s revulsion towards those who sin and persist in their sin. It is a term used when God is disgusted by the continuing actions of the nations or His own people. And here the term shows up in Jonah 2:10.

Jonah 2:10

“Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.” (NASB 2020)

The word is נִזְעַזַּע (yāqē). “Those who defile the land by an immoral life have impugned the purity or holiness of the land and cannot continue to dwell there: the land will vomit them out. This befell the previous inhabitants of the land and it will befall the Israelites if they do not keep the commandments.” (Ringgren 2004, 16)

Here in Jonah, it is used because the fish vomits, or rather spews Jonah out onto the beach. Jonah is a believer, but he has been involved in running from the Lord and apostatizing his faith in order to do so. He also has been ministering in the Northern Kingdom which will soon be vomited out of the land. Apostasy is the opposite of conversion, it is deconversion or falling away. This fact is not lost on the Holy Spirit as He leads Jonah to use the vomit word.

The same vomit word is also used in the New Testament for much the same purpose, a reflection of the disgust God holds towards believers who have apostatized themselves living for self rather than Him, just like Jonah.

Revelation 3:15–16

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot! So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth!” (NET 2nd ed.)

Jesus is talking about the church in Laodicea. That church, based on where it shows up in the book of Revelation, is a picture of the last days church. The primary characteristic of this church is it is all about me, and not about the Lord, the Great Commission, or really anything else. The Laodicean church reflected no outward signs of true repentance. Instead, they were self-absorbed with riches as well as looking good with no substance at all.

Just like Jonah, in Revelation, God is threatening “judgment to those who refuse to take their faith seriously, declaring that because the Laodiceans are lukewarm, he will spew them out of his mouth (Rev 3:16). Vomiting is here a gesture of disgust, as when the fish expelled Jonah on the land (Jon 2:10); while the act rescued Jonah from his watery threat, the word used is a term of repulsion that suggests that Jonah was nauseating to the fish.” I’ll go one further, he was still a bit nauseating to God. He is moving the right direction, but still has a way to go. (Ryken, et al. 2000, 919)

The fish is happy to be rid of the stomach problem. The mission has been achieved and the running prophet is back at the beginning point and now ready to be recommissioned. The fish was faithful. Jonah blew the first commissioning, so it will be round two. He experiences the God of second chances.

The mindset of Jonah. Bigoted, not happy with what he has been asked to do. Convinced that the people of Nineveh are only worthy of destruction. He has even prayed to the Lord in his, “okay I’ll go speech,” about how he isn’t anything like those foul filthy pagans. He still has some lessons to learn. Has he repented? He is moving down the path.

Don't get me wrong, Jonah was "grateful for the mercy God had shown him. He was alive even though he did not deserve to be. He had not drowned, even though death was the punishment he had merited (1:12). Jonah had experienced the grace of God, and he knew it and said so eloquently and at length. God had not treated him as his sins deserved. That is the message of the psalm prayed from the inside of the great fish." (Stuart 1994, 819)

Jonah neither loves God (he would rather die than do what YHWH wants, for reasons revealed in ch. 4) nor loves his non-Israelite neighbour, whose unhappy fate he imagines and glibly contrasts with his own. Those who genuinely love God reflect his character and rejoice to see others receive and enjoy the grace they have received. (Timmer 2021, 66)

But God has a purpose for Jonah's life, he has not yet arrived and is still learning.

The thing that I love about Jonah is, he has some issues. All of us do and the Lord is working with us on our issues, just like he is working with Jonah. Some of us are stubborn like Jonah. There are degrees of stubbornness. But God uses imperfect people for His purposes.

Prophets of God were not perfect, they were just men and a few women who were selected by God to be His messengers to His people, or like with Jonah, a people selected by God. In other words, they are like us. Some, like Isaiah, said yes, send me. Others, like Moses, wanted to negotiate the terms. Jeremiah asked why. But only Jonah turned tail and ran. Here is the thing, God will even use a Jonah.

Jonah, the unwilling recalcitrant prophet will be used by God as the catalyst for a massive spiritual awakening among a gentile pagan people. This isn't a revival like Joel saw, this is a full-on revelation of who God is to a people who had no idea they were even looking for Him. I guess we could call it a great awakening and it took place with God using the most unusual of evangelists who preached a pretty one-sided message.

God did the same with the Jesus movement in the 60's and used a born-again hippie, Lonnie Frisbee and the middle-aged pastor of a small church, Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel.

They both had their issues. Lonnie Frisbee was used powerfully by God to bring many to Christ, yet he was far from perfect and struggled with sin that would ultimately kill him. Samson had some of the same issues. Chuck Smith preached at Lonnie's funeral service. He told those in attendance that Lonnie was a "Samson figure" who was powerfully anointed by God, but whose broken childhood often contributed to his struggles and temptations.

If God can use Samson, or Jonah, he can use you and me. Obviously, perfection is not a prerequisite for being used. Being available though is.

Jonah 3:1-2

"Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you."" (NASB 2020)

Jonah has gone through a discipline action that resulted in him now being available. Is he happy to be going to Nineveh? No, his attitude hasn't changed, but he does now recognize who is in control and who it is he works for. Yes, now he is available.

Now that Jonah is safe and back on the beach, where is he? We really do not know as the text does not provide that bit of info for us.

I would suspect he has been brought back to where he started off from. That would reflect God's sense of humor about all of this.

How long from being beached to the recommissioning? That we do not know either. It could have been immediate; it could have been days or weeks later too. We simply are not told.

What we do know is that God has now placed Jonah back into the same position he was in back in chapter 1. Possibly he has made it back home, and had some time to process the events. He has emerged a different person.

Would you give Jonah a second chance? I mean, he disqualified himself, didn't he?

If it was us, we would probably treat him the same way many churches treat pastors who have failed, "no way." God does not operate that way though. But we would.

Recall Paul had to instruct the church in Corinth to allow the individual who had been churching in 1 Corinthians back into the fellowship (2 Corinthians 2:5 – 11). He most likely would be telling us the same.

I mean after all; Paul didn't want John Mark to come back due to his leaving (Acts 15:39) yet later we see John Mark is back with him (Colossians 4:10). Paul did indeed listen to his own teaching and forgave John Mark giving him another opportunity to serve.

But for many churches today, there is a legalistic spirit that says...no.

Would you hire this man? Highly educated with a dual doctorate. A religious zealot and legalist who has churching those who did not align with the word. A murderer who has some jail time, most likely divorced, and is pushing 50. But he is anointed by God.

That is Paul's resume by the way.

Even our "legal system along with organized sports distinguishes between a first-time offender and a repeat offender. In Jonah's case his misdeed is a one-time event. But it is a major one-time event, a gross neglect of duty." (Bob 2016, 139) But many in the church hold an unrealistic and unbiblical higher standard. They pop the red card without ever pulling the yellow .

Why did God forgive Jonah? Why does He forgive us for that matter?

2 Corinthians 5:19

"For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation." (NLT)

John 3:16–17

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (ESV)

God's grace is being placed on full display for all to see, grace fully realized by the work Jesus did on the cross for us.

We are all damaged in one way or another. "In an unforgiving world, many a career has been terminated by just one mistake. Even if someone gets a second chance, it is usually probationary and with less responsibility. But although he failed when first called by God to go to Nineveh, Jonah was both reinstated as God's prophet and given the same commission to preach to the Ninevites!" (Keddie 1986, 79)

God is the God of the second, third, thousandth chance.

We have disobeyed him. We have run away from him. Some of us, like Jonah, have run very far indeed. Does God cast us off? Does he disown us? No! He disciplines us, it is true. But, having done that and

having brought us to the place of repentance, he returns the second time to recommission us to service. Moreover, he comes a third, a fourth, a hundredth, a thousandth time, if necessary, as it often is. None of us would be where we are now in our Christian lives if God had not dealt thus with us. (Boice 2002, 294)

When we say yes, are we perfect? No. Are we still learning? Yes.

Will we regret not having said yes earlier? Always. Judah dealt with this earlier when Joel was ministering to them. Sating yes, repenting and returning back to the path He has for us has promises connected to it.

Joel 2:25

“I will give you back what you lost in the years when swarms of locusts ate your crops. It was I who sent this army against you.” (GNB)

Is this recommissioning a simple duplication of the prior call? No, there are a couple of differences.

The Two Calls

Jonah 1:1–2

“The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry out against it, because their wickedness has come up before Me.”” (NASB 2020)

Jonah 3:1–2

“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.”” (NASB 2020)

Jonah 1:2 commanded Jonah to “preach against” the city, while 3:2 calls Jonah to “preach to” the city. Further, 3:2 stresses YHWH’s message while 1:2 stresses the wickedness of Nineveh. These subtle changes effectively prepare the reader to take a different attitude toward Jonah (by subtly reminding the reader of his failed attempt to flee) and the Ninevites (by downplaying their wickedness). (Nogalski 2011, 438)

God is the God of a second chance. I am so thankful that He is. None of us would make it if He wasn’t. He didn’t have to use Jonah, but He chose to do so. He doesn’t have to use any of us, but He chooses to do so as He is the God of a second chance (1 John 1:9).

As He recommissions Jonah, there is no reminder of past failures, he is back to where he started and the only thing that has changed, is Jonah. Jonah could still say no, but this time, he doesn’t. “Jonah is the only biblical prophet who had to have his assignment given twice.” (Nixon 2003, 156)

So, what is the message that is required to be given? We are not told, but we do see it later.

We therefore cannot be certain whether God’s message had been, is being, or will be delivered. (Sasson 2008, 227)

But we do know that the message is to simply be a proclamation. The significance of the change to proclaim “allows more latitude in God’s purposes and gives Nineveh an opportunity to react to God’s message.” (Patterson and Hill 2008, 274)

“The verb קָרָא (qara’, “proclaim”) is repeated from 1:2 but with a significant variation. The phrase in 1:2 was the adversative קָרָא עָלַי (qéra’ ’al, “proclaim against”), which often designates an announcement of threatened judgment (1 Kgs 13:4, 32; Jer 49:29; Lam 1:15). However, here the phrase is the more positive קָרָא אֶל (qéra’ ’el, “proclaim to”) which often designates an oracle of deliverance or a call to repentance, with an accompanying offer of deliverance that is either explicit or implied (Deut 20:10; Isa 40:2; Zech 1:4). This shift from the adversative preposition “against” to the more positive preposition “to” might signal a shift in God’s intentions or perhaps it simply makes his original intention more clear.

While God threatened to judge Nineveh, he was very willing to relent and forgive when the people repented from their sins (3:8–10).” (Biblical Studies Press 2019, Note 3:8-10)

Mr. Stubborn would have picked up on that nuance. Remember, he wants to see Nineveh burn.

It is a serious thing to realize that people may become outwardly correct in their demeanor and zealous in the work of the Lord after a failure, so that none may realize that they are not yet restored in soul, while in reality the evil remains unjudged. The root of the matter is unreached. Certain acts may be confessed, and the confession may be real and genuine, so far as it goes; but the state of soul that led to these acts has not been faced in the presence of God. This was the great lack here, and a vital one. But God will have His own way of exposing the true state of His servant to himself, and of restoring his soul. (Ironsides 1909, 211)

God still loves the lost people of Nineveh, and He would still would have them to hear the word and repent.

Jonah has heard the call of God a second time, once again he has a choice to make, obey, or not. Just like the first time. We now know this is not an example of a good obedient prophet. He has his issues. “After his fleeing, his nonchalance during the severe storm, his attempt at sailor-assisted suicide, and his self-righteous prayer, the audience is half expecting a repeat performance of fleeing.” (Hoyt 2018, 477)

But he doesn’t flee, this time he goes just as commanded. This is not a short trip either.

As the crow flies, it is a trip of about 500 miles, but the major form of transport for Jonah’s day and age is by foot or mule. In other words, this trip will take roughly one to two months to achieve, and that is just getting there.

Jonah 3:3

“So Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk.” (NASB 2020)

Jonah gets up and goes to Nineveh. Now he obeys the Word of the Lord. Implying that he once again had an in person visit from the Word.

We all say to ourselves, “about time.” Jonah is being obedient to the calling of the Lord. But here is the question, are we always obedient the first time around? How many of us are on the umpteenth chance?

God cares about all of the nations, not just the Jews. He has made Himself very visible to Nineveh as a result of a couple of things that took place very close together. There was a major earthquake in the region followed by a total eclipse of the sun with the path of totality going right over Nineveh. All predicted by Amos.

The people of Nineveh are concerned, to say the least about their gods.

Jonah was told to get up and go, and this time Jonah got up and went. Briefly, it appears that Jonah has learned his lesson, but readers soon realize that Jonah does only the bare minimum. He remains a reluctant prophet who does his duty and nothing more. (Nogalski 2011, 438)

There is something missing though from this apparent obedience. Jonah does not say a word, just like the first time. What should he say? Probably “Here I am.”

When Abraham was tested by God involving Isaac in Genesis 22, three times Abraham responds with here I am. “Often people in the Hebrew Bible respond to a call by saying, “Hineini,”(here I am) but not Jonah.” (Bob 2016, 149)

In Genesis 31:11 Jacob responded to the angel of the Lord with those words. Moses responded to the Lord at the burning bush with those words (Exodus 3:4). Samuel did as well when called in 1 Samuel 3:4.

Isaiah also responded in like manner when called in Isaiah 6:8. "I believe that Jonah never recites this key declaration of presence, hineini, because he is never as fully present to God as Abraham and Moses were. Jonah goes to Nineveh to fulfill his mission, but he has not fully committed himself to God's cause. He still harbors doubts." (Bob 2016, 150)

Here I am is the simple translation to the word. But there is more in this.

When this word is used by the prophets or the Lord, then "the word hineini expresses a more profound message. When I say this word, I do more than simply describe my geographic location. I proclaim my presence. I am really here. I am fully present. I am here for you. When I say, "Hineini," I proclaim this is me and I am here for you." (Bob 2016, 149)

Jonah has not said this, not at all. He is in but not fully in. As we follow Jesus, we need to be fully in, agreeing with Isaiah.

Isaiah 6:8

"I heard the voice of the Lord say, "Whom will I send? Who will go on our behalf?" I answered, "Here I am, send me!" (NET 2nd ed.)

Jonah 3:3

"So Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk." (NASB 2020)

We are not told how long it took to get there, but once there; we now know that for Jonah to adequately communicate his message, he would need to spend three days walking through the city announcing the message. Does he?

Jonah 3:4

"Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Forty more days, and Nineveh will be overthrown." (NASB 2020)

It looks promising for Jonah. He arrived at the city, and the first day he is there he begins walking through the city delivering his message. Or does he? So, what about day 2 and 3? There are no days 2 and 3.

Jonah only completes a third of his mission. Why is that? He went to Nineveh; he didn't want too though. So, he is there, and he gives them only a day of his time. Is there a reason? We are not told why.

Two options come to mind.

The first is he is there, and he is not interested in doing anything more than the minimum. God told him to go, he did. God told him to deliver the message, he did, and he is done. This seems plausible.

The second option is that because of the response his message receives, that the people of Nineveh begin to repeat it and respond to it almost immediately, there really is no need for days 2 and 3.

Looking more closely at the text, we see this "Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk..." (Jonah 3:4a, NASB 2020)

This implies that Jonah went to the center of town before he ever proclaimed his message. I think though that he proclaimed the message as he walked to the center of town near to the citadel of the king. His message was one a threat of complete destruction within 40 days.

God had seriously prepared the landscape prior to the arrival of Jonah. The people of Nineveh had experienced an earthquake, though not a severe as in Israel, but they had also been in the cone of totality for an eclipse of the sun. Again, predicted by Amos.

Amos 8:9

““And it will come about on that day,” declares the Lord GOD, “That I will make the sun go down at noon, And make the earth dark in broad daylight.” (NASB 2020)

On June 15, 763 BC, a total eclipse of the sun took place that was experienced as a partial eclipse in Israel, but in Nineveh, it was a total eclipse. This could be the event, coinciding with a visit from Jonah, that helped to result in what we see in this book.

This alone, is a powerful statement about the grace of God and His not wanting anyone to perish but for all to repent.

There are two other events around this time that also may have prepared the citizens of Nineveh. “The year 765, two years before the eclipse, was a year of plague, as was 759.” (Mozley 1924, 194)

So, prior to Jonah’s arrival, plague, earthquake, total eclipse of the sun, plague. And into this prepared population walks a man, not real happy about his task but exercising faithfulness to a degree and his message is “Forty more days, and Nineveh will be overthrown.”

I would listen too.

If the recorded message accurately represented Yahweh’s message, then he allowed the ambiguity, which fits with his compassion and grace and is compatible with the use of contingent prophecy elsewhere in Scripture. If the Ninevites repent, then they will “overturn” themselves, leaving their wickedness behind them. But if they do not repent, Yahweh will overturn them. The Talmud supports the idea that, at least to Jonah, the message was ambiguous. (Hoyt 2018, 479)

The Ninevites believed that Jonah’s message was a message from a god who was likely to do as he threatened. That conclusion would have been reached by comparing Jonah’s message to the message of the omens. Omens were observations made in the natural world that were believed to be related to what the gods were doing in the historical realm. (Matthews, Chavalas and Walton 2000, Jon 3:5-10)

By the way, yes, the number 40 is significant. It is the number of judgement. 40 days and night of rain during the flood (Genesis 7:17) or 40 years in the wilderness after rejecting entering the land Exodus 16:35). But good kings ruled for 40 years, David, Solomon and Jehoash.

Was there a language barrier? I doubt it since there was a clear understanding of the message from those who heard it. Based on their experience and what they heard, there was no ambiguity at all. What they heard was 40 days and your toast. And the impact?

Jonah 3:5–9

“Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, removed his robe from himself, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on the dust. And he issued a proclamation, and it said, In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: No person, animal, herd, or flock is to taste anything. They are not to eat, or drink water. But every person and animal must be covered with sackcloth; and people are to call on God vehemently, and they are to turn, each one from his evil way, and from the violence which is in their hands. Who knows, God may turn and relent, and turn from His burning anger so that we will not perish.” (NASB 2020)

Jonah did not need to walk through town for 3 days to communicate his message, it happened in a day. This response is truly astounding and only possible because of the Lord. The city, as one, accepted the teaching as valid and as one, repented. And they had no guarantees.

This is why Nineveh was used as an example for the Pharisees and Israel of their unbelief.

Luke 11:29–32

“As the crowd pressed in on Jesus, he said, “This evil generation keeps asking me to show them a miraculous sign. But the only sign I will give them is the sign of Jonah. What happened to him was a sign to the people of Nineveh that God had sent him. What happens to the Son of Man will be a sign to these people that he was sent by God. The queen of Sheba will stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for she came from a distant land to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Now someone greater than Solomon is here—but you refuse to listen. **The people of Nineveh will also stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for they repented of their sins at the preaching of Jonah. Now someone greater than Jonah is here—but you refuse to repent.**” (NLT)

Nineveh repents, and to make sure that the Jews get this to be true repentance, the Holy Spirit ensures that those elements that Jews would attribute to that are repeated here.

Their reaction to the warning of destruction follows a pattern typical of Israel in the OT. The three elements of threat of disaster, acts of penitence, and eventual divine intervention to avert disaster constitute a scheme illustrated in 1 Sam. 7:3–14; 2 Sam. 24; Ezra 8:21–23; Esther 3:7–4:17; Jer. 36; and, not least of the parallels, Joel 1:1–2:27...These wicked barbarians react in quite a normal and commendable manner. (Allen 1976, 223)

For a Jew reading this, they see true repentance. There is no question in their mind.

How complicated was the message that was given? It wasn't complicated at all. It was simple and it was empowered by the Holy Spirit as it was the message God wanted to have delivered.

Was it delivered with all of the gusto that we would expect from a prophet of God? We do not know. Probably not since Jonah was not exactly the most willing of individual to be delivering the message.

One other thing too, some commentators state that since historically, others who have also experienced being swallowed whole, became discolored by gastric juices, Jonah must have been as well. The text is silent on that.

What we do know is that a foreigner from Israel, a prophet, has shown up. In the very recent history of Nineveh there has been plague, earthquake, eclipse and now a prophet of the Jewish God shows up with one message. And he probably made it clear he had no personal interest in what they did. But they repented based on what they heard.

With boldness only a prophet could have, he “disclosed to the great royal city its godless ways, and announced its destruction within a very short period with the confidence so characteristic of the God-sent prophets, could not fail to make a powerful impression upon the minds of the people, which would be all the stronger if the report of the miraculous working of the prophets of Israel had penetrated to Nineveh.” (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 276)

Not only did the people take the word from Jonah seriously, so did the King and his administration. They had no guarantee that repentance would save them but repent they did.

Here is the incredible thing which the Lord is pointing out to His own people in the Northern Kingdom, where Jonah is from. Jonah had been ministering there as well as others, yet the nation had not repented but instead had gone deeper and deeper into their own sin.

YAHWEH, the God of Israel and Judah, sends a prophet from Israel, a very reluctant one at that, to Nineveh.

God's people had rejected repentance at this point and God sends a man to the gentiles. Later, Jesus will draw the analogy between Himself and Jonah. Specifically, the 3 days and nights Jonah was in the fish with His death and resurrection. Jesus was rejected by His own people yet when His message goes to the gentile nations, they repent.

Jonah is a type as he goes to a gentile nation, and they repent, and do so with a fervor not seen often even in Israel or Judah. Later, Jeremiah is arrested for going through Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 26:7–11

"The priests, the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah say these things in the LORD's temple. Jeremiah had just barely finished saying all the LORD had commanded him to say to all the people when all at once some of the priests, the prophets, and the people grabbed him and shouted, "You deserve to die! How dare you claim the LORD's authority to prophesy such things! How dare you claim his authority to prophesy that this temple will become like Shiloh and that this city will become an uninhabited ruin!" Then all the people crowded around Jeremiah in the LORD's temple. However, some of the officials of Judah heard about what was happening and they rushed up to the LORD's temple from the royal palace. They set up court at the entrance of the New Gate of the LORD's temple. Then the priests and the prophets made their charges before the officials and all the people. They said, "This man should be condemned to die because he prophesied against this city. You have heard him do so with your own ears." (NET 2nd ed.)

Significantly, the response of the Ninevites is presented here in terms of what God expected from his own people (cf. Exod. 14:31; 2 Chr. 20:20), but frequently did not receive (cf. Num. 14:11; 20:12; Deut. 1:32; 2 Kgs 17:14; Ps. 78:22). (Wiseman, Alexander and Waltke 1988, 134)

Again, the example comes from Jeremiah.

The people of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 36:9) and Nineveh declared a fast.

So far, so good. In Jonah, we see the pagan gentile King respond to what was already going on among the people and proclaim a fast and then participate personally.

But in Jeremiah 36, we see the King of Judah rejecting a call to do the same and actually take the scroll of warning and burning it.

The reading of a scroll in Jerusalem did nothing, but a simple announcement of impending judgment in Nineveh leads to repentance.

Jonah 3:9

"Who knows, God may turn and relent, and turn from His burning anger so that we will not perish." (NASB 2020)

No, these words were not said by Jonah. Jonah has no desire for the people of Nineveh to be saved. He wants them to burn. But the Lord wants to see them turn and live.

The King picks up the phrase that normally a prophet would say. "In verse 9 the king links the threat that Jonah had uttered in verse 4 with the behavior of the people of Nineveh that had caused that threat to be made.

In other words, he suggests that the destruction of Nineveh can be averted by the people's repentance, although in verse 4 the destruction was not linked with any conditions. In this respect, the person whose words come closest to those of the classical prophets is not Jonah, but the king, as can be seen by

comparing this verse with Jeremiah 25:5, 35:15, Zechariah 1:4, and particularly Jeremiah 26:3, where God's willingness to relent is linked, as in these two verses, with reformed behavior on the part of Israel." (Price and Nida 1978, 99)

Jonah 3:10

"When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their evil way, then God relented of the disaster which He had declared He would bring on them. So He did not do it." (NASB 2020)

First of all, this is an anthropomorphism. This is defined as "the manifestation or depiction of God in human terms or as having the characteristics of man. Anthropomorphism is very common in the Bible." (Bromiley 1979 - 1988, 136)

"The biblical texts which speak of Yahweh's repentance, as well as those that utilize the phrase, 'Who knows?' in reference to divine punishment, do so in a way that still allows for acts of retribution to follow. Thus, when the king asks, 'Who knows if God will repent ... and we will not die?' the answer given by the Old Testament is clear: Yahweh's repentance, should it occur, is no guarantee that the Ninevites will escape punishment, since this divine change of mind is most often followed by an act of destruction. The author's choice of a city renowned for the fact that it is destroyed further emphasizes this." (Bolin 1997, 146)

Here, God changes His mind. This is here for our benefit since all of us have difficulty putting our hands around the immutability of God

...to say that God is immutable is not to say that He is immobile or static, for whereas all change is activity, not all activity is change. It is simply to affirm that God always is and acts in perfect harmony with the revelation of Himself and His will in Scripture...Immutability, or constancy, simply asserts that when the circumstances in any situation call for goodness, justice, or love as the appropriate response on the part of the Deity, that is precisely what God will be (or do, as the case maybe). (Storms 2006)

That means that here, when repentance is evident in the people of Nineveh, God responds and honors their repentance. This appeals to God's mercy which He exercises here in His grace.

God will later explain this concept to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 18:7-10

"There are times, Jeremiah, when I threaten to uproot, tear down, and destroy a nation or kingdom. But if that nation I threatened stops doing wrong, I will cancel the destruction I intended to do to it. And there are times when I promise to build up and establish a nation or kingdom. But if that nation does what displeases me and does not obey me, then I will cancel the good I promised to do to it." (NET 2nd ed.) God does not destroy Nineveh. And next time, we will find out just how much that upsets Jonah, who deep down wants to see Nineveh burn.

God's grace was made available to the people of Nineveh, and they were able to enjoy all that meant as a result of their repentance. They agreed with God that their behavior needed to change because His assessment of them was indeed correct.

We are still able to enjoy His grace today.

Romans 3:21-24

"But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins." (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

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