

An Encouraging Word From Dr. Tim Watson
Series in The Book of Jonah: The God Of A Second Chance
“What Can One Person Do?”

When you look around at people in your workplace, or people within your family who are not following Jesus Christ, do you say to yourself, "What can one person do?" If you are a college, high school, or junior high student, do you think to yourself, "I'm just one person? What can one person do?" Although God can certainly use and bless large groups of people, he seems to do his best work in the lives of individuals who are willing to be used by him.

Whether you agree or disagree with the politics of Charlie Kirk, you have to admit that God used his life and now his death as a catalyst for spiritual awareness and spiritual renewal that we have not seen in a long time in our country. My prayer is God will use us as followers of Jesus Christ to be bold and courageous in our witness as this young man.

When we surrender ourselves and become obedient to what God wants us to do, there is no limit to the impact we can make. One person can make a difference. Steve Jobs told his Macintosh engineers in the early days of Apple Computer Corporation, "Make a dent in the universe." With the help of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can do more than make a dent in our universe. We can knock a hole in our universe for Jesus!

As we continue in our series of messages from the Old Testament Book of Jonah, we will see the difference one person can make. We will see the incredible impact of one person on thousands of lives.

Would you look in your Bible to Jonah 3:1-10. We are continuing in our series of messages entitled The God of a Second Chance. Perhaps you come to this service needing a second chance, a fresh

start, a new beginning. You have come to the right place. God gave Jonah a second chance, and he's willing to do the same for you and for me. Our message is titled, "What Can One Person Do?"

Jonah was written between 782 and 745 BC, almost 800 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Jonah was a Jewish prophet who was called by God to leave the northern kingdom of Israel and go about 500 miles to the north and to the east of Israel into the Assyrian empire, and go specifically to the capital city of Nineveh.

The Book of Jonah tells us there were 120,000 people who lived in Nineveh, which is located in the modern-day country of Iraq. God wanted Jonah to preach a message to the people of Nineveh that said if the Ninevites would turn from their evil and cruel ways, the God of Israel would not destroy their city, but spare them. Jonah, this Jewish preacher, did not want to go to Nineveh because the Assyrians who lived there were enemies of the Israelites and were very cruel and inhumane people.

They were like ISIS or Hamas of our day. Instead of going 500 miles to Nineveh, Jonah fled the northern kingdom of Israel, went south 60 miles from his hometown of Gath-Hepher and got on a boat in a port city named Joppa. He set sail for Tarshish, near Spain, 2,000 miles in the opposite direction across the Mediterranean Sea. Jonah was running from God.

As Jonah was on this boat, God sent a horrific storm to the Mediterranean Sea, and to the ship upon which he was a passenger. Because of Jonah's disobedience to God his disobedience not only affected him but the innocent sailors on this ship. At Jonah's request the sailors threw Jonah overboard into the Mediterranean Sea.

When he was thrown into the sea the sea immediately became calm. This was good for the sailors but not good for Jonah. God then sent a large fish to swallow Jonah, who was bobbing up and down like a cork in the water.

Jonah spent three days and three nights in the bowels of this fish. And while in the fish's belly there was what we would call a come to Jesus meeting. Jonah repented of his sin of disobedience, and he told God if he got another chance he would do what God called him to do. He would go to Nineveh and deliver God's message. We concluded last week's message with Jonah 2:10 with these words, "And the Lord commanded the fish, and the fish vomited Jonah onto dry land."

Let's read Jonah 3:1-10.

1 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." **3** Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city. A visit required three days. **4** On the first day, Jonah started into the city and he proclaimed: "40 more days and Nineveh will be overturned." **5** The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on a sackcloth. (This was a sign of mourning, grieving, and repentance.)

6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne and took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat down in the dust. **7** Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; Do not let them eat or drink. **8** Let man and beast 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, God had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. (Jonah 3:1-10) NIV

Let's look at Jonah and continue using him as our example as we see what one person can do. We begin by seeing that we cannot change the world around us until we first are willing to correct our ways and make the adjustments God wants us to make.

If We Are Going To Make A Difference:

I. We must be willing to correct our ways.

Look at Jonah 3:1-4: **1** 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" **3** Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now, Nineveh was a very important city. A visit required three days. **4** On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned."

Sometimes we may forget that all of us possess the ability to correct our ways. Each and every one of us, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the shed blood of Jesus Christ, can make adjustments in our behavior, and we can make the changes God desires to make in us. How do we correct our ways? How do we make the adjustments in our lives that Christ desires? What does that look like?

- a. **First, we must seize our opportunities.** One of the positive things to come out of the Jonah narrative is that he seized the opportunity of a second chance.

It's one thing to be delivered from the bowels of a large fish and washed up on the shoreline. However, just being ejected from the belly of a fish will not solve our problems. It is a whole different situation to get a second chance from God and then do something with that second chance. God doesn't just deliver us on the shoreline so we could say, "Wow, I'm glad to get out of that crisis. I'm glad I'm out of that bad situation."

No, God doesn't just deliver us for the sake of delivering us. He delivers us and gives us a second chance, and we are to do something with that second chance. How heartbreaking it must be to our heavenly Father that He extends to us many times His grace, mercy, and forgiveness, and many of us fail to correct our ways. We cease to make the adjustments we need to make, and we do not seize the opportunity of the second chance.

I am sure that between chapters two and three of the book of Jonah, Jonah sat there in the belly of that large fish and he wondered if God would ever use him again.

God was under no obligation to do so. God could have said to his prophet, "Jonah, you made your bed. Now lie in it. Jonah, you're nothing but glorified sushi to me." I have tried to put myself in Jonah's place. I cannot think of anything more painful than to think God would not use my life anymore. The fear that God had put me on a shelf, the feeling because of sin, failure, or a mistake God would never use my life again. I cannot tell you the frustration and the sadness I would experience.

But listen to the word of the Lord in Jonah 3:1, "Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time.

What a comfort it is to realize that some of God's best servants made foolish mistakes, but they still had the opportunity to be used by God again. I have good news for you. God is not through with me and He is not through with you!

But here is the key. When the word of the Lord comes to us a second time, when God gives us another opportunity, the key is this: we must correct our ways and seize the opportunities God places before us, or we risk repeating the same sins of disobedience and making the same mistakes.

Notice in our text, in Jonah 3:3, the Bible says, "Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh."

Jonah got it right this time. He got back on track and he made the intentional decision to seize the opportunity God placed before him: *Jonah obeyed the Lord and went to Nineveh.*

Are you being obedient to what you know God has called you to do? Is there a specific behavior, a habit, an action where God has convicted you that He wants you to change, He wants you to stay away from this behavior, but you have chosen to continue in it?

God has given you a second, a third, a fourth, a fifth, perhaps endless chances to turn away from this behavior or action, to seek help from another person. But instead of correcting your ways, you are continuing in that sinful behavior. That is not very wise.

Are you being obedient to do what you know God has commanded you to do? For many of you, you know that God has impressed it upon your heart to start a new ministry, to be involved in a specific place of service in our church, to participate in one of the many mission and service opportunities that our church offers.

You've had this itching in your soul that you know is from God, and God has spoken to you numerous times about being obedient to Him in this area. The word of the Lord has come to you two, three, four, five times, and you've continued to say no, and you've offered excuses as to why you could not be obedient. God's word to you today is this: Don't say No!" Every time you say no to the Holy Spirit, your heart gets a little colder, harder, more calloused.

Some of you may wonder why your Christian life is boring, why your Christian life is unexciting. Could it be you've continually said no to the Holy Spirit and your heart has become calloused?

God gives us opportunity after opportunity to get things right with Him. God is giving you that second chance today. The question is, will you correct your ways? Will you seize the opportunity that is before you? We have no right to assume that God will go on giving us opportunity after opportunity to get right with Him.

If We Are Going To Make A Difference:

I. We must be willing to correct our ways.

How Do We Correct Our Ways?

a. We must seize our opportunities.

But there's another thing we must do:

b. Secondly, we must share God's message. Instead of sharing our opinions, our thoughts, our words, to make a difference in the lives of people around us, we must share the message God has instructed us to share.

Every one of us who professes to be a follower of Jesus Christ has the responsibility to tell people around them about the grace and the mercy, the love, the forgiveness, and yes, even the judgment of Christ that is coming soon.

Notice what God commanded Jonah to do in verse 2 of our text. God told Jonah He wanted to use him to make a difference in the lives of the people in Nineveh. Jonah 3:2, "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give to you." Notice God did not tell Jonah to share with the people of Nineveh his opinions on Israeli and Syrian political issues. He did not command him to give editorial comments about climate change in the Middle East, or talk about who had the better sports teams. No, Jonah was to go to Nineveh and preach the message God wanted him to preach.

What was the content of Jonah's message? What did he say in this message to the people of Nineveh? Look at Jonah 3:4, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." An eight-word sermon!

This has to be one of the shortest sermons ever preached. It's not flashy. From a preaching and structural perspective, it seems rather bland and boring. "Forty more days, and Nineveh will be overturned." We want to say, "Jonah, where's your slide presentation? Where's your PowerPoint? Where's your fill-in-the-blanks sermon notes? Jonah, where's your cool video that comes with your sermon? Where's your creative graphics? Jonah, how come you're not preaching a fluffy, comfortable sermon entitled Make Every Day a Friday? Jonah, why aren't you preaching a sermon that makes us feel good about ourselves?" Forty more days, and Nineveh will be overturned.

Do you know why Jonah's message was not like a felt-need sermon that you would hear in 2025? The message that Jonah shared with the people of Nineveh was not his message, but it was God's message. This was God's specific word to this particular people, in this particular place, at this particular time. The Lord said to Jonah, in Jonah 3:2, "Go and share. Go and proclaim the message I am giving to you."

It may seem like a simple, short, pithy sermon to us. But for Jonah, he was preaching a bold message of repentance to the people of Nineveh. As witnesses for Jesus Christ, we are commanded to take God's word, not our word, to a world that is lost, broken, and dying.

When we spend all of our time and energy sharing our views and our opinions with people, we may persuade people to believe us. But when we share God's word with people around us, the Holy Spirit convicts those people to believe God.

Jonah preaches an eight-word sermon, "Forty more days, and Nineveh will be overturned." That is a message from God to the people of Nineveh, and a strange thing happened. Jonah 3:5 says, "The people of Nineveh believed God." When Jonah shared the message God told him to share, an incredible thing took place. The

cruel, atrocious, evil people of Nineveh believed God. They put their faith in the one true living God, the God of Israel. 120,000 people turned to the God of Israel.

Listen to Jonah 3:5-10: **5** The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. (That's a sign of repentance.) **6** And when the news reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, and took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat down in the dust. **7** Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles, do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; Do not let them eat or drink. **8** But let a man and beast 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 relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger that we will not perish." **10 When** God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, God had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened."

The thing I want you to see is one man made a difference.

120,000 souls of men, women, and young people, were on the verge of being destroyed and were heading for a godless eternity, but one man made a difference.

The question is, where will you make a difference this week? You may think to yourself, "I'm not a prophet. I'm not famous. I'm just an ordinary person. What difference can I make?" What you may not realize is your life of obedience will affect not only people around you, but your obedience affects people closest to you as well.

Your life of obedience will affect your immediate family and the generations to come. You can not only make a dent in this universe. With God's help, you can make a major impact on this world.