



The God of the Bible is a God of second chances. Reginald Heber's 1826 hymns says He is the "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty..." Since we are all sinners, and all fall short of the glory of a thrice-holy God, we need forgiveness and mercy—a second chance. We thank God for compassionate second chances. However, this week, we will see that He only gives mercy to certain people.

God testified to His holiness and grace before one of His best servants—Moses. After chastising the people for the golden calf incident, then chiseling out a second copy of the Ten Commandments, Moses witnessed this at Mount Sinai's base:

Exodus 34:5-9: *The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with [Moses] as he called upon the name of the LORD. "Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." ⁸Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. ⁹He said, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession." (NASB)*

Moses shook in his sandals as he witnessed the holy severity of God who would not unjustly leave the guilty unpunished. Fearing that Lord, Moses bowed low, and requested a second chance for his people from a God Who was gracious and merciful, forgiving transgression and sin. Jonah also knew what it was to serve a severe, holy God of compassionate second chances.

1. THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES SPEAKS BEST THROUGH FIRST-TIME LOSERS

The only people who need second chances are those who have blown something the first time. The only Jonah we have seen, in Jonah 1, was an unfaithful rebel—a Prodigal Prophet. When *"the*

word of the LORD came to Jonah" telling him *"arise, go to Nineveh,"* he chose to blow it. This leader became a loser. God loved Jonah with tough love, so He broke His son's stubborn will with a perfect storm. He then threw him into the sea so he could pray and meditate in a deep, dark, cold, cramped, underwater, mobile seminary.

➤ Such genius chastisement by his Heavenly Father turned a Prodigal Prophet into a Praying Prophet who then asked for a second chance to get his first assignment right (being a Preaching Prophet). Often the best *heralds for* the God of second chances are those who have been *given second chances by* the God of new leases on life; yes, those who have been given moral mulligans after they have come up short—just like Jonah.

Jonah 3:1-2a *"Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh the great city...'"*

➤ Belched onto a beach, Jonah heard Jehovah's echoing command, *"Get up!"* The regurgitated landlubber mashed his way out of a 50-gallon vomit pool, wiping yellow mucous, brown kelp, and clear phlegm-strings from a bleached, pale, and stinging face. His skin was greatly tenderized, having marinated (up to 72 hours) in the gastric acids of a great Mediterranean monster. Jonah was a changed man—chastised and tenderized—both physically and spiritually. Good. God's word still needed to get to Nineveh, a word of holy justice, but also of second chances.

DO YOU SEE GOD'S PATIENCE AND GRACE IN THE WORDS "THE SECOND TIME"?

All in the Capitol Community Are Welcome to be a Part of Regular Bible Study and Fellowship

SENATORS' WEDNESDAY STUDY: 6:45-8:05 AM, ROOM 2108 CAPITOL MINISTRIES, NEBRASKA WWW.CAPMIN.ORG

STAFF WEDNESDAY STUDY: 12:00-1:00, ROOM 1306 PHONE: 402-327-0011 REV. PERRY M. GAUTHIER, V.D.M.

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2. THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES SPEAKS WITH GREAT PRIORITY TO GREAT CAPITALS

When God told Jonah the first time to go to Nineveh (the military-commercial capital of the ruthless Assyrians), He thundered about its *great evil*. He told Jonah, “*Preach against it.*” Now note:

Jonah 3:2 “*Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.*”

Relatively little time has passed—a maximum of three full days between the great fish’s gulping and gagging. The bustling metro of greater Nineveh had not grown less evil. That capital, teeming with a rampantly violent populace, was oblivious to the fact that their evils rose like a vile stench up into the nostrils of creator God. God by no means leaves the guilty unpunished. Jonah is still supposed to preach against its evil.

➤ What was new to his assignment were specifics of his duty to preach *to* them and literally “*preach the preaching*” exactly as the Lord would say. He was no longer straightjacketed inside a whale jail, but the overly patriotic, racist missionary was put on a tight verbal leash. Go figure. God needed Jonah to know and reflect that He had a capital concern for Assyria’s capital. Passively aggressive, Jonah sinned by silence in his first call to open his mouth in holy protest. He would have rather *died* than preach to his nation’s enemies. The Lord wanted him to accurately reflect His great concern for a greatly populated place. Jonah needed to know and convey that God was more than a thrice-holy God of justice. He was also compassionate to vile, violent sinners (like Ninevites) and defiant sons (like Jonah). He wanted Jonah to accept the fact that He really cared about the people to whom He had sent Jonah to preach, because God is great in mercy.

➤ What is a **city**? The Greek word for city is *polis* (πολις), which is a place where people/the

populace gathers. A city is literally a people place. A **citizen** is literally a “city person” (πολι-της). When people gather *en masse*, they need to be governed civilly and civically, literally “according to cities.” Reflecting on our four-week study of *God’s Five Institutions*,^a we know that people are designed for and entirely capable of self-government, family government, and church government. The institution of commerce also works best when it can work without excessive civil government regulation. Commerce will, by design, govern itself through the free will choices of free people in free markets. So, government is best when government is as small as it needs to be. Civil government is more needed when more citizens and city people gather.

➤ What are **capitals**? If cities are people places, **capital cities** are key people-gathering places.

➤ What is **politics**? The words **politics** and **politico** both mean, literally, “that which is city (πολις)-born (τιχτω).” Recalling our first four weeks, God has a special place in His heart for people, for the leaders of people, and for political leaders of people—which would include those in the capital cities and the Capitols of the world.

GOD HAS A SPECIAL PLACE IN HIS HEART FOR POLITICAL LEADERS.

If God cares for *all people*, would He not, in one sense, care more for places where *more people* are? Logically, theologically, and Biblically, this is why Capitol Ministries focuses, like Paul and Luke and so many others did, on the vital mission field of key Capitols and key capital cities which are filled with dear people made in God’s image.

3. THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES SPEAKS WITH GREAT CARE TO GREAT POPULATIONS

A tenderized, chastised Jonah now walked on landlubbing legs in the obedient (north-easterly) direction towards the massive city of Nineveh.



Jonah 3:3 *“So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ walk.”*

Jonah 3:3b, in Hebrew, gives a clear testimony of God’s compassion for the huge and evil Ninevite metropolis. But first note this about Jonah’s obedience. Jonah now walked according to the word of the LORD, obeying like he did in the only other Old Testament passage that describes him (see next). There we are told God used Jonah to accurately prophesy the undeserved expansion of Israel’s borders under the reign of an evil King Jeroboam. King Jeroboam was far from deserving^b of the economic, political, and territorial prosperity that God predicted and granted “by His servant” Jonah the prophet.

➤ **2 Kings 14:25** *“[Jeroboam] restored the border of Israel...according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which He spoke by His servant Jonah... of Gath-hepher.”*

A vital note from the Hebrew text: when Jonah 3:3b says that the city was “exceedingly great,” the original reads “a city, a great one, to God.” The NASB’s “exceedingly” is literally “^lelohim” = “to Elohim.” Nineveh was great to an infinite God, not geographically in puny square miles, but to Him personally, for all men have been made in His image. Remember God’s merciful heart of compassion when we get to Jonah 4.

➤ Moses never forgot God’s similar Self-testimony in Exodus 34 where He had said He was One who “*keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin*”; Jonah the prophet, the LORD’s servant, this man of God, knew his Bible. He had not forgotten Moses’ famous report of God’s lovingkindness and merciful forgiveness. Or had he?

The city *was* large. Archaeologically, we know that its 100-foot-tall walls were wide enough for three chariots to race on top, and it was further

fortified with 150 watchtowers, each 200-foot tall. Ancient Nineveh was a mighty fortress, great in square mileage, architecturally, and militarily. That was not the point of this Hebrew author.

**ALTHOUGH LARGE AND EVIL,
THAT CITY’S PEOPLE WERE
“GREAT TO THE GOD” WHO
FORGIVES THOUSANDS.**

To follow Assyrian political protocol, it would take Jonah three days to finish his itinerant preaching tour. The first day, he would be checked and cleared while making his way to the king’s palace in the uptown. Just as capitals in the USA are near the middle of each state, Capitols and palaces were often in the central, upper, and high points of the city. Also, his three-days walk is an intended grammatical echo to Jonah’s three days of chastisement. Has he learned his lesson?

**4. THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES SPEAKS QUICKLY AND
CLEARLY ABOUT FIRST FAILINGS**

Jonah’s eight-word prophecy (five in Hebrew)^c was meant to bulldoze the pride of the idolatrous Ninevites. Will they humbly accept his harsh message of a God who punishes the guilty?

Jonah 3:4 *“Jonah began to go through the city one day’s walk; and he cried out and said, ‘Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.’”*

Moses’ gracious God was merciful, but that was no guarantee of mercy to the pridefully guilty who would “by no means go unpunished.” Wicked Nineveh was still wicked. Jonah was to preach an exact message that got right to the point. “Second chances” are only for those who humble themselves and see their “first failings.” James 4:6 says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Jonah announced the bad news—a time bomb of heavenly judgment was now ticking on Ninevite soil.



In a godly effort to demolish idolatrous human pride, Jonah said Jehovah had lit a divinely devastating dynamite stick with a fuse of only 40 days in length. Like the UNL campus evangelist who led me to Christ used to say, “*You’ve gotta get ‘em lost, before you can get ‘em saved!*” Jonah got ‘em lost by getting right to the bad news. The Assyrians had been comfortable in their sins, and God would by no means leave them unpunished.

**GOD’S PREACHERS COMFORT
THE AFFLICTED AND ALSO
AFFLICT THE COMFORTABLE.**

**5. THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES SPEAKS REAL
REVIVAL TO “FAITH-FILLED FAILURES”**

Revival! Did you know the greatest recorded revival in Biblical history happened right here? Jonah had barely begun his fire-and-brimstone preaching tour when all heaven broke loose and the entire populace repented of their sins. They were saved by faith (not *about* God) but *in* a God whose amazing grace forgave thousands headed for judgment of iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Jonah 3:5 *“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.”*

➤ The Hebrew word for “believed” is literally “Amen-ed,” and the same strong word is used in Genesis 15:6, that classic passage on justification by faith alone. It says, “Abraham believed (Amen-ed) God and it (his faith) was counted to him as righteousness.” Like the nasty Ninevites, the heathen Abraham was saved (justified) by faith alone (per Romans 4). A few decades later in Genesis 22, Abraham proved that *he had been previously saved by faith* when he was willing to sacrifice Isaac on rocky Mount Moriah where the Dome of the Rock now stands in Israel. James 2 argues that it is *easy to say* one has been saved by

faith, but *good works show* that one has been saved by faith. So too the Ninevites’ immediate call for a humiliating, city-wide fast, while plopping down in black, coarse, goat-hair “clothing,” was external proof of the sincerity of their faith. They came to believe in, “to Amen,” the God who would forgive all of their black sins.

**WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH
ALONE, BUT SAVING FAITH IS
NEVER ALONE!**

➤ At the Jordan River, John the Baptist called this evidence of new life “bringing forth fruit in keeping with repentance.” In Israel last month, Faith and I were symbolically re-baptized in the Jordan, which was deeper, dirtier, and colder than either of us had hoped. This week, I looked back with joy to the video on 3-27 at 2:27 pm (Israel time) when I raised Faith up from the Jordan saying, “Buried in the likeness of Christ’s death, and raised to walk in newness of life.” Do you walk in newness of life (experientially), because you know (with certainty) that you have (past tense) been saved?

STATE SENATORS AND SECOND CHANCES

Dear Senator:

I trust you have said “Amen” to your full failures before a thrice-holy God, realizing your need of a “second chance.” Have you turned to Moses’ God—even the Ninevites’ God—Who forgives thousands of iniquity, transgression and sin?

Faithful to afflict, but longing for your comfort,

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier V.D.M. (cell/text: 402-770-6270)

^a See www.NECapMin.org for free PDFs and audio of that study.

^b Keep the beneficial prophesy for Jeroboam ben-Joash in mind for Jonah 4 as well as the Lord’s self-testimony to Moses in Exodus 34.

^c עֹד אֲרַבְעִים יוֹם וַיְנַיְתָה נְהַפְכָת: (Ode arbaiym yom wenineweh napachat!)

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