

Second Chance

**Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh.
--Jonah 3:1-3**

As Jonah's third chapter opens, one thing has changed, and two have stayed the same.

God and His call are the things that have stayed the same.

Jonah is the one who has changed.

Just as it was in the opening of chapter one, "the word of the Lord came to Jonah." But this time, instead of running away from the Lord, Jonah obeyed.

God was still interested in saving Nineveh. The rebellion of His chosen prophet wasn't enough to change that. That's no surprise. But the fact that God *still* chose Jonah to do the work is a bit of a surprise, is it not? I mean, surely God could have found *someone* more worthy of the task. Surely in all of Israel there was *someone* who could be trusted to obey God's call without making Him repeat Himself.

All of Nineveh was going to repent when they heard the message from God. It would be one of history's most successful evangelistic crusades. Why give an opportunity like that to a man like Jonah? God could have just said, "Jonah has failed Me, and not only failed Me, but willfully rebelled against Me. He's a lost cause. I have no use for him. I'll let someone else do it."

But that's not what happened. Because God was just as interested in developing Jonah's character as He was in saving Nineveh. So He gave Jonah a second chance.

Read these words again, and ponder them: "The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time."

A second time.

And this second call was issued without any words of condemnation. What a wonderful God we serve! How reassuring it is to know that no failure of our past is sufficient to disqualify us for anything that His abundant grace qualifies us to do.

How is it that God accomplishes such a miracle? I think that question is best answered in the words of someone I heard once (I wish I could remember who.) He said that God doesn't overlook our failures; He forgets them. When we repent, He wipes our record clean of every stumble. So He isn't really giving us a second chance, but another first chance.