



Restored through Repentance: The Power to Heal People, Families, and Nations January 19, 2020

For the last two weeks, we've been attempting to demonstrate that Restoration is the Heart of God...that God is Able to renew, revive, and restore His people! Amen!

But what, if anything, fosters this divine mercy? Is there anything we can do or work to cultivate in us that, by God's grace in and in Christ's power, might cause such restoration?

I submit to you that it is repentance...brokenness and contriteness before God.

- **Psalms 34:18 (KJV)** *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*
- **Psalms 51:17 (KJV)** *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*
- **Isaiah 66:2 (KJV)** *For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*
- **Matthew 5:3 (KJV)** *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Our God loves repentant hearts! He loves humility in His children! He is drawn to such in us....

James 4:7-8 (KJV) *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

Scripture is replete with examples of God's restoring power upon the repentant, whether it's these words from God after Solomon's great prayer of repentance while dedicating the temple:

2 Chronicles 7:14 (KJV) *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

To a wicked man like Ahab repenting and receiving mercy in his days at the rebuke of Elijah in 1 Kings 21, to Daniel's magnificent prayer of repentance that moved heaven in Dan 9 to the day of Pentecost were 3000 souls repented at the powerful preaching of Peter...God loves repentance!

Indeed, *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:"* **Acts 17:30 (KJV)**

I also believe that Restoration through repentance is wonderfully illustrated thought he preaching of Jonah. Let us turn to Jonah 3:1-10...

Text: Jonah 3:1-10

Many of you first heard about Jonah through a children's Bible stories, and were probably amazed that Jonah spend three days and night in the belly of a happy, jolly whale. :) Most of you have likely heard at least one sermon on Jonah. Most of you, upon thinking about Jonah,

can readily remember the “reluctant prophet” season of Jonah’s ministry, his acceptance of his fate as he was cast overboard the ship he is fleeing on, his “rescue” (and transport) by the fish, his very short sermon to the Ninevites, their response, and his really sad pity party in the last chapter.

If you’ve studied the book a bit, you might realize too that Jonah has likely reluctant because Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, one of the chief enemies of Israel. As Chuck Swindoll wrote, *“When the call of God came to him, Jonah could not see beyond his own selfish desire for God to punish the Assyrians. How could God want him to take a message of mercy to such people? Before Jonah could relay God’s message, he had to be broken. He had to learn something about the mercy of the Lord. Through his flight to Tarshish, his shipwreck, and his time in the great fish, Jonah was convinced in a powerful way that all salvation comes from the Lord ([Jonah 2:9](#)). And because of God’s supreme power, only God decides where to pour out His salvation and His mercy (4:11).”*

“Jonah was the son of Amittai (*true [to God]*). In [2Ki 14:25](#), we learn that his home was in Gath Hopher, in Galilee. Jonah’s mission to Nineveh took place in the reign of the Northern Kingdom’s mightiest monarch, Jeroboam II ([2Ki 14:23](#)), who ruled from about 793 to 753 B.C. He prophesied during the days when Assyria was threatening the Northern Kingdom, Israel. God sent him to preach repentance to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. He was reluctant to do this, fearing that the city would repent and be spared. Therefore, Jonah fled to go to Tarshish and was swallowed by a great fish en route. After his release, he obeyed the Lord’s commission by preaching to Nineveh. The city repented and was spared—much to Jonah’s displeasure!” - MacDonald

The writer is anonymous, though many believe it was most likely written by Jonah himself.

A Changed Kingdom (Jonah 3)

Simply put, Jonah 3 describes one of the greatest, most thorough revivals (albeit temporary) we see in Scripture. There are others...

Like the Revival inspired by Daniel after his miraculous escape from the lion’s den in Dan 6:

- **Dan 6:25-28** *Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 26 I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. 27 He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. 28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

Or the Revival ushered forth by King Josiah in 2 Kings 22-23.

- After the High Priest Hilkiah finds the Book of the Law in the newly repaired temple...
- And the Scribe Shaphan read it before the King...
- And King Josiah, after hearing the heart of God and realizing the nation’s sin “rent his clothes.” (2 Ki 22:11)
- He then said, “Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is

kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us." **2Ki 22:13**

- Josiah was spared the worst of God's judgment because of his humbleness of heart, and immediately set about "Reviving" the Nation. (2 Ki 23)
 - He gathered the Elders
 - He read the Law to the people
 - He renewed the covenant
 - He cleansed the temple of Baal worship
 - He removed idolatrous priests and burned and broke idolatrous objects of worship
 - He stopped child sacrifice to Molech
 - He reinstated the Passover
 - He slew the priests that ministered upon the high places

*"Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD. And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him." **2Ki 23:24-25***

Jonah's preaching ushered in THIS sort of Revival...

1. All of Nineveh believed God! (v5)
2. A citywide fast was proclaimed! (v5)
3. Ninevites of every socio-economic status put on sackcloth and mourned, presumably over their wickedness and known cruelty. (v5)
4. This heart of repentance was exemplified by the king himself who arose from his throne, took off his royal robes, and dressed in mourning attire, and sat in ashes. (v6)
5. The entire Assyria was compelled by royal decree to repent and cry out "mightily unto God," turn from evil way and violence" in the hope that God might "turn and repent" and be merciful.
6. And that is exactly what happened. Nineveh was not destroyed in 40 days. It was destroyed about 150 years later as prophesied by the prophet Nahum.

Now, the Ninevites eventual backslide notwithstanding, this "Jonahine" revival was amazing considering that Nineveh, was prideful, violent, and yes "an exceeding great city!"

The ATS Bible dictionary states that "In the books of Jonah, and Nahum Nineveh is described as an immense city, three days' journey in circuit, containing more than one hundred and twenty thousand young children, or probably six hundred thousand souls. It contained "much cattle," and numerous parks, garden groves, etc. Its inhabitants were wealthy, warlike, and far advanced in civilization. It had numerous strongholds with gates and bars; and had multiplied its merchants above the stars: its crowned princes were as locusts, and its captains as grasshoppers. Nineveh was said to be twenty-one miles long, nine miles broad, and fifty-four miles in circumference; that its walls were a hundred feet high, and so broad that three chariots could drive upon them abreast; and that it had fifteen hundred towers, each two hundred feet high."

So I have a question.

When preparing this message in summary form, I wrote, "So many believers long for revival in our Nation. So many churches institute program after program...strategy after strategy in an attempt to see the hand of God move our communities.

Why was Jonah's message so effective? Why did it Change this Kingdom so Powerfully?

I'd like to humbly offer 3 answers to that question for your consideration:

1. Jonah was Positioned by God for his Mission.
2. Jonah's heart was Prepared for His Message.
3. Jonah's Message was Prophetic (*Repent! is almost always the message of the OT prophet*); it precisely pricked the hearts of the hearers.

1. Jonah was Positioned for His Mission...despite his Rebellion!

In chapter 1 of Jonah, we see his initial reaction to God's command...

Jon 1:1-3 *Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. 3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.*

We read about Jonah's travails aboard that ship and are amazed the power and determination of God to show mercy to the Assyrians...

Jon 1:4-16 *But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. 6 So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish." 7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" 9 And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. 11 Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. 12 He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you." 13 Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against*

them. **14** Therefore they called out to the LORD, "O LORD, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you." **15** So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. **16** Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

Jon 1:17 And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Friends, this even was not only appointed by God; it was Purposed by God.

"The Assyrians in Nineveh worshiped Dagon and his female counterpart, the fish goddess Nanshe. Dagon was a "fish god" (dag in Hebrew means fish). He was represented as a half-man, half-fish. The transportation God provided for Jonah—a great fish—would have been full of meaning for the Ninevites. When Jonah arrived in their city, he made quite a splash, so to speak. He was a man who had been inside a *fish* for three days and directly deposited by a *fish* on the shores of Assyria. The Ninevites, who worshiped a fish god, were duly impressed; they gave Jonah their attention and repented of their sin."

"Henry Clay Trumbull wrote, "What better heralding, as a divinely sent messenger to Nineveh, could Jonah have had, than to be thrown up out of the mouth of a great fish, in the presence of witnesses, say on the coast of Phoenicia, where the fish-god was a favorite object of worship? Such an incident would have inevitably aroused the (curious) nature of observers, so that a multitude would be ready to follow the seemingly new avatar of the fish-god, proclaiming the story of his uprising from the sea, as he went on his mission to the city where the fish-god had its very centre of worship" (H. Clay Trumbull, "Jonah in Nineveh." Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 2, No.1, 1892, p. 56)."

Smelly, fishy Jonah (who must have been quite a sight) showed up and declared:
"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Please note these observations as it relates to Revival and Repentance:

- Jonah made no attempt to appeal to felt needs. God did that.
- Jonah didn't call a strategy meeting to figure out how to "meet them where they are." God did that.
- Jonah didn't devise a Whale-oriented marketing strategy, complete with Whale websites, a Whale-themed strategy rollout of buttons, flyers, and t-shirts, or a #heartheWhalerider hashtag on his twitter account. God did that.
- Jonah simply entered the city and began preaching the message God had given!

2. Jonah's Heart had been Prepared by God...he was Penitent!

Listen to the heart of this man as he celebrates His miraculous deliverance from the sea, and mourns his circumstances of being in the "belly of hell."

Jon 2:1-4 Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, **2** And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. **3** For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas;

and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. 4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

In the belly of the fish, Jonah realizes (if temporarily) a few things:

1. **That God will Manifest His Will.** It is certain. It will happen. God will accomplish His divine purposes. What hope! What a joy-producing truth!
2. **That God's is Merciful.** Even to a rebellious prophet! Hallelujah! Despite our faults and failures, we serve an merciful and faithful High Priest who can identify with our weakness and chooses to be gracious and forgiving!
3. **That God is Mighty.** He is Lord over His creation and able to do anything that pleases Him! Nothing is outside of His power and authority. "Even the wind and waves obey Him and everything under those waves!).

3. Jonah's Message was Prophetic!

*And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, **Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.***

Jonah's "cry aloud and spare not" message to Nineveh was one of impending doom. Some say we are likely given the message in summary form. Nevertheless, what we are given is simple, straight to the point, and presumably based on the results, saturated with the anointing of God.

The message was timely, it was cutting, it was certain, it was perceived to be truth. There is no record of Ninevite Obstinace; just Near-instant Obedience!

It was exactly what the Ninevites needed to hear.

Which is amazing from a 2019 perspective because Jonah was like crazy fundamentalist preacher on the street corner screaming "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is coming! Are you ready to meet Jesus? Repent or burn!"

Jonah's prophetic message could not be more different that our modern approach at evangelism and attempts at revival. I think most of the West would dismiss a modern Jonah out of hand, labeling him judgmental, insensitive, archaic, unloving, and mean-spirited.

Could the loss of the prophetic voice be at least a part of what ails the church?

So as we end our time together, a few questions:

- What if the church understood that we are purposed by God for such a time as this?
- What if our faith was less in our ingenuity and more in the simple, powerful, loving message of God for this generation?
- Might this cause us to speak the things of God to both normal people AND those in power?
- What if the church was less defiant and more obedient? Might we see Revival?
- What if the church simply declared God's message with simplicity? Might we see Revival?
- What if we humbly walked in a greater understanding of God's sovereign mercy?

May the LORD Jesus help us do all these things and more, for His honor and praise. Amen!