

## JONAH 2:10-3:5

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### INTRODUCTION

- Have you ever felt like you're stuck on the bench of the Xn life?
    - Other people seem to have this faith thing down...
      - They seem alive to God...
      - They seem to be following him.
    - But you – not so much...
      - Through failure, complacency, or sin...
      - Or bc life's struggles have worn you down...
- Maybe you're not even a Xn → Certainly not a very good one.*
- **Last week:** We saw that when life takes us down, when we're in over our heads, when we've messed up, when we're at our worst – grace meets us at the bottom.
  - **This week:** We'll see that God's not content to stop there.
    - After chasing us to the bottom...
    - God puts us back in the game.
      - And today, he can use your simple obedience...
      - To do amazing things...

### [GOD PUTS US BACK IN THE GAME]

- Having brought Jonah **down**, now God brings him back **up** – or, quite literally, fish does.
  - **2:10a:** And the LORD spoke to the fish...
    - What do you think that conversation was like?
    - *Hey Phil (Phil the Fish), This prophet's not for you → Spit him out somewhere safe – I've got things for him to do.*
  - **2:10b:** and [the fish] vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.
    - Unlike Jonah, fish does as God commands!
      - Doesn't swim off in the opposite direction.
      - Doesn't say no to God!
    - Vomits Jonah out upon on dry land.
      - Can you imagine it?!
      - Jonah struggles to his feet, covered in sick – but very much alive.
  - And before he's even showered, God shows up again...
- **3:1:** Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the **second time**...
  - Remember start of book: **1:1:** Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah...
  - Here, word of LORD comes to him again – underline it – *the second time*.
  - God says: *Go!* Jonah says: *No!* So, God comes to him again...
- **3:2:** **Arise, go** to Nineveh, that great city, and **call out** against it the message that I tell you.
  - Do you see the three commands in this verse? **Arise** → **Go** → **Call Out**.
  - Do they sound familiar?
    - Back to **chp 1** when God spoke to Jonah the first time...
    - And told him **1:2:** **Arise, go** to Nineveh, that great city, and **call out** against it.

- You see what's happening here?
  - God is giving Jonah a second chance...
  - To do exactly what he told him the first time!  
*He's putting Jonah back in the game...*

**APPLY:** A couple of things stirred in me as I reflected on this...

**ON ONE HAND:** There's no doubt it's a **challenge**...

- God's commands don't change just bc we disobey them.
  - God said: *Go!* Jonah said: *No!* So, God said: *Okay, let's try something else.*
  - Nope! God said: *Go!* Jonah said: *No!* So, God said: *Go!* a second time!!!
- God doesn't coddle us → Let us settle than anything but the best for us.
  - His commands were good for us the first time...
  - So he's not afraid to give them to us a second time.  
*He puts us back in the game so we can grow in the very places we failed before.*

**Illustrate:**

- Maybe you've failed in struggle with **pornography**.
  - *Distorted* view of women, *damaged* sex life, *destroyed* relational trust.
  - Sworn you'll stop 1,000x but hidden struggle remains.
  - Maybe you've started to believe you'll never get over it...

*The word of the LORD comes to you a second time → He's putting you back in the game.*

  - Get up/get moving...
  - Download some accountability software, tell a friend about your struggle, go see a good counselor, reach out for support here at church.  
*God is giving you a second chance to grow precisely where you failed...  
So that you can experience forgiveness/freedom in these places as well.*
- Maybe you've failed in as a **parent**.
  - Lost patience with kids, neglected to lead them as you should, or generally let them down.
  - Promised to do better but find yourself failing again and again.
  - Maybe started to believe you'll never be the parent your kids deserve.

*The word of the LORD comes to you a second time → He's putting you back in the game.*

  - Get up/get moving...
  - Apologize to your kids, get wisdom from other parents, pray and ask God to help you change.  
*God is giving you a second chance to grow precisely where you failed...  
So that you can experience forgiveness/freedom in these places as well.*
- Maybe you've failed in your battle with **diligence**.
  - Procrastinated, ignored responsibilities, missed good opportunities, frustrated those who depend on you at work or home.
  - Promised you'll do better but haven't been able to get it together.
  - Maybe started to believe person who said you'd never amount to anything.

*The word of the LORD comes to you a second time → He's putting you back in the game.*

- Get up/get moving...
- Set small goals, get some accountability, ask God to help you live intentional life.  
***God is giving you a second chance to grow precisely where you failed...  
So that you can experience forgiveness/freedom in these places as well.***

- Maybe you've failed in your calling to **serve others**.
  - You've prioritized own comfort, promised to get involved but haven't followed through, missed opportunities to bless others.
  - Told yourself you'll start serving soon but keep making excuses.
  - Maybe settled for a life that is all about you.

***The word of the LORD comes to you a second time → He's putting you back in the game.***

- Get up/get moving...
- Start small, find a place to serve, ask God to change your heart.  
***God is giving you a second chance to grow precisely where you failed...  
So that you can experience forgiveness/freedom in these places as well.***

- Maybe it's **something else** – Anger, dishonesty, generosity, prayer...
  - You tell me where you feel like you've failed!
  - Then let's hear the word of the LORD come to us a second time.  
***As he puts us back in the game.***

**SECOND:** As much as this is a challenge, don't miss that it's also tremendously **encouraging**.

- God doesn't coddle us → But doesn't give up on us either.
  - God said: *Go!* Jonah said: *No!* So, God said: *You are the worst, I'm done with you, you're dead to me.*
  - Nope! God said: *Go!* Jonah said: *No!* So, God said: *Go!* a second time!!!  
***He puts us back in the game...***

**Illustrate:**

- Who does that???<sup>1</sup>
  - **Business:** Staff member working on vital project. But on last 3 sales visits, proved completely incapable of closing deal. One last chance, and everyone says you should take over, but instead you put **failure** back in. Who does that?
  - **Sports:** Super Bowl. Down in dying seconds, but 2 yards out from punching it in. Running back's fumbled 3x already, head's down/looks frail. One last chance, but instead of calling a different number, you put **fumbler** back in. Who does that?  
***Who uses failures? Fumblers? Who does that?***
- God does that.
  - This is how the gospel works – remember “the sign of Jonah”?
    - As Jonah was swallowed by the fish, Jesus was swallowed by death.
    - And as Jonah was brought back up, so Jesus came back to life.
  - WHY?
    - So we could be forgiven of our sin...
    - And given a second chance to live for him.

***He's the God of the second chance, the third chance, and many more.<sup>2</sup>  
Through his life, death, and resurrection → God puts us back in the game.***

- Do you need to hear that today?
  - Do you feel like a failure/fumbler?
  - Stuck in your mistakes/missteps?
  - Like you've messed up and missed chance to live life you were supposed to live?
- We need to understand how grace works:
 

*It saves us at the bottom and then puts us back in the game.*

**Transition:** And when we hear that call – believe me...

*God will use our simple obedience to do amazing things...*

### [GOD USES SIMPLE OBEDIENCE TO DO AMAZING THINGS]

**State:** Back to the text...

- We already noticed what God told Jonah to do...
  - Exact same thing as he told him before...
  - **Arise** → **Go** → **Call Out**.
- And look what Jonah does now:
  - **3:3-4:** So Jonah **arose** and **went** to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he **called out**, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"
 

*Jonah: **Arose** → **Went** → **Called Out**.*
  - He does **exactly** what God told him to do, even though it was **hard to do**.
- Remember that going to Nineveh was no easy task.
  - Reputation for bloodthirsty savagery → Kill you as quick as look at you.
  - And then – oof!!! – look at sermon God gave Jonah to preach: **V4: Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!**
    - That's it → And it's the worst sermon ever!
    - Not going to get him book deal/social media following/win friends influence people in Nineveh.
- And yet – Jonah does exactly what God told him to do.
 

*It's not a new command → But it is new obedience!*
- And look what God does with it → Look at **3:5!!!**
  - Jonah preaches worst sermon in history and...
    - **The people of Nineveh believed God** – they turn to him in faith.
    - **They called for a fast and put on sackcloth** – marks of repentance from sin.
    - **From the greatest of them to the least of them** – from the king on the throne to the homeless beggar in the street → The whole city is saved!
  - How did this happen???
  - Obviously weren't won over by Jonah's brilliance/wit...
  - This happened bc God uses simple obedience to do amazing things...

**Transition:**

- Sometimes to get back in game, there's temptation to come up with **grandiose plan**.
- But often it's better just to **run the next play**:
  - Do what God's told us to do and trust him from there.
  - He uses simple obedience to do amazing things.

**Apply:** Do you get the distinction I'm making?

- In your battle with **pornography**:
  - You don't need a grandiose plan: Declare you're going to throw out all your devices and never to use the internet again.
  - Instead, maybe God is calling you just to run next play: Download accountability software, tell a friend about your struggle, reach out for help here at church.
  - God can use your simple obedience to give you victory over sexual temptation, and usher you into a new season of freedom.  
*Don't try to fix everything → Just do the next right thing.*
  
- In your failures as a **parent**:
  - You don't need a grandiose plan: Buy a bunch of parenting books, sign up for a seminar, sit your kids down and swear you'll change.
  - Instead, maybe God is calling you just to run the next play: Ask them how they're doing over dinner, tell them you're proud of them, go to their next game.
  - God can use your simple obedience to impact your kid's heart and give you a new relationship with them.  
*Don't try to fix everything → Just do the next right thing.*
  
- In your struggles with **diligence**:
  - You don't need a grandiose plan: Watch a bunch of motivational videos, read a ton of self-help books, draw up an elaborate schedule that completely overhauls your entire routine in a single night and has you starting at 5 a.m.
  - Instead, maybe God is calling you just to run next play: Set an alarm/don't hit snooze, get that paper done/turn it in, show up/do whatever you said you'd do.
  - God can use your simple obedience to form an intentional life that you enjoy.  
*Don't try to fix everything → Just do the next right thing.*
  
- In your failure to **serve others**:
  - You don't need a grandiose plan: Suddenly vow to foster eight kids and start a non-profit to tackle homelessness.
  - Instead, maybe God is calling you just to run next play: Do something tangible for spouse/roommate today, serve behind scenes at church, invite friend to Hello Fall!
  - God can use your simple obedience to bless others in unimaginable ways.  
*Don't try to fix everything → Just do the next right thing.*

## THE CLOSE

**God puts you back in the game – And uses simple obedience to do amazing things.**

- Is there somewhere in your life you stuck on the bench?
  - Maybe through failure, complacency, or sin?
  - Or maybe bc life's struggles have worn you down?
- God's grace will meet you at the bottom – that's good news.
- But, even better, his grace won't leave you there – God now puts you back in the game.
  - What step of simple obedience could you take today?
  - Take it and watch – God might just do an amazing thing.

## RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

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### Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- Ray Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City*.
- Ray Cortese, *Jonah: God's Unrelenting Pursuit of You*.
- Bryan Estelle, *Salvation Through Judgment and Mercy: The Gospel According to Jonah*.
- Sinclair Ferguson, *Man Overboard! The Story of Jonah*.
- J. D. Greear, *Castaway: The Book of Jonah*.
- Craig Groeschel, *Jonah*.
- Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal Prophet*.
- Logos Bible Software.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*.
- Tim Mackie, *Read Scripture: Illustrated Summaries of Biblical Books*.
- Douglas Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*.
- Tom Tarrants, *Consumed By Hate, Redeemed By Love*.
- Daniel Timmer, *A Gracious and Compassionate God*.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> I owe these illustrations to Ray Cortese, *The Redirected Life*, accessed [here](#) 2/3/20.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Tarrants, *Consumed By Hate, Redeemed By Love*, 185.