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## God of a second chance : Jonah 3:1-3

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**BIBLICAL  
PERSPECTIVES**

**THE GOD OF  
A SECOND**

**C H A N C E**

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**JONAH 3:1-3**

**G . M I C H A E L  
COCORIS**

THE GOD OF A SECOND CHANCE  
JONAH 3:1-3

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**THE GOD OF A SECOND CHANCE**  
**JONAH 3:1-3**

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A fellow named Jerry wrote a letter to all his friends in which he said:

*For exercise, I play the fast moving, action-packed game of racquetball once a week. Well, at least I used to. One particular game something happened that would soon change my life. I felt very faint, had a plastic taste in my mouth and had to lie down because I felt I was going to pass out. This happened in October of 1980.*

*Later that year, visiting my sister up in Oregon, I had a similar experience while splitting some firewood. I felt terrible. I felt that something was telling me I was dying. We went to the country doctor and he said he thought it was gas.*

*My wife and I returned home from Oregon. As time went on, I would continue having attacks. I began seeing my doctor at Kaiser Hospital in Fontana. There seemed to be no clear explanation for these attacks. My doctor put me through many different tests to find the cause. I took the hypoglycemia test, blood test, EEG brain scan test, halter-monitor heart test, etc. All turned up negative, the doctor couldn't find what was wrong! But within me I knew from my experience in Oregon I was dying. (Something was killing me.)*

*On Friday, June 5, 1981, I had a grand mal seizure while sleeping at home. I scared my wife very much and she called the paramedics. All I remember is waking up in the emergency room with a nurse getting ready to stick an IV in my hand! During my stay in the hospital, my doctor and wife were both determined to find out what was wrong with me. My doctor set me up for a CAT scan*

test of the brain. It was found that I had pressure on one half of my brain. To get a better picture of what was going on, my doctor ordered an angiogram test. For this they put a tube up an artery into my brain, injected dye, and took X-rays.

The results of all these tests were reviewed by a neurosurgeon. I was told that I had an astrocytoma brain tumor. I was also told that I had one to three months to live, and was advised to make up my will. This scared me more than I've ever been scared in my life.

Hey, wait a minute! I'm only 30 years old. Everything has just started going well for me. I have a beautiful wife, I'm buying a home, and I have a job which I enjoy very much and planned to retire from someday. All this stuff about having a brain tumor and dying just cannot be happening to me!

My family doctor advised getting a second opinion from a neurosurgeon in Los Angeles. He and four other neurosurgeons recommended surgery. The operation was scheduled to take place after my planned two weeks annual vacation from work. I wanted to have a good time camping and spending time with my family before having to undergo something so serious and risky as brain surgery. I enjoyed my vacation, but the operation was always hanging over me.

On July 13, 1981, I entered Kaiser Hospital to prepare for brain surgery on July 16. The surgery was to remove as much as possible of the astrocytoma tumor in my head. I felt that since I was young and strong, I wouldn't have any problems with the surgery. I also felt I was ready spiritually. I had accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior when I was 20 years old.

Waking up from surgery I experienced the most

incredible pains and suffering I have ever endured. My head felt like someone had beaten on it with a baseball bat! The pain shots did not help me at all! My emotions were also in shreds. I cried often. I kept thinking of all the times I had done wrong. There were times when the pain was so intense I thought I was going to die. I was afraid God wouldn't take me to Heaven; let alone say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21). This was a great time of agony for me because I could remember almost every single instance where I had failed God!

Now I'm getting better. God is healing me! Praise God! I'm facing chemotherapy and radiation treatments and there is a chance I may be cured with God's help! I believe that God is giving me a second chance to live right for Him! When I do finally die — everyone does someday — I want to meet Him with a clear conscience. Praise the Lord! I'm seeing all the good that's coming out of this terrible experience. My wife and I, and many of my friends and family, have been drawn closer to God. I now truly realize that I could meet the Lord at any time. God has blessed me with a second chance and I just want to live my life for the Lord.

What struck me as I read the letter from Jerry was his statement that "God is giving me a second chance."

Does God give second chances? We don't have any difficulty believing that He gives some, like Jerry, a reprieve from death. In Jerry's case, he didn't do anything wrong. What if you failed morally and spiritually? Does God give those who fail a second chance?

And what is meant by a "second chance"? Is second chance second class? To answer these questions, consider Jonah 3:1-3.

## **GOD GRACIOUSLY COMMISSIONED JONAH TO PREACH**

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God graciously commissioned Jonah to the office of prophet. All of God's dealings with men are gracious. He saves by grace (Eph. 2:8) and grants the privilege of service by His grace (cf. Rom. 12:3-8).

Jonah submitted to the Lord. He preached and was successful. As we have seen, he predicted that Jeroboam II would restore certain territories to Israel — a prophecy that came to pass (2 Kings 14:25).

Later in his life, God came to him and commissioned him to preach to Nineveh (Jonah 1:1, 2). This command did not come to a novice or a newcomer on the block. At this point, Jonah was a seasoned, successful professional. If you have ever trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you, like Jonah, have a gift for service and perhaps some experience in using it.

God gives every believer a gift for service (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-7, 11). You came into your spiritual life equipped to minister. Granted, your gift may not be as big as someone else's, at least in your own eyes, but you have a capacity to serve. Let me illustrate. New cars come with options. You can choose the color and the extras you wish, but all cars come with an engine. Some engines are more powerful than others, but all cars have one. It is inconceivable that a manufacturer would make an automobile without a motor. Likewise, God didn't make any duds. All saints are equipped to serve.

## **JONAH DELIBERATELY DISOBEYED**

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God graciously granted Jonah a gift for service, but Jonah disobeyed. Instead of going to Nineveh as he was told, he headed in another direction — toward Tarshish (Jonah 1:3).

Seasoned servants sin. James, the half-brother of Christ and the head of the Jerusalem church, said, "We [notice he included himself] all stumble in many things" (James 3:2). John, the apostle whom Jesus loved and who loved the Lord dearly (he was the only apostle who did not flee when the Lord was crucified), said, "If we [notice he included himself] say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8, cf. also 1:10).

Furthermore, seasoned servants deliberately sin. Jonah knew what he was doing, and he did it anyway. Some talk as if that's not possible. They say believers only stumble. But, they not only do that, they sometimes deliberately fall. David said, "Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins" (Psalm 19:13). The word "presumptuous" literally means "willful." *The Ryrie Study Bible* says, "Presumptuous sins are deliberate violations."

The writer to the Hebrews says, "If we [notice he includes himself. Whoever he was, he was a Christian!] sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (Heb. 10:26). Some argue that this verse is not referring to a true believer. But the author said "we," which includes himself (just like James 3:2; 1 John 1:8, 10; and Psalm 19:13). Besides, Hebrews 10:30 proves that the passage is talking

about genuine Christians. It says, "The Lord will judge His people."

Face it. Don't be deceived. Believers deliberately sin. You know that because you've done it. There is not a Christian reading these words who has not deliberately sinned. Frankly, some have even committed gross sins like lying, stealing, adultery and murder (in the form of abortion).

### **GOD GRACIOUSLY GAVE JONAH A SECOND CHANCE**

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When Jonah deliberately sinned, God did not immediately punish him, but He did immediately discipline him to teach him about grace. God graciously brought forth a storm. In the process, He saved the seamen (1:16). God's design was not to injure, but to instruct. He wanted Jonah to obey, and He wanted Jonah to understand that He was gracious. Likewise, some of us have deliberately disobeyed and have been disciplined. The question is, have you learned; have you turned?

God also spared Jonah. He could have died in the deep when he was tossed overboard. But instead, Jonah cried out to the Lord (2:2, 4, 7) and the Lord graciously provided an underwater Holiday Inn for the protection, safety and comfort of His servant. He had three days and nights — free! Then God delivered him safely to the shore.

In a similar fashion, God has graciously spared us. If you are still alive, then make no mistake about it — that is an indication that God has been gracious to you.

Now, God could have said, "Okay, Jonah, you've failed. I'm finished with you. I've been kind not to kill you, but that doesn't mean I have to take another chance on your failing and falling again. Go home and behave yourself — from now on, you're on the shelf."

No, God didn't do that. Rather, "Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you'" (3:1, 2).

Feinberg comments:

*The purpose of the Lord in chastening His servant was to make him more useful for the work to which he had been clearly called. Thus it was that the call came to Jonah a second time. God, in marvelous grace, commissioned His messenger. God gives men a second chance in His service as He did with Jonah, Peter and John Mark. (Let the reader not misunderstand. We do not say that God gives a second chance to trust Christ after this earthly life is closed. There is no such teaching in the Bible.) Thank God He bears with His erring servants and is willing to give them the message "a second time." (p. 143)*

God is the God of a second chance. If you have sinned, even willfully and woefully, and will turn to the Lord, He will restore you and replace you in His service. The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29).

"Yes," someone will say, "but, Jonah was a special case. God never prepared a storm or a special sea monster just for me." Don't count on it. There is no temptation that is special, but God has tailor-made your trial just for you. Besides, the idea of another chance for service is not restricted to Jonah.

David sinned. He coveted, lied, stole, committed adultery and murder. Yet God not only forgave him, God later used him to write Scripture, Psalm 51, for example.

Peter sinned. He cursed, lied and deliberately denied the Lord to save his own skin. And not just once, but three times! Yet God not only forgave him, He used him on the Day of Pentecost to convert 3,000 people, and afterward Peter wrote two books of the New Testament.

John Robertson, of Glasgow, had preached for 40 years when he himself became a backslider. The glow was gone, so he decided to resign. One morning he prayed, "Oh, God, Thou didst commission me 40 years ago, but I have blundered and failed and I want to resign this morning." As he prayed, he began to cry. In between the sobs, it was as if he heard the voice of the Lord saying, "John Robertson, 'tis true I commissioned you 40 years ago; 'tis true you have blundered and failed. John Robertson, I am not here for you to resign your commission, but to re-sign your commission." Instead of resigning, John Robertson re-signed and had a greater ministry than ever. God graciously grants sinful servants a second chance to serve Him. So get back to the Lord and get busy for Him.

On New Year's Day, in 1929, Georgia Tech played California in the Rose Bowl. In that game, a player named Roy Riegels recovered a fumble for California. Somehow he became confused and began running in the wrong direction. Fortunately, one of his teammates outran him and overcame him just before he scored for the opposing team.

Georgia Tech, however, went on to score the touchdown and led by seven at the half.

At half time, the Golden Bears filed off the field and into the dressing room. There was a somber air in the room and a sober expression on every face. The team was down by one touchdown. One of the major questions was what Coach Nibbes Price would do with Roy Riegels in the second half. Roy, in the meantime, put his blanket around his shoulders, sat in a corner, placed his face in his hands and wept like a baby.

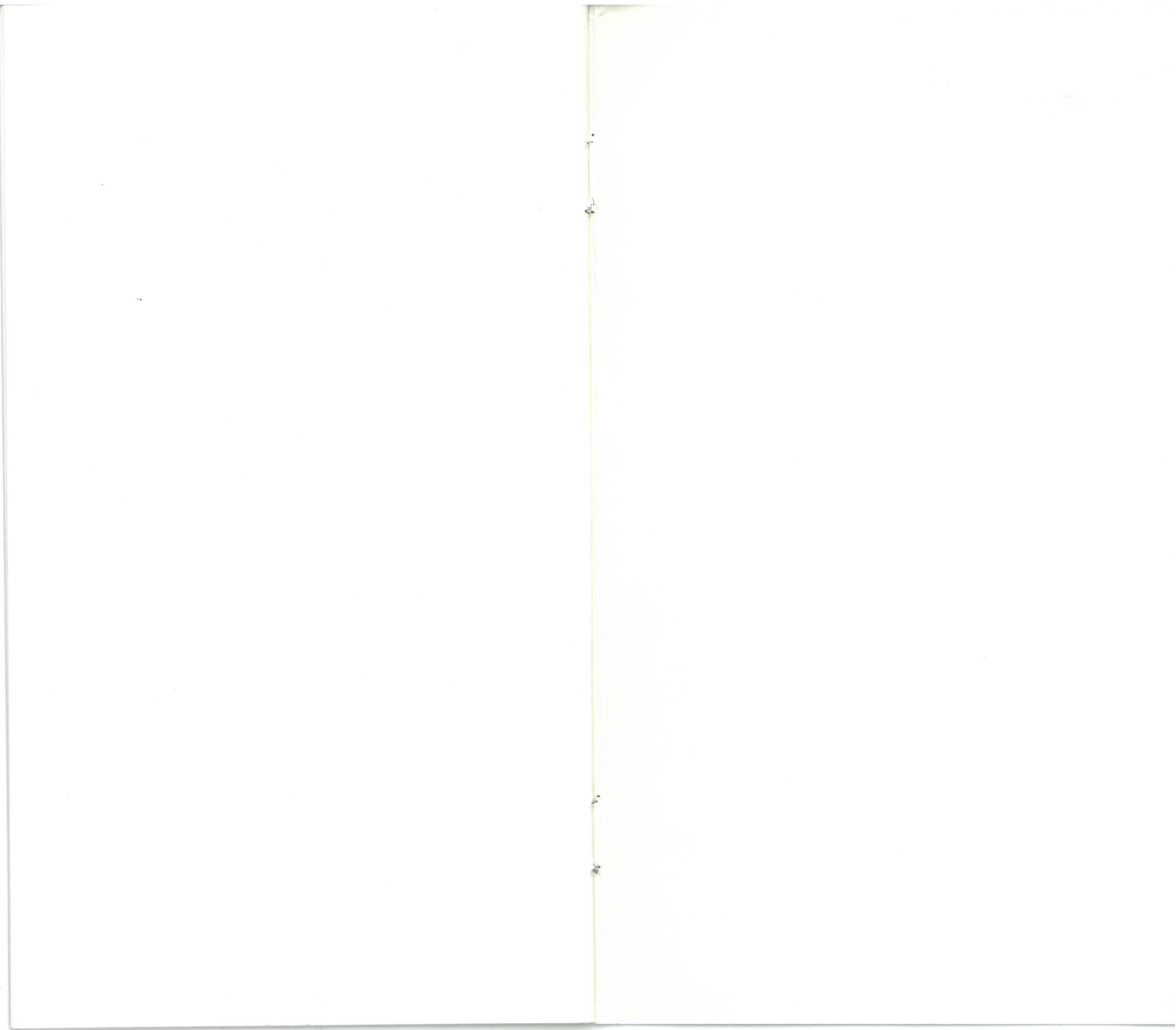
As anyone knows who has played football, during the half the coach usually has a great deal to say. That day, Coach Price was strangely silent. Perhaps he was trying to decide what to do with Riegels. The timekeeper came in and announced that there were three minutes before the beginning of the second half. Coach Price looked at the team and simply said, "Men, the same team that played the first half will start the second."

The players got up and started out the door toward the field, all but Riegels. He didn't budge. The coach called to him, but he still didn't move. Then Coach Price went over to where he sat and said, "Roy, didn't you hear me? The same team that played the first half will start the second." Roy looked up, his cheeks wet with tears, and said, "Coach, I can't do it to save my life. I've ruined you, I've ruined the university and I've ruined myself. I can't face that crowd in the stadium to save my life." Coach Price reached out, put his hand on Riegels' shoulder and said to him, "Roy, get up and go back; the game is only half over." Roy went back and he

played like he had never played before.

We are all like Roy. We take the ball and run in the wrong direction. We stumble and fall, and are so ashamed of ourselves we never want to try again. But God is like that coach. He reminds us that failure is not final, that the game isn't over, and He encourages us to go back at it. Our God is a God of a second chance, of a third chance, or a fourth chance, or a fifth chance . . .







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