

THE GOD OF THE SECOND CHANCE *continued*

Nineveh had an awareness of the anger of God. This was a message that preached overthrow, rooted in the righteousness of God and in the anger of God against human sin. There is some indication/hint in the passage that he also zeroed in on the specific sins that were the peculiar manifestation of their rebellion against God – their repentance dealt with the specific sins which Jonah himself had denounced. **Luke 11:30-32** reveals that Jonah “*was a sign unto the Ninevites*” – i.e., in the course of his preaching he drew counsel from his own experience: “*My God is not playing games with you Ninevites. He is so determined to announce to you that in forty days you will be overthrown that He has brought a messenger via Joppa, the Mediterranean Sea, a whale’s belly, a whale’s vomit and a gracious commission! My God is in earnest with you Ninevites – and I am the living proof of His earnestness!*” Plus, why could this grace shown to Jonah not be repeated with the Ninevites?

After J. Vernon McGee delivered messages on Jonah on a Los Angeles radio station, he received a letter from a doctor in Beverly Hills: “*Thank God for **Jonah 3:1**. That now is my favourite verse, and I’ll tell you why.*” He had been an officer in a church in Chicago, but a problem had arisen. Charges had been brought against him and though he was not guilty, everyone turned against him. So he walked out, on the church and on the Lord – and vowed, “*Never again!*” However, on hearing McGee’s message on this third chapter of Jonah, he said, “*If God would give those men a second chance, He will give me a second chance.*” He came back to the Lord, became active in a church – and discovered ... the Lord is the God of the second chance!



MEETINGS TODAY

- Morning Worship – 11.30am:
“*Jonah #6: The God of the Second Chance.*”
- Evening Service – 7.00pm: “*Isaiah 55 #3: The Assurance in the Covenant.*”



THE MARTYRS’ ONE HUNDRED CLUB

Over the course of 26 years of ministry in Londonderry I never had the privilege of seeing a member of my congregation reach the incredible milestone of 100 years of age; in 6 years at Martyrs I have buried three people of 100 years and more. The first was Lily Scott (104), then Annie Wilson (101); yesterday I conducted the funeral service for Geordie McCormick who celebrated his 100th birthday in September 2019.

Geordie – and his best friend Freddie Bowman – were both avid supporters of Dr Ian Paisley. They went to all rallies, protested when he was jailed, and leaflet dropped to support his campaigns. When Dr Paisley conducted Freddie’s funeral service he remarked that when he looked down on a Sunday night and saw George and Fred in their usual seats, front row in the church, “*All was right with the world.*”

On one 12th of July, when Gary Parkes was marching along the Lisburn Road, Geordie (seated outside his Belgravia residence) summoned him out of the parade, and handed him a white bag full of church envelopes. I have discovered this kind of dedication to the work of God typical of all the people mentioned above. May God raise up more faithful servants to sacrificially and joyfully serve Him 100% in our day and generation, for the glory of His name and the good of souls.



THE GOD OF THE SECOND CHANCE **Jonah 3:1-4.**

Back in 1775 William Cowper wrote these now familiar lines: *God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm.*

Much further back – in fact, more than 2500 years before Cowper put pen to paper – Jonah proved the truth of Cowper’s words by ‘starring in’ a whole series of events that emphasised the truth that we have a sovereign God who works out His eternal purposes in spite of the private schemes of men. The entire contents of **Jonah 1:4-3:1** outlines THE RESTORATION OF THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET and stands as a mighty memorial to the sovereign purpose of God being worked out through numerous – an amazing chain of – His providential acts!

[1] THE RECORD OF THIS RENEWED COMMISSION; 3:1-2. Like the original commission, it was: (a) A SOVEREIGN COMMISSION OF GOD: there is no indication that Jonah was looking for it; nor does God cajole or plead or negotiate with Jonah: He reissues His original command. In this modern age when there seems to be an infatuation with dialogue in churches, we need to get back to the declaration of God’s spoken Word. (b) A SYMPATHETIC COMMISSION. God displayed incredible grace in giving His prophet a second chance! I love to think of our God as the God of the second chance. He did this for Jacob, David, Elijah, Israel (**Joel 2; Hosea 4:1-8**), Simon Peter (cf. **Luke 22:54-62; John 21:15**), John Mark, etc.. And He does it for us! Let me add this word of caution: be sure you are ready if that glorious moment comes. Do not be crippled by pride that refuses to admit either the reality or gravity of past mistakes.

This renewed commission was not only sovereign and gracious; (c) IT WAS SPECIFIC: “*Arise*” – exactly as at the first; “*Go to Nineveh, that great city*” – exactly as at the first; “*And preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee*” – exactly as at the first.

[2] THE RESPONSE TO THIS RENEWED COMMISSION; 3:3&4.

(a) THE CORE OF IT. Consider the capsule statement that appears in **3:3**: “*So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD ...*.” At last, Jonah appears like a willing, obedient private in the presence of the commander-in-chief! Everything he does is within the boundary of the Word of the Lord: that Word which had previously been smothered by the word of his own carnal reasoning and smashed by the sledgehammer of his own carnal prejudice, now becomes the very pathway upon which he makes the journey to Nineveh. This is always the acid test of whether or not God has restored any Jonahs: does the word of the Lord now hold sway in the areas where previously it was defied and disobeyed? (cf. **John 14:15**). The measure of the genuineness of spiritual restoration is not to be found in the measure of emotional upheaval – in ‘spiritual’ whining or whimpering – but in this: does the Word of Jehovah, which was once disobeyed, now capture me in the precise areas where my disobedience was formerly seen? With this ‘capsule statement’ explored, we may proceed to consider (b) THE COMPONENTS OF IT – the DETAILED DESCRIPTION. One of the great difficulties for Jonah is found in i. THE GREATNESS OF THE METROPOLIS to which he was sent – Nineveh. Geographically, it is thought that this expression, “*an exceeding great city of three day’s journey,*” refers to the ‘Assyrian Triangle’ – an aggregate of three cities that spread over 26 linear miles; with Nineveh in the centre, Khorsabad 8 miles to the north, and Nimrud some 18 miles to the southeast (cf. ‘Greater London,’ that extends as far as 45 miles (70 km) from the centre in the City of London). Literally, Nineveh was “*a city great unto God*” – a city that was great even in the estimation of God the Creator ... great in terms of the number of human beings that lived within it (**chapter 4**); image-bearers of God, albeit pagans, yet His offspring (cf. **Acts 17:28**). It was also demanding because of the ii. THE GRAVITY OF HIS MESSAGE: “*... and he cried, and said, ‘Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.’*” It is a message that focusses on one essential theme – judgment! No doubt Jonah did not simply repeat this one line, but expanded on and explained the reasons behind this overthrow; which is why we read in **Jonah 3:9** that the people of