

God's Amazing Grace

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- [0 : 00] I want you to pretend with me that when I was sitting on the end of that pew, I had one foot stuck in the aisle.
- And one of the ushers, as he walked by, tripped and fell flat on his face. If it had been Tyler, we'd have just laughed.
- Or what if I got up and I looked down and I said, I'm sorry, Tyler.
- Sorry. Got back in that pew and stuck my foot out again. Do you think he should take my apology seriously?
- No one would, would they? It's obvious. I'm not sorry if that's how I reacted. But what if he fell and I jumped up?
- [1 : 05] I am so sorry, Tyler. I did not mean to do that. I didn't mean for my foot to be out there. Let me help you up. And I sit back down and I even scoop down now to make sure my foot's not out again.
- That ought to be believable, shouldn't it? In the tone of my voice, my response, that would be genuine sorrow, even repentance, because I'm changing my action, getting a foot out of the way.
- Now, let's don't pretend. Think to yourself, when I realize that I have sinned against God or another person, how do I respond?
- Boys and girls, when you know you've done something that God doesn't want you to do, or your parents don't want you to do, or you know you've done something to wrong somebody you go to school with, one of your classmates.
- And you're made to feel guilty. Either God convicts you, inflicts guilt on you, or your parent confronts you, or a teacher confronts you.
- [2 : 30] What's your normal response? Do you just mouth a meaningless, I'm sorry?
- But you're not. And you don't intend to even change your behavior. If you're doing that, you're not fooling anybody.
- I want to say this to boys and girls especially. Every teacher in this room, and probably most parents who have more than one child, something's happened, and you've told one child to say to another, you're sorry.
- Boys and girls, if you've been there, you're the one, and you looked at them and said, sorry, you just lied. And everybody knows it.
- Your facial expression, your tone gave you away. You didn't mean it. Or, when you sin against God or another person, does the way you respond, your voice, your tone, your facial expression, what you do afterward, does it demonstrate true sorrow and repentance?
- [3 : 56] Well, this morning we're going to look at what real repentance looks like in Jonah chapter 3. Turn with me if you would. Jonah chapter 3. If you're here for the first time in a long time, we're in a study of the book of Jonah.

We're in chapter 3 today. And what we're going to see is that Jonah preached. The people of Nineveh truly believed God and repented, turned from, changed their mind and life toward their sin.

This chapter provides us with a clear picture of what real repentance looks like. And I want to see as we go through this, everything that happens is a demonstration of God's grace.

God's amazing grace, like I titled this message. Read with me. We're in Jonah chapter 3. Last week, we just looked at the first few verses with a focus on God gives us a second chance.

God gives His people second and third and on and on chances when we truly confess our sin, turn from it, and seek His forgiveness.

[5 : 15] Jonah had a second chance. God called him to go to Nineveh the second time, and he went. Verse 3 tells us the message. So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord.

Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city. Some translations would say great city to God. Three days journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey, and he called out, yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown or destroyed.

And the people of Nineveh believed God, and they called for a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them to the least.

The people in general responded to the preaching of God's word by believing God and demonstrating repentance.

And then the king got in on it. The people responded first is what I want us to see. Verse 6. The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

[6 : 39] In his day, he couldn't show more humility and repentance over his sin. Verse 7.

And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock taste anything.

Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and let them call out mightily to God. It was highly unusual in reading what was going on in that day and time for such public humility, sorrow, brokenness to include animals.

But the king issued this decree as a way of saying to the people, we've got to let God know that we are serious. We want God to know that we are truly broken, repentant in hopes that he will not destroy us.

Look back now. Verse 8. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

[8 : 01] Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger so that we may not perish. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them and he did not do it.

This is a chapter that tells us a lot about repentance, but it also tells us a lot about grace. Let's look at it. Number one. God graciously warns us of the final consequences of our sin.

That's what he's doing in verses 3 and 4. God sent Jonah to this city to preach a message of judgment and look at it verse 4.

And he called out yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. Was this all that Jonah said? Well it doesn't say.

We don't know. Is it just a summary? I think it is. I think it's just a summary of what all he preached because this phrase, this sentence doesn't mention God's name.

[9 : 14] But in verse 5 we read that they believed in God. How could they believe in Jonah's God if they had not heard of him? So Jonah said more than just this one sentence, but the point is this was the essence of his message.

It was a message of destruction, of judgment. Jonah told them in 40 days you're going to be overthrown.

The word overthrown is the same word used in other passages in the Old Testament to describe destruction. But I want you to think of this. The fact that God told them warned them 40 days in advance means that he was giving them time to repent and Jonah knew that and didn't like it.

In chapter 4, which we'll look at next week, we'll start in chapter 4 next week, Jonah was mad because the people of Nineveh heard God's word and responded positively.

He was mad because they repented and God relented. We'll get into that next week. What I want to point out here is that Jonah knew that his message of judgment was in effect a warning.

[10 : 42] It was God's way of being gracious. Look at what Jonah said in chapter 4 verse 2. He said, I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and relenting from disaster.

And in the context, that's why he's mad. Jonah went and preached this message of destruction hoping they wouldn't believe, that they wouldn't change, they wouldn't repent.

But he knew when he preached that message that it implied there's 40 days left for you to repent. He knew, look at that verse, he knew that God's gracious, merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, relenting from disaster.

He knew these people may believe. They may take God's gracious offer.

There's 40 days and so they're going to repent. And they did. And for everybody but Jonah, that's great that God is so gracious, so merciful, so slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

[12 : 07] I want you to understand, if you are running from God, God, for whatever reason, you're trying to ignore Him. You're trying not to obey Him.

You're trying to get out of what you know He wants you to do. If you're running from God, the fact that you are alive and hearing this message this morning means that God is showing you grace.

He's showing you mercy. He's being slow to anger. But, God will not patiently wait on you to respond to Him forever.

We've seen some of that in our study so far. If you're not a Christian, but you know, God has been calling you to real faith in Jesus for years maybe.

But you've not responded. Maybe you are a professing Christian, even a member of this church, but you know I'm not really a Christian. I have never truly turned from my sin and trusted Christ.

[13 : 19] I'm more interested in pleasing me than pleasing God every day of the week. If you know you're not a Christian, and it may not be every week, but from time to time, maybe riding down the road, maybe in a church service, God convicts you to Jesus points out to you that you are not his child, but you could be if you'd humble yourself, turn from your sin, and trust Jesus.

I want to encourage you to do that now while you have the opportunity because you may not have that opportunity much longer.

If you continue to resist his call and die, not trusting Christ, you will spend eternity away from him in hell.

That is the bad news of the Bible, but the good news is what you see on the screen, God is gracious, and he is patiently waiting for you to come to him right now if you're not a believer, if you are a Christian.

But there's something in your life that you're just unwilling to obey God about. You're just refusing to do his will about a particular matter with a certain person maybe.

[14 : 41] I want you to understand that God will not allow you to disobey him without consequences forever. We have seen in earlier messages that God disciplines his children.

God disciplined Jonah. Jonah didn't want to go do God's will. God put him in a position where doing his will was what he wanted to do rather than die.

One of our church members mentioned to me after that message, say it in this service, I ran from God for years. I refused to listen to him as he called me to faith in Jesus, but God broke my back, put me in the hospital where all I could do was look up and look up I did.

That's when he saved me. God has a way for us as Christians I'm talking about. God can discipline us severely if necessary.

Some of you, some of us, have experienced severe discipline from a parent. They loved us so much, they took the car away for a month and put the driver's license on the mantle.

[16 : 00] Some of us, our parents loved us so much that they were willing for us to be just mad and angry and say all kinds of things, but they wouldn't give in. They wouldn't let us have our way because our way would have, if it didn't kill us, it'd hurt us.

God loves us so much that he's willing to pay the price. He's willing for us to pay the price for our long-term benefit of obeying him and honoring him because he's our heavenly father and we want his will.

Jonah came to the point where he wanted to preach. He didn't want these people to believe. We'll come to that next week. He didn't have the best attitude, but he had repented. He had come back to the Lord.

He was showing some good signs, but not all the good signs by a long ways. We need to learn from Jonah's message that God graciously warns us of the consequences of our sin so that we will repent of it.

And now I want us to look at repentance in more detail as we look at this next point. God graciously gives us opportunities to repent of our sin. What we're looking at, verses 5 through 9, how they responded.

[17 : 19] That's his whole point. He sends Jonah to preach so they will respond this way. They believed that the message Jonah preached was from God. So they took it seriously.

They put their faith in him. Look at the verse in verse 5. And the people of Nineveh believed God. These people were not followers of Jonah. After he preaches, when it starts talking about him believing, Jonah passes off the scene here.

We're not going to see Jonah anymore in chapter 3. It's all about the people's response to God. They immediately began to demonstrate that they meant business by publicly humbling themselves like they did.

Look at the last part of verse 5. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth. God was obviously at work. This was not something they just decided to do on their own.

God was doing a miraculous work of grace, opening their eyes to see the truth and want to respond because everyone did. Look at the last part of verse 5.

[18 : 27] From the greatest of them to the least of them. Even the king got in on this. He followed the people's example. They did this first.

That's important to note. But look in verse 6. The word reached the king of Nineveh and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, sat in ashes. These people truly believed God's word of warning and they responded by doing what they knew to do as signs of humility, brokenness, and repentance.

Let's look at this picture of real repentance now. I want to begin by defining it. J.I. Packer gives us a real concise definition. Repentance is a change of mind, issuing a change of life.

You may have heard it spoken a little bit differently. Repentance is a change of mind or heart resulting in a change of life. Wayne Grudem expands this. He includes a lot of the aspects of repentance.

Look at this. Repentance is heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and live in obedience to Christ.

[19 : 45] What we're looking at is how these people repented of their sin against God. That's the primary application. We need to think about do we truly, when we're convicted of our sin, repent?

But I want you to apply this in personal relationships. When you and your spouse, one of your family members, one of your friends, one of your enemies, when you truly have conflict and you feel guilty, you get convicted that you've been wrong, do you show genuine repentance?

Keep that in mind as we go through this. The people of Nineveh demonstrated what repentance looks like. I want us to look at three things. Number one, when we repent, we will feel genuine sorrow over our sin.

They called for a fast and put on sackcloth. In the ancient world, that was their way. It was a known way for expressing humility, sorrow.

It was just the way. When we truly repent, we will be genuinely sorry that we have sinned against God or another person.

[21 : 12] And we will show it in our own way in the way that we act toward the person. And the way we act toward the person, I'm talking about the way you look at them, the way you express yourself, words, tone, body language, and then what you do, how you respond going forward.

There's a lot of difference between genuine heartfelt sorrow over sin and genuine sorrow that you got caught and had to pay the consequences.

If I get stopped for speeding going home today and I get a ticket, I will be sorry that I got caught, that I've got to pay a fine.

And if they turn it in on my insurance and it goes up for three years, I'm going to be real sorry that I sped going down Highway 8 on the way home today. I hope there's no city policeman or highway patrolman in this room.

But I'm going to let you in on a secret. I like to drive fast. And if I get caught, I'm going to be sorry I got caught and got fined as my insurance goes up.

[22 : 33] But I'm going to be real honest. I'm not going to be sorry I drove fast. I like to. And if I can get by with it, I will. I don't just fly and do bad things.

I don't drive through neighborhoods like a wild man. But I figure on a four-lane road, just take your chance. I don't go 100 miles an hour, except sometimes on the interstate, but not around here.

You see what I'm saying? We can truly be sorry, feel terrible, guilty for consequences that we suffer from our sin.

Boys and girls, there's no doubt you are sorry when you are disrespectful to your parent or teacher and you get grounded at home, stay in for recess.

You're sorry for sure. But are you repentant? Is there a real heartfelt sorrow that leads to the next point?

[23 : 45] We will turn from our sin. Look what they did. The king issued this decree. He says, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

I pointed out in one of the first couple of messages that Nineveh is a very important city in Assyria. And the Assyrians were notorious for their brutality.

One of the ancient world's most evil, ruthless empires. They were known to sometimes skin people alive. Cut off an enemy's head, stick it on a pole and make a family member of that person carry it around, parade it around.

Well, the king demonstrates repentance by calling for these people to turn from their evil and the violence that is in their hands.

When God convicts us of sin, we will stop our sinful behavior. We will have a desire to turn away from it and we will put forth the effort to turn away from it.

[25 : 00] For example, if you've been lying, you've been convicted of your sin of lying, you will stop lying. That's how you'll show repentance.

If you've been disrespectful to your parents, you'll stop being disrespectful to your parents. If you've been talking about people, you're just a gossip, a slanderer.

And you really get convicted about it, you'll close your mouth. And you won't do that anymore. Now, some things are more difficult to stop than others. And I want to point this out for a moment. I know some people who have struggled with alcohol and drug abuse for years.

And if they ever become repentant and want to stop, they're most likely going to need help. Certainly they need God's help.

They're going to need other people's help, family members, friends. They may need professional help. They may need the help of a professional, of a medical doctor, a professional counselor, psychological, spiritual.

[26 : 10] If God is convicting you of your sin, whatever it is, it's important that you express heartfelt sorrow. And then you've got to ask God to help you to stop the sinful behavior.

You change your mind about it. You turn from it. And if you need help, you seek help. You just say, I can't help it. You seek guidance, help, correction in some way.

If you're on the receiving end of somebody coming to you and expressing sorrow for something, and it appears they truly are repentant, but next week or next month, they fail you again, don't give up on them.

None of us, none of us, when we truly repent, we don't walk away from it and never go back.

We fail. We struggle as sinful human beings, even as Christians. And just as God gives you second and third and 20th and 50th chance, you've got to give people other chances.

[27 : 28] It can't just be one and done. You don't want God to do you that way. You can't do people that way. But let's not take advantage of this.

I cannot, if it's my problem, I cannot go to somebody and say, hey, you've got to be patient with me.

I'm just a sinful person and I'm going to fail you all the time. You don't mean it if that's what you say. That's an excuse. We are that way, but we can't accept that in ourselves.

We work on it. We continuously, Martin Luther, the reformer, said the Christian life is a life of repentance before God, before others that we wrong.

There's one more part of real repentance here. We must turn to God in faith. We've already seen that in verse five. The people of Nineveh believed God. But then in verse eight, the king again said, let them call out mightily to God.

[28 : 36] Repentance is a turning from sin and turning to God in faith, or if you're a Christian, in renewed faith, if you're coming back to him.

The Christian life is more than a life of do's and don'ts. Far more. It's all about a relationship and fellowship with our heavenly father and the Lord Jesus.

Our sin hinders our fellowship with our father and our Lord. It doesn't destroy the relationship, but it does hinder close fellowship. And we ought to all be able to understand that.

Sin hinders fellowship in every relationship. When children disobey their parents, it hurts the fellowship. When children disobey, parents have to punish, discipline.

There may not be a whole lot of touchy-feely, lovey-dovey things said. Same thing true with husbands and wives. Sometimes these things hinder our fellowship, but they don't destroy our relationship.

[29 : 48] Well, repentance is the key to restoring fellowship in just about every relationship in life. It's important that we learn to express sorrow, that we stop it, we change, we turn, that we come back to God if our issue is with him, or that we come back into a right relationship with another person if the other person is involved.

If you're not experiencing close fellowship with God right now, and you know it's because of a certain issue in your life that you won't obey him about, I want to encourage you, if you want things to be ready with God, right with God, repent now.

Express genuine sorrow to him, and turn from it. Change your mind about it. Turn to him in renewed faith, love, commitment. That's what it means to repent.

There's one more thing in this passage, one more aspect of God's grace. Let's look at it real quick. Verse 10, God graciously withholds judgment and forgives us when we repent of our sins.

Look at the verse. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

[31 : 10] God demonstrated his grace. He withheld judgment from these people because they truly repented. This is how God desires to work in everybody's life.

I want you to look at this word from Jeremiah chapter 18. God says, if at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down, and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.

Going back to what Jonah says in chapter 4, God is and desires to show us grace and mercy, but God is also holy and just, and God cannot and will not overlook our sin.

He must, to be true to who He is, He must punish it. Well, God has graciously provided a way for our sin to be punished and Him still remain just.

What He did is He sent His perfect Son, the Lord Jesus, into this world to take our punishment by dying on the cross for our sins.

[32 : 32] That satisfied God's justice Jesus paid the penalty for sin. It's not overlooked. Now God graciously offers to forgive us and make us His children if we'll repent of our sins and put our trust in Jesus because when we trust Jesus, we're one with Him and the penalty for our sin has been paid.

We have His righteous character credited to us. Have you come to the place in your life where you know that you're a child of God, that Jesus Christ is Lord of your life?

If you know He's not, I want to encourage you to put your trust in Him now while you have the opportunity. If you're a child of God away from Him, you're not close with Him now and it's because of your sinful attitude, your sinful behavior, come to Him now.

Truly repent. Renew your faith in Jesus. Draw near to God now.

The Scripture says if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. Let's pray together.

Dear God, show us now how we should respond.

[33 : 57] Lord, help us all to understand that this is a message for Your people. Repentance is to be a part of our lives and our relationship with You and our relationship with other people.

Father, help us to let it sink in what it truly means to be repentant. Help us, Father, to be honest about if that's true about us as we seek Your forgiveness, as we admit our sin, as we seek to be reconciled with other people.

Let's just in an attitude of prayer respond to the Lord about this. Maybe repent for the first time in your life or maybe for the first time in a long time. and maybe make the commitment that when you get home, you're going to express genuine repentance to a person that needs to hear it and see it in you.

If I could pray with you this time, I'd be happy to do here. Let's just pray. Let's pray.