



A Systematic Expository Study on the book of JONAH

Study 6: THE RE-COMMISSIONING OF A REPENTANT PREACHER **Jonah 3:1,2**

Here in this world, we often have the second chance. Think about Moses. He lost the chance when he went ahead of God and slew the Egyptian. But afterward, some forty years after, the second chance came for him to lead the people of God out of bondage. Peter backslid and forsook the commission and went back to the nets. But for him too the second chance came. As it happened to Moses, Peter and to quite a number of people in the Bible and contemporary times, the God of mercy and love gave Jonah a second chance. **"And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."**

The mandate this time wasn't, in any way, different from what the Lord had told Jonah before. What brought Jonah from rebellion to re-commissioning? Divine discipline and the severe chastisement of affliction, isolation and suffering brought him to the point where he was able to realise that **"they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy."** Five things stand out in Jonah's turn-around from **rebellion to re-commissioning**. (1) There was a **realisation**. He came to himself like the prodigal son. (2) There was **remorse** and **regret**. How much he must have regretted, in the belly of the whale, of ever disobeying the commission of God and trying to run away from Him. (3) There was **repentance**. He turned away from rebellion and sin. (4) There was **restoration**. He came back into grace. Forgiveness was given to him and with it, renewed fellowship with the Lord. (5) There was a **reassignment**. He regained the privilege to minister the Word of God that he had lost in his escape bid.

REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION OF AN OBSTINATE MINISTER

Jonah 3:1,2; Luke 12:31,32; John 21:15-17.

When Jonah rebelled against God's will, he ceased to be a prophet of God. You cannot be an ambassador and a rebel at the same time. The moment Jonah became a rebel in his heart, thought and actions, he ceased to be the representative, the prophet of the Lord. That's why he was silent. There was no message, no communication between him and the Lord any more. The link between him and heaven was cut. He went down into the deep. He could not have been an ambassador, a representative of the Lord while a rebel. But then, he repented. And, with repentance came forgiveness and restoration. God's grace restored him in two ways: one, personally; and two, officially. There was personal restoration into the grace of God. There was also official restoration to the ministry. The two forms are very important. When a Christian worker backslides and goes into sin, first, there will be a restoration to personal relationship with the Lord and secondly, there will be, perhaps after sometime, official restoration into the work of the Lord. But then, restoration into personal relationship did not necessarily include official restoration into ministry. But in Jonah's case, because of God's grace, his restoration was both personal and official. God was so gracious to him that He called him the second time to begin at the point where he left off. He was to go back to Nineveh and do the very thing he had abandoned. He was to preach, witness and win souls unto the Lord. There as **sonship** and there is **service**. **Sonship** comes before **service**. If like Jonah, someone backslid, sinned, rebelled and abandoned the work of the Lord, before he can come back to service, there must be evidence of sonship. There must be evidence of personal restoration before official restoration. Likewise, there is **membership** and there is **ministry**. You must first of all be a **member** of the family or fold of God before you can be a **minister over** the fold of God. There should be the evidence of being a **sheep** before the privilege of being a **shepherd** over the flock of the Lord.

THE RE-COMMISSIONING WITH THE RENEWAL OF OUR MANDATE

Jonah 3:2; Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 9:60; Acts 5:17-20; 1Corinthians 9:16,17; Ezekiel 3:17,18.

It is interesting to note that the mandate given to Jonah at his re-commissioning did not change. He was to arise. He was to go. He was to preach. Jonah's resentment, reservation and rebellion did not change God's concern and compassion for the Ninevites. **"Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city."** Nineveh was a great city in many ways. (1) It was great in **size**. (2) It was great in **sin**. Their sin became so great that it came into the presence of the Lord. (3) It was great with **souls** Like Jonah, our reaction, resentment, reservation,

rebellion and retreat will not affect the mandate. The mandate remains the same. The Lord said, "go." He is still saying, "go". There is a Word to preach. **"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."** That word "go" has not been withdrawn. It means, get up, go where the sinners are and preach the Word unto them. That missionary mandate, evangelistic mandate has not been recalled nor cancelled. We are still to go. The whole church is still being asked to take the whole Word to the whole world. God's Word is what will save the world. There is no other avenue of salvation. It is through the foolishness of preaching that the world will be saved. Therefore, both the church and the individual Christian are to "go and preach."

Let the dead bury their dead. We have a greater commission, a greater responsibility and a greater duty to go and preach the gospel. We do it in the city. We do it in the village. We do it in our nation. We do it in nations beyond our nation. Whatever the circumstances around us, whatever the resentment and whatever the reservation and whatever might have happened to us as it happened to Jonah, Peter and the rest, the mandate still remains the same. There can only be a renewal but not cancellation of the mandate. The first two letters of the gospel is "go". If the going is suspended from the believing or embracing of the gospel, you really do not believe the gospel. To believe, to accept the gospel is to know that this is good news for people who are perishing. If you have the good news, you are not going to be able to spell it without the first two letters "go." Like Ezekiel, the hand of God is upon us. We have a responsibility and it must be done. We have no choice. We have been made watchmen. And, as watchmen, the mandate is to preach the Word. The response of a few and the rejection of many will not change the mandate or the commission. Preach. That's why we are in this world. Preach! It is not to go to school. Preach! It is not to make progress in life. Preach! It is not to raise up children or a big family. Preach! It is not to make money. We are left here for one purpose: to preach the urgent message that will save the sinners.

THE REITERATION AND RE-AFFIRMATION OF THE ORIGINAL MESSAGE

Jonah 3:2; Jeremiah 1:7,17; Ezekiel 2:7; Matthew 28:20

Suffering and adverse circumstances change people's original conviction. Tough, difficult audiences would often change the messages and emphasis of a preacher. Circumstances of life have a way of softening a man, of changing his emphasis. But with God there is no changing the message. After Jonah had passed through the sea, the belly of the whale, "the flood" and "the flame", He still said unto him, **"Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it [exactly] the preaching that I bid thee [before the problem came]."** Jonah was not allowed to change the mandate. Therein lies a great lesson for us. Whatever our positions and circumstances, the Word of the Lord should be proclaimed and preached forcefully. The gospel must not be altered to suit the desires of men. With faithfulness and persistence, we must preach the Word to save sinners and to sanctify the church. We have no right to change the mandate. Puny, poor and wretched man has no right to change the Word of the Almighty. Modernisation may come. New technology and new invention may come. But the same thing we preached in the days when there was no radio, when there was no television, when there was no modernisation and when there was no 'civilization,' we must continue to preach. We have no right to change the Word of the living God. It is His Word, not your word. Don't dilute it. Don't diminish anything from it. Give it to them whole as it is. **"Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."**

Jonah was afraid that Nineveh would not hear the undiluted Word of God, the prophecy that the Lord had given him. But God says to him not to change it. Human nature cannot be converted with a watery, diluted message that will not pierce the soul and get deep into the heart of men. What we need therefore is the original mandate and message of the Word of the Lord to give unto the people. Until the end of the world, until the Lord comes, we have no right to change the message. But we are to teach all things whatsoever that the Lord has commanded. Go and tell exactly what the Lord has told you. That is our commission. And, that should be our commitment. By the grace of God, we will do it. There is no other thing to do. Whatever riches and success we have here, if we are not preaching the gospel when we get to heaven we will be poorer than the poorest man on earth. But whatever we don't have on earth, if we will faithfully preach the gospel, when we get over there we will be richer than Solomon.

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