

always so bad.

You see, He knew she has begun to hang around some bad influences. It was as though God stomped out her nonsense almost immediately and put an abrupt end to her direction before she had even realized what path she was walking.

God knew the timing had to be right and the extreme situation necessary. Corin changed after that terrible night. We all did.

So what happened to our responsible child? That memorable night turned out to be a series of poor choices made by peer pressure to drive into Chicago. Allowing one of the leaders to drive, Corin panicked when they got involved in a car accident. Afraid,

lost, they drove around the city trying to find a way home and a way to reverse all the damages involved with their secret adventure.

Up until then I have always thought it was the bad kids that ran away from home. Some may be. But now, I think it is the good ones that cannot forgive themselves for their sin. She knew we would forgive her and God would, but she couldn't bear the thought of coming home to face the consequence, the reality of her own sin.

So, from that night, our 'perfect' Corin discovered she could make mistakes and still be loved. And I discovered that bad things could be good. ✠

Jonah

-- The Repentant Prophet

Andrew T. Wu

As we move into the new millenium, if we take a look back and measure the moral climate of America in the last half decade, we cannot but affirm its decline. If someone from the 1905's could enter into our world, they would be shock by this adjustment.

In this puralistic society, many of us do not share the same values and are deeply saddened by this moral downslide

of catastrophic scale, and yet, we feel helpless in changing this world. We ask ourselves, is there any hope left? Is there any way for us to turn the clock back? Or at least, is there some way we can slow it down? The third chapter of Jonah gives us a gleam of hope even as our world pressures us as if we are confined in the fish stomach; there is no moral room for us to stretch, nor is there any air of values

to breath. This chapter of Jonah calls out to us - NO, it is not too late for change. It is never too late when God has a part in it.

Nineveh, in many ways, was similar to the world we live in. Immoral standards were the norm; cruelty, inhumanity, and a lack of caring and concern for one's fellow men are characteristics of both societies. God did not deal harshly with the Ninevites, and He did not give up on them because of their evil. He continued to love them in spite of it and He sent His prophet to forewarn them of their sins, hoping that, by giving them a chance, they will turn away from sin. This was an act of true love and kindness, and this is called grace. Grace is a second chance, when a second chance is not deserved. Grace is looking beyond all wrongs in the hope that a person will move back onto the right path.

Before we carry our placards and cry for punishment for the unjust, let us first look at our prophet. Although Jonah was a chosen servant of God, he was no better than the Ninevites. Jonah knew what God had asked of him, and yet he chose to be disobedient and ran away. God did not rain judgement on him, but treated him gently but effectively. He was given a second chance to repent. God deals with us in the same way, making known to us His moral and statutory standards through the Bible, yet we often consciously disobey God; we deliberately choose our own stubborn path. Yet God does not treat us harshly,

but with the same grace He showed to Jonah and the Ninevites. He uses circumstances to force us to face up to our own sins, and waits for us to come to terms with ourselves, to recognize our wrong doings, so that we can admit our wrongs. If God is gracious to us, then why shouldn't He show the same kindness to Jonah, the Ninevites, and all others who also have wronged Him? If He looks beyond our sins and loves us, why can't He look beyond the sins of the homosexuals, the criminals, the gangsters, or our neighbour who has wronged us, and give them a second chance?

God gave Jonah a second chance and a second calling: "Go to the great city of Ninevah, and proclaim to it the message I give you". This time Jonah obeyed God and he went into Nineveh and cried out to the people there: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned."

Such a simple statement, and yet, such a difficult statement! Imagine going to today's Nineveh (Iraq) and declaring the very same thing; one would certainly be full of fear. Even if this was proclaimed in a friendly country, it would be a futile task, as no one would believe that a superpower could be destroyed in 40 days for no apparent reason. This was Jonah's situation.

However, as Jonah walked around shouting out god's proclamation, instead of becoming hostile, the people believed. If it is God who directs the order, not only

is one not in danger, but the extraordinary happens. The people understand their sin and they call for a fast and put on sackcloth. Instead of pursuing their heart's desires, showing off their finest clothing, and basking in luxury, they leave their hedonistic lifestyle and begin to fast. They refrain from gluttony, and wear the simplest of clothing. If that was the result of a one line sermon, that truly was a spiritual revival.

This flame of revival was not limited to the commoners, for when the king heard the message, he took off his royal robes and covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Can you imagine that the president of the United States, instead of sitting in front of TV cameras in a nice suit projecting a politically correct image, would sit in a corner wearing sackcloth, covered in dust and admit before the nation that he had been deceitful in his ways? What does it take for that to happen? It takes a spiritual revival.

This was no small revival. Ninevah was 60 miles across, and before Jonah walked one-third this distance, people from great to small in rank and in age were repenting. A national sin requires a national act of repentance in order to prevent it from national ruin. So the king issued a decree telling the citizens to fast. It was to be a thorough fast, not only by the people, but by the livestock and animals as well. They all had to put on

sackcloth as a sign of repentance for sin. He commanded the citizens to call on God and to give up their evil ways and their violence. They wanted God to have mercy on them. They wanted God to show compassion on them so that they would not perish. Their hearts were burdened because of their sins. Their conscience told them that they had done wrong. They knew they were doomed.

Our God is a God of mercy. When He saw that the people had turned away from their evil ways, His compassion moved Him, and He did not bring destruction to the city. This should bring joy to our hearts, for as God was gracious to Jonah and the Ninevites, so He is gracious to us. We should pray a prayer of praise by using to immortal words of the psalmist to describe God's ever lovingkindness:

"The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed; he remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103:8-14)

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