

Our Revealing, Receiving, Relenting God

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[0 : 00] more than a warning to Israel, this is an entreaty to Israel, revealing the great and wonderful mercies and compassion of Almighty God, the God of Israel.

The title of my message, our revealing, receiving, and relenting God. Jonah chapter 3, if you'll just follow along with me.

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim to it the proclamation, which I am going to tell you.

So Jonah arose. And went to Nineveh. According to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city.

A three days walk. Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk. And he cried out and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.

[1 : 23] And then the people of Nineveh believed in God, and they called a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on ashes.

He issued a proclamation. And it said, In Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock, taste a thing.

Do not let them eat or drink water. But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth, and let men call on God earnestly, that each may turn from his wicked way, and from the violence which is in his hands.

Who knows? God may turn and relent, and withdraw his burning anger, so that we will not perish. When God saw their deeds, that they turn from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity, which he had declared he would bring upon them.

And he did not do it. Now, we won't go into chapter 4 today, but I want you to notice the very next verse. But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry.

[3 : 06] Mm-mm-mm. Well, we've got to do something with that. We've got to try to understand something about Jonah's bratty, brooding mood.

He's just been like this throughout the book, throughout this account of his life, and it helps us to know that we believe that Jonah actually wrote this story, and by the Spirit of the Lord, he had to tell the truth, even about himself.

In chapter 2, we see Jonah coming to the place in his life where he realizes that God has compassionately and graciously spared him.

He didn't deserve what God did in his life, but he's recognizing in chapter 2 that God took him from where he was in his pride and his desire to die and gave him life and gave him hope.

And in those moments, it humbled him. Just didn't last. So let's talk about that just for a moment.

[4 : 16] Let's talk a little bit about what's going on with Jonah, and let me come at it in a way that's a little different, something you've become accustomed to in the way of my introductions most of the time. The Holy Spirit, putting this in terms of how we face this kind of thing in our lives, because we can be bratty and we can be broody toward the Lord.

The Holy Spirit living in us produces his spiritual fruit, and that's reflected in our good works.

That is, works defined as good because they are pleasing to God. That's why they're good. They're not good because we're these wonderful people that need to have everybody pat us on the back.

The good works that you and I do as a result of the Holy Spirit living in us are good because they please God. They are acceptable in the sight of Almighty God, whereas before, our best and highest efforts to please the Lord as unbelievers were as filthy rags to Him.

It is only in the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we can live a life pleasing to Almighty God, that we can say and do anything that honors Him.

[5 : 32] It is a great privilege, folks, to live in Christ and be able to live like that because that's a far cry from what we were before knowing Jesus by faith.

But I want to make sure that you also understand this. For each of the qualities and good works of the Holy Spirit in our lives, there is a counterfeit quality of sin and sinful expression that we produce. The Holy Spirit produces that good fruit that honors the Lord, but we are still capable of producing bad fruit. In Galatians 5.22, you can turn there if you'd like, but I'm just going to march through this and put some stuff up here on the screen so that I can move through it a little more quickly.

In Galatians 5.22, Paul gives us nine heart attitudes he identifies as the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

[6 : 47] These, and there are more, but he narrowed it to these, these are character qualities of an exclusive group of people on planet Earth.

Christians. The people of God who, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have the Holy Spirit living in them.

We're told God resides within us. Jesus lives within us. That's just, that's mind-boggling, isn't it? Now, this is evidence of a spiritual transformation in each Christian person.

There has been a spiritual renewal, a regenerating of new life. The Bible tells us we have become new creatures in Jesus Christ. On a spiritual level, we are new people with a new relationship with God through Christ.

Now, just before Galatians 5.22, in verse 17, Paul tells us what it is that wars against the Spirit in your heart and in your life.

[7 : 56] It's very real, and you know it, and I know it. We feel it. We experience it every day of our lives. It is your flesh, your flesh, with its opposite sinful passions and desires.

for the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are in opposition to one another.

So, folks, this isn't something that we would read and look at and think in terms of the Holy Spirit being, whoo, floating around out here like Casper's ghost.

The Holy Spirit lives in you as a believer, and that is what animates you to new spiritual life. And we can know these facts and these realities about the Spirit living in us and working these things out in us because the Bible teaches them to us in plain English, plain language, as it were.

Sinful desires of your heart, sinful desires of my heart, give way to sinful deeds. and Paul lists these out as representative of what we can call spoiled fleshly fruit.

[9 : 19] So, this list is very different from the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives and this is what that looks like. Now, the deeds of the flesh are evident.

evident, which are immorality, impurity, sensuality. Those three kind of take in a broad spectrum of all kinds of sexual sin.

Idolatry. Oh, there's all kinds of things we can make idols in our heart. Sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy. As you look at your relationship with people in the world around you, you see all kinds of sin coming out of you toward them and them toward you.

Outbursts of anger would be another one. Disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. It wasn't meant to be an exhaustive list.

There are more in things like these. So, people who live in a, and hear me carefully, lifestyle, habit pattern, where you look at their life and you see these, I mean, not all of these, but these kinds of things continually lived out in their lives.

[10 : 38] People like this are unbelievers who do not love God or live to please God. This is what Paul's talking about now, but I want you to remember he's writing to Christians in this passage.

So, even believers, even Christians, even those who are seeking to walk with God and please God can display these ugly, sinful traits.

And that's why Paul adds this very instructive insight in Galatians 5.24. Look what he says here. Now, those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

My goodness, how strong a language can you get? Now, this means that Paul's former spiritual self, his unbelieving self, the sinful, selfish passions and desires of that person, same with us.

that former self that we lived by and in, those have been killed, crucified. That's what crucifixion does to a person. But here's the question.

[11 : 54] Well, now, wait a minute. If that's true and you're tracking with the logic here, if that's true, why does Paul talk about this ongoing war or this ongoing opposition that Christians, that believers, have with our flesh, our former self and its wrong passions and wrong desires.

If we've crucified that, how come that keeps on going? We have to understand what he means by crucifixion. In what way has that been killed? Well, obviously, because we continue to battle with it, it doesn't mean that our old passions and desires are gone altogether.

We're not in heaven yet. So what does it mean? You and I still battle these kinds of things in our walk with God even though we're new creatures in Christ.

Here's what it means. It means that the cross of Jesus destroyed the power of these things as our masters.

And he paid the penalty that we incur because we have been or become criminals against God because we live in that kind of sin. So Jesus destroyed that power of sin to reign and rule your heart so that you're defined by your sin.

[13 : 17] That's what you are as an unbeliever. And Jesus paid the penalty that you and I deserve because we've lived like that in rebellion against God.

That's what it means that Jesus has crucified that for us. So in Christ we've seen that power crucified against us. Now as a believer as a Christian as someone putting their faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins we have the spiritual freedom of walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. That wasn't the case before. Now it is as the Holy Spirit lives in you. Now this is just what Paul tells us next in verse 25.

Look at what he says here. If at the top if we live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit.

If we live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit. Since we have new spiritual life given to us as God's gift in Jesus Christ then we can and we must live out or walk by or walk according to this new life.

[14 : 40] Folks that's a privilege. It's also a responsibility. We're commanded to do that. And God would never command us to do something that wasn't within our reach.

Right? As Christians we've been given that great freedom and privilege. So here's what we're saying. Jesus' cross broke the power of sin to rule our hearts.

And as believers we now live by a new and very different power. A greater power. It's the life-giving power of God's Holy Spirit within us.

Christ lives in us Paul said. He is the way the truth and the life. Now since we live by the Spirit let us also walk.

What he means is conduct our lives. Aim our desires by the Holy Spirit in freedom from sins dominating defining power.

[15 : 41] So now now we live we live out what God is working in us by his Holy Spirit. what God is working in by the power of his Spirit we work out.

And so we give expression to the love and joy and peace and patience and all that fruit. It comes out and it shows itself in these good deeds so that the Holy Spirit working in your life becomes the sign and seal and deposit that you are indeed a Christian.

you do indeed belong to God. The Spirit's work is God's seal and deposit and proof and evidence for you that you are in the faith and you do have a legitimate hope for eternal life in heaven.

Now the lack the lack of that kind of life should alarm you. It's one thing for us to struggle. It's a very different thing for us to just give in to sin every day and feel little to no conviction about it.

Little to no sorrow or grief that it grieves Almighty God. You see what I'm getting at here with this struggle back and forth and the reality that even Christians can live.

[17 : 06] The difference between us and unbelievers in this scenario that I'm painting here from Galatians is that unbelievers don't give a hoot about sin in their life. It's what they know and it's what defines them.

They don't have any remorse or regret or conviction about how it affects their relationship with God because that's non-existent. Believers on the other hand come under conviction by the Spirit because when we sin we grieve the Spirit and our sin quenches the work of the Spirit in our life. Now keep in mind as I say that that His grace is greater than our sin. right? Amen? Hold on to that beloved and don't let yourself get despondent for even a second because God has made a way for us to deal with this and walk in that freedom.

Here's what I'm saying as we move toward tying this to Jonah. it isn't natural or innate or normal for any of us to have compassion in our hearts or to show that compassion to others.

How can I say that? Because sin corrupted what we know as the fruit of the Holy Spirit which God designed into Adam and Eve and of course that kind of compassion toward each other would be a natural part of the life that God designed into those two people before they fell into sin.

[18 : 42] That is how we can understand I think what is going on with Jonah as a prophet quote unquote of God a prophet of God you'd think boy as a prophet of God he sure isn't acting like one what is that?

Jonah is experiencing a lapse into sinful expression of sinful desires in his heart in other words he's given undue rule to these wrong desires in his heart Jonah has become bitter Jonah is prejudice Jonah looks at the Assyrians as the enemies of his people his nation and his God and he wants to see those people wiped off the face of the earth he thinks that every man woman boy and girl needs to be killed and he wants to see them killed he wants to sit on a hill look down at the city and watch God destroy it that's his heart he hates the Assyrian nation the man has murder in his heart that's the prophet of God and so in one sense we understand the man

God says I want you to go to Nineveh and cry out against it and I'm going to tell you what to proclaim oh he's all good with the message 40 days from now and Nineveh will be destroyed and I am watching the clock tick tick tick faster that's Jonah but there's something else that he knows in the back of his mind that he cannot be happy with or satisfied with and so you go over to the other side and you got this brooding bitter resentful hateful man in chapter two he's all about the grace of God what happened in chapter three that grace isn't being aimed at him oh we are despicable folks aren't we aren't we one minute we're all full of love and the next minute

I'll let you fill in that blank oh I'm not judging you I'm not I'm just like you I'm one of you I'm remember I had to I've been working on this for weeks I'm glad you pray for me this is what Jonah is experiencing and so it isn't any surprise to you when I say Jonah needs to repent before his God he needs to trust God he needs to obey God from his heart of humility humility and gratitude it's like the man has just blown right by humility and gratitude toward the Lord it's like he's forgotten all that God did for him in the storm and with the whale and so here's what we're going to look at let's look at how this is all being expressed in chapter three we're going to see three powerful expressions of God's compassion on sinners who deserve his punishment so focus on this now and remember friends

Jonah is not the focus of the story the Ninevites are not the focus of the story it's what God is doing and God who is the focus of the story so let's zero in on what God is doing three powerful expressions of his compassion the first that we'll see deals with God's revelation his revelation this is a wonderful incredible beautiful act of compassion that God is making himself known and we'll begin with God doing that as he makes his compassion known to Jonah his compassion known to Jonah you'll notice now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time the second time what remarkable grace what is grace grace is the undeserved favor of

[23 : 19] God on your life it is all of the ways that God shows himself faithful and loving and forgiving and kind to you as an undeserving person you don't deserve any of the goodness that God spills into your life pours into your life overflows into your life and I'm in the same boat I don't deserve it either and yet God does that that's grace you get what you don't deserve in mercy he withholds what you do deserve God's compassion on Jonah this is the love the patience and the mercy of the Lord Jonah didn't deserve a second chance to serve the Lord but God orchestrated every single detail to bring Jonah to this place in his life just contemplate that for just a half a second here everything that's happened to Jonah and all that's gone on in his life to the smallest detail God has overseen superintended and created and designed and purposed to bring the prophet to this moment in his life where he would be obedient to the

Lord God showed himself to Jonah in these acts God is revealing himself he's showing Jonah something of who he is I am a God who saves Jonah I am the God of the second chance Jonah and the third and the fourth I am the God of mercy Jonah how else will you see that in your life how else will I see that in my life unless God reveals it through these circumstances of our lives in our walk with him and he does that he does that faithfully folks so so faithfully God revealed his compassion to Jonah despite the folly of Jonah's great pride despite the fury of the great storm that threatened his life despite the fearfulness of the great fish and

God proved this folks he proved that he was greater than all three of those great things amen now now Jonah must go to the great city where there is great wickedness no small thing it's the same mandate in fact that God gave to him in verses 1 and 2 of chapter 1 look back there with me if you will the word of the Lord came to Jonah the first time the son of Amittai saying arise go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it for their wickedness has come up before me now compare that with what we see over in chapter 3 now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time saying arise go to

Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you apparently at this time Jonah didn't know all the details of what he would say God God God will tell Jonah and give Jonah what to say folks Jonah had one charge go to Nineveh and tell them what I tell you to tell them proclaim my proclamation to them sounds redundant but that's exactly what the Lord said proclaim my proclamation to them the temptation in this man's heart at this time would have been just like you and I in our prejudice and bias and hatred it would have been I'm going to go and tell them something you can bet I'm going to go and tell them something I'm going to give it to them both barrels what did God say buddy you go and you say what I say to say that's it did he get the message yes he did yes he did this is an interesting development

I think the emphasis then is the same for Jonah and us here it is it's on Jonah speaking God's message with God's authority that is actually what the word here in Hebrew proclaim means it means to tell them only what I say and tell them with clear authority to speak within the bounds of my authority that's the word proclaim no mealy mouthing don't add and don't take away that's my charge that's Greg's charge anytime we stand before you to open the word of God we are commanded and constrained in thus saith the Lord so we we try to be careful when we venture off into this is how we might see it or this is how we are understanding this particular aspect or it could go either way we're careful to tell you that but we're not to stand up here and preach suggestions to you we're not to stand up here and say to you now you take it or leave it folks no I'm going to preach to you like this is the last opportunity

[29 : 09] I'll have and next week I'll be dead and you'll have to get another pastor because that could happen not to be morbid just to be real I don't know any more than you do thus saith the Lord folks when we talk to people about the matters of their spirituality their life their life before a holy God we need to be careful to stay within the parameters of God's truth and speak the oracles of God to them speak the truth in love this is the truth the Bible this is what Jonah has been commanded to say if you look at verse 3 with me over in chapter 3 what happened so Jonah arose and went to Nineveh there's a change according to the word of the Lord now please if you haven't if you look at verses 1 through 3 you have in the first verse the word of the Lord came at the end of the verse which I am going to tell you and then in verse 3 according to the word of the

Lord it's easy to pick up on the point everything Jonah is doing he is doing according to the word of God so God sends his messenger to do what was most likely or to speak to a city that was most likely the most wicked city on the planet he sent Jonah to give a message to the most cruel merciless perverse and battle hardened warriors of the time now I'm not going to do this but you can do this you can google Assyria in ancient times or some tagline like that you can do that and you can actually specify and say Assyrians in battle or Assyrians against their enemies or something and the kinds of things these people did to other human beings I can't even say from the pulpit I read it I read article after article in archaeological digest in all kinds of theological journals these were wicked sick sick people man they delighted in torturing people and devising all for those of you historians who know things about the inquisitions the spanish inquisition etc they at least rivaled that if not went beyond it and when I read the spanish inquisition stuff I didn't think anybody could ever be more sadistic that's the

Assyrians they're the nazis of their day they're horrible people just wicked wicked people but they did all that in the name of their deities well Jonah is being sent to those people Jonah knows in previous encounters with these people they did those kinds of things to Israelites they captured well in verse four Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk and he cried out and said yet 40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown now we assume that when the whale spit Jonah back up onto the shore it was probably near or around Joppa if not right there at Joppa the city of Joppa the coastal city from Joppa or the heart of Israel to Nineveh was a little over 500 miles that would have taken Jonah about a month to get to Nineveh under good conditions all I'm saying is this he had about a month to walk and think and listen to God and I just wonder how many times the Lord met

with him and said now remember this is what

I want you to say and gave him the full meal deal about what he would preach nevertheless he had that much time on his hands well he finally arrives in the great city and it was truly great folks it is absolutely massive massive it's the largest city in the ancient world at this particular time it sprawled over the landscape so that it took three days to walk across all that it took in and I want to just show you real quickly just a couple of renditions these are artist renditions based on archaeological evidence this is just one panorama one part of what that city would have taken in do you see the sprawl I hope you can see the great walls at the other end as they come around they were the largest in the ancient world at this time they were absolutely massive but the city was also beautiful that's at the front as it bordered the river

I believe it was the Tigris river at that time I hope you can see some of the detail of what they've rendered there's a lot of this still standing today a lot of I think it's this part and that part and Matt's not here today but I was talking to Matt three or four weeks ago Matt has actually been to the ruins been on site and he's flown over them and he's been down and he's seen them and it's near all of this is near the modern city of Mosul you all know Mosul in the news when ISIS took power of this area they began systematically blowing up all of these ruins and so a lot of this now is gone gone to history they demolished the walls blew them to pieces blew up a lot of artifacts went into the museums wrecked everything anyway Jonah most likely had more than the

[35 : 11] Lord had given him to say but we have here what would be the heart of the message so in scripture for us today this is what the Lord wants us to know and understand about Jonah's message and this was the message yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown so folks what do we have here judgment this is a message of judgment that is essentially the message given to the greatest city and the greatest warriors of Jonah's day but folks it's a warning it's a warning that's the part Jonah's having a hard time with it's like why give them a chance just wipe them out all of a sudden don't warn them just take them out they deserve it the number forty shows the significance of this event which is what the bible does the number of perfection the number seven and that kind of thing the bible will do this often forty says this is significant take careful note of this just as it did with

Moses praying on behalf of the Hebrews for forty days and nights and Jesus being tempted forty days and nights just a couple of examples so we know the end of the story don't we we know that this message is intended to bring them to repentance God didn't have to he wasn't under obligation to warn these people or to give them a way to forestall God's judgment on them his holy wrath the Ninevites deserved God's wrath they did they fully deserved punishment for their wickedness but God but God he showed them his compassion and he did this through his reluctant servant his reluctant servant now we know we know that while

Jonah is being obedient he is being obedient to God by preaching God's warning of doom we know from chapter four that his heart is not in what he's doing because as I've mentioned Jonah wants all of these people destroyed not repentant that's what he wants Jonah realizes that God is giving them in this warning 40 days from now he's giving them in this warning a gracious opportunity to avert God's wrath to be saved from utter destruction that would be on a huge and horrible horrible scale whereas Jonah would have them instantly wiped out many of the estimates that are coming back about how big the city was I mean the walls and everything just absolutely incredible you could it's kind of like Babylon you could drive chariots abreast on the tops of the walls and how many soldiers

I read all that and thought lands in but at this at this particular time the estimates for the population of the city was well over 120 thousand people now I may not sound big to you but think about that in ancient times that's a lot of folks and Jonah just have them all die the babies everybody the kids the women all the animals just take them out God that's what I want well that's not what happened Jonah didn't get his way and he's going to get angry about it what did happen Nineveh repented Nineveh repented that's what happened that's what the Bible tells us if you look in verse 5 then the people of Nineveh believed in God and they called a fast they put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them so God's compassion went to Jonah and then through Jonah and it made him mad I didn't want to be used this way that's why I ran the first place so even begrudgingly Jonah becomes God's instrument to show compassion to Nineveh and I take great encouragement from that now we have this clause then the people of Nineveh believed in God the question that I asked myself as I read through this does because I know some of the history after this that's Nahum the

book of Habakkuk those are prophets that are going to be prophesying about the doom of Assyria and during the time later much later of the Assyrian downfall I asked myself does this mean that the entire city was converted to faith in God were these people converted to monotheistic faith in the one true Hebrew God possibly but I'd like for you to consider a few things with me as I considered them and then

[40 : 30] I'll tell you where I land first the English standard version the New King James version and the Christian standard Bible those are several translations that I consult every time I work through the scriptures I have several more they all say the Ninevites quote believed God not believed in God all right now that that translation believed God that is consistent with the Hebrew text which says believed God it simply means that the Ninevites took God at his word through Jonah's message they didn't say yeah yeah you're all wet whatever get out of here where are you from kill him get rid of him quarter him all the stuff they do to people no they they took God at his word God will destroy Nineveh in 40 days it's going to happen second consider also the king's actions in verses 6 through 9 when the word reached the king of

Nineveh he arose from his throne laid aside his robe from him covered himself with sack cloth and sat on ashes that sounds pretty straightforward doesn't it it sounds like a repentant guy he issued a proclamation that's interesting to me God said I want you to proclaim what I proclaim and now the king's making a proclamation in response to God's proclamation and it said in Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles so this is authoritative just like God's proclamation was authoritative now the king is responding to that and being authoritative do not let man beast herd or flock taste a thing do not let them eat or drink water but both man and beast must be covered with sack cloth let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands and then notice verse 9 who knows God may turn and relent and withdraw his burning anger so that we will not perish what's happening in these verses is the king is pretty much following what all pagan religions do when their

God is angry they find a way to assuage or mitigate that anger through their deeds third we have to interpret the clause then the people of Nineveh believed in God N-A-S or believed God ESV either of those translations we have to interpret that by what we're told that God did in verse 10 God saw their deeds that they turned from their wicked way God also saw their hearts but the text focuses on their actions now we may say Jeff isn't it true that good actions typically follow what's good inside that depends have you ever done something in a way that was manipulative and controlling but it was a good thing in the eyes of the other people but in your heart you knew you were just trying to get your way okay just keep that in mind so what's going on with all of this the statements in the text about sack cloth and ashes those could refer could refer to a level of grief and humility of heart and I think they do

I think there's a level of humility here there's a level of grief here for sure I think that's what it's meant to tell us but it seems that the greater emphasis in the text is actually on what these people are doing tied to the hope that they might not perish you say now what's wrong with that it isn't tied to a heart concerned that God might be honored and worshipped I don't see it in other words it's like what the prophet Habakkuk was challenged with as he prophesied during the time that Nineveh was overrun by the Babylonians I think that was around 622 something like that God must be worshipped here's the point from Habakkuk God must be worshipped for who he is for his own sake not merely because of what he does or does not do in the lives of people so if you asked me if you pressed me and said

Jeff do you think the repentance of the Ninevites was genuine yes I do I think their repentance was genuine I certainly do or I don't think God could have given any honor to it at all God's not capricious and I don't want to paint the Lord that way at all so I want to be try to be very clear here the Ninevites genuinely repented from their ways of wickedness to avert destruction that's why I think the Bible is limiting the message to a message of then the people of Nineveh believed in God because Jonah said 40 days 40 days and Nineveh will be destroyed what are the people responding to are they responding to the message of a holy God well maybe but we're not told that the emphasis of scripture is 40 days and I'm going to wipe you off the planet and so all of that repentance is tied to the fear of being destroyed now what's the difference this is why I took time in my introduction to say the things that I did to help us better understand

[46 : 48] Jonah and some of the context of what's going on here so here's what I'm trying to present before you I'm skeptical I'm skeptical that the Ninevites were converted converted to

Judaism so that they recognized their sins against Jonah's holy God in such a way that they put their faith in Jonah's God as their God and their only hope of salvation from their sins against the Lord I'm skeptical of that so there's there's a way that I could say it I think they genuinely repented in their ways based on what they knew but I do not believe based on the text that they were actually converted to belief in Yahweh as their God and there are other signals and indications in here for that now as I say that I want to say this because you're a great group of people and many of you have the gold standard out there in helping you interpret and it's the MacArthur

Study Bible and you're going to read in the notes where John MacArthur says he believes that they were converted they were repentant in a converted way I can't quite go that far but it could be so can I hold this out here's what I do when I face these kind of things I wrestle with this for three weeks I read I prayed I studied I thought because the last thing I ever want to do is tell you something that's wrong I want to reserve the right then to do this as I learn with you I'm learning with you if down the road I come to the place where I have to come back and say you know what after this and this and this and more of this with this person or whatever I've come to think that maybe there was some conversion here and here's why and I'll tell you I'll repent or whatever but right now to the best of my understanding I think their repentance was genuine based on what Jonah was telling them and they didn't want to die they didn't want to get wiped out so they did what they knew but I do not believe that they embraced

God as their covenant God I don't believe they went that far and I have other reasons in chapter 4 I can show you some of that that's what I'm thinking so every time we face something like this I'm always going to encourage you to do what I just did land try to land try not to stay on the fence doing this every once in a while very very rarely I might have to do that and say oh I don't know I lean this time I'm telling you I've landed in the camp of what I've explained but I hold out that I'm not going to argue this if you think differently and there are that's fine that is absolutely fine alright we're not at odds that's that's okay this is I'm just explaining what I've come to understand at this point in my learning and ability well what does their repentance tell us about God and his ways now we can begin to discern more about that and make good use of it what does the repentance of the Ninevites tell us about God and his ways because I'm not ready to run up to all the Ninevites and hug them and say brother and sister I'm not ready to do that here's what it does their repentance it rehearses for us and this is why I think the point comes out the way I've leaned in this it supports this point it rehearses for us the deeply encouraging reality that God delights in gracious acts of compassion in response to small steps in the right direction that's our God that's our God so one way we might apply this this is what I want to help you do at this point before I start moving toward my last point we'll close listen one way you and I might apply this in our walk with God is that we can lean into and we can embrace God's compassion for our lives as you commit to and take steps to turn away from sin and to obey

God in faith you you are challenged with that beloved every day of your life throughout the day every day of your life throughout the day you are challenged with will I respond and live and act and move and speak in faith before the Lord and obey him or not and the not means you do your own thing you go Jonah on yourself see that's what we don't want to do we don't want to go Jonah Jonah Jonah is not our example here for godly living and I can't even principalize and tell you that it's okay for you to go out there and go Jonah because God's the God of the second chance it's not okay don't do that but know that when you do there is grace we don't we don't want to live presuming on the Lord do we but we want to embrace the fact that we do serve a God who is very gracious and compassionate and Psalms told us that in Psalm 86 this morning as we prayed that back to the

[52 : 19] Lord all right so here's what I'm going to do with you now in response to God's compassion on your life because he is very compassionate the fact that you sit here today looking at me and listening and you're breathing is evidence of God's compassion on your life please don't overlook that in response to God's compassion both Jonah and the Ninevites took steps to obey God now Jonah reluctantly Nineveh shallowly but they did move towards God and get this part according to the word of the Lord that's the key according to the word of the Lord so we have God revealing we have God receiving and we have these people responding to

God they are responding to God in this last week Jesus Christ if you were here Jesus Christ talked about the four soils in Mark chapter four only the fourth soil for those of you who were here to remember only the fourth one the good soil of a teachable heart sprouted the seed of God's word

so that the heart seeds produced holy deeds pleasing to God that's how Jesus explains that it works so I want to build on that with what we see here in the repentance from the Ninevites how they're responding but more importantly how it is that God is offering that compassion to them how God is making himself known and giving them enough truth so that they know what they need to do in response to this

God and so I want to ask you some questions about this in your life and I want to help guide you in how to apply this alright this is just one way we can do this look at these questions with me friends as you respond to the compassion of God is your heart tender and teachable so that it's ready to receive God's word implanted to lead to lead you to repent that is turn away from any sin in your life and to guide you to walk in what is right in the sight of God in the sight of the Lord that's the start now let's go a little further what sinful issue are you facing in your life you know you know and you know God knows this doesn't have to be necessarily a recurring sin but it could be and likely is something you struggle with you battle with something that just tears at you and and don't it doesn't have to be some monumental you know the big three or something you know whatever those are it could be something like you know

I know that it's a sin for me not to take the word of God seriously and be more engaged and involved with God's word for my life so that I can obey the Lord and know the Lord better it's a lack of discipline it's laziness in my life I see it could be something like that or gossip it can be complaining if you're just a whiner and a complainer the Bible says don't complain not even about the weather what are you facing have you taken a step in the right direction to deal with your sin I've asked have you owned it as sin or is it just a mistake is it just a little something that nags at you no big deal well how do you know the difference well we go on have you owned it as sin so that you've confessed it and called it what God calls it brother and calling it what

God calls it you're not going to trivialize it because he doesn't and then this do you know what God says about it in the Bible have you accepted have you accepted this that the greatest wrong about it is that it disobeys and dishonors God that it grieves and quenches the spirit's work in your life the greatest wrong with my sin and your sin is that it dishonors God and it grieves the spirit we start there whatever else it does to the people around us and to us it does that to the Lord and then finally have have have reached out to another believer to bear it with you do you know how to form a biblical plan to help you identify and deal with the sinful desires of your heart heart which fuel the deeds the issue are you working that plan in other words are you repenting and obeying this is how we live our life before the

[57 : 50] Lord because we're going to sin but we don't have to wallow in it or ignore it or throw it off or act like it's no big deal and then finally friends that's that's just a few things those at some point God willing will be posted on the website if you want to come back and and look at them or if you'd like to talk with Greg or myself about this or our wives would be happy to talk to you ladies if there's an issue you want to discuss we're available okay we're not above you we're walking this walk with you we'd love to help you finally let's do this one so that we can close out here God's relenting oh my goodness what is that verse 10 when God saw their deeds that they turned from their wicked way then God relented concerning the calamity which he had declared he declared that he'd bring it and now he's what is he changing his mind or what is this and he didn't do it he didn't do it

God brought Nineveh to this place of grace this was the purpose all along it's not like God told Jonah to go do this and then sat back and said 40 days and they're gone and then they repented and he went oh look at that well okay I guess if you'll do that then I'll I won't kill all of you wait God's not like that so what is it it was God's plan and purpose to spare the city from his wrath from the get-go that's why Jonah ran away because he knew that he's going to tell you that in chapter 4 isn't he he didn't run away because he was scared of the Assyrians some 40 years later some 40 years from around this point God is going to use Assyria to judge

Israel and Judah for idolatry what does it mean that God relented now I want to tell you this as straightforwardly as I can because you'll find this throughout scripture simply God acted sovereignly don't ever come to the place in scripture where you see God relenting and think that somehow he set aside a portion of his sovereignty he did what he purposed to do he accomplished his will in the mind of the Lord this was always the plan he didn't follow through on what he could have done in destroying the city instead God delights in responding to small steps in the right direction with gracious acts of compassion so in other words here's how we can put it in other words in his sovereignty here's what we mean by that in God's power and purpose to control all things to

accomplish his will he has mercy on whom he has mercy and compassion on whom he has compassion

Romans 9 so God's sovereign will to save whom he chooses is to always be understood it always is viewed and balanced with his heart of compassion and now here's here's how I want to end this with you I want to bring this right into your living room and into your life God's revelation to us in Christ Jesus and the word of the Lord came folks that's life to us this is the only way that we know God is Savior we sing about it at Christmas don't we Emmanuel God with us creation shows us God exists yes it does it shows us something of God's divine power and attributes Romans chapter 1 from 18 down but he specially reveals himself as

Savior not just creator but as Savior as he speaks to us in his word and through his holy son special revelation unique from the revelation we see about God in creation here are some verses that I just want to let speak to your heart in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we saw his glory glory as of the only begotten from the father full of grace and truth that's Jesus for whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope and then this one

[63 : 21] God after he spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways to include Jonah in these last days the days we live in has spoken to us in his son whom he appointed heir of all things through whom also he made the world our repentance to God in Christ Jesus the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand repent and believe in the gospel that's Jesus he who believes in the son has eternal life but he who does not obey the son will not see life but wrath the wrath of God abides on him here folks you see faith and repentance you see believing in God and obeying God you see a life of faith giving way to a life of obedient living pleasing the Lord and then finally

God's relenting to us in his reconciling grace in Christ Jesus and we're just like the Ninevites in our need look all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God but God but God made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ that's our heritage and that's our reality let's pray together father we thank you so much that no matter where we turn in scripture we see we see the compassion of your heart poured out into our lives in Jesus Christ your son we see everything about scripture pointing us to Jesus revealing to us the magnificent glory and beauty and wonder of the cross of Jesus the bloody tree where Jesus was tortured to death on our account we glory Lord in that reality because it is in that reality that you showed so wonderfully your love for us as sinners and the links that you went to to rescue us from ourselves and give us hope and so we pray that not only will you sober us with this reality but God that you will encourage our hearts that you will melt our hearts and remake us in the wonderful image of your son so that we can carry compassion compassion to the undeserving of this world the compassion of your heart of Jesus heart in the power of the Holy Spirit living in us thank you almighty God that you are our God and that we can serve you in this way and please you as we show compassion to each other and to others we thank you in Jesus precious name and for his glory amen