

POOR RESPONSE TO CORRECTION

JANUARY 22, 2023 | JONAH | JONAH 2 | PASTOR SCOTT TURANSKY

Jonah problem number two: poor response to correction.

Last week we looked at Jonah 1 and we saw Jonah problem number one, which was “I need to, but I don't want to.” All of us need to learn in our lives whether it's just a simple responsibility “I need to, but I don't want to,” those kinds of things. But then God can use us more powerfully when we know how to do what I need to do, even though I don't want to. God can direct our paths and take us wherever He wants.

Today we're going to talk about a different problem that Jonah had – a poor response to correction. We do know that in Jonah 2 he prays and he has a good response to correction, it appears. But there were some things that happened in his life before he got to the fish, where God used some things that could have been responded to by Jonah in this area of correction. God sent a storm. He could have responded at that point and said, “Okay, God. I see. I'll make some changes.” The sailors were rebuking him. He could have responded then. But no, he had to have this big fish take over his life. What a challenging experience.

I had a sewer problem once. I called Mike the sewer guy to come and fix it. Because I tried with my snake, it wasn't doing any good. Mike came and he comes with his little snake. I'm thinking, “That's like mine” as he sticks it in the drain thing. So he goes back out to his truck and he brings another one about this big with a hand crank on it and he sticks that in my drain, and that's not doing any good either. Now I'm getting a little bit worried. So I said, “Mike, what are you going to do if that doesn't work?” He says, “Don't worry. If that doesn't work, I've always got something bigger that will.”

I think that's what's happening in Jonah's life. And I think that's what happens in our lives too.

In fact, I think that's what parents might say to their kids sometimes. Kids, you don't want to have to wait for the other things that parents can do to you in order to bring you to a place of change. We don't want to wait for that in our lives for God to bring about change either. I want to be the kind of person who can change quickly. I don't want have a poor response to correction so God has to use some drastic experience in my life.

Young people, I want to share with you a very important concept about life, something that will help you to be successful. But before I do, let's read our passage today in Jonah 2. Would you stand with me as I read this chapter to us?

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying, "I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.' The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!" And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

You may be seated.

Young people, I want you to understand a very important concept about life and it is that correction is a valuable thing. I think sometimes we react to correction. We become defensive. We get angry. We blame other people. When someone corrects you, whether it's a friend or a parent or a teacher corrects you, what is your response? Is your response instantly to justify yourself? You want to be able to receive correction because correction is so valuable.

Some people don't like to be corrected because they believe they're right. They're always right. Let me suggest that if one person tells you that you have a tail, then you can ignore them. But if three people tell you you have a tail, you better turn around and look.

The point is that we all need correction. Sometimes even when we think we're right and we know it all. Correction is a valuable tool that God uses in our lives.

Some people reject correction because they take it personally as if I'm a bad person. The reality is, we did something bad and we need to change and God uses a plan to bring about that change.

Let me show you a verse, young people, that I think you're going to want to know. In Proverbs 6:23 it says – *Correction and instruction are a way to life*. In the book of Proverbs, the word 'life' and 'death' sometimes refer to physical life and death. But sometimes they also refer to the quality of life as they do in this passage. If you want to have a greater quality of life, then you're going to learn how to respond to correction well. It is a valuable thing.

You can learn things in different ways. You can learn from Google, you can learn from YouTube, and you can learn from a teacher or parent. You can learn from your own mistakes. You can learn doing a science experiment. You can learn all kinds of ways. But one of the ways we learn is through correction. It's valuable. It takes humility and courage to respond well to correction. It's one of those life skills we all must develop in our lives so that we can grow more effectively, so we don't become entrapped in our own cyclical thinking, but we're rather able to allow God to make some changes in our lives.

Another verse I like, also in the book of Proverbs, is this one in Proverbs 12:1 – *Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.*

We don't use the word 'stupid' in our home. But isn't it interesting that God uses the word 'stupid' here? When I show this to kids they laugh, "The Bible says stupid." Yeah, it does. What is it saying there? *Whoever who hates correction is stupid.* Why does it say that? Why is it that it says that someone who hates correction is stupid?

One young man told me one time, "That's because if you keep doing the wrong thing after you're corrected, you're going to look stupid." I said, "I'm going to remember that. That's a good explanation of this verse."

There's this reality that God wants to do some things in our lives. He wants to correct us. He wants to bring about change in our hearts.

Each one of us are like this diamond that God wants to bring the brilliance out of, but we have all this stuff around us, some of the rock still on there. God uses hammers and chisels in our lives to clean up the diamond so that it can shine. Sometimes He uses the hammer of a dad and the chisel of a mom to help that diamond shine in a young person's life. But if you reject that and you don't listen to parents, you don't have a good response to your parents, then what happens? God comes along with a bigger hammer and a bigger chisel.

You might be going to work and having someone else tell you to clean up your mess and get here on time and do the things I tell you to do. Or it may be that you get into a relationship and something bad happens in that relationship. God can use all kinds of things to correct us and change us and to draw out of us the beauty that He wants in our lives.

There's always something bigger that God could use. I don't want to wait for the big things. I just want to respond to the simple things.

This is a true story in our church. This dad and mom had a son who was quite rebellious. We prayed him through high school. That's basically it. We just prayed him through and he got to high school and he graduated, and we were grateful that we got that far with him. His dad says to him, "Why don't you come and work with me at the factory?" The son says, "Okay." So they go to work and the dad works in the office up there, but he assigned his son to a foreman in the factory.

He began working for this foreman. After a week he comes to his dad and he says, "Dad, I'm quitting."

His dad says, "Why?"

He says, "I don't like wearing the uniforms that they got down there. I don't like wearing those clothes. And I don't like people telling me what to do all the time. Every time I turn around he's telling me what to do."

Dad says, "What are you going to do?"

He says, "I'm going to join the army."

That's true. That's a true story. Can you imagine?

My son also had a hard time in high school. We prayed him through high school and he came at a point where he said, "I'm going to join the Marines. Dad, I hope you're not upset I'm going to join the Marines."

I said, "That's a good idea. Go ahead and join the Marines. I think it will be good."

He came home from Marine boot camp a changed man. It was so great, a conversion experience at boot camp. He came and he shared on our Sunday morning worship service. He said, "I got to tell you, I learned things at boot camp I should have learned as a child." This is what he's saying to all these people, tears in people's eyes. He says, "When I got to boot camp, they taught me how to dress." He used to wear his pants so low it was embarrassing for everybody. But now he had his pants pulled up and now he looked nice. He says, "I learned how to talk. I learned how to be respectful. I learned how to follow instructions. I learned how to walk properly." What a great thing. But God had to use a bigger hammer in his life in order to bring about change that needed to be done.

Correction is a valuable tool.

Before I go into chapter 2, I want to go back to chapter 1. I want to look at the conjunctions and just follow the path of thought that's going through chapter 1. Because before verse 3, God tells Jonah, "I want you to get up and go to Nineveh and I want you to proclaim the message of repentance to them." But verse 3 says Jonah, like a three-year-old in the grocery store, runs the other way. But the Lord brought the storm. The storm was a way to correct Jonah to get his attention. And then we get here. But Jonah went down into the inner part of the ship and he fell asleep.

Jonah reminds me of a child who you've sent over to take a break and you say to the child, "You need to go take a break, settle down, change your heart, come back, and see me." Just pouting. He doesn't want to do it. So he's got that pout. How long is he going to sit there? He could sit there a long time. Jonah decides to stay there a long time. In fact, he stays there three days and three nights. That's a long time.

I tell kids that if I was in a belly of a fish, it wouldn't take me three minutes before I change. But some kids are just so stubborn. Some people are so stubborn. Jonah's so stubborn. I don't want to have that poor response to correction that God has to put me in a big fish for three days. I don't want that in my life.

But look at this from the picture of God for just a moment as our heavenly Father. Just notice what happens. God has something He wants to get done. He wants the Ninevites to hear about the message of repentance. He chooses Jonah to send him there. So God wants to get something done. But Jonah is unresponsive. So God says, "Okay, I'm going to put the things I want to get done on hold." We have a lot of things we want to get done in family life. We want to get the clothes cleaned up, the dishes put away, we want to get the food on the table, we want to get kids here and there. Sometimes we just have to stop getting things done because this young man needs some work. This guy needs a detour in his life. A detour that's going to be three days long.

God's going to put aside the things He needs to get done temporarily because He cares for an individual who needs some help. This guy needs some work in his life. He needs a detour so he can experience some of my grace.

When we're going along doing the right thing and we're going along like this, sometimes we stop doing the right thing and we need a detour so we can experience God a bit more. A detour.

Parents don't like detours because they have to be the tour guides. I understand that.

But God uses detours. He used detours in the Old Testament with the Israelites who came to the promised land and they couldn't go in because they didn't have enough faith. So God says, "Alright. I'm going to send you out in the wilderness for forty years." This is not a punishment. You might think the forty years was a punishment time. It wasn't a punishment. This is a training time, where God is going to say, "I'm going to lead you, you're going to follow the pillar. You're just going to get up and go. When I tell you to go, you're going to go. I'm going to give you food every day, I'm going to care for you. I'm going to provide you with water. I'm going to guide you around. I'm going to protect you from your enemies." They're learning how to trust for forty years. So now they get to the promised land and they're able to go in across the Jordan. They're even able to do something silly, like play their trumpets as they're going around the city. Play musical instruments. How could they do that? They could do that because they learned how to trust. God does something in the detours of our lives.

Those are hard sometimes, the detours of our lives. But there's a place where God is doing some important things.

That's what we're going to see in Jonah 2. But the challenge with Jonah is that we get to this place where he has this big fish swallow him up. He didn't have a good response to correction, so he had to wait for something bigger in his life. I don't want that. I don't think you want that either in your life.

Jonah 2 says – *Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish.*

Maybe you feel like that sometime, like the child over here sitting there pouting. "I don't like this." Maybe you feel like, "I want to repent, but I don't know how." I'm going to show you how to do that today. It comes from this passage.

The first thing we're going to do is we're going to pray. We're going to come to the Lord and we're going to say, "Lord, I'm reaching out to you." Prayer is a very important part of the repentance process. We can make a change just by coming to the Lord and praying.

"I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice." There's never any place you can go that's too far from God's voice. You can call out to God in the midst of the belly of the fish. You can call out to God in the midst of the trial that you're in. You can call out to God when you're eating pig slop and you're wishing you were back in your father's house. And where's the father? He's there with his arms open wide, ready to receive the person who's the prodigal and comes back. Wow.

We want to recognize we can't get away from God's presence. He's following us. He's pursuing us wherever we are and He wants us to change. All we have to do is respond to Him and come to Him and receive that. Don't try to clean yourself up before you come to God. Just respond to Him in the belly of the fish, just like Jonah did.

He says – *For you cast me into the deep.*

Notice in verse 3, who's responsible for the correction here? Who's responsible for the storm and the billows and casting him out? Was it the sailors? Do we blame the sailors for casting Jonah? No. Jonah realizes that God is working instrumentally in his life. He says – *For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me.*

God loves his children so much that He's willing to correct them. Sometimes the bad things that are going on in our lives is God trying to get our attention to get us to change, to think about it, to say, “Hey, I'm trying to correct you here.”

I also want to say the bad things are going to come into our lives and maybe you're not doing anything wrong. Sometimes just because we live in a broken world bad things happen in our lives. So I don't want you to believe that just because bad things are happening in your life that God is somehow punishing you. That is not always the case. But I do think we always need to ask the question first, “God, are you trying to communicate something to me here? Am I doing something wrong in this situation that you want me to change?”

Then I said, “I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.”

He's saying, “I feel like I'm away from your sight.” But the Holy Temple is this place of intimacy, of closeness with God. Even in the belly of the fish, Jonah is imagining the intimacy with God that he could have. He's going to move in that direction. This intimacy is what he needs, this holy temple.

The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains.

He's just feeling overwhelmed. You can feel that sense of being overwhelmed. When a person is sinning, they get to that place where they just feel like they're overwhelmed in their life. “I can't live this way anymore. I've got to make a change.” That feeling of being overwhelmed is so important because what we'll often say about that person, “They finally reached bottom.” They've gone down, down, down, down until they've finally reached bottom. Now they're ready to make a change. They're ready to start doing what's right in their lives.

There is another kind of feeling overwhelmed. Again, there's this feeling of overwhelmed when you didn't really sin, you didn't cause this sin that's on you. But you're just feeling overwhelmed. That's time for another sermon where we'll see how God just comforts us in the midst of the struggles that we have. Not because we've sinned, but because we are His kids, and He wants to

embrace us with His love and give us His grace. That's a special kind of understanding of God in the midst of feeling overwhelmed that we'll talk about at another time.

But this guy's doing the wrong thing. He needs to feel overwhelmed because God wants to bring a change in his life.

So he continues – *I went down*. There's our word *down* again. This guy has been going down ever since we started this story. He went down to Joppa, then down into the ship. We know also he was thrown overboard and went down into the water and down into the belly of the fish.

He's saying now – *I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up* (circle those words *down* and *up*) *my life from the pit, O LORD my God*.

When you get down to that place where, “I just don't want to go down anymore,” there's that place where you can turn around and start going up. God wants to take us in that space from where we're down. He wants to turn us around and He wants to move us in a direction so that we're going that direction that He wants us to go, and that is up. God wants you going up. So if we're going down, down, down, maybe there's a problem here that we need to talk about so that you can experience this going up with the Lord. Because *the LORD brought up my life from the pit*. If your life is in the pits, wow, you need to be brought up from the pits. It's the Lord, Yahweh my God. That's what he says, Yahweh my God.

When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.

You got to know this word *steadfast love*. I would write it down in your Bible somewhere because this is God's favorite Old Testament word. It is the Hebrew word *chesed*. Say that with me. You got to do the throat thing. *Chesed* is sometimes translated *loving kindness*. It is such a big word it's hard to translate. It's translated here *steadfast love* because it has to do with God's covenant love. *Chesed* is the faithful love of God that's not based on condition. It's unconditional love. It starts in this idea of God has this unconditional love for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We saw this word *chesed* mentioned in Nehemiah, when we taught through that passage last year. We saw the word *chesed* used in the prophets over and over again. Because it's the unfailing love of God that we rely on. This word is so big, it's so beautiful, you can fall back into the *chesed* of God, no matter where you are.

So Jonah comes to this place where he realizes the hope of the *chesed* of God, the steadfast love.

Do you know what God's favorite word is in the New Testament? It's the word *grace*. It's just like this word, *chesed*. The word *grace* is the same word. It's so big it's hard to define. It is so big that we can just fall into the grace of God. *For by grace you have been saved through faith, not of yourselves, not of works, lest anyone can boast*. It is the grace of God that we fall upon for salvation. But even then, Paul says – “*Lord, take this thorn in the flesh from me,*” and God says – *My grace is sufficient for you*. Grace is so big we can fall back into the arms of God's grace in our lives. *Chesed*.

Jonah is getting it. It's coming to him. The steadfast love of the Lord.

The next verse says this: *But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you.*

If you're unrepentant or having a hard time pouting before the Lord, as I imagine Jonah is, thanksgiving is going to be a key. In fact, I would encourage you to start a chart in your Bible all the times thanksgiving appears in the Bible. You're going to keep seeing them. Thanksgiving is this powerful tool that God uses in our lives to do something inside of our hearts. He's using thanksgiving here in this repentance process. *With a voice of thanksgiving I will sacrifice to you.*

There were two guys at the gym on Friday when I was there. They were talking back and forth. The one guy was complaining because someone at the gym asked to borrow \$20, so he gave him \$20, but he didn't pay it back. So this guy is going on and on. Jawar (who I go to know his name later) was interacting with this guy and saying, "He's probably going to pay you back. He just probably doesn't have it right now. Just talk to him." He said, "I talk to him all the time." This guy's going on about his \$20 for a long time. This conversation started over by the mirrors and the sinks and so on.

When I go to get dressed there, they happen to be in the same place I am. They're having this conversation. I'm thinking, "I know what I'm doing. I'm going to my locker, I'm going to open it up, I'm going to get 20 bucks out there, I'm going to give it to him just to be quiet." I couldn't do it fast enough. I'm thinking this is going to be a great sermon illustration because I'm going to give him 20 bucks and he's going to say, "No, I don't want your 20 bucks," and I'm going to say, "It's easier to keep your anger than it is to forgive the guy of 20 bucks." That's what I wanted to say. Because that's a Jonah 4 illustration. I was thinking God was going to give me a Jonah 4 illustration. Because he's angry in Jonah 4. But the guy left, finally, before I could get to my wallet.

So I said to Jawar, "I was going to give him 20 bucks." Jawar says, "Yeah, I was thinking about doing the same thing." We started talking and laughing together. I said, "Look, I am glad I'm a Christian because God has blessed me so much I don't have to worry about \$20." And he says, "Yeah, God's blessed me too." So we're talking as we were getting dressed and so on.

This guy says, "Let me tell you a story. When I was 18 years old, I found myself locked up in County because I was on the street and I did something wrong on the street and they locked me up. That's the first time I was ever locked up. I was upset. After a few hours of being in there, I prayed. And when I prayed, just a few seconds later the guard comes and he says, 'You can get out.'"

I said to him (I stopped his story), "This sounds like a Jonah story to me. You prayed and you remember in the story as soon as the guy prayed, then God told the fish to throw and vomit Jonah up on the land. That sounds like you're a modern-day Jonah."

He says, "Yeah." I'm dressed by now with my coat on. He says, "Let me let me tell you the rest of the story, because it didn't quite happen that way. I got out that night, I went back on the street and I did something wrong again, and it locked me up again."

So I'm sitting down on the bench listening to this guy tell this story. I said, "Oh, no, you're kidding."

He says, “Yeah. I was so upset. I thought it might have been God correcting before, but now I knew that I got out there a second time and I get caught right away, and now I missed Thanksgiving and I missed Christmas.”

I said to him, “I bet you never did that on the street again.”

He said, “No way. I never did that again on the street.” I asked him his name and I was grateful.

As I'm walking out of the gym, I'm thinking about the story because I know this is the illustration for this morning. I want to tell it in a minute instead of 10 minutes, like the whole experience took in the gym. I'm kind of forming the story and kind of laughing about being grateful so you can forgive the guy his \$20.

I walk out to my car and I get to my car to open my door handle and there's a \$1 bill on my door handle. Do you know why there's a \$1 bill? I start laughing right away. You know why there's a \$1 bill on my door handle? Because one of you is messing with me. That's why. Because on January 1, I preached a sermon and in that sermon, I said I came out of the gym and I found three \$1 bills blowing around on the ground. Remember that? So one of you is out there putting a \$1 on my door.

So I take the \$1 bill. Okay. I take the \$1 bill. I go out to the back of my car, “Okay. You can show your face.” The place is desolate. There's nobody around. I can't find anybody. I'm laughing and laughing about the \$1 bill. So I get in my car I look up on my dashboard – two more \$1 bills stuck in the windshield wipers. Now I'm laughing. I get out of my car. I take the two more \$1 bills. I stick the three \$1 bills in my pocket. I'm laughing now as I'm driving down the road out of that place. I think, “Oh no, I really blew it. When I told that story on January 1st, I should have said it was \$100 bills.”

I'm going to the gym tomorrow. My car is silver. It's a 2009 Hyundai if any of you want to meet me there.

There's one more word I want to point out in this passage. It's this word: *Salvation belongs to the LORD!*

Salvation is the word *yeshua*. So when they chose to name him, they called him Joshua. Joshua is named after the word *yeshua*, salvation. He's the one who's going to be the person who is going to save the people.

When the angel came to Joseph, he said, “Mary's going to have a baby who is of the Holy Spirit. And you can name this baby Jesus.” Jesus is English. The Greek is Iesous. The Hebrew is Yeshua, but it means salvation.

The greatest correction experience any of us can have in our lives is to recognize that we must make a turn. We must recognize our own sin. It takes humility and courage to say, “Okay, I'm a sinner.” I know that's embarrassing to say, but I really am a sinner and I need a Savior. I need a Yeshua. I need to be able to trust the Lord. We make that repentance, that 180 degree turn and we come to the Lord, and we give our hearts to the Lord, and we trust Him, and we recognize

that He's the one that we need. It's that correction that must take place in our lives for us to experience life, as Proverbs 6:23 says. We experience life.

We're so grateful for a God who leaves the ninety-nine and goes after the one. That's you and me, the one. He comes and He cares for us so that we can be thankful. I'm so grateful that I can let go of the \$20. I don't have to carry that around and harp about it. But I know that there are offenses in our lives that sometimes we hold on to. The solution is to recognize how big God is and all that He's done for us. When we recognize how much God has done for us, we're able to forgive others more quickly in our lives.

Wow, what a story. Jonah had some very important things to learn. God's taking him on a path.

So it says in verse 10 – *And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.*

That ought to get you excited about reading Jonah 3. Your questions are in your bulletin. So get them out, look at it this week, get ready for next week. We'll see what else is going on in Jonah's life next week.

Would you stand with me? Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we come before you now, humble people recognizing that we need you, we need your strength in our lives. Lord, we don't want big correction. We want small ones. We want to listen to your whispers and we'll follow your Holy Spirit as the wind blows through. We'll listen to you. We just want to be at your feet and we want to enjoy you. We ask, Lord, that you would speak to us and grow us. In Jesus' name, amen.