

THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES

“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.”” Jonah 3:1-2.

God sent Jonah, His prophet to Nineveh to warn them that His judgement would come upon the city if they continued in their wickedness, but Jonah wilfully disobeyed God. Instead of going to Nineveh, he arose to flee to Tarshish. This he did, by going down to Joppa and boarding a ship going to Tarshish. God sent a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea which made sailing difficult. To lighten the ship, all the cargoes in the ship were thrown into the sea but the tempest did not calm down. Then, lots were cast to know the cause of the trouble and the lots fell on Jonah. After much deliberations with reluctance, Jonah was thrown out of the ship into the sea, at his request.

God prepared a great fish which swallowed Jonah and took him to Nineveh where it vomited him on dry land. There, the word of God came to him the second time that he should enter into the city and preach to them that unless they repent, the city would be overthrown in forty days time. He entered into the city and hastily delivered the message. The people of Nineveh believed God, repented, proclaimed a fast, put on sackcloth – from the greatest to the least –, and turned from their evil way. God, therefore, repented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them and forgave them.

Here, we see God as the God of second chances. Because of His mercy, Jonah’s wilful disobedience and stubbornness were forgiven and did not disqualify him from service to God. Instead, God pursued him and used him as His vessel to turn Nineveh from their wicked ways. Also, because of God’s mercy, Nineveh, the great city was forgiven and given a second chance through repentance.

The Bible gives other examples of people who were given second chances because they repented of their sins and turned to God in obedience. Peter, the chief of the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ denied Jesus three times, and, later, even led six other disciples back to the sea to their former trade – an action that could be regarded as backsliding –, yet he was forgiven and restored. Matthew 26:69-75. John 21:1-3, 15-17. Not only that, God still used him (Peter) as the leader of the Apostles who advanced the gospel of salvation. Also, Saul of Tarsus persecuted the first century church greatly. Jesus met him on his way to Damascus, converted him and used him to greatly advance the gospel that he once persecuted. Acts 9:1-22. 1Timothy 1:12-14.

However, Judas Iscariot’s case was different. He betrayed Jesus, and sold his master for money. When he realised that what he did was wrong, he was full of condemnation. He returned the money to the chief priests and elders, and went away to hang himself. He committed suicide and would end up in hell. Luke 22:1-6, 47-48. Matthew 27:3-5. If God could forgive Jonah, Peter and Saul of Tarsus, restored them and still used them mightily, He could have forgiven Judas Iscariot if he had repented and returned to the Lord Jesus.

Dear reader, what sin or crime have you committed? What wrong have you done? Have you backslidden? Have you betrayed, denied or disobeyed Jesus Christ? Do you think He can not forgive or use you anymore? If you think so, that is a lie from the pit of hell. Do not follow the example of Judas Iscariot. Our God is the God of second chances. Repent of your sins and come to Him; He will not cast you away. If He could forgive and restore Jonah, Peter and Saul of Tarsus, He will not only forgive you but also restore and use you. All you need to do is repent of your sins and forsake them, and return to God in obedience.

If after reading this tract you desire that God should give you a second chance, go on your knees, confess and repent of your sins. Ask God for forgiveness; tell Him you will not return to your sinful ways anymore, and pray that He should give you a second chance. Return and submit to Him in full obedience. 1 John 1:9; 2:1-2. John 6:37-39. "Return, you backsliding children, And I will heal your backslidings." Jeremiah 3:22.

- Paul Kilanko

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God bless you, as you do so, in Jesus' Mighty Name. Amen.