

# The Power of Repentance

---

Researcher Christian Smith's book, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, concludes that many young American adults have a faith characterized by "moralistic, therapeutic deism." According to this view of God, if we live **good** lives and if we're **kind** to others, then God will provide "therapeutic benefits" to us like self-esteem and happiness. Other than that, God is not involved much in our world.

This view of God has a profound effect on prayer. Smith found that American teens personally prayed frequently; 40 percent prayed daily or more, and only 15 percent said they never prayed.

However, their motivation for prayer largely focused on meeting their own needs. Some of the teens interviewed said: "If I ever have a problem, I go pray." "It helps me deal with problems. ... it calms me down for the most part." "Praying just makes me feel more secure, like there's something there helping me out." "I would say prayer is an essential part of my success."

But Smith also found that many young Americans' prayers lacked any sense of repentance or adoration. Smith writes, "This is not a religion of repentance from sin." Again, Smith concludes that this "distant God" is "not demanding ... because his job is to solve problems and make people feel good." There is nothing here to evoke wonder and admiration."

If this is the God that the church is modeling to our youth and to our world: **We Have failed.**

**We will answer the question today: how important is repentance in my life. Answer: It is everything! Have you repented of your sins today? Today's message is entitled: the Power of Repentance**

**Gorham Abbat** defined repentance eloquently and poetically → Repentance is the tear of love, dropping from the eye of faith, when it fixes on Christ crucified.

More specifically, Repentance like faith is an inward turning from something. We often decrie believe believe believe. But belief alone is not what God requires. Salvation is from God so we must believe in Yahweh as we do not believe in the strength of ourselves. Belief w/out repentance is not faith and is powerless to change.

Another way to describe repentance is to think of **Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade**. Where Indiana is walking through the last obstacle and he keeps repeating: the penitent man will pass. This man is humble before god. And at the last second Indiana realizes he **has to kneel!** And right as he figures it out the these sharp bladed swing narrowly missing his neck. Repentance is a bending of your will and submission to Jesus Christ. [Play Video](#)

Do you want to live a **powerful** Spirit-filled life? **There is power in repentance**

**Read** **Jonah 1:17-2:10**

## *Repentance is your **Spiritual** response to God's **Spiritual** pursuit (1:17)*

As we pick back up in Jonah we find a different scene in Act #3. In Act # 1 we found the Lord calling the prophet to a new location to declare that the Lord is gracious and good news! Act #2 we found Jonah running (or sailing) away from the will of God. Scene #3 we find Jonah in the world's first submarine. We must not only look at Jonah's **place but his posture**.

Jonah is in a horrible situation. He ran from God, ran to a ship, ran into a storm and now has run into a stomach. And finally, this mighty prophet prays to the Lord and calls out in distress. What has happened? **The prophet has a spiritual response to the Lord's spiritual pursuit.** A worldly response is sorrow/ our spiritual response is repentance. **Worldly = ill do better next time; spiritually is you have done it all!**

This is repentance. A bowing of the will to ask God to forgive and deliver. The **only right** response to the Spirit's pursuit of you is a **spiritual response**. A religious response w/out repentance is the wrong response. **There is power in repentance.** Yet, **brokenness is a critical first step in Jonah's deliverance.**

## *A repentant heart is a thankful heart (2:2)*

Immediately we encounter a great tension within this dramatic narrative. Jonah is praying- Jonah is crying out to God- Jonah is processing and in the process of repenting of his sins and--- he has not yet been delivered. Lest we think that followers of Christ are perpetually sorrowful and downcast. We are reminded that the the root of repentance is always a **Thankful heart.** (Jonah 2:9). Unthankful? Repent. It is uplifting for your soul!

Jonah does not need to wait to reach dry land to feel gratitude (NIV). Yes! Repentance is the recognition that we are wrong. And yes repentance is the recognition that we have **no power** to save ourselves from our own situation. But! A repentant heart is a thankful heart because it is the primary recognition that **Yahweh wants family not slaves.**

God will not force or coerce you to repent-turn- and serve him. Why? Because the Lord wants family not slaves. This is why God **adopts** us through Jesus Christ. This is the power of repentance. **A repentant heart is a thankful heart.**

## *Repentance is my counterpart to Faith (1:17)*

Repentance is my inward response crying out for deliverance and knowing that God will release me from the burden of my sin and fear of judgment. **If faith is saying "I believe" repentance is saying "I bow."** We have

**empty churches** because we have **empty worshippers** those who declare “I believe” and yet have “not bowed.” Look at Jonah a man who once ran now – praying/calling/crying. Jonah is a shining example of a man who appeared outwardly obedient yet his heart was emptied of submission. And yet—this moment of repentance changed Jonah from “follower” to faithful worshipper.

All the while that we walk by faith and not by sight, the fear of repentance glitters in the eye of faith. CH Spurgeon

Here is the beauty and power of repentance. **The greater my faith = the more my heart breaks over sin and the more deeply and often I repent.** The more I **grow** in repentance (pray-call-cry) the more my faith grows.

Repentance is the hand releasing those filthy objects it had previously clung to so tenaciously. Faith is extending an empty hand to God to receive His gift of grace. Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin. Faith is receiving a sinner's Saviour. AW Pink

**The faith filled life is a power filled life. Repentance is not a sign of a lack of faith A repentant life is a faithful life.**

## *Repentance is the voice of sinful ownership (2:1)*

Look at the example set by Jonah. I- Called. My affliction – my voice. **What a breath of fresh air. True repentance is the voice of sinful ownership.** Repentance is saying MY bad! *We live in the land of non-apologies.*

**One such example of bad apology** a resolution apologizing to American Indians for years of “ill-conceived policies” and acts of violence by United States citizens. tucked into page 45 of a 67-page spending bill in 2010, the first-ever admission by the US. The final bill omitted any specific references to such heinous acts as the Trail of Tears and Wounded Knee, and added a clause that nothing in the apology “authorizes or supports any claim against the United States; or serves as a settlement of any claim against the United States.”

What is wrong with a one sentence bill: I was wrong and I am sorry. True repentance is the voice of personal ownership

*It is easier to cry against one-thousand sins of others than to kill one of your own. John Flavel*

The repentant voice is not a still small voice. **Repentance needs to be as loud as the sin was. John MacArthur.** I believe the sound of sinful ownership is sweet in the ears of our Savior. Recently I had the joy of praying for the restoration and forgiveness of two people who had a public disagreement. They told me we wanted to seek forgiveness in front of others because our disagreement was public. **Repentance needs to be as loud as the sin was.** This is **significance of Baptism:** a bold declaration of your repentance and salvation. A Loud proclamation that Jesus is King of your life.

*Repentance is recognition that the worst thing that could ever happen is that I would not see God face to face (2:3)*

As a prophet, enjoying a privileged relationship with the one true God, Jonah heard the Word of the Lord personally, and powerfully. **Now, because of His sin, Jonah is wrecked by the overwhelming consequence that sin banishes one from the presence of God.**

The worst that that can ever happen to you is to be banished from the Lord. This is the consequence of Adam and Eve. The greatest consequence of original sin was **not physical death** but the **death of divine relationship.**

**Gen 3:23** So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup> He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.

This is the horrific nature of hell. Not that it is eternal. Not that it is a physical place. Not the place of burning fire or the weeping and gnashing of teeth. The great power of hell is that it is void of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**2 Thess 1:8** when he takes vengeance with flaming fire on those who don't know God and on those who don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will pay the **penalty of eternal destruction from the Lord's presence and from his glorious strength**

Because Jonah quit his prophetic Job, he **surmised that he was being banished from God's throne** (Zehabe). Jonah recognized the consequence of his sin. For Jonah, as should be with us, to be away from the Lord devastating.

**This is the power of repentance and faith in Christ.** *Matt. 27:45* From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over the whole land. <sup>46</sup> About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "*Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?*" that is, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

How great the pain of searing loss  
The Father turns His face away  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One  
Bring many sons to glory

**If the worst punishment of sin is banishment from the presence of the Lord; Repentance rests on the promise that Jesus was rejected by the Father so you never have to be.**

## *Repentance is recognition that I have rejected the Lord's mercy and will never do it again! (2:8)*

In the midst of his desperate situation, Jonah realized his sin for what it really was. He- a mighty man of God- had rejected the mercy of Yahweh. At it's heart, true repentance is an deep utter acknowledgement that you have abandoned the loving kindness that the Lord has freely offered you. This truth is on one hand beautiful and on the other tragic. **Listen: the Lord never abandoned you. It's the opposite, we walked away from his holiness.**

The motive for repentance is not only sorrow for sin but also a sense of the mercy of God in Christ. We have zero motivation to repent, unless we see the mercy of God awaiting us.

Not the slap of God, but the embrace of God. Ray Ortlund

Jonah reminds us that we have abandoned mercy that is freely and abundantly offered to us. No other thought makes me humble than to know I have declined and rejected the greatest gift I was ever offered.

## *Repentance is clinging to the promises of God by Faith (2:9)*

**In the midst of this tragic abandonment of God's grace—Jonah clings desperately to the only thing left, His hope on the promises of Yahweh.**

**How can one cling to a God who you have rejected?** Because Jonah intimately knows the character and nature of the Lord. He knows that Lord is not like us. He is perfectly gracious, merciful and righteous. **Jonah knows that salvation belongs to the Lord.**

Salvation is entirely from God through Christ. And it is majestically offered to you and I. **Jonah is shouting this from the belly of the whale**→ You are the god who saves. Even If I die in this whale you are the God who saves!

## *Repentance stirs the forgiveness of God (2:9)*

Jonah – a man familiar with the Word of the Lord trusted in the Word of the Lord.

The Lord's immediate response to those who call on him is a frequent topic pervasive in the Word of the Lord. (Pss 20:10, 34:5; 138:3).

**Psalm 20: 9** LORD, give victory to the king!  
May he answer us on the day that we call.

**Psalm 35: 6** This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him

and saved him from all his troubles.

**138:3** On the day I called, you answered me;  
you increased strength within me.

**Rom 10:13** For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

This is no ordinary Call. This is the call of faith in Christ by repentance. If faith is the phone #- repentance is the area code.

There is tremendous power in repentance!!! To declare today: Even if I die in this situation: salvation belongs to the Lord.

## My Response to the Gospel

---

Repentance is always voluntary. There will be a day when I cannot repent because it will be too late.

"God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination." Augustine

Jonah: is today that day of your salvation? **"Yejoshua belongs to the Lord."** Because of Christ: who was rejected for you; you never have to be rejected by the Father if by faith and repentance you believe in Jesus Today.

Are you a follower of Christ and your life feels empty, joyless, thankless, powerless? Here is His promise, if you repent He hears!! As you grow in repentance he will put a song of thanksgiving in your heart.

**That His people may declare: Salvation belongs to the Lord!!!**

---

# Notes

---

- It has surprised readers through the centuries that Jonah prays a prayer of thanksgiving while he is still in mortal danger (NIV). He is still in motion, at sea, isolated, uncertain, and at great risk of death. Yahweh has said nothing to him and Jonah has not repented of his running.
- Tension between psalm and narrative
- Jonah does not need to wait to reach dry land to feel gratitude (NIV)
- Jonah's song of thanksgiving demonstrated the power of prayer and thanksgiving in the midst of any circumstance. (NIV)
- Yet, **brokenness is a critical first step in Jonah's deliverance.**
- The believers life after salvation, but before complete fulfillment/perfection, is somewhat like Jonah's situation (NIV).

**Jonah 1:17** ¶ Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

**Jonah 2:1** Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly.

- From inside the fish→ It is objected by some that the psalm could not have been composed inside the fish. This arises, however, from a failure to appreciate the fish's function; it is the means by which Jonah is delivered from death by drowning (TOTC).
- Lord his God→ This designation links Jonah's plea to the captain's speech (1:6) and with Jonah's own self-description as one who fears the Lord (1:9). This echo probably intends to tell us that Jonah has at long last submitted to the authority of his God (Deut 17:19).
- In the Belly→ David Kimhi notes "in" here does not merely indicate a physical location but is a deliberate choice to indicate that he prayed as a result of his distress. This observation is confirmed by the first part of the psalm (2:2) out of my affliction (ABC).
- This is the prophet at his best, giving thanks before he is on dry land (NIV).
- Whereas Jonah's actions are extensively described with laborious detail, God's reactions are only described in sparse, minimalist terms. God seems more amused by Jonah than Jonah is with God. Every miracle is direct at Jonah. God's miracles are much more astonishing than Jonah's immature fits of rebellion, more copy is dedicated to Jonah (Zehabe).
  - God commissioned Jonah with a significant assignment but it only included two verses. The greater portion deals with Jonah's lack of compliance (Zehabe).
  - We can learn a lot from this interplay. **God wants family not slaves.** God is lonesome but not desperate. Although God will not compromise with Jonah he actively pursues him..
- Fish→ The Messiah also displayed his authority over the fish of the sea in Mt 17:27 (taxes to Caesar) and Mt 14 (Fish and loaves)
- 3 days and 3 nights→ (GM Landes)
  - This meaning fits most satisfactorily the context in which Jonah 2:1 is set. By having the prophet swallowed by the great fish, the author had no intention of implying that the fish was the cause of distress to Jonah, or even that it was the vehicle of his

punitive judgment. The fish appointed by Yahweh is simply a beneficent device for returning Jonah to the place where he may reassume the commission he had previously abandoned.

- His residence in the fish is therefore not the same thing as being in the Deep or in Sheol, and the fish is not employed as a personification of the chaotic waters or the realm of the dead. It is clearly before Jonah is swallowed by the fish that he is threatened by the sea and in danger of permanent residence in the nether world.

○

#### Jonah 2:2 And he said:

"I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction,  
And He answered me.  
'Out of the belly of Sheol I cried,  
And You heard my voice.

- Jonah here mentions a prayer he uttered as he was thrown overboard. We do not know the content of that prayer but we certainly know the context.
- The Lord's immediate response to those who call on him is a frequent topic in Psalms (Pss 20:10, 34:5; 138:3).
- Belly of sheol → the glory of prayer is that it has the power to save the supplicant from a situation that would have been irreparable without divine intervention (ABC)
- New Birth
  - Affliction-- מַצְרָהּ - He uses a word that is specifically used of the "travail" of childbirth
  - Belly -- בֶּטֶן - literally womb of sheol. This is the only time in scripture this phrase is used.
  - Jonah is as good as dead but may be reborn.
- He answered me →
  - "ultimately listened voice of me." The quarrel began on Jonah's side. God is moved by sincere repentance. Jonah not only found himself, he found God.

#### Jonah 2:3 For You cast me into the deep,

Into the heart of the seas,  
And the floods surrounded me;  
All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.

- Although Jonah was physically cast overboard by the sailors, here he readily acknowledges that ultimate responsibility rest with God (TOTC).
- Cast →
  - The verb as two meanings at the same time. He literal sense of being cast overboard and the figurative sense of being loathsome and rejected.
- Surrounded →
  - The helpless feeling of someone who was sunk to the depths of the sea is augmented by the feeling of being surrounded by a enemy force (ABC).

**Jonah 2:4** Then I said, "I have been cast out of Your sight;  
Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.'

**Jonah 2:5** The waters surrounded me, *even* to my soul;  
The deep closed around me;  
Weeds were wrapped around my head.

- Surrounded me → Jonah is a prisoner at sea.
- Sight//look → the thoughts of a drowning man, expressed in direct speech, embody the magnitude of his despair (ABC)
- Surrounded → literally surrounded over my soul
- Weeds → although *suf* usually denotes a plant that grows upon the riverbank here it also denotes seaweed wrapped around the head (ABC).
- Because Jonah quit his prophetic job, he surmised that he was being banished from God's throne (Zehabe).

**Jonah 2:6** I went down to the moorings of the mountains;  
The earth with its bars *closed* behind me forever;  
Yet You have brought up my life from the pit,  
O LORD, my God.

- In the OT we do not find the image of a gate with reference to the land of the living, but only with reference to the land of the dead "gates of sheol" (Isa 38:10).

**Jonah 2:7** "When my soul fainted within me,  
I remembered the LORD;  
And my prayer went *up* to You,  
Into Your holy temple.

**Jonah 2:8** "Those who regard worthless idols  
Forsake their own Mercy.

**Jonah 2:9** But I will sacrifice to You  
With the voice of thanksgiving;  
I will pay what I have vowed.  
Salvation *is* of the LORD."

- Thanksgiving = voiced "with joyous shouts" (Pss 42:5)(ABC).
  - How do you think the fish felt about this?

**Jonah 2:10** ¶ So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry *land*.

# Application

---

## Big Questions

---

### What is my message about?

Can I know for sure?

### Why is it important?

The Lord assures us of His salvation and gives you confidence to be in his presence.

### What do I want them to do?

Believe in Jesus Christ  
Life out eternal life  
Live with boldness and confidence.

### What is the single most persuasive idea?

The One who is in you is greater than the one in the world

