

Lessons on Repentance

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Date: 08 March 2020

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[0 : 00] Please turn in your Bible to the book of Jonah, chapter 3. This morning's sermon is the fifth part in our sermon series in this short but powerful Old Testament book.

! While you're turning there, I want to ask you a question. What comes to mind when you think of the word repentance?

What comes to mind? No doubt some of you may be thinking about your own repentance when you came to faith, when you turned from sin and trusted in Jesus Christ.

Or maybe you're thinking about the definition of repentance. Or maybe you're thinking about repentance in some other way. But however you're thinking about repentance this morning, in this third chapter of Jonah, we come face to face with three acts of repentance.

Three acts of repentance that teach us about this subject of repentance. And I believe that this subject is relevant to every single one of us in this room this morning.

[1 : 16] So I encourage us to posture our hearts to hear and to heed what God would say to us from this third chapter of the book of Jonah. So please follow along as I read, beginning in verse 1.

I'm reading from the English Standard Version. Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.

So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breath.

Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey, and he called out, Yet 40 days, and Nineveh will be overthrown. And the people of Nineveh believed God.

They called for a fast. And put on sackcloth. From the greatest of them to the least of them. The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

[2 : 49] And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh. By the decree of the king and his nobles, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything.

Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. And let them call out mightily to God.

Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger so that we may not perish.

God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way. God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them.

And he did not do it. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word and we thank you for the privilege that we have to sit under the preaching of it.

[4 : 06] Would you speak to our hearts? Would you watch over your word and its application in our lives? Would you use your word, Lord, to build this local church for the glory of your great name?

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. For those of you who were here last week, we recall that the sermon was on Jonah chapter 2.

And in Jonah chapter 2, we considered God's mercy that Jonah experienced in the depths of the ocean and in the belly of the fish. While Jonah was sinking to certain death in the ocean, he cried out to God.

And God had mercy on Jonah and God appointed a fish to rescue Jonah from his watery grave.

And in the belly of the fish, Jonah prayed a prayer of thanksgiving to God and recounted how God extended mercy to him and rescued him.

And now we come to chapter 3. Chapter 2 was about mercy and in a nutshell, in one word, chapter 3 is about repentance.

[5 : 30] And here's the overarching point I want us to see this morning as we consider chapter 3. God's mercy is extended and intended to bring us to repentance.

God doesn't give us mercy because we are special. He gives his mercy to bring us to repentance. We should never forget that. And here in chapter 3, we have three examples of repentance that bear this truth out.

That God's mercy is given to us to bring us to repentance. And they are, number one, Nineveh's repentance, number two, God's repentance, and number three, Jonah's repentance.

Now, the way they occur in chapter 3 is not in this exact order. Jonah's repentance is recorded first. But I want to cover Jonah's repentance last because Jonah's repentance is a bit complex.

[6 : 33] And I think you'll see that when we consider it. So I want us to consider these three acts of repentance and I want us to consider the lessons that we can learn from each one.

So first, let's consider the repentance of Nineveh, Nineveh's repentance. We read in verse 4 of chapter 3 that Jonah began to go into the city a day's journey and he called out, yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be destroyed.

Now, I think you know that Jonah didn't just walk through this huge city and that's all he said. We don't believe he'd said that once.

We don't believe that he said that in a repetitive kind of way. I believe this is part of what he said, no doubt, but the summary of what he said. But we know that Jonah had more to say to them. And one of the ways that we know that is that the people of Nineveh could not have understood what Jonah was talking about if that's all that he said.

If all Jonah said was you're going to be destroyed in 40 days, that could be from an enemy, that could be from an army, that could be from some calamity, it could be from any number of things.

But what we see in verse 5 is that the people of Nineveh believed God.

[7 : 58] they believed God so Jonah had to tell them this is a message from God. And Jonah had to be persuasive enough for them to truly believe that this is a message from God to respond as they did.

I want you to think about that. Imagine if somebody just comes and we're already seeing it. I mean, it is amazing to me that people are out there and they're saying things like, I prophesy the coronavirus is coming to the Bahamas.

Come on. That's not a prophecy. So we ignore people like that. We ignore them.

We ignore people who get on the front of some story and try to say, oh yeah, this is going to happen. No, get on the back of the story before the story happens and tell us, thus says the Lord. And prove yourself then to be one speaking for God.

So Jonah said more than these words that we find in quotation coming from him in verse four.

[9 : 17] He had to tell them in some way that God was addressing them and God was going to bring judgment upon them.

We know that much because they understood what Jonah was saying to be from God. And what we see is they responded.

They responded. We see in verse five, the people believed God, they called the fast, they put on sackcloth from the greatest of them to the least of them.

And sackcloth was a heavy garment, usually of goat's skin, goat's hair, sorry. And in the ancient world, they wore it to show that they were repentant, to show that they were humble, to show that they were expressing grief.

And that's what Nineveh did. the whole city believed God and they responded in this way of showing penitence, of showing grief over what they had heard.

[10 : 34] They took it to heart. In verses six through nine, we have the detailed account of Nineveh's repentance.

The king himself repented. And I think you know the kings in those days, no different from kings today, they are generally proud and arrogant and they don't show any sign of weakness and there's a different standard for them and a different standard for the people.

They expect the people to do certain things but they themselves don't do it but not so with this king. We're told in verse six, he removed his royal robes. He covered himself with sackcloth and he sat in ashes.

You see in verse seven, the king and his nobles issued a decree that neither man nor beast herd nor flock should taste anything, not even water.

I mean, this was no Daniel fast. This was a total fast, not even water. It was just radical repentance. [11:39] fast. But what we see is beyond the people doing this outward expression of fasting, we see that they did two critical things.

They did two other things. We see that they first called out to God mightily. We see this in verse eight. They called out to God mightily.

In other words, they were not just saying we're fasting, they were also praying. And I heard it said that if you say you're fasting and you're not praying, you're really not fasting, you're just on a hunger strike.

But they were fasting and they were praying. And second, they were told to turn from their evil ways and from their violent ways.

And they, by doing so, demonstrated repentance. So what are the lessons we can learn from Nineveh's repentance? I think the first lesson we can learn is that repentance starts with believing God's word.

[12:57] Repentance starts with believing God's word. Brothers and sisters, there can be no repentance. There can be no true repentance if it does not start with believing God's word.

As I look on social media quite a bit, I mean, there are all kinds of pseudo-biblical, pseudo-spiritual things being spread about. You can see someone swearing, using God's name in one post, and the very next post putting up something that shows that they are near to God and they love God and all the other things.

No. Repentance, true repentance, begins with believing God's word. But how easy it is for us to hear or read God's word.

He instructs us, he warns us, and yet we ignore what God says to us. And if we ignore it, we have no hope of genuine repentance, no hope of experiencing that.

But if we heed it the way Nineveh heeded God's word, then we would be well on our way to experiencing genuine repentance. Genuine repentance starts with believing God's word.

[14:20] The second lesson we can learn from Nineveh's repentance is true repentance results in acting on God's word. It's not just enough to believe it. As a matter of fact, the evidence of belief is action.

The evidence that we believe something is we act upon it. If somebody says to you that they deposited a thousand dollars into your bank account, if you don't go to check that, you're not giving any evidence that you actually believe that.

If that just goes through one ear and out of the next, then there's no real indication that you truly believe that. True repentance results from acting on God's word.

We have to act upon the word. That's what Nineveh did. Nineveh took seriously the prophetic message from God's word through Jonah about the impending destruction and they dramatically humbled themselves, dramatically turned from their wicked ways, from the violence in their hands. Just imagine visiting Nineveh in that day and just seeing the entire city, everyone coming to a pause and humbling themselves in sackcloth and ashes and crying out to God to have mercy on them.

[15:49] what a powerful sight that must have been to see that. You know what, if there's any hope for our nation and any hope for the nations of the world, we must similarly repent on a national scale.

Because no amount of human wisdom, no amount of laws, no amount of financial resources will arrest the widespread decay and the mountainous problems that we face in our nations.

But speaking about our own experience, instead of doing that, more and more, we're turning our backs towards the Lord, rejecting His word, disobeying His word.

And yet Psalm 33, 12 is still true, blesses the nation whose God is the Lord. And so the best prayer that we can pray for our nation is that God would grant us widespread repentance that we can deem national repentance.

But also from Nineveh's repentance, we can also learn that it is God's mercy that brings us to repentance. It's God's mercy.

[17:09] And this is something that we can easily overlook. Sometimes we think it's the wisdom of people or the goodness of people, they're better than this one, wiser than that one, and so they repent and turn from sin.

No. It is the mercy of God that brings us to repentance. Think about Nineveh again. Why would God say, in 40 days I'm going to destroy Nineveh?

Why would He say that? Why wouldn't He just destroy them? Why would He give advance warning and notice to them that He was going to destroy them?

And the reason is that even in the midst of judgment, God extends mercy. And that's what He was doing for Nineveh. He is extending to them mercy to bring them to repentance, to give them time to repent.

And this is a lesson for us. God is patient, God is merciful, God is kind. You think of Nineveh.

[18:18] Nineveh's sin, I mean, all the nations of the world sinned, but Nineveh's sin had gotten to such a place that it was prominent before the Lord. We read in verse 2 that the sin of Nineveh had come up to the Lord.

And yet, God didn't destroy them right away. He sent a messenger to them in the person of Jonah and gave them warning because his intent was to show them mercy.

The people of Nineveh did not count God's warning of judgment as slackness, as some of us do, and as scripture warns us about. But they took it seriously, and so must we.

The writer to the Hebrews writes, he starts his letter in chapter 1, verse 1 in this way. Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son.

Brothers and sisters, God is speaking to us by his son through his word, through his eternal word that he has preserved for us, even in the book of Jonah.

[19:41] He is speaking to us. Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 12, verse 41, he said to them, the men of Nineveh, referring to this account, the men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here, pointing to himself.

Again, Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. How much more should we repent? Those of us who are being addressed by God through his son in his word and calling us to repent, calling us to put away sin from our hands, put away high-handed sin from our hands, put away sin from our lives, and turn to the Lord.

The words of Jesus to the Pharisees would be the words to us as well. If they stood condemned because they were not hearing Jesus, we would be condemned as well for not hearing Jesus in the words of Scripture.

When I say that, I'm just talking about in the red words, because all the words of Scripture, whether they're red or black, they are God's word, and we need to hear them all.

Well, that's Nineveh's act of repentance, and some of the lessons we can learn from it. Let's now consider the second, God's repentance. Look at verse 10. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented from the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

[21:48] I'm sure that some of you who have modern translations like the English Standard Version, or the New International Version, or the New American Standard Bible, or the New King James Version, you're probably wondering why I'm referring to God's repentance when your translation would say that God relented.

He doesn't use the word repent. But if you have an older translation like the King James Version or the Revised Standard Version, you would not find that strange because your Bible actually says that God repented.

But whatever version you have this morning, whether an older one or a new one, the big issue is that God did not carry out what he told Jonah that he would do to Nineveh.

He didn't carry it out. And it raises a big question concerning God and whether God changes his mind about things, whether, you know, God is like us sometimes.

I'm sure we've all had a change of heart about things. We all used to believe something one way and then we become persuaded another way and we change our minds. And you've probably heard that it is human to do what?

[23:07] Change your mind. We do that. But the question is, does God do that? The question is, did God do that as it relates to Jonah in the way that we change our minds?

Now, this is a big question. And I hope in the next few minutes, if you don't see why it's a big question, that you will see that it is indeed a big question.

And in truth, we are getting into the deep end of the theological pool. And so we all need to put on our life vests so that we don't drown in this part of the pool.

And here's my intent. This is what I want you to think about. Imagine us, we're going to just stick our feet in the water. We're not going to swim here.

All right? I'm not going to try to swim here because those of you know, naturally I can't swim. And spiritually, I just can't swim in these waters. I have a better chance of swimming in natural waters than I can swim in these waters.

[24 : 12] but I want us to get some understanding of it that would be sufficient for us to appreciate what happened here in this account.

So let me try to set it up by reading a particular scripture from Romans chapter 11 verses 33 through 36.

36. And the apostle Paul writes these words after he is expounded upon the truth that God in his wisdom will make one people out of Jews and Gentiles, making them one spiritual family.

And in response to all of that, which I read it and I don't fully understand every single detail of it, but here's what Paul writes in response to that. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways. Inscrutable means impossible to understand or interpret. For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor, or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?

[25 : 30] For from him and through him and to him are all things. to him be glory forever. Amen.

So here's some preliminary thoughts before we directly look at verse 10. Based on my reading of scripture, and I trust you would agree with this as well as your reading of scripture, everything in the future is fully settled and fully fixed foreknown by God and predestined by God.

Everything. The future is not open. God is not waiting to see what's going to happen tomorrow. God is not waiting to see what decision I'm going to make tomorrow to know what move he's going to take or not take.

He's not waiting to see what the nations of the earth will do to decide what he is going to do. No, it is all known, foreknown, predestined by him, the sovereign God over his universe.

There is not one single iota or detail that is outside of his sovereign rule and his sovereign predetermination.

[26 : 56] Now, that does not mean that God is the author of evil. evil is laid squarely of the foot or the feet of the evildoers, not God.

And so, here's a very good example, one of the best examples in scripture that helps us to see these two particular tensions. It's a story of Joseph.

Most of us know that Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. And in Genesis 45, three times, Joseph says to his brothers, who sold him into slavery, he says, God sent me ahead of you into Egypt to preserve life.

He's saying to them, ultimately, it is God who sent me into Egypt. Now, was he exonerating his brothers for their evil? No, he was not.

They committed evil and they are going to be accountable for that evil. But Joseph saw beyond them, he saw beyond their evil acts, and he was recognizing God's sovereignty in the midst of those evil acts, and that God was the one who sent him into Egypt to preserve life for their clan.

[28 : 20] Now, let me lean on three smart theologians to try to bring understanding to verse 10.

The first one is Richard Phillips, and here's what he says about Jonas 3 and 10. He writes, God accommodates his word to our mode of understanding.

Just as the Bible describes human physicality to God, speaking of the hand of the Lord, God, or the heirs of the Lord, so also does scripture ascribe human reasoning to God when it speaks of him repenting.

So the point is that although God is spirit, what we read in scripture is when God is obviously accommodating himself to us, we see things like that God has hands, but we know he doesn't have hands because he is spirit, or that he is heirs, but we know he doesn't have physical heirs because he also is spirit.

And so the point is the same here, that in helping us to understand this situation, accommodating words are used for us to be able to grasp it.

[29 : 39] God does not change his mind as we change our mind because he doesn't have a mind like our minds. The second theologian is John Mackey, and he further explains this when he writes, when God said, when God is said to change his mind, matters are viewed from our human

perspective.

It appears to us that there has been a change in God, but what in fact changed is our human conduct. And then finally, Hugh Martin explains it this way.

It was wicked, violent, unrighteous, atheistical, proud, luxurious, Nineveh, which God had threatened to destroy.

A city sitting in sackcloth and ashes, humbled in the depths of self-abasement, and appealing as lowly suppliants to his commiseration, a Nineveh like that, that Nineveh, he had never threatened. That Nineveh, he visited not with ruin. He never said he would. I think that's a very helpful quote, that the warning of judgment that was sent, was sent to an unrepentant Nineveh versus a repentant Nineveh, and hence the result that God decided not to destroy Nineveh, but not out of some surprise to say, oh my goodness, they repented, let me change my mind, not in that way at all.

[31 : 36] Well, that's sticking our feet in the deep pool of the sovereignty of God. Now, let me just say this, in case you wonder, what's the big deal here?

I'll tell you what the big deal is. The big deal is that God is what we call immutable. He doesn't change. God is sovereign, meaning that he is in absolute and in total control.

And the reason that we have to believe that God is immutable and God is sovereign in order to be able to serve him is that if God was not immutable and God did change, we really can't trust this word.

Because he may change. if God was a God who changed, we could not have total faith that if we turned to him in repentance, that he would forgive us.

Because he may change his mind. But he doesn't change. And therefore we can trust him, we can trust him when we go to bed tonight, we will wake up in the morning, and the God who was will be the God who is, and who always will be.

[32 : 58] And when we tell people about God and who he is, they can take it to the bank, they can rely on it, there's no change in it. And then we have to believe that God is sovereign and in control of every single thing, because if God is not sovereign and in control of every single thing, then there would be uncertainties in the world, there would be unpredictabilities in the world, there would be things that would be a surprise to God, and we couldn't trust him to care for us.

And so whatever we understand from verse 10, what we must not come away believing is that somehow there are these unknown variables that are outside of God's knowing and God's determining and God's power, and that would be contrary to scripture.

scripture. One of the ways that we are called to interpret scripture is to recognize that there's no contradiction in scripture. And so you never allow an isolated passage to interpret a broader truth of scripture that is certainly confirmed and repeated elsewhere in scripture.

So what we do is we try to make sure that when there's a particular scripture that seems to go against the witness of scripture, we immediately know, okay, that clearly has to conform to the rest of what scripture teaches.

And this is why verse 10 in Jonah chapter 3 is so important, that we understand what God did not do, that he didn't change, because he cannot change.

[34 : 42] change. And because he cannot change, we can truly trust him, we can truly put our faith in him. We can go to bed and wake up and it's not going to change.

And to that we should say amen. We should say amen to that. That our hope is fixed in a God who cannot and therefore will not change.

change. And so we can truly trust him, we can truly serve him. So what are the lessons we can learn from God's act of repentance towards repentant Nineveh?

one important lesson is that in the midst of judgment, God extends mercy. And as we said before, God's mercy is extended to bring us to repentance.

And while this is a general word to all of us this morning, I have no doubt that for some of us is a specific word as well. It is a specific word to some of us this morning that God is reminding us of the reason that he gives us mercy, the reason that he is patient with us in our sin, the reason he is patient with us in our rebellion is to bring us to repentance, not because we're special.

[36 : 19] he wants to bring us to repentance, and we need to hear that, we need to heed that. Well, having considered Nineveh's repentance and God's repentance, let's finally consider Jonah's repentance.

As I mentioned before, Jonah's repentance is a bit complex. We see in Jonah chapter two, in verse nine, Jonah makes two statements that point to his repentance.

First, he says, in verse nine, the latter part, when I have vowed, I will repay. And second, he says, salvation belongs to the Lord.

In other words, Jonah's circumstances brought him to a place to make a vow to God. Perhaps he said, Lord, if you bring me out of this, if you just somehow rescue me, I will obey what you say to me.

I'll go to Nineveh, I'll preach to them. And then he says, salvation is of the Lord, and he is recognizing that God is the one who determines who he gives the salvation to, not Jonah, not the Israelites.

[37 : 44] Salvation is of the Lord, so God can give it to whomever he chooses to give it to. And so Jonah, it seems like he came to this place of conviction, he came to believing that, yeah, I'm going to obey now, and also salvation belongs to the Lord, he can give it to whoever he wants to give it to.

Even wicked Ninevites, who he and the Israelites hated. And so it's not surprising that when God speaks in the second time, we see in verse 2 of chapter 3, arise and go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it in the message that I tell you, we see in verse 3, Jonah arises and he goes to Nineveh.

It's pretty interesting to compare the opening of the book of Jonah in chapter 1 to these words and it's almost as if God is doing the exact same thing, giving Jonah the exact second chance that he forfeited in the first instance in chapter 1.

And then we see that Jonah, he goes out and he begins to cry out in verse 4, yet 40 days, and Nineveh will be overthrown. Now again, we know that he said more than that in his message because the people somehow knew it was a message from God, so Jonah had to tell them that, they knew that, but this is the recorded extent of the message of Jonah and his ministry to Nineveh. So what are the lessons that we can learn from Jonah's repentance? I'll offer three of them. The first lesson that we learn about Jonah's repentance is a lesson that we've seen as it relates to Nineveh's and as relates to God's own, is that God extends mercy to bring us to repentance.

[39 : 59] That's what we see in Jonah. God gave him mercy in the ocean, in the belly of the fish that rescued him, and it was to bring Jonah to this place of repentance, this obedience that we now see that he carries out.

The second lesson is that repentance produces fruit. Jonah said he would pay what he vowed, and we see him going to Nineveh, we see him, instead of running, he now goes, he obeys, and he proclaims the message that God told him to proclaim from the beginning.

I think the same is true for us. There's no repentance if there's no change. We're fooling ourselves if we say we repent and we don't see evidence of change.

we can work it from the opposite end, and rather than saying I repent, we can be asking ourselves, have I repented based on evidence of change?

But there's a third lesson on repentance that we can learn from Jonah. It is a sobering and sad but true lesson about repentance.

[41 : 30] And it's not just true for Jonah, it's true for us as well. And the sad and sobering lesson is that not all repentance is full repentance.

Or to put it another way, not all outward demonstrations of repentance are motivated by godly sorrow. The Bible says that godly sorrow produces a repentance that we don't change our mind about, we don't turn our backs on.

Sometimes our sorrow is circumstantial. We're sorry, not so much for our sin, but we're sorry because we may have gotten caught, or the pain that it brought to us, or the pain that it brings to others.

And so while Jonah obeyed and he went to Nineveh and he preached as commanded, Jonah's reaction in verse one of chapter four tells us that he didn't fully repent.

Because when Nineveh repented and God relented, Jonah was angry. Jonah still didn't believe the Ninevites deserved the mercy that God gave to him.

[42 : 45] Jonah still did not really believe that salvation is of the Lord. Jonah did not fully repent.

His actions, his response, his reaction to God's forgiveness of Nineveh and not judging them as he said he would, Jonah's reaction to that shows that at best, his repentance was incomplete.

But I think we can identify with Jonah. I can certainly identify with Jonah. There have been times in my life when in particular moments when I would repent.

And I would think I fully repented. And later on, days later perhaps, I look back on my repentance and look back on where I am and realize my repentance didn't go that deep.

My repentance really was not lasting. didn't genuinely repent. Didn't fully repent. Maybe you can identify with that.

[44 : 11] Maybe you can identify with how you have seen incomplete repentance in your own life. But we shouldn't despair because of that.

We really should not despair because of that. you know it's interesting. You think God was surprised of what Jonah did? You think God was surprised that Jonah was upset when he relented and did not destroy Nineveh?

He wasn't surprised. And yet he still gave Jonah mercy in the depths of the ocean and the belly of the fish.

An all-knowing, all-wise, all-sovereign God gave mercy to this man whose repentance was not complete.

And that's good news. You know, here's where that's good news. That's good news because even our best act of repentance is not complete. Do you realize that none of us can perfectly repent?

[45 : 35] None of us. If making heaven required perfect repentance, hell will be populated with every single person who was ever born.

God is our only hope is Jesus Christ. Our only hope is the perfection that is found in Jesus Christ that makes us accepted before a holy God.

And God gave mercy to Jonah for the same reason he'll give mercy for us, to us. mercy on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not because he sees perfect repentance because it absolutely is not there. And so I pray this morning that Jonah's experience and our own experience with incomplete repentance will help us to cry out to God more, throwing ourselves on his mercy, thanking him for a perfect savior.

Who's the only reason that sinners like us could be accepted before God. And this doesn't mean that we don't make genuine and sincere effort to repent with even more depth.

[47 : 03] No, we still continue to do this. As a matter of fact, the evidence of belonging to Christ, the evidence that true salvation is working in our hearts is that we have ongoing repentance in our lives.

The Christian life is a life of repentance. But we should never for one minute think that we will ever come to perfect repentance in this life, in and of ourselves.

We cannot and we therefore will not. And what that should do is not cause us to commiserate and look at ourselves and say, woe is me, no, it should cause us to look to a Savior who is perfect.

A Savior who has lived the life that we could never live and who died the death that our imperfect repentance deserves.

And God can accept us and he can receive us and count us holy in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ.

And so I pray for us today that we would consider this and we would, instead of looking at Jonah, looking at ourselves, let us look at our Savior and let us thank God for a perfect Savior whose merit he credits to us.

[48 : 30] And that is our only hope, brothers and sisters. it is our only hope before a holy God. And may that drive us to repent even more.

May that drive us to turn away from sin even more, even as we look at our Savior. And we don't think for one minute that we can do what only he has done.

And he will do in our lives. Well, next Sunday, the Lord willing, we will consider the final sermon in the book of Jonah.

We will consider Jonah's anger, which we call misplaced anger. Let's pray. Oh, Father, we are so grateful that acceptance before you is not based on perfect repentance because it is something that none of us can ever do on our own and in and of ourselves.

We thank you for sending Jesus Christ, your holy and perfect Son who came to this earth and lived a life that's perfect in your sight that none of us could ever live.

[50 : 06] But you have credited to the account of all who put faith in you. And we thank you, Lord, that he also died a substitutionary death, the death that we all deserve to die.

he took our place so that we might be accepted and forgiven by you.

Lord, may this be the anthem of our hearts, be the cry of our souls, that our great Savior is mighty to save, mighty to save us even when our repentance like Jonah's is incomplete.
Father, would you so work in our hearts to cause us to look to the Savior even as we experience greater depths of repentance?
We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.