

HOPE WINS PT. 3
REBOUNTING HOPE: HOW TO GO FROM
A BREAKDOWN TO A BREAKTHROUGH
4/26/2020

Jonah 2:1-3:2

I. **Welcome everyone.** Again, I want to tell you how much I am looking forward to seeing you again. I spent time this morning getting ready for the sermon, imagining as many of you as I could sitting out there, setting you up in my mind so I could preach to you. Saying, "I bless you... Pat, Vanessa, I bless you Larry, Virginia, Mike..."

A. Our focus in this series is best described in Romans 15:13: "*Now may the God of hope fill you with joy and peace by trusting in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*" This is what God's desire for this season... to pour in gallons of hope. If you get enough hope you will rise to the top again, no matter how far you get pushed down.

1. I'm wanting to get your vision on God's goodness: To get you to position your heart to grasp hope. In times like this you have to intentionally choose a different point of view to grasp hope. I like the example of the story I heard:

A kid was playing baseball by himself in his backyard. His mom was looking out the window. He yells to his mom, "I am the greatest hitter in the world." He throws the ball up and swings his bat. He says, "Strike one". He wasn't discouraged and picks up the ball. Throws it up and swings. "Strike two". His mom looks at him. He says, "Mom, it's ok I am the greatest hitter in the world." He throws the ball up again and this time swings so hard he falls on the ground. His mom is feeling badly for him; the greatest hitter in the world just struck out. She says, "I am so sorry." The boy says, "Don't be sorry; it's ok. I've discovered something. I just struck out the greatest hitter in the world. I am the greatest pitcher in the world!"

2. When we say "hope wins" we are saying that our level of hope will determine our level of victory. A person with enough hope becomes like the punching balloon I had as a little boy. I think it was Yogi Bear and he had sand in the bottom. So, when you punched him down, he just popped back up again.

I read a great quote this week by Dr. Martin Luther King. He said, "IF WE HAVE INFINITE HOPE, WE CAN HANDLE ANY FINITE DISAPPOINTMENT!"

Last week, we walked over to my granddaughter Laynie's house shortly before her 5th birthday. I could see her face looked bruised. I asked her,

“What happened?” She told me, “It’s Ok, Papa. I face planted over there on the ditch, but I got up and I’m better now.” I love that because some of you have gone through a “face planting” recently, but God is going to help you get up and be better.

- B. In the last couple of weeks, we talked about eternal hope and resilient hope. Today I want to talk about *rebounding hope*: How to find hope in times of failure. I believe the time we may need hope the most is when we feel like we deserve it the least. The fact is that we all fail. James said it pretty simply (James 3:2), “*We all stumble in many ways.*” I like what one person said, “If I could kick the person in the pants who’s caused me the most trouble, I wouldn’t be able to walk for a week.”

The question isn’t if we fall but what we do when we fall? Will we get stuck; will we drown in shame or blame? Will we let ourselves get bound or will we REBOUND?

1. I really feel burdened to share this message with you today because the truths I’m going to share have really been life and death kinds of truths for me. I can honestly say, I feel like I have a PHD in failure. I’ve failed in so many ways, so many times. I’ve chickened out on God. As I’ve shared, not many of you have discouraged your wife to the point I did early in my marriage when she shared with me, “I don’t believe in divorce but I’m praying for one of us to die preferably you.” I’ve failed financially, emotionally, had failures as a dad, a pastor.

Some of you may want to turn off the message right now, thinking this guy is messed up, but some of you are saying “me too”. If so, please listen on because I can also tell you that it has been in times of failure that I’ve experienced what Mother Teresa called, “the kiss of Jesus”. That is what the Prodigal received from his Father in his time of failure. Most of God’s deepest work in my life has been from those experiences- that is where I’ve discovered grace. I have discovered that one ounce of grace can produce in you a million gallons of hope.

2. The Bible says in Proverbs 24:16, “*for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.*”

What I want us to see is that victory in life is not about never missing; it is all about REBOUNDING. Victorious people don’t fail less; they rebound better. I will never forget a championship basketball game between N. Carolina State with Jimmy Valvano and the Houston Cougars with Hakeem and “Clyde the Glide” Drexler. The Cougars were winning with just seconds left when Dereck Whittenburg from N. Carolina State shoots a 30-foot “desperation” shot. It should’ve been over but N. Carolina’s Lorenzo Charles rebounds and dunks it. NCS wins.

What a picture of life! It isn't the one who shoots the best but the ones who rebound the best that win. I found in marriage, it is not just about what you do; it's about what you REDO until you get it right that makes a marriage successful.

- C. One of the important lessons I believe the Lord is speaking to us in this time of crisis is to consider our reaction to things. In normal times, it's easy to think about our actions. It's a lot harder in a time of crisis, since there is so much uncertainty about what to do. I believe it is during these times, the Lord wants us to give special attention to our reactions. **It's not only important to learn to act like a Christian; it is important to learn to react as a Christian.**

I keep telling the Lord, I want things to go faster and further; He keeps telling me I want you to go deeper and stronger. Crises reveal things. Those things are often revealed as reactions: anger, impatience, hopelessness, and despair.

Viktor Frankl, a Nazi concentration camp survivor spoke of one of the most important lessons he discovered that helped him overcome in a time of bitter crisis. He said he discovered that the last great human freedom is the ability to choose how you will respond in any given situation.

Victory will come, hope will win in any situation including failure, if we learn to respond God's way. Today, we will look at a story during a crisis. It's a story of a man who failed in a really big way, but rebounded in an even bigger way. The story is of a man named Jonah who ran as fast as he could in disobedience to God, and ended up on a journey into the belly of a whale to rise to lead one of the greatest revivals in history, where an entire huge city gets saved just a few days later.

This has sometimes been called the story of the big fish, but it is really the story of our Big God. He shows this prophet and all of us how in time of our biggest failure He is able to give a hope that wins. This hope is from the fact that He can redeem even our worst mistakes, and biggest regrets. He can take our biggest messes and blunders and turn them around. He can restore the years the "locust have eaten". He can turn fertilizer into flowers.

I love this quote from Dutch Sheets: "When we have spoiled his plan for us by our folly or ignorance, He has another waiting for us. Every day is a fresh beginning, and the future is radiant with another chance through Him. His imperial voice will bid the dead hopes of yesterday to rise in newness of life and fill the latter days with glorious achievement."

In fact, his hope can resurrect us from the deepest grave that we or others have dug for us. This is exactly what happened with George Frideric Handel. He had been one of the most famous composers in England. As he got older, he had one failed composition after another. He fell into depression. His hands got a bad case

of the palsy that crippled some of his fingers. Frederick the Great wrote of him, “His great days are over, his inspiration is exhausted.” Others said he was a relic and an old fogey. But then a friend, Charles Jennens sent him a letter with a word for word collection of biblical texts about Christ. Life was breathed into Handel, and on August 22, 1741 he began composing words of inspiration. Twenty-three days later after working non-stop, the world had the *Messiah*. On March 23rd an enormous crowd came to hear it perform. King George II was so moved during the Hallelujah Chorus, he rose to his feet; something people have been doing ever since.

- II. **Jonah’s failure story** is pretty familiar to most. Jonah was a prophet of Northern tribes of Israel around 745 BC right after Elisha. The arch enemies of Israel were the Assyrians who would actually invade and destroy Israel. Their capital city was Nineveh which had hundreds of thousands of people. God calls Jonah to go preach to them and warn them that judgment was coming in 40 days unless they repented. Jonah responds by disobeying and getting on a boat going the opposite direction.

The writer of the book of Jonah in a clever way shows that when Jonah runs from God he goes nowhere. Over and over he uses the word “*down*.” Jonah goes *down* to the seashore, *down* to the bottom of the ship, *down* into the water, and *down* into the belly of the whale.

- A. We can criticize Jonah but we’ve all done this: refused to get involved when God called us, held onto our resentments... You see the Assyrians were despicable people and had done awful things. Jonah felt justified in his grudge. We’ve all kicked God out of the driver’s seat of our lives and taken over in some way.
- B. What is so powerful in the story is that in all of Jonah’s pathetic story, God in mercy and power was unfolding a bigger story, a story that neither Jonah or the guys who threw him over the boat could see. It was a story of compassion. God was going to put Jonah in quarantine in the belly of a whale for three days. You think you feel stuck by a “stay at home order”, imagine Jonah. You think your ventilation and food are bad, think of whale breath and whale vomit.

God has a bigger plan.

Here is one of the reasons that we have hope. Even when we mess up our plans, God still has a plan. Even when everything in our world seems out of control, God is in control. Unlike people in the world who believe that history is circular, things all just repeat in a meaningless circle of futility, we know that history is linear. It is moving to a place and destiny that God is in control. God is in control and no one can thwart His plan. We don’t believe in accidents; we believe in *providence*. We don’t believe in fate but *faith*. One of the things you can be absolutely sure of is that God is taking us some place, and that place is good. If we don’t see the good then we don’t see where we’re going but it is good just the same.

I love Romans 8:28 in the Passion Translation. *“So we are convinced that every detail of our lives is continually woven together to fit into God’s perfect plan of bringing good into our lives, for we are his lovers who have been called to fulfill his designed purpose.”*

This good would include transforming Jonah’s heart, saving a city, and giving a story that would illustrate the gospel for the rest of the time. This story is part of the bigger story of God who would send the perfect Jonah, his only Son who would be buried for 3 days and rise to give us all eternal life.

I am reminded of the story of a famous painter. He walks into a restaurant about the time another guy spills his coffee all over a freshly white painted wall. The painter says, “This is perfect”, goes to his car, gets his paints and begins to work the ugly coffee stains into a beautiful painting of the local landscape. A lot of us have a lot of ugly coffee-stains. But God...is the Redeemer, Restorer, reclamer, healer...

III. **How Jonah received rebounding hope to go from his biggest breakdown to his greatest breakthrough.**

A. **He chose the place of failure to let it be a place to grow and change.**

The first step to rebound is to see failure not as something to hate ourselves for, not something to cover up, but something to learn from. Choose to reflect instead of react.

“Failure is the opportunity to start over more intelligently.”

When a reporter asked Thomas Edison, "How did it feel to fail 1,000 times?" He replied, "I didn't fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps."

Last week I tried to do a Zoom group with my siblings. We had an hour to spend together. After 45 minutes we were still just trying to get everyone on the call. By the time everyone was together, we muted, disconnected, were interrupted. We really only had about 10 minutes. We didn’t fail; we took 45 steps towards getting this right.

I think it is interesting what John Maxwell says about the areas of our lives we need change. **There are three times we change:**

- When we hurt so bad, we feel we have to.
- We learn enough, we want to.
- We receive enough, we are able to.

These hard knocks of failure are the wake-up calls to strategic changes.

When my marriage fell apart, I learned that I was doing ministry for wrong reasons, for self-validation and not really to help others.

When I fell off of a mountain, I was being presumptuous in expecting God to rescue me and not listening enough in decisions I made.

When I chickened out of doing some hard things, I discovered that I had let a spirit of fear come into my life that God wanted to deliver me from.

When I went through a financial setback, I had been careless about setting a budget.

- B. **The secondly, we rebound from failure when we humble ourselves.** We learn over and over that hope comes to the humble. People who don't rebound from failures are bound in a need to control things, justify themselves, and appear to other people to be someone who is right and has it altogether. The Bible says pride goes before a fall (Prov 16:18). It is also what keeps us from getting up when we fall.

Jonah chapter 2:1-9 is an incredible example of a prayer of humility.

Let me just say, if we are going to press through and bounce back in this crisis, it is going to take humility, admitting how much we need God, how much we need each other, admitting all of the ways we've been trusting in our ability and understanding. How many people do you know who never get up because they can't cry "uncle"? They won't surrender, let go and let God.

Jonah in the prayer makes a profound statement in vs. 8, *"Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them."*

Idols are the things we look for to justify ourselves and prove our worth. They are things that replace God, things we trust in place of God. For Jonah, it was his case that because the Ninevites weren't worthy of saving, he was justified in not going.

We all allow idols, things that define us: reputation, success, a certain persona that we portray, our competence, our rights, opinions, the things we think make us special whether it is our money, looks, our achievements.

Many people in times like this, go back to their addictions: food, alcohol, opioid's, pornography. At the root of addictions is that we are looking to some idol to fill a need that only God can meet and wants to meet if we let Him. All the things we trust in cause us to forfeit God's mercy and the love and healing He wants to give us.

- C. **We rebound by graciously and worshipfully receiving God's grace and undeserved favor.** Jonah prays, *"But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.'* Vs. 9

I said earlier receiving one ounce of grace creates gallons of hope.

How do we receive grace?

1. Realizing that God's grace doesn't depend on our performance but His unconditional promise that He loves us, will redeem us and use our life based on what Jesus has done not we have done.

One of the reasons some people don't rebound from failure is because they can't forgive themselves. They feel covered with shame. Part of why Satan is able to keep people trapped is that to some degree, they are still depending on a works righteousness. They feel that the basis of their validation and reason for hoping good things to happen to them is in being a good person. Some are trying to convince themselves and others that they're really not that bad and swept their faults under the rug.

Our place and the promise of God to bless and use our lives doesn't depend on us. The fact is that grace is God's announcement that we not only fail but in ourselves we are far worse than we can ever imagine but far more loved than we could ever deserve. Because of our faith in Christ, God is ready to give to us and treat us with the favor that Jesus deserves. It is on the basis of what He has *done* that we can expect He will take the regrets of our life and turn them around.

He still has only one plan, plan "A". No matter how many detours we have taken, He can still reroute us back on track. Just because we missed our plane doesn't mean that he doesn't have another plane and even a better plane coming to take us to His divine destination.

I love what Ephesians 2:3-6 says... It describes our failures and an exhaustive case for what makes us unworthy in ourselves to expect God's love and favor. Then in vs. 4 it says, *"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raise us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."*

It's grace that takes ashes and turns them into beauty, a crown of shame into a crown of favor, fertilizer into flowers.

- D. **Finally, we rebound when we take the grace and hope we receive in our failure and become messengers of hope to others, who have experienced**

failure. I love Jonah 3:1-2. *“Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim the message I give you.”*

We are reminded that the moment we step into receiving the gift of grace, we can know that the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29)

The point is that grace makes us a debtor not to pay back God, but to give the same forgiveness, love, and kindness God has given us to others. What is amazing and we see over and over in Scripture and life is that God takes and uses our biggest failures as platforms to show the greatness of His grace to others. Who better to bring hope to someone who has been divorced than someone who has been divorced? Who better to share God’s grace with someone in an alcohol addiction than someone who has been there themselves?

I like what someone said, “People may be impressed with our success but they are able to relate and receive from us the most from the area of our failures.”

I have found that God has taken our biggest mistakes and turned them into some of the most important parts of our ministry. This is Talitha’s story... Talitha, at 19 was pregnant, and full of fear of the future. She had an abortion that resulted in one regretful decision after another. She lived with shame, and self-hate and wanted to end her life. In desperation she turned for help and joined an abortion support group where she was loved and learned of God’s unconditional love. They helped her turn the thing she regretted the most into incredible passion to help other women who have had similar stories. She has been serving such families for 19 years. (video testimony).

Conclusion: I know it is hard to believe but God has some of his greatest gifts for your life in the places of the greatest failures of your life. That is just how good God is. He wants you to rebound from the hurts, messes, backstabs, crashes, breakdowns of your life by giving you breakthroughs in all of those places. He wants you to see that place of failure as an opportunity to receive grace and make an incredible rebound in your life. **Would you respond like Jonah taught us?**

1. Tell God you are willing to learn what He wants you to learn. You are eager to reflect and see change come as a result of this experience.
2. Humble yourself. Admit that you have idols. Maybe that you’ve blamed others, covered up, or even hated yourself and have been unwilling to forgive yourself, because you have so much pride in how good you want to think you are. Admit that you’ve turned to addictions that have replaced God.
3. Receive His unconditional grace.
4. Offer that place of failure in your life for God to turn and use for good in others. Ask God to turn your mistakes into ministry, your breakdown into breakthroughs for others.