



We all need a SECOND CHANCE – some of us know it.

⁵⁴ Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. ⁵⁵ And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. ⁵⁶ But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. ⁵⁷ And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. ⁵⁸ And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. ⁵⁹ And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. ⁶⁰ And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, **Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice.** ⁶² And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:54-62)

I have often reminded all who will hear me that the Bible is a mirror to our souls. We see in it the absolute righteousness and justice of God on the one hand; and the absolute unworthiness and depravity of our own souls, on the other. If this circumstance were allowed to stand, we would all be doomed to the well-deserved fires of Hell. But our Lord is a God of second chances (and it is by no means by chance that we come to His Throne of Grace). He makes us into new creatures altogether when we are drawn to Him in faith. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* (2 Cor 5:17) I apologize if I burden you too often with the same scriptural quotes, but these are the salient points of grace and mercy to me. If you tire of them, then go out and write your own little devotion.

Do you see your own failure in that of the courageous Peter? He was no wimp, but a strong man of the sea – much like John Newton. But at the very moment of greatest trial, Peter failed miserably. And to make matters worse, the Lord turned and looked Peter squarely in the eyes at the moment of this horrendous failure. Peter went out and wept bitterly in shame and disgrace, hurt and misery. He wept for three long days until the Word came to his longing ears of the resurrection of His Lord. That made repentance possible. Unlike Judas, Peter did not go out and commit self-murder. He waited in sorrow and sadness and contrition. Then came that wonderful morning by the shores of Galilee! Every repentant sinner has his great morning by those blue-lined shores. The Angel of the Garden Tomb had told the women to go and tell the disciples, and to *"tell Peter"* of the Lord's resurrection. *"But go your way, tell his disciples **and Peter** that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."* (Mark 16:7) Do you wonder at this choice of words? The Lord was aware of Peter's failure and subsequent misery, so He sends word to Peter that he can be forgiven and restored from his betrayal on the night of the Lord's trial.

Do not look at me with those pious eyes thinking that you are better than Peter – you are not, and neither am I. Peter was always faithful until parted from the physical presence of the Lord, but afterwards had the Holy Ghost as his Guide and Compass. He never failed of courage again. We all have our “Peter Moments” do we not? We all have our “Jonah Moments” as well. We all – every one of us – have our “Moments of the Woman Taken in Adultery” for we all are just as surely that Woman as the one that the Lord forgave. We have all been caught red-handed in our sins and can utter not a word in our defense just as the Woman could not.

I am inspired by the lives and writings of many men and women, but I am only inspired by their words and examples insofar as those works point me to Christ. Among my heroes are Robert E. Lee; Bishop J.C. Ryle; Matthew Henry; Charles Pettit McIlvaine (2nd Bishop of Ohio & Chaplain of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point); a lonely Christian in Kenya; a widowed or deserted lady of small children; numerous clergy in our church; a fellow clergyman, businessman and soldier in California; an isolated Christian in Wisconsin; and a loyal staff; but these all have inspired my thoughts by their Christian lives and teachings. I am, as well, inspired by the great hymns of the Church – not because of their simple beauty of expression – but because these are filled with cardinal points of the Light of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am often bitterly disappointed at myself, however, in failing to live up to the Standard and Ensign the Lord has raised before my eyes and set before me on the Battle-line of Life. I have even been inspired by those that I once considered villains, but the change the Lord Jesus Christ has wrought in their lives has inspired me to know that God is able to change us – to make us over into new creatures – and to realize that this has been possible for me as well. I share the ground of the Rev. John Newton of England (author of Amazing Grace and hundreds of other great hymns) who wrote for his epitaph: *“John Newton, Clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.”* My friend and brother, Mr. Newton also penned this line as well in his declining years: *“My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour.”*



Like many of us, Jonah wasn't looking for a second or even third chance. God gave His Grace.

After considering Peter, I look to Jonah. Even JONAH inspires me! Jonah did not desire a second chance, but got one anyway. Jonah had a fine Conception of the Lord. *“I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.”* (Jonah 4:2) Jonah was like many modern Christians who possess an excellent knowledge of the Word, yet fail to act upon it. Jonah was a Bible scholar.

Jonah had learned the above character of God from Holy Writ:

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2. The Grace of God – *“The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth”* (Ex 34:6)
3. The Mercy of God – *“For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”* (Psalm 100:5)
4. God is slow to anger – *“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”* (Psalm 103:8)
5. God’s great kindness – *“Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.”* (Psalm 63:3 and 5) the Forgiveness of God – *“But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”* (Psalms 130:4)

6. Even in his rebellion, Jonah continued to know and preach the truth of God.

Jonah, once forced to accept a second chance, went to Nineveh – that wicked city – and preached precisely what the Lord told him to preach. How many preachers are doing that today fearing to offend society or the government – never condemning the cardinal sins of our day such as abortion-murder and homosexuality? What did Jonah do at Nineveh? *“Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days’ journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day’s journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”* (Jonah 3:2-4) Now this was not your average, politically-correct message was it? Moreover, these people had a reputation for being mean, but Jonah preached it because the Lord had told him to preach it – against the people, its government and its king. For my timid Baptist friends who believe in the so-called *“separation of church and state,”* allow me to say that such a devilish doctrine is neither in Holy Scripture nor the US Constitution. Yes, the state should not interfere with religion, but when religion stops interfering with the ungodly rule of despots, we are in great trouble.

Jonah was not ashamed to confess who he was and in whom he believed: *“I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.”* (Jonah 1:9) I wish every clergyman of the AOC was as courageous as Jonah – even in his rebellion.

Jonah, like Paul, paid his own way, even in his attempt to escape God. *“But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.”* (Jonah 1:3)

Jonah did not blame others for his failures. He admitted to the seaman what he had done and who he was – even in the face of certain death. Cranmer, Ridley, Hooker, and Hus come to mind, as well as the Maid of Orlean, Jean d’Arc – all martyrs to the faith once delivered.

Jonah knew how to pray when he got in over his head, and the waters of the Mediterranean Sea were definitely over his head. *“Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish’s belly, And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.”* (Jonah 2:1-2) Do we know when and how to pray?

Jonah took heed of the Words of the Lord when they came to him the second time. *“And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD.”* (Jonah 3:1-3) You may be smugly thinking, *“Silly man!”* but at least Jonah obeyed the Lord on the second reminder. How about you and me?