

The God of Another Chance

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Forward

The resounding message given to every person today that God is a God of another chance. The heart of God is love for us to give us another chance, and another, and another.

The grace of God enables those who have sinned to have another chance.

In this study, you will review well-known Bible characters that needed and received another chance. In most cases that took another chance that God offered them

Proverbs 24:16 they may trip seven times, but each time they will rise again. But one calamity is enough to lay the wicked low.

God warned Judah that turning to Egypt and other nations for military might be able to not save them. Only God could do that. They must wait for him in “quietness and trust.”

No amount of fast-talking or hasty activity could speed up God’s grand design. We have nothing to say to God but thank you. Salvation comes from God alone.

Because he has saved us, we can trust him and be peacefully confident that he will give us strength to face our difficulties. We should lay aside our busy care and endless effort and allow him to act.

Isaiah 30:15 The Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says, "Only in returning to me and waiting for me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength. But you would have none of it.

Another big difference between David and us is that while he sinned greatly, he did not sin repeatedly. He learned from his mistakes because he accepted the suffering they brought.

Often we don't seem to learn from our mistakes or the consequences that result from those mistakes. What changes would it take for God to find this kind of obedience in you?

When you have fallen short of the mark of a Christian believer, remember that when David sinner, he sincerely asked for forgiveness. There is no reason why you cannot do the same.

Samson's story teaches us that it is never too late to start over. However badly we may have failed in the past, today is not too late for us to put our complete trust in God.

Chapter 3

Some people simply drift through life. Their choices, when they can muster the will to choose, tend to follow the course of least resistance. Lot, Abram's nephew, was such a person.

While still young, Lot lost his father. Although this must have been hard on him, he was not left without strong role models in his grandfather Terah and his uncle Abram, who raised him.

Still, Lot did not develop their sense of purpose. Throughout his life he was so caught up in the present moment that he seemed incapable of seeing the consequences of his actions.

It is hard to imagine what his life would have been like without Abram's careful attention and God's intervention.

By the time Lot drifted out of the picture, his life had taken an ugly turn. He had so blended into the sinful culture of his day that he did not want to leave it.

His daughters committed incest with him. His drifting finally took him in a very specific direction—destruction.

Lot, however, is called "righteous" in the New Testament (2 Peter 2:7, 8). Ruth, a descendant of Moab, was an ancestor of Jesus, even though Moab was born as a result of Lot's incestuous relationship with one of his daughters.

Lot's story gives hope to us that God forgives and often brings about positive circumstances from evil.

What is the direction of your life? Are you headed toward God or away from him? If you're a drifter, the choice for God may seem difficult, but it is the one choice that puts all other choices in a different light.

true when the younger sibling is more successful than the older. The bonds of family loyalty can be strained to the breaking point.

When we first meet Miriam she is involved in one of history's most unusual baby-sitting jobs. She is watching her infant brother float on the Nile River in a waterproof cradle. Miriam's quick thinking allowed Moses to be raised by his own mother. Her protective superiority, reinforced by that event, must have been hard to give up as she watched her little brother rise to greatness.

Eventually Moses' choice of a wife gave Miriam an opportunity to criticize. It was natural for her insecurity to break out over this issue. With Moses married, Miriam was clearly no longer the most important woman in his life.

The real issue, however, was not the kind of woman Moses had married. It was the fact that he was now the most important man in Israel.

“Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? . . . Hasn't he also spoken through us?” No mention is made of Moses' response, but God had a quick answer for Miriam and Aaron.

Without denying their role in his plan, God clearly pointed out his special relationship with Moses. Miriam was stricken with leprosy, a deadly disease, as punishment for her insubordination. But Moses, true to his character, intervened for his sister so that God healed Miriam of her leprosy.

Before criticizing someone else, we need to pause long enough to discover our own motives. Failing to do this can bring disastrous results. What is often labeled “constructive criticism” may actually be destructive jealousy, since the easiest way to raise our own status is to bring someone else down.

Some people can't stay out of trouble. When conflict breaks out, they always manage to be nearby. Reaction is their favorite action. This was Moses.

He seemed drawn to what needed to be righted. Throughout his life, he was at his finest and his worst responding to the conflicts around him.

Even the burning bush experience was an illustration of his character. Having spotted the fire and seen that the bush did not burn, he had to investigate. Whether jumping into a fight to defend a Hebrew slave or trying to referee a struggle between two kinsmen, when Moses saw conflict, he reacted.

Over the years, however, an amazing thing happened to Moses' character. He didn't stop reacting, but rather learned to react correctly.

The kaleidoscopic action of each day of leading two million people in the desert was more than enough challenge for Moses' reacting ability. Much of the time he served as a buffer between God and the people.

At one moment he had to respond to God's anger at the people's stubbornness and forgetfulness. At another moment he had to react to the people's bickering and complaining. At still another moment he had to react to their unjustified attacks on his character.

Leadership often involves reaction. If we want to react with instincts consistent with God's will, we must develop habits of obedience to God. Consistent obedience to God is best developed in times of less stress. Then when stress comes, our natural reaction will be to obey God.

In our age of lowering moral standards, we find it almost impossible to believe that God would punish Moses for the one time he disobeyed outright. What we fail to see, however, is that God did not reject Moses; Moses simply disqualified himself to enter the Promised Land.

Their lands he took, their riches he robbed, their lives he controlled, but their idols he allowed them to worship, sometimes even worshipping them himself. Nebuchadnezzar's plan worked well, with one glaring exception.

When he conquered the little nation of Judah, he met a God who demanded *exclusive* worship—not just his share among many gods. In a sense, Nebuchadnezzar had always been able to rule the gods. This new God was different; this God dared to claim that he had made Nebuchadnezzar all that he was.

One of the great conquerors in history was himself conquered by his Creator.

The Bible allows us to note the ways in which God worked on Nebuchadnezzar. God allowed him victories, but he was accomplishing God's purposes.

God allowed him to deport the best young Jewish leaders as his palace servants, while placing close to him a young man named Daniel, who would change the king's life.

God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to attempt to kill three of his servants to teach the king that he did not really have power over life and death.

God warned him of the dangers in his pride, and then allowed Nebuchadnezzar to live through seven years of insanity before restoring him to the throne. God showed the king who was really in control!

These lessons are clear to us today because of our place in history. When our attention shifts to our own lives, we find ourselves unable to see how God is working.

But we do have the advantage of God's Word as our guide for today's challenges. We are commanded to obey God; we are also commanded to

Paul was very religious. His training under Gamaliel was the finest available. His intentions and efforts were sincere. He was a good Pharisee, who knew the Bible and sincerely believed that this Christian movement was dangerous to Judaism.

Thus Paul hated the Christian faith and persecuted Christians without mercy.

Paul got permission to travel to Damascus to capture Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem. But God stopped him in his hurried tracks on the Damascus road. Paul personally met Jesus Christ, and his life was never again the same.

Until Paul's conversion, little had been done about carrying the gospel to non-Jews. Philip had preached in Samaria and to an Ethiopian man; Cornelius, a Gentile, was converted under Peter; and in Antioch in Syria, some Greeks had joined the believers.

When Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to check on this situation, he went to Tarsus to find Paul and bring him to Antioch, and together they worked among the believers there.

They were then sent on a missionary journey, the first of three Paul would take, that would carry the gospel across the Roman empire.

The thorny issue of whether Gentile believers had to obey Jewish laws before they could become Christians caused many problems in the early church. Paul worked hard to convince the Jews that Gentiles were acceptable to God, but he spent even more time convincing the Gentiles that they were acceptable to God.

The lives Paul touched were changed and challenged by meeting Christ through him.

Jacob was the third link in God's plan to start a nation from Abraham. The success of that plan was more often in spite of than because of Jacob's life.

Before Jacob was born, God promised that his plan would be worked out through Jacob and not his twin brother, Esau. Although Jacob's methods were not always respectable, his skill, determination, and patience have to be admired. As we follow him from birth to death, we are able to see God's work.

Jacob's life had four stages, each marked by a personal encounter with God. In the first stage, Jacob lived up to his name, which means "he grasps the heel" (figuratively, "he deceives"). He grabbed Esau's heel at birth, and by the time he fled from home, he had also grabbed his brother's birthright and blessing.

During his flight, God first appeared to him. Not only did God confirm to Jacob his blessing, but he awakened in Jacob a personal knowledge of himself.

In the second stage, Jacob experienced life from the other side, being manipulated and deceived by Laban. But there is a curious change: the Jacob of stage one would simply have left Laban, whereas the Jacob of stage two, after deciding to leave, waited six years for God's permission.

In the third stage, Jacob was in a new role as grabber. This time, by the Jordan River, he grabbed on to God and wouldn't let go. He realized his dependence on the God who had continued to bless him. His relationship to God became essential to his life, and his name was changed to Israel, "he struggles with God."

Jacob's last stage of life was to *be* grabbed—God achieved a firm hold on him. In responding to Joseph's invitation to come to Egypt, Jacob was clearly unwilling to make a move without God's approval.

In the two preceding stories, the seeker actively looked for the coin and the sheep, which could not return by themselves. In this story, the father watched and waited. He was dealing with a human being with a will of his own, but he was ready to greet his son if he returned.

In the same way, God's love is constant and patient and welcoming. He will search for us and give us opportunities to respond, but he will not force us to come to him. Like the father in this story, God waits patiently for us to come to our senses.

The sheep was lost because it may have foolishly wandered away (Luke 15:4); the coin was lost through no fault of its own (Luke 15:8); and the son left out of selfishness (Luke 15:12).

God's great love reaches out and finds sinners no matter why or how they got lost.

It was hard for the older brother to accept his younger brother when he returned, and it is just as difficult to accept "younger brothers" today.

People who repent after leading notoriously sinful lives are often held in suspicion; churches are sometimes unwilling to admit them to membership. Instead, we should rejoice like the angels in heaven when an unbeliever repents and turns to God. Like the father, accept repentant sinners wholeheartedly and give them the support and encouragement that they need to grow in Christ.

In the story of the lost son, the father's response is contrasted with the older brother's. The father forgave because he was filled with love. The son refused to forgive because he was bitter about the injustice of it all. His resentment rendered him just as lost to the father's love as his younger brother had been.

Don't allow anything to keep you from forgiving others. If you are refusing to forgive people, you are missing a wonderful opportunity to

may have been fear, or anger at the wideness of God's mercy, that made Jonah run.

But running got him into worse trouble. In the end, Jonah understood that it is best to do what God asks in the first place. But by then he had paid a costly price for running. It is far better to obey from the start.

Jonah's disobedience to God endangered the lives of the ship's crew. We have a great responsibility to obey God's Word because our sin and disobedience can hurt others around us.

You cannot seek God's love and run from him at the same time. Jonah soon realized that no matter where he went, he couldn't get away from God. But before Jonah could return to God, he first had to stop going in the opposite direction. What has God told you to do? If you want more of God's love and power, you must be willing to carry out the responsibilities he gives you. You cannot say that you truly believe in God if you don't do what he says (1 John 2:3-6).

Jonah had run away from God, but was given a second chance to participate in God's work. You may feel as though you are disqualified from serving God because of past mistakes. But serving God is not an earned position—no one qualifies for God's service. But God still asks us to carry out his work. You may yet have another chance.

Jonah was to preach only what God told him—a message of doom to one of the most powerful cities in the world. This was not the most desirable assignment, but those who bring God's word to others should not let social pressures or fear of people dictate their words. They are called to preach God's message and his truth, no matter how unpopular it may be.

God's word is for everyone. Despite the wickedness of the Ninevite people, they were open to God's message and repented immediately. If

[9] He feeds the wild animals,
and the young ravens cry to him for food.

Jonah 2:2

He said, "I cried out to the Lord in my great trouble, and he answered me. I called to you from the world of the dead, and Lord, you heard me!"

Jonah 3:1

Then the Lord spoke to Jonah a second time:

Psalm 37:33-34

But the Lord will not let the wicked succeed
or let the godly be condemned when they are brought before the
judge.

[34] Don't be impatient for the Lord to act!

Travel steadily along his path.

He will honor you, giving you the land.

You will see the wicked destroyed.

Proverbs 24:16

They may trip seven times, but each time they will rise again. But one calamity is enough to lay the wicked low.

Lament. 3:21-26

Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this:

[22] The unfailing love of the Lord never ends! By his mercies we have been kept from complete destruction. [23] Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each day. [24] I say to myself, "The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!"

[25] The Lord is wonderfully good to those who wait for him and seek him. [26] So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord.

Isaiah 30:15

The Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says, "Only in returning to me and waiting for me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength. But you would have none of it.

Isaiah 55:7

Let the people turn from their wicked deeds. Let them banish from their minds the very thought of doing wrong! Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Psalms 136. Six times in this chapter, it says: "O give thanks unto the Lord...for his mercy endureth for ever.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

John 14:1-3

"Don't be troubled. You trust God, now trust in me. [2] There are many rooms in my Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. [3] When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the special favor and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To him be all glory and honor, both now and forevermore. Amen.

Philip. 2:6

Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God.

Chapter 14

God's plan for Redemption

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

The entire gospel comes to a focus in this verse. God's love is not static or self-centered; it reaches out and draws others in. Here God sets the pattern of true love, the basis for all love relationships—when you love someone dearly, you are willing to give freely to the point of self-sacrifice. God paid dearly with the life of his Son, the highest price he could pay. Jesus accepted our punishment, paid the price for our sins, and then offered us the new life that he had bought for us. When we share the gospel with others, our love must be like Jesus'—willingly giving up our own comfort and security so that others might join us in receiving God's love.

In eternal life there is no death, sickness, enemy, evil, or sin. When we don't know Christ, we make choices as though this life is all we have. In reality, this life is just the introduction to eternity. Receive this new life by faith and begin to evaluate all that happens from an eternal perspective.

To "believe" is more than intellectual agreement that Jesus is God. It means to put our trust and confidence in him that he alone can save us. It is to put Christ in charge of our present plans and eternal destiny.

Believing is both trusting his words as reliable, and relying on him for the power to change.

If you have never trusted Christ, let this promise of everlasting life be yours—and believe. God is the God of another chance.

You may pray a prayer similar to this prayer.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I believe you are the Christ, the son of the Living God.

I ask you to come into my heart, forgive me of my sins and
Save me now. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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