



Episode Three

Repentance from the Gut

Jonah 2:1-10

The Story Arc of Jonah

The tradition of seeing the Jonah prayer as contrite repentance
Rebellious at the front, resentful at the end
Calls into question a posture of genuine repentance in the middle
A Biblical example of someone not to follow

Looking for “Repentance from the Gut” in Jonah’s Prayer

Verse 2: relief (maybe gratitude)
Verses 3-4: fixing agency of events on God instead of self, with a touch of hope
Verses 5-6: the dire circumstances and relief (maybe gratitude)
Verse 7: naming Jonah’s action in the crisis
Note the irony of Jonah’s use of temple when he was a pro-Israel northern prophet
Verse 8: an abstraction (a reference to the Assyrians) to set up a contrast of himself
Verse 9a: out of gratitude I will sacrifice and pay my vow
This can be seen as repentance: change of mind and direction
Verse 9b: salvation belongs to the Lord
But notice Jonah’s resentment when God chooses to exercise what belongs to Him!
Other prayers of repentance: see, for example, David: Psalm 51; Nehemiah 1:5-9
Here we see a resolution to obey as a thanksgiving for the rescue
What appears to be lacking is a repentance from the gut
Naming sin, a heartfelt sorrow (2 Cor 7:10), expression of repentance

Distinguishing Relief from Repentance

The rush of relief when a major consequence has been averted
I will never do that again (as I do not want to face that consequence again)
But the sorrow/terror was largely located in the constellation of consequences
More than in the knowledge of the sin itself, or in disappointing God
When the memory of consequences fail to deter, one is again predisposed to risk sin
Relief can appear like repentance: vulnerability, praise and thanks, vows of change
But unless the “godly sorrow” is present, the repentance is tepid at best

Lukewarm Nausea

A connection between the Jonah vomit and the Laeodecian church: see Rev 3:16
Central to a robust obedience is a robust repentance instinct
A robust repentance is rooted in a desire to please God
It’s easy to sound pious. It’s quite another to live it.
