

Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet - 16

Introduction: The repentance of the people of Nineveh and God's proclamation is seen in these few short verses. The Bible shows us how God had worked in the lives of these people.

Text: Jonah 3:5-9

III. Jonah's Preaching: God's Proclamation - Chapter 3

A. Jonah's Obedience v1-4

1. The Repetition of the Command. v1,2
2. The Obedience to the Command. v3,4

B. The People's Repentance v5-9

1. The summary of the situation. v5
2. The seriousness of the situation. v6-8
3. The statement of the situation. v9

The summary of the situation was given to us in **verse 5**. The Bible says, *"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."*

We continued into **verses 6-8** that describe for us the **seriousness of the situation**. They took seriously this message of destruction that was proclaimed. They showed an outward expression of their inward faith in God and His message to this city. In **verse 6** we are taken into the throne room of the king of Nineveh. It is here that we see first that *"word came unto the king..."*

I imagine the sight of an unusual foreigner would be remarkable to watch on behalf of the king of Nineveh. But this was not just an acknowledgment of a strange man, from a strange land, with a strange message. We see that the king believed the report. Let us observe this process that took place:

- (1) A preacher arrives on the scene, empowered by the Lord.
- (2) The preaching of the Word of God takes place.
- (3) The Holy Spirit works in the lives of the hearers, that they may see and know this is truth.
- (4) The hearers then are brought to a place of decision. They have a choice on how they will respond.

What is shocking for us, at least it should be, is how these in Nineveh responded versus what we see in the New Testament at the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Read **Matthew 12:14-42**.

In **verses 1-8** we have described for us the Lord's confrontation with the Pharisees because of their accusations of the disciples for transgressing the Sabbath. The disciples ate because they were hungry, according to **verse 1**. The Lord then quotes **Hosea 6:6** which states "*For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and **the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.***"

In **verses 9-21** we have a description and application of prophecy given to us by the Holy Spirit. And then in **verses 22-37** we have another confrontation between the Pharisees and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible says in **verse 24**, "*But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.*"

They accuse the Lord Jesus of being a worker of the Devil who is operated in the Devil's power. Jesus' response is given in three distinct points:

(1) Those the work for the Devil bring about the Devil's work. Those that work by the power of God, bring about God's work.

He summarizes this by stating in verse 30, "*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.*"

(2) A denial and vilification of the work of the Holy Spirit, places one in a position where they cannot be forgiven.

Why is this? Because one cannot come to Christ without the operation of the Holy Spirit. God reveals unto us our state as being lost, the truth of God's Word, and our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. This can be seen as further described when the Lord Jesus Christ stated, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*"

(3) (**v33**) A person produces good fruit or corrupt fruit. (**v34**) Jesus, therefore, looks at them and plainly says that they are corrupt. (**v36**) Jesus states that our words shall be judged and by our words we shall be either condemned or justified.

It is following all of this that the Lord gives us this answer following the Scribes and the Pharisees' request for a sign. In other words, they say, "Okay, prove yourself..." These may have been additional folks that had come now and asked this question, different from the fellows above (**Luke 11:16**), but regardless, they demanded a validation that Christ was indeed the Messiah.

Matthew Henry stated this, "Christ takes this occasion to represent the sad character and condition of **that generation in which he lived**, a generation **that would not be reformed, and therefore could not but be ruined**; and he gives them their character, as it would stand in the day of judgment, under the full discoveries and final sentences of that day."

Notice what the Lord states in **verse 41**, "*The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: **because they repented at the preaching of Jonas**; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*"

Herein is the contrast, Jonah preached and Nineveh repented. Jesus preached and that generation did not repent.

Warren Wiersbe in his expository outlines said this, "*Jesus used Nineveh to illustrate an important point (Matt. 12:38–41). He had preached to that generation for three years and had reinforced His message with His miracles, yet they would not repent and believe. The Ninevites heard one sermon from one preacher, and that sermon emphasized wrath, not love—yet they repented and were forgiven. The Jews heard the Son of God for three years, heard the message of God's forgiveness, yet refused to repent. Certainly, theirs will be the greater condemnation*" Warren W. Wiersbe, Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Jon 3.

When we look at our text we can see three parts to their response, even again as we approach our revival services.

We note first that **they must have heard and received the message that was preached.**

We note secondly, that the Bible says **that they were to "turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is [was] in their hands."**

This was not just an outward expression or a verbal expression of repentance but required them individually to forsake evil and to forsake violence.

We note thirdly, that **they submitted themselves to God's judgment.**

Notice with me in **verse 9**.

3. The _____ of the situation. v9

The Bible says, *“Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, the we perish not?”*

This expression of faith is most astounding when you think about it. And my friend this is the process that takes place when people turn **from evil and turn to God**.

We ought to mark well these steps and watch carefully our steps under the preaching of His Word. **How much more accountable are we for the knowledge God has given us?** As we see this phrase in **verse 9**, it does stir up for us how blessed we are in this day because of the Word of God. Imagine the Ninevites at that moment could only say, *“Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?”*

We have such a blessed hope as we turn through the pages of Scripture. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. Not only that but we find grace and mercy from our wonderful Lord in our time of need. We can turn from evil and turn to God. We can find restored fellowship with our wonderful Lord and Savior.

F.B. Meyer said this by way of illustration:

The Minor Prophets, Vols. I & II (Vers. 5–9)

During the Civil War in America some soldiers of the Southern Army deserted and found themselves caught in a wood between their own regiment and the Northern lines. To go forward or backward equally meant death. So here they hid and starved, feeding on berries. Meanwhile the Southern Confederacy was broken up, and peace was made between North and South. One day an officer riding through found them, and challenging them, heard their fears. You have nothing to fear,” he said. “Peace has been proclaimed. You can have all you want by going to the nearest village and asking for it.” So it is between the race and God. Men want to know that in Christ God has reconciled the world unto Himself. (F. B. Meyer)

C. God’s _____ and Mercy v10

Verse 10 says, *“And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.”*

Two salient points are found in this statement. The first point helps us to understand a

little about our Lord.

1. God _____ their works. **v10**

We serve the “seeing God.”

God saw their evil ways.

Remember in **chapter 1 verse 2** of Jonah the Bible says, *“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.”*

But now God sees their repentance.

It reminds us of what we find in **Genesis 16:13-14** concerning Hagar as she fled from Sarah after Sarah dealt harshly with her.

The Bible says in **verse 13 of Genesis 16**, *“And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, **Thou God seest me**: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.”*

The situation given to us in that passage is a terrible situation. There is a lot going on that resulted from the willing choice of man in the lives of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar. But in the midst of all that, this Egyptian Hagar discovered a blessed truth; that God saw her.

Nathaniel when he was called found by Philip and brought to follow after the Lord Jesus Christ was shocked when he learned the truth **that God [The Lord Jesus] saw Him.**

The Bible says in **John 1:48**, *“Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, **I saw thee.**”*