

# *Jonah 3:1-10*

*Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009*

## **What does true repentance look like? Lessons from the life of Jonah**

### **Prayer**

Let's bow again together. Dear Lord, thank You so much for this day. Thank You so much for Your grace and Your mercy towards us. We were total wretched sinners, filthy in Your sight, Lord God, in our deeds and our thoughts; and You were gracious. By nothing that we did, all through Christ, You saved us. And we praise You for that. And Father, as we look into Your Word today, I pray for those who may not be saved that You might pierce their hearts, that they might be saying in their heart of hearts to You, "What must I do to be saved?" and that Your Word clearly reveals the truth concerning Christ. Lord, help us also as a body to understand what true repentance looks like from Your Word. That we could analyze our hearts to examine ourselves, to see if this has truly happened to us. Lord, I praise You for the example that we will see today in Your Word, concerning the Ninevites who repented and believed. May we rejoice in Your work, for salvation is from You. And Father, I pray as we look in Your Word, You'd give us wisdom and insight and bless it now as it goes out. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Sermon**

Well in a modern day church these days, evangelical or whatever it may be, it seems as though there's quite a trend of a phrase coined many years ago, actually in the 50's – "Easy Believism" – where it's just easy to believe. And certainly if we look at what faith is and we look at repentance, seeing it as a work of God, it is easy because we don't do anything, right? It's a work of God. But that phrase really points out maybe some misnomers and maybe some teaching that is not accurate concerning what God requires in salvation. But what God requires, God supplies also; and that's what we will see today. But many people, maybe some of you, God supposedly saved by just saying, "I'll try Jesus." That's a popular message in some of the churches around here – "Just try Jesus to see if He will make your life better." And people who don't know Christ say, "Sure, that sounds like a deal! I'll try Jesus!" Other people will just raise their hand. "Do you want to accept Jesus? Raise your hand!" "Sure that sounds great!" But is this what, we see in Scripture, true salvation looks like? In Luke chapter 24, the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed throughout the earth. The Lord Jesus Himself proclaimed that within the context of faith in Him there is repentance. And folks, "repentance" is one of these words that many of us may not really be able to grasp very well. But I praise the Lord that He has not left us in the dark and we see in Scripture what genuine repentance looks like. And that's what I believe we're going to see today. And I believe the text we're going to look at today answers the question, "What does genuine, true repentance look like?"

So would you turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Jonah. And we're going through Jonah, and I hope you've been blessed by it. I've been tremendously, by my study, convicted and blessed. And I hope that's the same for you – you've been convicted of a straying heart or a heart that isn't right with God, and corrected and blessed as we've seen what the Lord God has revealed to us through this book of Jonah.

# *Jonah 3:1-10*

*Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009*

I'm going to briefly review the context in the book of Jonah. We know that Jonah is a true story. He was a true prophet – 2 Kings 14. We know the Lord Jesus Christ, as we will see today, declared that the story in Jonah was true (in Matthew 12). We know two things, as I've shared each week, in the context of the book of Jonah, that there are two threads running through Jonah. First of all we have Israel, the northern kingdom, which had split off from the southern kingdom. Israel was spiraling towards God's discipline. And within a generation, the same Assyrians (a different generation) would take them captive. And we also see that the Ninevites, from Nahum 3 and we'll look at it today, were on their way to judgment. Israel - God's people, on the way to severe discipline. Ninevites - not God's people, on the way to His judgment.

And we saw Jonah was written sometime during the King Jeroboam II's reign – 793 B.C. to 758. Jonah's name, as I've shared before, means "Dove." We've seen in this book so far that Jonah is a disobedient prophet. The Lord God calls him in chapter 1 to go to Nineveh, the very people that he probably hates because of their wickedness. Called him to go to Nineveh, a bloody city full of lies, full of spiritual harlotry. And Jonah, what's he do? He doesn't obey, right? We saw that in chapter 1. Jonah goes the other way, as far as he can go, fleeing from the presence of the Lord. And later on in chapter 4, we see he really wasn't trying to flee from God per say; he was fleeing from the sphere in which God would use him to bring about the salvation of the Ninevites. And he was trying to forestall their salvation because of his wicked heart.

Now we saw for Jonah that the true believer, as Jonah and as with us, will be disciplined if we disobey God. And we saw that in chapter 1, that the Lord God brought a terrible storm on Jonah as he boarded a ship to go to Tarshish, 2,500 miles the opposite direction from Nineveh; about 500 miles northeast of Israel. The storm became so bad, and hopefully you've been reading through, that the sailors became scared and the captain became scared. Everybody became scared and was throwing cargo over. They're doing everything. And Jonah is down in the hold sleeping. And we see that Jonah didn't care. Jonah didn't care about what was going on. He didn't care about obeying the Lord. He didn't care about those who were perishing. These pagans were calling on their gods, trying to discern why the calamity had come upon them; and the lot falls on Jonah. He's questioned, and as I've shared the cat's out of the bag. It's evident that it is because of Jonah's discipline, that he is running from God. Now the sailors desperately try to save him. Jonah says, "Throw me over and it will all be stopped," but they tried to save him, these pagan sailors. But things get worse and then the most wonderful thing happens in chapter 1. These pagan Phoenician sailors are saved. They call out upon the Lord; they are saved. They believe in the God of Jonah! They believe in the God of the Bible. They recognize His sovereignty; they call out to Him and they worship Him. And we see then they throw Jonah overboard. He is swallowed by a great fish, which God had prepared.

And then last week we saw in chapter 2 that Jonah recounts from the belly of the fish, as he prays to God, what was going on. He recounts the fact that he was drowning. He was going under. And he was about to die, and that's what chapter 2 is about – his prayer to God while he was dying. And in the belly of the fish, he recalls the fact that God saved him, that salvation is from the Lord. And inside the belly of this slimy fish Jonah then declares the truth concerning God. And I believe he repents, as he gives

# Jonah 3:1-10

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009

thanks to God for His salvation, as he declares that salvation is from the Lord. And it is at this point (albeit not a perfect repentance) as we see Jonah is still hardened, he makes a commitment to pay his vow and (I believe as we'll see today) to do what God asked him to do. And he is vomited up from the whale at the end of chapter 2 and put on the beach. And then now, that discipline is over for that time.

And this is where we come into our passage today, in Jonah chapter 3. Jonah has been vomited up on the beach. He is going to now, as we see in chapter 3, be given a second chance to obey the Lord. So turn in your Bibles with me to Jonah. We're going to be looking today at the ten verses in chapter 3. And I believe we're going to see in this passage the repentance of Jonah. And we're going to see the repentance of the Ninevites. And we're also going to see the repentance not from sin, but the relenting of God, concerning the Ninevites' destruction. Jonah chapter 3: 1-4, we'll start there as we look at the repentance of Jonah.

***<sup>1</sup> Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." <sup>3</sup> So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk. <sup>4</sup> Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." [Jonah 3:1-4]***

Now we need to recognize that in the beginning of this passage, the Lord the gives Jonah clear instructions again on how to serve Him. Again we have the Word of the Lord coming to Jonah, and notice this phrase, "the second time." It's very important that we see this; it's the second time, which reminds us of the first time, right? What happened when the Word of the Lord came to Jonah the first time in chapter 1? Jonah arose and went the other way. Now it comes the second time, and here is the Word of the Lord. "Arise (verse 2), go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you."

So then after God ends His discipline of Jonah, at least at this point (we'll see more discipline coming in a different shade later on in chapter 4), He gives him another opportunity to be obedient. He comes to him the second time and He says, "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation..." Same word we saw two weeks ago in chapter 1 – this "calling out," this "proclamation." Indeed in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it is the word *kerusso*, it means "preach" or "proclaim." "Proclaim to the Ninevites the proclamation" – same word – "which I am going to tell you." "Preach to it the preaching which I am going to tell you," the Lord says. And notice He says, "which I am going to tell you." It's actually emphatic in the Hebrew language – "...which I am going to tell you. It's My message, Jonah. Proclaim to them the message which I am going to tell you." God is saying, "Jonah, what I tell you is what you are to proclaim."

And notice just on a side note, God doesn't say, "Jonah, you do need to understand the culture. You need to understand their religions or they won't listen to you." He says, "Just proclaim my

# Jonah 3:1-10

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009

proclamation. Say what I have to say." Jonah is to proclaim the proclamation. It's pretty clear what Jonah is called to do.

And we see in Scripture that nothing has changed for us. For pastors, we are compelled and commanded to preach or *kerusso*, proclaim the Word! For everyone in the body who speaks (1 Peter 4), "If you speak," Peter tells them, "Whoever speaks let him speak as it were the utterances of God." And I share again, well wouldn't it be better if we understood the Ninevites? Saturated ourselves in their society? Became their friends? Maybe built a bridge to share the Word of God to the Ninevites? Brothers and sisters, this is the mindset of missions and evangelism throughout the evangelical church. And I don't believe it's Biblical, as we see from the Old Testament here and the New Testament. Pure and simple – Jonah is told to proclaim the preaching which He, the Lord, would tell him.

And I believe nothing has changed since the time of Jonah. It is the Word of God, it is *His* message, told to us from His Word, His powerful message that He uses to bring about salvation. That's the means in which He has ordained. Romans chapter 1 – we have the wonderful truth concerning what Paul says. He says, verse 16:

***<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [Romans 1:16]***

There are a lot of ashamed evangelists in the church, by their actions wanting to bring up a crowd and to pep it up so that they might accept the Gospel, that it might not be something that offends them. Paul says, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation."

James 1:18:

***<sup>18</sup> In the exercise of His will (speaking of God) He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.***

James 1:21:

***<sup>21</sup> Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.***

And if you are a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, God used His Word to bring about new life - His powerful, Spirit-inspired and powerful Word.

1 Peter 1:23:

***<sup>23</sup> for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. <sup>24</sup> For, "All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, <sup>25</sup> But the word of the Lord abides forever." And this is the word which was preached to you. [1 Peter 1:23-25]***

# Jonah 3:1-10

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009

Jonah is told to proclaim the Word which God would tell him. 1 Corinthians 2:1, we see the Apostle Paul's mindset in the proclamation of the Gospel when he came to the Corinthians. He says,

**<sup>1</sup>And when I came to you, brethren,** (He's making a case in these first three chapters to bring about a conviction on them concerning their boasting in their own wisdom rather than God's wisdom.) ***I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.*** **<sup>2</sup> For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.** **<sup>3</sup> And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.** **<sup>4</sup> And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,** **<sup>5</sup> that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. [1 Corinthians 1:1-5]**

One last passage. Pretty familiar, 2 Timothy chapter 3. Paul tells Timothy,

**<sup>13</sup> But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.** (That's in the context of the Word of God that they are twisting.) **<sup>14</sup> You, however,** (He's speaking to Timothy.) ***continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them;*** **<sup>15</sup> and that from childhood** (Listen, children.) ***you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*** **<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for... (And he goes through.) [2 Timothy 3:13-16]**

It's the Word of God that gives you the wisdom to bring about salvation. Jonah is to proclaim the message which God says, "I will give you." What would you think of an ambassador of a country who represented a country and went forth and just proclaimed his own mind? We're ambassadors for Christ. And God has given us His Word, and we are to proclaim in. And Jonah was told to do so.

So notice the second time here, Jonah now actually obeys. Verse 1, Jonah chapter 3: "Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup> 'Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.'" Jonah has been through a horrendous situation. First of all, it is never fun to run away from God in that sense. It is never fun to be under His disciplinary hand. The way of the transgressor is hard. And that his running away from God ended him up in the middle of the sea drowning, almost dying, and then in a slimy whale for three days and three nights. And now he has been vomited up on the shoreline. And God gives him an opportunity to obey where he had disobeyed before. I find this really amazing that God comes back with the same command again. "Arise, and go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." Verse 3 – so what did Jonah do? Did he go to the ship and split like last time? <sup>3</sup> "So Jonah arose and went (or literally walked) to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD." He did it according to what God said. He obeyed the Word of God – "according to the word of the Lord."

## *Jonah 3:1-10*

*Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009*

Now we're going to see that Jonah still has got some attitude problems and we're going to see about that later. But Jonah is exhibiting some fruit from God's discipline. He is no longer running away trying to forestall God's hand. He realizes that does not work. And he is obeying the Lord. What a change. Brought to the point of death, vows within the stomach of the whale to do what He has said, and now he obeys the command. It's the fruit of a repentant heart. It's the first step of obedience.

Now remember I shared in the book of Haggai how God works with disobedient people. Now certainly we want to obey with a good attitude. We do not want to be like Jonah in chapter 4. We don't want to go through the steps that he'll go through again as he is disciplined even more. But he does obey. And like we saw in the book of Haggai, as God addresses His disobedient people as their priorities are all messed up (they're about their own business rather than the Lord's), they obey the Lord. And He empowers them. But then He goes on in chapter 2 to address some attitudes and sin. And that I think is what He's going to do with Jonah. Jonah is obeying, but God is still working on him.

Now I need to address some bad theology in the churches these days – a theology by those who propagate it would say, "If you don't feel like obeying then don't obey because if you don't feel like it, you're not obeying at all." Folks, that's totally wrong! We walk by faith and not by sight. Even though we may not feel like obeying, we need to step out in faith and obey the Lord Jesus Christ. It is usually through those actions that He starts to change our hearts as we make the decision to obey the Lord God, confessing our sin. Now if you wait until your heart is perfectly willing to obey, you may be waiting for a long time. And certainly as I've shared, we want to obey with a willing heart, that is the way we should be and that's what we should strive for – a clean heart, a willing heart. But sometimes we need to step out in obedience and just do what He says. Now that's not all the time, but sometimes our hearts may not be there yet. We need to do it apart from feelings.

And Jonah responds. He goes 500 miles. I don't know how long it takes to walk 500 miles, but I think it's a long time. And I think Jonah had a long time to think about his obedience. So often we think of our obedience as a split second action. "Ok, I obeyed, Lord." But Jonah has got to walk 500 miles to obey the Lord here. Then when he gets there, he needs to give the proclamation which the Lord has told him. And Jonah does it. Now let me remind you as we saw in chapter 1, and we'll see in chapter 4, Jonah most likely hates these people. They were a brutal people. They tortured, and I can't share how bad it is, the people they took over. They were a bloody people. They were an evil people. And Jonah probably hated them for that. And Jonah didn't want to have them saved as we'll see. But here Jonah does obey and he goes no matter how he feels. God's discipline was working in Jonah. Brought to almost death, but willing to obey now.

So notice what happens when he arrives in Nineveh. End of verse 3: "Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk." We know from chapter 4 that Nineveh had 120,000 of those who didn't know the right hand from the left hand – that means real small children, which means it probably had over 500,000 people. It was a big city. It was the capitol of the Assyrian empire, the superpower of the day. And Jonah arrives and what does he do? In the Hebrew it's bang-bang-bang. Just one thing after another; no delay. Verse 4: <sup>4</sup> Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out

# Jonah 3:1-10

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009

and said, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.'" Remember back in verse 1, the Lord said *He* would give him a proclamation which he should share. This is part of that proclamation here. "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." Turned over, destroyed!

Now some of you might be wanting to go through the significance of forty days. And it's tempting to go through that and see what type of other things in the Bible were forty days. The flood; we have Moses on the mountain; the spies in the land; Elijah at Mt. Horeb; Ezekiel on his side one of those times; Jesus' fast in the wilderness forty days before His temptation; He also appeared after His resurrection forty days. Is there a significance here in our passage? And you know, the text doesn't say. What we do know is God is sovereign, and He set a date. Forty days and Nineveh is overthrown.

And He has set a date. "It is appointed man once to die and then the judgment." There is a date in which you will be overthrown eternally, if you do not repent of your sins. Now they understood in Nineveh as we will see, this was a message of impending judgment. They understood that. Look down in verse 9 as the king, which we'll look at in a little bit, is sharing in his proclamation to everyone.

**<sup>9</sup> "Who knows, God may turn and relent (The word "repent" actually), and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?" [Jonah 3:9]**

They understood Jonah's proclamation. I think we have a bit of it, "Yet forty days Nineveh will be destroyed." But maybe there was more to it that God was having him say. Because they understood He had burning anger upon them; God was angry at the Ninevites, and they understood that. And they understood that if He didn't turn His anger they would perish. They would perish. They understood the message of impending judgment because of their sin, as we will see.

Let me tell you right now – one of the greatest revivals came about because Jonah obediently preached God's Word, which contained the message of impending judgment. Oh folks, we have so many phony bologna evangelical revivals, fueled by the professions of false confessions who have not heard the full Gospel or have heard a false one. False converts that don't recognize they stand before a holy God who will judge them for their sin. And they will perish, experiencing eternal punishment. And their only way out from that punishment is the Lord Jesus Christ who bore that punishment for them, for their sins. God's Word is clear that day will come when His judgment will come on sin and sinners. That day will come. I was told this morning about a person that's come here, that passed away last night. And it's not sure whether he was saved or not. That's a sad thing - if you don't know, if people around don't know if you are saved. But that day has come for him, and if he was not saved he has entered into judgment as of last night. There were people on that flight in Buffalo, New York who entered into judgment at that time. God's wrath was upon them and those who did not know Christ, the appointed day had come; and they are now in the context of awaiting that judgment. It is appointed man once to die and then the judgment. God has not left us in the dark concerning what He plans to do to unrepentant mankind. And Jonah shared that with the Ninevites.

Now in Scripture, this judgment is called "The Day of the Lord." It is Yahweh's day, it is the day of Yahweh, it is the Great I Am, it is the day of Christ the self-existent one. It is the day when He pours out

# Jonah 3:1-10

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009

His wrath on sin and sinners. I'm not going to go through all the passages. We looked at them when we went through Ezekiel. But I want to read one passage in Isaiah which tells us why it comes. If you want to turn with me to the middle of your Bibles, Isaiah 13, we're going to look at this passage. And we're going to see why God is so angry. Oh and when you see why God is so angry, it makes you rejoice in why we're forgiven in Christ. When you know how awful sin is to God and you recognize what Christ has done, it gives you so much more appreciation for our Savior Jesus Christ. Isaiah chapter 13 verse 6:

**<sup>6</sup> Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. <sup>7</sup> Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man's heart will melt. <sup>8</sup> And they will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of them; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame. <sup>9</sup> Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. (That's pretty hard language. That's language from an angry God.) <sup>10</sup> For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon will not shed its light. <sup>11</sup> Thus I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity (No one will get away with anything. God is a gracious God and there are many who appear to be getting away with a lot right now. But that won't happen.); I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud, and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. <sup>12</sup> I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir. <sup>13</sup> Therefore I shall make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the LORD of hosts In the day of His burning anger. [Isaiah 13:6-13]**

The Day of the Lord will come, Scripture says, when Christ comes again and brings about His judgment upon the earth. But before that, if you die before that, then you enter into judgment. The same judgment which will befall these who fall in the Day of the Lord.

Obadiah 1:15:

**<sup>15</sup> For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.**

Have you ever considered the intensity of God's distaste for sin and evil? No one is going to get away with anything. God hates evil. He hates the evil that is propagated by mankind. But the most amazing thing is that in this hatred and burning anger for evil, He sent His Son Jesus Christ to live the perfect life, to be the spotless Lamb, to bear the punishment for our sins, that evil in which He is so angry at. God sent Christ instead. Instead. He came first in grace. That's what we remember when we did communion; that's why it's so serious. And He will come again, not in reference to sins but in reference to judgment. Christ will judge.

John 5:22:

# Jonah 3:1-10

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009

***<sup>22</sup> For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup> in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. [John 5:22-24]***

If you believe in Christ, you have passed from death to life. But what does true faith look like? And how is repentance involved in that? And the message was, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” They knew God’s burning anger; they saw they were going to perish. What was their response? Verse 5: ***Then the people of Nineveh believed in God...[Jonah 3:5a]*** The story is so much more than a whale story or a fish story! It is about the compassion of God towards sinful mankind. The compassion of God towards sinful Jonah. The compassion of God towards a wicked people, the Ninevites. “Then the people believed in God.”

And look what they did. ***And they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. [Jonah 3:5b]*** This is a big city. This is amazing. They responded to the message which God told Jonah to preach. And they believed in God, singular. Not gods like they had before. *God* – singular. The God of the message which Jonah preached. They heard the word and they believed.

Notice it was not an intellectual faith. Some people have an intellectual faith. But their faith and their genuine repentance was followed by true works. It produced works. Jonah 3:5: “Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.” And we’re wondering, what is this sackcloth stuff? What does it mean to put on sackcloth? What does that mean? Well first of all we see they literally proclaimed a fast. *Kerusso*. Or they called a fast – *qara*. Well what’s the significance of fasting and sackcloth? Well first of all both of these things I believe are evidences of sorrowful, humble repentance as we will see.

Indeed we see fasting in Scripture as a self-denial to represent a sorrowful humility before God because of sin. And in Scripture it is shown as an evidence at times of repentance.

Joel 2:11:

***<sup>11</sup> The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it? (Who could stand?) <sup>12</sup> "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping, and mourning; <sup>13</sup> And rend your heart and not your garments. Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, And relenting of evil." [Joel 2:11-13]***

Now I want to make it clear that it is not the external activities that bring about God’s favor. Those are evidences of a changed inside. We’ll see that. But what is this idea about putting on sackcloth? Well sackcloth was a cloth made of black goat’s hair. It was coarse, it was rough, it was thick. And it was obviously for making sacks, right? Sackcloth. And in Scripture we see it being used in two related ways when people would put on sackcloth. One – when those who were mourning over a deceased loved

# Jonah 3:1-10

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009

one, they would put on sackcloth as a visible sign of their distress. But throughout Scripture we also see that sackcloth represented a mourning over sin and thus a repentance. And I'm going to give you some examples here as we go. First Chronicles chapter 21. You can note these down and come back to them. There will be about five. We have a passage in which Satan incited David to number his armies. Satan incited David to number his armies, which Satan incited David to trust in his own wisdom rather than to trust in the Lord. He incited him to do that. And God confronted him and was disciplining Israel. And at this point David repents and we see this idea of sackcloth. First Chronicles 21:16:

***<sup>16</sup> Then David and the elders, covered with sackcloth, fell on their faces. <sup>17</sup> And David said to God, "Is it not I who commanded to count the people? Indeed, I am the one who has sinned and done very wickedly. [1 Chronicles 21:16-17]***

The sackcloth was an external evidence of an internal repentance.

Nehemiah 9:1:

***<sup>1</sup> Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the sons of Israel assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dirt upon them. <sup>2</sup> And the descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. [Nehemiah 9:1-2]***

External symbol of something going on on the inside.

Daniel chapter 9 – a long prayer. You can read it in your own time; it's a wonderful prayer where Daniel recognizes they are in the seventy years discipline because of their sin. Daniel prays (Daniel 9:3):

***<sup>3</sup> So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. <sup>4</sup> And I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, <sup>5</sup> we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled, even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances. [Daniel 9:3-5]***

New Testament example – the Lord Jesus Christ condemning the cities who rejected Him, the Lord, in their midst; comparing them to other judgments. Matthew 11:21:

***<sup>21</sup> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth...[Matthew 11:21]***

Repentance as evidenced by, in that culture, an external manifestation of sorrow. That was what sackcloth was about in these cultures. It was a visible sign of a humble repentance or a mourning or sorrow. Now I need to share this with you so that you don't take this the wrong way. Sackcloth and fasting doesn't mean you're humble before the Lord. Throwing on a sack and walking around not eating

# Jonah 3:1-10

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009

does not mean your heart has been changed. It is an external action based on an internal repentance. And that's what was happening with the Ninevites as we will see.

These Ninevites, as I believe and we'll see, clearly repent at the preaching of Jonah as the Lord Jesus said. And their outward actions were a symbol of that. Now there are lots of people doing lots of things to try to bring about forgiveness. There are lots of people running around in spiritual sackcloth and ashes trying to get God to forgive them, rather than having a broken heart. A broken heart for their sin. And it's God's Word which He uses to bring about repentance.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus – a pretty familiar story. Luke 16, and I'm not going to go through the whole story. But the rich man dies and he ends up in Hades. His body goes in the grave; he's in Hades saying, "Put out the fire on my tongue." And Lazarus dies and he is comforted. The beggar, Lazarus the one. And the rich man says,

***<sup>24</sup> "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame." <sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us." <sup>27</sup> And he said, "Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house— <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment." (Folks, you are being warned right now.) <sup>29</sup> But Abraham said, They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them." (That's what Jonah preached. That's what we have here. "Preach the word.") <sup>30</sup> But he said, "No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will (And here's the issue) repent!" <sup>31</sup> But he said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead." [Luke 16:24-28]***

But the men of Nineveh, they repented. Jesus says in Matthew 12:41, ***"The men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah."*** And sackcloth and fasting was an outward and visible sign of something that happened in their hearts as they were petitioning the Lord to stay His judgment because they recognized they had sinned. What an amazing work of God through the word of God. Salvation is from the Lord. Jonah in obedience preaches the message of judgment on the Ninevites; they believe and are saved, an amazing salvation. So we have the people's response. Now look at the king's response, verse 6:

***<sup>6</sup> When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on the ashes. [Jonah 3:6]***

Notice when the timing of this happened, "When the word reached the king..." He heard the word. When it reached him, here's his response of humility. He gets off his throne; he throws his robe down;

# Jonah 3:1-10

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009

covers himself with sackcloth and sat on ashes. This sign of repentance and humility. I believe he really did repent as we see he proclaims to the people this message of repentance. Verse 7:

***<sup>7</sup> And he issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. <sup>8</sup> But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. <sup>9</sup> Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?" [Jonah 3:7-9]***

Folks, there are all kinds of ideas these days in the church about what true repentance looks like. Do you know what it looks like? Have you truly repented? Here we have an Old Testament example, that Jesus proclaims in Matthew. And notice there are four elements here in this example of repentance.

First of all, a visible humbling and mourning over sin. In this proclamation we see him proclaiming a fast for men and beast – verse 7. Verse 8 – they should be covered with sackcloth. Again this outward symbol of a changed heart and not the reverse. But true repentance doesn't stop here. Look, he says, "Let men call earnestly (middle of 8) on God..." Let them "call" – the word is "mightily." Let them call mightily on God! Intense prayer upon God. And notice there's a turning from sin.

But before that notice they're calling earnestly on the Lord to save them from this judgment which they had been convicted of through the preaching of Jonah. And that's what the Lord says in Romans 10.

***<sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." <sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; (The Ninevites called on Him.) <sup>13</sup> for "Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved." <sup>14</sup> How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed (There's belief.)? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? (They have to hear to believe.) And how shall they hear without a preacher? (That's a kerusso or a proclaimer.) <sup>15</sup> And how shall they preach unless they are sent? (Jonah was sent.) Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" <sup>16</sup> (And he goes on...) However, (Speaking of Israel) they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. [Romans 10:11-17]***

Jonah spoke God's Word; they believed as evidenced by their repentance. You see that. He says, "Call on God earnestly." If you want to know if you've really repented, when you were saved did you call on God earnestly? Or did you raise your hand and say, "Sounds good to me." Did you call upon the name of the Lord? "Whoever will call upon Him will be saved."

"And let each turn from his wicked ways" – repent! The word is *shub* in Hebrew. It means "to turn," "repent," "relent." It's used often in the Old Testament to speak of a turning. And a Biblical repentance

# Jonah 3:1-10

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009

as we see here is a turning to God from sin. And genuine belief in Christ produces genuine repentance. They are two sides of the same coin. It is not a work; God grants repentance. God grants faith; it is not a work. It is a response to the powerful, living and active word of God.

And notice lastly we see a recognition here of God's right to judge. Turning from sin, the violent from the wickedness of their hands, call on God, turn from their sin. Let me go back to that. Folks, if you repented and you didn't turn from your sin or have this desire, "Lord God, save me from my sin! I'm a sinful man!" – maybe that's not genuine repentance. Verse 9: "Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?" The Ninevites were not given, as far as we can see, information concerning salvation. They were given information concerning judgment. And they responded. They repented. They acknowledged God's burning anger, His right towards them. They didn't say, "Oh God couldn't be angry at me. He's a loving God!" They recognized their sin and they cried out to Him. We see genuine repentance here. They mourned over their sin before a holy God. They called upon His name. They turned to Him from their wicked ways, recognizing His right to judge. That's a picture of genuine repentance.

And it all begins with "They believed in God." They heard the message. The Ninevites repented at Jonah's preaching, that's the summary. Matthew 12 – is that not what Jesus said? He said, "The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment and shall condemn it." [Matthew 12:41] They're going to be on the judging side, the men of Nineveh. And we know from the Scripture that the saints will judge the world. They were saved! And they're going to stand against this unbelieving generation of Christ's time who rejected Him. And it says, "They shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah." They repented! This is what Biblical repentance looks like. There is a mourning over sin. There is a crying out to God. There is a turning from that sin, crying out, and there is acknowledgement of His right to judge. The Ninevites did that.

Now on a side note, the Greek word used here in Matthew 12 that Jesus uses is *metanoeo*. It means literally "to change your mind." Now there's some bad teaching out in churches these days. Since we're talking about repentance I need to share. They have reduced repentance simply to just a change of mind, that's it. Saying, "That's all it means. As long as someone changes their mind, they have repented." And folks, this couldn't be further from the truth because a change of mind will produce a change of behavior. The Ninevites changed their minds based on the Word of God; but also it produced a change of behavior, a humility, a conviction of sin. And I want to remind you that salvation is a work of God. God grants repentance. Romans 2:

***<sup>4</sup> Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? [Romans 2:4]***

2 Timothy 2:25, Paul says, "***...if perhaps God may grant them repentance.***" And true repentance, as we will see as we close here, will bring about a change of life, of an action.

So verse 10 we see what God does here, in response to the Ninevites. We saw Jonah's repentance; he obeys. We've seen the repentance of the Ninevites; they turn to God. Wicked, vile people – read

## Jonah 3:1-10

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009

Nahum 3. I'm not even going to read it with kids here. They turn to God and they're saved. They repented. Now what happens when God sees this? Verse 10:

**<sup>10</sup> When God saw their deeds, (Notice He saw their deeds.) that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it. [Jonah 3:10]**

So then God observed their wicked ways, that they turned from those, they repented. He turned, He (same word) "repented" but not from sin. He turned and relented from what He declared He would do. And He didn't do it. God has declared that He will judge you for your sin. And He will relent from that declaration if you turn to Christ, repenting of your sins. Now there's a couple things to chew on as we finish here. But let me point out these things here.

First of all, God didn't relent until there was true repentance. He didn't relent until He saw their deeds; they were an evidence of a genuinely changed heart. And that's what the apostle Paul says in Acts 26 (and I'll read a portion of this) as he gives his testimony to King Agrippa. And we're not reading the whole thing, but he says in verse 19 of Acts 26:

**<sup>19</sup> "Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, <sup>20</sup> but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. [Acts 26:19-20]**

A genuine repentance will manifest itself in different deeds. You're going to change. I'm not saying we're saved by works. We're saved by faith in Jesus Christ. And He grants repentance, but if it's genuine you're going to turn. You're going to turn. Genuine faith in Christ will produce genuine repentance. They're two sides of the same coin. They're required for salvation. They're tied together. Jesus said that the repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed. Salvation is from the Lord. Salvation is from the Lord.

And one last thing I want to point out is that God declares eternal calamity and judgment, that He will pour out His wrath on sin and sinners. There is the terrifying expectation of judgment for those who die in their sins. The gentleman I shared about who passed away last night didn't trust Christ, didn't repent of his sins. He is in terrible, eternal peril. Those who died on that plane crash, if they didn't trust Christ they are in terrible, eternal peril. And if you haven't repented of your sins you are in peril. And God is gracious. He will relent. He does declare what He will do, that He will judge you eternally. But He will relent if you repent. Now in the Old Testament, they had a shadow of what would bring their salvation, fulfilled in the person of Christ who died for our sins. "The Lord Jesus Christ bore our sins in His body on the cross that we might die to sin and live to God."

So then what does true repentance look like? It is a change of mind brought about by a belief in God via His word which produces a genuine change, a turning to God from sin. And we see in the Ninevites' case

# *Jonah 3:1-10*

*Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009*

there is a mourning over sin. A humble mourning because of sin, an earnest calling upon God. A recognition of God's right to judge, tied up in the context of faith in what God has declared in His Word.

Friend, where are you today? Has the Word of God convicted you concerning God's judgment and His right to judge? When you sin, you sin against a holy God. Sin against the holy God. And He has declared your calamity because of your sin. Your calamity is coming. But God will relent if you trust in Christ, you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, cry out to Him for salvation. He will relent. He will save you. What about those who claim to be believers here? Have you truly repented? Does your salvation experience line up with that of Scripture? Were you broken over your sin and God's right to judge you? Did you cry out for Him to save you from sin? That's what He's saving you from. Saved from our sins. If you came to Jesus to save you from you know, whatever it might be apart from sin, that's not salvation. Have you truly repented?

What about us believers who have repented? I see so many well-meaning, naïve Christians who want people saved so badly they compromise the message. They really want people to be saved. But yet they're unwilling to submit to Christ. And all this missions and evangelism, and all this stuff we see is centered around getting a crowd primed up and pumped up so that their hearts might be changed, rather than proclaiming the Word of God. Are you sinning with your well-meaning desires to have people saved? By following people like that, or being part of that? It's the proclamation of the Word of God that God uses to bring salvation.

What about those of us who are saved? Are we genuinely thankful for what God has done? He has saved us from His wrath. We are so blessed. It is amazing grace as we sang. That He would do this for us. The Ninevites understood that God had a right to judge them and they cried out to Him. Are you thankful for what He's done? Folks, people are perishing. The laborers are few. There are very few people who will declare the Word of God. Are you willing to faithfully proclaim the truth obediently, like Jonah was?

## **Prayer**

Lord God, I thank You so much for Your Word. You are so good. And Lord, we see the greatest revival in Scripture here apart from what You will do with Your people in the future. The greatest turning to You ever. And Lord, it is all because of You. Salvation is from You. I thank You that You use people. That You used Jonah. That You gave him an opportunity after such great discipline to obey You. I pray for some of us here who are being disciplined, who recognize it, and are willing to obey now. Lord, I pray You'd give us that opportunity to obey You in the areas we've sinned. Lord, thank you for this example of true repentance with Jonah. True repentance with the Ninevites, Lord God. Thank You so much. May we not lean on our own understanding or trust in our own wisdom. May we not be wise in our own eyes. May we just as You lead us, as You call us, proclaim Your truth. Father, I pray we wouldn't leave out the truth of Your judgment for sin. But we wouldn't leave out also that salvation has come in Christ. May we rejoice in that. May we have a heart for the lost that is centered around Your commands and Your desires; and may we obey that. Thank You for Your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# *Jonah 3:1-10*

*Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 2/15/2009*

Available online at: <http://www.vancouverbible.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2013 Vancouver Bible Fellowship

You may reproduce this sermon transcript in its entirety

for non-commercial purposes in accordance with

Vancouver Bible Fellowship's Copyright Policy (<http://www.vancouverbible.org/copyright.pdf>)