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Jonah

JONAH 3:5-10 (FROM THE GREATEST TO THE LEAST)

Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day

Washington, D.C.
March 30, 1863

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation.

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do, by this my proclamation, designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th. day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting and prayer. And I do hereby request all the People to abstain, on that day, from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite, at their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the Nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings, no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering Country, to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this thirtieth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty seventh.

By the President: Abraham Lincoln
William H. Seward, Secretary of State.

Text Verse: “So shall He sprinkle many nations.
Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;
For what had not been told them they shall see,
And what they had not heard they shall consider.” Isaiah 52:15

When I first read this proclamation, I wept openly. To imagine that a people would humble themselves in this manner, or in the manner of ancient Nineveh, is truly stirring to the soul. But such is the state of a nation when it realizes it has offended the Power which ultimately directs it.

Time and time again, the people of Israel went through cycles of turning to the Lord, and then turning away from Him once again. Until times of great distress were upon them, they went about their merry way, ignoring Him, and even actively mocking Him through their actions.

During all such times, the Lord sent prophets to call them back to Himself. But their words fell on deaf ears, and often the dead bodies of the prophets witnessed to the rejection of the Lord’s message to His disobedient nation.

What does a nation need repentance for when they already believe they are God’s chosen, and who are also deemed as righteous because of who they are? Such a smug attitude negates any such need for repentance.

America of 1863 had come to such a point, but the leader of the nation, Abraham Lincoln, realized that their many blessings had become their curse, and so he called on the people to repent, to turn from their arrogance, and to humble themselves before the God of the Bible; the God who had established them.

Such a call is needed once again, and we should hope it won’t be long before it comes. If it does, will we respond? Only time will tell. One thing is for sure, Nineveh was given their warning, and even before it had been fully proclaimed throughout the land, the people were receiving it and acting upon it.

And when the leader of the great city heard it, he sent forth the word to repent, just as Lincoln did. The city as a whole responded, and the great destruction which was anticipated, was held back from happening. Humility before the Lord is of great value in His eyes. Let us pray that we as a people will demonstrate this most admirable quality, once again, before it is too late.

Such lessons as this are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. So the People Believed (verses 5-6)

⁵So the people of Nineveh believed God,

v'yaaminu anshe Nineveh b'elohim – “And believed men Nineveh in God.” These words are based on the proclamation of Jonah which was given in the previous verse, that which ended our journey last week, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” It is of note that the same term for “believed” is given here that was given of Abraham in Genesis 15 –

“And behold, the word of the Lord *came* to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.” ⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

⁶And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”
Genesis 15:4-6

There is, however, a difference between the two. In Genesis 15, Abraham is said to have believed Yehovah, the covenant-keeping Lord. So it was also with the salty sailors of Chapter 1. In this account, it says the people believed, *Elohim*, or “God.”

Therefore this is a clue that it is probably not to be considered justifying faith as it was for Abraham or the sailors. It does, in fact, picture this though. The turning of the Gentiles in Nineveh is a picture of the greater turning of the Gentiles to Christ the Lord in the dispensation of grace. Having said that, Jesus' words of Luke 11 must be considered -

“The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here.” Luke 11:32

He does say that they will “rise up in the judgment.” Whether this means they were saved, or whether they will simply be able to highlight Israel’s faithlessness at the same judgment must be left to God’s eternal counsel in matters of final judgment.

Here, there is no promise or covenant established with the Ninevites as there was with Abraham, or as in Christ’s New Covenant. Rather, there was simply a proclamation that destruction lay ahead. Instead of justifying faith, it is probably a faith grounded in the mercy of God in this earthly existence. There is an expectation that if they act, He will relent from His designs against them.

The entire account is showing a contrast between the Ninevites and the Jews. The Ninevites believed in God and were quick to respond to His word; the Jews had an intimate covenant relationship with the Lord, and they were slow to believe, slow to respond, and slow to repent.

The story of Jonah is a prophetic look to the future when God would do something new through Jesus Christ. For the Gentiles, there would be a massive turning to the Lord; for the Jews, there would be a pathetically small group who faithfully turned to Him; a mere remnant.

⁵ (con’t) **proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth,**

Va’yiqre-u som va’yilbeshu saqim – “and called out for a fast and put on sacks.” It is unknown if this verse really follows in thought to that of verse 6, or if it actually occurred before it. The writer seems to indicate that as the word spread, the people responded to it immediately, humbling themselves and fearing what they heard. Each was intent on proclaiming a fast and putting on sackcloth, both of which were external signs of an inward repentance.

Fasting was intended to deny oneself food in order to be reminded of a devotion to God. If one is hungry, they will be continually reminded of their hunger. If this is voluntary, it will then remind one of why they were hungering.

Likewise, sackcloth was poor quality cloth, it would be itchy and unsightly. The garments would be both a physical reminder to the body and to the eyes of their on-going repentance. Both actions speak of a state of humility, not arrogance, before God.

⁵ (con't) **from the greatest to the least of them.**

mi'gedolam v'ad qetanam – “From the most whopping and unto the least.” From the throne of the king, to the smallest child of the least servant, all participated in the fast and in the humble adornment of clothes. None felt excepted for none was above the word of the Lord. And this was either because, or it was followed by, the actions of the king himself...

⁶ **Then word came to the king of Nineveh;**

va'yiga ha'davar el melek nineveh – “And reached the word to king (of) Nineveh.” This may explain the “why” of what occurred in the previous verse, and so the words would then be in the past-perfect – “For the word had come to the king of Nineveh.”

Or the words may show an elevation of the message of Jonah which finally reached the ears of the king, who felt he was not above the actions of the people over whom he ruled. Either is possible, but the order of the verses seems to argue for the latter. The entire city had cumulatively humbled themselves which was then followed by even the king himself.

⁶ (con't) **and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe,**

va'yaqam mi'kiso va'yaaver addarto me'alav – “and arose from his throne and laid his robe from him.” The throne is the place of power, and the robe is a symbol of authority. By leaving his throne and laying the robe aside, the king is essentially

acknowledging that in comparison to the call of the prophet, he has no authority and no power.

It would be comparable to the surrendering of the sword by the defeated general. The king so firmly believed the word that he stepped aside from his own place of nobility, and demonstrated what one would think was the greatest act of submission that he could possibly perform. But he went even further...

⁶ (con't) **covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes.**

vay'kas saq va'yshv al ha'epher – “and covered sackcloth and sat upon the ashes.” The garment of the king would have been resplendent and beautiful, and it would have been extremely comfortable. He would have stood out from all others, both in physical appearance and in physical comfort.

And yet, he put on the same lowly garments as all of the people had done, placing himself on their level, even to the point where none could tell if he were king or pauper. And even more, we are told that he sat upon ashes. It was a sign that he understood that the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah was due.

When one sits on a throne, it is because they have a right to that throne. To sit in ashes then implies that being reduced to ashes was his just due. In assuming this position, it was then a petition for mercy. “I understand what I deserve, the fiery judgment of God, and I acknowledge that. Thine will be done.” The actions of the king are the greatest acts of humility that he could perform.

In the Bible, we read about another such occasion. Jesus laid aside His own garments in the most incredible demonstration of humility ever performed in the stream of time... time that He created. In the first, He set aside His glorious garments of divinity which He bore from eternity past, coming in the appearance of a Man. His divine splendor was hidden from sight. But He went further. At the last supper, He set aside His earthly garments to serve in the lowest manner of all...

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a

basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded." John 13:3-5

The symbolism of the King of Nineveh setting aside his robes was prophetically realized and yet outmatched by the King of kings setting aside his own robes to humble Himself. In the first instance, an earthly king set aside a beautiful robe before the King of the universe. In the second instance, the King of the universe set aside His divine robes, and then even His common garments in submission before the beings He created.

*Garments so rich and beautiful; those of a King
Radiant in splendor and in majesty
To this One, all hearts should joyfully sing
Robed in glory and of divine pageantry*

*And yet, they were set aside by this marvelous God
The robes common to all men, He did don
And among the sons of men, this One did trod
Yes, in the garments of flesh which he put on*

*And in those garments, He came to serve
The lowest position of all He took upon Himself for us
From His duties assigned by the Father, never did He swerve
And so all understanding souls hail the Name of Jesus*

II. The King's Decree (verses 7-9)

⁷ And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh

va'yazeq va'yomer b'nineveh – "And cried and spoke in Nineveh." These words are in response to Jonah's cry. Jonah cried out, and the king responds with his own cry. It would be in the form of proclamation and an edict in writing. The proclamation would be for all ears to hear, and the published edict, for all eyes to see. It was to be done so throughout all of Nineveh so that no person could be exempt from the word.

Despite having humbled himself before God and having stepped away from his throne and his robe for humility's sake, he still bore the authority of the kingship over the people. And so it was with Christ. Despite having humbled Himself and having stepped away from both His throne and His divine appearance, He still bore the authority of His kingship. It makes His actions all the more remarkable when this is properly considered.

^{7 (con't)} **by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,**

mi'taam ha'melek u-gedolav lemor – “by the taste (of) the king, and the whopping ones, saying...” The word *taam* indicates a taste, and thus it extends to what is tasteful to a person. And so it can indicate a mandate, a decree, and the like. The use of the word in Hebrew to mean a “decree” is unique to this verse. However, the cognate word in Aramaic is found in both Ezra and Daniel with this same meaning.

Therefore, it shows that the author was acquainted with this personally. It is a beautiful touch of confirmation that Jonah was indeed the person who was called to Nineveh, and the person who recorded the account for us. This is also the last use of it in the noun form in the Old Testament.

Another confirmation of sorts concerning the truth of the account is that the decree is sent out, not merely by the king, but also by his nobles. This corresponds to how the functioning of these eastern governments issued edicts, unlike those in Israel which were issued solely under the king's authority. Again, it is a nice touch of the reliability of the story.

^{7 (con't)} **Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything;**

ha'adam v'ha'behemah ha'baqar v'ha'tson al yitamu me-umah – “the man and the beast, the herd and the flock, no taste anything.” The noun *taam* used above to indicate the taste, or decree, of the king is a variant of the verb *taam*, or taste, for man and beast here. His *taam* forbids their *taam*. The tasting of food and water, for both man and beast is forbidden.

This verse has been called ridiculous, extreme, and even comical by liberal scholars. They tear apart the story of Jonah over verse after verse, but they really

tear it apart with certain verses. This is one of them. Here is a portion of the less than insightful commentary in the preface to Jonah in the liberally biased translation, The New Oxford Annotated Bible –

“The book of Jonah is also uncharacteristic, when compared to other writings in the prophetic tradition, in its use of humor to make its points. Humorous qualities, such as exaggerated behavior (running away from God); **never mind that the apostles did this** – “inappropriate actions (sleeping through a violent storm); – **never mind that Jesus did that too** – outlandish situations (offering a prayer of thanksgiving from inside a fish’s belly); **what better place to pray?** Ludicrous commands (animals must fast and wear sackcloth); and emotions either contrary to expectation (anger at mercy) or out of proportion (being angry enough to die because a plant has withered) appear throughout the story.” (Crummy scholars at Oxford).

However, even those who accept the Bible for what it is, and not just a ludicrous story, have trouble understanding the words of this verse. But what seems extreme to us, doesn’t really seem extreme if we just pay attention to our own habits.

When a president or former president dies, or when any great dignitary or wealthy person dies, family and friends are not the only ones covered in mourning cloth. Instead even the animals are. The presidential horse, Sergeant York, is adorned in black, and the shoes of the dead president are hung backwards over it.

What brute beasts cannot learn of God’s judgment through reason, they are still expected to learn at the hand of the master through the wearing of the sackcloth and the withholding of their food. And the words are all-encompassing. The animals mentioned include every animal possessed by the people. None were to be exempt. The king understood the people’s customs always included their animals, And so how much more should their repentance include them.

⁷ (con’t) **do not let them eat, or drink water.**

al yiru u-mayim al yishtu – “no do feed and water, no drink.” It is clear from the Bible that the beasts of the earth share in the sins of man, and they thus share in the mercies that God shows towards man. If a city is to be destroyed, the beasts

were not exempt. If the city was to be saved, the beasts would share in that salvation.

⁸ But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God;

Va'yitkasu saqim ha'adam v'ha'behemah v'yiqre-u el elohim b'khazeqah – “And be covered sacks the man and the beast and cry unto God with might.” The verse is clear that both man and beast were to cry unto God. This is the last of six uses of the word *khazqah* in the Bible. It indicates with strength or force. Their cries were to be sharp and strong, even so that the city would resound with the wails.

It is also the last time that sackcloth will be mentioned in the Old Testament. There is a call to repentance which is being answered by a pagan king which is being remarkably used by the Lord to show His erring people, Israel, how they too should act, or to relay to them that the consequences of their own failure to act lie solely with them.

The words of this verse are directly contrasted to what Isaiah records concerning the people of Jerusalem during the time when destruction lay ahead. Nineveh is donning sackcloth, and is in a state of complete repentance, even to the covering of their animals in sackcloth. Isaiah records exactly the opposite in Jerusalem –

““And in that day the Lord God of hosts
Called for weeping and for mourning,
For baldness and for girding with sackcloth.

13 But instead, joy and gladness,
Slaying oxen and killing sheep,
Eating meat and drinking wine:

“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”

14 Then it was revealed in my hearing by the Lord of hosts,
“Surely for this iniquity there will be no atonement for you,
Even to your death,” says the Lord God of hosts.”” Isaiah 22:12-14

They not only failed to mourn and repent, they held a party and feasted on the animals that were left to them. Nineveh, instead of feasting on their beasts, covered them and had them cry out to God. On the surface, though, this doesn't seem to make sense. How can beasts be trained to cry unto God? However, it

naturally follows from the deprivation of food and water. The Bible will explain itself on this. In the book of Joel, for example, it says –

“The beasts of the field also cry out to You,
For the water brooks are dried up,
And fire has devoured the open pastures.” Joel 1:20

The fasting was to continue until the beasts themselves raised their voices and cried out to God. The king understood that the beasts would either cry along with the humans in involuntary restrained feeding and directed humility, or they would cry along with man in destruction imposed upon them by the judgment of God.

^{8 (con't)} yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

v'yashuvu ish mi'darko ha'raah u-min he-khamas asher b'kapehem – “and let turn man from way the evil, and from the violence that in their hands.” Again, these words are given in direct contrast to the words of Isaiah concerning Israel. He uses the exact same term to describe them as the king of Nineveh uses –

“Their webs will not become garments,
Nor will they cover themselves with their works;
Their works *are* works of iniquity,
And the act of violence *is* in their hands.” Isaiah 59:6

Where the king of Nineveh was concerned about the violence in the hands of the people, the hands of those in Israel were filled with it and yet they were unconcerned over it.

In this verse, it specifies the evil ways and violence of the people rather than the animals. But this doesn't mean that the animals were not involved in those acts of wickedness. In at least two ways, they were probably implicated, and the king knowing this, would have been all the more desirous of their being brought into the same state of humility as the people.

First, they were used in sacrifices to the false gods of the people. The king, hearing the proclamation from Jonah, would have come to understand that the true God was calling them to account.

Secondly, what is contrary to nature itself, and that which is ingrained in the human psyche, is the wickedness of bestiality. At least five times in the Law of Moses we read about this crime –

“Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It *is* perversion.” Leviticus 18:23

Mandating that the animals wear sackcloth makes total sense when one realizes that Nineveh’s wickedness surely included this crime along with the crime of sacrificing their animals to false gods. In order to show complete humility at their actions, even the animals, which participated in the people’s wickedness, were clothed in sackcloth. Such perversions, along with all other acts of violence and wickedness, were to be mourned over and repented of.

⁹Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent,

mi yodea yashuv v’nikham ha’elohim – “Who can know will turn and sigh the God.” The king of Nineveh saw that there would be nothing to lose in abasing himself and his kingdom in order to be saved. The simplicity of the message, the Hebrew foreigner who cried it out, and the weight of the conscience in his mind all spoke to the fact that there was no other option than turning away from the course they had followed.

In this verse, we have the second use of the term *ha’elohim*, or “the God” in the book of Jonah. In this chapter, in verse 5 and verse 8, it simply said “God.” However now the king specifically states, “the God.” It is an acknowledgment that even if there are lesser gods, there is One true God. This supreme God has called for destruction on Nineveh, and so it is to Him, that his words are directed. This is in the proclamation which has been sent to all the people of the kingdom.

It is astonishing to me that no Bible translation properly translates this article when it is used. It is showing us a fundamental truth that is found in every culture on earth. Man may not have a right understanding of who God is, but man understands enough to know that there is “the God” above all other gods.

Although the Ninevites didn’t have the prophetic word other than five words uttered from the mouth of Jonah, God’s general revelation of Himself is still

written on the hearts of men. We can deduce things about Him without ever having His full revelation.

And so, with just these five words to convict them and to speak to their hearts, the people have – as a whole, and as directed by their highest leader – demonstrated that they understand enough about this One God to know that He is not only a God of wrath.

They had rain for their crops, they had flowers with countless colors and smells to delight their senses. They had the familiarity of the sun passing over their heads to warm them and illuminate their way during each day. They also had the twinkling of the stars above their heads at night, and the cool breezes to ease the trials of the work day which was behind them.

From these, and ten thousand other hints of His divine grace, they knew that He must be loving and that He must then also be merciful. Each undeserved blessing of creation spoke to them of these things, and so the five terrifying words of this prophet were expected not to be their end, but rather their turning point. And in their turning, hope for another such turning was laid forth...

⁹ (con't) **and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?**

v'shav me'kharon apo v'lo noved – “and turn from burning away, and no perish.” It is no small thing that the words of this pagan king are almost identical to the words of the Lord Himself as directed to the people of Israel.

“Now, therefore,” says the Lord,
“Turn to Me with all your heart,
With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”

¹³ So rend your heart, and not your garments;
Return to the Lord your God,
For He *is* gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger, and of great kindness;
And He relents from doing harm.

¹⁴ Who knows *if* He will turn and relent,
And leave a blessing behind Him—

A grain offering and a drink offering
For the Lord your God?" Joel 2:12-14

The Lord, demonstrating his nature in the words of Joel, was confirming that same nature to Israel as His words were passed on to them. Even though Nineveh only received words of assured judgment, the very fact that the words were uttered showed that mercy could be found.

Thus, He is a hoped-for God of mercy to the pagan world, and He is an avowed God of mercy to His people. If we can know that we are violating His standards and are worthy of condemnation, just as the book of Romans tells us, then we can also know that He is capable of forgiving those transgressions and showing mercy. The people of Nineveh figured this out and called on the true God to turn and relent.

*Gracious and merciful is the unseen God
How surely this is evident to all people if they will but look
Radiant flowers adorn the paths that we trod
And tender grass is to be found by the brook*

*The summer brings crops in abundance from the earth
And the fall brings relief from the summer's heat
Even winter is never a time grace is in famine or dearth
The winter to every youthful heart is a wonderful treat*

*Each meal we have comes from His gracious hand
In abundance or lack, can we then complain?
Why is it so hard for the sons of man to understand?
That God has ordained it all – both joy and pain*

*He does this so that we will seek Him while He may be found
In all ways, if we but look, we see His goodness does abound*

III. Then God Saw Their Works (verse 10)

¹⁰ Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way;

vayar ha'elohim eth maasehem ki shavu mi'darkam ha'raah – “And saw the God the works of them that they turned from the way the evil.” The king had pondered if “the God” would relent of his destructive intent. They had set forth their works of repentance, and they had turned from the evil path which they had trod for far too long.

Their path was evil, but their turn was more than just to another wayward path. Instead, it was a full turn to one which was directed to God and to His throne of mercy. How unlike Israel whose necks continuously remained, and which to this day still remain, stiff-necked toward this same God.

The contrast of what is placed before us is as clear as the finest crystal. The wine in the cup which was mixed for Nineveh on this day was one which was intended for salvation, not destruction. The cup of which Israel would drink after hearing of the sign of the prophet Jonah, on the other hand, would be just the opposite. They would reject the good and receive the bad.

The name of Jonah, being intimately connected to the word *yayin*, or wine, is showing us exactly what wine signifies in Scripture. It is the merging together of grapes which is intended to result in the thing that ought to happen, symbolized by wine. Jonah spoke, and that which ought to happen has come about. Jesus spoke, and the thing that He prophesied would occur likewise came about.

The final words of the chapter confirm that “the God” did, in fact, relent towards Nineveh. They acted; He responded. Salvation, even if just temporal in nature, came to Nineveh.

***10 (fin) and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.**

va'yinakhem ha'elohim al ha'raah asher dibber la'asot la'hem v'lo asah – “And sighed the God of the evil that he had said to do to them, and no did.” Again, the term “the God” is used in this verse. This is speaking of the true God, and the wording is anthropomorphic. The Bible, at times, ascribes human traits to God so that we can understand what has occurred.

God did not relent from the destruction that He had purposed to carry out. Rather, He did not do what He had threatened to do. The threatening was conditional based on the actions of the people. He knew what their actions would be and therefore, there was no change in Him, except from our perspective.

Finally, it is to be noted that the term “God” alone has been used in relation to the Ninevites in this chapter. Unlike chapter 1 where the sailors did call on the Lord, Yehovah, these people have only been placed under the mercy of God. They have not come to understand the covenant name of Yehovah as the sailors did.

This repentance then, even if it was temporary, showed a willingness by the Gentile peoples to accept the Word of God as it was minimally revealed to them. Through that word, they turned from their wicked ways, thus allowing God to demonstrate mercy towards them.

It is an anticipatory picture of the time when Israel would wholly turn from the true God as He revealed Himself in the Person of Jesus, and that this covenant of grace would be directed away from Israel and towards the Gentile people of the world.

He is proving, here and now, that He is the God of both Jew and Gentile. Any who will accept His word, and His revelation of Himself, can be called into a covenant relationship with Him. And this is exactly what occurred in Christ. A New Covenant was established through His shed blood. It is a covenant based on grace alone.

Even with a minimal understanding of the work of Jesus Christ, one can be saved. The gospel is for the neurosurgeon and for the numbskull alike. Whatever level of education, or lack of it, that we possess, we are all welcome by a mere act of faith. So don't muddy the waters when witnessing. Keep the gospel message simple, and keep it understandable.

The Word of God has come. He has walked among us, and He asks us to believe that He is capable of saving us, not because we deserve it, but because He is the God of grace and mercy. If nothing else demonstrates this to us, surely the cross of Christ must.

God was willing to turn from the destruction of Nineveh because they turned from their evil ways. How much more will God save us from His wrath when we accept the punishment which He has already carried out in His own Son for those who believe? Let us not fail in calling out to Him and receiving the greater salvation which comes from the shed blood of Calvary's cross.

Closing Verse: "Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. ⁹ For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10

Next Week: Jonah 4:1-4 *Never think that His goodness is odd. He is...* (A Gracious and Merciful God) (9th Jonah Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean rages against you and is ready to swallow you up, He can send delivery to you in the most remarkable of ways. So follow Him and trust Him, and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Repentance of Nineveh

So the people of Nineveh believed God
Proclaimed a fast; sackcloth they put on
From the greatest to the least of them
These garments of humility they did don

Then word came to the king of Nineveh
And he arose from his throne
And laid aside his robe
Covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes
His humility was openly shown

And he caused it to be proclaimed
And published throughout Nineveh
By the decree of the king and his nobles, saying

Yes, these are the words he did say

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything
Do not let them eat, or drink water
Nothing to your lips you shall bring

But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth
And cry mightily to God; we know He understands
Yes, let everyone turn from his evil way
And from the violence that is in his hands

Who can tell if God will turn and relent
And turn away from His fierce anger
So that we may not perish; so that mercy can be sent
Then God saw their works
That they turned from their evil way
And God relented from the disaster that He had said
He would bring upon them, and He did not do it that day

Lord God, how gracious You are to save those who will but turn
If we abandon the reckless path which we are on
Help us to think on this, and then to learn
Before the number of our days is expired and gone

Now, yes now is the time of salvation
And to You with hearts grateful and full we turn
Praises to You, O God, from the grateful nation
Of people from all lands, whose hearts for You burn

Thank You for Christ Jesus our Lord
And for the gospel message found in Your superior word

Hallelujah and Amen...