

Chapter 14

NINEVEH'S REPENTANCE: ITS EXPRESSIONS

We continue in the third chapter of the Book of Jonah starting in verse 5, and we will look at the subject of "Nineveh's Repentance, Its Expressions."

So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 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. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one 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?"

In the last lesson, we looked at the causes of Nineveh's repentance. The causes, which could be comprehended by the Ninevites, came to them by the means of the revealed message, or what we call the word of God. Those causes were twofold. Number one, the Ninevites believed that God's threats of destruction were real. Number two, they believed God's revealed character was that He delighted in showing mercy to repenting sinners. True Biblical preaching requires that both the terrors and the mercies of God be set forth to sinners, and that sinners must believe both of these aspects before they will repent. It is an unbalanced preaching which only majors on the terrors to the exclusion of the mercies, or which majors on the mercies of God to the exclusion of His terrors.

We saw also that faith to repent can be motivated by the principles of fear, grief, love, and/or trust. We saw then that the effectual call to repentance came from the secret mysterious power of the Holy Spirit renewing the spiritual and moral natures wherein a desire to please God is produced. Thus, the glory for Nineveh's repentance is to be given to God's power and not to the ability of man's will.

Now we want to turn the coin over and look at the other side of repentance, which is the expression or the effects of true Biblical repentance. We will look at it under three headings, its expression in the lives of the Ninevites in (1) its ceremonial pattern, (2) its prayerful expression, and (3) its moral or spiritual expression.

First of all, Nineveh's repentance expressed itself in ceremonial or/and formal expression. This is seen in the decree of the king in verses 6 and 7. Some teachers would have us understand that the revival in Nineveh began in the lives of the populace and then it spread to the king. This premise is based on verse 5 where it states "***the people of***

Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh." I disagree with that approach because verse 6 begins with a defining cause. For word came unto the king, he arose and issued the decree, and through that national decree he proclaimed a fast. It wasn't that the people proclaimed the fast, but the king proclaimed the fast, and then this spread throughout the city. Now the king's decree in verse 6 is that ***"the 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. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king."*** You can see that it began with a decree. The people are disturbed about Jonah's preaching. The commotion reaches the king, he calls his cabinet in. They discuss the matter and believe that Jonah's preaching is true. Therefore, the king issues an edict that on behalf of the whole city government, individuals are to humble themselves, confess their sins, clothe themselves with sackcloth and ashes, and begin a great fast. They have come to the conclusion that Jonah is telling the truth, and that they had better submit to God in unconditional surrender. The decree is then issued proclaiming a set time of fasting in which neither humans nor animals are to partake of food or water. The king further decrees that both man and beast be covered with sackcloth and ashes. The reason was to produce a scratchy and uncomfortable sensation to the flesh. In turn, this would produce a desire to be delivered from this discomfort. This was to outwardly signify one's inward consciousness of sin and humility before God, which would ultimately lead one to cry out to God for mercy, to receive relief from the discomfort brought on by their sin and its guilt. So when a sinner is brought to a place of moral conviction, he becomes very uncomfortable in that set of circumstances. He then is brought to cry out unto God for deliverance from the discomfort of a guilty conscience to be right in the sight of God. Therefore, again we state, the reason for the sackcloth and ashes was designed to produce this physical sensation, so that men and beast might cry out unto God to be delivered from the affliction which the sackcloth and ashes would bring about.

Then we read in verse 6 that the decree of the king arose from his throne, and he took off his kingly robe. This was an acknowledgment by the Gentile king that he was responsible to rule his people by the moral laws of the God of heaven and earth, and that he had failed to do so. In taking these actions, stepping from his throne and removing his robe, he was saying that he was stepping down from his rule and submitting to the authority of the higher power, that of God Himself.

The use of the word "robe" in the book of Jonah is the Hebrew word "*addereth*," and is the same word used to describe the "Babylonish garment" which Achan took during the destruction of Jericho, which led to his execution for disobedience to God. Look in Joshua

7:21, and you will find the expression "**a beautiful Babylonian garment,**" which was the accursed thing which Achan took. This was an elaborate external overcoat worn only by the leading governmental official to designate his royal authority. In the case of Jericho, this city had defied the authority of God, and everything about the city was dedicated to destruction by God. Thus, nothing was to be spared. The goods, the spoil and everything was to be totally burned because of Jericho's defiance against God's authority.

When Achan took the garment for himself, he was identifying himself with that defiant authority of Jericho, and thereby brought destruction upon himself and his family. This explanation will help you to better understand why Achan and his family suffered such a severe punishment.

So when the king of Nineveh removed this magnificent royal robe from his body, it was a sign of his submission to God's authority. The next statement we read is, he "**covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.**" The wearing of sackcloth among the Oriental people, was a sign of mourning and humiliation. Sackcloth was a very rough, hairy and scratchy material designed on purpose to produce discomfort. It might be comparable to what we call "burlap" today. When Jacob was told the lie that his son, Joseph, had been killed, we read in Genesis 37:34, "**Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days.**" The significance of wearing sackcloth was associated with mourning.

Also, we read about King Ahab's repentance in I Kings 21:27-29. Ahab was a very wicked king, and yet he was humbled for a period of time which led to repentance. "**So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house.'**"

You see it is not only a sign of mourning, it is a sign of humiliation, and Ahab manifested this before God. So to put on sackcloth would be to acknowledge that one has been humbled by his circumstances, and he is brought to sorrow and mourning over it.

Along with the practice of wearing sackcloth, an accompanying practice of sprinkling ashes on one's body was frequently observed as a sign of grief, humiliation and repentance. I will quote only one passage in Job to support this position. We read that when Job was rebuked by God that he said, "**Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.**" (Job 42:6). That is, with the sprinkling of the ashes on himself, Job was saying, "I have come to see that I am the one who has come short, therefore I repent of my attitude toward you." So repentance, grief and humiliation were associated with the sign of the sprinkling of ashes upon one's flesh.

Next we read that the king proclaimed a fast and said, **"Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, nor drink water."** Here we are not only introduced to sackcloth and ashes, but also to a fast. Fasting means to practice self-denial by abstaining from food and/or water for a specified period of time. The practice of fasting is found in the Bible. It is not a simple, but a very complex subject, in that it is performed for several reasons well beyond the scope of our time and our interest to pursue. The reasons I am going to give you in this lesson are associated with the subject at hand, which is repentance. However, there are numerous other grounds for fasting set forth in the Bible.

Among other things, fasting becomes an external expression of grief to show to others the inner emotion of sorrow. Let me state that again. One of the reasons that people fasted in the Bible, was to show to others an external expression of grief and an inner emotion of sorrow. In II Samuel 3:35 we read that at the death of Abner, David demonstrated his grief by fasting. We also read in the Bible that when joined with prayer, fasting is viewed as a means to influence God to grant petitions. This is also seen in the life of David in the death of his child. Look in II Samuel 12:14-16 for an example of a sign of grief and also an indication of the sincerity and desire of the heart to have God grant the individual's desires. **"However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die.' Then Nathan departed to his house. And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill. David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground."** David mourned when Abner died, but when his child lay dying, David fasted. Therefore, fasting is not limited to times of death and funerals. David fasted and presented himself before the Lord before death came. Verses 17-19 **"So the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them. Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, 'Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!' When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, 'Is the child dead?' And they said, 'He is dead.'"** What would then have been the natural thing for David to do like he did at Abner's death? Would he begin to extend the fast, or begin to mourn. But David did not do that. Look at what he does in verse 20. **"So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate."** The fast was over. Verse 21 - **"Then his servants**

said to him, 'What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food.'" They were saying "David, you have this thing all backwards." Look at David's answer in verse 22 - **"And he said, 'While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?'"** That is the same expression that is used in the book of Jonah about Nineveh's repentance. **"Who can tell?"** This indicated that the Ninevites believed that there was hope that God may grant repentance. Now we read in verse 23 - **"But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."** Do you see his reasoning in fasting? It was a connection with his prayer that God would be merciful and spare the child. When he did not spare the child, David said that there was no need for him to fast any longer.

I believe that there are three or four other passages in the Bible that can demonstrate that fasting, joined with prayer, was designed to influence God out of the sincerity of the heart that perhaps God might hear and answer the petition of the heart. Thus, in Nineveh's case, the combination of the fast, the sackcloth and the ashes, were all external signs to demonstrate the inward emotions of grief, humiliation and sorrow over their sin.

Now we look again at the extent of repentance in this ceremonial or formal expression of Nineveh's repentance. In Jonah 3:5, we read that the expression of their repentance was **"from the greatest to the least of them."** What a sight to behold! Earlier in this study we described that the city of Nineveh was the world's greatest city on the face of the earth at that time. What a sight to behold - the greatest city in the world, noted for its pride, its arrogance, and its violence, clothed in sackcloth and ashes. Can you visualize its inhabitants fasting and praying unto God for mercy? Can you visualize something similar to that ever happening in Washington, D.C.? Can you imagine the news commentators having their cameras focused on that scene, if a revival broke out in Washington, and everyone from the President, down through Congress, and right on down to the bum in the street, were clothed in sackcloth and ashes? On every street corner, you would hear people crying out to God, "O have mercy upon us!" That would attract some attention. That is what is happening in Nineveh, the greatest city in the world. They were crying out to God for mercy. This is of such universal proportions that it extended from the lowest servant to the king on the throne. Hugh Martin rightly observes that the repentance of Nineveh was one of the most singular events in history.

The repentance of Nineveh is one of the most singular events in history. A great and proud city suddenly smitten into the most profound humiliation from the greatest of its inhabitants unto the least of them - from the King on

the throne to its meanest citizen - is a spectacle to which, I suppose history affords no parallel. (Martin, *The Prophet Jonah*, p. 260).

I concur with that. We will comment more on that in the series as it develops, but there has never been a revival in the history of the human race to compare with what happened in the city of Nineveh. You may ask, "what about the day of Pentecost when three thousand were converted?" But in the city of Nineveh there were hundreds of thousands. There has never been a moving of God in church history like there was in the city of Nineveh. I am not ignorant of church history where revivals have occurred, and how influential they have been in those geographical regions. There has never been a city in the Old Testament or New Testament where there was a moving of God like what occurred in the city of Nineveh.

We have looked at the ceremonial expression of Nineveh's repentance. Next let us look at the verbal or prayerful expression, the cry of the people, found in verse 8: **"But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God."** Along with their fasting and their mourning, they must join in prayer and supplication to God. For while fasting is designed to serve the body, the duty of prayer is the role of the soul's service to God. Man commits sin in both body and soul, so he must repent in both body and soul. In their bodies they fasted, and in prayer they ministered to the needs of the inner man, the soul. It is the duty of a sinner to express his repentance in the form of prayer. In Nineveh's case, they must cry mightily to God for the pardon of their sins, which were crying mightily against them and crying out for their destruction. Matthew Henry remarks:

It was time to cry to God when there was but a step between them and ruin - high time to seek the Lord. In prayer we must cry mightily, with a fixedness of thought, firmness of faith, and fervor of pious and devout affections. By crying mightily we wrestle with God; we take hold of Him; and we are concerned to do so when He is not only departing from us as a friend, but coming forth against us as an enemy. (Henry, *Commentary on Jonah*).

In Matthew 11:12 it is written, **"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."** Nobody enters into the kingdom passively. Regeneration is an active work of God in which man IS passive, but no man enters into the kingdom of God passively. If you are going to enter into the kingdom, you must actively want it and pursue it. You cannot sit on a stump and say, "if I am elect, it will all work out." It may work out to your own destruction. If you would have God, you must seek Him. You must actively take the kingdom by violence. That is activity, not passivity. While prayer is not in itself a savior, it cries out to the one who saves. Don't look to your prayers to save you, but you must cry out to the One who saves through prayer. Thus, no conscious sinner is

saved without calling upon the name of the Lord. The scriptures declare in Romans 10:13, **"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."** I say again, no conscious sinner is saved without calling upon the name of the Lord.

We have looked at the prayer of the people, now let us look at the cry of the animals. Animals do not pray, but they do cry. We read in the king's decree **"Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God."** The king's decree imposed a very strict fast forbidding both food and water to both people and the animals. This was extended to the animals, so that upon being deprived of their basic needs, they might cry out for deliverance and make the affliction and mourning even greater. If you have animals and have compassion toward them, you know that it bothers you greatly when they get hungry and begin to moan, whine, moo and bellow. The affliction on the animals was designed to bring the intensity of the mourning, grief and threatened destruction to the consciousness of the Ninevites.

The scriptures frequently speak of God's watch and care over the animal creation. Psalm 147:9 we read: **"He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry."** God feeds the little birds in the nest that cry out to Him. You may think that it is the mother or daddy birds that bring the worms and all the food, but who do you think providentially directs the mother and daddy bird to do that? This text says that **"He (God) gives to the beast its food."**

Now we need to try to visualize this scene that is taking place in Nineveh. Put on your thinking caps for just a moment. Try to visualize the scene in Nineveh as the fast grows longer and longer. The loud cries of men and animals fill the entire region of Nineveh. If you have been raised on a farm, you know the sound of the livestock when they are not fed on time. In the city of Nineveh you have the moans and the howls of cattle, sheep, chickens and all the animals crying out for relief. God describes in Joel 1:18-20 what happens when animals are deprived of food and water: **"How the animals groan! The herds of cattle are restless, because they have no pasture; even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment. O Lord, to You I cry out; for fire has devoured the open pastures, and a flame has burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field also cry out to You, for the water brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the open pastures."** When you combine the cries of the animals with that of the infants, children and adults in the city, you have one massive, groaning wave after another going up before God seeking mercy and release from the discomfort. When an atomic bomb explodes, you have seen the pictures of the cloud that ascends up denoting tremendous destruction that has taken place in the spot where it has exploded. That cloud mushrooms

up through the other clouds into the heavens. Rather than a physical cloud, try to imagine a verbalized, audible cloud of moaning wave after wave of animals and men crying out unto the Creator in heaven for relief and mercy. This is what is happening in Nineveh.

Since animals are not moral creatures, you may ask why the animals are suffering for the sins of the Ninevites? The answer is that all creatures suffer from the judgment brought about by whatever sin was brought upon the created order. When Adam sinned, a curse was placed by God upon the whole created order. The first animals that suffered pain and death were the ones that God killed and used their skins to clothe Adam and Eve. How do you think this affected Adam and Eve? Adam evidently had a very close relationship with the animals that he was given the privilege of naming. They were tame, because at that time no ferociousness was taking place in the animal kingdom. How do you think Adam and Eve were made to feel when they were clothed with the skins of the animals? The very clothes which they wore reminded them that they were responsible for the suffering that existed in the lower kingdom of the animals.

The Apostle Paul states in Romans 8:22: ***"For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now."*** What makes the whole creation groan and travail in pain together? It was because of the curse that God had placed upon it. That curse was implemented when man fell into sin in the garden. When God created man and the animals, He limited their food to the fruit and vegetables that were found in the garden. Look in Genesis 1:29-30. ***"And God said, 'See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food'; and it was so."*** God commanded a total vegetarian diet on the part of men and animals. It was not until after the flood in the days of Noah that man was permitted by God to use the animals for food consumption. We read God's statement to Noah after he came out of the ark in Genesis 9:2-4 - ***"And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."*** In other words, they were not to eat raw meat which had not been drained of the blood.

This may cause some of you problems with your views on the age of the earth and whether death was in existence in the animal kingdom before the fall. You need to be very careful in trying to reconcile the "so-called" findings of modern science with the Bible, because you

may undermine a very important theological doctrine about when death entered into God's created order. In light of what I have just said, you cannot hold to the idea that the dinosaurs lived and died hundreds of millions of years before Adam came on the scene. Death entered into the creation of God at the fall of man as a universal curse, not a curse implemented in stages. This contradicts the gap theory which I formerly held to until I was shown how that concept affected your theological perspective. I believe this is very critical, because it undermines the understanding that when God lifts the curse, the lifting will likewise be universal and not by stages.

There was no suffering in the first paradise in Eden because there was no sin. In the paradise to come in the new heaven and the new earth, there will again be no suffering because there will be no sin. Everyone should concur with that. I personally believe that Isaiah 11:6-9 is a description of the time to come when the curse shall be lifted and the creation shall no longer groan in pain. We read there: ***"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."*** It appears that not only the destruction of animals by man will be no longer, but the animals will no longer destroy each other. However, in the time in which we are now living, between Eden's paradise and the paradise in the new heaven and earth, the curse on sin is still in place. The punishment in this life, which is being inflicted upon fallen angels and men, spills over into the lower kingdom of the creatures known as the animals.

While God has authorized the use of the animals for work, food and sacrificial worship, it was never intended that man should forget what exposed the lower creatures to such affliction. It is evident that we have done that, because there has rarely been any teaching brought forth regarding this subject in the current generation and the Christian church. Under the old covenant, the Levitical priests were permitted to eat the bodies of the animals which were sacrificed to God. However, when the priest saw someone bringing a lamb to the sacrificial altar, he was to be thinking, "here comes a sinner with his sacrificial victim that is going to suffer." The priest's conscience was to be reminded afresh that his sin had caused suffering in the animal kingdom. So rather than mistreating and inflicting unnecessary and unauthorized pain, suffering and death upon the animals, we should respect the lives of the animals as creatures of God. When they must be destroyed for legitimate reasons authorized by the scripture, it should sadden us to see what our sin has

done to the animals. I suggest to you that a serious study of God's word should be done by Christians to understand God's role for the animals, and how men are to treat them. I wish time would allow us to go through the Old Testament to see that God was intimately involved in the lives of the animals. We find one example in Deuteronomy 22:6 - **"If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself."** God was forbidding the Israelites to kill the mother bird. They were permitted to take the eggs or the young birds, but they had to leave the mother bird to breed again.

We have the idea that animals are here just for our sport and pleasure, and whatever we want to do with them. I wonder what God thinks of the opening of dove season? We did not eat doves in the part of the country where I came from, but some people eat them here in Alabama. I have seen hundreds of doves shot on opening day and left in piles to rot just to fill the lust and greed of what is called sport. Beloved, I submit to you that God is concerned about the mother bird and her offspring, and He has laid it out in the Bible and said, **"that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days."** (Deuteronomy 22:7). God takes cognizant of how human beings handle the lower creatures known as the animals. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, **"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will."** (Matthew 10:29). God takes awareness of every bird that falls from its nest. I suggest again a serious study of God's Word concerning the animals. What did Jesus say about how God cares for the oxen? Luke 14:5 - **"Then He answered them, saying, 'Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?'"** If anyone finds an ox in a ditch, it is their responsibility to relieve the misery of that ox. God cares for animals.

You may ask then, "why are the animals involved in the repentance of Nineveh? Because it is Nineveh's sins which have exposed the animals to suffering and affliction. In leaving this point, I suggest that every time we drive down the road and see an animal that has been hit by a car, it ought to remind us that it is our sins that caused that. Where did death come from? It came from Adam. One famous person named Lord Bacon in England said that he would never judge a person's Christianity until he saw how he treated his pets. He went on to say, "Show me how a man treats his cats and dogs, and I will tell you whether that man has been saved or not." If God has condescended to show pity and mercy to you, how can we then turn around and kick the dogs and cats and have no compassion upon them? Incidentally, I grew up as a very active hunter. I am not an animal rights advocate of worshiping animals. I am not an individual that believes there are certain breeds that

have to be kept under population control and things of this nature. Again, I find it extremely difficult just to wantonly and indiscriminately destroy animals just for the fun of it.

Lastly, let us examine the moral and spiritual expression of the repentance of Nineveh. We have seen the ceremonial and the prayerful expression, now the moral expression. Look at the latter part of verse 8: **"let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands."** This demands a moral reformation. Repentance means a change of mind. A new attitude toward God, one's self and one's sin. One cannot turn to God without leaving his sin. Isaiah 55:6-7 states: **"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."** Every sinner has an evil way that they have chosen, are addicted to, and walk therein. What are the Ninevites to do? They must restore what they have unjustly taken. They must not defraud others in business dealings. They must not oppress others over whom they have power. They must stop lying about others. They must stop robbing from others. They must stop mocking others. They must stop killing others and start doing unto others as they would have others do unto them. This is what God is calling for, because God's holy law demands it. In essence, they are to begin to love and to treat their neighbors as themselves. Love is the fulfilling of the law. The manifestation of a repentant spirit is seen in the words of Zacchaeus, the little man who climbed up in the Sycamore tree. He states: **"Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house."** (Luke 19:8-9). Notice the Lord Jesus Christ did not pronounce him saved until He heard that confession. Zacchaeus was a tax collector and had defrauded many people. In order to show Jesus that his confession was genuine, Zacchaeus said he was going to restore fourfold to those whom he had overtaxed. Jesus said salvation had expressed itself, it had come to his house.

This is where modern evangelism has missed the mark, and it explains why there is no ethical difference today between the church and the world. In our culture today, there is absolutely no difference between the way church members live and the way people outside the churches live. Modern evangelism has missed the mark because it has omitted the doctrine of repentance. It has left out the doctrine of Christ's lordship and repentance from sin. Some even insist that the call for moral change from what they call "errors" is legalism. Do you think for a moment that the Ninevites believed that God would spare their city from destruction if they merely fasted and prayed, but did not turn from their evil ways? Do you think that they believed God would spare them if they continued to live in

their evil ways? That is exactly what modern evangelism is saying today. You can say a sinner's prayer, go through the waters of baptism and continue to live like the devil, but yet believe that you got saved. Beloved, the Ninevites were more enlightened than the gospel hearers of this generation. This explains why there is no ethical difference in the lives of the converts in current Christianity. They are not told to forsake sin, therefore, there is no expectation of doing so. The real test of repentance is the forsaking of sin. It is not enough to fast and pray. In order for our prayers to be heard, we must not regard iniquity in our hearts. Before John the Baptist would administer the formal ceremony of baptism, the person to be baptized had to confess his or her sins. When the Pharisees and Sadducees presented themselves to John for baptism, he refused to baptize them. **"He said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.'" (Matthew 3:7-8).**

Multitudes of people are being baptized today under the name of the Christian church who have never been confronted with the wrath of God upon their sin, nor with their duty to repent and forsake that sin. No wonder there is no ethical change taking place in people's lives.

In summary, while no formal ceremony, no prayer, no amount of moral reformation can produce spiritual life, true spiritual life will manifest itself in prayer, in formal ceremonies and in moral change. It was unheard of in the times of the Apostles for someone to refuse to be baptized after making a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you truly called on the Lord, you participated in the ceremony of baptism, and by doing so, you were confessing that you were changing the way that you lived. The old man has died and a new man is walking away from the scene to live in newness of life. Confession, a ceremony and a transformed moral reformation is the application that is needed for gospel preaching under the new covenant era. Let us pray.