

POWER HOUR

11/10/2024

Lesson Text:
Jonah 3:1-10

Background Scripture:
Esther 4:1-3; Jeremiah 18:7-10

Devotional Reading:
Amos 7:1-6; Nahum 1:7-14;
John 21:15-17

“NINEVEH REPENTS”

NLT TRANSLATION

Golden Text: *When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened. Jonah 3:10 NLT*

Time: 780 B.C.

Place: Nineveh and vicinity

Jonah 3:1-10 NLT

1 Then the Lord spoke to Jonah a second time: **2** “Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh, and deliver the message I have given you.” **3** This time Jonah obeyed the Lord's command and went to Nineveh, a city so large that it took three days to see it all. **4** On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: “Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!” **5** The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they declared a fast and put on burlap to show their sorrow. **6** When the king of Nineveh heard what Jonah was saying, he stepped down from his throne and took off his royal robes. He dressed himself in burlap and sat on a heap of ashes. **7** Then the king and his nobles sent this decree throughout the city: “No one, not even the animals from your herds and flocks, may eat or drink anything at all. **8** People and animals alike must wear garments of mourning, and everyone must pray earnestly to God. They must turn from their evil ways and stop all their violence. **9** Who can tell? Perhaps even yet God will change his mind and hold back his fierce anger from destroying us.” **10** When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most encouraging things we learn about God in His Word is how willingly He gives a second chance to those who have been disobedient. This is one characteristic that set Him apart from the pagan gods of the nations that surrounded Israel. Those gods were often viewed as continuously angry and vindictive.

The list of people in the Bible to whom God gave second chances is lengthy. It begins with Adam and Eve, Cain, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph's brothers. Soon we read about Moses, Miriam, and Aaron. Later, God gave second chances to Elijah, David, and Manasseh. In the New Testament, God continues to work with Peter, John Mark, Paul, and others. Each life is a study of God's mercy and grace.

We fit right in. God has forgiven all who believe in Christ and offers them second chances. God's grace toward Jonah should produce deep gratitude in every heart.

The proclamation of Jonah (Jonah 3:1-4). Jonah 2 ends with the great fish vomiting Jonah onto dry land. God then commissioned Jonah a second time to go to Nineveh and proclaim His message. This time Jonah obeyed.

Nineveh is described as "an exceeding great city of three days' journey (Jonah 3:3). A typical city of this time would have been a relatively small area enclosed by high walls to protect from enemies, constituting the city proper. The residents of the surrounding district, mostly farmers and shepherds, would also be considered part of the city. It would thus take Jonah a journey of three days to cover the entire area.

After Jonah walked one day, he proclaimed the message that God had given him: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). Initially, this appears to be an unconditional statement. However, the fact that God sent this warning forty days in advance implies the opportunity for repentance.

2. The response of the Ninevites (Jonah 3:5-9). The people believed Jonah's message and demonstrated their repentance by fasting and donning sackcloth. Because of the widespread response, the message spread much faster than it would have if it had been dependent on Jonah's proclamation alone. It quickly reached the ears of the king, who also donned sackcloth and sat in ashes. His decree formalized what was already happening and commanded repentance from the whole city, including the animals! The people's hope was clearly expressed by these words of the king: "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish

not?" (Jonah 3:9)

3. The relenting of God (Jonah 3:10). The hope of the Ninevites was fulfilled! God saw the outward deeds that demonstrated the people's inward repentance and relented of the calamity that He had proclaimed against the city through Jonah.

This passage teaches us several important lessons about God's love for the lost. First, His purposes are never thwarted. Though Jonah initially fled from God's mission, God made sure that he went and preached His message to the Ninevites. Second, God is holy and must punish evildoers, but He is also long-suffering and merciful. The fact that He sent Jonah to warn the Ninevites of impending destruction demonstrates that He takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11).

Third, God is willing to relent from His judgment of those who genuinely turn from their evil ways, for "the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works"

(Psalms 145:8-9)

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Because God is gracious, our past does not disqualify us from serving Him now (Jonah 3:1).
2. Obey God, do not compromise His message under pressure, and trust His power to protect you from all enemies (Jonah 3:2-4).
3. Speak the gospel plainly, trusting God to move hearts (Jonah 3:5).
4. God's Word is for everyone (Jonah 3:6).
5. Our compassionate God desires that every sinner repent and turn to Him (Jonah 3:7-9).
6. Share the gospel freely, knowing that God responds in love to those who repent (Jonah 3:10).

CONCLUSION

Jonah showed a lack of concern for the lost; God, in contrast, showed great concern and compassion for them. Most of us are probably more like Jonah. We may have had a greater love for the lost at one time, but our concern tends to weaken.

Renewing our love for the lost starts with renewing our love for at least one lost person. Is there an unsaved person in your life who you could reach out to? Let us all take time

right now to identify one person for whom we might have greater spiritual concern and to think of ways to express it.

QUESTION(S)

- What was different about God's second command to Jonah compared to His first one?
- What made Jonah's assignment so difficult for him?
- What was the specific message God had Jonah give Nineveh?
- Why did God allow a grace period of forty days, and what does that reveal about Him?
- What three things did the people of Nineveh do after hearing Jonah's message?
- What did the king do?
- What did the fasting and wearing of sackcloth indicate, and why were the animals included, and why were the animals included?
- What was the king's rationale for ordering the things he did?
- What was God's response?
- How do we explain the fact that God repented of what He had said?

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson is *"Jonah Is Angry with God"* We will continue our time in the book of Jonah next week by examining Jonah 4 and seeing the way God's love embraces even His enemies.

Lesson Text: *Jonah 4:1-11*

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