

We Need A Sign – Jonah 3.4-9

3 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” ³So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” ⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. ⁶The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, ⁸but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”

¹⁰When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it (Jonah 3.1-10, ESV).¹

Memory Verse: And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. (Jonah 3.5, ESV)

Jonah preached a simple message, we do not know the exact words God told him, but God did say, “call out against it...” (vs. 2). Here we see Jonah telling the people of Nineveh they have forty days before God would destroy them. Now think about this, how would we respond if someone was to come into our school or place of work and say, “God says, “forty days and you all will be destroyed!”

We would think the person was crazy, out of their mind, lost their way, needs to be sent back to the funny farm. We would never take someone like that very seriously. But yet, the people of Nineveh did just that, they took Jonah at his word. They believed God would destroy them and they needed to change their ways or else all would be over. Not just for them but for their children and their grandchildren.

Jesus was talking with the Pharisees and they asked Him to give them a sign so they might believe He really was who He said He was. Of course, they had seen Him drive out demons, heal the sick, give the blind their sight, cause the lame to walk and so on. But nevertheless, they wanted a sign to know who He was.

Jesus replied, “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so, shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here (Matthew 12.39-41, KJV).²

When the people of Nineveh heard the message of Jonah (Jonas), they “Believed God” and called for a fast. They called all the people of the city to stop what they were doing and focus on

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jon 3:1–10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² [The Holy Bible: King James Version](#). (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Mt 12:39–41). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

the bad things, to understand why God, the God of Heaven, who Jonah was preaching about was ready to destroy them. This is why they were fasting, to remove their focus from themselves and place it upon God.

However, they did not just fast they also put on sackcloth, to show their humbleness and repentance for all the bad they have done. They knew they could do nothing to change the past, but maybe, just maybe God was willing to spare them if He saw how willing they were to change their ways.

This attitude was not just for the people, but for everyone from the king on down. The king got up off of his throne, removed his robe and covered himself in sackcloth and sat in ashes (vs.6). He then issued a decree that everyone else do the same and “call out mightily to God” (vs. 8). They were not to just offer some simple prayer or even a mediocre prayer, but were to call out with a loud voice, all of them seeking God’s mercy and grace to turn from His fierce anger.

There is something to be said when the leader will get down on his or her knees and cry out to God. When they will be broken before God, leading by example, it makes it much easier for others to follow them, to obey them and want to be like them. Jesus Christ led us by example when He died on the cross, not fighting, arguing, cursing, or complaining. He just died for us, and was buried, and rose on the third day by the power of the Father. He has given us such a great example to follow, just as the king of Nineveh gave his people. Will we follow the example Christ has given us or are we going to be like the Pharisees and demand a sign?

Application

1. When is the last time you really cried out to God for something? Did He answer you? What was the answer? Please explain.
2. Have you ever fasted (other than medical)? If so, what was the reason for the fast and the outcome? What type of fast did you do, for how long, and what did you experience during the fast? Please explain.
3. **Deeper Thinking:** Read II Samuel 12.1-22—explain how these verses are similar to Jonah 3.4-9? How did King David and the King of Nineveh respond the same to their situations?
4. Commit to memory Jonah 3.5 and seek ways to share the gospel at school this week.

Prayer

SOVEREIGN Ruler, Lord of all, Prostrate at Thy feet I fall; Hear, oh, hear my earnest cry; Frown not, lest I faint and die. Vilest of the sons of men, Chief of sinners I have been; Oft have sinn’d before Thy face, Trampled on Thy richest grace. Justly might Thy fatal dart Pierce this bleeding, broken heart; Justly might Thy angry breath Blast me in eternal death. Jesus, save my dying soul; Make my broken spirit whole; Humbled in the dust I lie; Saviour, leave me not to die.³ Oh Lord I humbly pray help me to continue to seek You ever day; to serve You in every circumstance without question or fear and to share Your gospel with others. In Your Son Jesus Christ’s Name I pray, Amen.

³ Spurgeon, C. H. (1883). *Our Own Hymn Book: A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public, Social and Private Worship*. London: Passmore & Alabaster.