

**Thursday 7/09/20**

**SERIES: CHARACTER OVER COMPROMISE**

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**TITLE: Can I Get a Witness Pt. 2**

Yesterday we learned that witnessing for God isn't a suggestion – it's a command! So we will get opportunities to obey that command. But as humans, we will pull a Jonah and go the other way from time to time. Thankfully, God's grace – it is sufficient! And he says, "Do better now my child. Here is a second chance. Follow me!"

And in Jonah 3, that's exactly where Jonah is at. He's got his second chance. Now the question is, will he obey? Let's look at Jonah 3, starting at verse 3.

So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city,<sup>[a]</sup> three days' journey in breadth.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>4</sup> Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" <sup>5</sup> 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.

This time, Jonah's response is immediate obedience. Whether he received this word moments after being thrown up on the shore or whether he took a couple months to recoup back at home, as soon as He hears the call of the Lord the second time, he immediately gets up and goes to Nineveh.

He gets to this great city. Commentators don't agree if the city was great because of its physical size, its population, or its influence. I believe it could be any or all of these reasons. The point is that the city was of importance to God. That's what matters.

He goes into the city and by the end of the day he declares just 8 words: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" Five words in English – eight words in Hebrew. And what's the response? According to verse 5 "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 comes in and declares 8 words from God and the response is belief and immediate repentance. Here's what I want you to see: God's Word is the power. You and I are not.

All it took for Nineveh to believe was just 5 Hebrew words of God to change. We don't know how Jonah declared it. We don't know if he just wandered from key locations in the city shouting these 5 words or whether he went to a central spot and just yelled them once or a thousand times. All we know these are the words he declared, and the people responded.

God's Word is the power. Jonah wasn't the power. His preaching wasn't the power. God's word was. God simply asked for Jonah to be the obedient servant to bring the Word. God's Word is the power.

Look at this: Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Romans 1:16 says, "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."

One more: 1 Peter 1:23 says, "Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."

God's word is the power. You and I are not.

It's not how funny you are. How good looking you are. It doesn't matter how smart you are. It doesn't matter how polished and rehearsed you are.

Those things are inconsequential. Why? It's the Word of God that is the power. God's Word is the Power because God alone is the one who does the saving.

Remember what you studied last week in Jonah 2. Jonah said this in Jonah 2:9, "Salvation belongs to the LORD!"

John 1:12-13 says, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

Jesus said in John 6:37, 44 says, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."

There is nothing you and I can do to save anyone. No begging or pleading or perfect presentation that will save anyone. You can't convince anyone into heaven. You can't love anyone into heaven. Scripture is clear. Salvation comes by God's calling and power in response to receiving His Word.

When I remember this, it takes all the fear out of evangelism. You know what the definition of evangelism don't you? It is two nervous people talking to each other.

Evangelism causes great anxiety, but when you remember that God has put you in specific places at specific times for everyday outreach, it makes it fun. You get to play in the areas God's wired you and gifted you all the while sharing His Word – the gospel when He asks you to. You play while God does the work of saving people.

1 Corinthians 3 says that you and I are simply to scatter seed and water as we go through life. We get no credit for saving anyone. God does the saving. That's what Paul said. Knowing and believing this removes the fear and nervousness of evangelism. God simply asks you to be obedient by bringing His Word to those in your spheres of influence who are far from God.

This is exactly what Jonah did. He went where God called Him to go and preach His Word and God did the rest!

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We're continuing our study in Jonah chapter 3. Let's look what happened next starting in verse 6 ...

<sup>6</sup>The word reached<sup>[cl]</sup> the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup> And 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, <sup>8</sup> but 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. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." <sup>10</sup> When 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.

God's message gets to the king of Nineveh. Those 5 Hebrew words reached him. He is aware that people have heard it and are repenting. So the king does the exact same thing. He gets up, takes off his clothes, puts on sackcloth, and sits down in ashes. But then the king and his team make it mandatory that everyone else does the same plus refrain from eating and drinking. Not only the people, but their animals too.

This wasn't an unheard-of practice. The idea behind an outward expression of repentance was a reflection of an inward repentance. As the animals cried out from hunger and thirst, the people would be reminded of their own repentance. True repentance always results in a change of heart and a change of behavior. That's what we see in Jonah 3.

But remember – I have to stress – it wasn't Jonah's articulate words that made them change. It wasn't his smooth packaging. His words were quite harsh and to the point. 40 days you'll all be toast. That was the message. It wasn't the "Jesus loves you" we tend to lead with. It was the Word of God and its message was judgment.

The power truly was, is, and always will be God's Word because it's God who does the saving. And yet, don't miss this: God told Jonah to deliver His Word. Today, God is asking, "Can I get a witness?" Today, we are to say, "I am your witness!" He is telling you and me to deliver His Word.

God has always used ordinary people in His salvation process. He uses everyday believers to share His Word to those who need to receive His gospel message. If you won't go who will?

Paul wrote these sobering words in Romans 10: 14-17

<sup>14</sup>How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?<sup>[cl]</sup> And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" <sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For

Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

When God saved you, He saved you for a purpose: to glorify Him. And one of the ways we glorify God is by living out the great commission. Preaching the good news – the gospel to the people we encounter in our daily lives.

Jonah preached a message of warning and destruction. It’s one we need to remember and communicate as well. If there’s no pending doom, there’s no need for good news. If there’s no hell that awaits those who reject God, there’s no need to preach the good news.

But there is a hell that awaits those who reject God and His offer of salvation. We need to tell our neighbors, our coworkers, our friends, our family members, and those we know that they are dead in their sins. And if they don’t repent of their sins and turn to Jesus as Lord and Savior, the hell they experience here on earth will pale to compare to what awaits them.

Let me ask you a serious question: Do you see people as God sees them? God, who hates sin and demands judgment of sin, weeps and mourns for His creation that has rejected Him.

In Luke 19, Jesus approaches Jerusalem before His death and He weeps. He wept over Jerusalem because His people rejected Him. It broke His heart. Does the lost break your heart?

My middle son Landon recently at bedtime asked me to pray for him. I asked him “why?” He said because he can’t stop thinking about the fact that people are going to hell. It makes him very sad. I told him that was just like Jesus.

The key isn’t to let the sadness paralyze you. The sadness is to motivate us all to get out there and share the good news with a lost and broken world. Jonah got out, preached God’s Word, and they repented. Imagine what God will do when we obey Him and deliver His Word.

Jonah was a reluctant witness who repented and started over. He delivered the Word of God to a lost and broken people. It wasn’t Jonah’s clever words or his witty packaging that impacted the people of Nineveh. It was the Word of God because of God’s saving power. Jonah was simply the obedient witness who delivered His word. The result was repentance of a people who were far from God.

This should lead us all to ask the question, “So what? So what?” What does Jonah 3 have to do with us today?

If you are hearing God’s word today, I believe there are 2 actions you should take. And there’s one I’m asking personally asking you to do.

The first action you should make as a response to Jonah 3, **you should go and give God’s life changing Word to the people you know.** Jonah was told to go and deliver God’s Word. He has commanded you to do the same.

How? Ask them if they have a Bible? If not give them one or help them download the our goTandem app. You’ll find that and many other bible helps at <https://www.backtothebible.org/>. These are all free resources. Or simply give them a bible. Then cycle back in a week or two and ask them what the verse is about and how it might apply to them. Give them God’s Word.

If you are like me and you have a lot of people who need Jesus, don't get overwhelmed. Just start with one. Get one person the Word of God. That's the first action.

The second action is to **pray for the lost by name**. Knowing that salvation comes by God's power, and faith comes only by hearing through His faithful children, this should lead you to pray every day for the lost.

Now, Jonah wasn't praying for the Ninevites salvation. We'll find out he was basically doing the opposite. But we want to learn from Jonah's mistakes.

If you aren't praying for the lost you know, begin today. Pray for open doors to bring God's word to them. Pray for softened hearts to the gospel. And pray that they will repent of their sins and turn to Jesus as Lord and Savior. A simple way to do this is by praying for **1 person at 1 pm for 1 minute**. Do that every day. Just set an alarm on your phone. Then at 1 pm pray for one minute for one person you know who needs Christ.

Imagine what would happen if God were to answer just 10% of our prayers at this church for the salvation of the lost. We'd have 100 new people in this auditorium by next week. I'll be faithfully on my knees. Will you join me?

So get the word of God to the lost and pray for them daily. That's a proper response.

Friends, God is at work and is in the business of saving people. It was true in Jonah's day and it's true today. Let's go from here and get them into God's Word and pray for them like never before. Salvation belongs to the Lord!