

## ***How Men Act When They Repent***

In Matthew 12:41, Jesus said, "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here." According to Jesus, the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah.

You remember the story, don't you? God had commanded Jonah, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me" (Jonah 1:2). Now Nineveh was not only a city filled with wickedness, it was also the capital of the Assyrians, hated enemies of the Israelites. Jonah didn't want to go. He fled from God's presence. However, after being given some quality time in the belly of a fish to reflect and pray, Jonah decided to obey God. Jonah walked through the city proclaiming the judgment of the Lord upon these pagan people: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4).

The people of Nineveh repented. They "proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5). When word came to the king of Nineveh, "he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes." He decreed that "neither man nor beast, herd nor flock" were to eat or drink and that "every one" was to "turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hand" (Jonah 3:7-8).

The text says that, "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" (Jonah 3:10). God can read men's hearts. He knows more about what is going on in our heads than we do ourselves. But He did not need to read the minds of the Ninevites to know that they had repented. He "saw their works, that they turned away from evil". When the men of Nineveh repented, nobody was left to wonder whether or not their repentance was genuine. Nobody was left guessing about their intention to stop committing evil. Nobody would have doubted they had actually repented of their sins.

We really need to learn this lesson from the men of Nineveh. We need to learn how to act when we repent. Repentance isn't just saying "excuse me," "my bad," or "forgive me," and then going on with our lives as if nothing happened. Repentance should produce real change in our actions. We are to "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8). I am afraid that too many of us think that our repentance should go unnoticed. We are incognito repenters! And while God hardly asks us to don sackcloth and ashes today, He does ask us to "do works befitting repentance" (Acts 26:20).

Let's resolve to turn away from sin in our lives, and make sure that we behave in such a way that folks can tell that's what we've done!

**- by Steve Klein**

---

## ***Self Control***

What is the value of self-control? Self-control is that which enables us to hold our tongues when we are tempted to viciously put someone in his place once and for all; or when we know a juicy bit of gossip that would be entertaining to the group and would turn us into the "life of the party"; or when an occasion almost demands that we betray a confidence that must not be betrayed under any circumstances.

Self-control is that which enables us to control our passions when another is provoking us to anger; that keeps the clinched fists in the pockets when the agitator is only half our size; that keeps the lips sealed when another is railing and swearing at us. Self-control is that which enables us to be like our Lord "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

Self-control is that which enables us to maintain purity of heart and to thrust out evil thoughts before they can take root; that enables us to place the best possible construction on another person's actions when unproven rumors could easily destroy our confidence in him; that helps us to maintain a cheerful disposition when everything around us has turned sour. Self-control is that which enables us to love the unlovable and to hate that which the world loves.

Self-control is that which enables us to rule our appetites; to say "no" when our lusts would lead us to sin or when that which is harmful to our health is placed before us. Self-control is that which enables the smoker to put down his cigarettes and the alcoholic to put down his drink and never return to it. Self-control is that which enables us to rule rather than to be enslaved.

The Bible does not glorify the indifferent and impassive. It is not our goal to be uncaring. To be like Paul, we must be able to have our spirit stirred within us when we are surrounded by evil (Acts 17:16). To be like our Lord, we must sometimes feel anger when surrounded by hypocritical self-righteousness (Mark 3:5); we must even react with occasional outbursts of goodness on occasions, as when the Lord cleansed the temple (John 2:13-17). But, all such outbursts must be tempered with self-control, that in our anger we "do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26).

God does not view our uncontrolled actions with amusement. Our temper tantrums and harsh, unbridled words are soul threatening, a potential bar to the abundant entrance into the Lord's everlasting kingdom (II Peter 1:5-11). We must not minimize the danger. We must not surrender to this evil.

What is the value of self-control? It is one of the qualities that enable us to go to heaven. The possessor of it is rich indeed.

- by **Bill Hall**

---

## ***The Kind Of Preaching That We Need***

People may have various views about preachers and their work, but the Bible plainly states the kind of preaching that is needed in the world today. We need preaching that is:

**1) Bible based** - The Lord told Jonah to "preach the preaching that I bid thee" (Jonah 3:2). Some preaching is pleasant to hear and it entertains people, but it leaves them sadly uninformed about what God really wants.

**2) Doctrinal** - Paul urged Timothy to "take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Timothy 4:16). Doctrine is distasteful to some folks, but it is essential to the saving of the soul.

**3) Direct & Personal** - Preaching that doesn't deal with the real problems and sins of people is of little value. We should not be unkind, but we have to "get to the point." John the Baptist set a wonderful example, and lost his head for doing so (Mark 6:18).

**4) Motivated by love** - We won't succeed in reaching people if they can't see that we truly care about them. But, when we "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) we will be able to help people deal with the toughest problems.

**5) Full of conviction** - You have to have deep faith in the message you proclaim. As Paul said, "I believed, and therefore did I speak" (2 Corinthians 4:13).

**6) Bold** - Some men check to "see which way the wind is blowing" before they speak. Instead of this, we should speak "with all boldness" (Acts 4:29).

**7) Balanced** - We need both positive and negative instruction. If we omit either one, we will not be effective in this important work. Paul told Timothy to "reprove, rebuke, exhort" (2 Timothy 4:2), and in doing so he emphasized the need for both positive and negative teaching.

The work of preaching is vital in God's plan for the salvation of lost sinners (1 Corinthians 1:21). It needs to be done well!

- by **Greg Gwin**