

Models of Repentance

Jonah, Part V

Jonah 3:1-10

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An Outline of Jonah

1:1-3	<i>Jonah Disobeys God</i>
1:4-17	<i>God Pursues Jonah</i>
2:1-10	<i>Jonah Turns to God</i>
3:1-4	<i>Jonah Obeys God</i>
3:5-10	<i>God Delivers Nineveh</i>
4:1-11	<i>Jonah Complains Against God</i>

I. Salvation is of the Lord

Whereas unbelief turns *from God to sin*, belief turns *from sin to God*. *Repentance* is the turning from _____; *faith* is the turning to _____.

II. Models of Repentance

A. Jonah embraces his calling and speaks truth (3:1-4)

Jonah cannot summon others to repentance unless repentance has first grabbed hold of him. And it has. Repentant Jonah goes to Nineveh, a large and important city in the Assyrian empire, precious to God because there were thousands of His image bearers and domestic animals dwelling there (cf. 4:11).

B. The Ninevites believe God and seek God's favor (3:5)

Jonah begins to preach and, remarkably, the Ninevites respond in faith. They willingly deprived themselves of food so that they might petition God not to deprive them of food in 40 days.

C. The King of Nineveh humbles himself and seeks God's mercy (3:6-9)

The king likewise responds in repentance and faith: He humbles himself, seeks God's mercy, and urges all his people to continue doing so as well. He urges everyone to *cry mightily to God*, and to turn from *his evil way* – his personal moral corruption – *and from the violence that is in his hands* – his mistreatment of his neighbor – in hope that God might *turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish*.

III. What does repentance look like?

A. The Duty of our Prophets/Priests (2 Tim 4:1-5; 1 Pet 2:9-10)

If we expect our people and our princes/rulers to take the Word of God seriously, then we must take the Word of God seriously. We must regularly repent of our sin. Judgment always begins with the household of God (1 Pet 4:17) – and that means that repentance must begin with the household of God, especially the leaders of that household, pastors and elders. Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Tim 4:1-5):

¹I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ²Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Because God is the judge of all, ministers are to proclaim the truth whether people want to hear it or not. We are, Paul tells us, to “*speak the truth in love*” (Eph 4:15) – and this means that it is loving to speak the truth to people.

B. The Duty of our People (Lk 11:29-36)

We want our friends and neighbors to take the Word of God seriously. We want them to turn from their sin to God; to turn from false gods to the Living God.

²⁹And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, [Jesus] began to say, “This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. ³⁰For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation... ³²The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. ³³No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. ³⁴The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. ³⁵Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. ³⁶If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light. (Lk 11:29-36)

Jesus insists that just as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, Jesus is a sign to His generation – and we are a sign to ours. Jesus’ preaching as well as His death and resurrection summoned His contemporaries to turn from their sin and return to God, to _____ and believe. This is the message we likewise preach.

C. The Duty of our Princes (Psalm 2:10-12; Rom 13:3-5; 1 Pet 2:13-14)

Jonah teaches us that princes are subject to the Prince of Peace, King Jesus. No ruler is a law unto himself. Every prince is accountable to God. Jonah teaches us that it is the duty not only of Jewish rulers but Gentile rulers to humble themselves before God and lead their citizens in a public acknowledgement of God’s authority. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16). Hence the princes of earth are to honor Him:

¹⁰Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. ¹¹Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. ¹²Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him. (Ps 2:10-12)

*O God of earth and altar, bow down and hear our cry,
our earthly rulers falter, our people drift and die;
the walls of gold entomb us, the swords of scorn divide,
take not thy thunder from us, but take away our pride.*

*From all that terror teaches, from lies of tongue and pen,
from all the easy speeches that comfort cruel men,
from sale and profanation of honour and the sword,
from sleep and from damnation, deliver us, good Lord!*

*Tie in a living tether the prince and priest and thrall,
bind all our lives together, smite us and save us all;
in ire and exultation aflame with faith, and free,
lift up a living nation, a single sword to thee.*

G.K. Chesterton

So what do we learn from Jonah about the duties of princes? First, the prince is to lead in humility, acknowledging God’s sovereign rule. Second, the duty of princes is to praise those who do good and to punish evildoers as _____ of God:

³For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. ⁵Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. (Rom 13:3-5)

IV. Conclusion