

# Gospel Repentance

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**Bible Text:** Jonah 3:10; Matthew 13:38-45

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## **Thirteenth Street Baptist Church**

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Now turn in your Bibles back to the book of Jonah chapter three. And tonight the title of the message is “Gospel Repentance.”

Now last time I preached through Jonah chapter three on this subject, “Preaching unto Repentance.” And there I spoke of how all true gospel preaching is aimed at the goal of repentance, repentance that great change that takes place within each and every born again sinner regenerated and converted by the Holy Spirit. Given the gift of faith in Christ and what the Bible in several places indicates and describes as “repentance of dead works.” And I believe it has to be stated that way in most contexts because without that we don’t really know what even to repent of. You know, many by nature does not know what to repent of. But it is repentance of dead works and idolatry. And so, of course, we see the example of that in the Ninevites here who repented of their idolatry.

And so tonight I want to bring you some further thoughts on this issue of gospel repentance. I have been restudying this subject and I believe I have some things that will help us all and I believe I am going to bring some more messages on this at other times, but the text that I want to go by tonight is verse 10 of Jonah chapter three, Jonah three and verse 10, the last verse of chapter three.

And then I want to use as a text with that the passage that brother Aaron read, Matthew chapter 12, because we don’t have a whole lot recorded. We don’t have really anything recorded in the Scripture about the Ninevites and what they did, how they conducted themselves after this event here that is recorded in Jonah chapter three of their repentance. The Bible is just silent on that issue.

I was talking to somebody the other day and he said, “Well, what did the Ninevites do? Did they become Jews or did they... how did they react? How did they worship from then?”

We don’t know. There is nothing recorded in history. There is nothing in man’s history. There is nothing recorded in the Scripture, but we do have the Lord’s Word on this issue in Matthew chapter 12. And that is far as I can go with it. But there is a lot said there and we will look at that.

But look there at verse 10 of Jonah chapter three. He says, “And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way.”<sup>1</sup>

Now that is repentance. When a sinner is brought to repentance, gospel repentance that sinner turns from his evil way.

The psalmist said, “I hate every false way,”<sup>2</sup> every evil way. And that is a particular thing here now. It is not just what men by nature see as evil. You have to understand that. We need to know... if we are going to think biblically, if we are going to think... if, you know, the Bible says we have the mind of Christ in 1 Corinthians chapter two, if we are going to follow the teaching and the motivation and the empowering of the Holy Spirit we have to understand that turning from an evil way here is not what men and women think by nature on that issue.

And so it says, “... that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them.”<sup>3</sup>

That is the revelation of God and his wrath. Remember Jonah preached back here in verse four. He said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,”<sup>4</sup> Nineveh shall be destroyed.

I have already talked enough about this issue about God repenting and how that doesn't mean God changed his mind as if... as we do. But that is the way it appears to man sometimes the way God acts in providence and in history. God doesn't need to change. He is perfect. And it says he “...repented of that evil,”<sup>5</sup> that evil not being evil in the fact that it is sinful, but evil in the sense of his wrath sometimes is referred to that way. It is referred that way in the book of Isaiah, because men look at it.

You see, it is talking about how we view things and we do that all the time now. You know, if you listen to the weather tonight they will probably talk about sunrise and sunset, you know. Well, the sun doesn't rise and it doesn't set, but that is the way we see it and that is what is happening here. So understand that.

And it says, “And he did it not.”<sup>6</sup> That is, God didn't bring his wrath down upon Nineveh. So here is his, this issue of repentance brought out either in real gospel repentance or at least we would say an illustration thereof, an illustration of gospel repentance.

Nineveh was brought to repentance.

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<sup>1</sup> Jonah 3:10.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 119:104; 128.

<sup>3</sup> Jonah 3:10.

<sup>4</sup> Jonah 3:4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Now have you ever asked yourself this question as a believer now? Think about it going through a hard trial, struggling which we all do, common to every child of God. You get frustrated or you may have some things in your life you are trying to conquer, some thoughts or actions or whatever and you just can't get the best of them. You ask yourself, "Have I ever really repented?"

Have you ever asked that question? Well, if you understand gospel repentance you could know the answer to that question. And that is what I want to deal with tonight.

You know, there are different kinds of repentance. But let me just simplify it. We can talk about a lot of different examples of repentance that was what we would call false repentance or temporary repentance. We can talk about Esau, how he wept bitterly. But it wasn't gospel repentance because his repentance had nothing to do with the glory of God and the way of salvation by God's grace in Christ and the ground of salvation. He was just sorry that he could not change his father's mind. That is what he was sorry about. And that is why he was crying and weeping bitterly. And that can be a bitter thing, now. I mean, it is not fake. It is real, but it is still not gospel repentance.

We can talk about legal repentance. Paul described something of that when he is talking about the continual repentance.

You see, repentance for a believer, there is an initial repentance which we call in light of the gospel when God brings us to know Christ. We see an example of that in Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road and how Paul described that in Philippians chapter three that we looked at last time, you know, where he talks about how all those things that he thought recommended him unto God, now he sees as lost for Christ's sake. Now that is gospel repentance right there.

He said, "I count them but dung in light of the righteousness of Christ. Those things I used to think they made me righteous before God. I used to think they recommended me to God. I used to think they really meant something as far as attaining or maintaining salvation, but when I look at my sin and my depravity and my impotence and when I see the glory of Christ and him crucified and risen again and the value of his blood that had to be shed as the complete payment for all my sins and his righteousness alone, the very righteousness of God, when I see his righteousness, then I see that all that I thought, that I thought so highly of, that I thought was so... I was so proud of it, now I see that that is nothing but dung that I may win Christ and be found in him."

That is gospel repentance right there.

Paul described... that is that initial repentance, but it is a continual thing now in the life of a believer. We don't just repent one time and then we say, "Well, that is it. Now we don't have to..."

It is a continual state of mind and heart and attitude, repentance is it.

And Paul describes some of that in 2 Corinthians chapter seven and verse 10. You mark that down and you read that whole passage there. And in 2 Corinthians seven and verse 10 he makes this statement and it kind of gives us a good way to understand the difference between true gospel repentance and every other kind that is not gospel repentance even though it might be sincere.

He says this in 2 Corinthians seven and verse 10. He talks about godly sorrow.

Now we know something about sorrow, don't we? But do we know anything about godly sorrow? Here over in Jonah chapter three it speaks of their repentance and it says in verse five that they believed God, they believed the God that Jonah preached, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is the God of grace. He is the God of justice. He is the God of promise, the God of the covenant, God who justifies the ungodly. And it says they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth and the greatest of them even to the least of them.

Verse six.

“For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him.”<sup>7</sup>

Remember, I told you when I think about that I don't know what was going through this king's mind. I like to think that it was true gospel repentance. But I know this, that whenever you see in under the preaching of the gospel—and that is where gospel repentance comes, under the preaching of the gospel. I will show you that in just a moment. But I know this. Whenever you really come to repentance of dead works and idolatry under the preaching of the gospel of God's grace in Christ which shows that you must be washed in the blood that we sing. And our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. When we see that, you are going to lay aside your robe of righteousness just like Paul did. You are going to have no confidence in the flesh. That is the gospel of repentance.

And so this king is expressing, I believe, godly sorrow. And that is the kind of sorrow it is. But, you see, there is a difference here in that he says... and Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7:10, he says, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation.”<sup>8</sup>

Now what is he? And “...not to be repented of.”<sup>9</sup>

You know, there is a repentance that you have to repent of. And that is that legal repentance, that sinners by nature think recommends them unto God.

But he says, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation,”<sup>10</sup> which you will never have to repent of.

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<sup>7</sup> Jonah 3:6.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Corinthians 7:10.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Now how does repentance... what is repentance to salvation? Now listen to me very carefully. Repentance to salvation is that repentance, that gift of God, that change of mind and heart and attitude that drives you to Christ and him alone for all salvation. That is repentance to salvation. It is not you are saved because you repent or you are saved because you have met the condition of repentance. It is that repentance that God works in you by the power of his Spirit under the preaching of the gospel wherein the righteousness of God is revealed drives you out of yourself into Christ and his righteousness alone for all salvation. Now that is gospel repentance.

And then he goes on. He says, “But the sorrow of the world worketh death.”<sup>11</sup>

Now there is this repentance that is worldly, a sorrow that is worldly. What kind of sorrow is that? Well, it can be a legal guilt. It could be social guilt. It could be the guilt and shame of getting caught that drives a person to get religion, to clean up his act and get right with God so to speak. Do you understand what I am saying? That drives him to trying to establish a righteousness of his own in order to attain or maintain salvation. They are sorry for their sins, but it is a sorrow of the world and it works death.

And the key is it is where do you find relief? Where do you find hope? Where do you find peace? Where do you find satisfaction? Where do you find salvation? Do you find salvation in the same place old Simeon found it when he held the Christ child?

He said, “I am ready to depart. Mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

Where do you find righteousness? In your sorrow over sin, in your ashamedness over sin, in your grieving over in, where do you find hope and peace and relief? Do you find it anywhere but in Christ and his blood and righteousness alone? If you do, then it is the sorrow of the world that works death, dead works. And that is the difference.

Now, again, I don't know exactly what was going through all these Ninevites minds. I really don't, but I know something that all of this that they were going through, look at verse seven of chapter three.

“And he caused it to be proclaimed.”<sup>12</sup>

The king did. Now this is the King of Nineveh. Now, Nineveh, you remember, a great enemy of Israel and a great enemy of the God of Israel, very brutal people. You... it would make you sick if I were to sit here and describe some of the practices of these people, how they treated their enemies when they won a battle. This is the same kingdom. This is the Assyrian Empire, now. Nineveh was a kingdom in itself, but it was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. Later on that is the instrument that God used to destruction upon Israel as a judgment against them for their unbelief and idolatry.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Jonah 3:7.

And so this king of Nineveh “caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water.”<sup>13</sup>

Now that is fasting. Fasting is an emblem of self denial in worship. And fasting was an emblem of showing that that when it is all over but the shouting, when it is all over but anything that is worth anything, that all I need is Christ and the grace of God in him. All I need is his wisdom, his righteousness, his holiness, his redemption. That is what that was an emblem of.

And it says in verse eight, it says, “But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth.”<sup>14</sup> That was the posture of sorrow and repentance and the garments of repentance showing like our righteousness. As Isaiah said, in Isaiah chapter 64.

“Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,”<sup>15</sup> in the sight of God.

That is what my righteousness is. You see, that is why I need the righteousness of God. And when I come to see that, that is gospel repentance right there.

He says, “But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God.”<sup>16</sup>

You see, they believed God. They repented and they cried mightily unto God because we have got nowhere else to go. We are like that publican. “God be merciful to me the sinner.”

“Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.”<sup>17</sup>

Now, again, I don’t know exactly all what was going through their minds. He says in verse nine here he is casting himself upon the sovereign mercy of God.

“Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?”<sup>18</sup>

Now let me give you these things about gospel repentance. Now, first of all, as I have already said, gospel repentance is the gift of God by the power of the Holy Spirit and the new birth. It is the gift of God just like faith is.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Jonah 3:8.

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 64:6.

<sup>16</sup> Jonah 3:8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Jonah 3:9.

How do you? We aim for repentance. How do we arrive at repentance according to the Scripture? Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, you can't repent if you don't know what to repent from.

Henry used to say this. He would say, "You can't repent from something you don't know what you are to repent of no more than you can return somewhere that you have never been."

You see, that is the way it is. And you have got to know the standard of repentance. This is a revelation of God, now. This is not intellectualism. This is not Gnosticism. This is a revelation from God that he teaches his people when he shows us who he is, the God who is holy and must punish sin, when he shows us who we are that we are nothing, that we are sinners and cannot be saved or justified by our own works.

And then when he shows us Christ the standard of all righteousness, the ground of all salvation. So Gospel repentance is the gift of God. And, secondly, gospel repentance always comes under the preaching of the gospel, the good news of salvation by God's grace wherein the righteousness of God is revealed. Because without that revelation though the preaching of the gospel we don't have any idea of what to repent of. We are just like Saul of Tarsus in a different way, you know? He said he was a Hebrew of Hebrews. Would say, "Well, we are Americans. We have got on our coins 'one nation under God.'"

And he said, "I was of the tribe of Benjamin."

Well, we say, "We grew up on the buckle on the Bible belt."

My soul, everybody is a Christian, aren't they?

This is the kind of thinking that Saul of Tarsus had in his mind about Israel, the same kind that we naturally have about us. I am a Baptist or I was baptized or I walked an aisle or I made a confession or a profession or whatever or I tithe or whatever. Join the church, all that stuff. This is what people think recommends them unto God until they are brought under the preaching of the gospel that reveals that all of that is nothing but dung in light and compared with the imputed righteousness of Christ, the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel repentance always, without fail, leads a sinner in conviction to take refuge in Christ and him alone, his blood and righteousness. Gospel repentance always brings forth the continual sorrow over sin that continually leads you to Christ.

You brethren, have you ever noticed that? That when you first started this race you had no place to go but Christ. And that is the way it is today, isn't it? And do you know what? That is the way it will be tomorrow and the next day.

No, I am not a fortune teller. I just know what Gospel repentance is.

So here they are. They believe God. They repented. They cried mightily unto God.

Hebrews chapter nine and verse 14 shows a gospel repentance. Look at it with me.  
Hebrews nine and verse 14.

He is talking about how the old covenant with its elements, its tabernacle, its priesthood, the blood of animals could not accomplish perfection, completeness, could not make a sinner righteous before God. Being a physical descendant of Abraham could not make a sinner righteous before God. It is not of blood. Being a circumcised Jew could not make you righteous before God. Trying to keep the law of Moses couldn't do it.

And he says in verse... look at verse 13 of Hebrews nine.

He says, "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth [or set apart] to the purifying of the flesh..."<sup>19</sup>

That was an outward cleansing. It was a temporal cleansing, ceremonial. Now if that blood of animals could accomplish that much and that is all that it could accomplish now. It couldn't make a sinner eternally washed from his sins. It couldn't make a sinner spiritually and eternally righteous. But it did accomplish a ceremonial thing under that covenant.

Now if that blood of animals could do that, look at verse 14.

"How much more..."<sup>20</sup>

Don't you love the much mores of Scripture?

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit..."<sup>21</sup>

Not a temporary, see. This is not a temporary thing. This is an eternal thing in Christ.

"...eternal Spirit offered himself..."<sup>22</sup>

Not a bull, not a bullock, not a sheep, but himself, the Lamb of God.

"...without spot to God..."<sup>23</sup>

The sinless, perfect sacrifice. He was made sin, our sins being imputed to him.

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<sup>19</sup> Hebrews 9:13.

<sup>20</sup> Hebrews 9:14.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



“...purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”<sup>24</sup>

That is gospel repentance when your conscience... What is your conscience? Well, that is the thing that accuses or excuses you. You say... somebody says, “Well, I feel guilty.”

That is their conscience.

Now what is going to purge that conscience? What is going to purge that guilt? Well, the only thing in gospel repentance that is going to do it is the blood of Christ. If baptism does it, then it is not gospel repentance. If tithing does it, if your works do it, it is not gospel. Do you see what I am saying? If it is the blood of Christ, his death, his righteousness, that is gospel repentance. What purges your conscience? What relieves your guilt?

You say, “Well, I did a bad thing today so I am going to go to church to relieve my conscience.”

Well, I am glad you are here, but don't think that coming here purges your conscience. I will tell you what purges the conscience of a believer, the blood of the crucified Lord of glory, risen Lord of glory.

Do you see the difference? All of this, you see, shows us.

Now back in Jonah chapter three. Now listen to what happens here. He says in verse 10...

He says, “And God saw their works...”<sup>25</sup>

He is not talking about their outward works here of putting on sackcloth and ashes. The Pharisees would do that. Anybody can put on a posture. How... why do you think the Lord had to warn them and instruct them in the Sermon on the Mount that when they give, you know, don't sound the trumpet before you. When you pray, you know, don't be... don't go into public like that and make a spectacle of yourself. And when you fast... Do you remember what he said when you fast? He said, “Wash your face. Clean up. Put on nice clothes. Don't go around all, you know, rip, all that, you know, trying. Don't do that.”

So he is not talking about just the outward apparel here of sackcloth and ashes when he says he saw their works. He is talking about the inward works. What are those inward works? Well, what is it in gospel repentance? It is faith in God and repentance towards God. And, yes, it is attended with what John the Baptist called fruits meet for repentance. You see, he is not talking about their works aimed at saving themselves. That would be dead works. That is what they are to repent of. This is the work of God.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Jonah 3:10.

Do you think those Ninevites repented because they were just a good bunch of folks and easily persuaded and a little less obstinate than the Ninevites 100 years later who would not repent whom the prophet Nahum said the wrath of God was coming down on them?

You know, 100 years from this Nahum came back and he preached God's wrath against Nineveh and later on God destroyed Nineveh.

Now why do you think these in Jonah's day repented and the ones 100 years later didn't? Was it because these in Jonah three were better, less obstinate, less rebellious? Well, I am going to tell you something. Ninety-nine and 44/110ths percent of what is called...comes in the name of Christianity today, if they were honest, would have to answer that question yes. Am I right?

No, this is the work of God. God saw their works. What were their works? They were the fruit of repentance, the fruit of God's grace. Those who seek salvation in righteousness by their working all they are doing is bringing forth dead works and fruit unto death. These works are not the works of men upon ourselves, but the works of God.

Now there are some scholars who look at passages like Jonah chapter three and they will tell you that Jonah's message was nothing but God's wrath and that the repentance of Nineveh was no more than their change of mind and attitude towards Israel temporarily. In other words, they were a great enemy of Israel. Jonah preached God's wrath and so they changed their mind and they were not... they were not as unfriendly and as wickedly against Israel anymore, but that didn't last.

Well, we do know that 100 years later Nineveh fell back into the same idolatry and unbelief. But what happened to this generation of Ninevites here in Jonah three? Well, we don't really know. Several things indicate to me that what they are experiencing here, I believe is gospel repentance. And I told you some of them last time when you go down through and read about that.

But verse 10 is one of the main things that shows me that.

“God saw their works...”<sup>26</sup>

What that means is God took notice of their works. And the indication is there is an acceptance here from God of their works. And we know based upon scriptural testimony from Genesis to Revelation that the only way that God can accept any man's person or works is through the blood and righteousness of Christ, by his grace and mercy. That is how he accepted Abel.

Abel's works were righteous. Now does that mean Abel was able to do anything perfectly sinless? Absolutely not. In fact, if Abel could have done anything perfectly sinless, do you know what? Abel would not have had to have brought a lamb, blood before God. The only ones who need blood is the sinner. But Abel brought the blood. But Abel's

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

works were righteous because they were washed in the blood, because he had a righteousness imputed to him by the grace of God. And that is the case.

But the next thing that indicates to me that this is gospel repentance is Matthew chapter 12. Now turn over there and let's read through it quickly.

Now this is our Lord's commentary on Jonah chapter three. Now, first of all, who is he talking to here? Who is the Lord speaking to? Matthew 12 and verse 38.

“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.”<sup>27</sup>

He is talking to the scribes and the Pharisees. Who were they? They were self righteous leaders who were trying to establish a righteousness of their own, who were trying to work their way into God's favor by their works. That is who they were.

Remember he said in Matthew five and verse 20, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>28</sup>

And then he showed how strict the law was all the way through Matthew chapter five, concluded it with, “Be ye holy as your Father in heaven is holy.”

How in the world is that going to be? Well, he explains it in Matthew chapter six and verse 33 when he says, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”<sup>29</sup>

That is how. That is gospel repentance now. So here he talks about the scribes and the Pharisees. Now listen to what he says here.

He says in verse 39, “But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation ...”<sup>30</sup>

Who is he talking about? He is talking about them. Remember, they talked about the Ninevites repenting of their evil way. Well, here is the Jews right here. Here is physical children of Abraham who were religious and claimed to believe and preach the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And he says, “You are an evil and adulterous generation.” He says, “You seeketh after a sign. There shall no sign be given it but the sign of the prophet Jonah.”

Now he explains what that sign is, what that signification is. Look at verse 40.

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<sup>27</sup> Matthew 12:38.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 5:20.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 6:33.

<sup>30</sup> Matthew 12:39.

“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly...”<sup>31</sup>

That is the only time that it is a... the great fish was ever called a whale and it is due to the King James translators, believe it or not. It was a great fish. I don’t know what it was, see. But Matthew, the King James translators translated it whale here.

But he said, “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.”<sup>32</sup>

The heart of the earth there doesn’t mean the grave. He wasn’t actually in the tomb three days and three nights, but that means from Gethsemane when Christ was in the grip of sin. Now I explained that already and I won’t go back through all of that. He was in the grip of the earth, the grip of sin, sin imputed to him and he suffered. That is from Gethsemane all the way to the resurrection. All right?

And so the sign of the prophet Jonah, Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish. And he was a type of Christ. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ to do what? To bring forth everlasting righteousness, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to put away all of my sins and to bring in the only righteousness that enables God to be just and justify the ungodly.

But now look at the next verse, verse 41.

He says, “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation.”<sup>33</sup>

Now the generation I believe he is talking about here is his generation that is spoken of in Isaiah 53, the ones for whom he died, his people.

“The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: [why?] because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.”<sup>34</sup>

Now there is nothing in the Scripture from Genesis to Revelation that indicates that lost people will rise in judgment with that generation and condemn unbelievers. The Bible... and what do you mean that this generation will rise in judgment? Well, here is what he is talking about. He is talking about the same thing he spoke of in Hebrews chapter 11, I believe it is verse seven, when he talked about Noah being a preacher, a preacher of righteousness, Peter said, when he built the ark and he preached and by that he condemned the world.

In other words, the preaching, the testimony of the gospel of God’s grace you can’t take it or leave it now, folks. It is to be believed. And if you don’t believe it, where does that

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<sup>31</sup> Matthew 12:40.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew 12:41.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

leave you? Condemned. And that is what he is saying. They are an example of repentance and you won't repent.

Remember he said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."<sup>35</sup> Luke 13 verses three through five.

Repent or perish. That is what he is saying. The men of Nineveh will rise in judgment with this generation of believers and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonas.

Well, he goes on and he gives another illustration of that in verse 42. He talks about the queen of the south. That is the queen of Sheba that came to Solomon asking questions. That is recorded in 1 Kings 10.

It says, "...shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."<sup>36</sup>

Christ is greater than Jonah. He is that prophet. He is our prophet, priest and king. Christ is greater than Solomon. They repented at the preaching of Jonah. She came and questioned Solomon about eternal matters and she heard. But now a greater than Solomon is here.

Now what kind of repentance is he talking about? Well, look at verse 43. He illustrates it.

He says, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man,"<sup>37</sup> that is a spirit of Satan. It is a spirit of darkness. It is a spirit of unbelief. It is a spirit of self righteousness. It is a spirit of rebelliousness, lack of repentance, lack of faith.

"...he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it..."<sup>38</sup>

Now listen to it, these three descriptions. He finds it empty.

Now a believer, a born again person, a regenerated person, a repentant person is not empty. He has the fullness of Christ, the fullness of the Spirit. But the unclean spirit comes back and finds this fellow empty.

Swept. Now you ladies when you sweep the floor... well, you men, too. I sweep. We sweep every now and then, don't we? We sweep the surface, don't we? And that is the illustration here. The clean up the outside.

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<sup>35</sup> Luke 13:3, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Matthew 12:42.

<sup>37</sup> Matthew 12:43.

<sup>38</sup> Matthew 12:43-44.

And garnished, garnished with what? Garnished with religion, garnished with outward trappings of what men call morality. In other words, there is a change here. There his a reformation, but there is no heart gospel repentance.

And he says in verse 45, “Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”<sup>39</sup>

Do you know what he is saying here? He is saying the same thing he said to the Pharisees about their evangelism... I won't say evangelism, their missionizing, their proselytizing. That is what it is.

He says, “You encompass sea and land to get one convert and when you get that one convert and you make him religious and you make him repent in what you think is repentance and you make him reform and you make him do this and do that, jump through this hoop, jump through that hoop and what you end up with is a sinner who is two fold more the child of hell than you are.”

He was better off without your self righteous religion.

Do you see what the Lord is teaching here is repent or perish? He preached repent and believe the gospel. Repentance and faith mark the beginning of new life in Christ. Not because when you repent you do the right thing, but beaus that is when God takes the scales off of your darkened eyes and you see Christ in the fullness of salvation, the fullness of his glory as the Lord your righteousness, forgiveness by his blood, the glorious light of the liberty of the sons of God.

Now let me conclude with this and I want you to listen very carefully. This is the end of the message and that is when people start waning off, you see? I don't want you to wane off. I want you to listen because I don't want you to... I want you to understand what I am about to say. I am going to make some statements that if left to themselves may sound shocking, but here is the thing. Now listen to me.

Repentance is not about what religion calls morals. Now should we be moral people? Absolutely. That is not even the question. That is not an option. Yes, we should be the most moral people in all the world. But repentance is not about morals. It is not about good behavior. Should we behave in a God honoring way? Oh, yes. That is not the issue, now. Yes, we should be people of good behavior. But repentance is not about good behavior. Repentance is not about doing better. I know people who say, “Well, I don't know if I have repented because I can't do any better.”

Well, let me tell you something. If you ever get to feeling you are doing better, you haven't repented. It is not about that.

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<sup>39</sup> Matthew 12:45.

Should we do better? Yes. Try to do better. Seek to do better in every way that is honoring to God. But that is not what repentance is about. Repentance is simply trusting Christ for all salvation, for all eternal life, for all righteousness, for all forgiveness and trusting nothing in and of ourselves.

Paul said it. We are the circumcision. That is born again. We worship God in spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. That is gospel repentance.

Gospel repentance come when we stop trying to establish our own righteousness before God and submit to Christ and his righteousness imputed as our only ground of salvation. Repentance is not about promising to be good.

Should we promise to be good? Yes. Should we act on that promise? Yes. But that is not what repentance is about. It is not about a teeth clenched strain to put sin out of your life. Should we try hard to put sin out of our lives? Yes. Should we fight the warfare of the flesh and the Spirit? Yes. Should we strive against sin? Yes, in every way.

That is not what repentance is about. It is trusting God to have mercy on us in Christ. It is trusting God to fix my evil heart. It is trusting God to be who God says he is, my gracious heavenly father, my keeper, my redeemer.

Over there in Jonah chapter three and verse 10 or verse nine they ask, “Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not?”<sup>40</sup>

And I asked this question. How can we know if God will be merciful to us? Is there any way that we can know that? When sinners hear God’s Word and turn to him in repentance, they can know for certain that they have obtained mercy in Christ. And it is not in outward acts of sackcloth and ashes and fasting, but it is an inward work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, a broken and a contrite heart over sin, even over my righteousnesses which I don’t have. These grace of the Spirit are gifts and fruits of his grace through Christ.

Somebody said, “Well, how do I know if God will give me that repentance?”

Well, let me ask you this. I will tell you what. Don’t sit around and think about that or ask.

Somebody said, “How can I know if God will give me that repentance?”

Let me ask you this. I will give you one simple question. Do you want it?

You say, “Well, obviously I want it.”

Well, not obviously because man by nature doesn’t want it. The Pharisees didn’t want it. Remember Christ in the parable of the sower and the seed he said that this generation,

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<sup>40</sup> Jonah 3:9.

their heart is waxed gross, grown hard and they have shut their eyes and shut their ears lest they be converted. They didn't want this conversion. They didn't want this repentance. Do you? Do you have it? Do you want this salvation? Because I am going to tell you something. When a sinner comes to know and believe and desire this salvation, that is repentance. That is gospel repentance. That is faith in Christ. That is the new birth, isn't it? Because God makes his people willing in the day of his power.

So if you want it, it is because God has done a work of grace. Isn't that right? Otherwise you wouldn't want it, not... I am telling you if you really want it.

All right.