

Nineveh and Her Testimony

by Horatius Bonar

The speaker uses the example of Nineveh's repentance to call the audience to repentance and to highlight the sovereignty of God in his dealings.

Scripture: Nahum 3:1, Matthew 12:41

Topics: "Judgment", "Repentance"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the significance of Nineveh's repentance as a powerful testimony to the present generation, contrasting it with the indifference of contemporary society. He highlights Nineveh's deep and immediate response to Jonah's single sermon, showcasing God's sovereignty in using a humble prophet to bring about profound change. Bonar warns that the men of Nineveh will rise in judgment against those who fail to repent, as they had a greater opportunity for repentance with Jesus among them. He calls for a heartfelt response to God's call for repentance, urging listeners to heed the lessons from Nineveh's past and prepare for the future judgment. The sermon serves as a reminder of the urgency of repentance in light of the greater revelation given through Christ.

Transcript

"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 12:41.

It is sometimes good to compare the present with the past; to mark the likeness or contrast; the progress or the regress. We may thus get a warning, or an encouragement, or a stimulus. Let the past speak to the present. The day is coming when the present shall speak to the future. Each day, each year, each age, has a voice to its successor, nay, to all its successors.

Our Lord here interprets the past. He bids it speak to the present. He bids the present listen. He re-animates past scenes; he gives life to the dead. Out of their graves He calls up a voice. Let us hear their message to Israel, and their message to us.

I. Nineveh and its sin.--It is of a heathen city that He speaks. He does not overlook heathenism or heathendom. It is a city wholly given to idolatry; immersed in pleasure; elated by its greatness; ambitious of universal dominion; a city of palaces and temples; a city of chariots and horses; a city of princes and warriors; a city of pomp and splendor; a city that knows not Jehovah, that scorns his people, and abhors his city and his land. The cup of its guilt was deep and full (Nahum 3 1-9.) Its character resembles that of

our cities. Its sins are ours. Pride, fullness of bread, love of pleasure, intoxication, covetousness, vanity, lust, gaiety,--these mark us as they did the men of Nineveh. Our sins are multiplying. Our cup is fast filling.

II. Nineveh and its repentance. It was a heathen city, yet it repented; a proud and lofty city, yet it repented,--king and people. It had no knowledge nor wisdom, yet it repented. Jonah was its first prophet, yet it repented. One sermon did the work. One trumpet-blast shook the city. It was not a word of terror, yet they repented like the jailor at the earthquake. It was (1) immediate repentance. (2) It was true. (3) It was deep. (4.) It was universal. (5) It was acceptable. Was the like ever heard! Noah preached one hundred and twenty years in vain, yet Nineveh repented in a day. Two angels went to Sodom in vain, yet Nineveh repented under one sermon of one prophet; and that a very feeble and inconsistent one. How marvelous that such a city should have repented under such a prophet! How marvelous that God should have so honoured such a prophet. How sovereign He is in his dealings; how unlike us in his counsels; how unsearchable in his ways. God speaks to us, to our cities, to our villages, and says, Repent! Yet we repent not! With bibles and ministers bringing before us the heavenly messages all our lives, we repent not! O hearts of stone! Harder than the rock!

III. Nineveh and its testimony. That city has two testimonies.

(1.) A past testimony. It speaks to us, and says, Repent. Its sackcloth says, Repent! Its fasting says, Repent! Its cry for mercy says, Repent! Are we better? Do we need no repentance? Has Nineveh's repentance no voice for us?

(2.) A future testimony. Its inhabitants shall rise against us in the day of judgment. Its testimony is not over. It spoke to Israel; it speaks to us; and it shall yet speak to both again in the awful day of recompense. Nineveh will condemn Israel and us; if we repent not verily we shall be inexcusable. In the presence of the men of Nineveh we shall not be able to utter a word of excuse or extenuation. For we have a greater than Jonas for our prophet,--the Son of God himself. We have Moses, and a greater than Moses; we have Elijah, and a greater than Elijah. Yes; Jesus speaks to us; He spoke on earth; he speaks from heaven! He says, Repent! He makes our land re-echo with Repent! He makes our churches resound with the same voice, Repent. He speaks down through all the ages; he speaks now, and says to us, Repent!

The day approaches, when the men of Nineveh shall rise up against the men of Israel, and when the men of Israel shall rise up against the men of Scotland. That rising up shall be for condemnation! The greater the light rejected, the greater the condemnation incurred. Men of the nineteenth century, look back three thousand years, and see Nineveh on her knees in sackcloth before God, broken down under one sermon of one prophet! Is not that a sight to break you down and make you cry for mercy, while the Lord tarries, and ere the last trumpet sounds. Oh seek the Lord while He may be found!

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