

Chapter 11

THE GREAT CITY OF NINEVEH

So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

We continue in the third chapter with our obedient prophet, but we need to be aware that he has not yet become a loving prophet. He started out disobedient, but the experience in the fish corrected that. Jonah does not love the people of Nineveh, the very people to whom God has told him to preach the word of God. It will not be until the fourth chapter when he is taken into, what we will call, the great heart of God who loves sinners. I hope that we are learning through the example of Jonah that it is possible for one to externally obey God's word, but not have an internal love for the people to whom he is ministering the word. Jonah is a classic example of that. We entitle our thoughts today, "The Great City of Nineveh."

In our last lesson, we followed Jonah as he obeyed God and went to Nineveh. We have looked at his restoration to the office of a prophet, his re-commissioning to the city of Nineveh, and then we beheld his renewed obedience to the word of the Lord. In this lesson, we will look at the magnitude and the scope of his mission as we observe the great city of Nineveh. Our text tells us that Nineveh was "***an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent.***" Let us examine the different areas that enabled Nineveh to be known as "great."

First it is great in its position before God. The Hebrew expression "***exceedingly great city***" literally means it was regarded by God as a great city. This is not just the opinion and the view of human beings, but God regarded Nineveh as a great city. In his *Commentary on Jonah*, Dr. John Gill points out,

It was a city great to God, not dear to Him for it was full of wickedness. Not great in His esteem with whom the whole earth is as nothing, but known by Him to be what it was."

In other words, Gill is saying, even though it is full of wickedness, God doesn't count that as nothing, but God recognizes the greatness of Nineveh. The Book of Jonah is a Divinely inspired book, so notice the four times it is recorded therein how great the city was.

Jonah 1:2, "***Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against***

it."

Jonah 3:2, "***Arise, go to Nineveh that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.***"

Jonah 3:3, "***Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent.***"

Jonah 4:11, "***And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, . . .***"

Not only was it recognized to be great in the sight of God, but secondly, it was great in its location. In the second chapter of Genesis we will find where this city was located when it was initially built. Genesis 2:10-14:

Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

The word "Hiddekel" for this third river, is the ancient name for the Tigris River, which flowed right by the city of Nineveh. So then out of what was originally the Garden of Eden, Nineveh became situated on a most fertile plain located southeast of the Garden of Eden. Look it up on a later Bible map and see how the river flows right by Nineveh. The Tigris River would then flow into the Euphrates River and then into the sea. Nineveh was enabled to be a great center of shipping and commerce because of these two monstrous rivers and this location of being on the banks of the Tigris flowing into the sea. Therefore, it was great before God and great in its location.

Thirdly, Nineveh was great in its history. In chapter 10 of Genesis we find the origin of Assyria and Nineveh. Assyria being the country, and Nineveh the capital of that country. Genesis 10:8-12:

Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord." And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).

Again, that reference is the first time we hear of Nineveh recorded in the Bible. Who is the

founder of Nineveh? There are two possible understandings. It can either be Nimrod, who is clearly the person mentioned in the text, or it could be a person named Asshur. The KJV renders verse 11 as, "**Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh**" If you examine the text, you can see that it is unclear as to whether the subject goes back to Nimrod or whether it is another person named Asshur. If it is a person named Asshur, then we have an unknown non-mighty one, non-influential one, being given the honor of being the founder of a large metropolitan area comprising four cities. The more natural reading is in the NKJV which I believe would be to attribute the honor of the building of Nineveh and all of its suburbs to Nimrod rather than to Asshur. In this text, Nimrod is referred to as the mighty one. We are not just completely left at the mercy of this particular text to try to discern this. There is more supporting evidence in another passage of scripture in Micah 5:6. "**They shall waste with the sword the land of Assyria, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances.**" Here the land of Nimrod is referred to as being the capital of Assyria. With this in mind rather, we understand that the word "Asshur" in the KJV of Genesis 10 may refer to a place rather than a person, and would be known as Assyria as it is translated in the NKJV, rather than referring to a person. I think that is the more correct understanding that Asshur in Genesis 10 is not a person but it is a reference to the whole country of Assyria in which Nimrod built the great capital known as Nineveh.

There is a whole lot that could be said about this person Nimrod. He is an interesting Bible character, but we can only limit our thoughts in saying that, in addition to his skills of being a great leader of men, he was also known for his ruthless, cruel and violent character. He respected no type of life, be it human or animal. When the passage talks about how he was a mighty hunter before the Lord, it does not mean that he just went out deer hunting. But rather he defied the ways of God and hunted the souls of men so that he might take them away from the knowledge of God. He departed from the people of God and went out into this whole region to establish a whole civilization dedicated to eradicating the concept of God. He was violent about this, and if he came in contact with people who did not consent to his ideas of human progress, then they were murdered, their penalty was death. So Nineveh was founded by a violent person, so you could only expect its culture to develop along that same line. The civilizations which he formed were hostile to the ways of God and His people. Thus, as this culture grew, it reached a state of wickedness and violence to such a degree that in the days of Jonah, the longsuffering and patience of God had declined to offer Nineveh a brief span of forty days before destruction would bring it to an end.

Now let us also look at the composition of Nineveh given to us in the historical record in Genesis 10. Notice that in verses 11 and 12 that while Nineveh is mentioned, there are three other cities that are mentioned, and that one particular city is located between

Nineveh and Calneh. Calneh was southeast of Nineveh, and the other city was located north. The city, Rehoboth, was right in the middle of the two, so what we have here is not just one city. We have a composition of four cities comprising a metropolitan area. I think we all can relate to that. We live in Birmingham, Alabama. Well, yes and no. I live in Trussville, but when people outside of the state ask us where we live, we tell them Birmingham. Trussville, Hoover, Bessemer, and all kinds of local municipalities surround Birmingham so that the whole area is known as the Birmingham area. Nineveh was not just the city, it was that which comprised the whole area with three other cities making it up. The interesting thing is that all through the Word of God the greatness of this metropolitan area is emphasized, so that the composite of these cities is a great city.

Now we have seen the history, the origin, and the location of Nineveh, it being situated right on the fertile, well-watered plains of the Tigris River flowing out from the mountains of what used to be the Garden of Eden. It was a shipping commerce formed and originated by the great man known as Nimrod.

Let us look again at Nineveh's greatness because of the huge area which it was comprised of. In Jonah 3:3 we read that it "**was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent.**" How can this expression help us determine the size of Nineveh? What is a three-day journey? How can this expression help us to understand how large a geographical area that Nineveh consisted of?

In his *Commentary on Jonah*, Matthew Henry bases his figures on the information supplied by the ancient historian named Diodorus Siculus. This man was a contemporary of Julius Caesar, an ancient historian. Matthew Henry makes this observation based upon the information from the book and writings of this man.

The greatness of Nineveh consisted chiefly in the extent of it; it was much larger than Babylon, such a city, says Diodorus Siculus, as no man ever after built. It was 150 furlongs long and 90 broad, 480 in compass; the walls 100 feet high, and so thick that three chariots might go a-breast upon them; on them were 1500 towers, each of them 200 feet high. It is here said to be of three days' journey; for the compass of the walls, as some relate, was 480 furlongs, which, allowing eight furlongs to a mile, makes sixty miles, which may well be reckoned three days' journey for a footman, twenty miles a day.

A person can walk about twenty miles a day, so it would take three days' journey to get through the city. Therefore, we are talking about sixty miles to get through this huge metropolitan area. When we allow a footman the ability to walk twenty miles a day, and then connect that with the statement found in our text in Jonah 3:4 which says, "**And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk.**" we will see that three days

times twenty miles equals sixty miles, which is exactly to what the ancient historian ascribed it. It was as C.F. Keil states--"The largest city in the world at that time." Are you beginning to get a little idea as to what this little Hebrew prophet is up against? He is not going to "Po Dunk Holler" to preach, folks, he is going to the biggest metropolitan area on the face of the earth at that time. What can he hope to bring to pass?

Next, this city is great in its population. Look at the passage in Jonah 4:11. God states, **"And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left--and much livestock?"** Who are these who cannot discern their left hand from their right hand? Nearly all of the commentators that I have researched on this are in agreement. There does not seem to be a disagreement in this area that these are the infants which have not reached the age of moral and intelligent consciousness. That being the case, you have one hundred and twenty thousand infants in the city who cannot discern their left hand from their right hand. It has been suggested, and until I can find information otherwise, that this means these children have not yet reached the age where they can determine whether they are going to be dominantly left handed or right handed. If you have raised children, you know that it takes a certain length of time to determine if they are going to be a left or right handed person. But whatever it is, it is a reference to extremely young children. If you allow for other children, parents, grand parents, aunts and uncles, you will reach a conservative figure of approximately one million people. That is comparable to our area in Birmingham, Alabama, is it not? So you should be able to get a little grasp of the size of Nineveh. Now Nineveh would not be considered great in size compared with our cities today. Mexico City has a population of about twenty-two to twenty-seven million people, so Nineveh would be small in reference to that. But in that day and time it was the world's largest populated city.

Next the greatness of Nineveh is seen in its strength, its defensiveness, or its ability to defend itself. Let us look at a couple of passages from prophet Nahum. Nahum is going to later prophesy the destruction of Nineveh after Nineveh repents under Jonah. Nineveh reverts back to an evil city a couple hundred years later, and it is going to be destroyed by God's providence. The whole book of Nahum is related to the destruction of Nineveh, and here is the prophesy against the city located in Nahum 1:1; then 2:1-6.

The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. . . . He who scatters has come up before your face. Man the fort! Watch the road! Strengthen your flanks! Fortify your power mightily. For the Lord will restore the excellence of Jacob like the excellence of Israel, for the emptiers have emptied them out and ruined their vine branches. The shields of his mighty men are made

red, the valiant men are in scarlet. The chariots come with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the spears are brandished. The chariots rage in the streets, they jostle one another in the broad roads; they seem like torches, they run like lightning. He remembers his nobles; they stumble in their walk; they make haste to her walls, and the defense is prepared. The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved.

In other words, there is a battle coming for Nineveh. That is, as the river would come by, there was another river flowing through the center of the city. There were river gates where they could float the boats right inside the city. Then they would shut the gate for protection. Here is a reference that there is going to come a flood to open up those gates. In summary, Nineveh is warned of a coming battle of immense proportions which shall be fought on its premises. The city is not going to be on the offensive, but is going to be on the defensive. Nineveh is told to seek protection behind its defense walls. Nevertheless, in spite of this, Nineveh's soldiers would be slain and its weapons of war destroyed. Nineveh is told something else in Nahum 3:7-15.

It shall come to pass that all who look upon you will flee from you, and say, "Nineveh is laid waste! Who will bemoan her? Where shall I seek comforters for you? Are you better than No Amon that was situated by the River, that had the waters around her, whose rampart was the sea, whose wall was the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was boundless; Put and Lubim were your helpers. Yet she was carried away, she went into captivity; her young children also were dashed to pieces at the head of every street; they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. You also will be drunk; you will be hidden; you also will seek refuge from the enemy. All your strongholds are fig trees with ripened figs: if they are shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater. Surely, your people in your midst are women! The gates of your land are wide open for your enemies; fire shall devour the bars of your gates. Draw your water for the siege! Fortify your strongholds! Go into the clay and tread the mortar! Make strong the brick kiln! There the fire will devour you, the sword will cut you off; it will eat you up like a locust. Make yourself many—like the locust! Make yourself many— like the swarming locusts!

In this section of Nahum's prophecy, Nineveh is told that in spite of all her military and economic strength, her walls of defense would not save her, and she should be as helpless as women in defending herself. Historians tell us that when Nineveh was later overthrown, a contributing factor was that a major flood washed out one whole portion of the walls and allowed the invading enemy to come through that hole and capture the city. This may be the meaning of the reference in Nahum 2:6 about the river flooding her.

This final overthrow of Nineveh took place about one hundred and fifty years after Nahum's prophecy. We know Nahum prophesied about one hundred years after Jonah. So the final destruction of Nineveh occurred about two hundred and fifty years after Jonah preached to it. But before its destruction, it was considered the strongest and the most powerful city on the face of the earth.

Let us look next at its greatness because of its wealth. In Nahum 2:9 we read these words: **"Take spoil of silver! Take spoil of gold! There is no end of treasure, or wealth of every desirable prize."** That is, whoever conquers this city will have access to gold and silver in almost infinite quantities. The spoils are going to be of a tremendous magnitude. Nineveh was an extremely rich city. Its wealth was known and admired by all. The money in Nineveh was plentiful. The palaces were breathtaking. The furniture was the finest that you could purchase. Nineveh was the Wall Street of the ancient world, the economic capital of the world. Not only was it great in its wealth, but it was great in its knowledge. It was a place of learning. Archeological excavations have revealed that it contained a huge library of twenty-two thousand clay tablets covering all areas of human knowledge. Nothing was known about this in modern times until 1845 when a man by the name of Sir Austen Layard was the first to examine the ruins of the city. Along with his partner, George Smith, Layard headed up an excavation in Nineveh. In the year 1850 the famous library named after King Assurbanipal, was discovered which contained twenty-two thousand inscribed tablets of stone, and proved to be a place of collected knowledge of such proportions that the world had never seen up to that time. These clay tablets contained the library of the king. Incidentally, you can relate to this. When one of our presidents goes out of office, he has a library dedicated in his name, and these libraries have monstrous storehouses of information. This is what this king did. He collected all of the greatest of knowledgeable people and brought them to Assyria. They recorded this huge library of information. It contained such subjects as the study of languages and word meanings. Dictionaries of all the languages then known were found to be present in Nineveh. It contained astronomy and astrology. They had in Nineveh a royal observatory which calculated the dates of the lunar and solar eclipses, and they gave names to the signs of the zodiac. It also contained religious text and subjects which included hymns and rituals used in temple worship among other things. It contained great collections of what is known as law. That is, many records of case law decided by the judges from time to time. It would be comparable to the records found in our Supreme Court. It contained great tablets of science, including long lists of the study of animals, birds, fishes, plants and rocks. Also, medical practices and mathematical tables were present in this huge library. It also contained great volumes of literature, including poetry, on religious and historical subjects, even references to the creation of the world and to a great flood having occurred in the past experience of human history. There were historical records found in

Nineveh which included dates and calendars recording the history of men in chronological order as far back as they could trace them. There were great volumes of commerce. It was like the courthouse in which there were sections containing deeds of sales to land, contracts recorded, even tax documents of individuals and cities who paid their taxes into Nineveh, and thousands and thousands of private letters some directed to public officials. So Nineveh would be a place of world wide learning where people would go to be educated. If you wanted to learn something you went to Nineveh.

Now we have seen all of these areas of greatness. Great before God, great in its origin, great in its history, great in its wealth, great in its defense, great in its knowledge. All in all, Nineveh was a great city in the sight of God. But there is one other area in which she was great which is not commendable. That is, Nineveh was great in her wickedness before God. In Jonah 1:2, we find the reason why God threatened her destruction: **"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me."** Consider the wickedness that existed in the city. We will divide it into two classes--the quality of sins, and the quantity of sins. Look at Jonah 3:8 to see what kind of sins these people were guilty of. We read in the middle of the verse, **"Let every one turn from his evil way."** Everyone had a pet sin, an evil sin, and from the violence that is in their hands, this was a crime-ridden place. Also, in the book of Nahum 3:1: **"Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs."** That is, everybody is lying, stealing, killing, and breaking in to take other people's possessions. It was not a place where you would want to raise a family. These evil activities were increasing as century after century progressed. Do you remember what characterized the culture in the days of Noah, back before the flood? There was violence and murder, and finally the flood came and wiped them all away. Whenever you compress a large amount of sinful people into a large city, sin increases. You, who were raised in the country, ought to be able to verify that by common sense and experience. This is because that when people are pressed together, they not only sin personally, but they influence others to sin. This exposes people to all varieties of sins, and thus sin begins to abound and increase in boldness. In addition to Jonah, the books of Amos, Hosea, Nahum and Zephaniah list the kinds of sins in which Nineveh was indulging. In addition to drunkenness and sexual immorality, the Bible focuses on the crime rate with murder and bodily harm being at the top of the list. We read in Nahum, **"Woe to the bloody city. It is full of lies and robbery."**

Under Jonah's preaching, Nineveh was brought to repentance, and this repentance was manifested by individuals turning from their own personal sinning. Jonah 3:8 describes it, **"everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands."** This would result in a dramatic drop in the crime rate. Wherever God does a work bringing

about repentance on a large scale, you have a right to expect an improvement in human conduct, and a reduction of the crime rate. If somebody makes the statement, "Don't you know that we are in a period of great revival right now?" My answer to that is, I have never seen a true revival in my lifetime. I have read about them in history. I have been in evangelistic meetings in which we have had many people converted. I remember when my Dad was converted and watching many baptized in the creek that day with the snow coming down. We were all huddled around there as they were lined up by the creek. That was a great moving of God, but that wasn't a revival which spread throughout a whole section. The Great Awakenings under Edwards and Whitfield were the last movings of revival in our land. But yet people say we are in revival today because we have so many churches filled and so many people making professions of faith. The problem is that the crime rate has not dropped. The figures show that in the United States, there is no basic difference between the ethical conduct of Christians and non-Christians. There is just as much lying, stealing and murder that is performed by those who profess to be Christians as there is by non-Christians. Something is wrong when we are calling it a revival and a return to God when we are not seeing a large impact upon the crime rate. Go down to the state penitentiary and you will find that over half of them are Baptists. You can go to any penitentiary in the United States and about half of the population will be Baptists.

Now let us look at the quantity or number of these sins. The quality was all kinds, but particularly murder. Jonah 1:2 gives us the quantity or number of sins: **"their wickedness has come up before Me."** There is more contained in that expression than what first meets the eye. Concerning the expression **"their wickedness has come up,"** Matthew Henry observes that:

It has come to a high degree, to the highest pitch; the measure of it is full to the brim; their wickedness has come up, and then it is time for vengeance to come down. Or, the cry of their wickedness has come up, as that of Sodom in Genesis 18:20-21. It has come up before me--to my face (so the word is); it is a bold and open affront to God; it is sinning against Him in His sight.

Have you ever seen someone so mad at another person that they get right up in that person's face to tell them off? That is exactly what the Ninevites were doing to God. Some people sin privately, hoping God will not see, or else, if He does see, He won't act. But Nineveh's sinning was an in-your-face-God type of sin. Their wickedness was a type of sinning that dared God to do anything about it. God took the challenge. As this loud cry came unto heaven, the Moral Judge must act to maintain His moral government.

Lastly I conclude, that although Nineveh was great in so many areas, its greatest need was

its need of salvation. Nothing short of divine intervention by grace and mercy could save this city. I don't care what programs you might originate or what evangelistic plans you might implement, nothing is going to work unless God intervenes and saves them by sovereign grace. It is their only hope. Some circles use the term, "sinning away your day of grace." I don't like that term, but that is used in some circles. Nineveh has filled up her cup of iniquity to where her cup is filled right to the brim, and she is defying God. Nineveh stands in a great need of a mighty work of God if she is ever going to be delivered.

What lesson can we learn from this? Simply this, that great sinners need great grace from a great God to bring about a great salvation. It is in God's hands to determine what will come to pass in Nineveh. Remember, no warning was given to Tyre and Sidon and Sodom and Gomorrah. Jesus said in Matthew 11:21-24,

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.

However, there were no miracles worked in those cities. But God had purposed something for Nineveh.

Look at the things that could not save Nineveh. Could she boast about her education, and say that education could deliver them from all of society's ills? Is money the answer? Let us just pour more money into this thing, and that will take care of our problems. Learning, education, or military might, we will depend on that. Maybe science, astrology, the study of the stars, and putting men on the moon. It is not its education, its military, its wealth and on and on. It is none of these things which make a person or individual great in the sight of God. What then does? What kind of a person is it that God relates to on a one-on-one or a city wide basis? These are very wicked individuals. If they have any hope of God ever being friendly and relating to them, they are going to have to know who God is first. Look in Isaiah 57:15:

For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

When Jonah began to announce to the Ninevites about the coming destruction, who did

Jonah say he represented? He said, **"I represent the God of heaven and earth."** Nineveh has to hear about this God, not a little weak tribal god. They have got to hear about the sovereign king who rules heaven and earth, inhabits eternity, who has always been, and whose name is Holy. Is that what your Bible says? As the sovereign Holy God, **"I dwell in the high and holy place."** Sovereign Holy One, who are you going to dwell with? **"With him who has a contrite and humble spirit."** He says, "I am not looking for your education, for your military might, for your money, for your defense, or for your location. I will dwell with the person of a broken and contrite spirit. **"To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."** Who is it that has any hope of relating to God in a friendly relationship? Look at Isaiah 66:1-2:

Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," Says the Lord.

"But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

God says, "That is who I look to." Nineveh you need to hear about this God. Nineveh, don't trust in any of your goodness or your religious rituals, your educational things, all of your wealth. Don't trust in any of those things to find favor with God. The people that He looks to are those of a broken and contrite spirit who will acknowledge who He is and reverence the teachings of His word. Nineveh you had better give heed, because your cup is about full. You have forty days to go. Think about what this prophet is telling you. Only God can save? Romans 5:20 tells us that **"where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."** Is that the way it was in your own experience? Did you need a whole lot of grace or just a little bit of grace? How big a sinner were you? Here is a good test for you. In Matthew 22: 36-40, the Pharisees ask Jesus,

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

What is the first and greatest commandment? Love God and love your neighbor. Have you done that? If you haven't, you have broken the first and greatest commandment. That makes you the biggest sinner. You are guilty of being the world's greatest sinner. Even the Apostle Paul said of himself as a sinner, **"of whom I am chief."** You need a big God if you are a big sinner. You need a God who is able to forgive, a God who is able to show

mercy.

So our prophet sets off to face an impossible task. He stands before the defensible walls of the world's greatest city that doesn't want to hear his message, and he has nothing to trust in but the word of the Lord. From human reasoning, what are the odds of Nineveh being saved? I say absolutely none, if left up to the human instruments involved. Why do you say so? Because you remember the Ninevites don't love Hebrew prophets, and Jonah doesn't love the Ninevites. What do you think is the potential of the human instruments bringing about a reformation before God? Even Jonah, the preacher, is not in favor of it. He is only doing it because he doesn't want to get back in that fish's belly. He despises the people to whom he has been assigned to preach. He is an obedient prophet, but a loveless prophet. He doesn't love the people that he is preaching to, and the people he is preaching to, don't love him. What are the chances of anybody getting saved here in Nineveh? Absolutely none. "But God." Where sin abounds grace can much more abound. Folks, that is our only hope today. We are living in a metropolitan area where you have people pressed in from all sides. They are moving here from the country for the income, for the education, the social advantages of living next to Wal-Mart rather than having to go out to a country store somewhere. When people get compressed in, more and more sin abounds, and people are introduced to all kinds of sin they never knew about in the country. Violence is increasing more and more and murders are increasing. This is the result when you compress a large number of sinners together. What is our only hope? We are not to look to education, wealth, or military might for our deliverance. It must be in God and God alone.

May I add something in closing? We can't even leave it up to our pulpit preachers. They may have a little bit of Jonah left in them. Some may say, "if we could just get a more loving preacher, then it would sure turn things around." No, it would not unless God turns it around. It is not human instruments, but the divine intervention of God. That is what we need today. Peter could deny the Lord before a little maid, and just a few days later, preach on the day of Pentecost when three thousand people get saved. Are you saying, "it is the preacher?" No, it is not the preacher. It is a need of God. Do we sense this? Do we feel it? Or are we pretty much complacent, like Nineveh was before its repentance? Let us pray.