

One Way or Another: “Who Knows?”

“And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. ¹ Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: ² “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.” ³ Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. ⁴ Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” Jonah 2:10-3:4(TNIV)

“Strict justice” vs. “Deeper/better justice”

(Ref. Numbers 15:27-31, Hebrews 10:11-14)

God's unchangeable desire is to deliver us and free us through his unchangeable love.

Jonah's Message: “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” Jonah 3:4 (TNIV)

Overthrown = Hebrew “hapak” = “a choice: to be overthrown, overturn, destroyed or turned over; or to overthrow, overturn, turn yourself.”

(Ref. Jeremiah 18:7-10. See also Ezekiel 18:30-32, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Jeremiah 25:5; 26:3-6)

Based upon strict justice, God will overturn you and you will be destroyed.

Based upon a deeper justice [Jesus], you may overturn yourself and be saved.

The response of Nineveh and their King: “The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.” Jonah 3:5-9 (TNIV)

“Who knows?” = humility, fasting, repentance

(Ref. Joel 2:12-14)

God's response: “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.” Jonah 3:10 (TNIV)

1. The heart of a prideful, self-serving individual is overturned/transformed to serve God. (1 Samuel 10:6)
2. A generational curse is overturned/transformed into a blessing. (Deut. 23:5)
3. Mourning and sorrow are overturned/transformed to become gladness and joy. (Jeremiah 31:11-13)
4. Desperation is overturned/transformed into deliverance. (Psalm 66:5-6)

For more information about fasting and the fast we are calling: www.northway.org/mondayfast

Small Group & Personal Reflection Questions:

1. Pastor Doug said that Jonah wanted destruction but God wanted repentance. Do you think that is an accurate statement of Jonah? Why or why not? When have you ever struggled with the same tension – either wanting destruction or wanting repentance?
2. Pastor Doug also said that “far too many of us spend far too many of our days sitting inside the belly of guilt and shame.” What is meant by that and where have you seen that play out in your life or the lives of others? As you answer this, perhaps bring to mind the story about the deer that grew up with the Berlin Wall that was shared. Perhaps you could find the story yourself online.
3. The Hebrew word for “overthrown” carries a choice with it. Read the five Scriptures given on the front as examples. Given those readings, what kind of choice is it? What is involved in the decision?
4. Have you ever had a “who knows” moment when you have been so desperate for God that you completely threw yourself at his mercy? Describe that for your group, if you are meeting as a group. If you are doing these alone, perhaps journal the story as a prayer or thanksgiving to God.
5. Above, in the notes, there were 4 examples given of when someone is overturned/transformed by God because they chose to do it themselves, through God's grace. Read the scriptures associated with each of the four, and see if you can identify which one most aptly describes you.
6. Take some time to discuss as a group what you experienced during the Monday Fast, if you did it. If you have any stories from the Monday Fast, feel free to email them to doug@northway.org.