Jonah 3:4-6 (NIV) On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." [5] The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. [6] 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.

9:3 (NIV) So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

****To put on sackcloth and cover oneself in ashes was a sign of deep mourning and sorrow. It is what the king of Nineveh did when he understood God was giving them one chance to turn away from their sins. When coming before God it normally meant an attitude of Humility and a sorrow over their own sin. Daniel expressed this kind sorrow as he pondered the 70 years of exile and the possible restoration of the nation. James McDonald said this about wearing sackcloth and ashes: *"By radically rejecting all matters related to external appearance... They were acknowledging how complete disinterested God is in externals and how entirely focused He is with our heart - our thoughts, our attitudes, and our motivations. ...over time people became guilty of offering God the SYMBOL but not the reality."* (Pg. 127 - Gripped by the Greatness of God) To go through the motions of fasting, wearing sackcloth and ashes merely as an outward symbol would be totally foolish. But I wonder how many times we are focused on the external rather than the heart? How often are we simply putting on a show for God and others?

PAYER: Lord, help me to be more and more focused on You and not what others think. Help me to remember that you can see past all the things that I do to fool others. Please Lord God, help me to be honest sincere before You and others.

Pastor Mark Kieft
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