

## ***“No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”***

### **A Wayward Prophet**

Jonah 1:1-17

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May 31, 2019

**Jeff:** Our heavenly Father, we thank You. We begin by thanking You because we owe everything to You. We're thankful for the salvation that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Most of all, we're thankful for Him. We're thankful for the way in which He came to make You known to us. And we're thankful for the Holy Spirit's glorying in the Son and directing us as He dwells in us to pray to You even when we know not what to speak. And so He utters groans that we don't understand and yet that we have an easy time resonating with because we are children of the living God. Father, we come before You, thanking You for the many blessings that we have in Christ. Chief among them is our fellowship with one another. And Father, we ask that You will continue to unite our hearts together in love and peace with one another. Father, we pray that You'll not only do that here at this Bible study, but we pray that You'll do that in our churches. And we ask that You'll continue to bless us and strengthen us in our work among the brethren there.

Father, we are thankful for the way in which so many ministries are active in the Pittsburgh area. We're thankful for the Man Up Conference that is upcoming and our brother Bruce's part in it. We pray for him and for his preparation. We pray for his opportunity to speak into Your people's lives that day, especially the men of our city who so desperately need to hear words of hope and encouragement, and certainly most importantly the gospel as it brings those things.

Father, as we think about brothers among us, we think about our brother Kevin, asking that You will bless him. We continue to pray that You will continue to be merciful to him. Father, we come before You today asking that You'll give us ears to hear and minds to understand. But we pray, Father, that You'll give us hands and feet to conform to Your gospel as well.

Father, as we think about the story of Jonah we ask that You will minister to us. Bring us a blessing for having been in Your word, but not just a blessing of thought, but a blessing of our whole life. And so, Father, we pray, asking that You will do these things. And we certainly also pray Your comfort down upon the Deffenbaugh family in their loss. Lord, we pray for them and ask that You will be with each of them. Minister to those who are in You. Bring those who are not to You. And so we pray these things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, let's turn together to the book of Jonah. And you'll remember that we flew last time through the introduction. So we'll pick up with point #1 this time. And yet we'll read the text before we get there. Don, do you have it?

**Don Maurer:** Yes, I do.

**Jeff:** Don, why are you dallying?

**Don:** I'm just congratulating Gideon.

**Jeff:** Oh, I got you. *(Laughter)* All right.

**Don:** But it's in the New King James.

**Jeff:** Well, forget it, then. *(Laughter)*

## **“No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”**

**Brave Man:** No!

**Jeff:** Yeah, forget it. *(Laughter)* Just forget it, Don. *(Laughter)* Get yourself set and why don't you read it for us, okay?

**Don:** Yes.

**Jeff:** All right. And we're going to pick up just near the end of the introduction from our last time together. And I'll remind you of what that was in just a moment.

**Don:** Chapter 1?

**Jeff:** Yep. Chapter 1, all 17 verses, Don, please.

**Don:** *“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.’ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it to go to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.*

*“But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.*

*“So the captain came to him, and said to him, ‘What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish.’ And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us.’ So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.*

*“So they said to him, ‘Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?’*

*“So he said to them, ‘I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.’*

*“Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, ‘Why have you done this?’ For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.*

*“Then they said to him, ‘What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?’—for the sea was growing more tempestuous.*

*“And he said to them, ‘Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me.’ Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them.*

*“Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, ‘We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.’ So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows.*

*“Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”* This is the word of the Lord.

**Brave Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, we talked last time about some introductory matters pertaining to the book of Jonah. And I argued the last time that we were together that the book of

## “No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”

Jonah really asks the question is it ever right to flee from God? To put it another way, is it ever right to disobey the living God? And we talked some about that the last time.

And you remember that I said to you near the end of the introduction that we’re not asking this question with regard to an unbeliever. We already know the answer to that. An unbeliever is not to disobey the living God. They are to repent. But we are thinking about a child of God. We’re thinking about Jonah, a covenant child, somebody who has not only professed faith but has a vocation within the Christian community, a vocation called the prophet.

And so we’re talking about a covenant child. This is a covenant story. And what we’re asking is, is it ever right for a covenant child to flee from God? Is it ever right for a covenant child to disobey the Lord? And the answer is obviously no. It is never right, it is never good, it never has a good outcome for this sort of thing.

And the reason for that is a principle taught not only in the Old Testament but certainly taught in the New Testament. And that is that judgment begins with the house of God. 1 Peter 4 verse 17. “For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God.”

And so that was how we ended the last time. But we also noticed this. And it’s something that I’m going to make a little more of today. We noticed that God is really pursuing His son in this story. This is essentially one of the things that we have to hold on to, because as we move through this story, one of the things that we can sort of morph in and out of is how to think about Jonah. And I think that if we’re going to think rightly about this story, one of the things that we need to hold on to is that God is pursuing His son. This is the story of a son who is wayward. And the Father is seeking him.

I think this is really important. I actually used this particular book one time when our congregation was dealing with a particular situation where we had one of our covenant children leave the faith and left the church. And so I talked to the congregation about that in light of the Jonah story, how we should think about that. And so it’s a good construct for us to be thinking about that kind of thing in light of this kind of story. So God is pursuing His son here.

Well, that leads us to the first point that I want to talk with you about. But I didn’t know if there was anything left over from the last time that you might—Yeah, sure! Brian, go ahead.

**Brian:** Just a point of clarification. You’re calling him a covenant child?

**Jeff:** Yep.

**Brian:** In light of your last comment, that’s not equivalent to a believer?

**Jeff:** Right. A covenant child would not be equivalent to a believer. A covenant child could be equivalent to a believer. But it’s not necessarily equivalent to that.

**Brian:** Is that just the Presbyterian faith, or is that—

**Jeff:** That’s according to the Bible. (*Laughter*) If you want to ask a further clarifying question I’ll let you. So when you think about—You know what? Yes, go ahead, Don.

**Don Maurer:** Yes. I’ve heard that the book of Jonah may be autobiographical, that it may have been Jonah who had written this after the fact. Do you agree with that?

**Jeff:** Yes, I think it was Jonah.

**Don:** Okay.

**Jeff:** Yes. As we get to the end of the book, there are some neat things in the book that I actually think that Jonah will help us to see. I think that the story itself doesn’t tell us that Jonah repents. But it’s an interesting thing how the story is written. If you think of it

## “No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”

written by Jonah, it would lead you to think that after the fact, as Jonah writes the story, that he has certainly come to a mindset of repentance. And I’ll point that out later. You may or may not buy that. But I’ll point that out later. Yes?

**Sig:** Well, what about Brian’s—

**Jeff:** Yes. I was going to say that Brian is getting left in the dust.

**Ted:** Let me go back. What would then be the difference between a covenant son and a believer?

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Ted:** I think I have an idea.

**Jeff:** Rather than extensively going into this, what I’m going to do is say this simply. And then there could be any follow-up that one may want to have.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Jeff draws a series of concentric circles.

**Jeff:** I want you to think about this as the covenant community, all right? Now those infant baptized members have the promise of salvation held out to them, though they may not have the salvation promised. That happens when they make a profession of faith. And when they make a profession of faith, then the grace that was offered them at baptism has now become theirs. And they make a profession of faith and become what is called *a communicant member*, which means that they can commune at the Lord’s Table because they have discernment about the Lord’s body.

So Jonah would not be a baptized member at this point. Jonah would be a covenant child in the sense that he’s a full communing member. But he’s still a covenant child.

the covenant community would be the fellowship of believers, okay? Outside of that fellowship are unbelievers. However, inside of this fellowship we have what are called covenant children who we call *baptized members*.

Now I realize that at this point I’m already parting ways with some of you. But we have baptized members. These members, these baptized members that I’m talking about, are infant baptized members.

**Brian:** Are they believers at that point, baptized and—

**Jeff:** What I call our baptized members who are little people, I call them our littlest disciples, because, for instance, in Titus we’re told—and this is far afield.

**Brian:** Don’t worry about coming down to me.

**Jeff:** No no, Brian, no no! (*Laughter*) No, don’t concern yourself with this. (*Laughter*) I don’t want you to feel guilty the rest of the day about this. (*Laughter*) All right. Let me show you something. This is in Titus chapter 1 verse 6.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Titus 1:6, ESV. “*If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.*”

**Jeff:** This is qualifications for elders. If anyone is “*above reproach, the husband of one wife, and whose children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery,*” and so on. Now that says if his children are believers. Well, that could also be translated “*if his children are faithful.*”

Now I actually think that it ought to be translated “faithful.” Because a father has no say over whether or not his child is a believer. That is the Holy Spirit’s role. But a father can make sure that his children are faithful so long as they live under his roof. So as long as a father brings faithful conformity to the covenant while the children are under his roof, then he’s qualified to be an elder. If they step outside of his house at 19 and forsake

## ***“No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”***

their faith, that’s on them. And the repercussions of that are on them. But so long as he brings faithfulness to their conduct while they’re at home, that’s all we can do.

So in that sense they’re the littlest disciples among us, when you raise up a child in your home. I teach that child to pray the Lord’s Prayer, “*Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name.*” Right? I’m teaching them how to be faithful disciples. But I’m not reading their hearts, right? I’m not saying that the Lord has made them believers at this point. What I’m saying is that they are covenant children in the covenant community learning covenant truth, and learning to behave in a covenant way. When they make a profession of faith and say, “What you taught me is now mine in my heart,” that’s when they move into a communicant membership. Does that make sense to you?

**Brian:** So back to Jonah. Is he a believer, or just a covenant child?

**Jeff:** What I’m saying is this. Jonah would give us every indication that he is that circumcised child in the covenant community, and that he had become a communicant child in that covenant community, if we can so use that phraseology which I wouldn’t, but you did. I’m bringing the parallel in. He had grown up in the covenant community, had embraced what the covenant community taught him, and had even found himself occasionally living the life of a prophet, a very meaningful position in the Old Covenant community because the Old Testament prophet enjoyed the intimacy with God like no one else. So yes, he is what we would call a believer.

**Transcriber’s Note:** A cell phone goes off.

**Jeff:** Don’t do that to me! *(Laughter)* Don’t act like this is such a simple question! *(Laughter)* I don’t know why Jeff went off on this; this was so simple! *(Laughter)* Thanks, Brian; that’s good. Yes, Tom?

**Tom:** Rather than saying, “Is it good that he did this?”, isn’t it better to say, “Isn’t it natural that he did this?”

**Jeff:** Did what?

**Tom:** Ran away from God? Because we have the old self with us.

**Jeff:** Well I didn’t say it was good that he ran away from God. If I did, I misspoke, because—

**Tom:** But it’s natural in that he’s human.

**Jeff:** Yes, he’s got a propensity to sin and disobey.

**Tom:** Like all of us.

**Jeff:** Yes. But I think the inclination of a believer ought to be obedience.

**Tom:** We try for that, but we don’t all do that.

**Jeff:** Sure.

**Tom:** There are times when, regardless of where we think we are,--

**Jeff:** Romans 7. The old man in me still wants me to do the things of the flesh.

**Tom:** And the Holy Spirit fights back.

**Jeff:** I agree. For sure.

**Tom:** Okay.

**Jeff:** Okay. Anything else? All right. So *no substitutions, please.* Brian, I made that point for you. *(Laughter)*

All right. What do we mean by that? Well, what I mean by that is this. Sometimes especially the theologically astute will try to worm their way out of the consequences of their sin by saying, “But I’m orthodox.” And orthodoxy can never replace genuine

## “No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”

repentance. In other words my orthodoxy, my understanding of the faith, can never replace my need to repent of sin.

And sometimes, in our worst moments, we actually think that. I mean, I want you to think about this. I’ve met people who are very clear about what they believe. And they’re very critical of people who don’t believe the way they believe. And they’re very critical of people who don’t practice the faith the way they believe. And yet they may be living in sin.

And yet there’s this false idea that at least I have orthodoxy. And that orthodoxy in some way compensates for the sin that I continue to practice. And what I’m saying to you is, that’s never the case.

You know, it’s an ironic thing that orthodoxy means *right or straight praise*. It’s an ironic thing when you begin to talk about having right praise for God when you know that your life is not right. You know, there’s a correlation between *orthodoxy* or right praise, and *orthopraxy*, right practice. Right praise ought to lead to right practice.

Tom reminds us that it doesn’t always, as Paul says in Romans 7. It doesn’t always. But what Paul says in Romans chapter 6 is that when it doesn’t, when we find ourselves offering our hands as instruments of wickedness, we need to do what Jesus said to do in the Sermon on the Mount. We need to cut off that hand that leads us into sin, to pluck out that eye that leads us into sin.

Now that’s not literal. But what he’s saying is that the sin in us needs to be mortified. John Owen used to say that if you don’t kill the sin that is in you, it will kill you. And that’s the idea.

And so theology, good theology, sound theology, never replaces faith and repentance, never.

**Brave Man:** Amen.

**Jeff:** And so we can fool ourselves until the cows come home. But that never replaces it.

Jonah flees from the presence of the Lord three times. I should say that he says three times that he has fled from the presence of the Lord. The question that we have to ask ourselves when we notice that Jonah is emphasizing this flight from the Lord is this. What is he fleeing from?

Now the reason that we have to ask that is because he’s a good theologian. He knows his theology. And what that means is, he knows that God is omnipresent. He knows what Psalm 95 says. “*The sea is His, and He made the land.*” He knows this. He’s an orthodox theologian. And yet he says that he fled from the Lord. He says it three times. What does he mean? When he says, “I fled from the presence of the Lord,” what he means is that “I’m fleeing from the temple,” that place where God is said to dwell.

He understands that he’s not fleeing from the Lord, because when these sailors ask him, he understands that the Lord is right there. But what he’s really fleeing from, what he wants to get as far away from as he possibly can, is the temple.

Think about it. What is it that we do when we are in sin? It’s easy to forsake church, isn’t it? It’s the place where the word of God is faithfully proclaimed. Why? Because we want to get as far away from that proclamation as we can, because it has a way of dividing bone and marrow, soul and spirit. It has a way of penetrating into our lives in such a way that makes us utterly uncomfortable. So we begin to forsake the assembly. And that’s exactly what Jonah is doing. Jonah is forsaking the assembly.

## ***“No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”***

You know, it’s an ironic thing that he would forsake the temple, the place where God is showing that there is mediation for him even though he sinned. And that’s the same thing with us. That gospel is proclaimed, telling us that there is mediation and reconciliation, and we’ll flee from it. That’s what Jonah is doing. It’s as simple as that. He flees from the presence of the Lord, and that’s what he’s fleeing from.

But notice this. *Running does not extinguish knowledge.* Do you know that? You can run as far as you want to run. He could run to Tarshish. I’ll tell you what he’s not going to be able to get away from. He’s not going to be able to get away from his orthodoxy! And I want to tell you something. You can use orthodoxy all you want. But orthodoxy is one of those subtle bugs that gets into your head. And you think you have it mastered. You think you can use it. But when you least expect it to, it will come upon you in such a way that it will become your master, because you see, true orthodoxy is not just a series of propositions, like mathematical articulations that you can add up and make them say what you want them to say. But orthodoxy is the word of God, the truth of God spoken into your life. And it’s like a time bomb. And you can run from it only so long. And when it’s time for it to explode in your life it doesn’t matter whether you’re in Jerusalem or Tarshish or Nineveh. It will go off.

And that’s what Jonah is facing. Running doesn’t extinguish the knowledge that he has. And you see that. The sailors ask this question. They ask him, “Who are you? Why is this coming upon us?”

And what is he saying in verse 9? *“I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.”* That’s Psalm 95, really. His running does not extinguish the knowledge of God that he has. He’s orthodox in his articulation of who God is when he’s asked by the pagans. He can’t help it! You know what I mean? He can’t help it! It’s so good!

In our best moments we tell people and we say to our friends, those closest to us, we say, “Look. If I ever go off the reservation I want you to come and get me. I’m telling you that right now.” And then what happens? We leave the reservation. And then that guy, he taps us on our shoulders. And he says, “Hey, brother! You’re going the wrong way!”

And we say, “Don’t tell me what to do!” And that’s the way orthodoxy is. That’s the way the truth of God is. We love to say, “Oh Lord, please don’t ever let me walk away from this truth!” And then when we walk away from this truth, the orthodoxy taps us. It’s hard to get away from it. We’ll even speak it in the midst of our sin when somebody asks us a question.

Have you ever been in that situation where you know you’re in sin and somebody asks you a question about God, and you kind of puff out your chest a little bit? And you say, “I have an answer to that. Let me tell you about God.” Right? He’s orthodox, but he’s not repentant.

You know, one of the most telling things about this is the question that he’s asked. *“What do you do for a living?”*

**Transcriber’s Note:** ESV.

**Jeff:** “What do you do for a living?” That’s not the way it’s being asked. They’re asking, “What do you do?” (*exaggerated anger*) “Are you a mariner?” Something like that, you know? “What do you do?”

## “No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”

Notice that there’s silence in this text. He does not answer that question. He doesn’t pump out his chest and say, “Do you see the camel hair and smell the honey? And here’s a locust. Whew, boy!” (*Laughter*) You know, he doesn’t do that. He does not do that! Silence about his vocation. Nothing.

But I’ll tell you what he does do. He tells them that he’s fleeing from God. The interesting thing is that when you look at verse 10, verse 10 indicates very clearly, because of the active nature of it, that he’s not done fleeing. His fleeing is still an active fleeing. He’s not come to that place where he says to these guys, “You know, I was fleeing. Now I’m on this boat and you guys are confronting me and this storm is really, really bad, and I need to stop this nonsense.”

No. What he says is, “I’m fleeing from God. That’s why you’re in this situation. I’m really sorry about that. But you’re in it with me.” No repentance here.

So what does he say? This gives another indication, doesn’t it? “Here’s what you need to do because I’m actively fleeing from God. If you want to be saved, you need to pick me up and you need to toss me over the gunwale.” Is that the right way to pronounce it, gunnel?

**Brave Men:** Yes.

**Jeff:** The gunwale, yes.

**Sig:** Jeff?

**Jeff:** Yes, please?

**Sig:** When Jonah says that, “Throw me overboard,” do you think Jonah realizes, well, I’ll just give up my life or God will somehow direct me to Nineveh?

**Jeff:** Well, you know, that’s the thing that we’re not told, right? And that’s the thing that we speculate upon. And I’m going to speculate on it. But it is the thing that we’re not told. What does he think about this? I mean, what does he think will happen to him?

**Sig:** Well first he’ll save the sailors, right?

**Jeff:** Does he care?

**Sig:** Well, I don’t know. Why would he just commit suicide. In a sense you’re going through a storm.

**Jeff:** This is the mark of a great narrator who pulls you in, right? And you know, the same author that inspired this book inspired Ruth and leaves us wanting more in the first five verses of Ruth. That’s the Holy Spirit, right? He has this way of making us ask questions about the text that really aren’t answered in the text, but drive us to want the text more. It’s a fascinating thing. But I can’t answer that. I mean, we can speculate and I’m going to. But I can’t answer that with any kind of certainty, what he thought would happen to him. Okay?

All right. So there’s a little bit of Jonah in each one of us. And I think that you get the idea of what I’m saying when I say that.

The question is *Where are you going?* This is a relatively brief point. Where was Jonah going? If you were to ask Jonah “Where are you going?”, he’d say, “Well, you know, God wants me to go to Nineveh. But I’m on my way to Tarshish.”

Now I want you to think about this. We might say that this guy needs to hit rock bottom. You know, that’s an expression that we oftentimes use, right? He just needs to hit rock bottom.

You know, my brother-in-law was very much this way. He was addicted to drugs, he had some brushes with the law. He spent some brief time in prison and got out. He then



## ***“No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”***

got caught with a meth lab and ended up being in prison for three years. He got out and was clean three years, got back into the drugs and eventually committed suicide. We always talked about him needing to hit rock bottom.

I'll never forget talking to him in the parking lot. He came to stay with us about a month before he died. He lived with us for a few weeks. And I was talking with him in the parking lot. And I had a chance to share the gospel with him. We were the same age.

Up until this time he had always told me what I wanted to hear. He always told me, “Yeah, yeah, that was wonderful, Jeff.” That sort of thing. This was the first time he had ever told me, “You know, Jeff, I have absolutely zero interest in what you're telling me.”

I think it was a moment of clarity for both me and him. And in my mind he had hit rock bottom. But it wasn't enough to bounce him back up because the Holy Spirit wasn't there. We sometime say that, thinking that if someone just hits rock bottom, that will be the impetus or the means of them rebounding. And that's not the case.

It's not just that someone needs to hit rock bottom. Someone needs to have the Lord save him. And that's the case with Jonah.

But it's interesting that the metaphor, that idea of hitting rock bottom, is in this text, and I want you to see it. God said to Jonah, “*Arise, go to Nineveh.*” But the narrator of the text,—both the human author Jonah and certainly the Holy Spirit,—tell us that Jonah is on his way downward. I don't know if you've ever seen this in the text, but it's there. Let me show you. And it's put in stark contrast to the command of God to arise.

Notice this. Verse 3. “*So he went down to Joppa.*” That's the Hebrew word *down*. He gets on and he goes “*down into the boat.*” Verse 5. Jonah had gone *below* or *down*. That's the Hebrew word, “*down into the hold of the ship.*” Again, verse 5. “*He had lain down and fallen fast asleep.*”

Do you get the idea? The Hebrew author is telling us that he's going down, down, down, down. And god had told him what? “*Arise.*”

Now one of the great things about this text is this. The captain comes in verse 6 and says, “*Arise!*” (*Laughter*) Now I want you to know that that is the kindness of God. And I think this is one of those things where Jonah is helping us to see after the fact, in the writing of the text, that “*God reached out to me in His kindness a number of times.*”

**Brave Man:** Amen.

**Jeff:** “He reminded me providentially of His word. I heard God in the captain's voice that day.” I think that's what he's saying.

But the old man was strong. In verse 3 Jonah rose to flee. And then in verse 15 he's hurled into the sea. And notice this in 2:5 and 6. He goes down to the roots of the mountains.

**Transcriber's Note:** Jonah 2:5-6, ESV.

*“The waters closed over me to take my life;*

*The deep surrounded me.*

*Weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains.*

*I went down to the land whose bars closed about me forever.”*

**Jeff:** He hits rock bottom, we might say. You know, I want to say something to you very briefly before we go to the next point. And that's this: *the providence of god.*

When you think about providence, the etymology of that word is *to see before*. And I think god sees before because He decrees in eternity.

## ***“No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”***

But I want you to lay that aside for just a minute and just think about the idea of God seeing before. As God saw before, He providentially ordained that the captain would be there for Jonah, to speak the same command He spoke to Jonah into his life.

And, you know, it was an opportunity for Jonah to see that God had planted this little time bomb on the ship that reminded him of God’s word. I’m sure that as I’m saying this that you’ve had experiences where you’ve been walking away from the Lord. Maybe it’s been a hard-line walk away from Him, or maybe it’s been just a subtle sidestep. And all of a sudden somebody says something to you and you get caught up short.

You know, I just went out to the Banner of Truth conference this past week. I sat there Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. And it’s a wonderful conference because the Banner of truth is a wonderful organization. It’s one of those conferences I go to every year no matter who’s speaking, because I just think that the Banner is a worthwhile organization.

And two years ago I was on my way out there. I had some seminary students and I was talking to them on the way out there. And I was talking to them about some of the difficulties of the ministry.

I’m exposing myself. I got there and Alistair Begg was talking. And it was on day 2. And Alistair Begg addressed the things that I had addressed in the car, exactly and oppositely the way that I had addressed them. (*Laughter*) And I was overcome with guilt. And I felt like the captain had just climbed into the pulpit and said, “Arise.” And I had to go to those seminary students and tell them that Alistair was right and I was wrong.

And that’s the kind of thing I mean. And I say that not telling you something new, because I’m willing to bet that every one of you has had that same experience, where either you’re walking hard away or sidestepping away. And you had that moment where all of a sudden somebody spoke to you. You read the Scriptures, you heard a sermon. Something happened where all of a sudden you were confronted with the truth of God and you realized “I’m wrong.”

Jonah hits rock bottom. But we don’t need to hit rock bottom. What we need is to be saved. And it’s the word of God that saves us.

So here I want to finish out. And I want to try to make this brief as well. *Ready or not, here I come!* A preliminary story. This is 1 Kings 13:11-26.

**Transcriber’s Note:** 1 Kings 13:11-26, NKJV. *“Now an old prophet dwelt in Bethel, and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel; they also told their father the words which he had spoken to the king. And their father said to them, ‘Which way did he go?’ For his sons had seen which way the man of God went who came from Judah.*

*“Then he said to his sons, ‘Saddle the donkey for me.’ So they saddled the donkey for him; and he rode on it, and went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak. Then he said to him, ‘Are you the man of God who came from Judah?’ And he said, ‘I am.’*

*“Then he said to him, ‘Come home with me and eat bread.’*

*“And he said, ‘I cannot return with you nor go in with you; neither can I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place. For I have been told by the word of the LORD, ‘You shall not eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by going the way you came.’”*

*“He said to him, ‘I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, ‘Bring him back with you to your house, so he may eat bread*

## **“No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”**

*and drink water. ‘ (He was lying to him.) So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water.*

*“Now it happened, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back; and he cried out to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Because you have disobeyed the word of the LORD, and have not kept the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, but you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which the LORD said to you, ‘Eat no bread and drink no water,’ your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.’”*

*“So it was, after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, the prophet whom he had brought back. When he was gone, a lion met him on the road and killed him. And his corpse was thrown on the road, for the donkey stood by it. The lion also stood by the corpse.*

*“And there men passed by and saw the corpse thrown on the road, and the lion standing by the corpse. Then they went and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt.*

*“Now when the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard it, he said, ‘It is the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the LORD. Therefore the LORD has delivered him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him.’”*

**Jeff:** Don, read that for us, will you?

**Don Maurer:** I don’t have it.

**Jeff:** I figured you didn’t, Don. That’s why I asked you to read it. *(Laughter)* You know, it’s just my way of showing my love for you, Don. I’m heckling you a little bit.

**Don:** Oh, I’m so touched!

**Jeff:** I know you are, I know. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** Do you have bread?

**Jeff:** No, I don’t. So what I want you to know is that this is the story about the prophet of God who goes to do God’s bidding. And God tells this prophet that “when you’re finished, leave.” And there’s an old prophet who comes along and says to him, “Hey, the Lord told me that you’re supposed to turn aside and come to my house.”

And the young prophet says, “No no no! I have to leave.”

And the old prophet says, “No no no. God told me to have you come.” And the man stops and goes to the house. And the man stops and goes to the house and departs. And a lion meets him on the way home and kills him. That’s the judgment of God for not doing the word of God.

The reason I bring up that story is because Jonah deserves what this prophet received. But Jonah doesn’t get what this prophet received. Jonah gets grace rather than righteous judgment.

Now that’s just a preliminary story. What did Jonah deserve? Jonah deserved death for disobedience. But Jonah got a fish instead. And we have a tendency to see the fish as oh no, this is a terrible thing! And it is. Who wants to spend three days in the belly of a fish? Not I, okay? But the fish is grace. The fish is god’s grace extended to Jonah. And so Jonah doesn’t get a lion, but he gets a fish.

And notice all of the things that we see in this text. This is God’s pursuit of a son. Verse 4. He, God, hurls a wind onto the sea. Verse 7. God acts in the decision of the lots. And verse 17. God prepares a fish. God is pursuing His son.

## ***“No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”***

Now why is that? Well, Matthew 18:12-14 is a very familiar text.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Matthew 18:12-14, NKJV. *“What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”*

**Jeff:** If you have one sheep among the fold depart, what does it say the shepherd will do. The shepherd will seek that one out. God is saying here that “He has departed and I am pursuing him.” The Jonah story is Matthew 18:12-14 illustrated. That’s what it is. I’m going to skip over the reading of that.

I’m also going to move to something else. God teaches through types. What is a type? Well, do you remember what I said to you before? A type is a mold. And we can see in various ways the mold of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the story of Jonah.

How so? Well, think of the Levitical law for just a minute. Think about the scapegoat, just one particular segment of the Levitical law. The scapegoat was the goat that you laid hands upon and then you led it out into the wilderness, away from the covenant community.

It’s a striking image to think of Jonah and the sailors. the sailors, what do they do? They take Jonah, lay hands on him and cast him over the wall. It’s like the scapegoat. They’re taking the sin and removing it from them. In fact, the very words that Jonah uses are often used in the Old Testament for the idea of casting sin from you.

So what we have is, we have Jesus who fulfills the whole law, not just in His righteous behavior but in His atoning work. And we see glimpses and pictures of that in the Old Testament. And so here we see a glimpse and a picture of even the gospel story in that the sailors take Jonah, the sin among them, cast it out, and then what do they do on deck? They offer a sacrifice to the Lord and repent.

The idea then is such that we are seeing in the pagan sailors what Jonah should have done right from the beginning.

**Don Nemit:** Amen.

**Jeff:** He should have repented, because orthodoxy is no substitute for repentance. And what we’re seeing in the life of the sailors is what we’ll see in the life of the king, but what we don’t see in the life of Jonah. Well, I’m going to end there. Do you have any thoughts or questions before we close out? Yes, go ahead, Kirk.

**Kirk:** It seems that Jonah knew that he was sinning. In that whole situation everybody was affected. Wouldn’t you agree? Because even that storm was a result of his fleeing the temple, fleeing his responsibilities.

**Jeff:** I know what you’re saying. But here’s the danger. The danger is always this. We always think about conscience as if it’s this little Tinkerbelle within us, and she kind of moves us one way or the other. But conscience is really with knowledge. We really act with knowledge, right? And we act with the knowledge we have.

However, the problem is that when one violates conscience, when one acts against one’s conscience, one does something to oneself that is sometimes not necessarily irreparable because grace is always able to repair those things. But when you act against your conscience, violate your conscience, acting against the knowledge you have, you do something to yourself that’s really difficult to overcome.

## ***“No Substitutions, Please: Pt 2”***

This is sort of the principle that when you talk about somebody sinning once, it's easier for them to sin again. That's the idea. When you violate conscience once, it's easier to violate it again. And so when someone violates conscience, they are harming themselves, hurting themselves in a way that could lead to more hurt. That's the terrible trouble.

So Jonah is acting with knowledge. And in one sense you say, “Yes, this is really good. He seems self-aware.” He is, and that's the problem.

You know, I could speculate on this a bit. But I sort of think that being left where we are with Jonah at the end of the book indicates the difficulty that Jonah has in overcoming, right? Any last thoughts?

**Sig:** How would the sailors have known, or why would they offer a sacrifice? They weren't Jewish. Why would that be a natural thing for them to do?

**Jeff:** Well I don't think it was natural. I think they had a prophet of God among them.

**Sig:** And he taught them about sacrifices and repentance?

**Jeff:** Well, I mean, that's another question that's left unanswered, right? But they seem to do what one would do that's repentant, having had a prophet. This is part of the reason why I say this. Here's this guy in their midst who is a prophet of God who teaches them very clearly.

**Brave Man:** The Storm of Vegas.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Tom:** They're actually playing the lottery because they all had their own gods. They're asking that their gods would protect them. They threw him over thinking that one of them has got to work.

**Jeff:** Well, I think they had moved past that by that point. But that's another matter. Whether or not that actually is the case is not spelled out. Again, we're left wondering. Well let's pray, and then we'll dismiss.

Father in heaven, thank You for this day. Bless this time to us, Lord. Thank You for Your word. We pray that You'll bless it to us as well. Use it to conform our lives to Christ's image. We ask these things in His name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.