

“Jonah and the Sailors”

A Wayward Prophet

Jonah 1:1-17

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Jeff: Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank You for this day and for the time You've given. You're so gracious to us and so kind in so many ways. Father, we are thankful to gather here together, to be men who are about Your word. We're thankful for our love for it, for it first came from You. We're thankful for our love for the Lord Jesus Christ, for indeed that did come from You, by the Holy Spirit making us alive when we were yet dead in sins. Father, it is for this truth that we give You thanks for revealing it to us. Lord, we know that there was a time when we wanted to be and thought we were autonomous, laws unto ourselves, apart from You. And we did what we wanted to do according to our own law, according to our own understanding of what was right. And yet You brought us up short by Your Holy Spirit revealing Yourself to us, that we might know the Way, the Truth and the Life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, it's in Christ that we bow before You now, and thankfully so, as humble servants ready to listen.

But Father, we also bring our cares and concerns from the world, and so we lay them before You now. We think about our brother Sig. And Father, we're thankful for him, for the dynamic that he does bring to this Bible study. And we're thankful for the way in which You've knit his heart together with ours. But Lord, we're also mindful this morning not just of our friendship with him, but with his dilemma with his family situation. So we pray for Nancy this morning, asking that You will bring her healing. We are so thankful that You've preserved her life, as these kinds of things are difficult and dangerous. So we're thankful that You brought her through it. We pray that You will continue to bring her life through it and sustain her life. We pray that the transition at home will be an easy one. And Lord, we pray that the healing process would have begun already. Father, we pray that You'll bless Sig and Nancy. We pray that You'll unite their hearts together and their lives together and their spirits together in these moments, Lord, making their marriage even stronger.

Father, we ask now that You'll bless us as we gather together and gather around Your word. And we pray this to Your glory and our good in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. We're going to look at Jonah 1 today, verses 1-17. So Kirk, will you read that?

Kirk: Jonah chapter 1. *“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and call out against it, for their evil has come up before Me.’ But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going down to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.*

“But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest upon the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to

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lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep.

“So the captain came and said to him, ‘What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god. Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.’ And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.’ So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

“Then they said to him, ‘Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us? What is your occupation, and where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?’

And 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, ‘What is this that you have done?’ For the men knew that he was fleeing 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 quiet down for us?’ For the sea grew more and more tempestuous.

“He said to them, ‘Pick me up and hurl me into the sea. Then the sea will quiet down for you. For I know that it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.’

“Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get back to dry land. But they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the LORD. ‘O LORD, let us not perish for this man’s life! And lay not upon us innocent blood, for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.’ So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

“And the LORD made a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”

Tom: The word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: I’m glad to see that you forgot that too.

Kirk: I was told by him to do it.

Jeff: That’s how that always goes. *(Laughter)* I do it all the time, too; I forget. *(Laughter)* All right, let’s look at some points. I’ve got a lot of them today. So we’re going to look at some introductory stuff. *In the same boat* is going to be our first point. Then *learning a common lesson in spite of us*, and *a right response*, all of these things.

You know what I feel like? I feel like I’m in a church today. I feel like everyone is in the back today. *(Laughter)* You know what I mean? I feel like I’m at church. I feel right at home. Anyway, I just thought I would mention that.

Lots of points and you probably don’t know, You’re probably scratching your head until I get to them and unpack them a little bit. So let’s just do that.

Let’s look at some introductory points. I want you to think about good stories. When you think about a good story, you recognize that a good story has some main points to it, and it also has some sub-points to it.

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I mean, you can think about even the simplest children’s book, *The Wind and the Willows*. And you can think about how the main story is about Rattie and Mole and their adventures. But there are all kinds of subplots to what’s going on in *The Wind and the Willows*. There’s this toad and the toad’s adventures. There’s the subplot of the friendship between them all. And so there are main points and then there are subplots that are throughout the book that make the book interesting. It’s in fact when you can identify those subplots and those sub-points and you can tie them together into the main theme. That’s what makes reading fun.

An example of this very thing is in Luke 15, verses 11-22.

Transcriber’s Note: Luke 15:11-22, ESV. *“And He said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them.*

“Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country. And there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country and he began to be in need. So he went out and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country who sent him into his field to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

“But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread! But I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father. And I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’

“And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him. And put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.’”

Jeff: And what story is that? Does anybody remember offhand?

Don Maurer: The Prodigal Son?

Jeff: That’s The Prodigal Son, yes. Now you all know the Prodigal Son story. The main point of the Prodigal Son story is that the prodigal leaves home, squanders his inheritance that he’s asked for and then returns home. That’s the main plot of the story.

But before I say anything else about that, let me give you this quote from Benjamin B. Warfield. And it’s kind of small, so let me read it to you.

He says, *“It undoubtedly has its main lesson.”* He’s talking about the Prodigal story. *“But it could not well teach that lesson without teaching along with it certain subsidiary ones closely connected with it, as corollaries and supports, or at least implicated in the manner in which it is taught. Only we must be very wary that we do not either on the one hand confuse these subsidiary things with the main lesson of the parable, or on the other hand read into it lessons of our own derived from its mere forms of expression.”*

Now think about Luke 15. What’s he saying there? He is saying that there are other points, sub-points to this story. We cannot read into those sub-points something of more

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significance than they actually carry. There are subpoints, sub plots, corollaries, support themes. But they’re just that—they’re corollaries, they’re supportive, they’re substructures. They’re not the main plot.

So think about that for a minute. One of the things that we always talk about when we talk about the Prodigal Son is the brother and the brother’s reaction. And it’s certainly a subplot to the story, and it’s an important one. But it can’t be raised to the level of the main point. And so we need to be wary.

Well, Jonah is like that. When we think about Jonah we think about a story. And I’ve been telling you this and I think it’s important to remember. We’ve been thinking about the main point, that this is a disobedient prophet. Remember, I asked you. Is it ever right to disobey the Lord? That was the main point. Jonah is disobedient to the Lord, and as I showed you the last time, he lacks repentance. In fact, when he tells them about who he is and what he’s doing, he does not repent. He says, “Just toss me overboard.” He’s not repentant. And so the main point seems to be that the prophet is disobedient to the word of God and he lacks repentance. That’s the main point.

But there are some subsidiary points, corollaries to what we’re looking at. And one of those is *the sailors*. And I want us to think about the sailors today. I want us to think about this subplot that’s going on and the sailors who are on the ship with him. The reason I want us to think about it is because there’s a richness to the text. I want us to think about this story because this story fills in some of the details. But it tells us an awful lot about something else that I want us to think about, and that is *organic evangelism*.

You know, you don’t typically think about evangelism coming from Jonah, except to say that well, you’ve got to be willing to do it, unlike Jonah. And yet Nineveh is not the place where we might necessarily think to go. We might think to go to Wexford or Cranberry, or wherever your area is. But we don’t think to go to Nineveh, because this is again a redemptive/historical situation. It’s not repeatable. You’re not going to be called to go to Nineveh, and so on.

But there is a sense in which the story brings to us an idea which is true in any place we happen to be. And that is that organic evangelism is there. It’s right in front of us. And we need to take hold of it. And so I want us to think about that.

But that’s how I want us to think about this text today. We’re thinking about a subplot. We’ve been thinking about the main plot for two weeks now. We’re going to spend this third week in Jonah 1. We’re going to look at a subplot to the Jonah story. And next week we’ll move into chapter 2. But before I move into this, do you have any questions or thoughts or holdovers from last week, or anything like that you want to address?

Okay. All right, let’s look then at the subplot of *the sailors*. What we find is that Jonah and the sailors are an unlikely group of passengers.

There are different commentaries out there that you can pick up and read. There are commentaries that are on the text. There are commentaries that are devotional in nature. There are also commentaries that are existential in nature. And one of them is one by the guy by the name of Jacques Ellul. “*These Joppa sailors do not belong to the Jewish people. They are pagans. But they set sail with a member of the chosen people of*

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Christians.” That’s anachronistic, but you see what he’s doing. “*They are in the same boat.*”

Now Ellul is an interesting guy because he’s not a Christian theologian. In fact, some people might dispute whether he’s a Christian. But he brings a perspective of Christianity a mediate ecology of cultural criticism, and that’s his main discipline. And so he writes this commentary and this is what he says. And I thought as I read it that this was a great point. He has nailed something that’s really valuable to us. And he’s nailed it because we don’t often think like that.

I’ll never forget when I was in a church previous to the one I’m in now. I had a guy come into the congregation. And he was quick to inform me that federal income tax was illegal, that it had not been ratified through proper channels, and that Americans were subject to this illegal active thing of the federal income tax. I of course heartily amended him. (*Laughter*)

No. I said to him, “Well, I don’t know the ins and the outs of this. But I don’t really care.” And he responded to that with sort of an indignity that you might expect from somebody who had put a lot of time into thinking about this. And he wanted to know why it was that I didn’t care, why I didn’t want to hold onto more of my money, why I wanted to make the government more rich and more powerful and larger than it is, and so on.

And I said to him, “Well, there’s a simple reason for that. And the simple reason comes out of the Bible.” He wanted to know where in the Bible that I could justify not caring about federal income tax.

And I said, “Well, you know, when you turn to Romans 13, there’s an interesting text there. And to feel the full impact of it, it might be good to understand the context, when it was written and so on.”

But I said to him, “In 55 A.D. there was a tax rebellion because everyone was paying way more taxes in Rome than any U.S. citizen.” And I said that this tax rebellion was because of the heavy taxes that were being levied against the people. And Paul writing to the Romans says to them, “Now I know, I’m not blind to the fact that there’s a tax rebellion going on. But pay your taxes, because that’s not the main thing. The main thing is the gospel. And so pay your taxes, and make the main thing the main thing.”

Now that’s hard to hear when you’re paying 40% of your income in taxes, maybe 50% of your income in taxes. Well, this guy didn’t want to hear that. He ended up stopping the paying of his federal income tax, buying property down in Belize and then moving there. What he didn’t realize is this. He didn’t realize the principle that we’re learning right now. And that is that there are pagans in Belize. Don’t tell him. (*Laughter*) There are wheat and tares no matter where you go. You’re in the same boat. And you may jump out of one situation and into another. But you’re jumping into a boat with pagans. And that’s the kind of thing that you get when you treat people unfairly, and so on.

So all of life is related before the Lord. You can’t not free yourself from the entanglements that are just distinctive of life in the Lord.

Now I want you to see something. I want you to see the interrelatedness of this. Look at this for just a second, the interrelatedness of life. There are the sailors. There is Jonah,

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of course. Then there are the Ninevites to whom Jonah is supposed to go and preach, and he eventually will.

And then there’s this fish, this innocent fish, you know? It’s called up to swallow this guy and then hock a major loopy. (*Laughter*) And there’s even a worm! I mean, think about that. Down to a worm, there’s an interrelatedness to life, everything from a giant fish to a human being to a city, down to a worm. And I think that’s one of the amazing things, corollary though it may be, about the book of Jonah that we can learn from.

And I want you to see that the narrator really pulls all of this together with one word. He has a way of doing that. It’s just really distinctive.

Transcriber’s Note: A Brave Man, Brian, walks in.

Jeff: You know, I have such a temptation to heckle Brian right now. (*Laughter*) I’m not going to do it. I’m going to let him sneak in unawares. (*Laughter*) Take his seat, and just kind of—What’s that now? What? No, Bill’s sitting down. (*Laughter*)

Brian: No. (*Laughter*)

Dick: Jeff, you don’t understand.

Jeff: What?

Dick: Sig would still be up there doing his opening remarks. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: I was thinking it, but I wasn’t going to say it. (*Laughter*) I’ll have to take it from an elder statesman on that one. (*Laughter*) All right. So one of the things that we need to realize is that the narrator helps us to see the interrelatedness of life with one word. And that word is *hurl*.

Now watch this. “*The LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea,*” in 1:4. That’s where it begins. His son has fled and God is pursuing him. God hurls a great wind onto the sea.

Now this we know. I’m going to remind you of this. This is a problem between a Parent and a child. This is a covenant relationship. And so this is a problem between God and His son. This is not a problem between God and the sailors per se. Remember, there are corollary subsidiary points, supportive in nature to the story.

I’ll never forget. I went over to a friend of mine’s house this one day. And I was probably, I don’t know, maybe eight or nine. He was, too. And I walked into his house and he was on a chair. And he had about 50 or 60 thumbtacks in his mom’s ceiling. He was really a genius. What he was doing was that he was creating a trap for their cocker spaniel. Yes, he was lying in wait for that dog. And when that dog came through, that dog was going to go through that trap and rip the ceiling out. (*Laughter*)

And so I walked in and I said, “So what are you doing?” And he told me and he explained this to me. And I knew that if I did that to my mother’s ceiling that I would not live. (*Laughter*)

And his mom walked in and it was just like the Jonah story. His mom was like God and he was like Jonah, and I was like the sailors. And she was hurling a lot of wind into the sea. (*Laughter*) And I was standing there in this awkward moment of fear, right?

That’s the kind of thing that’s going on in the story, this Parent/child conflict. And the sailors are there watching it. They have the unfortunate place of being spectators.

But then notice this. Because their lives are interrelated, and they see a common solidarity between themselves and this man, the mariners hurl the cargo that was in the

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ship into the sea in order to lighten the load so that they could perhaps spare not only their lives, but the life of this man now with them.

Now let's go on. Think about the interrelatedness of life. Again, I'm just throwing this out to you. Somebody's not going to get their cargo, right? Did you ever think about that? The Tarshish people are not going to have what was just hurled overboard. That's going to affect them, the interrelatedness of life.

Okay. It is Jonah's fault. So what does he say? Verse 12: “Hurl me into the sea.” And verse 15. Notice what they do. They hurl him into the sea.

I don't know about you, but when I look at a text like this one, and I just stop and I think about what's being said about the interconnections, and how the writer is just sort of sewing them altogether with this one word, I just stand back and think to myself, what a wonderful document that we have in the Scriptures that helps us to see some of the subtleties of what happened to be going on.

And so we have the corollary here, a lesson through grammar. Life is interrelated. And again we see the interrelatedness of Jonah the prophet, the sailors, those who didn't receive the cargo, the merchant who owned the cargo, the ship owner, the Ninevites, a fish, a vine, a worm. And even the cattle of Nineveh are caught up in this story. And so there is a massive interconnection between all of these things.

And so what you get is that you get a lesson in providence. And that lesson in providence, I think, is an important one. Sig! I'm going to use the board, Sig, just so you know. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: What are you writing on that board?

Jeff: I'm going to write on that board the breakdown, the etymology of the word for *providence*. *Pro* means *before*, and *widera* means *to see*. And so the idea is *to see before*.

Now God is not a fortune teller. God is not a fortune teller in that He sort of looks into His crystal ball and says, “Ah! I see what's going to happen. And Now I can respond.!” No, it's not like that at all. God is a sovereign God and knows what's going to happen, sees what's going to happen because He's sovereignly ordained it to happen.

And yet providence is a wonderful way of expressing that aspect of the decree. Why? Because think about it. Our God not only ordains what will happen, but sees ahead and makes provision for us. And I think that's a wonderful way to think about this text.

Now you say to me, “Now wait, Jeff. Cargo is lost. Men are terrified. The ship owner, he has a problem on his hands.” We'll see why in just a little bit. But this doesn't feel very much like provision. This feels a lot like terror and calamity and self-destruction and loss.

And you know, I would say to you that it does. And I would say to you to think about it like the way we're thinking about this story. The main point for God is not the cargo. The main point for God is reclaiming His son. And so there are important matters that are in view that must take precedence over others.

Now God could save the whole kitten caboodle if He wanted to. But that's not the way He works, right? He works in such a way so as to show us through pain and suffering our great need for Him. And think about that. All that is is a pattern of Christ's very own life, humiliation and exaltation. So that's what we see here.

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Let me show this to you. In Acts 17:26 this is God’s providence. “*And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling places, that they should seek God.*” And so there’s just a wonderful way in which God’s providence is at work.

You know this. Romans 8:28. “*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good.*” We know that if Jonah loves God that this is going to work together for his good.

And yet providence doesn’t negate responsibility. God is after this son to repent. God is after him to repent.

You know, any father knows that, the lesson of that. Any father knows that he can make his son do anything he wants. But the real challenge is to get the son to understand why and to feel it himself, right?

You know, I get my son to conform. I could always get my son to conform if I wanted to. But that didn’t do me any good as a parent, and it didn’t do him any good as a child.

You know, I’ll tell you what. You know, the best thing in the world was when I gave him a list of Scripture passages, three to five Scripture passages about the situation. I told him to go look at them, write them down and come back and talk to me about them. I never had to say another single word after I did that, because it was God’s word that had a way of reaching him, right?

Don Nemit: Amen.

Jeff: And so providence never negates responsibility. We must respond. And Jonah’s response must be repentance. But God isn’t breaking the man to the point that He’s saying, “Now do this, or else.” He’s just saying, “Well, let Me help you think about this a little bit.”

You know, even when he’s in the belly of the whale, look, even if the whale is a gun to the man’s head, he still has a will to choose, right? I mean, if somebody puts a gun to your head and says, “You’re either going to deny Christ and live, or you’re going to affirm Christ and die,” that’s a choice. It’s not a great one. (*Laughter*) But it’s a choice, right? So providence doesn’t negate responsibility. All right. So do you have any thoughts about that? Do you want to talk about that at all, or is that part of it okay?

Okay. Well, let’s go to a common lesson here. And this is a lesson in several parts. And when I say a lesson in several parts, I mean that we’re first going to look at the sailors, and then we’re going to look at Jonah. So the lesson, though, is pretty much the same. *All attempts at self-salvation are futile.*

I want you to think about the seamen for a minute, the seamen and their God. They all have different gods. They find out that Jonah is on board. They want him to bring his prayers to his God. Why? Because the seamen believe that somebody’s god can save them.

Now I want you to notice something that we learn. This is another corollary. *Human beings are not atheists.* This in my mind represents human beings. When human beings get in a tough spot, what do they do? They seek divine help. And they are pragmatists.

And here’s the great thing: God is neither. God is neither an atheist nor a pragmatist. And the great thing for us, when we think about evangelism, is that we need to bring

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them to God who is neither an atheist nor a pragmatist. Now that’s difficult, because there are a lot of people who affirm atheism, and there are a lot of people who are pragmatists, at least in our country.

The seamen become pragmatists in this situation. They become pragmatists by lightening the load, right? “Let’s throw out all the cargo.”

Now when that doesn’t work, they move to something else that we’re pretty familiar with. They seek to blame someone, right? And so they cast the lot. “Cast lots and we’ll see.”

Now I think it’s a wonderful thing to think about Proverbs 16:33. “*The lot is cast into the lap, but it’s every decision is from the hand of the LORD.*” I don’t think that you ought to take that advice and go down to the casino. (*Laughter*) Because, you know, God may know what the lot is going to read, but you certainly don’t.

Now God in His providence causes the lot to fall to Jonah. This is of God. Jonah gets pointed out as the culprit. And so the sailors, knowing that this is the man,--we’ve talked about his interaction with them,--they row harder again. Remember, they’re seeking to save not only themselves, but they’re seeking to save Jonah. And so they seek to row harder.

Now I want you to notice that they are confronted with God’s word. When Jonah tells them who he is and what he’s doing, he’s running. They flee. But I want you to notice something else. Jonah needs the same lesson because he is confronted with God’s word and flees.

You see, Jonah tells them, “You need to throw me overboard.”

“Nope. We’re going to try to save you.” They flee from God’s word.

Jonah has been told, “Arise and go to Nineveh.” He departs. He doesn’t want to heed the word of God. The lesson is really the same; it’s an ironic one.

Now Jonah actually believes he’s in charge. Remember that I said to you that all attempts at self-salvation are futile. And also, when you look at the sailors, they’re attempting to save themselves. They lighten the load. They cast lots in order to blame-shift. They hear the word of God. This man is running from the Lord. They try to row harder again to save his life. When they’re confronted with the word, they flee. They feel like they’re in charge. Don’t we all? Jonah hears the Word and flees. He thinks he’s in charge.

Now look at verse 3. Verse 3 says, “*He paid the fare.*” I want to show you some interesting things here. The question is, is he committed to his course? He seems to be very committed to his course. But here’s the question. The question is, is he financially able to be committed to his course?

I want to show you something that’s really interesting. The third person feminine suffix for *chicara* means *her price*. In other words, he paid not just her fare, it reads, “*And he paid her price.*” Some scholars look at this and say, “Isn’t it interesting that the antecedent of *her* is the ship?”

Now you can say, “Well, he paid her fare.” But the idea behind it is *he paid her price*. It gives one the sense that he was willing, if not able, to pay for the entire ship. In other words, he was willing to secure the entire ship to take him to Tarshish if that must be the

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case. And so there’s a sense in which his willingness to pay her price indicates his commitment to flee from God and his resolve to save himself from God’s word.

I love this because in verse 4 you get the ship personified. He’s willing to pay her price. But the ship expected itself to crack up. I mean, isn’t that interesting? It’s almost as if you should read the Hebrew in this way. Jonah purchases the ship. Now he doesn’t purchase the ship. The idea is that he is willing to pay her price so as to put her in danger. And when the ship is in the midst of the storm, she expects herself, or it expects itself to crack up. I think that’s just kind of cool, really, to think about it. Do you get it, though? Does that make sense?

Brave Man: Yes.

Jeff: Okay. I don’t see head shakes, so we’ll go on. There’s something else about the Jonah story that’s really fascinating. An infinitive verb is a basic verb. You’ll look it up and you’re going to find that the infinitive form of the verb is the basic form of the verb. And an infinitive verb is used in Jonah to describe human action. Those actions fail. That’s cool, because when you put it in contrast to this, when an infinitive verb is used of an action taken by God, He succeeds.

This is one of those corollaries, those sub-points. This is the thread that weaves the story together. I don’t know how many times I’ve read the book of Jonah and never knew that. I never paid attention to the fact that the verbs that were about humans always ended in failure. The verbs describing God’s actions always end in success. Isn’t that cool?

All right. Is somebody talking on the phone? *(Laughter)* Anyway, this is actually jumping ahead. This is actually what we’re going to learn in 2:9. “*Salvation is of the LORD.*” Salvation is not of ourselves. Jonah can’t muster up salvation. “*Salvation is of the LORD.*”

Now we’re going to go back to Jonah and the sailors for a minute. And we’re going to talk about salvation. And we’re going to talk about the salvation being in spite of us, okay?

And so here’s a maxim for evangelism. *People are saved in spite of us, not because of us.* Yes, that’s really true. People are saved in spite of us.

You know, our children are saved in spite of us, not because of us. I hate to tell you that. *(Laughter)* And some of us will say, “Thank God for grace!”

All right. So exhibit A. is Jonah. He’s pulled from the lower deck. He’s commanded to pray, and then he’s questioned. Now I want you to see this. I’m going to tell you right now that I think the sailors end up believing, and I think it’s in spite of Jonah.

Now I want to show you something. You already know this. During the questioning period, these are a bunch of men. “*What do you do for a living?*” He doesn’t tell them. But he does tell them that he’s fleeing from the God who made heaven and earth. “God is pursuing me. You know this storm? It’s His fault.” *(Laughter)* It’s His fault.

Don Maurer: Jonah’s?

Jeff: No no no. God’s fault.

Don: Oh!

Jeff: That’s what Jonah says, right? Jonah says that it’s God’s fault.

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Now just pause for a minute and think about this. Three times we’re told that the sailors were afraid. They’re afraid of the storm. But notice this. When God is introduced, the word is that they are “*exceedingly afraid*” in verse 10. In other words, when Jonah tells them who it is that threw the storm onto the sea, they’re not just afraid, but they’re exceedingly afraid. Let me say this. Yes, Don?

Don Maurer: R. C. Sproul makes that point. It’s very similar to when Christ calms the sea.

Jeff: Okay, yes.

Don: The apostles are afraid. “We’re going to drown!” But when Christ calms the sea, they’re exceedingly afraid.

Jeff: That’s right, because they’re confronted with a holy God. And that’s the exact point here. I’m coming at this from an Acts 17 perspective.

So think about it like this. These sailors are really like the Greeks of Acts 17. They are worshipping the unknown God, right? They have an altar to everything. And they even have an altar to the unknown God. So they are all praying to their gods. They’re telling Jonah, “Pray to your God.”

Jonah gets up on the deck. Like Paul told the Greeks, he tells them, “This is the God that you don’t know.” Jonah explains to them the God they don’t know. When he tells them about the God they do not know, they’re not just afraid. They become “*exceedingly afraid*.”

Do you remember what I said earlier? I said that God is not an atheist or a pragmatist, and so we ought to bring people to God. This is what happens when you bring people to God, right? When you bring people to God, they become exceedingly afraid.

Now here’s the point. The point is that it’s in spite of Jonah and not because of Jonah. Jonah at this point is not really doing what he ought to be doing, right? But I’ll tell you what he is doing. Whether he wants to or not, he’s introducing sinful people to a holy God. And when he does that, they become exceedingly afraid. And oftentimes we do that in spite of ourselves.

This is not a perfect example. What I love about this is this. Here is this guy running from the Lord. So he doesn’t have this perfect testimony. He’s not perfectly explaining. “Now let me sit down and talk to you about covenant theology.” (*Laughter*) “Let me walk you through what happened with Adam in the garden. And let me now tell you about the covenant of grace.” He’s not doing that.

Do you know what he says? They ask him what he does. And he’s like, “Let’s not think about that. Let me just tell you something. I’m in this situation because I’m being pursued by the God who made heaven and earth, okay? I’m not happy about it, you know?” (*Laughter*)

So it’s not perfect, right? It’s not a perfect evangelistic appeal. But we can say in one sense that it’s very faithful to what the Scriptures teach, right? It’s very faithful. We saw that it was very close to Psalm 95, and so on. So it’s not perfect, but it’s faithful.

Now I think that when you look at that sort of thing, it gives you some really basic coordinates. All people need to be brought to a holy God.

Tom: Right.

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Jeff: You let God worry about what God will do with that when you bring them to Him. In other words, it's not up to Jonah to make them exceedingly afraid. You know, he's not going, "I am running from the God of heaven and earth! Ooooooh!" You know what I mean? "Oh, aren't you really afraid?" He's not doing that at all. He's all bent out of shape. But God is the One who brings to bear upon them the truth of who He is.

So the basic coordinates are that you bring them to God. You let God deal with them in the way that He will through His word. And that's pretty much it, right?

That's not saying that you shouldn't be persuasive. I'm not saying that. You know, Paul said that you should be persuasive. He says, "*We seek to persuade men.*" "*As dying men, we seek to persuade dying men.*" So we seek to persuade, we seek to be zealous, we seek to be eager in our presentation. We seek to be interesting in our presentation. We seek to be all of these things, right?, because these are the ways in which people communicate and hear, and so on. But we know that ultimately they're not going to hear because we're interesting or engaging, or so logical, or so faithful. We know they're going to hear because God is faithful to bring about life in those whom He chooses, right? So it's really pretty simple and straightforward. Any questions about that, or thoughts? It's like a sea out there of no hands today. (*Laughter*)

Tom: Well I think, too, of the idea that what would have happened if God said to Jonah, "Go to Jerusalem and preach?" No problem.

Jeff: Yes.

Tom: "But why should I go to those bad guys?" He knows better than God. And don't we fall into that attitude at times? We know more than what God knows.

Jeff: Yes. Well, there's no doubt about it. Sometimes God puts the good right in front of us and says, "Go for it." And we say, "No, I'd rather have the bad."

Tom: That's right.

Jeff: We're the exact opposite of Jonah, you know?

Tom: Yes.

Jeff: Anybody else?

Don Nemit: You need exercise. I couldn't make them stand in my exercise class. And they're not helping you. You'll get all wilted. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: All right. So let's think about *a right response*. Let's think about the sailors a minute. And I think that the sailors actually come to salvation. And I think there's some positive evidence that would lead us to believe that. For instance, I want you to know that they use the covenant name of the Lord. And so, at least as I think about this, the idea is that Jonah uses the covenant name of the Lord in his speaking with them. And so they grab that. They know that okay, this is the way this God is to be addressed. And so they addressed Him as "LORD."

They call him "Sovereign Judge" in 14b. You know, I think it's interesting. I actually think it's really interesting, because most people don't come to saving faith believing that God is sovereign.

Now look! People do come to saving faith believing that God is sovereign. But they don't really believe that He's sovereign, okay? They don't really.

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You know, I’m reading a book right now that I can hardly stand. (*Laughter*) I am. I’m reading a book right now. A friend asked me to read it. And it’s about the Arminian position on salvation.

Now the problem in my mind is that the man who writes it is a philosopher. You know, my friend who asked me to read this didn’t know that I had an undergrad in philosophy. And so I’m a little familiar with some of this language, *compatibilism* and *libertarianism*.

Now compatibilism basically says that free will is compatible with divine sovereignty. And here is the reason why. The definition of freedom in the compatibilist understanding is that man chooses according to his desire. Man chooses to do what he desires most to do at the moment. That’s the compatibilist understanding of freedom. So it takes into account the imputation of sin.

In other words, take Joseph’s brothers. If you were to pull them out, get them on a talk show and say, “Now did you really intend to do that to your brother?”

“Yes, we wanted to do that. We acted according to our strongest desire at the time.” That’s what freedom is.

Now the libertarian says, “No no no, no no no, no!” The libertarian says that I must be free to not only make this choice, but if I could rewind the tape, I would be free to make the exact opposite choice without compulsion!

Now let me tell you what this means. Let me tell you what this means. Do you know the difference between *necessary* and *sufficient* condition? Now he doesn’t deal with this in his book because he doesn’t want to deal with it in his book. But let me tell you.

Think about a necessary and a sufficient condition. A necessary condition for a fire is what? I’ve got paper, I’ve got wood, I’ve got oxygen. Those are necessary conditions for a fire.

But they’re not a sufficient condition for a fire. A sufficient condition is a match, right? The match is the sufficient condition.

Now in the libertarian view there is never a sufficient condition. Why? Because that would mean that my free will is under compulsion at some point. And if my will is really free, it can never be under compulsion. It has got to be free. Okay?

Now I want to know this. If you have that view, how do you factor sin in

John: Because you want to.

Jeff: Why?

John: Because you feel like it.

Jeff: Why do you feel like it? But as soon as you answer that question, you’re going to tell me something that influenced you. And then I’m going to ask you what influenced you. And then I’m going to ask you why it influenced you. And we’re eventually going to get back to some influence. Libertarian-style free will exists nowhere, except in a philosopher’s mind. (*Laughter*)

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Because not even God has libertarian-style free will. Do you know what? God always acts according to his—

Tom: His character, his will.

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Jeff: His character, his nature, right? So not even God is a libertarian in his view of free will. The reason why I bring this up to you is because this is where people are, because they hate the fact that God is sovereign. *(Laughter)* And yet these sailors say that the covenant LORD is the sovereign Judge. They jump right over the semi-Pelagian stage of thinking and right to the Calvinist stage. *(Laughter)* No question. *(Laughter)* And not only do they believe rightly, but they obey, eventually. Their obedience isn't perfect. But it is obedience.

You know, I want to tell you something. And I may be wrong about this. I'm glad we're running out of time at this point. *(Laughter)* But I almost never wanted my children to first response obey. You know, my wife was always like that. She was like, "First response, they must obey!"

And I'm like, "How often do you do that?"

Brave Man: Good luck. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I mean, I feel like a hypocrite, holding my child up to a standard that I don't submit to myself. You know what I mean?

She's like, "Well, you called them from the TV. And they said, 'Dad, five more minutes, five more minutes!'" And I'd say, "All right. You are to submit to me, woman; that's what the Bible says." *(Laughter)* Nobody's laughing about that. That was a joke! *(Laughter)* Right?

Brave Man: How would I call you? *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer singing: "Put another log on the fire." *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I just simply want to say that the sailors, when they are first told, "Hurl me into the sea," don't do it, but they eventually do it. And that's realistic. I think that's realistic in terms of our Christian experience. Then they offer sacrifices and make vows They offer sacrifices. They're on board a ship and they're playing with fire. *(Laughter)* I think that's hilarious! That's all I've got for you. So do you have any questions? Yes, Caleb?

Brave Man: Are you saying that compatibilism is in line with Christian theology?

Jeff: Well, Jonathan Edwards was a compatibilist. He was the one who came up with the view of compatibilism. And I think that this kind of language is never helpful. I think that philosophers aren't theologians. And I think that philosophy is the handmaiden of theology and never the other way around. So I sort of hate to talk in terms of compatibilism and libertarianism. But compatibilism is the essence of the Calvinistic position

Brave Man: It distinguishes it.

Jeff: Yes. Caleb had a question.

Caleb: Are you saying that their repentance came before they threw Jonah off, or after?

Jeff: Well, I think that in terms of the historical unfolding of it, you see their repentance in what they do. But I think their repentance, their change of mind, had to come before it all, right?

Caleb: I don't know.

Jeff: Well, okay, so I think about it like this. When I think about the *ordo salutis*, I think about 1 Corinthians 1. God calls them. I think about the Holy Spirit making that call

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effectual to bring them to life in Christ (John 3.) And when that happens, that happens in the subconsciousness. And it sort of grows up into the consciousness. And how do I know that it grows into the consciousness of a person? They start to believe rightly, and they start to be sorry for sin. And when they think that way, then they begin to act upon those things.

So I've got a basic theological presupposition about how I become a Christian and how that influences me, and then what I do as a result. So that's kind of how I view it. I'm not necessarily answering and saying that this text says that. But when I put my theology together that's what I understand. Go ahead.

Caleb: I understand that part of it. But it seems odd to me that they came to that before throwing Jonah off, that their first act would be this after repentance.

Jeff: Yes, but it's obedience. It's sort of like the *harim* in the land, right? To the Israelites God says, “Now go in and destroy everybody in the land,” right? So it's the act of obedience, right?

Caleb: Was that Jonah telling them to throw him over, or was that God?

Jeff: Yes. It was Jonah telling them, “I'm being pursued by God. And if you want to calm the sea, you'll need to turn me over to God and throw me in.”

Caleb: So you're saying that is the line that God took.

Jeff: Yes. I think they learned their faith from this prophet. And so I think that the things that they do I think they get from the prophet.

Caleb: Well, you know, this is kind of anachronistic. But if somebody were to come to me and say, “You know, I'm running from God. Kill me to save us from judgment”, I would say, “No, you can't do that.”

Jeff: Yes, I agree with you. But that's why a proper hermeneutic is so important, right? I can never just open my Bible and say,-- You know, let's say that I'm in sin, right? And I'm really desperate. And I'm feeling sort of despondent. And I go to someone and I say, “Now look. I'm a person running from God, in sin. You know, you must execute him. It's right here in Jonah,” right?

You're going to go, “Hang in there, fellow!” (*Laughter*) “Because I don't think you're reading that right.” (*Laughter*) And you're going to tell him. You're going to say that this is a redemptive/historical moment that is not able to be repeated in your life, right? And so that's why a proper hermeneutic is so important for all of us.

You know, we do know those people who open the Bible, read it, and it's like “Judas went and hanged himself,” right?

Don Maurer: “Go and do likewise.”

Jeff: Yes. Go and do likewise. And so they flip around until they find something. You know, let me say this a minute. How many preachers have you heard preach on the rich young ruler, and say, “Now this means that you have to sell everything you have.” But we don't really do that. So what you need to do is that you need to be ready to sell everything you have, right? We automatically want to apply it. And when the preacher preaches it, it's almost like oh, I've got to give away everything!

But then he kind of qualifies it and says that you've got to be ready to give it away. And that's because he's got a faulty hermeneutic. He's not interpreting this story in the

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right way. What he’s doing is that he’s jumping right from story to application. And he’s missed a big part in the middle. And if you have that part in the middle, then the application becomes easy, because it’s not about Jesus telling every person to give away everything they own. It’s not about that at all, right? But that’s why a hermeneutic is so valuable when we read the Scriptures. You know what I mean?

Brian: You may want to define the word for people who don’t know hermeneutics.

Jeff: Yes. It’s just the interpretation of the Scriptures. Yes?

John: Why do you think that Jonah didn’t simply jump into the water himself? Why did he put that on the other sailors?

Jeff: Well, look. I think it’s the same thing as if you were standing at the top of a cliff and you want to commit suicide, right? You have to overcome the desire to self-preserve, right? It’s sort of like the gag reflex. Before you swallow the poison you have to find a way to suppress the gag reflex, you know? I think that’s it. I mean, I’m just thinking out loud. *(Laughter)*

Bob Busted: Jeff, I just want to take us way back to something you said. I think you’re an amazing and impressive guy.

Jeff: Okay.

Bob: And I’ve got a confession. When you said that you were talking to your son and you were referring to three or four or five places in Scripture, well, I can tell you that when I was young and raising my children that there were two reasons why I hadn’t done that. First of all, I wouldn’t have thought about it. *(Laughter)* #2, I wouldn’t have been able to find the sources in the Bible that I could give to him. So that’s an impressive thing. It really got my attention.

Jeff: Oh, good. Thanks. Well, it was really helpful, I’ll tell you. *(Laughter)* Yes, Caleb?

Caleb: I had a quick thought, like with murdering people because of the right way of God thing. So his part was to obey God and God didn’t actually fulfill that.

Jeff: Yes, right.

Caleb: So it’s that sort of thing, trusting that when God calls you to do something to follow that and trust that He has a plan, though we don’t necessarily know that.

Jeff: Yes. And that’s a great thing, because it all looks like this guy is going to die, right? You know, he’s getting tossed into the sea and it’s really violent. And do you know what I wonder? I’ve thought about this. If I could go back to any moment, like three moments, this would be one of them. Did the sea immediately calm? And when did Jonah get swallowed? Did they see it? Were they offering sacrifices while the fish came up and swallowed him? *(Laughter)*

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff makes a swallowing sound.

Don Nemit: The answer is in verse 15. The author brings it up and it says, *“Now they took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging.”*

Transcriber’s Note: KJV.

Don: And I’ve studied that and—

Jeff: It bears out?

Don: Yes, it bears out.

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Jeff: Okay, I’ll take your word for it.

Don: I know the Hebrew.

Jeff: Okay.

Tom: There was a fellow that did a whole series of research on why people commit suicide by interviewing women and men who have jumped off of bridges and lived.

Jeff: Oh, wow! Okay.

Tom: And to a person they all admitted that they regretted it the second they left the bridge. As soon as they left, they said, “Why did I do that?”

Jeff: Yes. Wow!

Tom: And so you think that’s why he said, “Throw me, because I don’t want to kill myself.” It’s the last thing we want to do.

Jeff: Yes, that’s really interesting. Kirk’s over here. You guys had nothing to say!
(Laughter)

Kirk: The sailors at one point were reluctant to throw him in, right?

Jeff: Yes, probably.

Kirk: And they even asked God not to put his blood upon them. Their lives were threatened by the storm itself as well. I mean, they were going to die. You know, there were in a precarious situation. He didn’t want to throw him over. He did everything not to throw him over.

Jeff: Yes.

Kirk: And the men sought God out and said, “Don’t charge this man’s blood upon us.” They also knew they were going to die.

Jeff: It’s crazy, isn’t it? I’m glad I wasn’t one of those sailors.

Tom: Goodbye, Jonah. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: Yes. Goodbye, Jonah.

Jeff: anybody else? No? All right, let’s pray. Father in heaven, thank You for this day. We again do lift up Nancy, and ask that you’ll be with her. Father, we pray that You’ll bring her healing. And be with Sig while he’s spending this time with her, trying to keep the house going and all these other things. Father, we pray that You’ll bless this day to us. We pray that we’ll be more like Christ today than we were yesterday. We ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. *(Applause)*