

“Hemmed In On All Sides”

A Wayward Prophet

Jonah 2:1-10

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Jeff: Heavenly Father, again we are thankful for this day, for the time You've given and for the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts. We are thankful that He has put Himself on display as the light of the world, the living water of life. We're thankful, Father, that in the Gospels He taught us. And He taught us that we cannot receive anything unless it be given to us by heaven. Father, we understand our inability. We understand that we are sinners and need the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in order to respond. And yet we are thankful for the Lord Jesus and His summons to come and place our faith in Him.

Father, as we come to you today in this Bible study, we pray that You will open the Word to us, not just the pages of Scripture, although that indeed is Your word, Your infallible word. But we pray that You will bring that word to bear upon our lives. We pray that You would take it up. We pray that You would apply it to us by Your Spirit in a way that we need it. Bring conviction or comfort, or whatever other aspect we need to be drawn to You, to be near to You. And Father, we ask and pray that You will do this not just for our good, though we pray that, but we pray most of all for Your glory. For indeed You taught us to pray, asking for Your glory to be spread over the face of all of the earth, that Your will might be done on earth as it is in heaven. And so we pray for that, asking that You will indeed spread Your glory over the face of the earth.

Father, as we come now to the book of Jonah once again, we ask that Your hand would be upon us. We pray that Your love would be shed abroad in our hearts. And Father, we pray that Your law would be a guide to our feet as we find it illumined by the Holy Spirit. So Father, we give ourselves to You, asking that You will do in us what will last for all eternity, for we ask it in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Don, do you have chapter 2 of Jonah?

Don Maurer: Yes.

Jeff: Would you read that for us?

Don: Mm-hmm. Okay. Jonah chapter 2.

Jeff: Please.

Don: *“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. And he said:
I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction,
And He answered me.
Out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
And You heard my voice.
For You cast me into the deep,
Into the heart of the seas,
And the floods surrounded me;
All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.*

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*Then I said, ‘I have been cast out of Your sight;
Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.’
The waters surrounded me, even to my soul;
The deep closed around me;
Weeds were wrapped around my head.
I went down to the moorings of the mountains;
The earth with its bars closed behind me forever;
Yet You have brought up my life from the pit,
O LORD, my God.
When my soul fainted within me,
I remembered the LORD;
And my prayer went up to You,
Into Your holy temple.
Those who regard worthless idols
Forsake their own Mercy.
But I will sacrifice to You
With the voice of thanksgiving;
I will pay what I have vowed.
Salvation is of the LORD.’
“So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.”*

Transcriber’s Note: NKJV.

Don: This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Okay. All right,. Today we’re going to look at Jonah chapter 2. And I have the following points that I want us to just work through today. And I want you to think again about some introductory matters. We’re going to think about *the hemming process*. And in this point we’re going to think about sin. And then we’re going to think about *the prayer of repentance* that we find here in the text. We’re going to think about *what the prayer of repentance brings*. It brings a new beginning. We’re going to think about that a little bit. And then I also want to round out with some *typology*.

I think it’s important. One of the things that I think is important, when you look at the Old Testament, is to realize that the Old Testament is not just a collection of stories that are interesting and for our stimulation intellectually and emotionally. But I think that what we need to be thinking about when we look at the Old Testament is how does this text bring us to and lead us to Christ?

Or, for instance, when you think about Luke 24, when Jesus was walking on the Emmaus road with those disciples, He said, “Are you slow of heart? Don’t you know what the Old Testament says of Me?”

And so one of the things that we’re supposed to understand is that the Old Testament speaks of Christ. And it speaks of Christ because the Holy Spirit has embedded Christ in the text. And the Holy Spirit who illuminates the Old Testament text to the apostolic authors also inspires them to discover the Christ embedded in the Old Testament text who is really there, and so brings Him out for us in the New Testament writings, not only as

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they write anew but as they bring the Old Testament to bear upon their New Testament revelation. So the typology that's there in the text is something that we want to consider, that we always want to consider when we think about the Old Testament. So those are the points I have.

Let me think now with you about some introductory matters. Now I want you to think about the sea and the way that the sea is portrayed, the way it's painted. It's almost as if the sea is like a wolf bearing down upon Jonah. It's finally got its fangs into him, and it's pulling him down below the sea.

And I said this to you the last time. I sort of wonder as we have this very short summary of what happened. I wonder where the figures are as each part of the story unfolds. Where was Jonah when certain things were happening?

But I'll tell you this. Though we may not know that with any sort of specificity, we know these things happened. But what I think is interesting is that when you move from chapter 1 to chapter 2, you move from fast to slow motion.

I mean, think about chapter 1. We start off at a port city. We're heading to Joppa. Lots of action is taking place. The storm is hurled on the sea by God.

And think about it. When the sea is in its turmoil, and all of the sailors are trying to lighten the ship and do all of these things in order to sort of extract themselves from the fangs of the ocean, Jonah is still sleeping. So the captain goes down and arouses him and calls him up. And then they cast the die. There's lots of action going on.

But I want you to think about it for a minute. Once they throw Jonah overboard and he's in the sea, once you get to chapter 2, what happens? Everything slows down. In fact, Jonah 2 is really a prayer. The bulk of it is a prayer. And so when you think about that, you think about fast motion to slow motion. It's really remarkable when you think about what the narrator is doing for us.

But one of the things that we understand when we get to chapter 2 is that all of the exits are closed off to Jonah. God has been hemming him in. And one of the things that I would say to you is that this is really sin's tendency.

I'll tell you what. I saw an illustration of this a few years ago that always reminds me of Jonah. I took the garbage out one night. And I looked above and what I saw was absolutely fascinating. I saw a small spider wrapping a larger spider in its web.

Now here's the interesting thing about it. The larger spider was still alive while he was being wrapped in the smaller spider's web. It just captivated me because what was happening was this. The smaller spider would get out of the way. The larger spider would thrash around. The smaller spider would use the thrashing to sort of spin him to get the web around him. Then he would thrash a little more and the smaller spider would spin him and he would wrap him a little more. And it was just absolutely fascinating, how this small spider was using the weight and the leverage and all of this to accomplish his will. There was no way out for this larger spider. This larger spider was being hemmed in, and sometimes being hemmed in by his own actions.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: And I thought to myself, *This is a wonderful illustration of Jonah.* Jonah is being hemmed in by a God who is sovereign. And yet, when you really think about it, Jonah is

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absolutely responsible as a free agent. He is at times kicking and thrusting. And God is using his kicks and his thrusts and his parries in His sovereign plan. And Jonah is actually working against himself to hem himself in.

I don't know if you've ever thought about that in your own life, where you've actually sat back and looked and said to yourself, “You know what? I actually think I've contributed to where I am right now. I can't blame this wholly on God. I've been kicking and parrying and thrusting oftentimes contrary to God's revealed will for my life. And I am where I am.” You know, sometimes we say, “I am where I am by the grace of God.” And in this particular instance, “I am where I am because of my own stupidity.” (*Laughter*) And Jonah could have said that.

And yet it would have been just as true for Jonah to say, “I am where I am by virtue of the grace of God.” And so God is sovereign. And yet he is responsible.

You know, when I think about this particular story there's another story I think about when I think about Jonah. I went to school with a girl who was like me at the time. She was not very interested in school. (This is not something for you to follow.) (*Laughter*) This is a bad example. (*Laughter*)

So I went to school with this girl. She wasn't very interested in school. And we all had to do a book report. And before class she was telling me that she had not read the book. She was supposed to get up in front of the class to present and answer questions about it.

And so she got up in front of the class, and she was very confident when she was talking to me. She got up in front of the class and her confidence sort of bled out of her as she sort of gave the movie account of the book. At least I think that's what she was doing.

And then everyone sat silent because we all knew what she had done, and so did the teacher. And so this is a teacher who was in her 50s and raised some girls and had a few boys herself. You know, this was the kind of teacher who in those days you didn't mess with. And she smelled blood in the water. You know what I mean? (*Laughter*) So in a motherly way she starts asking her questions about the book, and the girl can't answer. And so rather than letting up, she just continues to tighten the knot around her. And it was pretty evident that she was going to sink, which she did.

But anyway, this is Jonah, Jonah all over again. But the noose is tightening around him. And the question that we have to ask is what would Jonah do in this situation? And that's really the question that we have to ask ourselves, because what we're going to do now is that we're going to move into talking about *what the hemming process produces*, or that it at least ought to lead to repentance.

But before we get to that particular point, I want you to go into this particular point asking yourself a very simple question. *What is this process producing in me?*

You know, at all times in our lives we're struggling with some sin or another. If you're glorified already, you probably don't need to be here. (*Laughter*) Dick's raised his hand, okay? (*Laughter*) Let the record show that Dick raised his hand. Oh, you were waving, Dick. You were waving. (*Laughter*) Okay. (*Laughter*) All right, cancel the record. (*Laughter*) Cancel the record that Dick raised his hand and that he's glorified. (*Laughter*) Okay, I just wanted to make sure that we got that on our records. (*Laughter*)

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I just want you to think about the fact that we’re all struggling with sin at any given time in our lives. And no matter how great or how small, there’s a hemming process that’s going on. And the question is always what are we going to do with that process that God has us in? And that’s what I want you to think about as we get to this process.

I want you first of all to remember that Jonah is a believer. This is something I mentioned earlier. It’s vital for you to remember now. And it’s vital for you to remember now because oftentimes we have a tendency to think about texts. And sometimes when they don’t directly apply to us, when we don’t exactly feel like Jonah, we say to ourselves, “Well, this is just good for an unbeliever.” Well, we’ve already dealt with unbelievers in the pagan sailors. Jonah is a believer. And he is a believer who has departed. And God is pursuing him.

Now I want you to notice that even though Jonah is a believer, he feels very much like an exile. He feels like an exile. In fact, he even says it. Look at what he says. He says, “*I have been expelled from Your sight*” in 2:4.

Transcriber’s Note: ESV.

Jeff: Now I think that’s really interesting, because what is Jonah doing? When Jonah says, “*I have been expelled from Your sight*”, what is he doing? Well, he’s recounting what’s happened to him. He’s giving us the historical account of having been tossed overboard.

But chapter 2 also goes on to give us a theological interpretation of what happened to him. “*You,*” that is God, “*cast me into the deep.*” In other words, I want you to think about it like this. Jonah sees the hand of God behind the storm and behind the thwarted journey to Joppa, and behind the sailors’ hands that laid hold of him to toss him over the gunwale. He sees God in the midst of it. God is the One afoot.

And when you think about that, let me just take a pause here. I think that it’s important for us to remember that God is behind all of the providences of our lives. And it’s one thing to say that God is behind all of the providences of life. But it’s an entirely different thing to believe that I can come away with an infallible interpretation of those events.

In other words, let’s say that as I am pulling into the parking lot, what kind of scenario? I’m pulling into the parking lot. I’m about ready to hit a deer. And the deer jukes to the side and goes another way. And I come into the parking lot without having hit the deer.

And what do I say? I say that God was behind all of those events. I was in the parking lot at the moment God would have me in the parking lot. That deer crossed in front of me the moment that God would have the deer cross in front of me. The deer juke at the moment that God would have had the deer juke, and so on and so forth.

That’s all true. But what I cannot say is that “the deer juke because” with any sort of infallibility. In other words, the moment I begin to interpret the providences of life, I am assigning meaning to that of which I cannot assign meaning.

And people do that all the time. And that’s something that we need to be careful of. I don’t know whether you’ve done that or not. I do it all the time. You know what I mean? “I know what happened.”

Brave Man: Amen.

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Jeff: And then within five minutes God inevitably shows me that my interpretation is absolutely wrong. *(Laughter)* And it’s a reminder, you know? Does that make sense? Does anybody want to flesh that out a bit, because that’s important. Yes?

Brian: I think that on the opposite side too—

Jeff: I thought he was objecting before you even said anything. *(Laughter)*

Brian: You should listen to my wife. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Do you know this is being recorded? *(Laughter)* Go ahead.

Brian: But it also goes to the negative, if you take the negative side of that. You’re driving along and a deer is coming out and you hit the deer.

Jeff: Yes.

Brian: That kind of makes you take the negative side of that. “Oh woe is me! What did I do? God is punishing me!”, whenever that may not be the case, as likely as not.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. We do that all the time. We say, “God must be punishing me for this.” But we don’t know. We’re assigning a meaning to providence. You’re right.

Jim: So are you saying that we can never rightly interpret what the meaning might be, that sometimes God does reveal--

Jeff: Wait a minute. You never interpret rightly what the meaning *might* be. *(Laughter)* You know, you really are a precise guy; I don’t know. *(Laughter)*

Jim: I’m saying that you’re not doing it with 100% assurance. But you can have a pretty good sense that maybe this is the case. Are you saying that never happens, that you can never know?

Jeff: Well, I’m sort of going by Old Testament criteria. If it doesn’t happen the way it’s supposed to happen, you get stoned. *(Laughter)* All I’m saying is this. I would much rather talk about making use of providential situations in life.

So for instance, if I get laid up sick, if I’m sick for three months with a sinus infection, it’s easy for me to lie down on the couch and say, “God is punishing me because.” And I think that’s a bad road to go down. I think that the better road to go down is to say, “Okay. I’m on my back for three months. Now obviously God put me there. How can I make use of this?”

And so I begin to ask myself, “Well, what sins might I confess in this moment of stillness? In what ways can I think about God that I haven’t thought about God before?” In other words, is there something I’m not bringing God to bear upon in my life that I may need to, that this is an opportunity for me to stop and slow down? So I’m making use of providential affairs. And I think that’s always the better way. That’s sort of where I’d rather end up. Does that make sense?

Jim: Yes.

Jeff: Okay. I cannot get around the fact that I’m an interpreter, right? God made me to be an interpreter. I think that from the very beginning, even before the Fall, Adam said to himself, “What did she mean by that?” *(Laughter)* Okay. *(Laughter)*

Don Nemit: And there was no dinner. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right. Now it’s sin that leads Jonah into exile. The question is, what does the exiled life look like. Well, it’s a downward life. And I already said this to you, but it bears saying again. It’s a life that leads downward, right? God has said to Jonah, “Arise!” And

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then he gets into that providential state of affairs and the captain comes down and says, “Arise!”, right? And so in some sense we hear the voice of God again. “Arise!”

But Jonah continues to move in a downward direction, remember? He goes down to Joppa, down into the ship. He laid down and went to sleep. In Chapter 2, *“All Your breakers and billows passed over me.”*

Transcriber’s Note: ESV.

Jeff: Whose breakers and billows are they?

Tom: God’s.

Jeff: God’s breakers and billows. The water encompasses him, surrounds him. The water is enlisted in God’s army against him. And the seaweed entangles him. God’s creation is in service to him so that in verse 6 we find Jonah at the very root of the mountains.

What’s happening here? Life in exile is a downward spiral. Life in exile is moving in a downward direction. That’s the theology of exile.

There’s a document called “The Westminster Confession.” Maybe some of you have heard of it. It was written in 1646. And this is what it says in one part of that. A believer *“may fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God’s fatherly displeasure.”* That is said of a believer. A believer can fall into grievous sin and incur God’s displeasure.

Now I want you to think about something. Here’s what we do. We will use that as an excuse. You know that; we will. We will say this. You’re sitting there and you’re going— You’re in sin, right? You know you’re in sin. Not another person in this room knows that you go—

Don Maurer: Go what?

Jeff: I’m gonna say it. *(Laughter)* You wanna hang on there, Don?

Don: All right. *(Laughter)* I admit I’m impatient. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right. You sit there and you see that come up on the screen,—the Westminster Confession, what I just read, Don.

Don: All right.

Jeff: And you say to yourself, “Oh, a believer can fall into grievous sin and continue therein, and incur God’s displeasure!” And you say, “Huh? All right! What’s God’s displeasure? I’ve got grace! Who cares?”

And I want to tell you something. I want to tell you that the difference between somebody that’s in full apostasy—, in other words, a person who has chosen sin and has turned away from God—, and a person who is in partial apostasy, somebody who is struggling with sin and who will turn from it eventually. Do you know the difference? The difference is in repentance.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: Because the person who shows no sign of repentance and who says, “Hey, this is great! This grace stuff is awesome! I can wallow in this stuff!, has not understood grace.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: And I want you to notice something else. Despite being an exile, have you noticed something? There’s something that you can’t escape. If you are in this sort of

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exile and you're sitting in this room today, and you're in this sort of exile, you're in sin and you're running from God, (maybe no one in this room knows it), there's one thing (and Don, I'm going to say it; I'm just pausing.) That was dramatic effect; don't rush me! *(Laughter)* If you're in that situation, you will feel something that Jonah felt. And that is that you will feel that you're in that Parent/child relationship, and the Parent is displeased. And the Parent is pursuing.

Jonah's awareness was that God was the One pursuing him. He understood how everyone said that he was God's man. He was God's prophet. He was God's child. However you want to frame it, he understood that he belonged to the Lord. And it was the Lord's storm that was pursuing him. It was God's fish that swallowed him. It was God's hands in the hands of the sailors that threw him over the wall. You see, that's the sort of thing that he understands. The storm is for him.

And the theological truth behind this all is that *God preserves His people*. I've told you this before. We had a member apostatize from the faith, reject the faith out of hand. And so we excommunicated that person. And I had to preach to my congregation after we excommunicated this person. And I preached on Jonah chapter 2. And I said that the reason why Jonah chapter 2 is important for us at this point is because what we're desiring is that we've had to throw one of God's children over the wall. And our hope is that God is going to pursue His child so that he comes to saving faith and repentance. Yes?

Brian: So you said that the difference was repentance?

Jeff: Yes.

Brian: I agree, but what I---

Jeff: Stop there! *(Laughter)*

Brian: Where I'm having this tension with Scripture is Hebrews 12:17, where it talks about Esau in tears.

Transcriber's Note: Hebrews 12:17, NKJV. *“For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.”*

Jeff: Yes.

Brian: And God did not allow him to come to a saving faith. I can't get that tension in line. It's there; I just don't know how to figure it out.

Jeff: Yes, and it's also with Judas. Remember that it actually says that about Judas. Remember when Judas is in tears. I think it's in Matthew 26 or 27.

Don Maurer: 27.

Jeff: 27, where even he repents as it were. And the answer to that is that is not a saving repentance that has been granted to him, like Acts chapter 5 says, where repentance is granted to us. This is a sorrow that is a worldly sorrow; it's not a godly sorrow.

And here's how we know it. How we know it is that somebody who sorrows like Judas is somebody who sees sin as bigger than God's grace. In other words, they sorrow for the sin. But they're the kind of person that says, “I could never be forgiven. My sin is so big that I could never be forgiven.” And they may actually sorrowful and be regretful at

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having done it. But they don't believe that the grace of God in Christ can overcome that. Yes? I'm not sure who's next.

Brian: Then what you're saying is that they feel guilt, not repentance. And they don't have a saving faith and trust in Christ alone because they're not relying on God's grace and mercy to cover that sin.

Jeff: Well,--

Brian: The only way they'll be able to do that is that they would have to have a saving faith, called from an act of election. So if they're not elect, they can't have that trust. If they can't have that trust, the only thing they have is guilt, not repentance. Is that a good summation of that?

Jeff: There are three parts to saving repentance. The first part is *recognizing the odiousness of sin*. And that's the part that somebody like Judas cannot let go of. They see the sin. It looks odious; it looks horrendous. But what they don't have is the second part. They don't *apprehend the mercy of God revealed in Christ Jesus*. And then they don't have the third part, which is *endeavoring new obedience* as a result. So they only have that first part, where they recognize the heinousness of their sin. But they don't recognize the mercy of God revealed in Christ. So they don't actually change.

Brave Man: Could it also be their heart attitude, the fact that Judas was sorry for what he did, kind of like I'm sorry I got caught versus the heart attitude? Oh, sin is presented to me. I confess and repent and turn to God.

Jeff: Well, I mean, that's definitely there, right? That's there a lot of times. This is in 27:3. *“When Judas, His betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind.”* That's what we think of when we think of repentance. *“And brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.”* And then he says, *“I have sinned, for I have betrayed innocent blood.”*

And so that's where I think he is. He has recognized the heinousness of his sin. That's the reason he gives, anyway. But I think you're right. Sometimes people are just sorry they got caught. In fact, most of the time they are, right?

Jim: I was thinking as you alluded to this earlier. It turns out to be from Timothy. *“That God may grant them repentance after escaping the snare of the devil.”* Unless God grants that, it's not humanly possible.

Jeff: Yes. That same expression is in Acts 5 and in Acts 11, where God grants repentance. You're right.

Jim: And yet I want to say now that it seems that Jonah interpreted the prophets in this particular case.

Jeff: Yes. And he seems to be right, because that's confirmed by Scripture. *(Laughter)* I mean, that's the only time he can do it, right? *(Laughter)* I mean, if I read about a historical event in 2 Chronicles, I can say this event meant that, because God says it. Right.

Jim: I'll give you an example in our time.

Jeff: Yes.

Jim: World War I. There was a president at Hillsdale who is a great scholar. He basically said that World War I accomplished nothing because it led to World War II.

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Jeff: That’s right.

Jim: But in World War I the British retook Israel.

Jeff: Right.

Jim: And Jerusalem, which would set the stage for the fulfillment of prophecy.

Don Nemit: Amen.

Jim: I think you can look back at particular prophets and say, “This is part of what God was up to.”

Jeff: Yes. And so what we have next is that *our faithfulness does not save us.*

(Laughter) What are you thinking? I’m not going to that topic. *(Laughter)* Can you have one of your seminars to teach this? *(Laughter)* Our faithfulness does not save us.

Now I want you to notice this. Verse 8. “*Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness.*”

Transcriber’s Note: ESV.

Jeff: Now I want you to think about this. What does he mean when he says, “*Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness?*” He could be saying that they forsake their own faithfulness. But I think there’s another way that we understand that is more helpful to us than that they forsake their own faithfulness to God.

That word *faithfulness* is the word *chesed*. And it is translated in different ways throughout the Old Testament. It’s translated “covenant faithfulness,” “loyal love,” “steadfast love,” sometimes just “love.” It’s one of those big words that everybody has an idea of. In fact, in some places it’s translated “covenant.” It’s translated in such a way as to try to enfold all this meaning. But no one with one word can really attach a meaning. But that’s the idea.

Now with that in mind I want you to see Psalm 144, verses 1 and 2.

Don Maurer: I’m sorry, Jeff.

Jeff: Yes.

Don: My translation, the New King James, says, “*forsake their own Mercy,*” with a capital M.

Jeff: Yeah. You see, that’s the problem with the New King James. *(Laughter)* No, that would be another way of saying the same thing.

Don: I like the *textus receptus*.

Jeff: Do you really, Don? *(Laughter)* Anyway, Psalm 144, 1 and 2. This is turning into a really rough day. *(Laughter)* All right.

“*Blessed be the LORD my Rock, who trains*”—How do you like the TR when you use New King James? *(Laughter)* He’s not going to respond to that. *(Laughter)*

Don: They don’t do footnotes in my Bible. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Oooooooh! Oooooooh! All right, Psalm 144, 1 and 2.

“*Blessed be the LORD my Rock,*

Who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle.

My Loving-kindness,” (that’s our word *chesed*.)

“*My Loving-kindness, my Stronghold, My Deliverer, my Shield,*

And He in whom I take refuge,

He who subdues my people under me.”

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Who is the Psalmist’s Loving-kindness?

Brave Man: God.

Jeff: God. God is his Loving-kindness. Now think about this. Think about this way of thinking about Jonah in verse 8. *“Those who regard vain idols forsake their God.”* God is Jonah’s Faithfulness. And so Jonah forsook his God. Those who regard vain idols forsake their God.

But here’s what we need to continue to come back to. We need to continue to circle back to it. *God does not forsake His own.*

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: But even if, as the Westminster Confession says, a believer falls into grievous sin and brings upon himself God’s displeasure, God does not forsake His own. The Westminster Confession talks about this. It says, *“This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability,”* or the unchangeability *“of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father, upon the efficacy of the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and the seed of God within them.”* In other words, the perseverance of the saints is really the perseverance of God in the saints, okay?

So the work of hemming is now finished. The question is,--and this is the question that I posed to you at the very beginning,--what will you do with it? What will you do with the hemming process that you’re in?

And that leads to *the prayer of repentance*. Don’t you love this picture? This is the tail of the fish behind Jonah in the water, bobbing there. Jonah is the bobber. And the tail, don’t you love it? (*Laughter*) That’s an ominous picture, I’ll tell you.

All right. So what do you make of Jonah’s prayer? And just say that if you found these verses from Jonah chapter 2, up and lying on the ground somewhere, what would you make of them? There’s no identification to them. What would you make of them?

Well, Eugene Peterson says, *“Line by line Jonah’s prayer is furnished with the stock vocabulary of the Psalms and more. Not a word in the prayer is original. Jonah got every word, lock, stock and barrel, from the Psalm book.”*

Sinclair Ferguson: *“If we heard it read to us without its source being identified, we might wonder if it came from one of the Psalms. It sounds like Psalm 18. But then parts of it sound like Psalm 42, we might well find ourselves saying.”*

So I want you to think about this. Here we have Jonah who has taken the external word of God and hidden it in his heart internally, to the extent that when he is in a situation of lament, it emerges from him in this way. Now I want you to think about that.

Think about John Bunyan. John Bunyan was a man who bled Bible verses. You know, the way he writes, you can always say to yourself, “Is that Matthew 18? Is that Jonah 2?” And you’re always thinking along with the man and asking, what Bible verse was he thinking of?, because it sure looks like this one. And that’s what I’m talking about.

And so when you get into a situation that’s difficult, one of the things that God promises is that His Spirit will prompt us to cry out, “Abba, Father!” But you don’t just go, “Abba, Abba, Abba, Abba!”, you know? Contrary to what our friend—Well, let’s not say it. (*Laughter*) In Don’s difficult situation he may sit down at the piano and play some

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Abba. *(Laughter)* “Dancing Queen!” *(Laughter)* But the rest of us are going to mean “Father!” *(Laughter)*

And not simply “Father.” The rest of us,--and I’m pretty sure Don included,--
(laughter)—

Don Maurer: It’s a rough day. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: We’re going to say some other things and pray some other things. And those things are going to be Scripture-based. We’re going to find ourselves pulling from the Scriptures we know. And that’s the benefit of being steeped in Scripture as Jonah was.

Now this whole posture of his being prompts him to repent. Now I want to say what repentance is. It’s beginning to remember who you are and who God is. So he says in verse 7, “*While I was fading away I remembered the LORD.*”

Now the question is, what is repentance? We already talked about this. I’m not going to spend any time on this right now. It’s the recognition of sin’s odious nature. It’s the recognition of God’s mercy. And it’s endeavoring to turn from that sin. All that is is the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Those are the pieces of saving repentance.

And notice verse 4.

*“I was driven away from Your sight,
Yet I shall look again on Your holy temple.”*

Transcriber’s Note: ESV.

Jeff: The elements that threatened Jonah were gracious in their character. They were gracious in their character. And they were meant for his being called home to return to God. And I think that’s really important when you think about this whole thing.

I want to get to the next point because the next point talks about the new beginning that I mentioned. And this is really cool. *How does Jonah point to the new beginning?* How does he point to the fact of the new beginning that starts?

Again, it’s really cool. Notice in 1:17.

Transcriber’s Note: Jonah 1:17, ESV. “*And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*”

Jeff: How is the whale identified? It’s identified with a masculine noun. In other words, it’s a boy whale.

Now you don’t have this, but in a footnote it says that Jonah checked out. He had some veterinarian skills. And it says that he made sure that he knew what sex the whale was. That’s not true.) *(Laughter)*

Don Nemit: That’s good. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: A fish story.

Jeff: It’s a fish story. *(Laughter)* All right. In 1:17 the Hebrew identifies the whale as a male. In 2:1 it’s identified as a female!

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff speaks the Hebrew word.

Jeff: *Haggadah.*

Brave Man: *(Imitation of the sound of a female whale.)*

Jeff: Yeah, I’m not kidding you! And then in 2:10 it’s identified again as a masculine! It is a gender-fluid whale! *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: No, no! *(Laughter)*

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Jeff: No, that is not true! *(Laughter)* Don asked me to say that. *(Laughter)* No, listen! *(Laughter)* What’s going on? This is one of those places where you go, “I think he wants us to catch something. I think he wants us to see something in the text.” What is it he wants us to see?

Well, it’s really interesting because in 2:1, where the fish is identified as a feminine, you find something else. What do you find? Well, in 1:17,--

Tom: Oh, there you go!

Jeff: In 1:17 *stomach, belly*, can also be identified and is identified as a womb in other parts of Scripture. And think about this. Jonah was then in the womb of the fish. This is where it’s being used as feminine. And in the very next verse the fish is described as female. Then 2:2. He says, “*I called out in my distress.*” It’s a word used for childbearing.

And all of a sudden you begin to get the idea that Jonah is helping us to understand through the imagery of the fish. We know what he’s saying. He’s going, “Look! I didn’t take the time to look and see what the fish was.”

Don Nemit: But he knows which end of it is.

Jeff: “I know which end of it is.” *(Laughter)* But the point is that what he is saying is, male or female, I’m going to identify it as a male because it’s a patriarchal culture, and all men would identify the fish that swallowed them as a male. That was a joke. *(Laughter)* Anyway, he says, “I’m going to use this. I’m going to describe it as a female,--the womb as the belly, the belly as the womb and the distress as childbearing,--in order to communicate that something new is happening to me.” And that’s the travail of childbirth. He is born anew in one sense.

Now he’s a child of God. This isn’t like the new birth of John 3. But any time one comes out of sin like this and one repents, God’s mercies are new every morning. And that’s the idea that we’re supposed to catch. And so Jonah is born anew. Any questions about that or thoughts you want to wrestle with? Yes?

Don Nemit: I think that instead of describing physically a male fish or a female fish, Jonah was describing the attributes of the fish, males being used of God as we’re used of God. We’re miserable in and of ourselves. But He uses us. And with the belly of the whale being the womb I completely agree. It was from the womb that God created the nation of Israel. So he’s describing the attributes of what God is doing to bring him into new saving faith, just like us.

Jeff: I think it’s new saving faith in the sense that it’s repentance. He’s a child, right? He’s a child who has walked away. He’s never stopped being a child. Anybody else? Yes, Kirk?

Kirk: I don’t want to get ahead of myself here. But when you’re talking about repentance and you see this prayer, we just went through a Bible study with this. And it seems like he’s very reluctant to go after he was led up on the shore to go to Nineveh and do what God would have him do, thus his repentance and his reluctance there.

Jeff: Yes. I want to ask you a question, Kirk. Have you ever repented and then almost immediately went back on the repentance? *(Laughter)*

Kirk: Yes, I have.

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Jeff: Okay, I’m just checking. *(Laughter)* Anybody else? Yes, Kirk’s the only one. *(Laughter)* Yes?

Brave Man: He speaks of the childbirth thing. Why does he switch to vomit when the fish brought him out?

Jeff: That’s a really great question, because the man thing kicks back in for him. He can’t find his feminine side for that line. *(Laughter)* I don’t know; that’s a great question. That’s a question I hadn’t thought of. I’ll do a little poking around. That’s a good question.

Brian: Is it male whenever it comes to discipline and female whenever it comes to the salvific or the protective part?

Jeff: You know what? I don’t know. You know, if you were teaching this, if I were teaching this and I thought of that example, that’s certainly one of those things I’d want to put in the application but not in the exegetical part, because, in my humble opinion, I think that’s one of those ways you might apply the text. But you might have to say, “I can’t necessarily do that.” The only thing I can say is that *male* is used consistently here with this kind of activity in the text and *female* is used with this kind of activity in the text. But I don’t know if I can root this application in that per se. In other words, I don’t know if Jonah had that in mind so that I can read it out of Jonah and what Jonah wrote. But it’s an interesting application to think about. It’s an interesting thing that you say, it really is. But that is how I would present that, if you were going to do that.

Bruce Epps: I got an image as you were talking about the providence of God, and how we normally experience the dark providences or frowning providences of God. God orchestrates those. But He also is a Designer. So they are very much tailored to our situation. And it could be because we’re in sin like Jonah, or it could be that the frowning providences that we are undergoing might be for some other greater purpose that we might not sin.

Jeff: Yes. I totally agree. Okay, let me say a word about *Jonah and Jesus*. How is Jonah a type of Jesus here? Well, in Matthew 12:38-40, “*Then some of the Scribes and Pharisees said to Him, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’*”

“But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign. And yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the proper. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’”

What’s a type? Well remember, a type is to take a piece of metal. You put an imprint on it and hit it with a hammer, and it leaves a type. Now the antitype is if you took the metal and made that imprint and put it back into that imprint. You would find the original, the fulfillment of it. And yet the type is just a shadow of what will be fulfilled later.

And so Jonah is a type of Jesus the Antitype. Jesus is the fulfillment of what Jonah only foreshadows. So that’s the way to think about a type.

Now when you think about typology there have to be some parameters so that you don’t say that everything is a type, because that’s how we have a tendency to work. We have a tendency to say this. We get hold of this typology and then we look for typology in

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the Scripture and we say, “this is a type, and this is a type.” And pretty soon it gets out of hand.

When you think about it, typology is a very well-regulated thing. So in a true type there is a historical correspondence and a theological correspondence between the type and the antitype. In other words, when you think about the historical correspondence between Jonah and Jesus, you think about three days and three nights in the belly of the whale and three days and three nights in the belly of the earth. When you think about the theological correspondence you think about Jonah as the preacher of righteousness and Jesus as the Preacher of righteousness. So there’s a historical and a theological correspondence coming out of Matthew chapter 12:38 and following that aligns itself very well with what Jonah is saying.

In other words, what I’m saying is, this is a great example of what Jesus gives of how to identify that true typology. There’s got to be some sort of history. If it doesn’t have history, then what is it? It’s an allegory. So history keeps it from being allegorical. And theology connects it with the Old and the New Testament teaching, right? So the way I see it, there is a way of thinking about typology that keeps us within certain parameters and out of others. And so the typology is clear.

The point of application is this, though. We are united to Christ. And therefore in His death His burial is our burial and His resurrection is our resurrection. And we might say it like this. We’re hemmed in in Christ that we might be set free in Christ. In other words, He comes under death’s dominion. He is, as it were, hemmed in by our sin. And then He’s resurrected from the dead because He is a righteous Man; He can’t remain in the tomb. So we are hemmed in in Christ and set free in Christ.

So it’s kind of an interesting way to think about how Jonah is a type of Christ and how Christ is the antitype of Jonah, and how our lives according to Romans 6 are bound up or in union with Christ, and what that means for Him to come under the dominion of sin and to be set free from it. And so those are some interesting things. But anyway, I’m going to end there. Yes, Don?

Don Maurer: Jeff, if I sit down at the piano and play Abba, like I would play “Dancing Queen” or “Super Trooper,” (*laughter*), would your experience be the same thing as what happened to the fish?

Jeff: I’d vomit, yes. (*Laughter*) So on that note, let’s pray! (*Laughter*) It’s a good thing that this is a male Bible study. (*Laughter*) You know, we can’t stay too long and talk about the *hagadah* and traveling in childbirth. We’ve got to move on to the vomit. (*Laughter*)

Let’s pray. Father, thank You for this day, for the time You’ve given us to be together and for not only the time of learning but the time of fun we’ve had in the Word. And we pray, Father, that You’ll give us a blessing as we go throughout the rest of our day. Bless our families. And Lord, make us useful in Your kingdom, for we ask it in the blessed name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. (*Applause*)