

“The Way of Repentance” Part 2

A Wayward Prophet

Jonah 3:1-10

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Jeff: Our gracious heavenly Father, we thank You so much for the blessing of time. And we realize that it is to be redeemed, that we can fritter it away. And yet you have given us the ability, the capacity to recognize its worth and to put it to good use. So Father, thank You for our time this morning. We pray that as we spend it in the Word and in fellowship that Your hand of blessing would be upon us. We pray, Father, that as we study Your word that Your Spirit would accompany that study and that He would bring it to bear upon our lives in such a way that what He does in us through it would last for all eternity. Father, it's good to be here. It's good to be with one another. And it's good to be with an open Bible in front of us. We pray that Your hand would be upon us as a result.

Lord, we also think about others as we gather this morning. And we certainly think about Terry and his family and their loss. We ask that You'll comfort their hearts.

Lord, we think about our brother Sig and we certainly think about Nancy. Father, we pray that Nancy would be relieved of the nausea that she's experiencing so much of the day and night. We also pray more importantly that the therapy that she's receiving would be beneficial to her. We pray, Father, for the overcoming of the cancer in her, and we ask that Your blessing would be upon her for good, and that means not only for good spiritually, for which we obviously pray, but also health wise as well. Father, we pray that this time together with Sig and Nancy would strengthen their marriage, that You would intertwine them, that You would strengthen the bond of love that exists between them, and that You would take their relationship to a new level.

And Lord, we also certainly pray for Brett as he approaches surgery this coming week. We ask that on Tuesday the doctors would be at their best. We pray that they would work skillfully in him. And we pray, Father, for the remedy of this hernia. We ask that Your hand would be upon him and his family.

Father, as we gather we are mindful that it's a privilege to gather and open Your word. We are also very mindful of the nature of Your word, that it is Yours, that it's infallible and it's true. And it's true because You are a true God. And it's inerrant because it doesn't wander from that truth. And it's authoritative because it is from You. It's Your word. Father, for these things and others we thank You and praise You and ask that You'll use them, accompanied by Your Spirit, to bless us, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. So let's turn to Jonah chapter 3. We didn't finish the last time we were together. So I want us to finish up this chapter today. And let me have you turn to Jonah 3. As you do we will read from God's word.

“Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.’

“So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days journey in breadth. Jonah began to go

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into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, ‘Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.’

“And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

“The word reached the king of Nineveh. And he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles.

“Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish.

“When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that He had said He would do to them, and He did not do it.”

Don Maurer: This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Okay. All right, so let’s just think about where we’ve been and where we are now. We’ll catch up to where we are. And I want us to think about *the effect of Jonah’s preaching*. That’s what we’ve been really thinking about. We’ve been thinking about the effect of that preaching. I want to give you just an illustration to invite you into this again.

Brave Man: There are some markers right there too.

Jeff: Oh yes, okay.

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff draws the picture of a preacher on the board.

Jeff: Let’s think about the preacher behind the pulpit. How about that? No, that can’t be a preacher. *(Laughter)* He’s got to be somber. *(Laughter)* Ah, come on; I’m just kidding now! *(Laughter)* I’m a preacher; I smile. *(Laughter)* All right.

Don Maurer: What are you doing?

Jeff: I’m drawing. *(Laughter)* I’m drawing a minister in the pulpit and the people in the pews.

Don: All right.

Jeff: All right. Now I want you to think about this for a minute. Are you familiar with when we talk about the call of God? Are you familiar with that at all? Yes?

Brave Man: Yes.

Jeff: And are you familiar with that in terms of what is called *the ordo salutis*, or the order of salvation? No?

All right. I want you to think about two concepts. Actually I wanted to draw that the other way. I want you to think about this. This is a really important concept, and we’re going to put it up here like this. This is the *historia salutis* and this is the *ordo salutis*.

Now when you think about the *historia salutis*, you think about the history of salvation. When you think about the *ordo salutis*, you think about the order of salvation. Now let me help you to understand the importance of those words, those descriptions.

When you think about the *historia salutis*, what you’re thinking about is the history or the historical outworking of salvation that comes in Jesus Christ. So what do you think

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about? You would think about what? You would think about things like the Incarnation. What else? You’d think about the perfect life of Christ. You’d obviously think about the death of Christ and the what?

Brave Men: The Resurrection.

Jeff: The resurrection of Christ, right, all of these things. And you would think about the ascension of Christ, and so on. That would be the history of salvation. And so when somebody talks about the gospel, what they’re really talking about is this. (*the ordo salutis.*) But we have a tendency to talk about the gospel as if it were this (*the ordo historia.*)

Now what is the *ordo salutis*? The *ordo salutis* is the application of this (*the ordo historia.*) It’s the application of this (*the ordo historia*) to the individual.

And what would this be? Well, this would be foreknowledge, and then what? Predestination, and then what? Calling, right? And then what?

Don Maurer: Justification.

Jeff: Conversion, justification, sanctification, glorification. This (*the ordo salutis*) would be the benefits that one receives because Christ has accomplished this (*the ordo historia.*)

Now let me just say this for a minute. One of the things that we have a tendency to do is to place all of our eggs of spiritual experience in the basket of individual experience. So when we talk about the gospel to people we talk about it sometimes as if it were justification by faith. We talk about it sometimes as if it were conversion, repentance and faith. Or we talk about it in terms of predestination, right? When we get into those conversations with the Arminians we talk about predestination and how they believe, which is a weird form of predestination. (*Laughter*) But my point is that, however you talk about it, we often talk about the gospel as if it were just the application.

But the gospel itself, purely speaking, technically speaking, what the Bible talks about when it talks about the gospel is this. The good news is that Jesus Christ came, that He lived the perfect life, that He went to the cross, that He died for our sins, that He was raised again from the dead, that He ascended into heaven, and that He poured out the Holy Spirit upon His people. And then when we talk about its application, we talk about this (*the ordo salutis.*) Okay, does that make sense to everybody? All right.

So I’ll wipe this off the board. So what I want us to think about is this in the *ordo salutis*.

Don Maurer: What?

Jeff: Calling. And then I want you to remember that this comes after foreknowledge, predestination, then comes calling.

Now I want you to think about this. You know, maybe I can explain this. Who’s got a nickel of some kind, or a quarter or a dime, anything like that? Who’s got it? Has anybody got something? No? (*Laughter*) All right, I’m not going to look at this dime. I want somebody far away from me. You’ll get it back. You got it?

Brave Man: Yes.

Jeff: All right. I want you to look at that.

Brave Man: What do you mean you got it? You’re never gonna see that. (*Laughter*)

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Jeff: Don’t tell me the date. Do you have the date?

Brave Man: I don’t know; I can’t see it. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Nobody can see it. *(Laughter)* Do you see it? You got the year.

Brave Man: Yes.

Jeff: Are you sure?

Brave Man: Absolutely.

Jeff: All right. Now look. I’m going to tell you, I’m going to name it to you and tell you the year on that coin, all right? Are you ready for this? *(Laughter)* I need glasses. *(Laughter)* And the year is—*(Drum roll)* Is that the year? What was it? I think you’re wrong. *(Laughter)*

Regardless, you get the point. *(Laughter)* The point is that if I did that at a magic show, would you be impressed? No, you wouldn’t be impressed with that. So let me ask you a question. Are you any more impressed when God says, “I’m going to foreordain people to salvation. Now let me run down the corridor of history and see who’s good and who’s bad.”

Tom: No!

Jeff: And then run back and say, “Okay. I saw that So-and-So was good and So-and-So was bad, so I’m going to predestinate So-and-So to life and leave So-and-So in their sins.” Are you impressed with that at all, that God has to run through the corridor of time in order to check and see what the result is, so that He can come back later and ordain it in the counsel of eternity? That’s not very impressive.

When we talk about foreknowledge leading to predestination, one of the things that we have to keep in mind is that *foreknowing* has that word *knowing*, doesn’t it? Now that’s an important word, because we often think about cognition, don’t we? We think about thinking. But when you look at the Bible, knowing obviously has a more intimate tone, doesn’t it, because when you open up your Bible it says that “Adam knew his wife Eve,” and they had a what? A math problem. *(Laughter)* No, they had a child, right?

Now what does that mean? Knowing in that sense is not cognition, but intimacy. And when God foreknew us, He didn’t know us like He knew a math problem. He knew us intimately, like Psalm 139. “I knitted you together in your mother’s womb. I numbered your days before one of them came to be.” He knew us intimately, better than we’ll ever know ourselves. And He knew us before we “*had done anything good or bad, that His purpose in election might stand.*” So says Romans 9. And knowing us intimately He predestined us in the counsel of eternity, and in history He called us.

I want you to think now about this picture that is behind us. This picture that’s behind us is of a church service. And when you think about calling, you think about—Oops, we erased the guy here.

Don Nemit: He’s green with envy.

Jeff: He is green with envy. Oh, that’s good. *(Laughter)* So both of these people are hearing the gospel. The preacher is speaking. He’s only got a two-member congregation. And he’s preaching, and that’s why he’s smiling. *(Laughter)* And he’s preaching. The word of God is going out.

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And one guy hears and says to himself, “Hey! I don’t think I gave a rip about this before. But I think that this is very interesting. I actually think I’m believing what he’s saying.” And then he says to himself, “I actually feel bad about some of the things that I’ve done.”

And what’s happening to him? What’s happening to him is that faith and repentance are happening to him. The Spirit has come and He does work, and He brought about in his life faith and repentance.

Now what about the other guy who is green with envy? The other guy doesn’t hear in that way. The other guy hears and he says, “Boy, that preacher, you know, he makes me so mad! He runs over every Sunday. He’s running over this Sunday and I’m going to have roast preacher for lunch. That’s what I’m going to do. I’m going to complain about this guy,” and so forth and so on. He doesn’t feel bad about what he’s saying. He doesn’t believe what the preacher is saying, none of that sort of thing. That’s an over-exaggeration because there’s something more subtle than that, especially if he’s attending church every Sunday.

But the point is that one hears to the saving of his soul and the other one doesn’t. And that’s the difference between an external call of the preacher, sounding forth the gospel to everyone under his hearing, and the internal call when the Holy Spirit takes that word that’s being preached from the Bible and applies it to the man inwardly at a subconscious level. He doesn’t even know it’s happening to him. He only knows it’s happening to him when he feels the effect. In other words, when the Spirit regenerates, when the Spirit makes him alive, that’s when he starts to feel it.

Think about Lazarus in the tomb for a minute. Lazarus in the tomb is dead. And Jesus says, “*Lazarus, come forth!*”

Now Lazarus at that moment is dead, right? He has to be enabled to hear. But he really, actually hears after he comes to life. There’s a sense in which the summons to life happens when he’s dead. And he really starts to understand that he’s alive once he’s alive.

And that’s the way it is with us. Spiritually speaking, we’re summoned to life when we’re dead. And we feel the blood beginning to flow through us once we’ve been made alive. And that blood beginning to flow is faith and repentance. That’s the idea.

Now we’re talking about the effect of preaching. This is the effect of preaching on a dead person, on a spiritually dead person. And we need to remember that true repentance always accompanies, or ought to accompany, a message that is heard to the saving of one’s soul. Okay? Any questions about that before we get started? No? Okay.

So I just want to talk to you about a couple of things first. This is just to remind you. If you rightly remember, we ended last time with thinking about the original sin. And we talked a little bit about original sin. And we talked about original guilt. And we talked about how original guilt is not a feeling I have, but it’s a position I’m in because I’m in Adam. We talked about original pollution, which means that Adam’s original sin and his guilt have an effect upon my life. In other words, I sin because I am in Adam. There is a real effect that happens. And then part of that original pollution causes me to be totally depraved. Remember, it is a pervasive depravity. It’s not that I am as sinful as I possibly

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could be. And that total depravity is accompanied by total inability. Remember those things.

So *what is the nature of repentance?* Well, I want to remind you of the city of Nineveh and what the Bible says about it just before it’s overturned later on. About a hundred years later it is overturned. And this is what the prophet says. This is Zephaniah 2:15. *“This is an exalted city which dwells securely, who says in her heart, ‘I am, and there is no one beside me.’”*

Now whatever happens in Nineveh with Jonah doesn’t last. About a hundred years later they seem to be back to where they were. Now the message that Jonah is given a hundred years prior to that statement in Zephaniah *“Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.”*

Now I want you to think about this. I mentioned this last time as we ended. I want you to think about that message. I want you to think about the word *“overthrown.”*

Now that word *“overthrown”* is an important word, because you can think about it in Hebrew reflexively or passively.

Now what do I mean by that? Well, it’s really a double entendre. There’s a double message to that single word. *“Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overturned.”* Or, reflexively, *“it will overturn itself.”*

Now I want you to think about that for a minute. When you think about it that way, you think about this city hearing the gospel message, hearing the repentance message and repenting. And if they repent, what have they done? They’ve overturned themselves. Now we’re going to talk about—Don’t raise your hand yet, Bill. I’m gonna get there. *(Laughter)* Easy!

But there’s a sense in which, if I repent of sin, I repent. And so there’s a sense in which they will hear. And if they hear, they’ll overturn themselves. They’re overturn and turn a new leaf. Are you good? Okay.

“Yet forty days and Nineveh will overturn itself.” That would be the sense. That’s reflexive. But the participle can also be construed passively, *“will be overturned.”* In other words, this will happen to them. In other words, if they do not hear the message and repent, God is the One who will overturn them. He will overturn them in destruction, just as we’re seeing. So it would be like this. *“Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overturned.”*

You know, the interesting thing is that it is oftentimes translated that way in the Scriptures. But the idea of *reflexive* and *passive* is built into the Hebrew participle. So there’s a sense in which, as we read the text of Jonah, that there’s an expectation that God is giving them to repent and really turn over a new leaf, or He will overturn them. So it’s built into the message itself. It’s really fascinating, actually.

Now the question is, *what is required?* When you think about repentance, what is required? What is genuine repentance?

You know, one of the things that I do regularly when I do premarital counseling is this. I tell them. I say to the woman, *“Tell me all the ways that you love him.”* And she says, *“Well, he’s kind and gentle. And you know, I just love him because he does this and that and the other thing.”*

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I say to the guy, “Now tell me all the ways that you love her.” And he goes, “I didn’t really think about that.” *(Laughter)* It’s inevitable! I always ask the girl because it’s like, “Come on, Ed, listen along, because she’s going to say something you can use,” you know? *(Laughter)* And it’s always like that I’m taken by surprise. But I digress. *(Laughter)* Oh no, Don, now you’re not going to comment on that. *(Laughter)* Go ahead.

Don Maurer: No, but I’m going to comment on this.

Jeff: Okay.

Don: I was just wondering. With the message of Jonah you say that it can be taken negatively or positively. It can be taken as a message of doom or grace.

Jeff: Yes. Go ahead. Did you want to follow that up?

Don: No. Is it a message of good news or bad news?

Jeff: The message is “this is what I’ve heard about you; this is what I’ve seen about you, and this is what I’m going to do to you. How are you going to respond?”

Don: I kind of find it hard to believe that Jonah would be talking about good news with his reaction in the next chapter.

Jeff: Yes, for sure. But it’s interesting because I think that Jonah writes the book.

Don: Yes, right.

Jeff: And I think that one of the reasons he puts in a reflexive verb is because whether or not he felt that way at the time, that was the offer from God that he was supposed to communicate. Yes, Tom?

Tom: I’d like to disagree a little bit with our buddy here. I think that Jonah didn’t want to go to Nineveh because they were such bad guys, and they don’t deserve grace.

Jeff: I think that’s what he’s saying.

Tom: Oh, okay.

Jeff: Is that what you’re saying, Don?

Don: Yes.

Tom: Oh, I didn’t hear it that way. I’ll shut up.

Jeff: No, that’s all right. *(Laughter)* Okay, so what’s required? Well, I would say this to my premarital couple. I would say, “Look. You know, no matter what, no matter how you feel about each other now, you’re going to fight.”

“No!” You know what I mean? *(Laughter)* “No, we’ll never fight.”

“oh yes, you’re going to fight. You’re going to need to know how to repent and forgive one another,” right? So I always tell them. I’ll say, “Search the Scriptures. Use the Confession and Catechisms. And develop what repentance and forgiveness is going to look like in your home. Come up with a plan. When you first fight, tell me what it’s going to look like and how it’s going to be resolved.”

Well, when you think about it like that, there are some basics that you need to think about when you think about repentance. What is repentance? Well, *repentance is recognizing the odious nature of sin.* That comes right out of the Confession, recognizing the odious nature of sin. In other words, what I need to do is I need to look at the cross and see what my sin deserves in Christ. It’s that wicked, it’s that odious, it’s that sinful.

Now here’s the problem. You know, I think that it just depends on what tradition you’re in. If you are in a Reformed tradition that spends a lot of time thinking about the

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Puritans, you could have a distorted understanding of repentance. Why? Well, because some guys love to wallow in the Slough of Despond. And for some reason they can't ever get out of this particular element right here, this odious nature of sin. You know, they seem to revel in it.

I'll never forget this. About eleven or twelve years ago there was a guy who visited the church. When he was late he showed up and talked to me afterwards. And he said to me, “I need to talk to you about something.”

I said, “Sure. What is it?”

“I need to talk to you about my spiritual condition.”

I said, “I'll tell you what. I have to go and teach Sunday school. Let me give you an elder. Let me pull somebody aside that I trust.” I don't think he was an elder at the time. “You can talk to him and he'll be able to help you.”

“Okay, wonderful!” And so I pulled this guy aside. And the guy said, “I want to give you ten minutes now. But I want to get into church school. You can come into church school with me. Then we'll finish talking afterwards.”

The guy said, “Okay.” They didn't come back for the full church school. And then they were over there an hour after that. And I said, “Man, that's a long time, you know?”

And so then the guy comes out and I said, “What's up? What's happening?”

“Well, I don't have time now. But I want to go to lunch with you. Can we go to lunch?”

“Sure, we can go to lunch. How about tomorrow? Let's go to lunch tomorrow.”

“Okay.” We go to lunch. I get there and the guy's half an hour late. He comes in. When he comes in he starts talking to me in Puritan language about the deception of his heart and the odious nature of sin, and about how he believes that he's reprobate, and he believes that he's under the judgment of God, and so on and so forth.

And I said, “You know what? I think that you like being under the reprobation of God.” Because I said to him, “Let me tell you about the gospel.”

And he kept saying, “You know, I'd love to believe you. But I don't know if I can believe you because my heart is a deceptive organ, and I just don't know. Even if I say I believe it, do I really believe it. I might be lying to myself.”

I finally said to him, “you know, I think you like this. I think you like being in the position you're in.”

“Oh, no no no, I don't like it.”

I said, “You know why I think you like it? I think you like it because you talk about the theory of it all the time. From the first time I met you yesterday up until now you've talked about the theory. But when you were late to worship God, when you kept that man for two hours beyond the ten minutes that he asked to be kept, when you were half an hour late today, you apologized for none of these things. So for actual things that you've done wrong you don't seem to have any sort of self-awareness. But you love to talk about the deceptive nature of your heart, and you love to talk about it in Puritan categories.” You see, that to me has always been the epitome of my tradition that has gone bad.

Tom: Yes.

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Jeff: And this can never be where we rest, because if it is, that’s not the gospel. That’s not genuine repentance.

Don Maurer: Amen.

Jeff: Genuine repentance moves away from there and it moves to the apprehension of the mercy of God. In other words, we recognize by looking at the cross what sin deserves. But we also recognize by looking at the cross the mercy of God revealed to us in Christ Jesus.

Don Nemit: Amen.

Jeff: And that’s significant. That’s genuine repentance. And then what does it lead to? It leads to what? Repentance means *metanoia*. It means a turn. It means that I turn away from sin and endeavor to walk in a direction which leads me away from that sin. The Catechism says that I endeavor to new obedience. Those three things are what we would describe as genuine repentance,--recognizing the odious nature of sin, apprehending the mercy of God, and endeavoring unto new obedience. We’re turning from the sin and endeavoring to walk away from it. That’s what’s required.

In other words, when we think about Nineveh, and we think about the reflexive nature, are you going to overturn yourself? The question that’s being asked of the Ninevites is this. It’s a very simple one. Are you going to recognize what it was that God found so odious about you? And are you going to turn and receive His mercy, and then endeavor to new obedience? That’s really what’s being asked. What questions do you have or comments that you want to make before we go on from there? Yes, Bill?

Bill Obaker: If a man is dead in sin, can he possibly repent?

Jeff: That’s a great question that I’m not going to answer. *(Laughter)* No, I’m just kidding. Actually, that’s a great Segway into the next portion that we’re going to think about under this heading. The *reflexive redivivus*, the nature of overturning itself. This is where I told Bill to hang in there.

Transcriber’s Note: Bill McCoy.

Jeff: Kirk?

Kirk: Yeah, sure. What was that word again?

Jeff: *Reditivus*.

Don Maurer: What?

Jeff: *Reditivus*. Coming to life again. We’re going to revisit it. *(Laughter)* What does it mean to overturn itself? What does it mean to overturn oneself when one is dead in sins and transgressions? And I hinted at this earlier. I want you to think about this.

Did I ever tell you about this? You know, Spurgeon did a sermon one time on being dead in our sins. Did I ever tell you about this? When I was a young minister in this independent congregation I worked for a funeral director. And I was going to preach on Ephesians 2:1. “*When you were dead in your sins and your transgressions.*” And I was going to have this guy. He was a new guy and nobody knew it. He was going to come in. I tried to get a casket and my funeral director friend wouldn’t give me a casket. So he let me borrow his gurney because he was the coroner for the county.

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And so he let me borrow his gurney. And this guy got onto the gurney. This is a little bit of theatrics that I don’t engage in now. *(Laughter)* But I did engage in it then. I was learning at the time.

Anyway, I had four guys wheel him into the church as I started reading Ephesians 2:1. *(Laughter)* What is it to be dead in sin? Actually, if you want the root of this, Spurgeon gave me the idea, right? So it’s really a Reformed guy’s fault.

Anyway, so through that sermon Spurgeon says, what’s a dead man? Well, a dead man is a guy who can’t hear you. You could yell in his ear all day and nothing will happen. So you know, this guy’s over there and I’m like, “You can yell! I am not dead!” *(Laughter)*

You can poke him with a pin. *(Laughter)* He was a friend. He just came to faith, and—

Brave Man: The operative word is *was*. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: You could put stinky stuff on your nose and it wouldn’t do any good. *(Laughter)* Anyway, the idea is that he’s a dead man, right?

Now where do you find this picture elsewhere in the Scriptures? You find it in Ezekiel, the valley of dry bones, right? Ezekiel 37. And God says to him, “*Preach to the bones.*” And remember what happens? The bones start to clatter and come together, right? And all of a sudden it’s a valley of dead people, right? The bones come together, the sinew comes on, the skin comes on, and all this. He’s been preaching. And now the valley is not filled with bones; it’s filled with dead people. And then what does he say? He says, “*Prophecy to the bones.*”

Sinclair Ferguson helped me understand this. He said, “I think what God is saying to him is to pray to the Holy Spirit. Pray the breath over the bones.” And what he’s asking for is the regenerating work of the Spirit that you find in John 3.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: And when that happens, the bodies live. And I think that’s a beautiful illustration of preaching. In preaching, you’re preaching and you’ve been praying that the Holy Spirit will take that message and make dead people alive.

And it’s just like Lazarus. Lazarus was in the grave. And Jesus said, “*Lazarus, come forth!*” But he’s dead. And again he doesn’t feel the effects of life until he’s raised. You know, he doesn’t hear like you’re hearing me. He hears the voice of God’s summons in his deadness and he comes to life. And when he comes to life the blood starts flowing and the organs start working and the eyes open, and so on. And he’s able to hear, and so forth. And these are the effects of the resurrection.

And we need to remember that repentance and faith are the effects of the spiritual resurrection. You know, people don’t get that. There are Arminian folks who hear this and they say, “Yes, but how can he repent if he’s dead in his sins?” And what they fail to realize is that the repentance is granted to them.

Remember the man with the shriveled hand? Jesus meets him in the synagogue. And Jesus says to him, “*Stretch out your hand.*” Well, he has no power to stretch out his hand. But you see, the point is that he stretches out his hand because God has enabled him to stretch out his hand. And Lazarus comes forth because God has enabled him to come forth. And we are raised spiritually from the dead and are able to exercise faith and repentance because God has enabled us to exercise these things.

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But the striking thing about it is that the whole call or the command, the commands to repent and believe, are all the things that are said prior to the regenerating work of the Spirit. But when the person is regenerated, he hears and exercises those things. It’s an amazing thing when you think about it.

So repentance is ours. But repentance is part of a greater life-giving work which I’ve been talking about. And here are some texts that will show this.

Acts 5:31. *“God exalted Him at His right hand as Leader and Savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”* Jesus gives repentance to Israel.

But now that’s pertaining to the Jews. But how about the Gentiles? Acts 11:18. *“And they glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.’* So there’s a granting or giving of repentance that leads to life for both the Jew and the Gentile. If a Jew or a Gentile is to be saved, they’ve got to be granted that repentance leading to life.

Here’s one. 2 Timothy 2:24-26. He’s talking about the preacher here; this is Paul writing to Timothy. *“The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth. And they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.”*

So this is actually one that is really packed, because what it does is it says that God uses appointed means to bring about life in individuals. That’s the first part of it. In other words, God uses His servants to actually bring the message of the gospel, that God may grant repentance which will then lead them into a greater knowledge of the truth, and they’ll be able to escape from the snare of the devil. This is really a great passage.

I just want to get to a description of repentance because I don’t want to spend a third week on this particular outline. But do you have any questions, because I can go through this part fairly quickly. Any questions on this? No?

All right. So let’s talk about a description. I think that when you look at chapter 2 and chapter 3 you have *repentance compared*. What was chapter 2? Chapter 2 was Jonah in the belly of the whale and his prayer. And then you find in chapter 3 the repentance of the people of Nineveh.

Now I want to make three comparisons. The first comparison is this. There’s *the reception of God’s word*. When you think about the reception of God’s word in this story that becomes an important piece, right?

Now think about how the people received repentance. *“And the people of Nineveh believed God.”* In other words, we get the sense. Jonah is telling us (if he’s writing the book and I think he is), he’s telling us that the people reflexively heard the word *overthrown*. They overthrew themselves; they repented. And they repented because God granted them the ability to repent.

And the result was what? Think about it. The result in the city was fasting in sackcloth and ashes.

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Now the king is really the point of comparison I want you to catch. Now the king hears about it and catches on late. He hears about it after what’s happening in the city is happening. Before repenting he’s going, “What’s happening?”

“Well, there’s a guy going through Nineveh and he’s preaching.” And he hears the message, and the king repents.

But here’s the point of comparison. Look at verse 6 of chapter 3. “*He*” (That is, the king) “*arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.*”

Is anything striking to you? It ought to be at this point. Jonah 1:2: God says, “Arise!”, but Jonah arose to flee. Jonah 3:2: “*So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh.*” There’s the repentance. It comes. It comes after he has to be swallowed in the belly of the whale.

What’s the difference? It’s the response. The king hears immediately and arises from his throne and repents. Jonah hears the word of God and immediately arises to flee. He has to be pursued by God, snatched up by the fish, spewed out on the land, and then he goes to Nineveh. There’s a difference in response. That’s the comparison that I think Jonah is wanting us to catch. Both believed the Word, but there are two responses.

I want you to think about that for just a minute. One, Jonah, is the child of God. But he responds like a spoiled child. The king is an unbelieving Gentile, but responds with first obedience. It’s an amazing contrast.

Which describes us? You know, one of the things that I always hear in Christian circles is “I call my children to first obedience.” And I always hear that and I would say to myself about the parent, “I wonder how many times you offered first obedience when your parents told you to do this or that. And I wonder how many times you offered first obedience when God told you to do this or that.” I mean, I think it’s an ideal that we all ought to be shooting for. I think that when we hold our children to a standard that we can’t ourselves attain, maybe that’s the wrong way to go. But it’s an ideal that we ought to attain, both we and our children.

The second comparison is *the consequences of their responses*. Notice this. This is striking. Jonah 2:3: Jonah is engulfed or swept over by the waves of the sea. He’s covered by the waves of the sea. That’s the word. In Jonah 3:6 “*the king covered himself in sackcloth and ashes.*”

I just think that when you think about it, Jonah arose to flee. The king arose. Jonah was covered with the waves of the sea. The king covered himself with sackcloth and ashes. The idea is distinctive and striking.

As Jonah is writing this, can you imagine? Jonah has got to be humbled when he writes this. Why? Because Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. He likely didn’t want to go to Nineveh because they were Ninevites and he saw them on the rise. They were a rising power. He likely knew what they were going to do to Israel in due time. And yet he writes this prophecy to be read by the people of Israel. And what they are reading is that he was not a first responder, but the king was.

Tom: Yes.

Jeff: I mean, when you think about it, it’s just a striking thing. And so what is covering you?

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And then the third comparison is that *God hears*. Sin doesn't look the same in every individual. But I want to tell you something. God hears every individual who repents. Why? Because He's the one who has granted them repentance. But He hears repentance.

This is a Hermann Bavinck quote. It's from his *Dogmatics*. It's one in essence. That's the way God hears, because it's one in essence; it's the same. What is it? Well, I'll tell you what it is. It's recognizing the odious nature of sin. It's apprehending the mercy of God revealed in Christ. And it's endeavoring or turning from that sin to God.

So *“repentance is, despite its oneness in essence, different in form according to the person in whom it takes place, and the circumstances in which it takes place. What a difference there is in the conversion of Manasseh, Paul and Timothy! How unlike the experiences of David and Solomon and John and James!”* Yes, Dale?

Dale (singing):

“Salome was a gorgeous girl.
She did a lovely dance.
The men who gathered round her,
She held them in a trance.
The king said, ‘Salome,
You can't do that dance here.’
Salome did a different dance
Beneath the chandelier.” *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right, Dale. *(Laughter)* Dale, if you're hungry you don't need to sing about salami. You can eat it before you come. *(Laughter)*

The thing that we need to remember is that when you look at repentance in the Scriptures, when John the Baptist calls people to repent, what does he do when he talks to the soldier? He tells him one thing. *“Be content with your wages.”* When he talks to the tax collector what does he tell him? *“Don't collect more than is due,”* and so on. And these people go away having received life. In other words, what we're seeing is that they are asking, *“What does repentance look like for me?”*

Tom: Yes.

Jeff: And he's helping them to understand what repentance looks like for them. And they go away, having repented. Repentance looks different in different individuals. But it's one in essence, because whether or not I'm struggling with the same sin you're struggling with, I still recognize the odious nature of it before the living God. And I still apprehend the mercy that's revealed to me in Jesus Christ so that I can flee from that sin. So it's the same in essence, but it's different in the way in which it's carried out for each one of us.

And part of the reason for that is that when we think ahead to the New Testament, just think for a minute about the Beatitudes. In the Beatitudes you find that there's a progression of sorts. You can actually divide up the first four Beatitudes and the second four Beatitudes. There are eight Beatitudes. And both of them have 36 Greek words—36 Greek words in the first four, 36 in the second four. In other words, what we're finding is that there is a parallel between the first four and the second four. There are other parallels as well. One begins with the future and ends with the future. And then the six in between

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are present. In other words, these benefits, these blessings, are already present in our lives but not yet consummated.

But when you look at the first four, the first four Beatitudes are a very wonderful description of what it’s like to come to faith in Christ. You’ll recognize your poverty in spirit. You’ll mourn as a result. And you’ll hunger and thirst for righteousness. And when you hunger and thirst for righteousness you’ll be filled.

Now the idea is that you’ll be filled with an alien righteousness. Where does that righteousness come from? If you go back to Matthew chapter 3, it’s Jesus who fulfills all righteousness, that we might be filled with the righteousness that He supplies. And so the idea is that Christ is our righteousness.

And when you think about that baptism of Jesus, what does He say? He says, “I’ve come to fulfill all righteousness,” not because He’s a sinner, but He’s being baptized because He identifies with sinners. And so the idea then, when you think about this, is that repentance in Jesus Christ involves recognizing that our sins put Him on the cross. And yet He on the cross is God’s representation of His mercy toward us.

And so it’s a beautiful picture. It takes us further into the New Testament with Christ. But that’s all I’ll say for now unless you have questions or thoughts. No? All right, let’s pray.

Father in heaven, thank You for this day, for the time You’ve given to us. Bless us, Lord, as we go forth to our work. And we ask that You’ll strengthen us to do Your will. We pray, Father, that we might make an impact on the lives of others. And we pray certainly that we bring glory and honor to You. But Father, most of all, we thank You that we do this because You first loved us and brought Your salvation to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You, Lord. We pray these things in His name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)