

“A Failure to Reflect”

A Wayward Prophet

Jonah 4:1-11

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Brave Men: *(Singing):*

And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me who caused His pain,
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Brave Man: Hallelujah! *(Applause)*

Jeff: Our gracious heavenly Father, we are so thankful for the blessings that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, not only for the forensic blessings, the blessings of justification and adoption, but also for the renovative blessings we enjoy in Him, that is sanctification and looking forward to glorification. Father, we ask and pray that You will continue to abide in us and bless us richly as You intercede for us at Your Father's right hand. Father, we do pray that You will continue to cause us to grow up in Christ. And Lord, we understand that the means of that growth are basic things, things like studying the Scriptures, having Your Spirit bring them to bear upon our lives. And Father, we ask and pray that certainly He would bring them to bear this morning, even this morning. Father, as we gather together, we pray for Your work to be done in our lives not just here. But we also pray that You would lead us out of this place and cause Your word to overflow to others as we encounter them, whether it be a word of encouragement, a gospel word, whether it be a word of challenge. That's still a gospel word, and we pray that You will use us. And we pray that Your kingdom will flourish even in the small ways that You use us.

Father, we also pray for those who are sick and need our prayers. We think about Nancy and we ask that You will continue to sustain and bless her. Father, we are encouraged by the good report of her doing exercises on her own. And yet, Lord, we are saddened to hear of the infection. We pray, Lord, that You will overcome that. We pray that You'll overcome her trials. And we pray that You will use this in life for her spiritual good. Lord, we also pray the same thing for Sig, asking that these things would be for his good. Lord, we miss our brother and we pray for his well-being and his wife as well.

Lord, we also pray for Bruce. We certainly pray for him as the effects of the Parkinson's continue to increase. And we pray for You to sustain his life and for You to continue to encourage him in his spirit. Lord, thank You for the work that he has done over the years and for the work he continues to do now, and add Your blessing to it.

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Father, we're so thankful for Bishop Rodgers and his being with us today. We are encouraged by it and are thankful that You have brought him to us and brought him to health. Lord, we ask that You will continue to sustain him and bless him.

Father, we certainly pray for Kevin's daughter's friend's father and ask that You will sustain him. Father, we pray for Kevin's wife and ask that You will be with her as well. Father, for these things and for many more we pray, and know that we can turn to You, a God and Father who hears us and who cares for us and who has even invited us to cast our cares upon You. Father, we're thankful for that. And now as we turn our attention to Your word we pray that You will bless us exceedingly, for we ask it in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Don, do you have it open to chapter 4?

Don: Yes, I do.

Jeff: Would you read it for us?

Don: Mm-hmm.

Jeff: Okay. Thank you.

Don: Okay. Jonah chapter 4. *“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the LORD, and said, ‘Ah,. LORD, was this not what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!’*

“Then the LORD said, ‘Is it right for you to be angry?’

“So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

“But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, ‘It is better for me to die than to live.’

“Then God said to Jonah , ‘Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?’ And he said, ‘It is right for me to be angry, even to death!’

“But the LORD said, ‘You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?’” **Transcriber's Note:** NKJV.

Don: This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: All right. Well, let's think a little bit today about our outline. I want us to think a little bit about some introductory points. I want us to address three points in particular.

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They are all going to have in mind the idea of the failure of Jonah to reflect upon his situation. First of all, a failure to reflect upon the fact that *God is so gracious* in the way that he ought, and some lessons he should have learned.

Let’s think about some introductory points. I remember growing up. My parents always had a car. You know, it’s really funny. When you think about these things as you get older, you kind of wonder about them, you know? When I was young, maybe seven or eight years old. Every year my dad would get out with the spade shovel and he would overturn the dirt one shovel at a time. And I used to think to myself, *Why in the world don’t you buy a roto tiller?*, because the guy right across the street was roto tilling and he’d be done in minutes. *(Laughter)* Anyway, my dad would get out there and do that.

And then he would expect me to put the same amount of labor into that garden when it came to weeding it. And I would always think to myself, *I hate this job!*, right? So you know what I would always do. I wasn’t the best weeder in the world. So what I’d do is that I’d just rip them up at the top, which was easier. *(Laughter)* But one of the things that I realized was that if you don’t rip them up with the roots, they come back! And that makes you work all the harder. So I learned a valuable lesson. You have to pull them out at the roots.

Jonathan Edwards noticed this. His parents must have been the same types of people. That’s all I can think of. But he had a series of resolutions that he would live by. And he would read the resolutions over periodically and regularly. And one of the resolutions of Jonathan Edwards was this. It was *“to reflect upon and determine what is the root cause of the sin in my life, and to uproot the root.”* And that’s a good spiritual lesson, because if we don’t uproot the root, it’s going to grow back in our lives.

Now what do we see so far in Jonah 1-3? We see *disobedience* in chapter 1. We see *repentance* in chapter 2. We see *obedience*, at least outward conformity, in chapter 3. But in chapter 4 what do we see? We see the root again. The root has returned.

Now I want you to think about this for a minute because you have to ask yourself this question when you hear me say that. You have to ask yourself this. Was the repentance that we saw in chapter 2 a genuine repentance?

Now I just want to respond to you by asking you a very simple little question. When you have repented of sin, have you never returned to that sin? *(Laughter)* All right. *(Laughter)* That’s your answer. Yes, the repentance was genuine. And yet Jonah was a very real individual, struggling with a very real sin. And the root comes back.

Now I want you to think about this for a few minutes. The weed was back. How do we know it was back? Well, we know it was back when we look at the parting prayer that he offers.

Transcriber’s Note: Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the ESV.

Jeff: *“O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my own country?”*

And then, you know, it’s interesting. Look at what it says in verse 5. *“And Jonah went out of the city.”* Jonah wasn’t even finished going through the city of Nineveh when he prays that prayer to God. He’s not even finished. He’s not even out of the gate. He’s probably observing the repentance that he’s been calling for. And he says, *“Oh LORD!*

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Isn't this what I said to You? Didn't I say this would happen?" It's amazing! I just found that startling that he's not even out of the city gate.

So Jonah obeys, but he wants to die. You know, he's sort of like a child at this point. You know how children are. I'll do it, but I'm going to pitch a fit! (*Laughter*) You know what I mean? (*Laughter*) And that's kind of the way that you think about Jonah.

But why this reaction? And what we're asking is this. Remember when I gave our first lesson on this book? And I said to you that it's really difficult to determine why Jonah fled. And I said to you at that point that one thing that we can be certain of is this. *It's never safe to flee from the word of God.*

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: And I said, "Let's just leave it at that for now." And I said that we'll speculate later as to why he might have done what he did. So now is the time when I want to think a little bit about why it was that Jonah may have fled. And the first thing I want us to think about is this. *He's a prophet.*

Now I want you to think about what it means for him to be a prophet in this regard. First of all, a prophet is somebody—and I love this quote,—“*somebody who feels fiercely.*” God has thrust a burden upon his soul. He's vowed and stunned at man's fierce greed. This is a description of the prophets in general. And I think it's a description of Jonah in particular. A prophet is a person who feels fiercely.

But I think it's more than that. I think this just turns a prophet into somebody that may be opposed to idolatry, or a man out for social justice. But I think we forget that if you just limit it to this, that Amos tells us that a prophet was one to whom God made known the secret things. Amos says that “*The LORD does nothing without first showing it to His prophets.*” And it's a rare occasion when God does not show what He's about to do to His prophets.

I want you to think about this. Do you remember? Who was it, Elijah or Elisha? I think it was Elisha who was sitting on the hill. And the woman was running to him to whom he had prophesied that she would have a child.

Paul: Elisha.

Jeff: It was Elisha, right?

Don: Yes.

Jeff: And remember that Gehazi runs up to her because he's supposed to find out what it is that she was doing. She bypasses him and she runs up. And what does Elisha say? Elisha says, “*The LORD has not revealed to me what he has done.*” He didn't know why the woman was coming to him. And that was a rarity. Why? Because Amos tells us that this intimacy between God and His prophets is one such that God doesn't do anything without first revealing it to the prophet.

And just as an aside, let me say to you that when you move to Acts chapter 2, and it says there that basically your sons and daughters in the New Covenant are going to be like prophets, dreaming dreams and so on. What it means is not that we're all going to become prophets who foretell the future. What it means is that we are going to have the intimacy that was so indicative of God's relationship to His prophet. In other words, in

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the New Covenant that is the kind of relationship that we’re going to have with God. And so there is this close, intimate relationship that God had with His prophets.

And so the point is, if that’s the case, then Jonah probably knew what God was going to do because God had revealed it to His prophet. And so at the very least we can say that Jonah likely knew the outcome and so fled, which is ridiculous in and of itself when you think about it, right? Because we want to stand there and we want to go, “Doesn’t he know that no matter where he goes that God’s going to find him? Doesn’t he know that?” You know, we want to say that sort of thing.

But listen to me. Don’t we do that exact thing?

Don: Sure.

Jeff: We do. We do that exact thing! And we think God won’t see, God won’t respond, God won’t chase me. God will, and especially because of what we’re going to say next.

But for instance, I think there’s the character issue. And so he feels fiercely. The second thing that I want you to notice is that *he has an eye to the future*. He is a prophet. And because he knows what God is going to do not only in the city, (and that is to bring repentance through his preaching), but the man is either a prophet and so knows the future in this regard, or he’s just an astute person. And he knows that Assyria is the next power to rise on the landscape of power. And he knows that if Assyria does arise that this doesn’t hold good things for Israel. And he’s right, because remember. Assyria continually attacks Damascus. Eventually Damascus and Israel try to unite. And Assyria clobbers them both. And the whole point is that perhaps he knows that Assyria will be the punishing power of Israel. So not only does he know they’re going to repent. But perhaps it is that he knows that this particular nation is going to be used in God’s sovereign plan and purposes to bring about the punishment of His own people.

Now there’s a social reason. I want you to think about this for a minute. I’m just giving you possibilities, right? Think about it. How would anyone understand? He probably goes into the local juice bar after giving a prophecy against another nation. And everybody’s high-fiving him. “Oh, awesome, man! Way to prophesy!” (*Laughter*) And all of a sudden, after he gets back from Nineveh, there’s a big revival. Everybody repents. Who’s going to high-five him at the local juice bar? (*Laughter*) No one. “Who’s going to understand what I’ve just done? I thought God was for us and not for the Ninevites and the Assyrians,” right? Who would understand this sort of thing? I think that’s another possibility when we think about this sort of thing. Yes, Don?

Don: I realize that it’s very dangerous to compare the United States to Old Testament Israel. But let’s suppose in our day,--and I don’t think this would happen,--but God says, “If you go over to Iran and you prophesy to that nation, to those radical terrorists, they may repent.”

“Wait a minute! I want them destroyed! I don’t want them to repent and come to the Lord! They killed my relatives on 9/11,” or whatever. So you can kind of understand how Jonah felt in a way.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. Yes, you certainly can. I think that the good way to curb that feeling though is to remember that the Old Testament is a church under age.

Don: True.

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Jeff: And points of comparison are best made between the church of the New Testament and the church of the Old Testament.

Don: Amen.

Jeff: That’s probably the best way to think about that. Let me just remind you of something. I said to you that God will come for you. If you’re His child He will pursue you. And that’s the case here. God will pursue his child.

I just want you to think about this. We oftentimes think about the whale in terms of God pursuing His child. And in that whale or that great fish Jonah repents. But I want you to think about this. God continues to pursue the man. He continues to pursue him with the vine and with the worm, and so on. So God is continuing to pursue His child. He doesn’t let him go.

Now the book doesn’t end well for Jonah, okay? It doesn’t end well for Jonah. But if you remember, I think Jonah wrote the book. And I think that Jonah does not lead himself in a flattering position. But I think there are hints in the book that indicate that Jonah got it, that he understood. For instance, I think that when he compares the kings’ hearing the word and rising from the throne in repentance to his rising and fleeing upon hearing the word of God, I think that what he’s doing is that he’s setting up an intentional contrast in the Word so that we can see that Jonah recognizes his own failures. But he also recognizes that Gentile king’s proper response to God’s word. So I think he’s doing that.

You know, one of the things that I absolutely love about the Bible is that it doesn’t create heroes for us. There are heroic things in the Bible. But it never creates this guy so that it’s like we can never attain to his qualities. And you know, don’t you hate it when people do that? Like when they paint obvious sin as if, well, there’s a reason why they did this. It would never be a reason that would fly if I did it and tried to explain it to my wife. *(Laughter)* Right? I mean, it just doesn’t work that way. And so it’s like this. Why don’t we just call sin in Biblical characters sin, and let grace have the triumph, right? That’s the kind of idea that I think we ought to remember. Yes?

Bob: If the prophet knows what’s going to happen, does it also mean that perhaps it doesn’t lead to understanding for the prophet?

Jeff: Well, here’s the thing. I’m speculating at that point that Jonah does know. So I’m thinking that I know. But I don’t know how much he knows. I also don’t know how much he might understand. So for instance, that second point about Assyria being the next power. I don’t know if Jonah would have understood that. I’m not sure. It’s just a guess there. So that’s a good point. Anybody else?

Okay. So let’s go to *some failures to reflect*. You know, when I drop my kids off at places, I have a special little talk when I’m getting them. Remember who you are, right? You have this talk, right?

Brave Man: Yes, once or twice. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: You know how it is. After a while, they give you the talk, right? “Fine, Dad; I know. These three things, right?” And they give you the talk.

Well, Jonah’s problem (and he has more than one problem), Jonah’s problem is that first of all he fails to model the family values of his God. And so some of this in some

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ways is just a reminder. And in fact, I’ll leave that here. In the Old Testament and the New Testament there is a call to be holy. 1 Peter 1:16: “*You shall be holy, for I am holy.*” This comes out of Leviticus chapter 11.

Now I simply want to say this to you because I think this is important. When we talk about being saved, we don’t talk about being saved as if salvation is a door prize. We get into the church door. And then we can leave with it and do whatever we want. Salvation is always in union with Jesus Christ, okay?

So when I talk about possessing righteousness before God, it’s never my righteousness that I’m referring to. It is always Christ’s righteousness that I’m referring to.

Now that means that all of the benefits that I have with regard to salvation flow from my union or my standing in Him, which means this. It means that when you think about salvation, (and I’m drawing this line so you can understand this), when I talk about salvation I don’t simply mean justification. Justification is part of what we call *the forensic benefits*. In other words, I’m declared not guilty, right? But there’s another forensic benefit. What is the other forensic benefit?

Brave Man: Sanctification.

Don: Righteousness.

Jeff: I’m thinking of *adoption*. In the court I have been adopted as a child of God. So there are some forensic benefits that I’m thinking of when I think about my union with Christ.

But when I think about my union with Christ I don’t simply possess forensic benefits, justification or adoption. I also possess *renovative benefits*. In other words, I can never say “I’ve been justified. I just haven’t yet received the gift of sanctification.” In other words, I am as I am. And my life is not changing, but I’m saved. In other words, you can put it in any number of ways. You get what I’m saying. You can never say, “I said the sinner’s prayer. I just haven’t changed my life.”

All of these things are wrong. Why? Because union with Christ brings all of the benefits that are in Christ. And the renovative benefits, for instance, are things like sanctification.

And you can parse this out further. But my point is that when you are saved in Jesus Christ you are saved with all of the benefits of Christ applied to you.

So when we think about Jonah as a child of God, one of the things that we need to think about is that Jonah is never going to say, “Well, I’ve been justified: I just haven’t been sanctified yet. The reason I fled is because I don’t have a special added gift of grace to be sanctified.” No, he can never claim that, never. Okay? Does that make sense?

Brave Man: Yes.

Jeff: Yes. All right. Yes?

Brian: Where does righteousness come into play?

Jeff: Righteousness comes into play. I’ll answer your question. I was going to create a contrast so it can help you understand it better. Righteousness comes into play when I exercise faith, which is the fruit of regeneration in my life. So even my faith is a gift from God. When I exercise faith, what? I’m justified by faith. So when I exercise faith God justifies me in time. And that justification is twofold. First of all I am forgiven of my sins

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because Christ made Himself an atonement for me, took upon Himself the curse for me. And so I’m forgiven. But I’m also counted as righteous. Why? Because the great exchange is not just Him bearing my sin. But it’s Him counting me righteous by the righteousness of Christ. So when I’m justified it’s because Christ has taken my sin and atoned for it. But also His righteousness is imputed to me. And on the basis of that imputation of righteousness God declares me not guilty.

Brian: So justification consists of righteousness and forgiveness and imputation. That’s justification. And righteousness and forgiveness is within that justification.

Jeff: That’s right. When you think about double imputation, you think about my sins imputed to Christ and His righteousness imputed to me. So because of my sins imputed to Him I have forgiveness. Because of His righteousness imputed to me I’m righteous before God. And that’s in Christ. Yes?

Kirk: And if His righteousness has been imputed to us then it stands to reason that there should be evidence of sanctification.

Jeff: That’s right. That’s absolutely right. Okay? All right. So next I want you to notice this. This failure to basically model is seen in the book of Jonah itself. Look at this. Anger in Jonah in this particular book appears five times in eleven verses.

Look at 3:8-9. This is the king’s response. *“Who knows? God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.”*

Now look at Jonah 4:1. Jonah is *“greatly displeased.”* 4:4: *“The LORD said to Jonah, ‘Do you do well to be angry?’”* 4:9: *“Do you do well to be angry for the plant?”* God speaks to Jonah again.

Now look at 4:9. *“Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.”*

Now let’s just think through this a minute. A charitable reading of this says that Jonah is here reflecting on God’s anger. But I think that’s a charitable reading and not a reading that’s consistent with the text.

What’s happening here? I want you to catch the dissonance here, or the dissimilarity between what we find in Nineveh and what we find in the prophet himself. For instance, look in chapter 3 verse 10. *“When God saw what they did, and 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.”*

And then what? 4:1. Jonah is displeased by that. Now *displeased* can be translated that he found it exceedingly evil that God relented of what He had promised if they had not repented. Jonah finds what God did evil.

Now I want you to think about that for a minute. It’s a failure on Jonah’s part to embrace what he knew. Now the question then becomes well, what did he know? Well, notice this. Verse 2: *“LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? This is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish.”*

Now the words translated *“I made haste to flee”* could be translated, “I anticipated this; I was in front of this; I knew what you were going to do.”

Now look at this simple comparison. 1:6.

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Transcriber’s Note: Jonah 1:6, NKJV. *“So the captain came to him, and said to him, ‘What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish.’”*

Jeff: The sailors. “Maybe your God will be concerned. Get up and pray.” 3:9: *“Who knows? God may relent of the disaster He has promised.”* Then Jonah. “I knew You were going to be gracious.” *(Laughter)* Isn’t that striking? Everybody else is repenting. Maybe God will—And then Jonah. “Oh, I knew it!” *(Laughter)* And this is evil in Jonah’s sight.

Now I want you to think about this. Who in his right mind thinks this way? You know, there are a lot of things that we do where we can say, “I knew that.”

I don’t know if I’ve ever done this. I probably have. But I can’t ever think of a time where I’ve said, “You know what? Your dirty, rotten ways!” Anyway,— Yes, Don?

Don: Well, I’ve heard prominent evangelical leaders today say that when something bad happens to you, you have to forgive God.

Jeff: Yes.

Don: And that’s almost saying the same thing as far as I’m concerned.

Jeff: Oh it is, right.

Don: Very bad.

Jeff: Yes.

Bishop Rodgers: Unbelievable!

Don: It is.

Jeff: So Jonah knew that he didn’t like what he knew. *(Laughter)* Now I want you to think about this. His dislike is expressed in the prayer that he prays. Now listen to this. Get a load of this. The first part comes from Exodus, where Moses is given this description of God. This second is Jonah’s prayer. What is said in Exodus is *“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgressions and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.”*

And then here’s Jonah’s prayer. Listen to this. *“For I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.”*

What’s missing? Righteousness and justice. That seems to be what Jonah leaves out of his description that mirrors Exodus 34, righteousness and justice.

Now this is only an assumption. I think that what he’s doing is that he’s caricaturing God. What he’s doing is that he’s saying, “Look. If You fail to show righteousness and justice, I won’t. Somebody has got to be righteously angry about these Assyrians. I will be if You won’t.”

I don’t know if that’s what he’s saying. But by what he includes in his description of God and what he leaves out, it makes you wonder.

And then third. *Jonah failed to love God’s enemies.* And I think that what we find here is that Jonah is just saying, “I’m just not going to do it.” And I think again that this is a childlike response, especially when we think about what God calls us to do.

You know, this is one of the most difficult things. You know, if we can say, “I don’t do this,” and “I do this,” this is one of those things that you trip over, right? God says, “Love

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your enemies.” As soon as I say that, you’re struggling. I’m struggling. I don’t know how we don’t struggle. And I’m not even talking about people who are sort of our sworn enemies who have done some horrible things to us. I’m talking about Christian people that have crossed us in some way, shape or form that we know are our brothers and sisters in Christ. But we have trouble because of what they’ve done that has either directly affected us or indirectly affected us. It’s just the reality of life that I struggle this way and that you struggle this way.

You know, Paul and Barnabas had a falling out over Mark. You know, Mark didn’t do anything directly to Paul or Barnabas. He just went down on a missionary trip and we’re not even told why. But that caused a great deal of division between two godly men.

Now they were eventually able to heal that. And Paul was even able to find reconciliation with John Mark. But the division was there, and the reality of it is the case.

So I think we have to contend with that. Here are the enemies of God, the Assyrians. And Jonah is unwilling to love them. Any questions before we go on? Yes?

Bob: Just another comment to get it back to us and reality today.

Jeff: Yes.

Bob: We’re essentially the same way. In a sense, we know many times what’s going to happen. But we’re not happy about it. We’re unhappy about it. And it would be very unlike us saying, “You know, You’re a gracious God. And thank You for what’s going to happen to me.”

Jeff: Yes, I agree. I mean, it’s difficult for us. Anybody else? Yes?

Brian: I was just thinking whenever you had those two side-by-side comparisons. It’s a good analogy that the Jews were frustrated that the Gentiles would be in. And so the Jews would be saying, “Why would you let the Gentiles in?”, when they were the Gentiles and they’re really bad. It’s a false view of repentance. The analogy is very good.

Jeff: Yes. You know, I struggle. I mean, who doesn’t struggle with this if you have relatives who are not believers, and they seem to persist in their unbelief? You know, you struggle when people come into your life. And all of a sudden, you know, it’s just like dominoes falling. You’re happy for them, but it’s like dominoes falling over their family. It’s just sort of one after the other getting saved, you know, coming into the church. And yet your family continues to be hardened in unbelief. And no matter what you do, it seems to just kind of make them more angry when you talk to them about the gospel. So you back away from it. And you can have a smooth relationship with them. But you never get to the most important thing in life.

And that has been my own experience. I’ve lost grandfathers and a grandmother, and I have lost aunts and uncles. They’re in unbelief. And yet in the ministry you see whole families come, and you’re excited about that. Yet you certainly say to yourself, “Lord, okay. What gives about my family?” And that’s the tough thing.

And I don’t have an answer to that. And Bob, I can’t stay there, right?, because it doesn’t produce good things in my life if I dwell on that sort of thing. I have to give it to the Lord and say, “You’re sovereign and I’m not.” And so I have to give that to Him. Anybody else? Okay.

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All right. So *God is still gracious*. This is the thing that I think we just have to catch. You know, growing up, I think I told you that when I was five years old my dad called me in and said, “You’ve got to see this.” He wanted to introduce me to John Wayne. It was “The Cowboys,” you know? Remember “The Cowboys?” Bruce Stern?

Don: Not Dallas.

Jeff: What? (*Laughter*)

Don: Not the football team. Not the Dallas Cowboys? Go ahead. (*Laughter*) Just keep going. Strike it.

Paul: Forget it. (*Laughter*)

Don: Forget it.

Jeff: Don, when I say “The Cowboys,” I mean the movie, the John Wayne movie.

Don: Oh, all right. Okay.

Jeff: I mean, I’m seriously disappointed in you. (*Laughter*) Let the record show that I’ve been staring at you in shock and disbelief. (*Laughter*)

Don: Movies don’t do very much for me. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: He puts on his glasses. “The carpet baggers can see me now.” Remember this? “I’ll beat you up!” (*Laughter*) This is my parenting style. (*Laughter*) And I realize it’s raw. But you know, this is the kind of thing that many of us do, especially as dads. You know, we kind of stroll in and it’s been chaos all day. We belly up to the bar in our house and I say, “All right, I’m gonna straighten this here town out!”, right?

And that’s not the kind of parenting style that God chooses to use. God is very, very unlike John Wayne. (*Laughter*) He’s gracious, He’s kind. You know, He talks, He interacts.

I want you to think about that. God says, “Let Me ask you a question.” (*Laughter*) “Let’s talk about this. Let Me ask you a question. Do you have a good reason to be angry?” That’s what God asks him. You know, here’s this kid throwing a temper tantrum. “Let Me ask it another way. Is your anger righteous?” “Let Me ask it another way. Is your anger producing something good?” That’s what He’s really asking.

If you look at this question, is your anger producing something good? And what does he do? Jonah says, “You know what? Yes, God, You are so right!” (*Laughter*) No. He’s silent, right? (*Jeff snorts.*) “I’m not gonna talk to you; forget it!” (*Laughter*)

And so what does God do? God doesn’t spin him around and say, “All right, son! You’re going to show me respect, or else!” No, He just leaves him alone. Actually, what He does is He gives him some gifts. (*Laughter*) He gives him a vine and the vine grows up. And he’s very contented.

And then He gives him another gift. He doesn’t see it as a gift. But He gives him a worm to chew away the vine. That’s got to be a big fat worm. That’s all I’ve got to say. (*Laughter*) But He gives him the gift of a worm. Now the vine’s all gone and he’s all bent out of shape. And so the wind comes and the heat comes and he says this. “You know, I’ve got a request for You, God. How about killing me?” (*Laughter*)

And God says, “Do you have a good reason to be angry?” This is God. And he says, “Yes! I have a good reason to be angry!”

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And you almost get the sense that God is bookending this whole situation. Do we see any change in the man yet?

Brave Man: No.

Jeff: There’s no change. But what has God been doing? God has been giving Jonah a perspective. He’s been giving him a perspective. He’s been giving him a grid. And what has been that grid? The methodology so far has been “you either rise, or you descend.” This is an up-and-down direction here. You rise or you descend. And so when He gives him these gifts, He’s asking him, “Are you going to rise, or are you going to descend? You’ve already had an example of what it is to descend in your own life. And you’ve already had an example of what it is to rise by seeing the Gentile Assyrians. Which are you going to do?”

And here’s what God is doing, if we can add a metaphor to it. He’s wanting to turn this man inside out. The vine’s purpose was to show him that there’s a difference between the Creator and the creature. God is the One who creates and God is the One who takes away what He creates. And there’s an enormous difference between the God who creates and the creature. Jonah is a creature. And what God is showing the man, whether he receives it or not, is that these people are cared for by Him.

Now I want you to see this. I think I have this text up next. Look at what romans 5:6 says. It says this. *“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

And here’s the thing. I’m going to jump right through the lesson that this communicates to us. But let me ask you a question. We have to pause and ask ourselves. Does all of what we’ve learned thus far forge a resemblance in us to God, or not?

I mean, Matthew 5:48 clearly says that we are to be like our Father.

Transcriber’s Note: Matthew 5:48. *“You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

Jeff: That’s what the renovative benefits of redemption produce: likeness to God. And so let’s look now at *some lessons learned*. First of all, *we need to reflect on our own salvation*. And when I say that we need to reflect on our own salvation, I want you to think back to what we just looked at. I said to you that there is an enormous difference between the Creator and the creature.

Think about this. God is saying, “I created these Assyrians. I created the city of Nineveh.” And He really even has this kind of endearing demeanor. It’s in the last part of the book. Look at verse 10. *“And the LORD said, ‘You pity the plant for which you did not labor, now did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, the great city?’”*

And what He’s saying is “Look. The vine was Mine to do with what I wanted. And so is this city. But I’m showing pity and compassion toward you. Is it only to you that I may show this? May I not show it to other creatures that I’ve made, the city of Nineveh?”

This is like the absolutely difficult thing, right? I mean, you just think about this and this has to be hard.

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You know, I can't help but think. You remember the story of Corrie ten boom. I've told you this before. She's in Germany after the war. She's just preached the gospel message. And a man who has mistreated her and I think even had a hand in killing her sister comes up and extends his hand and says, "I've been forgiven by the gospel of grace. I want to know if you'll forgive me."

Now I want you to think about that for a minute. It's one thing to know that your sister was in the Lord and that this man is now in the Lord, and that they're going to be united in heaven. But what is it if the sister wasn't in the Lord, but now he is? It's a struggle, right that he was the instrument of God to take her life, and now he's dropped the peg.

I mean, these are the difficult scenarios of life, right? And just because I sort of changed the historical facts of that doesn't mean that it's not historically true elsewhere. That's a scenario that could very well be true. And think about how difficult that is. But if God is sovereign we leave it to a sovereign God.

In other words that I'm not trying to justify Jonah's anger. All I'm trying to do is to say that it's understandable. It's not excusable. But it's certainly understandable to some degree.

So we need to reflect on our own salvation. And a passage like romans 5:6 helps us to do that. We realize that all of us are in sin, helpless, needing the grace of God in order to be redeemed.

And then *we are to reflect on our own sin*. And this is the repentance passage, and then the root passage again. Years ago I went on a vacation. Actually it wasn't a vacation, but it turned into one. I had an intern who was a seminary student in the New England states. And he said, "If you come up and you officiate at my wedding, I'll give you my seminary dorm and you and your family can vacation."

Well, my son was really young at the time, probably three or four. And so we went up to the New England states. He gave me a syllabus of a walking tour of Puritanism. My wife doesn't call this a vacation. She hates this because we went to all kinds of gravesites and things like that (*Laughter*) which she absolutely wilted under.

But one of the things that I noticed was this. I noticed that there were a lot of children in the ground. A lot of children died and were buried. And some of the gravestones simply said, "God knows best." It gave the name and the dates, and then "God knows best." And that's kind of what we've been talking about all along.

And then we need to do this. I think we need to reflect on our salvation. I think we need to reflect on our sin and why it was that we needed salvation, and why we continue to need that salvation. But I think *we need to reflect on God and who He is*. And I think that when we reflect upon who God is, there's a sense in which we're put in our proper perspective.

I want you to know something. I've been reading a book lately that has been incredibly discouraging to me. It's called *Determined to Believe*, and it's by John Lennox. And he starts off the book and he says, "*Now I'm going to talk to you about free will. And what I'm going to talk to you about is free will from man's perspective. And we'll bring in God later.*"

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Now throughout this entire book he presses a view of free will that is not Biblical. And so basically what this view of free will is is that it's libertarian free will. And what that means is this. It means that I am placed in one scenario. I can choose to do this. But if I rewind the tape and put in that same scenario, I could choose the exact opposite of what I chose to begin with.

Now that's not a Calvinistic view of freedom. A Calvinistic view of freedom says that I am put in a scenario because I am a sinful creature, and I will do what I most want to do. And as a sinful creature, apart from God I will always choose contrary to God. If I am put in that same scenario again I will not, in an unregenerate state, ever choose God, because I can't. I can only choose my strongest desire, and my strongest desire is always to choose opposite to God.

Now what he does is that he says, “Now what does this have to do with original sin?” And he says that original sin is Adam's sin. But it has no influence or effect upon my life.

Don: That's Pelagianism.

Jeff: And that's what it is. That's Pelagianism, because if original sin is true, but has no influence or effect upon me, then why do I sin? I sin because I imitate Adam. And that's Pelagianism. But I can always choose not to imitate him. And then I want to ask, well, what's the purpose of redemption?

All I'm saying is this. When we begin a process that says that I'm going to start with man and work out from there, man will always get bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger. But when we start with God, God will always get bigger. If I get smaller, then so be it. Let God get bigger and let me get smaller, right?

And Jonah really needed that lesson. God needed to get bigger in his eyes. And he needed to get much smaller. And sometimes I think that's true of each one of us too. Any questions before we go? Don?

Bishop Rodgers: You said that Lennox buys that position?

Jeff: Yes.

Bishop Rodgers: Wow!

Jeff: Yes. And he even says it. It's funny because at the end of this one chapter he says, “Now some of you are thinking that this is Pelagianism. It's not Pelagianism.” But he doesn't explain why it's not Pelagianism. *(Laughter)* He just denies it.

Don: Going back to bringing this down to our own experience, a little sidebar here. It says in Ephesians 4, “*Be angry, but do not sin.*” How do we distinguish between righteous anger and unrighteous anger? I mean, Jonah could have had righteous anger if he would have thought, *Well, these people need to repent, and it's terrible what they're doing.* And he would have been glad if they had repented. But his anger was sinful and not righteous. How do we distinguish the two in our own lives?

Jeff: That's a great question, Don. Don wants to know how we distinguish righteous anger from unrighteous anger in our lives. And do you know what? I can only tell you my practice, okay? My practice is to always default to if I'm ever righteously angry, I will probably distort that pretty quickly to unrighteous anger. *(Laughter)* Either by holding onto it a little too long, feeling a little too prideful about it, or whatever. So by practice I try never to sit back and say, “This is righteous anger that I feel,” right? “I am righteously

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angry here.” I know me well enough to know that if I get angry, if it is righteous that it’s probably not going to remain so for very long.

This is where I’m a good William Jamesian. I’m a pragmatist at this point. I try never to think of myself as righteously angry even if I am. If I’m angry I always try to deal with it. That may not be super helpful to you, Don. You may want to know what constitutes righteous anger, and I’m just not able to give you the answer.

Don: No problem.

Brave Man: That explains why you’re attached to John Wayne. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Well, you know what? I struggled with my temper when I first came to faith. It was really a struggle, right?

I’ll never forget. I worked in a factory. And I went in for the four-to-twelve shift. And this guy on the fork truck had a terrible day. And all I said was, “Hey, how was your day?” And he just turned to me and spewed everything that could come out of his mouth.

And I was a believer at this time. In the past I would have given it right back to him, even as a new believer at the time. But the Lord brought over me a sense of restraint. And I just let it pass. And that was a huge victory in my life.

And so from then on, for years I never had that struggle. And then several years ago I had this struggle with anger. Where in the world did this come from? And so I always think to myself, *Well, that’s one of those things that you’ve got to guard against.* We all have those places in our lives to especially guard against. But none of us are above any sin. Yes? I knew it. All right, go ahead. Give it to me.

Bill: What you described to me is a process.

Jeff: Okay.

Bill: And I’ll call it maturity.

Jeff: Okay.

Bill: And one of the ways it helps us to decide which is right and wrong with the concept of anger to me is knowing God better. The way we do that is by studying the Scriptures because we see where He was righteously angry with social injustice. And we have the right to be angry when He was angry. I’m not to be angry the way the world is angry.

Jeff: Yes, I know what you’re saying. That’s good. It kind of goes back to righteous anger. But it always raises the question. Can I be righteously angry like God?

Kevin: When you blow your gasket as an individual, and you think you did wrong, do you say that you’re sorry at that point, or should you not consider it until later?

Jeff: It’s always best to apologize as soon as you can. I mean, it’s always best to humble yourself. You always make excuses the further you get away from dealing with sin.

Brave Man: Amen.

Don: Where do we go from here?

Jeff: Where do we go from here?

Don: Yes. What’s our next study?

Jeff: Well, we may have one more week in Jonah. There’s a theological issue that I may deal with before we press on.

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Don: Oh, okay. All right.

Jeff: Well, let's pray together. Father, thank You for this day and for the time You've given. Bless the day to us, Father, for we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)