

“Jonah” Pt 2

A Wayward Prophet - Jonah 1

Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.

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Jeff: Gracious God, we thank You and praise You for who You are. And we know that You’ve revealed Yourself in magnificent ways throughout redemptive history. We’re thankful for the fact that You are kind and loving and long-suffering and gracious and slow to anger. We also thank You that You have attributes that are not ours, not shared with us. We are thankful for Your aseity. We’re thankful for Your sovereignty, Your immutability. For these things, Lord, we give You praise and glory and honor, the honor that You deserve.

And Father, as we come before You today, we are thankful to do so knowing that we’ve been summoned here by Your word in our hearts. Father, we thank You that we long for the Word and desire to study it, and pray, Lord, that that Word would take deep root in our hearts. And we pray that it would in fact find those places within us, those dark places that still need sanctifying. And Lord, we pray for holiness, more and more of it. And yet we’re thankful that we’ve been translated from the kingdom of darkness and set down in the kingdom of the Son of Your love, that we might learn to grow in that holiness as we are in Your kingdom. So Father, we pray that You will help us to learn more about what You did on our behalf and be thankful for it, and also that that would manifest itself in our lives in some visible ways.

Father, we pray for the forgiveness of our sins. We ask, Lord, that You will help us to remember that thoughts and words and deeds that transgress Your law either by omission or commission are indeed sinful in Your sight. And we need forgiveness, the forgiveness of Christ. And yet we thank You that we are forgiven all of our sins in Him upon the cross. And yet, Lord, that daily reminder of our need for forgiveness and that repentance that comes from us daily is also our need. That is a subjective need, that we might draw near to You, that we might experience afresh Your mercies every morning.

So Lord, we pray and we ask that You would indeed impart those to us. And Lord, as we come to Your word this morning, we ask that Your hand would be upon us for good. We ask that You would strengthen us. And we pray, Lord, that You would conform our lives to this Word as it mirrors Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we pray these things in His precious and blessed name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Well let me remind you of where we were the last time we were together. We started looking at Jonah. And there are a number of things that I would like to get across as we look at the book of Jonah. *(Laughter)*

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff draws a picture of a cane, referring to something Don Maurer said during the announcements when he put his cane in the air and said that he was raising cane.

Jeff: One of the things that we’re not going to do is to raise cane. *(Laughter)* But what I want us to do is that I want us to see first of all what is happening in the story with the prophet Jonah himself. I want us to see the historical situation, and I’ve been trying to show you some of that as we go.

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Secondly what I want you to see is that I want you to see how there is really and truly relevance to our own lives as we look at this text. And last time we asked ourselves hard questions about Jonah’s flight. Doesn’t that resonate with us? And we had some good conversations about that. Some of that boiled over or leaked over into questions about the communication of God to us—how we hear Him, how we follow Him, those kinds of things—and we dealt with some of that.

But the third thing that I really want us to think about, at least at key points when we think about the book of Jonah, is the Christological aspect. If we’re delving into the Old Testament and we’re never seeing Christ, then we have a problem. One of the things that we have to see in the Old Testament is Jesus Christ.

That’s exactly what He said at the end of Luke’s Gospel in Luke 24. He told the disciples. He said, “You’re foolish and slow of heart not to see Me in the Old Testament Scriptures. And so it was at that point that He showed them where He was in the Prophets and in the Writings and in the Law and so on. So I want us to see Christ. And hopefully we’ll see a bit of that today as we work together through this text.

Now I ended with the question: Does Jonah’s sin resonate with us? And where I want us to start today is that I want us to think about how that misunderstanding is not the problem. Now what do I mean by that? What I mean is that when we take this text and we begin to read it, one of the things that we do is that we interpret it; we’re natural interpreters.

When we go home we see our wives. She’s in the kitchen and perhaps she’s making coffee for us, and she has a look on her face. *(Laughter)* I didn’t hear that; I don’t know if I want to. *(Laughter)* And I certainly don’t want it commented on tape. But—

Ron Baling: There you go. *(Laughter)* We see our sanctification, and she—

Don Maurer: I’ve never had that problem.

Jeff: You’ve never had that problem. *(Laughter)* Fine. Well this is really going downhill fast. *(Laughter)* You have your sister, your daughter, your whatever in the kitchen. Say what you want, okay? And she has that look on her face. And—

Don: I don’t know about the look on her face. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: *(Yelling):* Don, I’m in the kitchen making coffee! *(Laughter)* And she has that look on her face, and you’re interpreting it. And you’re saying to yourself, “Oh, she’s in that mood,” right? And then you walk away. And now you walked away without saying anything because you interpreted your face and said, “She’s in that mood.”

She watched you walk out the door without saying anything because you thought it was wiser that you do that because she was in the mood. And she’s not in a mood, but she just looked in a mood, and she has interpreted your desertion of her in the kitchen, right?

Ted Wood: That never happens to me.

Jeff: No, not at all; it never happens. *(Laughter)* This is a totally lame duck situation. And so when we come to the word of God it’s no different. And in fact now we know we’re interpreting. Sometimes we interpret without even thinking about the fact that we’re interpreting. If we come to the word of God we interpret it. And sometimes we just take for granted what we think we know when it’s actually wrong.

Ted: Yeah.

Jeff: But the point that I’m making is that we’re interpreters and we know it. And so what we do is, we dig. We have word studies. And if we’re not sure about the grammar,

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we’ll get out some books that will help us. And finally we’ll get out a commentary. And we’ll see what that commentary has to say, to see if it confirms what we believe about the text, and so on, and we’re interpreting.

And the point in what I’m saying to you is that oftentimes our problem is not one of understanding. In other words our problem is not intellectual; it’s ethical. What I mean by that is that we know what God wants us to do, but we don’t want to do it. It’s not an intellectual problem; it’s an ethical problem. And that’s oftentimes our problem with Scripture.

I want you to understand Jonah’s situation. Jonah was a prophet of God. He understood what God wanted him to do. The problem was not an intellectual one. He didn’t say, “You know what, God? I don’t know what the word *arise* means.” (*Laughter*) “I’m going to have to stop and figure that word out.” He didn’t say, “I don’t know where Nineveh is. I’m going to have to get out my map and look up where Nineveh is.”

You know, all of those things are what we sometimes do, right? We say, “What does this Hebrew word mean for arise?” Or, “I’m not sure I know where Nineveh is.” None of that was his problem. He understood what “arise and go to Nineveh” actually meant. It wasn’t an intellectual problem. He didn’t want to go. It was an ethical problem.

And so I think this meets us where we are. This hits us where we live. I’ll never forget. I was talking to a woman years and years ago. It was at another church I served. And she was asking me about a particular question within the Christian faith.

And I gave her a book on it. And I said, “Why don’t you read this book? And then come back and we’ll talk about it.”

So she started reading the book. And then she brought the book back to me the next Sunday. And she said, “I’m done with it.”

And I said, “Did you finish reading it?”

“She said, “No.”

And I said, “Well, don’t you want to keep it until you finish it?”

And she said, “No.” And I said, “Why?”

And she said, “Because I realize that if I read that book, then I’ll become convicted. And I can’t afford to be convicted right now.” And you see, to me that highlighted the issue. It’s not an intellectual issue. Oftentimes obedience doesn’t have anything to do with the intellect. But it has everything to do with ethics.

This is what she said to me: “I can’t deal with this right now because I’m not ready to change the way I live.” But I want you to understand that this woman was a believer, not an unbeliever.

When we think about Jonah we should not think to ourselves, He’s an unbeliever. We should think to ourselves: This is a believer.

And in fact, I want to tell you something. I’m going to say this in just a little bit. But one of the things that I think is really important when we think about the book of Jonah is that this is a picture of a father pursuing a covenantal son who is wayward. And that to me makes this book exceptionally relevant to us, because how many of us have either dealt with a wayward child or know someone who has? This is a book where we see God father-like, pursuing His covenant son in his disobedience. So that’s our problem.

And this is the story of God’s covenant people. I mean, this is the way God’s people have been for ages and ages. I mean, think about it. You know, we think that this is just an

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Old Testament problem, that God’s people are wayward. But it isn’t just an Old Testament problem.

Think about the New Testament documents. Think about how many times in the New Testament Paul was correcting people and saying, “Don’t do that,” or “Cast him out,” or “Bring him back in,” or “Put a rag in their mouth and stop them from talking. Oh, and by the way, you’ve warned this one twice. Have nothing to do with him now.” There are all kinds of problems going on in the churches.

But it’s not just an individual problem; it’s a collective problem to the point where John says at the end of his first epistle: “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*” And so we need to keep in mind that this isn’t just an Old Testament thing.

I’ll never forget that I was in a Bible study once. I was talking about the Old Testament people. I was talking about this very thing. I was talking about how in the New Testament that we have this similar problem of waywardness. And this guy raised his hand and he said, “You can’t tell me that’s us.”

And I said, “What do you mean?”

He said, “That’s Old Testament stuff. That Old Testament stuff is different from us. Those people were terrible people.” And I said, “You’re not?” (*Laughter*)

He seemed surprised. I said, “I don’t mean to single you out, but I’m talking about us collectively, and you were not.” And I don’t think that he was, but we are. Yes?

Matt Reichart: So you hit on an issue of today. I’m sure that my experience has been that in every Christian home somebody is wavering.

Jeff: That somebody is what?

Matt: That somebody is wavering.

Jeff: Yes.

Matt: A son or daughter.

Jeff: Yeah.

Gary Craig: I just wanted to say that this is like the Old Testament. The Pharisees didn’t think they were awful people.

Jeff: Yes, of course.

Gary: Just like nowadays; people don’t think they’re awful people.

Jeff: Yeah. You know what, Matt? Going back to your question I think this applies that when you think about it, this can’t be a canned approach, right? You have to take each child on a case-by-case basis. I do think there are some well-worn steps. For instance I think it just depends on where you are and what kind of church you’re in, and so forth. In my own tradition, for instance, it might start with informal shepherding that takes place. So you try to get into homes as pastors and elders and you try to visit with people, and you try to encourage people. Oftentimes that’s where problems will come to light—parent/child problems—and so you try to deal with them there.

But oftentimes it’s a situation where the child has graduated and has all of a sudden started to go wayward, something like that. And I think you have to deal with the child as best you can. And I think that means reaching out, meaning having conversations. I really think conversations are the best way to go. They don’t always seem to bear immediate fruit. But if you’re in conversation that’s a wonderful thing.

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And I think responsiveness is key. For instance how responsive a person is, even if it's only mildly responsive, there's some real hope in that, some glimmers of hope. So I think communication is one thing.

I think the other thing is prayer. I think prayer is key and I don't think we do enough of it today. And one of the things that I think that we ought to be doing as covenant parents is praying to the Lord for our covenant children who have gone wayward. And how do we do that? I think that we pray and say, “Lord, in their baptism a sign and a seal was placed upon them.” Not that the sign and seal is magic; it isn't. But that offer of the gospel to them was genuinely held out and sealed upon them.

It's sort of like circumcision in the Old Testament. It was something they could never get away from. You know, the male who was eight days old was circumcised. And he grew up realizing that this was the sign of his inclusion into the covenant community. And from his earliest days he was taught to be a disciple in that community.

And if he decided to go wayward, what would happen is that they might actually have to cast him out or excommunicate him, in which case the sign of circumcision would be a sign of being cut off from the community.

Baptism is no different. Peter tells us that baptism is symbolic of the waters that save us or of the waters that destroyed the earth. And so your baptism is either a sign of your cleansing and washing, or it's a sign of the deluge of destruction that the earth underwent in Genesis 6 and following.

So I think that communication with the person and communication with God is crucial, because you have to believe, and I think you have to have a significant amount of hope that God wants to deal with families covenantally. And therefore when you pray you are praying to a Father who cares more than you.

I mean, I want you to think about this. I really think that this is a test for us. When we see the four buddies lower the paralytic man down the roof of Peter's mother-in-law's house, you know what she said. Do you know what I'm saying? I can't imagine that Peter's mother-in-law liked him. *(Laughter)* Do you know what I mean? There was a struggle there. And you know what she's doing. She's looking at him going, “You're gonna fix this!” *(Laughter)* “This is your buddy they're here for. I don't care if He just raised me from the fever. You're fixing that!” *(Laughter)*

And so they lower him through the roof. And it can't be a little hole, right? They had to make a big hole in the roof. They lower him down and Jesus looks at him and says, “*Your sins are forgiven. Take a bow.*” *(Laughter)*

And the question is: Is that anticlimactic for us? Because if it is, then here's what we have to ask ourselves as parents. If that's our child we have to say this to ourselves. If our reaction is “What?”, then we have to ask ourselves: Do we hold physical well-being more precious than spiritual well-being?

I'll tell you what Jesus just did. He said, “Don't fear those who can destroy the body. Fear the One who casts the soul into hell.” And He has just declared this soul saved.

But if we find the body and the well-being of the body more precious than the salvation of the soul, then we'll act like that. But if we say, “Praise God; take him up”, then we've got it; then we understand.

So I think that what we have to do is that when we pursue a wayward child we have to have our priorities right. And one of the priorities that we have to have right is that if

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we’re more concerned for the child’s reputation, I’ve been in contexts where some parents actually want to hide the child so that the waywardness doesn’t come out. “How’s Billy?”

“Oh, he’s great.” And meanwhile he’s off in college and they don’t have any idea where he is; they’re not sure where he’s at. But the point is that as Christians I would say that we need to swallow the pride and say, “He’s in college and he’s acting up. I’ll tell you what: I’d really love your prayers.”

We don’t have to say that to everybody, right? But I think we certainly should say that to the people that we’re closest to in church and say, “We’re struggling and we need some prayer,” because you do need prayer. So I think that communication with the person who is wayward and communication with God are crucial. Having a right mindset with what the goal is in both of those dialogues is central. Yes, Ted?

Ted: This may be a bigger problem. I have a daughter who has been raised in the faith.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: She went through everything. She went forward at the invitation and was baptized.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: And she’s 33 years old. I asked her the other day. “Do you still believe in God?” And she said, “Not the God I was raised with.”

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: And I don’t think I speak alone. I think there are several brothers here who have kids that have (left.) And it’s very difficult.

Jeff: Yes. But I want to tell you something; let me encourage you. First of all, the God she was raised with is like your voice in her head. She can’t get away from it. It’s like anything she knows that you disapprove of: she hears your voice. And she hears the voice of the living God. So she can’t get away from that; that’s first.

The second thing is this. Not only is there that, but I would say this to you: She’s still alive.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: And not everybody who has wandered away from the Lord is (without hope.) I’ll say this to you. My brother wandered away from the Lord and ended up getting killed. Near the end of his life there were signs—maybe—that he had returned, but I don’t know. But I would say this to you. If I had to look at the pattern of his life when he died, I would say that he didn’t know the Lord. He knew the Lord, but he didn’t know Him in a saving way.

And so I would say to you that even a child in a wayward position is better than a dead child in a wayward position. There’s a lot of hope in that.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: Okay? All right. This is going to sound discouraging, but it’s meant to be encouraging at this point. And that is the covenant principle that “*judgment begins with the household of God.*” “You know what your dad said.”

“But little Billy was doing it.”

And your dad goes, ““I don’t care what little Billy is doing; you’re my son!”, right? That’s the thing. And so the covenant principle is “your butt gets wupped first.”

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(*Laughter*) And so judgment begins with the house of God. That’s what 1 Peter 4:17 says: “*For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God.*”

And so what we need to understand here is that God is pursuing His son. That’s the thing that I think we need to cling to. And I think that probably, of all the things we can learn from this, that’s the key. Christologically, certainly God pursues His Son, and we’ll see that. But God pursuing a covenant son is a real blessing at this point.

So I want us to think about *no substitutions* at this point: *no substitutions, please*. What do I mean by that? I mean that orthodoxy can never replace genuine repentance.

I want you to know that there can’t be genuine repentance unless there is orthodoxy. Or I should say that there can’t be genuine repentance without orthodoxy following. But what I am saying is this: Genuine orthodoxy, though it is good and you should strive for it, cannot replace repentance.

In other words, let’s say there is a person who knows Francis Turretin backward and forward, okay? He was a Protestant scholar of the 17th century who wrote a three-volume systematic work. And let’s say that a person has large, massive chunks of it memorized. And yet he is committing sin. He is not just falling into an incident of sin, but he is committing a pattern of sin. And you come to him and you say, “Hey!” And he says to you, “Let me talk to you about what I know.”

And your response should be, “Right now I really don’t care what you know. What needs to come out of your mouth is repentance: “I repent of my sins.” But that’s the point. And genuine orthodoxy can never replace that. Yes?

Ron: The rich young ruler was following all the rules.

Jeff: Well he thought he was, right? (*Laughter*) That’s right.

Matt: But what you know and what you do, in contrast for the Christian, is who is taking responsibility, right? I’ve seen a bunch of guys who are really broken over their sin, but they never change; they never take any action. So I’m going to make the right choice and do the right thing.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: They regret the consequences. We regret the consequences.

Jeff: You know, it actually says and Matthew actually tells us that Judas repented over his sin, but not to the saving of his soul. It was a repentance that was a repentance of I got caught.

I’ll tell you how Watson described it, and I’ve always found this helpful. Watson says that this is a repentance made by a person who thinks that his sin is greater than the grace of God. Have you ever met someone like that? I have definitely met people like that in my life where they say to me, “You don’t know the sin I’ve committed. God could never forgive me of my sin.” And they even weep over it.

But the point is that they believe that their sin is greater than the grace of God. And I think there’s just a sense of discernment that one has to have.

I’ll tell you what, I’ll never forget this. It was pretty much sixteen years ago; that’s when I started out here in Gibsonia. I had a friend call me from California. And he said, “There’s a guy coming to your church, and he’s fantastic. He’s in a struggle right now when I talk to him. But when he comes, talk to him; try to help him out. He’s only going to be here a couple days.” I said, “Okay.”

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So this guy comes. This guy knows the Puritans inside and out, backward and forward. And he comes to the service. And I’m getting the vibe that he wants me to know that he knows the Puritans backward and forward, along with his struggles.

So the service is over and I’m talking to him. He says, “Can I talk to you?”

I said, Well, I’ll tell you what. I’ve got to go into church school right now. But one of my elders can talk to you. But he’s probably only going to give you a bit of time. After the church school we’ll talk to you.” He goes, “Okay.”

So I grab one of the elders. Actually I grabbed a guy who wasn’t an elder at that time; he’s an elder now. And this guy said, “I would be glad to talk to you. It’s only for ten minutes now. And then let’s meet after church school and then we can talk after church school.”

I looked for him, but he never showed up for church school. And then I went home for lunch. (*Laughter*) And their cars were still there. And so I finally said, “What is going on?”

So I ended up talking to this guy. My soon-to-be elder went home and I ended up talking longer. So then we agreed to meet for breakfast the next day. And then he was fifteen minutes late. And then he showed up and he started talking about all of his abstract sins.

Ted: Yeah.

Jeff: And I said, “Let me tell you something. You know, what’s interesting to me is that yesterday I asked you not to keep this guy longer than ten minutes, that he wanted to come to church school and that we would talk with you afterward. And you disregarded that. And then today we were supposed to meet, and you were fifteen minutes late. When you showed up you didn’t even say, ‘I’m sorry I’m fifteen minutes late.’ And you started talking about yourself, about the abstract sins you hold.”

I said, “I want you to know something. I think you need to start confessing the sins that you commit that are obvious to everybody, rather than sort of dwelling in this imaginary world of “Oh woe is me! I’m so Puritanesque that I have all these problems.”

You know, I think that’s where people get. Their orthodoxy trumps any genuine repentance they might have. Now that’s not a reason to eschew orthodoxy. It’s a reason to have our orthodoxy actually lived; that’s what I think. Anyway,--

Ted: The Pharisees believed they were righteous because of their works.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: We can become righteous because of our orthodoxy. I mean, I’m just wondering about it. I run into the person you described all the time.

Jeff: Oh, yeah.

Ted: And I’m just wondering if this also doesn’t have to do with this kind of emotional and social immaturity. I mean, the person talks like this, and you just wonder if you’re listening to him if he thinks that makes his case. Am I buying this? Do you actually believe that I buy what you’re saying? It happens; it’s subtle self-deception.

Jeff: Yes, it is.

Matt: I like your solution, because there are Reformed brothers who have a tendency to be intellectual and not practical enough. But you’re suggesting that you have to do what’s in front of you, to confess the obvious sin that’s right in front of you.

Jeff: Yes, the obvious sin that’s dangling right in front of you.

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Matt: Walk in obedience. It’s knowing and then abiding.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely.

Matt: And I think that with the opposite, the bottom line is pride. We say that we sin so greatly that God can’t forgive us, and that’s my pride.

Jeff: That’s right.

Matt: And vice versa, there’s somebody who sins so greatly against us as believers. “I will not forgive you because you did that to me.”

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: And that’s pride too.

Jeff: Yeah, that’s exactly right.

Matt: And I say, “Wait a minute, wait a minute. You have to realize that you are a wretched, miserable wretch, and if it weren’t for God’s grace, we would be worse.

Jeff: Once we begin to think like the latter person in Matt’s example, we need to think, how did Jesus treat Judas, knowing who Judas was from the very beginning? When you think about how Jesus treated Judas, Judas never felt on the outs. He actually felt on the inside, right?

Jordan Obaker: I was going to ask, when we’re talking about genuine repentance, and incidents of sin and patterns of sin, there are only ten commandments.. And we sin and we break all of them every day.

Jeff: Yeah.

Jordan: How do you know when you have incidents of sin, as opposed to a pattern of sin? I have a tendency to beat myself up when I’ve done something. I know I struggle with this; I shouldn’t have done this. I confess it and ask for forgiveness. But before you know it, it happens again. So how do you know where you are because of that genuine repentance versus that of Judas? I regret that I did this, but—

Jeff: Well I think that’s a great question. And I think the answer to it is summarized in the Westminster Confession.

Ted: He has his copy right here. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Hey, I see that! *(Laughter)*

Ted: He carries it around like a rosary. *(Laughter)*

Ted: Or the Watch Tower.

Jeff: Just ignore him, Jordan. *(Laughter)* Obviously, he doesn’t have a copy. *(Laughter)*

Matt: He has it memorized. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: So it’s in chapter 15, Section 2. Listen to this and you’ll realize why he carries this around. *(Laughter)* I’ll start with Section 1, because it is defined and you have to know what it is.

So “Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ. By it a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for and hates his sins as to turn from them unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments.”

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There are three things in that paragraph that are vital. The first is that you recognize the odiousness of your sins, the filthiness of sin. In other words you see your sin for what it is; that’s first.

But not only that. See, that’s where some guys get stuck, right? It’s like the guy who says, “Start the sermon with talk about how dirty we are!”

And I go, “We’re children! Aren’t we children? I’ll remind you at some point along the way that you’re a filthy sinner. But do we have to start that way? We’re the church.” Hey, I digress. (*Laughter*) But you can feel my own position. We need to understand the filthy nature of our sins. But we also need to apprehend the mercy of God revealed in Christ Jesus.

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: So I need to understand the nature of my sin. And I need to understand the mercy of God. Where do I see both of those things? In the cross. It was the filthiness of sin that sent Christ to the cross. And it is on the cross that I apprehend the mercy of God in Christ Jesus being punished for my sins.

And the third thing is this. Notice this: Repentance does not include work. It includes purposing to live differently. Repentance is not a work. Repentance is a realization that that’s sinful, that’s merciful, and my purpose must now change; my aim must be different. I must endeavor to walk in newness of life.

And so my point to you is that if even in the pattern of sin, if you’re recognizing it’s odiousness and apprehending the mercy of God in Christ, and purposing the next time to walk in newness of life, that to me is genuine repentance; that’s the core of it. So you may beat yourself up, and you rightly should, if this is the sixtieth time. That’s the idea, right? But if these things are there, then this is what God has gifted you with, because remember that genuine repentance begins with grace. And God is still working in you to do that which is pleasing in His sight. Yes?

Matt: Wouldn’t there be #4, like—

Jeff: See, I think that would bring the work into it.

Matt: So that’s actually purposing your heart. With Zacchaeus Jesus says, “Today salvation has come.” He said, “I’m going to give—“

Jeff: But I think that is good works.

Matt: “I give four times what I’ve given.” So that’s evidence in his heart that there’s a change.

Jeff: Evidence of good works, and that’s next. Do you want me to read that chapter? (*Laughter*) That chapter is in there. What’s that chapter? Is that chapter 16?

Matt: That’s true.

Jeff: But what you need to keep in mind though is that faith and repentance are not works.

Matt: Right.

Jeff: And so I endeavor. I mean, when we parse it out, here’s our orthodoxy, right? Our orthodoxy in our view of repentance says that faith is not a work, neither is repentance. So once I endeavor to new obedience and I take that step, now I’m showing evidence, which now becomes the good works prepared in advance for me to do.

Matt: And just to encourage my brother, when we have that condition of sin and we purpose in our hearts to repent, and then we start walking—

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Jeff: Let me say this. If a person fails to actually take that next step,--for instance, if that person says, “I’ve seen the filthiness and I’m apprehending the mercy, and I’m going to endeavor in new obedience, and here’s what I’m going to do.” And he makes a list of three things.

Matt: Okay.

Jeff: He says, “Tomorrow I’m going to enact these.” And then tomorrow comes and he never enacts those.

Matt: Yeah.

Jeff: He will be in a less stable position, right?

Matt: Right.

Jeff: Because he never shows forth even to himself the evidence of good works.

Matt: Right. That’s what I first said. I remember now what I was going to say. We’ll never be sinless. But the deal is, have you in your condition taken those steps? And then if you fall again, our goal is to sin less—not to be sinless, but as we are redeemed and sanctified, it’s a struggle. We’re not going to be sinless, but—

Jeff: Do you remember how I gave this example? And you guys may totally disagree with me. But I want you to know that every time somebody gives that example I think of Johnny Cash. “You know, my friends, I’m gonna tell it to you: Jesus is Lord.” And then three weeks later, you know, he’s in rehab. *(Laughter)* But the man, from what we know of him, confessed Christ and struggled with a sin that he wanted to overcome, right?

Matt: Amen.

Jeff: There’s a great story in the biography of J. G. Machen written by Ned Stonehouse. Here’s this kind of prim and proper gentleman from Baltimore, Maryland who comes up to be a New Testament prof at New Westminster Seminary which he founded. And the guy is constantly working with this drug addict. And he’s constantly pulling this guy out of the gutter, blowing him out of jail. And the guy repents and confesses faith again and says, “I want to live differently.” And Machen is constantly walking by his side.

And I want to tell you something. If you’ve ever walked with somebody like that, you want to get on your knees, right? There’s a sense in which sometimes you have to let out the line for people. And we’re going to see that Jonah has to drop to the bottom of the earth. And the text is telling us that. But sometimes you have to let people go to the bottom in different ways.

Ted: Sure.

Jeff: But the fact of the matter is that these are examples of people who recognize that a man who repents in the midst of a pattern of sin is not necessarily evidence that the man’s faith is negated, right?

Matt: Amen.

Jeff: And that’s why I think that the best thing to do is to let God call it in the end, right? We’ll let God call it in the end. That’s why I say that responsiveness is key. If you have a person who is responsive, this is how our session operates. If a person is responsive to us even in the midst of his sin, we’ll continue to work with him in an informal way, continuing to shepherd him, and so on and so forth. It’s when the person says while he’s working with you, “You guys are out to lunch, and I’m going to continue

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to do this, and I don't care” when things usually turn to formal discipline in a church that practices church discipline like that.

Matt: Yeah.

Jeff: Where we either suspend from the table or throw people out, and so on.

Matt: So in our organization, if you do ministry long enough, good Christians sin.

Jeff: Mm-hmm.

Matt: And they get their lives blown up. So we came up with an acrostic: APG, from “The Enemy.” Are they repentant? Is there purity? Is there growth? And is there service? So we don't care what you've done. If you're in that current status you're qualified to come back to serve. We've had cases of people walking the front lines, setting aside certain ministers until they got back on their feet. But as a church we're supposed to throw them out. But we listen to the attitudes of the world.

Jeff: And see, this is why that's the case. The reason why that's the case is because the church has bought into the world's diagnoses, right?

Matt: Yes.

Jeff: And so as the church has bought into the world, the church feels itself in need of bowing to the world and the world's solutions to things.

Matt: Yes.

Jeff: And I want to say that the church has not always been as wise as a serpent and gentle as a dove. But I think that the church is only as wise as a worldly serpent. It's lacking in the crucial grace of the Lord Jesus. Yes, Don?

Don: Yes. And further on in chapter 15 of The Westminster Confession, like you were saying in regard to your friend that you were talking to, “we ought not to content ourselves with a general repentance.”

Jeff: Yeah.

Don: But it is our “duty to repent of our particular sins particularly.”

Jeff: Yes, that's right; absolutely. And I think that hits it right on the head. Well let me press on. And notice that he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord. This is what he says later on in chapter 2: he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord.

What does that mean? That means he's fleeing from the temple. I want you to think about what that means. We'll get there in the text. But that means he's fleeing from the God who has provided atonement for sins.

You know, it's in Psalm 73 that we read this. You know the guy, the Psalmist Asaph. He's wanting to tear out his hair because he watches the world around him. It seems that the world around him is always thriving, and he's not. And then he says this in the middle of the Psalm. He says, “*I went into the temple and I beheld their end.*”

How so? In the sacrifice. You see, he recognized that either the Messiah or the promised One was going to bear the curse for him, or he was going to bear the curse himself. And so he recognizes that the wicked man who seems to prosper is going to bear the curse. And so it's the ultimate things that write his present vision.

And so he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord. He's fleeing from the God who atones for sin. That's amazing when you think about it!

But I want you to know that *running does not extinguish knowledge*. This is what we talked about earlier. We said that my voice is still in my child's head. When they do

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something that they know I don't approve of, they can hear me say, “I wouldn't do that.” *(Laughter)* And that's the point: Running does not extinguish what Jonah knows.

Now notice this when you contrast that with the sailors on the ship. Verse 9: “*I fear the LORD God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.*” What's the sailors' question? Look at the preceding verse. “*Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?*”

That's what he knows. That's the voice in his head that he can't escape from! It doesn't matter that he moves all the way to Joppa; he knows that. “*I fear the God of heaven and earth.*” He can't escape that voice. And so he's orthodox, but he's not repentant. The great thing about it is, that voice stays with him.

The evidence: “What do you do?” Think about what he says. What does he say in that? “What do you do?” And he says in verse 9: “*I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God, who made the sea and the dry land.*”

“What do you do?” He tells them who he is. He tells them what he fears; he tells them his orthodoxy. “What do you do?” Silence. “I am a prophet of God, card-carrying.” ” *(Laughter)* Nope, silence. He's fleeing and he's active in doing it; he's fleeing from the presence of God.

Now what does he say? And this is the striking thing that I want you to notice, and we'll stop in this next second here. He says, “Pick me up and throw me overboard, because I'd rather die than listen to God at this point in my life.”

Now we read this, and we think about the Veggie Tales or the kid's stories. “Pick me up and throw me in!” *(Laughter)* No, this is the wayward child saying, “Not the God that I was raised with,” right? That is, “I'll never come back. I'd rather die than go back to that.” That's what we're dealing with here.

And there's a little bit of Jonah in us. There's a little bit of Jonah in every prodigal child, right? There's actually a lot of Jonah in every prodigal child. Okay. So we'll wind up there and we'll pick up with “Where Are You Going?” next.

Let's pray as we close out. Father, thank you for this day and for the time You've given us, for the blessing of life in Christ. Thank You, Father, that You love our children more than we can possibly imagine, more than we could love them ourselves. And Lord, thank You that we have a story like this one that reminds us what a heavenly Father looks like as He pursues His covenant children. So bless us in that. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. *(Applause)*