

## “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

Jonah 1:1-10

Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.

December 1, 2023

**Jeff:** Let us pray. Gracious God, we thank You for this day and for the blessing of life in Christ and for the gathering here. Lord, we pray that You'll be among us as we think our way through the Scriptures. And Lord, we know that we're not autonomous, that our reason is not king. And so we ask that Your Spirit would be among us. And we pray, Father, that He would be leading and guiding us into the truth that He inspired Your apostles to write. And Lord, we're thankful for that.

We're thankful for the opportunity to do so. And Lord, we're thankful for the opportunities that are both small and great. We're thankful, Lord, for the day-to-day activities that we enjoy: the way in which the seasons turn, also the warmth of this weather. Father, the unseasonable warmth is good for us, and we're thankful for it.

We ask that You'll bless us today as we interact with others. And Lord, we pray that the love of Christ that has been shed abroad in our hearts would overflow from our lips and our actions. And we pray, Father, that we would touch people with Your gospel and that they would be changed.

Father, we also ask that Your hand would be upon us as we head into the holiday season. And we know that's a difficult season for many people in their loss. And Lord, we pray and ask that You will comfort, and Lord, we pray that You will lift up the downcast. And we pray that You will not snuff out a smoking wick. And Lord, we pray that You will exalt Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in our lives and in the lives of Your people. And Lord, we pray that You would shine His light into the darkness of this world. Lord, we ask now that You'll bless us this morning as we open Your word and as we study it. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, let's turn to Jonah. And let's just read a little bit. I have read to you verses 1-6. I'm going to read to you from chapter 1, verses 1-10 today. So listen now to the word of God as I read it.

*“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ‘Arise! Go to Nineveh, that great city and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.’*

*“But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.*

*“But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep.*

*“So the captain came and said to him, ‘What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your God. Perhaps the God will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.’*

*“And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.’ So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.*

### “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

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

*“And he said to them, ‘I am a Hebrew and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.’*

*“Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, ‘What is this that you have done?’ For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.”*

**Jeff:** All right. Well I want us to start today; I think this is the third point that is on your sheet if you still have your sheet. So we did “no substitutions” last time, and today we’re going to start with “where are you going?”

And the question that we have to ask ourselves is, where was Jonah going? You know, I think about this in relation to a phrase that we oftentimes think about today when we think about people who are going in the wrong direction. But it’s one of those phrases that we think we have a good idea of what the answer to it is. And you know the phrase: He just needs to hit rock bottom. And we have a tendency to think to ourselves that we know where rock bottom is, at least intuitively. We think to ourselves that he just needs to go a little further and no more.

And the fact of the matter is that the bottom can be hell for some people. And we don’t have a tendency to think that way. We have a tendency to think that in this life they’ll hit some sort of bottom, and then their lives will turn around and be okay.

And yet bottom is a pretty deep well. And I think Jonah is about to hit bottom. And what I want you to do is that I want you to think about where bottom is for Jonah as we think about the phrase “he just needs to hit the bottom.” I want you to think about this.

Now we’ve been thinking about what God’s command was to Jonah. And that was “Arise and go to Nineveh.” What I want you to see is that Jonah was going in the wrong direction. Jonah by all indications in this text is going down and not up. God’s command is “Arise and go.” And Jonah is going down, and every indication in the text shows that to be the case.

I want you to just walk through this and see this. In verse 3: *“So he went down to Joppa.”* And I want you to know that some of these may not be immediately apparent in terms of the language of “down,” but it’s in the Hebrew. And that’s what the author is trying to indicate: that he’s going down, he’s going down, he’s going down.

The ship going to Tarshish in verse 3, he went down into it. And then the storm in verse 5: Jonah had gone blow—or in the Hebrew down—into the hold of the ship. And again in verse 5: *“He had lain down, and fallen fast asleep.”* So you get this idea that Jonah was going down and down and down.

And when you think about what God said to him, God said to him, “Arise!” Now I just want you to catch the artistry—not the moments of truth that we’re seeing, represented in a life that’s going in the wrong direction—but now I want you to see the artistry here. But also, more than that, I want you to see the way God deals with us as sons.

The captain comes down in verse 6 and says what? The very thing that God has said to him: “Arise!” It’s a reminder. And God in His providence, in His beautiful providence, has a way of peppering our lives with those reminders of His. He has a tendency to generously puts roadblocks in our way when we’re going down the wrong street. He has

### “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

a way of summoning us back with a voice of reminder. Maybe it's the voice of reminder from our pastor, maybe it's our dad's voice. It's a voice in our heads that says, "Son, don't do that."

And we pause. And we think to ourselves: Maybe I ought not to do that. But the fact of the matter is, sometimes we hear our mother's voice in our heads. We listen to our dad say in our mind's eye, "Don't do that," and we keep going in the wrong direction anyway.

And that's what Jonah is doing. Jonah has heard the voice of the captain. And I can't help but think to myself that in hearing the voice of the captain say the exact words that God said to him that the man pauses, and reflects upon what God had called him to do: to arise and go to Nineveh.

That's providence. And I want to stop and I want to just pause for a minute before we go further, because we are going to go further in this. I want us to pause for a minute and think about providence. This is a kind act of providence. All moments in life are providence. And I just want us to stop and reflect on providence for a minute, because I don't think we have a tendency to stop and reflect on it enough.

I want you to think about providence in a way that C.S. Lewis talks basically about consciousness. Lewis was actually kind of a rare breed. He had a way of thinking about things beyond what we have a tendency to do in our general day-to-day lives. We think of unconsciousness and consciousness. C.S. Lewis said, "I don't buy that distinction. What I think is that there is unconsciousness, there is meditation, and then there's enjoyment."

If you've ever read his *Meditation in a Toolshed*, you'll know what he's talking about, because he says, "*I was standing in a toolshed one day. And I was aware in the darkness that there were tools around me.*" He said, "I knew I was in a toolshed. And in front of me in a crack in the ceiling there was a beam of light coming down into the toolshed, which gave a little bit of light to my surroundings." And he said, "I was able to study that beam."

And he said, "*What was most apparent to me when I looked at that beam inside of that toolshed was not the tools. What was most apparent to me was the dust in the beam.*"

Do you see what he was doing? He was thinking about, he was contemplating, meditating on his surroundings, and most of all on the beam of light that was coming down in the midst of the toolshed. But then he said this: "*I put myself inside the beam of light. And I started to look out of the crack in the ceiling where the beam was coming from. And then all of a sudden the shed around me disappeared. I didn't see anything of the shed any longer. But I could see the leaves on the outside of the shed, and they were shimmying a bit. Then I could catch glimpses of the sun itself. The dust now disappeared, and I could see everything in all of its brilliance that was lighting up the dust, and what little of the toolshed there was to light up.*"

And he said, "*That's enjoyment.*" Watching the beam, looking at the beam, is meditation. But standing inside of the beam is enjoyment. And he said that we have a tendency either to be meditating or to be enjoying. And he said that one of the things that we need to do is that we need to seek to enjoy rather than to always meditate, because when we meditate we're analyzing, we're dissecting, we're looking; we're the master. But when we're in the beam, when we're enjoying whatever it is, then we're a part of it. And we're not dissecting it; we're enjoying it.

And you know, I think that in some ways the way we look at Scripture fits that kind of description pretty nicely. Like the German higher critic or critical scholar, we can take the

### “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

Bible and dice it up and slice it and talk about it in all sorts of ways as if we're masters over the text. Or we can step into its rays and we can enjoy the message of Scripture and the way in which it informs our lives.

You know, that's not the only way that we can look at life through this spectrum. I want you to think about this. How many of us have a tendency to look at our distresses—the difficulties in life—as if we're studying a beam? I'm talking about that, rather than sort of embracing the moment.

Now I'm getting that from the Scriptures, right? We are to see every affliction as an opportunity for joy, not because the affliction is so bad, but because God is so good, and He carries us through the affliction. We can embrace the moment, or we can stand back and analyze it, and there's a place for that.

But I can tell you this. When we only do that, what we have a tendency to do is to think about what God ought to be doing instead of what He is doing. And so I think there is an important place for us to be thinking about what's happening in my life and how I'd be handling it, and so on. And then there's a place where we just embrace what's happening to us, and—

**Matt Reichart:** With Scripture, do any verses come to mind in that regard?

**Jeff:** Well when I think about that, I'm thinking, for instance, of Romans chapter 8. In Romans chapter 8 he says: *“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ—provided we suffer with Him, in order that we may also be glorified with Him.”*

There's a sense in which that as a child crying out to the Father, I'm not standing outside of the beam and analyzing what's happening to me and critiquing God. I'm crying out; I know I'm a child. I'm in the embrace of the moment, in the embrace of the God who has ordained the moment. And I'm crying out to Him because I know that He'll sustain me. But I also know that through the suffering I'm experiencing that God is having His good work in me, having His way in me.

And I think there are other passages like that. I think one of my favorites is in 1 Peter chapter 5. You know, the whole text is really set in the context of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ as it comes in the beginning in 1:11-12, and then 5:1-2.

**Transcriber's Note:** 1 Peter 1:10-12, NKJV. *“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which have now been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.”*

**1 Peter 5:1-2:** *“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly.”*

### “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

**Jeff:** The whole text is roped off by Christ’s humiliation and exaltation. And then there are three key places in 1 Peter where he invites us into that. And then in the end he finishes it off. I’ll read this to you; it’s in 4:13. This is one of the key places. He says: *“But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s suffering, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.”*

And that to me is an enjoyment passage. And what I mean by that is that I’m in the beam rather than outside of it. And then he finished that off by inviting us to enter into the beam, to enter into the moment. 5:6: *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.”* So he invites us into the beam by saying, “Cast all your anxieties upon Him because He cares for you.” And then you will be in that humbled state. In other words, that’s the invitation into the beam, if you will.

**John Gratner:** So that’s the passage that we should be directed upon.

**Jeff:** Yes, 1 Peter 5:7 is that particular part.

**Matt:** Another one that we’ve covered is Romans 5:3: *“Not only this, but we also exalt in tribulation.”*

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** “Tribulation produces endurance that produces hope.”

**Jeff:** Yes. You know, I think theologically that we stand outside in terms of our thinking and we sort of analyze things. But you know, I think that we often talk about things that are unsystematizable, right? And I think that joy and suffering is one of those unsystematizable things. How do we account for Christian people? This is the rarity, right? This is the Christian person. They go through an absolute storm, right? And then they come out of it and they say, “You know, God is so good!”

And if you’re standing outside and you’re analyzing, you’re like “What was good about this?” And they’ll piece together how in this horrible moment that God brought this ray of light to us. And we have a sense of His presence in a way that we just didn’t the whole time. But all of a sudden this made it all understandable, at least from our perspective. And that to me is sort of entering into it, and being caught up by God in the most difficult moments, so that you—

**Matt:** It’s an oxymoron; it’s unnatural.

**Jeff:** Yeah, right.

**John:** We think of peace in the midst of what you’re describing as something that’s a concept, when Ephesians 2:14 tells us that *“He is our peace.”* It’s personal; He sees us personally. He personally in that time, and even not at that time—the time He is not suffering—He’s still our peace, right? We use the word “peace” in a way where David had more of a throw-back to the Old Testament *shalom* concept of holiness and all of the rest. And He is all of that.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**John:** In what we call the good times and the bad times. I’m not sure we would call the bad times the good times, but He’s good. He’s our peace; He’s our good Shepherd; He is all of those things, but in a way that’s not a concept, but in a way that’s a Person. We all have to understand here that there is a spiritualizing part to this.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**John:** When you look back and you came through that, somehow Jesus is my peace.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

### “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

**John:** He was really there, and He really is here now with us.

**Brave Man:** Where did you say it was?

**John:** Ephesians 2:14.

**Jeff:** I want to go back to this because this is Jonah. And in that situation that we were talking about we think about ourselves in terms of being in God’s care and His providence and depending on Him. But Jonah isn’t doing that, right? Jonah is not doing that.

So if you go back to 1 Peter and you think about what he says in different places, he says for instance that you ought to suffer for righteousness’ sake. And then in verse 18 of chapter 3: *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits who are now in prison.”*

And then verse 1 of chapter 4: *“Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking. For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions, but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality,”* and so on.

So he talks about “Since the end is near, what kind of people ought you to be?”, right? And so he says in there at one point: “Don’t suffer for wrong; suffer for righteousness.”

Jonah has experienced the kind providence of God. God has put someone into his life to remind him of God’s commandment: *“Arise!”* And Jonah just misses it. And so Jonah needs to repent.

Verse 3: *“Jonah rose to flee.”* The question is, what will Jonah do now that he hears the captain’s voice? Well now that he hears the captain’s voice, he ought to repent. And I want us not to take this for granted. I want us to think for just a minute about repentance again.

I think I mentioned this. Maybe I didn’t; if I did, maybe we shouldn’t spend the time here. But we did talk about repentance a while ago, right?

**Don Maurer:** Yes, two weeks ago.

**Jeff:** You have the confession. So again, just briefly, repentance is recognizing the odious nature of my sin, recognizing the abundance of mercy found in Christ, and then turning from the odiousness to the mercy and endeavoring to new obedience. Remember, obedience is not part of repentance. But there’s an endeavoring, there’s a purpose of change that I decide at that moment, as I turn from the odious nature of my sin to the mercy of God.

And so Jonah hasn’t even endeavored; he hasn’t even turned. He’s determined to flee. And so he doesn’t repent.

In verse 15 Jonah is hurled into the sea. In chapter 2, verses 5-6 he goes *“down to the very roots of the mountain.”*

I want you to just think about that for a minute. We have a tendency again to think that we know where the bottom is. And in this particular story we might think of the bottom as the very bottom of the sea, the bottom of the earth, if we can talk about it in that way. And so we think about it. Here is Jonah in the belly of the fish at the bottom of the sea, at the very root of the mountain.

And what happens there? Jonah repents. It’s there that Jonah repents. Now we’re going to come to that part of the story and contemplate it. But I want us to leave it behind

### “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

for just a minute because I want to talk about God’s role in this. But before we leave that, do you have any questions that you want to ask or that you want to talk about before we leave this? Yes?

**Jordan Obaker:** It’s not a super important question, but I’m just curious. In verse 10 they say to him, “*What have you done?*” “*For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.*”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Jordan:** What do you make of Jonah telling them that that’s what he’s doing? Do you make it as he’s trying to confess to someone, but not the right person? Or is he exalting in his disobedience, and so he’s going to brag about it?

**Jeff:** You know, I think that’s really hard to say. But here’s my gut. My gut is that he is a prophet of God; he’s a theologian. So when they say, “Who are you fleeing from?”, it’s time to teach. “Let me teach you. Let me tell you who it is,” right?

And I think Jonah is just like us, right? I mean, think about the times that you are struggling with your own sin. And somebody asks you a theological question and you go, “Well, let me tell you!” (*Laughter*) And then we churn out a theological answer. We know that we ourselves are fleeing at the moment that we’re giving that sound theological answer. I think that’s what’s happening here. We can’t know our own selves at the moment we’re trying to give our own answer for something. And here’s Jonah and he’s being asked this.

**Paul Sedlock:** There might be a hint to that when he says: “I am a Hebrew and I follow the LORD.” So he’s identifying with that.

**Jeff:** Oh, yeah.

**Paul:** If you were trying to hide, you probably wouldn’t say that. No?

**Jeff:** No. I mean, think about it. This man knows he can’t hide from the providence of God. I mean, if you are sound in your theology, I want to tell you something. The atheist who turns, the person who grows up in the church, who grows up in sound theology, who knows the providence of God and the sovereignty of God, they may say it differently. But the fact of the matter is, they can’t think differently. Those thoughts are swimming in their heads all the time, right?

They know, which is why I think that some people begin to think and they begin to sort of personify the “son of perdition” kind of personality. “I know I’m a reprobate. I know I’m the person who is cast off,” right? And they know that not because they know the secret will of God. They know that because their own actions embody what they’ve learned what a person like that is and does. And so yes; he’s not hiding from any of it. Yes?

**Matt:** Is there any significance that he asks them to pick him up versus him jumping into the sea himself, because it says that they knew he was running from God? “*And he said, ‘Pick me up and cast me into the sea.’*”

**Jeff:** Actually I’m going to put that off because I’m going to answer that.

**Matt:** Okay.

**Jeff:** Yes?

**John:** In verse 3 it talks about what Jonah is doing, but it doesn’t point out why.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**John:** Two weeks ago you had a map of Tarshish, which, if everyone recalls, was the farthest point of the known world.

### “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

**Jeff:** Yup.

And what does Jonah say? Yes, he goes down, down, down. God tells him to arise, and the first thing he does is to arise. And why does he not do what he’s told to do? It’s to flee from the presence of the LORD. You’re right; he was a theologian. I think he knew who the Most High God was. But in the context that he had Yahweh wasn’t in Tarshish, right? That wasn’t His territory.

**Jeff:** Hmm!

**John:** He was fleeing from the presence of the Lord. “If I go that way, He’s not there.” And he also knew the promise of Abraham: that it wasn’t just for Abraham. So he didn’t want to go over there to Nineveh because he was afraid that God was going to take that territory. And He does.

**Jeff:** And He does.

**John:** And so it’s like he doesn’t think he can get away from God. He can get away from where God wants him to be.

**Jeff:** Yes. But the paradox of that is that he flees from the presence of God, and I think he’s thinking the temple, right? That’s where God dwells in Jerusalem. But he introduces himself as “the one who serves the God of the earth and sea,” right? So he sees this God as the Owner of all, but in a very specific way, right?

**John:** Right.

**Jeff:** Those are His people.

**John:** Right, because he’s saying, “My God, the God of the Hebrews, He’s actually the great God who created all these things.”

**Jeff:** Yeah. Not your God.

**John:** Right. Because in verse 5 the sailors are crying out to their god.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**John:** And they say, “Hey, call out to your God.”

**Jeff:** Let’s face it. It’s easy to see the fact that you can conjure this in your own mind today in a singular instance, right? That guy should never have salvation, right? You think of some people and you go, “I don’t want to see that guy in heaven.” And that’s really the spirit of Jonah.

**John:** Right.

**David Miller:** I wonder, in terms of a human agent for verse 16, a human source of information, if there was a human source for that.

**Jeff:** Yeah. I personally think that it was Jonah who wrote this. But I have no other explanation for that.

**David:** It seemed like he had already left the scene by the time they—

**Jeff:** Oh, what were you asking then? Sorry.

**David:** Verse 16.

**Jeff:** Uh-huh.

**David:** It seems like Jonah had already left the scene.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Jonah 1:16, ESV. “*Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly. And they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.*”

**Jeff:** Oh. I’ll tell you what I think. Remember, Jonah is bobbing in the sea when the sea calms. So he’s watching them, right? And so that’s how I think of it: he’s observing that.



### “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

**Ted Wood:** They’re taking and they’re throwing their Baals and their Ashtaroths over the sea. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** (in a high-pitched voice): “Are you sure you don’t want that god? He really is God!” *(Laughter)* Well I want us to pause for a minute. I want us to go to a preliminary story here. I want us to go to 1 Kings chapter 13. And I want to read verses 11 and following. I just want you to hear this story, because this is about another prophet.

*“Now an old prophet lived up in Bethel. And his sons came and told him all that the man of God had done that day in Bethel. They also told their father the words that he had spoken to the king. And the father said to them, ‘Which way did he go?’ And his sons showed him the way that the man of God who came from Judah had gone.”*

Now what that is a reference to is a reference to the first ten verses, where this man of God is being called by God to go and carry this message, and so he does. And now the old prophet is hearing about it from his sons.

Verse 13: *“And he said to his sons, ‘Saddle the donkey for me.’ So they saddled the donkey for him, and he mounted it. And he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak. And he said to him, ‘Are you the man of God who came from Judah?’ And he said, ‘I am.’*

*“Then he said to him, ‘Come home with me and eat bread.’*

*“And he said, ‘I may not return with you or go in with you. Neither will I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place. For it was said to me by the word of the LORD: ‘You shall neither eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by the way that you came.’”*

*“And he said to him, ‘I am also a prophet as you are. And an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, ‘Bring him back with you into his house, that he may eat bread and drink water.’” But he lied to him.*

*“So he went back with him and ate bread in his house and drank water. And as they sat at the table the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back. And he cried to the man of God who came from Judah: ‘Thus says the LORD: Because you have disobeyed the word of the LORD and have not kept the commandment that the LORD your God commanded you, but have come back and have eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which He said to you, ‘Eat no bread and drink no water,’ ‘your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.’”*

*“And after he had eaten bread and drunk, he saddled the donkey for the prophet whom he had brought back. And as he went away a lion met him on the road and killed him. And his body was thrown in the road. And the donkey stood beside it. But the lion also stood beside the body. And behold, men passed by and saw the body thrown in the road, and the lion standing by the body. And they came and told it in the city where the old prophet lived.”* And then the old prophet says, “Let’s go bury the man of God.”

Now let me ask you a question after reading that text. Here’s this prophet of God, summoned by God from Judah to go to Bethel to testify against the North and its reconstruction of religion. God tells him, “While you’re there, prophesy. Don’t eat or drink. When you come back don’t come back by the same way.” And the man of God is found out by this old prophet who lies to him and says to him, “Come back. The LORD told me that you’re supposed to eat in my house.” The prophet does this, and then God gives a word to the old prophet and says, “You disobeyed and you’re going to die.” And he does; he dies by the lion alongside the road.

### “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

Now let me ask you: What did Jonah deserve? I mean, when you think about that, you think about that kind of story. And you think about what Jonah actually deserved. He was told by God, “Arise and go to Nineveh.” But he got up to flee. And he went down, and he went down, and he went down. And the question is, what does he deserve? And I think the answer is that he deserves no more.

If we were meting out judgment, he deserves no better than the prophet who disobeyed God when he went to Bethel, right? And yet what does he get? He got a fish! (*Laughter*) And when we look at this story we say, “This is terrible! How would you like to be in a fish for three days?”, right? And yet that’s an abundance of grace!

And I want you to think about that. What I want you to think about is this, and here’s where I find a great deal of comfort. I’ve used this story as a reminder, because there are Christian people who have children who have wandered from the faith. And I think Jonah is a wonderful story of God pursuing his children and bringing them back.

Now God doesn’t bring every child back. That prophet in 1 Kings 13 didn’t get brought back in this life, right? He was punished in a very severe way for his disobedience. But Jonah is brought back in this life.

And what I want you to see is that I want you to see the way in which God pursues. It’s amazing, right? In verse 4 God is the One who hurled the wind on the sea. Verse 7: God is the One who acts in the lot. And in verse 17 God is the One who prepares the fish to swallow Jonah.

And I think there’s an answer to why God does this. And the answer to that is in Matthew 18:12-14. I put it up on the board here.

*“What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of My Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”*

And I think that what we find here is that we find an example of God pursuing His covenant child. And I guess the thing that I would say to you is this: I would say that the bottom for a covenant child may look pretty ugly and awful before God brings him back. The fact of the matter is, if you’re like that prophet in 1 Kings 13, then people are hopeful of your eternal destiny but not sure of it. And that’s the way some parents have to feel about their covenant children.

And you know, I can tell you; I think I’ve mentioned this before. My brother wandered from the faith when he was about 18, and he was murdered at 24. And there is some slight indication that he was returning to the Lord when he died. But I don’t know, and I’ll let the Lord figure that one out because He already has. But I don’t make pronouncements about my brother’s eternal destiny because I don’t know. But my brother gave me reason to doubt. And so I hope that the Lord was summoning him back at the time of his death, but I don’t know. But the indication of his life and the trajectory of his life as a whole up to that point was like that prophet who disobeyed in the very end.

Jonah is not like that. Jonah is the one sheep that God is pursuing. And we ought to take it like that, and it’s encouraging.

What about types? When you think about typology, one of the things that you think about is that you think about type and antitype. And type is sort of like the mold where you see the reality come in later. But when the reality comes, it’s the antitype.

### “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

For instance, when you see the sacrifice and the temple, that’s a type of Christ. When you see Christ He is the antitype.

Now when you think like that, I think that you can see a picture of Christ in the story of Jonah. What do I mean by that? Well, in the Levitical law there is the idea of the scapegoat. The high priest places his hands on the head of the goat, symbolically transferring the sins of that person who brought it to the head of the lamb. There are two goats. The one goat is sacrificed and the other goat is led out into the wilderness.

And what I think is, I think that Jonah and the sailors are typifying that. Jonah and the sailors are sinners. But if they cast him they are saved. That is, if they cast the sin out of their midst, they are saved.

It’s like the scapegoat. You lead it outside of the community to wander, right? And Jonah is seeing himself. He can’t help but see himself in Biblical patterns. I think it’s interesting that he doesn’t say, “Make me a burnt offering.” (*Laughter*) I mean, it is interesting that he doesn’t say that. But he sees himself as a scapegoat. “I am the source of your trouble, so put me out.” And that’s what they do. They put him out. And when they put him out, the sea calms.

And I think that what we see is that we see a beautiful picture, a beautiful slice of what’s happening when we see Jesus fulfilling the whole law. In other words, think about it like this. Jonah can only fulfill one slice of it. He can say, “You know what? I’m the sin in your midst; put me out.” And so he in one sense fulfills or captures by way of analogy the scapegoat.

But he can’t embody the whole of the law. He can’t satisfy every type that is in the law. But when Jesus comes along, Jesus does embody and fulfill every aspect of the Old Testament law. But here we find Jonah just embodying or analogously helping us to see the fulfillment of one type. Hold on just a second, Don. Go ahead.

**Matt:** In God’s sovereignty, in Jonah’s disobedience, (*Unclear*)

**Jeff:** Oh, sure. I mean, think about that.

**Matt:** Who knows what happens from then on?

**Jeff:** The ironic thing is that “I’m not going to Nineveh; I’m going to Tarshish.” And the sailors who are taking him to Tarshish get saved. Do you know what I mean? He’s still as he is in the water when everything comes out, and he’s going, “I knew it! I knew it!” (*Laughter*) “See, that’s what you’re gonna do over there!” (*Laughter*)

**Ted:** We really don’t know if the sailors got saved.

**Jeff:** You don’t think it’s a good indication? We’re going to talk about this in the future, but—

**Ted:** I just think that anybody could adhere to the Lord for a period of time.

**Jeff:** Uh-huh. I got you.

**Ted:** Jesus said that “*He who endures to the end will be saved.*”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** It’s not enough to say you accept Christ if you don’t endure until the end.

**Jeff:** Right. You’re saying this is a plus-perfect figure of the Lord. We know that they did this at that moment, but not after that.

**Ted:** These things happen all the time.

**Jeff:** Yes, I understand.

**Matt:** It might be that we’re probably going to meet them in heaven.

**Jeff:** Right. Don, were you going to say something?

### “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

**Don:** Yes, I was. Two weeks ago or so you said that the reason that Jonah said “throw me into the sea” was that Jonah was having a pity party. He was bound and determined to disobey the Lord. And so, “Yeah. You know, all of this has come upon me. Woe is me! Throw me into the sea.” But when I taught Jonah a few months ago I said that it almost seems to me at least that this was almost a revelation from God. “You do this, and the sea will be calm.”

**Jeff:** Well, I think—

**Don:** It was almost like Jonah knew what would happen: that the sea would be calm if he was thrown into it.

**Jeff:** See, I think typically that I would say yes to that. In Amos 3:7 “the LORD does nothing without first telling his prophet,” right?

**Don:** Yes.

**Jeff:** So typically, when you think about Elisha, remember that they are building a new seminary, a school of the prophets. Maybe it’s a dorm building; I don’t know. *(Laughter)* But anyway, remember that the one prophet has an ax head that he borrows. The one student has an ax head that he borrows. And it flies off and it goes into the lake. And he goes, “Oh, that was borrowed!”

And you know, I don’t think that Elisha just picked up a stick and said, “Let’s see if this works.” *(Laughter)* This is God saying to His prophet, “This is what you are to do,” right? This is how this is going to happen; this is how it’s going to unfold.

So I wonder about that with regard to Jonah, because he’s a disobedient prophet. I wonder how much God has brought the screen down on his insight. So I think he is a childish person at this point. “Woe is me!” But I think that he can’t help but respond in Biblical categories. He knows that he’s the problem among them, and so they’ve got to get rid of him. It’s sort of like the casting off. And so I think he says, “Cast me off,” and God brings that about.

**Paul:** Is that the bottom for Jonah? Obviously you were talking about rock bottom, his restitution in a sense. He’s obviously a prophet, but he didn’t listen when God had told him to go to Nineveh in the first place. But then now all of a sudden he’s like, “I can’t fight it anymore. I know what I need to do.” He basically sacrifices himself. He doesn’t put up a fight with the sailors.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Paul:** To me that’s a change already.

**Jeff:** I think the change comes at the bottom of the mountain, because that’s where he prays. So we’re going to keep pursuing this. John, you have the last comment.

**John:** Where’s the pity in this? Where is the “pity party” part?

**Jeff:** That’s pure speculation, John. *(Laughter)*

**John:** Okay. *(Laughter)* He says “Throw me over” in response to the sailors’ question, “How could you do this?”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**John:** “You claim that you know the God who made the sea and the dry land. So how can we make the sea calm here on account of you?”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**John:** “Well, throw me over.”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**John:** And what do they do? They pray to the Lord and throw all the other stuff over.

### “A Wayward Prophet” Pt 3

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**John:** “No, that’s not enough; throw me over.” I don’t know; that doesn’t sound like a pity party. It sounds more like he’s—

**Jeff:** He’s giving them directions.

**John:** Yeah.

**Jordan:** I think you had mentioned a couple weeks ago too that since he had not yet repented, he was still in his disobedience. “I could end this by repenting,” or “I’m still rebelling to the point where I’d rather die.”

**Jeff:** Yeah. He could—

**John:** He didn’t know the fish was coming.

**Jeff:** No. He knew the sin was in him. And I think he could have repented and brought calm to the storm. And they could have returned to port and he could have gone to Tarshish. But he was unwilling; he was digging in his heels.

**Ted:** I’m so mad I could die.

**Jeff:** Yeah, right. Well, we all know the story so well that we’re anticipating, which is really good; I’m glad you’re thinking along with me. But we’ll pick it up here the next time. Let me pray with you.

Gracious God, thank You for this day and for the blessing of life in Christ. Thank You for this story, Lord, for how it provokes so much thought and how much reflection it provokes in us not only about the prophet himself, but about us and about our own responses to You. Lord, we pray that You’ll bless us and strengthen us. Lord, we know that we are like Jonah in many ways. And we pray that we would indeed be like the sailors, at least in the moment of their turn. And Lord, sustain that turn in us always. We ask it in Christ’s name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. (*Applause*)