

## **“A Wayward Prophet” Pt 6**

**Jonah 1:7-17**

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**Jeff:** All right. Welcome; it’s good to see everybody. Why don’t we get started with a word of prayer? And Don, why don’t you lead us in after these guys get done shaking everybody down, or doing their stuff, or whatever it was? *(Laughter) (Music)*

Gracious God, we stand before You thankful, thankful to come into Your presence day by day and moment by moment, thankful to stand before You having had a great introduction by the Lord Jesus Christ into Your presence, and knowing that we might draw near to You through the abundant grace of the Son. We come now asking that Your hand would be upon us for good.

Lord, as we come we ask that You would teach us. We pray, Father, as we open Your text, as we open the inscripturated Word, the Word that You gave to many authors and yet by a single Author—Your Spirit—as we open that Word we pray that our minds would be fed and that our hearts would be warmed and that our lives would be directed. Father, we ask that You would do these things not necessarily for our good,—though we ask that,—but we understand that we walk the veil of tears; we follow Jesus Christ in His humiliation. And so what may not feel good is certainly for our good, and so we ask for our good. But Lord, we ask most of all for Your glory. And we pray, Father, that our lives—every moment of them—would be given to You and to that glory which You deserve.

And we pray that the men and women who watch would only see that we love You because we have first been loved by You. So Lord, as we come we ask that Your hand would be upon us as we study, that our lives might be conformed more and more after the image of Christ Jesus our Savior.

But Lord, we also pray for those who are on our minds and on our hearts. And Lord, we ask this for Sig and Nancy. We pray for them, asking that You will heal them and make them well.

We certainly pray for Bruce as he continues to look forward to a new journey. And Lord, we pray that as He goes to this new place to stay—this new care facility—that You would go before him and that You would bless him in this. Lord, we pray for his wife as well.

Lord, we ask now that You will strengthen us for the day. And we pray, Lord, that You will bless us in it, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Well let me have us turn one final time to chapter 1 of Jonah. What I’m going to do this morning is to read verse 7 down to the end of the chapter. What you have in front of you is that you have the remainder of the outline. You have last week’s outline on one side. And that outline under the introduction begins with *Good Stories: Main and Sub-points*. And then the next outline is on the opposite side. So just to orient you we’re going to start on the outline with *Good Stories: main and Sub-points*. We’re going to start in Roman numeral III, *A Common Lesson*; that’s where we are today. And we’re going to start under #2: *But Jonah: Jonah in Charge*.

So let me read to you from verse 7 and read through the end of the chapter. This is the word of the Lord.

*“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.*

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*“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.*

*“Then they said to him, ‘What shall we do to you that the sea may quiet down for us?’ For the sea grew more and more tempestuous.*

*“He said to them, ‘Pick me up and hurl me into the sea. Then the sea will quiet down for you. For I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.’ Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get back to dry land. But they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.*

*“Therefore they called out to the LORD. ‘O LORD, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood. For You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.’ So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.*

*“Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly. And they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” This is the word of the Lord.*

**Brave Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Jeff:** Let me get my clicker here. All right, so we’re going to pick up just a little bit before where we left off the last time. The reason I want to do this is because I feel as if I rushed us some to get through this. And when I do that you can just call me on it. I always hate it when I do that; I always fear that I leave something out.

But anyway, what we were talking about the last time we were together was that we were talking about how man will attempt to work out his own salvation, but it just doesn’t work. And Jonah in this particular story actually thinks that he’s in charge, that he’s in control of his own fate, that he’s making decisions that will guide his steps, and that he is certain of where those steps will take him.

Now oftentimes that’s the way with us. I want you to see how that is with Jonah. Jonah believes that he’s in charge. And we see that in just the little actions that he’s taking. In verse 3 he pays the fare to go down to Joppa.

Now the interesting thing about this is this. We need to understand that when we make decisions we’re doing that which we are called to do. We’re called to be decision makers; we’re called to plan our steps and our course, right? That’s all true.

But we can do it with an attitude, an attitude that says, “I am the captain of my fate,” rather than what James tells us to do. James tells us that we ought to say that I will do this tomorrow or that tomorrow, Lord willing, because it is the Lord who ultimately guides our steps. He is ultimately the One who takes us where we will be this afternoon or this evening or tomorrow, or ten years from now. And so we have to do it all tentatively.

Now what Jonah was doing was rebelling. He was rebelling against God. He was in fact paying his own fare in order to escape the will of God. And I think that’s a mindset that we need to guard against. Why are we doing the things that we’re doing from day to day? Are we doing the things that we do in order to run from God, to flee from God? Or are we doing the things that we do to serve God?

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I want to stop and make just a brief distinction here for just a second, because we can easily think that we're doing what God expects us to do. But we have an internal conversation with ourselves, don't we? And in that eternal conversation we may say things like this: "I really don't want to be doing this. I don't really like that person," or "I really don't like doing this or that, or the other thing I'm supposed to do." And we have this internal conversation and we're like a rebellious child on the inside.

And you know, the hardest thing in the world to do is to have our speech that can be heard by men conformed to our speech that can only be heard by God. That's the hardest thing in the world, such that the inner conversation that we have, whose only audience is God, matches the external. Does everybody know what I mean, guys?

**Ted Wood:** Sure.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Ted:** All the time, all the time.

**Jeff:** So here we have Jonah. Listen! His external conversation is not even matching God at this point. His internal conversation is "I'm out of here," and so too is his external conversation. Everything he's doing leads us to believe that he's rebelling.

**Matt Reichart:** But couldn't we be asking the Lord every day, "What do You want me to do?"

**Jeff:** Well let me ask you a question.

**Ted:** Yeah, good. (*Laughter*) I can see this coming.

**Jeff:** Go ahead.

**David Miller:** Jesus said, "I always do what pleases the Father."

**Jeff:** All right; bring Jesus in and it will make us all feel good. (*Laughter*) So let me come back to Matt. Shouldn't we be asking Him every day? And I would say this to you; here is going to be my answer to that, okay? And I want you to feel free to push back. My answer to that is going to be that the word of God tells us what we ought to be doing every day.

**Don Maurer:** Right.

**Jeff:** And you say, "Well, wait a minute. The word of God doesn't tell me the specifics." And I say to you that at that moment you use wisdom.

Now you say, "Wait a minute. Doesn't the Holy Spirit lead us?" And I would say to you that the Holy Spirit may give you a prompting. He may give you a prompting that would kind of verge you in a certain direction.

But let me tell you this—and this is where you might resist!—you can't wait on that. What you have to do is ask: Does the Word tell me where to go? What does wisdom in light of the Word's principles tell me in terms of my likes, dislikes, interests, desires, gifts and capabilities? And then make the decision.

If God gives you a prompting in the midst of that, then it will either confirm your wisdom, or it will contradict your wisdom or the wisdom of others. And then you'll have to make a decision. Both of them are within Biblical principles. But one of them contradicts what I think is wise, and it actually looks unwise. But it's not sinful.

Do you know what I'm saying? I mean, think about it like this. Let's say that you ask yourself: What are the Biblical principles? Here are the Biblical principles, right? They create fences for you that you don't want to move beyond, right? And so within that there are a variety of decisions. There's option A., B. and option C. And after looking at the Biblical principles, and now realizing that I've got these three options, D., E., and so on are outside; I've eliminated those already. I have these options. As I think about it, I think that B. is the wisest decision for me to make. Decide for B.

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But maybe, all of a sudden, you’re unsettled because of something that someone said—a trusted counselor. And you decide that C. is probably where I ought to be going, at least until I feel like I’m being propelled to go. Now C. is still permissible because it’s within Biblical principles. But it’s not what you think is the wisest decision.

You know, it’s sort of like this. Let’s say it’s a job, and B. and C. are both options—good options, wise options. But B. is a wiser option. C. is not something you want to do because you’re going to make less money. You’re going to be away from a particular church that you want to attend. You might be further away from family. You think B. is a better option: more money, the church is closer, it’s a little closer to home. I’m going to go with B.

All of a sudden you start to feel prompted to go to C. Well, C. is not an unbiblical decision. You see it as unwise, but you feel prompted to go there. The question is, do you go there?

Now let me ask you this question, okay? The question is: If you still choose B., have you sinned?

**Brave Man:** No, I wouldn’t have.

**Jeff:** No. That’s right, no. Because in the end, it’s a prompt. And you may determine that it was the cheese sandwich with the bacon you ate the previous night that’s giving you the indigestion to moving to place C.

**Paul Deffenbaugh:** There you go, Don.

**Don Maurer:** See? That’s what happens when you eat cheese sandwiches. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** So you may determine that. But let’s say in fact that it was the Spirit who was prompting you to do that. Well, you still didn’t sin. Why? Because you made a Biblical decision, a decision within Biblical bounds, right? And B. was an option, but so too was C. So too was A., and you could have made any one of them.

Now let’s say that you choose B. And after choosing B. you say to yourself, “I should have chosen C.” Because your denomination plants a church closer than the one where you live, this place reveals to you that they would have given you more money, because your friend takes the job instead of you. And all of a sudden he’s a millionaire in a year, right? *(Laughter)* And you go, “I should have chosen C.” That’s the kind of thing.

But what do you do? You make what you now consider to be a less wise decision, the decision to which you’re committed. I think that’s how you work.

**Matt:** I also know that B. would be pretty good because it has nice sandy beaches and babes in bikinis. So you might want to go to B. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** I didn’t quite hear all of that. I did hear babes in bikinis. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** “Babes in bikinis” is when he went off track. *(Laughter)*

**Matt:** I wasn’t being a jerk; I was trying to get you guys to deal with reality.

**Jeff:** I gotcha. *(Laughter)* I’ve got news for you. If we have a move coming up, and I put in the column: Pro: babes in bikinis, my wife’s gonna probably say,—

**Matt:** “We’re not goin’.” *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** She’s probably going to say, “You’re not going.” *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** Of course, Jeff, in your spirit you would have said, “I’m not going.”

**Jeff:** That’s right. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** I knew that your wife didn’t have to tell you; you already knew that.

**Jeff:** Of course I would have said that. *(Laughter)* Somebody had his hand up.

**Don Bishop:** With that example, when you tell some people that God is sovereign, they have a fear of thinking that we’re all robots.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

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**Don:** God gives us freedom in Scriptural areas to make decisions, and we’re not robots. God works through that and accomplishes means.

**Jeff:** Yeah. And in the end that’s a red herring for them really, because you take them out to dinner and you say, “What do you want to eat?” And then you jerk the menu away from them and say, “Wait a minute; pray and wait for God to give you what He has ordained to give you. And you’re going to go hungry while I order.”

**Don Nemit:** Your teaching there takes me right back to Abraham when God told him to go to a land that He would show him, and he went. But he didn’t give him a map or a GPS or a donkey or anything. And where he went was a long way; his steps went all around. I’m guessing because I don’t know. I’m not that old; I’m getting there, but—*(Laughter)* But I’m sure that in his conversations with God that God turned his feet this way and that way, because when you follow the trail from Haran to all around where God says Israel is—not where it is now,—he had to go and track his course. And so he followed him, and eventually it was counted to him as righteousness.

So I’ve not been in a situation like this, and I fail miserably. *(Unclear)* And I’m sure he didn’t write it down, but I’m sure he conversed with God daily. And God said, “Okay, go this way and go that way.”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Don:** In simplicity.

**Jeff:** It was a different time, all right? He would not have had the Scriptures. I mean, Moses had to come along later and write about him. So he didn’t have the Scriptures like we do. And so there would have been a different way of communicating between him and God at that point, right?

**David:** Even in the Old Testament when they had the Scriptures, they also had prophets who gave specific directions.

**Jeff:** Yep.

**David:** And they had the admonition from God to pray about their decisions. For example, who attacked Ai? They brought him out and then they went to war.

**Jeff:** Yep.

**David:** And we also have extra-Scriptural leading from God if we’re open to it.

**Jeff:** That’s like the prompting that we were talking about earlier.

**David:** We listen to the Lord’s prompting. We can do that.

**Jeff:** That’s what I’m saying, though. We can pray and ask God to do those kinds of things for us. But we need to be ready to act on the Biblical principles and the wisdom. If He gives us the prompting, then—

**Paul:** Jeff, the thing that would concern me is, if you’re talking to somebody and he picks B., and they see these things happen to their neighbors, they said, “Oh, I’ve made the wrong decision! I’ve made a sinful decision!”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Paul:** And that’s where you need somebody soliciting your counsel. You need to say, “No. You did everything within the grounds of—

**Jeff:** Yes. This kind of thing is over against another kind of decision making. Maybe you’ve heard about it. You’ve heard people talking about being in the very center of God’s will. This is the dot theory of God’s will. So I need to be right in the center of God’s will. If I’m not in the center of God’s will then I’m outside of God’s will, and that’s the reason I’m living an unhappy life and an unfulfilled life. And that’s because I’m not in the very center of God’s will.

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This is a different view than that, because this view says that, let’s say, I have the option of marrying Jean or Jane, right? Let’s say I marry Jean. And I marry Jean and I think that I should have married Jane. *(Laughter)*

Now the guy who believes in this one is saying, “You’re not in the very center of God’s will. And you’ve sinned in marrying Jean. And so maybe you need to get rid of Jean and marry Jane,” right? There are Christian people who think that way.

And that’s not the way to think. The way to think is that this is the decision I made when I thought it was wise. These are not options now. Jean is the option.

**Matt:** That’s the center of God’s will.

**Jeff:** This is the center of God’s will for me right here. And so I need to make a less wise decision into a wise one.

**Matt:** I think of Jonah. When he is called to go to Nineveh he goes to Tarshish.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** He never even wanted to be in God’s following. He’s angry again.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** And he didn’t have the right in that sense. But when we try to serve the Lord, I think that sometimes too, though we don’t want to violate Scripture, sometimes God is counter-intuitive and doesn’t make sense.

**Jeff:** Yeah, sure.

**Matt:** He calls us to new things that don’t make perfect sense.

**Matt:** Yeah.

But a lot of times there is blessing in that.

**Jeff:** Yeah. I mean, take Hosea for instance. Do you remember Hosea? Hosea marries Gomer. Hosea is not in this situation. He’s a prophet of God who heard the voice of the LORD who said, “Go and marry that harlot.”

“What? Lord, I don’t think that’s very wise.”

“I don’t care; go marry her.” *(Laughter)* “I’m making you an illustration.”

**Ted:** He was eyeing the bikini. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Note that the teacher did not introduce this kind of bantering today. *(Laughter)* Were you going to say something?

**Ted:** I think we run into this in this group every once in a while.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** And those who would be on the left diagram or the right diagram, or the center of God’s will.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** And I’m not optimistic about my own ability to scan lack of self-interest. And I’m one of those who believe that the flesh is very persistent in us, even though I’m in union with Christ; that’s my whole basis of standing. So to folks who say that you’ve got to be in the center of God’s will I say, “Well, good luck with that. Except by the grace of God when He actually takes you and puts you in that place, you cannot get yourself to that place even after regeneration.”

**Jeff:** Well, there’s a sense, like somebody said earlier—I think it was Matt who may have said it. Let’s say Jean is the choice. That’s the center of God’s will for you right there. Once you take that marriage vow, you’re in, right? Or once you take this job, you’re in, right?

But the difference is, let’s say it’s a job. You think, I’m in the center of God’s will; I took this job. Well, that means you can never leave it, because how would you ever determine whether or not when to leave that job if it is the center of God’s will?

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That’s why this wisdom view is a lot better. This wisdom view allows for life to hand you a curve ball, and you find yourself in a position where you never thought you would be. And you say, “What is the wise decision I need to make going forward out of this?” Go ahead.

**Ted:** It makes me think about my own marriage.

**Jeff:** Uh-huh.

**Ted:** I met Diana in ’82; the first date was in March of ’82. I got divorced in May of ’82 from my former wife. I proposed to Diana in August of ’82. And so we got married in December of ’82.

**Jeff:** Wow; you are a quick mover! *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** Well, it was totally fleshly driven.

**Don Bishop:** A., B. and C. You must have looked under the bikini. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** When we first went out she looked great in a sweater and her blonde hair when she shook. *(Laughter)* Those were my motivations.

**Jeff:** Who wants to pay money not to have this transcript? *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** But we’ve been married 41 years.

**Jeff:** Right.

**Ted:** And it’s been a great marriage. I am very satisfied with our marriage now.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** I am the person I am today because of her, and I could not even have discerned that back at that time.

**Jeff:** Yeah. God is kind to us.

**Ted:** But the things that were totally motivated in a fleshly fashion God has turned to His good. And that’s what I’ve found through my entire life in everything: in jobs, in my relationship with my wife and my kids. God is doing the work even though I fail to do it all the time, and am not even interested in the subject of God’s will.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** Are you saying Amen to that?

**Jeff:** I’m saying Amen to that.

**Ted:** Diana is a great woman, as I said. I am the person I am today because of her, just because of who she is and not because of what she’s done. Just by who she is and the fact that it has changed me considerably.

**Ted:** Yeah. And not the person she was at the moment that you met, right?

**Ted:** Absolutely.

**Jeff:** But the person that God has grown her to be and who you are. And oftentimes God causes us to see that it wasn’t the best decision we could have made out of the right motives. But it certainly was a wonderful decision in terms of what I became because of that.

**Ted:** Right.

**Jeff:** But I would say that the other thing is because of what God was doing in your wife, right? Had you chosen outside of the square, and you continued to progress in the faith and you chose a woman outside of the faith, you know you would have had a miserable time of it, right?

**Ted:** Well, we just don’t know, because anyone could have become a great Christian.

**Jeff:** Sure.

**Ted:** And it turned out that Diana was a Christian, but very young in the faith.

**David:** I have a similar story. I was married to a wife who was pretty crazy. And I was advised by a Christian counselor to divorce her at the time. And I felt the urging of the

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Lord to stick it out. And He showed me the way to live with her today. She’s still a mess. (*Unclear*) But that’s not the issue.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**David:** The issue is praising God and doing everything I’m supposed to do.

**Brave Man:** Amen.

**David:** He will take care of the consequences.

**Jeff:** You may or may not agree with this. If you don’t agree with me, please don’t respond. (*Laughter*) But think about it, right? Let’s say you’re married. There are only certain reasons for a marriage to end Biblically, right? And I’m not asking you to reveal. But what I am saying—and I’m not saying this is your issue!—but let’s say, for instance, that you just don’t get along. That’s not a reason to leave this spouse; it’s just not a reason.

**Matt:** Amen.

**Jeff:** So faithfulness to God’s word is foundational in this; that’s first. Yes?

**Matt:** The question is: Do we truly believe in the sovereignty of God? Do we really believe that He’s in control? (*Unclear*) It might prevent you from making a wrong decision that you might live to regret.

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Matt:** In Romans 8 it talks about the creation. And in verse 16 it talks about our spirits, that we are the children of God and heirs, and that “*we suffer with Him in order that we may be glorified with Him.*” The creation groans within itself, but we also groan, “*waiting for the redemption of our bodies.*”

**Jeff:** I didn’t hear what the verse was that you were quoting.

**Matt:** Romans 8:20. And then later on it talks about God working all things together for good.

**Jeff:** Oh, yeah.

**Matt:** Not everything is good out there; there are bad circumstances that happen. But it has to do with when we make bad decisions.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** When we make bad decisions, even sinful decisions, do we believe that God is good enough even to redeem that and use those bad decisions for His good?

**Jeff:** Yeah, right.

**Matt:** Like Joseph said, “*You intended it for evil, but God meant it for good.*” So how sovereign is our God?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** So that gives me peace. So when I’m trying to figure out whether to make this decision—

**Jeff:** Are you trying to justify the bikini comment? (*Laughter*) I was really on his train until I just thought to myself: Wait a minute! (*Laughter*) No, I agree. Amen.

**Matt:** I make bad decisions that He redeems and uses for His good.

**Jeff:** It’s a wonderful thing to think upon, and to know that we have a sovereign God.

**Matt:** It’s redemptive.

**Jeff:** Don?

**Don Maurer:** I think that your comment about wisdom is very, very important. Otherwise I would think that you would be in a state of perpetual anxiety. Am I really in the will of God?

**Jeff:** Yeah, sure.

**Don:** How do I know I’m in the will of God? Maybe I’m not, and—



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**Jeff:** But here’s the thing, Don. As soon as you answer the question of what the biblical principles are and you create the fence, and then you have options within the fence, you know that no matter which option you choose, it’s in the will of God, right?

**Don:** Right, yeah. As long as it’s not sinful, you’re in the will of God.

**Jeff:** Your situation and your experiences and how you are receiving that may be difficult because of the decision you made. But you trust that you’re in the will of God because that decision was in the will of God.

**Don:** Does Deuteronomy 29:29 come into play here?

**Jeff:** Yeah, right. “*The secret things belong to the LORD our God. But the things that are revealed belong to us.*” The things revealed are the things with which you make the fence, right?

**Matt:** So my reality is that sometimes Christians, believe it or not, make bad decisions and do the wrong things.

**Jeff:** Yep.

**Matt:** They’re outside that box. And so I’m sorry, but the church likes to throw them away. So our experience has been okay, what happens? What do we do when that happens? So we came up with the acrostic RPGs.

**Don Maurer:** What is the acrostic?

**Matt:** RPGs—rocket propeller grenades. When you get blown up, is there repentance? Is there purity? Is there growth? And are you willing to serve? When somebody is outside the box, he comes back in, like going to Tarshish, coming back to Jonah.

**Jeff:** Doesn’t he want to go to Joppa?

**Matt:** Joppa.

**Jeff:** We’ve been saying all kinds of different cities all morning. *(Laughter)* We probably should get it straight. *(Laughter)* Yes, absolutely.

**Matt:** The reality for most of us as believers is that yes, we make mistakes, but God—

**Jeff:** Absolutely. And again that goes back to what your comment was about God’s sovereignty. It’s redemptive; yeah. Well, he’s committed to his course. And I would say to you that he’s committed to his course because he’s financially able to make it happen. And I think that’s oftentimes what we think of when we think of our own selves. We think about how we’re committed to make things happen.

There is an interesting detail. I mentioned this in a hurry. I want you to just reflect on this for a minute. There’s a third person feminine suffix—*shakara*—which means “for a price.” And you know, the interesting thing is that verse 4 says: “*The ship expected itself to crack up.*” The interesting thing is, he paid her price. And there’s a sense in which you could say that she expected herself to crack up. In other words, she enters into this union because he chooses her—the ship, that is,—and as a result of that she, the ship, is personified and expects herself to be cracked up because of the storm that God threw on the ocean. It’s an interesting thing just to step back and think about what we do to others as a result of our decisions.

Here the ship is personified. And we’re seeing what the ship, an inanimate object, is experiencing as a result of Jonah’s commitment to rebel against God. I think that’s an interesting little detail that’s put into the story that just makes you reflect. I wonder what my decisions have done to people throughout the years.

And not only do we need to be asking questions like “Do I need the counsel of others before I make this decision?” But we should be asking, “What will this decision do to others? How will it affect others?”

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You know, I was counseling the other day. And I said this to a couple that was having difficulty. I said to them, “You know, there are two motivating factors to make your marriage stronger. #1 is the glory of God, right? You want to glorify God in your marriage. #2 is your children. Are they not a motivating factor? Think about what life will be like for them, right? And if those aren’t motivating factors, I don’t know what a motivating factor is.” But that just goes to show us that those kinds of things are there.

There’s another thing and I mentioned it quickly the last time. But it’s worth us knowing because if Jonah is the author—and I think he probably is; I’d like to think that Jonah authored this in one of his better reflective moments after that—but when an infinitive verb is used in Jonah to describe human actions, those actions fail. When an infinitive verb is used of an action undertaken by God He succeeds. I think that’s a really striking thing. Yes?

**David:** Give me an example of an infinitive verb.

**Jeff:** When He hurls the waves onto the sea, when Jonah pays his fare. When Jonah is going to fail, God succeeds in the outcome; it’s that sort of thing.

**Ted:** I thought an infinitive was “to do something,” like “to go,” or “to see.”

**Jeff:** I don’t have the text in command. An intransitive verb is when you don’t need an object. It doesn’t carry over into an object; it just kind of stands on its own.

**Ted:** I think an infinitive verb would precede with “to do something”—to go, to see.

**Jeff:** To go, to see. But that would be an intransitive verb; it doesn’t necessarily need an object.

**Ted:** But you called it an infinitive verb. Wouldn’t you say that’s an intransitive verb?

**Jeff:** Yes. *(Laughter)* Sorry. *(Laughter)* Jonah 2:(9): “*Salvation is of the LORD.*” And that’s what he learns. Salvation is not of us; it is of the Lord. And so the lesson is, all attempts at self-salvation are going to fail. And Jonah is going to come to this realization himself.

Now I want us to think about this; I think this is Roman numeral Iv: *In spite of us*. And what I want us to think about here is that I want us to think about this text from an evangelistic standpoint. We said that salvation is not because of us or because of others; it’s because of God, right? It’s because of God; it’s not because of us.

But when we think about others, I think there’s a sense in which we need to say that people are oftentimes saved in spite of us and not because of us. And I want you to see that Jonah is a case in point. Notice: You know, it’s almost like he’s forced to do evangelistic work. I mean, he’s sleeping in the lower deck. He’s shaken awake. He’s commanded to pray. He’s questioned. They have to extract from him in almost a violent way what the answers to the questions are. “Who are you? Where do you come from?”, that sort of thing.

And it’s during the time of the questioning that they realize that he is being pursued by God. And what I want you to do is that I want you to compare Jonah to the sailors for just a minute. Again, broadly we’re thinking about evangelism here. And we’re thinking about Jonah as being sort of the trained evangelist on the ship. He’s the theologian on the boat.

And then you have the sailors. Now there’s an interesting contrast that is built into this text. And I think that we need to catch it because not only does it help us to think about evangelism, but it helps us to think about the story. So here it is.

He’s questioned by the sailors. Now three times the sailors are described as being afraid. Now they’re expected to be afraid because of the storm that’s on the sea, right?

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But notice this. After what? After God is introduced they are described as being “*exceedingly afraid.*” An interesting contrast; they’re afraid of the storm. They’re sailors; we could say that they’re afraid of the storm. This is kind of a remarkable thing.

But once the name of God is introduced by Jonah, their fear tacks out on the fear meter. And we might chalk that up in these early moments to superstition. But I think that we ought to see, especially when we see what happens to them, I think that we ought to begin to see that God is doing something in them. And so the fear, the exceedingly great fear that they experience, is something that everyone experiences when they begin to hear the gospel savingly for the first time. And I think that’s what we’re being clued into here. Yes?

**Don Maurer:** That’s similar to what happens with the disciples when Jesus calms the storm. They’re afraid of the storm. But then Jesus calms it. “Who is this?”

**Jeff:** Yeah. Yes, absolutely. And in fact I think I mentioned the first time we were together the Christological aspect of this story, where we said that here are these sailors laying hold of Jonah and making him the scapegoat by casting him out, like Jesus was led out of the city as the scapegoat. So Jonah is made the scapegoat.

Here’s the other thing. I’ll just mention this now because it’s a fascinating thing. When you think about the story, Jonah is rebellious; we’ve been describing him as such. But notice the Christological bent of the story. What do the sailors say about Jonah? They say in their prayer, “Don’t hold us accountable for innocent blood.”

Innocent blood? You have to say to yourself: Wait a second! This is a prophet who is fleeing from God. He’s anything but innocent.

But notice. No matter how the expression is understood coming from the sailors, how it is written is written to flag for us the Christological picture being painted before our eyes: that Jonah, this innocent man, is being sacrificed for us, because once he hits the water the storm subsides and the waves reduce, and the sea becomes calm. That’s a fascinating thing. I think it’s a Christological aspect to the story that’s in front of us. Yes?

**Matt:** Isn’t there a verse that says that without the preaching of the law there is no forgiveness of sin? Is that right?

**Ted:** No; it’s without the shedding of blood.

**Matt:** The shedding of blood; okay. But there is the need for the law; the law convicts us of sin. If we don’t have the law, we don’t have sin.

**Don Maurer:** “*Where there is no law, there is no transgression.*”

**Matt:** So I think about this too. Here they see this guy who knows the God of the universe and who created the sea. He’s disobedient, so he’s breaking whatever commands God has said. So they’re living with the consequences of an angry God.

**Jeff:** Yeah, think about it. Here’s a reflection of that: Sinful people need to meet the holy God. And part of knowing that God is holy is not just a sense of His presence, but knowing who He is and what He demands of us. And that’s the law that brings—

**Matt:** Did you ever watch Ray Comfort share on the street? You know, the street evangelist who starts with the Commandments? He asks them, “Do you lie?” Then he says, “You’re a sinner. You’re a liar, you’re a cheat, you’re a thief, you’re an adulterer.”

**Jeff:** Yeah. There are all sorts of ways to do evangelism. I’m not picking on anyone. But I think Evangelism Explosion starts with the two questions. And I have always found that not to be the most effectual way of sharing the gospel.

I would use the two questions and then I’d say, “Let’s find out a little bit about yourself.” (*Laughter*) Are you a liar? Are you an adulterer?—those kinds of things. And

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the driving conviction behind that is that sinful people need to meet a holy God. And they need to realize what’s happening.

And so what we realize is what’s demanded. I’ll just throw this in here. I happen to think that the sailors are converted. And I think we see a faithful response, not a perfect one.

Let me show you what I mean by that. With the sailors and salvation I think there are several positive evidences to think about these sailors as believing. Let me give them to you and show you what I mean.

First of all, notice that the covenant name LORD is used. It’s not the generic Adonai. This is the covenant name of God that was introduced in Exodus chapter 3 verse 14. So the covenant name of God is introduced by Jonah and used to describe them.

Notice in verse 14B. that it says, “*Therefore they called out to the LORD: ‘O LORD,’—there’s the covenant name—“let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood. For You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.”* In other words, these guys already believe in sovereignty. They already believe that this is the God of heaven and earth, the God who hurled the wind on the sea, the God who can create calm in the midst of the storm. This is the sovereign God, the God of heaven and earth.

And I think that’s important for us. We oftentimes don’t think that people can come to the faith, a believing state, believing Calvinism, believing that God is sovereign—the Reformed way of understanding god, which is a biblical way of understanding God. We don’t think people can do that. We think, oh, they’ve got to progress into that. You know, the Bible indicates that these sailors immediately believe that God is sovereign.

And then there’s another point. That is that they obey. Notice that Jonah’s word to them, “Throw me into the sea,” becomes a commandment. That is, “if you want to perish, then continue to try to save me and yourselves. Row harder and throw the cargo out; do all the things that you think you need to do. But if you want to be saved, then you need to hurl me into the sea.” And they obey the commandment. And I think that’s a significant thing.

Notice that the sailors offer vows and sacrifices. I think that’s an interesting thing. I think it’s a little comical, thinking about sailors building a fire on a ship. (*Laughter*) Hey, each to his own. But they certainly make vows to the Lord, and they are saved in spite of Jonah. I think that’s the interesting thing about this.

Well we won’t get to the next outline. But we have a couple minutes for questions or comments if you have them.

**David:** The covenant of being faithful applies to us as witnesses.

**Jeff:** We don’t measure our success in marks. We measure our success in whether we’re faithful or not.

**Jeff:** Well you know, I sometimes think to myself of my children. Who sees us at our worst? Our families, right? And so I oftentimes think to myself that my children are walking with the Lord in spite of me and not because of me.

Now there’s a certain sense in which that’s just plain wrong. They’re walking in the Lord because of what they’ve learned at home. So they’re walking in the Lord because of what the Lord has done for them. They saw faithfulness. But they also saw Mom and Dad at their worst. And so Mom and Dad say that they are believers in spite of us, not because of us. But I think we oftentimes feel that way.

**David:** Yeah. It’s been said that we’re successful if we’re faithful because we’re not there alone. The Spirit is with us.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

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**David:** He speaks to our hearts.

**Don Nemit:** Two aspects of these sailors that you brought up are: #1. They lived out the one verse that says, ‘Man looks on the outward, but God looks on the heart.’”

**Jeff:** Right.

**Don:** They said, “Don’t lay this sin upon us.” And then I see them following Stephen when Christ said, “You believe because you saw.” They believed because they saw the actions of God. They knew about a God and those Hebrews over there. And now they had a chance to practice it because they were on a sinking ship and they became on the rock.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Don:** Seeing is believing. And Stephen was never chastised for that.

**Don Maurer:** Stephen?

**Don:** Not Stephen; I’m sorry. Thomas.

**Jeff:** Hey, that’s all right: Joppa, Tarshish. *(Laughter)* Stephen, Thomas, who cares; whatever. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** Allah, God, Buddha. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Hey! Whoa! *(Laughter)* All right.

**Matt:** God can bring salvation in spite of us. But He also does it because of us.

**Jeff:** Yeah, that’s right. “I’m all things to all men.”

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Matt:** And I have Reformed friends who say, “I don’t need to share Christ because God is sovereign.”

**Jeff:** Those aren’t Reformed people. Those are not Reformed people.

**Ted:** Those aren’t Reformed people.

**Jeff:** What? I didn’t hear that. *(Laughter)* What’s going on here?

**Ted:** There are forms of Baptists who believe that.

**Jeff:** Hyper-Reformed. Let’s pray and then we’ll go. God, we thank You for who You are and for the fact that You are sovereign, and that the twists and turns in our lives are not a surprise to You. And even though they’re uncomfortable and sometimes even painful to us, they are meant for our good, and they come from a loving hand of a loving Father and certainly through secondary causation. And yet, Lord, we know that You control even that; You establish that. So Lord, we come to You today as people who recognize that we don’t know what a day holds. And today could be remarkably good from our own perspective, or today could be remarkably difficult. And yet, like the three friends who said to Nebuchadnezzar, “It doesn’t matter whether we live or die,” You are God. And so whether the day is good or bad, You are God; we admit it right now and praise You for it, and pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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