

“A Wayward Prophet” Pt 7

Jonah 1:17-2:10

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Jeff: Gracious God, we thank You and bow before You. We're thankful for the different seasons of the year. We are thankful, Lord, for the time of joy that You've set down in the middle of winter, and we recognize what a jovial time it is. Lord, we praise You for it. We ask that Your hand would be upon us as we remember the Incarnation of the Son. And Father, as we remember that we would also remember His obedient life and His horrifying death, His glorious resurrection, His ascension to Your right hand and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we might have life at the consummation of redemption.

And so Father, as we gather here, as we open Your word, we are mindful that You teach us by Your Spirit, for Your word is inspired, and it's also His word that He takes up regularly and applies to men and women and boys and girls. And so we pray, Father, that You would take up Your word today, inspired by Your Spirit, and that You would impress it upon our minds and our hearts, that we might be changed and shaped by it, so that we might remember it and draw down upon its resource.

Father, we ask that You would give us joy in the midst of this season. Many are saddened by it, whether it's through loss or difficulty of some kind. And yet, Lord, help us to experience joy as we gather with one another, as we worship, as we do all those things that one is prone to do at this time of year. And Father, we pray that we would be a blessing to others. It's so easy in life to get wrapped up in ourselves and to think only of our own difficulties or of the turmoil that is going on in our own lives. And we pray that we would be able to get out from under ourselves and that we would be able to minister with joy to others.

And Father, we pray for Bruce and for Nancy and for people who are in great difficulty this season, and ask that You would bless them, that You would strengthen them by Your grace. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right.

Ted Wood: Jeff?

Jeff: Yes?

Ted: You pray beautifully. I mean, the words are not trite or hackneyed at all, but put together with the ideas that follow. How does that come to you in the prayer that you just now prayed? How is it all a part of you?

Jeff: Well I try to think about the Lord who is in heaven. I think you've heard it said at different times that prayer services turn into organ recitals because people talk about their aunts and their uncles and things like that. So you try to avoid too much of that. But you don't try to forsake it either because it's important. I don't know if that's a good answer.

All right. Well, let's look today at Jonah chapter 2. And we're going to look here today at Jonah's prayer. But I want to start in verse 17 because obviously that ties the previous text to this text. And we're going to be looking a little bit at the first seventeen verses today as we draw down on them for chapter 2. So let me just read it this morning. This is God's infallible and inerrant Word; listen to it.

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“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.

“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying:

‘I called out to the LORD in my distress,

And He answered me.

From the belly of Sheol I cried,

And You heard my voice.

For You cast me into the deep,

Into the heart of the seas,

And the floods surrounded me.

All Your waves and Your billows passed over me.

Then I said, ‘I am driven away from Your sight.

Yet I shall again look upon Your holy temple.’

The waters closed in over me to take my life;

The deep surrounded me.

Weeds were wrapped about my head,

The roots of the mountains.

I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever.

Yet You brought up my life from the pit,

O LORD, my God.

When my life was fainting away I remembered the LORD,

And my prayer came to you,

Into Your holy temple.

Those who pay regard to vain idols

Forsake their hope of steadfast love.

But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to You;

What I have vowed I will pay.

Salvation belongs to the LORD.’

“And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out onto the dry land.” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Okay. So I want us to think today about these things. I want us just to have a brief introduction. And then I want us to think about what I’m calling the hemming process. And that really draws down on some of what we’ve already learned from chapter 1. And then I want us to think about the prayer of repentance for a few minutes. I want us to see that this is in fact a new beginning. And then we would be remiss if we didn’t go forward to Matthew chapter 12 and look at the typology that’s there, the typology that Jesus draws our attention to in Matthew chapter 12, saying that He is an antitype of Jonah who was in fact the type. And so I want us to close out this lesson thinking about that typology..

So first of all let’s think about some introductory matters. It’s interesting when we think about it. Jonah is in the fangs of the sea. He’s been cast into the sea. And it’s almost as if that when you think about the story itself, it’s almost as if the sea is like a raging animal that’s just really clamoring after him—a dog, the hound of heaven that has been pursuing him. And he knows that it’s the Lord’s hound. And so he says to the sailors,

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“Really, just cast me to the dogs.” And so they do. They cast him into the sea and now the dogs have him. I kind of wonder where Jonah was—

Don Maurer: That deserves a round of ap-paws, Jeff. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: You know, you had your time. *(Laughter)* And you said this. Didn’t he say that this is a time of real solemnity?

Ted: Yes, he did.

Jeff: I didn’t want to inject levity. But Jonah the prophet apparently can be subject to levity. *(Laughter)* I say—

Don Nemit: According to Don Maurer.

Jeff: According to Don Maurer. *(Laughter)* You know, this is a prophet getting thrown into the sea, Don. Have some solemnity here! *(Laughter)* So I kind of wonder where Jonah was. Just out of curiosity you sort of wonder where a person in the story is when certain things begin to happen. I said to you the last time that I think that the storm started to calm as Jonah was cast in.

Apparently, if he was the one who wrote the story—and I think he was—he is able to tell us about what the sailors were doing on the deck of the ship as they began to worship God, thank God and sacrifice to God. I wonder when it was that the fish swallowed him up. You just kind of wonder where he was in the story and what was happening in the story when he was swallowed. And you know, to think too long about that is to cause you never to swim again. *(Laughter)*

But what I want you to also catch when we think about the story is that there’s a sense in which this narrator—I mean, if this is Jonah writing the story, or if he has communicated this to someone else and he’s written it down, or maybe he’s dictated it to an amanuensis—however it was, you clearly get the sense that things were moving at a very high pace and speed. But things are slowed down. We are moving now at a snail’s pace in one sense.

In the first chapter we looked that it was a matter of going down and down and down. And now it’s a matter that he’s in the belly of the fish. And we’re still getting some sense of direction in the text, and I’ll point that out to you.

But even though we’re getting a directional movement, the only thing that we really get in this particular chapter is a prayer. And if you look at it from 1:17 to the end of chapter 2, I’m not saying that this isn’t a kind of technical inclusio. But it is in one sense an inclusion because the text begins with “God prepared a fish to swallow Jonah.” And then after the prayer the fish vomits Jonah out. And so you get the prayer happening between the swallowing and the vomiting of the fish. And so there’s a sense in which there’s not a whole lot happening except a prayer. And that prayer is a pivotal point; it’s a turning point.

But I want you to notice. As we get into this we’re going to see that there is still in one sense a direction to be taken into account. And that direction that’s taken into account is one that needs to be taken into account if we’re going to understand the power and the direction of what a prayer of repentance will do.

But one of the things that we need to see is this. At the point in time where he’s cast into the sea, things do slow down. But there’s a sense in which all options at this point are closed off to him. I mean, there’s only one option. Well, I guess there are two options. He can either repent or he can die. And both of them have to do with fleeing the Lord, right?

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So what I want you to see is that I want to sort of take a minute and I want to reflect on something because I think it’s good for us to do. And that is that sin has a tendency that I’m calling here *the hemming effect*. There’s a sense in which that when we commit sin, what we’re doing is that we’re enabling sin to hem us in, and to create for us as it were our own cocoon, or if you put it this way our own casket, our own coffin, our own demise.

I’ll never forget this. I was outside one day and I was taking the garbage out. I used to keep the garbage cans off to the left where I come out of the door. And I just happened to look up one day. And there was a smaller spider that was in the middle of wrapping a larger spider up in his web. Now I don’t know how that came about. But it was the most fascinating thing. And I’m telling you that this probably happened about fifteen years ago, and I’ll never forget it.

And so I watched it. But what the little spider would do was this. And when I talk about a little spider I’m talking about a medium-sized spider versus a big old spider. Not that big, but it was a smaller versus a larger spider, a larger spider by far. But what the larger spider would do was that he would take his free leg and he would swat at the smaller spider. And when he would swat, the smaller spider would just use his flailing to kind of spin. It was really fascinating; I never thought I’d see anything like it and I haven’t since. But what that smaller spider was doing was that he was using all of the kicks and fits of the larger spider against him as he continued to wrap him up, and it was really, really something.

And when I looked at Jonah later on I was reminded of Jonah. Here’s Jonah; he has kicks and fits and starts, and he’s flailing about. And every time he flails about God just uses his flailing to hem him in and to wrap him up and to put him exactly where He wants, to put him in the position where He wants him to be put in so that he can continue this process.

Now I want to say this to you because it’s important to say and to remind ourselves. And that is that God is sovereign in the process; there’s no doubt about it. And yet the thing that we also must say when we think about this kind of thing is that man is responsible. And how the two meet is not for us to decide. But it is for us to believe both: that God is sovereign and that man is responsible. And the person who uses sovereignty to get out from under that responsibility doesn’t understand either.

And so here we find this case where Jonah is clearly responsible for his disobedient, rebellious actions. But God is clearly sovereign over the whole thing. And we’re going to see that. We saw that already even in the fact that God prepared a fish. But we’re going to see that it comes out manifestly in the prayer of Jonah when we think about it.

So I guess what I’m wanting to say at this point is that our own kicks and fits and starts put us in the positions that we’re in, especially when we sin and we continue to try to get out of it. And God just continues to hem us in.

Here’s a funny story that I’ll never forget. I was in eleventh grade. I was in eleventh-grade English, and Mrs. Wilcox was her name. You all have those teachers that you remember.

Don Nemit: Oh yeah.

Jeff: And she would have us read a book, and then she would have us get up in front of the class and talk about it. And there was this one girl who never read her book. And I

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knew she never read the book. I wasn't a friend but I was an acquaintance. So she was asking me right before the class if I had seen the movie for the book and if I could give her the plot. *(Laughter)* I just looked at her and I thought, you are in big trouble.

And so she was up in front and she told about the book. And obviously if you had read the book—which I hadn't, but apparently the teacher had,--*(Laughter)*, she knew exactly that she had not read the book. And so what my teacher started to do was just to ask her questions about the story. And you know, they were deceptive questions. They were questions that had nothing to do with any of the characters in the story. In fact, she inserted characters into the story that weren't actually there. *(Laughter)* It was so masterful. *(Laughter)* And at the end she had her wrapped up in her web. And then she exposed the fact that she was the master mind who knew all of this.

But that's the sense you get when you look at Jonah. And you have to ask yourself: What would Jonah do? It was the same question that I was wondering about with the girl in my class. As she sat there I thought to myself: What will she do? She's being hemmed in. Will she just come out with repentance, or will she continue to kick and scream? She continued to kick and scream in spite of knowing that she had been had. And I think that's oftentimes what we have a tendency to do, right?

And that's sin's tendency. Just because we get wrapped up in it and there's no other place to move doesn't mean that we stop kicking and biting and trying to get out from under it by our own means; we often do. And so the question is: What would Jonah do? What is he going to do? And that's the question.

I want us to look at the hemming process a bit more. And I want to remind you before we get started that Jonah is a believer. This is important for us to remember. That is to say, Jonah is a covenant child.

Now I should probably say that Jonah is a professing believer; he says as much. When you look at chapter 1, notice what he says when the sailors ask him what he does. He says, “*I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God who made the sea and the dry land.*” So it seems like he's making or uttering a profession of faith. “I fear the God who made the heavens and the earth.” And he fails to say, “I'm a prophet and I serve Him.” But he seems at least to make some kind of credible profession of faith; he's a believer.

Now the reason I say this is because I think that the book of Jonah has some important salve for a parent who watches a child go adrift. And the reason I say that is because Jonah is one of those stories that is an encouragement to parents, because when parents watch a child drift they feel a bit helpless and hopeless. And yet this story reminds us that there is a Parent who is pursuing. And true, we don't know if our children will return. Certainly Jonah is left up in the air to us in one sense; he is certainly a mad prophet by the time we get to the end of the book. But the question is: Will a child return? I don't know. And we can't really say for sure because the covenant is a mixed covenant. There was a rabble that came out of Egypt. Ishmael was circumcised along with the rest. There is a sense in which the covenant is certainly mixed.

But there is hope in a text like this one that God pursues covenant children. And so I don't want us to lose sight of that; I want us to keep that in mind.

But it does feel like Jonah is an exile. And you get the sense that he feels like he's an exile. Look at what he says. In verse 4 of chapter 2 he says: “*I have been expelled from Your sight.*”

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Now I want you to get the sense of this. There are a couple of screens here, a couple of slides that I want to show you. And I want you to see the juxtaposition of them. Notice that it was the sailors who asked him from the boat. It was the sailors who cast him into the sea. And remember, they did so because they asked him, “What should we do?” And he said, “The Hound from heaven is after me. So just pitch me overboard,” right? And that’s what they did.

But notice: in 2:3 “*You*—that is, God—“*had cast me into the deep.*” And so there’s a sense in which Jonah has cast himself over the gunning wall. He has cast himself into the sea at the hands of the sailors because he told them that this is what will calm the sea. But he understands ultimately who cast him into the deep, and that is God. And he understands that because he still has a right theology.

You know, I don’t know if you’ve ever met a person like this. But sometimes you’ll meet a person who has sinned grievously and is still in the process of walking away from the Lord. But you can talk to them about theology and they know theology well. Why? Because their sin didn’t corrupt their theology; they still think rightly about God. And so you can have a really good conversation with some people who are walking the other way but have been well trained, because they understand theology.

And Jonah understands theology. He understands that God is sovereign and that it is God who ultimately put him here.

I don’t know if you’ve ever been in the midst of sort of struggling with whatever kind of situation you’re in in life. But you kind of realize, you kind of come back to the point and you say, “God put me exactly where I am, and I don’t know why He put me here. And I don’t know when I’m going to get out of this situation. But I know it’s not going to last forever. But I’m here because God put me here.”

Now you can say, for instance, “I’m also here because I sinned. And so God has wrapped me up and hemmed me in.” But there are other times when you just don’t know, as when you just don’t know why you’re in a particular spot in life, and you say, “I feel hemmed in, and I have no idea why I’m in. I have no idea why I’m here and when this is going to end.” And so you just have that sense. And I think there’s a sense in which Jonah resonates with us because of that.

Well for Jonah sin led him into exile. And the question that I want us to reflect on for just a minute is what does an exiled life look like? Now we already had this question answered for us, and I think this is a really good thing to keep in mind.

You know, the Bible gives us really good pictures or images with which to think about people. I’ll never forget. I was evangelizing one night when I was in another church in a small city. We would go out on Friday or Saturday nights. And it was a cruise night, so we would go out on the streets and we would just talk to people about the gospel. And there was this girl who was with her boyfriend. She was pregnant and she was a Wiccan. And she was really interested in talking to us, and receptive in some ways.

But not at the beginning. At the beginning she was kind of condescending; she was a little sarcastic with us. But I asked her and I said, “Would you do me a favor?” And she said, “What?”

And I said, “Would you give me just five minutes where you didn’t open your mouth, and you just listened to what I said, and I’m going to challenge you?” I said, “You seem to think that you’re very intellectual. Fine. But would you just do me a favor and control

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your mind—not just your mouth, but control your mind—and give me the benefit of the doubt? Consider that what I’m saying to you may well be true.”

And she said, “I can do that; I’ll give you five minutes.” So I started giving her the gospel. And I started with sin and sin’s punishment and hell, and then made my way to heaven. That was the contour of the gospel that I gave her.

And when I finished giving the gospel to her she was standing there. She had been silent the whole time. And this is what she said to me; I’ll never forget it. She said to me, “I don’t want to go to hell.”

And I thought to myself, five minutes ago you were telling me that you don’t even believe in hell, let alone this Bible. And here’s what I thought. The second thought I had was: This is what Jesus means when He says, “These people are like sheep without shepherds.” And so here was an instance. That has helped me to do evangelism. I realize that these are sheep without shepherds, rather than intellectual debate opponents that I’m going to win with Christian apologetics, right? These are sheep without shepherds, shepherd-less sheep. And if I treat them that way, then I’m treating them according to the image Jesus gave me.

And when I think about Jonah, here is an image that God has given to us of what an exiled life looks like; here’s an exiled life. It’s a life moving in a downward direction; that’s an exiled life. When somebody’s life is moving in a downward direction you can say to yourself, “That person is an exile.” He’s either in self-exile, or he’s in an exile that God has put him in. He’s feeling like he’s in exile. They have a sense that “God has driven me away from him.”

And that could be because of their sin. But it may not be because of their sin. It could, for instance, be a brother or sister who is in a position where they feel like they’re in the dark night of the soul. They feel like God has just distanced Himself from them, and He has put them there for only a reason He knows.

And so I want you to notice though that a sin-exiled life looks like life in a downward direction. And we’ve been noticing this. Remember in chapter 1 that it’s down to Joppa, down into the ship. He laid down; he went to sleep.

And in chapter 2 notice what it says. It says in verses 2 and 3:
“All Your breakers and billows passed over me.”

Now what I want you to notice is: who’s billows and breakers are those? *“All Your breakers and billows passed over me.”*

And then in verse 5 notice this: Water encompassed and surrounded him. But I want you to catch this; here’s the interesting thing. He’s entangled in the seaweed; water is breaking over him. The idea that *“Your breakers and billows have passed over me”* gives us the idea that all of creation is in service to God. There isn’t a place that Jonah can go to where he is not in exile. And all of creation is conspiring to lead him further and further away from God, at God’s direction, because God is saying to this young or old prophet at this time in his life: “Away from Me you wanted to go, and so away from Me you will go.” I mean, that’s the sense of it when you think about it, right?

And so then you find in verse 6 that Jonah is at the very root of the mountain. Look at this because this is the bottom. Jonah has hit, as it were, the bottom.

“At the roots of the mountains

I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever.”

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That’s the bottom. You know, we can say this. I started with this three weeks ago, or however long ago it was when we started back. I said to you that we all talk about people needing to hit bottom. Some people’s bottoms are a little further down than others. Jonah’s bottom is the very bottom of the world, the roots of the mountains. And for Jonah this was the bottom, because it was here that Jonah utters the prayer of repentance.

But before we get to the prayer of repentance I simply want to remind you that this is what an exiled life looks like. And you know, I think that we need to keep in mind that we sit in here in a semi-warm room drinking coffee together. And I think that we don’t have any idea what it’s like to be in the belly of a fish, being dragged to the bottom of the sea, to the very root of the mountain; that’s something that’s foreign to us.

However, we do know what it’s like to experience all sorts of repercussions due to sin. And I think that’s the analogy we ought to be thinking about to ourselves. This is life in exile due to sin. Not all exile—or at least not all feelings of exile—are the result of sin, especially when we think about some of the great texts of the church, and how God really in essence works. I mean, think about Abraham. I can’t imagine what Abraham must have felt on Mount Moriah as he had the knife over his son, ready to slaughter him, not because of disobedience but in obedience and faithfulness. He journeys a three-day journey away, and he goes to the mountain that God appointed. And he binds his son and he is about ready to slaughter him. And God says to him, “Don’t touch the boy.”

Now I don’t know about you. But you can read that story and you can have any number of feelings. But I wonder how many times you thought to yourself: I wonder what Abraham must have been thinking as he journeyed three days away to slaughter that boy.

And you know, Soren Kierkegaard is oftentimes thought about in a negative way. And I wouldn’t want to dismiss that because he does have a negative effect in some ways when one reads him. But here is a man who in fear and trembling struggled—and I think wrongly in some ways—with what Abraham must have been feeling as he took his son—his only son, the son that he loved—to the mountain that day.

Anyway, my point is that we can’t forget that there is a whole life that’s at the foot of the mountain, at the bottom of the sea. And there’s a whole life that is journeying to Mount Moriah. And all of these can be in some sense an exile. This one is because of sin, and that’s the one we’re looking at now.

So let me talk to you for a minute about the theology of exile. Certainly that’s what life looks like in exile; it’s a downward motion. I want to talk to you about a theology of exile because we need to know how to think about it, especially when we think about a covenant child like Jonah. Jonah is a covenant child. What does a theology of exile look like, especially when a covenant child feels like he’s in exile?

I want us to go to a couple of sections out of a text that has served the church for many, many years; it’s the Westminster Confession. And this is what it says in chapter 17. It says: *“believers may fall into grievous sins and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God’s displeasure.”*

Now that’s what it says about a believer. That is a theology of exile. In other words, what the Westminster Confession is saying is that this is possible for a believer. It’s possible for a believer to be in the experience of Jonah due to his sin, and to remain there for a time, incurring the displeasure of God.

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Now I want you to know that if a fish follows you, you know you’ve incurred the displeasure of God. *(Laughter)* And I want you to know something else. I don’t think this is about sin, but this is one of those things in life, like staying out of the water is not going to help you. If God has appointed a fish to swallow you, it’s going to get you. *(Laughter)* You may be on land. I don’t know how it’s going to happen.

I’ll never forget that during COVID I was doing trail running. I’d run in and then I’d run out. And I thought to myself: I’m going to get a mountain bike.

Now I thought hard about that decision, because at the time I was around fifty years old. I thought: I am not agile or responsive enough to ride a mountain bike on these trails without falling off and getting concussed. *(Laughter)* Okay? And a month later I’m running with my dog through the back yard. He trips me and I get concussed. *(Laughter)* So you know, I just thought to myself: That was funny! Ha, ha, ha! *(Laughter)*

Anyway, despite being in exile, did you notice Jonah’s awareness? The storm is for him. Even as he’s incurring the displeasure of God he knows that the displeasure is for him.

Now I simply want you to understand. I want to be careful and say that Jonah understood in a way that we perhaps don’t. But let me tell you something. If providential events seem like they’re conspiring against you, you don’t have to say, “I infallibly know what God is doing with these providential events” in order to say, “I think wisdom would urge me to think that God is hemming me in.” You don’t have to know infallibly what’s happening around you. All you have to have is a little wisdom to think: I think that maybe I’m being hemmed in.

And yet there’s a theological truth in the midst of this. This is the thread I’m trying to pull on, and that is that God preserves His people. And if there is a wandering person, a wandering covenant child, then God will preserve that person if he or she belongs to Him. And that means that our faithfulness does not save us.

And in fact I want you to see something here. In verse 8 he says: “*Those who regard vain idols forsake their steadfast love,*” or “*their faithfulness.*”

Now I want you to think about that because that could get us a little bit tripped up. I want you to think about that for a minute. “*Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness.*” Does he mean that those who regard vain idols—those who begin to worship vain idols—forsake *their* faithfulness, the faithfulness that they once had? Or does he mean something else? Does he mean—I just want you to think about this—does he mean, for instance, that those who begin to regard idols forsake the God who is faithful, who is their faithfulness? I think he means the latter.

Notice that faithfulness is *chesed*. And that’s covenant faithfulness, loyal love, steadfast love; it’s translated in all sorts of ways. It’s one of those pregnant terms.

Listen to Psalm 144, 1 and 2.

*“Blessed be the LORD God my Rock,
Who trains my hands for war
And my fingers for battle,
My Loving-Kindness.”*

*(My Faithfulness), “My Stronghold, my Deliverer, my Shield.
And He in whom I take refuge
Who subdues people under me.”*

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He references God as his Faithfulness, his Loving-Kindness. Who is the Psalmist's Loving-Kindness? It's God. God is Jonah's *chesed*. Those who regard vain idols forsake their God. I think that is the way we might paraphrase it, because he's not referencing his own faithfulness as having been forsaken. He understands that one doesn't save himself. He understands that just because he gets a little more faithful, that's not his salvation. The one who chases after an idol has forsaken his God because it is God who is faithful to us to keep us, right? That's the idea.

But God does not forsake His own. In other words, you may have forsaken God, but God doesn't forsake you. Back to the Westminster Confession: *“This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and the seed of God within them.”*

In other words, that person who moves into exile and incurs the displeasure of God may do so for a time. But if they really belong to Him, the perseverance of that saint doesn't depend upon them; it doesn't depend upon their faithfulness. It depends upon the One who is faithful, the One who is steadfast and faithful. And that's the point that we need to take into account. Go ahead, Don.

Don Maurer: So in verse 8 do you think Jonah is speaking of himself there?

Jeff: I think that what he's speaking of is that he has forsaken God for a vain idol, and thus he has forsaken his Faithfulness, his God.

Don: Yes, exactly.

Ted: Well what is that vain idol, then?

Jeff: Well, that's a good question. And I think that the vain idol is self, pride; I think it's those kinds of things. I don't think he's gone off and worshiped wood. I think he has worshiped self. Like we've talked about, he's basically said, “I'm not doing that; I'm going to do this.” Yes?

John Gratner: Do you think that Jonah thought that his salvation was gone?

Jeff: You know, I'll tell you what I think. I think he's a lot like the three friends of Daniel: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. “God is real and he's above you, Nebuchadnezzar. And we may die in that furnace, but that doesn't mean that God's not real.”

And you know, you get that with Peter in the New Testament. “Where are we going to go?” Jesus says, “Are you going to stay with Me or are you going to go?” And he says, “Where are we going to go?”

And I think that Jonah, though Jonah has an edge to him, I think Jonah is saying, “I get it. And if I die in this whale, if I die in the root of the mountain,” this is his repentance, right? I don't think that he's repenting, thinking that he might reclaim it. In fact one has to wonder if he's hoping that he will die in the belly of the whale, especially if God has revealed to him that he will still have to go to Nineveh when he's out of the belly of the fish. I don't know; that's a good question. But I would say that if God has revealed it to him, he's probably repentant but still wishing he would die; do you know what I mean? Or maybe he's repentant and God hasn't revealed it to him, and he's ready to die at the foot of the mountain; he has returned to the Lord. And you know, maybe he's repentant

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and expectantly hopeful that he will get out, but not knowing what God will have him do; I don't know. Do you have a thought on that?

John: Well, I'm trying to see the progression of the text. He tells them to throw him over.

Jeff: Yeah.

John: And repentance seems to come much, much later.

Jeff: Yup.

John: And it would seem as though “this storm is for me. I could repent on the boat. God could calm the storm while I'm still on the boat.”

Jeff: Yeah.

John: Based on repentance and being let off at the next port, “so I can go the way I'm supposed to go.” But he seems stuck there: “No.” Because he didn't want to do it.

Jeff: Yeah.

John: It didn't stop, “so pitch me over.” It doesn't seem like it, at least from the text. We know the end of the story. The end of the story hasn't happened yet when we're in verse 16 when he gets thrown over. It seems that the end of chapter 1—verse 17—is the beginning of chapter 2.

Jeff: Yes.

John: And yet I don't think there is any indication that Jonah thought he was going to be saved.

Jeff: Yeah.

John: I don't think that he probably repented yet. It seems like we have the fish, and then we get the details and the description and a little more explanation. But it seems that he was in the fish three days and three nights before “*Then Jonah prayed.*”

Jeff: Yeah, right.

John: He says, “Well, I'm still not going. I'll die.” We don't have any indication.

Jeff: Right.

John: When we get to Abraham, I'm sure he mulled over a number of things. But one of them was his confidence that God would raise his son from the dead and keep His promise.

Jeff: Yeah, that's right.

John: I doubt that Jonah had any inclination that there was going to be a fish.

Jeff: Yeah. I think you're on the right track. I mean, “*the LORD does nothing without first revealing it to His prophets.*” But this is a disobedient prophet, and I think that all bets are off.

David Miller: My son was brought up in the church.

Jeff: Yes.

David: And he understood the gospel. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not give me any assurance that my son is a believer.

Jeff: I know, because what's the difference between a full apostate and a partial one? Repentance. So I know parents who have wayward children who are really hopeful that God is pursuing them. But they will only know that He is pursuing them if they repent. And that's what I'm saying. it's hard when in real life he's walking away from the Lord, and you don't have any insight as to whether or not they're going to repent.

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Well, the work of hemming is finished at this point. And we’re going to pick up with the prayer of repentance the next time. We have about a minute left. Do you have any questions or thoughts at the last minute that you might want to chew on? Yes?

Jordan Obaker: It’s not really a question. But I know that there are a lot of men here who have family members who are concerned about the assurance of their faith.

Jeff: Yeah.

Jordan: And we have three young girls for whom we pray that they will hold on to the covenant promises and everything like that. One of the things that really struck me over the summer when I was preparing for something else was this. And I think I might have shared this in this group before. The denomination that we belong to had a synod meeting back in the 1870s. And they had written as part of a covenant, a renewal of the covenant with God. It said that there were things as a culture that we just haven’t done well. And one of the things that they mentioned there particularly was that they mourned the neglect that families had for the salvation of their children, that parents don’t pray for the salvation of their children as often as they should. You know, it’s one thing for us to say, “Oh, you know.” I think that for our kids we need to be constantly praying for them, praying for the promises of the covenant. And even if it’s looking right now like a child is wandering, I think you’ve said, “Thank God he’s still alive, so there’s still hope.”

Jeff: Yes.

Jordan: And so just continue to pray for them.

Jeff: That’s right, yes.

John: As we look at Jonah’s prayer of repentance in the final weeks, just look at how he prays. None of the words seem to be his; they all seem to be the Scripture.

Jeff: Yeah.

John: They are all quotations that are comparable to places in the Scripture that he is speaking to the Lord through His word. So it’s good if we pray the Scripture for our kids and for our loved ones. May Your kingdom come, and may we see Your claims that these things—

Jeff: Well don’t you wonder, too, how much of that is his parents’ influence? “You will learn this!”

John: He wasn’t in the whale sitting with a lamp and a scroll.

Jeff: Yeah. And we often talk about hearing our mother’s voice. And the Scripture that he learned at his mother’s knee is God’s voice in his head that he can’t escape, probably in his mother’s tone. *(Laughter)* You know what I mean? Think about it. Okay, I thought that was funny. *(Laughter)*

Mike Davis: I just have this picture of Jonah after three days. His flesh is about half digested.

Jeff: It’s all bleached white.

Mike: His flesh was about half digested; he’d been in there three days, with the digestive juices of the fish.

Jeff: Yeah.

Mike: And about at that point he’s saying, “Okay, Lord, I give up.” It’s almost like torture. It’s as if God had said, “I’m not going to make you die easier. Okay, so you’re thrown overboard. I’ve got a fish that’s going to swallow you and you’re just going to digest for a while.”

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Jeff: It’s a juxtaposition, because there’s a sense in which there are the juices of death. And yet he actually calls the belly a womb. And the funny thing about it is that in the Hebrew he refers to the fish as both a male and a female. There’s an alternate way in which he uses it as a womb. He talks about the fish as a female.

Don Maurer: Uh-oh!

Jeff: Yeah, it’s a trans-gender whale. *(Laughter)* Let’s pray.

Don Nemit: One second.

Jeff: It’s got to be quick, really quick.

Don: John experienced John 16:33: *“In this world you shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*

Jeff: Yeah.

Don: He experiences it about a thousand years before it was written. But it’s true.

Jeff: Yeah, that’s right. Well, let me pray. Father, thank You for this day and for the blessing of life in Christ. And Lord, though we may have tribulation in this world, we know that belief in the promise of Christ, whether it’s before His coming or after His coming, gives us peace. And Lord, we know that that peace is hard-earned in the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that we would realize it more and more, day to day as we live our lives. Lord, we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Merry Christmas.

Brave Men: Merry Christmas. *(Applause)*