

“Jonah Pt 8”

A Wayward Prophet

Jonah 2:1-10

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Jeff: Gracious God, we are thankful for this day and for the blessing of life in Christ. And Lord, we're thankful for Your faithfulness. We're thankful for Your mercies being new every morning. We are a people that need them. And Father, we look to them and expect them because we know that You are good and wise and holy. And we know that You care for Your people. Lord, we ask now that You'll bless us and give us the graces needed for the day.

And Father, You know what the day holds; we obviously do not. And yet knowing that You know gives us a great deal of confidence to face the day, even if there is a valley in it. And so, Lord, we look to You and ask that You will indeed keep us and continue to bless us in the abundance of Your grace found only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we turn to Your word this morning we are thankful to be in it. We know that this is a means of Your grace to us. And Lord, we pray that You will work this means into our lives by the working of Your Spirit in us, for indeed it is His word spoken out of eternity. And so it is *“living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.”* And so, Lord, we need this, not only to convict us but also to comfort us and to bring healing to those places in our lives that need divine attention.

Father, as we come we are thankful to be together. And we are asking now that You'll bless us together as we study Your word. And yet as we come together we have concerns and thoughts that we life put you, and one of them is certainly our brother Bruce. We're thankful for his faithfulness throughout the years, a faithfulness that has mirrored Yours in an imperfect way, and yet has certainly caused others to look to You in faith, and so we ask that You'll bless him. We're thankful for the surprise of the visit that he received over Christmas. And we're also asking that You will continue to bless him with friends and companions throughout these coming days. And Father, we pray that You will indeed be closer to him than any brother, and we know that You are. And so we pray that You'll give him that sense of nearness that he enjoys, and that You enjoy being next to him, indeed in him.

Lord, now we turn to You and ask that as we open Your word together that we'll be blessed, and we ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Today I want us to think about Jonah chapter 2, and let me just simply say a word. When I came back here in November, I'm not really sure and I can't remember if I thanked the guys who kept this going, scheduling people to come and work. And I appreciate the work that you guys put into this while I was gone; thank you so much. And obviously Ted and Roger, and who else would have been doing this to the extent that—

Roger Myers: Don.

Jeff: Don and of course Mike.

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Ted Wood: Michael Rush.

Jeff: So thank you. Some of you guys taught.

Ted: They were paid well. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: A lucrative sum, I’m sure. But I want to thank you for that. I appreciate it; I appreciate you putting in that effort to keep this going. And I appreciate you coming; I appreciate that very much actually.

So anyway why don’t we turn to Jonah chapter 2. And I’m going to read the whole chapter, but we’re going to jump into Jonah’s repentance. When we were together a couple weeks ago we already looked at the way in which God hemmed him in and the way we see that coming out of his prayer. But I want us to move to point #2 of the outline. And so let me read the text, and then we’ll get to that. This is the word of the living God.

*“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying:
‘I called out to the LORD out of my distress,
And He answered me.
Out of 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
At the roots of the mountains.
I went down to the land whose bars closed about 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 upon the dry land.”* This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Well like I said, we looked together at the first part of our outline the last time, the hemming-in process. And what I want us to do is that I want us to think together a bit about his repentance. This is Jonah’s prayer, and I simply want to ask you: What do you

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make of it? And when I ask what do you make of it?, I have a specific thing in mind that I want to have you try to wrap your minds around. It’s an exercise that we sometimes do with other portions of Scripture to think about how we might think about those texts.

But I want you to consider this. For instance, what if you found either the whole prayer or just a few verses of the prayer on the sidewalk somewhere? What would you think about that prayer? You picked it up and you read it; what would you think about it? Where would you think it came from? Would you think it was a Bible text? And if so from what book? Would it be from a prophet? Would it be from a poet? Would it be from the New Testament? Where would this text come from if you had picked it up along the sidewalk? And you know, others have considered that. Go ahead.

Ted: It’s a Psalm.

Jeff: Yeah.

David Miller: Very clearly.

Jeff: Yes, it’s very clearly a Psalm. I have a couple of quotes for you. Sinclair Ferguson says: *“If we heard it read to us without its source being identified, we might wonder if it came from one of the Psalms; it sounds like Psalm 18. But then parts of it sound like Psalm 42, we might well find ourselves saying.”*

And I’ll tell you, there is a little more specific quote than that, and that’s from Eugene Peterson. And he says this: *“Line by line Jonah’s prayer is furnished with the stock vocabulary of the Psalms, and more. Not a word in the prayer is original. Jonah got every word lock, stock and barrel, from the Psalm book.”* So Eugene is saying that he got all of this from the Psalter.

And I think that when we think this way we have a tendency to think in another way. And it’s a way that we’ve been thinking about on and off since November. And what I mean by that is that I mean the external and internal voice that we oftentimes hear—the external and internal Word that we oftentimes hear—or call a voice. And what do I mean by that? Well, I mean at least this. I mean that when we are little—when we’re children,—we literally hear the voice of our mother saying, “Don’t do this,” or “Do that,” or for instance, when we get a little older she’ll say things like “Make sure you bring that girl over here so we see how she works,” right? Or “Do things together. Don’t do things apart; do things in a group,” and on and on and on the voice goes.

And then when you get older and you get away from your mother, maybe you get into college. Or maybe you graduate from college and you begin to date. You hear the voice of your mother again, right? You begin to hear the voice of Mom speaking in your head. And you can’t get away from that voice. You wish sometimes that you could get away from that voice! But you can’t get away from that voice; it’s always going to be with you. And thank God for that, right?

Well that’s the way of it with God’s word. Whenever we put the word of God into the heads of our children, one of the beautiful things that happens is that they can never get away from that Word. They may try to get away from that Word, and they might run away from that Word for a time. But they can never actually get away from that Word. I just want you to know that even if they never return to the God who spoke that Word,

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they can never get away from it. And it's either going to be a Word that's going to comfort and heal them, or it's going to be a Word that will eventually condemn.

But my point in saying that is this: This is a real voice. And I think one of the things that we fail to remember is that when we speak into someone's life, that voice that we speak into their lives is going to be heard again and again and again. And I think this is really important when it comes to thinking about raising our children. Or maybe it comes with you now when you're thinking about your grandchildren or even your great-grandchildren. The point is that this is a reality, and we can never get away from it. And you need to know that others can't get away from it either.

And you know how it works. You are having that internal conversation with yourself; you're grumping, right? And you're grumping about something; you don't want to do this, that or the other thing. And all of a sudden it pops into your head. And maybe it pops into your head as if it's being spoken to you. Maybe it's a text from the New Testament that says, *“Do everything without grumbling.”*

And you know how it goes. You say, “I know what the text says!” But you don't say it that way. You go, “I know!”, right?—as if you're having this internal dialogue with yourself.

And then the next voice is what? The next voice is *“Do all things—”*

John Gratner: *“Without grumbling or complaining.”*

Jeff: “Without grumbling and complaining.” But I'm thinking of the Colossians text where he says: “Do things not just for eye-service, but do things in the presence of the Lord unto His glory,” right? And so you have this internal dialogue going on in your head, and it's a Scriptural dialogue. It's the text that you've read and been taught, and it's coming to light because it's a living Word. And it's always coming to you in moments of your need.

And I think that's what's happening to Jonah. I think he's in the belly of the whale. I think he's done an effective job of running away from God and God has helped him at that. He's now at the root of the mountains of the earth; yea for him! And yet he can't actually get away from God because the voice of God is in his head. And so when he repents you begin to see the voice of God that's on the pages of papyrus or vellum or whatever it was that he had handled. That voice is on the pages of those texts. That voice is coming out in his own words as he prays. And that's the internal/external Word. The external Word gets buried into us internally and manifests itself in this way.

Well that's all I want to say about that, but I do want to say this; I want to say one last thing. Not that we're in this text, but I think it's an important text because it reminds us of the truth of what I just said to you. And that is that in Hebrews chapter 4 we learn about the word of God. And it starts in verse 12: *“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. No creature is hidden from His sight.”*

Now the interesting thing about that is not only does it tell us about the character of the Word—living and active and so forth, which is important in and of itself,—but it actually ascribes the pronoun *His* to the word of God. *“No creature is hidden from His*

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sight.” Who is the antecedent for that pronoun “His?” It’s the word of God. The word of God is now described as Him. And so I think that what we ought to remember is that when we think about the word of God we shouldn’t abstract it from God Himself.

And that’s oftentimes what liberals have a tendency to do. And how do they do that? Well they do that by telling us that we’re Bibliolaters. “You Fundamentalists are Bibliolaters because you treat the Bible as if it’s higher than God Himself; you actually worship the Bible.”

And we want to say, “No, we’re not worshipping the Bible. But having the Bible in our hands is like having the mouth of God in our ears because this is God’s word; it’s spoken out of eternity; it’s His word.” That’s why it uses the personal pronoun Him to describe where it comes from. So that’s the idea, and I think that we need not to forget that.

Well, let’s ask a foundational question. I want to ask the question: What is repentance? And I think this is a fundamental question, because when we think about what happens to us as believers we have a tendency to think to ourselves that there are two things that I do to receive the gift of Christ given to me, and one of those is repentance.

Now I want us to think about something for just a minute. And I want us to think upon it because I think it’s important for us to remind ourselves of it. And I want you to feel free to ask me questions if you have them. Somebody put this marker up here and stood it up like this and did that on purpose. Do you know—

Ted: It was Don.

Jeff: It was Don? (*Laughter*) Thanks, Don; I appreciate that.

Don Maurer: Any time, Jeff.

Jeff: This is what is called the history of salvation. Do you guys know this? I think you guys should know what this language is by now. There is the history of salvation, or the *historia salutis*. And this would be, when we think about it, something we could summarize. We’d summarize it as the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. What’s that? When we think about the humiliation of Christ we think about His birth to His burial and all that’s in between.

Ted: And His descent into hell.

Jeff: Well I think that’s in between. (*Laughter*) We will talk about that in this class. That will be interesting to get to, now that you say that. (*Laughter*)

Ted: Sorry.

Don Maurer: No, you’re not. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: You know, the great thing is that I just heard Don, but I didn’t hear what happened before. Hearing loss is a wonderful thing. (*Laughter*) And then there’s exaltation. And exaltation is what? It’s resurrection, ascension, session, and so on.

Don Maurer: Ted said, “Sorry.” And then I said, “No, you’re not.”

Jeff: Oh. (*He laughs*) So when we think about the history of salvation we think about what Christ did. And let me say this to you. Strictly speaking, this is the gospel; this is the good news. When somebody says, “What’s the gospel?”, the gospel is not the Roman Road; the gospel is not EE. The gospel, strictly speaking, is the history of salvation, what Jesus did.

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And then there's what's called the order of salvation, or the *ordo salutis*. So there is the *historia salutis* and the *ordo salutis*. And what's the order of salvation? The order of salvation is election, predestination, calling, conversion,--we'll talk more about that in just a minute. What else? Conversion.

Don Maurer: Justification.

Jeff: Justification. I'm going to put calling and regeneration here. Conversion. What did you say, Don?

Don Maurer: Justification.

Jeff: Justification. What else?

Ted: Glorification.

Jeff: Sanctification, glorification. How about adoption? So all of those things are the things that we think of when we think of having the benefits of this work of Christ. So this is what Jesus did; this is the good news. And this is what He accomplished for us. This is what is applied to us when we believe this.

Now think about it from this perspective. I should probably erase this. Is there an eraser? Oh, there it is.

Don Maurer: I should probably do that since I started it in the first place.

Jeff: Okay, yes. You know, Don, we're going to go “election, regeneration.” You guys aren't helping me this morning; I'm not firing on all four. Calling, regeneration.

Ted: What about foreknowledge? Doesn't that come before election?

Jeff: I'm going to do just the basics because I want to highlight something here: conversion and then justification, sanctification, adoption, glorification. Okay.

All right. When we think about this we think of election as God's decree in eternity to save, right? When we think about calling and regeneration we think about these being two sides of one coin. That is to say, in 1 Corinthians 1:9 God calls. And we think of John 3: the Spirit regenerates; He blows where He wills. We don't know how He does or with who He does or what He does, but we know that He does regenerate. So we know that God calls; we know that the Spirit regenerates those God calls.

And then we know that conversion happens. And conversion is interesting because when we parse it out it means faith and repentance. And we typically think of faith and repentance as those things that we do. But my point to you in showing you this is that these are things that happen in the midst of the application of redemption to those who believe this.

But think about what I said. Those who believe this believe it is faith. In other words, you won't believe this unless God has elected, called and regenerated you. And so it's in the midst of receiving the benefits that you believe this. So even this is a work of God.

Ted: Sure.

Jeff: Faith and repentance are enabled by God; they are gifts of God to us.

Don Bishop: Ephesians 2 8 and 9.

Jeff: Ephesians 2:8 and 9: “*And this is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.*” And so conversion comes in the midst of these gifts, these benefits that Christ accrues for us. And here's the ironic thing, right? The ironic thing is that John the Baptist, Jesus, the disciples,

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they all go around and what do they say? “*The kingdom of God is at hand.*” Therefore, repent and believe.

And so isn’t it interesting that even though the theology that we learn from the New Testament is this, we learn that this is the direct response to the kingdom of God, and therefore it is our responsibility.

Now somebody is ultimately going to say, especially if you paint this for them, “Well I’ll just wait on God.” Well, of course you will.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: But the point is that you are being called to do something, and that is to believe and repent of your sins. And so we never forget this.

So as it applies to Jonah, we need to understand this. I’ve been saying to you that this is a covenant child. And there is a certain sense in which one of the things that I say about the kids in our congregations this, and you have to understand Presbyterianism at this point. Presbyterianism sees children who are born to Christian parents as members of the covenant community, first of all as baptized members, however then as communicant members. And what’s the difference between a baptized member and a communicant member?

A baptized member and a communicant member are both part of the covenant. But a baptized member is only part of, shall we say, the legal aspects of the covenant, the outward aspects of the covenant. They are with Mom and Dad, being taught the law of God, being raised in a Christian home to appreciate the worship of God. They are led into worship week by week.

What’s the move that they make from being a baptized member to a communicant member? When they say, “All of these things I have been taught are my own.” In other words, “I believe this Jesus is my Savior. I love to worship that Jesus because He is my Savior. This law is a delight to me.” All of those things are what they profess when they become communicant members. They move from the external aspect of the covenant to the internal aspect of the covenant. But they are members of the covenant regardless.

Now an example of that would be Ishmael in the Old Testament. He was circumcised along with the rest. He was a member of the covenant community, but only outwardly so. Legally he was a member of the covenant community. However his heart was never regenerate; we know that after the fact and by its fruit. But the point is, he was still a member of the covenant community in the Old Testament.

So it’s a mixed covenant. You can’t say, “Well automatically, because they’re my children, they must be elect.” You can’t say that about Ishmael, okay?

But I’ll tell you how you can treat Ishmael. You can treat the Ishmael in your house—the child who seems like he’s wandering—you can treat him before the Lord as a child of the covenant, saying, “Lord, this child had all of the legal benefits of being in the covenant. And I’m praying that the benefits that he received would never depart from him.”

One of those is the internal voice that he’s going to experience because of the external Word that was read to him and taught him. That’s a legal aspect of the covenant that shapes into an internal aspect of it.

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But the point is that when we think about Jonah, one of the things that we think about when we think about Jonah is that we think about this child of the covenant. And if we were his parents we would be praying that the very thing that’s happening to him in the belly of the whale would happen: that he would be having an internal conversation because of the word that we taught him. And we would be praying that repentance and belief would come as a result, because for a time it looks like he has actually forsaken these things. Yes?

Mike Davis: When I was in my early 20s,--late teens or early 20s,--I was very angry with my mother and father for teaching these truths.

Jeff: Ah!

Mike: I was very angry.

Jeff: Ah!

Mike: I was very angry that they were praying for me.

Jeff: Yes.

Mike: At 19 I got very angry with my wife. By the time I was 21 she was praying for me. I could not get the word of God out of my mind.

Jeff: Yeah.

Mike: I was very angry about that because I wanted to do what I wanted to do.

Jeff: Yeah.

Mike: And I sometimes literally yelled at them: “Leave me alone!” I’m glad they never did.

Jeff: Yeah.

Mike: But it was exactly what you’re talking about. The word of God would not leave my mind.

Jeff: Yeah. You know, I always say that for the unbeliever to come to church, it’s a frightening thing. I almost mock it when he comes. There was a time when there was a young person who came to our church because his parents literally told him, “We will not support you in your college unless you come to church.” And so he would come to church, but he was an atheist. You could just see it on his face sometimes.

And I used to think to myself: Buddy, this is the most dangerous place in the world for you to be, because I can’t get into your head and change your mind. But this word that’s being preached can. And you know, that’s the dynamic that I think that the mocker lacks at that moment. But then he discovers all of a sudden that he can’t get away from it. Yes?

Brave Man: Jeff, okay. While we’re out here, can you define adoption and where we find that in terms of the order of salvation?

Jeff: Yeah. Adoption is a legal benefit. It’s very much in some ways the counterpart of justification. So for instance justification is when you are declared not guilty, but righteous. And as you stand there, adoption is like the judge saying, “Now I’m going to legally make you part of my family,” that kind of thing. So it’s a forensic benefit. But it’s a forensic benefit that opens the door of familial affection.

There is one paragraph in the Westminster Confession that deals with adoption. I think it’s a wonderful paragraph, so let me read it to you.

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“All of those that are justified God vouchsafeth, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have His name put on them, receive the Spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry ‘Abba, Father!’, are pitied, protected, provided for and chastened as by a Father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.”

So if you think about it in terms of a family, you think about adopting a child. You think about the legal aspect of that. But then you think about this: Now they get all the privileges of the family: inheritance, love, all of those things. That would be the idea.

Brave Man: Thanks, Jeff. That was confusing for a second; that was hard.

Jeff: Yeah.

Brave Man: When it comes to the legal aspect of that.

Jeff: Yeah, that’s right. Okay. Yes?

Ted: I think this is also subsumed under union with Christ.

Jeff: Union with Christ.

Ted: All of these things are part of what it means to be in union with Christ which is a supernatural existence, reality and truth.

Jeff: Yeah. So when we think about this we think about all of these things in union with Christ. Now here’s the funny thing: Union with Christ is what we call a faith union. And that’s part of the point I was making. Before actually being aware of being in union with Christ as we exercise faith, we are in union with Christ by virtue of election or decree by an outward act of God by our calling and the regeneration of the Spirit. But when that happens, boom! All of a sudden, even unconsciously, we become aware that something has changed. And that something that has changed, you know, it’s funny oftentimes when you talk to somebody. It’s funny when you think back to your own conversion, that is, your own change of mind—your own repentance, your own belief. You think back to it and you’re like you know what? I don’t know how it was. But all of a sudden I liked this but then I didn’t like this. There was a moment in time where this just changed on a dime. And that was the moment you became conscious of all that God was doing in your life up until that point. And you realize at that moment that I’m in faith union with Christ, right? And it’s that idea.

Ted: What do you mean by “faith union?”

Jeff: In other words we think about entering into union with Christ, embracing the kingdom of God, by what? By faith.

Ted: But faith is our experience of that.

Jeff: It’s our experience and outward expression of that, yes.

Ted: Right. And that union is not dependent on faith. We will experience faith and all those other things. But the union is not dependent on faith as the foundation; it’s the decree of God.

Jeff: It’s the decree; that’s right.

Ted: From the beginning.

Jeff: That’s right.

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Don Bishop: It’s all through Paul’s epistles. We are hidden in Christ. Christ is in you. You don’t believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; you believe in him.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. You know, this is a concept that is oftentimes neglected today, this idea of union with Christ. Like you said, it’s everywhere in Paul. But I’ve talked to people in different contexts where I’ll talk to them about union with Christ and they’ll say, “You know, I’ve never heard of that concept before.”

And I’ll say, “Well do you know what? Pay attention to phrases like ‘in Him,’ or ‘with Him’—those kinds of phrases in the New Testament. Once you begin to see them, you can’t unsee them; they’re everywhere.” And you know, it’s been quite an interesting thing to hear people say that kind of thing. You’re right; it’s everywhere in the New Testament Scriptures, abundantly.

Well one of the things that we have to remember is that we are in a context where J. I. Packer called it “*hot tub religion.*” (*Laughter*) And that kind of religion doesn’t have room for repentance because it’s a religion of pleasure. Why would God want me to repent? He delights in me.

Well, that’s like saying, “Why would I ever want my son to repent? I delight in him.” No! If I delight in him I want to see his life conformed to righteousness. And therefore that means that he must repent. He must believe and he must repent. And his life must be shaped after the law of God, after the righteousness of God that’s expressed in His law.

And there’s no room for repentance in a religion that says that God is happy with me, and I don’t need to do anything else. That’s not the religion of the New Testament; that’s Packer’s point.

Repentance begins with remembering. It begins with remembering who you are and who God is. Now I want to challenge you to think about Jonah’s prayer in that light. He doesn’t explicitly say, “I’m a sinner.” He doesn’t explicitly say, “I ran from God.” He doesn’t say those things.

Now that’s one of the challenges about the Bible itself. Sometimes it doesn’t put things in the way that we might expect. And sometimes it doesn’t put things in the way that we require. And yet this is certainly a prayer of repentance.

I want you to see this. “*While I was fainting away I remembered the LORD.*” That’s the idea of who I am and who God is.

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: “*While I was fainting away.*” Where was he going? He realizes that he is going down into death. He already sees himself in Sheol. We’re going to come back to that in just a minute. But my point is, that’s where we see it. And we may not think about it in terms of the way we might describe repentance or the acknowledgment of sin. But this is certainly an acknowledgment of it. He’s using that idea in this kind of language.

Okay, and look at what he says:

*“I am driven away from Your sight,
Yet I shall look again upon Your holy temple.”*

“I am driven away from You.” Think about what repentance is. Repentance is *metanoia*. It’s actually a turning back. And here he’s talking about being driven away. But

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what does he say? “*But I will again look upon Your holy temple.*” In other words, that’s an about face.

Now when we think about what repentance is, repentance is not a work. I want you to see that, and in just a minute I’ll remind you of that. But I want you to see one more thing. “*Out of the belly of Sheol I cried.*” It’s a cry of dereliction; it’s a cry of having been forsaken.

It’s the cry of Christ on the cross. It’s the cry of dereliction on the cross. And here is where I’m going to say it: On the cross Jesus descended into hell.

Don Maurer: That’s Calvin’s position.

Jeff: Well, that settles it. (*Laughter*) All right, I’m going to pass over it; Ted’s going to let me go.

Ted: I mean, that is a very complex question.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: I know the church has taught it historically; it’s in the creeds.

Jeff: I know. I want to say this to you, though. I want you say to you that when you look at the progression of the development of the Apostles’ Creed, one of the things that you realize is that it was first of all the Roman Cymbal. And that Roman Cymbal starts in Rome about the mid-2nd century. And you find it in people like Irenaeus who uses it. And if you do some textual critical work on the Creed, you find out that it’s a text that’s combatting Gnosticism, this idea that says that Jesus only seemed to be a material Person.

Ted: He only seemed so.

Jeff: He only seemed so. And then the Creed progresses and takes greater form and shape. It has additions made to it, and it eventually becomes the *Aquilian Creed*. And the *Aquilian Creed* becomes the Apostles’ Creed.

And in the 400s Rufinus, an early church father, writes a commentary on the Aquilian Creed which again becomes the Apostles’ Creed. And he, Rufinus, is the guy who says that we got the *Aquilian Creed* because each apostle contributed a line. And so that’s where we get the tradition of the Apostles’ Creed.

But Rufinus is also the guy who said this. And again we’re moving from a creed that was saying that Jesus really died. He didn’t just seem to die; He actually died. We’re moving from that to Rufinus describing the grave. So He’s descended into Sheol. It’s not just about Him dying rather than seeming to die. Rufinus says that descent is a hellish descent. And so it’s Rufinus who actually gives the interpretation to the *Aquilian Creed* which then becomes the Apostles’ Creed that says that Jesus descended into hell.

So there’s a time in church history where you can identify the shift. And so I think Calvin was right when he comes along and he says that theologically and Biblically there is only one place where we might say that this descent is a hellish descent, and that’s in 1 Peter. But he would argue that that can’t be argued from that text. And so he would say that the descent into hell is on the cross, although he would recite the Creed. Why? Calvin would say this. Why? Because on the cross, right before He expires, Jesus says, “*It is finished.*”

So then what happens? Well, it can’t be what the early fathers taught after Rufinus. It can’t be that Jesus descent into hell was sort of a trickery that Jesus played on Satan.

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Satan thought he had Him; he thought he had Him in his grips. And then all of a sudden Jesus rose up like Phoenix. It can't be like that anymore because Jesus says, “*It is finished*” on the cross.

So others began to teach that no, it was a victory tour. So Jesus didn't go into hell in order to deceive the devil, and so arise and take with him captives from the devil. But instead it was a victory tour. You know, “I won!”—that sort of thing.

Ted: The mouse trap theory.

Jeff: Yeah. It is a complex thing. I fall down on the Calvinistic side of that.

Don Bishop: In a sense, if you believe that Jesus took on our sins, He took on the curse of our sins.

Jeff: Yeah.

Don: On the cross. Where does that lead us? The curse of our sin is sent to hell.

Jeff: And the fury of God is revealed in its uttermost form to covenant breakers. And the locale for that is hell. But for Jesus that wrath and curse was released on Him on the cross. And I think that's the feeling of abandonment that He feels. Don, you were gonna

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Don Maurer: Yeah. So in verse 2 where Jonah says, “*Out of the belly of Sheol I cried*”—*NKJV*—Sheol can be interpreted as the grave, or it can be interpreted as hell.

Jeff: Yes.

Don: So would you interpret it as hell?

Jeff: Well, I think that you can go either way on this one, right? I think that he is obviously in his own grave. And he's obviously moving away from God. Moving away from God is placing yourself under God's wrath and curse. So what he actually thought, whatever is going on in Jonah's head, I'm not sure of. But I think that you can move between either one of those poles and give an explanation for it, at least in the context of Jonah's life as we understand it.

Well let me talk to you. I said that repentance is not a work. What is repentance? Just the fundamentals of repentance again; you've seen them before: Recognition of sin's odious nature, recognition of God's mercy. These are the things that we find in the Westminster Confession; I'm just reiterating them to you. And then an endeavoring to turn from sin. That is to say that repentance carries with it an attitude: that is, I'm endeavoring to new obedience, that is, to turn from sin.

So when he says, “I will turn again to the temple,” that's a great expression of what I think is captured in the Westminster Confession: this endeavoring to turn from sin and offer a new obedience. Well we talked about repentance before, so I'm not going to say much more than that other than that point. Go ahead.

Don Maurer: And what you said is very important about turning again to new obedience, where Jonah says, “*I will look again toward Your holy temple*”—*NKJV*—because Judas repented in an ungodly way.

Jeff: Yes.

Don: But he didn't come to Christ. And so repentance isn't just feeling sorry for yourself; it's turning from sin and turning unto God.

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Jeff: Yes, and Thomas Watson said this. It’s been really helpful for me to distinguish Judas’ repentance from Peter’s repentance, or our own repentance. Thomas Watson said, “*Judas did not believe that the grace of God was bigger than his sin. He believed that his sin was bigger than the grace of God.*”

And you’ve met people like that, right? You have met people who have said to you, “Oh, God couldn’t forgive me! You don’t know what I’ve done!”, that sort of thing. I think that was Judas. Judas repented, but that regret did not finalize itself in a recognition that grace was bigger than sin.

Ted: And how do we see that, that last statement you just made? How is that evidenced? I’m agreeing with you; I’m—

Jeff: Despair.

Ted: Despair and maybe suicide.

Jeff: And that’s the ultimate end of that for him.

Ted: There is no hope. ships suicide ultimately said there is no hope.

Jeff: There is no hope; that’s right.

David Miller: I talked to a man who committed murder when he was a teenager and he was out of prison. And I tried to encourage him that God was greater than his sin. But he said, “You don’t know what I’ve done. I don’t know if God can ever forgive me.”

Jeff: Yeah, I know. Well let me go on here and talk to you about a new beginning. I think this is a fascinating part of this. How does Jonah point out this new beginning in his life? Well look at 1:17.

Fish is a masculine noun. In 2:1 *fish* is a feminine fish. And then in 2:10 we get a masculine fish again. This is a trans-gender fish! (*Laughter*) This is gender fluidity at its finest. (*Laughter*) That’s interesting.

But what’s going on here? Well, I think you need a little more information before you can really get any idea of what Jonah is trying to communicate. In addition to his repentance, (“I’m staying awake and I’m going to return again”), in addition to all that what you get is this contextual aspect. You have to think about it this way. When he was vomited out Jonah did not say, “Oh Lord, don’t swim away! I’ve got to see if this is male or female.” No, “I’m in the fish; I don’t care if it’s male or female!”, all right? But for literary purposes, what he’s doing is he’s helping us to see, regardless of whether it’s male or female, he’s using it as female for a purpose, “to help you to see how I understood what happened to me.” That’s what I think is going on here.

So in 1:17 he’s in the stomach. Stomach is a word that can be interpreted as *womb* and also translated as *womb*. So all of a sudden he goes to the female aspect of the fish, because what he wants us to see that “I’m in the womb.” And Jonah was in the womb of the fish. And in the very next verse the fish is described as a female.

And then in Jonah 2:2: “*I called out in my distress.*” And that is the travail of childbirth. “I called out in my travail; I called out in the travail of my distress.” Again, another way of describing a woman in childbirth.

And then what? Jonah is born anew. And how so? He’s vomited out; he’s vomited out of the fish. It’s just a little thing. But it’s one of those things that our English Bible just doesn’t reveal readily. But when you look at it, it’s kind of a fascinating thing.

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You have at least three indicators that Jonah is trying to tell us something about his experience. He describes the fish as male. “But let me describe it as a female for just a minute. In the womb and in my travail of my distress”—in the travail of birth he was born anew. I think he could say those four things when he was vomited out of the fish. Any thoughts on that? I thought that was a neat thing.

Time now? Yes, it’s time. All right; we’ll pick up with Jonah and Jesus the next time. *(Applause)* Oh, let’s pray. *(Laughter)* Sorry. Gracious God, thank You for the day and for the blessing of life in Christ, for the time You’ve given us to be together and for the love that You’ve shed abroad in our hearts. Lord, bless us now as we go forth into the day. And again, Lord, whether the day proves to be a sunny day or a day of valleys for any one of us, we pray that our eyes would be fixed upon You steadfastly like flint. And we pray, Father, that we would be resolved to follow You in all Your ways. And we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. *(Applause)*