

## “Jonah Pt 11”

### A Wayward Prophet

Jonah 3:1-10

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**Jeff:** Our gracious Father, we thank You. We gather together this morning ready to study Your word, asking that You will not only give us an attentiveness of spirit, but we also pray that You’ll give us Your Spirit in abundance and in full measure. Lord, we ask that You will use Him in our lives and that He will illuminate Your word. And Father, we pray that this word that He inspired so long ago by coming upon the apostolic authors He would open our eyes to the riches of it and that He would deepen our love for it, and that He would also help us to embrace it more with our hands and our feet, that is, in our doings of the gospel.

Father, we live in a dark world, and yet the world has always been dark. And yet, Father, there is a sense in which we feel the newness to the darkness because it is our darkness, the darkness of our generation. And yet we ask that You’ll help us to live in the light of the gospel. Father, we pray that You will teach us not to be afraid, for Your rod and Your staff, they comfort us. Father, we ask that Your hand would be upon us as we go through life’s journey. And Father, we know that it will be fraught with stiles and pitfalls and all kinds of dangers, and Father, not only for us but for those whom we love. And we ask that You will keep us and them in peace—not a peace that the world gives but in Your heavenly peace, the only peace You can give. And Father, we pray that You will strengthen us in that peace.

Lord, we pray for our time together. And Lord, as we study the Word we pray that it wouldn’t simply be an exercise in piety, though it is certainly pious. We pray that it would not be an exercise in fellowship, though we do have fellowship one with another. But we pray that it would be a time wherein we can wrestle with Your word and with You because it’s Yours, and that our lives can be changed and shaped by it, so that when we walk out these doors we are different men. Father, we ask that Your hand would be upon us for good in all of these things and many others that we haven’t spoken. And we pray it in Jesus’ precious and blessed name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. If you need an old outline there are new outlines on the table. But Gary reminded me this morning when we got here, and I remembered earlier before I arrived that I sent him next week’s outline but we hadn’t finished last week’s outline. So if you have last week’s outline then go ahead and take it out. If you need it there’s one over on the table by the exit. Grab one if you’d like; just don’t leave. I told a Roger joke.

*(Laughter)* Okay, that didn’t go over either. *(Laughter)* All right, it’s a hard morning.

All right. So what we’re going to do is to enter right into a discussion about sin. And this is where we left off the last time. We talked about the Titanic. We talked about how sin in one area of our lives is sort of like the Titanic. It was enough to sink the whole ship. And sin in our lives is enough to do that, especially if it’s unrepentant and continually corrosive. And it will in fact eat away at us. We may think we have it contained; we in

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fact don't have it contained. We think better of ourselves than we ought to think, especially when it comes to dealing with sin.

And so I want to talk to you just a minute. I want to take a pause just to talk to you about the nature of sin because I don't think we think deeply enough about it. Now we're not going to think nearly as deeply as we ought to even this morning. But we are going to dabble a bit in the depth of it. And there are four aspects of sin that I think are important for any Christian to know about. Those four aspects of sin answer to different areas of our life in Christ as we were once in sin.

First of all, we think about there being an original guilt. And that original guilt that we often think of comes from original sin. When we think about original sin—which is really a fit concept; I'm going to just set that aside and only mention it because it's Adam's sin—and it's Adam's sin imputed to us, that is, Adam's sin in the Garden. And we his posterity now stand in him and in his sin; we own his sin.

The four aspects of sin are how we own it. And so this first one is called *original guilt*. Now original guilt is an interesting feature because original guilt basically means that this is the origin of our guilt. It basically has to do with Adam and our union with him. So if you want to know where our guilt comes from or where our original sin comes from, all you have to do is look to Adam and you know.

In other words, let me just say this is probably a very subtle way. Oftentimes people are perplexed about where death came from. They can't answer that question though they know it's a reality. They think it's an evolutionary flaw or something like that. It certainly conforms to the law of thermodynamics, which says that every system left to itself moves to decay. And so they explain it, but they don't have a rationale for it. They don't know where it came from; we do. Sin came from Adam, so original guilt comes from Adam.

Now you might say to yourself, “Well, when I think about original guilt what else do I think of? I think of original pollution.” Original pollution tells me that the original guilt that I possess in Adam actually has an effect on me. And that original pollution that I'm talking about is not only the guilt that I have as I stand before God. And what I mean by that is not necessarily an experiential guilt. What I'm talking about when I talk about guilt is, I'm talking about you as you stand in Adam.

And so for instance—and I think the only way to describe this is to say this—think of a federal relationship. We know about federal relationships because we stand in one as citizens of the United States. If our President acts on our behalf and does something that we may not necessarily agree with, and our country stands responsible for it, somebody from another country can say, “You're guilty of this.” And he would be absolutely right, because our federal head acted on our behalf.

Now we could say, “He's not my President!” But that's only you saying “He's not my President.” He in fact is your President. And so there is an original guilt that attaches to you because of him being your federal head.

That's the way it is with Adam. And that works itself out in pollution. In other words, pollution comes from our attachment to our original head, Adam.

Now here's the thing that you probably wonder about. And I certainly think that this is a good question that one might ask. A good question that one might ask is: How does this

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work itself out? How does this original corruption and pollution work itself out? And the answer to that is that when you think about Adam in the garden, we have a tendency to think that if Adam lived and obeyed then what? He would have ascended to a higher life, a life that was communicated to him by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He didn't do that. He sinned, and so his life is now gradually on the downward slide. I put it like this because I think it's important for us.

Now notice. He doesn't die the moment that he sins. In fact he lives quite a long time, and so does his posterity: 900-plus years, right? So the corruption that comes with aging doesn't immediately take effect; it takes effect over time. It's over time that man's years reduce, reduce, reduce, right? But it's immediately the case that man dies.

If you read the genealogy right after Adam it doesn't matter how long they lived. All the genealogies end with: “*And he died. And he died. And he died.*” And the reason for that is because God said, “The moment you eat from the tree you will surely die—not only you, but all of your posterity.”

But was Adam as sinful as he could have been the moment he ate from the tree? Obviously not. The pollution crept in with the curse, and it multiplied over time, okay? In other words, he and his posterity became increasingly corrupt.

Now it is true that “*there is nothing new under the sun*”; so says Solomon. However, when you think about corruption, corruption is basically—well I'm going to move on, because this will get us into the next part of it.

When you think about corruption you think about *total depravity*. And when you think about total depravity you think about the extent of pollution. Now when you think about the extent of pollution, some people will say that total depravity means that a person is as sinful as he possibly could be. But you know that's not true.

You know that is not true even with individuals who are unbelievers. You may know an unbeliever who is a guy who is a good family man. He's faithful in his job. He may cheat on his income taxes a little bit and may lie once in a while, especially when it comes to him making sure that he can watch the football game without his wife knowing it. (*Laughter*) And so on, right? But that guy is still an unbeliever. He has broken the whole law because he has broken it at one single point.

But then you know the guy in prison who has murdered and was a serial killer, and so on. And his depravity is more in extent. And yet total depravity encompasses both men. Why? Because total depravity says that we are corrupt in the wholeness of our being. Let me put it this way. That says that both men are totally depraved. But it doesn't say how depraved one is over against another, okay? Yeah, Don?

**Don Maurer:** John Gerstner used to say that total depravity is distinguished from utter depravity because there is room for deprovement.

**Jeff:** Yes, there is room for deprovement; that's exactly right. So when we think about original guilt we think about what we get from Adam; we stand guilty in Adam. When we think about original pollution we think about how that pollution from Adam worked itself out generation by generation to our life as we have it. When we think about total depravity there is an effect on the whole person: of the mind, of the affections, of the whole man.

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And then the last one is *total inability*. And total inability has to do with the experiential side of sin. And it has to do mainly with one aspect, and that is can man choose the ultimate good for himself? And the answer is no. He is not able to choose the ultimate good.

Is he able to choose approximate goods? Yes. He is able to choose something good for his family, for instance. But is that good in the sight of God good? No, because he didn't do it in order to glorify God. He sought it in order to make life simpler for himself and for his family. So he saw himself as the center of his universe.

And so is man totally unable to choose the greatest good which is God apart from God's enabling? No, he's not; God must enable him. Why? Because he's dead in his sins and transgressions.

Think about a dead man for just a minute. A dead man is dead. I'll tell you what. When I was first in the ministry I used to be given over to a theatric or two when I could, which I don't think is right. But anyway I did; I'm just telling you; not a lot of guidance in those early days. *(Laughter)*

But I had this great idea when I preached on Ephesians 2:1-10. I was going to get this new guy in my congregation. And let me pause here; I worked for a funeral director. I was going to get this new guy in my congregation to lay in a casket. And they were going to wheel him into the church. *(Laughter)* And then they were going to put him up on the stage. And then I was going to talk about what a dead man could do and could not do.

I couldn't get the casket because we were in a small town. But I did get the EMTs to bring the ambulance with the gurney. *(Laughter)* So I got this guy. He was a little reticent to do it; he was reticent under the blanket, that's for sure.

But anyway he ended up being on the gurney. And you know, he traumatized his children. *(Laughter)* Apparently during the service one of them said, “Is Daddy okay?” *(Laughter)* I had Daddy under the blanket. It was a hot day and he almost died. But anyway it was one of those kinds of days. But when I pulled it off he was pale and sweaty. *(Laughter)*

But I ended up talking about what a dead man could do and not do. I got down to his ear and I yelled in his ear. And I said, “Can a dead man hear? Can a dead man smell? Can a dead man feel my pinch? Can a dead man live?” And the idea was no, a dead man cannot live.

And that's what the Bible describes us as; it describes us as dead men. And dead men can't make themselves live. Only God can make us live. And that's why Ephesians 2:4 says that God was so gracious to us that He brought us to life in Jesus Christ.

**Transcriber's Note:** Ephesians 2:4, ESV. “*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, (by grace you have been saved.)*”

**Jeff:** And so that's the nature of sin when you think about it. And the nature of sin is that it's a pretty dire situation to be in, which is why the gospel of grace is so manifestly wonderful. So anyway, any questions on that?

**Brave Man:** Did you have that guy jump off the temple?

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**Jeff:** You know, I didn't want to be too presumptuous and perform a resurrection in the service. *(Laughter)* So no, he remained dead. *(Laughter)*

Okay, so let's talk about the nature of repentance. This is a big deal for us as we look at the book of Jonah, and I think it ought to be. It says in Zephaniah 2:15, speaking of Nineveh: *“This is an exalted city which dwells securely, who says in her heart, ‘I am and there is no one besides me.’”*

Now I want you to know something. The message of Jonah's gospel was preached in that city, in that city that said, *“I am and there is no one besides me.”* In Hebrew there was a five-word message that was preached to those people. And that message is what we find in verse 4: *“Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”* It was a five-word message. Maybe God knew that was all that Jonah could give at that point.

It was a five-word message. And that five-word message has an important word for us to think about, because it has a nuance to it that we need to catch, because it's important when we think about the nature of repentance. I want you to think about the word “overthrown” in that message: *“Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”*

When you think about that word in the Hebrew, you know this is often the case when it comes to the original languages, right? When you interpret from one language into another there's a little bit of elasticity that comes with it. For instance my Greek students will learn about what case a preposition can go with and what that definition will typically be for that preposition. And then once they get out of the basics they realize that rule is just a guideline. But that proposition in Greek may have an entirely different meaning than one that they learned in the basics. And that's the frustrating part of translating one language into another.

But in the Hebrew we have two ways of understanding this Hebrew participle. We can understand it reflexively or we can understand it passively. What we have here is a double entendre.

I want you to think about the first way that we might think about this Hebrew word. We might think about it reflexively: that is, it will overturn itself. Yet forty days and Nineveh will overturn itself. That's thinking about it reflexively.

Okay now, I'm going to talk about that in just a minute. But I want to give you the passive idea. Passively, it will be overturned; something will happen to it. And that something is that it will be overturned. And so *“Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown!”* And that reflects more of what we have in our text.

Now let's think about this for just a minute. What is required for the reflexive to take place? Let me stop and talk for a minute about the reflexive and passive for just a minute. The reflexive—will overturn itself—means that they will hear the message and they will turn over a new leaf, as it were. They will turn themselves over. They will repent; they will go in a different direction. That's the reflexive idea that's in that Hebrew word reflexively, right? They'll overturn themselves. And that could happen with the preaching of the gospel; they could repent.

However, passively it's “they will be overturned.” They won't hear the gospel savingly and they will be overturned—not by themselves, but someone else will do the turning: that is, God will flip the boat on them. God will overturn them in judgment.

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So this Hebrew word can be read either reflexively, or it can be read passively; both meanings are legitimate. When you are translating you have to choose one way in order to communicate it. Most translations translate it in the passive. And so the idea is that “in forty days Nineveh will be overturned.” That is to say that we think of Jonah’s message as a certainty, as if God changed His mind. He had this set forty days and then He changed His mind. But the idea built into the Hebrew is that there is conditionality to this. “*Yet in forty days Nineveh will be overthrown!*”, or they will overturn themselves in repentance. And we’re left not knowing, but we’re certainly left with a message of conditionality, okay?

And so that’s the beauty of it. That’s the message of the gospel itself, isn’t it? When we tell people to repent or perish, that’s the reflexivity of it: repent or perish. If you don’t repent, you will perish. God will overturn you; that’s the idea.

Now what’s required for the reflexive to take place? Well, we’ve talked about this before. And that is that you need to recognize the odious nature of your sin. This is what the Confession talks about when it talks about repentance. It talks about three aspects. If I’m turning this way and God is that way, I need to recognize that looking this way is a terrible way to look, because there is sin there. It’s odious, it’s repugnant to God. It’s something I love in the moment and need to forsake. So I need to recognize that about my sin.

And you know, let me just say it this way, guys. If there is a sin that we’re holding onto—to go back to the Titanic for a minute,—the water has just crept into the first few bulkheads. But it was enough to take down the whole ship. The point is this: If there is a sin that we cherish, that we love to take out when no one is looking and that we delight in, the point is this: that is corrosive. And it will have a way of working itself through the rest of us.

But here’s the point of it. The point of it is that we don’t see it as odious; we see it as something we love. And we can say we don’t, but I want to tell you something. You know, it’s sort of like the person who chooses to do something and then says, “I didn’t want to do it!” And we have to say to them, “No, when you chose to do it you wanted to do that more than anything else at that moment.”

Did you ever hear of the woman who perhaps steps out in adultery and cheats on her husband? And you’re talking to her and her husband trying to bring reconciliation. And she says, “I didn’t want to do it!”

And you go, “Wait a minute! The first thing that we have to establish is that the moment you chose to do that you wanted to do it more than anything else at that moment,” right? And we have to get people to deal with reality. And so the moment you choose to sin you want that more than anything else. Don’t

**Don:** Ah, but I know I’m gonna throw a monkey wrench in here.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Don:** If that’s true, why did Paul say in Romans 7 that “the thing that I don’t want to do, I do?”

**Jeff:** The thing that I don’t want to do I do? When Paul sins, does he want to do that more than anything else?

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**Don:** Yes. But why did he say that then in Romans 7?

**Jeff:** “The thing that I want to do I don’t do.”

**Don:** And he said the opposite, too. “The thing that I don’t want to do, this I keep on doing.”

**Jeff:** So I think what we have there is basically the nature of sin itself in terms of the life of the believer. Let me put it this way. Let me go to this next slide because you’ve seen it, and then I’ll take up your question. Apprehend the mercy of God. The Christian apprehends the mercy of God, okay? And when the Christian apprehends the mercy of God then he repents and he turns.

Now let me give you one more slide because Don’s question requires it. Repentance is ours, not God’s. That is, it’s a gift from God, but the repenting is ours.

Okay. Now let’s say it like this. Let’s say that I’m an unbeliever and I’m living in Adam, united to Adam, and I choose the thing that I want to do, right? I choose the thing I want to do, which is sin. Now I’ve recognized the odious nature of that. I’ve apprehended the mercy of God in Christ and I’ve endeavored to new obedience. I’m living now as a believer; I am a believer.

The thing I want most is God, okay? The thing I want most is God; the overall trajectory of my life is God. However I as a sinful man have the ability to sin or not to sin as a Christian. What I can do and what I will do is that every once in a while I will look over my shoulder at the sin I left. And as a believer I do know it’s odious. But when I engage in that sin I want that sin at that moment more than I want the overall trajectory of my life. I can’t say it any other way.

**Don:** Well spoken.

**Jeff:** Oh, okay. I thought you were going to disagree with me. *(Laughter)*

**Don:** No.

**David Miller:** Can you explain it as the spiritual man is always the one who pleases God, and the fleshly man always wants to go against God? And so you have this tension between the spiritual man and the fleshly man.

**Jeff:** I do think that you can explain it like that, like the spiritual man and the fleshly man. Here’s the problem with that. All illustrations break down at some point. The problem with that illustration is that I choose to think that when I’m united to Christ my relationship with the first Adam is over. That’s the whole point of Romans 7; I can remarry when my first husband dies, right? So my first husband—Adam—has died, and now I’m married to Christ.

So for instance, think about it like this. Let me make this illustration maybe far too long. Let’s say, for instance, that a woman has come out of an abusive relationship. And she comes out of an abusive relationship and she marries a new man. And the man is kind and gentle and good to her and treats her well. But she fears and every once in a while looks back in fear at the old husband.

And the new husband keeps saying to her, “Don’t, honey; I’m not like him,” right? And sometimes she even feels like she must go back because he threatens the children. “If you don’t come back to me,” right? And so she says, “Should I go back to him?” And

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the new husband has to tell her, “No, you’re not going back. I’ll protect you, I’ll protect the kids,” right?

That’s a scenario where there’s a living spiritual man and a living sinful man. The way that the Bible describes it is that Adam is dead in my new relationship with Christ. Therefore for the woman who was in that abusive relationship, that abuser is now dead and in the grave. And yet she still has kind of that fear, that anxiety that was produced from that old relationship. But there is no old man truly summoning her back because he’s dead, if she actually stands in Christ. So that would be the difference that I would make.

So could that woman kind of continually look over her shoulder even though that first husband is dead? Surely, but that first husband is dead. And that would kind of go back to Don’s question. Is there a sense in which we look over our shoulders and sometimes choose the thing that is dead to us? Yes, there is. But it’s dead to us. And so the overall trajectory of our lives is toward the living Christ. And even though, like the abused and battered woman I still sometimes look over my shoulder and even falter, that relationship is dead because I’m in a new and living relationship with Christ.

**Jordan Obaker:** As a pastor, what’s your pastoral guidance for people who want to go in this direction but have the moment? And in that moment they still love their sin more than they love God. In those moments how would you be the pastor/shepherd, and so on?

**Ted Wood:** Are you asking this about a friend? *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** We’ll all be your friends. *(Laughter)* Just pick one of us; it’s okay. *(Laughter)* The first thing that we ought to do is to help them to look to Christ. Why is that? It’s because they put Him there, right? And you can see this in any number of ways. He drinks the cup of God’s wrath. You helped make the cocktail. He experiences the abuse; He experiences the cross. All of that was you doing that; those were your sins that put Him there. And so that’s the first place to start; set their eyes on Christ.

And then what you do is that you say to them, look: Repentance and faith are the only responses, and they are both gifts. Repentance and faith are the only responses to that kind of behavior. I need to believingly look to Christ, and I need to turn away from those sins and face Christ and so exercise repentance and belief.

And here’s what I would tell them: no matter how you feel, because you know and I know that as soon as you commit that sin, what you feel is that I can’t possibly repent at this moment. And you and I both know that’s a lie from the pit, because if you delay it you’re probably delaying it because you’ll think that God forgets. You’ll put a little time between you and your sin; that will pacify God a little while. You’ll do something good in the next hour that God will really like.

No, all of these are stupid if you know your theology, if you know that God accepts you on the basis of His Son and not on the basis of you and what you’ve done. So immediately repent.

The third thing I would say to you is that if this is an ongoing sin, a person needs to be gently reminded that there may be consequences for sin. Hebrews 12 says to us that God chastens us like a father who loves us. And there may be consequences to our sin.



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Now I would say to you that if you can read providence infallibly—that is, if you can tell me what God is doing by the events of life—then you must have an in with God that none other has. And personally I’d rather that you keep it to yourself because I don’t want to hear what you think God is doing. (*Laughter*) Because I know you’re wrong; I know you don’t have the in. If you want to think you have the in, then you go ahead and continue to think that about yourself. But try to just keep your glory in your own head.

But the point is that years ago, for instance, I had a sinus infection that lasted six months, and it was horrendous for about five. I mean I just had a headache and it was terrible. And the temptation is to say that this is clearly happening to me because I sinned, right? Well, you can’t know that.

And so what I did was that I said this. “God, I’m going to take this as an opportunity. Is there something in my life that is displeasing? Is there something that I need to confess?” And so I took the opportunity to search my life and to confess sin. I don’t know if God did that to me because of a sin or a series or a pattern. I don’t know; I can’t say that. But I know this: I took the opportunity to repent.

And so you want to teach people that there may be consequences. And I can’t tell you if a providential situation is a consequence; I can’t tell you that. But you can use any providential situation as an opportunity for repentance. That’s how I would tell them to treat it. Yes?

**David:** I’ve had men ask me this. What do I need to do to keep from sinning, because I know I’m going to go back and do it? So I say, “Okay. Always train yourself to recognize when the temptation is coming, because if you do you can always tell when the temptation is coming. And the second thing is always to realize that God is offering His power 24/7 to resist temptation and to put to death the evil deeds of the flesh.” So the way I invoke God’s power is that I thank Him for His good power. And every time I do that the temptation goes away, because it’s His power that resists temptation.

**Jeff:** Yeah. So the next one is one you’ve brought into the picture, Ted, and that’s fellowship. In the apostasy passage of Hebrews chapter 6 Paul says that a wonderful way to prevent apostasy is to imitate others who are in the faith, who walk in a faithful way. You need to surround yourself with believing brothers, right?

Another way is hedges, right? If it’s a sin to look at women lustfully and you have a problem with looking at women lustfully on your Internet, you put hedges around your Internet. These are just simple principles. So these things are things that I would say that you would tell somebody who is trying to combat sin in his or her life, right? Go ahead.

**Jordan:** Yes. I want to say that I really appreciate you mentioning repentance in real time.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Jordan:** And I know the feeling that I can’t face God.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Jordan:** Whether it be shame, disgust, or whatever it may be. One of the things I read recently in Psalm 10 is that “*the wicked man says in his heart: ‘God has forgotten; He has hidden His face and will not see.’*”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

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**Jordan:** I guess that’s trying to hide yourself from it so that God can’t see you. One of the things that I feel I struggle with is that I don’t have a hard time recognizing the odious nature of it. Thankfully God has helped me to see that sin is odious. And I do repent because I grieve for that. But what I’ve noticed, especially as I’ve thought about it for the last two weeks in the holiness class that we’ve been doing at church, is that the Westminster Catechism says that because we so grieve for and hate our sin we turn to God. And I feel like I’m doing more of hating the sinner and not hating the sin. I hate myself; I beat myself up for having done that. But it’s not like I see the sin and say, “I hate that.”

**Jeff:** Yeah. And see, I would challenge you. I would say to you that if I set a plate of dog crap down in front of you and I said, “Breakfast is here,” you would say to me, “I am not eating that!”, right? But if you were tempted to do the sin that you hold dear and you did it, you would say, “I recognize the odiousness of that.”

No, you don’t. Do you see what I’m saying? If every time I set the dog crap down in front of you, you would say, “I’m not eating that; I don’t know why you keep setting that in front of me.”

**Jordan:** Yes.

**Jeff:** But when the sin is set in front of us it’s because the sin doesn’t look and smell like dog crap; oftentimes it looks pretty nice.

**Jordan:** Yes. Maybe that’s where I was trying to go. In those moments you don’t hate the pleasure of sin. You love it and you want it more than anything else.

**Jeff:** Yes. So I’ve told guys that are struggling with pornography that you can’t focus on the picture or the movie or the magazine, or whatever it is. You can’t focus on that because that’s delightful to our senses, right? But you think about the child pornography that it kind of supports. Or you think about that human trafficking. All of those kinds of things feed into that. And I think you have to train yourself not to see the image, but to see all of the sin which that image is basically symbolic of. And I think that can fit under the hedge pretty nicely. But I think a person has to do those kinds of things in order to stay away from the sin.

**David:** I said earlier that you can always recognize temptation when it’s coming. But I have to qualify that. It’s probably not 100%; it’s probably more like 90 to 99% of the time. Sometimes you don’t recognize it. But you can improve yourself by training yourself to recognize temptation.

**Jeff:** Yeah. And you know, when you think about the New Testament—training in godliness, training in righteousness—that’s what they’re talking about, right? You know, it’s one of those things where you have to take on board the fact that a new believer may have a lot of zeal to resist temptation out of that zeal, right? But as a person gets older, the zeal kind of declines a bit, right? Hopefully in some ways we’re always zealous. But hopefully in our zeal we’re not like we were when we were younger. Hopefully that zeal has a little more of a gentle path.

But the fact of the matter is, just like testosterone and adrenaline won’t sustain us if we are an older age, so too that youthful zeal will not sustain us either. And there needs to be training in godliness. If that training has not been engaged in throughout our Christian

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life, by the time we get to be older men and we act like younger men when it comes to sin, shame on us! Yes?

**Brave Man:** Jeff, is there an element here of the hope of our future life?

**Jeff:** Is that a motivating factor? Is that what you're saying?

**Brave Man:** Yes; I try to remember that. I remember that you once described that a lot of us don't have the balance when we think of heaven and the future that awaits us.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Brave Man:** You described it as getting ready to go on vacation or being on a vacation. You get excited about it. You think about the time with your family and how much you're going to enjoy that.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Brave Man:** I think we lose—or I lose—a lot of that excitement. I don't think enough about that future that I have in heaven.

**Jeff:** Yeah, I think that's really true. Our family is thinking about that in just that way these days. I think that's 100% right.

**Michael Rush:** When Jordan asked the question he asked, you said that your first advice to the person was to remind them that it was their sin on the cross.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Michael:** So there's this story that's actually true that I tell now and then to highlight this whole conversation; I just call it “blind to sin.” So one day I was talking to a guy, a dear brother who was without sight, which he had not been not that long before. And so he gave his testimony. He said, “Let me tell you about myself,” and so he told me his story.

And he said, “Tell me about you!” So I told him about my life: B.C. and since Christ. In my life “*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life*” was visible, right? And when I was done telling him what I told him he said, “Oh my!” And in that “Oh my!” it was more than just those two words. What was in that “Oh my!” was “You're not like me.”

And it hit me at that moment that he couldn't even imagine the struggle that I know of vision-based lust. Do you see what I'm saying? And so I guess my question to you would be, for a person who doesn't have the ability to see, is self-righteousness a greater possibility? Would that be more prone to happen sometimes? I say that knowing that I talk to people all the time and they talk about their sin like it's not that bad compared to others. The state of the issue is actually what you really do. Do you kill people or do you cheat on a test?

**Jeff:** It's funny that you say that. We could ask Don to expose all of his sinful life to us. (*Laughter*) He would be a great candidate for us to ask about this question about a blind man and his sins, and how they are different from ours. I'm not going to put you on the spot, Don; I know you're a sinner like us. (*Laughter*) But I will say that I just heard this story not long ago. It wasn't told from a Christian perspective; it was told by a guy. I think Ray Charles was a blind man, right?

**Don:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Okay.

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**Michael:** I saw Ray Charles reading *Playboy* at the airport, in Braille. I’m not making this up! *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** I think it was Ray Charles. I’m going to make the qualifier that it may not have been, but I think it was. But this was a guy talking—again, not a Christian guy,—but he was talking about how Ray Charles was, and how he would test girls. He apparently went through women quite quickly. He couldn’t see them, right? So what he would do, he would grab their arms and squeeze their arms. And depending on how their arms felt was how he judged whether he wanted to be with a woman. And so I think there is plenty of lust to go around. *(Laughter)* With or without eyes. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** You may see me as your enemy. But would you say that you have sins that you have not been able to shake?

**Jeff:** I would say—

**Ted:** That’s true for all of us.

**Jeff:** So I’ll give you an example. One of the sins that I used to struggle with when I first came into the faith was anger. I was an angry person and I had a temper. I totally remember the day that I gained my first massive victory over that.

I was in the factory and I was relieving a guy. He had a bad shift and I was working four twelves. I went to relieve him and I just said, “Hey, how’s it going?” And he just spewed all over me.

And prior to that moment I would have spewed all over him, Christian or no Christian, right? But I held my control. I was joyous all night long that I was able to hold my control. That was a while ago; that was probably back in 1990.

Fast forward now to 2012. My brother had been murdered, and I got the call from the DA that the laws were changing. This guy who had killed my brother had filed his final appeal. It was dismissed because it was filed a week late. And so the DA’s office called me to tell me that they were going to help him to re-file his appeal.

And I said, “Why would you do that?” And they said, “Because we’re all getting old; we’re all dying. And we don’t want this to be a loose end. Somebody could come along and say, “A couple of days went by and this guy was rejected. We want the appeal because we can win.” I said, “Okay.”

Well that started a multi-year process of me driving to Meadville and being the only one to show up in the courtroom. I told my parents not to come. But I was the only one to show up at the courthouse with his family.

And this is how it was. I remember being at his sentencing, and a friend was going to speak on behalf of our family. And at the last minute he had a terrified look on his face. And so I just said, “I’ll do it.”

And I walked up the middle aisle. And I had to walk behind him in order to get to the podium to speak on behalf of our family to the judge. The bailiff and his partner moved in. The lawyer turned his chair so that I would be between him and this guy. It was amazing to me. In that moment I thought: They think I’m going to try to take this guy out.

I walked to the podium. I said what I had to say. The sentencing happened. I sat back down.

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The first time I walked in for this appeal no one was in the courtroom. There was a bailiff all the way on the other end. And this guy and his lawyer were standing fifteen feet away from me, and nobody thought that I would want to go and beat the snot out of this guy. But they didn't know my internal man, did they?

And I want to tell you something. I struggled for three or four years with anger issues in a great way, because every time I had to go up to that courtroom there he was in front of me.

So I told one of my elders. I said, “This is what I'm going through.” And so he was faithful to pray for me and faithful to ask me about it.

And I want to tell you something. It was so funny because I thought to myself that I thought I had beaten this anger. But I think there were times when I was more angry than I could have ever thought of being as a young man, and it was scary. So it reminded me that we can never stop being vigilant, even against those sins that we think we've mastered. Well, let me pray.

**Paul Sedlock:** That's what Paul said.

**Jeff:** Yes, in Romans 7. Let's pray. Gracious God, thank You for the day and for the blessing of life in Christ, for if it were not for Him we would be lost. And so we rejoice in knowing that our lives are hidden in Him as we stand before You, and so we rejoice. And so we pray these things in His name. Amen.

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

**Don:** Jeff, are you angry with me because I sidetracked us, and now you'll have to do Jonah 3 next week? *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Don, I could never be fully angry with you. *(Laughter)*