

“Jonah” Pt 13

A Wayward Prophet

Jonah 4:1-11

The Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.

February 16, 2024

Jeff: All right. Jonah chapter 4. Let me read to you the word of the living God.

“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the LORD and said, ‘O LORD, is this not what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.’

“And the LORD said, ‘Do you do well to be angry?’

“Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade till he should see what would become of the city.

“Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.

“But when dawn came up the next day God appointed a worm that attacked the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose God appointed a scorching east wind. And the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, ‘It is better for me to die than to live!’

“But God said to Jonah, ‘Do you do well to be angry for the plant?’ And he said, ‘Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die!’

“And the LORD said, ‘You pity the plant for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city in which there are more than one hundred twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?’” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: All right. Let me review for just a minute where we’ve been. I said to you that we need to think about why Jonah reacted the way he reacted. And I said to you the last time that it could be an issue of character. We’re going to return to that, so I’m not going to say a whole lot about that right now. But it could also be the fact that he was a prophet, and a prophet has an eye to the future and sees in a way that normal people in the Old Testament did not see. I said to you that Amos 3:7 says that God first reveals things to His prophets before He does things. And so it’s a remarkable thing to think about prophecy or the life of the prophet in the Old Testament when you think about that principle. For instance, how was it that Elisha knew that when the axe head was lost that it would stick on the water? Well I think the logical deduction would be from a passage like Amos 3:7 is that God revealed it to him. God not only revealed the events to him but the solution to the events. And so it’s a remarkable thing to be a prophet in those days

“Jonah” Pt 13

And so here's Jonah. And he knows as it were that God is going to do what He did and that He was going to relent, and we're going to get to that in just a little bit. But when you think about it from that perspective, you think to yourself, why would he react the way that he did knowing what he knew, or possibly knowing what he knew? And the answer to that is the last thing that we talked about. And that was the social pressure that it might bring, because here is the whole nation of Israel behind him that is hardening toward the Gentiles, not softening toward them, and certainly hardening toward those Gentiles seeking to dominate the world and to oppress the nation of Israel. And so they are not going to be happy that Jonah goes to the Gentile nation and speaks the gospel to them so they repent.

So there are a number of reasons why Jonah may have had the reaction that he had. And yet I want to move to what I'm calling a failure to reflect. This is on your outline; it's the second point on your outline from the last time. But I want us to think a little bit about his failure to reflect. I want you to think about that in kind of a general way, in sort of a way that you probably would relate to very well.

Do you remember taking your kids somewhere and dropping them off, maybe at a friend's house? And you decided that you were going to have a little talk with them before they went into the house just so they would remember certain things—for instance whose children they are and whose name they bear, and that they're a reflection of you when they go to these places.

So you say to them, “Now remember, son”—it's always the boy. No, I'm just kidding. My son says to me all the time, “It's always the boy, isn't it?” And I always say, “Yes, it is.”

Anyway, when they go you say to them, “Remember to say please and thank you. Remember to do this and that and the other thing.” You have a few things that you want them to do all the time.

I remember when our kids were little, and you probably had the same spiel when they were little. And you were taking them to a place and you said, “Don't ask for it if you're not going to eat it. If you put it on your plate, make sure you eat it”; you had that kind of line. And so I think that what we have here is that we have a child who is failing to remember who he is, a child who is failing to reflect on who his Father is.

And Jonah has some problems, more than one. And in this part of our time together I want us to reflect on at least three of these problems, three of these failures that we can identify pretty clearly in the text, and I think that are actually interesting when we take a look at them.

The first one is a *failure to model*. And I'm saying that this is like father, like son. Now there's a sense in which the prophet is very much like his Father, his heavenly Father. When you think about likeness I can't think of any more of a likeness than to know the mind of one's father, right?

I don't know if you've ever seen these books, but they're little books, and there are questions that you can answer. And they're directed toward a dad or they're directed toward a mom.

“Jonah” Pt 13

One year I bought a book like this, one for my dad and one for my mom. I gave them to them, expecting them to fill out all the questions so that I would know a little more about them. When they died I would be able to look through the book and remember what they thought, and why they did the things they did, and what influences impacted them when they were growing up.

My mom filled out the book. I said to my dad as I took up his book one day, “It’s totally blank and you’ve had it for a year. You’re not filling out the book.”

And he said, “You’re right.”

I said, “Aren’t you going to fill out your book?” He said, “No.”

I said, “Why?” And he goes, “It’s none of your business.” (*Laughter*) “It’s none of your business what I’ve been thinking all these years.”

Ted Wood: It’s an issue of communication.

Jeff: Yeah, right. (*Laughter*) And so when we think about that closeness that we have we want to know what our Father thinks. We want to know the ways His mind works; we want to know what makes Him tick. And I think part of that is with any child. I see it with my own son, and you probably see it with yours. They want to know you.

And so this first failure is a failure to be like his Father. Now what do I mean by that? I mean God-likeness. And God-likeness is not just something that the prophet embraces. It’s something that every Christian embraces, something that every believer embraces. And it’s one of those trans-Testament models, right?

So for instance it’s an Old Testament and a New Testament commandment. For instance, in 1 Peter 1:16: *You shall be holy, for I am holy.*” Where does that come from? I’ll tell you where it came from: Leviticus 11:44. That’s not a new commandment; it’s an old commandment. And it was required of people in the Old Testament; it’s required of people in the New Testament who believe.

And the point is that this likeness is that whole idea of like Father, like son. “I will be your God; you shall be My people.” My people means My family. And so we are to be like our Father.

What does Matthew chapter 5, verse 48 say? It says, “Be like your heavenly Father,” right? And so the idea of likeness is very real in the Old Testament.

And I want you to think about adoption. We have a tendency to think that if they are ours biologically that they will be like us. But I want you to know something. When you adopt a child into your family it is remarkable how many times people will come up to you and say, “You know what? He looks just like you. The way she walks is the spitting image of her mother.” And you know, the adopted child wanting to honor his or her adoptive parents just smiles, right? But the idea is that she knows and he knows that they’re adopted, and that these biological traits that they are naming as if they’re transferred from one generation to the next are not transferred at all, and yet there’s a likeness.

Why is there a likeness even with an adopted child? It’s because they are part of your family. They’re living with you; they’re part of your patterns. They’re imbibing your thoughts; they’re doing all of these things that a child would do because they are children. And so they’re a reflection whether or not they’re adopted.

“Jonah” Pt 13

Now why do I bring this up? Why do I bring up adoption? Because we're adopted. We're not natural children of God. Jesus Christ is the eternally generated Son; we are adopted children. And so the idea that we would mirror the likeness of our heavenly Father is just as real and as vital as a naturally born child. So as adopter children this is for us; we're adopted. Whether it be in the Old or the New Testament, this is ours to be.

Now here's Jonah, and Jonah is really a distorted model. He is not living like he should be living. He's not modeling the likeness of his Father.

Now I want you to see that in a particular way. And I want you to see it in terms of anger.

Now before I go into this I want to just say a word about this, because I think it's really important. I don't know how many times I've heard people say, “Well, there is a righteous anger that I might display, isn't there?”

And I say, “yes. The Bible does talk about there being a righteous anger.” But I want you to know something. When you think about anger, when you think about it in terms of God's display of anger, anger always has boundaries for God.

And what are the boundaries for anger? Because when you think about it, can I put it this way? When we think about God we think about the triune God, right? There is one triune God. But we think about God either pre-creation—that is, before anything was made,—and we think about God post-creation.

Now we know what an attribute of God is. We know what an attribute of God is because an attribute is something that is inherently belonging to God only if it can exist pre-creation. And so that means that anger is not an attribute of God. Wrath is not an attribute of God, because prior to creation who was God mad at? The Father was not mad at the Son. The Son was not mad at or angry with the Holy Spirit.

Anger and wrath is a post-creation response. In other words, anger—wrath—is a manifestation of God's justice. God is a just God. But when creation comes and it's unjust, His response to that is anger and wrath.

Now when we think about this, one of the things that I think that we need to keep in mind is that anger is a display of God's justice. And therefore, when we think about a righteous anger from God, we think about an anger that is within the boundaries of God's justice.

Now that means that if you can display a righteous anger it must be within the bounds of righteousness. The trouble is that our anger has a tendency to work outside of the boundaries of righteousness, which always turns our anger into an unrighteous anger.

We have this high view of ourselves, that we can be righteously angry. But if we really stop to reflect on the anger that we're displaying, sometimes the cause of our anger may be an unjust cause, which is why we have a righteous anger. But you should never trust yourself to display a righteous anger with all purity because you won't be able to do it. And so you really need to be careful to follow the precept: “*Don't let the sun go down on your anger*”, because I have news for you. You can't control it, because anger will eventually morph into bitterness, and it will be a deep, black hole within you that you will have a difficult time ever climbing out of. The only way you'll be able to do it is with divine assistance.

“Jonah” Pt 13

That’s what I want to preface this with. But is there anything you want to bring up before that? Yes, John.

John Gratner: I’ll go back to that idea. We often think our motives are pure. I read Thomas Watson’s little book on repentance.

Jeff: Yeah.

John: The only line I remember was that “*The true penitent confesses that he mingles sin with everything that he does, and therefore has nothing to boast of.*”

Jeff: Yeah.

John: That’s really good.

Jeff: That’s really good. That’s really true.

John: It’s really true. Just as I sit here thinking now how smart I am to remember that, it’s pride. We have that in everything we do. How much pride enters into the idea of thinking that I can be righteous in the inner man.

Jeff: Yes. You have too small of a sense of your own sin.

Ted: Right. And the idea that what’s restraining it is culture or politics is a form of self-righteous anger.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: Even if the cause is right, it’s too mingled with sin, as John was saying. We are very self-righteous today.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: All the causes are very righteous on either side of the political spectrum.

Jeff: Yeah. The great thing about it is that when we think about ourselves, as we think about when our righteousness goes out of bounds of justice, one of the things that’s great is that there is always repentance because there’s an abundance of grace. But like you said, the world has nothing to offer in terms of grace.

Ted: No.

Jeff: And so—

Ted: It has to be right.

Jeff: Yes, or you’re canceled and you’re eliminated.

Ted: That’s right; we’re the unrighteous ones.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

John: And in today’s world where you get to have your own say, your own truth, you can’t have this bizarre confidence in your own self-righteousness, because I’m right because I’ve decided that I am. You can’t tell me I’m not, because there is no outside objective standard.

Jeff: Yeah.

John: So you get this bizarreness that is being entrenched in these seemingly ridiculous ideas. But no one feels compelled that they are able to come against it.

Jeff: Yeah.

John: It’s so strange.

Jeff: Absolutely.

Gary Craig: Atheists are known for having a high view of themselves. *(Laughter)*

“Jonah” Pt 13

Jeff: Well, there’s none higher in their own eyes. (*Laughter*) Let me tell you some things here. “Anger” in Jonah appears five times in these eleven verses. Now notice that it stands in stark contrast in some ways to what we see in chapter 3. But I want you to notice this. In chapter 3 this is the king who says, “Who knows? God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.”

That’s exactly what we just said, right? There is an abounding grace for a turning from our sin, and God displays that.

But then we find these. In 4:1 Jonah is greatly displeased. We’ll return to that one. And then in 4:4 the Lord says to Jonah, “*Do you do well to be angry?*” And then in 4:9 the same: “*Do you do well to be angry for the plant?*”

Oh, and there’s one more: 4:9: “*Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die!*” And so what we have is that we have this dialogue about anger. And we actually catch a glimpse of this commentary on God by a Gentile king in chapter 3. But between Father and son—if I can put it like that,—and we should put it like that between God and His prophet, between Father and son—we have this dialogue about anger.

And it’s an interesting dialogue when you think about it, and I want to draw some things out of it as we think about it together. First of all, a charitable reading is that Jonah is reflecting God’s own anger. This is the most charitable reading that we can think of when we read this passage. “God, You are an angry God, and You display that anger toward Nineveh. And all I’m doing is consistently representing You when You fail to consistently represent Yourself.”

How about that? Have you ever said that to your father when you were younger? You might end up with a sore ear. I’m just saying, right? But that’s a charitable reading of Jonah in this text; that would be a charitable reading of the text: that Jonah is reflecting God’s anger more consistently than God is reflecting His own anger.

Now that kind of reading is problematic because it creates a dissonance for us. And that dissonance for us is seen in Nineveh’s repentance.

Now look at this in 3:10; I’ve already mentioned it to you. “*When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that He said He would do to them, and He did not do it.*”

Now you have to keep this in mind; remember what I said. There was the message that in forty days Nineveh would be overthrown. And you can look at that passively or reflexively; that is, passively they would be overthrown if they didn’t repent. Reflexively they could have overturned themselves. God always provided the condition; there is always a conditionality for the Ninevites, if they repent He will relent. And so they repent and God relents.

Now that wasn’t a surprise to God, nor was it a surprise to Jonah because he knew the mind of God as a prophet. But the point is, God relents of the calamity that He is going to bring upon them if they repent. And so He relents.

But then look at 4:1. “*But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the LORD and said.*” Now let’s just pause there because I want to deal with that in just a second.

“Jonah” Pt 13

But that word “displeased” in 4:1, that is *exceedingly evil*. Now think about that. The Ninevites turn from their evil way. But it says that Jonah was exceedingly displeased. But it stirred up evil in Jonah. It’s interesting that their repentance from their evil ways stirred up evil in Jonah.

You know, as a teacher that’s one of those things where I want to say, “can we just take fifteen minutes and think about that? Nobody say a word; just kind of reflect on that: that somebody’s repentance would stir up evil in him.”

Now we don’t have time to take fifteen minutes and do that. Maybe you can do that later today. But I will say this to you. I understand what that means, and my guess is that you understand what that means. There was a time when thirty years ago my brother was murdered; you guys know that. And I was contacted by the prison system about six months after he was killed. And I was asked if I wanted to come and speak to the inmates as the victim.

And it was interesting because I listened, and this is what was said to me. At the very end it was said to me: “But we’re not asking you to come and abuse the inmates. We’re just asking you to come and let them see you as a victim.” Now they put it a little differently than that.

But the last thing I wanted inmates who had harmed others, the last thing I wanted them to see was a victim that they could feel powerful over. And in fact I’ll tell you what. If you would have said to me at that point: “Maybe you should have preached the gospel to them so that they can repent,” I would have said, “That’s the last thing in the world I want to do.”

And so I get it, right? I get Jonah. And my guess is that you can get Jonah. And I think this is what makes Jonah not such a caricature of the cartoon that we see on Veggie Tales. This is what makes Jonah kind of living and breathing; he is a person that we can really relate to if we’re honest with ourselves.

And so here is the foundation of this. God the Father was wrong; Jonah thinks he’s right. And you know, that’s a scary place to be because even as you think it, you know you’re wrong. That’s Jonah’s first failure.

And I want to simply say that God has graciously given us an analogy of what it means to be like God from a father/son vantage point, because if we’ve had a father that we want to emulate, that we loved, let’s face it. Even some of the hardest dads like the factory worker dads that weren’t all that terribly affectionate when we were growing up, we still wanted to be like them, right? I mean, why is it that even guys who turn out kind of bad because they’re following the bad examples of their fathers, they still want to be like their fathers even though it was a bad example. Children want to be like their fathers, which is why we want to put forward the best example that we can put forward for them.

But my point is this. We know what it’s like to step away from our Father in this example. And that’s hard, even when it’s an example for instance of a bad father, even if it’s an example that we know we ought to step away from; that’s hard. And here is God the Father who is righteous in all of His ways. And Jonah is essentially saying, “You are wrong.” Do you realize how angry you have to be inside in order to maintain that posture for even a few seconds? This man is furious! So that’s first.

“Jonah” Pt 13

Second, there’s a failure to embrace what he knew. This has sort of been the underlying proposition of all that we’ve been saying thus far. I want you to look at verse 2. It says, *“O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? This is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish.”*

Notice: “I made haste to flee.” Why did he make haste to flee? Because he anticipated; the Hebrew is “I anticipated. I knew what was in front of me.”

And here’s where I think the Amos 3:7 text comes alive for us. How did he know what was in front of him? How did he know what to anticipate? We think, well God is a gracious God, and so therefore—No, I think it’s more than that. This is a prophet. And God does nothing without first revealing it to His prophets, as Amos 3:7 says. And so Jonah anticipated and knew what was in front of him. He knew it.

I want you to think about this simple comparison; I want you to think about it. In 1:6 we had the sailors say in the midst of the storm, “Maybe your God will be concerned.” In 3:9 the king says, “Who knows? God may turn.” In 4:2, “I knew you were a gracious God.”

You know, everybody else—the Gentiles—they don’t know like Jonah knows. But they say, “You know what? Where else can we turn?” They’re like Peter: “Where else are we going to go? Let’s just cast ourselves upon this God and let’s see what happens.” And yet Jonah is sitting back, and he knows exactly what’s going to happen, and he doesn’t want it to happen. He knew it, and he didn’t like what he knew.

And that’s a tough spot to be in. I want you to catch this. The dislike is expressed in his prayer. And what you see, what I’m going to show you, is something that’s really interesting, because the prayer is something that you know. In other words, if you look at that prayer you see that prayer before you. It ought to be one of those things that if you know anything about the Exodus story you know this prayer. Let me show it to you.

On the one side we have Jonah’s prayer. *“For I knew that You are a gracious God—merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.”*

This is from Exodus as God passed by Moses. *“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, and keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.”*

What’s missing from his prayer? Righteousness and justice. Isn’t it interesting? When you talk about this idea of anger being contained within righteousness and justice, Jonah’s anger was not contained within righteousness; it was an unrighteous anger. And yet he knows full well that God’s anger is contained within righteousness. It was given in a conditional message. Nineveh will be overthrown either passively or reflexively. In other words, they will overturn themselves by repentance, “in which case I will relent,” or “they will not and I will not relent.”

Again God knew what was going to take place and so did Jonah. But he also knew that the anger of God was in the boundaries of God’s own righteousness and justice. And so it was righteous of God to relent when they repented.

That’s amazing to me, because I think that Jonah is at this point. If you think about how we’ve talked about distorting the model of relationship between God and Jonah as a

“Jonah” Pt 13

Father and son, here Jonah is caricaturing God. Maybe you’ve done it as a young person, or maybe you watched another young person do it. Maybe if you’re a grandparent you’ve watched your grandkids caricature their parents—your children—to you because they wanted to win your favor.

And so they come to you and they’ll say something to the effect that “Grandma, you know how Mom is. She always—“, right? Those aren’t the same rules for Grandpa. “Now that’s my daughter, and I know she doesn’t always; I know that may be true sometimes; it’s not always the case.” You know what I mean?

You know what the grandpa usually does. “Oh I know; he is so mean!” (*Laughter*) Ted, you’re looking at me like—

Ted: No. It’s just that my mind is going 72 miles an hour. I mean, I’m right there.

Jeff: Yeah, yeah. And so what we have here is a childlike response on the part of Jonah, but it’s not a good one; it’s not a good childlike response.

Well, then we have the third failure. And the third failure is that Jonah failed to love God’s enemies. And I think this is a profound one when you think about it. We are to love our enemies.

Now think about that. All you have to do is just pause for a minute and reflect upon this whole idea of righteous anger, because I want you to think about how God treats the unrighteous. God treats them in justice.

Now when you react to somebody you react to them in a variety of ways. For instance you might react to them with logical argumentation. You might react to them with humor. You might react to them with emotion. You might react to them with behavior. All of those are reactions that we might have toward the unrighteous about whom we claim we are righteously angry.

Here is the point. When we think about being righteously angry, one of the things that we’ll typically say is that we are righteous to be angry. And where does that manifestation normally appear? It normally appears in logic, right? It normally appears in logic because we reduce the position to absurdity. And we think that’s just logical. And logical is the way God thinks, and so I’m just reflecting the logic of God as he reduces these foolish arguments to absurdity, right? And so maybe that’s good.

But then we move into humor. And our humor technically becomes sarcasm. And sarcasm means literally in the Latin: “ripping from the bone,” tearing the flesh from the bone.

You know, when you think about sarcasm in the context of family, it’s not very healthy. And when you think about it outside the family, it’s still not very healthy. And when you think about it with your enemies, that’s typically where we become unrighteous in our anger, right?

Sure, we have emotional responses, and so on. But my point is that we have to think about and reflect on what it means to be righteously angry. That involves the whole person. We can’t contain ourselves within the boundary of God’s justice, but God can and does.

“Jonah” Pt 13

And so when we think not about being righteously angry toward our enemies but actually now turning this into loving them, when we love our enemies God can love His enemies in righteousness. But that becomes so difficult for us.

Why? Well, think about it. You know, if we say that righteousness equals not killing my enemy, I'm good! I'm all good! But if loving my enemy means praying for the good of my enemy, I'm a little challenged there sometimes. And I guess that depends on how bad that enemy is, right?

In fact I would say this to you. I would say that there are some people who believe that they can actually pray the imprecatory Psalms about other people. Now I want you to reflect on what that has to mean. You know what an imprecatory psalm is. An imprecatory psalm is a psalm of curse. In other words, you believe that you can pray God's curse down upon another person.

Now if you believe that, let's say you believe that about a person who professes faith in Christ. What you are saying is that you know the mind of God so well that this person, even though he is in the church and has made a profession of faith and has everybody else fooled apparently, you know better. You know the mind of God, and so you begin to call the curse of God upon them.

Well, think about it even from the outside. You say, “Well obviously they're outside the church.” Do you know whether that person will ever repent? “No, that person will never repent; therefore I'm going to pray the imprecations upon them.” Really? You know the mind of God that well!

You see, imprecations from the Psalms for instance, are always reflective of Christ trampling upon His enemies. So we can only read or reflect, or for us even sing those Psalms after the fact, in light of Christ and not by way of personal vindication or vengeance. It's not possible for us to do it that way. And so when it says that we need to love our enemies in Matthew chapter 5, we need to love our enemies in the way that God loves our enemies. And we better stick close to God because we will fail if we don't.

The attitude “if God won't I will—if God won't hate my enemies the way that He ought to hate His enemies then I will”—is not an attitude that we ought to keep. It's not an attitude that we ought to possess.

This is the attitude that says, “Grace is for me and not for you.” And I think that can be a particular danger for us, that this becomes our attitude. And so there's a failure to model and embrace the love of God when it comes to these particular things.

This is Jonah's failure, and there may be other failures that you can think of. But these are the failures that I wanted to put in front of you today. We have about two or three minutes. Do you have anything that you'd like to chew on before we finish?

Jim Hamilton: Are we talking about trying to change the nature of the enemy that we're dealing with and the feelings you have for them?

Jeff: Well the thing about it is, you said, “Are we trying to change the enemy or the feelings we have?” And I think the question is more about me than it is my enemy. For instance, obviously I can try to change my enemy through the preaching of the gospel, or maybe even through the application of the law.

“Jonah” Pt 13

For instance, let's say that my enemy has broken the law. He's not going to sin morally against me; he's been a criminal against me. Well then the law can handle that, right?

Listen; think about this. I think John Piper was the guy who said that if somebody breaks into his house that he would never call the police and never lift a finger to stop him. He might preach the gospel to him. And I'm thinking that this guy is insane! If somebody breaks into your house, then you call the authorities, you have the state come and deal with them. It's the state's job in Romans 13 to reward the good and punish the evil. Let them carry this guy away and let them prosecute him according to the law.

Why? Because we know that there are three uses of the law. It's the Christian's guide, for sanctification of course, as he stands in Christ. It's a tutorial that leads us to Christ. But it also reigns in evil.

Now if in reigning in evil the law leads someone to the end of themselves and to the beginning of Christ, then wonderful! But the point is that this idea that there is no application of the law for the unbeliever, such that we can just let the world run amuck is nuts! I mean, it's nuts!

But—and this is the hardest part about it, right?—I've got to reign myself in terms of my attitude toward the world run amuck. I mean, if my attitude toward the world run amuck is let me kill them all and let God sort them out, then I'm probably wrong on that one, right? But if my response is that I'm going to live faithfully in each situation I encounter with an unbeliever, if it's a criminal one I'm going to live faithfully by bringing in the state. If it's a moral one I'm going to live faithfully by trying to live without reproach before them and the world. If it's somebody in the church I'm going to have my elders help me sort it out, right?

So there are ways of handling these things. But I always have to keep my own self in check as I deal with any one of these scenarios. And that means my thoughts, that means my feelings, that means my actions. I need to reign those things in. Good question.

All right, let me pray and if you have any questions we can take it up the next time. Father in heaven, thank You for this day and for the blessing of life in Christ. Again we pray for our brother Don and ask for a quick and a speedy healing. We're so thankful for his life. And Lord, thank you for John's ability to see him and encourage him and to bring us a report of that. Lord, we just ask that You would continue to work in him.

Father, bless us as we go out into the world. And we pray that rather than being failures—which we know we are—that we would have glimmers of likeness toward You, that the watching world might see and be glad and rejoice and ask us for the hope that is in us. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. (*Applause*)