

Sunday Evening April 22, 2018

“God’s Sovereignty vs Man’s Will” Jonah 1:1-17

I. Man’s will, free will and God’s sovereignty –

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." ³ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. (Jonah 1:1-3 NKJ)

1. *In this passage we have:*

- A. *God’s command - Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it;*
- B. *His expressed reason for this command - for their wickedness has come up before Me."*
- C. *Jonah’s disobedience to this command - ³ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish*
- D. *Where Jonah thought he was going - Tarshish from the presence of the LORD...*

to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

2. *Now, some people would say, ‘Jonah’s disobedience shows he has a FREE WILL! I would say it shows he has a will, an ability to make decisions. When God told him to go to Nineveh, he decided to go Tarshish, to run from God, to escape commanded obedience!*

- A. *This is what I call a will, an ability to make decisions, we are not robots!*
- B. *If people insist Jonah’s will was a “will free”, I would have to ask the question what are you saying his will is FREE from?*

3. *Arminius said man’s will was free from sin. I would argue Jonah’s actions are evidence that it was not!
Other Scripture seems to indicate a sort of slavery to sin –*

**Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?
Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.
(Jeremiah 13:23 NKJ)**

Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. (John 8:34 NKJ)

- 4. *Others insist man’s will is free from God’s sovereignty or maybe even completely free? If man’s will be so free, wouldn’t he be able to fly up to Heaven and punch God in the nose, rather than flee like Jonah did?*

Frank Sinatra sings the great song of those who exult free will, “I did it my way”

II. Man is not free from God’s sovereign control, note:

1. *God brings a wind –*

But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. (Jonah 1:4 NKJ)

2. *Men are afraid, start praying, they wake Jonah to pray, they cast lots, and God is in control of the lot, and the lot falls on Jonah –*

Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep. ⁶ So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish." ⁷ And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble *has come upon us.*" So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. (Jonah 1:5-7 NKJ)

A. *God is sovereign over lots -*

The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD. (Proverbs 16:33 NKJ)

B. *This lot falls on Jonah and the men, whom God is also sovereign over, are forced to make a decision. They want it to be an informed decision, so they ask Jonah questions, they are intelligent men. Look at all the questions, I have numbered them:*

Then they said to him, "Please tell us! (1) For whose cause *is* this trouble upon us? (2) What is your occupation? (3) And where do you come from? (4) What is your country? (5) And of what people are you?"⁹ So he said to them, "I *am* a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry *land*."¹⁰ Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, (6) "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.¹¹ Then they said to him, (7) "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?"-- for the sea was growing more tempestuous.¹² And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest *is* because of me." (Jonah 1:8-12 NKJ)

3. Question (7) was the most important of those questions at the moment, Jonah's answer indicates that God was sovereign over the sea, if the men would throw him in, God would calm the sea!

4. In spite, of Jonah's word to them, because they were not cruel men, they tried against God's sovereign will, to ROW – Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. (Jonah 1:13 NKJ)

5. Acknowledging God's sovereign control over their dire situation they:

A. Prayed to the LORD, to the True God -¹⁴ Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, "We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood;... (Jonah 1:14A NKJ)

B. They specifically acknowledge His sovereignty - for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You." (Jonah 1:14B NKJ)

C. They were obedient to what they believed was God's will –¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, (Jonah 1:15A NKJ)

D. They witnessed God's sovereign control over the sea – and the sea ceased from its raging. (Jonah 1:15B NKJ)

E. Seeing these great things; they feared exceedingly and seem to be saved –

Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows. (Jonah 1:16 NKJ)

III. Nothing is free from God's sovereign power –

Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. (Jonah 1:17 NKJ)

Please note the fish factors:

1. The fish's timing had to be perfect or else Jonah drowns!
2. The fish's timing was coordinated with the men's attempt at rowing which was against the REVEALED will of God, which they had learned from the prophet Jonah - "Pick me up and throw me into the sea" but not against God's secret will, He had perfectly coordinated the sailors rowing, the fish's swimming, the fish's perhaps being moved by the sea, like the boat as well!
3. The fishes belly, where Jonah was for three days, was the perfect place for:

A. Praying –

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. (Jonah 2:1 NKJ)

B. Crying – Jonah 2:2; and repenting, renewing broken vows - **But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.**" (Jonah 2:9 NKJ)

C. Travelling –

So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry *land*. (Jonah 2:10 NKJ)

Using the FISH God brought Jonah both physically and spiritually to the exact place he wanted him to be, ready to preach to the Ninevites - Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,² "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you."³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey *in extent*.⁴ And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:1-4 NKJ)

IV. God further shows His sovereignty in:

1. Nineveh's repentance and salvation – Jonah 3:5-10
2. The plant God prepared to calm Jonah's anger – Jonah 4:1-6
3. The worm God prepared (ordained) to humble and teach Jonah; Jonah 4:7- 11

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