

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

**C0821 – July 2, 2008 – Jonah 1 & 2 – Doctrine Of Divine
Discipline**

Tonight we want to return to the Book of Jonah but we want to do it by developing the Doctrine of Divine Discipline. So Jonah is going to serve as a motif for divine discipline. Now this is a powerful motif here for how God handles a believer whose gone negative volition to the word of God. So by way of introduction to the doctrine let's open our Bibles to the Book of Hebrews. Hebrews is one of those books that's got everybody confused. And the reason everybody is confused on Hebrews is because everybody's confused on the gospel. So until people understand the gospel of grace they'll never figure it out. Now, in Hebrews you have five warning passages and the language in these warnings is very strong. You get the same kind of strong language in John's epistles and John's Revelation, chapters 2-3, these are all linked so that however you interpret Hebrews you must, logically, interpret 1, 2 and 3 John and Rev 2-3 the same way. So I want you to watch the intensity of the language of Heb 3 as an introduction to divine discipline. Now, in verse 3 what's the context? Who's generation is being described? Moses' generation, alright this is the Exodus generation. With that in mind let's pick up in verse 6, "but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house—whose house we are, **if** we hold fast our confidence" IF? Third class condition? Maybe we will, author included mind you, maybe we will, maybe we won't. "But I thought all believers were a part of Christ's house by virtue of faith alone in Christ alone" yet this verse brings in a big IF. And what's the content of the IF, "if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end." Now what that is talking about is perseverance, holding on, holding fast until the end of the Christian life. So we call this a doctrine of perseverance. Now, obviously if we have a 3rd class condition here then there's the possibility of failure. Maybe we will persevere, maybe we won't. So what's the implication if we don't? What happens if I don't hold fast to the end? Then I'm not a part

of His house. Now maybe that shocks you a little but let's read on because now he's going to give an example of people who did not hold fast. So we've got a first class example, Moses' generation, the wilderness wanderers. Verse 7. "Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, ⁸Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, As in the day of trial in the wilderness, ⁹Where your fathers tried *Me* by testing *Me*, And saw My works for forty years. ¹⁰"Therefore I was angry with this generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they did not know My ways'; ¹¹As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" Ooh, more strong language, "They shall not enter My rest." In the OT context what does the rest refer to? The land, entering the Promised Land. That generation did not enter His rest but wandered around for forty years like a bunch of morons. "But I thought all believers would enter His rest." So how do we explain this? Well, one way this has been handled historically is to say they're not saved at all because if they were saved they would have persevered. That's the Calvinist interpretation. A second way to handle this is to go with the Arminian and say, "Yes, they were saved but since they didn't persevere until the end they lost their salvation? So there's some disagreement on these warnings and I want you to feel the tension. So let's continue reading with verse 12. "Take care, brethren," now that's interesting, he calls them brethren, you don't typically call unbelievers brethren, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God." Now don't you first have to be with the living God before you can fall away from the living God? "¹³But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we have become partakers of Christ, **if** (another 3rd class condition, maybe we will, maybe we won't, author includes himself) For we have become partakers of Christ **if** we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, ¹⁵while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me." ¹⁶For who provoked *Him* when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt *led* by Moses? ¹⁷And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief." Now, do you agree this is a stiff warning? It's powerful language. In the midst of that how many of you can see how someone might interpret that like the Arminian, that a believer must persevere until the end and if he

doesn't then he loses his salvation? Let me see a raise of hands. I'm just asking if you can see that not if you agree with it. Now, how many of you see how someone might interpret that like the Calvinists who say that we may think we're believers but if we don't persevere until the end then we must conclude that we were never believers to begin with? Let me see a show of hands. Alright. How many of you see a third way this could be interpreted? What way do you see? Could these be genuine believers who are being warned that if they don't live an obedient Christian life then they will not become a partaker of Christ? Will not enter His rest? They will not be "of His house?" What does all this mean? If it doesn't mean you were never saved to begin with, if it doesn't mean loss of salvation then what could it mean? Could it mean loss of rewards? To show you that's precisely what he's saying and that he's writing to genuine believers look at v 1, chapter 3, what does he call them? "holy brethren" and "partakers of a heavenly calling." How could that refer to unbelievers? So the Calvinist view that these are people who think they are believers but really are not and need to evaluate their performance to make sure they are is bankrupt. They most certainly are believers. Well, if they are believers then can they lose their salvation? It doesn't say that anywhere here. It says that while they are a partaker of a heavenly calling they will not be a partaker of Christ if they don't persevere. It says that while they are holy brethren they will not enter His rest if they don't persevere. It says that the Exodus generation did not enter the land because of disobedience. But it never says they lost their salvation. Nor does the rest of the NT ever say you can lose eternal life. It wouldn't be called eternal life if you could lose it. So the Arminian interpretation doesn't square. What does square in these warnings, John's warnings in his epistles and in Rev 2-3 is that these are genuine believers. Another thing in the context that indicates this is a group is that the analogy is the Exodus generation. That generation is looked upon by the NT as a believing generation. Turn over to 1 Cor 10. 1 Cor 10 is a parallel context where Paul's dealing with the same kind of carnal Christians that the author of Hebrews was dealing with. And in v 1 he says, "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³and all ate the same spiritual food; ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness." That's the consequences of disobedience. They

were believers all right but they fell away and lived lives of disobedience. So the Scriptures look at the Exodus as a dividing line, those who put applied blood to the door went out of Egypt which was a picture of the kingdom of man and went into the kingdom of God so that the generation that comes out of Egypt is a believing generation. But then they started grumbling and they wanted to go back to Egypt and all the rest of it. So that was a rebellious generation who hardened their hearts and therefore went under divine discipline in the wilderness, their bodies falling by the way. So they did not enter His rest, they did not enter the land. So you have to understand that the land in the OT was a reward for obedience. Only two believers from that generation entered the land, they're not mentioned here or in Hebrews but who were they? Joshua and Caleb. Why did they enter the rest? Did they enter it because they were the only two Israelites who had faith alone in Christ alone? Obviously not, what are we going to say that out of 2 million only 2 were believers? Are we going to say Moses was an unbeliever? And Aaron and Miriam. Why did Joshua and Caleb enter? Because of obedience. So there's a difference between being justified and receiving rewards. All believers are justified but not all believers receive rewards. There's a difference between having faith alone in Christ alone and living an obedient Christian life. And according to Hebrews a whole generation of Jews were justified but failed to live an obedient life thereafter. Did that mean they lost their justification? Of course not. What it meant was that they came under divine discipline and because of their unresponsiveness, never entered his rest, they had turmoil in the wilderness for forty years because they were idiot believers. So idiotic that Paul and the author of Hebrews picks up that generation as the picture of a carnal believer.

Now turn over to Heb 12 because here's another principle we want to hit from the start. Who does Christ discipline? Does He discipline unbelievers or believers only? This is another one of those warning passages in Hebrews, there are five in all and they are all written to genuine believers who refuse to obey. And let me add another thing, "How one understands these passages are a litmus test for one's clarity on the gospel." You can pick up a commentary and just turn to these passages and they will always tell you what direction they're coming from. It'll show you if they are Arminian and believe in the loss of salvation, or if they're a Calvinist and believe that all who are genuinely saved will persevere to the end. And if you take either one of those approaches you still haven't understood the gospel because both

positions require works as a necessary component of justification. Without persevering works they say you will not go to heaven and that violates the gospel because salvation is a free gift. And the only position that maintains the purity and wonder of the gospel is the Free Grace position, that salvation is a free gift received by faith alone in Christ alone and therefore all believers have eternal security but the believer can lose rewards if he fails to persevere. So perseverance is important but it's not a heaven or hell issue. So what we're doing here is very closely related to the gospel which is the touchstone of Christianity. Now, in Chapter 12, who can come under divine discipline? "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us," those are the witnesses who filled the hall of faith in chapter 11, Abraham, Moses and so forth, "let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us," so the issue is perseverance in the Christian life, you're in a race here, verse 2, how do we run the race, "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." So we fix our eyes on Jesus, what in particular is the focus, this is not a mystical meditation on a light or staring at a cross, this is defined in v 3 as mental activity, v 3 consider, consider how He endured such hostility from sinners and when we think about that the result is that we won't grow weary and lose heart. I see this principle at work in my life and I have close brothers and sisters in Christ, one of whom I called a few months ago and was sharing with him the burden of the work, how the struggle to study and teach the word of God, it's very draining, it takes a lot of effort, you work all day and half the night so you can prepare a material that is accurate to the word of God and feeds the Lord's sheep, that's my job and it's a tiring one, it's not easy, you spend hour after hour after hour looking at this Greek verb and how this is an imperfect and which kind of imperfect is it, continuous, iterative, inceptive and what's my main verb and how am I going to communicate this and most people don't have a clue what goes into all this. So I was growing weary and one of my brothers in Christ who I shared this with directed me to this principle of what Christ and other believers had faced and he did it in a very simple way. He asked me, "Have you been sawn in two today?" And of course I haven't faced that kind of difficulty. That's a difficulty mentioned in 11:37. And when I began to put my hardships in

perspective I realized I haven't faced a tenth of what believers of the past faced, I haven't faced a hundredth of what the Lord Jesus Christ faced. Therefore consider what they faced and you will not grow weary. Verse 4, "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; ⁵and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons," notice they are sons, you don't call unbelievers or professing unbelievers sons and here is the exhortation, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; ⁶For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives." ⁷It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? ⁸But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons." So there's a litmus test for whether a person is a believer or not. Has he received discipline from the Lord or not. Some people have it in their mind that if they get blessed financially that's a sign they're a believer. It's not a sign, the sign is has the Lord been spanking you because if He hasn't then you're not His son. So who does the Lord discipline? Believers and believers only. Therefore what do we find in Jonah? Why was Jonah disciplined. Because Jonah was a believer. Let's sum up the introductory information in two points. First, we've said that **the NT warning passages are written to believers** to spur them on to live obedient Christian lives, endure to the end in order to receive reward status. That's Hebrews, that's 1, 2, 3 John and Rev 2-3. Second, we've seen that **God disciplines believers to spur believers on to spiritual growth and reward status**. There is no loss of salvation only loss of reward. Now we want to see the dynamics of discipline using Jonah as a motif.

Jonah Disobeys the Lord (1:1-3)

The first point of the Doctrine of Divine Discipline is that **the believer must know the will of God**. If you don't know the will of God then you can't disobey the will of God. God holds us responsible for what we know not what we don't know. So in vv 1-2 the will of God is made known to Jonah son of Amittai. So here's this prophet, he lives in the 8th century before Christ. He lived in a small town called Gath-hepher up in the northern kingdom and operated under Jeroboam II. He had already given a prophecy to Jeroboam concerning expansion of the borders from the Dead Sea over into the transjordan region and up north into southern Lebanon at a place called

Lebo-Hamath and what this expansion did was bring a lot of prosperity to the northern kingdom because now all of a sudden you bring in a lot of important trade routes, the via maris and the king's highway and so forth and now you're making big money, the economy is booming so of course Jonah became very popular. Everyone's happy when the economy's doing well. The problem with this kind of a situation for believers throughout Scripture is it leads to complacency, it leads to lukewarmness. Two of the warning passages in Rev 2-3 in fact address these two problems and both places were wealthy cities, Sardis and Laodicea. In both cases these people had an out of proportion evaluation of themselves and this led to spiritual decay, they turned into spoiled rotten believers much like American Christianity, we've become so infatuated with all the stuff, the cars, the houses, the luxuries of life, now there's nothing wrong with those things intrinsically, the problem is not the wealth, the problem is what happens when the wealth becomes our security, when we're relying on the wealth to solve all our problems and your vision gets clouded as to your spiritual condition because you're supposed to use Bible doctrine to solve your problems and eventually you go into spiritual blindness. And now that our economy is deflating we're going to see first hand how strong these believers are and I'm afraid what we're going to find is a bunch of pansy Christians who want to boohoo about everything and shout "God why don't you bless America? And all the rest of the stupid sayings." He's already blessed believers with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places; and yet believers keep searching for the almighty dollar, the almighty dollar and if we don't have the dollar we don't have anything. Baloney, Jesus Christ said I've already given you every spiritual blessing and what do we find with Paul but that he was content in every situation, whether poor or rich, naked or clothed, it's not your material situation that matters it's your spiritual situation. Are you with it or not. And here we find a believer who is so spoiled rotten materially that he's become blind spiritually. Jonah son of Amittai. And in v 2 he receives the will of God for his life, this is the pre-requisite for divine discipline, v 2, "Arise, Go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry against it, for its wickedness has come up before Me." So the command comes and the believer has the responsibility to obey the command of the Almighty. But Jonah has other plans, and this is the plan of a lot of believers, it's the autonomous plan of I don't want to do that, that doesn't make me happy so I'll just block it out of the schedule and make my own schedule. And so in v 3 Jonah does just that. He goes down to Joppa, the opposite direction we might add, buys a ticket to Tarshish, the furthest spot known in the west,

it was in the south of Spain. So there's the sin, violation of the will of God for his life.

This is the second point in the doctrine of divine discipline, that **when the believer disobeys the will of God then he's out of fellowship**. He doesn't lose the relationship, that's eternal, but what is lost is fellowship which is the Greek word *koinonia* which just means "participation" because when you're in fellowship you're participating in God's program for your life but when you say "No God, I don't want to do that" then you're no longer participating in His program. So here Jonah sets himself outside of God's program for his life. He's not out from under God's sovereignty, he's simply out of God's will for his life. So, in God's program you have the general will of God, that's God's program for every believer, it's directly in Scripture, it's all the commandments believers are given. Then you have the specific will of God, and unless you are a prophet or an apostle you don't receive this kind of verbal revelation, but Jonah was a prophet so he did and here he's disobeyed that and he's out of fellowship. So point one you have to know the will of God. Point two when the believer disobeys the will of God he's committed sin and he's out of fellowship. Nothing has changed in the relationship, that's static, once established it never changes, but fellowship is dynamic and it does change, we can go in and out of fellowship.

The Lord Disciplines Jonah (1:4-16)

Third point of the doctrine of divine discipline, **when the believer is out of fellowship he's subject to divine discipline**. And that's what Jonah faces in vv 4-16. We want to talk about some of the forms of divine discipline but first, what's the purpose of divine discipline? The purpose is for the believer to confess his sin and restore fellowship. This is God's will for the believer; that once we get out of fellowship we get back in fellowship and the means is by confession. The Hebrew and Greek words for confession mean "to say the same thing" and when the context is sin the idea is that we are to say the same thing about our sin that God says about our sin. That's what 1 John 1:9 is all about. "If we confess our sins," 3rd class condition, maybe we will, maybe we won't, but if we do "then He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This was true for the OT believer, this is true for the NT believer. The need for verbal confession, this is not to a priest in a confessional booth, this is done privately to the Lord,

and the moment we do this He restores us to fellowship, that is to active participation in His will for our life. But Jonah, like many believers, doesn't exercise that option here, instead he remains out of it and continues in his carnality.

So it's at this point that you see the mental anguish this causes in Jonah and it's an effect of sin gone unconfessed. Sin causes mental anguish and that is very apparent by the time you get to v 6. Jonah is on the ship and God has sent this massive storm which is divine discipline and where is Jonah? He's asleep in the hold of the ship. And commentators have pointed out that the Hebrews were not a seafaring people, they didn't just go sailing around the world like the Phoenicians. They were primarily land travelers. So that heightens the fact that something more is going on here. How in the world is Jonah asleep? And the Hebrew word doesn't just mean your average sleep, it's the Hebrew word for a very heavy sleep, the kind of sleep you fall into when you're completely exhausted (Judg 4:21). It's the kind of sleep you see in the Book of Judges when Jael took a tent peg and quite literally drove Sisera's skull into the ground because he was so exhausted he didn't have a clue what she was up to and walked right up and drove a stake in his head. That's the idea with Jonah, he was dead asleep and didn't hear the storm at all. And this is so obvious from the text of v 6 that the captain comes up and says, "How in the world can you be asleep down here?" And I'm with the captain here, I'd like to know as well. And the only answer I can come up with is that Jonah has trying to cope with his mental anguish and he's used one of the most popular methods. It was used in the ancient world it's used in the modern world. And that is, I anesthetize myself to the mental anguish of my sin. Anesthetics are not a new coping strategy, they are an ancient strategy. And you'll find this in every culture, in every society, in every people group, on every continent, why's that, because that's where you find sin. And here's a prophet of God and I suggest he's done the same thing; he's knocked himself out so he doesn't have to think about his sin. Today people use drugs, they use alcohol, they use music, music is one we don't often think of but what does music do, what do you have in all the nightclubs? Thousands of people listening to this pounding tribal beat. Why are they doing that? Because it's a distraction, you can't think in all that, and if I'm not able to think then I don't have to think about my problem. Dancing, that's another one, and don't get me wrong, I'm not saying these things are wrong in and of themselves, I'm saying excessive use of these to cope with the problems,

that's what's wrong and dancing has become a very provocative motivator for another anesthetic, sex, sex with any and everyone, guys, girls, orgies, switching partners, the Bible puts that all under one category, fornication. But the one thing all these anesthetics have in common, whether it's drugs, sex or music is they drown out my problem. Obviously the alcohol and drugs do that and what's interesting is when you look at these what do you notice about them? Don't they sort of all go together? Sex, drugs and rock and roll. That's the theme of the 60's and 70's? Why did that become the theme of the entire culture? Because they were coping with deep spiritual problems. The problem wasn't sex, drugs and rock and roll, the problem was behind that, when you have a generation of parents that say "There is no absolute truth, there is no absolute morality? Then obviously one day the kids wake up and say, "Hey, I've got all these questions about who I am, why I'm here, what is going on in the world and there's no answer to my questions." So obviously these questions need to be answered but there are no answers so I just go anesthetize myself so I don't have to think about it. And this is tragic because the Evangelicals started to debate the same issue and they didn't have an answer. So the problems are deep down and until those problems are answered you can't tell people to stop with the drugs, sex and rock and roll. These people are in pain and they're going to cope with the pain. You don't tell someone with a headache not to take aspirin. I want some release from the pain. So Jonah went into the same thing, I'll just knock myself out and then I don't have to deal with my rebellion. But now we see that he's brought himself and everyone else into jeopardy. The storm is the first phase of divine discipline, the second phase of divine discipline is in v 11, "So they said to him, "What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?"—for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy." So the divine discipline was increasing and then they follow through in v 15, "So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea," so you can see that when one of us goes into rebellion that everyone else in our surroundings has to suffer because of us and this is just one of those things that gets old after awhile, we're associated with these people and therefore we suffer too and you just want to bang these people on the head sometimes but you can't make them do it, you can't make them go positive to the word and until they're ready they're just going to sink deeper and deeper into carnality, so that's what happens in chapter 2. As an interesting side note the sailors all became believers in YHWH. So it shows that even though Jonah was out of it spiritually God used him to minister to these sailors and one day we will all be able to meet them in heaven. V 17

then gives you a summary of what happened when he got tossed in the sea. But chapter 2 goes on to discuss the details of that and when the divine discipline ended. So what you have in reality is Jonah was tossed overboard he hits the water and the whole thing goes dead calm and maybe he tread water for awhile, maybe he didn't, if he did this went on for awhile and then he began to sink and that's the story of the poem in chapter 2. He's going down, down, down and he will not confess his sin, he will not confess his sin and finally he gets to the end of his rope and he prayed out there in the water and confessed his sin, we don't have an exact citation of his sin but we can gather that he did confess and so to answer the question "When will God stop spanking me? When does divine discipline stop? When I confess my sin.

Jonah Restored to Fellowship (2:2, 4, 7, 8)

So the fourth point of the doctrine of divine discipline is **confession of sin**. At that point, and I reiterate, to confess means "to say the same thing" it's a Greek word composed of two words *homo-* meaning "same" and *logeo-* meaning "to say" so it means to say the same thing. That's all our heavenly father is asking us to do, to simply acknowledge our sin, to admit our sin, that's what the Greek word means. It does not mean "feel guilty," you may feel guilty but that's not the basis of the forgiveness, the basis of the forgiveness isn't your confessing either, the basis of forgiveness is the cross work of Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:7. So the confession is merely the means or instrument through which God forgives the believer at which point the believer is automatically restored to fellowship and into God's program for his life. And again this is for believers only so if you have an unbeliever and he starts confessing his sins to God and "God I've done this and God I've done that" that's not going to move him one inch toward heaven. The only condition for heaven is faith alone in Christ alone. Eph 2:8-9 "For by grace are you saved by faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast." And John 6:47, "Truly, truly, he who believes in Me has eternal life." So that faith is the instrument of salvation and confession is the instrument of fellowship. Those are two different things. And when the believer confesses that's the end of divine discipline. It's very visible in chapter 2, that as Jonah rapidly descends toward physical death which is the ultimate in time penalty for a believer's sin, at the very last moment as he's drowning he confesses his sin and the Lord rescues him. So

the great fish is the means of rescue here and Jonah pens his poem of thanksgiving.

So we have six points to the doctrine of divine discipline. First warning passages are written to believers. Second, God disciplines believers who do not heed the warnings. Third, we must know the will of God in order to disobey the will of God. Fourth, we lose fellowship with God when we disobey the will of God. Fifth, the Lord disciplines believers so they will confess. Sixth, when the believer confesses his sin the Lord stops the discipline. That does not remove long-term consequences. Jonah's body is reported to have been damaged by the acids in the fish's stomach but the divine discipline stopped when he confessed and was rescued by the fish. Alright, next week we'll pick up with chapter 3.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2008