



I'll never forget hearing how a successful college football star had been resisting God's calling to preach, refusing to surrender his life to the ministry. On an Alabama highway he was thrown from a car at 75 mph. The only passenger of five to be so ejected from the vehicle when it flipped, he skidded (parallel to the spinning car) 135 yards down the freeway on his back side. Flesh-based friction brought that proud athlete's body to an eventual stop. Lying flat on a back now scraped to the bone and embedded with black asphalt, this prostrate prodigal and preacher-to-be stared into heaven and slowly told himself, "John—MacArthur—God—did—this—to—you!"

INTRODUCTION

*It is not uncommon for preachers to run from the will of God, for God to chase them, or for the whole ordeal to produce pain. John MacArthur was wrapped like a mummy in a hospital for three months. He should have died but realized he was alive to preach because God created a crisis to halt his rebellion against His sovereign will. John and Jonah were not the first preachers to run from God's will, nor will they be the last. While we all sin, we learn in Jonah today that some rebellions are deadly. Preachers, laymen, and lawmakers all face serious storms in life due to sin. Let us think about being **Storm-Breakers, Troublemakers, Lawmakers, Life-Takers**, and learn to trust in God as **Life's Maker**.*

1. STORM-BREAKERS: CONFRONTATION

When we are surrounded by a swell of surging troubles, we forget that trouble is often made by a troublemaker. The soaking sailors in our text are now certain that Jonah was the trouble.

Jonah 1:11 *"So the sailors said to Jonah, 'What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?'—as the sea was becoming increasingly stormy."*

Jonah was the reason for the storm. The sailors confronted Jonah, asking him how to punish him so the storm would stop punishing them. They were asking to become Storm-Breakers. A vital lesson is in verse 11: certain storms can only be broken when the troublemaker behind the storm is found out. This requires courage and the chutzpah to confront. Crisis helps us call up courage, for unless the troublemaker is found out and dealt with, the trouble will often not cease. Jonah had already confessed his sin, and yet the squall which started as "a great storm"^a was still raging and "was becoming increasingly stormy."

2. TROUBLEMAKERS: SUBMISSION

Jonah 1:12 *"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 on account of me this great storm has come upon you.'"*

Jonah had given a confession, an admission of guilt. Now he offers submission to let the Storm-Breakers stop the storm by sinking him into the salty sea. Is it a Biblical idea, really, that to stop trouble, the troublemaker must be stopped? Absolutely yes. Here is a famous example:

STOP THE TROUBLEMAKERS!

ACHAN—A COVETOUS, DECEITFUL, TREASONOUS TROUBLEMAKER:

In General Joshua's day of Bible-time warfare, God put certain war spoils and plunder under a ban. The victorious tribes of Israelite soldiers were not to enjoy or even touch such plunder.

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Achan, one of the tribesmen, disobeyed the LORD's ban, by taking gold and treasures and hiding them in his tent. As a result, when Israel went out to its next battle at Ai, it was sorely beaten. The soldiers' hearts melted and "*became as water*" without solidity or strength. Ever feel that way? Joshua lamented the loss, but God rebuked him, telling him to stop crying and to start dealing with the sin in the camp. Someone had violated God's commandment regarding the ban!

➤ Achan was found to be the guilty party and, like Jonah, confessed his sin. But the LORD Himself told Joshua that Achan's wartime betrayal was treasonous, deserving capital punishment. How did Joshua "break the storm" of massive military defeat in his day? By bold, civil confrontation of the troublemaker, Achan (and his family).

"Joshua said [to Achan and his household], 'Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day.' And all Israel...burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. ²⁶They raised over him a great heap of stones that stands to this day, and the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger." (Joshua 7:25f; *emphasis mine*)

➤ The LORD's burning anger required burning the banned substances and imposing the death penalty upon treasonous troublemaking Achan. In Jonah's troublemaking, the LORD's anger burned as well, causing (not military defeat but) an unstopably worsening sea storm. Jonah *admitted* his sin in verse 10, and in verse 12, Jonah *submitted* to the sailors' desire to act against him in a storm-stopping solution. Jonah submitted because he knew that he was the troublemaker. It is noble to own up to our sins and "*all da bad kine stuff we do.*" It is nobler yet to be willing to accept the consequential punishments due us, even to death.

➤ A GOSPEL TROUBLEMAKER—THE CRIMINAL ON CALVARY'S CROSS

We are 51 days from Good Friday. On the first Good Friday, in Luke 23:41, one capital crook on the cross *admitted* his guilt and *submitted* to capital punishment, which was his due. That criminal

rebuked the one on the other cross, saying, "*And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this Man has done no wrong.*"

➤ CAPITAL TROUBLE IN ACTS—PAUL

An *admitting* and *submitting* heart is found in Paul at his trial before Governor Festus in *Acts 25:11*—"*[Paul answered,] If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die.*" It is a noble thing, a just thing, to submit oneself to suffer justly for crimes unjustly committed.

IT IS GOOD AND JUST TO NOT REFUSE PUNISHMENT WHEN PUNISHMENT IS DESERVED.

➤ TROUBLE BACK AT JONAH'S BOAT

Jonah was willing to suffer justly as a troublemaker. He offered up two courses of action to facilitate his punishment: "*pick me up*" and "*throw me in.*" He told them they would be storm-breakers if they took the troublemaker and gave him a "heave ho" into the Mediterranean. The *professing-confessing* prophet had become the *admitting-submitting* prophet—submitting to the punishment he deserved. Troublemakers make trouble. Jonah was the troublemaker on board. God knew it. Jonah knew it. The sailors knew it.

3. LAWMAKERS: SPARKS AND CRIMES

Job 5:7 "Man is born for trouble as the sparks fly upward."

As a bonfire's sputtering sparks fly to the sky, men born of women will constantly find themselves making trouble for others or in the midst of the trouble others have made. What are lawmakers to do with troublemakers? How can senators be storm-breakers? Senators must confront all lawbreakers as well as all menacing troublemakers. That demands courage, humility, a just heart, and a clear mind trained in Biblical precepts. These are storm-breaking character qualities for life and law.



➤ For leaders and legislators, the stakes are high. We have seen the need for leaders to “listen up” and hear the voice of the God Who spoke in the Bible and did not stutter. They need to understand His ways, learn His Word with its clear revelation of criminal, moral, and ethical standards. Holy Scripture is key to lawmaking, storm-breaking, and dealing justly with those who are troublemaking. Do you wish for fewer storms and smoother sailing in the Capitol? Consider this modern-day beatitude:

**“BLESSED ARE THE LAW-
MAKERS WHO ARE STORM-
BREAKERS AND THROW
TROUBLEMAKERS INTO
‘THE SEA,’ FOR THEY
SHALL BE COMFORTED
WITH SMOOTH SAILING.”**

May the good Lord grant you real wisdom and raw courage as a lawmaker and storm-breaker.

4. LIFE-TAKERS: HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY HUMAN LIFE—TRYING TO SAVE IT

Jonah told the sailors to throw him overboard, prophesying the storm’s break. Jonah considered his treason as a capital offense, willing to accept his own death. He offered up his life as a sacrifice.

Jonah 1:13a “*However, the men rowed desperately to return to land...*”

Surprisingly, the pagan sailors placed too high a value on his life to follow his advice. They rowed desperately—literally in the Hebrew they “*dug hard*.”^b They rushed to their oars, broke their backs, calloused their hands, dug deeply into the swelling surf, and hoped to beach their vessel on dry land to save Jonah’s life. Such kindness after his confession of treason was stunningly gracious, gentlemanlike, and frankly quite unexpected.

**IT IS HARD TO CONFESS SIN—
MAY WE BE AS GRACIOUS AS
THESE ANCIENT SAILORS.**

Those sea salts placed a high value on human life; though they had his own permission to drown Jonah, they strove hard to save him.

➤ HUMAN LIFE—GOD SAYS THAT AT TIMES IT IS UNREDEEMABLE

Rather than hurl Jonah into a watery grave, the sailors tried to save his life. They rowed hard:

Jonah 1:13b “*...to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them.*”

God chose not to allow their success. He increased the storm’s intensity. The slanting storm started as a “*great storm*” (v.4), became “*increasingly stormy*” (v.11), and is screeching (v.13) into an “*even stormier*” state. It moved from Category 1 to 2. Why had God “*Who made the sea*” increased their maritime misfortune? God controls His creation with perfect power and calmness. It is at His disposal to use as He wills, even in the correction of His disobedient and rebellious children.

➤ There are times when God says human lives are unredeemable. I was sobered recently by Proverbs 27:22, which shows the power of evil to settle permanently into the human soul, like a wickedly metastasizing cancer. Verse 22 says if you grind a fool in a grit-filled mortar cup with a stiff pestle,^c you still cannot grind the foolishness out of him. Rank evil can deeply seat itself within a person, like an immoral cancer—beyond extraction or cure. So, too, we refer to “hardened criminals” like habitual murderers. Such men given the harshest punishments often become repeat offenders in and out of prison—murderers still. Gen.9:6 shows the high value of human life made in the *Imago Dei*.



It also shows the deep evils of murder. It says:

**WHOEVER SHEDS MAN'S
BLOOD, BY MAN HIS BLOOD
SHALL BE SHED,^a FOR IN THE
IMAGE OF GOD HE MADE
MAN. ~ GENESIS 9:6**

God knows if, when, and how a human life is unredeemable. Back at Jonah's stormy sea, God intervened and thwarted the intentions of the sailors to save Jonah. God had a *gutsy* "plan of salvation" for Jonah that we will study in Jonah 2, and dry land, for now, had nothing to do with it.

➤ **HUMAN "LIFE FOR LIFE" (LATIN:
LEX TALIONIS)—A BIBLICAL
PRINCIPLE OF JURISPRUDENCE**

Genesis 9:6 shows us God's proclamation of justice. We must exchange life (*wrongly taken*) for (*the*) life (*of the murderer*). "Life for life" is God's own Biblical principle of jurisprudence. The sailors sensed this kind of justice and feared for their own lives as they prayed (now) to Jehovah.

Jonah 1:14a *"Then they called on the LORD and said, 'We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us.'"*

They feared that if they killed Jonah, the Lord Himself might take their lives. Inscribed into every human heart is this "life for life" principle. Even these unbelievers knew that killing innocent people is murder. All people know it. Always. Jonah was "innocent" in their minds because he had just confessed his sins to them. The popular

preacher Charles Stanley once said, *"It's hard to argue with a man who begins by admitting his own faults."* Jonah was also "innocent" in that he had not set out to intentionally harm them and they knew it. Ironically, the unbelieving seadogs cared more for his solitary life than Jonah cared for the lives of the hundreds of thousands of Ninevites, whom he had been called to reach.

5. LIFE'S MAKER: THE GOD OF ALL SOULS

So far, we have seen compassionate men who worked hard to save one human life. We learned that sometimes human life is irredeemable. We reviewed the Biblical principle of "life for life."

Finally, we must come to grips with a truth that had gripped those rain-beaten sailors whose every effort to save Jonah's life and their own failed. They realized human life was *not* in their hands.

Jonah 1:14b *"...for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased."*

They came to accept *God's* control of all human life.

As a Christian in the Capitol, discipline your mind personally and professionally to uphold God's moral precepts regarding the value of human life.

STORM-BREAKING AND LAWMAKING

Dear Senator:

May this terrible sea storm remind you of your need to confront law-breakers and troublemakers behind Nebraska's civil storms. May your law-making reflect the holiness and severity of God, since *"civil government was given the sword as a minister of God avenging His wrath on the earth"* (Romans 13:4).

Your unworthy servant,

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier V.D.M. (cell/text: 402-770-6270)

^a The "great storm" (in Hebrew) is *sa'ar gadol* (סַעַר גָּדוֹל).

^b Hebrew *Wayacht'ruw* = (וַיַּחַתְרוּ). The root means *dig forcibly* as in burglary where one laboriously digs underneath the walls of a house to gain entrance.

^c Latin "pestillum" gave us the English "pestle" which means "pounder."

^d Murder is in view here, not killing. Killing humans is not always immoral. God did so in the Bible and commanded His people to enter into righteous warfare. He also gave "the sword" to civil government. Nor is manslaughter in view here. Manslaughter lacks the murderous intent of "malice aforethought."

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