

## Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

### **Bible Questions and Answers, Part 9**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1301-G

I think about seven or eight years ago, you know, I was studying in the Book of Acts, and I came across the word *dialogomany* times in the Greek text. *Dialegois* the word in the English from which we get the word *dialogue*. *Dialegois* used many times about the ministry of the Apostle Paul. He dialogued with them, which meant that, in his teaching ministry, there was an interchange. There was a back and forth reciprocation, and a lady called me today, to give you an illustration, lady called me today and...and she's from up in Oxnard, and she hears us on the radio. She said, "Oh," she said, "I love the radio program. I love the radio program; but it is so frustrating," she said, "because I cannot stop you and say anything." And I thought to myself, "Wonderful," she...probably better that way; but, anyway, I can just go on preaching and nobody can say anything back; but there is a frustration; and I really feel that the role of the man of God in the church, the role of the elder or the teacher or the pastor, is to be able to respond to the people. So, anyway, that's...it's for you to share; and, really, you can ask anything that's on your heart if it's a Bible question. I'll do the best I can to...to share a response with you; and if it's something you wanna know about the direction of the church, about my personal ministry or anything like that, feel free.

There are several questions that were asked of me prior to tonight, and asked...some people asked if I'd comment on some things. Here's a question. If a Christian commits suicide, will they still be saved? The answer to the question is yes. If a Christian does anything, he'll still be saved, because salvation is eternal, and I don't think that suicide changes that. There are many reasons why people might take their life. I think suicide is a sin, don't you? I think it's a sin tantamount to murder, because it's...it is murder. The Bible teaches that the reason we are not to kill is because of the sanctity of life, because God has created man in His own image, and life is so sacred, because it is the image of God, that murder is a direct affront to that which is sacred in terms of God's design and creation of man.

Now, when we kill that, whether it's somebody else or ourselves, that's a violation of God's law. That's a sin. "Thou shalt not kill," is a sin no matter who the object is. But, "If any man sin...1 John chapter 2 says...we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," and 1 John 2 says, "My little children, He's forgiven you all your trespasses." I've known in my life several Christians who have committed suicide, and I don't think that it has any effect upon their eternal salvation at all. I think it's a sin; and it's a terrible sin; but I don't think there's any sin that God does not put under the blood of Jesus Christ when you come to Him in faith. So I think if you're saved, all your sins are covered, and they're covered forever. In 1 John 1:9 says He goes on cleansing us, keeps on cleansing us, so I

don't think there's...in fact, He has forgiven you all your trespasses; and there's nothing to indicate that this one is infinitely worse than any other that He can forgive. So I don't think you need to fear that, if someone kills themselves, they have automatically forfeited salvation. That's not a question that really just deals with how serious is sin. That's a question that deals with how eternal is salvation, and it is eternal, and there's no thing that can change it. So we would say no, if a person does commit suicide, they do not lose their salvation.

QUESTIONER: I'd like to move \_\_\_\_\_

JOHN: Yes.

QUESTIONER: Hebrews 12:1, about the cloud of witnesses. Are those the same witnesses that are in Revelation that are praying saints?

JOHN: Let's look at Hebrews 12:1, and we'll see.

QUESTIONER: Okay.

JOHN: The message of Hebrews 11 and 12 is the message of living by faith, okay? In fact, in the 11th chapter, you have a...just a steady stream of the heroes of faith, right? You always wanna...you always wanna interpret a Scripture in light of its context, okay? So starting in chapter 11, look at verse 1. We get into the subject of faith. Now, the writer of Hebrews is writing about faith, and he wants to encourage people to live a life of faith. He says, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it, the elders received witness. Through faith, we understand the worlds were framed." Verse 4, "By faith Abel did this." Verse 5, "By faith Enoch." And now he starts in the Hall of Fame, see. Abel, Enoch, started with the elders, verse 7, "By faith Noah." Verse 8, "By faith Abraham." Down further in verse 20, "By faith Isaac, by faith Jacob, by faith Joseph, Moses." And even down to verse 30, "The walls of Jericho fell down." You have the...the harlot Rehab in verse 31; and then there are more in 32: Gideon, Barak, Sampson, Jephthah, David, Samuel; and he goes on and on; and those were stoned, sawn asunder, etc., etc. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses."

Now, who are the witnesses? All the heroes of the faith in chapter 11; and if you have that many people giving testimony that the way to live is the...is by faith, that oughta be pretty convincing. That's what he's saying in 12:1, "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run the race of faith. Let us live by faith and not by works, by faith and not by sight. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith." See the *hour* there? The *hour*? That's added in italics. That's not...it should be there. You see, he's talking about faith, and so he says, "Here are all these people that

lived by faith." Now, in case you haven't learned yet to live by faith, now, he's writing the Hebrews, right? And the Jewish mentality was to live by what?...By works, right? That was...that was their pattern, to live by works; and so he's calling on his Jewish readers to...and saying to them, "Look, you've gotta set the works aside and live by faith; and in case you think that's something new, let me go over the Hall of Fame of all the Jewish heroes of the past. They all lived by faith. Now, seeing we are compassed about with so many who lived by faith, let us also live by faith and look to Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of faith."

So it has nothing to do with the witnesses of Revelation; and it has nothing to do with a bunch of...of people who were saved in the church just hanging over the balconies of Heaven like some grandstand. Those saints aren't watching us. They are people who witnessed to the reality of faith as a principle for living. Okay? Um-hum, good question. They're always a good question when I know the answer, right? Okay. Great book, Hebrews. Boy, that's a great book.

QUESTIONER: I have a question for you. A lot of people take Biblical principles out of the Old Testament; and the seminars you go to, they say this is the principle that you can draw; and I know we're in grace, in the grace age today, but how, as Christians, if we wanna get the most and live by godly principles, how do we determine in...how when God was speaking to Israel, these principles, and apply 'em to our self as the church age today? How do we determine what we can take and apply to our lives today and what doesn't apply?

JOHN: I'll tell ya. The answer...that's a very good question, Glenn, and that is a question that, if I knew the answer to that in all cases and wrote a book on it, it would be the only book ever written on that subject; because that's very difficult. There is a lot of discussion about which of the Old Testament principles are transferable to us. Now, the...the best way to do it, the best way to determine...he's saying, for example, in the Old Testament, it...it says certain things. How do we know they're binding on us today or not binding? What is set aside; what is not set aside? The best answer to that is this, you... you examine the Old Testament principle or...or even the Old Testament act, and you...you try to find out whether it is an act attached...this is a...this is a process of study, try to find out whether it is attached to a spiritual truth, right? Or whether it was simply some kind of identification mark, say in Israel's case, they couldn't wear something made out of wool and cotton mixed, okay? Well, or they couldn't eat something that had a cloven hoof or whatever.

Now, these principles didn't really have spiritual things tied to them. They were simply identifying marks to keep them from having easy intercourse with other nations, okay. So in your study, you have to determine, first of all, what was God's purpose in giving this principle. That's the first thing you have to approach. What is the spiritual principle? If there's no spiritual principle, then...then it seems to be simply a cultural, simply a way to keep Israel separated or whatever; and there are many other principles, too, that would differ...from today, because they were more cultural. I think even going

back to 1 Corinthians 11, you know, where you've got the women and the hair coverings and all of that stuff. That was the mark of submission in that day, long hair. That was the identifying mark that separated a woman from a man. In fact, that was one of the only marks. They didn't wear makeup, the common people; and men and women both wore dresses, so that the only distinguishing mark would've been hair. In our day, the distinguishing mark is the way a woman dresses, more so. That's why we're sort of upset about things like unisex and...and trying to make everybody look alike. There shouldn't be a rubbing out of that distinction. So all I'm saying is, first of all, you've got to determine whether there is a spiritual principle there. Now, there is a spiritual principle behind the hair thing, and that's submission. Now, the...the principle is transferable, but whether or not the cultural aspect is or not. So the first thing, then, is to find out whether there's spiritual principle attached.

Secondly, find out if that spiritual principle is reinforced in the New Testament. If that same spiritual reality is reinforced in the New Testament, you're on good ground. Thirdly, find out if Jesus said anything about it...specifically, like in the Sermon on the Mount. Now, apart from that, it's very difficult, very difficult to know what is a binding principle. You have to be very careful. For example, you can teach Old Testament principles and almost unwittingly bind yourself to them. So you wanna be very careful about that. Or sometimes you'll hear somebody go through a study of Elijah and...and how he worked his ministry, and draw out of that absolutes as to how we should do our ministry. Be very careful of that. One, is there a real spiritual principle behind it, reinforced in the New Testament, or specifically stated even by Christ?

QUESTIONER: If I can add to that a little bit. In the Old Testament, God wanted Israel to be set apart.

JOHN: Right.

QUESTIONER: And Jesus said in the New Testament that, as believers, He wants us to be set apart from the world. Now, in a phy...I guess in a physical realm, I...I'm struggling with that a little bit, and what He meant for us as believers to be set apart from the world.

JOHN: Okay.

QUESTIONER: In a, you know, in a physical type of way.

JOHN: Yeah, I don't think it is in a physical sense. I don't think you can see that in the New Testament. I think that Israel was set apart physically as a national entity; and, of course, they miss the whole point and did the...did part of the physical bit and forgot the spiritual. There are no physical distinguishing marks of a Christian in this era. There's nothing said about how we dress, except modestly. There's nothing said about how we live, except not indulgently. In other words, it's the application of spiritual principle without an actual physical feature. In other words, sometimes, for example, if you're back in the country, back in the east, I know a woman that used to go to

Pennsylvania and see the Amish people. They marked their Christianity by the way they dressed; but that was not Biblical. Modesty is Biblical. Paul writes to Timothy and says, "The woman...women should not pile all the jewelry on their hair, so that they are extravagant," and things like that.

But apart from those general spiritual principles, there really is no...I mean we aren't even told, for example, to...to be sort of communistic like in Acts 2 where it seems as though everybody sort of shared their resources. If you check that out, you'll find that the verbs there are imperfect tense verb, which means that they didn't all at once dump all their money in a pot and split it up. They were giving it to people who were having need, which means there were some people who had and some who didn't; and so God has always designed the church that way. There is no...there is no, you know, maximum income. There is no maximum number of dresses a lady can have. There's no styles of hair. There is a style of life, and I think the key to the whole thing is this; and...and this maybe helps us, that I realize that...that everything I do and everything I say and everything that I handle in my life should be to the glory of God. That, to me, is the final thing, 1 Corinthians 10:31. So how I live, how I talk, how I act, how I deal with all those things that I'm a steward of, all boils down to the glory of God.

You see, what you have, Glenn, and I think you need to keep this in mind. Anybody who studies the Old Testament, the Old Testament...in the Old Testament, God dealt with people in terms of externals. Okay, He'd say to them, "You do this and it'll... your days will be long on the earth." See? He'd say to the farmer, He'd say, "You scatter your seed by faith. It comes in. You give Me the first fruits, and I'll increase your crop." Right? "And your barns will be full." In other words, God was functioning in the ABCs, in the...in the prim...primer sense with externals.

I'll give you a good illustration of that. With...with young people, we do the same thing. Okay? In other words, take, for example, Awana kids, the little kids out there. We want them to memorize Bible verses, right? So you know how we get 'em to memorize Bible verses? We tell 'em if they know their verse, they can play a game. If they play the game well, they can win a prize. That's an external motivation, but that's all right. That's exactly what God did in the Old Testament. "You do this, it'll be well with you on the earth. You do this, and your barns will be full, and your crops will increase. You do this, and you'll inherit more land. You do this, and I'll bless you. You do this, and you will inherit the earth." See?

But later on, with the little kids, somewhere along the line, you have gotta drop the external and turn him inside, and the...the motivation has to come inside, so that, hopefully, I'm not saying to you, "Now, all of you that would like to come and commit your lives to Christ tonight, we'll give you a steak dinner at the Sizzler. See? That kind of external is only for the ABC period; but it accomplishes a goal. Eventually, hopefully, it goes inside. Same thing is true is God's plan of history. Initially, God dealt with man in terms of the ABCs, and that's exactly what Hebrews 6 says. Let's go on to perfection, leaving the ABCs. He's trying to tell those Jews, this whole thing's gotta go inside. It's gotta go inside. It's gotta be a life of faith. You've got to accept and believe this thing inside; and when

that happens in the New Testament, the external elements are dropped. You don't find one statement in the New Testament to the effect that there is a physical result of a spiritual principle, directly in correlation except when it quotes the Old Testament, like in Ephesians 6, "Children, obey your parents for this is right." And what's the next one? "Honor your father and mother, and your days will be long on the earth." That's an Old Testament quotation; but the New Testament takes on a whole different style of \_\_\_\_\_.

Now, I realize 2 Corinthians 9 says that God will...if you give, God will supply bread for your food. That's sustenance. And if you give, God'll pour back to you what you give and invest with Him in terms of spiritual blessing, in terms of caring for your needs. But, basically, God says, "I'll return to you My care, My favor, My sustenance, My concern. I'll take care of you when you're faithful." But there is not that same kind of direct physical correlation. So we have to...I think we have to make a distinction between the old and the New Testament in those terms. Okay?

QUESTIONER: In that same vein, considering the Sabbath, on the seventh day, God rested and blessed and sanctified the seventh day. In the Old Testament, that was the Sabbath day, and I think it's still considered the Sabbath, but we're perhaps no longer commanded to worship on the seventh day. When and where does it appear that we do not have to worship on Saturday; and, if so, why is it Sunday that we worship on versus any other day of the week? I've read some places that the Catholic church supposedly changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday in order to appeal to pagans, you know, Sunday of worship and all that.

JOHN: Well, I'll tell ya. Where the whole thing came from, I'll give you just a real quick rundown. Christ rose on the first day, okay? With the rising of Jesus Christ, was the dawn of the new covenant. The dawn of the new covenant changed a lotta things. The law was fulfilled. It was fulfilled at that point; and one of the best passages on this, talking about transitions, is in Hebrews chapter 4. I'll show you, and then we'll look at a couple other passages, but Hebrews chapter 4. We won't go into all of the details about this; but, actually, the end of chapter 3, we could talk about, too. But, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left of us enter...entering in to His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

All right, the Sabbath pictures the ultimate rest of God's people, okay? It is an...it is a constant picture of rest, of the ultimate salvation rest of God's people. You understand what I'm using it in a spiritual sense. It's a picture of man resting from his labors, resting from self-effort, resting from trying to attain, resting from the bondage of the law, resting from the curse of Sinai. It's a picture of Christ coming and granting rest to the soul. Okay? So he's talking about entering into rest. "For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

Now, he's talking about the fact that some heard the message. It wasn't mixed with faith. They never entered into rest. "For we who have believed do enter into rest." Now, I think that's an important thing. I really believe that the rest, when Christ came, provided salvation. The believing people believed. They entered into the rest pictured by the Sabbath, so that the sign and the symbol is no longer necessary. The reality is here; and the thing which the Sabbath pictured is a reality in our lives every single day, all right? Every single day.

Another thing, the Sabbath was a day of expressed worship, a day when all kinds of rigmarole went on. When Jesus died, which was on Friday, I believe, the veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom by God Himself. The whole system of Judaism was obliterated in one fell swoop. I mean there it was, the Holy of Holies for everybody to walk in and out of, everybody to see, all of the supposed mystery and sanctity was unmasked. In 70 AD, Titus Vespasian came and literally wiped out Judaism as a...as a religion; and since that time, there has been no sacrifices. None, since 70 AD, Jews have never had a sacrificial system. God literally wiped out the things that occurred on the Sabbath. Not only that, we entered into the rest pictured by the Sabbath, and there's more of that here.

Now, once that had happened, it was very clear to the early church that the Sabbath was not the sacred thing. So what happened? Immediately, the church began to meet when? The first day of the week. In fact, look at the Book of Acts, and we'll see, in fact, the first time the church met was a week after Jesus rose. The disciples were gathered in the upper room, remember that? And the Lord Jesus appeared to them?

But I want you to look at Acts 20 verse 7, Acts 20 verse 7. And they sailed from Philippi and came to Troas, and verse 7. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread." All right? The whole concept of meeting on the first day of the week was something started by the disciples, not by the Catholic church, not by some dispensationalist, but by the disciples. This was just the normal thing; and they came together to break bread. Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the next day; and you remember how the guy fell out of the window and died, and he went down and raised him from the dead and brought him back up to hear the conclusion.

But, anyway, that's...that's very important to see that the early church started this. In fact, you might interested to know that immediately after the...the church was born, in Acts 2, this'll be another thing I think would be helpful to you. In Acts 2, the church was born. The Holy Spirit descended; the church was born; they were all baptized into the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit came, and they were all able to drink of the same Spirit; and immediately, it says, verse 46 of 2, "They continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their food with gladness and singleness of heart." So immediately after that, they met every day, because they had entered into rest. You see? Once they had entered into the reality of the picture, the...the picture wasn't needed anymore. They entered into the reality; and there they were every day, every day, every day meeting.

Well, when they officially began to meet, it was just obvious the first day was the day of the celebration of the Lord's resurrection. So it wasn't done by anything other than a consensus of the believers. As far as we know, the church never officially met after the resurrection of Jesus Christ ever on the Sabbath. Now, Paul would go, wouldn't he, to preach in the synagogues on the Sabbath, but that was evangelism. That was where he founded the churches.

Now, Romans 14 would be one other text that maybe would be helpful...What happens in the church is this. You...you get a... a buncha Jewish people saved and, let's say, they're...they were real staunch sort of legalistic Jews. They enter into the church; and, boy, they're still hung up on the Sabbath, right? The, let's say the guy's been going to...to the temple or whatever on...on the Sabbath for the last 50 years; and now, all of sudden, some Gentile tells him, "Hey, you don't have to go there anymore. That's passÃ©." Well, he can't handle that. You know, he...that's just too much for him to...he can't make that break. We find that today. A lotta times, somebody'll lead a Catholic friend to Christ, and the Catholic friend will continue to go to the Catholic church, and then they'll come over here for the second service, go to mass there, and they'll keep that up for a while; and, finally, they'll phase out the Catholic church and land here. There's...it's just very difficult to make that kind of an adjustment.

Well, that happened in the early church. So what happens here? You got a church in Rome. The Jews wanna hold the Sabbath. The Gentiles say, "Hang the Sabbath, it's not necessary." So it would be very easy for the Gentile with his liberty to offend the Jew, who's still a little legalistic. Right? So in Romans 14, this is what happens. Verse 5, "One man esteems one day above another; another esteems every day the same. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." See, that would've been a perfect place for the Holy Spirit to say, "Look, I'll stop the argument once and for all. On the Sabbath, you meet." Didn't say that. He said, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regards the day, if a guy wants to keep the Sabbath, after all, he's keeping it to the Lord. Fine. He that doesn't regard the day, to the Lord he doesn't regard it." It's Judaism to him. He doesn't wanna mess with it. Well, don't let that be the issue. "He that eats, eats to the Lord. If you're gonna eat pork, eat up to the Lord. Thank the Lord, and have your pork. But he that eats not the Lord, he eats not, and give...gives God thanks. Let's not make that the issue." See?

See, the...the Holy Spirit realizes that there was a transitional period there. You see it in the Book of Acts in the case of the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul has long since founded all kinds of Gentile churches. He's preached the...that the old system is abolished. You know, he's all clear on that; but he goes and has...takes a Nazarite vow and shaves his head. He's acting like somebody out of the Pentateuch. But, see, that was a way in which his past would've expressed his devotion to God, and so he followed it. Then when he went to Jerusalem, four guys, remember went down to the temple and do a vow, and he went along with 'em. So there was a transitory period; but the New Testament never makes a demand of the Sabbath. Of all the Ten Commandments, all ten of them are explicitly repeated in the New Testament, except that one. "Keep the Sabbath." So that we've entered into that

rest that was pictured there; and, yet, there's another rest that remaineth, and that's the millennial Kingdom. That's a long answer. Okay.

QUESTIONER: Exodus 20 verse 4, would you explain what that means to us today?

JOHN: Exodus 20 verse 4. You all know this chapter, Ten Commandments. I won't ask you to recite them. Okay, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." Now, in the corruption of mankind, Romans chapter 1 is a key to understanding this. In the corruption of mankind, the Bible in Romans 1, I need to read this to you so you'll really pick it up, says this: "When they knew God...that is man in his original state, mankind...When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Here's man, see, he doesn't want God, so he "changes the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things. And wherefore God gave them up."

Now, that's the history of humanity. God creates man in the Garden. There's only one God, monotheism, one God; and then when man rejects God, the first thing man does outside the Garden that we find in the Book of Genesis, man lives to his flesh, right? "And God looked on the earth, and He saw nothing but...what?...nothing but wickedness;" and so He decided to wipe the thing out. Then they turn right around in chapter 11, and man starts to build the Tower of Babel. Tower of Babel was idolatrous. It was an...it was an idol, in effect. It was a ziggurat, which is a form of idolatry. Man wants to substitute, and this is something to keep in mind. Man wants to substitute the God of his own making for the real God; and, invariably, the God that man makes in any culture has standards less than the real God; and, invariably, No. 2, the God that man makes is appeased by a works-righteousness system. That is the common denominator of every false religion that's ever been invented, because that's Satan's big lie, that you can appease whatever God there is by your own works.

So it is always a god with a lower standard, and it is always a god appeased by a works system. Now, that god can take many forms; but in the early years, it was what was called animism. That was worshipping an animal, and they would have, for example, the Egyptians worshipped beetles; and if you go over there today, and they...they dig in all those excavations. I remember everywhere you can go in the little shops, and they'll sell you these little tiny beetles they find everywhere. They worshipped a sacred beetle. They also, in Egypt, by the way, worshipped frogs, and that's why God hit 'em right where they were in the middle of their religion when He had all the frogs they wanted hopping all over the place. Think it might have had an effect on the frog religion.

The...the Philistines in 1 Samuel chapter 5 worshipped a god called Dagon, and Dagon was a fish with a man's head. This was part of the corruption of mankind. You see, you know, this is the...when man leaves God, he sinks; and when he turned his back on God, above him, all that was left was what was below him, and so he began to worship the animal kingdom; and he made his gods out of animals, and then, of course, out of the sun and the moon and the stars and so forth. So they began to make graven images. They...they were making idols and all these things, and I'm sure you're all aware of that; and, you know, you wonder how can a...how could people possibly worship a thing. I used to ask myself, "Well, how...why would people worship a stone?" You know, their father worshipped a stone, and his father worshipped a stone, and this tribe's been worshipping a stone forever; but you look in the Psalms and also in the Pentateuch, and it says, "That all the gods of the nations are demons." If you wanna worship a stone, a demon will impersonate the God you think is in the stone and keep you hooked to the stone by doing just enough supernatural stuff. Just like your horoscope, you know. You get enough true stuff to just keep you there.

So these were graven images. Now, today, I would say the parallel today is still graven images. There are still people in our world who worship graven images. They worship idols. In fact, historically, this was what finally came down to what was known as the iconoclastic controversy. An icon is the Greek word for an idol or an image, icon; and the church had this big, huge split, and I think this is what split the Western and the Eastern church, the Greek Orthodox split off the Roman Catholic. That was one church, one big, huge church incorporating the Eastern church and the Western church. They split over this, because the East said, "No idols." They took a hard line on Exodus 20 verse 4. The West said, "We want Christ and Mary and Joseph and Athanasius and whoever, I don't know who all gets to be one. And, you know, if you're not careful, you can be one for a while and lose it; but, you know, they had all these saints; and this is what split the church. This is why we today have the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic, the Western church, they split over that issue, a hard line on that.

Now, here's where I stand on it. I feel that that verse is still telling us we are to have no other God but the true God. We are to make no image of an other God than the true God. I don't think it means you can't have a picture of Jesus, which is not a picture of Jesus, incidentally. But if you would like, if your...if your mind is...is...if your worship potential is enhanced by having a picture of Jesus around the house, or if you feel that's a wonderful testimony, that's fine. You know, that's...that's okay. That's not a problem. But it is an...it is to make an image of a false God, or to make a...a false image of the true God. For example, do you know that when...when Moses came down out of the mountain and found them worshipping the golden calf, that that was an image of the true God in their mind? That was not a false God. They had...they were, in their own minds, they were worshipping the true God as a golden calf; but they had lowered its standard so that to worship Him, they exercised all this immorality. So worshipping the true God in a false image, or worshipping a false god under any image is it.

Now, I think...I don't think it means pictures of Jesus. I do have a real problem with the abundance of stuff that you see in a Catholic church; and I do think what happens in that situation is it can become idolatry. People begin to believe there is a magical charm in the idol itself. I was in Rome in St. Peter's, and the pope was speaking, and I don't know what he said, because he speaks Italian, you know; but he was giving a thing. And then I went in, and there was a...there's what's called a black Peter. You probably heard about it. It's a great big statue of Peter that's black, and people go by and kiss his toe. Well, there's no toe, right? It's gone. It's been kissed into oblivion; but, anyway, this has become almost a God; and, in fact, there is every so many years, and this happened the year we were there, every so many years, if you walk through the door and touch that idol, you are absolved of I think it's 25 or more years of purgatory. See, that's idolatry. That's believing a magical charm. There is a door there at St. Peter's that's only opened once every 25 years. If you go through that door when it's open, the year it's open, you get absolution.

Well, you see, those are the magical things that are equated with idolatry. Having a picture of Christ, you know, I think we ought to avoid things. I think if it's a obvious statue or a crucifix, I think that...that's a bad thing, because that will offend some Christian people. Plus, it will confuse some other people who associate that with idolatry. So I avoid all those things, you know. I don't mind having a cross around, as long as nobody's on it, because the Lord didn't stay there. Okay.

QUESTIONER: The question in my mind is this: that the Lord knows these children, and He knows that some of them are not going to grow up to be part of His family. Now, I go back to the ark of Noah, and all the babies and children that drowned there; and now I'm concerned.

JOHN: My...my personal confidence is...and there is nothing in the Bible that says all children are saved. In fact, lemme say it this way. I do not believe that all children, in the sense that we think of it, are saved as to...as a conscious act of faith in Jesus Christ. Okay? But the thing that keeps coming back to me is the words of Jesus. "If any of you offend one of these," and I think it says in one of the Gospels, "My little ones, would be better for you if a millstone were hanged around your neck and you were drowned." There is a sense in which, though, they are not saved in a sense of a conscious act of faith in Christ. They are God's. I believe that a child is given to us as a stewardship. I don't believe we ever own our children; and you who are parents know that, because you turn right...you just turn 'em lose, don't you, after a certain time; and whether or not you've invested a proper stewardship in their life will usually come to...to be somewhat apparent.

So we are given them as a trust from God, and I believe He possess them. Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Now, if the Kingdom of Heaven is of those little children, then they must be His possession; and since they cannot choose to...to come to Christ or to go against Christ, that must be a blanket statement in my mind. If He said, "Of such is the Kingdom," if the Kingdom is of little children, then it is of all little

children; because little children cannot choose yes or no to the Kingdom. So the other thing is when David's son died, without any commitment at all, David said, "He cannot come to me, but I shall go to him." He had that absolute confidence, and that uneditorialized in the Scripture. God just left it there. It was a confidence statement on David's part, and God didn't change it.

Now this is what I believe. I believe that God holds all little children in His...in His care; and if they die, at that point, He redeems them and takes them home; so that I believe one of the blessings of God throughout the history of man has been a high mortality rate in godless countries, so that little children who die en masse in countries without Christ, where there's no Christian testimony and little opportunity to be exposed to the Gospel are really...they really die in the providential love of God. So that when all...all the little babies that, say, are drowned in the Flood, I would believe in my heart, went into the presence of God. All the little babies that would die in a flood, in a famine in Bangladesh or whatever, would...would go to be with the Lord. These are just the things that I see in the Scripture. I feel the same thing about a person, for example who is a...would be classified as an idiot or an imbecile or...or a retarded...a person who cannot consciously choose Christ is kept in the care of the Lord. So that's...that's the confidence that I have. Okay.

QUESTIONER: I've been going to another church that truly believes in no clapping at all in the congregation, and I came here for my first time last Sunday and found \_\_\_\_\_

JOHN: We're so good to have you, Larry. That's wonderful.

QUESTIONER: Okay, go ahead...What I was talking about is like, things like when there's a song sung to the glory of God, and there's applause towards the person or the group of people. I strongly feel wouldn't an Amen be just as good if the whole congregation said Amen instead of a couple of hundred people clapping towards the person or to God or whatever?

JOHN: Yeah, that's...that's a fair question, and I...I have a lotta trouble with indiscriminate clapping. However, Psalm 41...47:1 says, "Clap your hands, all you people." So there is certainly justification. Although I think it's abused sometimes. You might just note that, Psalm 47:1. Lemme tell you something, Larry, about...about this thing. I don't like indiscriminate clapping, but I like people to respond. You know, people in an audience can only respond basically three ways. Okay? I mean, you know, you sit there and you get all excited, and something good happens. One, you can clap. That's acceptable behavior. Two, you could say, "Amen." That...that would be acceptable, although some people would turn around and wonder who did that. Three, you could laugh.

Now, when I'm preaching, sometimes they laugh. Sometimes they say, "Amen"; but they never clap. I haven't gotten to that level yet. I don't know what the key is, but some of it, they laugh when they should clap, I think. But, anyway, I really don't have too much of a problem with that if I believe it's a

spontaneous outburst that's legitimate. What I don't like is every time something goes on, people clap. Now, Sunday morning, I can't remember people in Grace Church ever clapping. Last Sunday, they clapped. I don't know why they did that. Two or three people did that, and then a bunch of other people did it. But it's okay, you know. If that was their way of thanking the Lord and praising the Lord, that's better than just sitting there and saying, "I certainly would like to praise the Lord, but what am I going to do?" But I...I have instructed the people from the pulpit from time to time what I feel about clapping, and I feel that the indiscriminate clapping, where you're...you're viewing things as entertainment, is wrong; and I feel that clapping in most cases does nothing but distract from what someone would be thinking. But where it is spontaneous and sort of just happens. And every once in a while, I have to admit, every once in a while I'm preaching somewhere, it usually isn't here, because it's...you're used to me, I think. But once in a while, I'll be preaching somewhere where they're...they're not used to hearing good teaching, and I'll make a point, and the whole crowd'll burst out in applause, and that's happened to me a lot at other place, not here, as I said. But, because these people are used to it, you know. But in other places, somebody'll get really blessed, and they'll just start to clap. That happens to me sometimes, and I accept that as a spontaneous expression of their...of their joy; and what are they gonna do? They...they... they've got to have some release for that kinda thing. But I don't like it when it's automatic, and I don't like it when it's patronizing, or when it's viewed something as entertainment. Good, that's a good question, and that's...and so if I feel that it gets to the place where it's a little like that, then I would...I would say something.

QUESTIONER: I had a question, and I've been working on it standing here for a while, on the question of the...of Biblical morality, and does the Bible teach 100 percent, and can we live up to that standard?

JOHN: Now, can you qualify that question?

QUESTIONER: Oh, okay, well, there are certain, you know, what it is, it's kind of something that deals with situation ethics. We're in a society, and the Bible tells us what to do in different situations, which I get the feeling the Bible is absolute. Like 100 percent morality, and then we say...well, we make exceptions or something. Is that right? Is it Christian? \_\_\_\_\_ hearing.

JOHN: Oh, certainly. Well, I'll tell ya, it's very simple. Matthew 5:48, Jesus said, "Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect." That's the standard. That's point one.

QUESTIONER: Okay.

JOHN: You ready for point two, Ted? Point two is you can't do that.

QUESTIONER: Well, I agree \_\_\_\_\_

JOHN: Point three...point three is that's what forgiveness is all about and grace and mercy and the unending love of God, in spite of yourself; but that does not change the standard; and there is no place for situation ethics. There is no place for adjustments. There's no place for accommodation to the culture in the plan of God. His Word is absolute. In fact, I just, writing a paper, I'm supposed to present this 40-page paper to the International Conference on Biblical Inerrancy, which is a big bunch of guys who are gonna get together and put out a big, huge statement on Biblical authority and inerrancy; and part of the paper I'm doing on it is on this subject of accommodation. That the people who wanna deny the absolute authority of the Word of God, say Jesus said certain things just to accommodate His culture. Okay? But He didn't really mean...mean 'em.

For example, when Jesus talked about the submission of a woman to a man or when Paul talked about a woman not pastoring a church or teaching, that was an act of accommodation to a cultural mentality, but it was not an authoritative statement for the rest of the church. That's what's known as the principle of accommodation, and that is a very typical neo-orthodox, liberal deal; and the...the study that...that we're doing on that now indicates that that is the very opposite. That Jesus, when He said anything, spoke as One having authority, and that everything He said was absolutely binding; and what the Apostle Paul said was binding upon us; and that every Word of God is binding, so there is no lowering the standard. To lower the standard would be a default in the nature of God.

QUESTIONER: What does perseverance of the saints mean in living a Christian life?

JOHN: Yeah.

QUESTIONER: Is there anything that we do to contribute to it?

JOHN: Yeah, what you're really asking about whether your eternally secure, because God says so, or because you maintain it. Is that right?

QUESTIONER: Well, are we, as Christians, to persevere? In other words, the idea, like in Revelation, it says, "The perseverance of the saints."

JOHN: Right.

QUESTIONER: Staying faithful to keep our salvation or something.

JOHN: Right, yes, you see, the term perseverance of the saints, both in its Biblical and theological terminology, has to do with once saved, always saved. Right? In other words, do saints persevere? Or many in theology says that some do, some don't. Calvinists says that...Calvin says, "We believe in

the perseverance of the saints. Once saved, zap, right on to eternity." And I'm committed to that principle, not because Calvin said it. He just happened to find the Bible truth on that. But, anyway, I believe that's in Scripture; but you...you have to look at the doctrine from two sides. Sometimes the Bible talks about God's part, sometimes talks about our part.

For example, Romans chapter 8 talks about God's part. "Whom He's called, He's justified. Whom He justified, He sanctified. Whom He sanctified, He glorified." Period, paragraph. "Who shall separate from the love of God? Shall tribulation, distress, peril, nothing shall ever separate us from the love of Christ, which we have, you know, secure in Him." And he goes, "Who's gonna lay any charge to God's elect? Who is he to condemn us? So God that justifies? No way. So the whole last of...of Romans 8 talks about God's part. Or you have it in Ephesians 1, that "He's chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, and He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son." You know, that kinda thing. We're to be like Christ. That's God's plan. That's also in Romans 8. We are secure in that. "We have His mercy and His grace, and we are already raised up together to be seated in Heaven in places," Ephesians 2. That's God's part; but our part is this. John 8, "Many believed on His name, but He didn't commit Himself to them; because He said to them, 'If you continue in My Word, then you are My disciple allaythose, my real disciple.'"

So from our standpoint, there'll be perseverance. First John 2:17, "They went out from us because they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would not have gone out from us. But when they went out from us, it was made manifest that they were never of us." So from the divine side, we're saved eternally, because God keeps us. From the human side, we persevere. You find that, for example, at the, I think it's at the end of the 1st chapter of James where he's talking about it from the human viewpoint; and, again, I'll say another word about this to clarify.

He says, "Whosoever looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth in it, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed." So you have the idea of...of continuing in it. He's the one who's blessed. Colossians, isn't it? Colossians 1 verse 23, yes. He's saying, "Having made peace through the cross to reconcile us, if you continue in the faith, grounded and settled and be not moved away." Now, notice this, and that's just a short thing, but in...you've got God's side keeping us, and you've got our side persevering. Those two will go concurrently right into eternity. True saints will persevere. When somebody drops out, that's 1 John 2. "They went out from us, because they...what?...they were not of us." So that's God's side and our part.

Now, notice this, you have to keep it in mind in all your Bible study. In every major doctrine of the Bible, you have the same paradox. You have God's part and our part, and how they harmonize is impossible to know. You say, "If God's doing His part, why do I need to do anything?" well, that's just the way it is. I can illustrate it this way. Who wrote the Book of Romans? Who wrote the Book of Romans? Who is the real author of Romans? Well, so far we've had two suggestions. Paul and the Holy Spirit. God. All right, did God really write the Book of Romans? Did Paul really write the Book of

Romans? Yes, both answers are correct. Now, do you see a slight problem there? You have a paradox, don't you? Paul wrote it with his thoughts and his words and his heart and his mind and, yet, it's every word the Word of God. That's that same thing. You've got God's part and man.

Lemme ask you a question. Who lives your Christian life? "I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live it. Yet, not I, Christ lives in me." You see the same two things? Lemme ask you another question. Who was Christ? Christ was 100 percent what? 100 percent what? 100 percent God and 100 percent man makes 200 percent, and nobody can be 200 percent of something. Well, the same paradox. You've got God and man. You have, now, listen, you have that same paradox in every single Biblical doctrine. You've got the sovereignty of God and the choice of man. God says, "Jesus comes into the world, says, 'No man cometh under the Father but by Me.'" And then he says, "No man comes to Me except...what?...the Father draws him." Then He turns right around in the same book and says, "You will not come to Me that you might have life." On the one hand you have God's side. On the other side you have man's side.

Now, listen, don't try to resolve that, because those two things go in paradox all the way through the history of Scripture; and it's one...as I've said so many times, this is one of the greatest proofs that God wrote the Bible, because man would never allow for that glaring a contradiction to exist on every page of a book that he wrote. The very fact that God never resolves the conflict is indicated...is an indication that there's a higher mind than ours who knew we could never understand it, and so we just leave that paradox.

Yes, the answer to your question, Ken, I believe that a true believer will and must persevere faithfully. That's our side of it. Just as I believe that one day I came to Jesus Christ out of an act of my own will and invited Christ into my life. Don't you believe that about yours? At the same time, I knew the moment I did that, that it was already my name had been written in the last Book of Life from before the foundation of the world. That was God's part. I don't worry about harmonizing those things. That's impossible for me. I just let 'em exist. So it's great. You just hold those things in tension all the time. You let God be God and man be man, and let Him worry about how it's resolved.

Okay, and you'll save yourself a lot of trouble. You sit around trying to figure out how it all comes together, and you're gonna come up with heresy. You know what happens, for example, in the early church, they didn't...they couldn't handle that God...Christ was God and Man, so they tried to make Him half of each, and they...they destroyed both. See? And people can't believe that...that there is...there is absolute election and choice on the man's part, so they make something in the middle and they ruin both. See? People don't wanna accept the fact that the Holy Spirit lives your life in you, and that you live it with a commitment. They try to mishmash something in the middle, and they come up with some kind of esoteric deal, and they miss both. Leave 'em there. Leave that tension. Very important.

QUESTIONER: When God created man in His own image, we know it was spiritually, but what about physically?

JOHN: Well, God does...doesn't make man in His own image physically, because John 4:24 says, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." And Jesus said, when they were seeing Him after His resurrection, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see Me have." So the Bible tells us God is a Spirit, and Jesus defines what a spirit is. It is without flesh and bones. There is no body. God has no form at all. He has no physical form. In the first place, where is God? Where is He? Everywhere. He is everywhere. But lemme hasten to say this, just because He doesn't have a body doesn't mean He isn't real. The most real part about you is not your body, is it? The most...the...the real you is...is intan...it's...it's... what is it? You ever think about that? Well, what really are you?

You know, I mean we can cut your leg off and still have you. We can cut your other leg off and still have you. We can cut your arm off and still have you. We keep going, we're gonna get to you, but...but the real you is a very intangible thing; and the same is true of God. God is the ultimate personality. He's a real person, but He has no physical form. He appears in the Old Testament manifest in light, in a glorious blaze of...of light; but He has no physical form. So when He created man in His own image, it was...it was, I believe, in the sense that man is a...is a thinking being. Man...has a will, and he has emotion. Intellect, will, and emotion, I think are the key things.

QUESTIONER: I don't have any problem at all with eternal security, but I have a question that came up some time ago concerning Hebrews 6:4 through 10. Could you deal with who that's addressing?

JOHN: Now, you gotta...you really need to go back to chapter 5 verse 12 to understand this, but we won't do that, because that would take so much time. The Book of Hebrews, you have to know this. You have to be careful to...to know who is the addressee. To whom is he writing, okay? The writer of Hebrews, we don't know who it is, only God knows. We don't know. It doesn't tell us. Some people think it's Paul. Personally, I don't think it's Paul, but that's all right if you do. You can still be a Christian and think it's Paul.

But...but, anyway, the writer is writing to Jewish people in three categories. Category No. 1, they are Jewish converts. They have committed their life to Christ, but it's very difficult for them to shake their Judaism, and so he's writing to try to say to them, "Jesus is better than Moses. Jesus is better than Aaron. Jesus is better than the old covenant. His sacrifice is better than the old system," and he just goes on and on. In fact, the first part of the book is Jesus is better than fill in the blank. That's the whole first part of it; but to the second group, and the second group are Jewish people who are

intellectually convinced that this is true, but they won't make a commitment to Christ, because they don't wanna pay the price. Okay? In other words, they're afraid of the...of being ostracized out of their community, of socially being outcast, being un-synagogued, is actually a Greek word, to be un-synagogued. They were afraid of that, and so they were hanging on the fence, and they knew all this stuff was true, but they wouldn't come on in and really commit themselves to Christ. The third group are people who don't yet have even an intellectual commitment. They're just the...the lost Jews.

Now, as you study each passage in Hebrews, you have to determine to which of those three groups he's primarily speaking. The main body of the book is to the Jewish Christians, who wanna really come to Christ. But, periodically, there are warnings in the Book of Hebrews. Every so often, he stops and directs a straight shot to the people who have made an intellectual commitment, but have not yet come all the way. Okay? This is one of those. There's one in chapter 4. There's one in chapter 6. There's one in chapter 10, and some other one. I can't recall. So he is saying to them, verse 4, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, made partakers of the Holy Spirit, have tasted the good Word of God, the powers of the age to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to an open shame."

Now, I want you notice what isn't there, first of all. There is no term in verse 4 and 5 ever used anywhere in the Bible for salvation. Okay? Enlightenment, is that salvation? What does that speak of? When you're enlightened, what is that talking about? That's talking about something that's intellectual, isn't it? Something mental. What about tasting the heavenly gift? Jeremiah said, "Thy Words were found, and I did...what?...I did eat them." This is just a tasting, a smattering; and a partaker of the Holy Spirit, the believer is not a partaker of the Holy Spirit. The believer is a possessor of the Holy Spirit. And tasted the good Word of God. Lots of people have tasted it. The Bible even says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Then you gotta make a commitment to it, and the powers to the age to come.

Now, listen, he is writing to Jewish people who know this stuff is true. They have been exposed to these things. They have been intellectually enlightened. They have tasted the heavenly gift. They've tasted something of the reality of Christ, which is God's unspeakable gift. They have been a partaker of the Holy Spirit. For example, I'll give you a classic illustration. Jesus did all of His miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit, right? So when He fed the 5,000, they tasted the power of the Holy Spirit, literally. There were multitudes upon multitudes of people who were healed, who tasted the power of the Holy Spirit. There were multitudes of people who stood and watched people heal, and they tasted the power of the Holy Spirit. They tasted the powers of the age to come, because this is...this is millennial power.

Well, in the millennium, when the Lord comes, what's gonna happen? Boy, the Lord is gonna heal the whole earth. They were actually take...when Jesus was on earth, people tasted the...tasted of Him.

When He was on earth, they tasted the power of the age to come. They tasted the Holy Spirit's power. Now, he's talking about those kinds of people, not saved people, but people exposed to the power of Christ, to the power that will be someday unleashed in the Kingdom. They saw His miracles. They saw the signs, saw the wonders. Not only that, they saw them even through the apostles.

Back in chapter 2 of Hebrews and in verse 3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Here's one of these warning passages again. These people have neglected their salvation. "How shall we escape if we neglect it, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, was confirmed unto us by, was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him, God bearing them witness, with signs, wonders, divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit." You see, they had heard the Gospel with signs and wonders and miracles, and that's what it means when it says they tasted all this stuff. They saw the powers of the age to come. They tasted the heavenly gift, but they went all the way to that point, full revelation. Man, they heard the Gospel. They saw the power of Christ. They saw the power of the Holy Spirit. They experienced the whole thing right there firsthand. If they fall away from that, to renew them again to repentance is impossible. "Seeing they crucify, to themselves, the Son of God and put Him in open shame."

In other words, the point is this. If you reject Jesus Christ when you have full intellectual information, you're hopeless, 'cause God can't give you any more information. You see? If you fall away at that point, and you do not receive Christ, when you have tasted the powers of the age to come, when you have tasted the good Word of God that Jesus spoke and that His apostles preached, when you are partakers of the Holy Spirit by the signs and wonders and mighty deeds and gifts of the Spirit, when you have been enlightened in your mind, when you've tasted of the wonderful gift of Christ and His Gospel, and you have fallen away from that, there is nothing more God can do, right? That's the end. It's impossible for you to be renewed.

Now, there are people who say, "Well, this is talking about a Christian who's gotten saved and all these terms meansaved, if he fall...and he falls away." Well, if it is, then that Christian's in a lotta trouble, because if he ever falls away, what? It's impossible to get saved again; and, while some people wanna teach that this means you could fall away, they are in a big hurry to teach that it doesn't mean you can never come back; but, see, that's a real problem if you wanna interpret that way. So it's not even talking about Christians. It's talking about intellectually convinced Jewish people who should have had enough information to make a conscious commitment to Jesus Christ, but they didn't; and if they fell away with full revelation, they're hopeless.

In fact, a perfect illustration is Matthew chapter 13 where Jesus says to the Pharisees, "You blaspheme the Holy Spirit. You've seen all the works that I've done. You've seen all the miracles that I've done, and you've attributed them all to Satan. You're...you're hopeless. You're hopeless." And lemme show you the...the real final deal on it is to go down to verse 9; and here He turns to the Christians. "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, even things that

accompany...what?... salvation." See, now he's talking to the people who have salvation, so you have to make that distinction. Does that answer it for you? Thank you.

QUESTIONER: You've used the term dying grace in reference to the death of a believer. Could you explain that term?

JOHN: Well, what I mean by that, I think that, we've talked about this some, but I think that God doesn't grant to us what we need until we need it; and so sometimes we create more anxiety about things that haven't happened than we will ever have when they occur. You know, and this starts out when you're a little kid and worry more about the dentist; and it actually...it's not as bad as you thought, you know, or maybe it is, I don't... depending on how bad your tooth is. But, and, you know, anticipation is always worse than reality, seemingly, we...which is a good indicator that...of where real pain and real problems come from. They're all in your mind, 'cause you can get yourself sick without 'em being there.

So I think a lotta people worry about dying. A lotta people fear death. That's a very normal thing. You know, the termination of all your dreams and ambitions and hopes and relationships and all, so it's kind of a stark thing. So people think about that, but what they forget is that...that God is not going to equip them to handle the reality until they get there; and so when we talk about dying grace, which is an old term. I don't know that it's Biblical, but we're simply saying that, when the moment comes, God grants to you the same peace that you have in life to face the reality of that without fear; and that's...that's not something you can anticipate, because you can get yourself so worried.

You know that the...it's interesting. They've done some recent tests, and they have found out that there are two reasons people kill themselves. One, they...they hate life; and, two, they fear death. A vast number of people commit suicide because they're afraid to die. In other words, they wanna take away the mystery of it. They can't live with the unknown anticipation of death, so they steal that anticipation away by killing themselves. They don't want death to have that mysterious when it's...when is it gonna happen thing. So, but I think God gives us the grace for the times when we need it. You've seen that in your life, haven't ya? When trouble comes in your life, how God sustains you? Well, dying grace would just be the...the ultimate in that aspect.

QUESTIONER: I wanted to ask you. You were talking about those...the Jews, I guess in that time not being capable of...of accepting the Lord after not taking...after having the intellectual view of Jesus and then casting it aside. Are you saying that those people were not chosen by God for salvation?

JOHN: I didn't say that. \_\_\_\_\_

QUESTIONER: No, I was just wondering \_\_\_\_\_

JOHN: Yeah, I wouldn't say that. You know, that is a--

QUESTIONER: Along with that paradox you were talking about.

JOHN: Yeah, but...but that is true. But that is not how the Bible approaches that. In other words, I don't say, the Bible never says anything about anybody not being chosen. Okay? It just says all that say...are saved are chosen. Illustration, Romans 9, and in Romans 9 says, "There are vessels prepared unto glory." Active tense verb, God prepares vessels for glory. God actively prepares vessels for glory. On the other hand, it says, "And there are some vessels that have been fitted for destruction." Passive, God is not actively involved in non-election, in non-choosing, in condemnation. That's the interesting paradox. Everybody saved is chosen by God. Everybody who dies and goes to hell, goes there on their own responsibility. Now I don't know how to resolve that. Don't put me in a corner on that. I just let God be God.

And, as I've said, you know, it's so great that we can't understand that. If I understood everything in the Bible, I'd be God; and if I was God, we'd be in such trouble, see. You don't want me to be God. Let God resolve those things. No, so I would never say anything like, "Well, they weren't chosen." When a person dies without the Lord, Jesus said, "You will not come to Me that you might have life." He may have said, "No man comes unto me except the Father draw him," but He turned right around and said, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." So salvation is an elective act of God. Perdition is a choice of man, and God never views it any other way. Just to keep the terms straight.

QUESTIONER: Please can you play...explain the 1 John 5:16 and 17?

JOHN: Sin unto death?

QUESTIONER: Yes, if these sin \_\_\_\_\_ with a unbeliever or \_\_\_\_\_ a believer, what kind of death he's talking about.

JOHN: There is a sin unto death. "I...I do not ask that you pray for this." In other words, there is a possibility that someone sins a sin and they die. Now people say, "Well, is that an unbeliever or a believer?" I lean toward the fact that it's a believer and that it's not any one sin, but it's the straw that breaks the camel's back. In other words, when a Christian walks away from the Lord and walks in disobedience for a period of time, God may just take him home. For example, 1 Corinthians chapter 11, where the Apostle Paul is talking to the Corinthians about the way they handled the communion service, and he says, "Because of your misuse of the Lord's table, many of you are weak and sickly, and some of you are sleep."

Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5, they lied to the Holy Spirit, and God struck 'em dead on the spot. I tend to feel that the sin unto death is not any given sin, you know. It's whatever that final straw is when the Holy Spirit says, "You know, you're better off out of there." And...and even so, you go to Heaven, you know. So it's not that bad. It's just that God removes you from the scene, so you're not a detriment to the...to the ongoing work of the church. That's...that's the way I kinda lean. It's very difficult to interpret. In fact, believe me, people, people say, "Oh, read 1 John. It's so easy." That is...this is probably one the hardest books to interpret and...and to outline of any book in the Bible. Very difficult, and that's a difficult problem there. But either way you go, you know, it's...it's true. Believers will die if they live in disobedience, as 1 Corinthians 11 says. So we just kinda tie it in at that point. If it's unbelievers, unbeliever can die. The Lord can take the life of an unbeliever for sin. He does. He took a whole slew of civilizations in the past, so either way it's still a Biblical truth. We just don't know which of those two truths that verse is attached to.

QUESTIONER: In a situation where the wife is a Christian and the husband isn't, and the Bible teaches obedience to God and submission to your husband, what do you do in a situation where the income tax has been prepared, and the woman, it's put before you to sign, but it's dishonest?

JOHN: I think...I think that falls into the category of Acts chapter 5. "You judge whether I oughta obey God or man." I think you are to submit until such submission violates a divine principle. That it's clearly revealed in the Word of God. Period.

QUESTIONER: In the parable of the ten virgins where five go into the marriage and the other five ask the Lord to open unto them, and He says that He doesn't know them. I've heard teaching that this is referring to the Rapture of the church. Could you clarify that for me?

JOHN: Most people feel that this is a Jewish passage, and that it's talking about the...the return of Christ for the Kingdom, and the people who either get in or don't get into the Kingdom, rather than the Rapture of the church. You see, you've got... you've got the Tribulation clear back in 24:29, and it's hard. It's a tough passage to interpret just where it is; but the... "The day, nor the hour in which the Son of Man cometh," is in 13, see? And the coming of the Son of Man is different than the Rapture; and, you see, He's on...He's...this is the Olivet Discourse. It's a very Jewish thing in character. This is "Immediately after the Tribulation of those days," verse 29 of 24. I kinda think it's moving toward the...the second coming here, so that this is a Jewish situation of inclusion or exclusion at the...at the time when our Lord returns, rather than the Rapture.

QUESTIONER: In the past couple weeks when I've been witnessing, people confronted me with, "Well, God says, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and yet over and over that Israel went to battle and killed so many people." And I say, "I don't know. I'll ask my pastor."

JOHN: Well, that's a fair question. The word in the Hebrew means murder. "Thou shalt not murder." Why does God allow...why did God allow Israel to...to do that to those nations? That's a question I'm often asked, and here's the answer. God never used Israel as a judgment nation unless the people they were judging were so gross that they were like a cancer in society. If you say to someone, "Why did you have your leg amputated?" And he says, "Because it had gangrene up to the knee, and if I hadn't, I'd be dead." You understand that. When you understand, if you do a little study of the nations around Israel and around Canaan, and you understand how engulfed they were in horrible evil; and I've told you before that, for example, the Canaanites, when they built a new building, would put a live baby in a jar and bury it in the wall of everything they built. That's just one thing that they did. These people were the lowest level of...of humanity in many ways; and when God came against these nations in judgment, it was because God in His sovereignty knew they were unrepentant. He knew there was no hope for them; and He knew that, if they remained in the situation they were in, they weren't gonna change. You know? And you gotta die sometime, and it was better to remove the cancer than to have it contaminate the whole of all of the surrounding society. Everybody's gotta die, right? Everybody, and God brought death soon to people of that kind in that day in order to try to preserve the righteousness of society. I think God is to be commended, not to be questioned; and you can't...you...you... unless you understand that God knew where they were in their rejection, you know, then you got a problem.

QUESTIONER: My question is related to your message Sunday night when you were talking about Christ being in the right place at the right time. I personally don't have too much problem being in the right place, but a lotta times I have problem being there at the right time. As far as, I mean, in other words, like punctuality and that type thing. So I was wondering if maybe you can give me some insight on...from Christ's life, how He, you know, He just didn't appear everywhere, so how...how He managed or planned or whatever He did to get places at the right time.

JOHN: Boy, oh, I don't...it doesn't really tell us the practical aspects. I imagine He walked fast, and I imagine He...you know, the key, to me, and I...I see this in the life of Christ, is no wasted motion...There's no wasted motion. In those days, structure was a little different. It's still like that in other countries, because there was no...everybody didn't have watches, right? No clocks. You started when they got there, and so there wouldn't be the same rigidity that we experience. For example, they would say at midday, you know, or about the third hour or about certain hour, because they would only be able to tell by a sundial if one were available, or by the location of the sun in the sky. So there was a sense of flexibility; but, of course, the Lord Jesus, because He was omniscient and knew everything, knew exactly where to be.

I'm not foolish enough to think that I'm always where I oughta be at the right time, either. Fortunately, I don't know whether I am or not, so I don't get guilty about it. If I didn't show up and didn't know I was to show up, you know, but if I was omniscient, that would be a very pressing thing. I think, you know, one of the things that I'm really, really tough on myself on is being on time, punctual. I feel that it's a matter of teaching myself discipline and priorities. If I'm gonna do anything, I'm gonna do it on time. Sometimes it's a problem for my wife and four kids, because, you know, they're all doing their thing; and kids, of course, don't feel that pressure; and so you got four kids in four directions, and you know everywhere I go anyway, I gotta be on time. If I'm not on time, somebody panics, you know. Whoever looks around and says, "He's not here. Who's gonna preach? Who's gonna talk?" You know, this is a problem. So it's been...it's a...it's been a great discipline, but it's been one of the things that I've really enjoyed teaching my children is that, if you commit yourself to a certain thing, you say something about the urgency and the importance and the respect you have for that thing if you're there when the thing is supposed to begin. Otherwise, it appears as though it's an intrusion in your schedule. If you wanna make people feel important, and if you want people to believe you think what they're doing is important, just be there a little early, and they'll know that you have set your sights on this objective. That's why you're there early, just a shade early. If you're always late, then they get the feeling that you...you sort of feel like you gotta come, you know.

So I don't know about the insights of the Lord. I don't know, because of His omniscience, how it could relate us; but I do know that it's...if it's worth your time to be there, then you oughta give good testimony to the significance of being on time.

QUESTIONER: Yes, I was just wondering as far as abortion goes, if a woman was told by her doctor that it would cause, you know, problems with her, complications or maybe even her death, what your views were as far as carrying through with an abortion in that case.

JOHN: I take a very firm position on that. I don't think abortion is ever an option. There may be; and, by the way, there...there...you know, I don't wanna be so hard-lined, that there may be a moment in time when the life of both hangs in the balance at the end, and the medical doctor makes a decision, one or the other will live or die; and in that kind of a situation, when the birth is taking place, at that crisis moment, I...I don't know what kind of medical factors come into play. But I've talked to enough doctors who say that that kind of decision, where you choose between the life of the mother and the life of the...life of the child, is so rare that most doctors have never even heard of one in that particular circumstance, let alone had that kind of experience. So that's extremely remote. I don't think that we can, at all take prerogatives in terms of taking lives based on whatever medical analysis we might make. We had, for example, a girl call us up, and she said, "I'm pregnant, and the doctors told us that if we went ahead and had the...had the baby, that because of my physical problems, I could lose my life. I could bleed to death in the...in the actual birth process. Or prior to that, I could have some real

problems hemorrhaging and all that, and they recommend an abortion. What should I do?" And we recommended to her that she commit it to the Lord and not have an abortion. She gave birth to a perfectly beautiful normal child and had a wonderful birth. Those things are in the hands of God, and that's our position.

QUESTIONER: It seems that there's many examples of fasting for spiritual conditioning in the Bible and, yet, today, we don't use this as a pattern in our Christian development. Why is that?

JOHN: Well, I...I think there's a very important place for fasting; and, you know, I don't...I don't like to say, "Well, it's good for your system." That isn't why you do it in the Bible...I think it has a place. I think the elders in the Book of Acts prayed and fasted when they came to the place where they were waiting on the Holy Spirit to choose out Paul and Barnabas to go to the mission field. Fasting, you see, was a...a process of spiritual preoccupation where you...you...you gave yourself totally to the concentration of the spiritual dimension.

Now, keep in mind, the majority of fasts throughout the Bible, by definition in the very terms and historical works that we have, were not total fasts, but partial fasts. For example, fasting could be absenting oneself from a banquet. That's the literal root meaning of the word. Absenting oneself from a banquet, so that what it...you know, you could fast by saying, "For a month I will...we will not eat out; but we'll spend our time at home with our family concentrating around the table on the things of the Lord and prayer." That would be a kind of fast. Absenting yourself from eating as a social activity, see? There were other fasts which would be partial fasts. One-day fasts. Only two times in the Bible do you ever have anybody fasting 40 days.

When you do fast, by the way, don't tell anybody; because the Bible says you shouldn't; and don't go around looking, "Ohhhhh, I'm so mis..." You know, don't...that's what the Pharisees used to do. They used to get sunken cheeks and put ashes on their head and all. Don't let anybody know you're fasting. Be happy. Kick your heels up and have, you know, just fit in. But fasting was a way, I think, of absenting oneself from the normal world entertainment. I...I almost think sometimes you could fast today by, like I say, not going out to eat. That would be one type, as well as times when you set food aside for a preoccupation with spiritual things.

There are times in my life when I do that, when I'm absorbed in the things of the Lord, and there are things that are going on in my life for which I'm praying or which I'm anxious for, I...I will set apart a period of time - one day, two days - and not eat anything in order that I might concentrate and not be preoccupied with the mundane; and I think that those...those are good things to do. Again, I don't talk about that kind of thing, because the Bible says you shouldn't talk about it. You should just do it. So, but I think it...definitely we need...I think we need to prove our...to ourselves that we can cut ourselves off from the mundane and concentrate on the spiritual area.

I think our time is gone, so we'd better stop. You really are getting down to the interesting questions, and I hope you enjoy doing this. I really enjoy doing it. I...I don't always have the best answers for you. I can remember when I first came to Grace, and I used to do this, and everybody asked easy questions; and...and, now as you're growing, and people say, "I've been reading, and all the commentaries say," you know, that's very interesting. Most Christians don't know what a commentary is. They think it's a thing that Howard K. Smith does on the...the news, you know. But it's really gratifying to know that you're in the Word of God, and you're really studying; and you've got to know these things, because this is God's truth; and the next thing you know, when...once you know these truths and you're feeding on these truths, you gotta turn it around and take 'em to somebody else. So that's great. God bless you for sharing your questions with us. Let's have prayer.

Father, thank You for our fellowship. We just thank You so much for the joy of sharing together and the love that you've given us in Christ, and I thank You for the privilege of seeing the growth in the...in the lives of these people who are feeding in Your Word, and who can teach me as...even as I teach them, who can share with me the answer to questions as I even share with them. Thank You for that interchange that comes as we mature. Increase our motivation to deal with You in terms of Your Word. Make us people of prayer that are devoted not only to listening to You speak, but to speaking in You in return as we bow before You. We thank You that we can reason out of the Scriptures, and that we can know these things are true. Thank You that we have an authoritative Word. We pray that You'll bless us as we continue diligently to know its truths; and, Father, as we reach out to touch unsaved people and Christians who need to learn, make us useful. May we not be reservoirs, but channels. Thank You in Christ's name. Amen.

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