

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 10

Selected Scriptures

1301-H

Well, now, let's answer some questions, and you asked me too many question. I can't answer 'em all, so if yours doesn't get answered, it's one of two reasons. I don't have time, or I don't know the answer...

Here's one that came right off the top. I'll just start with this, and there were many like this. Many said, "How can you really make your marriage what it oughta be?" Some say, "Well, how can you communicate in marriage? How can a wife really confront her husband? How can a marriage be what it oughta be?" There's so many answers in the Scripture. Of course, following the example of 1 Peter chapter 3 would be critical. Let's look at it for a brief moment, and we'll keep moving on these, so we're just gonna give you a suggestion to go back and do a little study on your own.

One lady said, "Well, if your...if your husband doesn't fulfill your expectations as a spiritual leader, if your husband isn't saved, or if your marriage isn't what it oughta be, what do you do?" First Peter 3 says, "You wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the Word, they may be without the Word won by the behavior of the wives." In other words, if your husband isn't living up to Biblical truth, either he's not saved or perhaps he's a Christian but doesn't obey the Word, without the Word and by your behavior you can win him. "When he beholds...verse 2...your pure conduct coupled with reverence." You see, it's a matter of who you are, not what you say, but who you are. "Your adorning, let it not be the outward adorning of the braiding of the hair and wearing of gold and putting on a fancy, fine apparel." In other words, if he sees that you're preoccupied with the inside, not the outside, that says a lot to him. It's very hard to convince somebody that something means a lot to you unless it's evident in your life; and if the spiritual is that important, then it'll be the preoccupation of your life rather than the external. See, that's what he's saying. "Concentrate...verse 4...on the hidden man of the heart, that which is not corruptible." Do you realize that most people spend their entire life buying things that decay. Did you know that? Every...everything in your house, and all the things that you possess in this world, will rot. We spend our entire life buying stuff that rots. Really something. Instead of working on the inside. "The ornament of a meek, quiet spirit." Now, that's the approach. That's what he said. You can compare Ephesians chapter 5 where it talks about the wife submitting to her husband in the Lord and so forth.

Lemme just give you some things that my dad was sharing with me. Cecil Osborne lists how to put romance back into your marriage. You ready for this? This is how to get the spark back. No. 1, learn the real meaning of love, and what is the real meaning of love? It is self...what?...sacrifice. Okay, No. 2, give up dreams of a perfect marriage and work toward a good marriage. Did you get that? Give up dreams of a perfect marriage and work toward a good marriage. Three, discover your husband's unique needs and meet them. He's unique. You know that. You've said to him many times, "I've never met anyone like you." Recognize his uniqueness. Meet his needs. Four, abandon your preconceived ideas of what men are like and discover what your man is like...There is no mythical

Aristotelian man. You gotta live with yours. Abandon all dependency on your parents. Six, give praise and appreciation instead of seeking it. These are pretty practical. Give praise and appreciation instead of seeking it. Seven, surrender possessiveness and jealousy that comes from insecurity and always destroys, and the only place to surrender it is to Christ. Eight, treat your husband or wife - it can either way - with affection instead of bad news and complaining. At least let him sit down before you tell him. Now here's a good one. No. 9, abandon all hope of changing your partner through criticism or attack. Who changes people? Only God...and, by the way, attack begets attack. Criticism begets criticism. Hate begets hate. Love begets love. Whatever you want is what you give. No. 10, outgrow the princess syndrome...A princess asks, and a princess demands, and a princess feels special. Realize that you have to give. No. 10, or 11, pray for patience. Patience is tension capacity, and then another one, just to final it. These are a dozen here. Abandon self-pity. Don't wallow in sorrow.

You know, I think part of the problem is this, you know, some women wouldn't be satisfied if their husband was a combination of Gabriel, Abraham Lincoln, and Robert Redford; and I think, in many ways, the church can set a standard that's so high that, no matter what the man does to try to be the spiritual head, he never lives up. We're looking for someone who could fit into the first vacancy in the Trinity, and maybe that's not right. I think there are some principles in the Word of God about how you live and about the expectations that you have that can help you to make your marriage a good marriage; and we'll say a lot more about that in Ephesians chapter 5. We're gonna cover that in great detail coming up.

Here's another one. What does the Bible say about Christians investing their money in things over and above their needs in order to get out of paying taxes? Now, lemme just say this. The Old Testament, we don't have to cover this in detail, but in my little book that I wrote called Giving God's Way, we cover a little bit about God telling us to invest our money and give our money. The Christian and His Finances tape covers that also. But lemme just say this. God expects you to be wise about your investments. The government gives you the right and the opportunity to wisely do that. Since God has told you to invest wisely, and since God has ordained government, Romans 13 says that, you have every right to take every opportunity to invest everything you can as a tax shelter. That's only wise stewardship. God expects you to use your head about those kinds of things. Whatever the government provides for you, you should take advantage of.

Now, in Matthew chapter 25, I'm just gonna refer to this one passage for time's sake tonight, we find our Lord Jesus' own words that, "It is wise to invest your money." In Matthew chapter 25 and verse 27, He says in talking here of the parable of the talents and, of course, the Lord in the parable is the Lord of reality, the Lord Christ. He says, "Thou oughtest therefore...Matthew 25:27...to have put my money to the exchangers...and literally it means in the bank...and then at my coming, I should have received mine own with interest." In other words, if you'd have been a faithful servant, and you'd have been a wise servant, you'd have wisely invested this, and you'd have gained interest. There is nothing wrong with that. That is a godly act to wisely invest. You go back to the godly woman of Proverbs 31, and she was wise enough to purchase a field and make a profit. There's nothing wrong with that. God has designed that we do that. God wants you to save money. He even sets up in the Proverbs an ant, "Take heed to the ant, who has enough sense to store up his food for the winter." We should be saving. We should be hedging against the future somewhat. There's no lack of trust in that. If God provides beyond your needs, now, then the money beyond your needs now may be money that He expects you to wisely invest now, so that when the future comes, He doesn't have to give you more. People say, "Well, I don't wanna save any money, because that wouldn't be living by

faith." Oh, yes, it would. If you have all your needs met, and you have something left, then that is to be set aside wisely to provide for the future when God may have a different design rather than wastefully spent. So it's important to invest, and our own Lord Jesus let's us know about that.

Here's another interesting one that no doubt has to do with Local 770 and the strike in the market business here. Is it unbiblical to belong to a labor union? No, and I hasten to add this. The Bible doesn't say anything about labor unions. The Bible doesn't say anything about economics and political economics, most of all. That is at the discretion of every Christian. It is not more sanctified to be in a...in a non-union shop than a union shop. That just isn't true. Those things are political and economic. Now, somebody else asked the question, should a Christian strike? When you join a union, you pledge a certain amount of support to that union, right? I mean that's basically what it is. The union seeks to better and improve your job situation on the basis that you will commit yourself to be loyal to their pursuits. Now, I think you have a responsibility, as a Christian, to submit, then, and to keep your word to that organization until such a time as you feel they have violated what is right; and so it comes right down to the place where every Christian must decide for himself and herself whether or not such a strike is a right thing to do. If it is right, if it is equitable, then you can submit to the structure of that union. If, on the other hand, it is inequitable, it is unjust, it is unfair, then I think you can go ahead and break the lines and go across and work if you wish. But that's for every Christian to decide. The Bible makes no specific comment in regard to that particular issue.

Well, I think that, you know, what you need to do in that case is to get your Bible and go to the 6th chapter of Ephesians, and you need to read that through carefully there, where you have God's labor relations all laid out. How you are to function, and it talks about master and a servant, and it means an employer and an employee, how you are to function. Then when you've done that, go to Colossians chapter 3 and make a comparison of the two. Then ask God to give you direction.

I know in my own situation, I used to be in Local 770 when I was kid working in high school as a...in a market; and there were times when I submitted, and times when I did not submit; and they were based upon what I felt was right. I remember that I was in a situation, and the union wanted me to stand up in front and raise my hand and swear loyalty to the union; and in my own conscience, I felt that I couldn't swear by anything, that I couldn't swear my allegiance to anything in this world other than Jesus Christ. That's just where I was in my understanding, and so I said, "I'm not gonna do that." So they picked me up bodily. The guy threw me on the street on Hollywood Boulevard. Then, of course, they came back next week to get my dues and get me back in again; and, at that point, I submitted; and I was willing to be a part. I just didn't feel I could pledge my allegiance to any other than Jesus Christ. Now, that was my own conscience at that point. I'm not trying to set down a law for you. But I think that's the rule by which you have to function in the economic/political world in which we live. You've gotta be responsible as a Christian. God doesn't give you these kinda pat answers. Don't strike. Do this, and so forth. You've gotta work your own situation under the energy and the power and direction of the Holy Spirit. Okay?

Let's go on to another question, and some of these are really good. A brother and sister in Christ here in our church, apparently, have separated, divorced, and remarried against the instruction of the Scripture, against the instruction of other brothers and sisters, against the instruction of the church. It ended in them being separated from our fellowship, and that's true. When someone goes against the teaching of the Word of God willfully, goes against the teaching and the instruction and ruling of the elders, they will be put out of the church. That's what the Bible says for the purity of the church.

The question then, when, if at all, can they be restored to fellowship and how? Well, lemme answer the first question. Can they be restored to fellowship? What's the answer? The answer is can God forgive sin? Yes. Yes, they can be restored; and, even though they divorced in a non-biblical manner, even though they remarried in a non-biblical manner, and even though there will be chastening, believe me, there will be chastening, because wherever there is sin, there is chastening, there will always also be in the heart of God forgiveness and restitution wherever there is repentance. So the first thing we have to understand is that there's no sin too big for God to forgive. There's no evil too despised by his holiness that he cannot take the sinner back who comes repentant.

Now, people say, "Well, if they repent, do they have to then leave and go back to the original partners?" No. That would really be something. That would be trying to unscramble the egg. It couldn't be done. Repentance, and I believe that repentance demands an overt, verbal confession to the church, at least in part, some of the church, of the sin involved and a turning from a sinful, willful heart attitude to an attitude of righteousness that seeks to serve God. In Galatians 6:1, we have the right Scripture to apply. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fall, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of humility or meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." When somebody is overtaken in a fall, and here the idea is that they fall and they repent. If somebody continues in sin, there's no restoration; but if they see it as such, they repent of it, they turn around, then restoration is at hand; and so, where there is repentance, where there is confession, I'm convinced there is restoration.

And that leads to another question or two that came up about this divorce issue. It says, "Is it always sin for a divorced person to remarry? Is it always sin for a divorced person to remarry?" Now, lemme answer that very briefly by saying no. No, there are some Biblical bases on which a divorced person can remarry. No. 1, where there is adultery, the Bible says that the innocent party is released from the marriage bond, and such release is to provide opportunity for a remarriage. Now, lemme say what I believe on this. I believe if two people are married, one commits adultery, there is a...there is the right of divorce. Jesus said this in Matthew. There is that right of divorce. You have that privilege. I don't think that that's an absolute necessity.

I think the Bible is most pure in its statement about divorce when Malachi says that God said, "I hate divorce." Okay? And it was always because of the hardness of your heart, right? Deuteronomy says, so, basically, just because a partner is unfaithful doesn't mean, "Well, you've done it. That's it. It's divorce. The only option." No, no, I think God's greatest desire would be for there to be great forgiveness, great repentance on the part of the person who was guilty, and then a coming back together; but sometimes that can't happen, because there's no repentance, or the...the adultery becomes prolonged, and it's just the end; and our Lord said that where that occurs, the person is free to remarry.

Now, also, in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, it says, "If an unbeliever departs, let him depart. A brother is not in bondage in such cases." And I believe that what that is saying is that if an unbeliever leaves a Christian, and the issue of their leaving, now watch it, the issue of their leaving is the spiritual issue, that a believer is then free. So I would say that a person can remarry on two bases. One is that if they lost their partner due to an adulterous situation, which they were the innocent party. Two, on the basis of an unbeliever who departs. But lemme tell you something real quick. Even though there is a divorce in the case of adultery, and even though there is a divorce in the case of a...of an unbeliever willfully leaving, it is my own personal policy that I will not remarry somebody, even though they're

the innocent party, to another partner until that partner who left for adultery or desertion has remarried; and the reason I say that is this. Romans 7 talks about the fact that, when a new partner is married, the first relationship is completely over; but even beyond that, my reasoning is this. I never wanna second guess God. In an adulterous situation, a partner could leave, and then their life could be transformed by Jesus Christ, and the best thing that could happen would be to put it back together again. But if I go and take that person and marry them to somebody else, then I have eliminated that option, and just maybe I've second guessed God. And people will always say, "You know, well, they went away, and it was adulterous, and they're not interested in me," and so forth and so forth and so forth; and "I found this new partner, and I wanna get married," and so forth. And, you know, I say to myself, "Well, maybe it's right, and maybe it is right, but let's wait until we know it's right, that God had nothing else in mind." So I'd rather give God that option. That's just my own personal conviction. I... that's not really a Biblical thing, because the Bible does say that when that partner leaves, when that person deserts, there is the right to remarry; but it's my conviction that I'd rather be patient than rush into another marriage, to wait and see if God might put it back together again.

Now, those things apply to people who are involved in the Lord's work, people who are in the family of God, and, I think, to those who are Christians married to non-Christians. What about a person who was divorced and so forth before they became a believer? You know, I really have to believe that whatever happened before you were a Christian is past; and now that you've come to Jesus Christ, there's a whole new life. I mean if everything becomes new, then everything becomes new; and you start from there. So I hope that helps if you're having questions about it.

And that led to another question. Somebody said, "In the standards for a deacon or an elder in Timothy and Titus, are those things that are given as standards there...things that have to be true of a man's whole life or just the present?" And the answer is very simply, just the present. Just the present. But, watch this one, if a man is to be an elder in the church of Jesus Christ, his present has to be long enough a period of righteousness to be believable. Okay? We wouldn't say, "Oh, boy, he's great this week. Make him an elder." Should be a period of time in which he's proven himself.

Well, important questions. Let's answer a Biblical question, specifically related to the Scripture. Lemme have you do this. Look with me for a moment at Matthew 9:3. Go back to 8:4. Let's...let's...let's speed it up. I'll...I'll skip that one, and we'll go back and pick up 8:4. Jesus has healed a leper here, put forth His hand and touched him and said, "Be clean," so forth. "And Jesus said to him...now this is the text...'See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.'" That cleansing act in the temple. Now, you see what happens? The man is healed, and Jesus says, "Don't tell anybody." Okay, look at Mark 1:40, and we see the similar situation. Maybe exactly the same one, in fact. He heals a leper in Mark 1:40, and he was wonderfully healed, and verse 44, He said to him, "'See thou say nothing to any man; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.' But he went out and began to publish it much and spread abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter the city, but out in desert places, and they came to Him from every quarter."

Now, the question comes up why did Jesus tell him not to tell anybody; and this has confused a lot of people. It's been asked several times. Lemme give you the...the point. Now, there are some commentators who say He wasn't telling him not to tell anybody. He was telling him not to tell anybody before he went to the priest. In other words, He wanted him to follow the proper sequence

of things that a leper had to do before he started to run around and tell everybody, because he needed to have the testimony of the priest, and so forth, that he was clean. He, a leper didn't just run in the crowd and say, "Hey, everybody, I have an announcement." Whoosh, you know, they'd be all gone. So some say the point was that he was not never to tell anybody, but for the moment, he was first to go and then go to the priest and do it afterwards; but I don't feel that that's the proper one. That's...that's possible. That may be implied here; but I think the key to the thing, understanding why Jesus told him not to tell anybody, is exactly what it says at the end of verse 45. When...when he told it to the people and spread it all over the place, Jesus could no more openly enter the city. Why? Every guy who was sick was standing around. He was mobbed, and He was mobbed for all the wrong reasons, see. Just like when He fed 'em bread on one side of the Sea of Galilee, and the next morning in Capernaum, when He got up, the whole mob was there; and He looked at 'em, and He said, "Ahhhhh," said, "you're not here because you believe in Me. You're here because you want free food."

You see, Jesus knew that if He'd draw undue attention to Himself, appealing to the wrong motives and the wrong reasons, it would just crimp what He intended to do. He wasn't chiefly a miracle worker. I believe, and this is true, I believe that the miracles were mostly for the disciples...to confirm their faith. You see, miracles don't con...don't...don't do a thing for unbelievers. You know that? Just read John 9, and they'll show ya. When all the Pharisees went about to examine the blind man, they concluded that Jesus was some blaspheming counterfeit. See, unbelief investigating a miracle is useless. See, miracles are only to...to support the faith of already believing hearts, and so I think that what Jesus was saying was, "Look, do me a favor, will ya? I've got some things I'd like to accomplish here. Keep this quiet for a while, so I don't get drowned in a sea of people who want nothing but miracles."...

That speaks to me about this age. It seems to me that there are lots of people running to Jesus for the same reason today. When you hear time after time after time people saying, "This miracle and that miracle and this miracle, and Jesus did this miracle, and He'll do a miracle for you and a miracle for you," and I hear Oral Roberts say that every time he comes on TV. "He'll do a miracle for you. Get my book, and it'll do a miracle for you." And they're...you know, the people are all piling around Jesus to get a miracle. I'm afraid that isn't the point. So that's, I think, the reason that our Lord was saying what He was saying here.

Here's a short question. Somebody said, "If Christ died Friday afternoon and rose Sunday morning, how could He have been three days and three nights in the heart of the earth as according to Matthew 12:40?" Well, there's a big debate, see. Some people think Christ was crucified on Wednesday. Some people think Christ was crucified on Thursday. Some people think Christ was crucified on Friday. I am of the Friday category, and I have reason for that. Remember that little book I wrote called Can a Man Live Again?, which dealt with the crucifixion? I tried to go into detail on that. There is also a tremendous book on Biblical chronology written by Harold Hoehner of Dallas Seminary, in which he defends the Friday day crucifixion. I think it's the right one; and the answer to that is this. Three days and three nights is a colloquialism. It is a Jewish colloquialism. A day and a night was simply a Jewish term for any part of a day; and so for a Jew to say three days and three nights simply meant three days in terms of a part of three days. You have to take it colloquially. It doesn't mean three 12-hour hours, three 12-hour nights. A day and a night is a colloquialism referring to any portion of a 24-hour day, and this can be substantiated by other Jewish literature that we can look at.

Okay, here's an interesting one. Look at Matthew 27:52. You remember when Jesus died, and all the people came out of the graves?...That was quite an interesting thing. Maybe you haven't heard about that...When Jesus died on the cross, the graves were, well, they were literally emptied in some cases. It says in verse 51, "Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake and the rocks were split. And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints that slept were raised; came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the Holy City and appeared unto Him."

Now, this is a fascinating thing. We're gonna get into this in a few years when we get to Matthew 27...But I really feel that whole point of this was that at the very instant of Jesus' death, He showed His resurrection power. This was a tremendous prophecy of what was going to happen. This was like a little preview of the resurrection, and you notice that it was Old Testament saints whose bodies were in the grave, and they came out of the graves. "The graves were cracked open. Many of the bodies of the saints had slept, were raised, and came out of the graves...and I think it should be read...and after His resurrection, went into the Holy City and appeared to unto many." They came out at His crucifixion. After the resurrection, they went into the city and did their thing, their ministry. Boy, what a deal that would be.

Now, people always say, "Did they die again?" I think not. I think this was a special group of resurrected Old Testament saints. It doesn't say they died again. They got their glorified body right there. You say, "Well, I thought the Old Testament saints get their glorified body at the end of the Tribulation." That, they do. In fact, read Daniel 12. Daniel 12 says first there's the Tribulation. At the end of the Tribulation, the Old Testament saints are gonna awake from the dust, and they're gonna rise. That's right. The mass, the majority of them will, at that point, receive their glorified body. The church at the Rapture, seven years later at the end of the Tribulation, after God has finished redeeming Israel, right? 'Cause He redeems Israel during that seven-year period, then the Old Testament saints get their body. By the way, when Jesus came out of...remember we talked about Sheol, "Let captivity captive." What He took were their spirits, not their bodies. Some people were confused about that. Took their spirits. Their bodies will be raised at the end of the Tribulation time.

So I think this was a tremendous prophecy. Our Lord was saying to the whole world that He had resurrection power; and when these Old Testament saints started mingling with the population after the resurrection, what a fantastic impact. In fact, we haven't talked much about that, but it may have been a contributor to the wonderful thing that happened on the day at Pentecost.

All right, here's a...an area of questions, and maybe we'll just kinda go through these real quick, on the angels. People have asked a lotta questions about angels. Apparently, I don't know who it was, Dr. McGee or somebody on the radio has been talking about angels, because there were about five or six people who wanna know about angels. And the question came up, do we have guardian angels?...The answer to that is the Bible never talks about them as guardian angels, but I do believe there are angels, okay? By the way, angels were created by God, and they last forever. I mean they go on forever. It's amazing how well we believe in the demons, but we have lots of problems with the angels. That's because the demons are maybe more visible in our society. But the angels are there, and the Bible is explicit about what angels do.

Now, as far as are there guardian angels, that's a term that some people have said, "Well, it means that everybody's got his own angel." Well, now, I don't...the Bible doesn't say that. I don't think that...that we can prove biblically that John MacArthur was assigned a certain angel who just goes

around all the time helping me out. I know that I probably need more than one, you know; and so...but I don't know on the...on the contrary, I wouldn't need more than one, frankly, since one angel could slay 185,000 Assyrians, which would be plenty anything I ever run into.

But what do angels do? What do they do in the behalf of a believer. Lemme give it to you real fast. The Bible is very clear about this. First of all, they watch the believer. Now, whether you wanna call it a guardian or not, the angels are involved very actively in watching believers. This is very clear from 1 Corinthians chapter 4, where it says that the Apostle Paul was made a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men. They watch believers. In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, same book, it talks about the fact that...that we are to follow the subordination that God has designed; and then it says in verse 10, "Because of the angels." The angels are looking at the church. They're seeing what the church is like. Ephesians chapter 3 verses 9 and 10, he shows the church to the angels, so that they might know the wonderful wisdom of God. So they watch the church. In fact, Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:21, "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus and the elect angels. Timothy, I'm telling you this because God is watching, Christ is watching, and so are the angels." So however you wanna call it, and whatever way you wanna define it, they watch the church.

Secondly, they guide. There's very specific cases in the Book of Acts where they guide people. They guided Philip - an angel guided Philip. You find guiding Peter to the house of Cornelius. Thirdly, angels provide. In Genesis 21, they provided physical needs for Hagar. In Psalm 78, they provide physical needs for Israel. In 1 Kings 19, they provided physically for Elijah. So they are watching, guiding, providing. Protecting is another thing. There's no question in my mind but that angels protect. In Matthew chapter 18, it talks about little children, and it says, "For their angels do always behold them." The angels are protecting children. Now, that's where you get that guardian concept.

Fifth, they deliver us. We find in the Book of Acts a couple of times, in the Book of Revelation chapter 7, that angels deliver from trouble, from death, from problems. And then one final one, they attend us at our death. To me, there's no question about the fact that angels are somehow involved when a believer dies. You remember that, in Jude 9, Michael, the archangel, was trying to fight with the devil to get the body of Moses; and so there was an actual conflict going on at that point over the body of Moses. Luke 16:22 comes to mind, I think it's the right one to add to that. It says, "It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." There was a believing man who died, and the angels attended him in his death.

So we do know that there are angels, and that they are active, and they are very busy in doing the things that God wants them to do. In fact, at the end of the Book of Hebrews, it says that we oughta be careful that we show love to people, and it says in Hebrews 13:2, "Don't forget to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Better be good to a stranger, might be an angel; and, of course, the writer of Hebrews has in mind there Abraham and Sarah, who entertained God Himself and two of His holy angels; and in chapter 1 of Hebrews, it sums it up by saying in verse 14 that "Angels are ministering spirits...watch this...sent forth to serve them who are the heirs of salvation." So I don't know if you wanna say we have a guardian angel or not, but we've got angels who, at least historically in the Bible, watch, guide, provide, protect, deliver, attend us at our death, and their purpose is to serve the heirs of salvation.

And then somebody asked, "Do angels and demons fight?" Yeah, they really do. They just fight like mad all the time. Read Daniel. God sent an angel down there to do something, and a demon withstood him, and God finally...this angel couldn't get past the demon, so God finally got Michael,

and said, "Michael, you go get that demon," and Michael went down there and got that demon outta the way, which tells me something about the fact that there are different levels of angels. Some of 'em can handle certain things others can't handle. But when Michael comes, he's super-angel. And, by the way, there's gonna be a big war of the angels and the demon - and the holy angels win. So we have nothing to fear about Satan's hosts.

Well, lemme just close with one question that somebody asked that I thought was really, really significant. "What is the difference," they said, "between Christians who seem to have such an exciting, happy life, and those who don't?" Boy, that's a good question, isn't it? What is the difference? What is it that really makes a Christian able to cope with life? You know, not everybody can handle it. Not everybody can cope. A lotta people got psychological problems. I...I've talked to you about that before. What makes it different? What...what is a Christian who's positive and excited and happy?

I always go back to the same passage, and I'm gonna close with that tonight. Look with me at Philippians 4. Many of you said in your questions, you know, "I have a husband who's an alcoholic," or some of you even asked about drinking. I'm gonna get to that when I get to "be not drunk with wine," in Ephesians 5 in a couple of weeks, so I didn't answer that tonight. I'm gonna give you the Christian's "whine" list; but many of you say, "Well, you know, what about...well, I can't...what do I do with my husband if he's...he drinks? What do I do with my teenage son? How do I get on top of the Christian life? And I've got psychological problems, and I need counseling, and what do I do?"

And I just thought I'd just close with this; and I want to share it with you; and I shared these thoughts when I was back at Moody Church on a Sunday night, last Sunday night; and there was a lady in the audience...Mrs. Smith. Her husband is the associate pastor of Moody Church and was making a left turn a month or so ago, and a truck hit him. A garbage truck fell on top of him and crushed his car and crushed his skull, and he's been in a coma ever since. Boy, she's had a hard time. I think she has what, maybe four children? Four little children and I wanted to share something that would help to say, "Hey, in the midst of a tough thing, you know, husband in a coma, four little kids to explain it to."

And a guy came to me, too, that night afterwards, and tears running down his face; and he introduced himself; and he told me he was a medical doctor; and he told me that he had...he'd waited till he was thirty four years old to be married; and he said, "Now, I finally found a girl in the church, and she...she said she loved the Lord, and I wanted more than anything to serve Jesus Christ, and I want more than anything a Christian marriage, and I waited all this long, and we've been married seven months and she just left me." And he had big tears came down his face; and he said, "And I've got some personal problems burdening my heart, and she called me the other day and said she's going to have a baby and..."

It's just a heart breaking thing, you know, and...and as I thought about it, these are the principles, people. I don't care what your trouble is - it's...it's somebody who waited till you were 34 to marry and she walked away. It's a husband in a coma. It's...it's a husband who drinks. It's a wife who doesn't submit. I don't know. It's a teenager. What do you do? Well, let me just run it by real quick. Philippians 4, and you're really gonna see an example on the part of Paul. I mean this guy knew how to do it. He really knew how to do it. He says in verse 11, "I have learned...that second line...I have learned in whatever state I am, in this to be...what?...content." Isn't that great? "I know how to be content," he says. Now if you do, man, I'd like you to tell me. Would you please? 'Cause you're a guy

in a lotta trouble. I mean you've been in it, man. You...you're in...you're in jail writing this. "I've learned to be content."

Oh, verse 12, "I know how to be abased, I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things. I know how to be full. I know how to be hungry. I know how to abound. I know how to suffer need. In fact, I can do anything through Christ who strengthens me." Gee. Would I like to have that...in any situation? Yes, in fact, he says, "Lemme help you a little bit." Verse nine, "The things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do them." Stop right there. In other words, he says, "And...and...and I wanna use my life as an example." Well, Paul, what is it that makes you so adequate? How is it that you can cope with anything? How is it that you can know victory in anything?

Well first of all, let's go back to one, and we'll just run them by real fast. Here are the keys. First of all, he had an adequate stand. Boy, he knew where to stand. I love this in verse one. He writes to them and he says "My, brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast...where?...in the Lord." You know what he's saying? "I don't care what the problem is, I know that I stand in the Lord; and nothing is too big for Him; and nothing is too hard for Him; and no problem is too complicated that He can't solve it. I stand fast in the Lord, that's how I can be adequate. God is my reservoir. God is my resource."

There's a second thing that he had, made him adequate. In verse 1, he says, "My beloved, my beloved, my dearly beloved;" and then he goes on to talk about two cantankerous women who split the church; and he shows his love to them and says, "You get those ladies together, those dear ladies that helped me in the Gospel." You know what? Any man who can love two cantankerous women who split the church has got something going for him. This was a church that Paul literally poured his life blood out to found, and here were these women, and he was showing love. "My dearly beloved." Listen, you know what makes you adequate for life? No. 1, you know your confidence is in the Lord. No. 2, no matter what happens, you maintain love. You maintain love. You never lose it.

There's a third thing, not only did he have the right kind of attitude standing fast in the Lord, the right kind of love, but he had joy, verse 4, "Rejoice always in the Lord...rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, 'Rejoice!'" What a great thing. He was adequate because he never lost his joy; and joy, listen to me, joy is an attitude that comes from the confidence that God has everything in control, right? It's not circumstances. It's the confidence that everything on the vertical level can be...or on the horizontal level can be falling apart; but on the vertical, it's okay. "I rejoice, not in my circumstance, but in the Lord." So he had an adequate stand, love, joy.

Fourth, "Let your gentleness be known to all men." He never became brutish. He never got mad. He never blew a gasket. He never lost the softness, the tenderness, and the gentleness. That's why he could handle anything; and then he says in verse 5, "The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer"; then he goes on. This man not only knew joy and gentleness, but he knew a tremendous security; and his security was, "The Lord is here. The Lord is here. What am I going to worry about? Why, if I have a problem, I'll just take it to Him. I'll just give it to Him.

Then, finally, he not only had an adequate love, an adequate stand, joy, love, gentleness, security, but he had the right knowledge. Verse 8. You know what he thought about? "Whatever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." He managed to set his mind on the truth of God.

Now, listen, people, that's really a fast summary; but if you wanna know how it is to be adequate in life, if you wanna be able to meet any circumstance in this world, stand fast in the Lord. Realize that no matter what the shifting sand of circumstance is like, God never moves. He's there; and you're firmly footed on...on Him, and that's forever. This is a passing world. Secondly, never let go of love. Thirdly, hang on to joy. Fourth, don't lose your gentleness; and fifth, don't worry. Pray, because He's there, and He answers; and sixth, think about things that are His things. Get your mind on Him. The result will be this, verse 7, "The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." That's what it means to be able to really handle life.

I called up the library the other day, because I began to think the other day. I don't know what stimulates my thinking; but sometimes the Holy Spirit just kinda prods my mind along certain lines; and I began to think about...the subject of hell. I took out a book that I every once in a while read when I find myself becoming a little indifferent to people who die and the reality of hell. It's the same book, and I bet I've read it 20 times; and I read it again, because it presents all that the Bible teaches about hell; and so I called the library; and I said, "How many people die every year?" And they said, 50 million people die every year. So I figured out that 136,986 people die every day; 5,707 people die every hour; and 95 people have just died since I started to talk to you. Most of them are in hell. Hell is not a popular doctrine, but it's true. There is a place of separation from God that the Bible calls the ultimate hell. All of the 4,219,000,000 people on this earth will die; and more than that will die, because the people on the earth are being replaced at two-and-a-half times the death rate. Billions of people will die; and said our Lord Jesus Christ, "Broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." The earth, as we well know, is pockmarked with graves. Every time I drive along and see Forest Lawn, and it all looks so green and so white with all the buildings and so beautiful; but all I can ever think about is that it's full of graves, most of whom are simply marks to indicate someone in hell. That's a terrifying thought. The myriad of tombstones and crosses and grave markers constantly remind us that death claims everything, every living thing; and that there are only two options after death. One is Heaven, and one is hell. I believe in the real Heaven and the real hell; and the Bible is explicit about that.

For those who obey and love the Lord Jesus Christ, there's Heaven, a place of joy and bliss and happiness. For those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ, according to 1 Corinthians 16:22, there is only cursing and an eternal hell...And, you know, I have to realize the fact that I think the doctrine of hell is one of the greatest proofs that God wrote the Bible, because men don't write books that damn their souls to an eternal hell...This is God's book, and this is what God says. In fact, it might be interesting for you to note that the person in all of history who spoke the most about hell was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. People say, "Well, the Lord Jesus Christ was full of love, and He was full of grace, and He was full of mercy, and that's so true. But for those who shun His grace and reject His mercy and do not return His love, there is an inevitable consequence; and He spoke of it many times, hell, the place of eternal burning.

Henry van Dyke put it this way, "Remember, that what you possess in this world will be found at the day of your death and belong to somebody else; but what you are in this world will belong to you forever." Death doesn't change anything. It just puts into forever what you were in this life. If you didn't want God in this life, God's certainly not gonna sentence you to an eternity in His presence. If you didn't want Him here, you don't want Him there. People always say, "Well, when people go to hell, aren't they sorry; and don't they want God?" Listen, if you wouldn't want the Lord Jesus Christ in the sweet wooings of the Holy Spirit in this age, you would never want Him in hell when there is no

good thought, no good influence.

And so the Bible teaches that if you live in this world for the gratification of the flesh, if you live in the sins of this world, you will die in those sins, and you will live eternally in a place prepared for those who have so died; but if, in this life, you live for Jesus Christ, and you live for God, you will live eternally in the place prepared for those who choose such a life. Our own Lord Jesus summed it up in Matthew, when we see the ultimate judgment there, the judgment of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, and Jesus says - these are the words of Jesus, the loving Savior, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." And on the other hand, He said, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous unto life eternal." There are two places, Heaven and hell; and, you know, some people can satisfy their minds by just sitting around trying to rationalize why there is a hell, or how could a loving God have a hell; but that's not really the point. It is true, and the Bible reveals it, and God's reasons are clear if we study them. God does not desire to force people into His Kingdom; but we best not sit about and speculate as to whether this kind of a God could have a hell, we had better realize the reality of it and do something about it.

Samuel Scales wrote this about a trip that he took. He said, "Recently, I had the privilege of visiting Paris. Among the sites and buildings chosen to visit was the Rodin Museum. Here are housed most of the works of the famous sculpture August Rodin. Perhaps his most well-known work is La Penseur, or The Thinker." And we've all seen that one if we've look at any books of art. "Before I made the visit," says Scales, "Someone told me that the statue of The Thinker was facing The Gates of Hell, which, by the way, is another work of Rodin, and that the two works were really to be seen together, as if The Thinker was thinking about hell. I discovered, however, that The Thinker was really an offspring of the work, The Gates of Hell. The Thinker was originally created by Rodin within The Gates of Hell. He is the one, Rodin, consigned to hell itself. What did this mean? As I stood before this giant work of art, I let my imagination roam at will. I wondered, 'What is it the famous figure might be thinking?' Rodin seemed never to have indicated specifically what his figure is thinking; but it is, no doubt, a reflection of Rodin's pessimistic speculation of the afterlife. Rodin received his inspiration for The Gates of Hell from Dante's Divine Comedy. Listen," he said, "'If he is thinking about hell, then he became too late smart,' because the time to think about hell is not after you are in it, eternally held within its confines, but before, while in this life." And Scales says, "My mind went immediately to a story that Jesus told in Luke 16 about a rich man who died and went to hell; and he, too, like Rodin's Thinker, became smart too late."

This is the time to realize it. It isn't just that the people baptized tonight have escaped the doleful, meaningless life. It isn't just that they have been given happiness and peace and love and joy. It is that they will never know hell. They will never spend an eternity without God, of which the Bible speaks in such explicit and shocking terms, as to say that, "It is a place called everlasting fire, where the worm dieth not, where the fire is not quenched, a bottomless pit, outer darkness, with weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, a fire unquenchable, a furnace of fire, blackness of darkness." And I couldn't help but think about it, people, tonight, that, as these folks were being baptized, it isn't just...it isn't just that they're gonna be happy. It isn't just that they'll know peace. It's that they have been granted by God's wonderful grace promise of eternal life in Heaven, and they have missed hell.

What about you? What does the future hold for you? As you come to this table, you say, "Well, John, I'm a Christian." Then are you thankful for the cross? Not only for the cross that purchased for you joy and peace and gladness and love and hope and all those good things for here and now and for forever; but are you thankful for the cross by which the Lord Jesus Christ endured hell, as it were, for

you that you may never know it? That's what the cross means, not just what we gain, but what we miss, what we lose. Hell.

I'm grateful tonight for the testimonies of these people, because, out of the 95 people that die every minute in this world, at least here were 25 who, when they die, will go into the arms of Jesus Christ. And I'm grateful to God tonight that we're all here, aren't you? And that we can come to this table and say, "Thank You, Lord Jesus, for dying for me. Thank You for giving Your body, and thank You for shedding your blood so that I can be with You in Your Heaven."

I would just say this to you. If you've never invited Jesus Christ into your life, you're in danger of hell. To die is go out of God's presence forever, but it need not be, because the Bible says, "He is not willing that any should...what?...perish." God said, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." You see, hell was created for the devil and his angels, not even created for men; and it's only as men willfully join the rebellion of Satan that they sentence themselves to hell. That isn't God's will...It was a place that He made to put fallen angels, so they wouldn't corrupt the world and the universe any more than they'd already corrupted it; and men choose to go there. It's not necessary. Put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He'll gather you into His Kingdom...Well, let's pray together.

Father, we thank You tonight for the fact that...these people who shared their testimony have committed themselves to You. They've stepped out of that broad way that leads to destruction, into the narrow way that leads to life everlasting. They're Your children now. They've chosen to love You. Father, thank You for that. Lord, at the same time, I know there are some folks gathered in this congregation tonight who've never given their life to Jesus Christ. Not only are they gonna forfeit the joy and the love and the meaning and the purpose of life, but they're gonna miss Heaven and spend forever in hell, a godless, Christless, tormenting, eternal hell. Oh, Father, You don't desire that. Jesus doesn't desire that. We don't desire that. Only Satan wants them there. By Your power tonight, break his hold and may some, even in this very moment right here, open their hearts to Jesus Christ...

And then, Father, for those of us that are Christians, we're so thankful. Life is so short, and this is just a drop in time. Oh, Lord, to know that forever we'll be in Your Heaven...instead of hell. Thank You. Thank You for saving us, being so gracious to those of us who are sinners. Thank you for Jesus Christ and His death on the cross in our behalf. We pray in His name. Amen.

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