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

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 24a
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 1301VA

Well, we are happy to welcome you tonight to our fellowship around the Word of God and it's been a while since we've had a question and answer time. I keep getting pre-empted by other things. But here we are and you will notice that there are three microphones, one on each side and one in the middle aisle, and what we do is just let you have the time. We have about an hour or so and we want you to ask questions about the Bible or the church or whatever, and we'll do the best we can to answer them.

All you have to do is go line up behind a microphone. It's particularly helpful if you have a brief question. If it isn't a question that starts I was born in Kansas City and then we moved to St. Louis and it goes on and on so that we can cover more questions. Also, I will encourage you to use this time as a time to ask questions rather than to sort of make statements because we want to be able to cover as many questions as we can. We'll start over here and while we're talking, Dave has asked me and we'll just let you line up behind the mics wherever you want and then when we get to you we'll get your question. Dave?

DAVE: Yeah, John, just a couple of questions here. Since with God everything has happened right now, per se, if I was fortunate enough to go home and be with Him this evening, would I reach Him the same time Adam reached Him?

JOHN: Well, I don't know. I mean, you're asking me...let me answer that question in two ways Dave. And number one it doesn't matter, it's irrelevant in a sense because who cares, right? Number two, I haven't got any idea except to look at it from this perspective and from this perspective the answer is no. But from God's perspective the answer is probably still no because he's not...he's not oblivious to the reality of the fact that you're here. So when we say that there's timelessness with God, we mean that there's timelessness in the sense that God sees the end from the beginning, that it all is one eternal reality to him.

Yet that is not to say that God has no sense of...of time. He's supersedes time. He's beyond and above time, but he recognizes time. And I think in...in view of eternity, the difference between the death of Adam and your death is absolutely the twinkling of an eye as compared to the eternity of God. But nonetheless, we would have to say God recognizes time. But the best answer to that question is who cares, right?

DAVE: Right.

JOHN: Right.

DAVE: Thank you.

JOHN: Okay, yes.

QUESTIONER: Hi, John.

JOHN: Hi.

QUESTIONER: It's nice to see you face to face and get an answer face to face...

JOHN: Okay.

QUESTIONER: ...after three years. Throughout the Epistles, Paul exhorts and admonishes the church against false teachers and teaching and you as the shepherd of this flock do the same. Can you explain Paul's remarks to me in Philippians 1:12 to 18, especially verse 18 and how you see that fitting into the position you hold here at Grace?

JOHN: Yeah, that's...that's a good question. The question is we know that the Apostle Paul warned against false teachers. He did that constantly. So did our Lord in Matthew Chapter 7 verses 15 to 20, He said, "beware of wolves in sheep's clothing." And the Apostle Paul in Acts 20 warned the Ephesian elders about grievous wolves who would enter in and then those who would rise up from among them and not sparing the flock and so forth. And then in light of that if Paul is warning consistently about false teachers, how can he say in verse 18 of Philippians 1, "And not withstanding every way whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached. And that I do rejoice, ye and will rejoice."

And the difference is this, a false teacher does not preach the true Christ. These did. The difference was, the false teacher had a false message, these people had a corrupted motive, but the message was pure. Now, let me tell you what I mean. In the incident that Paul is referring to here, we have to get a little bit of background.

When Paul wrote the Philippian Epistle he was a prisoner. And being in prison sort of curtailed his mobility, right, and his activities. And it isolated him to the ministry of confinement, which was no less a ministry. And at the end of Philippians, he says, "All those who are in Caesar's household greet you." Which is to say that he was evangelizing Caesar's household. So it was another mission field for him. But on the outside, there were some who were criticizing Paul, and he says that in effect.

He says in verse 15, "Some preach Christ of envy and strife, they envy me and they fight against me, and some have goodwill toward me. Some preach Christ contentiously, some honestly. Supposing not sincerely, he says, not honestly. Supposing to add affliction to my chains." In other words, it just works this way and you don't have to understand this, but when someone is very successful in the ministry, there's jealousy among other people. And that's essentially what's was happening. And some who wanted to gain the lime light were saying well, Paul's in prison because he blew his ministry and the Lord had to shelf him. I mean, he's...he's on the shelf. It's over for him, there's a new breed coming along.

When he was on the shelf, some of those were jealous of Paul's reputation, they were jealous of the effect of his ministry, even though they preached the true gospel. It was a jealous motive and they were contentious against Paul. And they were striving against Paul. And that's what he means when he says "some preach Christ of goodwill." In other words, they have good thoughts towards me and my imprisonment has made others in verse 14 very bold, because they now see that even if you do become prisoner you can preach the word with boldness in prison.

So he's had some good results, on the other hand, it's too bad that some now use this to sort of put me down, criticize me, fight against me, condemn me, and so forth. But he says look, if it's Christ they preach, I don't care if the criticize me, that's the point. It isn't that they...he's accompany...he's accommodating a wrong message. He's just saying even if it's a wrong motive, if the message of Christ comes through, it has power beyond it's container. In other words, we've always said that the message is greater than the messenger. And even a messenger with a bad motive and right message is going to have an impact. It would be a lot better for him and for everybody if he had a right motive and that's what Paul's saying.

QUESTIONER: Are these people saved then, John?

JOHN: Yes, yes, I think they are. I think...I think basically they are preaching Christ. I think he is assuming they are preaching the true Christ in the true way and they rightly represent Christ. But I'll tell you something and I've learned this in the ministry, there is jealousy in the ministry at all levels of ministry there can be jealousy.

And people can preach Christ, the true Christ and be critical of someone else that, for whatever reason, they have envy for and still the message is true. And Paul is saying look, "I'm not trying to preserve myself. I'm not going to answer all my critics, as long as they preach Christ that's okay, because I don't care who gets the credit. I don't have that problem." And that's...that's the statement of a mature man. All right?

QUESTIONER: Uh-huh.

JOHN: Yes, sir.

QUESTIONER: Good evening, John. I've heard you back east in New Jersey, Zarephath, WAWZ and I've heard some of your question and answers at periods and found them rather exciting and stimulating.

JOHN: Well, good.

QUESTIONER: And tonight is my first opportunity to participate. I've got two questions that I'd like ask and I'll ask the shortest one first. Would you be in agreement with Dr. Chuck Swindoll in our view that Jesus was crucified, not on Friday, as held traditionally, but rather more likely on the Wednesday preceding the Passover Sabbath and was resurrected on the Sabbath that then followed as the Holy week, the feast of unleavened bread ended on Saturday? Thus He was not to be found in the tomb on the first day of the new week. He did say He'd be in the grave three days and three nights didn't he?

JOHN: Yeah, I would disagree with Chuck on that, but I would agree with him on most things. That's one I disagree with. I believe Christ was crucified on Friday. I...and isn't it because that's the traditional view. And let me...rather than try to go into all of the ramifications, you need to understand perhaps just one thing and that is that three days and three nights in Jewish polocalalism was simply a way of saying three days. And any part of a 24 hour period constituted a day for a Jew. A day and a night was just a way of saying one 24 hour period. And any part of that 24 hour period constituted a day in their thinking.

And that is why there was such a mad rush to get Him in the ground on Friday before the beginning of the next day which would have begun at the Sabbath hour at six o'clock in the Jewish counting and they wanted Him in the ground. I believe that He was crucified on Friday. The best contribution to that, and I'd be happy to give you a copy of it, if you'd like, if you'll give me your name and address afterwards I'll send it to you or whatever, you can pick it up here at the office, is a book by Harold Hoehner called the Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ.

He's the chairman of the doctorial department at Dallas Seminary and he is done, I think, the finest work on the chronology of the life of Christ and presents the best case for a Friday crucifixion. And I...I agree with him. I agreed with him before I knew what he believed and he really strengthened where I'm at. I might have been a little nervous there with all the stuff that was coming around, but I'm still convinced of a Friday crucifixion.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. You still don't disagree with Swindoll and I, but I'll accept your answer. The second question is a little lengthier. We hear very little, well, absolutely nothing about the black Jews in Israel or Africa, and nothing about the Coptic Christians of Ethiopia, and beyond Sammy Davis, nothing is every mentioned of the plight of black Jews here in America. Yet, there is an increase concern evidenced for the Jews and Israel. After considering all the physical evidence presented to us in the Bible, along with Solomon's declarative statement in Chapter 1 verses 5 and 6, of Songs of Solomon, describing his pigmentation of skin.

And today when we find that prior to the death of Ethiopia's last reigning monarch, Haile Selassie, II, who could trace his families lineage all the way back to Solomon and Sheeba and with remaining few rare portraits or paintings of the black Madonna and child, would you agree that is reasonable and fair to conclude by all evidences that not only the Jews of biblical times prior to the European dispora were of much darker pigmentation than the white-washing of history has led many of us to believe. But that Jesus Christ as he appeared and walked on the earth as God's...God incarnate, the Son of David, the Son of Solomon was an appearance as dark or black as his forefathers?

JOHN: Well, I'm not sure that...that's an interesting questioning. I'm not sure...first of all, I'm not sure it matters. But secondly, I'm not sure that we can trust Haile Selassie's lineage or understand the Coptic origins all the way back. And I visited some of the Coptic churches when I was in Egypt. It's an interesting, interesting thing. But at the same time, I'm not denying that I do believe, for example, just to give you an illustration of this, and this may be the best way to answer your question, we have a cultural Jesus. There's no question about that.

QUESTIONER: Praise God.

JOHN: We have a cultural Jesus. That the American...I mean, let's face it, the Jesus of the American church is a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Republican.

QUESTIONER: Amen.

JOHN: There's no question about that in my mind. Really, and he's...he's really big on health, wealth, and happiness and success. And making money and being a superstar athlete and all that stuff, and that is a million miles from the Jesus of the Bible. No question about it.

QUESTIONER: Amen.

JOHN: We've created the Jesus in our own image. We have a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant American Republican Jesus. And if you don't think so, you just see how connected the Jesus of American is to the politics of white America. There's no question about it.

QUESTIONER: No question.

JOHN: But the solution...I mean, this guy, I don't know if you know this guy Tony Campolo, but he was saying when he was in a Sunday School class he had a group of really pretty rough neck kids in West Philadelphia. And most of them were black and they had this Solomon's head of Christ behind him where he taught. And Jesus is a real pale, you know, kind of fair skinned, you know, white person. And one day he came to class and it was gone. It was gone, man, the picture was gone.

And it had been given by Edith somebody, with a brass plaque, umpteen years before. And you know, it was a memorial and all this so everybody was upset. What happened to Edith's memorial, see? Well, in it's place was a real, you know, afro, black guy with a cross around his neck. And he...Campolo said, "I was very upset." And I said, "who took Jesus off the wall?" See? And he said some guy with an afro in the back, black guy stood up and said his afro filled the whole room.

And he said, "I did man." He said...well, Campolo said, "I want you to know that Jesus wasn't a black man." And he says, "And he weren't no honkey neither." Well, they're both right. And the argument or the debate is not whether or not the pigmentation of Jesus' skin was dark or light. The real issue in my mind is...is this whole matter of creating a cultural Jesus that is a far cry from the Jesus of biblical times, the real Jesus. A cultural Jesus that wants the rich to get richer and the poor to stay away from them, you know. That's the thing that concerns me.

And that's one reason why I never get involved in any kind of politics, because I do not want Jesus to be thought of as having a political lobbyist view of one form or another. I don't have any doubt that the Jewish facial features would be darker and different than ours, distinct from ours. So some of our art has suffered, but if you want to see some really bad stuff, look at the art of the Middle Ages. I mean, it's even worse in rendering Jesus.

But, you know, what he's saying, you pick up for example any of the little children's books about Jesus, and you will see the Jesus of our culture. It's just the way we do, you know. We just turn it into our own culture. So there is an issue there and I think unfortunately, we have created a Jesus that in many cases, is a Jesus that other people in our society wouldn't be interested in, because of different political views or views of life, and that's unfortunate. That's why it's so important for us to stick with the Jesus of the Word of God.

QUESTIONER: Praise God.

JOHN: Do you understand what I'm saying? Okay. Good.

QUESTIONER: Thanks.

ROBERT: Hi, John. My name is Robert. And I have a question about water baptism. I accepted the Lord in October and I was going to get baptized in February and I go to a church out of town, because I go to school away, and the pastor who was teaching the class on the baptism said I should ask my parents permission to be baptized since I was still under their authority completely. I come from a Jewish background also. And if they say I shouldn't be baptized, I should honor them and just wait until I'm out of their authority. And somebody confronted me last week and said I was being disobedient to the Lord by...by postponing the act of water baptism, and I was wondering what you thought about that?

JOHN: I agree. You've got to be baptized. That's...that's the dividing line right there. You're at the...you're at the very nexus of the issue. And if a man is not willing to forsake father or mother he's not worthy to be my disciple. Jesus said, "be baptized." Book of Acts says repent and be baptized. And I believe the Bible is very clear that we need to confess Jesus as Lord publicly and baptism is a dramatic way for a public confession to take place. The early church didn't know of a Christian that hadn't been baptized. In fact, you're...you're the actual test case in the New Testament, because that's exactly what happened.

Jews got saved and when they got baptized that was the public confession of their faith in Jesus Christ that set them against their own families and against their own society. So now, you're at the point of Acts Chapter 5 where Peter and John were hauled before the Sanhedrin and they said stop preaching and at they point they said, "we will not stop, you judge whether we ought to obey God or men." You see we obey men only as far as they can go. And as soon as they tell us to do something other than God told us to do, we have to make a choice.

ROBERT: Even though I'm under their authority?

JOHN: You're not under their authority in terms of your faith.

ROBERT: Right.

JOHN: You're under God's authority.

ROBERT: Okay.

JOHN: All right.

ROBERT: Thank you.

JOHN: And you need to make that break and you need to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and then love the daylights out of your parents, and be a son in every way you can be to them. A son of love and honor and respect, but when it comes to your faith and Jesus Christ and your obedience to Him, that's the priority. And that's where the cost is counted right there. And we have a baptism coming up in...next October at our Shepherd's conference. You going to be here in October?

ROBERT: No.

JOHN: Where are you going to be?

ROBERT: San Las Vista.

JOHN: A lot of water in San Las Vista. Do it brother.

ROBERT: Okay, thank you very much.

JOHN: All right, you're welcome. That's a great question, isn't it? Yeah, that's encouraging. Bless his heart.

JOHN: Hi, John. My name is John. Love that name.

JOHN: Great name.

JOHN: Got to love this microphone too. Let me state this as quickly as possible. I'd like for you to address the topic of the nature of man. It seems like there's a lot of discussion in the evangelical and fundamental circles and about the sin nature some hold to the total eradication of the sin nature. Some say there's a conflict that goes on inside. Some say that it's nothing more than just a concept that attempts to explain something that's not really there and we don't understand. And I have a little bit of a problem with all of it. And I would also like you to address that issue to the active disobedience on the part of Adam and Eve in the garden.

JOHN: Okay, well, let's...let's start at the beginning. And the best way to understand this is to look at Romans, 6, 7, and 8. He's really asking for a definition of terms relative to the identity of a believer. And we've been going through this. How many of you have been here for the series on Romans 7 and 8, 6, 7, and 8? Okay, so you know what we've been talking about hopefully. The first part of Romans 6 defines for us newness in Christ.

We're baptized into Christ, baptized into his death, buried with Him in baptized, raised to walk in newness of life, planted in the likeness of His death, we're in the likeness of his resurrection knowing this that our old man is dead. All right? Now old man is a term for former life, just former life. Our former life is dead, crucified. And hence forth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed

from the tyranny of sin.

We are now alive to God. Now that's essential to understand. Now what we've been trying to point out in the series is this. If any man be in Christ, he is what? A new creature or a new creation. How much of him is a new creation? Old things have passed away and behold, all things have what, become new. So he's all new. Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ." That means I am dead, "but nevertheless I live." That means a new life I is alive. And that is salvation. Salvation cannot be addition, it must be transformation. So you can't have a Christian who is nothing but a new nature added to an older nature. Do you understand that?

JOHN: What I don't understand is how we get the nature out of that. Now, I understand that the old man is made new. I've been following along with you in your study here in Romans. But what I don't understand is where in the world do we draw a nature out of the fact that an old man that has been in sin is now made new. And the reason that we were in sin was because we were a servant to sin. Now that we're in Christ Jesus, we no longer serve sin, but Adam and Eve were not servants to sin and yet they committed sin the garden.

JOHN: Well..

JOHN: See, what we have here is...

JOHN: ...yeah, you can't...you cannot normalize Adam and Eve. You can't...you can't make Adam and Eve the definitive picture. You put them out of your mind, because their circumstances are utterly other than ours. They are the exception. I mean, it's the old story of the chicken and the egg. Something's got to come first and it didn't come the way everything after it came, right? So you can't normalize Adam and Eve's situation. We know this, that sin didn't come to them on the outside, because in a sense they were untemptable.

It didn't come from the inside because they were perfect, but it came from somewhere. But it couldn't come from anywhere, but it did. And so that's all we know. It's like the chicken or the egg. It came from somewhere, we don't know where. Not from the cycle that we know is normative. So we put that away. Don't worry about Adam and Eve, don't use them as a pattern. All we know is this, that we were an old man. The word nature simply speaks of the essential being that's all. And our essential being was sinful. When you become a Christian your essential being is righteous. You're a new you. You're a new creation. Now in Paul's terminology as we've been saying in Romans 6 and 7, you're a totally new you, but you still live in the flesh and that's the right term to use.

The body of this death, body, flesh, remember bodily members, bodily parts, it's all flesh humanness. And as long as that new creation, nature is simply a word that means the essential being, that new essential being created in Christ created like Christ, created as a...as an incorruptible seed, created

as the very nature of God partaking that new creation has no sin in it. But it exists in humanness. Now, I don't understand how it all relates, I just know those are Paul's terms.

And as long as we have our humanness encasing this new nature, we have a struggle. And that is why Paul says in Romans 8 that we wait for the redemption of our what? Of our bodies. Because if we can get a transformed body, then we've got the whole ball of wax. We've already had transformed soul. And see when you go to heaven, the biggest change has already been made. You're conversion was a bigger deal than your death will be. Because you've already been made fit for heaven. All you got to do is get rid of this body. And when a believer dies, their body goes to dust, right? And their spirit goes into the very presence of Jesus Christ. Some day they'll receive a glorified body and that's what they wait for the glorious manifestation of the sons of God, the glorious liberation of the sons of God as he says in Chapter 8 verse 19 and so forth. So what you have to understand, and don't get all tangled up.

It's symmantecs basically. It's just terminology. An old man simply means body, soul, spirit, the whole shooting match, evil. You become a Christian, God transforms the inner man, and that's why Paul says in Romans 7, "I delight in the law of God with my inward man." And he says, "When I sin, it is not I," right? "It's not I," it's what? "Sin that's in me." And where is it? "It's in my flesh, he says. So we are a new a creation in our humanness.

Now, we...I do not believe in eradication. Eradication means that when you're saved, your sin is eradicated, wiped out. That's not true. That's a lie. And I've met people and I've heard people speak who said they have not sinned and they redefine sin frankly. They have to. I mean, it's the height of something or other to say you don't sin anymore. In the first place 1 John says, "You make God a," what? "If any man says he has not sinned, he makes God a liar." So you just need to understand all we're talking about is symmantecs. Steve's...Steve was playing the organ a little while ago. His father was here one Sunday and he's a very fine Bible scholar. He's taught Greek at Biola for years and years and years, Dr. Stursse, and made some tremendous contributions to the biblical field and the New Testament. And he was listening to me preach on this and he came to me and he said, "I appreciate that, John." He said, "I didn't mind you taking away my old nature, as long as you gave me something else to stick my sin in."

And that's...that's really very clear thinking. We're just talking about symmantecs. I just don't want to call it a nature, 'cause I don't think you're two people inside of you, the black dog and the white dog fighting and the old nature's still there and the nature comes in. That makes salvation addition instead of transformation and it's transformation. You're a new creation. So all we have to see is that we're saying, we're just looking for definitions. You're a new creation and you're still encased in your humanness. So all that happens in the future is that you lose the flesh that restrains and retards your new nature from reaching it's full potential. Okay? All right. Vince?

VINCE: John, I have two questions. How can a Christian in his every day life differentiate persecution attacks from Satan as opposed to just being incidents as just one of those things? That's the first.

JOHN: How do you differentiate persecution from what?

VINCE: From satanic attacks as opposed to just one of those things.

JOHN: Just one of those things.

VINCE: Something that just happens in the course of the day, for example.

JOHN: I don't know, Vince. How do you...I don't know. I don't even know that it really matters, you know. I...again, let me talk about something at that point. It's an important question. One things that happens to Christians very often is they get too analytical. You know, they wanna look in and get introspective. That's really kind of a bad thing.

You're saying, was that the Lord, was that the devil, was that a demon, was that me, was that flesh, was that...what was that the world, the flesh, the devil, you know? Who cares. Just go on with your life. Or was I being persecuted? Oh I hope I was being persecuted, you know. Because I came through it and I'll get more stars on my crown. Was that persecution or was that just my stupidity? You know, bungling another deal. I don't think that matters. The Lord keeps the accounting, see. And I don't know that we can ever really know that. The fact of the matter is the pure hearted saint, the pure minded saint might sense less the persecution than a rather fragile and immature one.

You know what I mean by that? Because what an immature Christian might feel is persecution and make him clam up, a mature Christian might see just as an opportunity. And so it would depend on how you perceive things based upon your commitment. Somebody might say to me sometime, you know, you're persecuted. You are persecuted for that. And I might say oh really, I didn't know that. It's a perception thing. And again, I don't think it matters. I think the idea is to live your Christian life.

That's why I don't like the psychological trends in Christianity where everybody starts looking inward and trying to analyze themselves and find out what temperament they are and what spiritual gift they have and you know, I've talked to people who've come out of counseling situations and this is how the counseling will go sometimes. "Well, you know what you need to do in your life?" And you says, "Oh no, I...I can't do that." "No, my counselor says I'm weak in that area." "Oh well, maybe you could do this." "No, I can't do that either. You see I have...I slipped on a banana and fell in the closet and I was left there for four weeks when I was and I...see I can't do that." "Oh I see. Well, maybe you could do this." "No."

And you know what happened, the person is so over analyzed that they can't get on about the business of living. They've got to analyze every step they take and I don't see that in the Christian living. I think you just focus on Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:18, "Gaze in his glory and let the Spirit of God change you and refine you," and do whatever he wants or wait to you get to heaven and find out what it was. Okay?

VINCE: I have another question.

JOHN: All right.

VINCE: How could God allow Satan in His presence in the book of Job?

JOHN: Well, I guess in a sense how could God...in a sense Satan could never get out of His presence, right? I mean, since God is everywhere all the time. So it really was no problem for him to be in God's presence, because God is always where He is anyway. But you're question is this, if God is an infinite and Holy God and can't look upon evil or tolerate sin, how could He allow Satan in His presence.

VINCE: Right.

JOHN: Yeah, the answer is that ultimately He's going to throw Satan out. Let's face it, temporarily he allows a lot of things that ultimately He will not allow, right? I mean, He allows sin in us that ultimately He will disallow. He allows sin in the world, but ultimately He's going to destroy. And this...this for His own purposes and His intentions, God will allow sin to exists and allow unholy representation even in His presence because every person lives in the presence of God. In Him we what? Live, Acts 17, move and what, have our being. So he is not divorced from that. What Hebakich means when He says He's of purer eyes and to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity, is that He ultimately can't tolerate it. And ultimately, He must judge it. But for the moment in time, God, for His own purposes and intents, may allow it. And He allowed Satan into His presence so that He could demonstrate that He had greater power than Satan had. And He could reverse anything Satan did, which he did in the case of Job.

VINCE: Understand.

JOHN: Okay?

VINCE: Thank you.

MIKE: Hi, John, my name is...

JOHN: Could you pull that mic up a little bit. I think it's so low that it would not be...just unscrew the thing down in the middle there and pull it up. There we go, right about there is good. Thank you.

MIKE: My name is Mike. I know it would be wrong to pursue an experience or an emotion as a goal in a Christian life, but I've been reading some stuff by Tozer and Spurge and Hudson Taylor, and even as I've reading through the Psalms, I notice they talk a lot about the presence of God. And I'm just curious, one of things Tozer said was that...that we're ready to accept doctrinally and positionally the presence of God in the church, but that we lack the actual experience. And I'm just questioning is that something we should be experiencing on a daily, day and day out the presence of God or is that something that every once in a while we might experience more? Is it a lack of holiness on our part?

JOHN: Well, it's hard for me to answer that question. Let me say that I agree with Tozer. I think we know more about God than we know God. I think we have more information than we do experience and that's...that's sad. You know, you find...you find, for example, in the Psalms, the upper limits of hilarity, I mean, this...I mean, David says things that we'd be embarrassed to say. I mean, would you gather a bunch of your friends together and say, "Oh God, my God, how I thirst for your presence"? They'd go, "what is this guy mystical." Right? I mean, if you prayed a prayer in which you cried out from the depths of your heart for a communion, sweet communion in the terms of the Psalms alone, people would think something happened to you. And that's sad, and Tozer is right.

We know more about God than we ever experience. I mean, we've got all the theology and we lack the reality. There's no question about that. And that's what...see that's what we've been trying through years to teach and yet you can't teach it. It comes, as somebody says, more caught than taught. For example, you read in 1 John Chapter 2 that there are three levels of spiritual growth. It says there are babies, who know the Father, they're young men who've overcome the wicked one, and there are spiritual fathers who have known Him that is from the beginning.

A baby knows the Father, spiritual goo goo, da da. He knows he's saved, that's it. Jesus loves me this I know. Period paragraph. And he knows God, that's it. Then you have a spiritual young man and it says they've overcome wicked one because the Word of God is in them and they're strong. They know doctrine. But a spiritual father goes behind the doctrine and know the God who is the eternal God. And the process of spiritual growth goes from the initiating of a relationship with God, to an understanding and teaching about God to plumbing the depths of the soul and the heart and the mind of God. And that kind of hunger comes...and I don't think it comes in a vacuum or mystically. I think it comes to those who, one, study the Word of God and two, who meditate on it.

And we have lost the art of meditation. We really have. We're...even when we prepare a lesson or whatever, it's pragmatism. It's crank out the lesson. You know, get the _____(34:11), get all the illustrations in and run out and teach the thing. You know, burn that baby down on Saturday night

and blow in there Sunday and do your number or whatever, Friday night. But there's no time to sit back and meditate. And meditation, I think, extracts out of the text and out of the heart the essence of a relationship with God. And in that meditation I think embodies prayer.

One of the wonderful things about doing what I do is that when I come to the Word of God, I can come to the Word of God daily with time enough so that the whole process is, in fact, a communion with the living God. It isn't the dealing with facts alone. It is a soul washing meditation. And I...I really cry out in my own heart that people in our society would somehow get off the merry-go-round, you know. The old song, Stop The World, I Want To Get Off, a musical. That's...that's so true, we've lost the ability to meditate.

What do you think Jeremiah meant when he said, "Thy Word is refound and I would eat them." What did...it must have been a pondering and Thy Word was in me, the joy and rejoicing in my heart. It releases joy. I mean, I experience that and I'm sure you do too sometimes when you study the Word of God and there's just an overwhelming since of joy about the kind of God that you have. I've been studying all week, Romans 8:28. And I mean, that...that thing is just...that's mind-boggling. "All things work together for good." All things? No, not all things. All things, and you start studying, what are the all things? And I got a list as long as my arm of all things, good things, bad things. All good things, all things. And you start...you...I just find myself sitting back in my chair and saying it can't be God. It can't. All things? And you start to meditate. I think that's an element of it. And then the communing and prayer and I think those things find it hard to worm their way into a pragmatic society, but I think you're right.

I think we need more than the knowledge about God. We need to experience His presence. Now, at the same time, you can get carried away and you can wind up sitting in a corner contemplating your naval, you know, and some kind of monastic posture. And you're going to go nowhere with that. So you want to tie your meditation always to the text. The problem with the mystics and you go back into church history, I've been reading Bernard of Clairvaux who lived from 1093 to 1150, and I mean, this guy was mystical, really mystical. But the problem with those guys was they were so mystical, the two things happened. One, they read into the Bible like mad.

Their mysticism and secondly, nobody could understand what they were talking about. I mean, I read William of St. Thierry and another pal of Bernard's, I read all these three essays last week, and when they were all done, I said, well, these guys must have been real nice guys. I wonder what in the world we're talking about, because it was all so spaced out. So there's a place for really sticking with the text, but really experiencing God.

Now, sometimes when you sing, don't you sense and overwhelming joy in your heart as you meditate in your mind? Singing is meditation. It's forced meditation. It makes you go over and over the same thoughts about God and that's essentially what meditation is. So I hope we can cultivate that. It takes

time. You've got to be willing to come to the worship with an uncluttered mind. You've got to be willing to study the Bible with uncluttered mind, pull back and meditate to think it through, extrapolate all there is. Squeeze it as dry as you can, and I think those are the things we long for.

But don't look for some...some metaphysical thing. Plus note this too, Mike, everybody reacts differently. And there may be people who are literally filled with emotional response, but it's not on the outside. And there may be people who on the outside, you know, like we say about the charismatics, we're not worried about them getting ahead. We're worried about them flying right on by. I mean, as far as...as far as ecstasy and experience, I mean, I they're gone. But it may not be any more real than the quiet meditative person who sits in the church of England, but sees God with a vision of his own soul. So do you want to always judge things externally. It's a very, very personal thing.

MIKE: Thanks.

JOHN: Uh-huh.

QUESTIONER: John, I was wondering if you can help me with the little comments on Mark Chapter 6, verse 5. I'm using the New American Standard. And it goes, "He could not do...He could do no miracles." Okay? The question I have is why the word could versus would or did not come into a play. Is there an implication there in relation to the level of faith that the people had in relation to any limitation that Christ might have possibly had in doing miracles?

JOHN: You know, I haven't...I haven't really personally dug into that particular text. As I'm trying to recall, Dick may have worked on that a little bit with his book on healing. I don't know. There are some cases where faith or lack of faith did in fact play a role. Isn't that so, Dick? There are some cases or non-faith did in fact play a role. This may be one of them. This may be one of those, but that is not necessarily always the case. There may be several other explanations.

The fact of the matter is one reason He couldn't, and this is in another place, but one reason He couldn't do any miracles in his village on one occasion was because they would have killed Him if He stayed. So there may have been other factors involved. He may have been looking at the long-term effect of doing those miracles. He may have been dealing with the faith or lack of faith. I'd have to dig into the whole context of this and compare it with...with the comparative passages in Matthew 13 and so forth to give you a better answer.

But note this, there were times when faith or lack of it did play a part. And there were times when it did not. And that was totally at the discretion of the Lord and based on His purposes for that given situation. Having just said in this case that He was without honor in His own country, it seems to me that He would be saying it is fruitless at this point to continue the display of my miracle power here since there's no faith here, right?

QUESTIONER: The only implication I have there is that it was a matter of choice where the wording would have been He did not.

JOHN: Right.

QUESTIONER: Or He would not, but here it's stating that He could not.

JOHN: Right, right, so you're saying was He under some limitation by the lack of faith?

QUESTIONER: Yeah.

JOHN: If there...if that was the case, it was only because that's the way He deemed it to be, because He voluntarily chose to be limited by that. Yeah.

QUESTIONER: Hi, John. I'm recently born again, and I have a mother-in-law as a Jehovah's witness. Okay? And we've had a little debate and the other day we were talking and she said, "Jesus Christ, God and the Holy Spirit are three in one," right?

JOHN: Right.

QUESTIONER: Okay, now, if Jesus...

JOHN: Jesus Christ, God, and the Holy Spirit are one.

QUESTIONER: One, okay.

JOHN: Right.

QUESTIONER: Now, Jesus Christ was crucified. He was dead for three days. Who ruled over the world for three days? Who was in charge?

JOHN: Boy I'm glad you asked that. I'll show you. Get your Bible, call a friend, look at 1 Peter 3:18.

QUESTIONER: 1 Peter.

JOHN: 1 Peter, it's a few books from the end of the New Testament. How long have you been a Christian?

QUESTIONER: Three months now.

JOHN: Three months, that's great. 1 Peter 3:18. Okay, got it?

QUESTIONER: Yes, sir.

JOHN: All right, "For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God. Being put to death in," what?

QUESTIONER: Unjust.

JOHN: In what?

QUESTIONER: Put to death in flesh.

JOHN: Okay.

QUESTIONER: "And made alive again in Spirit."

JOHN: Okay, "made alive," what, "in Spirit."

QUESTIONER: In Spirit.

JOHN: So while His flesh was dead, what was His spirit?

QUESTIONER: Alive.

JOHN: You got it.

QUESTIONER: Okay, I have one more quick one. Okay, she also asked me to ask if God is our Father, then who is our mother?

JOHN: Well, we don't need a mother biblically. And God is the Father only in human terminology. That's all. In other words, God is the creator of the universe. God is the sovereign universal creator. He is called Father in the Scripture for two reasons. One, so that He can demonstrate to us in terms that we understand that He was our source. Two, so that He can show to us His relationship with His son, who is our redeemer. But God created us as a loving Father and there needed to be no mother because God is complete in himself. Men are not. They have to have a compliment to produce life. God on His own could.

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

JOHN: Okay.

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