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

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 43
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 70-15

Tonight we're going to have a little time of question and I hope answer...question I'm sure about, answer may not come as easily. But we want you to feel free to ask what might be on your heart tonight. As I said, the idea is to try to clarify things or help you with things in terms of understanding Scripture or your own spiritual life. And there are three microphones...one in the middle and one on each side, just kind of line up and we'll do as much as we can. We may not...maybe you better not let them get any more than five deep, guys, cause we may not be able to cover all of it. So if you see five people in the line, stay in your seat until the line has dropped down a little bit so you don't have to stand there for a long time and kind of block the vision of the folks that are around you.

And let's see, Jerry Wragg is over here and Lance Quinn is in the middle and Dick Mayhew over on that side just trying to help these folks formulate their questions. So, we will start in the center, how about that? Just give me your name first and then ask the question.

PETE: Okay, my name is Pete Bodin(?)...

JOHN: Can I get a mike on or a speaker on up here? Okay.

PETE: And my question is concerning the death of Christ. And I know that the Word Faith people have...are teaching a very erroneous teaching on the death of Christ and going to hell and being born again and so forth. But it seems like sound teachers are denying the spiritual death of Christ along...you know, to kind of dispute what the Word Faith people are saying. And I would like you, if you would, to answer the question: did Christ die spiritually on the cross and what are some of the scriptural texts in regard to that?

JOHN: Well, spiritual death is usually defined as separation from God. And in that sense I would say yes, Christ did die spiritually. We know He died physically, I mean, that's obvious because they crucified Him and He yielded up His Spirit, right? And they ran a spear into His side and out came the paracardial fluid mixed with blood which indicated probably that His heart had burst and so we know He died physically.

What beyond that He experienced was a separation from God. And I believe in that sense there was a spiritual alienation, there was a spiritual death. Spiritual death is alienation from God. And Jesus articulated that when He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And I think in the

experience of bearing sin in His own body, literally Paul says, "Being made sin for us," the separation occurred. And so I think there was a spiritual element to His death.

Now obviously His nature was not defiled. Okay, and that's the caveat that you have to place there. While He bore the sins of many, He Himself never because a sinner. That's the mystery of it. He was made sin in the sense that all our sin was placed upon Him but He Himself was not culpable, so that His death was a voluntary substitutionary death and not one for His own iniquity. And that's where the Word Faith people just complete misrepresent the death of Christ. They have Christ dying on the cross as a sinner, then going to hell...this is what Kenneth Copeland, for example, teaches...going to hell and there suffering punishment for His sins and then being born again and then coming back to the world on His resurrection morning. But you're right in disputing that we cannot dispute the reality that Christ was made sin and in being completely covered with sin He was alienated from God which is the essence of what spiritual death is.

PETE: Besides the reference in Matthew, do you have any other scripture that would talk about that separation? I know in Psalm 22 that's a reference to that.

JOHN: Well, yeah, that's because that's where He drew that from, from Psalm 22. Just off the top of my head I'm trying to remember if there's any specific one. My mind is drawn to Colossians chapter 2 where it says that the certificate of debt, verse 14, consisting of decrees against us which was hostile to us which was the accumulated sin, the debt that we had accrued against God, He has taken it out of the way having nailed it to the cross. And I think again what this is saying is that the whole body of sin was placed upon Christ and nailed with Him there. And I think it's...it's just inherent in that that there will be an alienation from God as He bears this sin.

Another text that comes to mind is in Hebrews where we see Christ depicted as the scape goat, as the one who has to suffer, you remember, outside the camp. You remember the scape goat? The high priest would put his sins on the scape goat and then he would be taken outside the camp indicated that sin was taken away. Christ is the scape goat. He suffers without the camp. And there again you have the same concept of alienation where He is sent out into the wilderness bearing sin. But I can't just off the top of my head think of any other specific statement with that regard. Do you have any in mind?

PETE: Well the verse in 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 18, "For Christ also had suffered sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," and then it says, "being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit." And I'm wondering, that quickened by the Spirit, is that...what is?

JOHN: No, what I think that means, and what I think you have to hold there and that's why I wouldn't refer this verse particularly to this issue, I think it simply means He was dead physically but He was alive in His Spirit. In other words, that would be true of anybody who dies, right? I mean, you can kill

the body but you can't kill the soul. And I think that's what it means that His body was killed but His soul did not go out of existence. So when we talk about spiritual death, we're not talking about someone's soul going out of existence. And it tells us there that being alive in the Spirit, He then went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison. It is true that He did go to the abode of demons but He didn't go there to suffer, He went there to preach.

PETE: Right.

JOHN: So all that's saying is that while His body was dead the real Christ was still alive. That doesn't speak of the alienation that He experienced on the cross in bearing sin. Okay?

PETE: Okay, thank you.

JOHN: Good question, thank you.

STEWART: There are some movements ... my name is Steward Nurangio ... there's some movements in the body of Christ to unite the body of Christ. I'm not just talking about channel 40 or KTBN but I'm thinking of Wycliffe too where they have Catholics and some Charismatics in their organization. Do you think that there are any movements extent that are good, or do you think that they all endanger sound doctrine?

JOHN: Well thank you for the question. First of all, let's make one thing clear, the body of Christ is intact spiritually. God knows those that are His, they are His flock, they are His body and it's intact. So from the spiritual sound we are one and therefore it behooves us to pursue a temporal expression of that unity. So I want to say at the very beginning that we must do everything we can to endeavor to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace, right? We want to do everything possible we can to maintain the unity of the body of Christ. It is, I believe, that unity that is crucial to our testimony. Jesus said, "By this will all men know that you're My disciples that you...because you have love one for another," as He told the disciples in John. So let me say that no one is a greater advocate of the unity of the body of Christ, the expressed unity of the body, the body is one. We've all been baptized into one body, right? First Corinthians 12, we've all been made to drink of one Spirit, so we are one in Christ. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, everybody who is joined to the Lord is one with the Lord so everybody who is joined to the Lord is one with each other. That is a spiritual reality.

And I believe, by the way, that in John 17 when Jesus prayed that they may be one, that prayer is answered. It is answered in the spiritual unity of the church. I don't think His prayer was for ecumenicity, I think His prayer was for the spiritual unity of the body of Christ and I think...and I know His prayer was answered.

Now to the issue at stake. The church has always struggled with unity. The Apostle Paul struggled with it, right? That's why he wrote about unity and that's why he wrote Christians not to argue and quarrel and abuse each other but to love each other and pursue unity on every front. But as you've pointed out, unity is not true unity at the expense of theology, true doctrine. And to be honest with you, I don't see any great movement in the church today to bring together a visible unity around doctrine, around the truth. I see an awful lot of effort to try to bring together a unity that doesn't want to talk about the truth because the truth divides. And I think it's such a remote possibility because doctrine is such a remote issue. I mean, how are we ever going to get a real unity when we don't even want theology to be an issue? Not only can't we agree on doctrine, we can't even degree doctrine is important.

So...now on the other hand, I'm not sure that you could ever create some kind of ecumenical unity in this temporal life but I can certainly be one with a brother or a sister in the body of Christ who has a different view. I can express my love to them. I want to build on what we agree on and if I happen to be say with someone who is convinced about the gifts of the Spirit differently than I am, I can choose not to make that an issue of fellowship or of love or of ministry and I would definitely choose not to make that an issue. However, if somebody is wrong about the gospel, I will make that an issue. Or if they are wrong about the deity of Jesus Christ I would make that an issue or if they're wrong about issues of the atonement, such as we were just discussing, I would make that an issue.

But again, I've never felt compelled to create an organization to make this happen. Here we are a church like this...now, just out of curiosity, how many of you come say from a...well let's start with what might be the largest group of Baptist background, put your hand up...okay, put them down. How many of you come from a Presbyterian background? Okay, a few noble souls. How many of you come from a Methodist background? How many of you come from a Lutheran background...probably more? Yeah. How many of you come from some kind of independent background that only you could define? Okay. How many of you would come from a Roman Catholic background, put your hands up? How many of you would come from Jehovah's Witnesses background? Anybody? Yes. How many from Mormon background? You want to see unity in the body, there it is...there it is, only it's around the truth.

Now, to be honest, I can't orchestrate where I have no influence. I can't orchestrate that where there's no agreement on truth. But I'll tell you what, if the Lord continues to bless our church and we keep sending out other men to minister and other men to teach and preach the Word of God, we are effecting by the lives that we train and send out, the men and women that we send out to serve and minister and be pastors and leaders in churches and missions around the world, we can find that kind of unity and it does exist. If I go to...in fact, I have to go to Russia, I think I may have mentioned that to you last Sunday, did I say that? Because...Ukraine rather...because they had a meeting and Bob Provost called me and said, of course the Dukoncheko(?) died two weeks ago and they lost their leader, so when Bob Provost went over there they were all sitting at a table and they said to him, "We

want John MacArthur to come." And he said he's very busy and they said, "Yes, but he loves us and if he knows of our need he'll come." There is a bond between us, there's nothing to create and the bond is built upon a common love for the truth and it transcends this church but there's a common love of doctrine and a common commitment to the Word of God that ties us with people beyond the people we have normal influence with. And I'm not really concerned with trying to orchestrate some other kind of unity than that which is organic unity built around the truth and I don't really see that happening much in the current picture in the church because the church has down played the role of doctrine to such a degree that if you bring it up, you're considered to be sort of anti-unity.

Now this week I got a request to go meet with some people that I wouldn't necessarily agree with doctrinally, but I know they love Christ and so I want to go. And I want to celebrate with them the unity that we share around those things where we commonly believe but I certainly don't want to create an artificial unity that wants to ignore doctrine. So inevitably when we meet, we'll rejoice in the common faith and then we'll discuss the differences...as gentlemen in love. But we always wind up discussing those things because that's the issue of interpreting Scripture. Good question. Thank you

I wish we could say there was a real coming together in the unity of the church but I see the church getting fragmented. In fact, folks, I...you know, it's funny. I write a book and I think...well, that's covered that issue...and before that book gets out I have to write another one on another issue that's fragmenting the church. It just keeps breaking into so many pieces. All right, over here

Q: Yes, could you please clarify the extent of the atonement, limited verses, unlimited?

JOHN: Well I don't know if I could clarify it. But I can take a sort of stab at it. People always ask this question about the extent of the atonement and what the question is is basically this, did Jesus Christ die for the whole world or did He just die for the elect? Now we believe in election because the Bible says the elect were chosen before the foundation of the world, their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life at that time and they were given to Christ as a love gift from the Father and that's what election is and we were predestined to be adopted as children of God and all of that. So we believe in election.

The question then comes, did Christ die only for the elect or did He die for the whole world? And the debate circles around these thoughts. If Christ died for the whole world, then He died for people that He didn't save and didn't choose and therefore you have a wasted effort on His part. In other words, you have Him...this is the philosophical approach to it...you have Him dying for people who were never supposed to be saved anyway so why would He bother to die for them?

Now in the first place, this is a whole lot of human reasoning and that's what makes it so very difficult. Christ died, He died. God knew who His death would benefit, true? God not only knew who His death would benefit, He decided who His death would benefit? He decided who His death would benefit

before He planned His death because He wouldn't have planned a death unless He had planned a redemption effected by that death. Is that okay in the ordos category, Ken? Okay? Theology professor. I mean, you don't plan the means until you plan the end or the goal. So from the very outset God knew that the death of Jesus Christ would be applicable to the elect.

Beyond that I cannot go. Except to say this, that there are some ways, and you can find certain verses that seem to apply the atonement to the elect only, to go beyond it in several ways, maybe two. One, first of all, there are some ways in which the death of Christ applies to the non-elect and the unsaved and that would be in what theologians through the years have called "common grace." Are you familiar with that term? Grace that is common to all. For example, in Acts 14 in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways. He let them go their own ways yet He didn't leave Himself without witness in that He did good and gave rain from heaven and fruitful seasons satisfying your hears with food and gladness. That's what we call common grace, the rain falls on the just and the unjust. Also in 1 Timothy 4:10 it says, "God is the Savior of all men, especially of believers."

Now what does common grace mean? One, there is the temporal aspect of it. It's really all temporal but let's just divide it that way for a moment. There is the...well let's take the first temporal aspect of it would be earthly blessing. Somehow in the atonement of Christ, the wrath of God was mitigated so that He allows even the unregenerate to enjoy life. Okay? And they can laugh and they can smile and they can enjoy the richness of life and creation and love and children and whatever. But secondly, common grace shows itself in the temporal way in that God doesn't kill people. In other words, the very fact that a sinner takes another breath is grace, is it not? Because he deserves to die. So somehow in the atonement there is found even a common grace which can be bestowed upon an unregenerate. And that common grace will express itself in the blessings of human life and in human life itself.

But then there's another component and this throws the mystery into the whole thing and that is this, if a person goes to hell they do not go to hell because Christ didn't die for them, they go to hell because they rejected His death. Is that not true? That's what makes the whole thing incomprehensible to me. I was fine until I made that statement, right? But that's honest. There is an element in this whole atoning work that makes men culpable of sin because they believe not on Christ. Jesus simply said, "You will die in your sins because you believe not on Me." And we are told to go into the whole world and preach the gospel to all the elect, is that right? To every creature. So the atonement certainly in the purposes and plan of God in its efficacy, its effectiveness, was from the very beginning planned for and limited to the elect. And yet there was something in it that satisfied the justice of God so that He could be gracious commonly to all sinners and there is another component in the atonement that renders sinners guilty of rejecting it. And thus they're damned.

Now if you understand all those components and just leave them there, you're okay. And we have to let God resolve all of that in His own perfect wisdom. Okay? Good question. I think we're back to the middle.

DAMIEN: Yes, my name is Damien, by the way. In James 5:14 it says, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil and then...in the name of the Lord and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick and the Lord will raise him up and if he has committed sins they will be forgiven him." Now if that's a promise to the church then should we not being doing that or...I guess my question is, is it a promise? Can we claim that as a church?

JOHN: I don't know why not. It's right here in the New Testament. Let me...let me just tell you there are two prevailing views of this on our church staff. Right, Dick? And so I'll give you both views. There is the first view which is very viable that this kind of sickness being addressed here is associated with sin so that it is a sickness that is chastening. Not all sickness is chastening, right? Remember the man born blind, who's sin, this man or his parents? And the answer was none of them. This is not anything to do with sin, not all sickness is punishment for sin, but some is. And the context here calling for the elders of the church and letting them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick and the Lord will raise him up and if he's committed sins they'll be forgiven him. In other words, there would be the viewpoint that this is all tied in with confession of sins. If the Lord has put his hand on you in sickness as a chastening for sin and you confess and repent and turn from the sin then the reason for the chastening has ended, right? So that God can remove His hand, so confess your sin, verse 16. If you'll deal with the sin in your life the sickness that comes as a result of the sin will be dealt with.

Oil, some people associate with symbolism of the Holy Spirit, some people associate with some medicinal...I'm not sure. What normally does that view hold to...the medicinal aspect, Dick?

DICK: Yeah, they've got the mike here. That view could hold three different views, believe it or not.

JOHN: Give them to me quick.

DICK: One would be the medicinal view directly or the medicinal view by application, that it's medicine in pharmaceutics today. Some would talk about the rejuvenating work of the Holy Spirit and a third view and maybe the more general view would be that it's the oil of well being, it symbolizes what it is that God promised would deliver the kind of anointing that we talk about in Psalm 23.

JOHN: Okay, good. So that view would be that it's associated with sin. Now, I have chosen to approach it differently and if you want a more detailed view, you can get the tape on that. Tell them to give it to you and put it on my account, okay? Or Lance's account, even better.

Now let's approach it another way. And I don't want to get into too much detail, but it also can be interpreted that the word "sick" there doesn't mean illness or disease in a classic definition but weakness. The term is often translated "weak." And this would be a weakness that has come about as a result of serious persecution. What you have here in the context is persecution. Go back to verse 6, he is indicting the rich who have been attacking believers, condemning them and putting them to death. So these are Christians in a martyr situation. Some of them are being abused and beaten and it even talks about how they've been defrauded of their proper wages and all of that. And then in verse 7 he says, "So be patient like a farmer, you be patient." Verse 8, "Strengthen your hearts, the coming of the Lord is at hand, don't complain." And then verse 10 is an example, "Brethren of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord and remember the endurance of Job and remember the Lord is full of compassion as merciful." That whole context is about suffering and being patient and enduring like Job and like the prophets. And I think it's in that same flow that he comes down into verse 13 and says, "Is anyone suffering? Pray. If you're not suffering, sing praises. And if the suffering has made you weak," and he's talking here I think about a spiritual weakness, you've just become weak under the onslaught of persecution and suffering. Go to the elders. Why would a weak person go to the elders? Because they're what? Strong. Let them pray over him.

Literally rubbing him with oil. What that means is encouraging, giving him a sort of a spiritual massage in the name of the Lord. And their prayer of faith offered in strength will infuse strength into the one who is weak and the Lord will lift him up and if he's committed sins in his weakness the Lord will forgiven him. I like to see it that way. I wouldn't want to get in to a debate with the other view, I think it's viable. But I for my own sake feel comfortable with this perspective and that what he's dealing with here is those spiritual times of dryness and weakness.

Now I'll give you an illustration. A student came to me at the Master's College one day and I've often said if my door is open and I'm there, you come in and if you want to pray or talk about the Lord or the Word or whatever is on your heart, you come in. And I'm always available if the door is open and it usually is open because I don't study there. And one day a young man came in and he said...he said, "I need to share some things in my heart with you." And I said, "Go right ahead."

He said, "You know, I'm studying for the ministry. I love the school and God is at work in my life but I have some things that are going on in my life that are just crushing me and I feel spiritually weak and I keep falling to the same temptations and I can't seem to get victory over this. And I'm in despair and I've lost my appetite for the Word and my prayers are just kind of empty and I just feel at a point of total weakness spiritually and I want you to pray for me."

And I really saw that as a spiritually weak person under whatever onslaught he was under coming to someone that he saw as spiritually strong and asking for me to hold him up. And I'll never forget it. I

knelt down in my chair and as I knelt down in the chair I said, "Kneel beside me." And he pushed the chairs together and as I knelt down in the chair he knelt down and put his arms and his head on my back and it was such a graphic indication of what was in his heart. He was leaning on me physically because that's what he was doing in his spiritual heart as well. And so I prayed that God would give him strength and we prayed and then he prayed and I prayed again and we prayed quite a length that the Lord would restore him and that if he had committed sins in his time of weakness the Lord would forgive him. And to me that's the kind of thing that I sense here, not so much disease related as the weakness that comes in the spiritual battle and the spiritual struggle. It could be illustrated, for example, by the illustration of verses 17 and 18 which is not an illustrated of healing by the way, but an illustration of rain coming to a parched ground and a spiritually weak person is in the dry place and desperately needs God to bring the rain that brings strength. So that's kind of how I would handle that, all right?

DAMIEN: All right, thanks.

JOHN: Thank you.

Q: Recently a friend and I had some discussions concerning the amount of information that is needed for salvation. My friend is a Charismatic and has that background. We were discussing the heathen in Africa question. And his point was that a person could actually be saved without actually having the name of Jesus Christ mentioned or having the gospel, like the Word of God, read to him or preached to him because God could actually speak to that person and they would be saved much the same way as Abraham was saved in Romans chapter 4 where Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. And I disagreed with him and I said I think no because God has given the Word that is what needs to be brought to them and I brought to him Romans 10 that a preacher needs to come and so we've come to you at this point.

JOHN: I think you're exactly right. In the first place, Abraham was...was deemed to be saved because he believed the revealed Word of God, not because of some private conversation. Any Old Testament saint could be said to be saved or in faith believing God when he believed all that God had revealed at that point. And it wasn't just all that God had revealed to him but all that God had disclosed about himself. And there obviously is a saving amount of truth. Abraham could not have been saved simply if he had known God was a creator. He had to know God was a Savior. He had to understand his sin and it was abundantly clear, even in the early chapters of Genesis, wasn't it, that God had a standard of righteousness and that God would judge one who violated that standard? We see that with Adam and Eve, that God instituted symbols of the sacrifice of His Son early on in the proper offering that Abel brought. So all of that...and you can go back into the Old Testament and you can see many many indications that there was a full knowledge that God was a God of righteousness and wrath and that men were sinners and that God had provided an atonement and that there was to be a provision for sin and if men would believe all that God had revealed about that up to a given time

that God would account that as faith and grant them salvation.

When you come to the New Testament, it is unequivocal in the New Testament once the New Testament has been revealed that the gospel must be understood and believed. Nothing short of that. Verse 30 of Acts 17, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent because He's fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteous through a man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." In other words, there was a time when God was patient and tolerant, but now He's commanding all men to repent and the whole heart and soul of that repentance message is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Faith comes by hearing a speech about Christ. This is not true, it is not possible to become a believer apart from understanding the gospel. Now whether you know the name Jesus or the name Christ or the name Lord Jesus Christ or part of that or none of that, you certainly would have to understand that He was God in human flesh and was the perfect substitute for sin who paid the penalty for your sin and believe in His death and resurrection. Okay.

CRAIG: My name is Craig and this is a...going to be a hypothetical question but it's not silly.

JOHN: Does that mean like a hard one?

CRAIG: You'll see.

JOHN: We'll just take the folks that are there. I think if we hurry we'll get them down in 15 minutes.

CRAIG: Okay, let's say you have Church A, Church B and Church C.

JOHN: Okay.

CRAIG: And let's say you're Church C.

JOHN: Okay.

CRAIG: Okay and let's say the pastor of Church A falls because he no longer, you know, fits the elder qualifications, let's say it's immorality. And let's say that pastor goes over to Church B and they take him in and put him in a position of leadership, a shepherd. And let's say that you've previously had a working relationship with Church B, that is to say you've engaged in mutual ministry. Could you, Church C, still maintain the same level of a working relationship with Church B?

JOHN: No...no. If I follow you, what you're saying is Church B has a man who committed immorality in Church A. Could we maintain the same relationship? No.

CRAIG: With the new church that's taken him...yeah, okay.

JOHN: No, because it would be...it would be our conviction that he shouldn't be in the ministry. And while we might love the people and want to be a help and encouragement on a personal level, to be identified in any supportive role with that ministry would be contrary to what we believe and what we believe the Word of God teaches. Okay.

CRAIG: Thanks.

JOHN: That wasn't too difficult.

JIM: Hi, Pastor John. My name is Jim. I was reading your book, Our Sufficiency in Christ and I have just a couple of paragraphs to read. It talks about spiritual warfare who is after whom. Okay, God's sovereign purpose, why things happen. And it says here, "Why would God allow the devil an already defeated enemy to continually trouble believers. Scripture does not attempt to answer that question, it only assures us that God's purposes are always righteous, holy, good and ultimately for our benefit." Okay and it says, "Here Paul wrote of the divine purpose in the messenger of Satan that troubled him with the thorn to keep me from exalting myself," that's in 2 Corinthians 12:7. And here in Job perhaps the earliest of all the books in the Bible is the classic Old Testament study in how God uses Satan's diabolical efforts to accomplish His own divine purposes. There was no one else like Job on earth. God Himself has testified to that. He was a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil. Okay, and here Job lost everything, his children were all killed, he suffered painful and humiliating...

JOHN: Are you asking if I agree with all this?

JIM: No, I'm almost finished. Can he struggle with doubts, depression and discouragement. And here Peter in the New Testament also was personally attacked by Satan with God's permission. Okay, my purpose is as Christians today, do God allow these things to happen in our lives to strength our faith cause Peter went through a circumstances like that...God told him you're going to go through it because you're going to strengthen the church. Does this still happen today? Do God allow Satan to buffet us for us to be stronger in the faith?

JOHN: I think He does. I don't see any reason to assume any difference. You've got...you can go all the way back to probably the oldest book in the Bible, Job, which we could discuss about its authorship but may have even been written before the Pentateuch, you can go all the way to the time of the Tribulation in the book of Revelation and Satan is going to be heaping everything on believers then, right? And you can see it in the life of Paul, you can see it in the life of Peter. I don't see any reason since it's there at the very beginning and it's there at the very end in the redemptive plan of history why it shouldn't be running through the whole middle. So I would assume that the answer is

yes, that the Lord does turn Satan loose on us at His own purpose and discretion or turn demons loose on us for perfecting purposes to accomplish His own ends in our lives. Yes.

JIM: Okay, thank you.

JOHN: There's nothing in the Bible to convince us other than that. Good...good question.

DANIELLE: Hi, Dr. MacArthur, my name is Danielle Sehesan and I'm visiting from Len Crowley's church in Detroit.

JOHN: Well, send back our love when you go, will you?

DANIELLE: Okay. My question is at one point does deception become sin? For example, Rahab was commended for her faith but apparently she lied when she was hiding spies. And more specifically, what would you if you happened to be hiding Jews in your house and officials asked you if you were hiding Jews? How would you respond to that?

JOHN: Well in answer to that question, I would if asked directly tell the truth because I trust God. God does not need my deception to accomplish His purpose, okay? I know people are going to say...Whoa, whoa, whoa, what about the second World War, what about Corrie ten Boom, what about all that? I'm just saying God does not need my deception to achieve His sovereign purposes. If He's going to save the Jews, He's proven capable of doing it without me saying, "I think I can work this deal out by telling a few lies here and there." So, first of all, my belief in the sovereignty of God puts me in a position where I would just tell the truth.

Now, I wouldn't necessarily feel compelled to go down the street yelling it but if asked I would feel I would have to entrust myself to God and speak the truth. It sort of reminds me of the story of David. You remember when he was in the Philistine capital and he wanted to escape and so he pretended like he was crazy and he drooled in his beard and he acted like he had lost his mind, he scratched the walls and the gates. And the king says, "Look, we've got enough crazy people around here, get this guy out of here." And they shipped him out and he went off into a cave in the wilderness and asked God to forgive him for his lack of trust, that he had to act the fool to orchestrate his own escape rather than waiting to see the hand of God

Now in the case of Rahab, what you have to understand is God commended her faith not her lie. There's nothing in the Scripture to indicate that He commended her lie but He did commend her faith. And that's a good reminder that believers do lie. I mean, there are times when the noblest of Christians may commit the sin of lying and God will not damn us for the lie but He will save us eternally for the faith. So what was distinctive about Rahab and her commendation was she was commended for faith and if she had told the truth, who knows what wonderful thing God might have

done to deliver Israel. Okay?

WENDY: Hi, John, I'm Wendy Young. Could you talk about children and communion and should they wait till they're baptized to take communion?

JOHN: That's a good question. I think it's so hard to know specifically in the life of a child when they reach the age when genuine salvation occurs. I mean, I watch my own four children growing up, never did they rebel against Christ. At what point was their childlike faith saving faith? I don't know. But as soon as they wanted to participate, we were willing to let them. And I think they need to come to a certain level. I remember the first time my father had a conversation with me about it, he's reminded me several times and he said, "We're going to the Lord's supper tonight and we want you to come and it will be your first time." And I said, "Well, I hope they don't have peas." His basic response was, "I think we'll wait a while."

So what I'm trying to say is there may be an appropriate time to start letting a child participate, when they understand. I think it can be instructive. I don't think that you should become necessarily legalistic and say, you know, baptism is the entre into that. I think it can be instructive at a time when children understand its meaning and they believe in their hearts that they believe. I mean, it would be hard to say to a say seven or eight-year-old who says I love Jesus and I've asked Him into my heart...well I'm not sure this is really true and we don't know whether we ought to let you do this. If it's their good intention to honor Christ and they understand that we're remembering His death and resurrection, then I think the intent of their heart is consistent with the intent of God in the service that that's good instruction. And then they'll reach a point at some juncture when that saving faith is real and that service has its full meaning to them. Okay? Good.

Q: If Adam and Eve were the first two people...

JOHN: Wait a minute, what was that again? If Adam and Eve were the first two people...

Q: How did we get so many racials?

JOHN: How do we get so many races? Oh, that's a good question. This is a very complex question but let's go at it another way. The races that we experience today didn't really come from Adam and Eve, you know why? Because everybody on the face of the earth got drowned except for Noah and his three sons and their wives. So all the races came from Noah and Mrs. Noah and the three little junior Noahs, Shem, Ham and Japheth. And they were all, you remember, rescued in the flood and they came back and began to populate the earth. The best we can tell, Shem located with his people in the Middle East and are the Semites, Jews and Arabic people. It's a huge part of the world, huge population. Ham in most studies and I'm reflecting back a few years in reading things like Oliver Buswell III and others who dealt with these issues and some other books on the tables of nations, it

seems that Ham became a more servile people and may have moved south and wound up in Africa, the descendants of Ham and Japheth seems to have colonized Europe. It's very difficult to know all of that specifically, but they obviously through the years adapted themselves to their area. They, of course, began to develop and all the races eventually came.

But apart from what might be the scientific and historic explanation is the statement of Acts 17 where it says, "The God who made the world and all things in it since He is Lord of heaven and earth does not dwell in temples made with hands, neither is He served by human hands as though He have need of anything, He made from one every nation." So that's the best answer. Acts 17 verse 26, God from Adam...or from Noah and Mrs. Noah and Shem, Ham and Japheth, created the nations. Now one major component in that happened at the Tower of Babel, of course, where God scattered all the nations all over the face of the earth and changed their languages. So the best answer is right there in Acts 17, God did it. And God sort of tweaked their ears and tweaked their eyes and their nose and their color of their skin and all those genetic unique things in His creative power through the process of providential genetics to create all the different races. Okay. Good.

BERNIE: Good evening, pastor. My name is Bernie, I hope I have a hard question for you. It has to do...I hope you don't answer me this question from the sovereignty and the will of man's view so I'll put the conscience kind of what you've been teaching. Since Christ purchased our liberty consistent in our freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemnation of God, the curse of the law and everything else that came with the saving work and since God alone is Lord of the conscience, do we in our trying to keep our conscience pure in the sight of God could find ourselves working out our salvation by works and not by faith? I brought this question...I've been talking to some Seven Day Adventists, so.

JOHN: I understand that. Philippians 2 is the text that comes to mind in verses 12 and 13, Philippians 2:12, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," and then verse 13, "For it is God who is at work in you." And all I can say is it's God working in us and it's us working it out. The person who is a legalist will say I achieved it and God was happy with what I achieved. But the right attitude is God did it in me and I'm grateful that He overruled my fallenness to do it. That's the difference. The difference is attitudinal. I know in my own life I have to mortify sin. I have to work out my salvation, work what's on the inside on the outside in my conduct and yet when it's all done He gets all the glory. The legalist takes the glory and offers it to God and expects God to be happy with his achievement. Okay? So it's an attitude.

BERNIE: You mentioned in your preaching, you know, I think it was three weeks ago about the conscience that once we feel this guilt, we ourselves deal with it, confess it and that is how I understood it and then just forget it.

JOHN: Yeah, move on.

BERNIE: And I was talking to a friend of mine and we got in to...well isn't that then like okay if I did something wrong I'm just going to make sure I'm going to put it away and we deal about this working our own salvation, you know.

JOHN: No, I think you need to put it away. You know, if you've confessed it and repented of it, the Lord has forgotten it. What good is there in you remembering it? In fact, the longer you remember your old sins, the more likely they are to become new temptations. Okay.

Okay, we only have time for just a couple more so maybe you can find the noblest question...you stay right there...and we'll take one here and, Dick, if you want to find the one among the two there and make a choice, we need to break or the nursery will be experiencing severe difficulty. Go ahead.

STEPHEN: Hi, John, my name is Stephen Cooper and I was wondering if you could articulate for me your own personal theology...I know that you came from a dispensational background and I was wondering if you could talk about kind of like the history of your studying the Bible and being confronted with covenant theology and how you sort have come to the conclusions you've come to and when that happened.

JOHN: Well....let's see....I was born at a very early age and fortunately was born near my mother. And let's see, what else. No, I was raised in a dispensational environment, there's no question. People used to say of me that his hope is built on nothing less than Scoffield's notes and Moody Press. And I sort of grew up in that dispensational environment. But, as I got in to seminary I began to test some of those things and I have been perhaps aptly designated as a leaky dispensationalist or the Reformed people who want to claim me as Reformed say I am a Reformed but confused. But here's my dispensationalism, okay? I'll give it to you in one sentence. There's a difference between the church and Israel, period. If you understand that you understand the essence of what I believe is a legitimate biblical dispensationalism. That permits a kingdom, that demands a kingdom and that makes you premillennial because if you believe there's a distinction between Israel and the church, then the church is not Israel. And if the church is not Israel the promises of a kingdom to Israel have to come to pass and that's why you have to have a kingdom.

I came to understand that more narrow definition of dispensationalism while in seminary, at least to begin to understand it. And found that my study of Scripture over the last 30 years has yielded in affirmation that that is in fact correct. At the same time in seminary I began to be exposed to reading among more Reformed theologians and found myself drawn toward carefully examining the Scripture and over the years of exegeting the Scripture, now 25 years here, it has again yielded to me a Reformed theology but it is the byproduct of exegesis. I've always said a man has no right to claim a theology if he's not an exegete because how can you know what the whole is if you can't interpret the

parts? So it's been a process. I was convinced of it when I started and I'm more convinced of it now as I've gone through the texts. I was convinced of it when I started because I read so many noble men who held that view. It was more at that point hero worship and now it's become my own. Okay? That's squeezing it, okay.

Q: Yes, I recently have been studying apologetics and studied the pre-suppositional side and evidentualists side and then I came across a book by Mark Hanna(?) called Crucial Questions to Apologetics and he took a position called "verticalism" which made a lot of sense to me. But I just wondered what your response would be to a book like that and also how you came to your own personal convictions on an apologetics position?

JOHN: Well I am a presuppositional apologist, that simply means that I don't believe you start from ground zero with evidence, I think you have to start with a presupposition and that is God exists and He is the author of Scripture and that you affirm that by faith and that's given by the Holy Spirit. I believe...I believe in God because God planted the belief in my heart. And I believe in the Bible because God gave me the belief in His Word. And so I start with that. So my defense of anything will be that God already exists, that's the presupposition in Scripture is the Word of God.

Evidential apologetics starts with nothing and uses philosophical arguments to postulate the existence of God and the authority of Scripture. The difference would be...the most popular evidential apologists, the most widely known would be Josh McDowell who starts with nothing and does that. Now to be honest with you, I have not read Mark Hanna's book, I have read some of his material but that book on vertical apologetics I have not read. So it's hard for me to comment on it. And maybe a good effort, I need to read it, thanks for the peaking my interest. Okay

Q: John, I've always found the teaching of Harold Camping(?) to be confusing and I was wondering where does he go wrong and especially with the Rapture?

JOHN: Yes, his teaching is confusing. He...I've never been asked about him before, it's interesting because we don't have Family Radio in this area but wherever you have Family Radio he owns a network of Family Radio stations which are good and he gets on and it is very confusion. But he tends to be a five-point Calvinist, very strong in Reformed area but with some rather personalized interpretations of things. And when he gets in to eschatology which is not uncommon to be honest with you with Reformed people, they are just completely lost. And when he gets into the book of Revelation like so many other people of the Reformed tradition, they bought a Reformed theology that was codified and packaged prior to the historical development of eschatological theology and the flow of doctrine. And so they just don't want to talk about it. And when he gets into Revelation, it gets very confusing. And when you add to that the fact that he is now convinced that the Rapture will occur in 1994, I think it's September 28...I think it's September 28, and that that is the day of the Rapture and it's all proven in a great huge thick book, well we're going to find out how trustworthy he is and

probably before September 28 by watching what he does in months prior. But yes, you're right, his teaching is confusing.

Okay, one final question. Thank you.

Q: A Mormon asked me this question a number of years ago and through the years here at church I've asked a number of people this question, there seems to be a divided opinion on it and I wanted to get your opinion.

JOHN: Sure.

Q: So, people ask...she asked me, it was a Mormon lady asked me when I was witnessing to her, "Do you have to believe in the trinity to become a Christian?" And I didn't know how to answer at the time.

JOHN: Yeah, I would answer yes. If you don't believe in the trinity then you don't understand who God is. You may say the word "God" but you don't understand His nature. Secondly, you couldn't possibly understand who Christ is. I know what I'm saying when I say that, it's going to not only impact people that you may have witnessed to but there are even people in one form of the Charismatic or Pentecostal Movement called United Pentecostals who are called "the Jesus only" who believe in a kind of modalism where God is God for a while and then He gets to be Christ for a while and He gets to be the Holy Spirit for a while but He's never all three at the same time. It is my conviction that true salvation is built upon an understanding of the deity of Jesus Christ, that He is both God, fully God and that God at the same time is fully God. And that that's the whole point of what He did in the gospels. I mean, Jesus was never satisfied with having people accept Him as anything other than God. Not just God the Son but...what?...the Father. I think that was the whole thing that He was demonstrating was the trinitarian nature of God. So I think not to understand the trinity is not to understand who God is and it's not to understand who Christ is and therefore it's not to understand the gospel properly.

The same question arises about the virgin birth. I would say a person could become a Christian if they didn't know about the virgin birth because they would assume that Jesus Christ must have had a unique birth if He was both God and man, right? But if someone says I would deny the virgin birth, then all you've got is a man. You've got something less than the incarnate God. It is conceivable that somebody would say, "Nah, He wasn't born of a virgin, He was born of Joseph and Mary and God just infused the logos Spirit into Him," and it could get a little confused that way. But basically I think you need to believe that God is expressed fully in Christ and yet exists as God and that the Spirit of God was doing the work through Christ, that's what He said, and anything less than that...He said if you don't see the Spirit working in Me, what is that? Blasphemy. So I think the trinity is inherent to the gospel understanding. Good question.

Well, time is up. Thank you for a few extra minutes tonight. Hope it's been helpful. We are so encouraged because we hear such great questions. We know you're in the Word, you're learning, you're growing. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, thanks for a great evening. Go with us now to strengthen us to serve You. We pray in our Savior's name. Amen.

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