

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

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 46

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 70-18

We have some time tonight for question and answers, and we haven't done this for a long time, so we want to just encourage you. There's a microphone in the middle and one on each side, and all you need to do is kind of get over by the microphone; either sit down at the end of an aisle nearby or get in line, and we'd like it if you'd keep your question brief and direct, and we'll go from there. Okay, we'll start over here with Stuart, and speak right into the microphone, if you will.

QUESTIONER: Every Christian knows that Jews are antagonistic to Christianity, and whenever you hear about antagonism, you never hear about jealousy, but Paul said that the Gentile church was grafted into the tree, which made the Jews jealous, but I've never heard the word used. How do you know a jealous Jew from an antagonistic Jew?

JOHN: I think I would answer the question this way. An antagonistic Jew has a resentful attitude toward the Gospel. A jealous Jew has a longing for what he doesn't have and he sees belongs to somebody else, and the purposes of God in making Israel jealous was not to excite their antagonism, but to excite their longing.

If a person is jealous, it can be resentment, in one sense, but it can also be borne out of the fact that somebody has what you really want, and I think that's the essence of a kind of jealousy that God would desire to produce in the heart of a Jew; that a Jew would see the profound blessing of God, the blessing of Messiah on the life of a Gentile, and say, "How is it that the Gentiles can have that? How is it that the church can have that, that forgiveness of sin, that hope of eternal life, that working of God, and I don't have that; therefore, exciting the longing and the desire rather than inciting some kind of bitter antagonism toward it. Okay?"

QUESTIONER: Hi, John. Jonathan. Does God consider the sin of homosexuality to be worse than the sin of fornication among heterosexuals?

JOHN: Categorically, no, and I'll tell you why. Because when you have any listing of sins in the Scripture; for example, in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 6, he says in Verse 9, "Do not be deceived," 1 Corinthians 6:9, "Neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor homosexuals nor sodomites nor thieves nor covetous nor drunkards nor revilers nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

Categorically, you've got everything in the same list, and probably, when you compare sodomites to homosexuals, some would say that homosexuals could refer to what were called Catamites; those who are submitted to homosexuals, maybe the younger boy who submits to the pedophile, that kind of thing, so you have two different terms used for homosexual activity.

Some would even use those words to refer to people like transvestites or what are they are called today, transgender people, but when you look at a list like that, you see that they're all outside the kingdom, so, categorically, they're all in the same situation. They're defined by their sin. Verse 11 then says, "And such were some of you," so, the point being that those are all sins that are characteristic of people outside the kingdom, but they're all forgivable, right; because such were some of you.

And He's saying to the Corinthian church, "That list is a list of what you used to be, and some of you were here and some of you were here and some of you were here and some of you were here, so if it is true that that sin, along with many others, defines life outside the kingdom, but that that sin is forgivable, then, in that sense, it's no worse a sin than any other.

Having said that, I would say; however, that when you look at Romans, Chapter 1, and you have to look at Romans, Chapter 1 to understand this. When the "wrath of God," in Verse 18, is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness, the wrath of God follows a sequence. In Romans, Chapter 1, you look, first of all, at Verse 24, and here is the defining of God's wrath. Now, let me kind of sum this up for you. You read Romans 1:18 about the wrath of God, and we say, "Okay, the wrath of God; what are you talking about? Well, there are five kinds of wrath. There is eternal wrath. That's hell. There is, I guess what we could call eschatological wrath or the wrath of the last days, the wrath described in Revelation 6 to 19, all the Seal Judgments, Trumpet Judgments, Bowl Judgments, the final wrath, so there is eternal wrath; there is eschatological wrath.

There is also what I could call cataclysmic wrath, the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of the cities of the plain, the destruction of Capernaum, the judgment of God on Korazin, Bethsaida, and in history, God has judged whole civilizations through cataclysms that took unbelieving people and catapulted them into eternity, such as Pompeii, which was a city literally notorious for its vice, so you have eternal wrath; you have eschatological wrath; you have cataclysmic wrath.

Then you have what I would call natural wrath, and that is the wrath of God that comes in a sowing-and-reaping fashion. If you are a drunkard all your life, you may die of cirrhosis of the liver. If you live in sexual sin all your life, you may shorten your life and die of some venereal disease, including AIDS, so there are certain things built in. "Whatever a man sows, he reaps." That's another kind of wrath, but the wrath being spoken of here is the fifth kind. It's the wrath of abandonment.

It is that judicial act of God, whereby He lets the sinner go. In other words, He stops convicting. He stops calling. It's Genesis 6, where God says, "My Spirit will not always strive with man." There comes a point when God says, "That's it. I'm letting you go," and when God lets a society go, Verse 24 says, "He gives them over to uncleanness." That's sexual sin, and then Verse 26, He gives them up to vile passions, and women exchange the natural use for what is against nature, but likewise, the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men, committing what is shameful, so you have lesbianism and homosexuality.

When God gives a society up, they plunge into sexual sin, and then they sink deeper into homosexual sin, so while homosexuality is a forgivable sin, and, categorically, no worse than others, when it happens on a societal level, it is evidence that when a society affirms it; when it becomes normal in a society, that is evidence that God has turned that society over. If you look at America, you could look back to the sexual revolution of the '60s, which has now become a homosexual revolution of the '90s, in which the homosexuals have redefined themselves as a minority, like a racial group of people demanding rights.

And so I think, while it is, as far as individual sin goes, no more damning than any other sin and as forgivable as any other sin. When it becomes the pattern of a society, it is evidence that God has turned that society over to that sin. It may be at that point an evidence that many in that society are not redeemable because they have gone past the age of grace. Okay?

And in response to that, we hate the sin of homosexuality because of its baseness and because of its perverseness, but, at the same time, we understand that it is a sin like any other sin, and we have to call that sinner to repentance and offer that individual sinner the grace and the forgiveness of God. We can't play God, and while God may be turning our society over, God may be no longer striving with us. He may have abandoned us as a society. Still, He is saving individuals who respond to the Gospel. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Good evening. Within the context of ministering to a people group considered an unreached people group and the biblical principles and mandates regarding a woman's role in ministry, her spiritual role, and the sovereignty of our God, what is a woman's role if she is alone to minister to a group of men who need to be taught the Word of God? Is it permissible for her to teach them?

JOHN: Well, it's a very good question, and I would answer it this way. Obviously, if there's no one there but a woman who knows the truth, then she's obligated to communicate the truth, but what she does not want to do is establish herself as a pastor. She doesn't want to establish herself as the under-shepherd of Christ in a church.

In fact, in the history of the Jewish people, and it shows up in the Philippian Church, the Apostle Paul went to Philippi, and there was no synagogue there. There was no synagogue there. Jewish women met down by the river because they couldn't constitute a synagogue without a certain number of men (I think the number was 11) before they could have a group of elders who could lead a synagogue. They couldn't even establish one.

In deference to the biblical pattern, which they recognized, they simply met to worship the true God down by the river, and I think that, at that point, if they were the only ones who knew the truth, they would be obligated to instruct, but they would need to wait for the full development of the church when God sent along male leadership.

A way to answer that anecdotally: Patricia and I traveled some years ago down in the jungles of Ecuador. Some of you will remember back in . . . it was in 1955 I think, when the missionaries to Ecuador were slaughtered; you remember, by the river down there, and the famous, famous story, Nate Saint and his friends who were killed there; five missionaries murdered by the Auca Indians.

Well, the sister of Nate Saint, Rachel Saint, whose name is well known to people in mission work, was determined that she would go down there and reach those people that had killed her brother and his friends. They landed a plane on a river. They were trying to reach these people, and they massacred them, and she went down there, and God used her greatly. She was a woman in that situation, and she made a determination that she wouldn't send the church down a course from which it would be hard to recover, so she determined that she would never allow those people to view her as the leader or the pastor or, in an ultimate sense, the teacher.

And so what she did was, in an individual way, she endeavored to lead the natives to Christ, one on one, and her story is just a remarkable story. We've have met her, of course. What she did was she was enabled by God to lead some individuals to Christ. She determined that one of them would be a capable teacher, and so she established the meeting, a regular meeting of the people for the presentation of the Gospel; she prepared the lessons, and she taught them to him and had him teach them to the people.

And she did that for the very reason that she didn't want to become the teacher and the pastor whom everybody would adore and love and view as their teacher, and then try to alter that somewhere down the path, so, very wisely and very thoughtfully and obediently, I might add to Scripture, she being the only person with the truth, found a way to do that without violating the principles of Scripture. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

JOHN: You're welcome.

QUESTIONER: Hi, John. In Hebrews 1:3, I never, since a long time ago, have heard the expression "impressed image" used, and it seemed to me the word that would make it closest to what Strong says a root would be, connected to an engraver. I've never heard that used, and it would seem to make it closest to what Father and Son, the closest connection between the two. What do you say about that?

JOHN: Well, Hebrews 1:3, just for all of you, says that speaking of Christ, "He is the brightness of His glory." That is, the writer of Hebrews is trying to express the sameness of nature between God the Father and Jesus the Son, what we talked about this morning, and he's looking, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for language that expresses that, so he says, "The Father is the Glory, and the Son is the brightness of the Glory."

You know, that would be like saying, "The Father is the sun, and the Son is the brightness of the sun when you look in the sky." I mean, for us to see it, it's one in the same, and yet it's two, and that's what he's saying. There is the essential glory of God, but the very brightness of that glory is the Son Himself, which is a beautiful way to make them one in the same.

And he says it a second way: "The Son is the express image of His person," and it is a term that means "the imprint." It is as if the very handprint of God is pressed into the Son, the very essential nature. He is the very imprint of God so that God, literally, is manifest in Him, and I think that's exactly what he intends to say, and that is a very important thing. In the ancient world, Caesar would be imprinted on a coin, and he's using that as an analogy to say God is literally the face of God; the person of God is literally imprinted on the person of Jesus Christ, stamped on him.

Of course, anytime you try to describe that in human terms, you come up a little short. You hear people talk about the Trinity, and I've heard people say, "Well, it's like H₂O." H₂O can be steam, ice or water. Well, that's a noble shot at it, and I've heard people say, "Well, the Trinity is like an egg. You have the shell, the white and the yoke," but, you know, an egg is an egg, and water is water, and so when you're trying to talk about the Trinity, it's a stretch, but I think those are two ways in which, when you put them together, you're helped to understand that what he is saying is that they share the common life and the common nature. Hi.

QUESTIONER: Hi. My name's Brian.

JOHN: Hi, Brian.

QUESTIONER: My question is regarding Christ's prayer in John 17, where He said that when perfect unity was achieved among the believers that were and were to be; that the world would know that God had sent Him. I wanted to know what you perceive as the No. 1 obstacle to unity in the Body of Christ and what you think we can do as individuals to overcome those obstacles, without compromising on things that are key to our faith.

JOHN: Well, that's a good question, Brian, and stay right there a minute. I want to address that. In John 17:20, He says, "I do not pray for these alone;" that is, for His disciples, "but all those who will believe in Me through their word," everybody who is going to read the Word and hear them preach and believe all down through the ages. "And I pray that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I in You."

Now, we have to ask the question; when He says, "I pray that they all may be one," what is He really talking about here? First of all let me say this. I don't believe this is a wish that doesn't come true. Okay? Because the Son never prays for anything that the Father doesn't will, right? It's like the Holy Spirit in Romans 8; that whatever the Holy Spirit prays for, He knows is consistent with the will of the Father, so the Son never prays anything the Father doesn't will. Of the Son, consistent with the will of the Father, is praying that believers would all be one in the same way that the Father and the Son are one.

Now, listen to this. In what way are the Father and the Son One? It isn't experientially. It's essentially. Do you know what I am saying? They share the same life, right? They share the same common eternal life, so He's not saying, "I hope that they'll get along as well as we get along." He's saying, "I want those who belong to me to share the same eternal life that we share," and that prayer is answered every time a person is saved because when you are saved, you literally share the common eternal life.

You say, "What do you mean by that?" First of all, you're begotten again, right; to a new life. You have a new birth. You enter into new life. "Old things are passed away; all things have become new." That new life is characterized by the divine presence dwelling in you. Is that not right? So you, as a believer, have dwelling in you the life of God in your soul. You now possess eternal life. You're not going to get eternal life. When you die, you have it right now. Okay?

In fact, salvation is a bigger transformation than death. At death, you just lose the flesh. At salvation, your inside is totally transformed. You now have the life of God in you. That's why Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ." I've died, and yet I live, but not I, but Christ lives in me."

So Jesus is saying, "Father, what I want is that the Church would possess the very life that we possess," and God answered that prayer, and every time someone puts his trust and faith in Jesus Christ, he receives that same eternal life. You see, that's the only way to interpret that because

Jesus says, "That they may be one as You and I, Father, are one," and it's not that they are one because they get along so well. It's that they are one because they share the same essential life, and He is saying, "I want my people to share that same essential life." and that is one of the marvelous wonders, isn't it, of salvation?

Now, as a Christian, it isn't that I've just taken on a new religion. It isn't that I've got a new belief system. It is that I have a new life. Don't we talk about it like that? That's why we say, "You're born again, and now the life of God dwells within me. I am a temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in me, and I am a possessor of the eternal life, the life of God," and that literally comes out in so many different places in the Scripture; in the Epistles.

Now, having said that, we will say then that the prayer was answered, and it's answered every time somebody believes, and I hear a lot of people say, "You know, Jesus prayed that we would be one, and we're not cutting it folks, and this has got to break the heart of Jesus because His prayer isn't answered. Please; that is not the case. What He prayed for is reality, and every time somebody is saved, they become one with Christ and one with the Father, so much so that 1 Corinthians 6:17 says that, "If you join yourself to a harlot, you have just joined Christ to that harlot. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

That is the amazing thing about being a Christian, isn't it? And in Romans 8, Paul says, "The glorious manifestation of the children of God hasn't happened, and so the world doesn't know what we are." I mean, they think that we're like them. They don't know that we're aliens. We are the real aliens. This is true. We are the real aliens in this world. We are the only aliens in this world. Our citizenship is not here, and our life is not even human. We are the aliens of this world. We are the real people from outer space, but they don't know it, and they won't know it until the glorious manifestation of the Children of God is made known at the Coming of Jesus Christ.

Now, in the meantime, and I know this is your question; we all don't get along real well, even though we have the same common eternal life, and you're asking me, "What is the single greatest barrier to that, and I have to tell you there are two barriers to that. The first barrier to it is theological confusion, and they're not necessarily in this order, but the first thing that causes us to have difficulty in fellowship is some people understand the truth, and some people don't, and it's hard to connect with them if they don't.

If I believe that the Bible is absolutely the Word of God; that it's inerrant; that it's inspired; that every Word of God is true in the original autographs and so forth and so forth, and somebody comes along and says, "Well, I don't believe that. I'm a Christian. I believe the Gospel part, but I don't believe in any other part." I'm going to have a hard time connecting with that person in mutual ministry, agreed?

Or if I believe that the Spirit of God works through the Word of God, and you believe the Spirit of God works through tongues, we're going to have a hard time. We can love each other, but we're going to have a hard time locking arms in ministering, because we're going to have two different sanctification paradigms. We're going to be going two directions, so the first issue is to come to the truth, and that's, obviously, compelling to me, right?

I mean, let's get the truth out there. And today, people don't like the truth. I suppose I've always been known as somebody who has convictions. I think that's probably a fair assessment, but I don't think I've ever been as distasteful to the Christian culture as I am today because they have bought into the post-modern mentality that there is no fixed truth, and this can be true for you, and this can be true for you, and this can be true for you, and then the question is, "How are we ever going to get together in a mutual ministry, when we don't even agree on what the truth is?"

It's just very difficult. In fact, it's; well, nigh impossible to do some things. I can have fellowship with a certain pastor, certain Christian leaders; to a point, private fellowship. If you ask me to get involved in a mutual ministry with them, it's very hard for me to do that because, then, I'm going to give tacit support to something that they defend and preach that I don't think is true.

So the first issue is to come to the truth, and until we come. . .until the Church sees, first of all, the significance of the truth and understands the truth and adheres to the truth, it's going to struggle to get together.

The second thing is sin. Wherever you have sin, you have a breach in the fellowship. Now, as long as we're on this planet in our current condition, even though the inner man has been totally transformed and the outer man is still struggling, we're going to have struggles with that truth, and we're going to have struggles with sin, and those are the things that stand in the way.

It isn't that we don't want that. It isn't that we're not loving. I mean, if I confront a certain situation and say, "This is not true," some people would say, "Well, that's divisive," and that is not divisive. That is unifying because we will never get together as long as somebody is allowed in the church teaching lies. We don't have any basis to get together. You have to speak the truth, then you can speak it in love, but if you don't speak the truth, then you have to be literally pointed out, and Paul says to Titus, "Look, the first time you find a heretic, call on him.

The second time, if he doesn't respond, call on him again. The third time, throw him out of the church" because the Church can never get together as long as there is heresy in there, and that, of course, is the extreme, but wherever there is a lack of conformity to the truth. . .and we can't always agree on everything, but there are great things that do divide us, and they have to do with the great

doctrines, like the Trinity, the character of Christ, the Atonement, grace, faith, the Resurrection, Sanctification, the work of the Holy Spirit, the Scripture, inerrant and inspired, and so on and so forth. When we deal with those, then we still have to battle the issue of sin, because sin can be so divisive. Okay? Does that help?

QUESTIONER: Thanks, yes.

JOHN: Thanks, Brian; good question.

QUESTIONER: Good evening, Pastor MacArthur. My name is Jason.

JOHN: Hi, Jason.

QUESTIONER: Hi. There is certainly a lot of confusion about personal accountability in church discipline in the church today, and I'm facing a little of that confusion. I'm studying 1 Peter 4:8. It says, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins."

Now, I know that's just one verse. I don't want to take anything out of context, so that may not have anything to do with personal accountability with church discipline, but if it does, what. . .how should that affect our obedience to God's plan of personal accountability in the church?

JOHN: Love covers a multitude of sins. Let me tell you something. I will not take personally and become defensive over those things that are done against me. If I felt there was an ongoing pattern of sin, and I think this is how the Church has to operate, in the life of a person, for which there was no sadness, there was no remorse, there was no repentance, there was no sorrow, and this became a constant way of life, then I think it needs to be dealt with, but it is ridiculous to assume that you are going to go around, every single time someone says something that may be thoughtless or something that doesn't take into consideration your feelings or something that misrepresents something about you; that you, all of sudden, rise to some spiritual level and launch church discipline.

We're talking about the kind of love here that deals with the pro optimus of life; you know, you're sort of overtaken in a fault because you're human. This is not that you have premeditated a massive scenario of an ongoing commitment to this kind of inequity. That's the kind of thing the Church deals with, but what love does is love understands human weakness; love understands our foibles, our failures, our tripping-up, our falling. Love understands that are some times we say things and do things. Sometimes, I say things and do things that have no premeditated intentionality to hurt anybody, but because of my humanness and my weakness and my sinfulness, it happens that way, and I would be out of the ministry long ago if every time I had ever done that in my life, somebody had launched me into church discipline, and we would all be in that situation.

So the intent of what Peter is saying here, by the way, which is quoted from Proverbs 10:12; it's an Old-Testament proverb; is that in the nature of life, as we go through life, we're going to be offended by people, and you just can't rack up those offenses until you become a very bitter and vengeful person. But where you see in a person, and here is where I would draw the line; where you see in a person, not an offense against yourself, but where you see a pattern of unrepented offense toward God, and you then begin to work toward realizing. . .helping that person realize that this needs to be confronted and dealt with. I mean, if somebody is unkind to me and cruel to me, I might say to them, "You know, that's a sinful attitude you have toward me, and I hope that you won't keep that attitude. I certainly forgive you, but I hope you'll be more gracious in the future and you'll honor the Lord with the right attitude."

But I think, in my heart, I would have instantly forgiven them, but if I see a smoldering bitterness in an individual and sowing seeds of discord with that bitterness in the church that begins to affect the life of the church and looks like it's a pattern, then it becomes an issue; if you don't deal with that, you're going to be going to the next step of discipline, and if you don't deal with that, then you're going to be going to the next step.

So I think the simple statement of what Peter is saying is that in the normal course of life, we are filled with forgiveness, and that's exactly what I think Jesus meant in Matthew 18 when He said to Peter, "You are supposed to forgive 70 times 7." In other words, you just keep forgiving and forgiving and forgiving and forgiving 490 times a day if that's how many times you're offended. You can't just rack those things up and become a bitter and vengeful person. But where it becomes a pattern that offends the church and offends the Lord, from which a person is not willing to turn, then it becomes a disciplinable issue. Okay?

QUESTIONER: All right. Thank you.

QUESTIONER: Hi, John. My name is Richard Evans. I just wanted to touch base. I've been recently. . .finished the books on the *Left Behind Series*, and now, I'm reading your book. I'm about halfway through on *The Second Coming of Christ*.

Now, the implication in your book is that it is going to be extremely difficult for people to be saved during that time period of the Great Tribulation. That book, the *Left Behind Series*, kind of makes it seem like it is not all that difficult. and I'm just kind of curious and kind of, I guess hoping, for relatives and those that don't know the Lord, how easy it's going to be. I know people are going to be saved during that time period, but is it as difficult as you're implying in your book?

JOHN: Well, it's impossible. It's always impossible to be saved unless the Grace of God reaches down and redeems you, so it's not a question of human possibility. It's as possible for a sinner to be

saved as it is to stuff a camel through the eye of a needle. I mean, it's impossible, but with God, all things are possible, so the only question is, "Is God going to save people in the Tribulation;" not, "Is it going to be easier or harder?" It's always impossible. The sinner can't save himself, right? And unless the Spirit of God changes his heart; unless God grants him saving faith and grace, then he's not going to ever be saved. Unless God gives life to the dead, the dead can't respond, so it's always impossible, just keep that in mind. The only question is, "Is God going to save people in the time of the Tribulation?" Answer: Yes.

It's my own conviction that He is going to save people, probably in a greater volume than ever in history, and the reason I say that is you've got a period of seven years, but in Revelation 7, you have a group of people before the throne of God, who have been saved out of every tongue and tribe and people and nation, and there are so many of them that can't be counted. I think there will be the greatest spiritual harvest of souls ever in that time, and when God finally gets Israel to cooperate; when they finally become the missionary nation they were always supposed to be, and He gets 144,000 Jewish evangelists, and we can imagine when 144,000 Jews see their Messiah for who He is and start to reach the world with the Gospel; that there's going to be an amazing harvest of people. The nation of Israel is going to be saved, and people from every tongue and tribe and people and nation, and I think that's going to happen.

But as the Tribulation comes to its ending; once that wave of evangelism comes and there's going to be an everlasting Gospel being preached from heaven, and I tell about that in the book; that it's not going to be like a blimp dragging a sign, but it's a similar idea. Up in the sky, there's going to be the Gospel written in the sky, and there's going to be the two witnesses, proclaiming the Gospel, Revelation 11; there's going to be the 144,000 Jews; there's going to be all these people converted, and antichrist is going to come in a sweeping kind of a purge and trying to kill these people, and many of them will die for their faith, but the Gospel will still be spread all over the earth.

I think the world will hear the Gospel. If they can't hear it from the two witnesses, and they will be able to know that because the whole world will see them when they die and rise again, probably on CNN. And the 144,000 Jewish evangelists are going to preach the Gospel all over the world, and then you got the angel in the sky that everybody can see, even if the evangelists don't come to their towns.

So I think there'll be a great preaching of the Gospel. There'll be a great harvest of souls, but as you get to the end of the Tribulation, if people resist that, they become harder and harder and harder as you get to the end, and they start to curse God instead of believing when they see His judgment, okay?

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

QUESTIONER: Hi. I'm Grace. My question is that in view of the fact that, as Christians, we are to see ourselves as a part of the body, and we are to be exercising our talents in order to be most effective for the Lord. How should we see ourselves relative to society as far as how can we be most effective as lights and as salt to the earth? Should we view society as also being a part of the body?

JOHN: I understand that. You have a two-fold responsibility. You have a responsibility as a believer to the Body of Christ, for which you have been gifted. The responsibility you have toward the Body of Christ falls into two categories. You can simplify; maybe it is a bit of an oversimplification, but it's not a stretch.

First of all, your responsibility to the Body of Christ is expressed in the New Testament "one another;" love one another, pray for one another, confess your faults to one another, rebuke one another, reprove one another, exhort one another, edify one another, instruct one another," etc., etc., etc. Those are the characteristics of fellowship. Fellowship is "koinonia." The word "koinonos" means "partner," so you're partner with people, and if you're a real partner with somebody, you have to do all of that. If you are a business partner with someone, you'd exhort them, you'd encourage them, you'd instruct them, you'd deal with all the issues of their life because so much is at stake because you're tied together in this partnership. If you're in a marriage, you'd do the same thing back and forth because you understand how a partnership needs that if it's going to flourish.

So in the Church, we have that first area of responsibility called "fellowship." The second one is our spiritual giftedness. That's different. You have a unique ability to minister to the Body through a gift that the Spirit of God has designed and placed in you. Now, every one of us has the gift, 1 Peter 4:10 and 11, "As every man has received the gift, so minister the same," and the gifts are divided into two kinds of gifts, speaking gifts and serving gifts. Some of us speak. Our gift is primarily a speaking gift, preaching, teaching, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, exhortation, counseling; whatever it might be. For some, it's a serving gift. It might be administration; it might be helps; it might be prayer; whatever it might be.

Now, as I see the gift, you have a gift. It's just for you, and what the Lord does is you have these categories of giftedness, and the Lord sort of...it's like the colors on a palette. He's going to paint you, so He takes a little of this and a little of that, and a little of this, and He paints you, and you're unique, and when He gives you the gift, it's not that we're all rubber ducks stamped out of a mold and we all quack the same way. Everybody who has the gift of teaching doesn't teach the same way. Everybody who has the gift of exhortation doesn't counsel the same way. Everybody who has the gift of helps doesn't help the same way. It's sort of like spiritual fingerprints. There are no two alike, so God takes all the colors in the palette of gifts and blends them together for you.

And if I look at myself. . .and people have asked me through the years, "What do you think your gift is?" Well, certainly, I have a gift for preaching. That's part of what my gift is. I have a gift for knowledge to understand the Word of God. I think part of my gift is administration to lead and direct. Part of my gift is teaching. You know, I enjoy the teaching, as well the preaching. Many people wouldn't know this, but one of the things that I love most is giving. What you have is this sort of this blend of things that comes out of me. That's to the Body; fellowship and that unique design that God has made you.

Now, how do you know what that gift is? Very simple. What do you desire to do when the Spirit directs you, and what do people affirm that you do in His strength? In other words, if I say, "I have the gift of preaching," and I'm done preaching, and you all say, "No, you don't have the gift of preaching. You better go back to the list and find another deal." It's not only going to be something that you desire to do. It's going to be something that causes people to respond because it is for them. The gift is for them.

The second thing, then, is your responsibility in the world of unredeemed people, and you have singular responsibility, and that is to preach the Gospel to every creature, to go everywhere and make disciples by telling them the Gospel of Jesus Christ, bringing the Gospel to them and exposing them to the truth of Christ. You do that two ways. You do it by living it, which lays the platform down that makes your testimony believable, right; by living it, and, in every opportunity you have, expressing it. That's your obligation. That's the only reason you're here, really.

The only reason the Church has to hang around here and minister; the only reason that you have to be here in the Body is so that we can reach the unconverted. Everything else, we could do better in heaven, couldn't we? You say, "Well, I thought we were here, you know, to serve the Lord." Well, but our service is all bound up with sin, and it's not what it ought to be. "Well," you say, "We're here to praise the Lord." Yeah, but our praise is imperfect.

"Well, we're here to be delivered from sin." Yeah, but sin is still a problem. Everything in Christian experience is better in heaven except one thing, and that's evangelism. You can't do that there. So that's why we're here. And the Lord endures all the difficulties in our life as believers in order that we might accomplish the one thing necessary, and that's to live a changed life so the Gospel becomes believable, and then to speak it clearly to everyone with whom we have an opportunity. Okay? Good question.

QUESTIONER: Hi, John. I'm Joanne.

JOHN: Hi, Joanne.

QUESTIONER: Hi. On Mother's Day, it just occurs to me that myself and a lot of friends I have share an unusual; well, maybe a usual situation. I grew up in a very difficult household, violent, and I'm wondering what is the proper response to Mother's Day if you had a very difficult relationship with your mother?

JOHN: Well, I think that's a very good question; certainly a very appropriate one. You know, to borrow a biblical phrase, "Heap coals of fire on their head;" I think the appropriate thing is to treat people with love. I think love your enemies. I mean, I'm sure you would, certainly in the broad sense, not want to classify your mother as your enemy, but that's the way it worked out, right? But what do you do? You love your enemy, and when you love your enemy, you show that you're the children of God because God loves his enemies. That's us, and he saved us. If God can love his enemies when God is perfectly Holy, we who are less than Holy certainly should be able to love our enemies, who are more like us than we are like God, and God loves us.

So I think that's just a perfect illustration of how you can love your enemies, and I think that's what makes the Gospel so believable. You know, that is one of the tragedies of our day; that if you've been an abused child, you're supposed to go back and make sure you hack your parents up every time you get an opportunity. That's what psychologists tell us. Make sure you pour out your venom on them so they know what they've done to you, and that is the opposite of what you need to do.

First of all, it further destroys that relationship, and, secondly, it destroys you because you're carrying around all this hatred and animosity that's so self-destructive, so I think what you need to do is just love them and manifest that love toward them, no matter how much you sense that alienation, and I know that's hard to do, but you reach out in love to them, and I think it helps to know that unbelievers are supposed to act like unbelievers, and so don't be surprised if they do, but just love them in spite of that, and let Christ shine through in that love to them.

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

QUESTIONER: So let me just tell you, before, with one of the barriers with the church is theological differences. The reason I've been struggling with these, the topic of predestination, and looking in Romans 9 in your study book, actually, specifically, 15 talks about God is absolutely sovereign and does elect to be saved without violating these other actions, and then going back to John 6:44; again, the footnote, how Jesus referred to, "Cannot be reduced by Theologians call, prevenient grace; that somehow, the power to come to Christ is allegedly dispensed to all of mankind." So how do you address that as far as Christian and non-Christians who remain to say if there is predestination, why bother witnessing or anything, and also Christians who would disagree with that and say that it's open to all?

JOHN: Well, we never can have a question-and-answer session without the question of predestination, so I just want you to know, you are the anointed tonight. You are the chosen and the elect, which proves the point, right? Because our God always ordains somebody to ask that question, and I always want to. . .so, for you who have heard me answer many times; look, the Bible teaches predestination chosen to him before the foundation of the world. Elect: Recall the elect repeatedly. "No man comes onto Me except the Father draws him." That is all over the Scripture, and it was written in the last Book of Life and before the foundation of the world. God say, "Go preach in that city because I have many people in that city." Well, they weren't even converted people there, but He knew who they were. Their names were already ordained.

The Bible teaches election. There is no way around it. You literally have to ignore the teaching of Scripture. It is everywhere in the Bible, and so we preach it and we believe it. At the same time, the Bible teaches human responsibility. It teaches that every sinner is responsible for believing or not believing, okay? "Whosoever will come; him that comes to me, I'll never turn away," Jesus says in John 6. And when the whole Bible ends; I mean, when you come to the end of the Bible, you come to the very last part of God's revelation, and it says, "The Spirit and the bride say come, but him who hears come, but him who thirsts come, whoever desires; let him take the water of life really." That's how the Bible ends. You want to come, come.

If you don't come, you perish, and you'll be responsible, not God. Now, the question is how those two go together, and the answer is I don't have any idea. I mean, I understand that when anybody is converted, it is purely and simply because of the Power of God that awakened the dead and granted faith and life. At the same time, the Bible says that the sinner is completely responsible for rejecting the Gospel, and people perish because they refuse to believe. Nobody's sent to hell because they weren't chosen. They're sent to hell because they wouldn't believe. Jesus says, "You'll die in your sins" in John 7, "and where I go, you'll never come because you believe not on Me." That's always the issue.

Faith saves and unbelief damns. That is always the issue. You know, if I can't resolve that, that is not a major problem. That is not of any consequence because I have a very small brain, and the fact that I can't completely understand something as vast as the mind of God is really trivial. Can you understand that?

QUESTIONER: I understand, but which side of the fence do you stand on that with?

JOHN: Both.

QUESTIONER: Okay. You answered my question.

JOHN: There's no fence. Both are true.

QUESTIONER: Okay.

JOHN: This is not a fence. There's not two doctrines. You take one or the other. You take both; they're both in the Scriptures. In the end, when anybody's saved, they give all the credit to God. When anybody goes to hell, they get all the blame. Now, how God resolves that in the perfections of His infinite mind is not a problem for Him if it's only a problem for my pea brain, and it is one of the reasons why I believe the Bible was written by God because I know editors. They would fix that, but nobody fixed it.

Now, just since you see that as a problem, let me help solve your problem by giving you more problems. Follow this. Simple question: You just read from Romans. Who wrote it?

QUESTIONER: Paul.

JOHN: Paul. You see you have a problem, don't you? If you say Paul, that's not really a complete answer. Was it Paul's vocabulary, Paul's words, Paul's mind, Paul's heart? Absolutely, but every word was inspired by whom? God. How do you resolve that? How can that be?

Let me ask you another question. Is Jesus man or God? Well, he's man. Well, he's 100 percent man; he's 100 percent God; you can't be 200 percent of anything. That's not possible, but that's the way it is. I'll ask you one that you should be dealing with on a regular basis. Who lives your Christian life?

QUESTIONER: I do.

JOHN: You do? Really? So when you do what's righteous, it's you?

QUESTIONER: No, of course.

JOHN: It's not you. See, you have the same problem no matter where you go because you're in the horns of the divine dilemma. Paul, if you ask Paul who lives your Christian life, he would say this: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet not I." The truth is he didn't know either.

QUESTIONER: Okay.

JOHN: As great a mind as Paul had, there's no way to grasp the infinity of the mind of God, and so John Murray, the great Theologian, is right when he says in every major doctrine in the Bible, there is an apparent paradox that can't be resolved in the human mind. Leave them alone. They're evidence. This is a Divine Book, and God is greater than we are. If we could understand everything about God,

we'd be equal to God, and that would be a tragedy of tragedies.

QUESTIONER: Of course. I understand. I'm just saying something mysterious is if people are predestined not to have salvation. . .

JOHN: Nobody is predestined. They are only predestined to salvation. If they perish, they perish by their own unbelief.'

QUESTIONER: Okay.

JOHN: But that doesn't. . .you know, making those kind of word distinctions doesn't solve the problem in the end. The problem in the end is still unsolvable to the human mind because you have accountability to those who don't believe, and you have completely the Work of God for those who do, and that's impossible for us to understand. Someday, I think we'll understand it when we see Him.

QUESTIONER: Okay, thank you.

JOHN: In the meantime, don't come up with something in the middle that destroys both of those. Leave them there. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Of course, thank you.

QUESTIONER: Hello, Pastor. It's Jimbo. I want to tell you I love you, and I believe we all love you, and we bless God, and we thank you for your hard work in the Word of God and the communication to us.

Since man was made in the Image of God, in order that God may communicate and reflect His infinite knowledge, His infinite holiness and His infinite joy to glorify Himself, would you think it would be an accurate statement in saying the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever?

JOHN: Absolutely. That is absolutely accurate. That, of course, is the first line of the Great Catechism; that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever; sums up what we'll do forever, and it's what we're attempting to do here. We don't glorify Him like we should down here, and we don't even enjoy Him like we should down here because we fiddle around with sin, and; therefore, we short-circuit the joy we'd have if we were devoted to Him.

But that is our eternal purpose, and that will be what we spend all eternity doing.

QUESTIONER: Amen, thank you, sir.

JOHN: Amen. That's probably a good place to stop, but maybe we can do this quickly. I don't want to keep you. In, maybe, another five minutes; can we quickly do it?

QUESTIONER: If Jesus is God and man, and man has a choice, then how come Jesus couldn't sin?

JOHN: Jesus could not sin because his humanity was under the control of his deity, okay?

QUESTIONER: Okay.

JOHN: I mean, that is. . .that's a good question. The answer is if Jesus were just a man, just a perfect man, like Adam was just a perfect man; then Jesus would have been susceptible to doing exactly what Adam did. Adam was a man. He was a perfect man. He was a sinless man, and when he was tempted, he sinned. Jesus was a perfect man. Jesus was a sinless man, but his humanity was under the complete control of his Divine nature; therefore, there was no capacity for that humanity to step out from that control.

QUESTIONER: Hi. I was wondering what the biblical principles are regarding school debt, especially as a girl? I'll be graduating with an undergraduate degree in June and have the opportunity to go to grad school, but I will probably go into debt in the process. Is this a wise route?

JOHN: Sure. I don't think there's any problem there at all. I think debt is something that the Bible affirms as a reality in life. Jesus said. . .do you remember there's a parable in Matthew 25 about a servant, and the Master gave him some talents, which is equal to money, and he went away, and he came back, and the guy had buried him in the ground? Remember that? And the Master condemns him for that, and he says, "You should have put it in the bank and earned interest?"

That's really one of the few investment statements that Jesus ever made, maybe the only one. He said, "You should have put it in the bank and earned interest." Now, Jesus knew this. If you put your money in the bank and it earns interest, guess what? The bank is giving it to somebody else and charging interest to pay you. Do you understand that? So Jesus affirmed that borrowing money was a fact of life and that you could buy wise investment, earn money. Also, that affirms that if somebody needed money; could get that money, being charged an interest rate, and that's not. . .isn't anything wrong with that. That's simply buying money. You buy food; you buy a car; you buy a house; you buy money because you believe that if you had the money to do something, you could provide better for your family, and you could pay the money back. That kind of economics is perfectly fine, so what you're doing is saying I would have to borrow money to get an education that, in the end, would allow me to make a good living, pay back the debt, and then have a career in a certain area. I think that's a very reasonable approach to borrowing.

I think what you never want to do is borrow money for whimsical things. Borrow money for things that are emotionally attractive for you. Borrow money to put you in a debt situation that you can't pay back, but to borrow money for something like a home or something that has appreciate value, to borrow money for a career, which certainly has an appreciating value; an education is a very wise stewardship, as long as you have the capability to pay it back. Okay?

QUESTIONER: My name's _____, and just in regards to what you shared about with Benny Hin this morning; this kind of hits home a little bit. What is a righteous reaction to people like Benny Hin, because I have some friends in Illinois, who I counseled not to recently; she's been having back problems, and she's been going to the doctor. Nothing's been working. She wanted to go to Benny Hin, and I had to go through some Scriptures with her on why his ministry is wrong, and when you look at Christ and His righteous reaction to the moneychangers in the Temple; you know, He made astrantic accords and He beat these guys up, and if I see Benny Hin walking down the street, so do you put this guy in a Holy Ghost headlock or what do you do? I mean, what is a righteous reaction to people like that?

JOHN: Righteous reaction is to ask God to deal with him. A righteous reaction is to do what David did. David didn't go out and put his enemies in a Holy headlock. He just prayed the imprecatory Psalms down on their head. I think the thing to do is. . .I think, people, this is a matter that we need to really turn into prayer. I think we need to pray that God will stop this travesty that is giving the world a false view of Christianity, and it is moneychangers in the Temple. It is. These people are getting rich, filthy rich, at the expense of the weak and the suffering people that they take advantage of.

And the appropriate reaction is righteous indignation. The appropriate reaction, in the heart, is righteous outrage, but the appropriate action is to pray that. . .you see, it's all through the Psalms that God would put an end to His enemies; that God would glorify His name and vindicate His name and that God would exalt the truth, and I think that's what we need, to pray. I don't think there's anything wrong with praying that. You, first of all, would pray for the salvation of people like that if there's any hope, but then, you would pray that God would silence those who dishonor His name. I think that's a very legitimate thing to pray.

When are people going to wake up? It's just a sad, sad thing, and you think about all the people who are within the framework of the church. I don't want to think their Christians. I think so many people in those movements aren't Christians. They're just "sort of Jesus people," but not really Christians. They don't even understand the Gospel, but then you think about the people in the world who look at that and think that's Christianity, so I think the right thing to do is to remember that "Vengeance is mine. I will repent," says the Lord, "and take no personal vengeance yourself." That's not for us to do, from my standpoint. All that I've ever asked the Lord to do in my own prayers is silence them. "I don't know what else to say, Lord. I just wish You'd silence these people who bring such dishonor and reproach upon Your name." I wonder how the Lord can tolerate it.

Well, He's much more gracious than I would be, so I have to leave those things to Him. Okay?

QUESTIONER: This is your friend, Randy Horton, as you know, and he's really excited to give you the opportunity to give you the opportunity to give your final answer tonight, so if you'll listen carefully, you'll hear Randy speak in a really unique way.

JOHN: Okay.

RANDY HORTON: We come here to get feeding from you. Where do you getting your feeding?

QUESTIONER: Did you get that?

JOHN: Yes, I got it. Thank you, Randy. Randy's a good friend, and his wife, and he is one of the great voices in the world too, Randy does, through that box. He sounds exactly like Stephen Hawking, the Cambridge professor, who has that same little voice box. Where do I get my feeding?

I tell you, I read books, and I read the Scripture, and I read commentaries. In fact, it's rare that I'm not reading something all the time, constantly. My mind. . .I've always had a mind that has an appetite. It's very hard for me to just stare into space. I just need to be absorbing something, so I think it comes from reading. I really love to read; read books, read magazines, read articles. You know, when you're in the ministry, Randy, there's a certain level of desperation.

Every Sunday, you got to have something to say, so we're in a constant state of desperation because Sunday's coming, and you're all here, and you're expecting something. So I'm just compelled to be reading all the time, and it's amazing what I pick up, bits and pieces, and then I read. . .probably for a sermon like Sunday; this morning, I would probably have read maybe 15 to 20 commentaries on that passage; maybe several books of theology.

I read a book called *The Glories of Christ* by Peter Lewis. I read another book by Craig Glickman on the *Temptation of Christ*. I read an article in an anthology of articles on the life of Christ by Roy Zook, which deals specifically with the temptation of Christ. I read a number of other sources on the temptation of Christ, specifically. I read some geography stuff on the area called the wilderness, so you just absorb and absorb, and what you get is kind of the spillover. You get about a tenth of what I put in the computer, this computer between my ears, and because I preach every week, Randy, I need to eat every week. I need to feed every week, and that's one of the great things that God has given to me. The necessity to preach provides the necessity to study, and so I have a forced spiritual development plan. You force it on me, all of you, so that I can feed you, and I praise God for that. I really do. Thank you.

Let's have a word of prayer, and we'll let you go, and perhaps the Lord will use you greatly this week.

"Father, how grateful we are for the fact that the entrance of Your Word gives light that our questions can be answered. Thank you for these precious people and for the obvious love, the truth. Use them, Lord. Bless them. Make them people of the Word. Fill the hunger of their hearts with the truth. Lord, we pray that You'll raise up teachers of the truth and that You'll silence those who teach error, those who lead people astray. Father, how we pray that You would raise up through the college and seminary and other good, sound institutions, the Godly teachers of a new generation. There are so many idle talkers, so many deceivers, as Paul said, 'whose mouths be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not for the sake of dishonest gain,' and all we do, Lord, is pray that You would silence these people and raise up a generation of people who teach the truth and make us lovers of the truth. May we not only love it, understand it, know it and teach it, but live it. Thank you for a wonderful day You've given us. Now, bless our fellowship. In Jesus' name, Amen."

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