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

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 47
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 70-19

Well, just a bit of a preface before we begin tonight: It was many years ago when I was studying the Book of Acts that I became aware of the fact that the Apostle Paul dialogued with people in the meetings that he had. The New Testament says he reasoned with them out of the Scripture, but it uses the word dialego, from which we get dialogue.

And there was the common expression on the part of Paul of the Gospel and the truth, and that engaged him in a dialogue, and in that dialogue, there was an interchange with the people as they asked the questions that were on their hearts, and we're going to do that tonight.

And I'm going to make a little bit of a rule as we begin tonight, and I'm going to ask that the questions initially be asked by folks who've never asked a question before because I want to make sure that if you haven't asked one in the past, you sort of get a first shot at me, and after we've kind of gone through the folks who have never asked a question in a question-and-answer time, we'll then, if we still have time; we'll let some of the other folks ask questions.

Now, there are microphones in the main aisles here in the center, and there are some of our pastors nearby. I think Jerry is going to be over here on my right, your left, and Bill Shannon is in the middle and Rick Holland, so you will only need to step up behind a microphone, and they will kind of ask you what your question is, and we'll go from there. Give me your name before you ask your question so I can know who I'm talking to. Jerry, we'll begin with you.

QUESTIONER: My name is Kimberly. I have a rather interesting question. This came across my mind during the Thanksgiving service on Wednesday. What would you say to encourage those who would want to take communion, but for medical reasons, could not; that they felt discouraged because they couldn't do so?

JERRY: Well, I would say they need somebody to help them to do that. For medical reasons, you mean?

QUESTIONER: No, what I mean is it would not be healthy for them to do so, so how would you encourage them in such a way that. . .because, medically, it would be a danger to their health; like say if somebody had needed to be fed intravenously because they couldn't swallow or for other reasons. In what way would you encourage them as to encourage them that it's not a negative thing

to not do it if you can't.

JERRY: Oh, that's a good question, and I don't think I've ever been asked that question, but I understand that. Let me give you a parallel question, Kimberly. Thank you. And that would be the question that comes to. . .and I've faced this question a number of times, and it sort of broadens the picture a little bit. There have been people who have come to Christ in a very severe and final illness, maybe days, maybe hours, maybe just a few weeks from death that are, in no way, capable of being baptized.

They miss that ordinance, and yet, certainly, God knows the spirit of obedience and the heart of obedience, and I would just say that the desire in the heart to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, the desire in the heart to exalt the cross and exalt the Savior on the cross; certainly, God counts as the act, where the act is impossible. You understand that.

If a person cannot do because it is impossible for them to do what they would otherwise do, that the Lord does understand. If a person doesn't have the capacity to swallow; obviously, they can't eat the bread, and they can't drink the cup. I don't think we need to somehow reduce it to an IV drip. I don't think that's required.

I think the heart attitude counts for the act because it's the heart that God looks at anyway. I remember a dear old lady in her 90s that I had the privilege of being with when she embraced Christ in the hospital.

She was in her 90s, and another lady had encouraged me to go there, and I gave her the Gospel, and she responded to the Gospel and she repented, and after we talked a little bit about that, she said to me; she said, "I wish that I could be baptized. I really wish that I could be baptized."

Well, she was in the throws of death already and didn't live very long after that. It was an impossibility to immerse her, but I'm quite confident that the intent of her heart was sufficient to indicate to God the spirit of obedience that was there, and because of physical compunctions, it was unable to be fulfilled, but God looks at the heart in a matter like that.

Where we have the capability to do what God has asked us to do, we do it. Where we don't have the capability, the intent of the heart is sufficient to satisfy him, I'm quite confident. Thank you, Kimberly. Ron.

QUESTIONER: First, thanks for being my friend and being a riveting pastor.

JOHN: Thank you.

QUESTIONER: His Third Commandment, "Don't take the Lord's name in vain," so if a person is an actor and he's going to play a part in a movie and he's going to take the Lord's name in vain, should he not take the part, or if he takes the part, is he going to answer to God?

JOHN: Well, I think the Bible is pretty clear. It says, "Don't take the Lord's name in vain," and that doesn't somehow get set aside if you're playing a role. I think that as far as the audience is concerned, the Lord's name has been taken in vain. For me, I would have a difficult time doing that.

Somebody would say, "Well, now wait a minute. The people in the world take the Lord's name in vain, and you're simply playing a part of someone in the world that takes the Lord's name in vain." My answer to that would be you're still taking the Lord's name in vain.

And in the end, I wouldn't want to take the Lord's name in vain; certainly, I wouldn't do it myself, and I wouldn't want to pretend that I was doing it because I was playing a role. I think if. . .and this is a very difficult thing; I mean, through the years, we've dealt with a lot of people who are involved in acting, and they come up against this kind of thing, not just in that sense of taking the Lord's name in vain, but in playing roles where behavior is dishonoring to the Lord, and that is a very great challenge.

It's very difficult for a committed Christian, who wants to honor God to find the kinds of parts where they actually are either neutral or honoring to God. That's a great challenge, but I don't think that because I'm playing a role, I have liberty to dishonor God, even through the person whose personality I'm only portraying. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Thanks.

QUESTIONER: Hello, I'm Andy. I have someone who's close to me who lives out of state, and he's a profession believer, but I fear his faith is a dead faith given the lack of fruits in his life, and he does not currently attend church, although I've encouraged him to go.

The last thing I want to do is point him to a church that might lead him to conclude falsely that he's delivered and he's really not. I was wondering if you could share some of your wisdom on this.

JOHN: Yes, I think it's very good, and this is a very pertinent question. He's saying, "I have a friend who thinks he's a Christian, but I don't think he is. I want to send him to a church, but I don't want to send him to a church so it'll reinforce him as a Christian when he isn't." That's not helpful.

You cannot make him a victim of any church, so what you have to do is you have to get him to understand the criteria. You can't make him depend on the church, and that's one of the reasons why when we preach series like the series on deliverance; we put it on tape.

You could say to the guy, "Boy, I don't want to send you to the wrong place, so let me run around and try to find the right place." That's not really helping him. What you have to do is teach him the right criteria so he can make that judgment, so your responsibility is to find whatever material is necessary to bring him to a proper understanding of his condition and of the truth about salvation so that he is going to be able to make that judgment.

It's like your children. If all you ever do with your children is tell them what to avoid, you haven't prepared them for anything because when you're not there, they're not going to have the criteria to be able to make a choice that's right, so instead of telling your friend what to avoid or instead of protecting your friend from error, your friend needs to be taught the truth so that he then becomes the source of his own protection, okay?

And so take that series on deliverance and send it to him. All right? And make him take notes and write the notes down and send them back to you so you know he gets it.

QUESTIONER: Okay.

QUESTIONER: Good evening, John. My name is Mike.

JOHN: Hi, Mike.

QUESTIONER: In 2 Samuel, Chapter 24, Verses 1 and thereafter, about 5 or 6, it would almost seem as though God is prompting David to sin with respect to the taking of an inventory of his army and his troops, and, of course, in the footnote, in the NIV, it says that God did not create a cause for him to sin, which is true.

Everybody has free will, but if it was to reveal his sinful nature; if. . .I'm assuming, if that be the case, would it not have come about regardless of whether God prompted him with the quote, where it says, "Go and take a census of Israel and Judah," and yet that's clearly contrary. Because of pride, it almost seems as those He's prompting to do such, if I haven't muddied the water by that question.

JOHN: Well, no, and this is a question that has been asked and comes up very often. The bigger context, okay, has to be an understanding that God is "of purer eyes," Habakkuk 1, "than to behold evil, cannot look upon iniquity." Further, that God is Holy, Holy, Holy." Further, 1 James, "God tempts no man." Okay? And that's explicit, so the larger context is to understand that God doesn't tempt people.

Now, the answer to your question comes, and you're talking about 2 Samuel 24, "The anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel," and He moved David against him to say, "Go in number to Israel and Judah," but there is a comparative passage. Did you note 1 Chronicles 21 one; 1 Chronicles 21

one records the same account with these words:

"Now Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel." So in Samuel, you have the Lord aroused against Israel, and it appears as though He moves David, but in 1 Chronicles 21, the Holy Spirit has inspired the writer to tell us that it was only God who sovereignly permitted this to happen, but it was actually Satan who did the inciting.

That is consistent with the bigger picture. The bigger picture is that God must allow sinful things because if he didn't allow them, none of them would happen, right, so God, for his own purposes, allows things.

In the little note that I wrote in the study Bible, 2 Samuel 24:1 reports that is was God who moved David. This apparent discrepancy is resolved by understanding that God sovereignly and permissively uses Satan to activate or achieve His purposes. God uses Satan, and I give a whole lot of different ways David's census brought tragedy, and that tragedy, in effect, was the judgment of God.

So God sovereignly comes to a point where he is prepared to judge Israel. He allows Satan to incite the action on the part of David that brings about that judgment, so I think you have to compare 1 Samuel 21 and the bigger picture that God does not tempt; that God does not incite people to do evil. That would be against His holy nature, but within the bigger picture, God allows Satan, as He did in the case of Job, to affect certain purposes, which, for His own glory, achieve his purposes. Okay? Good question. Yes?

QUESTIONER: My name is Angel Taylor, and I have a question. If everything happens in the will of God, then why do people say when you're doing something wrong, "Oh, that's not in the will of God. That's not the will for your life if everything is in God's will?"

JOHN: Okay, that's a good question, Angel. That's a great name, by the way, Angel.

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

JOHN: The answer to the question is that you have to distinguish between God's will in the sense of what He permits, and God's will, in the sense of what He desires, and God's will in the sense of what He loves or what is a reflection of His pure, holy will.

In other words, let's go through those three. There is that big, large category of things that are the will of God, only in the sense that He permits them. We just talked about one, where God, for his own purposes, allows Satan to cause David to number Israel or God allows Satan to tempt Eve in the garden or God allows Satan to tempt Christ or God allows Satan to tempt us.

There are calamities that are the result of sin and fallenness. There is even eternal hell. In the big scheme of things, God wills in the general sense that those things happen, but only in the sense of allowing them. He gives a certain latitude, a certain space, a certain freedom to mankind to function within his fallenness, and He wills that sinners have the liberty to express their sin and also wills that, in the end, they will be judged.

That is His broad will. Secondly, there is a narrower sense, in which God permits certain things that don't reflect his righteous nature, but they achieve his righteous purpose, and we just had an illustration of that. God allows or permits specifically Satan to cause a numbering in Israel that produces the need to judge or the occasion to judge which God had already planned to do.

So there are things in a narrower sense which, though they are sinful in themselves and do not express His righteous will; He uses for His own ends. For example, God allows believers to be persecuted. You could ask is it God's will that the church be persecuted? Is it God's will that Christians be martyred? Is it God's will that the apostles be killed? Is it God's will that Paul have his head cut off and Peter be crucified upside down? Is it God's will that missionaries be boiled in a pot and eaten by cannibals? Is it God's will that they be massacred, etc., etc.?

Well, in a sense, more than just the general sense that God tolerates evil, there is the secondary sense that God permits certain things, sinful things to happen to his people because they perfect their faith, because they strengthen the church, because they allow the believer to be stronger and more effective, and the great illustration of that, of course, is Peter in 22 Luke.

Jesus says to Peter, "Satan desires to have you that he might sift you like wheat," and if you're Peter, you're going to say; well, you told him no, right? You told him he couldn't have me, and the Lord says, "No, I told him yes" because after he sifted you, you will be able to strengthen the brethren. In other words, there will be an impact in your life. You'll be stronger spiritually because of what you've suffered through this defection and this denial.

And I'm going to let Satan do this to you because I know the end result is going to be great strength, and it was in the case of Peter. The same is true of Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, where Paul has a thorn in the flesh, an angel from Satan, a demon, and this demon is tearing up the Corinthian church, and Paul says, "This is greatly disturbing," so three times you praise the Lord would remove that demon. The Lord would stop that disaster going on in the Corinthian church, and the Lord never does it because the Lord says, "It's in your weakness and it's in your humbling that you become strong."

So there is a category where God allows sinful things to happen to his people because there's a strengthening and there's a deepening, and there's an elevating of their spiritual capacities by that.

And then, thirdly, there is that will of God which is the perfect and precise reflection of His holy character, and that is always righteous and holy and good, so it is too general to say everything is God's will if you mean by that, everything is a direct expression of His holy nature. It isn't, and there are many things that He allows in the broad sense of allowing sinners to sin.

There are some things that he allows in the life of a believer that, in themselves, are sinful, but produce righteous ends, and then there is that specific expression of his will, which, in fact, is righteousness itself, and when the Bible talks about doing the will of God from the heart to believers, what it means is he wants you to behave in a manner that is consistent with his own righteous nature. That is, He wants you to do what is holy and righteous. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Okay, thank you.

JOHN: Good question, Angel.

QUESTIONER: Hi, John. My name's Jim. Can you talk a little bit about Arminian theology? Is it biblical, and if a church embraces that theology, are they saved?

JOHN: Yes, are you talking about Arminian theology? We always want to make the distinction between Armenians and Arminians. Arminians, or people that are Arminian, is a theology from Arminius. Let me just say this. This debate comes up all the time, and I like to answer the thing by saying I really don't land necessarily labels very comfortably, and you can be called a Calvinist or a hyper-Calvinist or a four-point Calvinist or I've been called a four-and-a-half-point Calvinist.

One guy called me a one-point Calvinist. I don't know how he came up with that, and people can be labeled Armenian. I think it's. . .I understand what they mean by that, but I personally try to resist those labels because those labels are alerted with different content for different people, and people love to slap a label on you, and then everybody defines that label in a different way.

So I really run from those labels. At the same time, to put it simply, the debate of Calvinism and Armenian falls along five simple lines that we all know about called TULIP, total depravity, unlimited, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints; TULIP, T-U-L-I-P.

John Calvin rightly interpreted the Bible to teach that man is totally depraved. What that means is not that every human being is as sinful as he could be or she could be, but that every human being is sinful to the point that they're incapable of altering their condition. That is to say total depravity means you can't do anything to save yourself. You can't even make a right choice. You can't awaken your spiritual deadness. You can't give life where there is life. You can't come to a right

conclusion on your own.

Total depravity means that everyone is, by virtue of their own will and their own power and their own choices, incapable of redemption. That's total depravity. Arminius would say Arminian theology, Palagian theology, as it's also called, would say man is capable; that while man is, in the general sense, a sinner, he has capacities within himself to choose to be saved. That is the debate.

I don't think that's Biblical. I think we are dead in trespasses and sin, and dead people don't make choices. Dead people can't make themselves alive, so I think there is a clear distinction there.

In the case of unconditional election, you have the view in the Scripture that people who are saved are saved because they were chosen by God apart from any merit of their own, apart from any condition, whereas, typically, the person who holds Arminian theology would say that we are saved by acts of our own will. We have still the power to save, to believe on our own, and; therefore, when we choose to believe, we become elect. It isn't something that God determined in eternity past. It's something that occurs sort of de facto or ipso facto, after the fact.

And then you have limited atonement in the typical reformed view; means that the atonement, in its actual work, the actual efficacy of the atonement, was only for the elect. That is, it's limited to those who believe and were chosen by God, whereas the Arminian side of it would say that everybody's sins have been paid for all across the world, whether people believe it or not, so that, in the end, Jesus paid the penalty for the sins of people who don't believe. That's a problem because if your sins are paid for already by Jesus and you go to hell, then that's double jeopardy.

And then you have irresistible grace, which is the idea that when the spirit of God works on the heart of a sinner, the sinner can't resist. Arminian theology would say the sinner can resist, and perseverance of the saints, the last in the five points, is the idea that if you're saved, you're going to persevere to glory. Arminian theology says you might not. You could lose your salvation along the way.

So they are diametrically opposed. The question comes, "Can somebody who holds an Arminian view be a Christian?" And I would hate to say they couldn't be. I really believe that it is possible to be Arminian and to be a Christian, to misunderstand your human capability, to misunderstand the election, to misunderstand the extent of the atonement, even to misunderstand the irresistible nature of God's saving grace, and even to think you could lose your salvation.

But at the same time, while being confused or ignorant about those things, to know that you're a sinner and know that the only way of salvation is through Jesus Christ. I guess you could say that someone could be an Arminian and push those points far enough, where they could jeopardize my confidence that they really are a Christian.

You could push the point of not being totally depraved far enough where you're actually being saved by your own works, by your own belief, by your own ingenuity, by your own self-induced faith, and you could get to the point where you could really wonder whether someone understands that it's all a work of God.

But I think it would be going too far to say someone who holds an Arminian view or anyone who holds an Arminian view is by virtue of that view, not a Christian. I think there are people who just don't understand rightly those things, but who know they're sinners and who cry out in their sin for the Lord to save them. They don't understand how what they're doing works together with the great purposes and power of God, and, consequently, can't give God fully the glory He deserves for all of that, but they could be genuinely saved by hoping in Christ and Christ alone.

QUESTIONER: Even if they are teachers of churches who teach that, why wouldn't they understand if they're so scholars, as well they say?

JOHN: Well, they don't understand. There are a number of reasons why people get it wrong. One is they are in a tradition where people have had it wrong for a long time, and so they just. . .that's the way they grew up; that's the tradition they're in, and that's what they understand.

In other words, there is a predigested, passed-down system. Let me tell you, Arminian people can make an argument. They can make the case. They've been making the case for centuries for their viewpoint.

I remember one of the exercises that I had to do when I was a seminary student. In fact, I did it on my own. I don't think it was an assignment, but I did it. It was to read Shank's book on Life in the Son, which is, I think, the best concise argument for the Arminian position, and it is a very carefully thought-out, systematic argument.

I also studied the theology of Arminians, Wiley and Miley; systematic theologies written by these men, and they can systematize their viewpoint, and once that viewpoint is systematized at some point in history and passed down and passed down and refined and refined and refined, they have a scholastic system.

I mean, essentially, Roman Catholicism is Arminian, and it's a pretty sophisticated system that can rise to pretty high levels of scholasticism, so it isn't that they're not scholars. It's that they tend to be in a mold or in a rut, I guess you could say, that traditionally gets passed down.

I also think a second reason why people get it wrong, and this is true for anything, is because they don't do the really hard work of studying the Word of God, and you have to drop your presuppositions

at some point.

Now, one of the benefits that I had is I was. . .I grew up in an environment where my dad was the preacher, and it was basically a Baptist kind of environment, and what I learned growing up was sort of a middle ground, but in my upbringing, we didn't like the Calvinists, and we didn't like the Arminians. We sort of had that Baptist middle ground, and that's probably what a lot of you. . .you grew up in the same kind of environment. You didn't talk about predestination or election.

That was kind of a frightening thing, and that was for dead Presbyterians, and there were only about 30 of them in the whole city of Los Angeles at the time, and they were over in a room somewhere, contemplating their naval and reading John Calvin. It was kind of introspective, and they were thrilled with their theology, but they were a small little group, and we weren't into that.

I went away to college, and, essentially, I went to two colleges, the roots of which were both Methodist, so they were steeped in Arminian theology. One was sort of a revivalist environment, and the other was a more traditional Wesleyan environment, where we read Wiley and Miley and all of that, and we had to imbibe all of this Arminian theology.

I got out of that. I went to a seminary that had Presbyterian influences, and so I went from Arminian kind of side to the reformed side, and there I was in the middle of this mix, and I just decided I'd go to the Bible and find out what the Bible said, and I think, in a sense, all of that experience sort of canceled each other out, which was good for me, and I went back to the Word of God, and in the Word of God, without all the presuppositions cast in stone, I was able to let the Bible speak, and through the years, the Bible, I believe, speaks very clearly about what the truth is.

But I think if people could divest themselves of their presuppositions and if they could be willing to eat a little humble pie and say, "It's possible that I might be wrong," and take another hard look at the Word of God, they would come to the right answers.

It's a very simple point to make, and it is this. If two people take two opposing views of something, they cannot both be right. Somebody is wrong, and it's not us, right? Thank you; both of you, for that hearty applause. Well, I mean, I don't say that in a proud way. I just believe that we are where we are because we believe this is true. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Good evening, Pastor John. My name is Wayne Gibbs, and I have a question about worshiping and fellowshipping with a so-called or professing believer, but who is in sin, a hardened sin of a grievous nature. You come alongside them to confront them, and there is no repentance.

They go to another church, and that church does not practice Matthew 18, and so you have a situation where the four steps of Matthew 18 are not applied by their church. They want to go to

conferences with you, perhaps pray with you, have fellowship with you, and yet you're reluctant to do that because of their lack of repentance.

JOHN: Well, and I think you should be reluctant to do that. I think. . .I think that's the whole point of putting someone out of the church's fellowship. I don't think that means you can't come in the building. I mean, I think it means you're disconnected from the people who are the church, and I think that that's exactly the intent of Scripture, when we are instructed that we have to separate from these people in the fullest sense.

We. . .I think anybody who walks disorderly. . .I was just looking at the end of 2 Thessalonians. . ."who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which you receive from us, for you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you. We didn't eat anyone's bread free of charge, work with labor" and so forth and so forth and so forth.

If anyone doesn't work, then he shouldn't eat, and if there's somebody walking disorderly, not working at all; they're busy bodies, and He says these are the people who affect the fellowship, and He says in Verse 14, "If anybody doesn't obey this word in our epistle". . .note the person. . ."do not keep company with him." That's Verse 14.

Why? That he may be ashamed. In other words, you want to heap the real shame on him that he deserves. You don't count him as an enemy. Don't consider him an enemy, but admonish him as a brother, and how would you admonish a brother? Get it together, confess, repent. It's your life right, but do not keep company. That's as explicit as it can be.

QUESTIONER: Even without the application of the four steps of Matthew 18?

JOHN: Oh, sure. Yeah, because that's going to be very difficult. I mean, how many churches are doing that? I mean, where is that going on?

QUESTIONER: Right.

JOHN: I think regardless of that. . .and there are those sort of free-willing Christians that don't ever attach to any church. I always worry about people like that. Even people who come here; when I see people's attendance at the church becomes sporadic or fragmented and inconsistent, I only make one conclusion: Sin. Sin, because that's what keeps people away.

They don't want the exposure; they don't want the accountability; they don't want to sit under the conviction of the teaching of the Word of God; they don't want to have to answer to the people. In fact, it kind of works this way. You take it if it applies and if it doesn't. You watch some people in the front of the church; then a little later, during the middle of the church, and finally, they're in the back of

the church.

Now, when that. . .there are others who are in the back and are moving toward the front, but what that tells me is people in the front; they're here because they love to be here, and they're here all the time. As soon as they don't want to be here all the time, they don't sit in the front anymore or people know they're not here all the time, all right? They start in the back because people don't know if they're here or not, and when you start to see people follow that kind of pattern, you know that there's an increasing difference for church and the things of the Lord, but there are just people who just. . .and you never are able, sometimes, to deal with that because they sort of move away, so when you know about it, whether the church has acted on it or not, whether you have had anything official or not; I mean, if you know about that, then I think you have to follow that instruction. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

QUESTIONER: Hi, John. My name is Mark, and my question essentially arises from your presentation of Like, Chapter 4 this morning, and as I drove home, I thought about this quite a bit, and then I got home, thought about it some more, and I'm still thinking about it.

So the question in synopsis, in the line of reasoning goes, essentially, something like this. If Christ, as you presented him this morning, heals by one of two ways in His early ministry; it's either by direct touch and divine intervention, where people are coming to Him in, essentially, a petitionatory manner and making requests of Him. He is either making a touch or someone else is making a direct petition to Him, person to person, and then He is, by word, healing some distance from where He is standing.

Knowing that Christ is completely raised from the dead; he lives forever and lives on our behalf now and has ascended to the right hand of the Father, what then, if anything, keeps Him from, either by the petition of the individual who is directly afflicted or one on his behalf, through the petition of prayer, keeps Him from essentially doing the same thing, where He supernaturally, directly and completely, even though He is not physically present?

JOHN: Yeah, that's a very good question, and I made somewhat of a reference to that this morning in the first hour, but not in the second. My wife pointed out to me that that would have been helpful if I'd have said something about it, so I'm glad you asked the question. I may comment on that next week.

There are a number of ways that I need to approach the question in order to give you a full answer. The first one is this. No one is saying that Christ cannot heal. I was talking about the gift of healing, which He exercised on earth, but for the purpose of demonstrating his Messiahship and revealing Himself to be the One who had power over the physical world, which the Messiah must have if he's going to grant to us a glorified body.

So I'm not saying He couldn't heal, but the gift of healing, which Jesus demonstrated, was unique to Him, the 70, and the apostles, and even diminishes with the apostles, as I commented on this morning. Paul met Trophimus when he was sick and left him sick, so even in Paul's case, the power to heal had diminished as his ministry went on.

So I was talking about the gift of healing; that is, somebody here has the power to heal. Jesus had it, and He gave it to those who were around him who were His representatives in order to affirm that the gospel that He was bringing and they were preaching was, in fact, from God. The gift of healing was the specific issue to deal with in the life of Jesus.

The question of whether Jesus can still or does still heal is a different question, and the answer to the question is He can do whatever He wants, but mark this, and this is very important to notice. There is no healing ministry that Jesus can do now that can prove that He is the Messiah because there is no way that even if He does heal somebody; that it is necessary to connect that with Him. He's not here.

You can say to someone, "You know, I had cancer and I prayed, and I don't have it anymore." That's your belief, but that doesn't say anything to the public at large. That doesn't say anything to people about the power of Jesus Christ because there is no natural connection between what happened to you and Jesus. He's not there. He isn't speaking, and He's not touching, and He's not visible.

So the purpose of Jesus' miracles was clearly demonstrated. It was His voice, and it was His touch connected to that healing, and it was not arguable because there were vast crowds, in most cases, who saw the touch and heard the voice, and Jesus was making that necessary link that was really not arguable. Today, somebody says they were healed. Somebody might say, "Well, your view is that God did it. My view is you were lucky."

A Christian scientist could say they were healed, and they do, without medicine, and a Mormon could say God healed them, and it might have been certain physiological things that were going on. Somebody could say they were healed by Allah. Somebody could say they were healed by praying to Buddha. Somebody could say that the witch doctor them or the Shaman healed them or whatever it is, and you might say, "Well, that's your belief,"
and somebody comes along and says, "I had an illness and God healed me."

We, as believers, might affirm that, but that does nothing to demonstrate the deity of Jesus Christ, which was the purpose of those miracles. It does nothing to unarguably enforce the authority of Scripture because there's no immediate connection. Do you see what I'm saying? So it can't achieve that purpose, so we set that whole thing aside.

Then we come back to the issue of, "Does the Lord heal believers who pray for healing?" And the answer to the question is He can do whatever he wants to do. That is not; however, a major emphasis in Scripture. In fact, if you go through the New Testament and try to find a verse that says, "Pray for people to be healed," you won't find one. It's not explicitly part of what we do as believers.

Paul prayed for the deliverance of the thorn in the flesh. Didn't get it. In James, we have a situation where "if any is sick among you," which I think has to do with being spiritually wounded, spiritually weak, but even if we grant that it's some kind of sickness, it says, "Go to the elders of the church and let them pray over you and confess your sins."

So, in that case, if we take it as a healing, it would be a healing connected to some chastening for sin. The elders of the church pray on behalf of the person; the person confesses the sin, and when the sin is dealt with, then the reason for the chastening can be set aside, but apart from the passage in James, there is no command for us or demand of us to go to God and ask for physical healings.

Can we do it? Of course, we can do it. We can cast all our care on Him in the general sense. That's part of our care. We can go before the Lord and say, "Can you glorify yourself in a physical healing or a recovery? Put your glory on display, and the Lord may choose to do that. There are times when people are restored, and when they become well when they've been ill, and the doctors can't give a natural explanation to that, but there is no guarantee, and there is no. . .let's put it this way. It is not the normal thing.

I, personally, have never seen a quadriplegic walk out of a wheelchair or a paraplegic move limbs that weren't moved. I've never seen someone completely blind who could see as a result of prayer or completely deaf who could hear as a result of prayer. I'm not saying God can't do that.

The idea that I was trying to point out this morning is that miracles are very, very rare, extremely rare, not at all to be considered as normal-course events, so I do believe that we can go to the Lord and say, "Lord, you know, I'm praying for my dear friend who's ill." The Lord may, through medicine; He may through his own power, working through the healing of that body for His own purposes, bring about restoration. You remember that Paul, when Epaphroditus was sick, he said, "Epaphroditus was near to death," but he said, "The Lord delivered him;" remember that? And the Lord spared Paul the pain that his death would have brought on Paul and, as well, allowed him further usefulness.

So I do think that, for God's purposes, providentially, not in some massive kind of flow of miracles that are all around us, but, at times, providentially, God can spare the life of a believer through medicine, through the restorative power of the body, even through His own supernatural intervention, and we have every right and every reason to ask God to do that because those are the kinds of cares that we can cast on him.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. I just know it seemed to me this morning that you were making the presentation to deal with a certain heretical, doctrinal line of thinking rather than just extrapolating from what was in the text, and I asked this question, essentially, from an ulterior motive because my girlfriend is an MD, specializing. . .she's a director of a major trauma unit here in Los Angeles.

And she tells me about times, where there are people that come in; they go through the whole ultrasound process. She does a very, very through examination before they send them off to surgery, and she says sometimes that they go back and they do a second one, and when they've shown physical symptoms of a particular disease, and she says later on, one, two days later, maybe, there will be no signs, and so she questions me about that, saying, "What essentially has happened to her?"

And I essentially give her the reasoning that one of these three things has occurred. Either, 1.) You made mistake. She doesn't like that one. Point No. 2: The person never really had it, and you essentially diagnosed something else that was correctable or whatnot, and the third one, actually, is that God did a providential action that was essentially non-dependent upon the theology or the relationship that that person has to Christ in eternity, and it's completely separate. Would you agree with that?

JOHN: Well, I think that's reasonable. The other thing would be that the typical thing of the amazing recuperative powers of the body. I think the diagnosis issue is really big. I think; you know, the medical science is very advanced, but doing the right diagnosis; I mean, you can miss the diagnosis, and then when you look for what you thought was there, it's not there. I think all of those are very right, and there's just a little sidelight on this.

I've been doing some work on a book on. . .I'm going to do a book on the origins and the beginnings and all. . .we've talked about that, and recently, I have been digging into things that are way beyond my mental capability, but I've been studying a little bit about what's called "zero-based energy." Zero-based energy is so. . .it's so beyond comprehension. Let me see if I can define it in a simple way.

If you can create a vacuum, a perfect vacuum. . .now, a perfect vacuum would be the absence of everything but space, okay? You have space with nothing in it. In other words, that would be a vacuum. There's nothing there. There's no. . .There's nothing there but empty space. There are no nothing there, no molecules, nothing; I mean, it's hard to conceive of that. There's no air there; there's no hydrogen; there's no oxygen; there's no chemicals; there's no nothing; it's just empty space, a vacuum.

They have been able to do this experimentally, and what is absolutely mind-boggling to me is that when they create a complete and perfect vacuum and they study that vacuum, let's say of a molecule,

what they see in there are oscillating waves of energy, but there's nothing there. What is this?

Well, the power is so great, and I don't have this right. I'll get this down exactly when I get the book done. I'm still working through the material, but it's something like they calculate that the amount of energy, the amount of what they call "zero-based energy" in one molecule would be enough to keep the stars of the universe lit for some number of millions of years. That's in one molecule. That's the kind of energy that exists in the universe.

Now, understanding that and understanding when the Bible says, "Almighty God" and the "power of God;" that that just blows our mind, just add up every molecule in the universe and imagine what His power is like. For him to do a little tweaking on your anatomy is not a major problem, so this is where Einstein; you know, at the end of his life, died in total disappointment because he got all the way down to that, and he couldn't define it because it doesn't have a chemical definition, and it is God who upholds all things by the word of His power.

So I only say that to point out the fact. . .look, there is energy the likes of which we cannot even comprehend, and if God chooses to activate, at any point, that massive energy in the recuperative process of the body, who's to say He can't do that? But again, I say, no matter what's going on in the trauma ward, I doubt whether people who had their legs chopped off are getting new ones, and I doubt whether quadriplegics, whatever is going on diagnostically or recuperatively, who have their spinal cord cut, are getting up and walking out. I really doubt that. I doubt whether people who have lost their eyes can see and so forth and so on.

These kinds of things, the Lord does, but this is not an age of those kinds of dramatic miracles that were protected and preserved for that unique explosion that demonstrated the arrival of the Messiah. Okay? All right.

QUESTIONER: Hello. My name is Brent, and I've been involved in a couple of Bible studies, where women have ended up sharing throughout the time, so I did some studies on it, and I was reading the MacArthur 1 Corinthians commentary, and I came to a sentence that I wanted you to clarify for me.

JOHN: Or defend, right?

QUESTIONER: It says, "There are times in informal meetings and Bible studies where it is entirely proper for men and women to share equally in exchanging questions and insights."

JOHN: Well, I think that's exactly right. If you'll read in the Book of Acts; I mean, it's in the. . .I mean, I would hate to have a Bible study with my wife and her never say anything, you know? She has so much to bring to the discussion. I think the key New Testament illustration is the illustration of Aquila and Priscilla in the Book of Acts.

There was a man named Apollos, and Apollos was a great preacher of the Old Testament, but Apollos was uninformed about Christ. He was informed about; well, it says in 18:24 he was a "certain Jew named Apollos, born in Alexandria;" eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures. "He came to Ephesus. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, fervent in spirit. He spoke and taught accurately the things of God, though he knew only the baptism of John."

His whole theology ended with John the Baptist. He didn't get to the Messiah. He spoke boldly in the synagogue. When "Aquila. . .that's Mr.. . . and Priscilla. . .that's Mrs.. . .heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."

Here is a husband and wife taking home not just any yahoo off the street. This is a great, eloquent, Old Testament theologian and preacher, and they sit him down, no doubt, over bagels or whatever. No, these are Greeks. They sit him down over whatever Greeks ate; baklava, is that what it is? And they explained to him the truth.

So I think that's entirely right, and that's what should happen in a Bible study, and it should happen in times of fellowship with men and women. There is no male nor female in the body of Christ. We're only talking about the limitation that's imposed upon the church in its due course of worship, where women are not to take authority and they are not to preach and teach.

That's explicitly taught in 1 Timothy 2, and it's reinforced in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 11, but as far as the Spirit of God working in the heart of women, and as far as the spirit of God teaching them and instructing them and guiding them in the grasp of Scripture and through the work in their lives and them making a contribution to Christian fellowship and mutual study of the Word of God, I think that is absolutely essential to the growth of the body of Christ.

QUESTIONER: And when would be a church circumstance?

JOHN: Well, I think when the church comes together. . .you have 1 Timothy. . .this is, of course, in 1 Timothy 2. 1 Timothy is designed. . .the third Chapter gives the purpose of the book; to teach people how they ought to behave in the church, so when you come into the worship of the church and it's leading the church, to take leadership in the church and preaching and teaching; that's reserved for men because that's reserved for elders, and the elders are men, clearly by qualification 1 Timothy 3, Titus, Chapter 1. Anything outside that official service of the church is merely a matter of Christian fellowship and sharing in the Scriptures. There is no limitation on the participation of women.

QUESTIONER: So if there aren't elders, then it's okay?

JOHN: Well, even if there are, it's okay. I mean, everywhere I go, there's an elder present, but if I want to have a Bible study, I want women to participate. I want them to share the things that they're learning, give testimony to the work of Christ in their life, testimony to their understanding of Scripture. I don't think there's any restriction on the informal, normal fellowship in the life of the body of Christ. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

JOHN: Good.

QUESTIONER: Hello, John. My name is Victor Sholar. I met you earlier today from. . .

JOHN: Welcome. Victor is just arriving from Missouri?

QUESTIONER: Yes.

JOHN: And Victor has arrived with his wife, Athena, and they have come to go to seminary, and Victor was telling me this morning he'd been praying about that for quite a while, and finally, the Lord opened the door. He was working for the Governor of Missouri, who was killed in the plane crash recently, and working for a governor is a wonderful thing, but preaching is a higher calling, right?

QUESTIONER: That's right.

JOHN: So we're. . .and, by the way, he was telling me that one of the men who was also killed in the plane was a believer that you knew. Well, we're glad you're here. Go ahead, Victor; I'm sorry.

QUESTIONER: Okay, well, thanks. . .

JOHN: Just want to get to know who you are.

QUESTIONER: Well, I told you I wanted some friends.

JOHN: Well, you got them now.

QUESTIONER: Okay.

JOHN: Where's your wife? Where's your wife?

QUESTIONER: Right there.

JOHN: Stand up. Stand up so everybody can see you. Now, they said they hadn't met anybody, so now, you got a whole church full of friends.

QUESTIONER: Praise the Lord. I've been studying the topic of the Atonement, and Romans 5:10; it's profound, but it's kind of. . .it's messing with me. I can't get it. It says, "If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life," and John Murray led me to a book, John Murray, Redemption Accomplished and Applied. My question is this. In what way can the elect be viewed as reconciled to God on the historic day of Christ's death, apart from the experience of the elect? Are there two aspects of redemption, objective and subjective?

JOHN: Well, let me answer the question by saying there is obviously the overwhelming supernatural reality in redemption that we will never grasp. In other words, if you're asking me in what sense was I there when Jesus died; I mean, I can only take you so far. I can only say that Jesus Christ died on the cross, and I would put it this way, "and paid in full the penalty for my sins."

In that sense, I was there. I don't think I was there mystically. I don't think I was there in some pre-birth spirit being. I just. . .what was there were my sins, and really, essentially, that was all there was of me. So I believe that an actual reconciliation was purchased for me, then, historically, that day in the Council of Almighty God, when my sins were punished in Christ; it could not be delivered, though it was purchased; it couldn't be delivered to me until I was born, believed, was redeemed, okay?

That is a very important verse. There's another element there that Paul is pointing out. If/when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son; the verbs there, the language there would seem to indicate that the actual realization of that reconciliation occurred when we stopped being enemies, so it didn't occur before we were born. The actual application and realization of reconciliation occurred when we stopped being enemies.

So at the point of faith, that's when reconciliation takes place, and the great point of the verse is that if God could reconcile us or if God could reconcile us through His Son through death, how much more, having already been reconciled in that we're no longer enemies, but friends by His death; we shall be being saved by his life, and what He's saying there is if Jesus, dead, reconciled us to God, Jesus now living and interceding can keep us. That's the point.

But I think the actuality of our reconciliation was accomplished historically on the cross when, specifically, our sins were paid for. The elect who would believe the application of that occurred when we stopped being enemies; when we were awakened and given grace and faith to become Children of God.

QUESTIONER: So is the language of Paul pretty much speaking from an aspect of like in the mind of the Father and the Son on that historic day?

JOHN: Well, I think no. I think He's speaking from our viewpoint.

QUESTIONER: Okay.

JOHN: We were reconciled when we stopped being enemies. That's when. . .that reconciliation had meaning to us, okay?

QUESTIONER: Okay, thank you.

JOHN: I think this is the beginning of many discussions with you. Your professors are going to have a great time. It's wonderful.

QUESTIONER: Thank you very much.

QUESTIONER: My name is Corinna Karabetta, and in Matthew 12:39 and 40, the Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign, and he says, "No sign will be given to it except that of Jonah, the Prophet, as Jonah was in the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." I was wondering what that meant and how it relates to Jonah; how Jesus is relating himself to Jonah.

JOHN: Well, first of all, those guys had had plenty of signs up to them. Really, their unbelief was inexcusable, and Jesus, essentially, is saying, "You're not going to get any more signs, but one more sign, and the one more sign you're going to get is the sign of a resurrection, and they hadn't believed any of the other signs. Is that Matthew 14?

QUESTIONER: Twelve.

JOHN: Matthew 12, yeah; it's in the 12th Chapter. I thought you said 14. I thought it was 12. In 12, He says, "You have taken everything I've done and attributed it to Satan," right? "And that's all; I mean, you're not going to get anything else. Everything I've done, you've attributed to Satan. You're beyond the point of forgiveness, so all that's left now is going to be one more great sign, and that's the sign of resurrection."

And I think He just uses this story of Jonah as an analogy, as a picture. They all knew that story. They all knew that. Jonah's story was very well known, as it is to all of us, and He is simply saying in the same manner that Jonah was dead, as it were, and came back to life. The Son of Man is going to be dead and come back to life.

QUESTIONER: You're saying Jonah was physically dead when he was in the whale?

JOHN: Well, if he was dead, he couldn't have had a prayer, and he was praying there, but I'm saying. . .I'm not saying Jonah had a resurrection. I suppose it is possible that he had a resurrection. I think they only point is he is saying just as Jonah was in the grave, and for all intents and purposes, was dead, and three days later, came out; I think the analogy here is that he went into a death experience and came out of it in three days.

So the Son of Man is going to go into a death experience and come out of it. You could even argue that while Jesus' body was dead, certainly, his spirit was not dead, but I think the whole point is to take something that they know very well, and from that very common story, which they all knew, draw an analogy that he's going to go into the grave, into a death experience, and he's going to come out alive in, essentially, the same period of time, the three-day period. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Thanks.

JOHN: Okay. All right. Who's next?

QUESTIONER: My name is Evvie, and my question is going to be a lot easier to answer than some of these.

JOHN: Good.

QUESTIONER: When the children of Israel were in the desert complaining about the Mana and begging for meat, as I understand it, they had been eating meat since the flood. Why did they not eat? They had their flocks and herds there with them that they came out with. Why did they not eat that meat?

JOHN: Well, I guess the question to ask is how long and how much they would have had? It becomes apparent that they need food, and they don't have any, so I guess the only answer to the question would be whatever flocks they may have gotten out of there. . .now, remember, you've got 2 million people, or up to 2 million people would either have been diminished by that point, unable to reproduce, not being able to find food. That would be a very tough place to find food in the wilderness of the desert.

So the assumption would have to be that at whatever point they reached. . .they needed food and they needed meat. They didn't have any. I guess that would be the only way to answer the question.

QUESTIONER: So they had already used up the meat.

JOHN: Well, yeah, whatever they had was long gone, obviously, and would have perhaps been long gone very early because they had no other resource; I mean, when you're traveling like that and you have nothing. You have no crops; you're not planting; you're migrating. Whenever it was there, it was eaten fairly rapidly, and then the Lord began to forgive them, as we would remember Mana, the supply for them, and they wanted meat, and so the Lord provided that for them. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Thanks.

JOHN: All right. We'll take a couple more. I think our time is gone. We have two ladies, and we'll have to catch the rest of you next time. Sorry.

QUESTIONER: Hi. My name is Gloria, and my question is this. My family and I just watched a video, *Left Behind*. At the end of the video, the main character let the audience know that in the beginning of February, the video will be released in the theaters. What is your opinion of Hollywood making a film like this, and would you support it, or in the church, by sending out flyers and announcing it, sending people to the movie theater to see it or just buying the video and having people in your house?

JOHN: Well, I think the answer to that is I'd have to see it to know whether I felt it was something I want to support, but it's now available in a video? I need to get that video and look at it.

Many years ago, there was another video that was done on the Rapture. I forget the name of it.

QUESTIONER: *Thief in the Night*?

JOHN:*Thief in the Night*, yeah, and that had quite an impact on people who watched that video. I have not. . .I confess. I have not read any of those books, but I know the Gospel is in those books, and I know people have enjoyed reading those. I really don't know how to evaluate the video. I get a little nervous, to tell you the truth, when fiction gets mixed with Scripture because I don't. . .it comes with interest, and it comes with emotion, but it lacks authority.

The Scripture carries such tremendous authority, and as soon as you dilute it in a fictional environment, then it only becomes a matter of interest or emotional, sort of emotional stimulation, and it loses something of its authority, but before I could even answer that, I would have to watch it. If you felt that it was good and that it brought to attention, the reality of the future and the coming of Christ and it could stimulate conversation that could take you to the Scripture, I would say invite people in to look at it; I mean, make your own evaluation if you think it was well done.

I've never heard complaints about any of the books being shy on the Gospel or not emphasizing appropriately the return of Jesus Christ. I just don't know how it would be dramatized in the film, and

again, I get a little bit nervous when fiction is mixed with Scripture because I'm such a purist about the Scripture. I don't. . .I just think some authority is lost when you do that, but again, if. . .I will look at it, and I'm quite sure, like the books, that it could bring people to a reasonable fear about the future and give you an opportunity to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a clear biblical presentation of what's going to happen, so it might be a very good thing to use. You probably have an opinion on it, and if it's good, go ahead and use it.

QUESTIONER: Well, I didn't know if you felt that it was something that was beneficial to other people. Would the church be able to put flyers up and that?

JOHN: Yeah, if we thought it was something beneficial, sure; we might even. . .we don't carry a lot of videos here, but it might be something that if everybody feels as good, we would certainly want to promote.

QUESTIONER: Okay, thank you.

JOHN: I'm not sure. We have a number of videos in the library. Sometimes, you can check them out. I'm sure something like this could end up in the library, a number of them there for families to check out if you'd like to use them. Yes?

QUESTIONER: How many verses out of the Bible have you memorized?

JOHN: Well, not enough, not enough.

QUESTIONER: Okay, that's not the serious question.

JOHN: You know, honestly, I used to when I was younger, memorize Bible verses, and then, unfortunately, I memorized them all in the King James, and then there came the New American Standard; then there came the NIV; then there came the new, New American Standard; then there came the new King James, and we were all kind of befuddled about what to memorize.

I don't consciously memorize verses anymore, but I remember them because of the intensity of my study of them, you know what I mean? And by the time I preach a passage, just because I've worked it over for so many hours, I pretty much have it in memory, and while I can't necessarily verbatim recite the verses, I pretty well know where they are and, generally, try to remember what they say. I admit to having a number of senior moments, however, when I can't. . .okay, anyway, what's your question?

QUESTIONER: Okay. When Jesus said, "You have heard eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth, but I say to you when somebody smacks you, turn the other cheek." I recently told a friend, "Hey, you know, if you say that the Bible contradicts itself, show me one and I'll renounce my faith," and I was

thinking about that, and I wanted you to explain to me how that's not a contradiction.

JOHN: How would you see it as a contradiction?

QUESTIONER: Well, because it's a change, like if you're going to be even with somebody by doing what they did to you, like that's them, and that's different from when somebody smacks you; you turn the other cheek because you're doing the opposite.

JOHN: Let me answer that question this way as a bigger context to a bigger question. The Bible forbids personal vengeance. It forbids, in the Old Testament, "Eye for an eye; tooth for a tooth; a life for a life" as an act of personal vengeance. It establishes that; however, as an act of national law so that an eye for a eye and a tooth for a tooth, life for a life was prescribed as a part of social justice, right?

In other words, if you take somebody's eye, then you lose the compensating eye or a compensating value. If you take somebody's sheep, you lose a compensating value. If you take someone's life, you lose your life, capital punishment, but that was never personal vengeance, and what had happened by the time you get to the life of Jesus; they have taken this social law, which is a matter of social justice, due process in the court before the judge, and they had turned it into personal vengeance.

And Jesus was saying, "You think that you can just reap personal vengeance on anybody who offends you, but I'm telling you on the personal level, when somebody offends you, you show them love in return." That's how you deal with it personally. There are courts for vengeance and even a God, who says, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay." But the law of LexTalionas, the law of retaliation, was never instituted by God to be applied on a personal basis. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Okay.

JOHN: Good. Well, boy, let's stand. Went a little over. Good questions, though, huh? Maybe we'll do this again for those of you folks who didn't get your question answered tonight. I would just encourage you, if you have questions like this, write them down and send them to us through the mail; you know, like grace, to you; we get these by the bag load every day at the radio ministry, and through the years, we've written volumes and volumes and volumes of answers, and many of them that I've written through the years and others have written are in the computer, and we have lots of answers.

If you have these kinds of questions, don't hesitate to fire them off to my office and we'll be glad to get back to you with an answer so that you don't need to struggle with these things, and I would really encourage you if you don't have a MacArthur Study Bible; you know, I'm almost useless up here because the Study Bible has so many notes. Tonight; however, we've dealt with a lot of things that

aren't in the notes, but you'll find in the 20,000 or 25,000 footnotes. . .we've never figured out how many quite yet. . .many of the answers to these questions, but this is really important to do. It really helps me to know what you're thinking, and, frankly, it's extremely encouraging to me because the questions indicate the depth of your study of Scripture, and that's wonderfully encouraging.

Thank you for loving the Word and loving to delve into it. This is. . .it's a joy for me, and I hope our times like this are helpful to you. Let's have a closing prayer.

"Father, thanks again for tonight. Thank you for Your Word. The inference of Your Word does give light. The Word gives us the answers to the questions that come up, and it's so refreshing to know in a world of confusion and deception, there is truth, and that truth is readily available on the pages of Your precious Word. Thank you, too, for other pastors and teachers and those who have preached and written and provided all the tools that we need to search the Scriptures. Thank you for the illumination of Your Holy Spirit in the lives of so many who've left us a legacy of understanding, and may we lean on that illumination, as well as on the work of the Holy Spirit in our own hearts as we open the Word, and may we come to understand its rich truths; that we might better love You, better know You and serve You, proclaim Your truth. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

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