

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 50

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 70-22

JOHN: All right, this is a time for you to have some question and answers, the next 45 or 50 minutes or so. And we want to have you mention your question to one of our men. Let's see Jim Pyles to my right, and Tom is in the middle, and Rick is over on the left. Just so they can kinda see what's on your mind. Boy, they're coming at me here seriously.

We want to do our best to give a concise and biblical answer without getting too detailed. So we hope we can be of help to you. We'll give 'em just a second to find out what the questions are okay. Why don't we start over here on the right. And this is Stewart, so go right ahead sir.

STEWART: Okay, I'm Stewart. You may want to take this with two grains of salt here and there, but I think it's a question that needs answering because it's there. I've heard ministers, including yourself, talking about giving and such. You say well, who does it belong to? Whose it all belong to anyway? Well, Paul taught that it all belonged to us, that we're joint heirs with Christ. He said all things belong to us. Even Apollos belong to the Christians back there. And Paul belonged to the Christians back there. We're not perfect, and giving is a spiritual principle, but never does it say we rob God when we don't give.

JOHN: I think I understand the question, and it's a good one. There are two ways to look at that. There is a sense in which the Bible is very clear that everything belongs to God. The cattle on a thousand hills are His. Now, local ranchers might wanna argue about that. Local shepherds might wanna argue about that. Local cattle owners might wanna argue about that. There's a sense in which, however, everything belongs to God. The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. So from that standpoint, everything is His.

But, from another standpoint, because we are in Christ, everything is ours. That is true. From the spiritual side, since God is the giver only of perfect gifts. Everything that is good in God's sight, everything is perfect in God's sight, He gives to us. Certainly in this life temporally, we don't get the fullness of all of it. We will in the life to come...the millennial kingdom and the eternal new Heaven and new Earth. And what Paul is talking about when he says "all things are yours in Christ," he means all those eternal things, all those spiritual things and all of whatever there is that exists for the joy and the blessing of believers. It is related to the temporal, because as we serve Him here we gain an eternal reward. As we honor Him here we gain an eternal reward. As we give, we lay up treasure in Heaven, which then accrues to us as a part of that eternal reward.

So, from one perspective, everything is God's. From another perspective, everything that lasts, everything that's eternal, becomes ours in Christ, because all that is God's is Christ's and we are joint-heirs with Christ. So, ultimately, all that is eternal becomes ours. And some of what is eternal we enjoy now...grace and peace and joy and all of the plethora of spiritual blessings. And we will enjoy the millennial Earth, a renewed and restored paradise of God across the Earth when Christ comes and sets up his Kingdom, as well as the new Heaven and the new Earth. So it's a question of perspective.

There are occasions when I would say that everything you have belongs to the Lord, and it's on loan to you as a test. That is true from the perspective from the Earth is the Lord's and everything it contains. But, on the other hand, as you freely give that up to God, even the material things that don't have eternal value, if they are used for things that are eternal then gain eternal value and are part of what will ultimately all be ours as God brings everything into the possession of His beloved in eternity.

Stewart: It's interesting that giving in the New Testament is according to Vernon McGee is a spiritual principle, but not a law.

JOHN: Right and I agree with that. In the New Testament, you don't have an amount commanded, but you do have a command given to give. Luke 6:38: "Give and it shall be given unto you." Paul says, I think, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit we'd all agree, that you are to give and to give on the first day of the week regularly as he says in that last chapter of I Corinthians. The amount is not prescribed. That's why we don't hold to the tithe as an amount. As a New Testament amount, you're free to give whatever's in your heart to give. Thank you, Stewart.

Ok, Ron.

RON: Pastor John, I read an article in a big city newspaper...to remain nameless...on the Pentecostal movement, and I'm still puzzled. These people, true believers, and if they are true believers, what are they doing in this movement? "Heal me right away, or maybe I'll walk away from Jesus Christ." Can you shed some light on that?

JOHN: Yeah. Ron, you're opening up a huge issue here of the Pentecostal movement. The Pentecostal movement, as a movement defined by its unique characteristics, is not biblical. Now, understand what I'm saying. I'm not saying all the people in it are not Christians. Some of them are. But, those things that define the Pentecostal movement are not biblical. It is not biblical to say that speaking in tongues is a sign of receiving the Holy Spirit, and if you haven't spoken in tongues you haven't received the Holy Spirit. That is not biblical. It is not even biblical to encourage people to speak in tongues as if that in itself was some spiritual gift that everybody had to have.

It is not biblical to believe that God is gonna heal you. And it is not biblical to believe that some people have the power to heal, and can go into great places, and can knock people over by the power of the Holy Spirit and that they yield this great supernatural power. So what I'm saying is the defining characteristics that label Pentecostalism, Pentecostalism as apart from general Orthodox Christianity, are not biblical. So the movement is defined by things that aren't biblical. If you, for example, compared it to the reformed movement, what distinguishes reformed theology is an accurate theology. It goes back to the reformation, and it's based on an accurate understanding of theology. What distinguishes Pentecostalism is an inaccurate wrong interpretation of Scripture. And all the distinctives are not all accurately interpreted from Scripture. So you have a movement defined unbiblically.

At the heart of it there, I think, are masses of people who are unconverted, unconverted, who couldn't explain the Gospel the way you heard it tonight. They could say that Jesus died for their sins and rose again, but they have no idea just exactly how God used the death of Christ to satisfy His justice and grant righteousness to those who believe. They do not understand anything more than a very shallow and thin grasp of the gospel.

Many of them, and this has been reiterated to me by people who come to our church from other large Pentecostal churches in the area, live under a strange and bizarre doctrine that they never articulate. But, it is definitive the movement and it is doctrine of the sovereignty of Satan. It is inherent that, temporarily at least, Charismania, Pentecostalism...by the definition of the current Charismatic movement, and the Pentecostals and the Charismatics are so blended now you can't separate them. But it is in amicable to that system to believe that Satan is sovereign, not God. God would like people to be saved, but He's not sovereign in salvation. God would like to keep people saved, but He can't so people can't get unsaved on their own. God would like to solve the problems in the world, but the Devil keeps messing things up. People in that movement are taught that when you get sick, it's the Devil. When your little baby gets sick, it's the Devil. When you lose your job, it's the Devil. When it's announced to you that you have heart disease or you have cancer or you have some other problem, when one of our children goes stray...whatever it is, it's the Devil.

So, you're living, literally, under the sovereignty of Satan in a mode of constant fear. That's one very unbiblical element of that. So you're always trying to bind Satan. You're always trying to cast out demons. God, in Pentecostalism, becomes the victim. It's a strange kind of thing where there's this pervasive fear of Satan. Parents who can't sleep, who live with anxiety and fears that the Devil's gonna come in and make their baby sick at night, or the Devil's gonna get in there house and they gotta pray the Devil out or the demons out of their house, or bind Satan someway. This is utterly unbiblical. We, as believers, have nothing to fear from Satan in the ultimate sense.

It is God Himself, who has made the blind and the lame and the _____, it says the book of Exodus. The enemy of God, who is Satan, is God's servant. I don't know if you've ever thought of it that way, but the Devil is God's servant. He can only do what God allows him to do. His borders and boundaries are established by a sovereign God. Some people came to our church from out of this kind of a background. They happened to come on a Sunday, I think, but when they heard me preach on the sovereignty of God. And they said it was the most liberating thing they ever heard. To find out that God was sovereign, that God was in charge was totally opposite everything they'd ever heard. Well, that is an abhorrent theology that says that.

Pentecostalism, also, because of its belief that people today can have the same gifts that the Apostles had...Benny Hinn and whoever the healers are...he's sorta the prototypical healer today...started out with A.A. Allen and Oral Roberts and down to Morris Siroulo and on and on it goes. Jimmy Swaggart and Benny Hinn...whoever it is, Benny Hinn is the latest edition of conmen in that area. This idea that they believe that these men can do what the apostles did...they had the power to heal the power to cast out disease. I heard Benny Hinn say with my own ears, I heard it...that if you have somebody if your own family die, leave their body in the living room, take their body over to the TV, drape their arms over the TV because "God is gonna use me to heal...raise the dead through the television." I can't think of a more insensitive thing for a man to do than to have some poor bereaved person drag a corpse of their family member and drape them over the television under some bizarre allusion that Benny Hinn is gonna heal them through the TV set.

RON: It's idiotic.

JOHN: Well, it's cruel is what it is. But that cruel, that's only the extreme form of cruelty. But there's a cruelty that goes along day-after-day, week-after-week with this bizarre expectation of healing and then this false staging of supposed healings that continue to raise people's hopes. And all that does is create false hopes that are dashed to pieces. And much of the fall out of that movement is people who reject the Gospel, reject Christ because they didn't get what they were promised they would get.

So, as I said, the defining elements of the movement itself give it its identity are unbiblical. And yet, at the core, there are many in the Pentecostal movement who are Christians who understand the Gospel. If you just took all the Pentecostal stuff...the Charismatic stuff...out, there would be a core understanding of the Gospel there. So, I believe that some of them are Christians. The Lord knows how many, but it's my own conviction that the vast majority are not.

And also that those people who purvey and ply the trade, particularly in the media, know they are deceivers, and they're very effective at it, raising millions of dollars. One such preacher along, T.D. Jakes, took in personally last year, \$63 million. They're trading on a certain desperation. Like Jesus when he sent out the 70 said, "Go and heal, but take no money." You can heal people; you can be instantly rich. People get instantly rich who can't heal, but pretend they can. So, but at the heart of it,

if you can just skip the trappings, there are some who know the Gospel truth. So, I guess I would say somewhere in that movement there's a true body of believers not to be confused with the movement, which is full of schemers and dreamers and conmen and people with abhorrent theology and false teachers who take advantage of people and then people in the middle.

There's the serious, very serious errors, of the word-faith movement. Fred Price, Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagland. Marilyn Hickey, Joyce Meyer, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera who had an abhorrent view of the nature of Christ. They're the ones who say on the cross Jesus became sinner and had to go to Hell and suffer for his sins for three days and then the Father let him come out of Hell and that's when he was raised. They turned Jesus into a sinner and let him be punished for sins. This is a frightening view of Christ. Also, Kenneth Copeland is the one who said that Jesus wasn't anymore God than he is. So, you have aberrations all the way down the line. And, of course, because the movement is defined by its experiences and its phenomenon, they don't ever deal with the aberrations. Nobody polices the movement. You can turn on channel 40 and you can see them. They will literally advocate anything. They would advocate absolutely anything. Anybody can come on there and say anything they want about God, anything they want about Christ, anything they want about the Holy Spirit, anything they want to say about the work of God, any interpretation of the Bible will stand.

But what you can't do is go on channel 40 and say somebody's wrong. That's intolerable. And so that's why in some of their books they call me a heresy hunter. There's one book has a whole chapter on me as heresy hunter. Well, I am. I thank them for the compliment. I don't have any axe to grind with those people. I just am committed to the truth, and I want to bring the truth to those people. And it's really one of the wonderful realities that grace to your radio penetrates into those people who don't come to this church, but they turn on the radio, and they get the books.

The book, "The Charismatics," that I wrote back in 1978, I think it was...later on we wrote a new one called "Charismatic Chaos." Those books have had a great impact and continue to have an impact on the hearts of people who are questioning the movement. They're in it; they're questioning the reality of it.

But one of the...this is a final thought Ronnie, it's a big question...but one of the giveaways that there's something seriously wrong with the movement is its breadth. It embraces anybody and anything and any view of anything that reports to be of God. If you just say the Lord told me this or the Lord told me that or you had a vision or you saw this or you heard voices or the angels just told you. If you have the experience, or you supposedly experience some of the super-natural phenomenon, it will embrace you. The movement will take you in no matter how bizarre your theology is.

I remember when Benny Hinn first wrote his first book called "Good Morning Holy Spirit," I think it was, and in the book, he had nine members of the Trinity. Okay, now, it's not even good English to

have nine members of a Trinity. You can have a double quartet plus one, but you can't have a trinity with nine people. Not a trinity. But in the book, he had nine members of the trinity. He had the Father having three parts, three persons, the Son having three persons and the Holy Spirit having three persons totaling nine. And I said to the publisher...who was having lunch with me wanting to sign me to a book contract...I said to him, "Why in the world did you publish that book? Why would you publish that?" And with a look of incredulity, he said to me, "What do you mean? We publish everything." He didn't even understand the question. It didn't even connect. "What do you mean, we publish everything." And I would say that has been the, that has been pretty much the reality with the Pentecostal movement. There's just no borders at all. And the way the movement has perpetuated itself, it's an infection in the body of Christ and spreading rapidly. It's a kind of spiritual AIDS.

AIDS is a deficient immune system, and this kills the Church's immune system. The Pentecostal Charismatic movement kills the immune system because it makes it a sin to question their theology. See, the only way error can survive is if truth doesn't prevail. It's the only way. The only way error can survive is if truth does not prevail. And so how do you get the truth out of the way. You have to silence the people who speak the truth. So how do you do that? You have to turn them into bad guys. Those people with discernment, those people who speak the truth, those people who draw lines that are biblical, you have to turn them into the bad guys, the non-spiritual. I remember a radio program where a man who was prominent in the Charismatic movement said, "I don't know much about John MacArthur, but I know one thing: He doesn't possess the Holy Spirit." And that created...this was on a radio talk show...that created an interesting dialect. I was being vilified as someone who didn't possess the Holy Spirit, was not there for God simply because called into question some of their unbiblical teaching. And what has happened is, they have been saying this long enough that...they have been working their way into the mainstream of the Evangelicalism simply by attacking the critics and silencing the critics. And most people just roll over.

I can give you an illustration. In 1980, after I had written the book, "The Charismatics," which was a bomb when it came. It was the first book that was out really taking on that movement. And it just hit the thunder. But, it was really an important statement. At the time, "Moody Monthly" was a monthly periodical put out by Moody as sort of a standard fundamental Evangelical magazine. They said this is so important we want to serialize the book. So the magazine picks up the book, they put the cover of the book on the cover of the magazine which had a circulation of, I don't know, I think maybe, let's just say for sake of argument, 150,000. During the time they serialized the book it went up 50% to 225,000...tremendous response. And this book was as direct attack on that issue. And Moody, at that time, says this needs to be heard; this is discernment.

Today, if I say I on Grace to You anything negative about the Charismatic movement, the Moody Broadcasting Network will remove it from the broadcast. Because what is happened over a period of time is Evangelicalism just rolled over. Because we've been vilified so much as being unloving and heresy hunters and divisive, and so they literally have shouted long enough and loud enough to

silence people. And they've found a way into the mainstream, and now they dictate what is politically correct to say in the body of Evangelicals. Now that Evangelicals are so softened up theologically...now that we have this case of AIDS, this immune deficiency that can't fight off error, we can't stop the influx of disease, theological disease. The latest is called The Openness of God and I'm digressing, but I need to take you there for a minute.

You been reading about this? This is the last place you can attack. They've attacked the person of the Holy Spirit. They've attacked the person of Christ. They've attacked the Gospel. They've attacked the authority of Scripture by adding to Scripture revelations and visions and words of wisdom and words of knowledge and on and on and on and on. And they've created a fertile ground now for an all out assault on God, which is coming from some pretty heavy places. The parade is being lead by "Christianity Day" magazine, which finds a very open climate to question God. And the new view of God is that God is not sovereign. God not only doesn't determine the future; He doesn't even know what it is. That God is about as clear about the future as you are. He has got as much control over it as you do. And this is the re-definition of God. And I said to someone the other day, I said, "That is the end. Jesus has to come soon. Where else do you go when you've attacked the nature of God?"

I have a chapter in a new book that came out called "Whatever Happened to the Reformation?" I wrote one chapter. RC Scroll wrote one. A bunch of us wrote them. And Scroll, in his chapter, says "Call yourself a Christian if you want, but if you have the wrong view of God, you're a Pagan. You're a Pagan. That's idolatry." That's the last place you can go in heresy is to re-invent God. That climate to do that I think is largely aided and abetted by the utter disinterest in doctrine that has been created by this Charismatic pressure, Pentecostal pressure.

So, at the same time I say that, there are people in that movement who are Christians. And most of the Evangelical church doesn't have the discernment to know how to sort all that out, and many of these people don't either. They're subject to their leaders...like Hosea says, like people, like priests. They can't rise above it and so they just sorta take it in. But, in their hearts, they are truly trusting Christ for their salvation. Truly there are true believers in that movement. I said this before, and you can take the Charismatic movement. You can take the seeker-friendly church growth movement, and somewhere in those movements, there's a true church...not to be confused with a crowd.

But I think when you look at the legacy of the Charismatic and Pentecostal movement, in history looking back its not gonna be "Oh, they were speaking tongues." That's true, but you know, speaking in tongues to me is a minor detail. Fact they've even gone so far as to say if you have the choice between going in your closet and mumbling in tongues and coming out and gossiping, go in your closet and mumble in tongues.

So, I don't wanna overstate the importance of that. I don't think that history's gonna look back and define the impact of Pentecostalism in tongues. I don't even think it'll look back and define it in terms

of healing. Since everybody who goes into that movement with any kind of honest analytical and critical approach looks to Christ to find healing can't find 'em. And that's documented many, many times over. But, what is going to be history's verdict on the effect of the Pentecostal movement is the Pentecostal movement caused the church to become disinterested in sound doctrine. That, ultimately, is the greatest impact and that Spiritual AIDS. The church no longer has a functioning immune system to recognize deadly error. Okay?

RON: Thanks.

JOHN: So, when you see one of those conventions, Ron, your read one those reports, you see anything and everything there. It's, all of everything is gonna be there. Good question. I didn't mean to take that long, but that's a very important issue.

TROY: Hello, Pastor MacArthur. My name's Troy.

JOHN: Hi, Troy.

TROY: My question surrounds in Matthew, "Many will come to me, 'Lord, Lord' and say I don't know you," and make my election sure, I John. A person outside of Christ does things out of pride and everything out of pride and for himself. And a person in Christ does them, to my understanding, to please God. How can you look at ones own heart and know that yourself, that you're doing something to please God? I know that you say for saving faith is the Word, how much someone reads the Word. But, how can you really examine your own heart and know that it's to please God.

JOHN: Well, if you're looking to find a perfect and unmixed motivation, it's not gonna be there. And that's what prompts your question. Because even at our noblest as Christians, even if I say...I'll use myself as an example, somebody asked me the other day if I get nervous before I'm gonna preach. And the answer is no. Not unless I'm preaching in a hostile environment. Then I got a...there's a little more tension. But, when I prepare to preach and when I stand up to preach, I've one overpowering objective. And that is to bring the truth of God to bear upon the minds of people, in order that God might be rightly known and worshipped. That's the compelling motive. Is there any little mixture in there of, "I'm glad they like me, and I hope they think I'm good"? Sure. I can't get to the point of a perfect pristine motive, because as soon as I see the hand of God working, there's always that little, sort of thought that pops into your mind that commends yourself. That's just because the fallenness of man is what it is.

I'm simply saying don't be looking for that. Paul said, "Look. I look at myself, and I'm the chief of sinners." Now, if he...and he's saying this at the end of his life...if he saw himself as the chief of sinners, you might ask the question, then how could he examine himself and know that he's a true believer? Answer: only a true believer, only a true believer would see the reality of his sinfulness. So,

what the true believer sees is not the evidence of his salvation by his perfection, it's the evidence of his salvation by the mixture of that righteous longing and that nagging inequity. Okay?

So, in recognizing both the work of God in my life and the compelling need to repent, I am then recognizing my true nature in Christ. Okay?

TROY: Thanks.

MICHAEL: Evening Pastor. My name is Michael.

JOHN: Hi, Michael.

MICHAEL: My question has to do with destruction of the wicked or annihilation of the wicked or the unsaved, I should say. The scriptural thoughts that some people use for that thought would be, like in this morning's Psalms 136, the perishing of the thoughts of the dead. Or in Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 10, which has to do with there's no activity in Sheol, as you know. And then also, in the New Testament, it has to do with Scriptures like the saved will be...they will go off into everlasting life, where the unsaved will go off into ever lasting destruction. The key point there is about destruction of those people. Could you comment on those Scriptures, Pastor, as far as _____...

JOHN: I can't. I will in general, without getting into too many specifics. There are simple answers to each of those. There is no normal human activity in Sheol. It's pretty obvious if somebody says, we have life, we have a family, we have a business, we have an enterprise. But, once you're dead, you don't have that anymore. There's nothing more implied than that in the statement you referred to. What you have to do is to take the complete symphony of Scriptures related to eternal life, both eternal life in Heaven and eternal life in Hell. You have to take all the Scriptures. You can't isolate out.

There are more statements made by Jesus about Hell than about Heaven, Jesus, Himself, so we just take the teaching of Jesus. And all the language that Jesus used was that Hell was an eternal place of conscious punishment, where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched. And the language, the use of tone, is used to refer to the life of the righteous dead and the life of the unrighteous dead.

So if we were to say then, that there was a termination point for the wicked, then there would have to be a termination point for the righteous, because the same terminology is used to describe the permanence of Heaven that is used to describe the permanence of Hell. We know, from Scripture, that the righteous are eternal are gonna live eternally, but it's the same eternal that is applied to the unrighteous. This is not a doctrine that is difficult to prove by Scripture. What happens? Then there's an outstanding book on this called "Whatever Happened to Hell?," and it's written by John Blanchard...who's preached in this pulpit...I commend that book to you. It answers everything. There

was a book that came out some years ago called "The Fire that Consumes," written by a man with a funny name of Fudge. And I was asked to write a review of "The Fire that Consumes." This is a book that compounded the view of annihilation. The fire literally consumes and that's the end. And I wrote a response to that book. John Blanchard's book, "Whatever Happened to Hell?" is the most careful, thoughtful, comprehensive treatment that I've read on that doctrine. So, if you are interested in that, I would commend that book, "Whatever Happened to Hell?," by John Blanchard. Very biblical, very well thought out, very careful, deals with every single Scripture with regard to that.

But, to eliminate the doctrine of eternal punishment, one must eliminated many, many portions of Scripture. And, in particular, the teaching of Jesus, which dominates the subject. The only reason that people do that...and I admit that there's, in all of us, some, I suppose, motivation in that direction, is because they can't cope with the concept of eternal punishment. And so they back into eliminating it, because they can't cope with it. It's emotionally too much for them...to contemplate a family member, a friend, in eternal punishment. The history of humanity, all the unregenerate people have gone into this eternal punishment is more than human emotion, for some people, can bear. And so they create a theology that accommodates that emotion. But there really is no case at all to be made for that few in Scripture.

And the truth of the matter is it makes a mockery out of the whole plan of redemption. Because if the Lord is only redeeming of from non-existence, then why all the threats in the Scripture about the eternal judgment of God? Non-existence doesn't threaten anybody. So, again, it's just an emotional thing. I commend that book to you if you want a very detailed response. Okay?

MICHAEL: Thank You.

CORY: Hi, my name's Cory.

JOHN: Sure is.

CORY: Save that for the tape. I'm trying to understand how to articulate or teach to someone in the Charismatic movement about the following: When they are taught a story in the Old Testament like Israel being in bondage, they'll build a construct out of that, and then say we were born into this bondage principle, and then they'll build a theology out of that. And I don't know how to articulate...no, what you just did was wrong...you misapplied Scripture; you built a construct out of thin air.

JOHN: Excellent question, Cory. This is their stock and trade. This is their stock and trade. They can't interpret the Scripture accurately and come up with their theology. It's not there. So, where they gonna get it? Well, they have to invent it off of analogy, spiritualization and allegory. This is standard stuff. Most of those people have no biblical education, no formal education in the languages of Scripture. They do not have a sound hermeneutic. That is a principle for interpreting the Scripture,

historical, grammatical, literal interpretation, because it would never yield their system. So, what happens is, they use analogies to create their theology. This is not new. But this is endemic in the Charismatic movement.

They will interpret portions of the Scripture, the Gospel, of whatever, in a straight-forward way. Jesus went here. He said that. That's pretty straight-forward, but they will go to the Old Testament, and novelty is king in the Charismatic movement, right? They're like those people in Athens who always wanted to hear some new thing tickle their ears. How are you gonna come up with a new thing if you just have the old Bible. Well, you gotta find stuff that's not there, but you gotta use the Bible to do it. One of the things that I commented on in my book, "Charismatic Chaos," was a Pastor, prominent Charismatic Pastor in Southern California, his series on the book of Nehemiah. You know what Nehemiah's about, right? The story about Nehemiah who was the cup bearer to the King, in captivity in Babylon. The King makes a decree...the people can go back; they go back under the leadership of Nehemiah. They build the wall, right? They rebuild the city of Jerusalem and Israel, after 70 years of captivity, is back restoring its nation again. Nehemiah's there, right? Everybody's building their little section of the wall. And some of the guys are armed, and they got the enemies and Sanballot and Tobiah trying to thwart the work. You know the story. The story's about Israel going back and rebuilding its country and its city and its wall and sorta re-establishing its nation again.

Well, this series on the book of Nehemiah went like this. Nehemiah is the Holy Spirit. The broken walls are the fallen walls of human personality. The building of the wall is the re-building of human personality. The mortar between the bricks is tongues. The pool, there was a pool referred to Nehemiah, in the city. The pool is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. There's what the book of Nehemiah wants to teach. Nehemiah, aka The Holy Spirit, wants to come into your fallen life, dip you in the pool of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and rebuild your life through speaking in tongues. This was like eight tapes of this. And you know people are sitting there saying, "This is deep. I've never seen that." You know why they've never seen it? It's not there. It's not there. Because, you see, the average person in the pew says, "Wow, this is fabulous insight." This is bunk. This is a misrepresentation of Scripture. But this is the stock and trade.

And, I remember years ago when some guy came in for counseling here. And he said, "I'm in a real bad situation." This is actually, this actually occurred. How did you get in that situation? "Well, I married the wrong woman." Well, why did you marry her? "Well, it was the sermon my Pastor preached." Really? What was the sermon? "It was on the walls of Jericho." The walls of Jericho? He said, "The principle of Jericho is that anything you want, you march around it seven times and it'll fall to you." So, he said, "There was this girl and I really wanted her." And so literally, he found himself in a position where he could go around her seven times. And the walls of her heart would fall down, and they did and they got married. No wonder the guy was in trouble. But see, that kind of novelty is the stock and trade of that movement.

Let me tell you how serious this is. Now, I want you to understand this. This is like Bible codes. This is attributing to God things God never said. And that, my friend, is serious stuff. You're not gonna be telling people, this is what God meant, if this is not what he meant. That's pretty serious stuff. And the only way you can deal with people like that is to say, "How is it that you know that it means that?" And their answer's gonna be, standard answer, "The Lord told me." And now you've got no revelation confined here. You've got Pandora's Box opened up. How do you answer people like that? I think you answer them right between the eyes. "This is an abhorrent, unacceptable, form of interpreting the Bible. This, kind of spiritualizing, allegorizing is serious error." And, in fact, you know that kinda stuff...I used to talk to Pastors about this...if you're gonna interpret the Bible like that, you don't need the Bible. You don't need the Bible. You can use anything. You can use Little Bo Peep. You could say, "Oh, the other night, I was reciting Little Bo Peep and the Lord showed me what it meant." Little Bo Peep. She was little. But, God can use the little.

You get the drift? Little Bo Peep, she lost her sheep. All over the world, sheep were lost. People are lost. You ever meet lost people? Lost people over here. Lost. That's exactly what they do. And she didn't know where to find...you ever felt like that? You just don't know where to find...that, you laugh at that. That is the stock and trade of that kind of preaching. Ah, but they'll come home. I haven't figured out what to do with the wagging their tails behind them.

All right, we laugh at that, but that's the point. The point is that the hermeneutic is so abhorrent to start with. And the only way to deal with that is to say. "That is not an adequate way to handle the Scripture." I said this so many times in...to students...the Bible is real people, actual history, normal language. You can't be spinning off these wild fantasies as the expense of Scripture and saying this is what God meant by what He said, because you are putting words in the mouth of almighty God and that is not a trivial matter. Okay? Good question.

Where are we? You guys are cranking me up here.

JIM: Hi John, my name is Jim.

JOHN: Hi, Jim.

JIM: I saw you at Grace to You this week and told you I was gonna ask a question. In Genesis 3:14 God goes through and curses the serpent. Then, in 15 says, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise you on the head and ye shall bruise him on the heel." Now, that's understood as being a prophecy of battle between Satan and Christ.

JOHN: Yeah, I think that's right.

JIM: So, who is the seed? Whose seed that it's referring to? Christ is referred to as the seed of the woman Mary.

JOHN: Yes, and I think putting enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed simply extends the enmity to the children of righteousness, as it were, and the children of Satan. I think the seed is the just extended metaphor that the battle is not just Christ and Satan. The battle extends from all that are Christ's and all that are Satan's throughout time. Okay?

JIM: Okay.

JOHN: All right. Good question. A couple more and we'll be done.

ARMAND: Hello Pastor, my name is Armand, and I've a question from a friend of mine. He doesn't speak English so I'm asking it for him.

JOHN: Sure

ARMAND: His question is regarding Romans 11:21, 22 and whether these verses teach someone can lose his salvation.

JOHN: Romans 11:21-22? It says, "For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore, consider the goodness and severity of God on those who failed severity but toward you goodness; if you continue in this goodness, otherwise you also will be cut off." What you need to understand is that those two verses are not addressed to an individual. Starting in chapter nine, Paul, for the first eight chapters, is giving us this grand understanding of salvation. In chapters nine through eleven, he speaks of that might saving work of God with reference to Israel and the Gentiles. And what he is saying here is Israel was the natural branch. There was...look at it in this analogy, and you can use analogies when they're in the Bible. You just can't invent them. The stock of blessing is like a great trunk of life. And originally, the blessing of God flowed out of the branches of Israel. Israel was the blessed nation of God. But, by Israel's unbelief, she was cut off. Cut off from blessing through unbelief...the nation. There were individuals Jews, of course, who were true believers. They didn't lose their salvation. But, on a national level, there was a separation and the people of God were no longer viewed as the people of God.

You remember that Jesus pointed in this direction when he said the parable about the feast for the king's son. And he said, "Go call the invited guests." None of them wanted to come and that was Israel. And so he said "Go into the highways and byways and find anybody you can find and tell them to come." And that was sort of a prophecy that since those were the invited guests...would be Israel refused to come, we'll take anybody who will come. And that was sort of the way it was in the Church.

So, the original natural branches through which the blessing of God flowed, Israel, are cut off in The Church, which is Gentile, primarily...there are obviously some Jews, but...are grafted in.

And, what Paul is saying here is, "Look, don't think that because of that God has forgotten Israel." Early in chapter 11 he says, "God does not repent of his callings. And there's gonna come a time when God is gonna bring Israel back," he says. "So all Israel shall be saved. And don't you think, you Gentiles, that because you've been grafted in, you are permanently going to be the people of blessing. Because the truth of the matter is, if you drift away, if the Gentile church defects and apostatizes," and frankly folks, that has already happened. We start out with early Christianity. Christianity apostatizes. You have a thousand years of the dead Orthodoxy of Catholicism. And a mass of quote, unquote "Christians" in the world today aren't believers in Christ in the true sense. So, there's already a serious defection. And we're watching it happen all the time as the Church continues to fall increasingly into apostasy. We've talked about some of that tonight.

And what we're saying here is, if God didn't spare the natural branches, if God judged Israel, who were the initial people of blessing, don't think that somehow you're place is secure no matter what you do. Fact of the matter is, the day is gonna come that the apostate church is gonna be collected around the anti-Christ, right? They're gonna destroyed and the Lord is gonna give the Kingdom back to Israel...the Millennial Kingdom. In the time of Israel's salvation, when they look on Him who they pierced, and a fountain of blessing is open on them as Zachariah says it. So, you have to look at that in its context of Israel and the Church, rather than a threat to an individual. Okay?

ARMAND: Thank You.

JOHN: Good question. The last two, real quick.

BRIAN: Hi John, thanks for taking my question.

JOHN: Glad to do it.

BRIAN: My name is Brian, and my question is: In light of some of the statements that people like Billy Graham and others have made publicly, at what point do you go from saying this person made a heretical statement to saying...just writing the person off as a heretic?

JOHN: Well, talking about labels, you know, Brian, it's hard. I mean, heresy is a...a person can be a true Christian and buy into something that we can call heresy, because that's simply a word that speaks to something that is an error, the severity of which, varies from error to error. I mean, you can be wrong about some things that doesn't affect the Gospel.

In the case of Billy Graham, Billy Graham believes the Gospel. He believes the Gospel. That is true. He knows the true Gospel, believes the true Gospel, preaches the true Gospel. And so, because he believes the true Gospel, he therefore, is a believer. But, he goes beyond that to say that somebody can be saved that didn't believe the true Gospel. That's wrong. That doesn't eliminate him from the redeemed because he believes the true Gospel. You know what I'm saying? We're drawing a fine line here. But, it's such a dangerous thing to say that. It's not something new, something he said back in 1978 in "McCall's" magazine and even before that. I don't know what sentimentality causes people to say things like that.

But, I've never found myself in a position where I needed to go around labeling everybody. You know, heretic, non-heretic, whatever. I just try to deal with the truth, try to give somebody the benefit of the doubt. There are a lot of people in that category. There are lots of people through the years that we've discussed and talked about and read their writings and we would say, well this person believes the Gospel, completely understands the Gospel, affirms the Gospel. But, they don't think everybody has to believe the Gospel to be saved. Billy Graham isn't alone in that. There are a lot of people who take that position. Lot of people. They're wrong about that. Their emotions get carried away, because that's a very, very clear biblical issue. But, while that in itself is heresy, I think to label someone a heretic is pretty, that's a pretty loaded statement. So, I would be hesitate to drop that label on someone, unless they do not preach the true Gospel, do not believe the true Gospel. Then that's when heresy becomes fatal. Okay?

BRIAN: Thank you.

JOHN: Good question. Yes?

TOM: Hi, Pastor MacArthur. How're you doing? My name's Tom.

JOHN: Hi, Tom.

TOM: I just wanna thank you for your faithfulness. That's a great encouragement and I thank God for that. My question is on predestination, and free will. No, it's not. You're getting all riled up, so I thought, let's keep it going. Actually, my question is, in I John, the last verse of chapter five, he writes, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols," and then leaves us hanging. How do we guard ourselves from idols? If you can just kind of expound on that. I'd like to know, how do you guard yourself form idols on a daily basis? Maybe some practical insight on how can we as a body guard our self? How can I as an individual believer? Because, I think it's also kind of directly related to the soil and the fourth one with the thirty, sixty and a hundred. I mean, you've got a hundred or sixty and I pray I can get thirty...I mean...

JOHN: Yeah, right. You're sorta leap-frogging off the text. But, it's...

TOM: Yes, I mean is that...correct my thinking if...

JOHN: Well, no, let me just start with the text. If you go to the end of verse 20...well, go to the beginning of verse 20, "We know the Son of God is come and given us an understanding." Okay, Christ is come; we have a true understanding of the Gospel. We know Him, who is true. We are in Him who is true. Now, notice the language. Know, understanding, know, true, true, and then this is the true God. This is all about truth here. So your question really is pertinent tonight.

Verse 21 then says, "In opposition, little children keep yourselves from idols." Idols are views of God and Christ that are not true. We have created a false God. He's not so much talking about the idol of money or the idol of this or that or the other thing. What he's talking about here is this...we're all about knowing the Son of God has come. We have been given an understanding. We know Him who is true. We are in Him who is true. And His son, Jesus Christ...this is the true God, so don't get tangled up with false representations of God and Christ. That was exactly what we're talking about tonight. It's not the idols or the petty idols of life that he has in mind here.

One of the things we're gonna learn next Sunday when we talk about John, who's the next apostle in our list, is that John was passionate about truth. I think we all maybe come to think of Paul as the theologian, as the person concerned with truth. John was at least as passionate as Paul about truth. In fact, he goes so far in one of his epistles, second epistle, to say if anybody comes into your house and doesn't tell you the truth about Jesus Christ, throw him out. He was passionate about truth. This is exactly the point that we've been saying all along. The Lord is greatly dishonored when He is misrepresented. The battle for truth is not some kind of personal thing. It's not all about whose king of the mountain humanly. It's not all about whose right. It's about the truth.

And what I feel so compelled about is to make sure that we keep the Church at large, from worshipping idols, from viewing God the wrong way. You know, I think what they're doing in Christianity today to undermine the biblical character of God is to create an idol. It's a pagan idol. And people are buying into it all over the place. And what they're saying in the Charismatic movement about Jesus Christ is to create a Christ that doesn't exist, that Christ is somehow a victim of Satan, a victim of sin, has to go to Hell, be judged by God. That is exactly what John is saying for us to keep ourselves away from. And again, the call here is for discernment.

And I'll take your question to the direction you intended it originally and that is this. You're not gonna be able to deal with the issues of life until you have a true understanding of who your God is and who your Christ is. And I think you heard that in a testimony somewhere tonight. I think it was Mary Ann who said she got into the Word of God and began to see the wholeness of God, the character of God, the nature of God, that is the most compelling thing in your life. That is what controls your conduct. It's

your view of God. It's not a sermon, a clever sermon, an illustration you remember, a thought that flies by your mind, some whimsical thing, some serendipitous circumstance that controls you. What controls you is how you view God and Christ. And the more majestic they are in your view, the less likely you are to worship something else in your life. Starting with a wrong view of God, a wrong view of Christ and descending there to any other idol. Okay?

TOM: Thank You.

JOHN: Good question. All right. That's it.

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