

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

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 56

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 70-28

Well we want to end this day together with just a little bit of family fellowship, an opportunity for our question and answer, what might be on your heart. You can share with me and I'll do the best to give you a biblical answer.

There are microphones...one down here and one over there. I was handed a question that I can start while you're kind of getting organized. Don't get the line too long cause we'll never get through all of it. But a couple of questions were directed at me and I'll share these with you while we're getting organized. And there's a pastor there to kind of help everybody kind of clarify the question that they had on their mind.

The question is:

QUESTION: In Matthew 13:38 when it refers to children of the evil one, or children of the wicked one, is it referring to only human beings, or is it referring to demons? And the answer is, it is referring only to human beings that in the Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, those who proclaim the name of Christ, the Kingdom in general, there are going to be non-Christians. They're going to be believers and unbelievers, there's going to be wheat and there's going to be tares. That's what that parable is talking about. And the true wheat is sown by the Lord and the tares are sown by Satan.

But what it's referring to is the fact that Satan in his strategy fills Christendom in its broadest sense with his own subjects, but they are people. We understand that. We understand that there is true Christianity, true Christianity is engulfed in and surrounded by false forms of Christianity and that is what is in view there.

The fact that they are children of the wicked one doesn't lend itself at all to thinking they're demons because demons are not in fact the offspring of Satan. Demons are the same being that Satan is, fallen angels, but Satan didn't give life to them, he didn't bring them into existence, although he led them in their rebellion.

But the phrase "children of the evil one," simply is a Judaistic way to express a common nature. For example, in talking about all human beings who are sinners in Ephesians 2:1, it calls us all children of disobedience. It doesn't mean disobedience gave us birth, it means we share the nature of disobedience, we share the essence of what it means to be disobedient. So when it calls people

“children of the wicked one,” it simply means they have the nature of evil. They have an evil nature. In the case of the parable, they have an evil nature masked over with a Christian front, and we’re all very much aware of false forms of Christianity.

And then this same person asked a kind of a follow-up question and there’s so much being taught out there, I don’t know where all of this would come from, but the second question in the forgiveness that Jesus requires, does that include forgiving a demon?

Well the answer to that is no. We have no interaction with demons whatsoever. We are not required to do anything but flee from Satan and from the enterprises that Satan is engaged in and works through in the world...the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. But we don’t encounter demons in a personal confrontation. We have no power to forgive them. Furthermore, there is no forgiveness ever offered to demons. They were sinful once and they were confirmed in their wickedness and hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. So we don’t forgive them, and God will never forgive them. There is no redemption. There is no recovery. There is no salvation for demons. So I’m not sure where those things came from, but yes, only referring to believers, they are the children of the wicked one, or the children of disobedience, other phrases are used to describe them, children of wrath because they...their nature accords with those things and as far as demons go, we don’t forgive them, we don’t even need to bring to bear on them some kind of punishment, we don’t need to pray against them. They are completely under the sovereign power and authority of God and whatever they’re able to do of the enterprises of Satan, they do because God allows it to be done.

Okay? We’re going to let you ask your question as quickly as possible. Now give me your name first, except in your case, Frankie, I know your name, and then your question.

QUESTION: Hi, Pastor John. My brother died just three months ago in Boston and I have a family member who constantly talks about Peter being up in heaven and looking down on us and watching over us, and that kind of thing. When I try to share the gospel with her, she responds, “I’ll believe what I want to believe and you believe what you believe.”

I’ve left her a Bible, which she kind of doesn’t want to read. And since she’s obviously still grieving for my brother with the loss of him, is there a more compassionate manner I can share with her? Or could you tell me specific Scripture to share with her that she might be open to. Thank you.

JOHN: Good question, Frankie. Let me give you the straight-forward answer. What she needs to understand is the gospel. She needs to understand the gospel. And she needs to understand the truth that saves, okay? Because apart from that there is no comfort, there is no real comfort. There’s no comfort in saying, “Well maybe someday you’re going to meet your husband in hell.” There’s no

comfort in that. And there's no way you can assure her of anything.

The only thing you can do is give her the gospel. And I say this..I want to say it in the broadest sense as I can. I don't care what the exigency is, what the trouble is, what the pain is, what the loss is, what the suffering is, that is not the time to concede to their emotional weakness. That is the time to give them the gospel. And while at that time it might offend, that is the only way they will ever be saved. As you heard in the testimony tonight, faith comes by hearing the Word about Christ. So in the moments of greatest sensitivity, you give them the truth that saves. If they're offended by it, then so be it but at least they now know it.

And I would take those opportunities that seem perhaps to be the time when you want to be hypersensitive and you want to back off and make sure you don't say anything that offends anybody, I would take the very opposite approach...lovingly, graciously, kindly I would say, "I can help you to view death completely in a different way. I can show you a way to live anticipating your death with joy. I can show you a way that you know you will leave this world to an infinitely more glorious and fulfilled life." And give the gospel on that positive note, understanding that without the gospel that person is not going to be saved, then or any other time. That's your opportunity.

So, I think that's how you make the most of that moment. Comforting scriptures...where's that comfort going to come from? What verses are going to comfort a non-Christian who in her own heart has no hope, who in her own heart is insecure, having all kinds of doubts and fears, that kind of comfort that you would just bring on a very temporal and temporary basis isn't really what that person needs. So I think all those times of extremity call for the clarifying gospel. And then in the future, at whatever time the Lord...the Lord's Spirit may prompt that heart, that's going to be there because the glory of the gospel when it's presented simply and directly is not likely to be completely forgotten. Knowing you, I'm quite confident that you would have done everything in terms of love and kindness and sensitivity and tenderness and compassion to deal with her because that's the kind of person you are. I know you're that way cause you're that way with me. And so I know that's your heart.

So you couldn't fail in that. I think the only failure that can come is if in times like that we fail to make the gospel clear so that if that is the time the Spirit of God would prompt the heart that that can take place, if it's another time, at least the gospel seed is planted there, okay? Does that help? Okay. Thank you.

QUESTION: John, Jerry Boone from Ventura. I have a fellow engineer that rejects Christianity because of the problem of evil. I understand that God allows evil to bring more glory to Christ. But I have a couple of questions. Where did evil come from if God did not create it? And if God cannot be in the presence of evil, how can He have a conversation with Satan about Job?

JOHN: Those are good questions. I'll give you the best answer I can. Where did evil come from? It came from Satan. It originated in Satan. That is a remarkable thing in itself because there was no evil outside of him initially and there was no evil inside of him, right? He was a holy angel from the time of his creation which might not have been too long before his actual fall. But there was no sin outside and there was no sin inside. The only thing that we could say biblically is he became the initial cause of evil. Not God, but yet in the purposes of God He allowed that to happen. And the question, of course, that you've already answered is...why would God allow evil? And the answer was...for His own glory because His glory is put on display in His wrath and His glory is put on display in His grace to save sinners. So He would do neither...demonstrate His wrath or save sinners if there were no evil. So He allows evil to put His full glory on display.

Now the second question which is the question of "If God cannot look upon evil, how does He have a conversation with Satan after Satan has fallen?" That's all bound up in what you mean about "look upon," the Lord cannot look upon iniquity, that is to say the Lord cannot indulge Himself in that. It doesn't mean He can't see it because He sees it everywhere. He's omnipresent, right? And He's omniscient, therefore He is well aware of all evil.

Furthermore, every human being who has ever lived has a record of his evil written down and all the unregenerate who are brought before the Great White Throne will be judged according to everything that is written in the book. Not only does God know every sin that has ever been committed, God has a record of every sin that has ever been committed. There is an indelible record for every sin ever committed, except in the case of those sins that are blotted out...those sins that are removed, those sins that even the Bible says He remembers no more, and those would be the sins that are covered in the death and the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for those who have trusted in God and trusted in Christ.

So when it says He doesn't look upon it, it means that He doesn't look upon it with tolerance, He doesn't look upon it with favor. It means He doesn't engage Himself with it. He cannot look upon evil. That is, He cannot let evil go unpunished. And in the book of Habakkuk where it says that God cannot look on evil, that is a statement tied in to the fact that Habakkuk is struggling with why does God send the evil Chaldeans to judge Israel? And His answer is, because He can't tolerate the evil in Israel. So He's very aware of it. Sinners are, in reality, in His presence all the time because His presence is everywhere. So it's not out of the boundaries of God's omnipresence and omniscience to have to even deal with Satan.

He is much more personally involved with Satan and demons than most people would like to think. They all operate under His sovereign control. They have boundaries beyond which they cannot go. Class in point, Job. He can only go so far because God put boundaries on what he could do. So He is engaged with them. That's one of the reasons I don't like the phrase, "I have a personal relationship

with Christ,” well so does the devil and so do all the demons and so does everybody else in the world and it’s a very personal one, it’s not a good one, but it’s a very personal one. He is personally acquainted with everything about everyone’s life. It’s much better to say, “I have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. I have a loving relationship with Jesus Christ, He’s my Lord, I’m His slave.” Okay?

JERRY: Thank you.

JOHN: Good questions. Yes?

EDITH: Hi, my name is Edith.

JOHN: Hi, Edith.

EDITH: My question has to do with the Master’s College. One of the changes the new health law brought about is that it nationalized the entire student loan program and kicked out all the banks. And now the only way a student can get a loan to go to college is from the U.S. Department of Education. And I’m concerned about the college because does this now mean that the government can dictate what the college teaches and doesn’t teach and who they can hire?

JOHN: Edith, you always ask really good questions. Thank you...thank you, Edith.

EDITH: Is there anything we can do to help...like give you more money or something...

JOHN: Yeah, don’t worry about it...don’t worry about it. Look, I mean, if we all go to jail and end up martyrs, we’re not changing anything. Okay? We’re not changing anything.

But listen, this is the way it works, okay? The government does not give a loan to a college. The government does not give a loan to the institution. The Master’s College should never receive one penny from the U.S. Government in its history. We don’t have government money. Now that can’t be said by all schools, but we don’t take government money.

Student loan program is a personal loan by the U.S. Government to the student. That is...without regard for the school, the institution that the student goes to, the U.S. Department of Education doesn’t sit in judgment on that.

It was a few years back now, I’m thinking maybe eight or ten years ago that the United States Government...and this will surprise you...the United States Government was concerned about the problem with student loans. Why? Because the Student Loan Program ultimately ended up with class distinctions and the people that got the loans were the minorities and many of them needed those

loans, many of them shouldn't have had those loans, like house mortgages. You know, when the government starts giving away money so that everybody gets everything equally, you get a problem because like it or not, education is...is not an equal right. Playing the violin is not an equal right. Running a hundred meters at world record speed is not an equal right. Some people are faster than others, some people are more musical than others, there's a certain distinctiveness about a college student. It's not racial. It's not sex. It's not class. It's not money. But it is brains. Okay? So, it does discriminate on that level. If you try to remove all the discriminating factors out of education, you have a huge problem. So what happened to the government was the end result of this complete availability of Student Loan Programs was that the U.S. Government was in massive default, it was a bigger default than at the time the...the...the savings and loan crisis which was in the multiple billions of dollars, that the savings and loan...this was, you know, ten years ago, fifteen years ago, but the government had more losses because they were giving money to students who couldn't graduate. And when the students dropped out with twenty, thirty, forty thousand dollar student loans that were never going to be paid, the government was in default on all of that. If you want to talk about the sensibility of doing that, it doesn't make sense. For the government then to do that and the view again is the same thing...we've got to give money to everybody equally...but that's not how it works in education because not everybody can equally do the work, go out, become productive and pay the loan. But whether or not anybody read the record of fifteen years ago, I don't know, this is all about politics.

But here's what happened. The U.S. Government decided they needed to examine the issue so they put a congressional committee on this and they called for hearings in front of this congressional committee and they asked people to come and speak representing education. The amazing thing was public education was represented by public university presidents and they asked me to represent private colleges. And so I spoke to the Congressional Committee about private colleges from the private college perspective and I always speak fairly openly about what I think and I basically said what I just said to you, you give the money to anybody and everybody who gets in line, just like we now see with the house mortgage, you're going to end up with a big problem because these people can't get through the education, get out, be meaningfully employed and pay it back. And I said, "Furthermore, do you understand the partnership that you have with private institutions? If you do not fund the students who go to private schools, then you're going to fund their entire education." Right? "But if you give students who come to a college like ours, a Christian college, if you give them student loans when we admit them because we know they can do the work, and they can perform and pay back, you're only having to make a very small investment in them and an investment you'll get a return on and we'll pick up the rest of the cost. Why would you short the private institutions and bear the entire burden of education yourself?"

Well, that was my speech with a lot of other elements to it. The government understands the value of private education. They don't want to take on the whole burden, but nonetheless they began to

diminish what they would give students who came to a private college and as a result, basically California is a good example, the public education, university education in California is bankrupt, or virtually bankrupt. They wanted to do it all.

I think they've learned their lesson about the value of private education. The other thing to say is this, never in the 25 years and this is my 25th year of being at the Master's College, never in the twenty-five years of my being there has anybody from a government agency or an accrediting agency ever told us what we had to teach or what we couldn't teach...never.

Now maybe they would like to tell us that, but they never tell us that. And I have a little favorite story. I don't say much about the college, so I'm taking my opportunity for Edith's sake and my sake. I was called to the accreditation...you know, we're accredited by WASP which is the premiere accrediting agency out here, UCLA, USC, Stanford, everybody is WASP accredited. WASP is not a government agency, it is an independent audit firm an educational audit firm that is basically funded by its member institution, so we pay fees to be a part of it, everybody else does who qualifies.

Now, I went to a meeting of the twenty-five heads of this association in San Francisco and they said to me, "We're concerned about academic freedom in your school. Do you have academic freedom?"

I said, "We have academic freedom within boundaries. I think any institution would have some boundaries for its academic freedom, right? I mean, you don't have the freedom to blow up the building, for example. You don't have the freedom to rob books out of the library and never bring them back. You don't have freedom to steal things out of the science labs. So within boundaries everybody's freedoms are somewhat limited." I said, "Yes we do."

Well this person from USC said, "Well what if somebody in their search for truth decided the Bible wasn't the Word of God? What would you do?"

I said, "Fire him immediately. Terminate him immediately."

And he said, "Well how is that academic freedom?"

I said, "Well, sir, let me ask you a question. You're the professor of Ethics at USC, so let me ask you a question." I said, "Sir, if your catalog says this is what you teach and this is what you believe and that is what the student pays for when he comes and that's what he expects to hear and he gets there and you teach him something contrary to what you say you're going to teach them, how is that integrity?"

Well, ahhh...er...there was no answer. You know, I mean there was no answer. I said, "Look, we put

our catalog out there for all to see.”

Well you'll be encouraged to know, Edith, that we just received from The Western Association of Schools and Colleges the most extensive accreditation that I have ever seen in the twenty-five years that I've been involved. They gave us a ten-year accreditation, ten years. I've never seen anything longer than eight years in the time that I've been there. Maybe there's a new trend but ten years...we don't want to look at you for ten years, that's how confident we are on the quality of this education here. So I don't really have any fears about that being imminent because the quality of education is high. If the government starts imposing that kind of stuff, it probably won't show up in the curricular area first, it will probably show up in the hiring area, it will show up in human resources. And they're going to say, "You can't discriminate in your hiring against homosexuals, or whatever here at the church or at the college of anywhere else." But we would deal with that the way we deal with anything else. You judge whether we obey God or men, we will not do that and we'll take the consequence...whatever they are. (Applause)

EDITH: Lord, we thank You.

JONATHON: Hey, John, Jonathan. After having heard you preach for several years now, I've decided to become a pastor. Why? Because I want to work just one day a week, too. (Laughter)

JOHN: Right.

JONATHON: Just kidding.

JOHN: Jon's my friend, he can get away with this.

JONATHON: Thank you for sharing us...with us, this morning, that even when Jesus was dying on the cross, He was still focused on evangelizing. What would you say to a Christian who believes that evangelizing is a gift, John?

JOHN: Yeah, evangelizing is a duty, it's a responsibility. It belongs to every believer. I don't think any of us is exempt from that. I think there is a calling to be an evangelist, you know apostles, prophets, pastor/teachers and evangelists. So I think there is a special calling to go where Christ is not named. But that looks like a missionary to me, or a church planter, somebody who goes to a place where Christ is not named, wins people to Christ, starts a church. So there is a unique calling in that sense.

But all of us fall under the great commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel. All of us fall into the responsibility of Acts 1:8, "Be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth. The Holy Spirit will come upon you and empower you to do that. All of us have the

mandate to give, as we read from Peter, to give to every man who asks us a reason for the hope we have in us with fear.” We are all evangelists. We are to let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven, and we are to live in such a way that people ask questions about our transformed life and we have the opportunity to describe what the Lord has done for us. So I don’t think any Christian can legitimately say, “I don’t have any responsibility to evangelize people.”

But I think there are callings that take people to another level, a more consuming level. There’s a passion that is connected with certain unique callings from the Lord, or giftings from the Lord and there are some people who are as passionate about that as there are people who are passionate about prayer, or who are passionate about knowledge and digging down and interpreting the deep things of Scripture and enriching us all. So I think it’s all of our responsibility to know the Word. It’s all of our responsibility to pray. It’s all of our responsibility to evangelize. But there are some for whom a greater calling is given and they follow that calling and it’s, in many cases, a very consuming calling. But none of us is without the responsibility to live our lives evangelistically and to open our mouths and proclaim Christ. Thank you.

JONATHON: Why is it that when we first meet an unbeliever, we’ll talk to him about almost anything except how to be saved. Why is that, John?

JOHN: Well I...you know, I think it’s sometimes hard to cross that barrier and we’re looking for an opportunity to do that. You can’t...you can’t force-feed situations, you want to be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and you want to be sensitive to the opportunity and the situation you have, you don’t want to just throw things out there until you’ve made some kind of point of contact. I don’t agree at all with the old friendship evangelism, you know, don’t tell them anything about Christ for months and months and months. I remember somebody was telling me that you may have been hearing about one of the pastors at some big mega church and the question was asked this person, “How long would a person come to your church who was living obviously in an openly sinful style before you would ever confront that?”

And the answer was, “Oh, maybe two years. We want them to feel welcome.”

Well, I mean, that is just a bizarre approach, as if somehow some other kind of level of relationship needs to be established before the gospel can occur. And if you need an answer for that, the message I gave this morning on the thief on the cross, I mean, in the most hopeless of conditions, in the most debilitating circumstances, Jesus at His weakest and His most powerless, a conversation happens in His presence there because the truth is known. That’s why I was saying to Frankie at the beginning, you give the truth and you go for the truth when you have the opportunity to do that and the Lord will use it as He sees fit. You don’t need to suffer under the fear of man, you want to do it in

a gracious way, you want to have the sense that this is an opportunity, there's a door open for me to say these things whether or not it stays open, no matter how they might respond. I think just being sensitive to the opportunities. Yeah. Good.

CAROLINE: Hi, John, my name is Caroline. And I remember you telling the story about the conversion of your college football coach.

JOHN: Yeah...

CAROLINE: And how you didn't give up on him. I wanted to ask you about those times when we don't cast our pearls before swine and if there is indeed a time when we should walk away from people since we're all enemies of the gospel initially and only God can see people's hearts.

JOHN: I understand your question. By the way, I'll give you an update on Coach Brownfield. It's really been a remarkable story. He was converted at the age of 80, some of you know the story, I won't go through the whole thing, after rejecting the gospel.

But in direct response to your question, he never mocked it. He never treated it with scorn. I never had the sense that he was going to trample it, tear it up. You know the difference? That's what our Lord was talking about. You don't cast your pearls before swine, they'll tear them into shreds. That was never that. There was always a sense of respect, a sense of conviction but strong resistance. And as long as it was that and not scorn, I don't waste it on people who heap scorn on the gospel.

And just to give you an update. Some little things that have been special graces that have happened, his heart prayer...and you can pray for him...is he wants to come here and be baptized. But he..he can't recover enough from these devastating surgeries and treatments that he had with the serious heart surgery, he can't get strong enough to come here. So I'm pretty close to baptizing him in his pool nearest to his house and may wind up doing that. But he wants to come here cause he wants to give his testimony. And we're working on a way to do that.

But one of the cute stories about him was he called me one day and he said, "Johnny Mac, Johnny Mac," he said, "you've got to hear this...you've got to hear this." He said, "One of the things they told me since I've been here," and he's been in the hospital, he was in the hospital for like six months, that's a long time...more maybe, in the hospital trying to recover. And one of the things that happened in all the heroic life-saving stuff they did was they destroyed his ability to swallow. So he's never had a meal since before surgery, can't swallow a drink, fluid, liquid, anything, so everything goes in through some port, the only way he can be fed.

So I was saying to the Lord...he said, "You're going to like this...you're going to like this." He was

saying to the Lord, "Lord, how am I going to live the rest of my life without ever eating a meal? Man, it's going to be hard. I'll never have another steak, I'll never have another baked potato." He's going on listing all the things he likes. And he said...he said, "I didn't know what..." so I said to him one day, I said, "Okay, Lord, I have another prayer. You've got to give me a sign that I can handle this. You've got to give me a sign that I can handle this."

And he said, "They decided they were going to let me out of the hospital and they're going to let me go home with an attendant who would be able to, you know, get the food and feed me. So they came to get me after all these months and I was so glad to be going home." And he's single, he's always been. So he says, "The guy is pushing me down the hall, taking me out of the hospital and he's pushing me in this wheelchair and all of a sudden he said, "I smell the worst stench I've ever smelled in my life." I thought we must have gone through an open sewer, it was terrible. And I said to the guy pushing me, I said, "Can you smell that? That is the worst smell I have ever smelled in my life. Something terrible has broken, something's wrong in the hospital."

And he said...you know what he said to me, he said, "No, coach, we just went by the hospital cafeteria." He said, I said, "Lord, thank You, that's my sign. You have removed all desire for food."

And so I went to see him in his little apartment and spent some time with him, he wanted me to pray with him, holding hands and just praying together. So he's doing well and I'm going to go see him very soon again.

But in regard to your question, there was never any hostility toward the gospel. And I think that's the turning point, when you know they're going to shred it, they're going to attack it, they're going to tear it up.

I received a letter this week, I just saw it on my desk, from a guy who said, "You've read my writings before, I wrote articles in the past criticizing you about this and about that and I was writing for an evangelical, I don't know, magazine, or periodical." He said, "But...he said...I've rejected it all and I've become an atheist and I just want to set you straight." And it went on with about a three-page thing, none of which I read because he's an apostate. His last little line before me reading everything he said to dismantle what I teach and attack me, was, "You probably won't read this because you know I'm an apostate." He was dead on. I didn't read it, nor would I read it, nor would I answer it. That's where the line is crossed, okay?

CAROLINE: Thank you, John.

ANDY: Pastor John, my name is Andy and...

JOHN: Hi, Andy.

ANDY: Ah I pray for your ministry every single night.

JOHN: Now I want to know, what country are you from?

ANDY: From Sri Lanka.

JOHN: How did you get the name Andy? Nobody in Sri Lanka is named Andy.

ANDY: Actually my name is Anura.

JOHN: That's what I thought. You are the only Andy from Sri Lanka, I like that. Go ahead.

ANDY: Actually two years ago when I walked through those doors I was a rebellious man and then I got saved through your ministry so I pray for you every single night...

JOHN: Thank you, Andy.

ANDY: That there would be more conversions. Really my passion in life is evangelism. So I want to ask a question about evangelism. You know, countries like China and the Middle East and the Third World countries, especially Sri Lanka, there's so much persecution there, people are thrown into prison, people are killed for evangelism. Right now in Sri Lanka they're passing a law that if you evangelize you can go to prison.

But I see there is so much evangelism happening in those countries, even under those threats, people are not afraid to evangelize. But I see with all the freedom to evangelize in this country there's hardly people having an urgency to evangelize. And also, I want to ask you how could I...how could I...how could I motivate a brother or a sister with indifferent evangelism, to evangelize more?

JOHN: Well, Andy, first of all, I know that's your passion cause we talk about it. And I would just say to you, "Look, the best way to motivate other people to fulfill that passion is to do it yourself and be the model and the example that they learn to follow. But I would say something else with regard to the very important comments and observations you make about Sri Lanka and places like that. Wherever there's serious persecution of Christians, all the phony Christians disappear, right? They're just not there. The only Christians that are going to take the heat, face the persecution, are the real ones, right? And real Christians tend to be evangelistic and they have no fear of prison and they have no fear of death. They have a greater fear of God than that, and they have a greater fear of sin than that and a greater fear of disobedience than that. So I think in America you would find, if you stripped

away all the superficial people who claim to be Christians, you would probably find the same degree of faithfulness here among the true believers who share the glories of the gospel of Jesus Christ as you would find anywhere in the world. It's just that relative to the number of people who claim to be Christians, the number who aggressively communicate the gospel are few and far behind. And I think even today those people who are true Christians, who should be more aggressively communicating the gospel, are sort of anesthetized in to not doing it, sort of subdued because their preachers have decided that you can't be bold, and you can't be confrontive and you can't present the gospel and you can't confront sin and you can't talk about judgment and hell and all of that, because they don't ever do it from the pulpit.

So I think they just...they just tranquilize all their people and they go around in a kind of Christian stupor, not really like soldiers who should be at the high levels of alert, looking for every spiritual opportunity to fight the battle. So I think it's not just a western or American thing, I think true Christians everywhere understand that, but I think where you have Christians that are persecuted the purest of the pure remain and they understand the price. They're moved and motivated by the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and they are faithful even to the death.

I mean, look at China, the church in China. You mentioned it. It's...it numbers in the hundreds of millions of true believers all growing underground during the time of Mao and Chinese Communism flourishing.

Look at Japan. Japan is the neighboring country. Two hundred and fifty missions, three hundred...three hundred and fifty mission boards from America and the U.K. in Japan for literally a century or more going back to people like Hudson Taylor, and you have virtually no Christians in Japan. In China, no missionaries and you have hundreds of millions of believers in a persecuted environment. In Japan, in an environment, very different, economically different, sociologically different, none. Some of those are in the providences in the power of God, but I've always been of the conviction that where persecution occurs, the church is purified, the church is fueled by that persecution to be faithful to its Lord, it is empowered by the Holy Spirit and aggressively evangelizes and the church flourishes. I think if governments wanted to stamp out Christianity, they need to do one thing...make it the state religion. That will do it every time. That will wipe out the real thing, make everybody a Christian, do what Constantine did, baptize everybody and call them all Christians, and it disappears.

But if you want it to flourish, then start to persecute it, you'll fuel the church. The pure church will remain and the pure church is the powerful church, okay?

ANDY: Thank you.

JOHN: Good question.

DORIS: Hi, John, my name is Doris.

JOHN: Hi, Doris.

DORIS: Foremost, thank you for your faithfulness. Two questions. Israel is facing heavy opposition of threats from Iran and Russia. Where does this fit in the prophetic time line before Jesus returns? And the second is, Who is the world in John 3:16?

JOHN: Who is the world in John 3:16? Humanity. Let's just take that one, first of all.

"God so loved the world." Humanity. "That He gave His only begotten Son." It doesn't mean every human being who has ever lived because we know that God doesn't savingly love every human being who has ever lived. Okay? So it's humanity. God loves humanity. And He gave the world a Savior. The world only has one Savior, in that sense, Jesus is the only Savior the world has. So it's the world of humanity.

Obviously He doesn't love the whole world savingly or He would save them all. He loves His own to the max, John 13:1, loves His own to the limit, to the max. So when we see the word "world" we always have to find the context to qualify what it means. But the best way to understand it is it's humanity, He loves mankind, He loves humanity and so He gave to humanity a Savior. That's in a general sense.

Now your first question, with regard to the threats on Israel coming from Iran or Afghanistan, or any other source, I think there's one thing we need to understand that nothing specifically going on in Israel right now is connected to biblical prophecy. Okay? This...this might surprise you. The fact that Israel exists is certainly prophetic, the fact that they're in their land is setting the stage. But the motions and movements in the Middle East and in Europe, you just...you just can't get too specific. I remember when there were ten nations in the European Confederacy, European Economic Community, people were saying that's the ten horns, the ten toes, Daniel's image. But then, all of a sudden, there were twenty. Now we've got a problem here. So we don't want to do a lot of headline exegesis of prophetic passages.

And there's another thing to think about, too, and this is a very important one. Israel is still under the divine curse, okay? Israel is still under the divine curse. I was asked, the other day, if I would...if there's anything I could do to help some Arab pastors? And I was talking with a guy in our church, John Azar who has been in our church for a dozen years and he's Arabic by descent, but it's wonderful to spend some time with him. And I said, "Well we're doing what we can to help them.

Books are coming out in Arabic now, the Study Bible will be out in the summer. Give them good tools for their instruction.”

But he said, “Some of the Arab pastors feel that you’re pro-Israel, maybe...maybe it would be good if there was a way to communicate with them.” I said, “Sure, let’s do this. Let’s have an Arab pastor’s lunch here and they can ask me anything they want and I will explain to them this, I am not pro-national Israel, I am pro-prophetic Israel. Do you see a difference there? I understand the future prophetic purpose of God unfolding in Israel during the time of the Tribulation when they look on Him whom they have pierced and they mourn for Him and a fountain of cleansing is opened and Israel is saved. Two thirds of the rebels are judged and one third of Israel, and that’s the remaining nation goes into the Kingdom and receives the promise of the Kingdom given to David and Abraham in the future. That is the Israel of God that is blessed. Up until that, Israel is still under divine judgment.

So, I...I will not go so far as to say that God is going to protect Israel because He has some obligation. They’re not a righteous people. They have no acknowledged their Messiah. They are not obedient to the Word of God. And they are under a divine curse from God. They are set aside. They are cut off. The church is grafted in, Jews and Gentiles who believe make up the church. But as an entity, there could be another disaster happen. There could be another holocaust. There could be another form of judgment that could come from Iran, could come from some other source. We can’t assume that that won’t happen because in the future Antichrist is going to amass his armies against Israel even then. So Israel is in an unprotected position before God until they turn to their Messiah. Then they become completely protected. So I don’t think we want to rush to any assumptions about the current condition of Israel. God will preserve the people, the nation, the human strain to the final conversion. But through those years there may well be more difficulties and more challenges as they suffer much of the same kind of thing they suffered since the Babylonian Captivity when they were hauled off and treated mercilessly. So there is no protection on Israel at this point. Okay? Good.

PETER: Hi, Dr. MacArthur, my name is Peter.

JOHN: Hi, Peter.

PETER: I have a question concerning teaching and church leadership and specifically it comes from James 3:1. What is that stricter judgment that it is referring to there? And in comparison to somebody who is not a church leader?

JOHN: Yeah, I think...you know, James 3:1 says, “Stop being so many teachers for theirs is a stricter judgment.” I think we are all judged not only for our sins but for the impact of our sins. We extend our judgment as we extend our sin, right? I mean, we become...we become more culpable, the more far-reaching our sins are. And the one who teaches, therefore, is the one who extends his influence

because I'm a teacher, I am not only responsible for what I say, or what I believe, but I am responsible for how it affects all the people that I tell to believe it. So I just think the stricter judgment comes because if you're going to be a teacher of the Word of God, there is this....there is this unparalleled obligation to faithfulness, to faithfulness to living what you teach and faithfulness to teaching accurately the Word of God.

So this is not something you want to rush in to. James is talking in the area of the tongue, realizing that because you've become a spokesman for God, because you are given the position of that representative, or delegated authority, people are going to listen to you and they're going to believe you and, boy, we know that happens. False teachers get large crowds, don't they? Huge crowds. And we are...we are certainly responsible for what we teach. And I think when it comes to judgment time, false teachers are going to have a far-greater stricter judgment than just your average run-of-the-mill sinners because they spread their sin far and wide, and many of them did in the name of God and the name of Christ. So I just think it's a...it's a set of brakes on a person who might rush in to doing this. I mean, it's not supposed to terrify you to the point where you would never do it, but it is supposed to warn you that you better have that calling on your life and be ready to apply yourself both in your living and in your teaching to be faithful to that.

PETER: So does that mean that somebody who is not a teacher then, as somebody is a teacher in front of the Bema Seat of Christ, they're going to be evaluated differently or not?

JOHN: Well, first of all, it's not even specific to the Bema Seat of Christ. I think it's just a...it's an axiom, it's a self-evident truth that there's a stricter judgment for people who have a wider influence. I mean, it's axiomatic. Do you know what I mean? It's self-evident. So there's going to be...nobody would have to explain that, there's a stricter judgment to people who have a wider influence. I mean, if you..if you perpetrate your..your...your crime on a massive amount of people, there....they're obviously at every level would be a stricter judgment on that kind of thing. I don't think it's saying to us that when we go to heaven we're going to face a judgment. But when God views and renders a verdict, let's say, on anybody's ministry, it's going to be a stricter set of standards applied to the person who was in the position of influence. Okay?

PETER: Thank you.

JAMES: Pastor John, my name is James Chung. My family and I have been at Grace Church for about five years.....

JOHN: Thank you, James.

JAMES: And it's been an amazing time and I want to thank you for your ministry and let you know

that we love you very much.

JOHN: Thank you.

JAMES: I have a daughter who is four and..four years old, and the answer to this question is something that my wife and I want to pray for in the future and...what are some examples of questions you would ask to a young man your daughter would bring home as a possible suitor? To...to...to gauge and to discern where his relationship is with God?

JOHN: Well, I've asked those questions. I'm familiar with those questions. You know, one of the things that was a blessing to our family was that all of the...all of the kids that are kids married were part of their lives through school days, through church life, through college experience, so they sort of grew on us with time. There were no strangers in the mix. And I think maybe the background principle is this, your children are going to marry their friends. So the most important thing you can do is control who their friends are. Okay? Patricia and I were completely devoted to this early on from the standpoint of influence. We were very concerned with the young children and the junior highers and the high schoolers at which ever age you were talking about, that our kids spent their time with because we knew they would tend to gravitate toward the behavior of their friends, they would deepen those friendships and they would start making choices for the future out of that circle of friends. So it was very, very important for us to watch those people and make judgments.

I don't want to reveal all the family secrets but I can remember sitting on the bed with one of my sons and saying, "You're not going to be allowed to see that young lady again." That's a...that was a hard line. I mean, that was the guillotine on that relationship. That's it...long before it would ever have gone to something close to being married. But that was the direction...that's the direction all those relationships tend to go...friends, and then the group of the friends it starts to sort itself out a little bit to a life partner. So I think the best thing you can do is not a series of questions but a very careful diligence as to who their associates are and who their friends are. And what you're going to learn is what they're attracted to. And you have to make some....you have to help them along the way to be attracted to the right kind of things, the right kind of things mean people of character, people of spiritual commitment. That's the best that you can do. Okay?

JAMES: Thank you.

JOHN: Well we're going to have to hurry through this. I was afraid we wouldn't get to everybody. We're not going to even..I think we have time for maybe a few more, just a couple more questions. I know I give long answers, but that's the way it is.

ANDREW: Hi, Pastor MacArthur, my name is Andrew. I know that the purpose of this is really for us

to ask you a question but I've always wondered about what you would ask. So here's my question. If you were a disciple of the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry and you are in there with the Apostles, what would your question be?

JOHN: I would have several questions. Question number one, "Lord, can You please tell us more about divorce because it has been so hard to figure out every single case, with just a few more sentences we'd have this thing nailed down." Okay? That would be one of my questions.

The other question, "Lord, give me just a thirty-second resolution between human volition and divine sovereignty? Just let me solve every Calvinist's dilemma? Just give me thirty seconds on that one." And, Lord, if we can't glimpse heaven, could we just see a trailer, could we just see...because I think...I think it would just wrap everybody in such glorious anticipation that it would take...evangelism would take a completely different approach. I mean, questions like that. That's what comes to my mind.

I think just a little bit more of clarification on a few things. And I think maybe the biggest question I would ask...this has always been a question on my mind is, How is it that You can tolerate such abuse of Your holy name and how is it that You can tolerate such abuse of Your holy Word? You know, I live and breathe for the truth and it is...it is most traumatizing to me when people depart from the truth, tamper with the truth, misrepresent the truth, misinterpret the truth, manipulate the truth, use it for their own selfish goals and self-promotion. I just wonder why it is that God suffers such indignity at the hands of people who name the name of Christ, who just devastate His Word. That goes to the question asked earlier, and I think we'll someday stand in judgment for that misrepresentation.

Those are the kinds of things that I mull around in my mind.

ANDREW: Okay, thank you.

JOHN: For now I think we'll go with this gentleman and this young lady and we'll catch the rest of you next time. Thank you. Sir.

WALTER: My name is Walter. I've been listening to your teaching on Matthew. And on Matthew 6:10 where it talks about the disciples' prayer, it says that, you know, "Your will be done." And you speak about God's will and you give a particular aspect of God's will and you call it "God's unfulfilled will." And you give an example on how God wants all men to be saved but this doesn't happen. And my question is, what prevents that part of God's will to be fulfilled? What prevents it from being...from becoming truth?

JOHN: Well maybe I need to clarify this. I haven't listened to that tape in ever so it's been a long time

since I said those words and I'm not sure exactly what I said. Probably what I said was that God finds no pleasure in the death of the wicked because that's what the Bible says. But if God willed that all men be saved, all men would be saved in the pure sense of the Word. But God does not will that all men be saved. He wills that some be saved. And that's why some are saved. So He finds no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but His saving will acts in behalf of those whom He has chosen.

That, of course, is every time we have a Q&A we get eventually back to that question because it's so counter-intuitive to human fallen beings. We think we...one of the elements of our fallenness is we think we should make every decision ourselves and that nobody else should make a decision for us. But that's...that's a reflection of our fallenness, that we have trouble understanding the reasonableness of God making a decision, even though we know He is God. I mean, if your boss made a decision that affected you, you really wouldn't have a problem with that, he's your boss. Well God's the boss of everybody and everything and He has made decisions.

There are other ways to look at the will of God. There are behaviors that God wills that are not fulfilled and that's what I would have referred to. God...God wills for us to do righteous things, never for us to sin. So in that sense His will is unfulfilled. In the big scheme, redemptively His will is fulfilled. And even our failures and our sins He provides for within His will and that's part of the mystery of it. Even though He doesn't will us to sin, He wills our sinning to fit in to His ultimate purpose for us and for His own glory. Okay?

WALTER: Thank you.

EMILY: Good evening, Pastor MacArthur, my name is Emily.

JOHN: Hi, Emily.

EMILY: I just have a question. Are you aware of the Twilight Series?

JOHN: Am I aware of the Twilight Series? Yes, I'm living it. (Laughter) This is it. No, I'm not aware...I don't know what you mean by the Twilight Series.

EMILY: Okay, it's a book about vampires and werewolves...

JOHN: Oh, one of my favorite subjects, vampires and werewolves.

EMILY: Yes.

JOHN: I don't think I've ever read ten words about vampires and werewolves but anyway....

EMILY: I was just wondering, do you think vampires and werewolves are satanic?

JOHN: Well, first of all, they don't exist.

EMILY: Right.

JOHN: So do I think it's satanic? Sure, absolutely. I wouldn't allow any child at all to get anywhere near that kind of stuff because what it does...they've got enough evil in the real world and what it does is create a horrifying unreal world, a fantasy world where you can get away with even worst things.

You know, there are certain confines in the real world? You know what I mean?

EMILY: Yes.

JOHN: In the real world, certain behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable. In the real world, there's a level of outrage. But in the world of vampires and werewolves, from what I understand, you can fly through the air and bite off somebody's head and spit it out, or you can morph yourself into some kind of a horrible ghastly creature that can wreak havoc and massacre cities and people. That is evil the way Satan would want it to be in an unrestrained world. But he can't pull it off in this world because he is restrained. But in the fantasy world, Satan is unrestrained. And I think that's all that is, that is a fantasy world in which Satan runs unrestrained. And I...I mean, this comes down to video games, this comes down to books, this comes down to movies, anything that takes people into a fantasy world takes them to a place of danger because there are no boundaries there are no limits for behavior in the fantasy world. And that is why we have the kind of behavior in the real world that goes beyond these bounds to a degree that we've never had in human....in our lifetime in the past because people finally obliterate the line between the fantasy world and the real world and they turn in to monsters that do horrendous things that even appalls the criminal element in society.

So I think everything needs to be done by a parent to keep your children out of the fantasy world, keep them out of the unreal world (applause). Emily, that was a really good question.

EMILY: Thank you.

JOHN: Thank you. God bless you. Okay, that's an interesting note. I've never been asked that question, Emily. That was good. But the answer was there, wasn't it? Boy. That's one of the amazing things about doing what I do, an answer I've never heard myself give. That's not inspiration, it's just common sense, huh? Okay.

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