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

Questions and Answers, Part 57
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 70-29

JOHN: What a joy to hear the testimonies tonight from these young people as we often do and the testimony of the grace of the Lord in their lives. I think you are probably fairly well aware of the fact that there is a rather large segment of the Christian church and even the evangelical church that believes in infant baptism. Something borrowed from, or retained from Roman Catholicism, that somehow baptizing an infant makes them a child of the Covenant with varying possible results. Everything from it's merely a symbol to what is called presumptive regeneration...the doctrine of presumptive regeneration which you find among some Reformed people is that if a child has been baptized, you presume that child is regenerate. And since you presume that the child is regenerate, you treat the child as you would a regenerate person. And it leads to what is known as paedo-communion. You give your infant child communion, put the elements of communion in a blender and feed it to your child. Of course, this is utterly foreign to the Scripture but there's a growing interest in this paedo-communion as there is a large segment, as I said, of the Christian church that hold on to infant baptism.

In contrast to that, all that the Scripture knows is that you profess Christ as Lord and then you are baptized. And, of course, you heard testimonies tonight from young people who all were raised in a Christian family with no apparent benefit apart from the knowledge of the gospel. There's no saving benefit in being a Christian family. One has to come to faith in Jesus Christ alone. I used to say that when you enter the narrow gate, you enter alone...you don't come in with your family, or in some kind of group association.

So it's wonderful to make much of Christian baptism. It's a very, very, very foundational act of obedience. "Repent and be baptized." That was the sermon of Peter on the Day of Pentecost. Nothing has changed. Repent, believe, be baptized. It's subsequent to salvation. But baby baptism grew up in the Constantinian version of Christianity that started in the fourth century. It became a way to make everybody automatically a Christian so that the church and the national power were wed together and you had total control over everyone and the Reformers for some, I think, ill-conceived reasons hung on to that because they were threatened by the fact that there were these Catholic countries where everybody was baptized and everybody was a part of the Christian church. But when the Reformation came, there were these Protestant countries that didn't have that kind of sort of uniformity and so the battle was on as to whether or not they should make everybody automatically a Christian, in that way they could have uniform control over everybody, and they opted out to do that. And it's also true that at that period of time, there were people called Anabaptists from anabaptizo

which means to re-baptize. That was a slur, they were called rebaptizers because they affirmed that infant baptism was wrong and unbiblical and that people should be baptized after they confessed Christ. So they went around rebaptizing people who had been baptized as infants. And sad reality in church history was that those Reformed people, those people of the Reformation, who were against the Anabaptists, drowned many of them. You want to be baptized, do you? We will hold a one-way Baptism. You go down and you never come up alive.

So this was a...this was a bloody battle in the period of the Reformation over Baptism. But the testimony of Scripture is crystal-clear. There is no such thing as an infant Baptism anywhere in the Bible...no place.

And some people say, “Well infant Baptism is the New Testament equivalent to circumcision.” So whenever that comes up, I say, “Okay, where does the Bible make that connection. You can’t just say it is that, where does the Bible make that connection?”

Well the answer is, it doesn’t make that connection anywhere. So it’s a wonderful thing to follow the simple principles of Scripture. You repent, you believe, and you’re baptized. And that’s what we heard from those wonderful young people tonight. That’s just a great, great, great blessing. Thank you so much for those testimonies.

Well, now we have some time for some questions and alright, ma’am, please give me your name first.

CARMEN: Hi, my name is Carmen.

JOHN: Hi, Carmen.

CARMEN: First I have to say thank you, Pastor, for your teaching.

JOHN: You’re welcome.

CARMEN: It’s given me a lot of accountability every Sunday when I hear you. I have a request and a question. My request is, if you can say something, we have so many kids here from Grace that are going to college, very soon, if you could say something to them because most of them, they think they are Christians because they come here since they were little ones, or because they have Christian parents. You can encourage them. Now they are going to college without being...making any commitment to God or being baptized. And my question is...

JOHN: Well let’s stop there for a minute, okay?

CARMEN: Okay.

JOHN: Yeah, that's obvious. What you're saying, and I know what you fear and it's probably pretty close to you, is that they have been sheltered here, they have been kept in a protective environment, they've been protected by the presence of their parents, you know, 1 Corinthians 7 says, "The unbeliever is sanctified in the presence of the believer." Just the blessing that comes down on believing parents spills over on the kids, even if they're unbelieving kids. So they've had that family influence of Christianity. They've had that in the church. They've had not only expectations from parents, but they've had peer expectations, and you heard testimonies tonight about kids who grew up in the church here who walk the walk on the outside because that they knew was expected of them, and that would be a way in which they could be accepted by the group and all of that.

Of course, the issue is if you never come to a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and you step out of all of those protective influences, you are unsheltered and you are unprotected. And, of course, to step into the situation that you're going to step into in a secular college is to step into a situation where all the standards are completely different than everything you've experienced in the church...everything. Christianity is on trial, virtually every class, or most every class, it is under attack. Christian morals, Christian standards, Christian beliefs, Christians convictions are ridiculed, as well as questioned, undermined, all of those kinds of things.

So it's a very, very dangerous situation for a young mind because an unconverted person will gravitate more to that internally than he will gravitate to the influences of the gospel. If you reject the gospel, then essentially you're against the gospel, right? Jesus says, "You're with Me or against Me." So if young people who have been raised in it have not committed themselves to the truth of the gospel and embraced Christ as Lord and Savior, they maintain a position of being enemies of the gospel and that is to say they will welcome all those things that undermine that truth.

So it is a very, very dangerous situation they step into and I think young people need to be warned about that because it is not going to be a neutral environment. The world is never a neutral environment and when you go into a classroom, perhaps Psalm 1 is the best way to understand it. "How blessed is the man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers." That is not a good place to be, sitting in a classroom with a scoffing professor. So I do think you need to warn your children about that, that you don't need to distrust the grace of God and the goodness of God and if you're having to let your children go into that secular kind of environment, this can wrap up your prayer life significantly. But many people have come to Christ. There will be Christian influences there. There will be Christians around whatever school that person goes to. But the danger comes because the unconverted heart resonates with the things that assault Christianity. They're more comfortable with the lies than they are with the truth. That's the nature of being unconverted, as you heard Nick, I think, said, "The natural man doesn't understand the things of God. They're...he's blind to those things. But he's not blind to the things of this world." So that is an important warning.

Okay...the question.

CARMEN: Thank you. And the question is, what do you think about, or what can you say about kids, girls or boys, fifteen years old dating, or having a boyfriend or a girlfriend. When do you think is a good age for them to start a relationship or dating, or commitment?

JOHN: Well, it's not fifteen in my judgment.

CARMEN: Thank you.

JOHN: (Applause) Next question.... Yeah, the last thing you want to do is let fifteen year olds be alone together. That's not smart because immaturity and strong desires don't make for good results, good outcomes. I think it's important to protect those kinds of situations from happening. I think it's fine for them to be...to get together collectively in groups, to go places, do things, be involved in activities, but not to begin an isolated relationship. I think those kinds of things...given the society in which we live in and the influences that are all around us that excite all the wrong kinds of things in young people, I don't think high school is the right place for that either. I think it's a very, very unusual, mature Christian, high-school student, who can cultivate a godly relationship with someone because if you start that situation in high school, it's not likely you're going to get married for three or four years and that is an explosive situation...to try to keep young people pure in a long-term relationship and to start with the fact that they're immature at the outset. So I think having your young people be together socially, make friends. And the best kind of relationship is not a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship. The best kind of relationship is a friendship that matures and blooms into love. So you have to exercise control over who their friends are. I don't think it's healthy to let them isolate themselves from other people. And I think you have to try to instruct them that what they're looking for is character.

You know, this is the greatest lesson you'll ever teach your young people...you are looking for a person of character. You are looking for a godly person who has character. And by character, I mean conviction, strong beliefs and lives a God-honoring life. That's the kind of person you are looking for. And all the other kinds of things, you know, there are people like that and the romance factor follows that somewhere down the road. What you want to begin to do is cultivate friendships with people of character, people of spiritual character and conviction. That's what you want your young person to do. That's very far away from teen-age crushes and all of that kind of thing. Okay? Okay, good. Thanks.

PHIL: Hey, Pastor John. My name is Phil.

JOHN: Hi, Phil.

PHIL: I was in line like two weeks ago, I wanted to ask a really theological question, but one of my friends was saying that I should ask something that's really like subjective, opinionated, you know, because I might not get...we might not get a chance to do that. So I think I have it and I think it's a good one.

JOHN: Okay.

PHIL: Yeah, so this church, I think, has a really good...and I think you would agree...has a really good way of discipling each other, keeping each other accountable, even to the point where I've seen you openly rebuke people from the pulpit because they've gone through that system that is biblical and yet not repented. And so that's really good. I actually want to come here on behalf of everybody and ask like...what would you say if you had seen any friends in your very congregation, or like the weakest part of us, like as far as being Christlike. And then also, to maybe end on a good night, it's like the strength.

JOHN: Okay, say your question in one short sentence.

PHIL: What is the weakest part of your congregation, basically?

JOHN: Well, yeah, what is the weakest part of the congregation?

Simply stated, the weakest part of any congregation are those who are least sanctified, okay? Because you have to parallel weakness with sin, right? Well, okay. So those who are the least sanctified would be the weakest, that is to say they are the weaker brother. They haven't yet matured. They haven't grown up to understand both their privileges and their freedoms. So that would also mean that the weakest part of your congregation would be the newest believers, would be brand-new babies.

If you take 1 John chapter 2, and this is a very definitive portion of Scripture, 1 John chapter 2. The Apostle John is segmenting believers and he's segments them into three categories. He says, "I write unto you, little children, because you know the Father." Okay? That would be the category that would be those who are most immature, the weakest. You know the Father...that's kind of spiritual Dada. They know God but not a lot more. "I write unto you, little children," okay?

Now what defines "little children" is...let me borrow from the Apostle Paul, "Be no more children," Ephesians 4, "tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine." The problem with being a child is you know the Lord but you don't know much else. So you are susceptible to error, you are susceptible to false teaching, you are susceptible then to various kinds of sins because you don't have a full set of conviction, you don't have a full set of understanding. So those are spiritual children. But we all start there, okay? So it's not wrong to be there, it's...it's right to be there. That's where

everybody starts.

The second level in 1 John 2:12 to 14, “I write unto you, young men, because you know the word and you have overcome the wicked one.” So the second level of spiritual development are those who are doctrinally strong. They’ve overcome being tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, being susceptible to error and misunderstanding because they’re just babes, they haven’t been fed, they haven’t been developed.

Spiritual young men are sound in theology. You’ve overcome the wicked one because the wicked one is primarily disguised as an angel of light, he’s a purveyor of lies and false doctrine. Now I look at our congregation and I see people who are weak in the faith. I mean, they’re here and I thank the Lord that they’re here and they’re growing because this is the place where you don’t stay that way, at least you don’t need to stay that way because all the resources are provided.

They would tend to be the ones who generally speaking would need the greatest amount of attention. You know, we have FOF, Fundamentals of the Faith, that’s 13 weeks of intense training that is basically small groups digging deeply into sound theology and they tend to be either non-believers who are curious, but for the most part, new Christians, weak who need to grow into spiritual young men who understand theology and doctrine.

Then the third category, he says, “I write unto you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning.” What that means is you’ve gone to the level to understand the vastness of eternal God. That’s spiritual maturity. Those are the people who go behind the theology to understand God, to grasp the greatness and the glory of God.

So John breaks down those people who are part of the church, part of the Kingdom into those three categories. So it would be true that the greatest attention in the church, it needs to be given by the spiritual young men and the spiritual fathers to the spiritual children, to help move them through that pattern, moving them up from being children who are susceptible to error, to be strong in theology. But you need to get pass that as well, pass just knowing your theology to knowing the God who is the living reality behind that theology, okay? So that’s the way you would look at the church.

Now, apart from those general categories, the attention of the church inevitably focuses on the people who are sinful. There’s nothing in the New Testament that says when you find somebody in your church who is really living to the honor of the Lord, do these three steps with them. No, no, they’re...they don’t need anything, in a sense. I mean, they need to keep growing, they haven’t attained, they haven’t arrived. But it does say when somebody’s in sin...do these things with them. So the attention of the church is driven at those who sin and the reason is because the Lord is concerned about the purity and the holiness of the church, for the church’s own sake, for the usefulness of the church and the testimony of the church, okay? Good question, Phil. Thank you. Yes.

GREG: Hi, Pastor John, my name is Greg.

JOHN: Hi, Greg.

GREG: And my question is regarding the Christian life...particularly the flesh. In Romans 7, you know, really hits home but Paul always says something amazing in verse 24 where he calls the flesh the body of death. So can you explain exactly what is the flesh?

JOHN: Sure.

GREG: And I have a follow-up question.

JOHN: Okay. Stay right there and I'll make an attempt at that.
Romans chapter 7 is a very definitive, definitive text and it must be understood accurately or you can be confused about the reality of spiritual life. So that's the place you want to go to ask the question that's on your mind.

And the issue really begins in verse 14 of that chapter, it's the back half of that chapter.
Paul says this, and he is a believer here, he's not only a believer, he's a mature believer. He's not only a mature believer, he's an Apostle of Jesus Christ and the supreme teacher of theology on the planet. He has arrived. He is a spiritual father who has plumbed the depths, the deep knowledge of God. But he says this, "I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin." Which is a stunning statement for a believer to make. It's similar to the one he makes in 1 Timothy where he says, "I'm the chief of sinners.

But what he is saying is, I recognize that I am still of flesh. All that means is I am human, I still retain all the fallenness of my humanity, okay? I still recognize the fallenness of my humanity. And it is not just there, it is there powerfully so that I am still in bondage to it. I can't fully free myself from it.

And then he begins to kind of parse that, dissect it to tell us...how does it show up? What do you mean you're in bondage to sin? You're the great Apostle, you know, you're the lover of Christ. What are you talking about? You're the guy who said my conscience is clear, I know nothing against myself. I've lived godly and in sincerity before you and in the world. You're the guy who says your conscience doesn't accuse you. What are you talking about here?

Well he's saying there is still the reality of the fact that I am human and although I've been converted, and regenerated and born again, I have not yet been relieved of my humanity. And it shows up like this. What I am doing, I don't understand. I'm not practicing what I'd like to do, I'm doing the very thing I hate.

So the way this flesh shows up is there are things I desire to do, there are things I desire not to do and I find myself having a hard time with both of those. I end up doing what I don't want to do and I end up not doing what I want to do. So the flesh which is humanity, just our remaining, fallen humanity, that's what that is, in all its parts, not just the actual physical body, but the humanity that's in our brain as well. All of our humanness. He says I do the very thing I do not want to do. But he says this, very important in verse 17, "It's no longer I who am the one doing it, it is sin that is in me." And here he bifurcates himself, in a sense. Here he splits himself and identifies an I, an ego, a new person. This is Galatians 2:20, "I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I." There's a new I and this new I has holy longings, holy aspirations, holy desires, wants to do what's right, wants not to do what's wrong. And he's in touch with that reality. That's the experience of a true believer. You...you....you want to do the things that are right, you want to honor the Lord, you want to express your love to Him in obedience and holiness.

"But sin dwells in me." Then he goes further and says, "I know nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh." In other words, there is this all-bad humanity. Flesh simply means humanity, that is all bad. There's nothing in it that is good in the sense of being acceptable to God. So willing he says is present in me. The things I want are the things that are right and good and holy, but the doing of the good is not. Then he goes through the cycle again. "The good that I want, I don't do. I practice the very evil I don't want. But if I'm doing the very thing I don't want, I'm no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."

So here's the way I view this and a simple way to understand it. A believer is a new creation with new longings, new aspirations, new desires, new impulses incarcerated in unredeemed humanity. And for us, to get all of that that is right and good and holy and righteous out is a challenge because it has to penetrate through our humanity and our humanity makes war against that...that internal...

GREG: So the humanity is the body of death?

JOHN: Well I'll get to that point in just a second, I may be taking too long.

So he says the principle of evil is present in me, it is in my humanity. But I concur with the Law of God in my inner man. So there's an inner reality, a new life, a new person, a new creation with all these holy longings incarcerated.

Now why does he call it the body of death? Here's the answer. In ancient times when someone committed a crime of murder, one of the ways in which the murderer was punished was to have the victim of the murder, the corpse tied to his back, strapped to his back. This would be a slow death because the corruption of that body would then enter the healthy murderer and eat him to death. Paul sees the presence of his humanity as a corpse strapped to him. That's...that's the language in which

he’s talking about.

Now the resolution for this doesn’t come in chapter 7 but it comes in chapter 8 where he says, and this is his hope and the hope of every believer, he says, “We ourselves groan...verse 23...within ourselves, waiting eagerly for out adoptions.” What does that mean? The redemption of our body, the redemption of our body. It’s in hope we have been saved and our hope is for redemption of our body.

What’s that? That’s the resurrection. That’s the glory. So for a believer, when a believer dies, the spirit is already recreated. What happens for us is death is simply the liberation of the regenerate inner man from the incarceration of the body of death, namely our flesh. Okay?

GREG: And the follow-up question is, what is the greater threat to our sanctification? Would it be the flesh or Satan?

JOHN: Well there’s no qualitative difference at all. It’s a package deal. It’s a package deal. Your flesh is simply the beachhead on which temptation lands, okay? Temptation comes from the world’s system, right? Surrounding you and you have susceptibility to that, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life of all that is in the world, 1 John 2. So part of your residual fallenness, your residual humanity that has not yet been redeemed, the incarceration of the flesh is that it is driven by lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and the pride of life. The world is designed to drive its temptations at those three categories. Satan is behind that system. So it is Satan developing a world system that drives its temptations right at those elements of your flesh, the package deal. You don’t sin because the devil personally comes to you and makes you sin, you may live your entire life and Satan may never show up anywhere near you. He’s not omnipresent. He’s quick, fast, but not omnipresent. Not everywhere at the same time.

But Satan doesn’t have to be there. Your flesh has these three categorical bridgeheads by which the system which is under Satan can drive itself at you, okay? So what you....you don’t need to fear Satan. You don’t really need to fear the world. You need to flee Satan and flee the world, okay? Okay.

QUESTION: Hi, I’m a Catholic. I’ve been a Catholic all of my life, that’s 75 years. The question I’m going to ask is a very, very basic and has been bothering me for many, many years of my adult life. To the billions of non-Christian denominations, I’m talking about the Jewish, the Buddhists, the Profuciests, Mormons and so forth that truly believe in their faith, that lived a very good life according to their faith. My question is, is there salvation...a heaven for them? Or all they all condemned to hell?

JOHN: Yeah, that’s a very good question. What’s your name?

CHARLIE: Charlie.....Simmons

JOHN: Hi, Charlie. That's a very good question, Charlie.
The answer to that from the Word of God is they will all perish in hell because there is only one way to go to heaven. There's no salvation in any other name than the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus said "You will die in your sins," to the Jewish leaders, "because you believe not on Me...because you believe not on Me." "God, that familiar John 3:16, so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes on Him shall not perish."

There's only one heaven and there's only one way into heaven and that is through faith in Christ. It is the only hope, that is why we are told to go to the ends of the earth, preach the gospel to every creature. So all who perish without the knowledge of Christ, die in their sins and go everlastingly to hell.

Now the degree of punishment in hell will vary. But what makes it vary is not the goodness of the person because no person is good before God, no person. Only God is good and Jesus said that. No person is good, no person is good enough to earn heaven. The only difference in hell will be that the people who heard about Jesus Christ and rejected Him will have a greater punishment than the people who didn't hear about Him. They will all be punished, but those who knew about Christ and didn't receive Christ will have the greater punishment. That's Hebrews, "How much sorer, or greater will be the punishment of those who trampled underfoot the blood of the covenant and counted the work of Christ, as it were, an unholy thing, rejected Christ."

Now the other thing to say is this, that even if you believe in Christ, even if you believe in Christ as God and Christ dying on the cross and Christ being raised from the dead and Christ being Lord, and all those things, that may not be enough to get you into heaven either because in Matthew 7 it says, "Many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, we did this in Your name and that in Your name.' And He'll say, 'Depart from Me, I never knew you.'" So you can know about Christ and you can know that He lived a holy life and was born of a virgin and that He died on the cross and He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven and reigns and is returning and not go to heaven.

But here's the key. You must trust Christ for your salvation alone and reject any works of your own as having any contribution to your salvation.

JOHN: It doesn't matter how many times you went to church, it doesn't matter how many humanly good deeds you did, it doesn't matter how many times you took the Mass, for example, in a Catholic situation, it doesn't matter how many times you went to Confession, it doesn't matter how bad you felt about the sins that you did, it doesn't matter how many rosaries you said, it doesn't matter any of those things...none of those things individually and all of those things collectively cannot save a person. A person will be saved by faith in Christ alone, recognizing that in my flesh dwells no good

thing, by the deeds of the Law will not flesh be justified. You can't earn your way in by being good. You can only receive salvation when you know you're not good enough and you cry out to be forgiven of your sin by the sheer grace of God based upon the death and provision of Christ on the cross. Okay?

CHARLIE: Oh one last thing, I meant to add this. I am leaving the Catholic Church and hope to join this church.

JOHN: We welcome you. (Applause) Now you folks over there, you folks over there need to open your arms to Charlie, right? Let him know we love having him here.

You understand the gospel, right? The way I explained it? All right, Charlie, never too late, right? You're the youngest-looking 75. What happened to me? I don't get it. Okay. Alright.

JIM: My name is Jim. First of all, John, I'd like to thank you so much for the very strong stand you take in defending the truth. I am grateful for it.

JOHN: Thank you, Jim. (Applause)

JIM: My question is concerning a radio program that comes on Sunday morning on KFI from six a.m. to nine a.m. called "The Jesus Christ Show." He claims to be Christ. People call in and call him "Lord" and "Jesus." And when he comes on the program, he says, "This is your holy host," and he talks about when he walked here two thousand years ago. This all to me is just very blasphemous and I know the Word says in the last days many shall come in your name, My name.

JOHN: Now does this guy actually think he is or is he just role-playing here?

JIM: This...

JOHN: This...he's role playing, he's trying to act as if he was the Lord?

JIM: Yeah, well maybe that's so. He acts as though he is.

JOHN: Yeah, in any case...to put yourself in a first person position of representing the Lord is unquestionably blasphemy.

JIM: And I was just wondering if you had ever heard of this and what your thoughts are? I've not been able to talk to any other Christians to get their opinion because nobody has ever heard of the show.

JOHN: Yeah, and that's because Sunday morning between 6 and 9, I'm listening to myself. I'm not available to other things. So....no. I think he probably thinks that he's offering people some kind of

Christian help by acting as if he's Christ and trying to react to things the way he thinks Christ would react. But that kind of first-person assumption is no question blasphemous. No true Christian would ever do that. No true Christian would ever represent himself that way. No true Christian would even come close to a proffering himself as if he could give the very words that would come out of the mouth of Christ if He were present.

You know, I...I would venture to say that KFI radio would allow a guy to do that, but if a true Christian was given the same three hour period and gave the biblical answer as a humble Christian to every question, the program probably wouldn't survive because the true kind of Christianity they can't tolerate. For that kind of blasphemous nonsense will find a place because you can heap scorn on it so easily. It brings embarrassment and shame to the name of Christ.

JIM: Right, that's what I think.

JOHN: Right, thanks, Jim.

ADELINE: Hi, John, my name is Adeline.

JOHN: Hi, Adeline, that was my mother's middle name. Nice to meet you, Adeline.

ADELINE: My question is, is it ever justifiable for a Christian to lie, for instance, lying by a birthday surprise, or on the other hand...(Laughter)...on the other hand, taking Bibles into a country where it is illegal to do so?

JOHN: Well, a very good question and my answer to that is that, you know, it's the basic confidence in the purpose and sovereignty of God if you tell the truth, if you do what's right, God will accomplish His ends and no sin will be committed. I don't think that if we lie, and we're talking now...let's talk about serious things, that if we blatantly lie, we achieve anything that God would not achieve otherwise if we were honest.

Now having said that, I will also say to you that I have personally smuggled Bibles into China. My wife was with me smuggling Bibles in to China and my kids were all with me and they had Christian books tucked in their little clothes everywhere as we went into China.

Now the strategy was this. Kids, when we get to the border and we had gone on a jet boat to mainland China from Hong Kong, and the Christian church there had asked if we would bring some Christian literature, some of my books and some others that had been translated in Chinese, and the plan was to go to a cemetery and they told us where the cemetery would be and there would be somebody to guide us to this cemetery, there would be a little kind of a larger than normal crypt with a broken window and we're all supposed to dump all these books in this glass window.

Well, this is like Indiana Jones for the kids. I mean, this is great stuff, you know. So here was the strategy. We go through and if they don't say anything, just keep moving, don't lag behind, you know, doing double takes as to why they let you go...just keep moving. So we told them if we go through and they don't ask about anything, and they let us through, great. If they stop you and ask you if you have books, say, "Yes we do." Plain and simple.

Well in the purposes of God they didn't stop us. We went roaring through and once the kids got right pass the guards, you know, they bolted and we collected them eventually, dropped all our books in the little place. But on those kinds of serious levels, you know, you can remember the story of Corrie Ten Boom who lied about having the Jewish people in her house during the Nazi assault, and should she have lied? Should she have told the truth? My conviction is that you tell the truth. If Rahab had told the truth, God's purpose would have worked out another way. There's no virtue in the lie.

But having said that, Adeline, I would also say this, I don't believe you have to say everything that could be said at every point. I think there is some virtue in keeping your mouth shut. I don't think not lying means, "I'm here and I'm loaded with Bibles, I just want you to know." I really don't think it goes to that level. So I would say, and let's get down to a birthday party or whatever, that's...that's such a simple thing, such a fun thing that restraining yourself from...from saying everything is probably...is probably fine. Look, I've been surprised a lot of times. People all the time say, "Something's going to happen, we're not telling you what it is." That's not a lie, that's the truth. They won't tell me what it is. So I think there are ways that you can do that, but I wouldn't...I don't think it's good to wrap up lies. I think you can have fun with kind of making people think that one thing is going to happen, and something else happens and there's a big surprise. Those kinds of things are fun, there's no maliciousness in that. And I think that's what makes life fun and enjoyable and I think it's good to keep a secret like that because you have in mind something special that's going to kind of come out of that.

Remember when we were studying in the gospel of Mark and our Lord was saying that there are secrets that are kept until the appropriate time. You remember that? And then they are disclosed. Well our Lord understands that. There are secrets to be kept. And they're just part of life, sometimes part of the joy and the fun of life. And sometimes they need to be kept because they have potential to do damage and so you don't have to say everything. I think there's a level of honesty that can hurt people and harm people that is needless. You know, some people think it's a virtue to just get in people's face and say everything that they think. I...I think that you're better off to restrain your tongue and to be gracious. Not everything needs to be said all the time, okay?

ADELINE: Thank you.

JOHN: Okay.

MELISSA: Hi, Pastor, my name is Melissa.

JOHN: Hi, Melissa.

MELISSA: And I want to thank you for all you do here. I have two questions. I know that believing the Bible to where God does not save you. But can a believer or a person that claims to be a believer reject the Bible as the Word of God, or search in portions such as Mark 16 verses 9 through 20, or John 7:53 and chapters 8 through 11? I understand that, for example, that deathbed confessions don't know everything about God and the Bible, but a person who knowingly rejects this act might be in question if he's truly saved.

JOHN: Okay, good question, Melissa. She's referring to passages at the end of Mark, and we'll get to that, and in John 8 that you have in your English Bible whatever translation you have with a notation. The notation in the margin which will tell you that these do not appear in the earliest manuscripts. The ending of Mark is probably added later. So saying that we know that was added later because it doesn't appear in the oldest manuscripts, I mean, if you've got ancient manuscripts that don't have it, and then you have much later manuscripts and it appears, the assumption is it got added since the originals. That's true of John 8 which is a story of Jesus and a woman taken in adultery. The more ancient manuscripts do not have that and it shows up later. So to say that those are not a part of the original text is not to deny the Scripture because there are those kinds of passages, they're very few, we know exactly which ones they are, that are probably not in the original but were later added. They don't change theology or anything like that, they don't change the character of the nature of Christ or any of those things.

So to say that those are not in the Scripture because they aren't in the earliest manuscripts is not to deny the Bible, it's not to deny any part of the text that we know to be the original text.

Now to the other question, can a person truly be a Christian and not have a full understanding of the inspiration of the Bible? Yes...yes. I don't know if the thief on the cross had a full understanding of Old Testament revelation, and you're absolutely right, when you lead someone to Christ, there's one thing they must believe and that's the gospel, right? They must believe the gospel. And they must believe that what is the essence of the gospel, that God, the true and living God, the only God, is a triune God was incarnated in the form of Jesus Christ, came into the world, lived a godly life, died on the cross a substitutionary death, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sent the Holy Spirit and by the means of the Holy Spirit regeneration comes and all those things. So you have to believe the gospel to be saved. But beyond that, it isn't necessary to have a full understanding of what inerrancy or divine inspiration in its fullness means.

The next point is this, the big question, and this is where you're going, the big question is this, a Christian regenerated, receiving the Holy Spirit, I believe, has from the Holy Spirit a gift of confidence in Scripture. We have the confidence of the Spirit crying "Abba, Father," we have an assurance of the truth of divine revelation granted to us in our salvation. So while a true believer might argue about, for example, Genesis 1 and 2 and want to put evolution in there, I'd say, "Well, you know, I believe God was involved in creation but the days aren't real days..." A true Christian could come to that conviction. I don't think it's legitimate. I don't think it's accurate. I don't think it's right.

A true Christian might say that there were two authors of the book of Isaiah, not one, or three authors of the book of Isaiah, not one. A true Christian might...might debate whether or not each of the gospel writers wrote his gospel independently or whether they used cue(?) material and Mark in priority, which you don't even know about, which is stuff they argue about, none of which is true. But you can get caught up in some of those critical things and still be a true believer. But I think there must be an overwhelming affirmation of the integrity, the inspiration and the authority of Scripture. True believers, I think, receive that as part of what it means to believe.

Our faith is a gift from God, right? And if my faith in God is a gift from God, all I know about God and all I know about Christ, and all I know about the gospel is revealed here. So how can I say the Spirit of God gave me the faith to believe in the gospel, but not the faith to believe in the source of the gospel?

MELISSA: I agree. And my second question is...

JOHN: Haha...you are relentless, Melissa.

MELISSA: Does our Bible today have any errors and if there are some mistakes, how can we be sure which ones are, you know, what is right?

JOHN: Yeah, such a good question, Melissa, thank you for asking. The answer is no. Look, there's a science called "lower criticism" I don't know why it's called that, but it's...it's the science of manuscript study. What you have...if you have a NAS or an ESV or you have, you know, any of the newer translations, there...there aren't any debates anymore. There aren't any debates anymore about what we call the autographa, the original text. The work has been done and it's been done for a long, long time so that we have the purest and best reconstruction of the original autographa and it's done because there are thousands of manuscripts, ancient manuscripts collected, compared, studied. And one of the remarkable realities in that is the way that the Scripture has been preserved.

You know, when the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the caves at Qumran, those are scrolls, Old Testament scrolls from before the time of Christ. What was so astounding to people was that they are

accurate, that the later manuscripts on which the Old Testament were based are in agreement with those ancient manuscripts so that we see God not only inspired that but He preserved it. So we know that, for example, the ESV, the NASV, the later, newer translations have the very best of that study and that scholarship.

If there is a passage that is debatable like John 8, Mark 16, they note that. They say, “This does not appear in the earlier manuscripts.” If you go through like any of the...the MacArthur Study Bible, you’ll find notes in there occasionally, there’s something in there that doesn’t appear in the oldest manuscripts, or there might be an alternative reading in the margin. But we basically know what these are, we know what they are, they are inconsequential, they don’t deal with any points of doctrine.

We really are blessed in this era of history to have the very best translations based on the best manuscripts, okay? Alright.

MELISSA: Thank you so much.

DON: Hi, my name is Don and I know time is kind of against us here now, but I just have...when we talk about cult religions, you know, we kind of..not the Occult, but cult religions such as Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses...

JOHN: Sure.

DON: And stuff. Most of these religions really deny the deity of Jesus Christ. And I know...I’m not sure what your feeling is on Dr. Walter Martin but I think he’s wrote a couple of great books.

JOHN: Sure, Kingdom of the Cults, really helpful. Kingdom of the Occult, also very helpful.
By the way, Walter Martin preached in our church many times when he was alive. Of course nobody preaches here when they’re dead, but he preached here (Laughter)...although we have had some dead preachers through the years. But yeah, he was here and he was a friend, right.

DON: Just as a quote from him, I’ve got the book in the bookstore there, just a quote from him says, “Cult expert Dr. Walter Martin once said the average Jehovah Witness can make a doctrinal pretzel out of the average Christian in about 30 seconds.” And I was just wondering, that’s not my real question, but why we maybe don’t have more classes or teachings or assemblies or seminars or whatever on how we can better deal with the cult religions, especially Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Mormons.”

JOHN: No, that’s a great point, Don. And I agree with you on that. I think periodically through the years we’ve had times, and maybe this is a good time to do it again, where we’ve had a special series of classes maybe on a Sunday, a special elective series on these cults because we all run in to JW’s,

we all run in to the Mormons, and we run into people who are caught up in these things. The books are always in the bookstores so you can read about it. But I think that's a good suggestion. I think we need to think about maybe doing some special class work, maybe a fellowship group emphasis on a Sunday morning, going through a series on the cults. I think that would really arm us. I think we're less likely to be pretzelized by those people. I know their arguments, you know, they go to John 1 and try to deny that Jesus is God and all of that. But I do think it's really good to be armed, and not just with a general understanding but some specific ways to deal with them. That's a good suggestion. I think we'll...maybe we can look at the fall and help to equip our congregation to be confronted by those people and give a reason for the hope that is in you. That's a great suggestion. Thank you.

DON: The one question I had for you though is just two compelling arguments they kind of bring out. You just mentioned John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word," for anybody who doesn't know, "the Word was with God and the Word was God." They put that letter, that article "a" in there to make it a God. They tell me there's no articles in the Greek language. I don't know if that's true or not. But my question is, how would you handle the argument...you can answer that in about ten seconds, I'm sure, but how would you handle the arguments if Christ was really God incarnate, or was the Word made flesh, then how is it you cannot kill God, therefore how is it possible to kill God. The other one is found in Matthew 1:21 where Christ was born and they'll call His name Jesus, and He will save HIS people from their sin, indicating Israel? And that would be my question.

JOHN: Yeah, well...okay. You know, they nit-pick. Of course there are articles in the Greek. You know, there's the definite article, the indefinite article is unstated, there's no word for the indefinite article so that's where they say "a" but there's an article...there's a word for the definite article. It's a one letter, with a breathing on it. So the arguments they make in John 1:1 are totally irrelevant. Where that argument falls down is that Jesus said, "I and My Father are one." He said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." So what you want to do is get them out of fooling around with non-existent articles in John 1 to the things that Jesus said. This is the ploy that they use. Don't argue about the things that aren't there, argue about the things that are there. And there are all kinds of evidences of the deity of Christ.

As to He came to save His people from their sins, the primary fulfillment of that would, of course, be Israel. That's not apart from that. When it says... When the angel came to announce His birth, it said, "He will reign on the throne of His father, David." So that's implied there. I think He is the Messiah of Israel and look, even Paul says, "To the Jew first," Romans 1, "and also to the Greek." Jesus said, "Salvation is of the Jews." So I believe when it says He came to save His people that the first and primary target of that pronoun was Israel, but it doesn't end there because you can show in the Old Testament how, you know, the promise of salvation was to extend to the nations. Remember a few weeks ago we talked about a mustard seed that grew and the birds came and the mustard seed, and I took it back to Ezekiel 17:22 to 24 where it describes the Kingdom and the birds that come in to the tree are all the nations of the world. So you can see world salvation, Gentile salvation in the Old

Testament through Israel. Salvation is of the Jews, but it extends to the whole world.

So again, they want to pick these little things in a passage, these little nuances in a word and ignore the vast instruction of Scripture. That's why you can take an 18-year-old kid, put him on a bicycle, let him ride around and confuse people because you give him this simplistic formula which just a few little verses and a few nuances and the truth of the matter is, if you get involved with one of these people, you can literally take them apart if you understand the broad sweeping reality of Scripture, because they don't know that. They only know the little formulas that they have been taught, okay? Good question.

We have time for one more. Yes, sir, step up there.

NORM: My name is Norm... and I appreciate your ministry here.

JOHN: Hi, Norm. Thanks.

NORM: I have some friends in the Presbyterian denomination that hold to Barthinian view of Genesis, the creation, 1 to 11 and I would like to understand in terms of talking with them about how...what the view...could you give a critique of Barth's view of Genesis 1 to 11 as ...how it's not compatible with Romans 5, for instance?

JOHN: Right. This is a big issue here. So let's take five minutes.
I got a call last week when I was somewhere, I was...I think I was in Memphis last week when they called. ABC called me, ABC nightly news, Diane Sawyer, you know who she is. And they want to know if I would do an interview with ABC Nightly News on the issue of evolution and creation. I said, "Yes, absolutely, where do I go? Let me on." And the reason it came up was there's a very, very prominent theologian, evangelical theologian who began his career at Dallas Theological Seminary and then more...later years went to Regent College with J.I Packard with the University of Vancouver, University of British Columbia, Vancouver. And then more recently he went to Reform Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida, his name is Bruce Waltke(?). Anybody who is in seminary knows who Bruce Waltke is.

Well Bruce has been on a trajectory going in the wrong direction for a long time. He's 79 years old and he just was basically asked to leave Reformed Theological Seminary because he came to a sort of a modified Barthian view of Genesis in which he denied six-day creation. Now that's not a....that's not a good thing to do and that's not a good place to do it because the main theologian there is Douglas Kelly who has written the most definitive book that I've read on that by a theologian called Creation and Change. And I would encourage you, Norm, to find the book Creation and Change. It's a quick read. It's about 175 pages, just really, really brilliant.

Now the view of Karl Barth, and Karl Barth is a German and they keep resurrecting Him. If he would just stay dead, we wouldn't have to deal with this stuff. But liberal theologians love to raise these dead Germans and make them issues. Karl Barth basically denied Scripture truth. He denied the historicity of Scripture, not just Genesis 1 to 11 but the whole thing. He said, "Redemptive history happened but it didn't happen in history...the German...it happened in Heiliachik-da-lickta, it happened in elevated super-duper history. He had a kind of category, a mystical category in which redemptive history occurred. So if you say to Karl, "Do you believe in Genesis?" Yes. "Did it happen in history?" No. "Do you believe in the resurrection?" Yes. "Did it happen in history?" No. "Do you believe in the miracles of Jesus? Did they happen in history?" Well they happened in holy history. And it's a...it's a...it's a split world in which he lives. But he...he did the same thing to Genesis that he does with everything. And this is...it has a name, it's called neo-orthodoxy. And the reason they called Karl Barth a neo-orthodox was the whole world of German theology was liberal. They were all liberal, back in the nineteenth century, they were all liberal and Karl Barth said, "This is not good, you've thrown all the miracles out, you've thrown everything supernatural out of the Bible. You've emptied the Bible of all of this. That's not good, we've got to put it back. Well let's put it all back."

Only he couldn't get it all the way in to history, he just put it back in holy history. So he was called a neo-orthodox cause it was a new kind of orthodoxy that allowed for all of this but not in history, but in the Heiokiachik-da-lickta, whatever that is...holy history.

So, Karl Barth's approach to Genesis was the same as his approach to the resurrection. It's always the same with him. It is not orthodoxy. It is not orthodoxy. It is called neo-orthodoxy, it is liberalism in another dress. And, of course, he would...he would call Genesis 1 to 11 nothing more than sort of spiritual saga, spiritual narrative, spiritual poetry.

Now the problem with that, I'm going to end this right here, number one, it's not poetry...not poetry. And one of our professors in the Bible department at the Master's College has done monumental ground-breaking work on this by taking Hebrew poetry and creating some kind of technical logorhythmic graph out of poetry because poetry has meter, and showing that when you take Hebrew meter and impose it on Genesis 1 and 2, it is not poetry...it is not poetry. It's a fascinating scientific study showing that, it's not poetry at all. So it doesn't work for that. And if you say that what the Bible records didn't happen...like Karl Barth said...it just happened in holy history, which is the spiritual attitudes of people rather than historical reality, you basically undercut the Scripture. So their problem...people who have that problem in Genesis have it everywhere in the Scripture. So you've got to get them to dump Karl Barth en masse or he's going to effect and infect every portion of Scripture.

The bottom line is you believe Genesis or you don't. You can't find anything in Genesis about evolution, nothing at all. There is no evolutionary process in Genesis whatsoever. Now this plays out

very importantly in Romans because as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Adam is the first man and Christ, of course, is the new man.

Romans then confirms the historicity of Adam because Paul affirms the historicity of Adam, Jesus affirms the historicity of Adam and other elements in Genesis. Okay? And even Jesus affirms the historicity of another book the liberals tried to destroy and that's the book of Jonah, when Jesus says, "As Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days." Liberals don't like that because they think that's a fish story that's simply legendary but Jesus saw it as literal. So Jesus' view of the Old Testament is very important. That's where I go with things like that, okay?

Well, we've covered a lot of ground tonight. I hope it's been helpful to you.

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