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

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 59
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
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I thought back over this week in the ministry that I had this week, and everywhere I went and every conference that I was in, and essentially there were meetings every day. I left here last Sunday and I eventually got where I was going after all kinds of airplane trouble and missing a day and, you know, all of those things that happen when you travel. But it seemed to me that in every conference there was a demand to have some time to just talk to me and ask questions and see if we can get biblical answers. And I thought about how dynamic those times were in every place and that it's been a long time since I've done that with you, so that's what we're going to do tonight. And the good thing is, we didn't tell you so you didn't spend all afternoon coming up with questions that I can't answer.

So, you know, haven't had a conversation with you on a personal level in a very long time. Lots of questions are always on people's minds. And some of you write me, some of you corner me before/after services here and there and everywhere and ask me questions…and that's good. That should be that way. We should do that. We should…Paul everywhere he went it says dialogued with them out of the Scriptures. And that's a back and forth kind of thing. And I've always loved doing that. And so we're just going to let you have a conversation with me and you can choose this time. I always choose the conversation and it's a one-sided one. So this is your opportunity to poke around and ask some questions of me that are on your heart.

Now, you know, we don't want them to be obscure, we'd like to get in as many questions as we can. These ought to be things, not things that you have to kind of work to think of, but things that are on your mind and on your heart, maybe prompted by the preaching and the teaching or by your own Christian life, or what you're seeing out there from the Scripture, maybe an issue in terms of biblical interpretation, theology, doctrine, practical application, whatever it is, this is your time to have a conversation with me and let me know what's on your heart.

And we can do this for about an hour, of if you have no questions we'll sing a hymn and go home. But that's probably not likely. I think I've preached about, I don't know, nine times already this week, so we've had a great time ministering the Word of God, and the highlight of each conference seems to be when the focus is on what is in the hearts of people and how God speaks to those issue.

I had an absolutely great time doing a Q&A with several hundred pastors down in Houston yesterday, and it was wonderful to hear them ask the things that are pertinent on their hearts about ministry and about the Word of God, and about the issues, and about the state of the church, and the things that

they're facing in the world, and the truth, and false doctrine, and how do they respond to this and that, to try to help them to see clearly down to wherever their questions are. And that's always a joy. So that's what we're going to do tonight. Kevin Edwards is on that microphone, Austin is here, and you notice we picked the big and burly people and just to guard the mike. And, Tom, how did we get you in on this deal, Tom? You're not big enough for this group. Tom Patton's over there. So just come up to the mike when you're ready and give me your name. You know, don't get, you know, twelve deep, or anything. If you have three people at a mike, just wait till one person's question has been asked and we'll go from there. Okay?

It's important for you to give me your name first, and then frame your question. And we'll start right over there.

QUESTIONER: Thank you, John. Just recently, I don't know, not recently, it…

JOHN: What's your name?

DALE:

JOHN: Dale. First Corinthians 15:29, I'm sure you've answered it a lot of times but I've never heard it, so what is the baptism of the dead?

JOHN: Well, there is a comment made in that chapter which is all about the resurrection and all about life after death. And the Apostle Paul writes and essentially says, if there's no afterlife, if there's no life after this life, then why are people being baptized for the dead? If the dead aren't raised, if that's the end, then why do people get baptized for the dead?

Now he's using an existing religious ceremony to point up the fact that even pagans understand that there is life after death. One writer put it this way, God has put eternity in the heart. And even the unregenerate feel the tug of eternity. That's why among the Greeks they put a silver coin in the mouth of anyone who died to pay the fare across the Mystic River into the next life. That's why the American Indians buried the warrior with his pony, so he could ride in the next life. That's why the Egyptians buried the Pharaohs with a boat so they could sail across the Mystic River into the next world.

Even in the pagan world, eternity is in the heart. If you study the world religions, you will find universally the reality of an afterlife. Even the Hindu world which believes in incarnation, doesn't believe death is the end, but there's another life, and another life, and another life and another life. It doesn't mean that they're right about that, but that's in the heart. The death is not the end. The idea that you die and go out of existence is the default position, not the normal one for people. And so Paul is referring to the baptism for the dead which he doesn't explain…the reason he doesn't explain it is because everybody must have known what he meant. It was a part of some very well-known

religious ceremony and belief system. So he doesn't explain it. There was a dissertation done on this that had 40 suggestions as to what it could mean…4-0. And somebody got a Master's Degree for coming up with the forty possibilities in that dissertation. And what that tells you is that you can write a dissertation without a conclusion and get a degree for it, because there was no way to make a conclusion because it's just not explained. So I don't know what it means in specifics, because Paul doesn't tell us that.

But what it says is, it's just another sort of argument on the very general sense that there's life after death. Okay? All right? Good!.

TOM: My name is Tom.

JOHN: Hi, Tom.

TOM: I occasionally have ???long enough thinking oh this is something I've been wanting to ask John about and that is I get so angry about these people who are against the death penalty and saying if the government is doing murder and I think about your message on hacking Agog to death, and so I was wondering what…is there any difference between the Old Testament what God felt about the death penalty and today in Christ where, you know, He's more compassionate and all. Just what is your thinking on that line?

JOHN: Sure. Let's go back to what we said this morning, Tom. The Lord reigns. The Lord reigns, the Lord reigns. We pointed that out. And it is the Lord who determines kingdoms. It is the Lord who determines rulers. It is the Lord who takes authority over things. And in the earliest and purest form of the theocratic kingdom, the death penalty was in place for the taking of a life, and even for teen-age rebellion. I mean, there are a number of things that call for the death penalty. And God lays that out. And that is the absolute law.

But even in the life of Israel, it didn't take very long until God began to demonstrate mercy and you have the absolute character of the law starting in the ninth chapter of Genesis which essentially said, "He who sheds man's blood by man, shall his blood be shed." That's capital punishment.

Jesus affirms it in the New Testament to Peter when He says, "If you live by the sword, if you kill anybody with that sword in the Garden, you're going to lose your life. And He affirmed the death penalty. That is the absolute exaction of the law. But throughout the history of the Old Testament, God demonstrated mercy. And then God even presents Himself, for example, to Moses in the mount as the God who is merciful and demonstrates loving kindness to generations. So that would be the absolute position of the law. And in that sense, valid.

But even God Himself allowed for mercy within…even within Israel throughout history because He reigns and He determines who rules, and how they rule.

Another way to look at it is that execution for sin would be the picture of what every sinner deserves and would be justice. But God is also a God of mercy. David was guilty of murder. He really essentially had a hit man take out the life of Uriah so that he could commit adultery with his wife. Adultery was punishable by death, and murder was punishable by death, and yet David cried out to God in remorse, Psalm 32, Psalm 51, and was spared and used by God and is known as one who loved God, wrote all the magnificent Psalms. So while on the one hand we affirm that as absolute law, we understand that if God allows in a society for that to be set aside, for a time such as in our society where if someone is given the death penalty, it's years, and years, and years before they're executed if they ever are. That in itself is a mercy. So we affirm that but we also declare that if God chooses in a time and a place and for a period to demonstrate mercy, that mercy would be defined by Romans 2 as the kindness and forbearance of God intended to lead you to repentance.

I've seen that. Warden Beryl Kane(?) at Angola Prison, the amazing prison in Louisiana State Prison, which was the worst prison in America, five thousand, five hundred inmates, ninety percent of them there for life. Many of them on Death Row. I went in to the executioner chamber, I put my hands on the very furniture where they're executed, and I was told by the warden that he had such a concern for the men who were sent to be executed that he felt his own personal duty to make sure every single one of them heard the gospel. And so, you want to temper the finality of that with whatever extension of mercy God will give. You know, God said He's going to judge Nebuchadnezzar, but He gave him twelve months. God said through Noah said, "I'm going to destroy the world," but He gave him 120 years in a time when people lived for centuries. So I have to leave the application of that to God in any given time and place. I think we affirm that it is the Law of God. We affirm that it is a just Law. We affirm that it can be applied and I personally believe that if that were applied swiftly, it would be a deterrent, it would be a really powerful deterrent to criminal behavior. But I'm not going to argue with the mercy of God that He gives time for repentance and that's what I see in being in the death row down there and seeing these men and knowing that they're still alive, which means they still have an opportunity to hear the gospel. So I affirm the validity of capital punishment. I think there are some people unequivocally who…should justice prevail would lose their lives. But I also understand the mercy of God and He orders society the way He does. The tragedy of tragedies is that the longer those men live and reject the gospel, the worst their punishment will be. But that's in God's hands.

So we affirm capital punishment, but we also want to extend mercy as God chooses to extend that mercy, okay? Good question, Tom.

HANK: Good evening, my name is Hank.

JOHN: Hi, Hank.

HANK: The question that I have is prompted by two things. One is, I'm regularly attending for four years. I'm not a member and I know your immediate question would be, "Why are you not a member?" And I believe I'm also standing right next to the person I needed to talk to and I'm determined to engage with him regarding that. But…

JOHN: You're overdue. Yeah.

HANK: But this morning you even said, you would just fill out the card in the pew right in front of you, you're a member or a regular attendee. I would just like to know what is the status of a regular attendee just in broad terms. And, I mean, there are many issues that I will talk about in a different forum in a different setting. But just in broad terms, Grace Church's view of the relationship and the status by someone who is a regular attendee.

JOHN: Sure…sure. Yeah, it doesn't change your life. It doesn't change your spiritual condition. Thought about that. But membership does two things. It says, "I want to come under the care and authority of the elders of this church. I submit myself to the leadership of this church. And secondly, it says, I want to embrace this congregation as one of them in the fullest sense and serve them.

It takes you from being a bystander, kind of an onlooker, to saying, "I submit myself to the leadership of this church and I come in the fullest sense to express my ministry and my service to the family here. I think the bottom line in this is there was sort of no such thing as a detached part of the church in the New Testament. They knew who was in the church. They knew who they were responsible for and accountable for, and they knew they were to care for them. They knew who their sheep were, like Jesus said, "I know My sheep, My sheep know Me." We just want to know who belongs to us and have them come under that care and that oversight.

In the New Testament, they knew how many people were converted. They had records. When somebody moved from city to city, you see this in the New Testament, the church they moved to know who they were and they took letters from a previous church.

So it's about accountability and it's about service in the church so that we know who we are to care for and so that you take on the accountability to the leadership of the church. Okay? That's essentially it. Right. Good.

GREG: Hi, John, my name is Greg.

JOHN: Hi, Greg.

GREG: Recently while going through a practical difficulty, I was being counseled by an older brother in the Lord. And I mentioned to him, “I’m praying for patience through this thing.” Now he was quite insistent that I needed to ask God’s forgiveness for praying that. And I thought to myself, “I could pray for an increase in love, or joy, or peace, or patience, or kindness or any of the fruits of the Spirit. Why would I need to ask for forgiveness for praying for patience? I’ve always kind of regarded that as an evangelical joke, you know, people say don’t pray for patience, you know, this sort of thing.

JOHN: Yeah, it seems to me that he should…yeah, he should pray for patience for being irritated at the fact that you were praying for patience. I mean, that’s how I would handle that. I mean, what? We have…we certainly have the responsibility and the right and the privilege to ask the Lord to grant to us all those graces, to prayerfully ask Him for those. Give me patience, give me endurance, that’s a very right thing to do, a very spiritually minded thing to do. What is the assumption that I’m already perfectly patient and I don’t need anymore? Or I already perfectly love and I don’t need anymore?

I don’t think we’re saying that that’s not available to us. I think what we’re saying it is available to us, Lord, help me to draw on that, help me to exercise that, help me to cap that. I would say just with regard to patience, the people who have the most patience are the people who have the highest view of the sovereignty of God. A pastor said to me yesterday in the Q&A down in Houston, he said, “What do I do when people that I’ve worked with and tried to care for and invest my life in are cantankerous and resistant and critical and make life difficult and produce disappointment?”

I said, “Don’t worry about it. I wouldn’t worry about that.” Why would you worry about that? The Lord said He’d build His church and the gates of hell couldn’t prevail against it. You just be faithful, joyful, pick your ministry, fulfill it to the max. Don’t worry about that.

Now if you think you have to orchestra your life, if you think you’ve got to get control of every component, you’re going to be impatient and you’re going to be more impatient the less things you control. But if you yield to the sovereign God who orders everything according to His will and just walk in obedience to Him, it doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter what comes cause He’s in control, by His power and His providence ordering your life. The more clear your view of the sovereign purpose of God and His control in your life, the more patience you will have. Patience is the virtue that comes to those who don’t try to control everything in their lives. It’s very hard, from a personal standpoint, it’s very hard to get me perturbed about anything. I get perturbed about liars and deceivers and false teachers. And I have a certain indignation about that that I think is the right kind of indignation, but it’s very hard to get me perturbed about the way things are going, or the issues surrounding me, or the disappointments of the difficulties because I have such an absolute confidence in the divine purpose and power and providence of God.

And the more I know the truth of that, the more patient I am to see God unfold His plan, even in the midst of the most difficult things, the most trying things, there's joy and there's gratitude, and there's confidence, and there's assurance, and there's an underlying happiness that God is in control. I wouldn't want to try to live life as an Arminian, let's say, someone who didn't believe in the sovereignty of God, believed everything was just kind of happening at random, and God was having to figure it out just like we are and hoping He can make something out of the mess. I don't think I could live that way. That's why the most comforting and assuring and patience-inducing doctrine of all doctrines is the doctrine of God's sovereignty, that He orders everything according to His will. It's Romans 8:28, isn't it? I mean, what are you impatient about? What's to be impatient about? Just do what you do and do it faithfully and do it to the glory of God and let Him sort out the end result for His glory and your good, okay?

JOSH: My name is Josh Cieto(??), my question relates to we, as men, are lazy by nature, always want to take the spiritual path which takes of least resistance. My question is, we, as men, have our spiritual duties, cannot be lazy about this, I need to be the spiritual leader. What would you advise and ask God how we can actually achieve this?

JOHN: Well, you know there are a lot of steps along the way but I think it comes down to a simple principle. Paul in Romans 11 laid the…or 1 Corinthians 11 laid the principle down, it's this, "Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ." Through the years I've tried to exalt Christ. I told you we're going through John. Look, we've been through Matthew, Mark, Luke and in the early years once through John, why is it important? Because you need to see Christ. You need to see Him in all His beauty, in all His magnificence and all His glory. You need to see Him as the God/Man living in the world because He's your example.

So it comes down to this. It doesn't come down to some formula, and I grew up, you know, in a day when there were a whole lot of little formulas about how to be spiritual and how to be a leader. You know, you can read all that useless stuff about wild at heart, and you know, go into the mountains and, you know, kill an animal and you live in the wilderness and that will make you a man.

That won't make you a man at all. It certainly won't make you a godly man to isolate yourself like that. What makes you a man is to be Christlike. He's the perfection of what it is to be a man. He's also the perfection of what it is to be faithful to God. He's perfection of what it is to be a leader, a spiritual leader with an impeccable life. And so the pursuit is to be like Christ. And Paul says it. "Be followers of me as I am of Christ." So study Christ, come to know Christ. That's why even as far as Paul had gone along in his life, he said, "That I may know Him…that I may know Him…that I may know Him." I don't think you can ever rise higher than your understanding of Christ and your affection for Him. We said that a few weeks ago in a message comparing Peter and Judas, remember that? And what separated them was Peter's love for Christ, his love for Christ. Cultivate that, cultivate that by knowing Christ, you know Him in His Word, it's not mystical, it's coming to know everything about

Him that you can in His Word.

I just got a page proofs for a compilation book that I'm very thankful for, I've always wanted to do this, it's called One Perfect Life, The complete story of the Lord Jesus. And what it is is a blended harmony of the gospels. You can open it up and you can read the harmony of the four gospels all together, the story of Christ in its blended sequence, the full story. Not like—typical harmonies are in columns, you can see what Matthew said, and Mark, and Luke, and John in columns, but this is all blended in one story you read like a narrative. And I read it all the time because I can never get enough of the majesty of Christ in every issue in life that He faced and so I think the more Christlike I am, the better man I am, and the better leader I am, and the better discipler I am, that to me is the key. Okay? Good question. Yes?

JACKIE: My name is Jackie.

JOHN: Hi, Jackie.

JACKIE: I just had a death in my family, close cousin, and I don't think he knew the Lord so I've been really wrestling with it night and day, I wake up at three o'clock in the morning, hear one of your sermons, listen for a while, go back to sleep, struggle with it day and night. I've been thinking about it and kind of finally came to the conclusion if you have to ask if someone knew the Lord, they probably didn't because I may just know Him and Christ makes me swoon and I want to tell everybody. I have a big mouth…big mouth and I think that everybody that loves the Lord has a big mouth. And you either want to rejoice or we want to warn our loved ones. I try to go to what J.C. Ryles said about…I thought about the thief on the cross and said, "Well maybe, you know, in his last moments... But I kind of really am convinced that you can't go through your life rejecting God and then in the last minute make a fire insurance policy.'

JOHN: Well, it could happen.

JACKIE: It could happen.

JOHN: But you wouldn't know that.

JACKIE: Exactly. So my question is, how do I reconcile that in my head?

JOHN: I don't think you can, because you love Christ…and I can tell by the way you're talking that you want to tell everybody about Christ and you can't get pass the fact that this person that you know and love died without Christ, and you shouldn't be able to get past it. It ought to wake you up in the middle of the night. It ought to disturb your soul.

You know, I wish all Christians felt that way. We come way to easily to terms with that…Oh, somebody died a non-Christian. If that doesn't move you, then you don't understand what that means. You don't understand the devastating reality of that. If hell isn't a horror to you, if you don't lose sleep over that, then you're way too comfortable with the perishing of the unconverted, we should never come to terms with that. You know, some people stay awake at night because they worry about trivial things. They worry about earthly failures, earthly problems. I'm afraid too few Christians lose sleep over the death of the unconverted. I think that's because we've become way too familiar with that. And we live in a very sterile world, we don't see people die. I would say most people in this church tonight have never seen someone in the throes of death. Very unusual to be where someone is dying without Christ and see that, experience that. Everything is hidden from us. So I think yours is the right response to that, Jackie. When you don't feel like that, and you've become indifferent to it, you've fallen victim to, sad to say, what many people have as their attitudes. Just another day, another death. It ought to disturb you and I'm happy that it does and it will only add to your zeal to proclaim the glories of Christ.

Yes, could your cousin have been saved in the last hours? Yes, that could happen. That certainly could happen. But you can't know that. And if you couldn't see that this person was a believer by the life he lived, or she lived, then there is no evidence and if there's no evidence, there's no life, so I'm glad you feel the way you do. And the Lord will give you mercy and grace and comfort to get, you know, beyond this but I hope you never lose that sense of the horror of the death of an unbeliever. Okay? Thank you, Jackie.

ISAAC: My name is Isaac.

JOHN: Hi, Isaac.

ISAAC: My question is about a month ago I've had some Mormons come to my door and have been actually inviting them back and talking to them about the gospel and giving them the Word. the only problem is, is how do you evangelize them when they do not believe that the Bible is true and they have extra-revelation that they do believe is true?

JOHN: You have to warn them. You have to warn them that they are headed for eternal judgment. You have to warn them that they are trapped in a lying heresy. You have to warn them that they are worshiping Satan, they're worshiping a demonic substitute for the true God and the true Christ. You have to warn them. I think they not only don't believe in the Bible the way we do, they not only have addition revelation, The Pearl of Great Price, The Book of Mormon, The Doctrines and Covenants, all that other stuff, but they have basically been programmed with an interpretation of Scripture and they will always go to John 1 and they'll go to the normal thing that they've gone…they don't know anything outside of that. They're literally programmed like robots to stick with those things that they

think Christians can't handle. So I think you warn them. That's always been my approach. I'm not going to debate the Scripture with you because your minds are blinded, you're in the dark, I don't want to hear your view because I don't want to give you an opportunity to misrepresent Christ.

If anybody comes to your house and preaches another Jesus, don't let him in or you become a partaker in his evil deeds. Don't show hospitality to someone who has a heretical view of Christ. Does that mean you shouldn't sit down and witness to them? It does not mean that, but what you do is you warn them that they are headed for the fires of eternal judgment and that the only hope is a true view of Christ and the gospel. So I think you have to literally penetrate their sense of comfort in their system by saying things that the Holy Spirit may use to put fear in their hearts, okay? Okay.

CHARLES: Hi, my name is Charles…

JOHN: Hi, Charles.

CHARLES: This is something I've struggled with my whole Christian walk and find it most difficult, especially when you're witnessing. Basically, how do you reconcile the duality of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility…like, for example, if someone asks you, "Well if God literally brings about everything, how can He blame me for sinning?"

JOHN: Well, I don't know the answer to that and I've never met anybody that knows the answer to that. So, you know, sooner or later we always come to this question, and that's normal. I think every…every Christian has come to that question. There is no question that the Bible teaches that God is absolutely sovereign. There is no question that God chooses who will be saved and you chose it before the foundation of the world, wrote their names down. There's no question that the sinner is blind and dead and unable and unwilling to believe and repent and can only do what God asked him to do if God gives him life and changes his heart. That's what the Bible teaches.

It also teaches that the sinner is responsible and that if he perishes, he perishes because of his own hard-hearted rebellious unbelief. Jesus even says, "You're going to die in your sins because you don't believe in Me." And Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem, right? "How often I would have gathered you but you would not."

So on the one hand the Bible teaches the sovereignty of God in salvation at every point. And on the other hand, the responsibility of the sinner at every point. So you have to believe both of those. The fact that they are apparently paradoxical doesn't change the fact that you must believe them. You can't in some simplistic way tamper with either of those. So we are left with an inability in our minds to put those two together logically, but what is a problem to us is not a problem to God. His mind is so much more vast than ours. So let me help you to understand that with a simple set of questions.

Who wrote Romans?

CHARLES: Paul.

JOHN: Okay, you stand by that? Paul wrote Romans by himself?

CHARLES: No.

JOHN: Oh.

CHARLES: He was motivated with the Holy Spirit.

JOHN: Motivated by the Holy Spirit? Inspired by the Holy Spirit. Is every word in the book of Romans out of the vocabulary of Paul?

CHARLES: Yes.

JOHN: Is every word in the book of Romans inspired by the Holy Spirit?

CHARLES: Yes.

JOHN: How can that be?

CHARLES: I don't know.

JOHN: No, you don't know and that's the right answer.

CHARLES: Give me another question.

JOHN: Yeah, yeah. Well let me ask you this question? Who lives your Christian life?

CHARLES: I do.

JOHN: Oh really. You do?

CHARLES: As far as I know, I do….(Laughter).

JOHN: So whatever noble God-honoring things happen in your Christian life, you have produced?

CHARLES: Only by God's permission and sovereign act.

JOHN: Yeah. See, you can't even answer that question. You don't even know who lives your Christian life. You don't even understand who wrote Romans, and you can't resolve that. Paul says, "For to me to live is Christ." Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." He didn't know the answer. It's me, but it's Him. Anything wrong, it's me. Anything right, it's Him.

How do you sustain your salvation? Do you do anything to sustain your salvation? Of course you do, you persevere. If you persevere to the end, you'll be saved. But on the other hand, you're kept by His power to the end. So you have the same difficulty in every major doctrine. Human responsibility and the sovereign power of God. Why are you a Christian? Cause the Holy Spirit regenerated you, or because you were convicted of your sin, you repented and you believed. Yes! You see, this is not isolated to salvation. This is true in every doctrine. You have the human element and the divine element and we can't know how it comes together but we believe both. Sinner takes full responsibility for his sin and God gets full glory for salvation. The believer is responsible to obey and to submit and to love God and honor God, and when that happens, it's all the work of the Holy Spirit.

So I say, I can never come to the place where I fully harmonize that, but I won't do what others have done and destroy both by trying to find some middle ground. Okay? So we hold to responsibility as believers to discipline ourselves, to beat our body into subjection, to be obedient, to honor God, to love God, to serve Him, to obey Him, to war against the flesh, to walk in the Spirit, at the same time, we give all the glory to God for everything good that happens in our lives. And that's how we have to view everything. Once you come to comfort with those, they become wonderful truths that only really come together in glory and in the mind of God, maybe someday we'll understand. Okay?

JEFF: I'm Jeff.

JOHN: Hi, Jeff.

JEFF: Twelve-six has become a topic that we've been talking about with our sons, we have four boys, throughout the time we've had them and different politicians are in power and we have some interesting discussions about, you know, their lives and what's going on and some of our kids have met some famous politicians and being able to interview them. So we get some of that discussion, I think for the most part, a lot of young people are seeing now today, you know, basically immoral, pagan politicians and moral ones, very few now, and they're just kind of going, well we give up? We're not going to get involved in it. And so I know with this church when I came here as a non-believer and became saved, the church in the world pagan politicians and moral ones, we're not even going to get involved in it.

And so I know with this church when I came here as a non-believer and became saved, the church taught about abortion, homosexuality, a lot of different things which I didn't really know about and it was good because it helped me to share the gospel with that segment and I think that's the reason you do that. But anyways, about a year ago I heard you on the radio, it was a back east interview and the radio interviewer was talking to you about they're redefining marriage and you made some comments politically and kind of surprised some of my kids and they're going, "I never heard Pastor MacArthur come out on that." and you said, "Whenever someone crosses the line in the institution of God, I will take a stand on that publicly." And so in the last few weeks as you've done that, we got some really interesting discussions and today a discussion with my son, he said, "Do you think Pastor MacArthur would preach that sermon to the President?" And I said, "Well, I think he probably would, but in the question is…we were talking about how do you approach, you know, John the Baptist has pointed his finger at Herod for immoral relationship…of course Herod is a pagan. And then the Apostle Paul is confronting the Sanhedrin, calling them white-washed tombs, how…what is…you know we were talking about that whole issue and trying to reconcile that and I'm really glad that you're teaching this at college too of the responsibility to young people to take responsibility.

JOHN: Look, the government has a function. The government's function is very simple biblically, it's to keep order in society, it's essentially to police society. Romans 13, "Bear not the sword in vain." You don't carry a sword for nothing. The government is a threat to evil doers. That is government's role. The government's role is to protect people who do good and to punish people who do evil. That's how you keep order in society. That's government's role according to the Word of God. That's its function in society. Its…it really isn't beyond that in the Bible. Now governments may choose to do other things, but biblically government is the police to keep order in society. There are only three institutions that God ordained. One is the family, a mother and a father raising children and teaching them what is right, to pass morality and righteousness to generation to generation civilly, not religiously. And the church which then is different, God ordained the church and that's how spiritual truth is passed from generation to generation. And government is ordained to keep order in society. If the government's role is to keep order in society, then government has to know what's right and wrong. So it has to operate by a moral law.

There is in the Ten Commandments a moral law that is somewhat universal, and it's also written in the heart of man, Romans 2. That is government's primary role. All the other stuff is usurped by governments to one degree or another through history. And once government begins to usurp and people become power hungry and think they can control human behavior by other things, the government will run wild because powerful people will take more power. Power corrupts, and ultimate power corrupts ultimately. So government just keeps expanding and expanding and becomes intrusive. In America, we've watched an experiment in freedom being diminished. Freedom is defined as making choices. The fewer choices you can make, the less freedom you have and we're watching in this country freedoms taken away. If you can't order a sixteen-ounce Coke in New York City, then you can't make a choice about that. So eventually corrupt power takes a bigger and bigger amount of

freedom away. That is not in the Scripture the purpose of government, it's not the purpose of government. And what you have ultimately is the corruption of power and the corruption of power is so great that it can't protect people who do good and punish people who do evil because it's corrupt itself. And when you have leaders who are so corrupt that they have inverted the order and affirmed gay marriage and the slaughter of infants and free sex, and everything else, you have no hope of true government function because you have leaders who don't know what's right or wrong. They've inverted it, so they can't do what government is supposed to do. Government does this because it doesn't fear God, Romans 1, that is the issue.

That's all I'm saying. So what I would say is, "Look, whether or not a person who runs for President, or Vice-President, or Congress, or Senate, or Governor, whether or not that person is a Christian is not the issue, that's not the role of government. You're not choosing a pastor. Since when, all of a sudden, do we think that someone's religion is the issue in picking a President any more than it would be an issue in picking a pilot to fly you somewhere? I don't really care what the religion is, I just want to know he can land the plane. That's not an issue. That's a different function in society. But if you put in power people who have a completely corrupt view of power and a completely perverted view of morality, they can't function to do what government has to do. They not only don't know how to lead us, they don't know how to protect people beyond us so foreign policy is totally confused. In the past, moral leaders have felt that we would protect innocent people who are attacked in unjust wars because we have the power and the ability to do that and that's a function of government. Now our government doesn't know what to do, doesn't know whose side to take cause it doesn't have a clear view. So that's why I'm speaking to these kinds of issues. It's not about whether a person is a Christian, it's about whether somebody understands right and wrong. If somebody understands right and wrong to any degree, it says abortion is murder and homosexual marriage is wrong and has a sense of the priority of family and marriage, then that allows those people to govern with at least a right view of morality. And if someone says, "We must punish those evil aggressors to the ability that we have who attack innocent people, you're having government function at least in the role that God has designed it to function. So that's all I'm saying.

This is not about the church. This is not about being Christian. This is simply about doing good to all men in a civil way. And in the meantime, praying for the salvation of our leaders. As I have said, and I get asked this all the time…we're not voting for a pastor, or a spiritual leader. That's the church. We're voting for someone who understands what's right and wrong and who can exercise definitive leadership in those areas. And through the years you might…might have fallen on one or the other side in terms of economics, you know, you might have been more of big government and social help and all of that, or you might have been on the less government, more free enterprise, more individual freedom as a form of economics and sociology. But now it's all become morality. The platform now is morality.

So that why for the first time in all these years I've started talking about it, because they've crossed the line, as you said, Jeff. They've crossed the line now to become haters of God, Anti-God. And they have taken up what God hates as the platform and the agenda. That's really amazing to be alive in that time and it speaks to judgment.

Can we slow that down? Maybe we can extend some mercy in the midst of judgment. So I don't know, we will see. But whatever happens will be God who lets it happen. Okay?

JEFF: Thank you very much.

MIKE: Hi, Pastor, Mike Cowell(?).

JOHN: Hi, Mike.

MIKE: I've listened to you over a thousand hours on MP3, I listen to you on a 16-hour work day and I spoke like you for about two hours.

JOHN: Yeah?

MIKE: Since listening to you, one thing that became somewhat of a stumbling block. There are a lot of threats to Israel, one of the latest being a nuclear threat. And I try to figure out in my brain how I would reconcile this if Israel was completely nuked in reconciling that with Revelation.

JOHN: Well it's hypothetical. I can just promise you this, that they're going to be around in the end of human history for the Kingdom. It doesn't mean that a few million of them might not perish yet, you know, Hitler killed millions, Stalin killed millions, but he didn't wipe them out. They're still around. That could happen. I don't think Israel can claim any protection by saying we're the people of God any more than the generation of Jesus when the leaders said to Him, "Look, we're fine, we're Abraham's seed." And Jesus said, "That's not going to do any good to you. If God wanted to raise up Abraham's seed, He could do it out of these stones." God will always preserve a remnant for the future. But that's no safeguard for the present generation. It could happen.

You have to understand, God will preserve them as a people, that doesn't mean He'll preserve every generation, even this generation. You know, if you were a premillennialist who believed in the preservation and the future of Israel during the terrible, horrible time of Hitler and Stalin, you might have wondered whether the promises of God in the bible for a future for Israel were really true because so many of them were massacred. But they weren't all and they survived. And they're still there. And I remind you that you never met a Hittite, an Amorite, a Hivite, a Jebusite or any other ite but there are fourteen or fifteen million Israelites in the world and God has preserved them.

But I can't say that that means that they are in a time of blessing. They're not in a time of blessing cause they're in a time of rejection of their Messiah as they've been for generations. And that's what we learned in Isaiah, didn't we?, that the future time is coming when they'll look on Him whom they've pierced and mourned for Him, and a fountain of cleansing will be opened to them and they'll be saved and washed and cleansed, and that's when they will confess Isaiah 53, and they will say, "Yes, now we see it. He was pierced for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquity, chastened for our well-being and by His scourging we were healed." And they'll look back on the cross. So that will come, but that's no necessary guarantee that there wouldn't be a holocaust again because they're under judgment until they turn to Christ. Okay? Good question.

MADISON: My name is Madison.

JOHN: Hi, Madison.

MADISON: My question kind of coincides with what he's talking about. It's a two-part question. First, does the temple have to be built before the Rapture? And second, does the seventieth seven start immediately after the Rapture, and if so, those who were saved during that time, if the seventieth seven starts immediately after the Rapture, wouldn't those who are saved at that time have a countdown of when Christ comes? And then how do we reconcile that with no man knoweth the day or the hour?

JOHN: Good question. Now the first question again? The temple? No, it's not necessary that the temple be built before the Rapture, there's nothing in Scripture that indicates that. They could slap up that temple as fast as they slapped up the tabernacle in Exodus. There are all kinds of stories about the fact that they've got the plans and some have even said they've got the materials sitting in place, waiting for the time in the future…I don't know about that. But there's nothing that says…certainly going to be a rebuilt temple but that doesn't necessarily have to begin for the Rapture.

To your second question, we don't know how long that period would be between the Rapture and the…is that what you're asking? The beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel?

MADISON: Yeah.

JOHN: Yeah, there may be a period of time in there, we don't know that, even someone who was really definitive, John Walberg who wrote so many good things on that eschatology was open about what that period of time might be between the Rapture and the beginning of those judgments. We know the Rapture is the event that happens and then the seventieth week of Daniel, the seven-year period of Tribulation, the final 42 months, or three and a half years of which is the escalated judgment of God on the world which ends with Christ returning and setting up His Kingdom. So there may be a

period of time, we don't know that.

But in answer to the question that is really on your mind, how can Jesus say we don't know the day nor the hour, well remember, He said the day or the hour. You can look at that period of time and you can certainly begin to see the unfolding of these judgments. You're going to know if a fourth of the population of the world is killed and the waters turn to blood, and the sky starts to fall, and all those very specific judgments of the book of Revelation take place. So you're going to know the period. You're going to know the judgment is coming, and that's the point of all that. That's the point. The point is those are pre-judgment warnings, pre-final judgment warnings. Even though you know the period and you know that it's coming, the generation in that time won't know the day or the hour. Okay? Good question.

BEN: Hello, my name is Ben Ditzel.

JOHN: Hi, Ben.

BEN: Hi. I had a question regarding the Pledge of Allegiance, I have a weekly radio program in Idyllwild, of all the episodes that I've aired, the one that's received the most feedback is the one about the Pledge of Allegiance and I had Christians all over the spectrum on this. And I was wondering what your views are because it seems to me that in Daniel 3 it says that we shouldn't be worshiping the golden image, represented by Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom. Well in our case, that would be the flag, I'm thinking, and that which would be representing our ruler and our country, so where do you stand on that?

JOHN: Yeah, you're asking the question, "Should a Christian pledge allegiance to America.

BEN: Yes. The Republic, and then also I guess the wording is somewhat vague, ??? to Republic and flag as well seems to be…

JOHN: Yeah, yeah. You know what? I only pledge allegiance to God as my sovereign. I remember when I was in high school and I got a job in a market and I had to join a union, Local 770, the retail grocers and clerks union, and they took me down to Hollywood to be sworn in to the union and they asked me to put my hand on my heart and swear. And I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't swear allegiance to the union. So some guy came along and said, "You need to put your hand on your heart and you need to repeat these words." And I said, "I can't do that. My allegiance is to Christ." I was 17 at the time and they threw me out. And threw me out on the street, it was on Hollywood Boulevard and they threw me out of the building because I wouldn't pledge allegiance to them.

But, I think as a Christian I have a responsibility to submit to my government and to submit to those that are in authority. And I think the Scripture is very clear on that. So in a limited sense, in a

minimalist sense, I affirm that I will be a good citizen, that I will submit to my leaders, I will do good to all men as much is as possible. I think Titus 3 is a great text to use on that, that I will live my life in a way that is harmless to the government, that is submissive to the authorities over me. So in the sense that I can say yes, I pledge to be a loyal, faithful, submissive citizen, I think I'm within the responsibility that God has given me. I don't think I have a right to rebel. I don't think I have a right to be revolutionary.

I will give you an illustration of that. I think one of the most foolish things I've ever seen the American government do is aid and abet revolutions in the Middle East. I said this when the Arabs spring first began. This is absolute insanity because you are aiding a revolution, the overthrow of power, that's going against everything God has said in the Bible. I don't care who the power is. God placed them there. And what happened in the Middle East, of course, is you had all these dictators who ran these unilateral empires, who checked and balanced each other, and there was order in the society. And people didn't die, unless they rebelled. They didn't die unless they had a revolution.

You say, "What about all these people being killed in Assyria?" If they just go home and have dinner, they'll live. If they take guns and try to kill the people in power, they're going to die. This is a revolution. To aid and abet a revolution with a silly notion that you're going to create a democracy is just stupidity. What happens is as soon as you aid and abet the revolution, you have a vacuum, and into that vacuum will come the coalition of people who have the most clear and focused ideology. You've got all kinds of fragmented people who just hate the governor, or the ruler, who want a different life, who want money, who want some higher level of life like the western world. And they're no factor at all once the revolution is over. Who takes over is whoever has the most cohesive ideology. And the people with the most cohesive ideology and the greatest power and the greatest threat is the Muslim brotherhood.

So inevitably, they'll take over. And when they take over everywhere, you have no checks and balances, you have a massive monolithic control in the hands of people who want to do damage to the world. And that's what we're seeing happen. Aiding and abetting a revolution doesn't make any sense at all, I don't care what the revolution is because God produces order by those kinds of leaders. There was never a suggestion from any of the Christian leaders in the New Testament era that they overthrow Rome, or that they have a revolution in Israel to kick the Romans out. The powers that be are ordained of God. And I think we submit whether it's Caesar, or you know, whether it's Mubarak, or whoever it is, whether it's the government we have now.

So I'm saying, in that sense I can commit myself to my country to be a faithful, submissive citizen. That's a far cry from pledging to God. It's a very temporal and limited commitment, okay?

Okay, we're out of time, so you guys are going to have fire some very brief questions. I think we might have time for…we got some ladies there and we've had all these men. Can we preempt you

with these ladies? Can you make the question really fast? Okay.

TRUDY: My question is fast. I would just like to know when the time was when life changed from man's living hundreds of years to a hundred years?

JOHN: The Flood. Before the Flood, people lived well, 900 years plus. And that's because there was no penetration of the sun. There was basically a water canopy around the earth that filtered out the ultra-violet rays and you had a hot house protected and people lived a long time. That was all broken up in the Flood and all that water came down to flood the earth. And after that, the sun directly hit the earth and life was shortened. Okay?

TRUDY: Thank you.

JOHN: You're welcome, Trudy. Yeah, okay, where are we? Real quick.

KATHY: Hi, John.

JOHN: Hi.

KATHY: (Spokesman) Kathy wants to know…

JOHN: You want to know about divorce?

KATHY: Yeah.

JOHN: Don't do it, Kathy.

KATHY: No, I'm not married.

JOHN: I know.

KATHY: I'm talking about my parents. (inaudible)

JOHN: Or a divorce. It's better to have two parents that are constantly fighting, to find a way to resolve that. Yeah, I mean, it's never good to have two parents fighting. A divorce isn't the answer. You know, that's like saying I have a problem with my right arm so I'll cut it off. That's not the answer, fix it. The terminal solution is not the solution. The right solution is to keep the marriage together because God says, "I hate divorce."

KATHY: Yeah, I know, but the thing is…my parents How can I be a good Christian if…inaudible.

JOHN: You know, you are a good testimony by your faithfulness and I think you just need to pray for them and, you know, when God gives you the opportunity to talk to them…I just don't think you give them divorce as an option. Even non-believers I would say…

KATHY: (Inaudible)

JOHN: You know that but they don't know that. Then you've got to do all you can, you know, you're not going to be able to control what they do but I think you speak to the…the hearts on that issue.

KATHY: (Inaudible)

JOHN: I missed that, what was it?

KATHY: (Spokesman: she said thank you…)

JOHN: Thank you, you're welcome, hon. You're welcome. Thank you for being such a good student. Thank you so much.

All right, we're going to do it really fast. Okay, quick question, yes or no answer.

KEVIN: My question is this, does sin evolve, or does it change? Because in the Old Testament there were things that were permissible that are no longer permissible now and sin by definition is opposition to God. So either sin is changing, or God is changing, but God doesn't change. So…

JOHN: No. Anything that is moral doesn't change, unchangeable. Anything that's ceremonial, external, non-moral is subject to change like dietary laws, laws of sacrifice, laws of clothing, laws of cooking. The violation of those laws I don't think necessarily was a sin. I mean, I think if, you know, if you happen to mix the milk and the meat when you were cooking, that's not a sin, that's an oops, probably shouldn't have done that. Because God was simply trying to separate you from the way everything else done, to isolate the Jews. So that's not considered a sin unless the heart is a heart of willful defiance against God and it shows itself in just that attitude of disregard for things that God has asked you to do, or placed as ordinances. No, sin does not evolve. Sin is always the same because sin is any violation of the nature of God. The law of God is a reflection of His holy nature. Any violation of that is sin. Failing, you know, to dot the I and cross the T in some ceremony or some ordinances or how you pick out birds' eggs out of a bird's nest. That is not sin unless it is a defiant act against God. Okay.

KEVIN: What about like incest. It was necessary with Adam and Eve…

JOHN: Yeah, well it wasn't a sin. Yeah. It's only a sin because as time went on it became an issue, it became an issue as time went on. Obviously people married their relatives in the beginning for a brief period of time. But it wasn't very long that they were doing that and there hadn't been the genetic decline which then made incest potentially a devastating kind of thing genetically. So it took a while for the genetics to deteriorate and create the problems that incest creates. Okay? Good question.

Quickly.

ELSHAWN(???) he's from Brazil. A brief question about Romans chapter 1, and verse by verse, I do like to focus in verse 20. I would like to know if as the verse says, everybody can (inaudible).

JOHN: Everybody can recognize God as a Creator. But the way you know God as a Savior is through…well, yeah, that's 1 Timothy, God is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe. There is a demonstration of God's saving nature in the fact that He doesn't give sinners what they deserve when they deserve it. It's His patience and forbearance with sinners that demonstrates that He's a Savior by nature. Sinners should see that in the fact that they know they're sinful. They know they're immoral. And they live and they go on living. They know they violate the Law of God because the Law is written in their heart. You go to Romans 2, the Law of God is written in their heart. They know God is a Savior by nature because they know they have violated its law. They know He's creator by reason. They know He's righteous by the law written in their hearts. And so they know there is a God who is a Creator and He's written His law in their hearts, they know they violate that Law and yet they live. So they know, in a sense, that God is a merciful Savior. But the truth about how He saves has to come through Scripture. Okay? All right.

I think we better cut it off there. Our time is gone, we've gone too long. So sorry about making everybody wait. We'll do this again and thank you for..well, you guys, I was going as fast as I can, sorry for keeping you, When the people start fleeing, I know it's time to quit. Let's have a Word of prayer and we'll let you go.

Father, thank You for good conversation tonight, good fellowship around Your truth and all these sort of various issues that are in our hearts, all come back to the fact that we want to submit ourselves to Your Word and it gives us answers…it gives us answers. We can know the truth and we thank You for that. Bless these precious people and apply the truth to their hearts and use them, Lord, for the advance of Your name. We pray for the sake of Christ and everyone said, "Amen." Good night and thank you.

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