

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

## **Strange Fire Q&A: Answering the Critics**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 70-37

PHIL: Well, John, welcome back to Grace Church. We've missed you.

JOHN: Thank you...thank you, it's good to be back, wonderful. Thank you.

PHIL: But it turns out that some of our Charismatic friends and brothers are not happy with you and...

JOHN: This is true.

PHIL: They've been writing a flood of criticisms and complaints and questions about the conference and your book and I've collected some of those and I want to ask them to you tonight.

JOHN: I'm ready, I think.

PHIL: I think it's an interesting phenomenon that a Word of Faith teacher could go out there and make up and teach any doctrine he wants and the Charismatic world seems to be placid and calm with that. But you criticize the Charismatic Movement and the whole Charismatic world comes unhinged.

JOHN: Yeah, this is what we've said through the years that you can, in that Movement, you can advocate anything and no one will question it. You can advocate absolutely any experience, anything from God and no one will ask you to defend it, no one will take a position against it. But if you take a position against something in the Movement and identify it as error, you are vilified. So it's that uncritical attitude that allows for absolutely everything that makes criticism such a shock to them and they've...they've managed to go along for so many years without anybody really doing that. I think that's fair to say. We were trying...we were talking about the fact that it had been fifteen years since a critical book had been written on that Movement, fifteen years that that Movement has gone unabated and without criticism and without accountabilities. So I understand the shock that it was.

PHIL: Well, in fact, you raise this issue with some of our Reformed Charismatic friends, "Why don't you criticize the extremes in this Movement?" And the consistent answer has been, "That's not what I feel called to do, I'm here to teach the truth, I want to inject as much truth as I can into the Movement." I don't want to be a critique but some of them have spent the past three weeks incessantly criticizing...

JOHN: Me.

PHIL: You and the book.

JOHN: They don't mind criticizing me.

PHIL: Yeah, and it's an interesting phenomenon.

Let me just raise some of the questions. You're the first objection almost every Charismatic critique has raised is that you paint with a broad brush when you point out heretics and abominations in the Charismatic Movement. You don't always add disclaimers and exemptions for Charismatics and there are some who would share your concerns. How do you differentiate between those who are outlandish and those who are more restrained? How do you make the difference between the rank heretics and the Christians who are merely misled or confused in the Movement?

JOHN: Well, I think there are different categories. There are...there are the very moderate Charismatics that we know as Reformed Non-Cessationists, or Continuationists, their theology, for the most part, is sound and solid. Then there is the sort of the middle part of it that maybe more traditional Pentecostals who know the gospel and believe in Jesus and have a sort of normal church life, even though they allow for the gifts. And then there's the wild fringe. The problem is, if the people who should be responsible to confront all of that never do that. Then, in a sense, they acquiesce to that. So there's culpability in not doing that. I mean, you just can't say, "Well I...that's not me. That doesn't represent me." But whatever you allow and whatever you tolerate is to one degree or another a representation of you. And if you're tolerant of that, then you defacto affirm it. You know, I mean Jesus simplified it by saying if you're not for Me, you're against Me. So it's either one or the other. You can't hide behind the fact that you're not like the rest of them unless you're willing to rise up and condemn what isn't right. And that then legitimizes those people at another level.

So I thought there was a very interesting little piece put together by one of our seminary graduates, I don't know if you saw this.

PHIL: I saw it yesterday.

JOHN: Really amazing. He said, "Let's look...let's look at this thing in a quantitative basis." So he took, I think...was it 20? The twenty sort of leading, moderate, continuationist who believe the gifts continue that John Piper, Wayne Grudem, D.A. Carson even through Rick Warren and some others in their who would allow for the gifts, and maybe twenty of them. And then, you look at their Twitter account and added up how many people were on their Twitter account and the number came...I don't know what it came to, five million or something would be the total of that. And then he took the twenty most well-known Charismatics and added up their Twitter accounts and it was massively,

exponentially way, way beyond by the multiples of millions, beyond those more reasonable people. So when...if you're trying to convince me that the radical kind of aspect is the minority. I'm not buying into that and there's a quantitative objective proof of that. That is the vast majority of the Movement. And as we pointed out, a hundred and twenty million of them are Catholics and, of course, they don't have the true gospel. And twenty-five million of them belong to the oneness Pentecostal Movement which is non-Trinitarian, denying the Trinity. And then you have all of those people in Africa in some kind of combination of Christianity and ancestor worship and demon preoccupation and witch doctor stuff, as Conrad pointed out. So I think you're going to get caught in the broad brush and in the radical aspect of the Movement if you're not willing to rise up against it.

PHIL: Yeah, and one of the debates that's come up has been, you know, what is the fringe and what is the mainstream? And it seems to me to a person our Reformed Charismatic friends are either willfully blind or they truly don't see that they are in the minority. They really seem to think that they represent the Movement's mainstream. I mean, historically and numerically that's not true, is it?

JOHN: No, they don't represent the mainstream at all. They don't even...they don't even trace their roots back to the beginnings of Pentecostalism. They trace their roots through the Reformation, right?

PHIL: Right.

JOHN: Those people basically, for the most part, the ones that we're talking about, Grudem and Carson and Piper and those, they trace their roots to the Reformation. And there is no Charismatic string there. There is no non-cessation view that comes through that history of the church. You can go back to the fathers, you can go back to Calvin, you can go back to Luther, you can go back to the Puritans and the Reformers and they're not...they're not affirming the continuation of the gifts. So it's an anomaly, and that's why we say that, it's an anomaly. So they even...they're outside the Movement truthfully. They are outside the Movement, sort of sitting on the fringe. They are the fringe. The Movement itself traces itself back through Charismatic history, back to the turn of the twentieth century, 1900, where it all really was launched.

PHIL: You did a kind of online interview with Tim Chales(?) and he asked you about the broad brush accusation. And here's what you said to him. You said, "Of course, I would agree that there are true believers within the Charismatic Movement, but that does not negate the seriousness of the corruption. The Charismatic quest for extra-biblical revelation, subjective impressions, ecstatic experiences and so on, represents a massive danger to the church. Error is still error, even if there are true believers who embrace it and espouse it. And when the error threatens the church in such significant ways, it needs to be called out and directly confronted."

That sort of prompted in my mind a memory of the Christianity Today review of *Charismatic Chaos*, your first book, or your earlier book on the Charismatic Movement, and they famously said this, quote:

“The book vastly overstates the Charismatic threat.” Now I suspect they would feel, or they’re going to feel the same way about *Strange Fire*. What is your response to that? How serious is the threat posed by the Charismatic Movement as a whole?

JOHN: Well we tried to communicate this, the seriousness of the threat is not somebody standing in a corner speaking gibberish. And I’ve actually said to people, “You’d be better off to go in a corner and speak nonsense then come out of the corner and gossip.” So, you know, we don’t want to say that that’s the threat. The vast negative aspect of this Movement doesn’t come from people who seem to have spiritual impressions. It comes from living in a paradigm outside Scripture, which is what we were trying to say this morning, because nothing good happens out there. This is shocking to them because it’s a huge paradigm shift to submit themselves completely to the true and accurate interpretation of the Scripture, the historical interpretation of Scripture and to, as we were talking about this morning, to believe that communion with the Holy Spirit occurs through the Word of God and understanding the Word of God and applying the Word of God and obeying the Word of God. That is a complete paradigm shift. And it isn’t induced by music, it isn’t induced by mood. Nobody is playing on your emotions. When you’re studying the Bible, just studying the Word of God, you’re in a pure communion with the Holy Spirit. When you’re listening to a sermon, if you’re in that environment and you’re listening to a sermon, maybe at least half the time somebody’s playing music while he’s preaching, and you’ve heard this. The organ goes up, and the organ goes down, and there’s music because this is all about inducing some kind of emotional state. So to say to people that you’ve got to ignore all of that and use your mind to understand the Word of God, is a huge paradigm shift. They have to undo their whole perspective on spirituality. And as I said briefly this morning, when people live outside Scripture and when they’re chasing supposed messages from God, all kinds of bad things happen. All kinds of unbiblical things happen and sometimes cults are developed that literally have a massive influence on culture and deceive millions.

So my issue is not in a particular behavior, speaking in tongues or, you know, lifting your hands, or whatever, my issue is defining spirituality completely outside Scripture in some kind of experience induced with false claims and false expectations. So because it’s a false paradigm of sanctification that can’t restrain the flesh, as we point out in the book, that the Movement is rampant with immorality because a false approach to sanctification can’t restrain the flesh, so we’re not surprised when we see immorality everywhere. We’re not surprised when we, as we point out in the book, you see somebody expose some pastor, high-profile exposed for a really outrageous kind of immoral conduct and he’s right back doing it, you know, a few weeks later in another place, and another way...because that’s germane to a false paradigm. In my mind, it would be like legalism. Legalism would be a parallel. We reject legalism because legalism is a false...a false gospel, it’s a false message. You can’t earn your salvation. We would even reject legalism as a means of sanctification, that you’re sanctified by your outward behavior. We would reject that. This is another false form of sanctification.

And I'm afraid that people think they're saved because they had some kind of Jesus experience. I was reading online the other day, a very famous broadcast television lady who made the statement that something came over her and she knew she had met God. And I remember, and you remember this, too, and KBRT radio, I was doing an afternoon interview with a woman and it became apparent, she was a Christian radio talk-show host for three or four hours every day, and off air I said, "How did you become a Christian?" I'll never forget what she said. She said, "Oh, one day I got Jesus' phone number and we've been connected ever since." You remember that?

PHIL: Yeah.

JOHN: I said, "What? What does that mean?"

She said, "What do you mean what does that mean? I got Jesus' phone number and we have been connected." And then she said to me, "Well, if somebody asked you how you became a Christian, what would you say?"

I explained the gospel to which she responded, "O come on, you don't have to go through all of that."

So this is somebody who is giving answers on the radio to people calling up with spiritual questions. So I think...that's part of the delusion that's in this Movement at the very entry point. And then trying to live a Christian life by chasing these imaginations and feelings, piling in to auditoriums to have your emotions stirred, kind of radically and extremely and thinking that's some kind of aid to your sanctification, falling over backwards, laughing hysterically.

So my concern is you're taking people outside the only help they can really have and that's with a clear mind understanding the truth of Scripture, whether it's for salvation or sanctification.

PHIL: In short then, when the experiences you have become more important to you than the truth you believe, that's dangerous.

JOHN: Look, 1 Corinthians 2 says, "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them that love Him. But the Spirit reveals those things because He knows the deep things of God." If you're chasing your experiences, and you're chasing your intuition, and you're following your sensory stimulus, eyes, ears, that's the wrong way to go. It's the Spirit of God who reveals the deep things of God and has laid them in here and this is the mind of Christ. That's...that's the true sanctification.

So what do you have then? The outcomes of this are bad for the people who are in it, and they're disastrous for the world that's watching because they're looking at people who claim to be the not just Christians but they claim to have the power, they claim to have the anointing, if you will. They claim to

be the elevated Christians. They look down on us, you know, we're the mundane Spiritless people worshipping the Bible. And they're the ones who have the power and they're the miracle people, and the world looks at them and says, "This is a disaster, look at these people. Their lives are a wreck, they're overtly lavish in their lifestyle, the people at the top of the sort of Ponzi scheme, the people who are supposed to be the spiritual leaders, their lives are...I mean, they look at Jim Bakker, they look at Jimmy Swaggart, they look at all these...these holocausts of immorality that have occurred among these media guys and if this is Christianity, you know, it's the old statement, "Show me your redeemed life and I might be inclined to believe in your Redeemer. Show me that and I have no interest in your Redeemer."

PHIL: Now, our Reformed Charismatic friends will say, "But we don't operate completely apart from Scripture. We have the same commitment to the authority of Scripture you do, we have the same theological framework that you do..."

JOHN: And they do. I agree with that. That there are many that do have that.

PHIL: So what's the danger there? I mean, they...what is it? They listen for prophecies and so on, but if the prophecy contradicts Scripture, they'll reject it.

JOHN: The first danger there is they give credibility to the rest of the Movement. They give cover because they are biblical, they are erudite, they are trained, they are intellectual, and they get so much right. So the fringe looks to them for credibility.

The other danger is that they're looking for something that they don't need. And by their own admission don't know when it comes of if it comes. And so there's a sense in which you live in a kind of hopeful dissatisfaction unnecessarily.

But I think the big issue for them, and that's what we said in the book, is come on, you know, you're giving cover to this when you allow for this in an uncritical way or when you allow for this. I mean, for example, in the book to say that a guy who claimed to be a prophet who turned out to be an alcoholic homosexual, to say that he is really a prophet as one of those finest of men said, a Reformed guy, "He's really a prophet even though he's homosexual, alcoholic who didn't get messages from God except maybe this man believes once or something...why give that kind of cover? So that's my concern is they gain a degree of credibility. Not only do they gain a degree of credibility, but the people that follow those men stay open to that like they're open to that.

PHIL: Yeah. Yeah and we're back to the broad brush thing again. I mean, I was questioned on the same thing and I made the comment that...I mean, you look at some of these men, like Sam Storms who has written some excellent things, some books that I treasure on the Sovereignty of God, and issues like that. But he's a Charismatic and he followed me on a radio interview a few weeks ago and

one of the first things he said was, "There are two men he reveres in his life, one is John Piper and the other is Mike Bickle. Mike Bickle is the pastor of the Kansas City Prophets and, you know, the founder of IHOP, The International House of Prayer, the guy who says that in his entire experience, over 40 years, I think he said, in the Charismatic Movement, 80 percent of the phenomenon he's seen, he knows it's false. And he's saying that not as a critique of the Movement, but he's saying that to say to people it's okay, it's okay if some of the stuff is false, it's all right.

JOHN: Yeah...yeah. Then that's the point. How can a guy like Sam affirm a John Piper and affirm Mike Bickle? You talk about...They've got a broad brush.

PHIL: They're miles apart. That's exactly what I said.

JOHN: In fact, you said...I read what you said. You said, "There isn't a broad enough brush to paint a mess like that." I would never say anything like that. (Applause)

PHIL: Yeah, well quote some more Spurgeon and make me sound nicer than I am.

JOHN: No, isn't that the whole point?

PHIL: Yeah.

JOHN: You would expect him to say what's going on with the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, is false, it's been proven false. His partner, Bob Jones, was totally discredited morally.

PHIL: And they admit a lot of it is false.

JOHN: And then to be able to say it's okay to be wrong because this is fallible prophecy? This is prophecy that is fallible, non-authoritative, non-binding. In fact, most of it, most of what is claimed to have come from God doesn't. And then when you ask them, "How do you know?" You get a strange kind of dance. Well, if it feels like it's the Holy Spirit.

PHIL: Is there...is there some principle in Charismatic theology that undermines discernment itself?

JOHN: Sure...sure.

PHIL: Promotes gullibility.

JOHN: Because discernment...discernment comes from objective, external truth. I mean, just think about it. The spiritual world is run by laws, just exactly as the natural world. The next time you go to the doctor and you go in to the doctor and you've got all kinds of pain in your abdomen, let's say, and he looks at you and says, "You know, I have a strong impression, I'm feeling that this is what you've

got. You've got cancer. This is a strong impression that...

You'd be out of that door.

PHIL: Looking for another doctor already.

JOHN: Are you kidding me? You're not going to tamper with my body. Well why would you let somebody tamper with your soul? Why would you go in and have some guy talk to you like that?

So you can't discern unless your criteria are fixed in objective when the Bible demands discernment? When it says, "Examine every prophecy, don't despise preaching, don't despise teaching. Don't despise the people who speak for God. But examine everything and hold fast to what is true and reject what is not." And the criteria is biblical.

But in that Movement, that is not the paradigm in which they thing, in which they exist. And this is why when we do a conference like that, the Charismatics react with such...with such extreme anger because they can't process that. I know that. Look, I love these people. I want to see them come to the truth. And, you know, you have to rock their world. You have to rock the paradigm in which they live. You've got to shake the house down. To borrow the language of 2 Corinthians 10, you've got to smash the ideology. You've got to crush the fortress. It's got to come down because they're imprisoned in this wrong paradigm and then bring all thoughts captive to Christ.

I understand it's a war.

PHIL: In your view then, this is the Charismatic Movement, Charismatic theology is one of those strongholds that Paul was talking about in 2 Corinthians 10.

JOHN: It is one of those strongholds. I mean, just put the pieces together. You turn on TBN and you'll hear Paul Crouch talking about the fact that they're on 50 television stations in Africa and God is doing miracles all over Africa. And then Conrad Mbewe comes here and says, "The whole Movement is bogus. The whole Movement is false. These pastors are nothing but the new witchdoctors. They're taking money from people by promising them they can navigate them through the dead ancestors in the demon world to God so they can get rich and healthy. It's bogus. You're not going to hear that on TBN. Next program comes on TBN and you're listening to an evangelical preacher having an interview with Paul Crouch, the same guy who is affirming something in Africa that's false. Where do you draw the line here? This...this kind of confusion, this uncritical acceptance of the Movement has gone on for such a long time. You know me because we talk all the time, but this is what drives me to do things like the conference when it reaches the level where you just can't allow it go on. People say to me, "Do...do...do you worry about what people think?" And my answer is, "Of course I worry about what people think, I want them to think truth and not error." Do I worry what they think about me? No.



Do I worry that they might not like this? No. This is the truth and the truth will always have this reaction when it confronts error.

And again, back to what I said earlier, this has gone on without criticism. And the guys that we've been talking about the continuationist who have responsible ministries and sound theology should have risen up long ago and confronted and condemned this thing. But because they haven't, there's a young generation of even Reformed young guys who don't know what they believe about this but they're very comfortable because these guys aren't sure what they believe.

PHIL: Now there's a myth floating around there that one of the things you said at the conference was basically to anathematize all Charismatics and consign them all to the eternal flames. I mean, you've already made clear tonight that's not your position.

JOHN: I married a Charismatic. I did. Patricia and her family were saved in a Four-Square Church.

PHIL: You healed her from that, didn't you?

JOHN: I healed her from that, yeah. But it was not instantaneous. It took a very long time. No, look, are there Christians in the Movement? Of course there are, and particularly in the old line traditional Pentecostal churches, Assembly of God, Four-Square churches, there are people who believe the gospel, pastors who believe the gospel. They're Christians not because of anything in the Movement. They're Christians because the true gospel is there.

PHIL: Help people on our side of this debate understand though that you're not advocating that everybody who has any Charismatic strain in their teaching be totally anathematized.

JOHN: No, of course not.

PHIL: So...so how do you differentiate, how can we...what is the difference between someone who is preaching another gospel and they fit under the condemnation of Galatians chapter 1 verses 8 and 9, and someone who is our brother in Christ, and we embrace him though we reject this aspect of his theology? How do you make that determination?

JOHN: I would make that determination and how I would talk about that person and how we'd refer to that person, and I would minister alongside that person. I've ministered alongside John Piper many, many times. I've spent hours and hours in a basement praying with John Piper. I was there when he announced that he had just discovered he had cancer and we gathered around him, some men, and prayed for him. And C.J. Maheny(?) was there with us. I mean, these are men who know the Lord, love the gospel, love the Word of God. They're the fringe of that Movement. They're really outside and I don't know why they think they need to hang on to it. But I think a lot of it comes from what I

was saying this morning about them kind of pursuing and anointing, and sort of finding that in people like that in Lloyd-Jones and others who are a little bit mystical about that. But I don't have a problem. We've had these men minister here. Wayne Grudem gave a great series on biblical manhood, and womanhood at the college. And he's written an outstanding theology which would be a great text for theology with just those deviations on that one point. So, oh yeah, these re brothers in Christ and that's how they should be treated and loved and revered and honored as such.

To get the gospel right is the starting point. But I think they also understand the true paradigms of salvation and sanctification. They know the realm in which that occurs. They know the true means of grace. They operate within the true means of grace. I don't know what the compulsions are that cause them to step out of what is normal for them.

PHIL: It's a paradox that's hard to explain, isn't it? Because Charismatic theology really comes from a whole different strain of Wesley and perfectionism.

JOHN: Right, right, right. And maybe I could say this to you, this is a perspective, and I said it to the elders the other night, look, you are living in the greatest revival in the history of the church right now. It outstrips the Reformation, vastly outstrips the Reformation. It's a revival of sound doctrine and Reformed Theology, the Sovereignty of God, the Sovereignty of God in salvation with...we know it as Calvinism. You are living in an explosion of Reformed Theology that is global...it's global. There's never been anything like it in the history of the world. It is so far beyond the Reformation that it would be impossible to even make a comparison because of technology. So now, I was telling the elders, you know, there are 35,000 little groups of Viet Nam...Vietnamese people, you've been there, sitting in rice paddies listening to me preach in their own language and learning Reformed Theology and Bible exposition in Viet Nam, 35,000 of them listening to me on little boxes with thirty-five hours of teaching on a chip in their own language. This is staggering, and that's just Viet Nam. That's just one little place and one little ministry. It's crossing the globe.

Let me tell you. When I was a young guy, my Dad was a pastor. This would probably surprise you. I never one time had a discussion with my father all his life as a pastor and my life under his teaching, and I loved him and learned from him, and even through my days as a student. I never had a conversation with him about the sovereignty of God and salvation, never. I never had a conversation with him about imputed righteousness. I never had a definitive conversation with him about justification. I never had a discussion with him about the doctrine of election. It wasn't there. It wasn't even in the landscape. There was a little orthodox Presbyterian church with about thirty people in it and that was it. That's the only one I even knew of. The landscape of Evangelicalism was...was sort of baptistic and very generic and not very theological, and very kind of evangelistic. I never had that conversation with my Dad and my Dad was a relentless reader and loved the Word. It just wasn't there.

When I went to college, all of a sudden a guy landed here by the name of J.I. Packer. He wrote *The Sovereignty of God in Evangelism* and he just grabbed everybody by the neck and he said, "You do believe in the sovereignty of God because when you want somebody to be saved, you pray for them which acknowledges that God can save and God alone." This just shook the foundations of a generation of young people, he followed it up by *Knowing God*, the book of God Himself which extolled the sovereignty of God. This is all new. This exploded over a period of time.

I started to read the Puritans in seminary. I got a hold of Benjamin Warfield, first of all, B.B. Warfield on *Counterfeit Miracles*. You know, that was the foundations of my non-...of my cessationism. B.B. Warfield on *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*. Then I got a hold of Stephen Charnak, I don't know, 900 pages on the *Character of God*. Then I read Thomas Watson's *Body of Divinity*, and Thomas Watson. I remember flying to Peru one night, all night, reading Thomas Watson's *Beatitudes*. And my whole world changed, dramatically changed. And by the time I arrived at Grace Church, I was a completely different person than I was when I entered seminary. And it didn't have anything to do particularly with the seminary. It had to do with what I had been exposed to. And I came here, and I started in to Matthew early on here. And I had to interpret Matthew for myself because the way I saw Matthew was completely different than the way I had been taught...completely...The Sermon on the Mount. And that's where all that really took root.

So I was part of that early Movement. So I traced my...I started finding friends like Jim Boice. I started listening to men like S.Louis Johnson who was a phenomenal...phenomenal theologian, linguist, really a Reformation man. And I began to find my lineage and my lineage was S.Louis Johnson, Jim Boice. Jim Boice came here and preached, wrote the forward for *The Gospel According to Jesus*. My lineage went back...it went back to Jonathan Edwards. I didn't know anything about Edwards till I got to seminary. It went back...it went back to Spurgeon first, then it went back to Edwards. It went back to the Reformer...the Puritans, and I started reading the Puritans, all the Puritans I could get. And then it went back to the Reformers, then it just kept going back to the Apostles. That's our lineage.

Grace Church is in that lineage, okay? That's where we trace our history. We go...we go back. One of the early instruments that God used in that was R.C. Sproul. R.C. Sproul, phenomenal teacher, probably an unparalleled gift for teaching, brought Reformed theology to the masses through the Ligonier Ministries, and still doing it. And that's our family. And we go back through that family down through the Puritans, down through the Reformers, back to the Apostles. Okay? That's where we live. That's where we come from.

There's a completely separate Movement going on in the evangelical world, that does not trace its lineage back to that at all. It starts in 1900, it starts with Parham who is a bizarre kind of screwy character who was arrested for sodomy and he launches the Charismatic Movement. It shows up in

Azusa Street here in L.A., William Seymour, it's a bizarre kind of Movement. It starts the Pentecostal Church. It goes through Aimee who was a kind of a con-woman, Aimee Semple McPherson. And there were people in those Movements who knew the gospel, heard the gospel, believed the gospel, my own wife's family was saved in a church connected to Aimee Semple McPherson's ministry. But her life is a story of deception. That Movement moves along, that Charismatic Movement arrives at Chuck Smith, gets infused with Jesus people, you know, the communal living, hippies that came out of San Francisco who showed up at a Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa and took the church of 30 and turned it into a church of a thousand because all these beach kids landed there. And Calvary Chapel was born and for the first time in the history of the church, the suits went out, the hymns went out because they decided to adapt to the culture. The culture was casual, guitars came in and the church changed. And out of that, a few years later, Calvary Chapel went ahead and there are many faithful guys in there who teach the Bible and believe the gospel, but it has Charismatic...it's Charismatic in its theology, but faithful to the gospel for the most part.

And then there was a serious deviation when a guy named John Wimber broke from Chuck Smith and started the Vineyard and that's...that's the line that went bizerk, that, just, you know, then they got the Toronto Blessing and the stuff going on down in Florida and all the crazy stuff that comes out of that Vineyard extreme Movement. That's the Charismatic tree, that's their family. So they...you have leading Charismatic pastor who would say something like this, he said this, "The Reformation is highly overrated." Why would he say that? Because he has no connection to it. His roots go back to 1900. Ours go back to the New Testament, to the church fathers, to the Reformers, to the Puritans, to the great men who have been the great theologians.

So these people live in a different paradigm. They are informed by the culture. For the first time when Calvary Chapel, went Chuck Smith decided to throw out the suits, throw out the hymns and let's do the guitar stuff that the kids want and let them casual and barefoot and all that, let the hair grow, the church conformed to a very highly defined subculture that told the church what it wanted it to be. I know all this cause I lived it. I was here when all this was happening. Came here in 1969, watched this happen from a front-row seat. And I didn't get on board.

We had...we had hippies come here. And in a few years they looked like us, we didn't look like them. I mean, not that that's the main issue, but our approach to the church was informed by the Scripture, not by the culture. That started a Movement of culturally informed church, and that's where all the seeker-friendly stuff, all the, you know, market-driven church, all that kind of stuff comes on that side. So we trace our lineage back through those great Movements of theology, back to the New Testament.

So what do I do when I want to prepare a message? I don't look for a Charismatic back 15 years who had a vision. I go read a dead person. I go read a dead person in my family, my spiritual family.

PHIL: Now your Charismatic critic is going to say, "Yup, and your churches are dead as well. And if you look at the expansion of Christianity in the world today, the vast majority of professions of faith are coming through the spread of the Charismatic Movement. You think that's a wrong way to think, why?"

JOHN: Professions of faith makes me very nervous. "Many will profess unto Me, 'Lord, Lord.' And I will say to them, 'I never knew you.'" But what are they going to say? "We did this in Your name, we prophesied in Your name, we did miracles in Your name. Depart from Me I never knew you." It's easy to get professions. You know, there have been non-Charismatics who are really good at getting professions, that's the world I grew up in. You know, ten verses of just as I am, and keep the organ playing and keep people coming forward, and, you know, manipulate them into some kind of profession.

Listen, wherever the gospel is preached, the Lord will save His people. But no one is saved by anybody's approach or anybody's method, they're saved by the sovereign purposes of God. But not apart from the gospel. So if the gospel's in there, God will save through the gospel.

But I'm afraid in many of those, for example, among 120 million self-confessed Roman Catholic Charismatics, the gospel's not there. So wherever the gospel is, salvation can take place. You don't have to have a perfect theology on all levels for people to know the gospel and hear the gospel and believe the gospel.

Which brings up the question, and we've been trying to deal with this, people say, "Well what about all these people in the Middle East, these Muslims are getting visions of Jesus in the sky?: And I read about this, and people driving down the road and all of a sudden Jesus appears. There's another one, you may have seen this about a rabbi who had a vision and it was the Messiah and the closer He came, the further...the closer He got, the more he knew it was Jesus. I don't know how he knew it was Jesus, unless he had a picture of Salmon's(?) Christ or something. But who knows what Jesus looks like? I guess he thought it was Jesus. So that could be pure imagination, that could be fear. I suppose there are a lot of explanations for that. But people don't get saved through those kinds of things because faith comes by hearing the truth concerning Christ. That's why we Live Stream Grace Church in Arabic because we know that in that part of the world there aren't churches and there aren't books, and there aren't opportunities and they're not going to be saved by seeing some kind of imaginary Jesus in the sky without gospel content. So we're pumping the truth in so that they can come to Christ.

PHIL: This, I think, is the single-most controversial thing that you said at the conference and wrote in your book and it's this notion that vast numbers of Charismatics who profess faith in Christ, don't really know Him. And I know that's a driving concern behind the reasons you wrote the book. Talk

about that a little more.

JOHN: Okay, I'll go back and...

PHIL: In fact, can I give...let me just give you an example. During the Q&A at the conference, Todd Friel played that video clip where they were doing the Holy Ghost Hokey Pokey.

JOHN: Yeah.

PHIL: People jumping and dancing around to a mindless message and a Christless gospel and your comment after that, I wrote it down because...this is one of those quotes that's been taken out of context to prove that you're considing(?) all Charismatics to hell. You said, "These people need to be rescued." You're talking about people who are responding emotionally with a...to an empty gospel, a Christless message, the reality is that these people are lost in this system. They're throwing the word "Jesus" all over the place, but they don't know the gospel, they don't understand the gospel, the people can't be saved out of that Movement until they hear the gospel.

JOHN: I'm not radical.

PHIL: It is to a Charismatic who thinks these phenomena or evidence that these people have the Holy Spirit. In my view, that's one of the most dangerous things about the Charismatic Movement.

JOHN: Well of course. That...

PHIL: It puts assurance on the wrong...

JOHN: Well look, we hear all the time, "These are the people who have great faith, they have great faith, they have great faith." They don't have faith, they have doubt. They're so loaded with doubt, they need external proof. This is not faith, this is doubt looking for validation. This is...this is people who have no reason for real faith, no reason for real confidence in God. They don't know that God is sovereign, even if they know of the God of the Bible, they...they....they don't really have any confidence about their relationship to Him because they're taught that you can lose your salvation if you do get it. So this is not great faith that makes this kind of activity take place. This is doubt looking for validation. These people need external validation to give them some peace because they're traumatized. I think by fear. And I think that all of that activity is a substitute for the reality of the peace that comes when you genuinely know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I'm not saying that all people in the Charismatic Movement are non-Christians, I've never said that. The book makes that clear again and again and again.

PHIL: And you've made that clear again and again and again.

JOHN: Yeah. There are people in that Movement, people in traditional Pentecostal churches, people in Calvary chapels, wonderful guys that I know and count as friends who faithfully teach the gospel, preach the gospel, people know the Lord. I've preached in those places. There are many Christians in those kinds of places. But they're the minority. There's this vast array of people out there buying into this extreme kind of stuff and this is the delusion that they're feeling the presence of God, experiencing the Holy Spirit. So this must mean they're okay and they're in. And yet they can't get a hold of their lives. They can't grasp truth. They can't have security. They can't enjoy assurance. They can't live godly lives because that's not going to come that way.

PHIL: And what I understand you to be saying is that if the Charismatic Movement were actually a Movement of the Holy Spirit, then the gospel would be front and center always. Christ would be the center of the message. And that's simply not the case, as you look around.

JOHN: Christ would be the center of the message. The gospel would be being preached all the time. Feelings and emotions would dissipate and disappear and be set aside in favor of the mind being engaged with the Word of God, with the Scripture. Preachers wouldn't be standing up making up stuff which is what they do. "The Lord showed me. The Lord told me this and that." That is a for sure indicator that that's not a Movement of the Holy Spirit.

PHIL: Now let me jump on something you just said about feelings and emotions being set aside. I don't know if you watched the videos that John Piper put online in response to the conference this week.

JOHN: I think I saw one of them, I don't know how many there were.

PHIL: In one of them, he said, let me see if I can find...I know I wrote down his quote. He basically said that he thinks emotionless religion is a greater danger than the abuse of human emotions. I think on that you and he are at the opposite ends.

JOHN: No, we're not talking about...emotion.

PHIL: Cause you're a man of passion, I know you. Your passionate about the truth. I mean, when you preach you're passion comes through, so it's not that you're against emotion per se.

JOHN: Guess what, I actually have emotions. (Laughter)

PHIL: Although they're pretty controlled. I don't think I've ever seen you actually angry.

JOHN: No, but I am angry about a lot of things.

PHIL: You bottle it up pretty well.

JOHN: No, but I...

PHIL: You're not saying...explain what you mean by emotions your concern about it.

JOHN: That's not emotion, that's emotionalism. Emotion is legitimate. You know, we're all just singing this beautiful music. It overwhelms me. I feel the truth of that. It's not the tune, it's not the melody. I don't need to be led around with fleshly impulses. It's the truth of it. It's the beauty of the truth set to beautiful music. That's an experience for me. Everybody demonstrates that in a different way. And, you know, maybe I'm a little more sedate in how I express that. But any emotion that anyone has ever felt, I feel and...from my standpoint I feel them strongly. I feel strong love. I feel strong disappointment. I feel strong righteous indignation. So emotion is a gift from God but my emotions are related to my mind. My emotions connect to the way I think. Everything...every emotional reaction I have is connected to something I believe. I get sad because I see someone without Christ, or I see all these millions of people caught up in this moment...Movement. That's heartbreaking to me because I know they're lost, so many of them.

I have joy when I see someone come to Christ because I understand the reality of that, the eternal reality of that. And so I would say those are real emotions attached to real convictions basically established by an understanding of the Word of God. Emotionalism is just isolated, disconnected manipulation of people.

PHIL: So the key is that those emotions in order to be legitimate need to be...have some connection with truth. I mean, what I heard you saying in the conference was when you talk about music, especially, that there's a strategy, a deliberate strategy in a lot of Charismatic circles to use music to just sort of generate mindless emotion.

JOHN: You stop the music and you'd stop a lot of the Movement. It's an induction, in mindlessness. And it's repetitious, relentlessly repetitious. And...yeah, if you stop the music, the whole thing would wind down really fast...the whole mob kind of psychology would disintegrate right there.

But...you remember the interview when I was asked how I handle depression.

PHIL: Yes!

JOHN: And do you remember my answer?



PHIL: I do.

JOHN: I said, "I don't know, I've never been depressed."

PHIL: Yeah, which is...you've got to admit, that's most of us...

JOHN: No, no...no the reason I said that was why would I be depressed? What would I be depressed about? I believe in the sovereignty of God. I believe in the providence of God. I believe my steps are ordered by the Lord. Disappointed, I've been disappointed. Disappointed with myself. I don't go blithely through life thinking every sermon I preach is what it should be. I go mostly through life thinking every sermon fell short. But what's to be depressed? I'm going to heaven and I know that. And the Lord's in charge of my life and he's surrounded me with wonderful people. How could I be depressed? And you remember in that conversation, the other guy said, "I'm depressed all the time and I don't know why." I don't even get that. And so I said, "Well you've got to at least know why you're depressed, you can't be depressed and not know why. But there are people I would grant who tend to, you know, be more fluctuating in their emotions. But I think if your theology is what it ought to be, it produces contentment...it produces a real contentment. And I think God in His grace has allowed me to have that kind of contentment that nothing...I mean, there's a certain protected place in my mind that's insulated by what is true. And things don't ever disturb that place.

PHIL: That's good. I preached on that this morning, by the way.

JOHN: Did you really?

PHIL: Yeah, Psalm ...in Psalm 17 David starts out disconsolate and just a few verses later, by the end of the Psalm, he's triumphant and that's kind of his pattern. And the point I made was...

JOHN: "Why are you disquieted within me, O my soul?" he asks.

PHIL: Yeah.

JOHN: What are you doing?

PHIL: And the answer he finds always is a theological reason to look into eternity and anchor his hope there and that clears it...

JOHN: See that's when I look at those people and they're just...they're just jacked up with emotionalism, but they have no theology to anchor all that. That's really tragic. So you're living with the illusion that you know God, and this is the frightening thing in Matthew 7, "Lord, Lord," and He says, "I don't know you."

PHIL: Yeah, in fact I wanted to get back to that. Matthew 7, it seems to me...you have come back to many, many times in your preaching ministry, it's a kind of a key idea...

JOHN: Let me go back before I forget.

PHIL: Okay.

JOHN: You asked me about that and when I was in high school I had a friend named Ralph. We used to go down into L.A., we played football together, and baseball. I played shortstop, he played first base. He played in the backfield with me on the football team in high school. And we were just good pals. He was in a youth group and I was in one. And kind of leaders in our youth group and we used to go down and pass out tracks and talk to people about the Lord down in downtown L.A. on a late afternoon or Saturday. Ralph and I graduated together in the same class. He went off to Redlands University, and I found out within a year he communicated with me and said he had become an atheist. I don't think I had a category for that. How does a Christian guy, in my mind he's a Christian, become an atheist? I went to college, I had a buddy, his name was Don Robertson. We ran in the same backfield, tandem backs again. His dad was a pastor, my dad was a pastor. He was a youth group leader, I was a youth group leader. We were headed for the ministry together, talking about seminary, playing football. We graduated together. I went on to seminary. He went on and got a Ph.D. in some kind of psychology, completely denied the faith and lived a dissolute life, ended up a criminal. I went to seminary, I became very close friends with the dean's son who when he graduated set up a Buddhist altar in his house. I'm trying to process...what is this?

PHIL: You're not a very good influence on your friends, it seems. (Laughter)

JOHN : You know...I think...I think you have identified the common denominator. So...but, you know, from the personal standpoint, I'm trying to figure this out. So when I say...when I say I'm afraid most Charismatics aren't Christians, I could say this, I could also say, "I'm afraid many non-Charismatics sitting in churches are not real Christians." And, you know, that came to be a reality when I wrote *The Gospel According to Jesus*. And people started reading that book and saying, "I'm not a Christian, I've been in the church, I'm not a Christian." My friend Don here, you were raised in the church, taught Sunday School in the church. You came to visit us and you came when I was preaching those two sermons at the end of Matthew 7 here, and you said to yourself, "I'm not a Christian." Right? And the Lord saved you in those two weeks.

So, you know, to say that most of these Charismatics, if you just add up the numbers, they're not Christians. That's not some kind of outrageous statement. But this is a politically incorrect statement.

PHIL: Right.

JOHN: Because you're not supposed to deny anybody anything, that's the Post-Modern claim on I can have my own truth and you're not...and you can't sit in judgment on me.

PHIL: That's what I mean when I say this has been a kind of a theme in your ministry. You've had a few controversies similar to this, never anything quite on this largest scale because you haven't attacked such a large Movement. But there was the No Lordship gospel. It was the same issue there.

JOHN: Yeah.

PHIL: You know, people who buy into that kind of teaching. Many of them are...

JOHN: People who think they're saved and they will not confess Jesus as Lord, and there's no change in their life.

PHIL: Same thing with the Seeker-Sensitive Movement, another big Movement you've attacked. It seems...

JOHN: No, no, no, I'm not doing these attacks. These are coming from the Word of God.

PHIL: That's true. But I mean you have...you've preached on that issue...

JOHN: Yeah, but then I give them to you to edit and you make me even worse.

PHIL: I read too much Spurgeon, I'm afraid. Now I didn't bring my watch cause I wanted this to go as long as...how are we doing?

JOHN: You need to ask me that one question that you said...

PHIL: All right, one more question. Because this is a big one, you at one point, at one of the Q&A sessions at the conference, you said this. I want it quoted exactly. You said, "People who have any connection to Judaism and Christianity have a connection to philanthropy. It's a striking anomaly, however, that there is essentially zero social benefit to the world from the Charismatic Movement. Where's the Charismatic Hospital? Social Services, Poverty Relief, this is a scam," unquote.

Now your critics say that's unfair. There are Pentecostal missionaries who do medical work. You know, Charismatics often minister in disadvantage areas doing disaster relief work, stuff like that. Joyce Meyer has two hospitals, one in India, and one in Cambodia...

JOHN: No, one in India and one...yeah, Cambodia.

PHIL: Cambodia. And I know...well I know you're aware of these things so explain what you were saying.

JOHN: Okay, let me explain...let me explain. You can go down here, you can go around in America, you'll find a Catholic hospital, you'll find Cedar Sinai Jewish hospital, you'll find Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital, all through the Midwest, all through the south you'll find Baptist hospitals in every major city, the Baptist Medical Center in Dallas, everywhere, everywhere, everywhere. There is a philanthropy tied to Judaism and Christianity that rises out of the Bible's concern about poverty and all of that. Where is the Pentecostal Hospital? Where is the Pentecostal Medical Research Center.?

Oral Roberts tried to pull that off. You'll remember.

PHIL: Yeah.

JOHN: So Oral Roberts decided he was going to build a medical center and he was going to build...he built a 60-floor building and a 35-floor building, 95 floors in a city already with more hospital beds than they had patients. But he said that if he didn't get the money to do it, God was going to kill him. Remember he had that vision. So some guy gave him the money. Those two things sit there like monstrous white elephants, tributes to a man's folly. They've never functioned as a hospital...never. In a sense, it's contrary to the Movement. It's contrary to the Movement that says if you...you can speak your prosperity into existence, you can speak your healing into existence. You can speak your well-being into existence. You can't sell that kind of thing, it doesn't work.

Now let me go back to Joyce Meyer's two hospitals....they're clinics in underdeveloped countries, very underdeveloped countries among very poor people. Look, there are many faithful Charismatic missionaries around the world who are giving out the gospel, who are helping poor people, who are ministering. But the Movement itself is alien to anything that's of any significance for a number of reasons.

For example, those two hospitals, from what I understand, are underfunded and they're always trying to get money, get money, get money. And then you look at the lavish lifestyle of Joyce Meyer and you realize that she has a mega-million dollar G4 Jet and a fleet of a hundred thousand plus-dollar Mercedes and two little underfunded clinics. Something wrong with that picture.

PHIL: That's what you mean when you say it's a scam?

JOHN: What I'm saying is and an art collection and an antique collection, and furnishings and mansions, yeah...I mean, why...how does that connect? How does that connect? There was this

thing on the media the other day about Joel Osteen's ten-point-five million dollar house. And he was on, I was sitting there with my grandson Oliver, and we happened to watch Joel Osteen the other day and this is what he said. He said, "Your priority is to make certain that you're happy." That's what he said. Your priority is to make certain that you're happy...you're happy. Oliver is seven, he looks at me and says, "Poppa, that's not right." But in a system where your happiness and your health and your wealth are priority, there's not going to be philanthropy. There's not going to be sacrifice. There's not going to be self-denial. This is all about chasing the dream for you. That's what the prosperity gospel produces. And then the idea of healing in the atonement and faith can produce your own healing, I look...I've met these people around the world. I've met people in places in the world with camera crews taking pictures of desperate people to go back and raise money for hospitals that don't exist.

I talked to a guy at a table in former Soviet Union, I said, "Why are you here?" He said, "We're taking video to raise money when we go back." I said, "Do you have a ministry here?"

"No, we just show the pictures and it raises money." I'm not saying that individual Charismatics aren't precious Christians and aren't sacrificial and self-denying and do good and there are people working in third-world countries, you know, from Pentecostal churches and they are helping and all of that. But there's no great philanthropy there. That's contrary to what's going on. The people at the top of the pile are the ones getting all the money. So that's all I was trying to say.

And you know, when you're preaching, you say things and...

PHIL: Yeah, that's an off-the-cuff thing. JOHN: Yeah...plus it's a valid point, that even those who are doing philanthropy, the motive of that is rooted in the second great commandment, not in any of the distinctive teachings of the Charismatic Movement.

JOHN: No, philanthropy's...the Jews do it, the Roman Catholics, I mean, whose been more philanthropic than the Roman Catholic Church? That's all rooted in a biblical view of loving and caring for people who are poor and needy. That's there. That's in Judaism. That's in Catholicism. That's not in that Movement. You have all these people trying to get what they can get for themselves and the people on the top are the ones that are getting... There's this church in Singapore, pastored by some guy named Kong-Hee(?), they have something like twenty thousand people, and he was just indicted by the Singapore government for absconding with twenty-three million dollars off of his church...

PHIL: I was there just last month.

JOHN: To fund his wife's secular sexually suggestive music career. And the government shut him down.

PHIL: They haven't shut him down yet because his followers...

JOHN: His followers have risen up to defend him because this is consistent. Hey, he's getting what they want. So that's more consistent with the Movement in its broad sense, that's all I was trying to say. Does that?

PHIL: I get it. All right. I would keep asking you questions but we do have to quit. So I'll let you...

JOHN: Well I just want to finish by saying, Charismatic Christian people, real Charismatic Christian people have made great contributions to the Kingdom of God. They've been faithful Christians, they have evangelized effectively. They have represented Christ honorably. They're real Christians having a real impact. When I said that there's no impact by the Movement, I mean Charismatic Theology as such adds nothing. But the truth in a Charismatic person is a powerful thing. Okay? Very good.

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