

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

The Reliability of Scripture

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 80-37

It's been, I was just telling someone about 15 years, I think since I've had the privilege of speaking in this very building here at UCLA under some other circumstances and I'm very happy to be back and I congratulate your institution on winning the PAC-10 basketball championship last night. That's pretty exciting and one of these days our little college, the Master's College, will attempt to put you on our schedule just so, just to make your record look better. But it is a privilege to be here. I'm very thankful for any opportunity to speak concerning the Bible and it's part in the life of anyone who submits himself or herself to its truth.

Let me begin in a world that for the most part has no absolute standard for its life and behavior. Basically we are under a system that you could morality by majority vote, or whatever feels good sets the standard for behavior. That really runs contrary to everything we know about our world. From a physical standpoint, for example, in the scientific dimension there are absolutes. Our entire universe is built on fixed laws. That's why we can send little shuttles up into space and why we can send satellites into space and totally and absolutely to the very nth degree predict their behavior because of fixed laws.

Points of reference: science like, whether you're discussing biology or botany, or physiology, or astronomy, or even mathematics, engineering, any part of physical life is controlled totally by unalterable and viable laws. And when you move from the physical into the spiritual you have the same kind of world where there are fixed laws.

Yet, it seems as though in the moral world we want to live without law, we want to live without absolute and try to figure out our points of reference from our own minds and our own determination. That's impossible. We cannot remain at harmony with the moral, spiritual dimension of existence without laws anymore than we can remain in harmony with the physical dimension without laws.

There is a morality built by God right into life. Just as there are physical laws there are spiritual ones. Recently people have asked me, not once, not twice, but dozens of times if I believe that aids is the judgment of God. Let me respond to that by saying this: aids is the judgment of God in the same sense that sclerosis of the liver is the judgment of God or that emphysema is the judgment of God. If you want to drink alcohol all your life you're liable to get sclerosis of the liver. If you want to smoke all your life you're liable to get emphysema, heart disease and if you want to violate God's standards for morality the chances are you might get venereal disease or even aids. It is an exorable law that the

Bible calls sowing and reaping.

Let me give it to you in another illustration. God made a law called gravity. I don't think anybody here wants to argue gravity. That's a fixed law. You may not believe in gravity. In fact you may not like gravity. You may even be an atheist and want to deny that God invented gravity, but no matter what you believe if you jump off a building I promise you you'll go down. You don't have any option. It's not a question of what you believe. It's a question of an inexorable law. It will go into effect if you put it into test and it's the same in any area of physical law. We watched Challenger explode in the sky because physical laws were violated inadvertently and the result was devastation.

The same thing is true in the moral and spiritual dimension and to segment life and assume that we have a physical universe with fixed laws that cannot be violated without negative circumstances and assume that when you transition into a moral or spiritual dimension that's not going to happen dichotomizes the universe in an impossible way. The same God who operates the physical things by fixed laws operates the moral and spiritual in the very same way.

Now where do you go then to find the laws of morality? Where do you go to find the fixed standards of human behavior? Where do you go to determine what is, to put it simply, right and what is wrong? Well there's only one source that I know of and that's the Bible, the word of God.

Now let me just talk about it for a moment. There's so much to say that I can barely scratch the surface in the brief time that we have in this hour. But the Bible is an incredible book. I have spent the years of my life studying the Bible. I wasn't always so committed to the Bible and I didn't grow into this. I wasn't born into this commitment. It's a commitment that came to me very strongly after my freshman year in college when I came to grips with life and destiny and my future and wanting to know the source of truth and I found my way intentionally into the Bible and it has satisfied me ever since.

But it's an incredible book, not only because of my own personal experience, but let me just share some things with you for example. The Bible presents the most viable understanding of the universe. It presents what I believe is the only proper explanation for things the way they exist. It presents a God who creates. That makes sense to me. I find it very difficult to believe that everything came out of nothing. I find it impossible to believe that nobody times nothing equals all things. I have a lot easier time assuming that everything that is was produced by someone. That seems to me to be at least as viable as to believe that everything that is was produced by no one.

And so the Bible tells me who that someone is, that someone is God. And then the Bible also explains to me how things become the way they are from a geological standpoint, from the study of creation around us and that is through catastrophism. And the Bible explains a catastrophic creation in six days and then it explains a worldwide universal flood that through catastrophe explains a

geological things and all kinds of other scientific issues that make sense to me.

The Bible also, when it moves into other areas of science, is curious because it deals, for example, with the law of thermodynamics, which is a relatively modern concept that is the law of the conservation of mass and energy. And yet you can go back in the Bible to a document that is thousands and thousands of years old and you will read in, for example, the prophet Isaiah 40:26, speaking of God, that it is God who creates things and God who holds them together by his power and not one of them ever fails. That's the Bible's way of stating the law of thermodynamics that nothing really ultimately is ever destroyed.

In Nehemiah, another ancient book in the Old Testament, it says of God, "You have made heaven, the earth, and all things therein, the seas and all things therein and you hold them all together." And then we read in Ecclesiastes, another ancient book, "Is there anything of which it may be said, 'see, this is new.'" And the answer is everything has been from old time.

The ancient writers of the Bible, thousands and thousands of years before the law of thermodynamics was ever stated, were affirming the conservation of mass and energy. The second law of thermodynamics is that that mass and energy, which is always conserved, is nonetheless breaking down and going from order to disorder, going from cosmos to chaos, system to non-system. And the Bible says that as well. In Romans 8 it says that creation groans because of its curse and that curse is reflected throughout biblical teaching.

Another thought that came to mind, I don't know if you've studied the science of hydrology. Hydrology is the cycle of water and it basically goes, as you know, from the sea through evaporation to the clouds. The clouds are moved over the land, they drop the water through precipitation, it comes down as rain, the rain runs into creeks, the creeks run into streams, the streams run back into the sea and the evaporation process takes place again. That hydrological cycle known as evaporation, transportation, precipitation, is described in detail in Scripture, which is amazing. Both in the book of Ecclesiastes Chapter 1 and in Isaiah Chapter 55 it gives the entire water cycle as a cycle, and then in Job it speaks in Chapter 36 of evaporation and condensation. This is centuries; this is millennia prior to scientific discovery.

Then you have the field of astronomy and of course you know that even in 1473 to the middle 1500's when Copernicus presented the idea that the earth was in motion people were astounded because they believed it was like a record, it was a disk flat, and if you went through the pillars of Hercules at the Rock of Gibraltar, you'd fall off. And along came men like Kepler and Galileo in the 17th century and gave birth to modern astronomy. Prior to that there was this confused idea that we were a flat disk and above us were approximately a 1,044 to 1,046 or 56 stars. That was the number that had been counted.

And yet the Bible says in Isaiah 55:9 that the heavens are so high they're immeasurable. In Job 22:12, it talks about the height of the stars. In Genesis the first book of the Bible it equates the number of the stars of heaven with the number of grains of sand on the sea. Genesis is the book where it all begins. Jeremiah said that the stars can't be counted, chapter 33:22. And we now know that there are probably a hundred billion in our galaxy alone.

It's interesting to note that the oldest book in the Bible is the book of Job. It predates Christ by a couple of thousand years. In that book it says in Job 26:7, he hangeth the earth on nothing. Amazing statement when you stop to think that you can read in other sacred books of other religions that the earth is on the back of elephants who produce earthquakes when they shake. You can read Greek mythology, which says the earth is on layers of honey and butter and sugar but the Bible says he hangeth the earth on nothing.

The oldest book in the Bible, Job, says that the earth is turned like the clay to the seal. Fascinating statement because if you wanted to sign your signature in those days soft clay was used in which to write, you had your signature on a little seal with your name in it. This is the way it was, it was a cylinder hardened clay with your signature raised on that cylinder. Through it was a stick so that you could roll it like a rolling pin and you would roll your signature across the soft clay and sign your signature. That was in Job's time, in the ancient times and he said the earth is turned like the clay to the seal, which means it rotates on its what? On its axis long before anybody discovered that.

The word is used in the book of Job when it talks about the clug; it says the earth is a clug in the Hebrew word means a sphere, a sphere. Job also said and Galileo discovered this, but centuries before Galileo, the oldest book in the Bible says that God gives weight to the wind. There was no way to measure weight to the wind in that time.

It's interesting also that the earth has perfect balance. Have you ever seen a basketball that's out of balance? It just goes like this when it rolls. Well you can imagine what would happen if the earth was like that. We'd go a little while and then we'd all get catapulted into space. The earth is a perfect sphere and it is perfectly balanced. The depths of the sea have to be balanced with the height of the mountains. The weight of the mountains has to be balanced with the weight of the waters. That's called the science of isostasy and it's incredible but all the way back in Isaiah 40, again centuries before science ever even conceived of this Isaiah says, "God measures the waters in the hollow of his hand, he measures the heavens with a span, he comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure and he weighs the mountains in scales and puts the hills in a balance." God alone can do that.

It's interesting to me that Herbert Spencer who died in 1903 received many prizes for his scientific research. You in science know about Herbert Spencer. He was given one particular accolade for discovering the five categories of the knowable; that is everything that can be known can be placed

into one of five categories. "Everything that is is either time, force, action, space, or matter," so said Herbert Spencer. Everything can fit in there somewhere: time, force, action, space and matter and he died in 1903 hailed as a genius for having discovered that categorization of all things in existence in this universe.

I don't think he realized that Genesis 1:1, the first verse in the Bible says in the beginning, that's time, God, that's force, created, that's action, the heavens, that's space, and earth, that's matter. God laid that out in the very first verse. The Bible is an amazing book, an absolutely incredible book, and while it does not choose to speak in scientific terminology, it makes no scientific inaccuracy.

Somebody steps up and says, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, in the Old Testament it says that one time the sun stood still and it didn't really stand still the earth stopped revolving." Yes, but that's a perception that the earth person would have. When you got up this morning you didn't look to the east and say, "What a lovely earth revolving." That's a sunrise from your perspective. And so if you're permitting yourself to do that then would you please permit the Scripture to do that as well? It does not have to have everything within its pages conform to all scientific data in terms of technical terminology.

The Bible is also amazing for a lot of other reasons. It's amazing too because it predicts things before they happen. There were 332 specific prophecies given in the Old Testament before Jesus Christ was ever born that were absolutely and explicitly to be fulfilled in his life. We don't have time, obviously, to go through them, but there are other prophecies. For example 150 years before he was born the Bible predicted a man would be born by the name of Cyrus. He would rise to power in the Middle East and he would release the Jews from captivity. Isaiah said that in Chapter 44. 150 years later a man was born, his name was Cyrus, he became king and he released the Jews. No men know that. How could men know that? It had never happened. Only God would know that. Just like only God would know the scientific order of the world and write it in books before men had ever discovered it.

In Ezekiel Chapter 26 God said through the prophet the city of Tyre would be destroyed. He said not only will it be destroyed, a conqueror will come in, wipe out the city, and then the city will be scraped clean and everything left on the city's surface will be thrown into the ocean. That's a rather bizarre prophecy. And then the prophecy ended by saying men will dry their fishnets there and it'll never be rebuilt.

We start at the back and move to the front there is no city of Tyre today. You can go to the ruins of Tyre and see them this day, but there's no city. There never has been a city rebuilt. Jerusalem's been rebuilt 17 times. Tyre has never been rebuilt and that's because the Bible said Jerusalem will always be a city and Tyre will never be a city.

And then you think about what happened to Tyre it's absolutely incredible. The prediction was made that Nebuchadnezzar would come and he did and that he would destroy the city, and he did. After 13 years of sieging the city he finally smashed the walls down, very formidable by the way, 150 feet high, 15 feet thick. He crushed the city but when he came in to take the spoil there was nothing there. The people had taken their boats because they were Phoenicians, they were the navigators and colonizers of the ancient world and they had sailed out of the city onto an island a half-mile off shore and they had reestablished their civilization on the island during those 13 years. And so when Nebuchadnezzar came to the walls nothing was there, no spoils were there, this happened just a few years after the prophecy of Ezekiel, but all Nebuchadnezzar did was conquer the city and when there wasn't anything there he had no navy so he left. And the prophecy wasn't fulfilled because the rubble was still there.

250 years later came a man by the name of Alexander, the Great, the son of Phillip of Macedon, moving east to conquer the world. He came into that area and he needed supplies for his 33,000 troops, his 15,000 horsemen and he wanted the city of Tyre to provide it. Well by now they were off on that little island, they had their little city going over there, and they had a fairly large size city. They had at least 75,000 people living on that island, because we know that Alexander killed about 60,000 of them.

So he sent a messenger out there and said, "We want supplies and money and resources for our army," and they said, "Forget it", and thumbed their nose at him. "You don't have any boats. How are you going to get out here?" So Alexander was so infuriated at what they did that he picked up all the rubble that was left from the Nebuchadnezzar devastation, threw it into the sea and built a causeway, marched out and destroyed the whole city. Just exactly what Ezekiel said 250 years before that the city would be scraped clean and all the rubble would be thrown into the sea. Read it in Ezekiel 26.

If you go there today you'll find people drying their fishnets and the city will never be rebuilt. That's one of dozens and dozens and dozens of such prophecies. In fact, Peter Stoner, a mathematician who wrote a book on mathematical probability said the probability of that happening is one in 75 million that is happening by chance.

The city of Nineveh was another one. The city of Nineveh was one of the most formidable cities of Assyria in the ancient world that had a hundred foot inner wall 50 feet thick. Then there was a half-mile and in the half mile was a 150-foot moat and then there was another wall, a double wall and the prediction of the prophet of God was that it would be destroyed. It reached its apex about 663 B.C. Naham, a little tiny prophet in the Old Testament said the city is going to be wiped out and here's how it's going to happen.

The river is going to overflow, crush the gates and come in, and the city will be destroyed. That's exactly what happened. In those days when you walled a city in, rivers ran through cities, so they ran gates down into the river so the water would flow through the steel or the iron and that way enemies couldn't come in, in the river. And what happened: a great storm and flood came, washed all the gates away. The enemy came in, destroyed the city, exactly and specifically the way the prophet said it would happen years and years before.

Now all I'm trying to tell you is the Bible is an amazing book. It's amazing when looked at scientifically, it's amazing when looked at historically, but beyond that it's particularly amazing when looked at from the spiritual and the moral dimension.

I often hear people say this and I kind of chuckle. People say to me, "I don't believe the Bible. I don't believe the Bible." Well let me tell you something. That is an utterly dishonest intellectual arrogant statement if you haven't carefully studied it. For anyone to say, "I don't believe this book," who has not studied it carefully isn't even honest anymore than it would be to say you reject any other book you've never read.

Most of us have a smattering of the Scripture and we have a few things about it that we might not agree with so we dump the whole thing and we fail to be honest with ourselves. This book is a powerful life-changing book. It is not only scientifically accurate, it is not only historically amazing in its ability to predict, but it is dynamic in its ability to change your life and my life because it is a living book. In fact it claims for itself the word of God is alive and powerful. That's a tremendous statement. I have never read any other living book.

There are some books that change your thinking. This is the only book that can change your nature. This is the only book that can totally transform you. Let me kind of challenge you with some thoughts and looking at a portion of the Bible and there are many that we could look at. In fact I have spent the last many years of my life teaching through all the portions of the Bible, but there's a section in Psalm 19 that I was asked to share a little bit about with you. This is Scripture's own testimony to itself, okay? So you have to interact with the Bible.

This is what it says: first of all referring to the Scripture as the law of the Lord, which is a Hebrew term used to define Scripture. It says that the law of the Lord, Psalm 19:7 is the verse, "The law of the Lord is perfect, transforming the soul." Perfect, transforming the soul.

Now I want to talk for a minute about what this book can do in the life of a person who submits to it. First of all it is perfect. Now what does that mean? Just what it says. That Hebrew word simply means all sided, comprehensive, so as to cover all aspects of a thing. In other words it is a comprehensive treatment of truth that is able to transform the soul. What is the soul? That's a Hebrew word nefesh. It's always translated soul, life, person or self into English. And it means the total person. It means the

real you, not your body but the you inside. And what the Scripture is saying is it is totally comprehensive able to transform the whole person. It's a tremendous statement. The truths in this book can totally transform a person.

You say, "Hey, I'm not interested in being transformed." Fine, then you don't need this book. It's that simple. You see this book is for people who have some sense of desperation about where they are. This book is for people who say I don't have the purpose in my life I wish I had. I don't have the meaning in my life I wish I had. I don't have the direction in my life I wish I had. I don't know where I am, not sure where I came from and I have no idea where I am going.

I have a lot of things in my life I wish I could change. I wish I wasn't so driven by passions I can't control. I wish I wasn't the victim of my circumstances. I wish I didn't have so much pain in my life. I wish my relationships were all they ought to be. I wish I could think more clearly about things that matter in life. That's the person this is for. The person who doesn't have all the answers and who is saying I want a different life. I want to be a different person. Because you see the Bible promises to be able to transform a whole person.

Somebody says, "How can it do that?" Well what the Bible says is that the key to that is the Lord Jesus Christ. That God came into the world in the form of Christ, Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins and mine, rose again to conquer death and now lives to come into your life and my life and transform us. And I say again it's only for people who want to be transformed.

I mean if you're totally content with the way you are, you don't have the kind of need that's going to drive you to look to the word of God to see if there can't be a way that you can change the way you are. But if you've had it with your guilt and if you want to get rid of your anxiety and your patterns of life need desperately to change and you have some emptiness in your heart that the old reformers used to call a God-shaped vacuum and if there's some longings that have never been satisfied and if there's some answers that you just can't seem to find then you're a candidate to look into the word of God and examine the life of Christ and his death and resurrection to determine if in fact it can't do what it says it can do or it can.

As for one, I am living proof that it can. It can transform the whole person through the power of Christ's life coming into your life, the one who died and rose again for you.

The second thing he says in Psalm 19 is that the Scripture is sure, that's absolute, trustworthy, reliable, making wise the simple. That's a very interesting statement. The word for simple in the Hebrew comes from the root that means an open door. And the Jew would look at a person with a simple mind and he'd say his head is like an open door. Everything comes in and everything goes out. He doesn't know what to keep out, doesn't know what to keep in. Oh he's just that indiscriminating per--oh that's a nice truth, oh whatever turns you on. Oh that's lovely and in and out

it goes. Absolutely no discernment, no discrimination, totally naïve, unable to evaluate truth, that's really the typical person. You don't know what to keep. You don't know what to turn away. You don't know how to control that because you don't have any truth absolute by which to make a judgment.

So what the Bible says is that it is sure; that it is trustworthy and reliable able to make wise that naïve person. What kind of wisdom? Well wisdom to the Jew was the skill of daily living. To the Greek it was sheer sophistry. To the Greek it was sheer concept. To the Hebrew always the ultimate fool was the one who knew in his head and never lived it in his life. Right? The Greek it was enough for him to know. To the traditional classic Hebrew it was not enough to know, it was only enough if you lived it.

And so when it says that the Scripture is so reliable that it can make a simple person wise, it means that it can take the uninitiated, naïve, uninstructed person whose undiscerning and make him skilled in every aspect of daily living. What a fantastic promise. It touches every area of life. You want to know about relationships? It touches that. You want to know about marriage? It touches that. You want to know about a work ethic? It touches that. You want to know about the factors of the human mind? You want to know about motive? You want to know why you do what you do and how to do it better? You want to know how to get the most out of your life? You want to know why you're here, where you came from, where you're going, and what you're to live for? That's all here. The matters of skill and daily living are all here.

It tells you about attitudes, about reactions, responses, how you treat people, how you're to be treated by people, how to cultivate virtue in your life. Every aspect of living that comes into any person's existence is covered on the pages of this book and it can take a person with no understanding and make them skilled in the matter of daily living. Tremendous!

You say, "Well how does that happen?" That happens because, not just because you're reading a book, but because when you commit your life to Jesus Christ the teacher and the author of the book comes to live in you and applies the truth, you see. He applies the truth.

Thirdly it says here that the word of God, called the precepts of the Lord, are right. And that means in the Hebrew that they set out a right path. They lay out a right track and the result they bring rejoicing to the heart. Boy this is so important. I know when I look back in my own life and I didn't know what direction to go, I didn't know where to go, I didn't know what my future was, I didn't know what my career ought to be, I just didn't know. And I began to study God's word, to submit myself to God's spirit. When I gave my life to Christ and all of a sudden God laid out this path for me and it's been absolutely fantastic to see how Scripture lays that path out and as I walk in that path I experience joy, happiness, blessing.

In fact I have to be so happy in my life that most people must think something's wrong with me because there is nothing but satisfaction in my life. Even difficulty brings satisfaction because it creates a way, which God can show himself faithful to get me out of it. So even unhappiness is a source of happiness. Jesus said, "It's like a woman having a baby. There's a lot of pain during the process but boy the results are fantastic."

The same thing is true when you walk with God. There's joy through any circumstance. I know people want a happy life. I know you want to contented life. I know you want a life of peace and joy and value and meaning and purpose. I know you want that fullness of life that everybody seeks. Well the Bible says, "Happy is the man who hears my word and does it." Why? Because God then pours out blessing because of your faithfulness and your obedience.

You can have a happy life without sin, without sex, without drugs, without alcohol, without self-gratification at all costs. You can have a happy life because God gives a happy life to people who obey his word. And God is not a cosmic killjoy. I know some people think he is, that God's running around saying there's one having fun, get 'em. That God wants to rain on everybody's parade. That isn't so. God made you and he knows how you operate best and he knows what makes you most happy. And the happiness he gives isn't over when the party's done. It lasts and doesn't even need a party. It's deep within.

Number four in this little list he says the word of God is, this is really good, clear enlightening the eyes. Now I'm not that smart to be honest with you, but I know a lot of things that many many very erudite people don't know. Because I know the Bible there are things clear to me that aren't clear to other people. It enlightens the eyes, particularly the dark things of life. What about death? What about disease? What about sad tragic things? What about the devastation of the world? Don't you get sick of picking up the paper reading about lying, cheating, murder, war. It really gets old and people say, "Why is this, why is this, why?" The Scripture answers all that. It enlightens the eyes.

I can go to a person who is facing death as a Christian and there's, I can see joy in their heart. My grandmother just died, a little lady 93 years old, and she was in bed and the nurse at the convalescent hospital told us what happened. She went in in the morning and we called her Nan, she was lying in bed and the nurse said, "It's time to get up." She got up every day in a little wheelchair and scoots around, you know, and she said, "No, I'm not getting up today." She said, "Why?" She said, "I love Jesus and I'm going to heaven today so don't bother me." And she smiled and went to heaven. What a tremendous way to go. I love Jesus and I'm going to heaven today so don't bother me. I mean that's fantastic.

I mean do you have this kind of hope? Benjamin Franklin's epitaph, when I was a little kid I used to go to Christ Church in Philadelphia and I would read epitaphs written by these Americans who are gone but who had a great part in our country. Benjamin Franklin had the most interesting epitaph. He wrote

his own epitaph before he died and said put this on my grave. It says this: "Here lies the body of Franklin printer, stripped of its lettering and gilding it lies here food for worms, but the work shall not be lost for it will appear once more in a new and more elegant edition revised and corrected by the author." That's terrific. Do you have that hope? Do you understand the dark things? I mean can you look death right in the eye and say, "Hey, this is not the end, this is the beginning for me?"

What can you say to someone who loses a child? What can you say to someone who loses a life partner to cancer, heart disease, heart attack? Do you have an answer to that or are you roaming around in the same melee of confusion that people like Shirley McClain find themselves in? Where do you go for the dark things to be made clear?

I go to the word of God and I find there's clarity there because it explains everything about it. And then he says, also, and just bringing this thing to a conclusion here, he says, "Furthermore the word of God is clean," this is Psalm 19:9, "The word of God is clean enduring forever." Listen, the only thing that lasts forever are things untouched by the devastation of evil, sin. Sin built into our universe creates its degeneration. Anything that is eternal is therefore, untouched in a sense by that, and he says the Bible is forever enduring every generation. This is an ancient document and yet every generation, every person in every situation, in every society of every race can find in this book things that endure forever. Here is a book that never needs another edition, it never needs to be edited, it doesn't have to be updated, it is never out of date or obsolete, it speaks to us as pointedly and directly as it ever did to anybody in any century since it was authored. It's incredible. It's clean. What that means is it's so pure that it lasts forever.

When I was in college I studied philosophy. Almost every philosophy that I studied and was curious to somewhat adhere to in philosophy is long dead. While I was in college also in the liberal arts area I studied psychology. In graduate school I took more psychology and I read particularly in that field. Almost every form of psychotherapy that I read about is now obsolete or has been replaced by something beyond that in terms of the progression of thinking. But, there's one thing that never changes and that's the eternal word of God, always relevant, tremendous truth, tremendous truth!

And finally, and most pointedly, it says in Psalm 19:9 that the word of God is true. Boy what a statement. Do you know how hard it is to find something that's true today? Do you know what's true? The LA Times true? Sports Illustrated? Newsweek? U. S. News and World Report? Is the Isuzu commercial telling you the truth? What is truth? Did you see the U. S. News and World Report whole article on lying in America? Everybody lies, everybody lies. The President lies, the Vice President lies, the Cabinet lies, the Congress lies, the Senate lies, the doctors lie, the lawyers lie, everybody lies. If everybody lies it doesn't matter if you tell a lie anymore, it doesn't matter at all. In fact now the number one commercial is lying. They're selling cars like mad because everybody's into lying. There's no premium on truth. Do you now why people have committed themselves to lying? Because I think they're fed up with trying to find truth.

Pilate, when he faced Jesus Christ and sent Jesus to the cross said, "What is truth?" Cynically I give up on it. I remember meeting a guy, he was bombed on drugs, he was living in an overturned refrigerator crate in the mountains of Northern California, living by a stream, actually an overturned Frigidare box with a sleeping bag by a stream. I went and he was high on drugs and I said to him as I was hiking through the area, I said, "I want to introduce myself and my name is John." And we talked a little while. He said, "I've escaped. I've escaped." He was a graduate of Boston University. I said, "Well have you found the answers?" He said, "No. But at least I've gotten myself into a situation where I don't ask the question. I can't handle that."

People look for truth. Do you realize how much technology we have? We have a lot of information. I don't know how big the library is at UCLA but I called the L.A. Public Library and asked how many volumes there were there and it was absolutely a mind-boggling number of books. In fact we have so many books now we can't store them in books anymore right?

So, we have technology, laser technology. I don't know if you know this but they can take the entire Library of Congress and put it on an object the size of a sugar cube. They're working on scientific ways to reduce that size. Even micro fish is becoming cumbersome. They're using laser beams bouncing off of crystals and refracting things onto screens and because the data is coming so fast, thousands upon thousands of pages of stuff every day and the Bible says man is ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

I'm not talking about truth about mathematics. I'm talking about truth about life, death, God, man, sin, what is right, what is wrong, heaven, hell, hope, joy, peace, I mean the real stuff that makes life worth living. I mean you can't find it. We say it's in higher education. Chaska, the brilliant European philosopher said, "Here's a parable. Imagine a bombed city and this bombed city is total rubble. The bombing raid has devastated it and raised it to the very ground, death everywhere, people crushed under the rocks like a thousand Mexico City earthquakes. And all these people are smashed under these things, they're bleeding, they're bruised, there's cries, there's screaming, there's smoldering. In the middle of this total holocaust one solitary figure is picking his way through the rubble," said Chaska, "and as he picks his way through the rubble he comes to this one building totally ignoring all the screaming and crying around him. He just almost obliviously walks into this high building that's left. It's the only thing still there, and it rises untouched pristine unscathed into the air. He walks in the front door and goes up the staircase until he gets to the top floor of this one lone building, looks down a black dark hall and sees a light at the end, walks all the way down, turns into the lighted room and finds himself in a bathroom. He walks into the bathroom and he sees the guy Chaska calls the defiant fisherman who's sitting on the toilet fishing in the tub. The solitary stranger says to the defiant fisherman, 'There's no water in your tub.' He says, 'I know,' and keeps on fishing. The solitary stranger says, 'There's no fish in your tub.' He says, 'I know,' and keeps on fishing." Chaska said, "When it comes to real truth that is higher education." That's a frightening concept. What he is saying

is when it comes to moral values people are looking for something that isn't there while the whole world is being blown to bits.

Where do you find that kind of truth? I believe that does not come from man. That comes from God. Let me put it to you simply. You live in a time space box and you can't get out. Contrary to what your fantasies might tell you you cannot go into a phone booth and take off your clothes, well you could do that but you wouldn't come out Superman. We hope you won't do that.

You cannot transcend the natural world. You're locked into a time space continuum. You can't get out. And men bounce around in their little box and try to figure God out and so they invent religion but it's nothing but self-contained stuff. The only way we'll ever know what is beyond us is if what is outside comes in and that's exactly what the Bible is. It is a supernatural revelation from God who invaded our box, and not only did he invade through the pen, but he invaded in person in the form of Jesus Christ. And he brought us the truth.

I remember reading Sartre's novel, which he says articulates his view of life. You remember the title of it is Nausea. And in it his main character Roconten says, "I wanted to find the meaning of life so I decided I would try everything." He said, "I tried first of all I tried love but everything I loved I turned into a sex object and destroyed so I decided," he said, "that it wasn't in love. Then I decided that life would be bound up in humanitarianism and so I gave myself to people and I felt I could love humanity. It was just individuals I couldn't stand. And then," he said, "I tried pain, and then I tried pleasure and I tried thrills and I tried agony," and he goes through the whole thing, and the rap up on Sartre's comment is I decided after all of that, that I was one more superfluous life and the best thing I could do was kill myself.

Where do you find the truth that really makes a difference? Where do you find the truth that isn't a catch-22? I believe it's in the word of God. That's the promise that Scripture brings to us; that it can do all these things. Now I just submit this to you. If, as you look at your own life, you're looking for a far better life than you have. In fact, you wouldn't mind a transformation or if you're looking for some skill in the matter of daily living in relationships and how you live in this world, or if you want guidance in the decisions of your life, if you want to understand the dark things of life clearly, if you want something unchanging you can anchor to, and if you want to know truth, real truth that transforms then I submit to you that the only place you'll ever find it is in the pages of God's word, the Bible.

Is it any wonder that the Apostle Peter said to Jesus, when Jesus said, "Will you go away?" "To whom shall we go? You're the only one who has the words of eternal life." The Bible, somebody said, that is falling apart usually belongs to somebody who isn't. It is the source of every thing you need in the spiritual dimension and I commend to you this living word. Thank you.

Some of you have seen notices up, and we're going to have a few minutes of question and answer so if you've got something more for John to clarify or some other question that he's not discussed, feel free to line up right now and we'll go ahead and take some questions.

Male: I have a question for you, John. If the Bible and Jesus Christ and faith in him has all our answers to the spiritual realm to making us complete, why is it so many Christians today who are, it seems like, consuming the word of God, professing that Jesus Christ is their savior and not seeing these changes in their life.

John: I think there are two answers to that. First of all one is that it's one thing to have resources. It's something else to use them. And there are, I believe, very clearly given to us in Scripture all the necessary resources, but that's like a bank account that you don't cash in on. There are just lots of people who for one reason or another don't study the Bible well enough to know those principles or who by virtue of disobedience to God don't apply them. Secondly I would say it is also true that as long as we are in this body in this world there are certain natural fleshly sinful propensities that restrain our ability to fully use all the resources God has given us.

Let's put it this way. We can be the best we can be until one day when we go to be with Christ and are fully like him, but we have to use the resources that he gives us. And that is a question of faithful daily diligent application of truth. Okay? Thank you. Good question.

Male: Hi John. I am a, have been a believer for a number of years and I recently got involved in the whole question with animals and our use and abuse of animals and since getting into this I've obviously looked in the Bible and found an incredible amount of information about God's concern and his care for animals and so forth. And I just want to say one thing, in the New International version it says one of the 16 major social concerns in the covenant is concern for the welfare of other creatures in the animal world. And I just wondered if you could make a comment on Genesis 1:26 where God says that we're to rule over the animal world, because I think there's a lot of misrepresentation and a vast under importance on the importance of animals.

John: You know the Bible does touch on everything and it's been interesting how people have interpreted the Scripture relative to the animal world and so forth and so on. But the simple thing to say is this: that everything that God created he created good initially and that included the whole animal world.

I'm thrilled to think about what's going to happen in the future because the Bible says the day is coming when Jesus will return and when he returns he will establish on the earth a perfect kingdom. The Jesus who rose is coming back, he will establish a perfect kingdom and he describes that kingdom this way: the lion will lay down with the lamb, little children will be able to handle poison ness snakes because whatever curse that we presently see and the violence in the animal kingdom will be

removed and the animal kingdom will be back to that beautiful perfection that God intended when he created it at the very beginning.

So we would say that if you believe in evolutionary theory then you depersonalize everything and then why would we care about animals? Why would we care about genetics? At best we become sentimental genetics, nothing more. But if we believe in a God who created in beauty and design a creature for his own pleasure then we can have that same kind of pleasure when we look at that which he created. Even in its present sort of cursed state for animals even bear the fallen ness of this world but God's going to restore that in the future. So we want to make sure that we treat all God's creatures with respect.

Male: I think people argue whether animals have a soul or not. I don't think that's an important issue at all. I think what's important is what we see, like you're saying, in the Bible that God's concern for animals is very high and so---

John: It's a question of enjoying his creation. If I look at a beautiful mountain out here, I don't argue whether the mountain has a soul. But if someone goes and blows it up I don't like it. There's a beauty in that, there's a sense in which I see God revealed in his creatures. Good.

Male: Thank you.

John: Sure.

Male: I have a question on exactly how much choice personally we have in being saved. We are sure that by John 3:16 that anyone who believes will be saved and on the other hand we have Paul and Peter saying that, Paul particular says, "It is in the pleasure of God's will that we are saved." How do you reconcile the two?

John: That's a good question and we're often asked that question. The Bible very clearly says, very clearly that God desires for all men to be saved, I Timothy 2:4. God desires all men to be saved. I Peter 3:9 says God is not willing that any should perish. In many other passages God desiring the salvation of men. You read the Old Testament and you will find God weeping, the tears of God, Jeremiah over the people who will not come to him.

Come to the New Testament in Matthew 22:37, Jesus weeping over Jerusalem saying you won't believe, you won't believe. Jesus saying in John 7, you will not come to me that you might have light. You must understand that from the beginning to the end God calls to people to come and believe in him, to come through Jesus Christ in faith and receive the gift of salvation. And if men do not do that that's their responsibility, okay? That's very clear in Scripture. You will not come and you are making that choice against me. That's repeated in Scripture.

On the other side, okay, on the other side it is very clear also that anyone who does come is chosen by God, drawn by God, predestined by God, or elected by God. Now you ask how does that harmonize, right? And the answer is it doesn't. It does not harmonize. Does not compute. Okay? You say over here you have man's choice and responsibility. Over here you have absolute choice by God. How in the world do those harmonize? And the answer is they don't harmonize and don't try to harmonize them.

You say but they appear to be contradictions. Exactly right and what that proves to me is that God has a mind that is superior to me because he can resolve what I can't. And one of the greatest proofs that God wrote this book are things like that because if men wrote it some editor would have fixed that.

Now let me ask you another question. Okay? Approach it another way. Who wrote the book of Matthew? Who wrote Matthew? Who? Matthew wrote Matthew. Everybody agree? Anybody think the Holy Spirit wrote Matthew? Was it all Matthew and all the Holy Spirit? Same problem, same kind of a problem. You ask the question who is Jesus Christ God or man. Yes. God and man. That appears to us apparently contradictory. Somebody says to you who lives your Christian life? I do. I do all by myself I live it. No.

It's not I it's Christ living in me. Who is it? It seems to be all of me. When anything goes bad it's me. When anything goes good it's him. In other words you are going to have in every major doctrine of Scripture an apparent unresolvable paradox because the mind of God is so infinite and he's done his best to reduce it to our understanding but there's some things we cannot resolve that are bound up only in his mind. That's a great confidence to me. If I could fully understand the Bible in every dimension I'd be equal to God and if I was God we'd be in a lot of trouble. I want a God whose mind is infinitely beyond mine. I am very content with those kinds of tensions. Okay?

Male: Thank you.

John: You're welcome.

Male: My question is that if you're not, if you're a non-believer and you hear a lot of different input about how you attain eternal life, I was wondering if you could explain according to the Bible how you would attain eternal life?

John: That's a very good question. Let me make it very simple for you and I appreciate you asking. There are only two religions in the whole world, okay, I mean you can reduce the whole systems, all systems of ethnology, the whole world religious scene to two religions. There is number one the religion of human achievement and number two the religion of divine accomplishment. In other words

to put it simply, every religion in the world apart from Christianity believes that men attain rightness with God through some means of self-effort. Okay?

Maybe you go on a pilgrimage, maybe you give offerings to a deity, maybe you burn incense, maybe you do x number of good works, maybe you pray x number of prayers, light so many candles, do some vows, pay some money, clean up your own act, do good to people. Whether it's a ceremonial thing, a ritualistic thing, or some kind of behavioral thing, the systems of religion worldwide all agree that man does something to make himself right with God except Christianity.

Christianity teaches in the Bible that man does nothing. That God has done it all and all we have to do is believe that he did it and accept what he has done. That's the distinctiveness. And so the Bible says if you believe in your heart in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he is God in human flesh, that he died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sin, and if you believe he rose again and you will confess him as Lord of your life you will receive eternal life. It's not something, and then what will happen is having received Christ, you will begin to do things as a result of, not to earn your salvation. Okay?

So that's the difference. All the systems of the world all line up in the human achievement area and require certain things to be right with God. Christianity says all that we require is that you acknowledge your sin. All God requires is that you acknowledge your sin and receive the gift of salvation in Christ. It's not a work. It's receiving a gift. Okay?

Male: Thank you.

John: Thank you.

Female: Okay, my question is on the opposite end of that. Let's say that you have accepted Christ as your personal savior, and then sometime down the road you rebuke him. Now is your salvation guaranteed and you still have it or did you lose it or weren't you or at the first time you accepted Christ you really didn't accept him? Because I got responses from all kinds of people saying, "Well you lost it once you rebuked him." Some people say, "No, you're guaranteed it." And other people say, "Well you really didn't accept him in the first place." I mean what is---

John: That's a very good question.

Female: ---What is the answer between?

John: Let me give it to you. First of all we'll look at it from an epistemological viewpoint or from the nature of it. If you commit your life to Jesus Christ what does he do, transform your life, give you a new nature?

*Female:*Right.

*John:*And is that nature temporary or permanent?

*Female:*That's permanent.

*John:*Okay, it's what kind of life?

*Female:*It's an eternal life.

*John:*Eternal life. Eternal life is eternal life.

*Female:*Right.

*John:*Okay. So if you received a new nature with eternal life and as Peter puts it, "You now have become partaker of the divine nature forever," that's not going to change. But the proof of that is going to be in what the theologians have called the perseverance of the saints. You will prove the reality of your salvation from God's viewpoint by your perseverance in faith.

If you come to the place where you no longer believe and where you turn your back on God and say, "I don't believe that anymore," then you have not persevered, which is evidence that you were never really the recipient of eternal life because eternal life is not just God's saying it's eternal, it's you living it eternally. Now look at I John, taking it a step further, I John 2 I think sums it up pretty clearly. It says this in verse 19, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us. For if they had been of us they would have remained with us, but they went out in order that it might be shown that they are not all of us." In other words, when people bail out and abandon the faith and turn their back on God that proves they were never really there to begin with because if they had eternal life it would last how long? Forever. And it's not just God saying it's forever, it's the person persevering that is maintaining that faith and that confidence.

*Female:*You mean even if you first accept it and you feel this transformation and then later on down the road you rebuke him it's like saying you never got him in the first place?

*John:*What do you mean by rebuking him?

*Female:*Well turning your back on him saying I no longer-

*John:*If you doubt, and you struggle, and you fall into sin, you could still be a Christian, but if you turn your back on Christ and walk away and say I do not believe, you give evidence of having the same old sinful nature, not a new one. See your nature is what's most true about you and if you have been

given a new nature the thing that is most true about you is that the life of God exists within you and the life of God within you will never deny itself.

Female: So after that when you die you don't go---

John: So the question, it's hard to answer the question. I know what you're driving at because you can see a person who appears to have all the joy and all the whatever but later on they just fall away. Well look at the parable of the soils where Jesus said sometimes the plant pots up a little while but there's no roots and the sun comes out and it dies and never bears any fruit. So it's possible to be a Christian and fall into sin, but not to openly flagrantly turn your back on God and say, "I don't believe that." Now you're showing that you have that same old sinful fallen ness, not a new nature.

Female: So you weren't really ---

John: Okay?

Female: Okay.

John: All right. Thank you. There's a lot more, by the way, to be said on that, really is. There's a lot, in fact if you'll come and see me afterwards I'll send you a few tapes in the mail that will help you. Okay? No charge.

Male: Hi. You made a reference to a verse in the Psalms where David declared that the law was perfect and had a transforming power in people's lives. But isn't it true that in the Old Testament what he was referring to was the acting out of the law. In other words, as you obey the law in your life as a daily expression and the sacrifices and all that; that's what was transforming. It seems like there's a little tension between the New and the Old Testament that way.

John: No, I don't think there's any tension at all and I think that's why we made the statement that he uses the word nefesh in Hebrew, which means self, person, heart, soul, as opposed to body, function, behavior. What he's saying is the law of the Lord is so comprehensively powerful that it is able to transform the inner person. There will be a change in behavior, but only because of a transformation of the inner person. So I believe very strongly that in the Old Testament the teaching of Scripture was the same that God wants to change the heart. In fact, God said to Israel many times don't just circumcise your body circumcise your hearts. In other words, God was after the transforming of the heart.

Male: Thanks.

Female: This is going to have to be the last question 'cause we're running out of time.

*John:*All right. Thank you.

*Female:*Probably one of my hardest things when witnessing to other people about Jesus Christ is when they say, "If God is such a loving God why is there so much bad going on in the world? Why are innocent people dying? Why is there starvations and that? I just want to know how you answered that question when I'm sure people have brought that to you.

*John:*Sure. God created a world where there was no death and there was no starving and there was no weeping and there was no sorrow and the Bible says there will come another day when the Lord Jesus will create a new world with no tears and no pain and no death and no grief and no sorrow. That's God's world. What you have today is not God's world. What you have today is a world dominated by, the Bible says, the Prince of the power of the air, the ruler of darkness, spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies, you have a fallen world.

God makes a perfect world and then man chooses to violate God, sin against God, falls into sin and what you're seeing now is not that which God has made, but that which God will restore back to the way he originally made it. Somebody says, "Why doesn't God stop all the wars? Why doesn't God stop all the pain? Why doesn't God stop all the sorrow?"

The answer is God didn't start it and the time will come, even though God didn't start it, when he will stop it. But for this time God has left man to his choice because God has deemed that he will not be worshipped by men who are made to worship him but rather those who choose to do so. So until God in his sovereign purpose restores the world it will play out on its stage the full-blown result of the sinfulness of man. And what's wonderful is that in the midst of it all God is gracious and God does many things to make life wonderful and rich and overrule what could be total disaster.

So I think it's only the grace of God that preserves man from destroying everything. Okay? Thank you very much. It's been a real pleasure to be with you today.

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