

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

The Certainty of God's Existence

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: GTY66

[Applause] Thank you very much, it's just great to be here. I've been commenting all evening that I haven't been on the CSUN campus in a long time. Some years back when I wasn't so occupied over at Grace Church (I don't need any water, John, I'll spill it, thank you). When I wasn't so occupied with so many different things, I used to come out here quite regularly and sometimes speak out in the . . . they used to have a kind of a quad area over by the gym, and a little bit off from there, and we used to come out and do some "open air deals" and some evening evangelistic outreaches and all kinds of fun things in years past, and being back here reminds me of those old days. We used to do that at UCLA, we used to do it at Valley College, occasionally down at USC and just had a great time doing that. In fact, for a number of years, I kind of floated around the country doing that kind of thing on college campuses and really had a great time doing it, and I have to offer an apology that it's been so long since I've been here, and I don't even recognize the place with all these trailers and new buildings since the earthquake . . . but it's great to be back here.

And as John said, I did come back from the Master's Golf Tournament today, in fact, jet travel is really amazing. I mean, I was standing on the green next to Arnold Palmer this morning when he made a birdie. That was kind of fun, and then I got on a plane and here I am with you tonight.

And I count it a great privilege, really, to talk to you about what is dear to my heart. I probably should start by saying that I am not a preacher because somebody made me do this. I know that probably if you are not familiar with preachers or pastors you look at them as some kind of weird, sort of sanctimonious, you know, stained glass type people . . . and that's really not the case. I mean in my college days, I can still remember that far back, it doesn't seem that long ago to be truthful with you. In my college days I basically was your average jock, I never let my books get in the way of my education and that is for sure. I mean if there was something happening to goof off, I was there, goofing off with everybody else. I was involved, primarily as an athlete. My juices got flowing on a football field. I played football and basketball and baseball and all of that. That was kind of what I lived for. I thought I was headed for a professional athletic career. Really, that was my goal, that was the direction that I was going and the Lord redirected me a little bit and I got . . . I'll tell you how it happened, just in a real brief little vignette.

My senior year in college I had a great football season, we had a great team that year. I played for Pacific College. We had a great team. We were . . . in fact, in those days we played, with this school, used to be known as San Fernando Valley State and we played some of the same schools that

CSUN through the years has played, it was the college division of the NCAA . But we had a great team that year. We ended up second in the nation in pass offense. And I ended up second in the nation in receptions. I was a wide receiver, and a defensive back, and a punter, and a kick returner, and stuff like that. After that year was over I was invited to a couple of training camps at the end of my junior year, for the NFL, then in the AFL, AFC, and tried to decide what I wanted to do. And after my senior year a most amazing thing happened.

After football season was over and I was trying to decide . . . my coach was talking to me about what I was going to do in my future and all this kind of stuff, I got a phone call from a woman at Thousand Oaks High School. And she said, "I heard about you and I heard that you are a Christian athlete," because I went to some Kiwanis thing and they gave me some award, and some gold football that I lost 20 years. And I gave a testimony regarding my faith in Christ at that time and so this lady had gotten the word and she said, "Would you go to the hospital and visit my daughter?"

And I said, "Wait, I mean, I'm just a college guy and I'm not too sure what the situation is," so I said, "What's wrong with your daughter?" She said, "She's paralyzed. She's a quadriplegic, it just happened." I said, "How did it happen?"

She said she and her boyfriend were in the backyard, her name was Polly Grider (sp.), she was head cheerleader at Thousand Oaks High School as a senior and a gun went off and shot her through the neck and severed her spinal cord. And she asked me if I'd go by the hospital to visit this girl. You know that's a pretty formidable job for somebody so young . . . and I said well I'm willing to do that, I don't know what I'll say, but I'll certainly go and tell her about my faith in Christ. And the lady said, you know, she's in such terrible despair we don't know what to do with her. And I don't even know how the Lord worked that connection so I went in, it was Glendale Adventist Hospital, and I went in there and she was lying on a sheepskin, you know because people who can't move get severe bedsores, they put them on something like sheepskin. And I'll never forget the conversation . . . it was an amazing conversation.

I introduced myself, I said, "Hi, I'm John MacArthur, Polly. You don't know me but, (I think it was her mother, or maybe it was her aunt), called and asked if I would come by and talk to you and all I can do is tell you about my relationship to Jesus Christ." And she said to me, "If I could move, I'd kill myself. I can't imagine living my life like this." Your talking about a 17 year-old kid, and her boyfriend, he was history, he wasn't about to hang onto a quadriplegic, so she said, "If I could kill myself, I'd kill myself, I can't move anything." All she could move was her head. And I remember saying to her and I have rehearsed it many times since then . . . I wrote a little article about it and it was published in a little magazine . . . I said to her, "You know Jesus Christ can make your life worth living even if you could never move again." I mean I thought that was the right thing to say and it was true. And I thought, you know, she just probably won't buy that. But she had the most amazing response. She said, "I have to have something to live for." And so I presented to her how she could know Christ,

have her sins forgiven, be on her way to Heaven, have a reason to live, have joy and hope and peace and meaning . . . and she said, "I think I want Christ in my life," after about a 45 minute discussion. I said then, "Well, why don't you just tell Him that, He's here, He's alive, He'll come into your life." She prayed a prayer, and she confessed her sin and asked the Lord to forgive her sin and to come into her life, and take over her life, and give her a reason to live, and all of this, and then I just kind of touched her face, because that's the only thing she could feel and said "Goodbye." And she said, "Will you come back tomorrow?" I said, "Sure." So I came back the next day and I'll never forget what she said to me. She said to me, "You know John, (she said), I have to tell you in all honesty, I am kind of glad that this accident happened, because if it hadn't happened I never would have met Jesus. And I was absolutely knocked over. I mean, I couldn't believe what I had just heard, a quadriplegic saying that, in 24 hours, that kind of transformation--that changed my life.

I went back to my football coach and I said, "Would you please tell all these teams that have asked, showing interest in drafting me, would you tell them I am not going to play. Would you tell them I am going to go to seminary." That was the moment, that was the moment of crisis in my life when I determined what really mattered and what I really wanted to do with my life.

By the way, Polly's story got really magnificent. She came out of the hospital, came through rehab . . . obviously the paralysis didn't change, there was a wonderful Christian young man, who fell in love with her and married her and as far as I know now, (she has kind of passed out of my life), but I followed her for a number of years and she had a happy and fulfilled life.

And that was the turning point in my life. And I just kind of feel like I need to say that, because I don't know whether people think pastors just sort of drop out of the air, you know, or fall out of Heaven or get raised by monks, well that wouldn't work, would it? But you know we are just like anybody else--life has choices and you make them, right?

I went off to seminary, I finished seminary. After my first year of seminary I got a call from the Cleveland Browns . . . Paul Warfield was their outstanding wide receiver, broke his collarbone and my name pops up on the computer, and they want to know if I'll come to training camp, and I am tested again after one year of seminary. Seminary's a bear, you know . . . it's a lot of work and drudgery and studying Greek and Hebrew and you know, I mean, a little hoopla on a football field wouldn't be half bad after a year of that, but I was fixed in the direction I was going to go, and that's why I do what I do. I came into the San Fernando Valley, to Grace Community Church in 1969, in my 20's, and I've been here ever since. And I'm not really any different than any of you, I just, with all the options of life out there, I just felt that the most important thing I could do with my life was to tell people about Jesus Christ and tell them about the Word of God.

And so that's what I've done all these years and that's really why I'm here tonight. I mean, I don't know where all of you are, I know some of you because I know you from our church, but the rest of

you I don't know. I have to kind of start at ground zero with kind of where we are and the environment in which we are living today and particularly in your university environment. I've been out here before, I've talked to classes, lots of classes in years passed. I've talked to the philosophy classes and I have talked to classes in the P.E. Department, because some of the guys from our church have taught in the P.E. Dept. for years here, Nick Bright, and Sam Britton and others through the years. I keep my eye, kind of, on the university scene and interact a little bit with what's going on in terms of the thinking of the current culture and I think the major question right now that is facing our society is a very basic, simple question, and that is the question of, "Is there a God?" I mean, "Is there really a God?"

Just two days ago . . . three days ago or so . . . somebody in New England donated a book to the public library of a town in New England. A book that advocated a God, and said that everything that existed in the universe was created by that God, as opposed to the typical evolutionary approach. This book held a creationist view that there is a God and the God created everything. And the library refused the book. This is America. You know there is a code of ethics built into the libraries of America . . . that every bona fide library has to sign a code of ethics that they'll not discriminate.

But it's that unpopular to postulate God. And people would like us to believe that it's an intellectual thing, you know, that they've thought about it and they've come to the conclusion that it's irrational to believe in God. It doesn't make sense to believe in God. It's an irrational thing. And that's the ploy today that a really educated person doesn't believe in God, he believes in chance, he believes in evolution. He believes this equation: "nobody times nothing equals everything," and that if you don't believe that, you're irrational. That's the mentality.

About three weeks ago, I picked up Newsweek magazine and I read a fascinating article by George Will. George Will writes some very interesting things, he's a very provocative thinker. This article was quite interesting. Here's what the article was about, it was about "black revisionist history." What is happening today is you've got a group of black people in the educational realm, (you can read it in a month ago Newsweek), and they go around to universities, they have PhDs, and they are basically teaching a history that never happened. They are teaching, for example, that all of western culture had its roots in black culture, and that Cleopatra was black, and Socrates was black, and Aristotle was black, and all of this. And everybody knows it isn't true. And in the article scholars have confronted these people going to the major universities and teaching this and saying, "Wait a minute, we know this is not true." And the response is, "So what? What does that have to do with anything? Truth isn't the issue, we're trying to empower black people, and it makes them feel better about themselves if we rewrite history for their benefit." Now, we might want to debate and justifiably debate whether black people have been treated right; whether they are treated right, now or not, that is an issue that needs to be addressed, but that's not the issue at hand.

The issue at hand is, are we replacing truth with whatever works. Have we become so pragmatic that we can absolutely rewrite reality in favor of whatever works? Well, that's frightening. I mean, I'd hate to have a guy who believed like that doing brain surgery on my head. I'd like him to have a heavy dose of commitment to reality, wouldn't you? Somebody taking my heart out and doing something with it, in surgery, I'd like him to be functioning in a real world and not doing fantasy surgery. How would you like a revisionist surgeon?

But the premium nowadays is on empowerment, not on truth. And the issue in regard to God has nothing to do with rationality, because it's irrational not to believe in God. It's as irrational as looking at this building and saying, "Well, how did this come here?" Well, it's really strange . . . after the Northridge Earthquake, after everything flew around; this is how it all landed. You know if you kept saying that they'd put you somewhere--that's so irrational. I mean those kinds of arguments are nonsense.

Nobody times nothing equals everything is bizarre. You can't for a moment believe that one of the great space machines that goes up into outer space in its incredible display of scientific ingenuity flies around and does whatever it does and ends up in orbit sending back all these messages, could occur by an explosion in a metal factory . . . you can't have that from random--that takes an incredible amount of intelligence to produce.

How in the world could you explain the universe with any other thing than an intelligent Creator. But as soon as you have an intelligent creator, you have a problem and you know what the problem is? Somebody bigger than you is in charge. It is not an intellectual thing. There's not a rejection of God on campuses today and universities today because it's intellectually reasonable, it is because nobody wants anybody being their judge. That's the issue.

On August 7th, 1961, 26 year old Major German Titov (sp.) the second Soviet cosmonaut to orbit the earth and return safely . . . that's a long time ago . . . '61. Climaxing a monumental feat for mankind--he orbited the earth. Sometime later, speaking at the world's fair, he recounted his experience--a very unique experience, (not too many have it). In a rather interesting pronouncement, on a triumphalist note this is what he said, "In my excursion into space, I did not see God." Now, he was an atheist, right? A Russian communist atheist, and he wanted to make it clear that he had been around the earth and he didn't see God. Upon hearing of this exuberant argument from silence, someone quipped, "Had he stepped out of his space suit, he would have."

On Christmas day, 1968, three American astronauts were the first human beings to go around the dark side of the moon, away from the earth. They fired their rockets and were homebound on Apollo VIII. They looked at our planet in a way that human eyes had never witnessed it before. Some of you have seen the blue planet picture that came out of that Apollo VIII. They saw earth rise over the horizon of the moon draped in a beautiful mixture of white and blue bordered by the glistening light

of the sun against the black void of space, and in the throes of this awe inspiring experience they opened the book of Genesis and those astronauts read this . . . "In the beginning **God** created the heavens and the earth." Two similar experiences of awe and exhilaration, two diametrically opposed conclusions about the nature of the world. One said, "I went around and didn't see God," the others came back and said, "We saw God crystal clear!"

There is no explanation; there is no rational explanation for the existence of the universe apart from a rational mind. And the reason people want to reject the rational conclusion that there must be, (listen), a cause for this effect, the reason they reject it, has nothing to do with the mind but it has everything to do with the heart. It's a moral issue. They don't want responsibility. They don't want some moral judge telling them how to live. That's the issue. And so God is rejected, supposedly intellectually, and when you reject God, all hell breaks loose, because if there is no creator, if no one is in charge, and if you are not accountable to someone, and if there is not a moral law, and a moral law giver, and a judge in the universe, then everything goes and anything goes, and what does that produce? Self-destruction.

Several years ago Encyclopedia Britannica published a fifty-five volume series entitled "The Great Books of the Western World." Mortimer Adler, noted philosopher and legal scholar was co-editor of the series. Basically the series marshaled the most eminent thinkers of the western world, their writings and the most important ideas, in other words, it's all the great thinking of the western culture. These ideas involve law, science, philosophy, history, theology, and even love. Everything that has shaped the minds and destinies of people--Fifty-five volumes. Do you know what the longest essay in those 55 volumes is on? The longest essay is on God--is on God.

When Mortimer Adler was asked by a reviewer why this theme merited such protracted coverage his answer was uncompromising. "It is because," he said, "more consequences from life follow from that one issue than any other." If there is God, then everything flows from His existence. All created matter and all moral law. If there is no God then how can you explain anything? There is no law, except that which we make up for ourselves, there is no accountability, there is no source for this, there's no rhyme or reason and that is absolutely irrational on the one hand and morally suicidal on the other. But I submit to you that nothing will have more impact on your life than whether or not you believe in God. It'll have personal impact on your life. It has an immense impact on a culture, and the destiny of nations.

If you believe in a Creator, Sustainer and Law-Giver, then you have some shape to your life. I mean, imagine children, no parents, "Lord of the Flies." No parents, no rules. What happens? Barbaric devastation. Where you have father, mother, who create, control, constrain, give rules, teach behavior, you have order. I mean in a little microcosm . . . that's a simple illustration of the existence of God.

But man has always rejected God. I mean just generally, Romans, chapter 1, in the Bible, says that men "when they knew God glorified Him not as God and weren't thankful." Why? Because they don't want somebody sitting in judgment on their sins. "Men love darkness," the Bible says, "rather than light." You love your sin, I mean how hard is it to do good? Compare that with how easy it is to sin, to do evil. When you eliminate God, what you have is no control.

G. K. Chesterton (sp.), the British philosopher said, "God is like the sun, you can't look at it, but without it, you can't see anything else." Apart from God, everything is black pointlessness.

To show you how silly it gets in the *Science Digest*, which is an evolutionary digest, a sort of a heady, academic thing, there is an article called, "The Accidental Universe," in one of their issues in 1992. The author is a scientist by the name of Trion (sp.), listen to what he says. This is the *Science Digest*, this is a heady science journal. He says this, "Our universe is simply one of those things that happens from time to time." What an unbelievable statement! ". . . just happens from time to time . . ." and yet that evolutionary lie permeates education, law, government, politics, sociology and morality and all areas of human endeavor and human relationships.

If there is no God then everybody is free to live any way they want. And according to Scripture, you'll pay for that, you'll pay seriously for that. You see, preachers, and teachers of Christianity and Christians, we're not running around trying to rain on your parade. We're not trying to introduce you to the God who is the cosmic killjoy, and always goes around saying, "There's one whose having fun . . . GET HIM!" That's not the idea. We're here to tell you the Good News. You know what the Good News is? There is a God and if you've got your head screwed on, you have to conclude that--you HAVE to conclude that, because you cannot explain the complexity of the universe by chance. It can't be done. Everything can't come from nothing.

And even if it was just mechanical, where did personality come from? Where did love come from? Wisdom? And why are men so different than animals? I know that the evolutionists want to believe that a rock is a rat is a dog is a boy equation, but dogs don't write symphonies and neither do rats. And dogs don't blast off in their own private deals into space and they don't create dog universities. There is a huge gap between all animals and man because man is created in the very image of God, he bears the stamp of God--personality, will, choice, intellect--there is no explanation for the universe apart from the fact that there is a Creator.

Philip Johnson, a graduate of Harvard Law School, principal law teacher at, I think it's Bolt School of Law at Berkeley, has written a book, "Darwin on Trial" in which, from purely argumentative basis, not from the Bible he dismantles evolution and he goes across the country debating all of this and giving these tremendous speeches about the irrationality of evolution, and he is arguing as a courtroom lawyer who is a genius. And he just dismantles the whole system and they throw him out of school,

after school, after school. Why? Because if there is God, then somebody's in charge and there is a rule giver, a law giver, and a judge, and accountability. And if there is God, then I have got to live according to His standards, and I don't want anybody messing with my lifestyle. I wish I could say it was intellectual--it's really moral.

Dr. Edward Wilson, writing in a humanist magazine, he teaches at Harvard, he said this, "Bitter experience has taught us that Fundamental Christianity is one of the unmitigated evils of the world." Why do they hate Christianity? Because we say that God has given laws and when you break them there are consequences. We ought to know that anyway. We have laws in our country don't we? We have laws. When you break them there are consequences--where did that come from?

So, where does Christianity fit into all this? Well, we want to bring the reality of God clearly to human hearts.

By the way, before Darwin, nobody questioned the existence of God. Darwin invented an anti-God system. But in our modern world, they do question it, so the first thing we want to do is to bring people back to the fact that there has to be a God, and that that God is Creator, Sustainer, and Law Giver, (and listen to this, this is really important), and that you have all broken His law. I am obligated to tell you that. We've all come short of His law. We have broken His law--we know it. You say, "How do you know it?" Because you have a conscience that tells you that.

Now God has given you two things, and I often talk about this, God's given you two ways to know He exists.

1. Reason

First is Reason. What does reason do? Reason works through a cause and effect pattern. I have a microphone on, reason tells me somebody made it. There's a soundboard back there, reason tells me somebody made it. There's a building here, this is an effect--something caused this--an architect, some builders and so forth. And you keep reasoning back and back and finally you get to the biggest effect, which is the universe, and you say, somebody made this. Somebody with tremendous intelligence, with a tremendous love of beauty and harmony and variety and etc., etc.

2. Conscience

So, the first thing that takes you to God is reason, but the second thing that takes you to God is conscience. This is very important for me to talk about for a minute. Conscience is a little built-in device that God has put in you to react to the moral law that is written in your heart. When you come into this world, you know what is right and wrong--basically, basically.

There is a moral law written in your heart--you know that, you know that right now. You know that if you do certain things that you are going to feel guilty about those things. You go into a classroom and you cheat, I hope you feel guilty. You might say, "I got away with it, I got away with it," but in the darkness of the night when you are going to sleep, maybe your conscience jumps up and grabs you by the throat . . . "You cheater!" You steal something somewhere; whatever it might be. You act in an immoral fashion, and something grabs you and you fight against that guilt.

Well, that's what our society is doing on the academic level, in the universities, and they're cranking out all the lawyers and educators and everybody, so it gets all over everywhere. They are cutting themselves off from God by saying, "No, it all evolved . . . once there was a one celled thing that said, 'Let's be two' . . . we don't know where the one celled thing came from . . . and once there was a big explosion of stuff that didn't exist and we don't know where the stuff that didn't exist came into existence so it could blow up, but that's what we believe, because we don't want to think of God, because that puts too much pressure on us. So we ignore that path, cut it off, bring in evolution and cut people off from God. And the second thing they do in our society today is try to destroy the function of conscience.

Now let me tell you how conscience functions. Your conscience is a warning system and it just makes you feel bad when you do what's wrong. So if you want to get out of that you can do two things. You can reprogram yourself so that your moral system is really completely reversed. In other words, if you have a certain moral standard built into you when you come into the world and it makes you feel guilty about things, you've got to reconstruct your morals system so you don't feel guilty about those things anymore, right? That's what you're having in our culture today. Immorality's good, homosexuality is good, anything is good, bestiality is good, anything you want to do is good, it's all fine, it's all wonderful. Let's create a whole new moral system.

And there's a second thing you can do if you want to get rid of guilt, and that is, you can just shut your conscience up by just saying, "Well, my problem is I don't have enough self-esteem. My problem is that I need to feel good about myself, I shouldn't feel bad about myself, I'm a wonderful person, I'm an excellent person. I need to feel better about myself not worse about myself--and you just play psychological games with your conscience.

Let me tell you how this works. I'll give you an illustration. In 1984 an Avianca jet crashed, Avianca is the European airlines from Spain. An Avianca jet crashed in Spain, I mean it was a big jet and it crashed into a mountain, and everybody was just instantly dead. As investigators began to study the accident they made an eerie discovery and this discovery that they make often is the curiosity that all of us look for, you know when they find the little black flight recorder. The black box cockpit recorder revealed that several minutes before a fatal impact, (the plane ran right into the side of a mountain), several minutes before the fatal impact there was a shrill computer synthesized voice like you hear on

the telephone sometimes, a computer voice. And the little voice said in English, "Pull up, pull up, pull up, pull up, pull up!" Well it was a warning system, right? The pilot, (and the flight recorder had this on it), the pilot inexplicably snapped back, "Shut up Gringo . . . shut up Gringo!" and flipped off the warning voice . . . flipped the switch. Minutes later the plane smashed into the mountain and everybody was dead. That's a parable of how people are treating their consciences today. "Shut up gringo!"

Psychologists tell you, "Don't feel guilty, don't feel shame, don't feel remorse, don't feel bad, it's not your fault, you're a victim, you're not to blame, and by the way you can do anything you want, and you shouldn't feel bad about anything, it's up to you, nobody's going to tell you what to do, you can live your own life any old way you want to live your life. Don't let your conscience do that to you. Don't feel bad about things!" And you begin to train yourself to ignore that little voice. That's deadly.

Let me tell you something, it's a parallel to pain. Pain's a good thing, because pain tells you something is wrong with you. Did you watch John McSherry, that umpire fall over dead. You know the day before he had pain, and he was going to go to the doctor and he didn't go to the doctor. If he had gone to the doctor they might have put him in the hospital and done some surgery and saved his life. He ignored the pain and dropped dead. You can't ignore . . . pain tells you something's wrong. You know pain is a gift from God so you don't kill yourself. Pain is a good thing, because when your body is screaming with pain, you've got to deal with that.

I just talked to a young lady here who had terrible pain and had to go to the doctor and what was it? It was on the verge of a burst appendix. What happens if she says, "Oh, I hate pain, pain go away, get off my back pain!" You're dead! It's a gift.

Conscience is a gift. It's a warning system. But people today are being trained by the psychology of today to ignore, to flip the switch . . . "Shut up Gringo!" . . . there's nothing wrong with me.

And the second thing they are doing today, and this is constant, is redefining the moral system so the conscience doesn't know what to react to. In other words, your conscience can only react to your moral system and if you rewrite the moral system, then conscience has nothing to react to but error. This is classic stuff today.

MTV, which I don't usually watch, but MTV did a special series, I wrote about it in one of my books, "The Vanishing Conscience," but they had a special series on the seven deadly sins.

Now some medieval monks, you know back in the medieval times between 500 and 1500, took all the sins and sort of spread them out over a table and they drew them all together in groups and they decided that they all sort of got reduced down to seven sort of motivational sins that were behind all sins and they were called the "Seven Deadly Sins." The seven deadly sins are: pride, covetousness,

lust, anger, envy, gluttony, and laziness. These medieval monks said all sin kind of fits into those categories. And these were the categorical sort of underpinnings or attitudes of the heart that led to all kinds of sin. Now that wasn't a biblical group but it was sort of a classic group by those medieval theologians.

Recently MTV decided to ask people what they thought of the seven deadly sins. And they did. They asked Queen Latiffa (sp.) what she thought about pride. She said, "Pride is a sin? I wasn't aware of that." They asked Kirstie Alley (sp.) of Cheers about pride. She said, "I don't think pride is a sin, I think some idiot made that up". And they asked one of the rockers from Aerosmith if he thought lust was a sin. This is what he said, quote, "Lust is what I live for, it's what I got into the band for, man, the little girls on the front row!" And then they asked, no less a theologian than Ice Tea if he thought anger was a sin and he said, "Anger is no sin, anger's necessary man. You have to release this tension because life brings tension and we release anger when we do our records. When we did 'Cop Killer,' we were angry and the cops got angry back." And Michael Douglas plays a character from the movie 'Wallstreet,' and his line is "Greed is good!" And then they went back to Ice Tea and asked him about pride and he said, "Pride's mandatory man! I got into a gang because of pride." You see everything is totally reversed.

You just cut off the lines to God. You cut it off rationally by evolution. You cut it off morally by the psychological effort to stamp out your conscience and flip the switch, and by reconstruction of all moral values and reversing everything. You know what you've got . . . you know what you've got . . . you've got a group of people with no God and no control and you've got hell on earth. And that's where our culture is. And I have to tell you how bad it is before I can tell you it can get better.

By the way, according to MTV, there is no moral standard, no absolute moral standards they say. You do whatever you want. What is sin to me may not be sin to you. And then they ended the program, two-hour program with this unbelievable statement, "The most evil sin in the world is the killjoy attitude of those who think sin is an offense to a Holy God." That's the worst sin, to think sin is an offense to a Holy God. How twisted is that? There's no God, there's no holy standard, there's no sin, and so sin is when you think there is. You've sinned against yourself because you've made yourself feel bad.

People have gone to any lengths to rationalize their iniquity and their sin, but you know I really believe in my heart that God has put a rational mind in us, since we are made in his image as humans and a moral law in us to the degree that you just can't quite ever really destroy it. It sneaks back up and says, "Yes, there's a God and yes there's a moral law, and yes you are violating it." And that's why the Bible says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Everybody's in the same boat, I am in the same boat with all of you, everybody. We all sin and the Bible says the wages of sin is death. That's the simple truth of the gospel. We all sin against God and the wages of sin is death. That's why we die. Everybody dies, why? Because of sin. That's why there's death in the world . . .

because there's sin in the world.

That's why the second law of thermodynamics, the Law of Entropy works. Everything breaks down. Sin has cursed the universe and it's all disintegrating and crumbling and going down and you and me with it. It's not getting better. Wouldn't you think this deal would be getting better? Right? I mean we've been around a long time, haven't we? Human beings have been around a long time? You'd think we'd have figured out something, right? We are massacring each other faster than we ever have in human history. There are more wars now than ever. More people die now than ever. Do you know there are even more Christians being persecuted to death in the world today, this year, than in the past? It's a hostile, ugly, wicked world.

You'd think in America we would learn how to control crime and abuse. We can't. It just escalates and escalates because we have a whole realm of sinners, all of us. And the wages of that sin is death and after death it is appointed unto men to be judged by God. And what happens to those who die in their sins? Jesus says they go to hell forever. God is a just judge and He sends sinners to eternal hell. They can't be in His presence . . . they can't be in His presence, He's a holy God. That's the bad news.

It's bad news, but if you don't understand the bad news, folks, you can't hear the good news. I mean, if you don't understand the disease, you can't get the cure, right? We have to explain to you what's wrong before you can look for what's right. And that's the sad reality. You see as long as people deny the reality of sin they cut themselves off from the hope of salvation from it. If you're going to go around thinking you are really intellectual and deny there is a God, and cut yourself off from God, you have cut yourself off forever from God and that's called eternal Hell.

God does exist whether you want to acknowledge it or not, and He does establish a moral law by which He judges every human being in the world, whether you want to acknowledge that law or not. My responsibility and the responsibility of every Christian is to tell you that. What you do with that is between you and God.

Now I've discharged my responsibility to tell you that there is a God and I may not be the most intelligent person in the world, but I'm not stupid and I know that for every effect there is a cause. Something is behind everything in this universe. Somebody made it. God alone makes it and I'll tell you something else, that God has a moral law and He has written it in your heart and then He has written it in this book, called the Bible. And then God says every human being falls short of living up to this standard. And not everybody's as bad as everybody else and not everybody's as bad as they could be. Some people are about as bad as they could be, but not everybody's as bad as they could be, but everybody has broken God's law and the wages of sin is death. And after death, Hell. And the Bible describes Hell as a place of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth . . . a horrible, horrible place, cut off from God forever in eternal torment. That's the bad news.

But quickly, the good news . . . if you'll accept the bad news, young people if you'll just accept the bad news then you're in a position to get the good news. If you deny the reality of the bad news, you've basically damned yourself. Let me tell you what the good news is . . . **God forgives sinners.** That's the good news. That's the gospel. That's the simple truth . . . God forgives sinners. You say, "Well how much of their sin does He forgive?" All of it. Scripture says that He forgives all their trespasses. Why would He do that? Because He's a loving, gracious, merciful God and He wants to display that. Because the Bible says He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Because He's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. God forgives sinners, that's what Christianity teaches.

Let me tell you a little story. I was flying to El Paso the other day and I sat down next to this guy on a plane. And I had my Bible and I was reading. I was going out to speak to a men's conference in the civic center in El Paso. And this guy sat next to me, he was Arabic guy and I've been in the Middle East a number of times and I always enjoy Arabic people and there a lot of them around here . . . some of them come to our church and I always have a great time getting to know them and so I just sat there and I said, "Hi, my names John." And then I went on reading my Bible, kind of getting ready for what I was going to say and so as we were going along he finally says to me, "Could I ask you a question?" He was from Iran. He said, "Could I ask you a question?" I said, "Sure." He said, "I'm new in America . . . I'm just going through my citizenship . . ." and he said, "I just don't understand religion in America, maybe you could help me." I said, "Be glad to." He said, "Could you tell me the difference between a Catholic, a Protestant, and a Baptist?" I mean, that's the question he asked, right? So I said, "Yeah, sure."

So I went through an explanation of Roman Catholicism, you know, kind of a sacramental, sacerdotal, ceremonial, kind of external approach with a lot of standing up and sitting down kind of form, and all of that and then I talked about Protestantism, and that Baptists were within the framework of Protestantism and just went through this kind of thing and so I explained it to him.

And I said, "Are you Muslim?" "Oh, yes," he said, "I'm Muslim." I said, "Well, could I ask you . . . I have always wanted to ask you Muslims a question . . . maybe I could ask you." He said, "O.K." I said, "Do you have sins?" "Oh yeah", he said, "many sins, we have so many sins, I don't even know them all . . . many sins." I said, "Well, let me ask you another question. Do you commit them?" "Oh yes," he says, "all the time." He said, "In fact, I am flying to El Paso to commit some." That's what he said. He said, he said, "I met this girl, and I'm going down there to sin with her." He was that open. And I said, "Well look, so you commit all these sins, right?" "Yes," he says, "yes." I said, "Well, do you feel bad about it?" He said, "Yeah, I feel very bad about it, but I can't help it, right? I can't help it." So I said, "Well look, what are you going to do about this? What is Allah going to do to you?"

"Oh," he said, "I don't know." I said, "Well, what does your religion say he is going to do to you?" "Oh, I don't know." I said, "Well, what do you hope he's going to do to you?" He said, "Well, I hope he is going to do nothing." And then he said this, this interesting thing . . . he said, "I hope the god will forgive me." I said, "You do? You hope the god will forgive you?"

I said, "Let me tell you something . . ." . . . and I didn't realize just how this would come across to him, but I said to him, "I know Him personally, and He won't." And he looked at me, he looked at me and he said, "You know the god personally?" Blew his mind! Because we as Christians talk about a personal knowledge of Christ but Muslims . . . "You know Allah personally?" "What are you doing in coach?" You know, what is this? You should have your own private jet if you know god! It just blew his mind . . . but I said to him, I said, "I know God personally and I know He will not forgive you." He said, "Oh . . .", he said, "He won't forgive me?" I said, "No, He absolutely will not forgive you. You will die in your sins."

"Now," I said, "that hurts to hear that doesn't it?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Can I give you some good news and explain to you the difference between Christianity and Islam? Here is the difference . . . Jesus, God in human flesh, came into the world to die on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins so that God would be free to forgive you." I said, "That's what Christianity is . . . it's all about the forgiveness of all your sins." He couldn't believe it. He said, "I wondered what Jesus was all about. I wondered why He came into the world." Because most people think, you know, He was this good teacher and He went around with a beard patting little children on the head, and He died and some people think He rose from the dead, but it was just a figment of the imagination of the well intentioned disciples who wanted Him alive so bad that they had a virtual reality resurrection. But I told him, I said, "The distinction of Christianity is that you don't have to sit and hope that the god will forgive you. I can promise you, He won't unless you have come to commit your life to His Son." And I said, "That's the message." And we had a great talk. In fact before the conversation was over I had given him the address of Chuck Swindoll's church and he was going to go there the Sunday he got back from El Paso. I can only imagine how messed up his plans in El Paso were after that conversation. Whatever guilt he may have felt before he met me was significantly exacerbated I'm afraid.

Christianity is not a complex thing, it's all about forgiveness of sins. There is God, He has a law, you have broken it and that means you're condemned, but He will forgive. And you see, God is just, so if He's going to forgive . . . He has to have His justice satisfied. Somebody has to pay the price. He sends His own Son into the world. Jesus is a part of the Trinity, comes into the world, and dies in your place. You say, "How did that work?"

Well, it's simply this, God treated Jesus as if He had committed all the sins of all the people who would ever believe. You get that? Jesus didn't become a sinner on the cross . . . people who say that aren't telling the truth. He didn't become a sinner, He was always sinless . . . perfect. But God put your punishment on Him. He wasn't guilty but God put your punishment on Him. Now here is the

incredible exchange . . . He became sin in the sense that God treated Him as if He had committed every sin ever committed by every person who would ever believe. That's an incredible thing.

God just took our sin, as it were, and had Him pay the price for it. So you know what? We don't have to pay the price for our sins . . . that's what forgiveness is about. And then God did something else. God took all the righteousness of Christ . . . all the perfection and all the holiness and put it to your account . . . just like you put your sin to Christ's account.

Let me say it another way. He treated Him as if He had committed all your sins and He treats you as if you had done all His righteousness. That's the great doctrine of imputation . . . the tremendous heart of Christianity right there. I'm a Christian, does that mean I'm perfect? No. Does that mean I'm absolutely righteous? No. Does that mean I'm holy. No. But what it does mean is God treats me as if I was. He treated Christ as if He were a sinner, He treats you as if you were Christ. And God looks at the repentant sinner who has committed his life to Christ and sees Christ. We're not better than anybody else.

People say, "Well, I don't know about Christians, they're certainly not perfect." You've got that right! But we are forgiven and that's the issue. If you desire to have your sins forgiven and to be cleansed and to be granted righteousness and Heaven eternal . . . I am just finishing a book on Heaven. If you want Heaven and joy and peace and forgiveness--come to Christ. That's the issue.

You say, "Well how do I do that?" Ask Him to forgive your sin . . . how hard is that? You say, "Do I have to do some works?" No. No . . . it's a gift . . . right? "Not of works, lest any man should boast." We'd all go around saying, "I did it, I did it!" No, it's a gift. If you want your sins forgiven . . . a simple prayer . . . Lord Jesus, I believe you died for me . . . and by the way . . . He rose from the dead. The Father raised Him from the dead to prove that He had satisfactorily paid the price for your sins. The Father was pleased with what He had done. He said . . . remember he said, "It is finished."? He did it and God was satisfied and raised Him from the dead . . . and He now lives to be your Savior. And you say how do I make Him mine? Believe what I have told you from the Scriptures and ask Him to forgive your sin and to take over your life. That's it. You pass from death to life . . . from doubt to knowledge . . . from fear to joy . . . that's the simple message of Christianity.

And the only difference here tonight between the Christians and the non-Christians is that the Christians have been forgiven and have been set on a new path and a new course. Part of that forgiveness is also a transformation of the inner person. We're just different . . . you can't see it yet because the outside hasn't been transformed but the inside has. We are different. We have different longings. We have different desires . . . different passions . . . different loves.

You know I talked to a guy a long time ago . . . he said, "I can't become a Christian, man, because if I become a Christian I'll have to get rid of everything I like . . . you know I got booze and drugs and girls

and money and whatever values . . . ". And the guy says, "If I become a Christian I'm going to have to throw all that stuff away and then I'll have to do church and Bible reading and I'm not interested in that." And I said, "No, you've got it wrong, it doesn't work like that. Here's how it works . . . you gotta table here and you got all this stuff in your life . . . you become a Christian . . . you know what happens? You get a whole new set of price tags . . . you just go back to the table and say, 'Wait a minute, that doesn't mean anything to me anymore.'" And all of a sudden you love different things. I don't feel like I made a big sacrifice. I do what I love, I do what I enjoy, I do what fulfills me, I give my heart to what rewards me, what makes my life rich and meaningful. My whole approach is different. Everything is different. That's the transformation. Forgiveness and a transformed life, that's what Jesus Christ offers you and that's the message of Christianity in it's wonderful simplicity.

Bow with me in a word of prayer, would you?

Father,

We are so grateful to you for first of all creating this universe and this world in which we live. Lord, we're grateful that you've filled it with so much wonder and so much beauty and so much variety and so much richness. It's hard to even imagine what kind of God you are with so many interests and such vast power and intelligence, and yet you are not just the God of the earthquake but you're the God of the fragile petal of a rose . . . delicate. You're the God of great movements of the ocean and you're the God of a butterfly. You're the God who fills our lives with tenderness, and kindness, and love and compassion . . . as well as drive and energy. All of this reflects something of what you are. And the fact that we can know you . . . that we can have the barrier of sin removed by forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ and His death for us thrills us. I pray Father, tonight, first that every person here that they might know the Lord Jesus Christ and that their sins would be forever forgiven, permanently forgiven, and that their life would be transformed. Oh God, I pray that you will do that work in the hearts of many. We thank you that you have risen from the dead so that someday when we leave this world that we might rise to the glory of the Heaven you have created for your own. Thank you Father, for loving us enough to send your Son to die for us and to forgive our sins and to take us to be with you forever. We praise you. We ask Lord that you would be gracious to many hearts and bring them to the knowledge of Christ. In whose Name we pray . . . Amen.

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