

**Q & A**  
**Selected Scriptures**  
**January 13, 2008**

*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher*  
*Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas*

Well, it's come time again for us to have our question-and-answer session. The elders and I talked about our doing this at least twice a year and, somehow, the time slipped by, and I did one last spring but it's - I don't think we've had one since. And so, it's time for us to do it again. And it's a time I always look forward to and I hope you do, where you get a chance to ask some questions. And always the questions that are asked - there are a number of other people who have those same questions. So, it's a great occasion for us to make sure that a number of people's questions on a number of different topics are covered.

Now, here's how it works. There are three mics in the aisles. And when you have a question, you'd like to ask, you come ahead and get in line to do that. Now, let me tell you that if only one person comes to one mic and asks one question, I'm going to keep answering that question until somebody else gets up to a mic, alright? So, don't be overly courteous. I know Texans are very courteous and want to give everybody space. In this case, I need to know there're other questions or I'm going to keep talking and answering that question. There's no question that I can't spend the rest of our time answering. Okay? It doesn't exist. So, if you want other questions answered, just get in line so I know that and that way we'll move on.

And so now, if you have questions, go ahead. This would be the time. Go ahead and step up to the mic and we'll move forward with our question-and-answer session tonight.

Yes, Sir. Now, here's how it works too. You have to tell us who you are. Introduce yourself so other folks can know who you are and then we'll go from there.

Jason Irish: Okay, I'm sorry. A little nervous. My mother said she wouldn't sit by me if I embarrassed her so... My name is Jason Irish and a question about a letter from Knox Theological Seminary.

Pastor Tom: Okay...

Jason Irish: And it's "An Open Letter to Evangelicals and Other Interested Parties: The People of God, the Land of Israel, and the Impartiality of the Gospel". It was signed by R.C. Sproul and D.J. Skinny, and seventy others.

Pastor Tom: Okay...

Jason Irish: I just want to read a few comments from this, get your - I'd like to hear your response.

Pastor Tom: Okay.

Jason Irish: Section 6 says, "The inheritance promises that God gave to Abraham... do apply to any particular ethnic group, but to the church of Jesus Christ, the true Israel." And then in section 9 it says, "The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the 'Holy Land' cannot be supported by Scripture. In fact, the land promises specific to Israel in the Old Testament were fulfilled under Joshua." And then it goes on to say, "Lamentably, bad Christian theology is today attributing to secular Israel a divine mandate to conquer and hold Palestine, with the consequence that the Palestinian people are marginalized and regarded as virtual 'Canaanites'. This doctrine is both contrary to the teaching of the New Testament and a violation of the Gospel mandate."

Pastor Tom: Alright, yes, I'm familiar with that position. There're really two separate issues and two separate things that have to be addressed. The first one is: what about current Israel? Well, let's do it the other way around. Let's start with the first question which is: are there promises to ethnic Israel that have not yet been fulfilled? That's the first question and one that they say the Scripture does not support. The second question, and it's related but it's a different question is: what about those ethnic Jews that currently maintain the state, the nation of Israel in the Middle East today? Is that the fulfillment of it? Should we protect them? Are they somehow to be guarded and protected - in that State, guarded and protected? So, let's take those two in separate questions.

Let's start with: is there a future for ethnic Israel? Are there promises that have not yet been fulfilled? Now, I would encourage you, when we went through our eschatology series, I dealt with this at length. And so, go back and go on the internet. Listen to those messages where I dealt with the future of Israel, particularly pertaining to the millennium, because that's where the issue - that's what the issue really comes down to. What you have in contemporary understanding - or there are two schools of thought among Evangelicals that we would respect and admire. Certainly, R.C. Sproul we enjoy much of what he writes but he is with a group called Covenantalists. Then there are those who are called Dispensationalists. Now, within both of those groups, there's a lot of wiggle room. There's a lot of continuum in both of those groups. But essentially, and I'm really oversimplifying here, but essentially

when you look at the doctrine of last things, the eschatology of Covenantalism, for the most part, they would be what are called a-millennialists, that is, they do not believe there will be a future, literal reign of Christ on the earth. They believe there is no future for ethnic Israel, that all of those promises were fulfilled in the past or have been transferred to the Church. That's what you're reading right there. That's one position.

Then you have a position called Dispensationalism. We would fall within the parameters of Dispensationalism or at least most of us would. However, we would not go where classic Dispensationalism goes that a la Scofield Reference Bible, you know and even Larkin, and Ryrie, and so forth. Instead, we would say that the essence of what we believe that differentiates us from Covenantalism is we believe that there is a distinction between Israel and the Church. They are not the same entity. And, secondly, that there is a future for ethnic Israel.

Now, there are a lot of places we could go. Let's go to one. Let's go to Romans 11. What's interesting to me about this passage is even those who are a-millennial, who do not believe that there is a future for ethnic Israel, stumble over this passage. They have trouble reconciling this passage with their view to the extent that some, for example John Murray would be a good example (those of you who are familiar with him), would say there are still some promises at least, at least this promise that remains for ethnic Israel.

Let's just briefly walk through this. You have to really go back to Romans 9. And in Romans 9, God is talking about His election, His sovereign election, and He brings into play Israel. And in His choice of Israel, and even within Israel, a remnant. And so, when you get to chapter 11, let's look at the end of chapter 10, chapter 10:17: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.' But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, 'I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, By a nation without understanding will I anger you.' And Isaiah is very bold and says, 'I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME [that's the Gentiles], I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME [God reaching out to the Gentiles].' But as for Israel He says, 'All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.'" Now, remember, this is Paul in the New Testament talking about Israel and everyone so far would agree he's talking about ethnic Israel. To this point in the passage, no one would say we're talking about the Church. Look at the next chapter. Remember, there were no chapter breaks in the original text. These were inserted for our convenience. "I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? [What people are we talking about? In the context, we're talking about

ethnic Israelites. We're talking about Jewish people.] May it never be [he uses his strongest expression]! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew." And then he goes on to explain that reality that there is a remnant. But more than a remnant, there is a time coming when all Israel will be saved.

As you go through this passage, he goes on to explain this grace that has been shown to the Gentiles as the Jews have been broken off as it were, as branches. And he comes down to verse 25: "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery - so that you will not be wise in your own estimation [he's writing to Romans, primarily Gentiles] - that a partial hardening has happened to Israel [we're still talking about ethnic Israel - all of those who aren't Gentiles] until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved..."

Now, there's a whole lot of ink that's been spilled over what that expression means. What it has to mean in the flow of the context are ethnic Israelites. So, there are definitely promises that have not yet been fulfilled to ethnic Israel. Whatever you want - however broad you want to make that stand, I personally think it doesn't imply that absolutely every Jewish person. I think he's saying there's going to be this huge revival; there's going to be this huge regeneration of those Jews living in the last days, at the time of the Tribulation. I think it's the one that Zechariah describes when "...they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son..." and "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem..." And so, there're, without question, promises that are still to be fulfilled.

So, then the issue is, what about the land? Clearly, ethnic Israel still has a future in God's plan. From this one passage - and there are many others - listen to the CD. What about the land? Was it fulfilled in Joshua's day? I see two problems with that. One, the promises God made to Abraham, the extent to which the nation of Israel would possess that land, was not fulfilled in Joshua's day. That's the first problem. The second problem is there are other reiterations of that land promise later in the Old Testament. And so, when you put the two together, to me it's a devastating blow to that position.

Now, there're men I respect who hold that position. I love them and respect their - what they teach about the doctrine of salvation and we're brothers in complete agreement on that, but I just disagree with what - when you look at the scope of the Scripture and what it teaches. If you want to read more about this, get Robert Saucy book called *The Case For Progressive Dispensationalism* in which he argues through these

issues, I think, very well, very cogently. And I think it'll be a convincing argument to you. Listen to the CD.

Let's go to the second question, and that is, what about the current state of Israel - that nation that now exists as Israel? Understand that this may or may not be the fulfillment of the promises of God. I know in 1948, when the state was founded, Christians jumped on and said, "This is it. We're near the end time. This is going to be it." We don't know that. Nowhere is it written in the Bible that 1948 is the date. The nation of Israel, as we know it today, could cease to exist and be out of existence for a thousand years before Christ returns. Someday, I do believe they'll be reestablished in that land, but we don't know that what's happened today is the ultimate fulfillment of that promise God made. And so, we have to be careful as Christians to understand what the Bible teaches but then not to be quick to jump and say, "Ah, that must be it!" when the Bible doesn't say this is it. Okay? So, I would say that in terms of the Jewish people today, we ought to love them as Paul did. For Christ's sake, we ought to want to see them come to faith in Christ. I don't think we ought to be on a crusade to throw the Jewish people out of the land of Israel. I don't think that would be consummate with God's promises to them. I do think we ought to be concerned about the disenfranchised everywhere. Not terrorists but people that - everyday people who have been uprooted from their homes. We ought to be concerned about them - Palestinian, Jewish, whoever they are. That's part of the heart of the Christian faith. So, I don't think we allow our faith to become politically oriented, that we're going to stand up and support Israel no matter what happens. Many of the people there don't believe in the true God. They're atheists. If you go there and visit today, much of the population is atheistic. And so, we're not talking about true believers in the true God - many of them. And, of course, Paul has much to say, as did Jesus, about apostate Judaism. So, be careful in reconciling the two. Pray for them. Love them. Pray for their conversion. Pray that God will restore, in His time, His people and follow the promises that He's made.

Okay? Long answer to a short question. Alright. And... What's that?

Jason Irish: A follow-up question?

Pastor Tom: A follow-up. Real quickly, sure!

Jason Irish: It's somewhat related, but not really. Which presidential candidate and or party do you think is most in line, overall, with biblical thinking?

Pastor Tom: (Laughs). That's called a hardball question. I just want you to know that. You know, I think what we have to do as Christians - and I'm not really going to answer that question for two reasons. One, because the Church doesn't stand to put itself in the conscience of believers. Where the Bible speaks, we're to speak. Where the Bible doesn't speak, then I don't speak with the same authority. So, I can tell you my opinion but it's just my opinion.

I would say this. You have to look at what the Scriptures teach, and you have to vote for the person and the party that you believe best reflects the teaching of Scripture. And if there isn't such a person... You know, actually, John MacArthur and I were having this discussion recently. And he was talking about the frustration - he'd had a conversation with James Dobson. He had been on James Dobson's program talking about the problems in America and they had had offline this discussion. And the frustration that there really wasn't a candidate who seemed to hold all the positions and values that we hold. And John made a point that I thought was a very good point, and that is, I'm more compelled to vote by the Scripture than I am to vote. And if there is no one that I can vote for whose morals and moral standing doesn't reflect and values and what they teach is completely out of line with the Scripture, better for me not to vote than to vote for somebody who is God's enemy. So, that was... I think you just have to weigh all of those things individually and come to that decision. But I do think you have to be careful of just getting in line with a party period. I'm very grateful we live in a country where there is a balance of power because most of the people, we elect are not believers and they are fallen people and who, given the opportunity, will do all kinds of things they shouldn't do. And we read about it in prophets of the Old Testament - take advantage of people and abuse power and on and on it goes. And so, it's God's gift to us, I think, the wisdom of the founding fathers to balance that power so that there is no one person or party, for the most part, that controls the destiny of the country but, rather, there's that tension to keep everybody a little bit honest when their tendency would be not to be.

So, anyway. That's as far I'm going into politics. Yes, Sir!

Stafford Milton: I'm Stafford Milton and I was wondering, in the Garden of Eden when Satan tempted Eve, did he imitate a snake, or did he enter a snake and control its actions?

Pastor Tom: Well, you know, that's a good. It's really not one that we can answer with any certainty because in the Old Testament, in Genesis 3, he is simply called "The Serpent": "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." We don't know - we're told no more than that. And when we go throughout the Scripture, other places (at least one other place I can

think of in the Old Testament, I think) and a couple in the New, he's simply referred to (Satan is referred to) as the Serpent. And so, I really can't answer that. I know that Satan was originally created as an angelic being, apparently the sort of Prime Minister of heaven, if you will, under God. And some of that is described in, I think, in Ezekiel 38 [he meant 28]. And I think what you have is him taking control of and speaking through the serpent personally. But that's my own personal opinion. We cannot be certain of what happened. You know, whether he imitated, you know, certainly we know that angelic beings can take on the form of and present themselves as men. So, there's certainly nothing to keep them from presenting themselves in some other way. They're powerful beings. And so, we can't go further than that. I wish I could give you an answer, but I can't give you an explicit one because the Scripture really doesn't.

Stafford Milton: I had another one.

Pastor Tom: Okay.

Stafford Milton: Why... When God confronted Adam and Eve, how come He cursed the snake instead of Satan himself?

Pastor Tom: Well, you know, I think He did. In cursing the snake, if you look at it, He did curse Satan as well because, if you look at Genesis 3:14: "The Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life...' There, I think, He's simply showing - He's cursing the snake because it was an instrument, albeit perhaps unwittingly in the hand of Satan. It's God's demonstration of His displeasure with what has happened in the garden. But then He says, "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed..." Now we've moved beyond talking about a snake, crawling on the ground, or serpent. We're talking about a person, the person that inhabited that snake, that serpent. He's talking to Satan because He says, "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He [speaking of her seed, speaking of Christ, He] shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." So now we've gone way beyond whatever animal Satan may have used in the garden and we're talking about Satan himself. So, there was both the curse against the animal he used (the tool, the instrument) as well as Satan himself. Okay?

Randy Rhodes: My name is Randy Rhodes and I know we're going through Ephesians. My question is about freewill and I'm well aware of Romans 9 and passages... but I struggle, and I'll quote, and we all know John 3:16: "For God so loved the world..." and in Titus, Titus 2:11. And here's my question before I read it. I struggle because I think there is good people with good rationale from a, I guess a freewill perspective that say that God has given them an opportunity to be saved. And so, here's the statement - here's the Scripture: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age..." So, again, the question is, I need some pointers, need some help with I guess the freewill or just "God so love THE WORLD" and yet here in Scripture the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

Pastor Tom: You know it's a good question. It's one a lot of folks struggle with. It's not an easy for us to reconcile in our minds. I do believe, however, that it can be reconciled. Let me, first of all, again, at the risk of promoting the website, let me say that a couple of years ago, I think it was a couple of years ago, I did a series of five messages on human depravity called "Bad to the Bone". And it was on Sunday evening, back a couple of years ago, and I dealt with this whole issue of freewill because that's a crucial one. It really does bring up, "Okay, what is freewill?"

First of all, you have to define it because sometimes we use that expression. Well, what do we mean? You got to start by saying, what is freewill? Now, once you ask that question, there're a couple of ways to answer it. Everyone agrees - everyone that I read and know about on both sides of this election issue agree that man is not a robot. No one says man is a robot. So, if you mean by freewill that I and you make our own decisions and choices without being forced into them outside, by some outside force, then yes, we have freewill. Everybody has freewill in that sense.

But freewill, if you mean that I make uninfluenced choices, is a little too grandiose a term. None of us make uninfluenced choices. I'll give you an example. My children have freewill. But my freewill is stronger than their freewill. Okay? And same for your children. They have a freewill. They can make their own choices. You know, when my wife puts food on the table, there are two choices. You know, you can take it, or you can leave it but those are the choices. There's a limit to their freewill. Their freewill is limited by my freewill because they can't do whatever they want because my will controls that and demands that they do certain things.



With man, our freewill, our ability to make choices is also influenced by outside forces. Not forced upon us. I don't force my children. I can't get inside their hearts and force them. I can make the penalty such that they want to make the choice I want them to make but I don't force them. I can't do that, and neither can you. And so, there's still a free will. They're making independent decisions but they're not making uninfluenced, independent decisions.

And so, when it comes to God our wills, when it comes to spiritual things, our wills make real choices. We make decisions. I decided to become a Christian. I decided to come to faith and believe in Christ. Okay? I made that choice. But I was unable to come to that decision without the work of the Spirit of God because I was already being influenced in my freewill, limited by own fallenness. I was unable to do anything good. I was unable to make a decision for good because of my sin. I can make a decision to sin. I had a freewill to do whatever I wanted in terms of sin, but my will was not free to choose God and to choose good. Why? Because of God? No! Because of me. Because of my fallenness. Because of my sin. And that's why last Sunday night or not last Sunday night - last Sunday morning - I went through that list of "cannots". There's an entire list of things the New Testament and the Old Testament but especially the New Testament says that unbelievers cannot do. They do not have the power. They do not have the ability to do, because of sin. It's not because God did something to them. It's because of their innate sinfulness they do not have that ability.

So, our freewill is not limited by God. Our freewill is limited by our sin. All we can do is choose sin. We choose. We make free choices. But what we don't have the power to do is do anything but choose sin and evil. We do not have the power in ourselves to choose good and to choose God. You cannot, Jesus says - "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..." We don't have that capacity. Because God did something? No! Because of our sinfulness. Because Adam did something and I inherited that and then I've added to that with my own sin so that my will is corrupt.

I reminded you last week and this morning; Ken Hughes mentioned it. Romans 3: "NONE [No man] WHO SEEKS FOR GOD..." No man seeks for God. Let's just stop there. There's all we need to know about freewill. Yeah, man has a freewill. He can choose to do whatever he wants. Will he ever to choose to seek God? God says, "No!" Unaided, uninfluenced by the grace of God, unregenerate he will not seek God. It won't happen. Not because God did something to him, to our wills, to somehow force us but because our wills are corrupt because of the fall.

It all comes back to understanding the fall. Martin Luther, in his interaction with Arminius said... Or I'm sorry, not Arminius. Let me start over. Martin Luther, in his interaction with Erasmus (is who I meant to say), the great Greek scholar and the sort of voice for the Roman Catholic church, when he wrote his book, *The Bondage of the Will*, Martin Luther said, "This is the greatest book, the most important book I've ever written." And he took on Erasmus and he said, "Look, Erasmus, I'll give you this." He says this toward the end of the book. "You understood the key issue about the Reformation - everything this is all about. Because if you get this key issue right", Luther said, "you get everything else right and it's this: man's will is not free, it's bound. Not by God but by sin. And unless God intervenes, we will never seek God. We will never turn to God. God has to intervene (as we'll study in Ephesians 2)."

But go back to and listen to that series from "Bad to the Bone" on man's depravity and sort of walk through that process because I fill this out a little more about the will. It's so important to understand that - start with terms and what do we mean. I do not mean that man, that you and I, don't make real decisions. We do. We just don't make uninfluenced decisions and we are severely influenced and limited by our sin and our fallenness so that we can choose evil all day long and will, but we will never choose, according to Romans 3, to seek for God. It won't happen.

Okay? Where are we? Here? Okay. Yes, Sir.

Terry Tyler: Hi, my name is Terry Tyler. About a year and a half ago, I began to understand the biblical teaching that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to genuine believers and that really opened up a whole new understanding of God's grace for me that was really revolutionary. But an issue that began to surface in my mind is the fact that the Bible also teaches about the Judgment Seat of Christ and the fact that our works are evaluated and rewarded. And so, the issue in my mind is if the works of Christ are attributed to me, then why are my works evaluated and judged? And so, what is the distinction in the eyes of God in terms of how He looks at me in terms of the works of Christ that cover me versus my own works because I can't view any - obviously any work that I do that would gain a reward greater than what Christ has done for me.

Pastor Tom: Right. No, that's a great question Terry. And, by the way, this is a passion of mine. If the Lord chooses - someday if I can find somebody that can help me in writing, I want to write a book from the messages I preached on justification because what you're talking about is justification by faith. And according to Paul, it is the gospel. In Romans 1 Paul promises, "*I'm going to tell you what the gospel is.*" Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to

everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.'" And then, he slips into the need for this righteousness. And for the next couple of chapters, he deals with our sin.

He doesn't touch again on the gospel until you get all the way to Romans 3. He finishes up the section on sin in Romans 3. Look at verse 19, Romans 3:19, just below verses I was quoting a moment ago. He says, "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. But now [verse 21, now he gets back to the gospel, back to the heart of the gospel. Here's where I started to tell you the gospel I'm not ashamed of. But now] apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus..." Verse 26: "for the demonstration [God did what He did at the cross] ... so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

For those of you who are newer to our church, I urge you to go back and listen to a series I did on Philippians 3:1-11 which is all about justification. It really is the bedrock. It's when I started to understand this myself, Terry, that my own Christian life was revolutionized because I just sort of meandered and wandered along until I understood what happened at the cross.

At the cross, a major exchange took place. God took my sin, every sin I have ever committed, every sin I'm committing today, and every sin I will commit in the future - every sin - all those were future when Christ died. He took all of those sins and He punished - He credited them... I'm getting ahead of myself. He took all those sins and credited them to Christ's account. He put them in Christ's account.

We understand this. It happens with bank accounts and other things. You know how that works - a ledger. He took them out of my account, and He put them in Christ's account. And on the cross, He treated Christ as if He had done everything I've done and, if you're a Christian, everything you've done. He treated Christ for those six hours, He poured out on Him the wrath that my sins deserved - every single one of them. And Jesus, when He said, "It is finished", you know what He meant? You know the beauty of those words? He meant those who would come to believe in Him had a perfect payment for every sin they would ever commit. It was done.

And that's why Paul comes to Romans 5, after he deals with all this, and he says in verse 1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God..." Now, something else happens. Not only does God credit my sin to Christ and, on the cross, treat Christ as if He'd lived my life, but then He takes Christ's perfect life, as you've heard - some of you who've been here have heard me explain. Jesus didn't come down just for a weekend. I mean, He could have. To die, He could've just come down for the weekend, died, gone back to heaven. Why did He come and live here for 33 years, 30 of those years in obscurity, working as a carpenter? Why? Because, during those years, He proved Himself to be righteous - not one single sinful thought, not one sinful deed, not one sinful word. For 33 years He perfectly obeyed the Law of God. He perfectly loved God with His whole heart and He perfectly loved others as He loved Himself. And so, Jesus was righteous. And what God does, in this marvelous exchange called justification, is He credits my sin to Christ and treats Christ on the cross as if He'd lived my life. And He credits my... He credits Christ's righteous, rather, His perfect life to my account and then treats me as if I had lived that life. That's justification. That's the gospel. That's the good news. If people don't understand that they don't understand the good news. It's not just forgiveness, as wonderful as forgiveness is, because if God had just forgiven me... Think about this. If God had just forgiven you, then what about your failure to meet the standard? Okay, He forgave you for your lapses of the standard but what about your utter failure to meet the standard of righteousness? But God's gift doesn't stop with just forgiveness. It goes beyond that, and He gives us positive - that's what Paul is saying here in Romans 3. The righteousness which is a gift - it's Christ's righteousness credited to our account. And then we're treated as if we had lived Jesus' perfect life.

No place is this better stated than in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf..." Doesn't mean He made Him a sinner as some heretical television preachers teach it. It means He made Him as if He were a sinner. He treated Him as if He were a sinner, as if He were me. "...so that [he goes on to say] we might become the righteousness of God in Him." He gets my sin and I get His righteousness. What a deal! That's justification.

Now, Paul goes on in Romans 8 then to say that we have... By the way, Romans 5 gives you all the benefits of that. As a result of that justification, my sin is credited to Christ, Christ's righteousness is credited to me. "Therefore [verse 1 of chapter 5] having been justified by faith"... Let me tell you the benefits. And Paul goes through ten verses of benefits, or eleven verses rather, of benefits from that justification. I love that passage. We have peace with God. That's not talking about some feeling I have

in my heart. That's talking about the end of the war. God is not my enemy anymore. I have peace with God. And he goes on to list a number of them.

You come to chapter 8:1 and he says, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Judgment for sin is gone forever. Listen, here's the good news. Because of justification, you and I will never stand before God and be judged for our sin - will never happen. Why? Because they were judged fully and completely on Jesus Christ. There is therefore now no condemnation (that's one of those judgment words) for those that are in Christ Jesus.

So, you say, "Well, what about... Let me go one step further to your question. What about when we sin as believers? The way I explain it is, think of two different rooms. Before we're a Christian, we stand in the room of God's courtroom. We stand before God as judge, and we have to answer to God as judge. When we are saved, when He justifies us, we leave the courtroom forever. You'll never go back to God as the judge of your sin again but I still sin. Now, however, instead of the courtroom I am in the Father's house. I'm a son. And when I sin, my sin doesn't take me back into the courtroom over there where I have to stand before God as judge again and have my sin judged. Instead, my sin offends my Father and I deal with my sin, not as an offense to the judge over there, but I deal with my sin here in the Father's house to make sure the relationship that I enjoy with my Father is all that it should be and can be by not keeping unconfessed sin as a part of my heart and life.

Okay? So, you have to think of that change. That's a dramatic change that occurred at salvation. I left the courtroom forever, the courtroom of God's justice, demanding payment for my sin. And now, when I sin, I deal with that sin as with a father. Okay?

Now, what about rewards? Whatever we receive in this life or the next in eternity that's good will be God's grace. In other words, I don't truly earn anything. If I got what I earned, it would be hell. What I get, both in this life and salvation, the good things God gives me, as well as the opportunity to serve Him here which are - and to be faithful to Him and all of those things that I will be rewarded for - those are demonstrations of His grace. So, the rewards that I receive are rewards God is graciously giving to me when in fact I haven't earned them. Whatever I am that's good, as Paul said, it's God. And so, it's just another manifestation of God's grace. We will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We will not - and this is another plug for the eschatology series because I covered the Judgment Seat of Christ on Sunday night (took a whole service on it). I encourage you to listen to that. But at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will not give answer for our sins. We will be evaluated for our service, and it will either stand the test

and we'll be rewarded for it, or it will fail the test and we will not be rewarded for it. But we will not be judged for sin. Okay?

Again, listen, it's dealt with in much more detail in the message on the Judgment Seat of Christ I did just a few months back on Sunday night. But that's the big answer. And, by the way, that's why when you come... I believe that's why, when you come to Revelation and you see the saints there before the throne of God and they have these crowns that represent, to some degree, the rewards that they've received, what are they doing with those crowns? They're throwing them down at the foot of the throne. Why? Because we haven't earned them. They don't belong to us. Whatever we have that's good, it's from God. It's a demonstration of His grace.

Okay? Yes, Sir.

Michael Ryan: Yes, my name is Michael Ryan. I was wondering when Lucifer, when he had that prideful moment, you know, believing he could be greater than God.

Pastor Tom: Yes

Michael Ryan: And, you know, Michael the Archangel who stands, taking a stand for God's glory - you know, those two go at it. And then God comes in and says, "*Okay, Lucifer. You and your followers - you're out of here.*" I was wondering when Lucifer did have that prideful moment if it was in heaven or if it was at - or if it was someplace else? I tend to lean more towards it may have been someplace else because, you know, there can be no sin in heaven. But if it was in heaven, did God have to like create like a new, you know, place in heaven...

Pastor Tom: Hmmm.

Michael Ryan: ...for that with what happened?

Pastor Tom: Yeah. No that's... You know, it's a very interesting question about Satan because, obviously, that's where sin originated. That's where evil originated - was within the heart of Satan. It's important though to think that evil is not, I don't believe anyway, that evil is an entity. It's not that there's this thing called evil. Evil is really the absence of all that is God and all that is good. And so, in Satan's heart and there're two passages you're referring to. One of them is in Isaiah 14. You know, there

you have the king of Babylon. You know, it's obvious they're talking about king of Babylon. To what degree is it talking about Satan? I personally think that you have the spirit of Satan in that passage, but I wouldn't force that to say that passage is about Satan. I think I would say that passage is about the king of Babylon, and I think the king of Babylon is empowered by and is demonstrating the same spirit of the one that is empowering him and that is Satan. So, in that sense, I think it's fine to use that and you'll occasionally hear me use it to describe the sinful choices Satan made. But I don't think that passage is saying, "This is what went on in Satan's heart." If you read it in its context, it's talking about the king of Babylon.

Now, I do believe that when you come to Ezekiel 28, and I think I said 38 a little bit ago. I meant 28. But Ezekiel 28 - that's the other passage where you have a glimpse into Satan. And I think there we do move from the king of Tyre, in this passage, a literal king over Phoenicia being judged - I think you move from a judgment on the king of Tyre to a real description of what happened with Satan, the one who energizes him. And here's why. If you look at Ezekiel 28, you have all of this description about the king (verse 11): "Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, 'Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, 'You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty...'"" And then, he seems to go elsewhere. He seems to be focusing not so much on the king of Tyre but on the ultimate empowering figure behind the king of Tyre because he says, "You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering [and he goes on lists them]... On the day that you were created..." Verse 14: "You were the anointed cherub who covers..." That doesn't sound like the king of Tyre to me. Okay? I think we have moved now beyond the king of Tyre and we're looking at the satanic figure behind him that empowers all evil in our world.

I'm watching a series my wife got me for Christmas that I used to watch when I was a boy with my father narrated by Lawrence Olivier called "The World At War". And it's a description of WWII and, you know, in Hitler I see that same thing. It's not that he was Satan. But was he empowered by? I believe, absolutely - just as king of Tyre, just as king of Babylon was.

So, anyway. Does that answer your question? Yeah, little bit. I can't really go beyond that to say that we know exactly when. Oh, that was... I'm sorry. I meant to go that one other step. Thank you for reminding me. I didn't fully answer your question. In setting it up, I didn't get to your question.

When? Well, we can't be sure, but we know, I believe, that when you come to the 6th day of creation and God said, after He had looked at everything He had made, everything He had made was very good. To

me, and I can't be dogmatic about this because He could just be talking about the earth, but I think that that's a testimony to the fact that, at that point, Satan had not yet fallen. I do think - obviously, by the time you get to Genesis 3:1, he has fallen. So, somewhere in the middle there, and I don't think there was a great deal of time between creating Adam and Eve and their fall. And so, somewhere in there, he fell. I think he fell in heaven because you go to Revelation, and it talks about their being cast out of heaven. There was, you know, war in heaven, rebellion in heaven. So, personally, I think it did occur in his heart, in heaven, that he wanted to be like God. He wanted to be in that position. He, as the Prime Minister of heaven, had every right. He got an inflated sense of himself. There was sin in his heart, and he led a rebellion against God. And they all got tossed out of heaven according to Revelation. So, I think it happened between the 6th day of creation and Genesis 3 and I don't think there was much time there. And I think it happened in heaven.

Okay? That's more specific, right? Okay, who's next here? Yes, Sir.

C.J. Blankenship: I'm C.J. Blankenship.

Pastor Tom: Hi, C.J.

C.J. Blankenship: I was wondering about if Lucifer was able to sin and he also brought, I think, a third of the angels with him, are angels now - do they have the ability to sin like...

Pastor Tom: That's a very deep question and one that theologians wrestle with. But most would say that, no they do not, that when God allowed evil He knew, when He created Satan, that that would come. For His own purposes, He allowed it in the world. He knew what would happen and that now having allowed that and having allowed evil to spread into the world so that He could demonstrate portions of His character that would not have otherwise been able to be demonstrated - His grace, His mercy, and so forth - that He is now sealing those who are His own - the holy angels will be holy angels and those who have fallen are forever sealed to destruction. That's what most believe. But, again, we really aren't told that clearly and definitively. I can't point to a chapter and verse and tell you that, at least not that I can think of offhand. Okay?

C.J. Blankenship: Thank you.

Pastor Tom: Alright, you're welcome.



Kirk Challgren: Hi, my name is Kirk Challgren and I just have a question, kind of piggyback on to the freewill question.

Pastor Tom: Okay.

Kirk Challgren: Forgive me if you've answered it. I may have missed it. But I just read like Acts 17 in verse - when Paul is on Mars Hill. And he - it's like in verse 27. And I'll just go from verse 26 because it follows the context, I guess. And it says, "and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us..." And, just playing devil's advocate, I guess, if I were someone that didn't hold to predestination, and you know what this question is about...

Pastor Tom: Yeah.

Kirk Challgren: How do we...

Pastor Tom: How do you reconcile that with the other passages?

Kirk Challgren: ...reconcile this?

Pastor Tom: And I would say this. It always comes down to - you go to those passages that most clearly develop a doctrine and that becomes the foundation for what you believe about that doctrine. And then you have to reconcile the rest of what Scripture teaches to that. This passage here is not intended to teach election or non-election. It's a comment Paul makes in passing. There're clear passages where he does intend to lay down a doctrine of salvation. Those have to frame the foundation of what you believe about salvation.

So, you go passages - you go to books like Romans. You go to passages like Ephesians 1 where he's clearly talking and laying down a sort of doctrine of salvation and you look at what he says there. And then when you come to a passage and a sermon like this by Paul, you have to ask, "Well how does that relate to it?" We know it comes back to our doctrine of Scripture. We know that the Scripture is inspired. We know that it doesn't contradict itself. Therefore, we know that it cannot mean - you know,

the basic law of non-contradiction. Something can't be both A and non-A at the same time and in the same relationship. That can't happen. That's part and parcel of the nature of God. And so, it can't be A and non-A. It can't be that men seek God and men don't seek God. So, that means there is a way to reconcile those texts in which they don't contradict each other. Okay? That's sort of the larger framework.

When you look specifically, here, Paul is saying that God has arranged humanity in such a way as to make Himself evident. You go through this passage, and he says... You know, he begins by saying (verse 24), "[I'm talking to you about] The God who made the world and all things in it..." *So, I'm talking about Creator. You worship all kinds of gods. I'm talking to you about the god you worship in ignorance is the one true God, the Creator.* And then he says, "...He is Lord of heaven and earth..." So, He's the Sovereign. He's the One over everything else. "[And He] does not dwell in temples made with hands..." And he goes on to instruct them about the character of God. So, he's talking here, in its context, about the one true God and what He has done to make Himself known versus the idols that they worship. That's what he's dealing with here not whether people are elect or non-elect or whether they even have the will to seek Him. That's not what he's developing. He's talking primarily about God and what He has done to manifest Himself. So, you've got to go to where those passages are very clear.

Go to Romans 3. When you look at human depravity, it couldn't be clearer there. No one is righteous. No one seeks for God. There is none who understands. I mean, he just goes right down the list. He talks about our morals, our intellect, our will. And he says, "*They're all corrupt.*" And he says, "All the law does is make us with our hands over mouths (Romans 3:19) where we have nothing to say to God. We're guilty, condemned, you know, guilty as charged.

Okay? So, when you look at it in its context, I think that helps a lot. But I can't answer every question. You know, there is an extent - this is as far as we can go. You know, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever", Moses said in Deuteronomy. And so, I think we can go as far as Revelation goes. And where that goes is to say that God has set Himself on display. He has extended a universal invitation to believe the gospel. He loves all men and yet, at the same time, He has chosen some from the fallen human race to be His own and those are the only ones that will ultimately come to faith. Okay?

Kirk Challgren: Thanks.

Pastor Tom: Yes, Sir.

Jordan Wesley: My name is Jordan Wesley, and I had a question about what happens after we die but before Jesus comes back? I know the thief on the cross - Jesus said that he'll be in Paradise. So, I'm wondering if that paradise is heaven and also when Lazarus and the rich man died, they both went - I was wondering where they went, if it was heaven and hell that he looked down to the rich man. So, I just had a question about that.

Pastor Tom: Yeah. No, and that's a... I tell you where that question comes from. For a portion of the church, through the history of the church, has taught that there was this sort of compartment, before Christ rose, where the righteous were kept sort of in a nearby compartment to the unrighteous dead until Jesus rose. And at that point, He took the righteous to heaven. Before that, they hadn't been in heaven. And that place, they said, is called Paradise. Alright? Again, there's a lot to say about this and the different views of what's... What you're really talking about is called "The Intermediate State". What happens between death and when Christ comes back? Theologians call it "The Intermediate State". Again, I did an entire message on that on a Sunday night. I'll have to think about what it's called. See me afterwards and I'll see if I can come up with that. But where I developed that at length. I talked about the false theories. In fact, I think I did two messages - one on the false theories and one on what the Bible teaches. The bottom line, though, is Paul said, "...to be absent from the body [is to be what?] and to be at home [present] with the Lord." What did the thief say or what did the Lord say to the thief, rather? "...today you shall be with Me in Paradise." Was the Lord going to some other holding place rather than heaven itself? I don't believe so and I think the Scriptural evidence and weight is against it. That is sort of medieval view. I forget who originated it. I probably mentioned on the message, but it has not been the most common view of the church. But it kind of raised its head in more modern times in some dispensational circles where they were looking for that point of separation between Israel and the church and so forth. So, I don't believe that's true. I think the Scripture teaches for the believer now to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

I think the same thing was true in the Old Testament. I think you have a picture of that in the one man who didn't die in the Old Testament. You remember what happened to him? Instead of dying, he was ushered into God's presence into heaven without death. And I think that's a picture of exactly what happened to all Old Testament believers through the - to use the old metaphor, the river of death or the way of death.

Okay? But, again, listen to that message online. It goes to the full orb, you know, all the different views of that. I think it'll fully answer that question. Good.

Yes, Sir. One, I think, one more and then we better be done. Yes, Sir.

Sean Boleman: I'm Sean Boleman and I've encountered, throughout my course of business, an individual who is self-described former Christian, now devout atheist. And, based on that description, we've had some conversation. He's not totally opposed to the idea of there is a God and is actually willing to read Scripture. My question though is that, whenever I presented him with chronological Bible, he indicated he would take with a grain of salt as he felt it was a book full of folklore from men that may or may not be correct. So, my question to you would be, do you have any sort of supporting text that would offer up the historical viewpoint of where the Scripture came from, how it was brought to us today, so that from a secular point of view, if you will, here is why the Bible can be called authentic.

Pastor Tom: Well, there're really two parts to that. One part is to say, you have to understand what really is going on here, and that is, his problems with Christianity are not intellectual. His problems are moral. There is something in his life that he does not want to give up to the lordship of a God who says, "You shall not, and you shall." Always is that true. Never an exception to that. This guy's problem - especially the fact that he was a Christian or professed Christian and now doesn't profess to be a Christian - he wasn't a Christian before, but he was a professing Christian and now he says, "I'm not a Christian"? How does that happen?

Well, you know, Paul describes it to Timothy. In 1 Timothy he talks about two guys, and he says, "whom having made - whom having given up a clear conscience..." And he - the verb tense is a very careful to observe. "...whom having given up a clear conscience made shipwreck concerning the faith." The giving up of a clear conscience precedes and comes before making shipwreck of the faith. And so, I can tell you without equivocation that there're issues in this man's life that have driven him to this. And so, the issue for him is not intellectual. And if he is not a believer, back to our study in Ephesians 2, what is he? He's dead. He has no capacity to respond. So, what tool... And only the Spirit can turn on the light. What tool will the Spirit use to turn on the light? With Scripture. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." So, you can poke a dead man. You can shout at a dead man. You can argue with a dead man. You can give him evidence. A dead man is not going to respond to all of that because he has no capacity to respond. And so, what you have to do is to get him, is to confront him with the truth of

Scripture that then the Holy Spirit has tools to use.

Now, I don't mean to say that you just spout verses at him. Obviously, I mean you intelligently explain what the Scriptures teach about his position. If I were talking with him, I would say, "You know, did you know that God doesn't believe in atheists?" In fact, the apostle Paul says in Romans 1 that there is no human being that does not see in the created order and world around us the evidence for God. They know that. But what do they do with that knowledge? What you've done with that knowledge is to suppress it by your own unrighteousness. You have made conscious decisions to suppress the truth about God that He's presented around him (around you) and that He has put in your heart. And so, you have to help him see what's really going on and do that in an intelligent way.

Now, second part of that is there is a place for answering objections to the gospel. I'm not saying you would never respond to, you know, a concern somebody raises but don't let him get you sidetracked there. Remember, this is a dead person. The value of evidence is to simply kick the props out from under somebody. You know, if somebody says, "Well, I just can't believe the Bible because it's full of errors." Well, you can ask them to show you errors. You can show them the amazing, fulfilled prophecies of Scripture. You can bring out that arsenal but you're doing that not to convince them to become a Christian. Those things don't have the power to convince them to become a Christian. They're dead. Okay? And unless the Holy Spirit turns on the light, they will not believe. And so, what you're doing, when you share those things, is you're just kicking the props, the crutches, out from under them that they're leaning on as some sort of support to their system.

Alright? Does that make sense? So, it's okay to present, you know, some degree of evidence and to say... But you do not want to put them in the position of judge over the Scripture. They have no right to judge the Scripture. The Scripture is the judge of them. God is written in their heart. He's written on the pages of Scripture, and you got to bring it to bear on their conscience. Okay?

Sean Boleman: Excuse me, just as a follow-up. I think it is a valid point for somebody to question where our Scripture came from and its authenticity. So...

Pastor Tom: No, absolutely. And that's what I'm...

Sean Boleman: In the grand scheme of that, where would you be able to point someone in a comprehensive text that would indicate here's where it came from and why it's believable?

Pastor Tom: Well, a good starting place would be, when we started our systematic study, Systematic Theology study, back four years ago, I took a number of weeks to lay down a doctrine of the Bible. And several of those weeks, we talked about inspiration. We talked about inerrancy. We talked about canonicity. Why these 66 books? Why are these there? And there are very good reasons they're there. And so, it's okay. I agree with you. It's not that it's wrong to ask those questions. I just want you to see, on the bigger picture, what's really going on. That even if you were to present him a compelling argument in support of the Scripture, it's still a moral issue and it's still going to be his heart responding.

Let me show you why. One passage and we'll be done. John 15. Here's why people don't want Christ. John 15:22. Jesus has been saying they're going to hate you because they hated Me. And He says, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin [that is, they would have no knowledge, no full awareness of the extent of their sin and its sinfulness], but now [because I have come and I have spoken to them] they have no excuse for their sin." It's the bottom line. When people won't respond to Christ, when they distance themselves from Him, when they say I want no part of that, it comes down to what the Jewish rulers said the morning of Jesus' crucifixion - "We do not want this man to reign [rule] over us." It's a moral issue.

Anselm proved that... Nah, I better be done! But Anselm proved that by saying, "Look, if you... If it is logical to believe the Bible or to believe the truth of the gospel, then you ought to believe it." And then he said, "Okay, think about this. If it's true... If I'm right and it's true and you're wrong and it's not... Let's do it the other way around. He said, "If you're right and the gospel is not true, and I'm wrong, then what does it cost me? Little fun, little, you know, little fun in this life. Some things like that. But if I'm right and the gospel is true and you're wrong then what does it cost you? Eternity! So, it is logically rational to believe the gospel." But you can tell a sinner that and what's he going to do? Walk away! Because it's not logical. It's not rational. Sin is not - it's a moral choice. Okay?

Alright. Well, thank you for your questions. I hope that's helpful to some degree in sort of filling in some blanks. And if you have others, don't hesitate to come up and ask them afterwards but we need to be done. Thank you for your patience. Sorry to go six minutes over.

Let's pray together.

Father thank You for the time we've had this evening. Thank You for Your goodness toward us in giving us Your Word. Lord, help us to look to Your eternal Word and Your Word alone for the answers. Lord, I pray that we would rest in Your truth. In Jesus' name, Amen!