

Q & A
Selected Scriptures
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So, any questions again that have to do with the Scripture, what we studied this semester in Anchored. This is our final night of the Anchored for this semester. So, if you have questions about God and His Person or His work, or if there is some other question you have about the Scripture, about the Christian life, about what is going in the Christian world right now, whatever it might be, those are all game and I will do my best to answer them. We will start over here. Yes sir.

GENE CHALLGREN.

PASTOR TOM: Who has one of the best voices in the world I might say.

GENE CHALLGREN: I have a man that I work with, and he professes to be a Christian. The other day he said something about—we were talking about anniversaries—and he said that he was married to his wife for 52 years and then the devil came, gave her cancer and she died. I just wondered what would go through your mind after a statement like that.

PASTOR TOM: Well, Gene, it's a sad thing because I think where that comes from often, not always, their misunderstandings can come from various ways. But I think one of the main ways that that intrudes into the Christian community is through the charismatic movement. Because some of you come out of a charismatic background you know that in a sense, and this is a bit of an overstatement but not really, in a sense in that movement, Satan is sovereign. So, there is a constant fear of Satan and demons and what they might do as if God Himself were not in control.

There is a graphic example of that. There is a church in California who has a well-known pastor, he's now retired. But as he was retiring, I think it was his son-in-law, was going to step into his

role. One night at a service at that church, it was not that far from Grace Community, and at that service that night, a prophet got up, it's a charismatic church, a prophet got up and prophesied over this young man that his ministry was going to far exceed that of his well-known father-in-law and that the Lord was going to use him mightily and all of that. Literally, in that service, he had no more than gotten up from that prophecy than he had, I want to say it was an aneurism or heart attack, I am not sure now in retrospect what it was, but he literally died during that service. At the funeral service, the only explanation that the charismatic folks who were gathered there could come up with, one of the speakers said was that the prophecy was true, that is what God was going to do but Satan didn't want it to happen so Satan killed him. Interestingly enough, out of that a lot of folks ended up coming over to Grace Community Church because, and they said this, "We just hate living under the sovereignty of Satan."

Folks, Satan is not sovereign. As you see in the book of Job, Satan reports to God and he seeks permission to do whatever it is he does. In those early chapters, you remember, he shows up and he brings Job to God's attention, and he asks permission and God grants it. I like the way Luther referred to the devil: He said that the devil is God's devil. And he pictured him as a dog on the leash, on a chain and he can only go as far as God allows the chain to go. And that is what the Scriptures teach. God is sovereign over all things including Satan himself.

In fact, in 2 Chronicles, I want to say 2 Chronicles 21, there is an interesting interchange where you get an insight into this scene in heaven in which there is a deliberation and God is leading the deliberation. There are angels there and there are evil spirits there. God says, "Okay, who is going to go down and entice Ahab into the battle?" And one said this, and another said that, and they are debating what would be the best tactic. Then one of the evil spirits steps up and says that he will go and put lying words in the mouths of the prophets and that will cause him to go into battle. God said to go do it. This is God sovereign over Satan, Job, over demons, chronicles, over everything in the universe. There is not a stray molecule.

You know, we talked about God's providence, Rocky did this semester. Listen, if there is one molecule in the universe out from under the control of God, then God by nature ceases to be God because to be God is to be sovereign over everything. So, this really goes to the very person and character of God.

So, it is a sad thing. But I think the best way you can help someone like that, Gene, is to take them to those passages and those texts or if you have heard sermons here or in other places, that really elevate the sovereignty of God over all things. Because I can tell you that a person like that when they learn that God is in fact on His throne, it is a huge, huge comfort.

I actually had a discussion with some folks from a local charismatic church who came because they were deeply troubled by what they were hearing. They had, interestingly enough, even in that setting come to embrace the sovereignty of God. They are sort of the odd man out, but they found that such a huge comfort to their souls.

So, it's tragic but that's not true. In the end, does God use Satan to accomplish His ends? Does He do that in Job? Yes. But who is in charge? Never, ever, anyone but God.

My name is NATHAN BUSH. I have a question from Leviticus overview. So, Leviticus 4:20 says, "He shall also do with the bull just as he did with the bull of the sin offering; thus he shall do with it. So, the priest shall make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven."

So, my question is in the book of Leviticus what do "atonement" and "forgiveness" mean? Can we also use those terms for Christ's sacrifice? And if so, is there a difference in the meaning?

PASTOR TOM: You have to step back first and look at the book of Leviticus as a whole. Leviticus is a book about holiness, but you start in the first seventeen chapters of Leviticus, the fact that man is only able to approach a holy God one way, and that is through sacrifice. That is the lesson of the sacrificial system. Of course, in the early chapters of Leviticus, I want to say

chapters 1 through 7, you have the five basic sacrifices laid that were possible for the individual Israelite to offer. You are pulling on one of those here, the sin offerings are the context of this passage.

And so, with that understanding, the idea that sacrifice—the big lesson of this section is that sinful man can only approach holy God through sacrifice. The Lord was preparing the way for the ultimate sacrifice.

You know, Hebrews makes that clear, right? The blood of bulls and goats can never take away sin. This wasn't atoning for sin in the sense of an ultimate payment for sin. In the Old Testament context, the idea was that God accepted those sacrifices as an act of faith that the ultimate sacrifice would one day be paid.

Now, the question comes up did Old Testament believers understand that? I think they understood a lot more than we think they understood. Because remember, what was the very first revelation about man's salvation? It was in the garden in Genesis 3. And what was that prophecy? A unique human being would come and ultimately deal with sin. The protoevangelium of the pre-gospel, if you will, the first presentation of the gospel in Genesis 3:15 was that a human being, a unique human being because He is called the seed of the woman and He is referred to in unusual ways—that person would come and deal with sin.

Then you have later, of course, the idea of sacrifice flows out of that—that somehow, that unique Person who would come would render a sacrifice, but we are not told exactly how. And so, they are anticipating that. I think they understood that. I think Moses understood that. What does Hebrews 11 say about Moses? “He forsook the pleasures of Egypt considering”—what?—“the reproach of the Messiah”—that's what it says in Hebrews 11. “Moses forsook Egypt considering the reproach of the Messiah greater than the treasures of Egypt.” He was looking for the Messiah. He was looking for that one that is promised the first time in Genesis 3.

Then as the Old Testament unfolds, we are told more and more about Him. And somehow His work would relate to a sacrifice. But we aren't told how until we get to Isaiah 53. In Isaiah 53 we are told that He would be the sacrifice. The Suffering Servant would lay Himself down in that passage, Isaiah 53, as a guilt offering. So, seven hundred years before Christ, Old Testament believers had enough information to know a lot of what we know. That was the gospel very clearly presented.

Back to Leviticus, what's happening there? Well, the animal itself, the death of the animal, is not truly, ultimately atoning for man's sin. It is merely a picture. Hebrews makes that clear. It is a shadow, a type, of the One who would come who would ultimately truly deal with sin.

In fact, look at Hebrews 10, I think that would be a good place for us to sort of put this question to bed. Hebrews chapter 10. He's talking here about the sacrificial system in chapter 9. If you go back to chapter 9, verse 23, there were needing to be better sacrifices than those Old Testament sacrifices. So, verse 26, the Messiah has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And then verse 1 of chapter 10, "For the Law"—that Old Testament Law with all of its sacrifices—"since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make" the worshiper perfect and able to draw near. Otherwise, why would they need to keep doing it year after year? Verse 3, here's the key to your question, "In those sacrifices"—both the personal sacrifices of Leviticus as well as the national sacrifices that are eventually developed there and in Numbers as well—"there is a reminder of sins." Every time you offered that there was a reminder that you have sinned again. There's more sin to be dealt with. "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." They never truly atoned in the ultimate sense for sin. They offered merely in anticipation of that ultimate and final sacrifice.

So, how were they forgiven? They were forgiven like you and I are forgiven. God graciously forgave them through the sacrifice but not because of the blood of an animal but because they in faith offered that animal and I think most of the time with anticipation of some ultimate sacrifice to which it pointed, at the time until Isaiah, not understanding that it would be the Messiah

Himself who would be the sacrifice. Only that somehow the Messiah would offer a sacrifice would offer a sacrifice that would once and for all atone for sin. That would deal the death blow to Satan, Genesis 3:15.

Does that answer your question?

NATHAN BUSH: Yes, thank you.

PASTOR TOM: Thank you, Nathan.

CHRISTINE COOPER: My question relates to the Old Testament quotes in the New Testament. I am wondering why they are not word perfect because as I look through the New Testament and see that no matter the author, examples like Romans 15, Hebrews 1, 1 Peter 2 where they quote Old Testament passages. But if you go back and look at Old Testament in our English, it is not word perfect—it doesn't match.

PASTOR TOM: There are a couple of reasons for why those don't match. First one is, that remember, they are quoting them—all the New Testament is written in Greek, and so they are quoting them in Greek and then they are translated out of Greek into English. Well, they were originally written in the Old Testament in Hebrew. That's one issue.

Second issue is the most common Bible that the New Testament church used, and is quoted is the Septuagint. The Septuagint was a Greek translation from Hebrew. By the time you get to a couple of hundred years before Christ, the people in Israel were not speaking Hebrew. They were speaking Aramaic. After the Babylonian captivity, they're speaking Aramaic. So, the language is lost by and large. So, they can't read their own Scriptures in Hebrew except for the most educated. And so, a translation was made called the Septuagint, comes from the idea that there were seventy people involved in the translation, somewhere between 100 to 200 years before Christ, there is some debate among scholars about that.

When you come to New Testament times, both our Lord and His apostles quote most often from that translation—from the Greek translation. Both affirming the principle of translation, interestingly enough. Obviously, I think, what we have to say is where they differ, we have what amounts to the divine understanding in translation in the New Testament. They are doing it in some cases, from memory because they don't have the scroll in front of them. They are doing it from—in some cases, they knew Hebrew and they are translating it from their mind into Greek. In other cases, they are using the Greek translation, the Septuagint and they are putting it in there. But in every case, back to our doctrine of inspiration. Because under the inspiration of the Spirit, 1 Peter 1, they are directed by the Spirit, moved by the Spirit, they are quoting accurately, that is, the Spirit's own translation, if you will, of the truth of that passage. Does that make sense?

But I think there is also a huge principle there for us, an encouragement, for us. God Himself in our Lord was affirming the principle of translation. You know, that we would be able to have in our own language as the Septuagint provided for the Greek speaking Jews of the first century, a translation of the Scripture.

My name is STEPHEN ATKINS and I actually have two questions. Would I have time for two?

PASTOR TOM: Okay, but one at a time because I can't remember that many at once.

STEPHEN ATKINS: My first question is how can the church recognize the canonicity of the book of Hebrews if we don't know its author?

PASTOR TOM: That's a good question. How can we do that? Well, it comes back to why were the books of Scripture received at all by the people of God? I can't answer this as thoroughly as it deserves. I did a six-part series on the canonicity of Scripture. So, you can go back and listen to the whole thing and really develop it.

But let me just jump to the heart of your question. With the New Testament, the reason we and the church from the very beginning embraced the New Testament books—let me just put the pause button there and say don't you dare buy into the idea that some church council three or four hundred years after Christ, voted to see which books got into the canon. That's a lie. That's not how it unfolded. The church council simply affirmed together what the church had for, since the writing of those books, those books the church had received. There is an excellent book written by Michael Krueger called *The Question of Canon*, excellent book to answer these questions that people are always throwing at us.

But from the time the books of the New Testament were first written, the earliest writings of the church fathers, they are affirming—you go back to Justin Martyr for example who lived at the end of the first century. He was affirming the canonicity, the authority of those books that are in our New Testament. Why was that? Well, there's one simple reason. It's John 14, 15 and 16. Those three chapters, The Upper Room Discourse, Jesus says to His disciples but He says to us as well, that I am going to send the Spirit and the Spirit is going to call to your remembrance all that I have taught you. Then you get to chapter 17, and Jesus in His High Priestly prayer authorizes them to write. He is saying, "I am praying for all of those who will believe through their word." And so, you have Jesus not giving us an inspired list of New Testament books—we don't have that from Jesus. What we have is an inspired list of New Testament authors.

So now we come back to the question you are asking. The books in the New Testament were received by the early church, and there were books that were questioned: Hebrews was one of them because there wasn't a direct connection. But many of the early churches received it because it was, and this is the key, associated with an apostle.

So, what we have in the New Testament, if I had time, I could take you through and show you, what we have in the New Testament most of the 27 books of the New Testament were written directly by apostles under the direction of Christ Himself as authorized in John 14, 15, 16 and even into 17.

Okay? There were other books that were received by the early church because they were written under the auspices of an apostle. For example, Mark's gospel. Mark was not an apostle. But Mark was mentored by, disciplined by and wrote under the authority of Peter. So, you have, I think it was the church father Papias who said that Mark is like an amanuensis for Peter. So, the book was received not because Peter wrote it but because it was written under his authority. So, the books we have in our New Testament were primarily written by apostles. The others that we cannot prove were written by an apostle were received because they were written under the auspices of an apostle. The church recognized that from the earliest days.

Again, there were books that had questions here and there by various churches but overall, the people of God received them and ultimately the church councils affirmed that these were the received books by the people of God from the beginning. And the reason they were received, primarily, was this: that they were written by an apostle or an auspice of an apostle.

So, who wrote Hebrews? We don't know. A lot of people think Paul wrote it. I guess that is possible. I lean toward Apollos. I think that is why he is featured the way he is featured. He was a man mighty in the Hebrew Scriptures. Hebrews certainly demonstrates that. His polished eloquent style in Greek, I just think there is an argument that can be made there but I don't think we will know until we get to heaven. Okay? You had a second question real quick.

STEPHEN ATKINS: Is dispensationalism a biblical concept?

PASTOR TOM: Oh wow! Okay! That is not a quick question, but I'll give a quick answer to it. The answer is yes and no. It depends on what you mean by that. Okay?

Dispensationalism is like saying "Baptist." There is a wide spectrum. But here is what I believe and what our elders believe about dispensationalism. When you talk about dispensationalism there is a lot of clutter. You have an old classic dispensationalism. You have these seven dispensations—I grew up on the Scofield Bible and Scofield in his Old Testament notes even

says that there was a different way of salvation. That's kind of the far side of classical dispensationalism but that's where it goes. That's not where I am; that's not where our elders are; that's not where our church is.

What we would say is this: that we are dispensational in two ways. One, we don't believe that Israel was the church. We believe the church began at Pentecost. So, the true believers within Israel, the true people of God had far more in common with us than not in common with us, but they were still not the church. The church was as Paul says in Ephesians 2, "the one new man" that was created. He says in Ephesians 3 this mystery that God has now revealed that was once hidden but now has been revealed.

So, we don't believe that the Old Testament Israel was the church and the second way we are dispensational is that we believe there is still a future for the ethnic descendants of Abraham. In other words, those promises in the Old Testament to the ethnic descendants of Abraham or Romans 11 where it says that all Israel will be saved, we believe that is actually going to happen. Israel didn't get all the curses of the Old Testament but none of the blessings. There is still a future. God is going to prove Himself faithful to Abraham and to his ethnic descendants by fulfilling those promises. So, that is the way we are dispensational.

As my mentor, John MacArthur, calls it we are "leaky dispensationalists." That's where we are. If you want to know where I am personally, a great book you can read, it's a pretty good read, it gets a little technical at times, but it is a book by Robert Saucy and it is called *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*. It is basically arguing that neither system that is out there, covenantalism or dispensationalism is a perfect system, so let's talk about taking pieces that make sense from both of them and coming up with a biblically based system. It's a good book. Okay?

JONATHAN HANSON here. I had an opportunity recently with a couple of people to share the gospel and one was a Jehovah's Witness and one was a longtime friend dealing with many issues

kind of in Romans 1:18-24, anywhere in there. I guess my question is kind of two part. One was a short opportunity, so that is the one I don't have much follow-up on. The other one there is follow-up opportunity. In sharing the gospel with people, how do you go and respond to people who are more on the cult side? Do you have kind of a just direct response where kind of cut off and be quick to tell him that here's the truth? And then with someone who has basically told me that this is not an ad hominem attack against you but and then they throw out all this stuff about "No, you are wrong. Creation is not true." All these things but they keep coming back to me about those things. Obviously, I know I need to pray for both individuals but how do you address those two kinds of scenarios?

PASTOR TOM: Sure. I do think you approach them somewhat differently. But even in the case of a cult member—if they are not one of the champions of the cult, they have just become a victim of Satan's lie in its various forms including the cults, then I think you see them with compassion. You see them as captured by that false teaching. And so, you try to bring the truth to bear but I think you always come back in any presentation of the gospel with a cult member you come back to the key issues: what is the ultimate source of authority? Scripture. Who is Christ? And make sure that is clearly defined. And what is the gospel? If you come back to those three issues with anyone you are addressing, I mean it always comes back to that right? Because often the cults, almost always, the cults have a wrong Christ. They almost always have some flawed view of authority. They accept the *Book of Mormon* or *The Doctrines and Covenants*, or whatever. You know what I am saying, they embrace some other authority. And then they come to a different gospel. It's either the true gospel or it's a works-based gospel. That's where you want to go with cult members.

Where I often start with Jehovah's Witnesses that come to my house although I think there must be a mark out there now because it has been a few years since I have had one, but I enjoy those conversations. When the two Jehovah's Witnesses come to your house, if you are going to talk to them, if you are spiritually strong enough, biblically strong enough to do that, if you are not, then be careful because basically they lie. Mormons will lie and tell you that they don't believe what

they believe. I had this happen right here at Countryside with two Mormons that showed up on a Sunday night. They were trying to convince this woman that they were friends and believed in the same thing. For twenty minutes after the service, they denied what I knew they believed. And finally, they agreed. They just lied. So, know that happens so be careful.

But if you feel you are strong enough with those Jehovah's Witnesses who come, focus on the trainee. Bring the truth to bear on the younger person who is there who has been duped and try to bring the truth of who Christ is. That is where I always go first. I'll go to a text like John 8, "Before Abraham was I Am." And then just to make sure that they understood, then it says, "They picked up stones to stone Him." They understood what He was claiming, and He didn't counter it. There are so many proofs of the deity of Christ you can go to. But those are the places I would go with a cult member.

With someone else, like the other person you have mentioned, you want to answer legitimate questions. You don't want to just blow those off. But realize those are often smokescreens. They are not usually the ultimate issue. So, answer them. Address them. But don't let that sidetrack the whole conversation from who is Christ and what is the gospel. Ultimately, the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not. The only way they are going to come to life is through the Word. James 1:18, "You brought us forth through the word of truth." That is how it is going to happen, so you want to bring the weight of the gospel: who Christ is, what the gospel is to bear on them.

Again, you don't treat them with disrespect. If you were in that situation, you would want an answer. You want to answer it as legitimately as you can, as thoroughly as it makes sense in that conversation, that relationship. But don't get sidetracked either. Okay?

My name is JUDAH CLARY. My question is: when we get to the book of Joshua and it finishes with Joshua's military campaign, it says, "The land had rest from war." But we know also that there was continued fighting with the Canaanites after Joshua's death, but it also says that he was

advanced in years. So, was that break because Joshua was old, and they were going to wait for a new leader to come on the scene or was it because they wanted time to inherit the land that they had received?

PASTOR TOM: Well, I am sure that there were mixed reasons. I mean, I am sure there were some faithful Israelites who were going and intended to obey the command of God to completely root out the Canaanites. I am sure, as becomes evident, there were others who weren't willing to do that. That becomes the downfall of Israel in the centuries following that. I don't think we can say there was one unified reason.

I think what God accomplished through Joshua was the essential taking of the land. The big war was won; now there were mop up operations that needed to be done to drive the Canaanites out of the rest of the land that had been conquered. They weren't faithful to do that. That's the bottom line. So, I think whether they intended to and got lazy and got settled into their lives and their comfort or whether they never intended to—the Scripture isn't really clear. But we do know that they weren't obedient. The sad thing is it says that the very next generation after all those who were with Joshua died, the people strayed, and the time of the judges begins. It's the darkest time in Israel's history. It's just a great reminder of how important it is to bring your children into the knowledge of the truth and to shepherd them toward God because that generation, the very next generation after Joshua was lost.

That doesn't answer your question satisfactorily, I am sure, but I don't think we can fully answer that question. Okay?

My name is LOGAN McCLENNY. I have a question about hermeneutics.

PASTOR TOM: Before you ask the question, hermeneutics is simply those principles or the science of the principles by which we interpret a document and particularly here we are talking about Scripture.

LOGAN MCCLENNY: The apostle quotes Psalm 22, Psalm 110, things like that that aren't explicitly specified as being prophetic. How they know that those are prophecies? Are they using a grammatical, historical hermeneutic? How were the Israelites supposed to have understood those passage and then how do we interpret it as a result?

PASTOR TOM: That's a huge question. Again, it's hard to answer in a brief time but I will give you the big picture. I think, yes, they were using a literal, grammatical, historical interpretive principle when they came to the text. In other words, what we mean by that is they were interpreting the Old Testament Scripture in the normal way that you interpret any piece of literature. The way you do when you pick up a newspaper or magazine or you read a website. You're interpreting it in its most literal natural sense. You are not looking for multiple layers of meaning. Unless there are clues in the writing itself that the author intended that. You are interpreting it using those normal principles of interpretation. I think they did that.

Now, I think you also have to realize that you have passages like Luke 24. In fact, let's turn there. Luke 24. You have Jesus on the Emmaus Road with the disciples there after the resurrection. He's finding out that what's happened, they thought that Jesus was the Messiah but then He died and then His body has gone missing. Verse 25 of Luke 24,

And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Wouldn't you have loved to be there for that discussion! Now, it wasn't too long of a discussion. Maybe a couple of hours at the most because He approached them near to mid to late afternoon. Then the events of the rest of the chapter unfold. But nevertheless, there is a lot of discussion there.

Then go down to the end of that chapter, verse 44, “Now He said to the disciples when they were all gathered together later,

These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Those descriptions, Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms in Jewish thinking encompassed what we call the Old Testament. The same material that we call the Old Testament.

And then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

So, I think what we have to realize is that Jesus Himself both during His ministry before His death and resurrection and here, after His death and resurrection and remember, there are forty days in which Acts 1 tells us, He was talking to them about all the things concerning the kingdom and all the issues that He wanted to explain to them. Of course, then He says that He is going to the Spirit who is going to continue teach you and give you more insight.

What you have in the New Testament authorship then is you have a group of men who were taught by Jesus Himself how the Old Testament Scriptures revealed Him and applied Him and then of course, continuing to do so by the Spirit. So, what we have in the New Testament is an inspired commentary, if you will, on those passages that this was the divine intention.

There are a couple of passages that are more challenging. There have been some good things written. In fact, one of the things that comes up more frequently as an issue is “out of Egypt I

have called My Son.” A professor at the Master’s University Abner Chou has done a great seminar on that at Shepherd’s Conference, you can listen, where he deals with this very question, if you want to track further with it, do that. But essentially yes, grammatical, historical, interpretative principal and an inspired hermeneutic and understanding of the Old Testament Scripture taught by Jesus Himself.

LOGAN MCCLENNY: How much can we look for Christ in the Old Testament with that in mind? Is it just the passages that have been interpreted to us by the apostles or is there more?

PASTOR TOM: No, I would say be very careful about saying something in the Old Testament is about Christ if the New Testament authors don’t tell us it is. Now, you can say, “This is a beautiful picture” or “I think this is a beautiful picture.” That’s different than saying that this Spirit intended that to be about Christ. Don’t say that unless we have New Testament revelation. I would never call something a type that the New Testament doesn’t say is a type—or someone a type. I would never go beyond the inspired explanation we have in the New Testament. Okay? At least not definitely. If you are going to say that—sure there are things in the Old Testament as we read it that remind us about Christ. But that is all it is. It is not an inspired intention. That’s where we have to be careful.

JONATHAN ATKINS: I had a run-in with a guy a while back, I don’t know him, but just from looking at him, I could tell he did not most likely hold a Christian view. The more I got to talking with him the more he actually said that: kind of like, “I tried God but He didn’t work for me.” But I told him as best I could the truth of the gospel and tried to make it clear to him. He said, “Well, that’s great. You can believe what you believe. I will believe what I believe.” I was wondering, how do you deal with someone that holds that view? It is almost negating no matter what you say.

PASTOR TOM: What you have to understand is that that mindset is whether he realizes it or not is the acceptance of the prevailing philosophy of our age which is postmodernism which says

that there are no absolutes—there is no metanarrative; there is no overarching story and there is, therefore, there is no truth that is true in every circumstance with every person and with every time. And so, therefore it doesn't matter whatever you believe, that good. If it works for you, this is what works for me. That's where you have to go. You have to go to the fact that two people who believe contradictory things can't both be right. It comes back to the basic Law of Noncontradiction that our Lord affirms. You can't be A and non A in the same place and in the same relationship, same time and same relationship. So, that's what they are contradicting. The Scriptures affirm the principle of the Law of Noncontradiction. So, you just have to go to the fact that no, we can't both be right.

I'll do this sometimes when I have conversations with people who are ecumenical. They have been taught by their friends that we are all one big happy family. In fact, I was just telling those who are going on the reformation tour recently about a conversation I had with a Roman Catholic Priest. He was saying, "Oh, we all believe the same thing." And I said, "Well, no actually we don't and here are the main differences: ultimate authority and how is a man made right with God?" I quoted Trent and the anathema of the Council of Trent, the counter reformation of the Roman Catholic document response to the Reformation in which it anathematizes, it damns those who believe in justification by faith alone. I said, "So, we are not both going to heaven. One of us is wrong. One of us is damned." I went to Galatians 1, there is one gospel. Everything else is a non-gospel. It is a false gospel. It is a damning gospel. Twice Paul says to let him be damned—let him be accursed if he believes a different gospel. There is one gospel: we both could be wrong or one of us is wrong but we can't both be right because we believe exactly the opposite.

You come back to a passage like Galatians 1 where the Scripture itself lays down that principle of "No, it's not okay if it works for you." There is one true gospel. Everything else is a damning gospel. So, you better know what that true gospel is. So, I think that is where you have to come. You have to challenge that, sort of kick the prop of post modernism out from under him and say,

“No, no. You have to deal with what it is true. It doesn’t matter what you believe and what I believe.” Okay?

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Hey, Pastor. Thank you for taking our questions. Seth gave me a whole list, but I will let him give that to you later.

PASTOR TOM: Let me guess—he has a question about infralapsarianism, doesn’t he?

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: It’s number one. But my question is what impact do our prayers have in someone’s salvation.? When we pray for someone to be saved, does that move God’s hand? Does that change His timing? Does that have any impact, or should we pray more of “help me be an instrument or vessel in delivering the Word to that person?”

PASTOR TOM: That’s a great question and here’s where the sovereignty of God is the only thing that makes prayer make sense. If you don’t believe that God is sovereign in salvation, why would you bother praying for someone’s salvation? And frankly, even those who are declared Arminians are inconsistent on this point because they still pray for people’s salvation. Why? Because they are Christians, and they understand that God is going to have to do it even though it’s out of step with their stated theology.

So, here’s what happens in prayer, God is sovereign. He has declared all things. Let’s take salvation, the salvation of someone. He has chosen in eternity past who is going to be saved, so He has declared the end that that person in your life, that family member is going to be saved. You don’t know whether that is true or not. So, what do you do as a Christian? You share the gospel with that person, and you pray that God would save them. Here’s the beauty in God’s sovereignty in prayer. The same God who decreed the ends that that person is elect, that they have been loved from before the foundation of the world, that Christ died on the cross for their sins, that they would come to genuine saving faith, that they would eventually reflect the glory of Christ for eternity, that some God who declared the ends also declared the means. The means that

that sovereign God—He uses means, okay? He works through means. That same God declares one of the means He will use is the response to the prayers of His people. So, when you pray for the salvation of someone, or you pray for something else that's in keeping with God's will, the amazing thing is you may be very much acting as an instrument in the hand of God to accomplish His sovereign will in that life. He may have decreed from eternity past that He will save that person for eternity in answer to your prayer.

When you understand that, prayer becomes really important. Because it is not changing God. I'm not changing God and His will and purpose. I have the privilege of being an instrument, a means that God uses to ultimately fulfill His eternal purpose. If you will, I mean this in a nontheological way, but I am in a sense cooperating with God in that purpose. He made that end through the means of my prayer.

So, it's really a beautiful thing and that's why we pray is because God who has decreed all things that will come to pass may very well and often does decree that it will happen in answer to the prayers of His people. So, keep praying. Keeping sharing the gospel because God may have very well decreed that you will be the means to that end.

Sorry, got one quick question. Let me see what I can do.

UNKNOWN PERSON: As quick as I can. A few weeks ago, we had a baptism service. One of the themes that seemed to carry through everyone's testimony was "I made a decision as a youngster, and I grew up and I realized that was a false decision." I was just wondering a bunch of adults or people who have young children, do you have any advice on how we can approach the concept of salvation with our 5- or 6-year-olds where we can give them the truth?

PASTOR TOM: I understand exactly where you are coming from. Let me encourage you to do this because I don't have time to answer this question thoroughly. Our elders have written up a little statement. John Anderson our family pastor has it. It talks about evangelizing our children.

Get a copy of that from him because that will answer the question in full. But the short version is you share the gospel, you keep encouraging every little step toward Christ, you don't just write the date in their Bible. You don't assure them they are Christians. You know, you don't want to discourage them, nor do you want to say to your 4-year-old who wants to please their mom and dad, "Oh, you are now a Christian! That's a wonderful thing!" And treat them like Christians from that day forward. There's a balance and the balance is "Sweetheart," and I remember saying this young daughters, "that is so encouraging. It encourages me to see God at work in your heart and life and drawing you to Himself. You keep following Christ because that will be the ultimate proof that you are really His." And that way, you are doing neither. You're not falling off on either path. Because we don't know at what age someone is fully able to comprehend the gospel and be regenerated. So just keep being faithful. Share the gospel. Be encouraging but don't give them the ultimate "You are a Christian now." Okay.

Wait. That's why we don't baptize kids until their old enough to begin to show their own will separate from their parents because we want to have time to see the reality of that unfold. Anyway, get that statement. That will answer it much more thoroughly than I just did.

Great questions. Seth is going to come lead us in a closing song and then we will be dismissed.