

# OpenTheo

## Torah Observance (Part 4 and Q&A)



### **Torah Observance** - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the topic of Torah observance, exploring the story of Exodus 4:24 and the significance of Jerusalem in Jewish culture. He addresses questions about the worship of Sabbath and the appeal of embracing Jewish traditions in Messianic synagogues. Gregg emphasizes the importance of humility and teachability when it comes to interpreting Scripture and following apostolic doctrine. He also highlights the potential conflicts that may arise between Torah observance and following the teachings of Jesus, suggesting that different groups may have differing spirits in their approach to these practices.

### **Transcript**

Why don't we pray and we'll get started and if you have a question, Handy, that'd be great. Before I start, how many of you came with a question in mind? Not everyone who comes to these Q&A's has a question of their own, but how many had a question that you'd like to introduce? Let's see, this is one of those things where people came to hear other people's questions. You've got one, okay.

All you need is one. Because I can talk a whole night about one, but on the other hand, what usually happens if someone asks a question, you say, oh yeah, I would have a question about something like that too, it reminds me. Or my answer raises new questions.

So, usually one question to get the ball rolling is enough to make an evening of it. So, let's pray. Thank you, Father, again for the body of Christ.

You know, Father, these people cannot possibly know how much it means to me to be able to visit like-minded brothers and sisters here in Oregon or anywhere I go to meet members of your body that I did not know and it's such an enriching thing to me. I think some of these people feel like they're getting something out of coming, but I feel like I'm getting more than they are and I thank you for that. I pray that this fellowship time, this Q&A time, as well as other fellowships that we have before the night's over, will be pleasing to you, edifying to us, glorifying to Christ.

And I pray for your Holy Spirit to give wisdom, both to me when I'm trying to give an answer and to the listeners to be able to discern whether my answer makes any sense or is right or wrong. Because you've told us to judge all things and hold fast to what is good. So, I pray that as they judge what I say, they'll be guided by your Spirit as well.

This is what we count on in our walk with you and in our learning. So we ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen. All right, there was at least one question that came and Pete will give you the microphone so you can, everyone can hear.

Oh, did you not have a question or you're afraid of the microphone? Oh, okay, he'll be the first one, you can be number two. Moses, on his way to Egypt, him and his wife get in a fight. In Exodus 4, yeah.

Okay, about the circumcision. He was 80 years old at this time. So, they had just had a child at 80 years old? No, you're right.

They had a, well, we don't know how old the child was. Of course the child should have been circumcised at age eight days and that had not happened. How many years had passed while Moses was remiss, we don't know.

But it was the wife who circumcised the child and that gives the impression that the child was still a child and not an adult, you know. I mean, we get that impression but then sometimes we're not picturing things right. You know, when Hagar was, had to leave Abraham's house with her son Ishmael, it sounds like she's got a little boy with her.

She's carrying him. He's out of water and she throws him under a bush and she can't stand to watch him die. She goes a distance away.

And here the kid's 16 years old, you know. I mean, so sometimes these kids were, I guess, late bloomers and mama's boys or something. So that, you know, you picture a mother doing something toward a son that you do toward an infant or young son.

What we don't know is we're never told exactly how old Moses' children were when they were born. We know that he was 40 when he fled to Midian. He took a wife there and there's some reason to believe that probably they had children.

We know of two sons that were eventually born to him and that story only one is mentioned. And it's possible that they, you know, like so many of the heroes of the Bible, their wives were barren for the first decades of their marriage. Sarah was, of course, barren.

Rebecca was barren for 20 years after she married Isaac. Rachel was barren initially. So many of the women who gave, eventually gave birth to important people were barren first, just so God could make it miraculous, I suppose.

But we're not told any details about Moses, the growth of his family, how old his, how old his wife was, how long they'd been married before the child was born, nor how old the child was. You're right, Moses was 80 at that time. Of course, his wife was probably not 80.

She could have been 20, you know. Well, not probably that. No, she'll be over 40 at this time.

Probably over 60 even because she had been a young lady when he met her 40 years earlier. So she would have to be at least in her 50s. But how old the child was, we don't know.

But he had not been circumcised and that was something that was obligatory at eight days old and that became the area of conflict. That story puzzles lots of people because it says that after God had met with Moses and sent him to confront Pharaoh, that Moses is in the process of obeying and going to see Pharaoh and God met him at the encampment and tried to kill him. And it says that Zipporah, the wife, took a flint and circumcised her son and cast the foreskin at Moses' feet.

Actually, it's quite ambiguous in the Hebrew apparently. It's not clear exactly what was done with this foreskin. But some say he touched, she touched Moses' feet with it or touched the baby's feet.

We have a more of a Hebrew scholar than myself back here, Steve Donahue. You know how ambiguous that passage is about what they did with the foreskin. Different translations really render it differently.

In chapter 4, what is it around verse 20 or so, anyone remember? I'm not sure. Let me see. It's just that some translators make it sound like she, when she cut the foreskin off the child, that she, the King James says something like she cast it at Moses' feet or something like that.

And some would say touching the feet is an idiom for touching the genitals even. I mean you hear all kinds of things from commentators. And perhaps it could be covering the feet is an idiom for going to the bathroom and stuff in the story of David and Saul.

But the point is that something was done with the foreskin and it was a matter of offense between Moses and his wife. And she said, surely you're a bloody husband to me, which was apparently not a compliment. And we never read of her being with him again, at least until maybe as much as a year later after the Exodus where she and her dad come to visit him.

And in the book of Exodus, I think it's a chapter 18, when she and her dad come to visit him, it says that Moses had sent her away. He doesn't say when he had, but probably on this occasion. He and his wife had a conflict over the circumcision issue.

Now what the backstory of that is, we are not told. I have in my own mind formulated a backstory that makes sense to me, but I have met people who see it differently and think it's different than that. The way I have understood it, and this is somewhat conjecture but I'm trying to make all the factors fit, is that when Moses and his wife had the child, that he had wanted to circumcise the child.

When he was eight days old, because Moses was a Jew and knew he's supposed to do that. His wife was a Midianite, not a Jew, and I think she found it a disgusting thing, and I think she talked Moses out of it. Now this is the part that not everyone agrees about, but I think this was a matter of conflict with them at the time when the child should have been circumcised originally.

The reason I think that is because Zipporah's reaction at the time of this problem where Moses is almost being killed by God, she immediately connects it with the circumcision. She knows there's an obligation there that has not been met. She complies with the obligation, but seemingly grudgingly because she complains about it and apparently separates from Moses at this time complaining you're a bloody husband.

Sounds to me like she's saying this is disgusting to me, I find this loathsome, but I'll cave in so that you don't die and I'll go ahead and go along with it but not without complaint. And that makes me think that this had been a bone of contention probably at an earlier time between them just because she's blaming him. And now another view is that she is blaming him that that he had not circumcised the child and that it fell to her to do it at this late date, but I'd always kind of read it a little different way and no one knows.

But there had been some reason that Moses had neglected to circumcise the child. My suspicion is because of the distaste that his wife had for the suggestion and that Moses of course was the meekest man in all the world. He says so himself, probably an editor included that in numbers, but the point is as a meek man, not self-assertive, he probably complied with his wife on this.

And then though she got her way, she found herself in a position where she really had to go his way after all and circumcise the child but she was still not happy about it. That's how I've read that story. But you're asking simply how old was the child, right? I mean is that basically what your question is? Well yeah, it was just, you know, with Abraham it's made a big deal that they were old when they had their kids.

Yeah. But it was just almost, you can just about read through that passage and that it goes so quick that you can just about miss what's going on there. I understand that, yeah.

I thought, why don't they make a big deal of him being old and still having, you know, as they did with Abraham? I just thought it odd. That is a question that I can't answer because again it doesn't make an issue of how old Moses was. So the impression you get

reading the story is he must have a young child.

But you're right, he'd been married for 40 years so maybe the child wasn't all that young. By the way, that is Exodus 4, 24 is where the story begins. No, let's let this sister, she can be second.

She's not afraid to be second. Ellen, did you have a question? I think I have a question. Okay, while you're there.

I'm just wondering, was it possible for the Jewish people to have still sacrificed after the temple was gone? And if so, why wouldn't they have chosen to sacrifice somewhere else or just built an altar and done that? In Deuteronomy it made it very explicit that they were only allowed to offer their sacrifices in the place that the Lord should choose to put his name. And that was understood eventually to be Jerusalem. It was in other places before that, Shiloh and Nob apparently, and there were more than one place the tabernacle had been used.

But eventually after David conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites and made it the capital, it was fairly understood that Jerusalem was the place that God had now chosen for that. And that's where the temple was built by Solomon. And the Jews, I think, have never, I don't know that they've never contemplated other places, but I think that they have just assumed Jerusalem is the last place that we know of that God approved of.

And you can't just build a temple just anywhere because your sacrifices have to be offered in the place that God should choose. Also, of course, they can't be offered by anyone other than descendants of Aaron. And I'm not sure to what degree they were able to keep track of the Levitical tribe and its members after the temple was gone.

The Levites, after all, when the temple was standing, had a full-time job. When the temple was there, they probably didn't go out and become bankers or something, but they couldn't really keep a job at the temple. So they would, I don't know, eventually lose their priestly knowledge.

I mean, when there's no sacrifices being offered, I would assume that they would more and more be disinclined to feel themselves qualified. But I don't know all this. I'm assuming that if I was a Jew, that's how I would see it.

But I do know that Jerusalem was viewed, and I think still is by the Jews, as the one place that God has chosen to put his name there, and that's where the temple has to be. It's surprising to me that they feel like it has to be specifically on the Temple Mount. Because, I mean, it seems like there could be another place in Jerusalem.

If the Dome of the Rock is in the way, it seems like, well, Jerusalem's got more places than that one, but maybe not big enough. I mean, the temple is a very big complex, and also, of course, I'm sure they're quite sentimental toward the sacred site. They might

even have some other reasons, like the fact that Abraham is thought to have offered Isaac in roughly that spot, or that the threshing floor of Arona, which David purchased, that was there, and that became the temple site.

Those things probably give it special status in the eyes of the Jews, that you just can't go arbitrarily moving it different places. I'm not that much in touch with the Jewish thinking on that particular point, but I'm pretty sure you're not going to find any Orthodox Jews building a temple anywhere else than on the Temple Mount. How authentic would the sacrifice be without the Ark of the Covenant, anyway? That's a good question.

They don't have the Ark, and they don't really know where it is. Although Ron Wyatt knew, but he died. He told us where it is, but I don't think anyone's been able to confirm it, which raises questions as to whether it could be there.

Probably the most long-standing tradition is that it's in Ethiopia. Actually, in a church, a Coptic church in Ethiopia, I believe. But no one knows if that's true either.

They've got armed guards, and there's no windows, and no one's allowed to check. So I think for hundreds of years, the Ark has been recuded to be there. The Jews had a tradition that Jeremiah rescued the Ark from the temple before the Babylonians destroyed it and carried it to Egypt.

So it's not impossible that it did go eventually to Ethiopia, but we have no biblical record of that. Of course, Ron Wyatt thought that it was directly under the place where Jesus was crucified, and there's a crack in the rock, and the blood that dripped down from Jesus' hands actually went through this crack and landed right on the mercy seat. That sounds like fiction to me.

But of course, he said it's in a place where it's really, really impossible to get it out again. That's convenient, because actually, I can't think of any place underground that with modern technology, people would find it impossible to excavate. So that gentleman has gone to be with the Lord, I hope, and I don't trust his testimony about that.

I hate to say that, because he was, as far as I know, a Christian man, certainly. But you hear all kinds of weird stories. But without the Ark, you know, I don't know.

But they didn't have the Ark in the Second Temple either, did they see? After the Babylonian Exile, they built the Second Temple, there was no Ark there, but they still did offer sacrifices. So apparently, they didn't think that was absolutely necessary. But given the requirements of the Torah, you'd think it would.

But you know, come to think of it, the Second Temple was divinely ordained, even without the Ark of the Covenant. So I suppose if they built a temple today and didn't have the Ark, they could find justification for using it without the Ark. I'm surprised they don't build another one.

They'll have to build another altar, have to build another, you know, all the altars and the labor and all those things have to be built from scratch, if they built another temple. So I suppose they could build another Ark. It's surprising the Jews did not do that after the Babylonian Exile.

I'm not sure why they didn't, but of course, I think most of the original furniture from the tabernacle came back from Babylon and was incorporated in the Zerubbabel's temple. But the Ark, apparently not. You brave enough now? Okay, good.

This will take a little bit to explain ahead of my question. My husband and I have been attending what is kind of called the Messianic congregation for about 10 years. And it was established around the early 80s, as are some others in our area.

I would not call us part of this Hebrew Roots movement, because it seems way different than the way we believe or think. We happen to, almost all of us, meet on the Sabbath, just because I understand it's in hopes that Jewish people that want to believe in Yeshua could have an easier transition. And for Gentiles, what we do learn is how all the feasts and festivals are intricately laced into Yeshua, into Jesus' whole life, and how he fulfilled things, things that seem to be fulfilled with a plan and intricacy.

And we love to hear how that is all woven, but we don't do all this other stuff. We were explaining in earlier sessions. But the problem is we do have a lot of people wanting to force or think that, oh, Torah observance is okay.

So we have a complex, unique dilemma. And it's been coined by a friend I know that's gone to meet the Lord already as the Messy Messianic Dilemma. Messy Messianic.

Yeah, anyway. And part of what drew me into this is I love worship dancing. And ever since I was two, I couldn't, I was a believer then.

There's so many. I have to do that. And it's hard to find a church where you can do that.

Can't do that Hebrew-style dancing without being in a Messianic group. Well, I've tried before in other conventional churches and actually have brought that style of worship in. I believe that we should be able to dance.

So your question would be... My questions are basically to, we've heard visitors or even people that have become members think that we are under some kind of obligation to worship on the Sabbath. And I've even heard people come in as visitors say, God, oh I'm so happy we found this congregation because God told me in dreams that lasted weeks and weeks that I should find a church that worships and believes this way. Well, they're misunderstanding the way we believe.

If somebody has dreams that last weeks and weeks, are they in a coma? I don't know. I've been repeatedly... I get it. And I have not come up, I've run a couple off, I mean a

family I'm sure because she was one and one that said, what brought you to this church? I said, well not because of being on the Sabbath, we believe we can worship any day of the week.

But I told her what did. She was so offended that he never came back. She said, prior to that, we are coming here forever, that we have found our home.

And I just don't know, I'm trying to be gentleness. Have a good, quick reply to these people that want to turn it into the bad way. Well, the reply I would give, I gave in three hours time this afternoon.

Which is not a quick response. Right, exactly. I don't know that those people who are all enamored with this, that there's a few sound bites you can give them, they're going to just turn them right around.

I think they're going to have to study out the issue somewhat more thoroughly. I don't know if they'll have to do three hours worth of lectures to do it, but I think that they're going to have to spend some time studying it. What I would say is, I think we do not feel that it's mandated by God for us as Christians to observe the Torah.

Now that may offend them, but I guess that's the offense of the cross. Paul offended Jews too by saying similar things. You're going to lose some because of that.

If they say, how dare you say that? Well then, of course, some of the things we shared in our lectures this afternoon would be possibly useful. A lot of the verses would be relevant. By the way, today I was simply talking about Torah observance, which I think is a real misguided way to go.

But I've given another lecture series, which is available at the YouTube channel, The Narrow Path, called Hebrew Roots Movement. Which obviously has some overlap. I mentioned in those lectures, I think there's six lectures in that, that Hebrew roots means more than one thing.

A lot of it is simply Christians who are Jewish who want to continue, frankly, in their comfort level, doing worship in a Jewish kind of a way. Or, even if they haven't, a lot of them were non-observant Jews before they got saved, but they want to reconnect with their ancestors and their heritage, things like that. But what really happens when they start these Messianic synagogues, and I did a lot of research on this subject directly before I gave that other series, turns out that only about 10-15% of the people in these so-called Messianic synagogues, only about 10-15% are Jewish.

The overwhelming majority are Gentile wannabes, Jew wannabes, they're Gentiles, who are enamored with all things Jewish. And I can relate a little with that, because when I was younger I was very much enamored with it. I liked the Jewish style music, I liked the Jewish style dance, although I didn't realize at the time that's not really the style of



music and dance that David wrote, or even that was practiced by Jews in Jesus' day.

It comes from Eastern Europe, it's from the Ashkenazi Jews, it's the dancing and so forth, which we call Jewish style dancing, and the Jewish style music and the minor chords and all that. That's really something that I think is Eastern European style, which the Jews picked up, and it's now, of course, part of their culture. But it's not necessarily the style of music and dance that David did.

It's hard to know what style they did, because it seems like that's so Jewish the way we see it today. You always picture David doing these kind of line dances, like on Fiddler on the Roof or something like that. But it really is a kind of dancing that was probably unknown in the Middle East in the time of Jesus or times before that.

We just don't know. That's one thing about these Messianic synagogues. A lot of the things they adopt are not really Torah at all.

They're not really part of Judaism as God gave it to Israel. It's more the rabbinic styles that have developed sort of to replace the temple worship. Because once the temple was destroyed, they had to do something.

They either had to say, wow, God took the temple from us, maybe there's something better he wants us to do, like follow Jesus. Or they'd have to say, let's ignore the fact that God took the temple away, and we're going to still, you know, they tore down our brick buildings, let's build them with stone now. We're going to make it more permanent, even without the things God ordained.

I love Jewish people. I've never, I honestly could say I've had many Jewish friends and even non-Christian Jews. I don't think I've ever met a Jew that I didn't think was enjoyable to be with, intelligent, funny usually, very talented.

For the most part, I have a lot of Jewish friends who are very talented musicians and such. I've never had a bad feeling about a Jew in my life. I'm sure there are some Jews that I'd have a bad feeling if I met them, but there's a lot more Gentiles that I would probably.

But having said that, I really don't sympathize with the need, I'm not saying you can't, I'm not saying anyone else has to agree with me in my sympathies. I don't sympathize with the desire to incorporate all kinds of Jewish things in my worship. Now, I was pretty close friends with Moshe Rosen, the founder of Jews for Jesus.

I knew him for many years. I'd attend his places where he talked about the Seder and kind of give the Christian interpretation of how the Passover was done. But even those customs are not found in the Torah.

You know, it's the three matzos, you know, crackers in the middle one, you know, you

break and so forth. And that's like Jesus, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's the one in the middle, he gets broken, Jesus' body was broken for us, and it's got stripes on it, the way it's cooked, it has stripes, and with his stripes we're healed.

All these cool little associations between Passover keeping and things in the New Testament. But the only thing is, I'm not sure those forms of Passover were even around in the days of Jesus. I don't know when they originated, but they're not in the Bible.

It's not like Moses gave these commands, okay, take the three matzos, crackers, and do this number here, and so forth. There was, you know, it may be that some of these practices did predate the time of Christ, I don't know. But even if they did, there's not any evidence they were inspired.

So, I mean, there's a certain amount of speculation, I think, involved in, oh, this is a picture of Christ. But it is, in fact, of course, you know, culturally closer, perhaps, to the time, to the life of Jesus, to remember Passover and its basic observance. But, of course, he fulfilled it.

And he said, as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, and he's talking about the Passover, that's where he was at, the Passover, his meals. He said, now you do it to remember me. The Passover was to remember salvation from Egypt.

Now we're supposed to remember salvation from sin, Egypt being a type of sin. Christ, our Passover, is sacrifice for us, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5, 7. And he does say, let us therefore keep the feast. He's alluding to the feast of unleavened bread, which was the days that followed the Passover.

But he said, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. So he's clearly not talking about keeping a literal feast with literal bread. He's talking spiritually.

We keep the feast by living a life of sincerity and truth without the leaven of, you know, whatever, the evil that leavened. So, Paul entirely spiritualizes our observance of it. And, again, I can certainly relate with people who are somewhat enamored with customs and so forth that they think may be the customs that Jesus did.

I like the fact that at Passover, at least the way Jews have celebrated it for a long time, they sing the Hallel Psalms, there's six of them. And it's customary, I think, to sing the first two before the meal and four after the meal or vice versa. And as you read those particular Psalms called the Hallel, some of them are very poignant to read them thinking Jesus sang this at the last Passover with his disciples.

Because some of them are messianic and even allude to, well, say now, you know, Hosea and things that the Jews were saying at the time. But I don't even know if they sang the Hallel at Passover Seder 2,000 years ago. They might have.

It's hard to know how far those go. I shouldn't say it's hard to know because it may be very easy for someone to know if they know more than I do about when those things were written. There are people who certainly have studied that more than I have.

From the point of view of just reading the Bible, it's hard to know where those things came from because those customs are not necessarily prescribed in the Law of Moses. But, you know, if people say, if people are offended that you're not Torah observant, just say, well, let's talk about this. Is there some reason I should be? You know, let's talk about the book of Galatians.

Let's talk about Romans. Let's talk about Colossians 2, 16 and 17. Do you see something there that I'm missing, you know, that we're supposed to do something that it seems to me Paul says we shouldn't do? They know that we'll have some scriptures.

They'll be probably some scriptures I was mentioning earlier today when I was giving their case. But I don't know. As long as you're in a messianic kind of a church, you're going to have people visiting her for that.

Now, by the way, the messianic movement sometimes says that it is justified by the fact that having messianic synagogues, as you said, would give an easy way to evangelize Jews because they'd feel like there's a less of a stark cultural transformation. Transition coming into a culturally Jewish milieu when they become Christians. The truth is, again, the statistics are interesting of the.

Oh, I think there's several hundred thousand Jewish Christians in America and in a survey or more than one survey has been taken as a result of the same results. It says like 5% of them were evangelized through a messianic synagogue or church. The other 95 got evangelized through a Baptist church or Billy Graham crusade or something like that by mostly by Gentile Christians.

So this idea we need to have these so the Jews will feel comfortable. A lot of times people who have that thought are dreaming because they don't realize that Jews who are not Christians are not fooled by Christians who put on Jewish yarmulkes and and prayer shawls and things like that. What the Jews object to is Jesus himself.

The way to not be offensive to the Jews is to kind of obscure Jesus. As long as you're preaching Jesus is Messiah. Most Jews are not going to be saying, well, you keep Sabbath, so I'm comfortable with you.

Now, it's Jesus is considered to be Mishima. He's considered to be, you know, evil. And a Jew who accepts Jesus is considered to be a traitor to his people and to his religion.

And that's deeply ingrained in Jews, even even non-observant Jews often feel that way. And so this idea, it's an evangelistic strategy to reach Jews will have sort of a Jewish flavor. We'll have the Talmud or not the Talmud.

We'll have the Torah scrolls, you know, carried through the service and we'll have the shofars blaring and which is one of the most unpleasant sounds I've ever heard. By the way, some may love it because it's supposed to be sacred, but I'll tell you, it's a pretty annoying sound, the shofar. But if any Messianic Jew, they say, oh, that's blasphemy.

You know, the shofar, annoying. Yeah, well, at least maybe the people I've heard don't know how to play it. Well, you know, maybe they need to go to a music class, learn how to play the shofar so it's not annoying.

But the truth is doing these Jewish seeming things is not going to fool non-Christian Jews into thinking, hey, I feel at home here. If the church is actually preaching Jesus. Now, a lot of the Messianic synagogues say some people who were interviewed to attend them and some who left them say it seemed like we heard an awful lot more about the movement than about Jesus.

We're in a lot more about being Torah observant than we heard about Jesus. And I can't say that's what all of them are like. I haven't been to any of them myself, but a lot of interviews with them in books that I've read has said, you know, we were happy there until we noticed, you know, Jesus is not emphasized.

Now, you're at a church, not a not a not a Messianic synagogue. So I assume Jesus is held up. But but as long as that's happening, I how many Jews have been converted? Yeah.

The word Messianic has exactly the same meaning as the word Christian, Christian being Greek and Messianic being Hebrew. And and yet Messianic is obviously we're not Christians. We're Messianic people.

And and yet the words have exactly the same meaning. But a lot of times they object to the word Christian because they say it's Greek, it's pagan and so forth. But it has exactly the same meaning as the word Messianic.

So if you drop the name Messianic and said we're a Christian church, you'd be communicating exactly the same information. It just wouldn't sound so holy, I guess, maybe or so, I don't know, authentic. Maybe we could say some people think, you know, it's more authentic to have a Jewish style of worship.

Anyway, I love my Messianic friends. Most of the Jewish Christians I know are not in these movements, partly because I'm not in them. And I don't make a lot of friends where I don't go.

But but I have been very close friends with some of the Jews for Jesus over the years. And they're most of them are in Baptist churches, not in Messianic synagogues. It seems like and that's they usually get saved in Baptist churches or someplace like that.

Yes. I was listening to the tale. I've listened to a lot of your messages, especially the ones about the millennium, which are very edifying.

And I caught something at the tail end of this message when you were talking about the Hebrew Roots Movement. I remember turning on the debate that you had with Doug Camp. And I remember at the beginning, like Doug Camp was trying to be very specific as to the nature.

You want to call it a discussion, I believe, something along those lines, you know, between brothers. Was that when he and I were sitting on stools talking to each other? I think you were on a stage of some sort. I mean, it looked like.

Yeah, there was a debate where we're standing up separate. And then afterwards, I think there's a talk or maybe it's before we had a talk sitting on stools next to the same day. But when I first came to the faith, I was listening to some of Doug Camp's stuff.

He was featured in a documentary that actually presented to me the gospel for the first time. But you made a very poignant statement at the end of this teaching series. And it was that you didn't believe that the Hebrew Roots Movement or the Judaizers were in the light.

And one thing that I've noticed about your teachings and just maybe the spirit behind it in general is that I've noticed that you seem to have a lot of mercy for people of very different views. And I can't tell if maybe I've been too hardline and then you're like, you know, holding on to a level of mercy that is more godly than maybe I've had towards certain different views. I know that I went through a season of humbling recently where I was drawing lines in the sand that I don't believe were godly or righteous stands on things.

But at the same time, I do believe in a certain standard of truth that is necessary that must be evident for someone to be born again, in my opinion. You just can't be in a certain amount of error. And so I guess my question is, we see right now a big ecumenical push.

We see certainly in the celebrity pastor movement, a lot of people trying to reach across the aisle and create this sense of unity. To the Catholics, to the Muslims. Right, yeah.

I mean, now even to the Muslims. I mean, just even within the so-called household of faith. My question is, how do you determine where to draw the lines for fellowship? Because if you don't believe someone in the Hebrew Roots movement is walking in the light, which I would agree with you, if they're trying to put people under, you know, at best, they're backslitting, you know, in some serious deception.

If indeed they're ever born again. So you're wondering where you should draw lines? Yeah, like how do you determine that? How do you determine where to draw the line? I

listen to your teaching on Hebrews, about the foundational doctrines of the faith, and things like that. But like, just in my experiences, which aren't broad by any extent within Christianity, because I've only been a Christian, at least a professing Christian for about six years.

But I've just noticed that even among foundational doctrines, you know, baptisms, repentance works. Christians don't agree much. Yeah, and I mean, you know, I've been blessed to find fellowship with brethren that I am in one accord with.

That is a rare blessing to take. Yeah, it's a small group, mind you. You know, we'd like it to be bigger.

But at the same time, we're not willing to compromise on certain doctrines. There are certain areas that we will extend mercy. So how do you, you know, as now an elder in the church, you know, how do you determine that? Where do you draw the line? Would you like, because it sounds like you wouldn't consider Douglas Hamp a brother so long as he's teaching that people need to observe the Torah.

That I wouldn't, you say? Yeah, you would not. Okay, you asked a really good question. I'm asked it frequently.

Have you by any chance heard my lecture series, Strategies for Unity? No. That's one where I wrestle with this very question somewhat. Not so much with the Hebrew roots people, but with where do you draw the lines.

Now, you're a man much younger than me, as you alluded to. I'm an elder in the church. Not officially, just in fact, an old man in the church, which is what Pres Bouderos means.

But you mentioned that even as a young man, you went through a time of humbling, and it seems like you're a little less hard-edged on the lines you draw than you were before that time. I've been through several of those. And the lines get less hard-edged, the humbler God has forced me to be.

See, the problem here, being humble, if you really get to a place where you're really humble, you realize, I'm doing my best to get things right, and probably that person is doing their best probably as much as I am. They might even be a better person than I am, but they're getting it, I believe, wrong. They're reaching different conclusions than I am.

But certainly there have been people in certain theological traditions that are better people than I am, as far as I'm concerned. I mean, there are some famous Calvinists, Puritans, and so forth, that I'd be ashamed to compare myself with them, because they're superior, clearly. There are dispensationalists.

I mean, Hudson Taylor, for crying out loud, and George Mueller, they were

dispensationalists at one point in their lives. And yet, I don't feel like I'm worthy to take their shoes off, you know. So, in other words, there's people who can be wrong, in my opinion.

That is, they see it differently than I do. But I know, at least I have very good reason to believe, they're as honest as I am. They're as oriented towards serving God as I am.

And for all I know, even more than I am. I hope I am, as much as they are, but I don't know. The humbler you are, the more you tend to elevate your estimate of other people, by contrast.

And the way I see it is, I don't know how some people can get things so wrong, vis-a-vis the way I look at things. I mean, some people are so far from the way I see things, I think, I don't know how someone as smart as they are in Godly's there could be that wrong. But, I'm sure they're not trying to be wrong, any more than I am.

And I can't be certain that I'm the smartest person in the room. You know, and I have my views, and I hold them in good conscience, because I arrived at them by my own search, by my own, I hope, humble, teachable, you know, approach to the Scripture. But, we're not all at the same place, and some of the people who think differently have arrived at their views, the same way I have.

And so, I've got to grant, the more I can really be humble, the more I have to grant everyone else, perhaps, as much virtue as I trust that I have, in their pursuit of God, even if I think they're really wrong. Now, this was not, this is, I think, more necessary now than it was in the first century. Because in the first century, when the apostles were here, and those who heard them, if there were differences of opinion, you could consult the apostolic teaching on it.

I mean, Peter wrote, Peter and Paul both wrote letters, but we don't have but a tiny specimen of their explanations of things. People who sat under Paul in Corinth for 18 months, or in Ephesus for three years, or who traveled with Paul, they really would have more of a grasp than I do. And if I were living at that time, and not sure, I heard a controversy, someone thinks Paul thinks this, someone says Paul thinks that, at least I could write a letter to Paul, or talk to somebody who talked to him, I could actually consult the apostles directly.

And that we can't do. In those days, if somebody taught persistently something that Paul or Peter did not teach, they'd be exposed as persons deviating from the apostolic teaching easily enough. Because somebody could consult Peter or Paul and say, what do you think? That's off, you know.

And if they considered, like the Gnostics, I mean, Paul was really hard on, what is it, Hymenaeus and Alexander, or Hymenaeus and, there were a couple different guys that

he picked on, and he actually excommunicated a couple of guys because they taught that the resurrection is past. Now, obviously, they had every reason to get their doctrine right, because Paul could be consulted. And they didn't care what Paul said.

They taught what they taught without regard to the apostles. Now, that's rebellion against Christ, because Christ appointed the apostles. So, anyone who would knowingly teach contrary to apostolic doctrine was knowingly rejecting the authority of Christ who had appointed them.

And that would be intolerable. Even small differences could possibly be viewed as major rebellion. When the apostles were available to clarify, and people didn't want their clarification, didn't go with it.

Now, the difference today, almost every Christian thinks they're following the apostolic doctrine. The Calvinists believe they are, the Arminians believe they are, the dispensations think they are, the reformed people think they are, there's, you know, amillennialists think they are. Full preterists think they are.

Almost every cult thinks they are. That's the hard thing. They are, in most cases, not the rebels of the first century who knew what Paul taught and wanted to deny it.

There may be some, but they wouldn't be the average Christian, I wouldn't think. But we have very sincere people who are devoted to Jesus and devoted to apostolic Christianity as they understand it. But they understand it differently, and we don't have Paul here to write a letter to and say, which is it? Paul, were you Calvinist or were you Arminian? And therefore, what we have to tolerate, I think, that they didn't have to tolerate when the apostles cleared this up, we have to tolerate the fact that people who really want to be true to the apostolic teaching, like Peter said, some things Paul wrote are hard to understand.

Now, he said that people who are unlearned and bad people twist Paul's words to their own destruction. But he said those are bad people. A lot of the people who are misunderstanding Paul today, they're not bad people, they're trying to get it right.

And that's what I have to take stock of when I'm dealing with somebody who's really mistaken, I think. I have to realize, well, you know, they think I'm really mistaken, too. I can't judge everything with me as the center of all things.

I'm the one who's right about everything, and anyone who doesn't agree, I'm going to have to just say they're stubborn, they're heretics or whatever. Now, when it comes to the Hebrew roots thing, that's one of the few heresies that Paul spoke directly against, wrote whole letters against it. I don't understand how a person who's knowledgeable and really seeks the mind of God in Scripture could miss Paul's teaching on this.

And therefore, those who teach against what Paul said, even if they say they're trying to



follow Paul, I mean, I have to say about Douglas Hampton, I don't want to feel badly about him. I did mention that when I was with him, it was hard to feel I was in the same family, but I want to be gracious because I believe he's wrong, but he might be honestly wrong. I don't know.

But I don't see how, when I actually hear him expound on the letters of Paul, if you go to his website, he's got a whole bunch of videos of him sitting and teaching through the Bible, and one will be called Paul Teaches Torah, Philippians chapter 1, verses 1 through 10. Second one is Paul Teaches Torah, Philippians chapter 1, verses 11 through whatever. He'll go verse by verse through Paul's letters, and all of them are entitled the same thing, Paul Teaches Torah.

I remember when I first saw these, I'm really interested to see how he's getting that out of this passage. And it turned out he wasn't. In most cases, just assuming Paul Teaches Torah, sometimes the passage has absolutely no bearing on the subject, and the ones that do, he explains them away.

I think that doesn't sound as honest as I think people should be. Now, I don't want to judge a man's heart. He may be more honest than I think, but it doesn't seem honest, so I'm careful about saying, you know, I don't know if he's a brother.

I think Paul, if Douglas Hampton was teaching the same thing in the Apostolic Age, when the teachings of Paul were, I think, unambiguous, or could be made so by consulting him, I think Douglas Hampton would have been called one of the false brethren. But in a day like ours, I don't know that he isn't sincerely trying to follow the Apostolic teaching, and he's just got it, in my opinion, quite wrong. So, I don't usually, you know, when you say, how do I decide what drawings, I generally draw lines on moral grounds, rather than theological grounds these days.

Partly because most theological concepts are more abstract than practical. And lots of times people can have a wrong abstract theological concept and still live a pretty godly life following Jesus, I have found. Calvinists, Arminians, Dismasagialists, Non-Dismasagialists, all those camps have people who follow Jesus very wonderfully.

And if they're following Jesus, Jesus said, the way you know if you're a disciple is if you love each other. And if I see someone who's a very loving, genuine Christian, I'm not going to exclude them because of some conceptual, abstract theological difference that we have. Because it doesn't seem that that particular difference really makes a difference.

Lots of teachings don't make differences, they just are matters of curiosity, which people answer differently, and some wrongly, obviously. But if it doesn't keep them from being a good disciple of Jesus, I'm not going to be bothered by it. If Jesus accepts them, I'm supposed to accept them.

I don't want to be more exclusive than Jesus himself is. And so I'll draw, you know, when Jesus talked about excommunication, for example, he said, if your brother sins against you, go to him. If he doesn't hear, take two.

If he doesn't hear them, take them to church. If he doesn't hear church, treat him like a pagan. Now, that's if your brother sins against you, not if a man has a different opinion than you.

And I find that most of the heresies that Paul denounces in Peter are heresies that are promoted by people who are morally impure, sexually impure, I should say, who are greedy for money. I mean, if you actually read the descriptions in Paul when he's telling the Ephesian elders about the false apostles to watch out for, or in Peter, in 2 Peter 2, when he's talking about the false teachers to watch out for, or places that talk about false prophets, you're going to find sort of a recurring theme. These guys are in it for the money and for the ladies.

They have eyes full of adultery that cannot cease from sinning. They creep into houses and lead women astray, and so forth. And then there's also the fact that they're in it for the money.

And Paul makes it very clear that that's often the case. And even when he doesn't say that right about the false teachers, he emphasizes that he wasn't like that. He wasn't in it for the money.

And it seems to me like greed and sexual immorality were big temptations for false teachers. And lo and behold, if we would sort of write a profile of the best-known false teachers today, we'd have to use the same criteria because it fits. Now, if somebody is motivated by money, if somebody is immoral, if somebody's taking advantage of people in any way, I'd say they're false.

They're a false teacher if they're a teacher, or a false prophet if they're a prophet. They're a false apostle if they claim to be an apostle. They're just false.

They're false Christians. But when I find that somebody is not at all in it for the money, they're living a moral life, they're advocating a moral life, they're advocating obedience to Jesus, living by the Sermon on the Mount, for example. I mean, take the Mennonites.

Mennonites definitely advocate living by the Sermon on the Mount. That's kind of what they're distinct for. Now, I don't take everything the same way they do.

They think it's wrong to take vows in court and things like that. And they do, of course, they have a strong emphasis on nonresistance, which I think is also a biblical emphasis, but I think that it's more nuanced than they take it. So I have some differences with them, but I certainly respect the fact that they've always been willing to die in order to be obedient to what they think Jesus commanded to do.

And certainly, even if I think they're wrong about a few things, they're not going to hurt anybody by being the way they are. They're not, they love, they're living as obediently to Jesus as they know how, and there's some good chance that some of them are better Christians than I am. But I don't know them to be, and I don't know myself to be less, so, but I, God's the judge, not me.

Paul said, I don't even judge myself. God will judge that, ultimately. I do judge myself in some respects, but I don't make the ultimate choice of what I'm a good person or a bad person compared to somebody else.

It's not my problem. It's somebody else. So, the older I get, and the more I get the wind knocked out of me by the dealings of God, and become hopefully more humble.

I don't say becoming humble is a permanent thing. The pride tends to want to reassert itself, but God's pretty faithful to knock it out of you again once in a while if you live long enough. I fear you'll have to learn it like me.

I hope not. You should learn from the mistakes of older people and not have to make them yourself, but I didn't have older people to help me that way. I think you'll become more and more willing to grant grace to people who differ on things.

Now, the Hebrew roots thing is a little different. Again, Paul specifically said it was a heresy. He specifically said if you become Torah observant, you've departed from the faith.

You've fallen from grace. You're estranged from Christ. Christ will profit you nothing.

That's pretty strong words, and the reason is because that does impact practical Christian life. It's not just an abstract theological question. It's a matter of what am I supposed to do today and tomorrow.

Now, today is Sabbath, but not anymore. It's dark now, so it's not Sabbath anymore. But if I was going by the law, my instructions for today would be different than my instructions yesterday, which was the Sabbath.

So, that would obviously dictate my life in ways that I think only Jesus is supposed to be allowed to do. And when you have something dictating your behavior that isn't Jesus, even if there's much overlap between what a Torah observant person does and what a person following Jesus does, there's still going to be times of conflict. Jesus has to be the only one.

He doesn't like rivals. He doesn't want the old husband stepping in once in a while when he's got the bride now. He doesn't want the old covenant claims coming on his wife.

And so, Torah observance is a very dangerous thing, it seems to me. Much as I respect a

great number of people who are leaning that way, I would say I don't think it's safe. I don't think it's spiritually safe.

Now, would I fellowship with someone who is? In measure, perhaps. I don't know that they would fellowship with me long term because I won't keep Torah and I won't affirm their doing so. But I will say there are certain groups that have doctrines I disagree with that not only have a wrong concept, they've got a different spirit.

I don't know if you've noticed that. A lot of people tell me, you know, the Calvinists I know, they seem to be more arrogant and more elitist. Now, certainly not all Calvinists are that way, but I have certainly met Calvinists, perhaps a larger percentage of non-Calvinists, who seem to have this kind of elitist feel about them, this different spirit.

I don't say that this is true of all Calvinists, but I know what they're talking about when they say that, because I encounter that. With those who become Torah observant, there's definitely a different spirit about them. You watch their videos, for the most part you listen to their arguments and what they're saying.

I'm not saying that they're saying super evil things or anything like that. And this is so subjective, you know. I can't require anyone else to agree with me, but there are people I just sense, it doesn't seem like the spirit of Christ here.

It seems like another kind of spirit. And Paul himself said it of the Galatians. He said, who has bewitched you? That's a spiritual thing.

In Romans 8, he said, we've not been given a spirit of fear again, a bondage again to fear, but we've been given the spirit of adoption. He's talking about, of course, the Jewish observances as opposed to being a Christian. One is a spirit, a bondage.

And it's a spiritual thing you can sometimes pick up. And I'm not even going to say that those who have some of that can't be real Christians. I just don't, I can't assume that they are.

Again, this is the one group that Paul spoke most vehemently against, that and antinomianism, which is, you know, he spoke very much against antinomianism too, which is basically do any immoral thing you want to, it's okay, you're under grace. That's an antinomianism. Paul spoke against that just as much.

It seems strange that people can't just follow Jesus without going off to the right hand or to the left in the extreme. But when I find they do go off in the extreme, noticeably, you know, I'm not saying I won't ever talk with them or talk about the things God has done, but I won't, it's like talking to Jehovah's Witnesses. I don't know where they're at with God.

Most of them have kind of a different spirit than most of the Christians I know. And I

believe they have a heretical doctrine. But I also believe some people who are humble and love the Lord could be mistaken for a little while and be in a group like that.

I believe God will lead them out if they're really his people, but that they're there. I've had some few Jehovah's Witnesses come to my house who I really said, this guy's different than the others. He's like, he's humble.

He's like teachable. He might be a real Christian for all I know. I can't be sure he's not.

He's not like the older ones in many cases who you just have a different, I've had many long conversations, they just have a different kind of spirit about them than Christians I know. So where do you draw the line? I draw the line mostly in the moral categories. And perhaps you could say that Torah observance is a moral category.

But there's also more of a spirit of, you know, you sense a same spirit or not a same spirit. I mean, I assume, you've found a small group of people that pretty much are on the same page you are, but not everyone in this room would be on that same page in every way. I don't know everyone here, but everyone's going to have their own opinions and they're not all going to agree with yours.

In fact, I'm pretty sure mine don't on some things. I'm divorced and remarried. I got a feeling that might be an area of disagreement with some of us.

But I think we all sense the spirit of God among ourselves, you know, a brotherhood of sense. And of course, no doubt people like, there was a brother who's not here now, but he hosted the meeting yesterday. He was sharing with me his background in a church that didn't believe in any divorce or remarriage for any reason.

And we were talking about that. And I'm sure there are people like that who would look at me and say, what's he doing in the ministry? He's living in adultery. He's not in his first marriage anymore.

See, I don't believe I'm living in adultery, but that's obviously a difference of opinion. And that is a moral issue. But I think it's more of an ambiguous moral issue than some of them.

I don't think the Torah observance is ambiguous. I think Paul's very direct about that. I think the teachings of Jesus and Paul on divorce and remarriage, it's a little more foggy.

Not to me, but certainly in general, there's enough room for people to see it differently than I do. And I don't blame them if they do, but I always feel like I've thought it through more than they have. But that may not be true.

But you see, even with those kinds of differences, which would be a serious difference, I suppose, there's still a sense among us all that we are followers of Jesus doing the best

we know how. And that we have the spirit of God. I'm assuming you agree.

But I didn't give you a four-point plan for testing. People say, okay, here's where the line is. Connect the dots and you've got a line.

And anyone who crosses that line, they're out. I do think the issue of Torah observance is one of the clearer lines that is drawn in Scripture. Some of them are not as clear.

And where they're not as clear, I tend to err on the side of grace. And basically, if I accept somebody as a Christian and they aren't, well, God knows how to sort that out. He's going to judge everyone.

And I may find out that I was accepting somebody who's not, you know, on the Day of Judgment. They're not, Jesus doesn't recognize them. I never knew you, he'll say.

But I'd rather think that I extended mercy and grace and love to somebody who I might turn out to be wrong about than that I excluded somebody that I might turn out to be wrong about. You know, partly because Jesus' whole manner was offensive to those who were the exclusive types. And he was seen as not sufficiently exclusive by them.

And I don't know, I feel like I'd be safer being more like that and let God do the excluding, you know. That's me. Maybe someone wiser than me has a better answer to that, but that's just how I do it.

That's how I do it. And he skated over the kind of foundational things in the meaning of Hebrews. Yeah.

And you might want to go to the second or third point. Well, part of the question that was raised was, what about those six foundations that the writer of Hebrews mentions in chapter 6? He talks about not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith toward God and the doctrine of washings or baptisms, depending on how it's translated. And there are certainly many who think it should be washings.

I think it should be baptisms, but not because of any Greek scholarship I have. I don't have any Greek scholarship, but because of the context. He calls it the foundations of Christ.

He calls it the fundamentals of Christ. I don't think washings is one of the fundamentals of Christ. I think baptisms is.

And there's eternal judgment, resurrection within eternal judgment. Now, obviously, there are differences Christians have about those, though the writer of Hebrews assumed that's foundational. That's the foundation.

Everybody knows this stuff. Let's move on and go on to maturity from these things. Don't lay this foundation over and over and over.

Let's learn some more stuff. Let's go on to the solid food. And yet we look at the church and say, well, I'm not sure we've got the milk down here.

The milk looks a little curdled, you know. I mean, I just mentioned Christians can't even agree about whether the third thing on the list is Jewish washings or Christian baptisms. To say nothing of differences they have about faith.

I mean, think of the word of faith people, what they think faith is, as opposed to what Christians think. That is biblical Christians. There are some who teach that we should never teach repentance to unbelievers.

I mean, I won't name them, but one of the most famous, longstanding, well-loved Christian broadcasters on Christian radio. I've heard him say, we have no business preaching repentance to unbelievers. We're justified by faith, not by repentance.

I've heard people have called me and said, if you have to preach to people who have to repent, then isn't that salvation by words? You know, it's like real misunderstandings about one of the fundamental things. I mean, the first word of the gospel is repent and believe the gospel as Jesus preached it, you know? And there's lots of reference to that. So, you've got people who teach that repentance is not necessary.

Now, that's a scary doctrine. That's kind of an antinomian doctrine. That could be a serious heresy.

I think it sounds like one to me. I believe that the wrong views of faith, especially if they're word of faith type, is, I think that's pretty heretical too, because it turns faith into a genie in the bottle, rather than into a relationship with God. Baptisms, obviously, if we take it as a reference to baptisms, think about one of the most basic Christian practices in the Bible is baptism.

And yet, in the church, there's some who think it has to be immersion, some think it has to be sprinkling, some think it has to be pouring. And among those who have one or another view of those, there are some who think you can baptize babies, others say you shouldn't baptize babies, you should only baptize converts. I mean, the differences of view on these very fundamental things, it's amazing how much has been lost in the modern church.

And when you get to the resurrection of the dead, you turn, or laying on of hands, how many have gone to a church that wasn't a charismatic church and ever heard a word about the laying on of hands, or have a clue what it's about? And then resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment, this is eschatology. Now, the eternal judgment, there's even three views on that. I wrote a book about that.

And resurrection, we're talking rapture, resurrection, are there any differences of opinion about that stuff around? A few. I mean, these are all the fundamentals, and you can find

Christians all over the map on these things. Now, what are we to conclude? They're not real Christians? Or should we just conclude the church has so dropped the ball in the past 2,000 years that people who really do sincerely give their hearts to Jesus and really are following him the best they know how have not even been informed properly about these things, some where the church ceased to teach their converts correctly.

And fortunately, we do have the New Testament from which we can draw authoritative doctrines, but obviously, there's enough ambiguity there that people can find their doctrine in the New Testament, no matter which doctrine it is on these things. That doesn't mean we're hopelessly left with the impossibility of discovering the truth. It does mean that we're going to have to be awfully careful and responsible in trying to understand what the New Testament says and not allowing our presuppositions to guide us very much.

We have to, and that's a hard thing to do. So, because it's a hard thing to do, I feel like I have to give grace to people as long as their wrongness, as I regard wrongness, is not inhibiting their love for God, their faithful following of Jesus as best they understand it, their love for their fellow man. These are the things that matter most.

Now, take baptism. Obviously, there's a lot of churches that really are neglectful of baptism. Then there's people like the Church of Christ that says, you're not even saved until you're baptized.

Now, that's a pretty different view, and I'm kind of like the Church of Christ in a way, in that I argue that baptism is not optional. Baptism is mandatory. But I'm unlike the Church of Christ in saying that even though it's mandatory, there are people who, for whatever reason, they haven't been taught about it, so they've neglected it, or they get saved and they die too quick, they haven't had a chance to get baptized.

In the modern world, there's situations that weren't in the first century. In the first century, there was never an unbaptized Christian. There was no one in the church who hadn't been baptized.

The day you got saved, you got baptized. That was just part of the whole deal. But the church has departed so far from that in many cases that there's whole churches that a person can go there for years and never know that it's a mandate to be baptized.

Now, that's the church's fault more than the individual's fault. And I think while the early Christians say, an unbaptized Christian, there's no such thing. Well, there wasn't in their day.

Is there now? Depends on how legalistic you want to be about the matter of baptism. But I'd say, Paul said, I didn't come to baptize but to preach Christ. You know, I mean, baptism's important, it's mandatory, but there are other issues.



I don't think baptism is what justifies. Now, see, when people say, do you have to be baptized to be saved, I take somewhat a different approach to answering because I want to say, what do you mean saved? Because some people, when they say saved, they mean justified. Can I go to heaven as a justified sinner if I'm not baptized? Well, that's not saved.

The word saved is much bigger than that. The word saved means justified and transformed and become a disciple and, you know, overcoming sin in your life, living obediently, eventually being glorified with Christ. That's all saved.

Saved doesn't have any, in the Bible, doesn't have any of those parts missing from the concept of being saved. But in the modern church, we only hear about being justified. And so the question is, can I be justified? That means, can I go to heaven? When I stand before God, will he condemn me or will he justify me? Oh, I'm justified by faith? Okay, then I'm saved.

Well, that's part of it. That's like kind of walking into the door of salvation. Salvation's not a destination, it's a journey.

It's a walk with Christ. It's a relationship. It's not a transaction.

And so I personally believe that Paul is clear on saying that what justifies is faith. And, of course, he makes it very clear. That is a faith that works through love.

He says in Galatians 5, 6, what justifies a person is faith that works through love. Now, he didn't mention baptism, though it was well understood. If you have that kind of faith, you get baptized.

Today, it's not as well understood. It should be, but it just isn't. There are people who have a faith in Christ and they're totally willing to obey him, but they kind of have to be told what he said to do.

The church is commanded to teach them to observe all things Christ commanded, and the church doesn't do that. So if a person has really given his heart to Christ, really surrendered to Christ, really humbly wants to follow Christ, and is doing the best they know how, and they love their neighbor, and they love God, but no one ever told them to be baptized, this is a problem. The problem is on the part of the person who didn't tell them.

And I suspect that this neglect is not related to the charge of the ignorant convert, at least not initially. So, baptism is very important. I don't think there should ever be an unbaptized Christian, but there are people that I would consider have been justified by faith, but they're not living out the salvation that begins with baptism, really, I mean, in a sense.

So, we're living in messed up times. Ever come to that conclusion? I mean, our society is messed up, and then when you look at the church, it's even as messed up, at least as confused. So, we have to say, okay, this is really complicated.

What is the simple truth? The simple truth is Jesus. If you are surrendered to Jesus Christ as your Lord, that's what makes you a Christian. Now, if you are, you want to learn what he said to do, and you want to do it.

And if it takes you out to learn some of the things he said, because no one told you, well, shame on them. They should have told you, but you'll learn if you follow. I sometimes have mentioned that I've been surprised to meet people who tell me, I've been a believer for three years, and I've never been baptized.

And I can't, it blows my mind. I think, what, how could you be a believer for three years and not be baptized? And they'll say, well, I'm waiting for God to lead me. I'm waiting for the Holy Spirit to lead me to be baptized.

Well, these people obviously were evangelized by some kind of nincompoop. You don't have to wait for the Holy Spirit to lead you to do what you're commanded to do. But they obviously don't understand that.

They don't understand that they're commanded to. So what do I think of them? I think they've neglected something very important, but I don't think they know they have. I don't think they did it intentionally.

At least I can grant them that much grace to assume the best. If I'm wrong, God will have to take it in hand. He's the one who's going to anyway.

But the fact is, it's not my place to go condemning people whom I don't know the nature of their relationship with Christ. Again, it'd be different in the first century. Because people who are wrong could be correct if they want to be, and they apparently don't want to be.

They could consult the apostles. Now, we can consult the Holy Spirit, but every Christian claims to be doing that. I'm amazed at the things people say the Holy Spirit led them to believe, which is quite the opposite of what I believe the Holy Spirit led me to believe.

So, although the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth, and I know I'm going off far beyond what the question was, but this is an important point to make. People often say, if the Holy Spirit's leading all Christians into all truth, why are Christians so disagreeing? Why hasn't the Holy Spirit led us all into all truth? Why are there so many different camps? And I think there's a couple of parts to the answer. One part is the Holy Spirit doesn't catch us initially all in the same place.

We're all different places when he finds us, and he doesn't just download all truth into

our head. He leads us over a lifetime into all truth. And if I'm starting out way over here, let's say as a Muslim or an atheist before I'm a Christian, I'm going to have certain presuppositions and ignorances that I'm going to have to learn things.

If I'm coming from a different direction, the Muslim comes from a different direction than the atheist, or the Baptist comes from a different direction than the Catholic, or whatever, or even the Presbyterian from a different direction than the person raised in Methodist. Everyone has been indoctrinated or has adopted views that they think are true, and then God begins to work on them. And he's leading them all to the right place, but they're coming from all kinds of different places, and most of us are not very far along that way, so we're still all over the map in our thinking.

If you could see the trajectory rather than a snapshot, I think you'd find that those who are true Christians are in fact in motion. And if you could stand up and see God's eye view of it and see the direction they're going, there's a central truth that he's eventually bringing them all to, but they're kind of coming from different starting points, and they're not there yet. So if you take a snapshot of where all Christians are at, they've got a thousand different opinions about things.

But they started out with two thousand different opinions about things, and someday we'll be of the same opinion. Paul says, until we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a mature man. And so I think that's one of the reasons.

God, the Holy Spirit, is leading all true Christians into all truth, but we're slow learners, and we started in different places, so we haven't gotten all the way there yet. And the distance we have yet to cover defines the differences that we still have among ourselves. And I find in every church and every theology, there's some people I meet who are in motion in their learning.

They're growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, like the Peter says to do. Other people aren't growing, and this is a second factor. Not only does God find us not all at the same starting point, He doesn't find us all as equally willing to learn.

Some people are more teachable than others. I remember when I was in my 20s, and I was teaching, a young man who was traveling around with me in the ministry, as we drove hundreds of miles together just to talk, he said, Steve, is there one piece of advice that you'd give a young Christian like me that would do the most to help him grow to maturity? And I thought for a moment, I said, be teachable. Be teachable.

Be able to change your mind so that God can do that. God can't change your mind if you won't let Him. And there are people, by the way, and I was thinking about these people as I was teaching about the Torah observance today, thinking, I know people who are just stuck on that, and they are so convinced that that is the high ground of Christian

position, that they will not move.

Even if they hear Scripture, plain Scripture, they will not move because they believe, I have arrived at the truth. They actually feel God has led them to that place, and they feel like they'd be betraying God if they moved anymore. They're settling in.

And there's people like that about every doctrine just about. Not everyone who holds those doctrines is like that, but there are people in every doctrinal camp, they're just saying, I'm not moving. They may not admit it to themselves, but that's where they're at.

They're afraid to move. They feel like they've come to the truth finally, and they're not going to let anyone dislodge them from that, even God. And perhaps all of us in some measure have some of that in us.

Not every, I mean, some people are very, very stubborn, but I think God finds varying degrees of stubbornness in all of us. And there's always some things that I think if God would tell me to believe that, I'd have a real hard time going there. Not because I can't believe it's possibly true, but because I'm so invested in what I now believe.

Teachers are especially in danger of this because they're not only invested, you've got a reputation. You're a champion of a position. And all the little groupies who are in that position, they look to you to defend it.

And you'd be betraying them if you began to move the other direction. You kind of feel you're here. I've staked my claim right here, and I'm not moving from it.

Frankly, this is a very strong incentive in many Christians to not change. And though the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth, he only leads people who will be led. And Christians are not... Now, all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

So all Christians are led by the Spirit of God, but not everyone's... Some people are like being led through mud, deep mud. And there's a lot of resistance. Others are just on a smooth road.

They'll just cruise along with whatever God says because they're very teachable. But because of that, there are Christians, some of them more teachable than others, who are coming from different places from each other, and they're all... God is leading them into all truth. But we're not very far along that goal yet.

That's why some people have suggested, you know, we might still be in the infancy of the church. They think, oh, it's been 2,000 years. Certainly Jesus is coming now.

Well, that's what they thought 100 years after Jesus left, unless... And in the year 1,000, a lot of people thought he was coming then because that was the end of the millennium, as far as they knew. And then there's been a lot of other dates set. We're all wrong.

We may be way out of touch. Some have argued that the apostles thought Jesus was coming back in their lifetime, and I'm not sure they didn't. Seems to me like they could have thought that.

They're entitled to be mistaken about that in their own opinions. But... we could be just as mistaken if we think he's coming our time. Maybe he is.

I can't say that Jesus won't come today, but maybe he won't come for another 10,000 years. Maybe this is really the infancy of the church. After all, Paul said the Corinthian church were like babies because they were saying, I'm of Paul and I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas.

He says, are you not carnal and babies? I couldn't speak to you as unmaturing, but as in the babes, because you're like this. I don't know if the church is much better today. 2,000 years later, this may be in the mind of God, we're a day to the Lord for like a thousand years.

We just may be about two days along. We're still babies. Who knows how long it'll take for the Holy Spirit to actually fulfill his desire to lead us into all truth.

I hope it's not another 10,000 years, because I would like to see it happen in my lifetime, but who knows? Well, I know who knows, but it isn't me. Jesus said, in fact, even to the apostles, it's not for you to know the times or the seasons that the Father has put in his power, which is why it's okay to be wrong about that. It's not for me to know anyway.

In fact, it's wise for me not to speculate since it's not for me to know. It's amazing how many people spend their whole Christian lives or big portions of them speculating about the times and the seasons, when Jesus said, that's not really for you to know. Oh, but I want to know.

Some whole ministries are built on speculations about that. What a waste. What a waste of time that is.

You know? So that's my short answer to your question. That's about 45 minutes probably. Got another one? Hey, now you're really opening up.

Okay. Is it ever allowed or an example given, if you do know personally that someone is a false prophet, teacher, evangelist, whatever, that you make it known to others? To others? And if so, how long do you test that? And what's the... I mean... I have no problem telling anybody who I disagree about, who I disagree with and about what. For me to say this person is a false teacher, I'm willing to go there with a few people, but I honestly don't know enough.

And I don't think I need to. That is to say, I don't need to say, this man's not a Christian, he's a charlatan. Although there are some people that you can tell right away they are,

and I'm willing to say so.

There's just fewer of those than there are people who say, this person really, I think, is mistaken about this. Now, by telling someone, I think he's mistaken about this, it should have the same impact as if I said he's a false teacher. It's a little more gracious.

But if I said, as anyone who trusts my opinion, if I say that person's a heretic, a false teacher, don't listen to him, well, anyone who trusts my opinion probably won't listen to him. But if I say, I think this person's wrong, then the same people who respect my opinion will say, oh, he's probably wrong. Although what I will expect, of course, is that they won't just take my word for it.

When someone comes out and says, this view, preterism is a heresy, well, there's a certain number of people under that teaching that say, oh, then I won't investigate it because it's a heresy. I think it's scary for us at this stage in the game to take another view that some Christians hold and say, that's heresy, even if we think it is. Better to say, this is, we believe, mistaken, unscriptural, and not to be followed.

And I'll tell you why. And you should know that that's what I believe, that's my judgment, you can search it out for yourself and make your own decision. And you probably should, because no one's gonna go to heaven for believing what I believe.

And no one's gonna go to hell for not believing what I believe. Yeah. Now, there are some people who have been exposed as total charlatans, I don't mind naming them, you know, but most Christians I disagree with have not been exposed as total charlatans, and I really suspect they're not.

I don't know. Well, what if you live with a person, this is not him, that's pretty much what it sounds like, that professes something and has an outward showing, but at home is totally, and daily life is totally different. If a person has no fruit of Christian life, and daily life.

Trying to kill you and abuse you every day, I don't mind that. Let's face it, there are people who are religious when they go to religious meetings, but there's nothing else of Christ in them at any other time. There's not a reason in the world to believe they're Christians.

I mean, remember, Jesus said, many will say, Lord, we prophesied in your name, we cast out demons in your name, we did many works in your name, they'll say, I never knew you. Why? Because it's not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father in heaven. Now, going to church and acting spiritual is not one of the things the Bible says that is the will of God for you to do.

But to live a holy life, to be obedient to the commands of Christ, to love your neighbor, including your enemy, to be gentle and meek and have the fruits of it, those things are

unambiguously the evidences that a person is a Christian. And if a person isn't any of those things, except when he throws a switch and walks into a church building, anyone who lives with them and knows that is not going to have any reason to believe they're a Christian. Talking like you're a Christian doesn't count.

It's living like a Christian. Okay, so in other words, people that were supporting him financially for his ministry, I could, I was in my rights to try to help people. Oh, I think so, yeah.

But it was not what it appeared to be. You mean while he was your husband? Yeah, while we were separated. That's an awfully hard thing for a wife, because you're trying to balance, I'm supposed to respect my husband, I'm supposed to submit my husband, but he's a charlatan.

I think your obligation to expose him exceeds your obligation to submit. We have to realize that the commands of God, there's a hierarchy of importance to them. Jesus said the Pharisees paid their tithes, that was required, but there were weightier matters of the law they neglected.

And there are weightier matters. Certainly it was against the law for David to showbread. There were weightier considerations to God that allowed him to break that.

And we have to ask, okay, what is God's priority here? Is it his priority that I be the perfect wife and submit in all ways? Abigail kind of broke that mold. And of course the Bible doesn't say she was right to do it, but it doesn't say she was wrong. The Bible indicates she was a wise woman.

She was certainly commended by David for it. But if somebody is deceiving the body of Christ, he's a danger. And if he's absorbing Christian resources from donors and deceiving them, this is something that I think a wife would be entitled to expose.

It's, you know, Abigail exposed her husband, Nabal, as a fool. You know? And, you know, a good wife hopes to never be put in that position. But it's not her fault if her husband puts her in that position.

God has put her in the position of loving God more than family. That's stated a number of times in Christ's own teaching. So I think that, you know, where you've got someone who is without question a charlatan and in the ministry and so forth, anyone who knows it would do well to warn others, including, frankly, an estranged wife.

And then this would extend to other ministries that were also charlatan in nature that this person was connected with. You can't still go beyond that one person and expose organizations. Well, sure.

Sure. I mean... I just want... I speak... In my teaching ministry, I expose and condemn a

number of organizations. That's different than condemning a person, even a person who's in it.

For example, a caller recently asked me, is the Catholic Church the Christian Church? I said, no. The Catholic Church is not the Christian Church. But that doesn't mean that the people in it are all non-Christians, you know? There may be somebody in it, deceived by it enough, who loves the Lord and just doesn't know better.

I mean, that's between them and God. But I can't say everyone that's in a bad organization is a bad person. I said earlier something about the Jehovah's Witnesses.

As far as I'm concerned, the Jehovah's Witnesses are a dangerous cult. But there's some people in it that I think, I'm not so sure that they're really of that same spirit. I think they may be seeking God, seeking Christ.

I'd warn anyone against the organization. But I'm not going to say, and because it's a bad organization, everyone in it is damned. Who am I to say that? I don't know, that's for you to tell.

So, to, when you know organizations to be teaching wrong things, or doing harm, expose the organizations. They are not the body of Christ, the organization's people are the body of Christ. So, yeah, I'd say certainly expose them.

Spare people the grief of being deceived in them. And is there a biblical example to point out, or is this just more in general? There's no biblical examples of Christian organizations. Well, or an individual that's false.

Well, Paul names names of false teachers. So it is okay to name names? Oh yeah, I would say so. I mean, Paul talks about the Hymenism and Alexander and some others that he says are, you know, dangerous.

They didn't have organizations as far as we know, but they were, I guess they could have led people in mass in the wrong direction. We just have to love the truth and love people too. You know, you have to speak the truth in love.

And so, you know, I say this person, when you're talking to someone else, you say, this person or what this person is teaching is wrong, and in fact, I think it's dangerous. And the Bible says thus and so, and this is why I judge them to be teaching some dangerous heresy. Do not follow it.

But that doesn't mean that everybody who's been fooled by them is a bad and dangerous person. They may be as harmless as lambs and not as wise as serpents, you know. Harmless as doves, but not so wise.

I just haven't really found any reason in my last many decades of ministry to condemn



individuals about whom I know very little. When I can, as with as much good fruit, I can just condemn certain teachings, which these people may or may not teach or hold. There are times when individuals can be named because they're so unambiguously evil people and deceivers.

But there's too many people who are teaching the wrong stuff that are not unambiguously evil. They may be honest, good-hearted Christian people trying to serve Jesus, and even if I think they're doing it all wrong, well, let me address the wrong thing, not condemn them. Because you never know who Paul, I'm sorry, who Jesus really condemns.

Certainly, almost all the Jewish Christians would have condemned Cornelius before the Holy Spirit came on him and revealed him to be accepted by God. Even Peter would not have gone into his house without a divine revelation because the Christians would not receive him. They'd think that God doesn't accept him.

But God corrected him. I do accept him. Don't call him unclean.

So that was like light went on for Peter even. He would have thought Jesus doesn't accept this person. Then it turns out, Jesus does.

So, you know, I try not to make myself the ultimate judge of people, but I think I have every reason to judge behaviors and judge ideas as to whether they're true or false. And then, of course, comes a time when you have to judge people who make it clear that there's no way you can give them the benefit of the doubt anymore. That's the thing.

I think we should give the benefit of the doubt to people as long as there is a doubt. But some people remove all doubt. They're so clearly evil in everything they represent and do.

There's no more power to give them benefit of the doubt because there's no doubt left. Yes, back in the corner there. So, if you've already answered this question, just ignore it and move on.

I spent the first hour and a half answering that one, but go ahead. You mentioned today earlier in your talk you talked about the second chapter of Romans. And you mentioned that the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law.

My first question was what nature is he speaking of there? And then when he said that they show the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness. And then this phrase, I wanted you to expand on this a little bit, where he says, in their thoughts, they mean while accusing or else excusing one another. Could you just expand on that? Sure.

As far as the nature is concerned, I think Paul uses this expression by nature in this case

to mean by an inward impulse as opposed to by compulsion. They're not obeying the law by compulsion because they're Gentiles and they've never been put under compulsion to keep the law. But from an inward impulse, you find them doing it.

So, the nature of God? Well, I don't know if Paul is thinking in quite those clear terms. Are we talking about the new nature, the old nature, or whatever? I think by nature is simply more generic of this is something they're doing quite naturally for them rather than being forced to do something that they wouldn't naturally want to do. Now, of course, Paul's theology, if you inquire, he'd probably say, yeah, well, that's the influence of the Holy Spirit in them and they have the nature of Christ, which, you know, they also have human nature, but Paul's not, in my opinion, trying to address the question of two natures or the two influences on nature so much as he's just using the term they do it by nature means, in contrast to you Jews who I'm criticizing, you don't do it by nature.

Sometimes you don't even do it by compulsion. But if you do it, you're doing it by compulsion. These people, these Gentiles, they aren't doing it by compulsion.

No one's compelling them to keep the law. But look, they're doing it anyway. They're doing it kind of naturally.

It's sort of natural for them. Now, we could say, knowing more of Paul's theology, more than he's interested in talking about in that particular passage probably, he's thinking of, you know, God has influenced their nature. God is, they've received the divine nature, you know, the law is written on their hearts.

That's a divine work. And therefore, it's natural for them to do it. But I don't know that Paul's trying to, at that particular point, indulge in a discussion of anthropology and the nature of our nature and things like that.

I think it's just kind of a phrase that just means they do this naturally enough. You know, they're not, it's from an inward impulse as opposed to compulsion. I think that's the thought he has there.

It's sort of like when Paul says, does not nature itself teach you that for a man to have long hair, it's a shame to him? Well, what nature teaches you? Is that the divine nature? Is that human nature? Or what? I think what he's saying is doesn't it just seem unnatural for you? For a man to adopt styles that really are for women? Now, of course, in Corinth, women wear their hair uncut and their heads covered. Apparently, he addresses it as if that's so. And men wear their hair short.

Therefore, if a man wears hair long, he's adopting a female custom. That just goes against the nature of a thinking person, Christian or non-Christian. It's just, it just seems unnatural to us.

It goes against our grain. He's, again, not discussing two natures or this nature or that

nature. He's just talking about, listen, does that seem right? Just in your own internal gut, does it seem right? It doesn't seem right, does it, for a man to dress like a woman or wear his hair like a woman? Now, of course, the question is, what about me? I have hair longer than some of the women here.

Shame on you, women. You should have longer hair than me. Paul said so.

But actually, I don't believe that Paul is talking about the customs of America. I think he's talking about the customs of Corinth. Paul himself took a Nazarite vow once, in which case he grew his hair.

So did Samuel. So did Samson. So did John the Baptist.

As far as we know, we're Nazarites. It wasn't considered to be a woman's style, per se, nor was shaving the head a man's style, necessarily, because in Number 6, where it gives the Nazarite instructions, a man or a woman could take the Nazarite vow, and afterwards they shaved their heads. Now, in Corinth, for a woman to walk around with a shaved head, that was advertising something that a Christian woman doesn't want to advertise about herself.

Likewise, for a man to wear hair like a woman, that would be sending a message he doesn't want to send also. But in another culture, like Israel, a Nazarite woman, a woman who took the Nazarite vow might have her head shaved, but it wouldn't in any way communicate the same thing as what it communicates in Greece. Likewise, a Nazarite male, with his hair long, wouldn't be ashamed.

This is, you know, styles, whether it's clothing styles or hairstyles, they are culturally conditioned. And what Paul is saying, doesn't nature itself teach you, you Greeks, you Corinthians, doesn't seem unnatural if you saw a man with long hair, they probably never saw one, but if you saw one, wouldn't that seem like, wouldn't that kind of go against your brain? Yes, it would, because that would be a man wearing a woman's style. When the hippies started wearing their hair long in this country, that kind of went against the instincts of, you know, polite Christians.

Why are they wearing hair like women have always worn? Now, 50 years later, there isn't a hair length that is recognized by the culture as man's or woman's hair length. At least I don't think so. Almost every woman I'm looking at here, not everyone, but it looks like they cut their hair once in a while.

And I've had a few men in the meetings that seem like they don't cut their hair as often as most. It's not, it's a cultural thing. And Paul even said, I believe that, he said, if anyone seems to be contentious about it, we don't have it that custom.

The churches of Christ generally don't have it. And I realize that's been understood differently by some people too, but the point I'm making is, when he says by nature,

doesn't nature teach it? Certainly, you know, the nature you watch on National Geographic doesn't teach you that it's a shame for a man to have long hair. In nature, it's the males that have the plumage.

The birds, the male birds have the colorful plumage. Think of a peacock as opposed to a peahen. Think of a lion as opposed to a lioness and so forth.

Certainly he wouldn't be saying, if you look at the natural world, you'll see and know that's wrong for a man to have long hair. Well, it may be, but you wouldn't get it by looking at the natural world. So what nature is he talking about? How does nature teach you that? I think, and I think probably most commentators would agree with me on this, though I didn't get it from them, but I think he's just saying, doesn't it seem unnatural? Doesn't it kind of go against your grain when you see someone, you know, in Deuteronomy it says it's an abomination for a man to wear what pertains to a woman and for a woman to wear what pertains to a man.

On the basis of that, there's been many Christians who have taught women should never wear pants. Why? Because pants are a men's style. Are they? I was just in some stores with my wife just yesterday.

A lot of pants there that I wouldn't wear as a man. They didn't look like a men's style to me. Now, there was a time when men wore the pants and women always wore dresses.

That's great. I'm not against it. I love dresses.

Or women. But it cannot be said at this point in time that pants are a male style. It is still true that dresses are a female style in our culture, but not pants necessarily.

So, the point is nowhere in the Bible does it say what exact styles pertain to a man and what exact styles pertain to a woman. That's different from culture to culture, but it's always wrong in any culture for a man to cross dress or for a woman to cross dress. That's what's forbidden.

It's against nature. Of course, the youngest generation in this country are going to not know that because nature and gender differences and so forth are almost an excluded category in their upbringing, but that is a shame because then we'll have a whole generation that doesn't know by nature anything about that subject. That's sad to me.

But anyway, what does it mean by nature? I think it just means internal awareness. By nature they do the things written in the law. Now you said, what about that line where in themselves their conscience either accusing or excusing themselves? Yeah, what's that mean? Well, that's what the conscience does.

I mean, that's the function of the conscience. When you think about a certain action that has moral ramifications, your conscience either excuses it, which means that's okay, or

condemns it, accuses it, no, that's not right. My conscience tells me, at least when I'm listening, when I've done something wrong, my conscience accuses me.

When I do something right, my conscience approves of it, excuses it or approves it, says it's okay. That's not really an exceptional thing happening there, that's just what the conscience does. The conscience is there to distinguish between what's right and what's wrong, and those are what those terms refer to.

The conscience excuses an action or accuses an action. It either approves or disapproves is really what I think it's saying. And that's what the conscience is supposed to do.

But he's saying, these people who are Gentiles, who have not been instructed in the law of Moses, their own conscience is serving that purpose. Why? Because the law is written in their hearts. And we need to remember the conscience isn't really an organ of the body.

The conscience just refers to the human ability to distinguish between moral right and moral wrong. Something that apparently animals don't have, although some of the higher animals may appear to at times, but the truth is that the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, even as categories, is the function of the conscience. And that's what consciences are for.

You know, to avoid you going the wrong way and not feeling bad about it. So I don't think there's any... It is a strange selection of words, but really when you think about what they mean, they just mean something unexceptional. In my opinion.

It's been two hours. Who wants to go? Okay, Sarah. We can close any time, but as long as there's real questions, I'll keep going.

So, earlier in the session, when you were discussing the Sabbath, and I'm just kind of paraphrasing for my notes, which are kind of sloppy, but you brought up the part where Jesus wasn't the biggest Sabbath observer, and he said, my father worked up until now. So how would I reconcile that with someone who would then go back to the Father resting on the Sabbath day of creation? If they felt that was a conflict. Okay, so since Jesus said he worked on the Sabbath because God does, and they say, but wait, God rested on the Sabbath.

Yeah, once. Never again, as far as we know. I mean, what it says, what it says is he, on the seventh day, he rested from all that he had created and made.

That is, a certain activity of creation was completed. There was nothing more to do, so he desisted from it. He could have kept going, but he had all that he wanted made.

It was all complete. It was all very good. So, instead of continuing to work on that, and think of how God could almost infinitely keep creating things, he got it right the first time

in six days.

He had it the way he wanted, so he rested from that activity. Now, I don't think he rested from all activity. I think that he still was needed to keep the stars and the sun and the moon in their courses and the earth turning and the animals being fed and giving breath to every living thing.

You know, that's what God does, and I think he did that on the Sabbath too. He wasn't resting absolutely. He rested from a particular work that was finished.

He desisted from it. And that's like in the book of Hebrews, it talks about how Jesus rested. He sat unlike the priests in the Old Testament on the Day of Atonement, who continually, year by year, are seen standing, offering the same sacrifices, never make the worship perfect.

Jesus just did it once. He offered himself once for all, and then he sat down. Meaning, okay, he finished that work, nothing more to do, so he's resting from that.

Now, he's not inactive. He's still got a lot going on, but he's not doing that anymore. Got that job done.

Tick that box. Let's go on to the next project. So God is never really inactive, but it was true that we read of him resting from a particular activity.

Which activity was the focus of all the previous verses? He's done with that job now, and now, you know, he still does all kinds of things, upholding everything by the word of his power. So, but even if someone wanted to argue, I think he absolutely ceased from all work because he had to keep seven. Well, if he did, we read of him only doing it one time.

And I hope he doesn't do it every seventh because I need him seven days a week. I hope he doesn't take a day off every seventh. That'd be really scary, you know? I mean, I need God to provide for me and protect me and so forth even on Saturdays.

All right. You know, these are good questions. I feel like not all my answers are very well helpful, but I'm doing my best.

We'll take one more question, I think, only because it's late. Well, they don't have to, but we'd encourage them to. I'll take another question if we get one in front of them.

This gentleman's first, then we'll take this brother here. Okay? When it comes to the conscience, when Jesus says to learn from him, when he says to deny yourself, so there's things we need to be learning as we go. I'm not talking about moral things that are... I mean, just in each person's life, what is it that to have a good relationship where I'm hearing and doing if a person does not have peace with something? Would you take that

as that is sin to you if you do do it, and if you do do it, then it kind of damages the relationship with God? Okay, that's a good question.

What if you do something you don't have peace about? Maybe you don't have a command from God not to do it, but you just don't have... What older Christians used to call, you have a check in your spirit, you know? Which is another way of saying your conscience is not really giving you the green light on that. You think about it, and something in you says, I don't feel totally peace about that. You know, there's a verse in Colossians where Paul said, let the peace of God rule in your hearts.

And preachers and commentators say that the word rule there has to do with being like an umpire. The peace of God has to make the call, you know? I could do this, I could do that. Which one is the peace of God approving, and which is the peace of God not approving? It's being the umpire in the situation, you've got to make the call.

And I think that that suggests that your question is well asked. You know, if you don't feel peace about something, then I don't believe you should do it. Unless there's a direct command from God to do it.

In which case, your lack of peace is misinformed. even if there's no scripture against it. You are beguiled by the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit about things like that, I think. Now, and that's what the peace of God is, the fruit of the Spirit is peace. Among other things.

Now, Paul said, for example, it's not wrong to eat meat which happens to have a checkered past. You know, it actually is the remnants of an animal that was once sacrificed to an idol. It's not wrong in itself, but some people don't have a peace about it.

I mean, he doesn't use those terms. He says to some people, they can't do that. They don't have the faith to do it, is the term he uses.

But he means, they're not convinced that it's right. They don't have a peace about it. He says, for them, it's wrong.

He said, whatever is done apart from faith, and by that, in the context in Romans 14, he's talking about he's talking about confidence that this is the right thing to do. If you don't have that confidence and your conscience is kind of checking you about that, don't do it. He said, even if it's not a wrong thing, it's wrong for you.

If you don't believe it's right, then it's wrong for you to do it. That's what Paul teaches. So I think that would be the answer.

If you're thinking, I might want to do this and I prayed about it, I'm willing to go either way, whatever God wants, and I'm contemplating doing this, but I just don't have a

peace about it. Well, if you don't have a peace about it, I wouldn't do it. You know, we do have a vital connection with God if we're walking with Christ, and we can expect Him to give us guidance in that way, as well as other ways.

So if you don't have the Scripture giving you guidance, that check, that peace, or lack of peace, is really part of God's guiding us. It says in Isaiah, they shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace. We are led forth with peace.

God leads us by the peace that He gives us about something. And we may not be aware specifically of feeling peace, but that's probably because peace is something you take for granted most of the time. You're not aware that you're at peace.

It's when the war breaks out that you suddenly realize that you had peace before. You know, it's the lack of peace that you really notice. And that's where, if you begin to have a lack of peace about something you're contemplating, I would be inclined to believe it's God keeping you from having a peace about it, and you shouldn't do it.

All right, we have a question up at the front table here. Yeah, so I personally think it's unwise for a Christian and a non-Christian to marry, but is there some good rules for you to give for that idea? For a Christian marrying a non-Christian? Or why they shouldn't? Why they shouldn't? Yeah. A scriptural reason why a Christian should not marry a non-Christian.

Yeah. Yeah. Well, of course, the most famous verse on that is in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, I think it's verse 14, where Paul said to not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

Now, it can be rightly pointed out that Paul, in the context, is not discussing marriage. So that it might not be, he might not be talking directly about marriage. But certainly marriage is a yoking, and it would fall under that general principle.

Paul may be thinking in terms of other kinds of connections with unbelievers, you know, partnerships in various ways, but certainly marriage is the most binding of all partnerships, and to yoke together with an unbeliever would certainly be a violation of that principle. In 1 Corinthians 7, when Paul's talking about widows marrying, he says, I think they'd be happier if they stayed single. But if they want to marry, they can marry whoever they want to, but only in the Lord.

He makes it very clear they can't marry someone who's not a Christian. Now, I was asked this question when I was a teenager by other Christians who were teenagers, and wondered, you know, is it okay to date a non-Christian? That was a big one that single Christians my age were asking when I was a teenager. And my thought was, that doesn't really compute.

First of all, I don't really know why I'd want to become romantically involved with



someone that I wouldn't want to marry. Why set yourself up for breaking your own heart or somebody else's? Once you get romantically involved with someone, it either ends in marriage or someone being brokenhearted. If it's not going to be marriage, brokenhearted is not okay either.

I don't want to break somebody else's heart, nor do I want mine broken. So why would I want to get romantically involved with somebody that I can't marry? And besides, what would I have in common with them? Now see, this is a question that suggests itself to me that doesn't maybe suggest itself to everyone. If Jesus is everything to me, what do I have in common with a woman that Jesus is nothing to? I want to talk about the things of God.

I have to explain and justify all my behavior in terms of Christ. How can I have a life shared with somebody who doesn't have that frame of reference at all? Now, of course, many people who are called Christians, they would not say Jesus is their whole life. He's an aspect of their life.

He's part of their life. He's an important thing in their life. Maybe the most important thing, but there's other important things too, and they connect with unbelievers on other things.

They like the same music, they like the same movies, they like the same hobbies. We've got a lot in common. We don't, you know, you're not a Christian, I am, but we've got a lot in common.

We could probably get along and have a good time. Well, to the degree that Jesus is not everything to you, there might be some sense that this could be a possibility. It would still be wrong to marry someone like that, because I believe it's forbidden.

But whether it was forbidden or not, you have to realize that even if Jesus isn't everything to you now, you might grow. You might become a normal Christian someday where Jesus is everything to you. And then if you're with somebody who Jesus is nothing to them, then you're going to be really in an unpleasant situation.

I'll tell you this, marriage is hard enough when you and your spouse both agree that Jesus is going to be the Lord. There's still difference of opinion, there's still difference of temperament, there's sometimes people have annoying habits. They could be really good Christians, but you can't stand the way they laugh, you can't stand opinions that they express sometimes.

There are things that can annoy you about a person even if you're both totally committed to Christ. I remember before I married the first time, I remember saying to a friend of mine, I think I could be happily married to anyone as long as they're just totally committed to Christ. And the friend said, really, how about... and he named a certain

woman that we both knew, who is definitely very committed to Christ, but very annoying.

I thought, well, maybe I was a little idealistic there, you know, I mean, I thought I could be happily married to anyone who's really committed to Christ, but when I gave it some thought, I know some people really committed to Christ that would be really annoying to be married to. But take Christ out of that picture and say, how about marrying someone who isn't committed to Christ? I don't care how pretty she is, how pleasant her personality is, how great her sense of humor is, how little about her annoys me, it's going to annoy me somewhere down the line. I'm talking about a lifetime here with somebody.

If they don't love Jesus and everything I want to do is about loving Jesus, what do we have in common? You know? And I realize that, again, there are times when we meet somebody that, although they're not a Christian, they connect with us in a positive way on a lot of different points. But when you live together as a man and wife, like I said, even if you're both really committed to Christ, there's going to be adjustments to make. But if you're not, you're going to be having a tug of war.

How are you going to raise the kids? Are you going to have kids? How many kids are you going to have? Frankly, even people committed to Christ don't always agree about those things, but if you have a spouse who doesn't care about the things of God, you're going to have a real hard time saying, I don't want my kids in public school. And your non-Christian says, why not? I went to public school. Didn't hurt me.

I'm just fine. No, you're not. You're not a Christian.

I want my kids to be Christians. Well, you'll find all kinds of things to give you trouble if you marry a non-Christian, and besides the fact that it's forbidden. But I would suggest it's forbidden for two reasons.

One is because it's a real bad idea for reasons I've just said. Another thing is that your marriage is supposed to be, God has designed it to be a reflection of Christ and the church. That means if you're the guy, you've got to love her as Christ loved the church.

A non-Christian guy can't do that. If you're the woman, you're supposed to submit to your husband as the church submits to Christ. Not going to find very many non-Christian women who believe that a woman's even in any way supposed to submit to her husband.

Not today. Not even a little bit. In fact, even Christian women have been conditioned to believe they're not supposed to do that.

But the point is, regardless of conditioning, your marriage is never going to be a good reflection of Christ and the church to the world if one of the parties is either not like Christ or not like the church. And a non-Christian is not like either. So, I just can't think of

any good reasons for a person to marry or frankly even to date a non-Christian.

And I don't say that as a legalist. I say that as somebody who's just saying, what's wise and what's stupid, you know? And I don't mean stupid in a way that's supposed to be insulting. I'm just saying it's an, when you think it through, it doesn't make sense.

But if you want to date a non-Christian, you have to ask, what is it exactly that's so important in my life that I don't care that this person is on the road to hell, but I want to link my life to them anyway? Of course, most Christians answer that question and say, well, once I marry them, I can bring them to Christ. Well, that's a nice dream. It's happened.

There are stories like that. But it's far more likely that the non-Christian drags down the Christian. Even if the non-Christian does not cause the Christian to backslide, it's like an ox and an ass being yoked together to pull a plow.

They're not going to be pulling with the same willingness, the same zeal, the same speed. They're not going to be, they're bound together. And the slower one's going to be the one that slows down the faster one.

The faster one's not going to be able to drag along the slow one. I remember a pastor had a young couple who were not married but considering marriage, the girl was a Christian. Hey, God bless you guys.

It sure has been good seeing you again here. Alright, we love you. The girl was a Christian, the guy was a non-Christian.

They wanted marriage counseling. And the pastor says, well, let me try this out. He said, you, the girl, stand up on this desk here.

And you, the guy, stand on the floor. Hold hands. Now, you, girl, Christian girl, you try to pull him up onto the table.

And you, guy, try to pull her down. Who do you think won that tug of war? I mean, it's hard enough for Christians to live a godly life when they've got all the encouragement in the world. When they've got someone bound to them 24-7 whose desires and values have to color all the decisions made by the team.

Even if the Christian maintains their integrity, they'll be frustrated at every point because they can't serve God as they want to. And you might say, but no, you know, the way I feel I want to live, I don't think a non-Christian would have a problem with it. Yeah, what if God calls you to become a missionary? You don't know what God's going to call you to do later.

What if God tells you to sell all your goods and give them to the poor? You know, I say,

God doesn't tell people to do that anymore. I think He does. Sometimes.

You know? You never know but that God might act like Himself and ask you to do something very sacrificial and you'll be married to someone who's not the least bit willing to go along with that. Then what do you do? I got an email just yesterday from a godly man who's made some, he's done some volunteer work for our ministry. And he's, apparently he's in a mixed marriage in that respect.

He says, what counsel do you have for me that, or he said for a person, I'm pretty sure it was him, if his wife, you know, she kind of claims to be a Christian but she doesn't have any evidence of being a Christian, she's strictly into worldly things and I can't get her, you know, what should I do? What can you say? You've got to stay with her. You can't leave her. You've got to accommodate her in some measure.

You've also got to try to be the head of the home, which is like pulling hen's teeth if you've got a wife who doesn't want you to be the head of the home, doesn't even believe there's such a thing as a head of a home. What are you going to do? You're going to suffer, is what you're going to do. And you may end up just saying, I know God wants me to go do this but my wife would never go along with it.

So I guess I won't do it, you know? I mean, that's really, I know people who didn't go on the mission field when they really thought they should. If they'd been single or married to a life-mighty Christian, they probably would have been able to obey. Hooking up with a non-Christian when you really want to serve God is just a fool's errand.

And it's, and that's probably why it's forbidden in Scripture. Not a lot of passages about it, but I mean the Old Testament made restrictions on who a priest could marry, for example. Had to be a Levite and so forth.

But in the New Testament we have a couple of statements about the importance of not being bound in marriage to someone who's not a Christian. And I would say even if those Scriptures weren't there, I hope I'd be wise enough. And I don't see that I'd be sufficiently attracted to a non-Christian because frankly, I don't think we'd have much of anything in common.

Except maybe a little bit of lust. A lot of people get married for that reason, but that doesn't work out real well. That's a real bad foundation for marriage.

You know the prettiest girl? I hate to say it, girls, 50 years from now, probably not as pretty. You guys? Probably not going to be as good looking either. I'm one of the lucky ones with good genes, but most guys... I'm lucky that way too.

I'm lucky because my wife doesn't age and she's still as beautiful as... Actually, honestly, she's actually more beautiful than when she was in her teens. I've seen pictures of her, she's a pretty girl, always. She's just gotten better with age.

And that's... I'd say that if she wasn't here to hear it too. In fact, I've often said it without her hearing it. So, that's just true.

And you say, come on, you should have quit 30 seconds ago. It's time to go home. And didn't need to say that.

So, we'll do that. We'll quit here and we can go home.